

# A Study to Examine How Education Influences Women's Political Participation in Rongnihang

Tamhidi Terangpi\*

\*Department of Political Science, Mewar University, Gangrar, Chittorgarh (Raj.) INDIA

**Abstract :** This review investigates the complex relationship between women's education and political participation, emphasizing the socio-cultural factors that mediate this dynamic. While education provides women with essential knowledge, skills, and confidence, its impact is often constrained by persistent gender norms, religious interpretations, and limited social capital. Drawing on case studies from South Asia, Africa, and other global contexts, the paper reveals that educated women still face cultural stereotypes, patriarchal constraints, and institutional exclusion that hinder their political engagement. In conservative societies, even educated women are often reduced to symbolic roles, with male relatives controlling their political influence. Religion emerges as both a restrictive and empowering force—certain interpretations limit women's leadership, while others inspire activism through faith-based literacy and advocacy. Social capital, such as women's networks and grassroots organizations, significantly affects their access to political opportunities, but its availability is shaped by societal norms. The review concludes that while education is a foundational tool for empowerment, it must be supported by broader socio-cultural shifts and institutional reforms to achieve meaningful political inclusion for women.

**Keywords:** Education, Women, Empowerment, Political Participation, civic engagement, rural Assam.

**Introduction** - Women's political participation remains a fundamental indicator of democratic inclusivity and societal progress. Despite legal and constitutional guarantees, women across many parts of the world—including India—continue to experience underrepresentation in political institutions due to entrenched socio-cultural norms. Education is widely acknowledged as a transformative tool for challenging these norms and empowering women to participate meaningfully in political life. It equips women with critical knowledge, strengthens self-confidence, and enhances the civic competencies required for leadership, policy engagement, and democratic participation (Bhat, 2015).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that higher levels of educational attainment are strongly linked with increased political engagement among women, including voting, political discourse, party involvement, and participation in governance (Burns et al., 2001; Norris, 2002). Education contributes to women's understanding of civic rights and responsibilities, develops political self-efficacy, and encourages active participation in public discourse. Beyond these cognitive gains, education fosters non-cognitive skills such as critical thinking, communication, and leadership, all of which are essential for civic engagement and representation (Wang & Chen, 2020). However, the influence of education is shaped

significantly by broader socio-cultural, religious, and economic conditions. In patriarchal societies such as rural India, women's political voices are often muted despite educational advancement. Cultural expectations, gender stereotypes, and institutional barriers limit the extent to which women can convert educational empowerment into political agency (Prillaman, 2023; Li, 2024). For instance, even in regions where women have formal political representation through quotas, real decision-making power often remains with male family members or community leaders. Religious interpretations and social capital also mediate the impact of education. While some theological traditions restrict women's public roles, others have catalyzed empowerment through faith-based literacy and collective action. Similarly, access to community networks and support systems can enable educated women to overcome structural obstacles and influence public policy (Annisa et al., 2020).

This paper aims to examine how education influences women's political participation, especially in contexts where gender norms and religious ideologies act as both constraints and catalysts. By integrating global research and insights from specific Indian contexts like the Karbi community in Assam, the study seeks to highlight the complex interplay between education, culture, and political inclusion. It argues that for education to truly empower

women politically, it must be embedded within broader efforts to reform institutional practices, reshape societal attitudes, and expand socio-political opportunities for women.

Examining the intricate relationship between education and women's involvement in political processes constitutes a crucial area of investigation, particularly within specific socio-cultural contexts such as RongnihatDiphu in Karbi Anglong. The ability of women to participate fully and effectively in the political arena is greatly influenced by education, which acts as a catalyst for empowerment and social change (Le & Nguyen, 2020). Education can enhance women's understanding of their rights, increase their self-assurance, and equip them with the skills necessary to successfully negotiate the political environment (Kuteesa et al., 2024). In the context of RongnihatDiphu, where traditional patriarchal structures may still be present, education may be a particularly potent tool for dismantling gender-based obstacles to political engagement. It is important to conduct research that examines how education affects women's political participation in RongnihatDiphu in order to promote gender equality and inclusive governance in the area. The promotion of women's empowerment and the establishment of a more inclusive and representative political landscape depend on an understanding of the dynamics at play in this particular context (Pandey et al., 2021). An investigation into this subject can shed light on the particular difficulties and opportunities that women in RongnihatDiphu encounter as well as the ways that education can be used to overcome these obstacles and promote their involvement in political processes.

