



Evaluation Of Educated Muslim Women Of Dakshin Dinajpur District Towards Women Empowerment In West Bengal

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ABSTRACT:

Participation in decision making is an important tool to facilitate democracy in the country. Women in rural areas are still fighting for their participation in decision making. The women in Muslim are usually bound to live within the walls of the house. They are not participating freely in all families and social matters are illiteracy, low family income, large family size etc. It is found in the study that Muslim women, in present study, are a part of decision making in their family. But, it appears from the data that the women have not dominating power over the family in respect of daily expenditure for the family. It indicates that majority percent women take decision for household affair, so it can be pointed out that women enjoyed empower in the sector of decision making for household affairs. In this article, educated Muslim women of Dakshin Dinajpur district towards women empowerment in West Bengal has been evaluated.

Keywords: Muslim, Women, Empowerment, Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal.

INTRODUCTION:

According to the census of 2001, the literacy rate among Muslim women 50.1% which is far below from national average and it is also below from other religious communities in India. There is no doubt that the Muslim women are educationally backward. The literacy rate among Muslim women is 49.75% which is 28.89% lower than the average literacy rate (68.64%) of West Bengal. There is no educational indicator except literacy rate on which data are available to show the status of Muslim women or for any other religious groups [1-3].

There is also a common belief that Muslim parents feel that education is not important for girls and that it may instill a wrong set of values. Even if girls are enrolled, they are withdrawn at an early age to marry them off. This leads to a higher dropout rate of Muslim girls. The interactions with them indicate that the problem may lie in non-availability of schools within easy reach for girls at lower level of education, absence of girls hostels, absence of female teacher and availability of scholarships as they move up the education ladder [4-6].

It is found that the state of education among Muslim women is even not so remarkable though it is increased from the past. The cultural traditions do not allow Muslim girls to take advantage of co-educational schools, especially if they are far away from their homes [7-8].

The Muslims are economically disadvantaged group in West Bengal as well as India enrolling girls in school is one half the battle, because it is meaningful only if they complete the minimum of 8 years of schooling which requires that their families be able to resist the pressures of income generation and work in the home. For Muslim women, not being able to enter the schooling system seems to be the first obstacle. As for the working condition of Muslim women in West Bengal are concerned, it is found that about 60.07% women were house wife and remaining 39.93% were working in different economic activities. Out of total working women maximum were engaged in agricultural activities, remaining were engaged in washing utensils, labour in brick work, collection of polythenes, weaving of mats, swing, bidi worker etc. It is also found some Muslim women are teacher in madrasa and some of them also are teachers in general primary and secondary school, but the percentage is very low [9-10].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:

The study has been carried out through descriptive survey method. The present study has been based on mainly primary and partially secondary sources of data which was collected with the help of questionnaire & interviews from the Muslim women in Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

Variables:

In the present study the following variables have been considered these variables can be divided into two categories.

1. Independent variables.
2. Dependent variables.

Independent Variables

In the present study the following are independent variables.

Educational level:

- i) Illiterate
- ii) Primary
- iii) Secondary
- iv) Graduate
- v) Higher Education

Dependent Variable:

Empowerment is the only 'Dependent variable'.

Tools and Techniques:

The following tools will be used for collection of data for the study:

1. Structure of proforma to estimate the educational status of Muslim women.
2. Socio-economic status scale.
3. Questionnaire for participation of Muslim women in various profession (Teacher, social workers, political leaders, Govt. employees and others).
4. Interview of all sections of Muslim women including students.

Construction of Tools:

All the tools were constructed with the help of experts, resource persons and available variables. Following general steps were adopted for the construction of tools.

Step I : In the first step lists, items, and statements were collected from various sources and these were classified and systematized after a through discussion with the experts.

Step II : Necessary modifications of statements were made on the basis of expert's suggestions and the tools were made ready for try out.

Step III : First try out was made on one block and on a small group parallel to the sample. On the basis of try out results further modifications were made where necessary.

Step IV : For more sophistication, the tools were again administered on a parallel group of Gen., SC and ST women of other block and data were collected and the limitations of the tools were pointed out.

Step V : Tried and sophisticated form of the tools were finalized after removing the limitations of the fourth step and the tools were ready for final administration.

