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Gender Discrimination in Higher Education Institutions of Northeast India



Tapan Kumar Basantia¹

Central University of South Bihar, Department of Teacher Education, Gaya, Bihar, India

Yengkhom Rameshwari Devi²

Kumbi College, Department of Education, Kumbi, Bishnupur Manipur, India

ABSTRACT

Gender discrimination is a common phenomenon in higher education institutions in many parts of India and in the world. Northeast India is a less developed area of India. In order to promote higher education, substantial numbers of higher education institutions have been established in northeast India periodically. But, how far the northeast India higher education institutions are maintaining gender equality is a serious question facing the researchers and other stakeholders of education. Therefore, this study was designed to study gender discrimination in higher education institutions in northeast India. The study's objectives were to examine the status of women employees compared to men employees and the status of girls compared to boys in higher education institutions. Six higher education institutions were taken as sample institutions for the study. The study included public relations officers/representatives of the head of the institutions and the head of the departments of the institutions as participants. The study was descriptive survey-type research. Two information schedules were used as tools for the collection of data from participants. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used for the study. The study revealed that women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in all the administrative

¹ Corresponding author, email: tkbasantia@gmail.com, mob: +91 7667865571

² Email: yengkhomrameshwari@gmail.com, mob: +91 8787381951

and related positions (i.e., vice chancellor/director, pro-vice-chancellor, registrar, controller of examinations, finance officer, medical officer, deputy registrar, assistant registrar, section officer and clerks), and in all the academic and the related positions (i.e. dean of schools, head of the department, professor, associate professor and assistant professor) in higher education institutions. Further, the study indicated that girls possessed inferior status in comparison to boys in enrolment in different courses. In contrast, girls maintained superior status compared to boys in retention in various courses and completion of the different courses (achievement) in higher education institutions.

KEYWORDS: *gender, women, men, girls, boys, higher education, northeast India*

Introduction

Gender discrimination is commonly prevalent across many societies in the world. Women and girls are the victims of gender discrimination in most societies. In most societies, women and girls possess lower social, economic and political status than men and boys. Women and girls are abused in different forms at home, in educational institutions, job situations and public places. Discrimination against a woman starts from her birth and continues throughout her life. Discrimination against women is a well-known fact in a male-dominated society. Gender discrimination is a universal phenomenon, and it is reflected all through the life cycle in the guise of the custom-specific devaluing of women or girls, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dowry, girl child marriage, infanticide, foeticide, son preference and so on. At present, more than one billion people (the majority of them are women) in the developing world live in miserable conditions of poverty. Gender differences in economic power-sharing are also considered a significant factor in determining women's poverty (Alam, 2011). Gender discrimination is well documented in Indian society. Patriarchy is the definition of a society based on family units, where the father takes responsibility for the welfare of the family. In India, women have been oppressed for centuries and depicted differently in history, literature, religion, art, education, and culture (Hasan, 2010).

Gender inequality in education is a worldwide phenomenon. Women's representation is very poor in the education field. In the field of higher education, gender discrimination is rampant. Currie and Thiele (2001) stated that universities are patriarchal institutions where sexual discrimination is often deployed to keep women out of senior positions. Itzen and Newman

(1995) mentioned that university cultures worldwide significantly value career and academic achievement, as well as institutional and intellectual work relating to male life trajectories. Women are under-represented in positions of power and prestige in all the systems of higher education (Lie & Malik, 1998; Brooks, 1997). Brown and Ralph (1996) stated that women had made little progress in attaining equity with men in respect of availing leadership positions in educational administration and policy making. Universities are treated as highly hierarchical gendered institutions. This is applicable both within universities and between universities. The higher the university status, the more male academics are expected to work there. The primary academic labour market among the full-time academic staff is extremely gendered (Hearn, 2001). Women still have vast underrepresentation in universities. Although women have been pursuing university education in unprecedented numbers, they continue to be underrepresented in mathematics, engineering and computer science programmes. Chesterman (2002) mentioned that women academics who generally begin and/or finish their doctoral qualifications at a later stage are more likely to work part-time for a period or throughout their careers. They are also likely to have more career interruptions compared to male academics, linked to the responsibilities and duties of women for their dependent children. Women academics have lower classification levels and lower remuneration than their male colleagues due to two specific factors: they have fewer years overall in university employment and less opportunity to have a Ph.D. Women have underrepresentation in scientific fields. Only 25% of all physical scientists and 10% of all engineers are women (National Science Foundation, 2003). Gender discrimination plays a prominent role in occupational segregation, although the roots of occupational segregation are complex (Farmer, 1997). Historically, for example, women were prevented from entering into graduate programmes in so many scientific fields by University-by-laws well into the 20th century (Weisgram & Bigler, 2007). The enrollment rates of women are lower than men in science throughout the globe (Dhull, 2005). High levels of discrimination among social groups and classes are observed alongside new forms of gender discrimination specifically when more and younger women are accessing higher education (John, 2012).

Gender equality has a significant role in strengthening the country's ability to grow, reducing its poverty, and helping it to be governed effectively. Thus, the promotion of gender equality is treated as a vital aspect of a development strategy that seeks to empower all people- both

women and men alike– to eradicate poverty and improve their standard of living (World Bank, 2001). Empowerment of women and their full participation based on equality in all spheres of society, including the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace; the rights of women are human rights (United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, 1995). The strategies and/or processes that help to integrate gender-responsive goals in the directions, policies, budgets, projects, etc., may be treated as gender mainstreaming strategies and/or processes. Gender mainstreaming helps to ensure that both men and women have equal access to society's or organization's resources, including socially valued goods, rewards and opportunities (Dass & Rani, 2011). Gender discrimination has been one of the major obstacles in achieving equal opportunity for women in higher education. It has been identified as a crucial concern and deserves attention in the educational equality paradigm.

