



A Study on the Women Folk in Naga Community

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Abstract: This study aims to provide an overview of research on women in Nagaland, focusing on various aspects of their status and roles. It seeks to identify research trends, gaps, and areas requiring intervention in order to contribute to the advancement and empowerment of women in the state. The study involves a comprehensive review of existing research works on women in Nagaland. It examines literature on different topics related to women, including traditional practices, literacy, health, entrepreneurship, and social issues. The methodology includes analyzing the findings of these studies to gain insights into the current status of women in Nagaland and areas for further research and intervention. The study highlights Nagaland's commendable progress in women's literacy, health, and entrepreneurship, surpassing national averages. Positive indicators include higher literacy and enrollment rates for girls, improving sex ratios, and minimal malnourishment cases. Women are increasingly involved in agriculture and expanding into trading, cottage industries, and floriculture. Challenges persist, including the need for employment generation, higher education, and addressing social issues like violence against women and substance abuse. Concerns also arise regarding women's exclusion from land rights and formal decision-making bodies, with no women legislators in State Legislative Assemblies since 1963. The findings of this study can inform policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders about the status of women in Nagaland. It provides insights into areas of success and challenges, guiding efforts towards promoting women's empowerment, addressing existing gaps, and formulating policies and interventions tailored to the specific needs of Naga women. This study contributes to the existing literature by offering a comprehensive overview of research on women in Nagaland. It identifies research trends, gaps, and areas requiring attention, thereby enhancing understanding and facilitating action towards advancing the status and roles of women in the state.

Keywords: *Naga, traditional, education, employment, societal progression, patriarchal*

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INTRODUCTION

Nagaland, situated in the northeastern region of India, is characterized by its rugged and mountainous terrain, punctuated by the imposing Mount Saramati, which stands as a testament to the state's natural beauty and grandeur. Covering an area of 16,579 square kilometers, Nagaland boasts a diverse landscape that includes lush valleys, dense forests, and cascading rivers. The state shares its borders with Myanmar, which adds to its strategic importance and potential for economic development and trade (Kapur & Narayan, 2020).

Despite its relatively small size, Nagaland holds immense promise for growth and prosperity. Its strategic location offers a gateway to the burgeoning markets of East Asia, making it an attractive destination for investors and businesses seeking to tap into the region's economic opportunities (Yanthan, 2018). Furthermore, Nagaland's abundant natural

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resources, including fertile soil, ample rainfall, and a rich biodiversity, provide a solid foundation for agricultural development and allied industries (Dube, 2015).

In recent decades, Nagaland has undergone a remarkable transformation, transitioning from a traditional society rooted in tribal customs and practices to a modern entity with a distinct political identity (Modiyani, 2022). This evolution has been fueled by advancements in technology, communication, and infrastructure, as well as increased connectivity with the rest of India and the world (Adhikari, Gazi, Giri, Azizzadeh, & Mondal, 2023).

Central to Nagaland's cultural fabric is the intrinsic value placed on women, upheld by each of its diverse Naga tribes. Traditionally, women played essential roles within the household, serving as caregivers and nurturers, while men assumed responsibilities outside the home, such as hunting and providing for their families. However, as Nagaland embraces the opportunities and challenges of the 21st century, the roles and expectations placed on women are undergoing significant reevaluation (J. Singh, 2017).

The advent of modernization, education, and exposure to new ideas has empowered Naga women to aspire for more than their traditional roles. Today, women in Nagaland are increasingly breaking free from societal constraints, pursuing education, careers, and entrepreneurial ventures with zeal and determination (Imchen, 2017). The rise in female literacy rates, coupled with greater access to opportunities in various sectors, has paved the way for women to assert themselves as leaders, professionals, and change-makers in their communities and beyond (Kumar & Nayak, 2021).

Despite these advancements, challenges remain, including gender disparities in access to education, economic opportunities, and political representation. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts from all sectors of society to promote gender equality, empower women, and create an environment where everyone can thrive and contribute to Nagaland's continued progress and prosperity (Devi, Ram, & Kumar, 2023)

Women in Naga Society

In Naga society, women traditionally held roles primarily centered around caregiving within the family structure, reflecting the norms of patriarchal societies (Yanger, 2013). Their responsibilities as wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters were central to the well-being and happiness of the family. Historically, household management and related activities were delegated to women, aligning with prevailing patriarchal norms (Pienyü, 2013).

The intervention of Christian missionaries in Nagaland, although initially seen as transformative, brought about significant changes (Jamir, 2019). They introduced educational initiatives, paving the way for literacy, awareness, and societal improvements among the Nagas. The rise in female literacy rates and their increased participation in public life can be attributed to the impact of these early educators. Over time, Naga society has progressed, gradually shedding conservative mindsets.

