

Educational Status of Muslim Women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Chapra Block in Nadia District

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Abstract

Education is the key factor for development, prosperity and welfare of a society. As we all know that proper development is not possible without education. It is all the more true for the weaker and neglected section of the society i.e. women. The social science research studies on the Muslim society in India with particular reference to the women of West Bengal are negligible causing immense loophole in our insight and understanding of the Muslim society from the experiential point of view. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the educational status of Muslim women of Chapra block of West Bengal in particular.

After spending seventy two glorious years of the independence the major portion of Muslim women belong to the marginalized section in the Indian society specifically in the economic and politically arena. In this study effort would be undertaken to find out the educational advancement of Muslim women in selected block of Nadia district of West Bengal through adequate data collection. The minority cell of local block development office would be also consulted. This study is based on both primary and secondary data and it should be definitely have an impact factor and provide both the government and civil society.

Key words: Muslim Woman, Educational Backwardness, Drop-out, Literacy, Development.

Introduction

Swami Vivekananda an ideal philosopher, thinker and reformer of India has rightly said that, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing". He also realized that right type of education is very important for women and it is the basic necessity for a nation to prosper and advance. Islam has given so much importance to the education. The prophet himself quoted that education is essential for Muslim man and woman to adequate knowledge. It is the fact that women constitute almost 50% of the total population in the worldwide. But this is not true in India. Though, India is belonging to the status of developing nation, however it is shocking to find out that population of females has been comparatively lower than males. The social status of Muslim women in the Indian society is concerned that they are not fairly treated as equal to men in all the places. The best practices in Western societies are that women are recognized and given equal rights and status. Muslim have founded most educationally backward community at national level and which the Government of India acknowledged the National Educationally Backward

Minority in 1993(IOSR Journal 2012). The Muslim women are enough educationally backward as compared to non-muslim women. Some kind of sufficient reasons behind the low literacy among muslim women.

Conceptual Background of the problem

In tradition of West Bengal women in Muslim society used to living in a much close societal environment and they were mostly confined to homes due to social and ritual restriction with regards to the pattern of behavior and activities. In West Bengal Chapra block is a border based and minority block also. The average female literacy rate of Chapra block is recorded only 57.97 per cent which is very low as compared to the average female literacy rate of West Bengal that is 70.54 per cent. This backwardness of majority of the Muslim women is one of the ultimate factors for their way behind, employment is also necessary for raising status to social change. The main objective of the paper is to highlight the educational status of Muslim women in Chapra block.

Statement of the problem

The present study is an attempt to explore the educational status of Muslim women in the post globalization era, particularly in the context of the selected block. Any fruitful research attempt must be objective and precise in its forces. In recognition of the fact, the present study attempted to find out about the awareness of education among Muslim women of selected block and researcher also try to find out the educational status under this project on ongoing girls education and thus Muslim women education in selected block is taken as a case study. Chapra block of Nadia in West Bengal has been selected as the field of enquiry primarily because-

- The personal accessibility of the researcher - the important factors in the context of research.
- To understand the change of approach of political party member in the block on and off the political power to the Muslim girl students.

Literature Review

John, A. and Pande, S.V. (2012), in their research paper *“Educational Status of Muslim Women in India”* have stressed on the role of education which simplify the social and economic progress. They want to display the reality that Muslim girls are discussed in the least educated sections of Indian societies. The authors have based their paper on secondary data like Census of India Report of 2001.

Hossain, M. I. (2012), in his paper *“Muslim Women of West Bengal: An Enquiry into their Minority Status”* have highlighted Muslim women of West Bengal are lagged behind the mainstream on all human development like educational enrollment, political participation, standing position on socio economic etc. The author has gathered their study both primary and secondary data like Census of Govt. of India Report 2001 and relevant published literature.

Nasrin (2013), in her research paper *“Education of Muslim Women- A Journey from Past to Present”* has discussed to find out the alternative way of educational pattern of Muslim women since independence. The author has focused on sources data for pointing out the socio economic factors like low access to school, poverty and discrimination faced at school which lead to low education among Muslim women.

Islam, M. S. and Siddiqui, L. (2016), in their paper *“Assessing the Educational status of Muslim women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Malda District”* has represented the education status of Muslim women in Malda district. He emphasized on the percentage of drop-out of Muslim women from Illiterate to

higher education like school, college and university. The authors have based their paper mainly on primary sources of data.

Mollah, Kamruzzaaman. (2018), in his paper *“Status of Muslim women in west Bengal”* has tried to trace out the actual status of Muslim women in West Bengal. The author also focused on education, socio economic, employment picture, health and political awareness status among the Muslim women in Bengal. He has concluded his paper with giving some suggestions.