**Global Perspectives on Education and Women's Political Participation:** The impact of education on women's political participation is an essential area of research, especially in regions like Rongnihat, Diphu, and Karbi Anglong, where cultural, social, and economic factors shape women's roles. This analysis explores the global, national, regional, and local perspectives to better understand how education influences women's political engagement. Globally, education is recognized as a key tool for women's empowerment and political participation. Research shows that educated women are more likely to participate in political activities, challenge gender norms, and advocate for policies that benefit their communities (Kumari et al., 2024). Education equips women with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate political spaces, making them more effective leaders and agents of change. A significant global strategy to increase women's political participation is the implementation of gender quotas in political representation. Studies indicate that gender quotas help boost women's political engagement by creating opportunities for them to hold public office and influence policy decisions. This approach has proven particularly effective in regions where cultural and structural barriers

have historically hindered women's political involvement (Mohapatra et al., 2023; Kumari et al., 2024). Furthermore, educated women are more likely to push for policies that address gender inequality and improve access to essential services such as education and healthcare. Female politicians, for example, have played key roles in advocating for legislation that promotes gender equality and enhances public service delivery, particularly in areas like maternal health and education (Mathur, 2017; Karekurve-Ramachandra & Lee, 2024).

**Table: Key Insights on Education and Women's Political Participation**

Perspective	Key Insights	Citation
Global	Education empowers women, leading to increased political participation and policy influence.	(Kumari et al., 2024)
National(India)	Gender quotas have increased women's representation, focusing on education and health.	(Mathur,2017) (Karekurve-Ramachandra & Lee, 2024)
Regional (North East)	Education reduces gender disparities, but rural challenges persist.	(Hussain, 2025)
Local (Karbi Anglong)	Education empowers women, but cultural and economic barriers remain.	(Hussain, 2025) (Singh, 2023)

### National Context: India's Journey Towards Women's Political Empowerment

#### The Role of Education in India's Political Landscape:

In India, education has been a cornerstone in empowering women and enhancing their political participation. Research indicates that educated women are more likely to engage in political activities, challenge gender norms, and advocate for policies that benefit their communities (Kumari et al., 2024). Education has also been linked to higher political awareness and participation, particularly in rural areas where literacy rates have improved significantly in recent decades (Singh, 2023). As more women gain access to education, they become more informed about political processes, enabling them to participate actively in public life. India has introduced gender quotas in local government bodies, reserving 33% of seats for women. This policy has significantly increased women's political representation at the grassroots level. Research shows that women elected to reserved seats are more likely to focus on issues such as education, healthcare, and public service delivery, leading to improved community outcomes (Mathur, 2017; Karekurve-Ramachandra & Lee, 2024). The reservation policy has been instrumental in enhancing women's political participation and in giving them a voice in local governance.

#### Regional Focus: North East India and Assam

**The Role of Education in North East India:** In North East India, education has played a significant role in enhancing women's political participation. The region has made notable

strides in reducing gender disparities in education, with states like Meghalaya and Mizoram leading the way in terms of female literacy rates. These states have also seen increased participation of women in public and political spheres. However, challenges persist, especially in rural areas where access to quality education remains limited (Hussain, 2025). The gap in educational access continues to hinder many women from fully engaging in political activities, emphasizing the need for more inclusive educational initiatives in these regions.

**The Impact of Gender Quotas in North East India:** The introduction of gender quotas in local government bodies has contributed to a rise in women's political representation across North East India. In many localities, women have become key players in enhancing access to education, healthcare, and public services, particularly in rural areas. Despite the progress, the success of gender quotas has been uneven, with some states achieving more significant outcomes than others (Mohapatra et al., 2023; Karekurve-Ramachandra & Lee, 2024). While the quotas have facilitated greater female participation, challenges in the effective implementation of these policies remain.

**Challenges to Women's Political Participation in North East India:** Women in North East India face distinct barriers that limit their political involvement. Cultural norms, limited educational opportunities, and economic dependence are key factors that discourage women's active participation in politics. Additionally, the region's complex ethnic and tribal dynamics pose unique challenges, creating further obstacles for women who wish to enter political roles (Hussain, 2025; Siingh, 2023). These socio-cultural complexities require targeted efforts to foster an inclusive environment for women's political engagement.

**Local Perspective: Karbi Anglong and the Role of Education and Political:** In Karbi Anglong, education has emerged as a powerful tool for empowering women and fostering their political participation. Over the years, the district has made notable progress in improving literacy rates among women, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. This educational advancement has helped enhance women's awareness of political rights and governance processes, encouraging their involvement in public life. However, access to education in remote and rural pockets of the district remains limited, posing a challenge to broader female participation (Hussain, 2025).

