

**PARENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS GIRLS' EDUCATION:
A CASE STUDY OF TEA TRIBES OF BORBAM TEA
ESTATE**

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ABSTRACT

Woman, an equally important part of human society, constitutes almost half of total population of the country. However, this section of human society is being deprived in many socio-economic aspects as reflected in many multidimensional indices including GDI. Among them education is one important aspect. Participation of women in education seems to be less than that of their counterpart males which is reflected in the male-female difference in literacy rate, school dropout, Gender Parity Index (GPI) etc. of the country. Besides socio-economic factors captured in Socio-Economic Status (SES), parents' attitude biased against girls' education is an important determinant for this difference. This low level participation in education is chief factor for more and more deprivation of this section. This paper is an attempt to understand the attitude of Tea Tribe of Borbam Tea Estate towards girls' education. These people are based in rural areas, on old customs, and survive in poor economic conditions. Educational awareness among these people has not spread much for which they prefer work for their child to school. This paper is based on a sampling of 50 households of Tea Tribe of Borbam Tea Estate of Sivsagar District of

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Assam. An attitude test questionnaire is prepared for this purpose. A modified 3 points Likert scale is used to test the attitude of parents to their girl's education. Care is taken to ensure required reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

Keywords: Tea Tribe, Attitude, Socio-Economic Status, GPI, Literacy Rate.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women, which constitute almost half of the total population of the world, are an important and indispensable part of human society. They play an important role in building and rebuilding this society. Their quality participation in society depends, among other things, mostly on their education; the basic instrument of social changes. However, their educational achievement largely depends upon parents' attitude to their education.

Parents' attitude to a child's education is an important determinant of child's educational participation and achievement. This attitude, on the other hand, depends largely on various socio-economic conditions captured in Socio-Economic Status (SES). These various dimensions of SES include parents' education, family income, parents' occupation, the society the family live in, health and so on. However, from the same SES background, gender disparity in attitude is not an unobserved phenomenon; parents prefer their sons to girls for school education.

However, notwithstanding the enactment of many policies such as Education (Amendment) Bill, 2010, and many constitutional provisions for gender equality, many people primarily women are deprived of access to education which is a challenge to universal education and inclusive growth targeted by our socio-economic policies.

1.1. Female Education in India: a backdrop

There has been a big gender disparity in education in India reflected by many indicators of educational development. Among them are – comparative statistics of male and female literacy rates, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), School Dropout etc. The two indicators Literacy rate and GPI, which covers both male and female GER, are presented in following sub-sections.

1.1.1. Male and Female literacy Rates difference: The Trend

Not a single decade, since independence, has passed in the education history of India when the female literacy rates overridden the male literacy rate. This difference in literacy rate can be partially attributed to the negative attitude of parents to the girl child’s education. However, as shown in the following data, the magnitude of difference has taken a downward trend during the post economic reform era.

Table – 1: Literacy Rates for Male and Female since 1951

Year	Literacy Rate			
	Total	Male	Female	Differential
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.95	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.69
2011*	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Data source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI (2003)

* Data not from above source.

The Male-Female Literacy Rate difference is portrayed in the following figure.

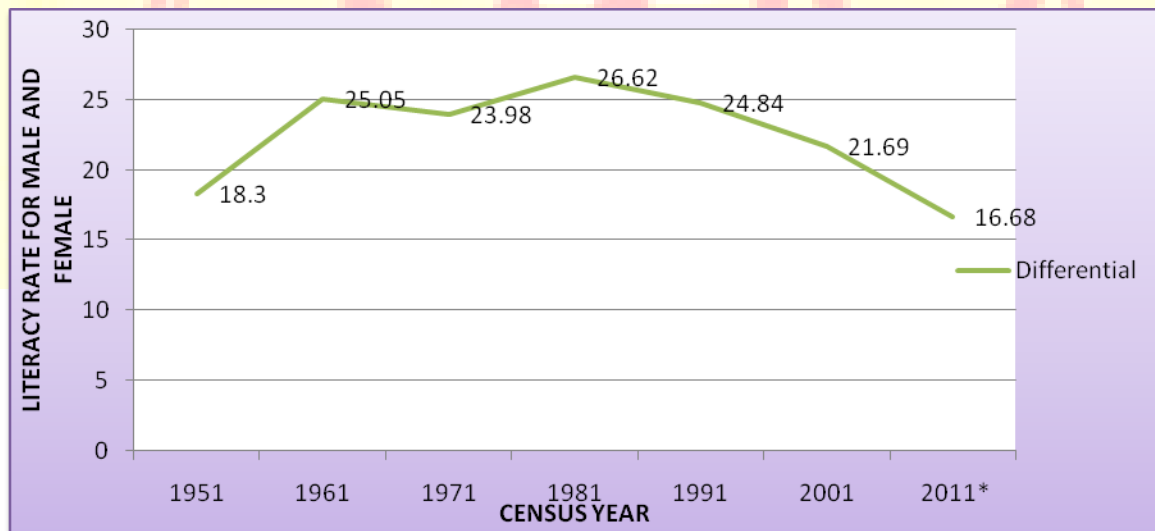


Fig. 1: Trend of Male-Female Literacy Rate Difference

The above table and the corresponding data show make it clear that the difference between Male and Female literacy rate rose up to 1981, beyond which it has taken a reverse trend.