Northeast India is a constituent part or region of India. Northeast India remains in the extreme point of the northeast direction of India. There are eight states in this region: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The area is underdeveloped on the educational front and many socio-geographic fronts. The region is filled with hills, terrains, valleys and small rivers, including a big river like the Brahmaputra. The region of northeast India is connected to the mainland of India through a narrow land route that passes between the northern part of Bangladesh and the southern part of China/Bhutan. The entire region is a meeting spot for different cultures, religions, and traditions. The socio-geographic disadvantages of the area have made it educationally disadvantaged as well. The region has a slow pace of growth in education, starting from school education to further education or higher education. Higher education institutions in this region have been established very recently. The first higher education institution in northeast India is Cotton College, Guwahati, which was established in 1901. Most of the higher education institutions in northeast India were established after the independence of India (1947). After the independence, the Govt. of India, in cooperation with state governments of northeast India, is trying to facilitate higher education in the region at a faster speed. However, the progress hasn't been too satisfactory till today. However, during the last few decades, good progress in higher education in northeast India has been visible. Now, northeast India has premier higher education institutions like the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati; North Eastern Regional Institute of

Science and Technology (NERIST), Itanagar; National Institute of Technology (one in each state of north/east India); Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Shillong; North Eastern Hill University, Shillong; Assam University, Silchar; Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar; Nagaland University, Kohima; Mizoram University, Aizawl; Manipur University, Imphal; Tripura University, Agartala; Sikkim University, Gangtok along with many other institutions and colleges. Patriarchy is a common feature of most of the societies of northeast India, where men control most of the resources, and they are treated as superior to women (Buongpui, 2013), except for the societies of Meghalaya. Considering the Government of India (2001) data, Rustagi (2004) revealed that the dropout rates of students are very high in the states of the North-East Region (NER) of India in comparison to many states in other parts of India. Gender discrimination is a common phenomenon/practice in higher education institutions in many parts of India and at the world level. Since northeast India higher education institutions are in the beginning phase of development, there is a serious question before the researchers and other education stakeholders: how far northeast India higher education institutions are maintaining gender equality? Furthermore, the study of the gender gaps in higher education institutions of northeast India can be a medium to eradicate the existing gender gaps found in such institutions. Based on these research gaps, the present study intended to determine gender discrimination in higher education institutions in northeast India. The following objectives were set to be achieved through this study:

1. to study the status of women employees in comparison to men employees in higher education institutions, and
2. to study the status of girls compared to boys in higher education institutions.

Operational Definitions

The key terms used in the study and their operational definition are given below.

Gender Discrimination: Gender discrimination refers to any kind of gender-based unequal treatment. In other words, it can be defined as a kind of feeling/maintenance of superiority/ inferiority in our society by a group of people from the other group(s) because of their gender differences. In this study, gender discrimination is understood in terms of socio-psychological

and educational position/status achieved or attained by women/girls compared to men/boys.

Higher Education Institutions: The educational institutions which provide beyond-school education are treated as higher education institutions. Beyond-school education includes undergraduate and/or post-graduate courses in professional and non-professional areas of learning. Colleges, universities and many other similar cadre institutions are considered higher education institutions. The present study is confined to the university equivalent institutions which provide undergraduate and/or post-graduate courses.

Northeast India: Northeast India is a region of India which is socio-geographically and educationally disadvantaged. This region remains in the extreme point of the northeast direction of India. The states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim constitute northeast India.

Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited to the following kinds of institutions:

1. The institutions that provide postgraduate courses or both undergraduate and postgraduate courses. For example, Universities, Higher education institutes of National Importance like the National Institute of Technology (NIT), etc.
2. Both professional institutions (the institutions that mainly offer technical or job-oriented courses/ programmes) and non-professional institutions (the institutions that mainly offer non-technical or liberal courses/ programmes).
3. The institutions are funded and managed by both the central government (Govt. of India) and state governments of northeast India.

Area of the Study and Participants

The study was conducted to learn about gender discrimination in higher education institutions in the region. All the higher education institutions of the region were treated as the population of the study, but the sample of the study covered six institutions: Gauhati University, Guwahati; Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat; National Institute of Technology (NIT),

Silchar; Assam University, Silchar; Manipur University, Imphal; and National Institute of Technology (NIT), Agartala. Through the purposive sampling method, the sample institutions were selected. They were chosen from the central government institutions as well as from the state government institutions (based on the management of the institutions); and from the professional institutions as well as from the non-professional institutions (based on the professional base of the institutions).

Out of the six sample institutions, four institutions are funded and managed by the central government, and the other two institutions are funded and managed by state governments. Further, out of four central government-funded and managed institutions, two are professional institutions, and the rest two are non-professional institutions. Out of two state government-funded and managed institutions, one is a professional institution, and the other one is a non-professional institution. A larger number of central government-funded and managed institutions in comparison to state government-funded and managed institutions are taken in this study. This is because, in northeast India, a good number of central government-funded and managed institutions are found in comparison to state government-funded and managed institutions at the higher education institution level. In this study, an equal number of professional institutions and non-professional institutions were taken as sample institutions. Out of the six institutions, four are from Assam, one is from Manipur, and one is from Tripura. As Assam has a high concentration of population in comparison to the rest of the states of northeast India, significant proportions of the higher education institutions of northeast India are located in Assam. Fewer higher education institutions are found in all other states of northeast India except Assam. Moreover, most of the higher education institutions of all other states of northeast India except Assam are in the infancy stage of development. Taking into consideration the distribution of higher education institutions in northeast India, four higher education institutions from Assam, one higher education institution from Manipur, and one higher education institution from Tripura were selected as the sample institutions for the present study. Additionally, from each institution, two departments were taken as sample departments. From the two departments of each institution, two programmes (from each department, one programme) were taken as sample programmes for conducting the study. From the professional institutions, six four-year

