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Women In Academia And Their Impact On Social Change In The Barak Valley Region Of Assam

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Abstract

Empowerment of women is said to be a day dream unless there is proper opportunity for their education. A society can achieve holistic development only when education is equally accessible to both men and women. Higher Education helps the women not only in gaining knowledge but also enables her to earn a living. Money is a necessity in maintaining life and education helps in preserving life. An educated woman plays an important role in a family, dealing with both health care and financial support to the family. As primary caregivers, educated mothers said to have significant impact on children development, nurturing educated families that contribute to societal progress. The paper highlights how women's participation in academia not only enhances their personal growth but also encourages collective upliftment within communities. This study explores the critical role of women in higher education within Barak Valley region of Assam, their presence in academia which tend to reveal the link they have particularly in improving livelihood and social transformation in general.

Keywords: Women academia, higher education, Society, Barak Valley, Assam

Introduction

Education is the key instrument for daily survival, enabling individuals to develop their potential and elevate their standard of living. Its impact transcends monetary gain, cultivating holistic growth and improved well-being for both male and female members of the community. Academic women play a pivotal role in empowering females to confront critical socio-economic, cultural, moral, and spiritual challenges. By imparting specialized knowledge and skills, they stimulate national growth and support prosperity. The transition to a knowledge-driven economy, characterized by globalization and increased competition, emphasizes the importance of human capital development in developing nations, promoting vital attributes such as creativity, productivity, collaboration, critical thinking, adaptability, and responsiveness. In today's society, acquiring these skills is vital for individuals to fulfil their responsibilities and manage resources effectively. Higher education institutions are instrumental in this regard; however, those in India and Assam must unlock their full potential to enhance female representation in academia, driving societal and state development. Barak Valley is a part of Assam as the state is divided into two valleys i.e. Barak Valley & Brahmaputra Valley. In Barak Valley, it has been observed women's involvement in academia being crucial for their personal and professional growth, as well as the development of their families and society at large.

Review of Literature

Malhotra and Mather (1997), education can also help to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, and can promote greater gender equality and social justice. Education can provide women with the knowledge and skills needed to participate more fully in social, economic, and political life.

Kabeer and Mahmud (2004), women's economic empowerment can lead to increased income, improved nutrition and health, and greater decision-making power within the household.

Kundu (2016) world-class institutions, global rankings, and accreditation have become hot topics within field of education, the potential of researching these topics is significantly limited by the lack of theorizing about what quality means. Quality must be at the centre of the research and the first step must include revisiting the notions of quality.

Ronksley-Pavia et al., (2023), Higher education institutions have differences in the gender composition of their academic hierarchies, with women under-represented in top positions.

Ministerio CTCI de Chile (2022), There is slow progress in the gap between men and women, especially in Education and Health.

Kabeer (2005), Janzen (2008), Murtaza (2012) Educated women are believed to have better saving habits, make better investments in health and children's education, and have better access to knowledge and information.

Shaguri, (2013), The involvement of private sector in higher education has seen drastic changes in the field. Today over 60% of higher education institutions in India are promoted by the private sector. This has accelerated establishment of institutes which have originated over the last decade making India home to the largest number of Higher Education institutions in the world, with student enrolments at the second highest.

Women in academia and their role in social change in the region of Barak Valley of Assam

1) Women in academia plays a crucial role in empowering women, providing them with the requisite skills, knowledge, and self-assurance to engage meaningfully in society, exercise their rights, and improve their socio-economic circumstances.

2) Women in academia are instrumental in meeting their family's needs and promoting harmony in their community, understanding that a stable family environment has a profound impact on societal well-being, encouraging others to replicate this harmonious model.

3) Women in academia face unique challenges balancing work and personal life, shouldering greater responsibilities than their less-educated counterparts, while also empowering other women in their families and communities through spiritual and valuable knowledge sharing.

4) Women in academia play a key role in promoting social progress by enhancing healthcare within their families, neighbourhoods and providing financial support in times of need.

5) Women's engagement in academia reveals that women take on roles in schools and colleges, across both private and public sectors, after completing their academic pursuits with a primary emphasis on supporting students' success.

6) Women's Involvement in University Settings indicates that women play an active role in research initiatives and skill development programs designed to foster students' growth and potential for a brighter future.

7) Women's in academia plays a crucial role in economic participation, studies have shown that increasing women's participation in the workforce and providing them with equal access to economic opportunities can lead to significant economic growth. Women's economic empowerment also has positive effects on their families and communities, including improved health and education outcomes.

8) Women in academia have greater self-determination, resulting in decisions that yield positive outcomes for themselves and the broader community. Women in academia or in higher education broadens their understanding of social and political processes, fostering wise citizenship and effective social engagement.

Conclusion

The primary focus of this research was to investigate the presence, participation, and impact of women in academia on social change. Analysis reveals that increased educational access has been a significant milestone for women. Since 'Assam University, Silchar' was established in 1994, Barak Valley has experienced notable growth in higher education, with male students outnumbering female students. However, women now have greater access to quality education, enabling them to pursue careers, achieve financial independence, and contribute to society. Education has empowered women with knowledge, critical thinking, and the ability to challenge gender stereotypes. Notably, Barak Valley has witnessed significant progress as women in academia pursue higher education, driving family and societal advancement. Sustained efforts are necessary to address persistent barriers, including gender-based discrimination and social biases, to further empower women's roles in society and promote moral values in academia for a harmonious and peaceful life.

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