The introduction of gender quotas in local self-governance institutions has significantly increased women's representation in Karbi Anglong's political landscape. Women elected to local government positions have played an essential role in improving access to education, healthcare, and community welfare programs. Their participation has led to more gender-sensitive policymaking at the grassroots level. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of gender quotas varies across the district, with some areas showing greater success in integrating women into political

roles than others (Mohapatra et al., 2023; Karekurve-Ramachandra & Lee, 2024).

**Challenges to Women's Political Participation in India and Assam Karbi Anglong:** Despite these advancements, women in India continue to face significant barriers to political participation. Cultural norms, limited access to education, and economic dependence often restrict women's ability to engage in politics. Moreover, women in politics frequently encounter discrimination and violence, which can deter them from pursuing political careers (Siingh, 2023; Sharma, 2020). These challenges highlight the need for continued efforts to overcome societal barriers and foster a more inclusive political environment.

Despite these advancements, women in Karbi Anglong continue to face several barriers to political participation. Deep-rooted cultural norms, economic dependency, and insufficient educational opportunities still hinder many women from entering the political arena. Moreover, the district's ethnic diversity and tribal power dynamics present additional challenges, often reinforcing patriarchal control and limiting women's public agency (Hussain, 2025; Siingh, 2023). Addressing these barriers requires localized strategies that consider the socio-cultural fabric of Karbi Anglong while promoting inclusive education and political empowerment.

**The Interplay Between Education and Women's Political Participation:** Education serves as a foundational pillar for women's political empowerment. It enhances their ability to participate in decision-making processes, question societal norms, and advocate for change. Educated women are more likely to vote, run for office, and engage in civic discourse. They possess the confidence and knowledge needed to navigate political systems effectively, positioning themselves as strong leaders and advocates for their communities (Kumari et al., 2024; Sharma, 2020). Grassroots movements have been instrumental in strengthening women's political participation in India. These movements often emerge from within communities, helping women understand their rights and develop leadership skills. By challenging patriarchal norms and promoting gender-inclusive policies, grassroots organizations empower women to enter the political arena with greater confidence and purpose (Siingh, 2023; Sekhon & Joti, 2011).

Moreover, women's increased involvement in politics positively influences education itself. Female political leaders frequently prioritize education and health in their policy agendas. In rural areas, women in local governance have advocated for improved access to schools, better infrastructure, and support for girls' education. Their leadership contributes to tangible outcomes such as higher school enrollment and better public services (Mathur, 2017; Karekurve-Ramachandra & Lee, 2024), thus reinforcing the cycle of empowerment through education.

**Conclusion:** The impact of education on women's political



participation in Rongnihang, Diphu, Karbi Anglong is multifaceted. Globally, education has been recognized as a key driver of women's empowerment and political participation. In India, the implementation of gender quotas has led to an increase in women's political representation, particularly at the local level. In North East India, education has played a crucial role in empowering women and increasing their political participation, although challenges remain. Locally, in Karbi Anglong, education has been instrumental in improving women's political engagement, although cultural and structural barriers continue to limit their participation. To further enhance women's political participation in Karbi Anglong, it is essential to continue investing in education and to address the cultural and structural barriers that limit women's ability to engage in political activities. Additionally, grassroots movements and gender quotas have been effective in promoting women's political participation and should be supported and expanded.

