



# Globalization, Urbanization And The Transformation Of Women's Status In The Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA), India

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**Abstract:** Globalization has emerged as a transformative force reshaping economic, social, and cultural landscapes across the world. In India, its effects have been particularly significant in altering the status of women by expanding access to education, employment, information, and mobility. This paper examines the role of globalization in transforming the status of women in the Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA), a major industrial and urbanizing region in eastern India. The study investigates the progress of urbanization in ADPA over the last two decades and analyses how globalization, mediated through urban growth, transport and communication development, and welfare interventions, has influenced women's lives across urban, sub-urban, and rural areas. Drawing upon Census data, secondary sources, and primary survey findings, the study reveals substantial improvements in female literacy, awareness, and access to opportunities, particularly in urban and sub-urban areas. However, marked spatial disparities persist, with rural women continuing to face greater socio-cultural constraints and limited autonomy. The paper highlights the interplay between globalization, state-led welfare initiatives, and local socio-cultural structures in shaping women's empowerment. It argues that while globalization has created enabling conditions for gender advancement, its benefits remain unevenly distributed across space. Context-specific policy interventions, improved implementation of welfare schemes, and sustained awareness-building are essential for ensuring more inclusive and equitable outcomes for women throughout ADPA.

**Keywords:** Globalization, Women's Empowerment, Urbanization, Gender, Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area, West Bengal

## 1. Introduction

Globalization refers to the intensification of economic, social, cultural, technological, and institutional interactions across geographical boundaries (Alkharafi, 2025). It has fundamentally altered the ways in which societies function, facilitating greater integration among people, markets, and governments. Advances in transportation, communication, and information technologies have accelerated this process, reducing the significance of distance and creating new opportunities for social and economic transformation (Sobczuk, 2024).

One of the most significant dimensions of globalization has been its impact on women (Husain, *et.al* 2024). Across the developing world, globalization has expanded women's access to education, employment, markets, and information. It has also challenged traditional gender norms by exposing societies to new ideas regarding gender equality, women's rights, and female autonomy. In India, the post-1991 era of liberalization, privatization, and globalization has opened up new opportunities for women across agriculture, industry, and services, while simultaneously reshaping social attitudes toward their roles in family and society.

The Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA), located in Paschim Bardhaman district of West Bengal, provides an ideal setting for examining these transformations. As one of eastern India's most important industrial and urban regions, ADPA has experienced rapid urbanization, infrastructural expansion, and increased integration into global economic networks. These processes have had significant implications for women's status, opportunities, and everyday lives.

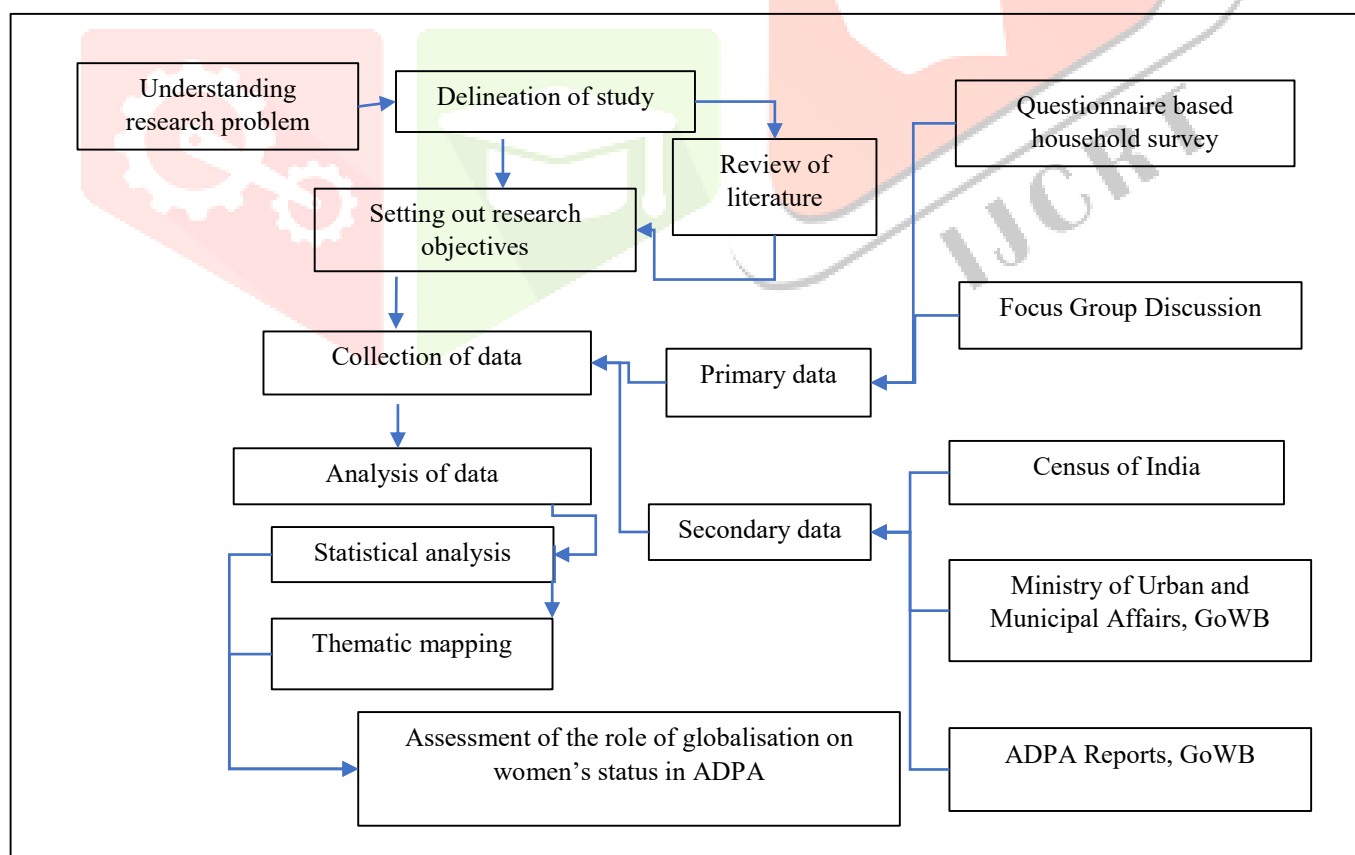
This paper seeks to explore the extent to which globalization has contributed to transforming the status of women in ADPA, with particular attention to spatial variations across urban, sub-urban, and rural areas.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the progress of urbanization in the Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area over the last two decades.
2. To analyse the role of globalization in transforming the status of women in ADPA.
3. To assess the status of women across urban, sub-urban, and rural areas of ADPA.
4. To evaluate societal perceptions regarding women's education, mobility, freedom, and participation in development.