Table 1. Details of the Participants

Sl. No.	Professional base of the Institutions	Management of the Institutions	Name of the Institutions	No. of Public Relations Officer/ Representative of the head of the Institutions	Name of the Departments (and their courses) of the Institution	No. of Head of the Departments
1	Professional Education Institutions	Central Government	NIT, Silchar	1	Computer Science (B. Tech. Computer Science) Electronics and Communication (B. Tech. Electronics and Communication) Computer Science (B. Tech. Computer Science) Civil Engineering (B. Tech. Civil Engineering)	1 1 1 1
	Higher Education Institutions	State Government	NIT, Agartala Agricultural University, Jorhat	1 1	Home Science (B.Sc. Home Science)	1 1
2	Non-professional Higher Education Institutions	Central Government State Government	Assam University, Silchar Manipur University, Imphal Gauhati University, Guwahati	1 1 1	Social Work (M.A. Social Work) Chemistry (M.Sc. Chemistry) Economics (M.A. Economics) Chemistry (M.Sc. Chemistry) History (M.A. History) Mathematics (M.Sc. Mathematics)	1 1 1 1 1 1
Total				6		12

B.Tech courses/ programmes and from the non-professional institutions, six two-year Master courses/ programmes were taken as sample courses/programmes for conducting the study.

The study included two categories of participants, i.e., public relations officers/representatives of the head of the institutions and the head of the departments of the institutions. From six institutions, six public relations officers/representatives of the head of the institutions (from each institution, one public relations officer/representative of the head of the institutions), and from twelve departments of the six institutions, twelve heads of the departments (from each department, one head of the department) were taken as participants of the study. The details of the participants are given in Table 1.

Design of the Study

The study was basically considered in the area of descriptive-survey type research. The study was considered descriptive-survey type research because, in the study, data were collected from the participants (through the use of the descriptive survey method) to know gender discrimination in higher education institutions of northeast India. The study was considered under both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. This is because, for achieving different aspects of the study, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used for the collection and/or analysis of data.

Tools Used

Detailed descriptions of tools used in the study are given below.

Information Schedule-I (Information schedule for studying the status of women employees in comparison to men employees in higher education institutions): This information schedule was used to collect data regarding the status of women employees in contrast to men employees in higher education institutions (i.e., to achieve the first objective of the study). The participants of this information schedule were the public relations officers/representatives of the head of the institutions. The information schedule secured the data regarding the status of women employees compared to men employees in higher education institutions under two broad heads: a) administrative and related positions, and b) academic and related positions. Since this tool is a schedule, the information or data

relating to this tool were collected through interviews or personal interaction. This schedule also secured the personal and institutional data of the respondents according to the requirement of the study.

Information Schedule-II (Information schedule for studying the status of girls compared to boys in higher education institutions): This information schedule was used to collect data regarding the status of girls compared to boys in higher education institutions (i.e., to achieve the second objective of the study). The participants of this information schedule were the heads of the departments of the institutions. This information schedule secured the data regarding the status of girls in comparison to boys in higher education institutions under three broad heads:

- a) Enrolment in the courses data sheet of students of 2006, 2007, and 2008 admission batches (for four-year courses) and students of 2008, 2009 and 2010 admission batches (for two-year courses)
- b) Retention in the courses data sheet of students of 2006, 2007, and 2008 admission batches (for four-year courses) and students of 2008, 2009 and 2010 admission batches (for two-year courses)
- c) Completion of the courses (achievement) data sheet of students of 2006, 2007, and 2008 admission batches (for four-year courses) and students of 2008, 2009 and 2010 admission batches (for two-year courses)

Since this tool is a schedule, the information or data relating to this tool were collected through interviews or personal interaction. This schedule also secured the personal and institutional data of the respondents according to the requirements of the study.

Procedure for Collection of Data

The data for the study were collected personally from the participants of the sample institutions by administering the tools for data collection. The data were collected in a very natural and friendly atmosphere. To study the status of women employees compared to men employees in higher education institutions (to achieve the first objective of the study), the Information Schedule-I was administered to six public relations officers/representatives of the head of the institutions of six sample institutions (i.e., one public relations officer/representative of the head of the institution of each sample institution). To study the status of girls compared to boys in higher education institutions (for achieving the second objective

of the study), the Information schedule –II was administered to twelve heads of the departments of twelve sample departments (i.e. one head of the department of each sample department) of six sample institutions. The Information schedule –II was administered to the heads of the departments in order to collect enrolment in the courses, retention in the courses and completion of the courses (achievement) data of the students of 4 years B. Tech courses/ programmes (in case of professional institutions) and 2 years Master courses/ programmes (in case of non-professional institutions). Administering this Information schedule –II, enrolment in the courses, retention in the courses and completion of the courses (achievement) data of students of the three admission batches (2006, 2007, and 2008 admission batches of students of four years courses; and 2008, 2009 and 2010 admission batches of students of two years courses) were collected from the head of the sample departments of the institutions.

Procedure for Analysis of Data

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis were used for the analysis and interpretation of the data. The quantitative method, like percentage, was used for the analysis of data and interpretation of the results of the study. In the study, the status of women employees in comparison to men employees in higher education institutions was analysed with respect to their two board heads: a) administrative and related positions, and b) academic and related positions. Moreover, in the study, the status of girls in comparison to boys in higher education institutions was analysed with respect to their three important parameters: a) enrolment in the courses, b) retention in the courses and c) completion of the courses (achievement).

Analysis of data and Interpretation of Results

The analysis of data and interpretation of the study results are presented below.

1. Status of Women Employees in comparison to Men Employees in Higher Education Institutions

The status of women employees in comparison to men employees in higher education institutions is given in the following heads.

