



EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN BIRBHUM DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL

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ABSTRACT

Education of women in particular is important for the development of a society. This is not only because women constitute half of the population and therefore they naturally have a right to education but also because women's education has far reaching impact on the society as a whole. India is a country with diversities inhabiting various ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious groups. After Independence, much emphasis was given to women's education, including Muslim women. Past researches on socio-economic profile of Muslims confirm that Muslims, especially women, remain socially, economically and educationally backward. The committee has clearly revealed that only 4 per cent Muslim population is educated and it is the most educationally and economically backward minority in the country. According to Census 2011 in Birbhum district 37.71% population is belongs to minority section and out of this 37.06% are Muslim population. The literacy rate of Muslim female is 57.47% while the literacy rate of female in general is 64.14%. This paper aims to explore the present educational status of Muslim women in Birbhum district and also the causes of educational backwardness.

KEY WORDS: Education, Empowerment, Enrolment, Drop Out.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the basic and fundamental requirement of the citizens of a nation. Education empowers a woman to participate in political and economic decision-making in the community as well as in the household and thereby enable her to participate in development efforts in both the family and the community. Women are important part of society, without their proper education a society cant developed. Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes. Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in themale-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. According to the 2011 Census, the male literacy rate is 82.14 while female literacy rate is 65.46 only. In Islam there is no priority of men over woman to acquire education. Both are equally encouraged to acquire knowledge. Islam attaches immense importance to the acquisition and extension of knowledge. Islam has always considered learning at least a useful accessory to become a good Muslim, and as necessary condition which helps to develop their faculties Islam holds the person who seeks knowledge in high esteem and Quran is full of verses which praise learned. Islam has always considered and advocated education of its followers as one of its most preferred activities. However, the high status and equal treatment granted to woman by the Islam which prevailed during early Islamic period did not last long. The status of Muslim woman deteriorated and they were denied of their rights. Although Indian constitution provides equal opportunity to the Muslim women they are still educationally backward. It is a matter of concern that why they are educationally backward, what their present educational status is and what are the solution of the problems

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the educational status and attainment of Muslim women of Birbhum district
2. To find out the factors affecting the education of Muslim women of Birbhum District.

METHODOLOGY

As per the nature and demand of the problem Descriptive Survey Method was followed for conducting the study.

POPULATION

The population of the study is-

1. Muslim women student of Birbhum district.
2. Muslim Parents of Birbhum District.
3. Muslim Households Birbhum District.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

The followings samples are drawn purposively:

1. 120 Muslim girl students from six schools of Rampurhat Sub-division.
2. 50 Muslim Parents from five villages/towns of Rampurhat Sub-division.
3. 100 households from five villages/towns of Rampurhat Sub-division

EDUCATIONAL STATUS AND ATTAINMENT OF MUSLIM WOMEN

Educational status does not refer only literacy level. It also includes educational attainment, educational aspiration, consciousness about education, retention rate, dropout rate etc. Rampurhat sub-division of Birbhum district is Muslim concentrated area. According to Census 2011, 48% population belongs to Muslim population. The overall literacy rate of Birbhum District is 70% whereas female literacy rate is 64%.

It was an interesting fact that in Birbhum district the Muslim Female literacy rate was 57.47% which was far below the Hindu Female literacy rate i.e. 62.12%.

Table 1: Literates Female Population

FEMALE POPULATION	HINDU	MUSLIM
Percentage of Literates	62.12	57.47

Source: Census Report, 2011

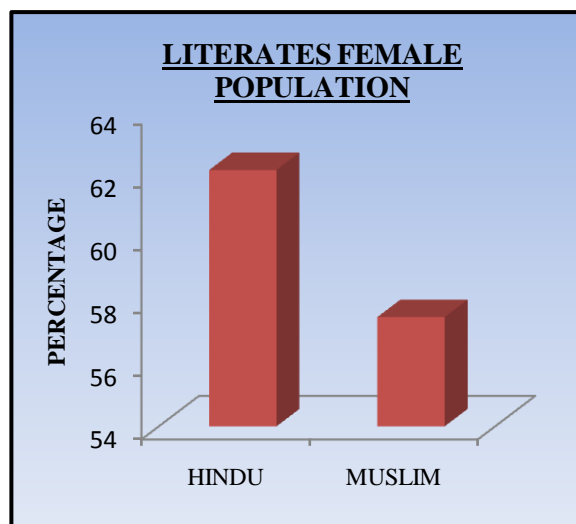


Fig 1: Literates Female Population

In Rampurhat sub-division Muslim male literacy rate was 64.41% and Muslim Female literacy rate was only 57.47%. In Islam there is no discrimination between male and female. But the educational status of Muslim women was backward than Muslim Men.