## 3. Methodology



**Fig 1: Methodological Framework**

## 2.1 Understanding the Research Problem

In order to have a clear understanding of the research problem, in-depth review of literature has been done at first. After the review of literature, the study area was selected. The Asansol Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA) has been selected as the study area as it has been observed that not much in-depth research work has been done in the context of status of women and also related to globalisation in the ADPA. Moreover, ADPA, is an emerging urban industrial economy where an analysis of the role of globalisation on transforming the condition of women will further help in overall development of the region.

## 2.2 Delineation of the Study Area

Asansol-Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA) in the Paschim Bardhaman district of West Bengal is a significant emerging urban centre of Eastern India having huge potentials (Fig 2). In the recent years this region has made progress to a significant extent in terms of urbanization and industrialization (City Development Plan, 2006). The ADPA consists of two broad urban areas namely Asansol Municipal Corporation and Durgapur Municipal Corporation along with eight community development blocks (City Development Plan, 2006). The areas under ADPA lies within the new district of Paschim Bardhaman which was formed in 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017 after being bifurcated from the erstwhile Bardhaman district. ADPA is highly urbanized as more than 60% of its population lives in urban areas.

## 2.3 Collection of Data

Qualitative and quantitative data has been procured from both primary and secondary sources. For collecting and analysing the qualitative data, questionnaire-based household survey and focussed group discussion has been conducted. The secondary data has been collected from various governmental reports, Census of India etc.

## 2.4 Analysis of the collected data

The collected data from both primary and secondary sources has been analysed and mapped using map making software ArcGIS and cartographic representation has been done with the help of MS Excel 2013.