Research Gap

In spite of the fact that the extent of the problem of girls in Nadia district of West Bengal is real concern regarding policy analysis, its systematic research and study has been few and far between. The existing literature on educational status of Muslim women in India and previous research work reflected on the status of Muslim women in West Bengal. The problem of drop-outs, child marriage has always been the centre of attention. But less work has been done on the role of government in the context of their policy to deal with the problem of Muslim girl students on academic development particularly in the context of different blocks of West Bengal.

Objectives of the study

In this paper an attempt has been made to draw an objective picture of the Muslim women educational status in Chapra block of West Bengal through adequate data collection. The main objectives of the present study are as below:

- The first objective of this study is to understand the educational scenario of Muslim women in this study area.
- The second objective of this study is to trace out the literacy rate of Muslim population in this study area.
- The third objective of this study is to identify the socio economic status of Muslim households.
- The fourth objective of this study is to examine the major problems of Muslim women education in this study area.
- The fifth objective of this study is to find out the reasons behind the increased number of female drop-outs in study area.

Hypotheses

The present research work revolved around the following hypotheses-

- (1) There is no significant difference between the rural girls students awareness towards education.

(2) Educational status towards woman is general one without special focuses on the Muslim women.

(3) The central and state governments in India have divergent policy towards muslim women.

Research questions

In reflection to the above mentioned statement few research questions are mentioned below-

- Why Muslim women are lagging behind from the mainstream?
- Why so many drop-outs among Muslim girls?
- Why is there such a lack of literacy rate among Muslim girls compared to other religions?
- What is the situation of women literacy in Chapra Block of Nadia district in West Bengal?

Methodology

The present study give to quantitative research methods while through case study a detailed survey of the research field i.e. the status of the Muslim women will be undertaken interview method in the month of October, 2019 and it will be used to understand the sentiment of the major actors of the research field- Muslim girl students, their parents,

political leaders, some teachers of the selected schools, minority cell of local BDO office. The total 150 households were surveyed in all area of Chapra block of Nadia district. On the other hand quantitative research methods like the sample survey, measurement and statistical aspect of the research paper. So this study is also based on both primary and secondary sources of data. Some simple percentile method, simple bar has been used and also table, pie chart have been drawn.

Discussion

Education:- Education backwardness is a factor responsible for the backwardness of socially, politically, culturally and economically of the Muslim community in West Bengal. In this study area there are total 150 surveyed households in which 627 residents have been recorded. Out of the total residents, the number of female population 296 persons and male population is 331 persons. As per as education of female is concerned, about 31.08 percent females are not able have at least basic education. Moreover, about 8.78 percent female children are not enrolled yet. Remaining 60.14 percent hold education upper primary (22.3percent), primary (15.20percent), matric (13.51percent), and higher secondary (5.40percent) also.

Table 1: Education of Muslim Female and Male Population

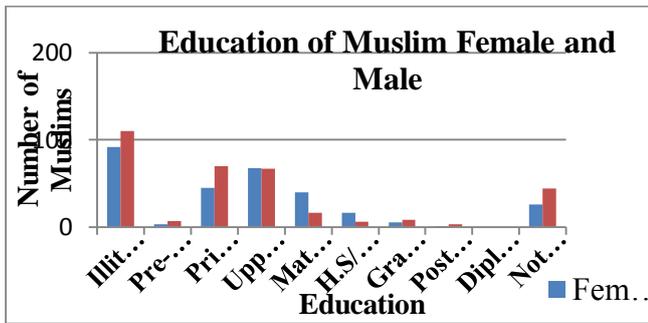
Education Percentage	Female	Percentage	Male	Percentage
Illiterate	92	31.08	110	33.23
Pre-primary	3	1.01	7	2.18
Primary	45	15.20	70	21.14
Upper Primary	68	22.3	67	21.24
Matric/SSC	40	13.51	16	4.83
H.S/10+2	16	5.40	6	1.81
Graduation	5	1.8	8	2.41
Post Graduation	1	0.33	3	0.69
Diploma	0	0	0	0
Not Enrolled	26	8.78	44	13.2
Total	296	100	331	100

Source: Primary Survey in Chapra Block (October, 2019)

Very few females are doing graduation and post graduation only 1.8 percent and 0.33 percent respectively. The above table clearly shows that the higher education among Muslim females is wretched than male. In this study area, maximum Muslim male population is associated with agricultural work and they are belong to the below poverty line, for this reason male illiteracy rate is 33.23 percent which is generally higher than female illiteracy. And male primary and upper primary level of education have

assumed almost equal which is 21.14percent and 21.24percent respectively.

