

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE DISTRICT OF MURSHIDABAD, WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

According to the census of 2011, women constitute 48.2% of the total population of India. We know that, the goals of human development are closely related with the empowerment of women in our country. For sustainable development of the Indian economy, women empowerments are highly prioritized. Women constitute a valuable human resource of any country in the world. Women empowerment has been recognized as the central issue since independence. Now in 21st century women empowerment becomes a global issue. Though many women of our country are empowering themselves, but still there are some Muslim women of our country who remain backward in education and development. Muslim women always remained socially and economically backward in our country. Their low participation in education becomes a roadblock in the path of achieving the goal of universal education. Indian Muslims women are far behind in achieving the literacy status because of their poor economic conditions and superstition. The Constitution of India grants the right to Equality and Right to Freedom of Religion and Protection of Interests of Minorities in regard to educational right. Besides providing all the facility, Muslim girls and women are still lagging behind in the entire sphere and are deprived of all the opportunities especially in the state West Bengal. Empowerment of Muslim women is one of the pivotal issue while addressing Muslim women's right and development. This paper highlights the educational development and empowerment of Muslim women in West Bengal with special reference to Murshidabad district.

KEYWORDS: *Empowerment, Education, Development, Minorities, Muslim Women*

INTRODUCTION

“I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved”

- Dr. B R Ambedkar

The word 'women' have different forms and roles in our society. Women are the producer of a new generation and also a transformer of the vast society. So, in 21st century women empowerment becomes a great challenge, which aims at increasing women's self-reliance, self-confidence and internal strength to determine their own choice in their life. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women by giving them proper knowledge, skills and self confidence. From years Muslim women are being exploited in all sphere of life. So, it's the duty of a nation to make the Muslim women educationally empowered.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Review of related literature in the area of enquiry is a crucial component of the research process. A review of related literature and previous researches in the present study is attempted below:

Kumar, S. S. and Palanisamy, M. (2013), conducted a study on, "Impact of Education on Women Empowerment in India". Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. This study examines the impact of education on women empowerment and also aims to find out the effect of Indian Women Education during Vedic Period, Buddhist Period, Muslim Period, Indian Women Impact of Education during British Period, and Indian Women Impact of Education during Modern Period. This study tries to find out the Reform in Women Education, Status of Women in India and etc.

Hossain Md. I. (2012) made a study on, "Muslim Women of West Bengal: An Enquiry into their Minority Status". The study is to examine the socio-economic situation of the largest religious minority population compared to other religious minorities of the state and the status of Muslim women of West Bengal in particular. From this study I have acquainted with the socio-economic status of Muslims in various districts of West Bengal and the factors which remain barriers in their development and social change and the situation of Muslim women of West Bengal.

Mukhopadhyay, H. (2008) conducted a study on, "The Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in a District of West Bengal, India: Reflections on a Survey of Women". The objective of the study was to find out the role of education in the empowerment of women in the district of Malda in West Bengal. The study was done by survey method. From the conclusion of this study I have acquainted that, women's status was inferior to men's status in Malda district of West Bengal.

Rahaman, H. & Barman, H. (2015) conducted a study on, "Muslims and Education of West Bengal: Theory to Pragmatism". The main objective of the study was to highlight the educational status of Muslims of Bengal. It was a sociological study and the study mainly based upon the secondary data. From the conclusion of the study I have acquainted that, for the socio-economical development of Muslims of West Bengal, the government and NGOs have to focus on their educational development.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The main objective of the study is to find out the level of empowerment of Muslim women in West Bengal with special reference to Murshidabad district. The study also intends to find out the level of literacy among Muslim women in Murshidabad districts of West Bengal.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this paper are:

- To find out the rate of literacy among Muslim women of Murshidabad district at primary, secondary and higher education level.
- To estimate the extent of participation of Muslim women of Murshidabad district in Political, economic and social spheres of development.

- To estimate the levels of empowerment among Muslim women of Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following research questions were laid down by the researcher for conducting the study:-

- What are the rate of literacy among Muslim women of Murshidabad district at the Primary, Secondary and Higher education level?
- To what extent the participation of Muslim women of Murshidabad district in Political, economic and social spheres of development?
- What are the levels of empowerment among Muslim women in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal?