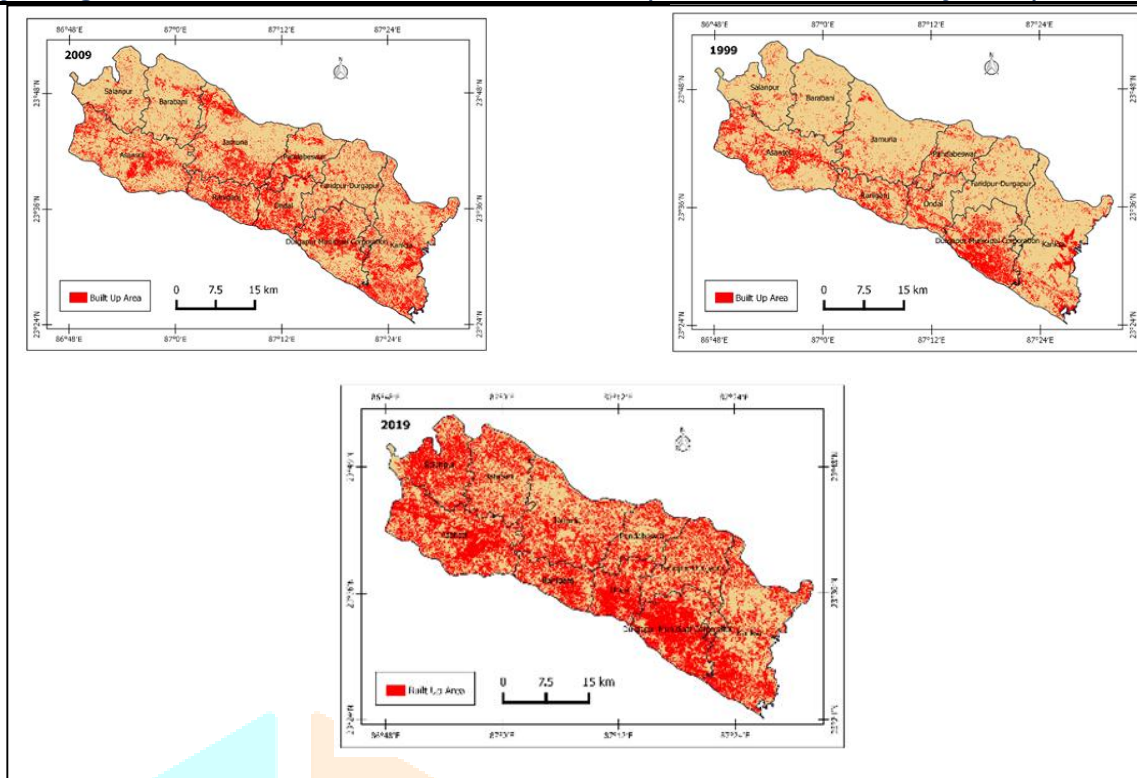
## 2.5 Formulation of guidelines for enhancement of the status of women residing in ADPA

The findings of the study provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of globalization in transforming the status of women within the study area. Based on these insights, a set of policy-relevant guidelines will be formulated, taking into consideration the existing legal and institutional frameworks of the country. These management guidelines are informed by expert opinions derived from interviews with knowledgeable local stakeholders, government officials, administrative staff, and members of non-governmental organizations. The formulation of such guidelines is expected to contribute significantly to the enhancement of women's status in the years ahead.

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1 Urban-Industrial Development and the Role of Globalization in ADPA

The process of urban industrialization in the Asansol-Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA) can be traced back to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, following the discovery and expansion of mining activities in the region (Basu, 2018). Subsequently, the Asansol-Raniganj belt emerged as a prominent mining-oriented industrial nucleus (City Development Plan, 2006). Institutional support to this growth was provided with the establishment of the Asansol Durgapur Development Authority (ADDA) in 1980, formed through the amalgamation of the erstwhile Asansol Planning Organisation and the Durgapur Development Authority under the provisions of the West Bengal Town and Country (Planning and Development) Act, 1979. Since its inception, ADDA has undertaken several planning and developmental initiatives, although these have largely remained concentrated within the urban centres of Asansol and Durgapur.

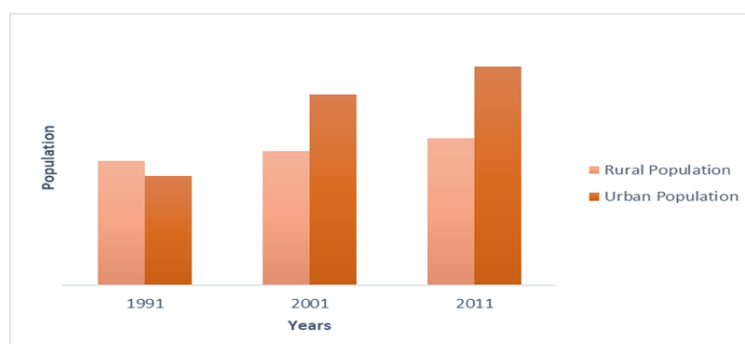


**Fig 3: Urbanization in ADPA in Last Two Decades**

The delineation of the Asansol Urban Agglomeration in the Census of 1991 marked a significant phase in the region's urban evolution, eventually leading to the expansion of the Asansol Municipal Corporation, whose jurisdiction has increased more than fivefold. In contrast, the urbanization of Durgapur has been primarily shaped by national-level planning policies aimed at fostering industrial growth. Therefore, the urban-industrial development of Durgapur must be understood within a broader regional planning framework rather than as an isolated phenomenon.

Spatially, urban growth in ADPA has been concentrated along key transport corridors. The Asansol–Kulti–Jamuria industrial belt has developed along the eastern bank of the River Barakar and the northern bank of the River Damodar, aligned with the Grand Trunk Road (NH-2). Additionally, significant urban expansion has taken place along the Durgapur–Dhanbad railway corridor under the Eastern Railway network. This linear pattern of growth highlights the critical role of transport infrastructure in shaping urbanization. However, the rapid increase in urban population and the scaling up of industrial and economic activities have placed considerable pressure on the existing infrastructure.

