

Effect of Socio-economic status on educational and employment orientation among Muslim women

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Abstract

The present research was an effort to examine the effects of socio-economic status (SES) in relation to educational and employment attitude of Muslim women. The subjects were 540 Muslim women in the age group of 18 to 25 years. Results have shown that Socio-Economic Status has significant effects on Muslim women's attitude towards education and employment. Highest educational and employment orientation has been found in women of Middle socio-economic status while lowest employment orientation has been secured by Low SES Muslim women.

Keywords: Socio-economic status, Educational orientation, Employment orientation, Muslim, Women

Introduction

The minority sections of the Indian population have always attracted the attention of the successive governments and all concerned with the planning of socio-economic growth of the nation. The status of the minorities on the scale of socioeconomic development is a significant index of development in any national society. About 19.5% of the total Indian population constitutes the minorities. Among them the Muslim minorities is the largest segment with 13.4% of the total national population. Though literacy rate among Indian Muslims has been reported to be about 60% and 84% of the Muslims belong to the poor and vulnerable group. (National Commission Report, August 2007). As far as employment is concerned, in the highest cadre government jobs, only 3% of the Muslims is in the IAS cadre, 1.8% in IFS, 4% in IPS, 4.5% in Railways, 6% in Police constables, 4.4% in Health and 6.5% in transport. Similarly only 36% of the Indian Muslims are engaged in agriculture, livestock, forest etc, 17% in manufacturing, 20% in Wholesale and Retail trade, 8% in transport, storage and corporation, 8% in the construction and 11% in other industrial sectors including transport, storage, communication, finance, insurance, community and social services.

The status of Muslim Women which constitutes 48% of the Muslim population in India, is far more alarming. The Muslim Women in general are a deprived lot-educationally, socially, as well as economically. As per 2001 census, literacy rate of Indian Muslim Women is 50.1%. In the rural areas, literacy rate is 42.7% and in the urban areas, it is 63.2%. In addition, the illiteracy rate among the Muslim Women is 49.9% (Rural-57.3%, Urban- 36.8%) According to Planning Commission Report, only 1% of Muslim Women in Urban areas are graduates. In rural areas, women graduates are too few in number to even register on a survey (ndtv.com, Nov 5, 2006). The statistics above indicate that Muslim Women have not been able to take full advantage in the society.

Of the total Muslim Women population in India, 85.9% have been recorded as house-wife and only 14.1% Muslim Women are working women. A majority of them are employed in the rural areas, primarily as agricultural laborers (30.8%) and cultivators (22%). In the urban areas, a part of the Muslim Women workers are employed in the unorganized sector, i.e. in household industries (19.3%), petty trades and services, buildings and construction etc (27.9%). It has been said that educational and socio-economic development of the women section in any society is key to the socio-economic development of the society as a whole. In Bihar, about 16.5% of the state population is Muslim, which is 9.9% of the total Muslim population of India. In this figure (16.5%), the share of Muslim women is 8% which is 4.8% of the total Muslim population in India. Bihar has the highest numbers of Muslims in India, after Uttar Pradesh, and is characterized by widespread poverty and inequality. Muslims rank among the poorest communities in the state. 87% of the Muslim population in Bihar lives in rural areas and the rest 13% in towns and cities. Only 35.9% of the Muslim households in rural Bihar have cultivable land. The percentage of rural Bihari Muslims actually operating some land is even lower, at 28.8%. Literacy rate among Muslims of Bihar as per reports is about 30%. In this, the share of Muslim women literacy rate is 31.5. The work participation rate of Muslim women in Bihar is only 15.1%. Early marriage is also very common among the Muslims. It creates problems in acquiring education for women.

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The statistics above indicate that Muslim women have not been able to take the full advantage in the society. It has been recognized that education and employment are the two basic factors in the development of any social community. Several studies by the Hyderabad born, US based, Omar Khalidi, including 'Indian Muslims since Independence' (Vikas, 1995) and 'Khaki and Ethnic violence in India' (Three Essays Collective, 2003) have highlighted the systematic exclusion of Muslims in India's public services. A study by Delhi based researchers, Ritu Menon and Zoya Hassan, entitled 'Unequal citizens: A study of some Muslim Women in India' (Oxford University press, 2004), similarly emphasized poverty and discrimination as causes of the 'backwardness' of the Muslim population as a whole.

Safia Iqbal (1986) says in her book (Women and Islamic law) that the greatest problems discerned by the Muslim women are that women lack proper knowledge of their faith, and this is why Muslim men sometimes mistreat their women. (Sharma, 2002).