A detailed description of tools and their construction procedure is stated hereunder:

Construction of Questionnaire:

Three different sets of questionnaires were constructed for collection of necessary data.

- Step I, a set of items and statements were collected from various sources and these were classified according to the nature of statement.
- Step II, statements were scrutinized and modified with reference to the area of the data.
- Step III, the set of items were presented before the experts to estimate the rationality of the items. On the basis of expert's suggestion, the items were modified or altered for finalization of the questionnaires.
- Step IV, tryout of the questionnaire was made on a small group of women parallel to the sample. On the basis of tryout results further modification were made where necessary.
- Step V, tried and sophisticated questionnaires were again presented before the experts so give the final form. As such the questionnaire was made for final administration.

Socio-Economic Status Scale:

Realizing the importance of Socio-economic status, the quantification and rationalization in social sciences had led the formulation of scales for the measurement of social sciences had led the formulation of scales for the measurement of social phenomena. Among other variables of social phenomena, the quantification of socio-economic status is an important one. Many variables have been identified in relation to social status. In India social status is attached to the amount of income as well as the source of income.

Population and Sample:

Women of all categories, i.e. professional, home maker, political leaders under all socio-economic status group, labour class, student, and participatory of different political and social organization were included as sample.

Sample Size:

More than 400 Muslim women have participated in the present study.

Sample Character:

Muslim women of different sectors of Dakshin Dinajpur district, West Bengal.

Action Plan:

It is a survey type research. The survey made during the study comes to supplement the facts known through different sources. The step to carry out the study were as follows:

- Selection of State.
- Selection of Districts.
- Selection of Samples.
- Preparation of Tools.
- Standardization of Tools.
- Administration of Tools.
- Collection of Data.
- Analysis of Data.

The research intends to analyse the data which is collected through field survey in Dakshin Dinajpur district in West Bengal. The analysis has been made to find out the literacy rate and status of Muslim women in society, the role of religion to educate women, political awareness of women and economic position of Muslim women inside and outside the family. Data for women in various age, engaged in different services and views of different educational status been analysed. The data on the relationship between variables and the rate of activities have been structured.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

In Islam, women education is accepted. But in practice there is a religious dominance upon women. In this study shows that 37.97% women are bounded with the prejudices of their religion and other 59.06% women have no problem regarding their religious orthodoxy.

Some of the Muslim women say that religious dominance is one of the obstacle of their education. In their opinion that it is one of the causes of backwardness of Muslim women. Religious education is better, but practice is not so healthy. Male member of the family in the name of religion try to dominate over women (45.91%). It is noted that the women have no desire to pray in Masjid with male members (78.66%).

In many parts of the country, here are several gender based restrictions for women at home such as observing purdah. Purdah is a system in some Muslim societies by which women live in a separate part of a house or cover their face3s so that men do not see them. Purdah is the symbol of seclusion. Purdah symbolizes restriction to public appearance, public speaking, mobility, and many more. It is found from the conversation with Muslim women that most of the women do not wish to leave the custom of purdah as if this custom has been proved useful for their safety while moving around here and there. From this study, it is shown that 60.30% women believe in women conservation and only 35.73% of women say negative attitude of women conservation. Only some teenagers of women wish to do away with custom of purdah. Purdah is not considered as a means to restrict the freedom of women by majority of Muslim women in study area. On the other hand, it is regarded as a precaution to protect women from eve teasing and various other kinds of sexual harassment.

A very small percentage of women expressed their opinion having freedom of movement outside the home without permission. Only 29.01% women says that they have no problem if she spent night outside their house. Freedom of movement is one of the most important indicators of domestic empowerment for the women. This movement away from the home may have important implications for exposure to information development of interpersonal skills, increased self-confidence and opportunities to take independent action.

Women are much more behind than the men in decision making of taking care of their children. It is found that mostly 77.67% women takes care according to their own decision but the up bring of child is the decision of their husband. The respondent's view about their daughter's education, nearly a positive view of respondent seen towards their daughter's education. In most cases the women gave their opinion for equal right in education of son and daughter. Even some of the Muslim women are agreed for daughter's education more important than son because her marriage in good family and they feel that if daughter is educated then she can handle her family easily.