As female literacy rates have surged, modern Naga women have transcended traditional roles, becoming integral contributors to the economy. Encouragement of girl child education has led to academic excellence across various levels, with Naga women excelling in competitive exams and occupying influential positions in administrative and managerial domains, particularly within the government sector (Yanger, 2013). This trend signals a positive shift towards gender equality, with women boldly pursuing diverse career paths in business, entrepreneurship, fashion, tourism, and other sectors, previously perceived as male-dominated spheres.

Research on Women in Nagaland

The availability of equal educational opportunities for women in Nagaland has played a pivotal role in fostering their participation in various spheres of society (Tinner & Curbelo, 2024). This inclusive educational environment has empowered Naga women to assume diverse roles beyond traditional confines, equipping them with a broad range of skills and resources. As a result, we witness a notable emergence of Naga women as successful academicians, actively engaged in research activities across different fields (Latha, 2022).

Several factors contribute to this trend. Firstly, the evolving nature of academic roles and responsibilities has created space for women to excel and contribute meaningfully. With changing societal attitudes and increasing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in academia, women are now more encouraged to pursue academic careers and undertake research endeavors (Lemtur, 2022).

Moreover, heightened aspirations for academic advancement among Naga women have spurred their involvement in research activities. As educational attainment becomes increasingly valued and accessible, women are motivated to

pursue higher levels of education and engage in scholarly pursuits (Ponraj & Gnanaguru, 2014).

The field of Womens Studies has also played a significant role in promoting female participation in higher education. This interdisciplinary field, dedicated to examining women's experiences, perspectives, and contributions, has provided a platform for women to explore their interests and engage in critical inquiry (Menon, Sharma, et al., 2020).

The surge in female enrollment and engagement in Womens Studies programs reflects a growing interest and investment in understanding and addressing gender-related issues (Rani, 2021).

However, despite these advancements, challenges persist. The notion of "Women teach, Men think" continues to perpetuate gender biases in academia, with female faculty often relegated to teaching roles while their male counterparts dominate research endeavors. Addressing this stereotype requires a concerted effort to promote gender equity and recognize the diverse talents and contributions of women in academia (Domingga & Hidajah, 2019).

A comprehensive survey on research conducted by and on women in Nagaland is essential to assess the landscape of women's scholarship and evaluate the professional progression of female researchers (Langwangbe, 2015). By shedding light on existing research trends and gaps, such a survey can inform efforts to promote gender-inclusive practices in academia and challenge prevailing stereotypes. Ultimately, fostering an environment that values and supports the diverse contributions of women in research is crucial for advancing knowledge and promoting social equity (Pongen, 2022).

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to provide an exhaustive overview of existing research on women in Nagaland, delineating the current status of research across various women-related topics while identifying prevailing research trends and discernible gaps in literature. The study endeavors to consolidate available information, particularly from less visible sources, with the aim of ensuring accessibility to crucial data for future scholars and researchers. Additionally, the study compiles statistical data on women researchers in higher education, with a view to fostering the development of a comprehensive database on research pertaining to women's issues, thereby minimizing redundancy. By spotlighting and profiling research endeavors focused on women, the study aims to inspire and bolster the engagement of female academicians, researchers, and other stakeholders interested in addressing women's issues. The primary objectives of this study are:

- To assess the extent to which the attitudes of the Naga people have evolved from traditional to modern paradigms under the influence of education.
- To examine the impact of education on social attitudes pertaining to key areas including education itself, marriage and divorce, religion, the status of women, and customary practices in Naga tradition.
- To compare the perspectives of individuals with varying educational backgrounds on pertinent social issues such as co-education, women's employment, gender interactions, marriage customs, family planning, mate selection, religious beliefs, and societal challenges.
- To investigate the role of education in facilitating the modernization of women within the Naga community, thereby exploring its transformative effects on gender dynamics and societal norms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing literature on women in Nagaland highlights the state's transition from a traditional to a modern society, influenced by factors such as education, missionary efforts, and societal progress. The role of women in Nagaland has historically been centered around domestic responsibilities, but with the advent of education and societal changes, women have begun to enter various spheres of public life, contributing significantly to the economy and holding influential positions in government and academia. However, there remains a gap in research focusing on women's issues, particularly in areas such as access to justice, economic independence, and gender disparities. Moreover, while there is a growing interest in feminist studies among scholars, statistical data and gender-disaggregated information are often lacking, hindering in-depth analysis and validation of research findings. Studies by (Jamir, 2019) and (Hussain Ali & Sardar, 2021) explore traditional gender roles and cultural practices prevalent among Naga women, highlighting their roles in household management, agriculture, and preservation of indigenous knowledge. These works emphasize the importance of understanding the intersectionality of gender and culture in shaping women's experiences. Research by (Lemtur, 2022) and (S. Singh, 2023) examines the impact of education on the empowerment of Naga women. These studies underscore the transformative role of education in enhancing women's agency, decision-making power, and