Over the past few decades, ADPA has witnessed a substantial rise in both urbanization and population. The rate of growth of the urban population has significantly outpaced that of the rural population, indicating the region's transformation into a major industrial and economic hub. This rapid urban expansion has been largely driven by migration, as employment opportunities in mining, manufacturing, and allied sectors have acted as strong pull factors, attracting population from surrounding rural areas and beyond (Basu, 2018).



**Figure 4: Trend Of Growth of Rural and Urban Population, Data Source: Census of India, 1991, 2001, 2011**

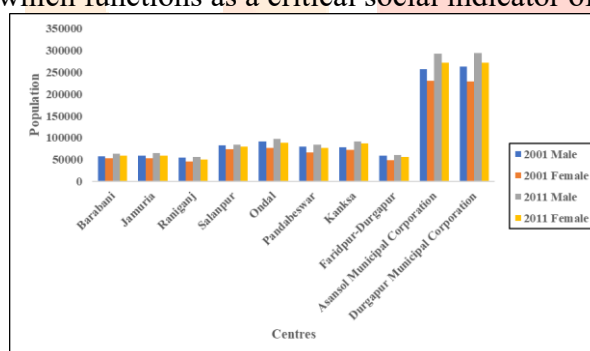
In the context of globalization, these processes of industrialization and urbanization have acquired new dimensions. The integration of ADPA into wider economic networks, facilitated by improved transport and communication infrastructure, has accelerated the flow of capital, information, and labour. Globalization has contributed to the diversification of economic activities, expansion of industrial production, and growth of the service sector within the region. Enhanced connectivity has also enabled greater diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices, thereby linking ADPA more closely with national and global systems.

Furthermore, globalization has reinforced the pace of urban growth by intensifying industrial competitiveness and attracting investment, both domestic and international. The presence of better infrastructure and industrial base has made urban centres within ADPA more responsive to global economic processes compared to their rural counterparts. As a result, urban areas have become focal points of economic dynamism, while also experiencing increased socio-economic transformation.

Thus, the evolution of ADPA from a mining-based industrial region to a more complex urban-industrial system reflects the combined influence of historical industrialization, planned urban development, migration dynamics, and the more recent forces of globalization. These processes have not only reshaped the spatial and economic structure of the region but have also laid the foundation for broader social transformations, including changes in the status and roles of women.

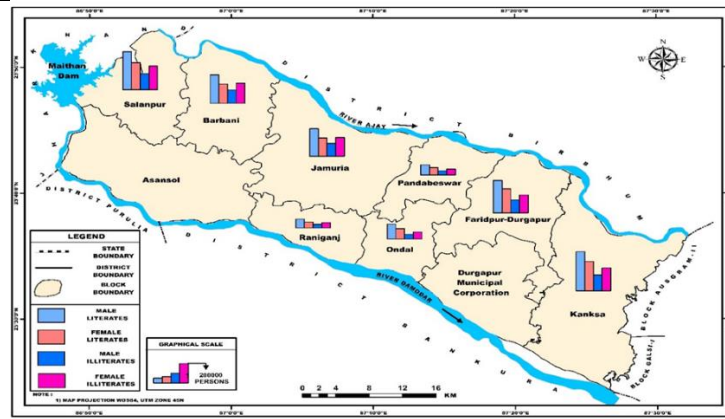
### 3.2 Women and Urbanization and Globalisation in ADPA

The Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA) is increasingly emerging as a significant urban–industrial economy in eastern India. In such contexts, urbanization is often associated with broader social transformations, among which the advancement of gender equality through the elevation of women’s status is particularly noteworthy. While economic growth remains a key driver of regional development, it is now widely recognized that inclusive development cannot be achieved without substantial progress in women’s empowerment, which functions as a critical social indicator of overall development.