Table 2. Table indicating the Status of Women Employees in comparison to Men Employees to Men Employees in Administrative and related Positions in Higher Education Institutions

Sl. No.	Category → Positions ↓	Professional Higher Education Institutions		Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions		Higher Education Institutions (Both Professional & Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions)				
		Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
1.	Vice-chancellor/ Director (or similar position)	3	0	3	3	0	3	6	0	6
2.	Pro vice-chancellor (or similar position)	*	*	*	2	0	2	2	0	2
3.	Registrar (or similar position)	2	1	3	3	0	3	5	1	6
4.	Controller of examinations (or similar position)	2	0	2	3	0	3	5	0	5
5.	Finance officer (or similar position)	2	0	2	3	0	3	5	0	5
6.	Medical officer (or similar position)	5	1	6	4	3	7	9	4	13
7.	Deputy registrar (or similar position)	3	0	3	7	0	7	10	0	10
8.	Assistant registrar (or similar position)	5	1	6	9	1	10	14	2	16
9.	Section officer (or similar position)	5	3	8	26	9	35	31	12	43
10.	Clerks (or similar position)	144	64	208	224	25	249	368	89	457

*Position is not available

a) *Status of Women Employees in comparison to Men Employees at Administrative and related Positions in Higher Education Institutions*

Table 2 explains the status of women employees compared to men employees in administrative and related positions in higher education institutions. The details of the data analysis relating to the table are given below.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 3 positions of vice chancellor/director, men were found in all the 3 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 3 positions of vice chancellor/director, men were found in all the 3 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In higher education institutions (both professional and non-professional higher education institutions), out of 6 positions of vice chancellor/director, men were found in all the 6 (100%) positions, whereas in no positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of vice chancellor/director in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, there is no post of pro-vice-chancellor. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 2 positions of pro-vice-chancellor, men were found in all the 2 (100%) positions, whereas. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of pro-vice-chancellor in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 3 positions of a registrar, men were found in 2 (66.66%) positions, and a woman was found in 1 (33.33%) position. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 3 positions of a registrar, men were found in all the 3 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In higher education institutions, out of 6 positions of a registrar, men were found in 5 (83.33%) positions, and a woman was found in 1 (16.66%) position. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of a registrar in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 2 positions of a controller of examinations, men were found in all the 2 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 3 positions of a controller of examinations, men were found in all the 3 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In higher education institutions, out of 5 positions of a

controller of examinations, men were found in all the 5 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of controller of examinations in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 2 positions of a finance officer, men were found in all the 2 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 3 positions of a finance officer, men were found in all the 3 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In higher education institutions, out of 5 positions of a finance officer, men were found in all the 5 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of a finance officer in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 6 positions of a medical officer, men were found in 5 (83.33%) positions and a woman was found in 1 (16.66%) position. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 7 positions of a medical officer, men were found in 4 (57.14%) positions, and women were found in 3 (42.85%) positions. In higher education institutions, out of 13 positions of medical officer, men were found in 9 (69.23%) positions, and women were found in 4 (30.76%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of medical officer in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 3 positions of a deputy registrar, men were found in all the 3 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 7 positions of a deputy registrar, men were found in all the 7 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. In higher education institutions, out of 10 positions of a deputy registrar, men were found in all the 10 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of a deputy registrar in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 6 positions of an assistant registrar, men were found in 5 (83.33%) positions, and a woman was found in 1 (16.66%) position. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 10 positions of an assistant registrar, men were found in 9

(90%) positions, and a woman was found in 1 (10%) position. In higher education institutions, out of 16 positions of an assistant registrar, men were found in 14 (87.5%) positions, and women were found in 2 (12.5%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of an assistant registrar in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 8 positions of a section officer, men were found in 5 (62.5%) positions, and women were found in 3 (37.5%) positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 35 positions of a section officer, men were found in 26 (74.28%) positions, and women were found in 9 (25.71%) positions. In higher education institutions, out of 43 positions of a section officer, men were found in 31 (72.09%) positions, and women were found in 12 (27.90%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of a section officer in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 208 positions of a clerk, men were found in 144 (69.23%) positions, and women were found in 64 (30.76%) positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 249 positions of a clerk, men were found in 224 (89.95%) positions, and women were found in 25 (10.04%) positions. In higher education institutions, out of 457 positions of a clerk, men were found in 368 (80.52%) positions, and women were found in 89 (19.47%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of a clerk in higher education institutions of northeast India.

b) Status of Women Employees in comparison to Men Employees at Academic and the Related Positions in Higher Education Institutions

Table 3. Table explaining the Status of Women Employees compared to Men Employees at Academic and related Positions in Higher Education Institutions

Sl. No.	Positions	Professional Higher Education Institutions		Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions		Higher Education Institutions (Both Professional & Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions)			
		Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Total	
1.	Dean of the schools	*	*	*	0	27	0	27	27
2.	Head of the departments	64	7	71	33	87	33	120	191
3.	Professors	271	42	313	61	184	61	245	558
4.	Associate professors	181	21	202	59	115	59	174	376
5.	Assistant professors	169	34	203	131	261	131	392	595

*Position is not available

Table 3 explains the status of women employees in comparison to men employees in academic and related positions in higher education institutions. The details of the data analysis relating to the table are given below.

