

Problems of Rural and Urban Muslim Girls in Higher Education- A Study

Dr. Runuma Saikia

¹Assistant professor, Department of Education, Anundoram Borooah Academy Degree College, Pathsala, Bajali, Assam, India, runumasaikia430@gmail.com

Abstract

Muslim girls form an important part of our society. They should therefore get higher education in reforming our society without facing any problem. So, the present paper proposed to study the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls with regard to higher education. The main aim of the present study was to find out the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships in higher education. It's another aim was to study the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls with regard to dropout in higher education. The study also attempted to find out the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education. The method of investigation for the present study was descriptive survey method. The sample of the present study was consisted of 80 rural, 80 urban Muslim girls and 30 rural dropout and 30 urban dropout Muslim girls (total 160 Muslim girls and 60 dropout Muslim girls were selected randomly) from 4 provincialised degree colleges of Barpeta District. The investigator used self constructed questionnaire for finding out the problems of the sampled girls. The study revealed no significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships and with regard to dropout in higher education. But, the investigator found significant difference between the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education.

Keywords: Problems, rural and urban Muslim girls, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

It is very unfortunate for us that problems of girls still exist in the 21st century. In some cases the problems of girls are found worse than they were in the primitive society. Problems of girl child are dependent on different issues and phenomenon of our society. But owing to the development of education and change in our society the nature of problems are also changing. It is the Muslim girls who are the worst sufferers in our society facing many more problems in their life. But the problems of all Muslim girls are not same in all the countries. So, it is becoming very crucial global issue to study the problems of Muslim girls in the field of education.

Higher education means that education, which is imparted in post-higher secondary institutions, colleges and universities etc. This type of education is beyond the secondary education, especially education provided by a college. Education in the higher institutions can act as a bridge between the community and government. It can generate creative ideas as well as creative people. No doubt, higher education can give us better financial security and better life style. So, in the field of higher education, analysis of the problems of Muslim girls is an important aspect to be studied. With the help of studying the nature of problems of both rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education, we can find out it's affects in that particular field and also can find out the solution. The present study tries to focus on the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships,

problems with regard to dropout and also the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education.

This article reports on a study investigating the problems of Muslim girls in higher education in Barpeta District, Assam. Specifically, it explores the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls pursuing higher education in the district. So, the study mainly intends to fulfill the following objectives:

1. To study the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships in higher education.
2. To study the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls with regard to dropout in higher education.
3. To find out the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education.

The present study is delimited to 4 provincialised degree colleges of Barpeta District, Assam. It is confined to both rural and urban degree colleges of Barpeta District and includes only the Arts stream.

Need and Significance of the Study

Despite progress over the last several decades, girls remain the majority of the world's unhealthy, unfed and unpaid. Across India, girls face discrimination because of being born in the society as girl. So, girls from Muslim minority should get equal education along with the boys without facing any incidence of discrimination. But still we find discrimination in our society in giving education to the girl child. As a result Muslim girls and women are behind in their acquisition of education and empowerment as compared to other communities. Higher education is an important stage for leading a healthy and better livelihood in society. So, when girls face different types of problems in higher education, then they will not be able to get success and fulfill the aim of completing higher education.

Educating a girl child is an investment not only to the family, but also to the whole community and consequently the nation. But, the proportion of education in Muslim girls is found very

insignificant due to many problems. The constitution of India has made provisions for safeguard for minority's right. But in spite of the provisions for minorities, especially the girls from Muslim minority are not able to get education due to many more problems faced while getting education. The common problems of low educational attainment of Muslim girls are existence of large families, unawareness regarding the significance of education, condition of poverty, possession of negative attitude towards education of girls and so on. Enrolment of Muslim girls and women in schools and colleges was slow and there was prevalence of anxiety amongst the Muslim parents to send their girls to schools and colleges (Shazli and Asma, 2015). But, it is considered essential for Muslim girls to get proper education for the development of their Muslim society. As higher education has an important role in our life, we should give importance on education of the girls at this stage. In fact, the position of the girls in higher education management cannot be treated in isolation from the general status of girls in society. The Sachar Committee Report (2006) has specially drawn our attention to the low levels of educational attainment of Muslim women, Muslims in rural areas as well in technical and higher education. The status of Muslim girls in the field of higher education is more deplorable than the male child coming from their community due to some problems. Barpeta district is one of the minority concentrated district in Assam. So, a study on the problems faced by the rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education in Barpeta district is very important.