1.1.2. Gender Parity Index (GPI)

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is defined as the ratio of girls' GER to boys' GER for a particular age group. The improvement of GPI shows the increased participation in education and broadened educational opportunities for women. The GPI values for different years for the last decade are shown in the following table:

Table 2: Gender Parity Index in various educational levels

Year	PRIMARY	SECONDARY	TERTIARY
2000	0.84	0.71	0.66
2001	0.85	0.72	0.68
2002	0.87	0.74	0.7
2003	0.96	0.81	0.68
2004	0.96	0.81	0.67
2005	0.96	0.82	0.71
2006	0.95	8.83	0.72
2007	0.97	0.86	0.7

Source: United Nations Statistics Division (accessed on 26/09/12)

The above table shows that GPI in India in various educational level including Primary, Secondary and Tertiary has shown an improving trend, except in some specific years. In all these educational level the GPI value for the year 2007 is higher than what it was at the beginning of the decade.

These two indicators – Literacy Rate and GPI – reveal it that participation of female in education is improving over time.

1.2. The Tea Tribe Community

Educational achievement of people in general and women in female is not equal for various tribes and communities. There are many marginalized communities whose participation in education is very unsatisfactory; for women it is even more. Tea Community, popularly known as Tea Tribe, is one. The present paper is based on the Tea Tribe under Borbam Tea Estate.

Tea Tribes are one of the most backward tribes and are regarded as among the poorest and most exploited of all agricultural laborers. These tribes were brought to Assam to work in the tea garden by the East India Company. These tribes hail their originality to states like Andhra

Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and neighboring regions. But these people are now permanently settled here and are identified as a part of greater Assamese society. They have their cultural identity and hence got the name Tea Garden Community. These people belonged to scheduled tribe communities in their respective regions. Although unrecognized as tribes in Assam, some Anthropologists and Sociologists describe them as tribes. These tea garden workers, found almost in all the districts of Assam and involved in growing and harvesting tea, are the main determinants of labor force supply in the Tea Industry of Assam.

These people are forced to depend entirely upon tea planters, are based in remote and interior areas, and survive in poor socio-economic conditions even after six decades of independence. The 70-80 lacs population of Tea Tribe constitutes around 30% of total population of Assam; however, around 96% are below poverty line (Assam Vision, 2025: 2011: Online).

Tea plantations are generally located in remote area. These people have to depend on the amenities provided by their tea planters. They are deprived of many development benefits and are being exploited over time and its extent is aggravated by the interiority of their residence. Left with no other options, their bargaining capacity is very low.

These people live with old customs and traditions. These people have learnt to leave from hands to mouth. Lack of education, poor socio-economic conditions, lack of access to basic amenities are the primary features of this tribe. Moreover, the deprivation of women is more as compared to their counterpart male. Similar to other aspects, their participation in education is also small. Awareness of need for education among these people has not spread to the need of the hour. Besides, the parents consider their girl-child to be an income earning asset for the family, and are subject to hard work beginning at their early age.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Empirical statistics show that the participation of female in education is low when compared to their male counterparts. In response to it, many literatures on broad subject social sciences have given a good explanation of the reasons behind this gender disparity in education. One important psychological factor that has rolled in the minds of intellectuals is the issue of parents' attitude towards girls' education.

What is an attitude? Allport (1935) defined an attitude as a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and situations to which it is related. Typically, when we refer to a person's attitudes, we are trying to explain his or her behavior. Attitudes are a complex combination of things we tend to call personality, beliefs, values, behaviors, and motivations. As an example, we understand when someone says, "She has a positive attitude toward work" versus "She has a poor work attitude."

Attitude involves three things: firstly, an attitude object – an object is something as defined by the attitude holder; secondly, a set of beliefs that an object is good or bad and thirdly, a tendency to behave so as to keep or get rid of the object (Hugh M. Culbertson, undated).