In professional higher education institutions, there is no school dean post. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 27 positions of dean of the schools, men were found in all the 27 (100%) positions, whereas women were found in no positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of dean of the school in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 71 positions of the head of the department, men were found in 64 (90.14%) positions, and women were found in 7 (9.85%) positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 120 positions of the head of the department, men were found in 87 (72.5%) positions, and women were found in 33 (27.5%) positions. In higher education institutions, out of 191 positions of head of the department, men were found in 151 (79.05%) positions, and women were found in 40 (20.94%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of the head of the department in higher education institutions of northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 313 positions of professor, men were found in 271 (86.58%) positions, and women were found in 42 (13.41%) positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 245 positions of professor, men were found in 184 (75.10%) positions, and women were found in 61 (24.89%) positions. In higher education institutions, out of 558 positions of professor, men were found in 455 (81.54%) positions, and women were found in 103 (18.45%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of professor in higher education institutions in northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 202 positions of associate professor, men were found in 181 (89.60%) positions, and women were found in 21 (10.39%) positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 174 positions of associate professor, men were found in 115 (66.09%) positions, and women were found in 59 (33.90%) positions. In higher education institutions, out of 376 positions of associate professor, men were found in 296 (78.72%) positions, and women were found in 80 (21.27%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison

to men in the position of associate professor in higher education institutions in northeast India.

In professional higher education institutions, out of 203 positions of assistant professor, men were found in 169 (83.25%) positions, and women were found in 34 (16.74%) positions. In non-professional higher education institutions, out of 392 positions of assistant professor, men were found in 261 (66.58%) positions, and women were found in 131 (33.41%) positions. In higher education institutions, out of 595 positions of assistant professor, men were found in 430 (72.26%) positions, and women were found in 165 (27.73%) positions. Hence, women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in the position of assistant professor in higher education institutions in northeast India.

2. Status of Girls compared to Boys in Higher Education Institutions

The status of girls compared to boys in higher education institutions is given in the following heads:

a) Status of Girls compared to Boys in Enrolment in the Courses in Higher Education Institutions

Table 4. Table indicating the Status of Girls in comparison to Boys in Enrolment in the Courses in Higher Education Institutions

Sl. No.	Professional base of the Institutions (Courses)	Year of admission of the course	Year of completion of the course	No. of boys admitted to the course	Percentage of boys (out of total students) admitted to the course	No. of girls admitted to the course	Percentage of girls (out of total students) admitted to the course	Total students admitted to the course
1	Professional Higher Education Institutions ('B. Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B. Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala)	2006	2010	181	57.64	133	42.35	314
		2007	2011	211	63.93	119	36.06	330
		2008	2012	301	69.19	134	30.80	435
		Total		693	64.22%	386	35.77%	1079
2	Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions ('M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A.	2008	2010	167	62.54	100	37.45	267
		2009	2011	165	57.49	122	42.50	287
		2010	2012	172	54.60	143	45.39	315
		Total		504	57.99%	365	42.00%	869

Sl. No.	Professional base of the Institutions (Courses)	Year of admission of the course	Year of completion of the course	No. of boys admitted to the course	Percentage of boys (out of total students) admitted to the course	No. of girls admitted to the course	Percentage of girls (out of total students) admitted to the course	Total students admitted to the course
3	in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal) Higher Education Institutions (Both Professional & Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions)		Total	1197	61.44%	751	38.55%	1948

Table 4 explains the status of girls compared to boys in enrolment in the courses in higher education institutions. The details of the data analysis relating to the table are given below.

In professional higher education institutions, 1079 students were admitted in the six courses ('B. Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B. Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala) in the years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 together, out of which 693 (64.22%) were boys and 386 (35.77%) were girls. Hence, in professional higher education institutions, girls possessed inferior status in comparison to boys in enrolment in the courses with respect to all the three admission years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 together. Therefore, to sum up, gender discrimination (favouring boys) is commonly prevalent in enrolment in the courses in professional higher education institutions in northeast India.

In non-professional higher education institutions, 869 students were admitted to the six courses ('M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal) in the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 together, out of which 504 (57.99%) were boys and 365 (42.00%) were girls. Hence, in non-professional higher education institutions, girls possessed inferior status compared to boys in enrolment in the courses with respect to all three admission years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 together. Therefore, gender discrimination (favouring boys) is commonly prevalent in enrolment in the courses in non-professional higher education institutions in northeast India.

In higher education institutions (with respect to admission years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 together in professional higher education institutions; and admission years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 together in non-professional higher education institutions), 1948 students were admitted in 12 courses ('B. Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B. Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala; 'M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal), out of which 1197 (61.44%) were boys and 751 (38.55%) were girls. Hence, girls possessed inferior status in comparison to boys in enrolment in the courses in higher education institutions in northeast India.

b) Status of Girls in comparison to Boys in Retention in the Courses in Higher Education Institutions

Table 5. Table indicating Status of Girls compared to Boys in Retention in the Courses in Higher Education Institutions

Sl. No.	Professional base of the Institutions (Courses)	Year of admission to the course	Year of completion of the course	No. of boys admitted to the course	No. of boys retained in the course up to the end of the course	Percentage of boys retained in the course up to the end of the course	No. of girls admitted to the course	No. of girls retained in the course up to the end of the course	Percentage of girls retained in the course up to the end of the course	Total no. of students admitted to the course	Total no. of students retained up to the end of the course	Percentage of students retained up to the end of the course
1	Professional Higher Education Institutions ('B.Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B.Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics &	2006	2010	181	151	83.42	133	119	89.47	314	270	85.98
		2007	2011	211	191	90.52	119	113	94.95	330	304	92.12
		2008	2012	301	256	85.04	134	117	87.31	435	373	85.74
		Total		693	598	86.29%	386	349	90.41%	1079	947	87.76%

Sl. No.	Professional base of the Institutions (Courses)	Year of admission to the course	Year of completion of the course	No. of boys admitted to the course	No. of boys retained in the course up to the end of the course	Percentage of boys retained in the course up to the end of the course	No. of girls admitted to the course	No. of girls retained in the course up to the end of the course	Percentage of girls retained in the course up to the end of the course	Total no. of students admitted to the course	Total no. of students retained up to the end of the course	Percentage of students retained up to the end of the course
2	Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala)	2008	2010	167	123	73.65	100	81	81	267	204	76.40
		2009	2011	165	127	76.96	122	112	91.80	287	239	83.27
		2010	2012	172	121	70.34	143	124	86.71	315	245	77.77
		Total		504	371	73.61%	365	317	86.84%	869	688	79.17%
3	Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions ('M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal) Higher Education Institutions (Both Professional & Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions)	Total		1197	969	80.95%	751	666	88.68%	1948	1635	83.93%

Table 5 explains the status of girls compared to boys in retention in the courses in higher education institutions. The details of the data analysis relating to the table are given below.