METHODOLOGY

This paper is theoretical and descriptive in nature. More specifically it is a social survey type research study. Total 400 Muslim women of Murshidabad district has been selected as sample for the study. Samples were selected purposively from the district of Murshidabad. House to house survey was conducted for collection of data. In this study, a self constructed questionnaire was used by the researcher for collection of data. The tool used in this research study named as, 'The Scale of Empowerment'.

The primary data for this research study were collected with the help of questionnaire from Muslim married women and some widow of Murshidabad districts in West Bengal. Secondary data were collected from various books, journals and from different websites of the Internet. Some simple calculation like percentage and average are used in the present study.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Analysis of Data Pertaining to Objective -1

To find out the rate of literacy among Muslim women of Murshidabad district at primary, secondary and higher education level.

Murshidabad District: (400 Samples)

Table 1: Showing the Rate of Literacy among Muslim Women in Murshidabad District of West Bengal

Muslim women	Illiterate	Primary	Secondary	Higher Education	Total
No. of sample	11	192	140	57	400
Percentage	2.75%	48%	35%	14.25%	100%

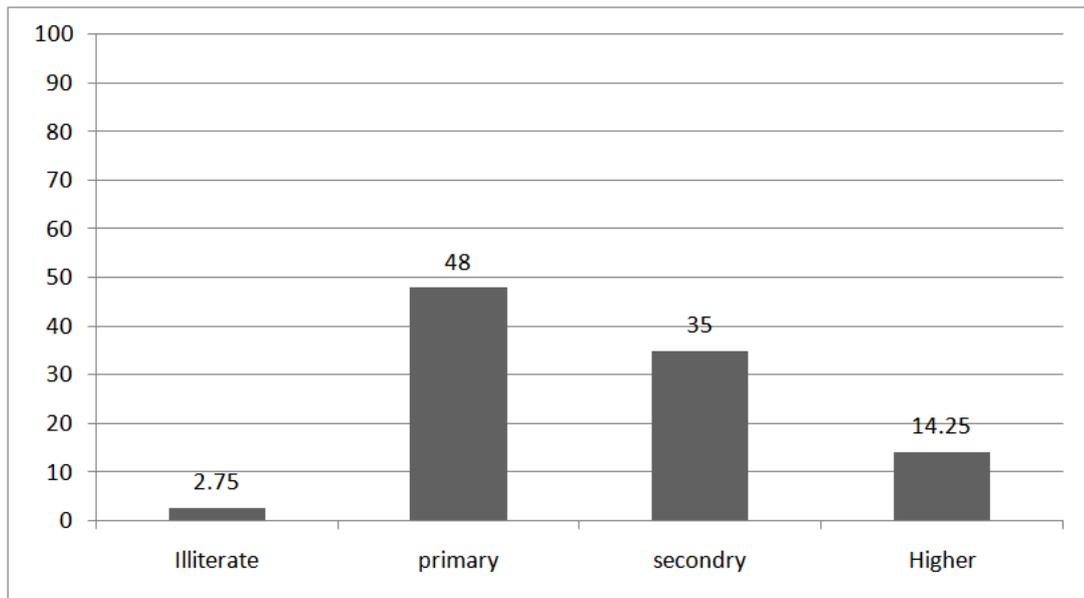


Figure 1: Clearly Indicates the Literacy Rate among Muslim Women of Murshidabad District in Primary, Secondary and Higher Education Level

Interpretation

Results indicate that most of the selected Muslim women belong to primary education level, but it is interesting to note that only 2.75% women belong to illiterate category. A significant trend has been found in the rate of literacy in the Murshidabad district. Therefore it may be clearly mention that the Muslim women of the study area are aware of education and its importance.

Analysis of Data Pertaining to Objective -2

To estimate the extent of participation of Muslim women of Murshidabad district in Political, economic and social spheres of development.