**Fig 5: Gender wise Growth of Population In ADPA, Data Source: Census of India, 2001 and 2011.**

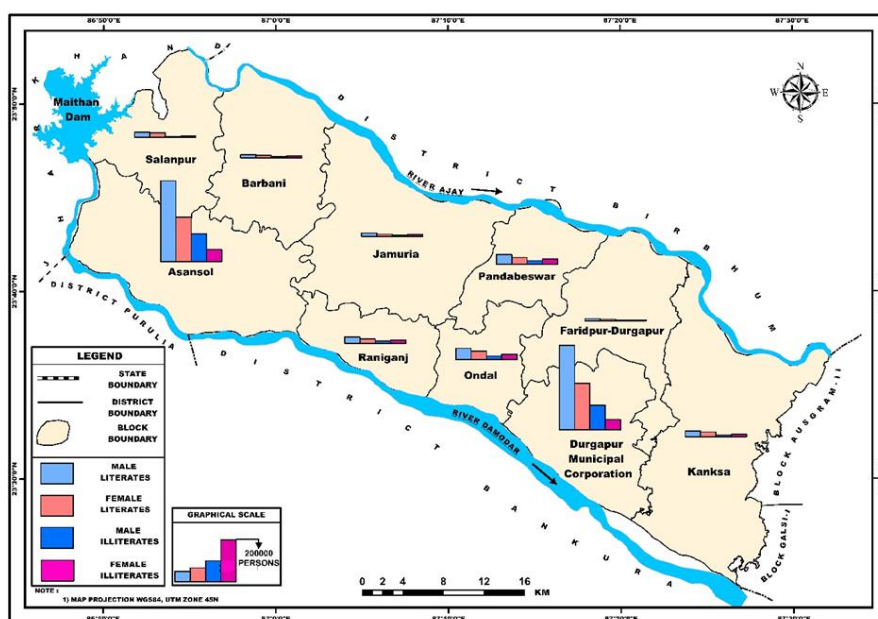
The demographic composition of ADPA reflects a relatively balanced gender distribution, with males and females constituting nearly equal proportions of the total population (Fig 5). However, spatial variations are evident across different Community Development (C.D.) Blocks. In certain blocks, such as Barabani and Jamuria, the rate of increase in the female population exceeds that of the male population (Fig 5). This trend may be indicative of a gradual shift in societal attitudes, potentially influenced by increased awareness of gender equality, improved access to healthcare, and the diffusion of progressive norms—processes that are often reinforced by globalization through enhanced communication networks and exposure to broader socio-cultural values.



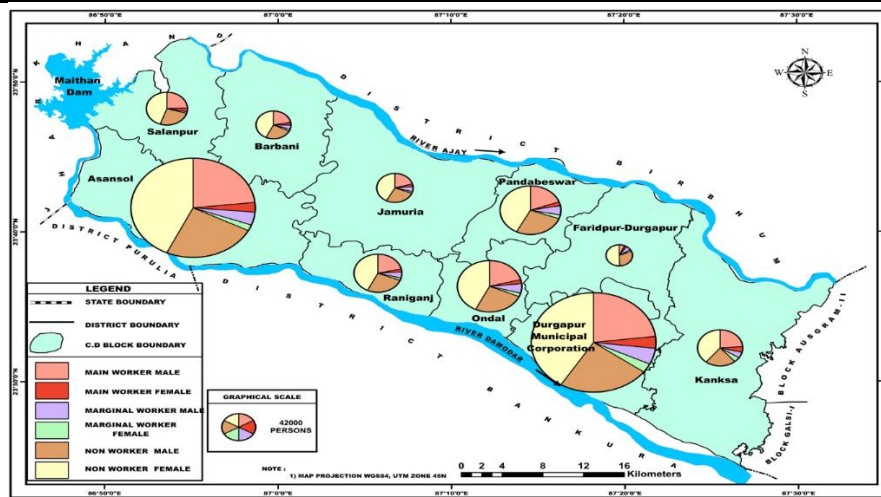
**Fig 6: Gender Wise Literates in the Rural Areas of ADPA, Data Source: Census of India, 2011**

Literacy remains one of the most crucial determinants of regional development and social transformation. In ADPA, both male and female literacy levels are relatively high, particularly in major urban centres such as Durgapur Municipal Corporation and Asansol Municipal Corporation, where educational infrastructure and accessibility are more developed (Fig 7). In contrast, rural areas such as Barabani and Jamuria C.D. Blocks continue to exhibit comparatively lower literacy levels, reflecting persistent spatial disparities(Fig 6). Nevertheless, the overall literacy scenario across ADPA is appreciable, suggesting positive developmental trends. The spread of globalization, especially through improved information and communication technologies, has played a facilitating role in enhancing awareness about education and increasing access to knowledge resources, thereby contributing to the gradual improvement in literacy levels.

An analysis of gender-wise work participation, based on Census of India (2011) data, reveals a pronounced disparity between male and female workforce participation (Fig 8 & 9). The proportion of male workers significantly exceeds that of female workers, particularly in urban areas. This pattern can be attributed to the industrial nature of the regional economy, where employment opportunities have traditionally been skewed in favour of male labour. However, an interesting contrast emerges in certain rural areas, where the proportion of female non-workers is relatively lower compared to their urban counterparts. Primary survey findings suggest that this may be due to the availability of employment opportunities for women through government-sponsored schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which has facilitated women’s participation in the workforce at the grassroots level.