Table2: Sex Wise Muslim Literates

LITERATE MUSLIMS	PERCENTAGE
Male	64.41
Female	57.47

Source: Field Survey, 2017

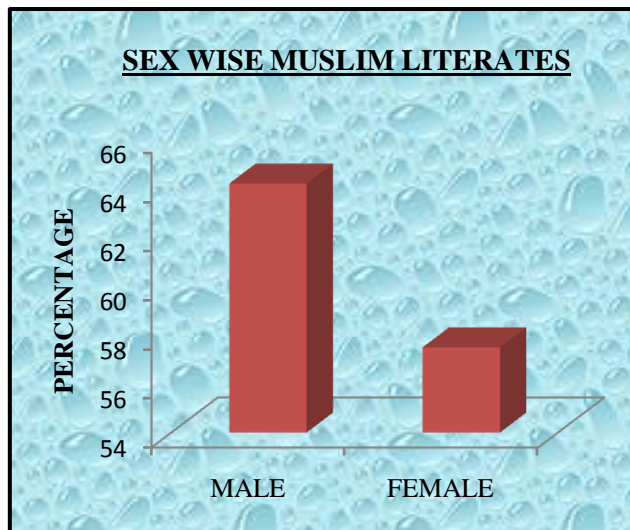


Fig 2: Sex Wise Muslim Literates

AGE WISE FEMALE LITERATES

It is an important aspect of educational scenario of this study area. A detailed survey showed that about 52% literate Muslim female belongs to the age group greater than 25. As the female population belongs to the age group >25 is maximum, the literates belongs to this age group was also maximum. The age group 5-10 contributed 10% of the total literates Muslim women. 7% of the literate females were belongs to 11-15 age group. The age group 16-20 contributed 20% of the total literate population. 11% of literate female population was under the age group 21-25.

Table 3: Age Wise Muslim Female Literates

AGE GROUP	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE LITERATES
5-10	10
11-15	7
16-20	20
21-25	11
> 25	52

Source: Field Survey - 2017



Fig 3: Age Wise Muslim Female Literates

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

Educational qualification of any area reflects the developmental status of that area. For the growth of any area primary education is not enough, higher education is needed for the betterment of any society. The household survey conducted revealed the status of the educational qualification of Muslim women as follows:

- About 15% of girls studied up to class IV.
- The literate women of about 25% ended their study at class VIII level.
- 30% of the literate women studied up to class X
- 15% of the literates studied up to XII.
- About 9% of the literate women were able to achieve graduation degree.
- Only 4% of the literate Muslim women completed their Masters degree.
- The percentage of literates going for professional education was significantly low i.e. only 2%.

Table 4: Educational Qualification of Muslim Women

EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION	IV	VIII	X	XII	BA	MA	PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION
Percentage of Literate Women	15	25	30	15	9	4	2

Source: Field Survey - 2017

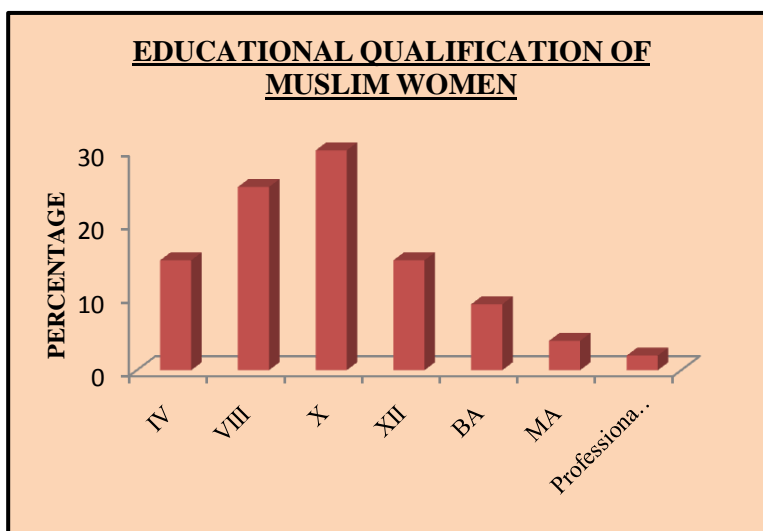


Fig 4: Educational Qualification of Muslim Women

It is clear from above discussion that maximum numbers of literate Muslim women were educated up to class X. Most of the literates only complete their education for fulfill their minimum needs.

