

Education, Fertility and Earning of Women in North-east India

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This paper attempts to shed light on the bearing of education and fertility on income of women in northeast India. Econometric analysis indicates that high literacy rate is giving dividend in terms of higher work participation rate and higher income with greater educational attainment compared with women with low educational attainment. The study finds a threshold limit of two children for the optimum income of women as annual income tends to decline for women with three or more children. This result though applicable to states in NE India, there exist inter-state variation in women's income.

I Introduction

Education provides foundation of knowledge and skill required to meet the demand of labour market. It also plays an important role in ensuring small family, and women with fewer children are more likely to be available for work outside home. Thus, education elevates the importance of women's time and provides opportunities for women to be engaged in economically gainful activities. In this context, it is pertinent to examine the causal linkage between education, fertility and women's wage earning, particularly in northeast India for two reasons. First, female literacy in the region is among the highest in the country and secondly, there is a lack of employment opportunities for women as the region is devoid of industry and big corporate firms. There is also want of empirical research which supports or negates the hypotheses of positive association among education, fertility and female wage in northeast India as evidence elsewhere.

Social and demographic change, particularly increased level of female literacy and fertility transition from five or more children to fewer children in developing countries, is the force behind increased female work participation in economically gainful activities. Empirical evidence for India is provided, among others, by Singhal (1995). Duraisamy (2000), from an analysis using data from

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