In professional higher education institutions, 693 boys and 386 girls were admitted to the six courses('B. Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B. Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala) in the years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 together, out of which 598

(86.29%) boys and 349 (90.41%) girls were retained in the courses up to the end of the courses. Hence, in professional higher education institutions, girls possessed superior status in comparison to boys in retention in the courses with respect to all the three admission years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 together. In conclusion, gender discrimination (favouring girls) is commonly prevalent in retention in courses in professional higher education institutions in northeast India.

In non-professional higher education institutions, 504 boys and 365 girls were admitted to the six courses ('M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal) in the years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 together, out of which 371 (73.61%) boys and 317 (86.84%) girls were retained in the courses up to the end of the courses. Hence, in non-professional higher education institutions, girls possessed superior status in comparison to boys in retention in the courses with respect to all three admission years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 together. To summarize, that gender discrimination (favouring girls) is commonly prevalent in retention in the courses in non-professional higher education institutions in northeast India.

In higher education institutions (with respect to admission years of 2006, 2007, and 2008 together of professional higher education institutions; and admission years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 of non-professional higher education institutions), 1197 boys and 751 girls were admitted to 12 courses ('B. Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B. Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala; 'M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal), out of which 969 (80.95%) boys and 666 (88.68%) girls were retained in the courses up to the end of the courses. Hence, girls possessed superior status in comparison to boys in retention in the courses in higher education institutions in northeast India.

c) Status of Girls in comparison to Boys in Completion of the Courses (Achievement) in Higher Education Institutions

Table 6. Table indicating Status of Girls in Comparison to Boys in Completion of the Courses (Achievement) in Higher Education Institutions

Sl. No.	Professional base of the Institutions (Courses)	Year of admission to the course	Year of completion of the course	No. of boys admitted to the course	No. of boys completed the course	Percentage of boys who completed the course	No. of girls admitted to the course	No. of girls who completed the course	Percentage of girls who completed the course	Total no. of students admitted to the course	Total no. of students who completed the course	Percentage of students who completed the course
1	Professional Higher Education Institutions ('B.Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B.Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala)	2006	2010	181	137	75.69	133	108	81.20	314	245	78.02
		2007	2011	211	176	83.41	119	104	87.39	330	280	84.84
		2008	2012	301	236	78.40	134	91	67.97	435	327	75.17
		Total		693	549	79.22%	386	303	78.49%	1079	852	78.96%
2	Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions ('M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal)	2008	2010	167	85	50.89	100	62	62	267	147	55.05
		2009	2011	165	102	61.81	122	95	77.86	287	197	68.64
		2010	2012	172	98	56.97	143	91	63.63	315	189	60
		Total		504	285	56.54%	365	248	67.94%	869	533	61.33%
3	Higher Education Institutions (Both Professional & Non-Professional Higher Education Institutions)	Total		1197	834	69.67%	751	551	73.36%	1948	1385	71.09%

Table 6 explains the status of girls compared to boys in completion of the courses (achievement) in higher education institutions. The details of the data analysis relating to the table are given below.

In professional higher education institutions, 693 boys and 386 girls were admitted to the six courses ('B. Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B. Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala) in the years 2006, 2007, and 2008 together, out of which 549 (79.22%) boys and 303 (78.49%) girls completed the courses. Hence, in professional higher education institutions, girls possessed inferior status in comparison to boys in completion of the courses (achievement) with respect to all the three admission years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 together. Therefore, gender discrimination (favouring boys) is commonly prevalent in the completion of courses (achievement) in professional higher education institutions in northeast India.

In non-professional higher education institutions, 504 boys and 365 girls were admitted to the six courses ('M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati; 'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal) in the years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 together, out of which 285 (56.54%) boys and 248 (67.94%) girls completed the courses. Hence, in non-professional higher education institutions, girls possessed superior status in comparison to boys in completion of the courses (achievement) with respect to all the three admission years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 together. To sum up, gender discrimination (favouring girls) is commonly prevalent in the completion of courses (achievement) in non-professional higher education institutions in northeast India.

In higher education institutions (with respect to admission years of 2006, 2007 and 2008 together in professional higher education institutions; and admission years of 2008, 2009 and 2010 together in non-professional higher education institutions), 1197 boys and 751 girls were admitted to 12 courses ('B. Sc. in Agriculture' and 'B. Sc. in Home Science' of Agricultural University, Jorhat; 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Electronics & Communication' of NIT, Silchar; and 'B. Tech. in Computer Science' and 'B. Tech. in Civil Engineering' of NIT, Agartala; 'M.A. in History' and 'M.Sc. in Mathematics' of Gauhati University, Guwahati;

'M.A. in Social Work' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Assam University, Silchar; and 'M.A. in Economics' and 'M.Sc. in Chemistry' of Manipur University, Imphal), out of which 834 (69.67%) boys and 551 (73.36%) girls completed the courses. Hence, girls possessed superior status compared to boys in completion of the courses (achievement) in higher education institutions in northeast India.