Most of the girls cannot go for BA, MA or higher education due to their social and financial background. Most of the literate women after completing their study at X or XII level got married. The fortunate students who complete higher education get lots of support from their family.

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION:

With regard to Educational Aspiration, it is found that –

- 43% of the respondents wanted to complete Higher Secondary education.

- 30% of the students wanted to get graduate degree.
- 25% of the respondents had an aspiration to complete master degree.
- Their aspiration for training and professional course was very low i.e. only 2%. The data reveals that maximum wants to get basic education. They did not want to go for higher education. Family pressure, economic condition, social problems were responsible for their low aspiration level.

Table 5: Educational Aspiration of Muslim Women

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION	H.S.	B.A.	M.A.	B.ED.	PROFESSIONAL COURSE
Percentage of Women	43	30	25	2	2

Source: Field Survey - 2017

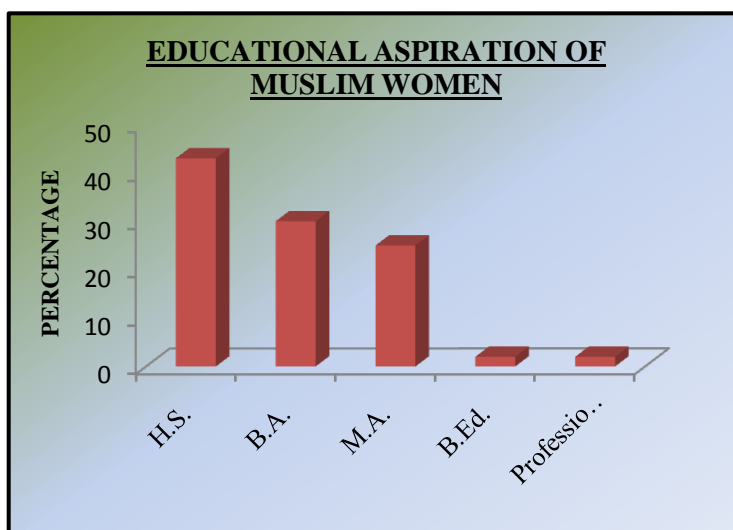


Fig 5: Educational Aspiration of Muslim Women

ATTITUDE TOWARDS STREAM SELECTION

- 81% of girl students preferred Arts stream after Madhyamik examination.
- 19% of girl students preferred Science stream. No one wants to get admission in Commerce.
- 91% parents preferred Arts for their daughter.
- Only 9% of the parents were in favour of their children choosing Science stream.
- Parents had misconception about daughter’s education in Science stream like it was costly and they thought that girls cannot go for Science as they are not meritorious like boys.

DROPOUT RATE

The dropout rate in secondary education, collected from six schools was 6%. In recent times the incentives given by Government such as free books, uniform, scholarship helped in reduction of dropout rate. The school authorities were so conscious about dropout rate. Whenever students did not coming to the schools, Headmasters usually went to their home and searched for the reason and brought them back to the schools.

Enrolment of Muslim Girl Students in class V- X

The number of Muslim girl students enrolled in class V to X of the six schools from the year 2014 to 2017 was gradually increased. In 2014 the number of Muslim girl student of class V to X was 915 which increased to 1098 in 2017.