Hence, the present study focuses on problems of both rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education in Barpeta District, Assam which will help to know about the situation in this respect. The study mainly focuses on the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships and the problems with regard to dropout in higher education. It also tries to find out the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education. So, the present study will be useful for finding out the problems of both rural and urban Muslim girls in the field of higher education.

Review of Related Literature

Some influencing factors responsible for creating problem among girls pursuing higher education in rural area are- unplanned family, no importance on giving education to girls, lack of knowledge of the parents towards importance of higher education and no adequate transport facilities in remote areas etc (Selvan, 2017). Muslim women in India were lagging behind the rest of the Indian population in almost every respect since independence due to problems of education. Muslim women have a lower level of education than women from other communities like Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Parsi, Buddhist and Jain (Jalil, 2011). Educational backwardness among the Muslims was the product of poverty and Muslim education was neglected by the state. Due to structural location in the economy and the perception of discrimination, few Muslims could afford or aspire for the higher education (Hasan, 2003). In respect of education, Muslim girls lag behind than their male counterparts and other communities. The main problems of educating the Muslim girls are- poverty, illiteracy of the parents, negative attitude towards girls' education and lack of up-gradation in the Syllabus of Madrassa and Maktabas etc (Samsujjaman & Parvin, 2017). The Muslim females and males along with other religious communities in India have lowest literacy rate than Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs and Buddhists and Muslim girls. Women lag behind their male counterparts and women of all other communities (Bano, 2017).

The condition of education of Muslim girls is quite pathetic. The Muslims are educationally backward in respect of literacy, enrolment in all level of education, quality of education, low economic status, Madrasa education and women education etc. Their causes of educational backwardness are- lack of general awareness, lack of modern education, low socio-economic status, lack of 'only for girls' schools, the distance of the school, the poor leadership etc (Johan, & Ahmad, 2016). There are several reasons for backwardness of Muslims in Murshidabad such as- poverty, lack of awareness about the importance of education, unsuitable environment for education, lack of facilities in schools for Muslim girls, lack of job opportunities due to less industrialization, negative attitude of the Govt. towards Muslims, shortage of adequate educational institutions,

child marriage and negative attitude towards girls' education etc (Hoque, 2016). Lack of education or poor educational status resulted in the married women depending on their husbands for undertaking any decisions concerning the family. Poor educational level of the Muslim women also affected their awareness of certain factors in respect of their lives like family planning, right to information act and domestic violence laws etc (Dutta, 2015). To get success in the field of education whether primary, secondary or higher education, attitude towards the program is significant to be taken into consideration. The majority of the students determined the personal and employment attitude to continue their higher studies (Maheswari, & Haridas, 2013).

Muslim women of both the country of India and Pakistan had to live in fears and domination and most of the women had to overcome parochial outlooks to get freedom in respect of education (Saxena, 2014). The participation of women in higher education is increasing in almost all states and the women enrolment in higher education is also increasing (Ghara, 2016). A study (Nayar, 2007) was conducted as a step towards the preparation of a National Plan of Action for advancement of Muslim women's education in India for enhancing the participation of them in elementary, secondary education and also in higher education, especially in professional and technical education. The results showed that education helps to remove the social inequality and suggested that there is a necessity for girls to get higher education.

Research Hypotheses

To understand the problems of the rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education in respect of scholarship, with regard to dropout and to know about the incidence of discrimination and harassment, some hypotheses were formulated. The investigator in the present study attempts to test the following hypotheses:

1. There exists no significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships in higher education.

2. There exists no significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls with regard to dropout in higher education.

3. There exists no significant difference between the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education.

Methodology

The research methodology is very much important, which includes the research design preparing blue print necessary for doing the research work. In the field of research work, methodology is a way to solve the research problem systematically.

Method of the Study

Method is the process which is used to collect information and data necessary for the purpose of making some decisions. To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the investigator employed descriptive survey method to collect the required data and make proper decision.

The primary data were collected by field survey based on the self constructed questionnaire. The secondary data were also collected through government reports, documents, official records, periodicals and various publications etc.