Discussion of the Results

This study investigated gender discrimination in higher education institutions of northeast India. This study specifically studied the status of women employees compared to men employees in higher education institutions and the status of girls compared to boys in higher education institutions of northeast India. The study found that women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in all the administrative and related positions (like vice chancellor/director, pro-vice-chancellor, registrar, controller of examinations, finance officer, medical officer, deputy registrar, assistant registrar, section officer and clerks) and in all the academic and the related positions (like the dean of schools, head of the department, professor, associate professor and assistant professor) in higher education institutions of northeast India. Furthermore, the study found that girls possessed inferior status in comparison to boys in enrolment in the courses, whereas girls possessed superior status in comparison to boys in retention in the courses and in completion of the courses (achievement) in higher education institutions in northeast India.

Many other studies were also carried out by other researchers, relating to this study. The findings of those studies, in one way or the other, are related to the findings of this study. The findings of some of those studies are intimately related to the findings of this study, and the findings of some of those studies have differences from the findings of this study. The relations and/or differences in findings of some of those studies with the finding of this study are given below.

The findings of the studies conducted by Mingaleva & Shironina (2021); Loziak (2021); Shafina (2020); Bradić-Martinović & Banović (2018); Stevanović & Simović (2017); Sajuyigbe & Fadeyibi (2017); Žalėnienė, Krinickienė, Tvaronavičienė & Lobačevskytė (2016); Md. Asaduzzaman, Kabir & Radović-Marković (2015); Dhar (2015); Shaukat, Siddiquah & Pell (2014); Mahanta & Nayak (2013); Matope (2012);

Russell, Smyth & O' Connell (2010); Nwadiuwe (2007); García-Aracil (2007); Naylor (2007); Doherty & Manfredi (2006); Winchester, Lorenzo, Browning & Chesterman (2006); Gunawardena (2003); Gupta & Sharma (2002); Shelburn & Lewellyn (1995); and Dkhar (1991) are related to the findings of this study in different ways. The findings of these studies indicate that most women possess an inferior status in comparison to men in the education system/higher education system and/or some other aspects of life in society. For example, the study of Mingaleva & Shironina (2021) on 'Gender aspects of digital workplace transformation' showed that the wages of women are 3.4 times less than the wages of men in the personnel development zone, which is a key area of the company's personnel readiness for digital transformation. Loziak's (2021) study conducted in Slovakia indicated that female teachers experienced significantly more stress in several stressors (for example: being held responsible for students' achievement and perfectionism) compared to male teachers during the Covid-19 Pandemic. The study of Shafina (2020) showed that a gendered dichotomy is very much prevalent in the higher education system of the Maldives. The results based on a standardized survey conducted by Bradić-Martinović and Banović (2018) indicated that Serbia is lagging behind the European Union (EU) average in digital skills, and Serbian women possess a lower level of digital skills than Serbian men. Stevanović and Simović (2017) found from a study based on financial, descriptive and comparative analysis that women are the directors in 15% of the medium-sized enterprises in the processing industry in Serbia. They further found that the average values of success indicators in enterprises managed by women are lower in comparison to the enterprises managed by men. The results of the study of Sajuyigbe and Fadeyibi (2017) revealed that lack of access to finance, work/home conflict and lack of moral support from family members are major challenges facing women entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Žalėnienė et al. (2016) concluded from a survey conducted in the universities of the Republic of Lithuania in 2013 and 2015 that there is a prevailing asymmetric gender distribution and vertical segregation in the higher education system of Lithuania. They found that the lowest administrative and research levels were dominated by women, while the highest levels of the same were dominated by men. Md. Asaduzzaman, Kabir and Radović-Marković (2015) mentioned that in rural Bangladesh, there is no equal status of women to men. Men dominate household decisions. Women have difficulties participating in labour market, and they have no equal opportunities in comparison to men in higher education. The

results of the study of Dhar (2015) revealed that the status of enrolment of women is poor compared to the status of enrolment of men in higher education. Shaukat, Siddiquah and Pell (2014) from the study on 'Gender discrimination in higher education in Pakistan: A survey of university faculty' concluded that in the area of decision making, gender discrimination is felt most strongly, females are mostly excluded from decision-making. It is found from the study that there is the sharpest discrimination of female registration in policy formulation and curriculum evaluation. Mahanta and Nayak (2013) found from their investigation that women are generally disempowered and enjoy a lower status in comparison to men in the northeast region of India. Gender difference is found in the areas like education, health and employment. Matope (2012) found that gender discrimination is commonly prevailing in recruitment, promotion and transfer, as evidenced by 58.8% of the participants who support the statement that gender influences recruitment. It is indicated from most of the documents of the Gweru Urban District Office that male teachers occupied 70% of the administrative posts. Russell, Smyth and O'Connell (2010) showed that after three years of graduation, there is an 8 percent pay gap in hourly wages between male and female graduates in the private sector and a 4 percent non-significant pay gap between male and female graduates in the public sector, females are mainly affected by this pay gap. Nwadiwe's (2007) study revealed that female students are affected adversely because of the relatively high prevalence of sexual harassment in selected universities in Nigeria. The gap between men and women in Nigeria is widening because women do not get a conducive learning atmosphere to enjoy their academic freedom and optimize their potential for educational development. García-Aracil (2007) conducted a study on young European higher education graduates to know the gender earnings gap among them and found from the study that the overall unemployment rate for men was 2.8% and for women was 4.8%. The study of Naylor (2007) resulted that, in spite of having national bodies and legal efforts to check gender inequity, females are still treated differently than their male counterparts in higher education. Doherty and Manfredi (2006) found from their study that women progress well to be promoted to lecture grade, but their career remains stagnant beyond this grade or level. Their less developed research profile is the main impediment to women gaining professorial status. Women value work-life balance and are less interested than men in bringing themselves forward for advancement. Winchester et al. (2006) found from their study that women experience problems in the promotion process, including the process of

applying, and they remain underrepresented in senior positions; they comprise only 16% of the professoriate. Gunawardena (2003) found that after half the century of establishment of the first university in Sri Lanka, women students have a better status of enrolment except for engineering and its related fields; and university-educated women still remain unemployed for longer periods, find employment in lower positions and face problem in entering the management positions. The study of Gupta and Sharma (2002) revealed that women academics constitute only 7 percent of the total faculty members in science and engineering in the four institutes surveyed. There are no women faculty members in certain branches of engineering, such as Mechanical Engineering, in the four institutes surveyed. Shelburn and Lewellyn (1995) found that female students receive less professional and personal support from their faculty members than male students. The study of Dkhar (1991) revealed that the proportion of male students was slightly higher than female enrolment in colleges and university departments. The results of these studies are related to the results of this study in the sense that the results of these studies indicate that women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in different facets of education/higher education system and/or other aspects of society.