Murshidabad District: (400 samples)

Table 2: Showing the Extent of Participation of Muslim Women in Different Occupations in Murshidabad District of West Bengal

Muslim Women	Political	Economical	Social Worker	House Wife	Total
No. of sample	30	79	49	242	400
Percentage	7.5%	19.75%	12.25%	60.5%	100%

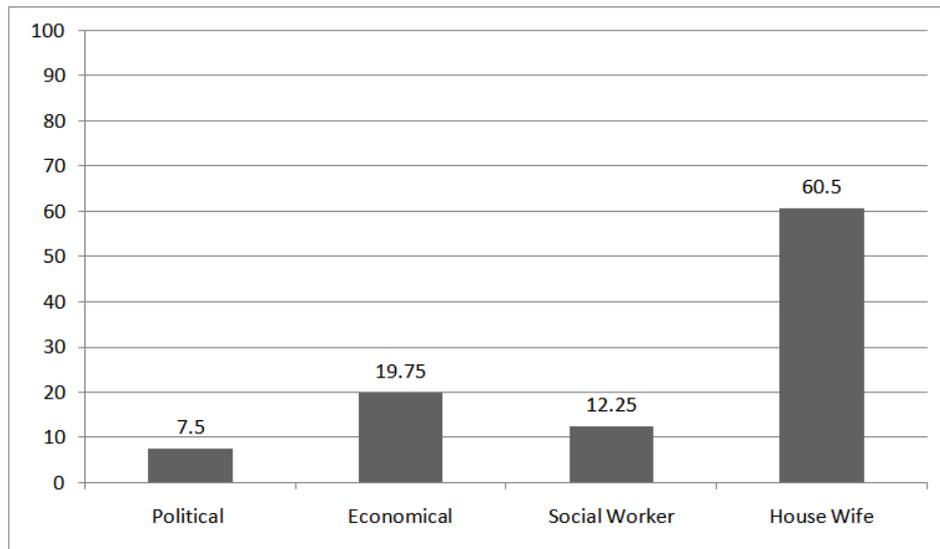


Figure 2: Reveals the Trends of Activities Carried Out by the Muslim Women Selected for the Study

Interpretation

Results indicate that the occupations of most of the Muslim women of Murshidabad district are nothing but household activities. More than 60% women working as house wives, where as very less percentage of women were participating in political activities.

Analysis of Data Pertaining to Objective -3

To estimate the levels of empowerment among Muslim women of Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

Murshidabad District: (400 samples)

Projected Score:-

Max projected score- $10 \times 3 = 30$

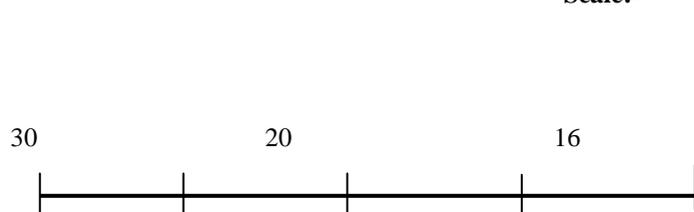
Average projected score- $10 \times 2 = 20$

Min projected score- $10 \times 1 = 10$

Total no. of items = 10

Rating point = 3

Scale:-



30-25: Highly empowered

25-20: Empowered

20-15: Low empowered

15-10: Very poor empowered

Average Level of Empowerment among Muslim women in Murshidabad District

Table 3: Showing the Level of Empowerment among Muslim Women in Murshidabad District of West Bengal

Empowerment	No. of Muslim Women	Average Empowerment Score	Trend
Social	400	18.65	Low Empowered
Economical	400	20.11	Empowered
Educational	400	23.25	Empowered
Political	400	19.43	Low Empowered