Table 6: Enrolment of Muslim Girl Students of Class V to X

YEAR	ENROLMENT
2014	915
2015	1042
2016	1075
2017	1098

Source: Field Survey – 201

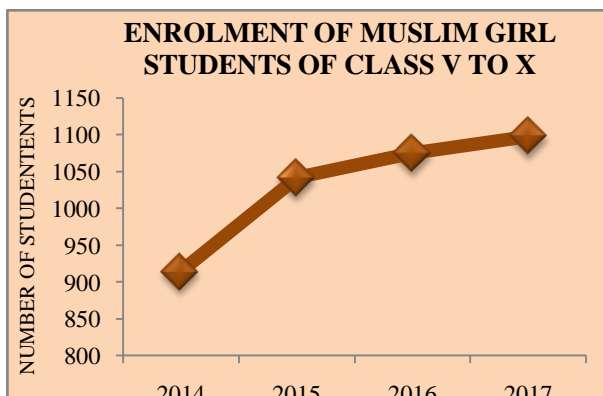
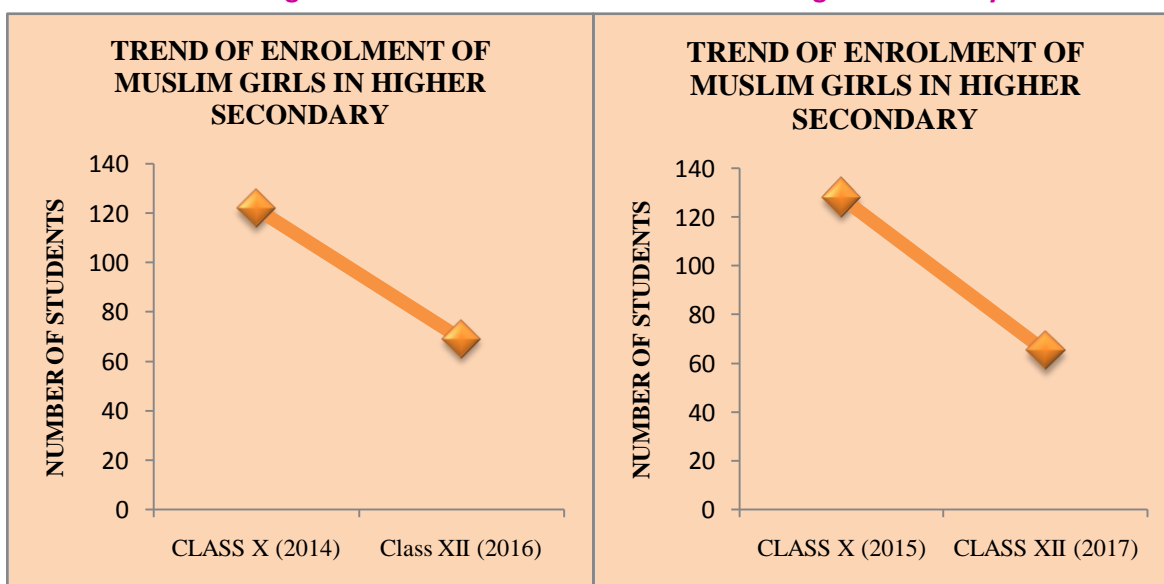


Fig 6: Enrolment of Muslim Girl Students of Class V to X

Enrolment of Muslim Girl Students in Higher Secondary Education

The trend of enrolment of girls in higher secondary explained that number of girl students completing/appearing in higher secondary was less than the number of student appeared in Madhyamik examination two years ago. The number of students of class X of the six schools in the year 2014 was 122 but the number of students decreased to only 69 in 2016 when they

Fig7:Trend of Enrolment of Muslim Girls in Higher Secondary



appeared in class XII examination. The number of students of class X in the year 2015 was 128 but the number of students decreased to only 65 in 2017 when they appeared in class XII examination. It is clear that large portion girl students after passing Madhyamik examination did not go for higher secondary education due to several reasons such as family support, economic condition, and social factor.

FACTORS AFFECTING EDUCATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN

After discussing with students, parents and experts some factors were identified which affects education of Muslim girls. These are-

i. Lack of Parental Support: The negative attitude of parents toward girls' education is a major factor. Education of their daughters was taken as a burden. As after marriage they will go to their husband's home, the parents will not get any profit from their daughter's education. Most of the parents were keen for their son's academic life. They considered them as their future support. The male child got much importance and involvement than girl child. Besides, it was believed that there will be some problems in the marriage of highly educated girls.

ii. Economic Condition: Economic condition was found to be the main constraints for the development of girl education. Most of the families were poor and not able to send their daughter for education. After completing the primary education girls helped in household work. The poor economic condition restricted the meritorious students for getting higher education.