Figure 1: Education of Muslim Female and Male Population



The above table is showing the comparative representation between the educational status of both Muslim male and female.

Educational Drop-out of Muslim Women:- But only education can break through the social barriers and it

can bring social change, cultural development by enhancing through achieving knowledge, skill for earning job opportunities which can help to economically development. But only for the drop-outs they are lagging behind. Basically it is more visible in rural areas in Muslim community of this block. In this study area the total number of drop-outs is 86 in which the highest drop-outs are found in upper primary level by accounting 36 (41.86 percent) students that is followed by matric or 10TH class 25(29.06 percent) students, primary level(17.44), higher secondary(9.30 percent). In this study pre-primary and graduation muslim female students drop-outs rate is same that is only 1(1.16 percent).

Table 2: Muslim Female Drop-outs in Education in Chapra Block

Classes	No. of Females	Percentage
Pre-primary	1	1.16
Primary	15	17.44
Upper Primary	36	41.86
Matric /SSC	25	29.06
H.S/10+2	8	9.30
Graduation	1	1.16
Post Graduation	0	0
Diploma	0	0
Total	86	100

There are some important reasons behind the Muslim female drop-outs in education. The following reasons are summarized in the table below:

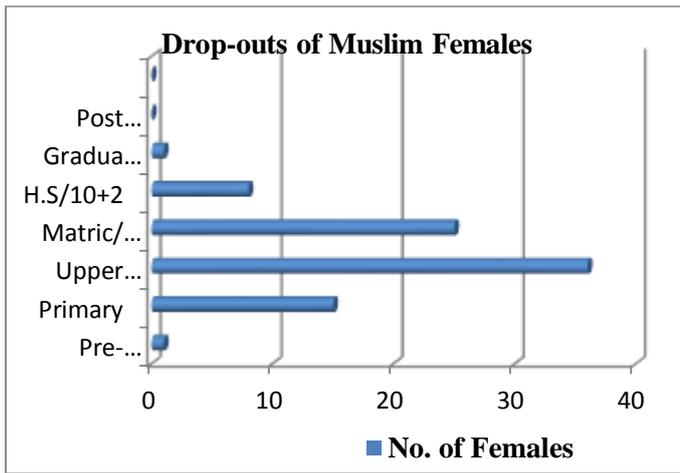
Reason of Muslim Female Drop-outs

Reasons	No. of Females	Percentage
Marriage	60	69.76
Poverty	24	27.90
Work/Job	2	2.32
No Interest	0	0
Total	86	100

Source: Primary Survey in Chapra Block (October, 2019)

About 69.76 percent females have dropped their education due to marriage including early age or child marriage for some traditional reasons, their family members were forced them to marry and it is one of the most important reasons for their drop-outs. Though, poverty is another reason of drop-out that is grabbed 27.90 percent females. So many Muslim girls are not able to complete their studies for the lack of money.

Figure 2: Muslim Female Drop-outs in Education in Chapra Block



Remaining of Muslim females has left their education for earning some job or work. So, basically two main reasons behind the drop-outs that is marriage and poverty. Muslim girls are far behind from the other communities women. They want to study more but

their family forces them to marry or forces them not to study because of they are not afford to spend because their poverty.

Types of Educational Institute:-In this study area, about 76.96 Muslim females have got enrolled in Madrasa education including Maktaba (within mosque), High Madrasa. Basically there are maximum number of students have got enrolled in Madrasa, High Madrasa etc. Currently there are very few Govt. institutions. They are also complete their education from Madrasa and High Madrasa. 21.91 percent Muslim females have enrolled in governmental school and colleges. After many years later West Bengal Govt. established a government college in this block which them to complete their essential education. There is very few private educational institution where Muslim female students have enrolled. The total number of enrolled Muslim female is 178 which unenrolled 118 females have covered the rest.

Table 3: Income of Households

Types of Institution	No. of Muslim Females	Percentage
Madrasa	137	76.96
Private	2	1.12
Government	39	21.91
Total	178	100

Source: Primary Survey in Chapra Block (October, 2019)

Literacy rate of Muslim population in Chapra Block:-Literacy rate among religious communities: (in percentage)

Table 4: Literacy rate of all communities in Chapra Block

Religious Community	Female	Male
Muslims	48.30	52.31
Hindus	62.78	67.29
Christians	22.42	35.61
Sikhs	11.0	58.33

Source: Census report of 2011

The literacy rate of Muslim women in Chapra block of west Bengal is not so bad and it is higher than any other religious communities. This table 4 reveals the literacy rates among the religious communities in Chapra block according to the census 2011. It is seen that the literacy rate of Muslim females is only 48.30% which is lower than all other religious communities and it is even lower than the national average of female.