Political participation of women is one of the most important concerns among scholars, academicians and government. Mahatma Gandhi also believed that full and balanced development of the nation and establishment of a society is possible only when women participation actively and fully in the political deliberations of the nation. Thus, women's political participation has been considered as a major measure of women's empowerment. It is noted that Muslim women are interacted in politics but not active politics in rural area.

But in urban area they are conscious about politics. Some of them are played an active part of the political programmes (29.28%). They cast their vote according to their own choice (81.64%). Due to lack of education, sometimes they are influenced by their husbands and other. But the girl's student is much serious about their rights and duties. They wanted to improve their condition in participation of politics.

Political activism of Muslim women as for other underprivileged groups is integral to social transformation. Unless women are brought to the decision making levels directly important Muslim issues will never be tackled with the seriousness they require. They faced many obstacles inside and outside the family. They faced many obstacles inside and outside the family. The traditional idea of most of the Muslim family tried to resist the women but they played the vital role in politics for more advantages of Muslim especially for women.

A large body of available research has argued that cultural and religious factors caused high fertility among Muslims. Education is found to be one of the most powerful indicators of fertility. The study shows 74.94% women is taken a part of family planning. But most of the women are uneducated, so they have no idea regarding Family Planning. The decline the level of education had a direct negative impact on the fertility rate of the respondents. Fertility rate also decreased gradually with the increase in the educational level of the husbands of the respondents. Higher educated husbands of Muslim religion negated the fertility. Age at marriage of females was found as one of the best indicators of status of women and variable to influence fertility. It is found that lower was the age at marriage higher was the rate of fertility. Age difference between husband and wife played a vital role in fertility.

The traditional Indian Muslim orthodoxy does not allow the women to come in contact frequently with the neighboring people as well as outer world. In such circumstances, media, the window to the world about their rights and updating them in accordance with the present dynamic world. At the study area only 88.09% women has come in contact with media mainly electronic and 10.17% of respondents does not access any type of media.

Since the typical Indian married women psychologically accept their husband as guardian in all aspects of her life, husband's support and co-operation in family matter determines their levels of empowerment colossally. Almost 71.47% of respondents receives cooperation and followed by 26.30% do not receive co-operation at all. It may be ratiocinated that husband's cooperation in family matter is an important predictor determining the empowerment of women.

CONCLUSION:

Empowerment is one of the main ceremonial concern when addressing human rights and development. Women empowerment includes the capabilities to decisions about personal

and collective circumstances, decision-making ability, ability to choose a range of options, ability to inform other perception through exchange, education and engagement, increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma, increasing one's ability in discreet thinking to sort out right and wrong etc.

According to the United Nations Millennium Campaign, women work two thirds of the World's working hours, with growing food, cooking, raising children, caring for the elderly, maintaining a house etc. and universally is accorded by low status with no pay. This study deals with the pragmatic measurement of women empowerment within Muslim community people of India conducted over randomly chosen sample from Dakshin Dinajpur district of West Bengal.

At the length it may be convenient to say that the task of empowering of women is not an easy task rather, it is difficult one in such typical area like Dakshin Dinajpur district where still a major portion of Muslim women are not aware of their self-identity and esteem in the pressure of family matter. Permissive poverty of people along with traditional beliefs and orthodoxy for women folk is solely responsible for such immense deplorable condition of Muslim women. Women are conscious about family welfare but still they are to depend on husband because in most of the cases they are out of the access to money. Most of the respondents agreed for existing equal rights in society but they were not enjoying freedom of exercise regarding their opinion about vote, freedom of movement away from home without husband's permission, daily household expenditure and child health care.

Government of India and State Government of West Bengal adopted many measures regarding education and tried to empower the Muslim girls and women. Many NGOs like CINI (Child in Need Institute), Jabala Action Research Organisation, Child Welfare Home etc. but the achievement lags far behind its aim. This may be due to greater emphasizing on overall minority development in lieu of women empowerment. From this study, it is said that the literacy and decision making power in household affairs is increase, but it is not at par all over the two districts. Self-help groups that have presently emerged as an earning tool of women in rural side, it can prove as a media of empowering this deplored class by rendering various governmental as well as non-governmental aids and training them to earn by their own, which can further change the gross socio-economic condition of the Muslim community.

Education is important for everyone, but it especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Brigham Young has therefore rightly stated: "You educate a man, you educated a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation".

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