For the collection of data, the investigator personally visited the sampled colleges of Barpeta District. The required data gathering was conducted in full three weeks.

Participants

For the present study, all the Muslim girls enrolled in all the provincialised degree colleges of Barpeta District constitute the population and a sample of 160 Muslim girls (80 rural and 80 urban) has been selected randomly from 4 provincialised degree colleges of Barpeta District. 40 Muslim girls (20 from urban and 20 from rural) were randomly selected from each college. The investigator also selected 60 Muslim dropout girls (30 from rural and 30 from urban) randomly for collecting data to find out the problems of dropout of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education.

Tools Used

The investigator used self-constructed questionnaire for collection of required data. This self-constructed questionnaire has been made standardized by finding out the reliability and validity of it. Reliability of the questionnaire was estimated by the split-half method on a sample of 60 Muslim girls pursuing higher education. The split-half reliability has been found to be .77 which indicates a high degree of reliability.

The self-structured questionnaire has been prepared with 3 ratings such as strongly agree, agree and disagree. Accordingly the scoring pattern has been fixed as 2 for strongly agree, 1 for agree and 0 for disagree.

The prepared questionnaire possesses high content validity, as the items of the questionnaire at the first stage for tryout were selected on the basis of unanimous agreement of the experts in the field regarding its content adequacy. In the light of their opinion, adjustments were made by the investigator and the questionnaire was finalized. Thus, the content validity was established.

Statistical Techniques Used

The statistical technique was determined by considering the objectives and hypotheses of the present study. In the present study mean, standard deviation and t-test were used for analyzing the data.

Data Analysis and Results

Table-1: *Showing significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships in higher education*

Group	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Level of significance (0.01 and 0.05 level)
Rural	80	55.64	23.53	0.41	Not significant
Urban	80	54.18	26.81		Not significant

The above table-1 shows that the mean score obtained by the rural Muslim girls is 55.64 with S.D 23.53 while the mean score obtained by the urban Muslim girls is 54.18 with S.D 26.81 and the calculated t-value is 0.41, which is less than the table value and not significant at both the

level of 5% and 1% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. So, it can be concluded that there exists no significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships in higher education.

Table-2: *Showing significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls with regard to dropout in higher education*

Group	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Level of significance (0.01 and 0.05 level)
Rural	30	22.33	15.3	0.97	Not significant
Urban	30	18.25	18.32		Not significant

From the table-2, it has been found that the mean score obtained by the rural dropout Muslim girls is 22.33 with S.D 15.3, while the mean score obtained by the urban dropout Muslim girls is 18.25 with S.D 18.32. The calculated t-value is 0.97, which is less than the table value and not significant at both the level of 5% and 1% level of significance. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. So, it can be concluded that there exists no significant difference between problems of rural Muslim girls and urban Muslim girls with regard to dropout in higher education.

Table-3: *Showing significant difference between the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education*

Group	N	Mean	S.D	t-value	Significant
Rural	80	34.91	31.93	2.46	Significant at 0.01 level
Urban	80	23.83	31.78		Significant at 0.05 level

From the table-3, it is found that the mean score obtained by the rural Muslim girls is 34.91 with S.D 31.93, while the mean score obtained by the urban Muslim girls is 23.83 with S.D 31.78. The calculated t-value is 2.46, which is greater than the table value and significant at both the level of 5% and 1% level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. So, it can be

concluded that there exists significant difference between the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education.

Discussion

At the higher level of education, the Muslim girls remained backward due to many problems. But higher education as a public good can contribute to the society as well as to the nation. So, a study on the problems faced by the Muslim girls in higher education is considered very significant to find out proper solution for it. In a study (Selvan, 2017) found some problems in giving territory education to rural girl students pursuing higher education, like- sex-biases at home, sex-biases at educational institution regarding books, curriculum, allocation of subjects, Socially Useful Productive Work activities, participation in some of the co-curricular activities and sex-biases in society. The government provides different scholarship facilities for the girls coming from Muslim community, so that poverty and backwardness do not hinder in continuation of their education. Therefore, it is very vital to find out the problems faced by the sampled girls in receiving the scholarships in higher education. The present study set out to explore the problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarship in the field of higher education. The obtained results showed that there exists no significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls in receiving scholarships in higher education.