iii. Child Marriage: Many social reformers fought for the eradication child marriage from the Indian society in 19th Century. But in 21st Century this evil is still existed in Indian society. Among the Muslims of Birbhum District it was also practiced. For this child marriage the education of girls had to be stopped in the middle of study.

iv. Misinterpretation of Islamic Thoughts: Islam does not neglect women education. The women are getting respect and equal position like men. Some orthodox people misinterpret the Islamic thoughts and make the thoughts barrier for getting of the girls.

v. Social Factor: Society and societal norms have great impact on the educational scenario of the area. The orthodoxy of the people for female education was a negative impact of on the educational development. A section of Muslim people send their students to Madarsah for getting religious education as well as formal education.

vi. Negative Attitude towards Girls Education: There was negative attitude towards girl's education among Muslims. The most important reason is that there is difficulty in finding educated groom if the girl becomes highly educated.

vi. Preference of Local Teacher: It was observed that parents preferred local teacher in the school in which they send their daughters. They felt safe to send girls to the schools if local teacher was present there. Besides, girl students also preferred local teacher in the school to whom they can share their problems easily and education become more effective. But some parents and students think that not the local teacher but the attitude of the teacher for giving education and attitude of student for getting education was a main factor.

vii. Preference of Girls' School: Most of the parents preferred only girls' school for sending their daughters. They highly opposed co education schools. They felt safe to send their daughters in girl's school.

viii. Lack of Female teacher: Lack of female teacher in all the schools is a main factor that affected the education of Muslim girl students. Parents felt safe to send their daughters to the school if there is female teacher in the school. Girl students also preferred female teacher. They felt free to share their problems to female teachers.

ix. Distance of School: Distance of the schools was one of the factors that affected education of girls. Parents felt insecure to send their daughters at distant schools. Due to distance of the school they did not go for higher education. Maximum numbers of higher secondary schools of the district are far away of habitations of almost of 50% of girl students.

x. School Environment: School environment is an important factor that affects education of Muslim girls. Physical environment has to be maintained favorable to students in terms of infrastructure, adequate light and ventilation, student teacher ratio, hygiene and safe environment. Due to unfavorable condition students

o not want go school. Parents wants safe environment. The absence of such environment sometimes creates barrier for getting education. But all the parents and students were not aware of this factor.

FINDINGS

- On the basis of the analysis of the data it can be pointed out that the educational status of Muslim women is backward than Hindu women and Muslim Men. Muslim Female literacy rate is 57.47% which is far below the Hindu Female literacy rate i.e. 62.12%. Muslim male literacy rate is 64.41% and Muslim Female literacy rate is only 57.47%.
- As the numbers of Muslim women were maximum in age group greater than 25, 52% literate Muslim female belong to this age group.
- Maximum number of literate women studied upto class X Only 4% of the literate Muslim women completed their Masters degree and 2% complete professional education.
- Educational aspiration of the girls of the area is not very high.
- The dropout rate in secondary education was 6%.
- The number of girls students completing or appearing in higher secondary was less than the number of student appeared in Madhyamik examination two years ago.
- Maximum Muslim girl students and parents thinks that lack of parental support, economic condition, and social factor, religious factor are major factors affecting the education of Muslim girls.

CONCLUSION

From the study it can be concluded that Muslim women are educationally backward in Birbhum district. Their literacy level is lower than Hindu Women. Any society cannot be developed without the education of women. In Islam there is no discrimination between girls and boys. But still Muslim girls are backward. Several social, religious, economic and family factors are responsible for this situation. Society and parents do not support Girls education in many cases. Parents should be more conscious about their daughter's education. They must give equal opportunity to their daughters for continuing education. Besides society should be flexible and with changing time should adopt modernity, reject the orthodoxy, superstitions related to the education of Muslim girls. Stereotype mentality of parents and members of the society should be removed so that Muslim girls can get proper education. Muslim women should get opportunities for completion of their education because it not only plays a significant role to empower women, but also in encouraging self esteem, confidence and equal participation in all work of life. The educated, employed and empowered Muslim women should come forward as the models and establish NGOs in order to guide and create awareness among the deprived Muslim women about the opportunities available.

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