In order to harness India's economic potential, it is imperative that Muslims along with the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are brought into the developmental fold. The Government has made some efforts during the past year to address various aspects of Muslim deprivation. Debates continued on the type of affirmative action for Muslims, even before the Ranganath Mishra Committee revealed that Muslims could be provided with the benefit of reservation. Then came the 2007-08 Budget announcements- exclusive scholarships to poor and deserving Muslims, increased allocation for the "Minorities Development and Finance Corporation" and the "Maulana Azad Education Foundation".

The Sachchar Committee recommendations were aimed at effecting systemic changes in institutional functioning and improvement in governance, essential to enhance the inclusiveness of the Muslims. But the poor performance of the Ministry for Minority Affairs is shocking; it has failed to deliver any noteworthy service. The action taken report(ATR) which was presented by the Minister for Minority Affairs (MMA), recommends geographic targeting- 90 minority districts identified to provide "basic amenities and employment opportunities." Only about 30 percent of Muslims are covered, and the question is, what happens to the remaining 70 percent?

Aims of the research - The main goal of the present research was to study the effect of the socio-economic class upon the attitude towards education and employment among young Muslim in the special context of Bihar. Socio-economic class has been treated as independent variable. Educational orientation and employment orientation in Muslim women have been treated as dependent variables.

Rationale of the study- The political and the government will apart, there may be specific social psychological conditions operating as constraints and obstructing the participation of young Muslim women in the educational, employment and general process of economic growth and development. The present research has been planned to identify such factors of constraints and to examine how the participation of Muslim women in the process of education, employment and economic development can be facilitated and increased.

Research Questions- There are certain social psychological, socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions which affects the educational and employment orientation in Muslim women. Socio-economic status of a person has a certain effect on her social condition. Persons belonging to lower socio-economic class face more problems in compare to high socio-economic class. On the other side Muslim women from high class are secluded by Purdah and because of this they cannot go outside for education. And Middle class, to which majority of people belong, have its traditional values. It is not clear that which class women have more problems in acquiring education and employment? To what extent the socio-economic class of Muslim affects their education and employment? Muslim women from lower sections had to work outside their houses for their livelihood. But why they don't think about their education and economic independence. It is interesting to know that what are the opinions of Muslim women of different socio-economic class about their education and employment?

The basic problem with the Muslim women in India, particularly in Bihar, is the lack of education which deprives them from employment opportunity. The question is how Muslim women in Bihar can be made educationally oriented? How they can be motivated to take up modern education and gain the necessary skills for development? These are some of the issues taken up in this research for analysis.

Research Variables-

(A) Independent Variable :—

- (i) Socio-Economic Status — In Indian Society, there are different socio-economic class. People from different socio-economic status have different resources, life styles and cultural values. It affects their views about different aspects of life.

(B) Dependent variables-

- (i) Educational Orientation—In the Present study, educational orientation have been studied as the desire/ attitude/inclination for education through which one can develops his cognitive ability and social perception.
- (ii) Employment Orientation—In the present research employment orientation has been treated as the desire/ attitude/inclination or orientation to be employed and to get freedom for own decision making.

Hypothesis of the study- The main hypotheses of the present research is- “The Muslim Women from different socio-economic classes will differ on educational orientation and employment orientation.”

Methodology :

- (A) Subject:-The subjects were 540 young Muslim women in the age group of 18 to 25 years. They were either college or university students. Among the total subjects, 180 were from High Socio Economic Status, 180 were from Middle Socio Economic Status and 180 were from Low Socio Economic Status. The Subjects were selected from the different Muslim localities of Patna Commissionary.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Muslim students who are studying in colleges or University departments of Patna.
- Age range between 18-25 years.
- Belonging to High, Middle or Low Socio Economic Status.

Exclusion Criteria:

Any history of Psychiatric or Psychosomatic disorder.

- (B) Research Tools:-The two main dependent measures of “educational orientation” and 'attitude towards employment' have been measured by means of two separate questionnaires. One questionnaire named Attitude towards employment scale” and the other questionnaire named “Muslim women orientation towards education” Both questionnaires have been structured and developed by Dr. Kartik Jha and Saba Farheen.

Muslim Women Orientation Towards Education (MWOTE)- It consists of 19 items which altogether provide the measurement of educational orientation in Muslim women. Each item is associated with five point scale. All items are related to the different aspects of education, especially in the context of Muslim women. In the 19 items, 15 were positively worded and remaining 4 were negatively worded. The responses were to be obtained on five point response format. The positively worded items of the questionnaire were given the score of 5,4,3,2,1 and the negatively worded items scored in the reverse way at 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Scores on this questionnaire vary from 19 to 95. The more high the score, the more orientation towards education and the lower score indicates lower educational orientation.