The individuals from rural as well as urban areas began to realize the significance of education. As a result, there has been an increase in the enrolment of girls in schools and higher educational institutions. But, there is high dropout rate, the primary cause of which is early marriage. It was found that the parents believe in marrying their girls at an early age and hence, there is an increase in the dropout of Muslim girls from educational institutions (Sahzli and Asma, 2015). In the provincialised degree colleges of Barpeta district, the enrolment of Muslim girls is inspiring. But, it is significant to note that the dropout rate of Muslim girls in these higher educational institutions is very high. Therefore, the problems for their dropout is another important issue to be taken into

consideration, so that after identifying the problems, remedial measures can be found out by the concerned authorities for getting solution. For the present study, the investigator tries to explore the problems of dropout of the rural and urban Muslim girls. The study revealed that there exists no significant difference between problems of rural and urban Muslim girls with regard to dropout in higher education. The investigator found same kind of problems responsible for their dropout.

It is very important that all individuals should be treated equally and there should not be any kind of discrimination in any aspect of life. Muslim girls should also be equally treated and allowed equal participation and opportunities in their life, whether in family life or in the educational institutions. In fact, they should not feel neglected and alienated within their family. So, emphasis should be put on common values of respect and broad mindedness. But, in practical field discrimination is found especially in their own family. So, in the present study the investigator also tries to find out the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education. The results showed that there exists significant difference between the incidence of discrimination and harassment of rural and urban Muslim girls in higher education. The Muslim girls coming from the rural area is found more discriminated than the Muslim girls coming from the urban area. So, to put a stop to discrimination against the girls, proper planning should be there from the Govt. and stress should be given on taking affirmative action for the same. Every human being in this matter should be sensitive and conscious. So, participation of the Muslim girls in the field of education should be increased to get a solution of this serious matter.

Recommendations

Education is regarded as the means as well as mechanism to lead social, economic, political and cultural development of the society and the nation. Muslims are in the least education section of our Indian society. There are number of reasons responsible for their backwardness. So, it is important to formulate proper policies and rules for improvement of their educational status within the educational institutions. The

awareness of the Muslim girls towards different policies and schemes implemented by the Govt. may be an important topic for investigation. There is also sufficient scope to study on problems of rural and urban Muslim minority girls in the various levels of education. It is necessary to touch each and every aspect of education of both rural and urban Muslim girls to contribute more to the society for bringing improvement to their life. The present study is conducted by taking the sample girls from Arts stream only. So, further study may be conducted by taking the sample girls from both the Science and Commerce stream. There is enough scope to study the attitude of the parents of Muslim girls towards higher education and comparative study may be conducted on attitude of parents of rural and urban Muslim girls. Further researches can be conducted by taking samples of Muslim minority girls who experience learning disabilities and problems, as the problems faced by the students of learning difficulties also led to an increase in the dropout rate. There is sufficient scope to make a comparative study on the impact of modern education on the traditional life of both rural and urban Muslim minority girls pursuing higher education. The parents should take a positive attitude towards education of their girl child and discriminative attitude should be removed from their mind. The government should take initiative in this regard. Different schemes implemented by the government for improvement of Muslim girls should be practically worked out. Besides, principals, teachers, and staff members are required to work towards creation of pleasant, amiable and approachable environment in the educational institutions to get success in developing the educational status of the girls coming from Muslim minority community.

Conclusion

Islam is the second largest and growing religion in Assam. But significantly, their educational status is very low. Specially, the educational status of Muslim girls in Assam is not inspiring. Different researches conducted in the past on socio-economic profile of Muslims confirm that Muslims, especially women remain socially, economically and educationally backward. In a study (Shazli & Asma, 2015) opined that in respect of social, economic, political and educational aspects, Muslims are behind as

compared to other communities. Muslim communities possess negative attitude towards the education of their girl child. Therefore, it is vital for the Muslim girls to develop will power and determination to get success in education. If the girls themselves develop an interest as well as enthusiasm towards attainment of education, they will be able to convince their families for their education. With the help of co-operation of their family, they can continue their education and overcome all the obstacles and problems that may arise in course of their acquisition of education. Besides, there is the urgent need to understand that education will help to raise their status in the society and therefore they should try their level best to raise their educational status.

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