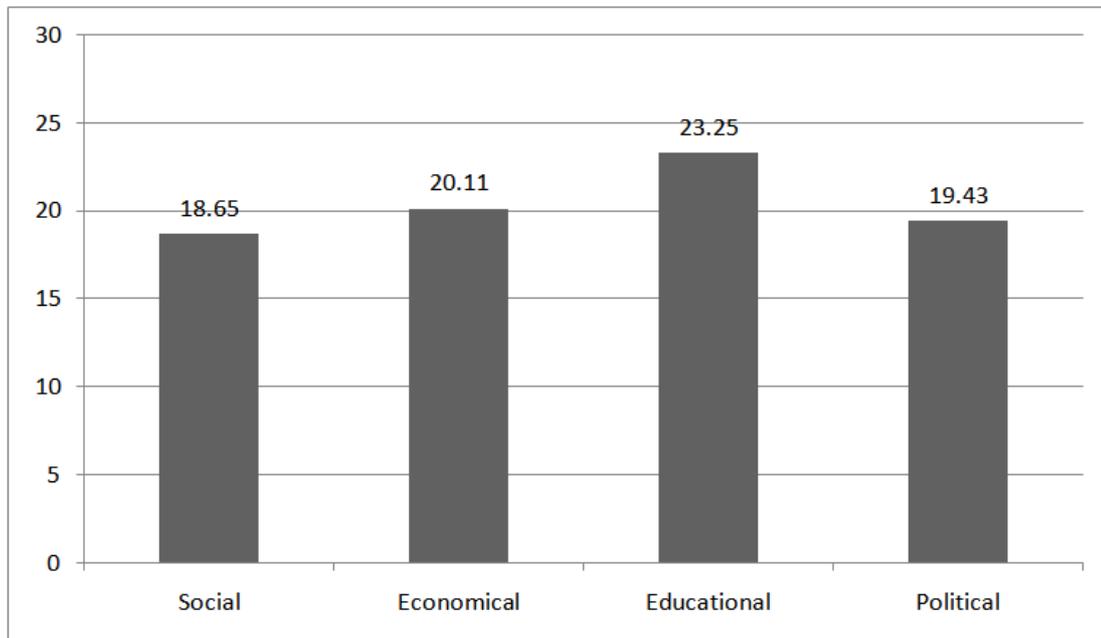


Figure 3: Clearly Indicates the Level of Empowerment among Muslim Women in Murshidabad District of West Bengal

Interpretation

To estimate the level of empowerment among Muslim women in the study area, an empowerment scale was used. Based on the number of items and the rating score, projected value of empowerment was estimated. The scale reveals that the person who has obtained the score as per category mentioned in the scale to be taken as his degree of empowerment. Accordingly empowerment in four categories of 400 Muslim women of Murshidabad district was estimated.

Result reveals that, the average rate of social empowerment of Muslim women in the study area is not satisfactory. They belong to low empowered category with reference to social areas. But the Muslim women are economically empowered. In case of educational empowerment, they secure maximum score. However, the Muslim women in the district of Murshidabad are not highly empowered about education. Muslim women in the study area are least interested about political activities.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings Pertaining to Objective 1

The levels of education of Muslim women selected for the study have been estimated in four categories, i.e. illiterate, primary, secondary and higher education level. Most of the selected women belong to primary education level, but it is interesting to note that only 2.75% Muslim women in Murshidabad district belong to illiterate category. Significant advancement has been found in the trends of education levels.

Findings Pertaining to Objective 2

The survey on Muslim women in the study area concludes that, the occupation of most of the Muslim women is household activities. More than 60% Muslim women working as house wives, where as very less percentage of women have active participation in political activities. Less than 20% Muslim women of Murshidabad district are engaged in economical activities and services.

Findings Pertaining to Objective 3

The objective concludes that, the average rate of social empowerment of Muslim women in the study area is not satisfactory. They belong to low empowered category with reference to social areas. However the Muslim women of Murshidabad district are economically empowered. They are not highly empowered in education. Another issue has come out i.e., the Muslim women are least interested about political activities as they are not properly empowered in political issues.

From the discussion we can conclude that, education is very much essential for empowering Muslim women in our society. Muslim women empowerment is a powerful tool for the change of any society. Muslim women empowerment is an initiative to develop our nation. The researcher observed in the study area that the Muslim women are least interested about political activities as they are not properly empowered in political issues. So, it is the duty of the state and country to give proper education toward politics. The Government of India thus came up in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as, 'Women Empowerment Year' focus on making gender equality in our country.

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