3. THE STUDY SITE

The study is confined to the Borbam Tea Estate. This Estate is located under Amguri Development Block of Sivsagar District of Assam with a Highway distance of about 45 Kms from the district headquarters. The Borbam Tea Estate has an area of approximately 273.90 hectares and a population of about 3575. The Estate has its own processing and production unit.

The tea estate, which belongs to Goodricke Group Ltd., West Bengal, was established in 1865 and is situated on the South bank of the river Brahmaputra, located between the district towns of Sivasagar and Jorhat and The Estate has a scenic beauty of being bordered with other Tea Estates such as Amgoorie Tea Estate, Halwating Tea Estate and of being situated in the foothills of Nagaland State.. The name Borbam is believed to have been derived from 'BOR', which means very in Assamese and 'BAM' meaning highlands, as it was located on the higher grounds on the banks of the river Jhanji. The Estate has two divisions, Baghjan and Hulwating.

4. Objectives

This paper is prepared with the following objectives in front.

- 1) To study parents' towards girls' education.
- 2) To compare the attitudes of Male & Female respondents towards girl's education.
- 3) To compare the attitudes of Literate & Illiterate parents towards girl's education.

Hypotheses

- 1) There is no statistically significant difference in the Male & Female parents' attitude towards girls' education.
- 2) There is no statistically significant difference in the attitude of Literate & Illiterate parents towards girl's education.

5. Methodological Framework

5.1. Data Collection

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data: Primary data are collected through Household Questionnaire prepared for the purpose. This includes data related to socio-economic conditions, educational level of parents, demographic characteristic of the household and attitude towards girl's education. 50 respondents were randomly selected for sample.

Secondary Data: This includes literature on methodological, conceptual framework and empirical statistics of female education in India.

5.2. Measure of Attitude

A modified three points Likert Scale is used in the attitude test questionnaire. The test questionnaire consisted of 33 items or question on attitude to girls' education. The maximum score of a test item is 3 while the minimum is 1. Considering 33 items, the maximum score of a respondent in a test questionnaire is 99 (= 3 x 33) and the minimum score is 33 (= 1 x 33). Care is taken to ensure reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

This scale is reversed for the negatively keyed items and the formula used for determining new score after reversal is:

$$\text{New Score} = (\text{Max Score} + \text{Min Score}) - \text{Score} = 4 - \text{Score}$$

Sufficient care was taken to ensure required level of reliability and validity.

5.3. Tools for analysis

Various statistical tools such as measures of central tendency, dispersions and statistical test for hypothesis testing are used.

6. Analysis

6.1. General Demography

In this study 50 respondents were taken as sample. Out of them, 25 were male and the remaining 25 female. Among them, only 12 respondents were illiterate and the remaining 38 literate. The average age of the respondents is 39.94 years.

6.2. Characteristics of Attitude:

The average attitude score of the respondent was found very high, which is 86.1 as against the maximum possible score of 99. The standard deviation of the response is 4.33 (Table 1).

Table – 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of respondents' score

Mean Value	Standard Deviation
86.1	4.33

Source: Independent sampling of the researchers

Categorization of respondents into two – literate and illiterate – also shows that the average score of both literate and illiterate respondents are high enough which are 87.63 and 88.64 respectively with corresponding standard deviations 4.16 and 5.03. One important picture is that average score of illiterate respondents is higher than that of literate ones by 1.01 points (Table-4). However, the difference of mean score is not statistically significant.

Table – 4: Attitude to girl's education: Literate and Illiterate parents

Education	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	p- value	Remarks
Literate	38	87.63	4.16	0.697	0.4897	Insignificant at $\alpha = 0.05$
Illiterate	12	88.64	5.03			

Source: Independent sampling of the researchers

Classification by gender also shows that the mean score of female respondents (88.58) is somewhat higher than that of male counterparts (86.56) with respective standard deviations of 6.19 and 3.05. This difference in mean score, however, is not found to be statistically significant (Table – 5).

Table – 5: Attitude to girl's education: Male and Female

Sex	N	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	t-value	P-value	Remarks
Male	25	86.56	3.05	1.464	0.15	Insignificant at $\alpha = 0.05$
Female	25	88.58	6.19			

Source: Independent sampling of the researchers

7. Findings

- 1) High attitude of parents' attitude towards girls' education is observed.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the attitude of Male & Female parents towards girl's education.
- 3) No significant difference of attitude was found between Literate and Illiterate parent respondent.

8. Conclusion

The present findings are important indicators of their eagerness to let their daughters participate in education with equal opportunities as those for their counterpart sons. This attitude to girls' education may be due to various factors such as awareness programs of government departments, opening up of educational institutions in remote areas – both government and private and the influence of their co-inhabitants from other communities. Anyway, this predicts an equal participation of girls' participation in education with boys.

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