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CULTURAL CONSTRIANTS OF MUSLIM GIRL'S ACCESS TO HIGHER
EDUCATION IN BANDIPORA DISTRICT, JAMMU AND KASHMIR INDIA

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Abstract

The study was set out to investigate the cultural constraints that hinder girls' education in Bandipora District in Kashmir Division; India Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The design of the research adopted in this research is cross sectional in nature. The researcher made use of systematic random sampling technique to select 404 girls from Government Degree Colleges of Bandipora District of Kashmir Division. The researcher made use of a self-developed instrument with 07 items both positive as well negative. The instrument has a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.646. The instrument had facial and content validity. It also had language appropriateness. The researcher administered 450 copies of the questionnaire on the respondents and 404 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved back. The data generated from the field was collated and the mean score analysis for the 07 items was carried out in order to provide answer to the research hypotheses and a scoring procedure with a mean score of 0.00-2.50 for lower levels and the second one assess the higher levels with a mean score of 2.51- 5.00. The Chi-Square test was used to test the hypotheses at a significant level of 0.05. The investigation denotes that more than fifty percent of the girls are in the age group of up to 20 years and little less than eighty percent of them are living in rural areas and more than half of the girls have joint family background. Also it is revealed that more than thirty five percent of the girls agreed that their family members were optimistic towards their higher education. Being

visible in public sphere during to and fro to college is not encouraged in culture was disagreed by nearly thirty five percent of the girls. However nearly thirty percent of the girls agree with the statement that they have the lack of permission to study in other far off places. Moreover it is observed that irrespective of the age, girls have encountered lower cultural constraints in accessing higher education with varied intensity.

INTRODUCTION

Education is one of important tool that gives a person identity and makes him/her with the associated abilities and understanding that facilitates him/her to solve the different contests that s/he may face in everyday life. It promotes an individual to be fruitful in several features of life (Zombwe 2010). This helps in constructing consciousness among girls towards their moralities and develop in them sense of confidence and enables to empower girls to achieve human rights that are denied to them. Right to education for all is the international goal for several decades. Girls' education is one of the most effective investments for development, yielding not only individual but also broader societal benefits.

Girls' education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and enable better health care and education for their children, should they choose to become mothers. All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and nations out of poverty.

132 million girls worldwide are out of school and 2/3 of 750 million adults without basic literacy skills, also 1% of the poorest girls in low-income countries going to complete their secondary school (UNESCO, 2019). UNESCO IN 2019 launched an initiative "her education, our future" a new drive to accelerate action for girls and women's education by utilising political and financial commitments, as well as leadership for women and girls. The barriers creating walls of exclusion for girls includes poverty, gender-based violence, early marriage and pregnancy, conflict and restrictive gender norms (UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), September 2019).

In all regions girls and boys are equally likely to complete primary schooling whereas, at secondary level, gender parity in completion rates is not sustained in all regions. It is shown that only 38 per cent of the girls in South Asia and 29 per cent of the girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete their upper secondary education and the girls from the low economic families are much more disadvantaged. In low income countries only 8 per cent and 2 per cent of girls from the low economic households complete their lower secondary and upper secondary schooling (ibid).

Osadan (2014) in his review article on the enrollment of girls versus boys in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, reported that male students have higher enrollment and completion rates (p.218). The research study found that for every three students who were denied full and equal primary education, two of them were female. This mostly keeps girls to the traditionally-held gender role

of staying at home, domestic chores, rearing of children, and doing other honorary works. Regardless of this fact that educating girls yields a higher investment return for a country's economic development (ibid). The research review discusses the different approaches towards growing number of girls who attend school in the sub-Saharan region and different barriers that have appeared in the progression towards women's education in Sub-Saharan Africa (pp.219-221).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) 05 aims at achieving gender equality and empowering women and targets the elimination of all forms of discrimination, based on gender violence and child marriage and increasing participation of women in decision-making and providing the universal access to sexual and reproductive health services (CESR, 2017).

Women in Higher Education: Indian Viewpoint

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE, 2018-2019) revealed that total enrolment in higher education has been estimated to be 37.4 million with 19.2 million male and 18.2 million female. Female constitute 48.6 percent of the total enrolment. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is 26.3 percent which is calculated for 18-23 years of age group. GER for male population is 26.3 percent and for females, it is 26.4 percent For Scheduled Castes, it is 23 percent and for Scheduled Tribes, it is 17.2 percent as compared to the national GER of 26.3 percent Share of female students is lowest in institutions of National importance followed by state, private, Open and Deemed universities.