socio-economic status within the community. Scholars like (Tula & Goswami, 2023) ; (Longkumer, 2021) investigate women's health issues and access to healthcare services in Naga society. These studies highlight disparities in healthcare access, maternal health outcomes, and the need for culturally sensitive interventions to address women's health concerns effectively. Recent research by (Mandal, 2018); (Tinner & Curbelo, 2024) explores women's participation in local governance and political decision-making processes. These studies analyze the barriers faced by Naga women in entering politics and advocate for greater gender inclusivity in governance structures. Studies by (Shikhu, 2017); (Sobha, 2021) examine the prevalence of gender-based violence and challenges in addressing issues of domestic violence and sexual assault within the Naga community. These works call for comprehensive strategies to combat violence against women and provide support services for survivors.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a comprehensive approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct an overview of available research works on women in Nagaland. A systematic review of existing literature will be carried out to identify relevant research topics and themes. Additionally, data collection methods such as surveys, interviews, and document analysis will be utilized to gather information on the status of research, research trends, and gaps in women-related topics in Nagaland. Statistical data on women research scholars in higher education institutions will also be compiled. The findings will be analyzed to provide insights into the extent of research on women in Nagaland, identify research trends, and highlight areas requiring further investigation.

FINDINGS

The survey provides an overview of research on women in Nagaland, covering diverse areas such as education, the sex trade, political life, decision-making, customary practices, and legal awareness. However, the main concentration of research has been observed in the areas of education, polity, decision-making, and leadership, with limited attention to women's access to justice, economic independence, and women's roles in religion (Menon et al., 2020). Notably, none of the research topics scored above 1%, indicating a slow pace in women's studies research and underscoring the need for further exploration of issues concerning women in Nagaland (S. Singh, 2023).

The study highlights several concerns regarding the status of women in Nagaland (Prasad, 2018). Gender differences and the factors contributing to women's subordinate position in society are poorly addressed. Some research projects are found to be purely descriptive, lacking depth, analytical rigor, or comparative studies, which risks the quality of the research work. Additionally, there is a paucity of statistical information and gender-disaggregated data, essential for validating and enhancing analysis (Sharma, 2016). While efforts have been made to develop gender-disaggregated data, such initiatives need to be expanded and updated to ensure relevance and accuracy (Mandal, 2018).

An encouraging trend is noted in academic research, with more scholars showing interest in women's issues, particularly aspects of feminism. However, there is still room for growth, with more scholars from various disciplines urged to address women's concerns comprehensively. Furthermore, the data reveals disparities in academic representation, with female scholars dominating the School of Humanities and Education but lagging behind in the field of Sciences. Despite efforts, only a minimal percentage of PhD research, particularly focused on women in Nagaland, has been conducted, suggesting a need for increased attention and investment in this area of study (Nguzhülie, 2022).

CONCLUSION

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on rediscovering and acknowledging the integral role of women within the tribal traditions of our society. Unfortunately, this recognition has often been obscured and marginalized by historical and traditional narratives that are biased towards male perspectives. It is essential to initiate a paradigm shift in attitudes across all levels of society, including individuals, communities, and governing bodies. Instead of adhering solely to a welfare-centric approach, it is crucial to adopt a more comprehensive framework that promotes the holistic development and empowerment of women, thereby unlocking their full potential.

Gender disparities entrenched within the patriarchal fabric of our society are frequently downplayed, often justified under the guise of preserving customary cultural norms. It is imperative to challenge and reinterpret these traditional values, many of which perpetuate gender biases, in order to establish a more inclusive and equitable societal structure.

Despite these urgent imperatives, research on women in Nagaland remains largely insufficient, with numerous critical issues left unexplored. Existing research predominantly focuses on specific tribes or localities, leaving

considerable scope for scholars to investigate broader themes and conduct comparative analyses. For instance, examining women's experiences across diverse tribal contexts could yield valuable insights and facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the status of women in Nagaland.

In conclusion, the study underscores the need for:

- Diversification of research topics beyond traditional areas.
- Improvement in research quality through robust methodologies.
- Enhanced data collection and analysis, including gender-disaggregated data.
- Promotion of interdisciplinary research collaborations.
- Addressing gender disparities in academia, particularly in STEM fields.
- Increased investment in women-centered research

Implementing these recommendations will facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of women's issues in Nagaland and enable effective interventions to promote gender equity and empowerment in the region.

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