Social status of Muslim women:-The essential factors for socio-economic developments of Muslim women are educational achievement and their employment opportunity. Muslim of West Bengal as well as Chapra

Block is lagging behind in terms of qualitative education. Mostly Muslim women follow the parda system for their culture. Many women of Muslim society are ignorant, illiterate restricted at home. There certainly exists systematic patriarchal oppression of Muslim women in west Bengal, the picture is not one of deprivation alone. As per Sachar committee report (2006), the share of Muslims in all courses is low particularly at the post graduate level and marginal in the science stream. 25% of Muslim children in the age 6-14 age group either never to school or else drop-out at same stage. Their representation in governmental jobs, including public sector is very lower than other communities. Women

empowerment in Muslim society is crucial as they continue to be victimized by ongoing traditional social structure and social institution of their community. Backwardness in education of major part of Muslim women is one of the important reasons for lagging behind in employment where economic employment is also obligatory for rising their status in society.

Economic Condition of Households:- According to Sachar committee report (2006), Muslims occupies the incidence of poverty, with 31% of people below

poverty level. Chapra block is an agricultural area. Most of the people in this study area associated with farming and it is one of the most important occupations here. There is no such industry here, and for this reason they are economically and socially backwards. Out of the total number of households, about 84.66 percent households are having monthly income less than of less than of Rs. 4000 while 14 percent households are having monthly middle income Rs. 4000- Rs. 8000 and 1.33 percent fall under the high income respectively. Therefore, lots of number of peoples is belonging below poverty line.

Table 5: Income of Households

Income Group	No. of Households	Percentage
Low Income Households (< Rs.4000 per month)	127	84.66
Middle Income Households (Rs.4000 – Rs. 8000 per month)	21	14
High Income Households (> Rs.12000 per month)	2	1.33
Total	150	100

Source: Primary Survey in Chapra Block (October, 2019)

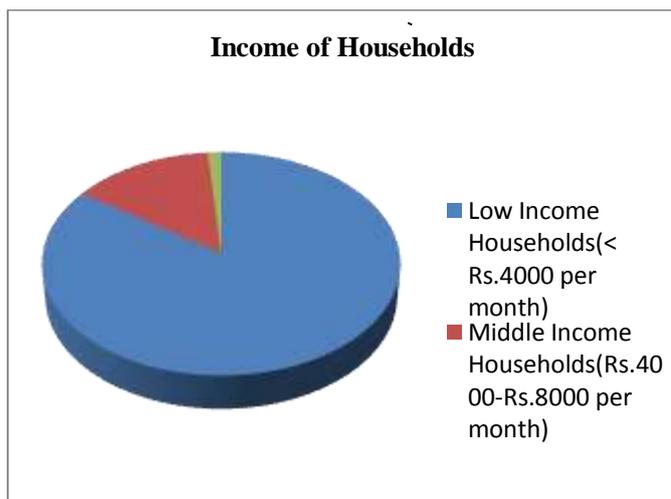


Figure 3: Income of Households

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi said, “To educate one man you educate one person, but to educate a woman, you educate a whole civilization”. This means, education is not only empower the women, empower the whole society. By reviewing the overall circumstances of the Muslim women of this study area it has been clearly displayed that the situations are very pitiable almost in every face of development. It is the visible fact that the educational status of the Muslim community especially in women is very low, inadequate and negligible due to complex panorama of educational problems among the Muslim women in Chapra Block where educational, situational, socio-cultural variables are together playing the key roles to

eternalize the situation in the 21st century. From the study I can sum up that Muslim women are lagged behind in achieving the literacy status because of their drop-outs. The highest female drop-out is found in upper primary, primary and matric classes due to marriage, poor economic conditions etc. and religious superstition.

Justice Ranganath Misra Commission Findings and Sachar Committee Report in addition have stated the fact that the Muslims are educationally, socio-economically and politically less advantageous than other and way behind the mainstream. To overcome the situation of Muslim women in this study area the prime thing this is necessary for socio economic development of their awareness, unconditioned motivation and their participation in some developmental programmers for their bringing progress in the given society. The above discussion on education, it can be conclude that Muslim female at the prevailing circumstances should demand for special facilities for them to get education and the government has to solve all the problems of girls through different policies and awareness.

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