The Commission on Higher Education for Women revealed that higher education ensures that the participation of women in the political, social and national issues. Higher education will make women economically independent and self-reliant. It is important for her to participate in all spheres of work, education, social and political matters in equal footing and it is more important to diagnose, identify and make efforts to solve the problems that become barriers for them in completing higher education. As per UGC report (2011) "there is a steady rise in women's enrolment in India since from 1950- 2011. It is observed that women students in the age group of 18-23 years, in the year 2011, for higher education are 41.5 percent".

Status of Muslim Women in Higher Education: Indian Context

Muslims in India accounted for 14.20 percent population, and the second largest denomination, after Hindus (80.5 percent). It was found by the Sachar Committee report that school enrolment rates among Muslims were lowest but has improved significantly. It is seen that the community were of the opinion that education is a means of improving socio-economic status. This report confirmed that the Muslim community is lagging behind inspite of other religious groups in India. There are highest dropout rates among Muslims and is rising significantly after high schooling. Higher Secondary attainment levels among Muslims are also low. This is interesting to note that 64.3% of Muslims live in rural areas, and their literary rate is 59.1%. However, the situation of

rural Muslims who are only 52.7% literate is worse and among them the rural female literacy rate is more below.

As per National Sample Survey Report of the 75th Round (2018), reported that Gross Attendance Ratio (GAR) of Muslims was lower (i.e., 100) than SCs (101), STs (102), OBCs, and minorities and in Upper primary level GAR was lower than other communities. Also GAR of Muslims at Secondary level was 71.9%, which was less than STs 79.8%, SCs 85.8% and from OBCs also. Whereas GAR at higher secondary level among Muslims was lowest i.e. 48.3%, below from the SCs 52.8%, STs 60% and lowest from others communities. The GAR at above higher secondary level has been 14.5%, just above the STs 14.4%, but below from the SCs 17.8% and other communities (Abdullah, 2020).

The status of education among Muslims is found to be a serious concern for policy planners makers in our country. Due to unremitting backwardness of a particular community, with a large proportion of the nation's population, act as a prevention to the nation's overall socio-economic and political development, they writes. Muslims, the largest minority community and the second largest population in India, after Hindus, are lagging behind other socio-religious groups in terms of several human development indicators and education (Khan and Batool, Fazal and Kuma, Chandrasekhar, 2013, Main Uddin 2011). Parental education was seen an important element in determining school dropouts among children who came from non-working parents and no formal schooling were having higher chances of school dropout than other children of same age (Gouda and Sekher, 2014).

Gender disparity is found to be one of the major reasons for educational backwardness among the Muslim community. Furthermore it was reported that negative attitude and least aspirations towards girl's education, early marriages and age old cultural preference of engaging girl's in activities of domestic chores prevents them from education (Narula, 2014). Another study found that Muslim girls with no education or having only primary education belong to poor socio-economic families having low parental income (Chacha and Baraton, 2013). The Sachar Committee Report revealed that parents feel that education is not important for girls. It was reported that even if girls are enrolled in the schools they withdraw at an early age to get married that leads to higher dropouts.

The condition of Muslim women is changed as now they come out of purdah and taking part in greater tasks of national reconstruction. Whereas, their educational status is still a dismal. The reasons are because of their economic conditions, leadership in the community, lack of schools and resources in the schools and high drop-out rates (Nasrin, 2013). The backwardness in education among Muslims in India is accounted in terms of social, cultural, economic, political and infra-structural factors. As Muslim women are concerned this is common that they are highly disadvantaged. Like they are poor, are members of a minority community and finally are the women also. However, the AISHE (2019) reported that Scheduled Caste students

constitute 14.9 percent and Scheduled Tribes students 5.5 percent of the total enrolment, 36.3 percent students belongs to Other Backward Classes and the enrolment of Muslim Minority students is 5.23 percent only.

Status of Muslim Women in Higher Education in Jammu and Kashmir

In 20th century there was an addition in the number of schools and also a growth in number of girl's enrolment in schools, but the absence of establishment of any higher educational institution wholly for women had a striking blow to Muslim girl's education. A spring of hope came in women education in the year 1950 in which the first women's college on Maulana Azad Road, Srinagar was established in Kashmir and the higher education among women begins to improve with the establishment of this college.

Then in 1961 another college (Nawa Kadal College) for women was established. The establishment of higher education institutes specifically for women changed the attitude of women and raised their consciousness. As a result the attitude of the people towards women's education and the number of Muslim women in schools and colleges improved, and their participation towards education increased gradually (Khan, 2005). Despite many efforts by the Government, the position of literacy rate of Muslims and Muslim women in contemporary J&K remains below the national average.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for the current study is derived from the theory developed by an American psychologist Abraham Maslow in 1954, on Hierarchy of Needs. This theory is most related to growth and personal development. Abraham Maslow discussed the five important needs which are arranged in hierarchical form:

- Physical Needs: thirst, hunger, shelter, sleep and sexual desire.
- Safety Needs: security and protection from physical and emotional harms.
- Social Needs: belonging, affiliation, companionship and acceptance.
- Esteem Needs: Internal factors like autonomy, achievement and self-respect,; and external factors like status, recognition and attention
- Self-Actualization: growth and accomplishing ones potential and satisfaction: This effort becomes whatever the individual is accomplished to do.