Some other studies indicate that more or less parity or equity is found among women and men with regard to their status or representation in the education system. Studies in this direction are very few in number. For example, the studies of *Ramadani et al. (2022)*; *Page (2009)*; and *Golmei (2008)*. *Ramadani et al. (2022)* conducted a study to examine the moderating role of gender in the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions of graduates in Bangladesh, and from the results of the study, they found that entrepreneurial education significantly impacts entrepreneurial intentions, but gender does not moderate the relationship between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions. The study of *Page (2009)* showed that in Virginia Community College System, the faculty members were slightly more likely to be female, and both females and males were equally given the opportunity to be employed as part-time faculty members in the Virginia Community College System. *Golmei (2008)* found that in the Imphal west district of Manipur, women are participating in the education field as their male counterparts. The results of these studies, in a little way, are related to the results of this study because, in this study, parity or equity is hardly found among women and men concerning their status or representation in the education system.

In one way, the results of this study state that women possessed inferior status in comparison to men in all the administrative and related positions as well as in all the academic and related positions in higher education institutions, and in another way, the results of this study state that in higher education institutions girls possessed inferior status in comparison to boys in enrolment in the courses, whereas girls possessed superior status in comparison to the boys in retention in the courses, and in completion of the courses (achievement). However, the abovementioned studies hardly indicate that women possessed superior status compared to men in different facets of education/higher education and/or other personal and social aspects of life.

Conclusions and Implications of the Study

This study revealed that women possessed inferior status compared to men in all the administrative and related positions in higher education institutions. Furthermore, the study revealed that women possessed inferior status to men in all the academic and related positions in higher education institutions. Not in a single administrative and corresponding position or academic and the related position in higher education institutions, women possessed superior or equivalent status compared to men. This kind of discrimination between men and women in higher education institutions should be removed to achieve gender equality in higher education institutions. All sorts of efforts should be made to enhance the participation of women in all kinds of administrative and related positions and academic and related positions in higher education institutions.

The study also indicated that in higher education institutions, girls possessed inferior status in comparison to boys in enrolment in different courses, whereas girls possessed superior status in comparison to boys in retention in different courses and in completion of the courses (achievement). This kind of discrimination between boys and girls in higher education institutions should be removed to achieve gender equality in higher education institutions. Sincere efforts should be made for equal participation of both boys and girls in higher education institutions concerning their enrolment in the courses, retention in the courses, and completion of the courses.

Historically, it is well known that women possess very low status compared to men in different spheres of life in many societies of the world,

barring a few societies. Literature on gender studies reveal that in different corners of the world, women possess lower position than men, and they are struggling to achieve equal status with men, but till the present time, the attainment of gender parity is not highly satisfactory in most parts of the world. In respect of achieving gender parity, there is a need to empower women on different fronts, i.e., social, economic, political, educational, administrative, scientific and technical, and so on. Women education, women entrepreneurship, women leadership, etc. need to be promoted in respect of achieving gender parity in different spheres of society. A close link needs to be established between education, employment opportunities, administrative and management policies, etc. which would facilitate women development and promotion. Many researchers suggested different means or guidelines for better promotion and development of women in respect of attaining gender parity in society. For example, by considering the significance of entrepreneurship for the empowerment of women, Achakpa and Radovic-Markovic (2018) mentioned that our educational institutions should strive to help our females to develop their entrepreneurial acumen in respect of the sustainable development of livelihoods and the economy. The results of the study of Fabian (2015) showed that female participation in teaching has positively affected the enrolment of female students in secondary schools in Nigeria. Hence, the study advised the policymakers to devise a proper plan to accommodate more women in the teaching profession in respect of increasing the enrolment of female students in secondary schools and consequently reducing gender inequality. Radovic-Markovic et al. (2012) concluded from their study based on the respondents of Serbia, the United States, India and Iran that the business environment of modern times should be accompanied by the change in the educational environment. Additionally, they concluded that the new entrepreneurship education strategy should be based on a women-centred approach.

As it is concluded from the study, gender discrimination is commonly prevalent in educational practices in higher education institutions in northeast India, so proper planning should be designed to make the educational practices of higher education institutions free from gender discrimination. The study provides valuable insights for making the higher education institutions in northeast India, in particular, and the higher education institutions of India and the whole world in general, free from gender discrimination. Some of the significant policy implications of this study are given below.

1. This study would help to remove gender discrimination from educational practices and to maintain gender equality in educational practices.
2. This study would help to bring necessary change in existing policies and devise new policies for the protection and empowerment of women in the context of achieving gender equality in education and other social spheres.
3. This study can be considered as a model or reference point for removing many other types of social inequalities like caste inequalities, class inequalities, etc. beyond gender inequality in the educational and social setup.
4. The study would help to create a sense of positive attitude among educational administrators, teachers, students, etc. towards maintaining gender parity in educational setup.
5. The study would be quite helpful for achieving social equity and social justice through maintaining gender parity in educational institutions.
6. The study would help create many visionary activities, programme and missions for making educational setup free from gender discrimination.

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