**Fig 7: Gender Wise Literates in the Urban Areas of ADPA, Data Source: Census of India,2011**



**Fig 8: Gender-wise work Participation in the Urban Areas of ADPA, Data Source: Census of India, 2011**

From a globalization perspective, these patterns reflect a complex interplay between global economic processes and local socio-economic structures. While globalization has expanded opportunities through industrial growth, service sector development, and improved connectivity, its benefits in terms of women's employment have not been evenly distributed. Urban areas, being more integrated into global networks, have experienced greater economic dynamism but continue to exhibit gender disparities in workforce participation due to entrenched social norms and labour market segmentation. Conversely, in rural areas, state-led interventions have, to some extent, compensated for these gaps by creating employment avenues for women. Thus, the status of women in ADPA, as reflected through demographic trends, literacy, and work participation, underscores both the opportunities and limitations associated with globalization. While the forces of globalization have contributed to increased awareness, improved access to education, and gradual shifts in societal attitudes, structural inequalities and spatial disparities continue to shape women's experiences across the region.

### 3.3 Status of Women in ADPA

#### 3.3.1 Role of Welfare Schemes and Globalization in Women's Empowerment

The transformation in the status of women in the Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA) cannot be understood solely through the lens of urbanization and industrial growth; it is equally shaped by targeted state interventions and the broader processes of globalization. In recent decades, the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal have introduced a range of welfare schemes aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of girls and women. These initiatives, when viewed in conjunction with globalization, reveal a complementary relationship—where global discourses on gender equality, human development, and rights-based approaches have influenced policy formulation, while improved communication networks have enhanced awareness and accessibility of such schemes at the grassroots level.

One of the most notable initiatives in West Bengal is Kanyashree Prakalpa, launched in 2012 with the primary objective of preventing child marriage and promoting girls' education. The scheme provides financial assistance to economically disadvantaged families, thereby reducing the economic incentive for early marriage (Sen and Datta, 2018). By encouraging girls to remain in school and pursue secondary, higher secondary, or vocational education, the scheme enhances their prospects for improved socio-economic positioning. Importantly, the direct transfer of funds into bank accounts held in the girls' names ensures a degree of financial autonomy and decision-making capacity. The international recognition of this scheme by global organizations such as UNICEF and the United Nations in 2017 underscores the alignment of local policy initiatives with global development priorities. Furthermore, delaying marriage contributes to reducing risks associated with early pregnancies, child mortality, and malnutrition, thereby improving overall health outcomes. The success of Kanyashree across West Bengal highlights the critical role of education, alongside urbanization, in fostering women's empowerment (Mutuwa, 2019).

Another important initiative is Sikshashree, introduced in 2014 through the consolidation of earlier book and maintenance grants for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students from Classes V to VIII. This scheme specifically targets the reduction of school dropouts and aims to encourage continued education among marginalized groups, particularly girls (The Times of India, 2014). By addressing financial barriers to education, Sikshashree contributes to building human capital among disadvantaged sections, thereby enabling greater participation of women in socio-economic activities.

The Sabooj Sathi scheme, launched in 2015, focuses on improving access to secondary education by addressing mobility constraints. The provision of bicycles to students, especially girls, has significantly reduced dropout rates associated with commuting difficulties (UNI, 2020). Beyond facilitating access to education, the scheme enhances confidence and independence among female students. Notably, its objectives resonate with several global development priorities, including good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, and climate action, as outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 framework. This illustrates how local initiatives are increasingly shaped by global policy agendas.

At the national level, the Sabla scheme, initiated in 2011, targets adolescent girls aged 11 to 18 years, aiming to improve their nutritional and health status while also imparting life skills and awareness regarding health, hygiene, and public services (The Times of India, 2011). Such interventions are crucial in preparing young women for active participation in society and the economy. In many cases, these schemes have contributed to the emergence of women entrepreneurs by enhancing skills, awareness, and confidence (Hans and Shetty, 2019).

Similarly, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao programme, launched in 2015, addresses the critical issue of declining child sex ratios in India while promoting education and awareness regarding the value of the girl child (Hindustan Times, 2019). The scheme seeks to improve both societal attitudes and the efficiency of welfare service delivery, thereby contributing to a more gender-equitable environment.

The Sukanya Samridhi Yojana further complements these efforts by providing a government-backed savings instrument aimed at securing the financial future of the girl child. By encouraging long-term financial planning through savings accounts in the name of girls, the scheme promotes economic security and reduces vulnerability (Economic Times, 2020).