Research Methodology

Objectives of the study

- To find out the cultural constraints of Muslim girls access to higher education.

Hypotheses

1. Higher the age lower the cultural constraints on girl's access to higher education.
2. Girls coming from nuclear families face lower cultural constraints.
3. Girls of urban background face lower socio cultural constraints.

Nature of the Research Design

Research design is the blueprint of the research project that brings out the information required for solving the identified problem. A research design is a logical systematic plan prepared for directing a research study. The design adopted for the current study is descriptive in nature as it analyses the socio economic profile of the respondents, perception of Muslim girls on parental attitude towards higher education and the perceived benefits of higher education & the relationship between the different variables as well.

Selection of Samples

Out of 2254 total number of study population who met the sampling criteria, were selected as a sample. The researcher decided to select 20 percent of them as a sample population. The researcher adopted systematic random sampling method to choose 450 respondents as a sample population selected proportionately for the study. The first unit of sample was selected at random starting point and other units were selected systematically with a sampling interval of 5th unit taken as a sample as mentioned in the below table.

Sample of the Study

S.No.	College	Girls Enrolled	Universe	Sample (20%)
1.	Government Degree college Bandipora	1440	1032	206
2.	Government Degree college Sumbal	1636	1222	244
	Total	3076	2254	450

The researcher as per sample distributed the response sheets to 450 respondents however only 404 response sheets were received back by the researcher from the respondents. Out of which 181 respondents belong to Government Degree College Bandipora and 223 respondents belong to Government Degree College, Sumbal.

Tool for Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected from the respondents using Self-Constructed Structured Questionnaire by the researcher as per reviewed literature and available sources by obtaining content validity from the experts.

Reliability

The reliability of the tool is tested for its average inter-item correlation and the number of items. For this study the reliability was measured by using Cronbach Alpha test. The Cronbach Alpha co- efficient, based on primary data was 0.646.

Data Process

On each day of data collection, the researcher reviewed the data and checked for its completeness and then the response were coded and entered

into the Microsoft Excel. Data cleaning by running frequency was performed prior to analysis. The entered data was analysed using SPSS package.

Data analysis

The statistical analysis comprised of the frequency distribution and chi-square test.

Results and Discussions

The purpose of this research was to examine how cultural factors become constraints on girls’ access to higher education.

Table 01: Respondents Profile

S.No.	Personal Information	N=404	
		Frequency	Percent
Age (Years)	Upto 20	207	51.2
	Above 20	197	48.8
Type of Family	Joint Family	209	51.7
	Nuclear Family	195	48.3
Place of Residence	Rural	316	78.2
	Urban	88	21.8

With regard to age of the respondents more than fifty percent of the girls are in the age group of up to 20 years and little less than eighty percent of them are living in rural areas and more than half of the girls have joint family background.

Table 02: Percentage Frequency distribution of the scale items of Cultural Constraints

S.NO	STATEMENT	SD	D	N	A	SA	T
	CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS						
	I feel that family members are optimistic towards my higher education	15.3	10.6	10.1	35.6	28.2	100
	I feel that peer friends influence encourage me to join higher education	9.2	7.7	34.4	28.0	20.8	100
	I feel to acquire positive attitude if received higher education	5.7	7.7	12.1	44.1	30.4	100
	My parents think if educated up to higher level will make me less productive in family	31.4	19.3	23.3	9.9	16.1	100
	My parents think that the reputation of family will be lost if I received higher education	35.1	19.1	13.1	20.3	12.4	100
	I feel being visible in public sphere during to and fro to college is not encouraged in our culture.	12.1	34.7	18.1	22.0	13.1	100
	I have lack of permission to study in other place	20.3	13.6	15.3	29.2	21.5	100

Parentheses is the percentage to the total

From the findings of the above table it is revealed that more than thirty five percent of the girls agreed that their family members were optimistic towards their higher education. It was examined that nearly thirty five percent of the girls were influenced by their peer friends to join higher education and it is evident from the results that little less than half of them agreed that after receiving higher education they will acquire positive attitude from the society. More than thirty percent among them strongly disagreed about the statement that their parents think if educated up to higher level will make them less productive in family, also thirty five percent of them strongly disagreed with the statement that the reputation of family will be lost if they received higher education. Being visible in public sphere during to and fro to college is not encouraged in our culture was disagreed by nearly thirty five percent of the girls. However nearly thirty percent of the girls agree with statement that they have the lack of permission to study in other far off places.