Attitude Towards Employment Scale (A.T.E.S.)- It consists of 16 items which measures the subjects' attitude towards employment. Each item is associated with five point scale. In this scale, the last five items describe about the subject's family support towards her employment attitude. In the 16 items, 10 items were positively worded and remaining 6 items were negatively worded. The responses were to be obtained on 5 point response format. The positively worded items of the questionnaire were given the score of 5,4,3,2,1 and the negatively worded items scored in the reverse way at 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Scores on this questionnaire vary from 16 to 80. The more high the score, the more orientation towards Employment and the lower score indicates lower employment orientation.

- (C) Personal Data Sheet- A personal data sheet was used to collect the information about the

- subjects 'Socio-economic status'. This sheet has been attached along with the scales.
- (D) **Data Collection Procedure:-** Each subject was approached individually. Before recording the responses, a strong rapport was established with the subjects to get their free and frank views/opinions on various items of the two scales. Each subject has been approached individually. The printed instruction on the both scales was read out to them. After that they were asked to respond on all the items of the scales. If the subject had any problem in understanding any of the items, it was duly clarified to her.
- (E) **Data Analysis-** When all the subjects had given their responses then subjects were identified for different treatment conditions and grouped together. The responses of the subjects were decoded and scores of the subjects in different conditions on each of the two questionnaires as well as over all scores on educational orientation and employment orientation were computed. The obtained scores were subjected to factorial analysis in a manner so that empirical testing of proposed hypotheses could become possible.

Results: Results of the present study have been displayed through Table-1

Table-1

Mean scores on educational and employment orientation of subjects from different socio-economic status

	SES	Educational orientation			Employment orientation		
		Mean	SD	t-ratio	Mean	SD	t-ratio
a	High SES(N=180)	71.92	6.29	a-b 6.01 P<.001	55.26	8.35	a-b 5.49 P<.001
b	Middle SES(N=180)	76.01	6.63	b-c 5.84 P<.001	60.15	8.66	b-c 8.05 P<.001
c	Low SES(N=180)	71.63	7.83	a-c 0.39 P<.01	51.93	10.54	a-c 3.33 P<.001
	Total (N=540)	73.18	7.25		55.78	9.6	

Table- 1 illustrates the mean scores of subjects in the High/Middle/Low socio-economics conditions on the two dependent measures. The significant mean differences have also been shown in the table. It may be seen from the table that mean educational orientation score is significantly higher in the case of middle socio-economic condition than either in the high or in the low socio-economic conditions. Noticeably, while the middle class subjects have demonstrated significantly higher educational orientation than the subjects of either high or low classes, no significant difference on mean educational orientation has been found between the high and the low class subjects. It appears that Muslim families of lower SES have little motivation for children education, particularly the girl child. It is not surprising that the literacy rate among the women of Bihar is only 31.5%. It is largely due to socio-economic deprivations. On the other hand, Muslim women from higher classes are secluded by purdah and more conservative about religious values. (Upreti, 2000).

The middle class Muslim women, in recent years seem to have come out of their conservative orthodox cultural boundaries. In fact, the Indian Middle class as such has shown upward mobility and the Muslim women from middle class are in no exception. It is therefore not surprising if the middle class Muslim girls have demonstrated stronger orientation towards education and employment. The high class Muslim girls,

perhaps, because of traditional legacy, should show low attitude. These results confirm the hypothesis of the study.

Major findings of the study

1. Socio-economic status may be an important factor in the educational and employment orientation among young educated Muslim women.
2. Subjects from Middle socio economic status have displayed highest level of educational orientation as compared to subjects of High and Low SES.
3. Subjects from Middle socio economic status have displayed highest level of employment orientation as compared to subjects of High and Low SES.
4. Subjects from High and Low SES have secured equal mean score on educational orientation.
5. Muslim women from Low SES have gained the lowest mean score on employment orientation in comparison with that of High and Middle SES.

Suggestion

In the immediate future, some steps are necessary for the upliftment of Muslim Women in India. They are as follows:–

1. The Muslim Women need “motivation, desire and efforts” for their education and employment.
2. The Government should provide trained personnel and an institutional mechanism to implement and monitor its programs. In education, affirmative action also entails the two steps of monitoring and correcting. If monitoring reveals, corrective steps may be undertaken.
3. The Government service delivery procedures must use population shares at the “Program specified operational levels” so as to ensure maximum coverage and provide a sense of equity.
4. The Government should name to adopt a multi pronged policy to tackle the problems of Muslim Women simultaneously, such as reservation, girl's educational institutions, increase Budgetary allocation and others.
5. It is essential to implement legislations that protect Muslim Women's rights by advertisement, plays, films etc. It will develop the feeling of security in Muslim Women so that they can go outside the home for educational and employment attainment.

Conclusion

Conclusively, it can be stated that the Socio-economic class has prominent effect upon the attitude towards education and employment among young Muslim women in the special context of Bihar.

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