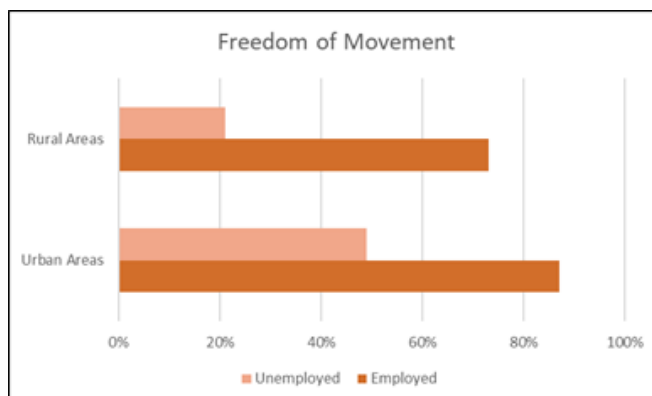
From a globalization perspective, these welfare schemes are not isolated interventions but are embedded within a broader framework of global development discourse emphasizing gender equality, education, and empowerment. The spread of information and communication technologies has enabled wider dissemination of knowledge about these schemes, ensuring greater outreach even in semi-urban and rural areas. Additionally, globalization has fostered the adoption of international best practices in policy design, monitoring, and implementation. In the context of ADPA, the impact of these schemes is particularly significant in bridging the gap between urban and rural areas. While urban regions benefit more directly from the economic opportunities generated by globalization, welfare schemes play a crucial role in extending these benefits to sub-urban and rural populations, especially women. They act as enabling mechanisms that allow women to access education, improve health, gain mobility, and participate more actively in economic and social spheres.

Thus, the combined influence of globalization and state-led welfare interventions has contributed to a gradual but meaningful transformation in the status of women. However, the extent of this transformation continues to vary spatially, highlighting the need for more targeted and context-specific approaches to ensure inclusive and equitable empowerment across all sections of society.

### 3.3.2 Societal Perception and Women's Empowerment in ADPA

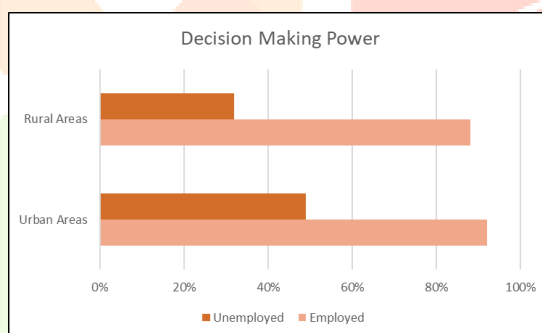
In the context of women's empowerment, societal attitudes and perceptions play a pivotal role in shaping the lived realities of women. Understanding these perceptions is essential for assessing the current status of women and for formulating effective, context-specific policy recommendations. In this regard, a perception-based survey was conducted among community members across urban and rural areas of the Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA) to examine attitudes toward women's mobility, decision-making, and the perceived importance of women's education and freedom in social and economic development.

The findings indicate notable spatial variations in perceptions, particularly with respect to women's freedom of movement. In urban areas, more than 80 percent of employed women reported having freedom of mobility, whereas in rural areas, the proportion was only slightly above 60 percent (Fig 9). This disparity suggests that financial independence is a key determinant of personal autonomy. During the course of the survey, several unemployed women reported that their mobility is often constrained by the need to justify their movements to family members, highlighting the persistence of social scrutiny and control in non-earning contexts.



**Fig 9: Showing freedom of movement of women, Data Source: Primary Survey**

Decision-making within households further reflects the influence of economic participation. Although patriarchal norms continue to shape gender roles, the study reveals that employed women—both in urban and rural areas—exercise significantly greater decision-making power compared to their unemployed counterparts (Fig 10). Financial independence appears to enhance women's agency, enabling them to participate more actively in household decisions and thereby renegotiate traditional gender hierarchies.



**Fig 10: Showing the Opinion of the respondents regarding the Decision-Making Power at Household levels by Women, Data Source: Primary Survey**

Perceptions regarding the role of women's education in social development also exhibit clear urban–rural contrasts (Fig 11). In rural areas, a relatively lower proportion of respondents recognized the importance of women's education, with some expressing the view that educating women has limited societal impact and that domestic efficiency remains their primary responsibility. In contrast, respondents in urban areas overwhelmingly acknowledged the critical role of women's education in social development. Many emphasized that even in the absence of formal employment, educated women contribute significantly to society, particularly through their role in early childhood development, as children spend a substantial amount of time with their mothers during formative years.



**Fig 11: Showing Perception on various Aspects, Data Source: Primary Survey**

Similarly, perceptions of women's freedom as a factor in development vary considerably across space. In rural areas, only a limited number of respondents associated women's freedom with social development. However, in urban areas, a substantial proportion of respondents recognized the importance of women's autonomy not only in social development but also in economic progress. This reflects a broader shift in urban mindsets, where women's participation and independence are increasingly viewed as integral to overall development.

From a broader perspective, these perceptual differences can be partially understood in relation to the uneven diffusion of globalization across the region. Urban areas, being more integrated into global networks of communication, education, and employment, are more exposed to progressive ideas regarding gender equality and women's rights. This exposure contributes to more liberal attitudes toward women's roles and freedoms. In contrast, rural areas, with relatively limited access to such global influences, tend to retain more traditional and patriarchal outlooks.