Association between Independent Variables and Dependent Variables

Table 03: Level of Cultural Constraints of Muslim girl's access to Higher Education

Cultural Constraints	Frequency	Percent
Lower	202	50.0
Higher	202	50.0

Existing data shows that about irrespective of the levels girls have encountered equal levels of cultural constraints in accessing their higher education.

Table 04: Association between Age (Years) and Cultural Constraints of Muslim girl's access to Higher Education

Domains	Age	Lower	Higher	Total	X ²	Df	P value
Cultural Constraints	Up to 20	103 (49.8%)	104 (50.2%)	207	.010	1	0.921
	Above 20	99 (50.3%)	98 (49.7%)	197			
	Total	202 (50.0%)	202 (50.0%)	404			

Significant @ 0.05**

The analysis of the table shows that there is no association between cultural constraints of Muslim girl's access to higher education with age of the respondents. From the above table it is observed that irrespective of the age group girls have encountered lower cultural constraints in accessing higher education with varied intensity. However having no statistical significance the researcher was able to reject the **H1**.

Table 05: Association between Type of Family and Cultural Constraints of Muslim girl's access to Higher Education

Domains	Type of Family	Lower	Higher	Total	X^2	Df	P value
Cultural Constraints	Joint Family	91 (43.5%)	118 (56.5%)	209	7.226	1	0.007**
	Nuclear Family	111 (56.9%)	84 (43.1%)	195			
	Total	202 (50.0%)	202 (50.0%)	404			

Significant @ 0.05**

The table reveals that there is an association between type of family and cultural constraints of Muslim girls access to higher education. It is identified that respondents did not acquire positive attitude after getting higher education from the society and the reputation of the family will be lost if received higher education were among the major cultural constraints among girls. Moreover it is obvious that whether the girls are part of nuclear or joint families they have experienced lower cultural constraints in accessing higher education. Showing a statistical association the researcher was able to accept the **H2**.

Table 06: Association between Place of Residence and Cultural Constraints of Muslim girl's access to Higher Education

Domains	Place of Residence	Lower	Higher	Total	X^2	Df	P value
Cultural Constraints	Rural	148 (46.8%)	168 (53.2%)	316	5.811	1	0.016
	Urban	54 (61.4%)	34 (38.6%)	88			
	Total	202 (50.0%)	202 (50.0%)	404			

Significant @ 0.05**

The analysis suggests that there is no association between place of residence and cultural constraints of Muslim girl's access to higher education. The findings further shows that the place of residence of the girls is no way associated with the constraints faced by them, moreover girls obviously encounter cultural hurdles in either lower or higher intensity. Having no statistical association the **H3** is rejected.

Conclusion

This study is an attempt to investigate the cultural of Muslim girl's access to higher education in Bandipora district of Kashmir division in order to understand and analyze nature of constraints on Muslim girls in achieving higher education so that a comprehensive strategy can be evolved to remove such constraints for their higher educational advancement.

It is generally believed that Muslim women are guided by existing notions of religion, and tradition and it becomes difficult for them to break

away the shackles of both religion and tradition. Girls incline to suffer from the disabilities attached to them as Muslims constitute the largest minority community in India. The minority identity leads towards the alienation and withdrawal from their socio-economic life. With the grim picture of marginalization it is anticipated inevitability that the resultant status of Muslim girls is crooked towards the bottom. It must be noted that Muslim girls cannot be viewed from the mirror of religious entity whereas it is society that is consisting of various socio economic groups across the region and states.

It proposes the relevant information about the girls, on their age, place of residence, type of family, and cultural constraints, to access their higher education. The empirical evidences collected reveals that higher education has contributed considerably in the improvement of the status of Muslim girls. Age of the respondents was found to have no association with cultural constraints in accessing their higher education. Girls' higher education seems to have influence on the type of their family and it was identified that joint family system still exists in the study area. It was examined that girls in the family were not given an equal preference as boys. The results depict that respondents were having less say in decision-making towards their achieving higher education.

With the consistent progress parents have shown a tremendous interest towards the girl's higher education but still the pace of progress is slow due to their low levels of education. Government has been taken various approaches towards the development of girl's higher education but still lot needs to be done.

There is an immediate need to take strict measures for improvement of girl's higher education as it plays a major role in raising their status. The stakeholders involved must have to pay a great consideration in bridging the gap of gender inequalities in higher education and that is possible through raising the social status of girls.

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