#### References:-

- Annisa, M., Setiyono, B., Yuwanto, Y., & Sardini, N. H. (2020). The effect of social capital on women's political participation. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology*, 17(7), 14255–14264.
- Bhat, R. A. (2015). Role of education in the empowerment of women in India. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(10), 188–191.
- Burchi, F. (2013). Women's political role and poverty in the educational dimension: A district-level analysis in India. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.2369248>
- Burchi, F. (2013). *Women's political role and poverty in the educational dimension*.
- Burns, N., Schlozman, K. L., & Verba, S. (2001). *The private roots of public action: Gender, equality, and political participation*. Harvard University Press.
- Clots-Figueras, I. (2012). Are female leaders good for education? Evidence from India. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 4(1), 212–244. <https://doi.org/10.1257/APP.4.1.212>
- Figueras, I. C. (2006). *Female political representation and economic development in India* [Doctoral dissertation, London School of Economics]. <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/2692/>
- Goyal, T. (2020). Local female representation as a pathway to power: A natural experiment in India. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/SSRN.3590118>
- Goyal, T. (2023). Replication data for: *Local political representation as a pathway to power: A natural experiment in India*. <https://doi.org/10.7910/dvn/9xpv4i>
- Goyal, T. (2023). Replication data for: *Representation from below: How women's grassroots party activism promotes equal political participation*. <https://doi.org/10.7910/dvn/clydwu>
- Goyal, T. (2023). Representation from below: How women's grassroots party activism promotes equal political participation. *American Political Science Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055423000953>
- Goyal, T. (2024). Local political representation as a pathway to power: A natural experiment in India. *American Journal of Political Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12840>
- Haider, E., & Nooruddin, I. (2023). Well-behaved women: Engendering political interest in public opinion research. *Comparative Political Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140231209961>
- Hussain, M. A. (2025). Gender equality and the educational achievement index (EAI) in Northeast India. *Social Science and Humanities Journal*, 9(01), 6567–6576. <https://doi.org/10.18535/sshj.v9i01.1613>
- Karekurve-Ramachandra, V., & Lee, A. (2024). Can gender quotas improve public service provision? Evidence from Indian local government. *Comparative Political Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140241252080>
- Kaur, K. P., & Philips, A. Q. (2022). A moveable benefit? Spillover effects of quotas on women's numerical representation. *Political Research Quarterly*, 76(2), 680–696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129221108697>
- Kumari, S., Nanduri, S., Sharma, H., & Batar, S. (2024). Women in politics: Examining their impact on policy development - A comprehensive review. *Multidisciplinary Reviews*, 6, 2023ss034. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2023ss034>
- Kuteesa, K. N., Akpuokwe, C. U., & Udeh, C. A. (2024). Gender equity in education: Addressing challenges and promoting opportunities for social empowerment. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, 6(4). <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijarss.v6i4.1034>
- Le, K., & Nguyen, M. (2021). How education empowers women in developing countries. *The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy*, 21(2), 511–536. <https://doi.org/10.1515/bejeap-2020-0046>
- Li, Y. (2024). Systemic and sociocultural factors impeding women's political participation and leadership development. *SHS Web of Conferences*, 174, 03012.
- Mathur, S. (2017). From reservation to public service provision: Impact of reservations for women in government on maternal health. [https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/41854/SMathur\\_MA\\_2016\\_17\\_GDP.pdf](https://thesis.eur.nl/pub/41854/SMathur_MA_2016_17_GDP.pdf)
- Mohapatra, B. P., Desai, U., & Pawar, A. (2023). Does gender-based representation matter in fostering political inclusion of women in local governments? A case of India. *Socioeconomic Challenges*. [https://doi.org/10.61093/sec.7\(3\).63-75.2023](https://doi.org/10.61093/sec.7(3).63-75.2023)
- Nargis, A. A. (2023). Women 2019's political representation in India. *ShodhKosh Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*. <https://doi.org/10.29121/>

- shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.2814
24. Norris, P. (2002). *Democratic phoenix: Reinventing political activism*. Cambridge University Press.
  25. Pandey, P., Choubey, A. K., & Rai, G. (2021). The involvement of women as the domestic decision maker: A study of Patna Metropolitan City, Bihar, India. *Sociedade&Natureza*, 33. <https://doi.org/10.14393/SN-v33-2021-62053>
  26. Prillaman, S. A. (2023). The patriarchal political order and the gendered participation gap in India. *American Political Science Review*, 117(1), 123–140.
  27. Sekhon, J. (2011). *Engendering grassroots democracy: Research, training, and networking for women in local self-governance in India*.
  28. Sharma, D., & Devi, L. (2019). Role of education in women empowerment. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 6(2), 432–437.
  29. Sharma, D., & Devi, L. (2022). Karbi women in oral traditions and folklore. In *Women in Diphu: Social and Political Dynamics*.
  30. Sharma, E. (2020). Women and politics: A case study of political empowerment of Indian women. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 40, 607–626. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-12-2019-0261>
  31. Siingh, S. (2023). The political participation of rural women and its societal impact. *Journal of Advances and Scholarly Research in Allied Education*, 20(3), 440–447. <https://doi.org/10.29070/gqtmjg48>
  32. Teron, R. (2011). Gender and power in Karbi social institutions. *Karbi Cultural Studies*, 3(1), 22–30.
  33. Wang, L., & Chen, X. (2020). Voter education and women's electoral participation in rural China. *Asian Journal of Political Science*, 28(2), 150–172.

\*\*\*\*\*