Thus, the perception analysis underscores the critical role of socio-cultural factors in mediating the impact of economic and structural changes on women's empowerment. While globalization and urbanization have contributed to shifting attitudes in certain areas, deeply entrenched norms continue to influence gender relations, particularly in rural settings. These findings highlight the need for sustained awareness programmes and community-level interventions aimed at transforming societal attitudes alongside improving women's access to education and employment opportunities

#### 4. Suggestions

##### 1. Promoting Inclusive Globalization Through Gender-Sensitive Development Policies

As globalization continues to reshape the socio-economic landscape of ADPA, there is a need for gender-sensitive development policies that ensure women are able to equally benefit from emerging opportunities. Policies should focus on integrating women into industrial, service, and technology-driven sectors through targeted employment programmes, vocational training, and skill enhancement initiatives. Special emphasis should be placed on women from rural and economically weaker backgrounds to reduce spatial inequalities in access to globalization-driven opportunities.

##### 2. Strengthening Digital Connectivity and Information Accessibility for Women

The expansion of communication networks and digital technologies has been one of the key dimensions of globalization. Therefore, improving digital literacy and internet accessibility among women, particularly in rural and sub-urban areas, is essential. Enhanced digital inclusion would enable women to access educational resources, government welfare schemes, employment

opportunities, online entrepreneurship platforms, and information related to their legal and social rights, thereby strengthening their socio-economic empowerment.

### 3. Enhancing Women's Mobility and Access to Urban Opportunities

Since improved transport and communication systems are central to globalization and urban development, efforts should be made to strengthen safe and affordable mobility infrastructure for women throughout ADPA. Expansion of transport facilities, improvement of road connectivity, and continuation of mobility-oriented schemes such as *Sabooj Sathi* can significantly increase women's access to education, workplaces, healthcare, and markets. Greater mobility would also contribute to breaking traditional restrictions imposed on women's freedom of movement.

### 4. Transforming Societal Attitudes Through Awareness and Community Participation

Although globalization has contributed to the diffusion of progressive ideas regarding gender equality, traditional patriarchal attitudes continue to persist, particularly in rural areas. Regular awareness campaigns, community discussions, and educational programmes should therefore be conducted to promote positive perceptions regarding women's education, employment, mobility, and participation in decision-making. Such programmes should involve local leaders, educational institutions, NGOs, and media platforms to facilitate broader social transformation.

### 5. Ensuring Effective Implementation of Welfare Schemes in the Era of Globalization

Government welfare schemes aimed at women's empowerment should be strengthened through better monitoring, transparency, and outreach mechanisms. Globalization-driven improvements in communication and digital governance can be utilized to increase awareness regarding schemes such as *Kanyashree Prakalpa*, *Sabooj Sathi*, *Sabla*, and *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*. Ensuring that women, especially those in rural and marginalized communities, are able to access these schemes effectively will help bridge the developmental gap between urban and rural areas and contribute toward more inclusive and sustainable empowerment.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study highlights the transformative role of globalization in shaping the status of women in the Asansol–Durgapur Planning Area (ADPA), an important urban–industrial region of eastern India. The findings reveal that processes of urbanization, industrial growth, and enhanced connectivity have significantly contributed to improving women's access to education, information, and economic opportunities. These changes have been further reinforced by state-led welfare initiatives, which have played a crucial role in promoting female literacy, delaying early marriage, and enhancing overall awareness.

However, the impact of globalization and development has not been uniform across the region. A clear spatial disparity exists, with urban areas exhibiting greater progress in terms of women's mobility, decision-making power, and societal acceptance, while rural areas continue to be constrained by traditional patriarchal norms and limited access to resources. Sub-urban areas represent a transitional space where both progressive and conservative attitudes coexist.

The perception analysis underscores that economic independence and educational attainment are key determinants of women's empowerment, influencing not only their personal autonomy but also their role within households and society. At the same time, deeply rooted socio-cultural attitudes continue to shape gender relations, often limiting the extent to which women can fully benefit from the opportunities created by globalization.

In this context, it becomes evident that globalization alone cannot ensure equitable empowerment. Its positive impacts must be complemented by targeted policy interventions, effective implementation of welfare schemes, and sustained efforts to transform societal attitudes. A holistic approach that integrates economic development with social transformation is essential for achieving inclusive and gender-equitable development.

Thus, while ADPA demonstrates significant progress in the advancement of women's status, the persistence of spatial and social inequalities calls for continued policy attention. Ensuring that the benefits of globalization reach all sections of women, particularly those in rural and marginalized communities, remains a critical challenge for achieving sustainable and inclusive development in the region.

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