



Socio-Economic Status of Muslim Girl Students at College Level: A Study on Rural Murshidabad, West Bengal

Panna Mallick

Department of geography, Shri Venkateswara University, mallick.panna@gmail.com

Abstract:

This study explores the socio-economic status of Muslim girl students pursuing higher education in rural Murshidabad, West Bengal. Drawing from a sample of 100 respondents, it examines key socio-economic indicators such as family income, parental education, access to government schemes, and the impact of cultural constraints on their academic pursuits. This research employs a cross-sectional survey. The study has been carried out with a sample size of 100 respondents, chosen through random sampling from various colleges in rural Murshidabad. The data collection tool was a structured questionnaire that included questions on socio-economic status, parental background, access to financial aid, and cultural challenges. The data was analyzed using percentage to present findings in a clear and organized manner. The study reveals that despite certain advancements, these students continue to face significant challenges related to poverty and societal norms, impacting their ability to complete their education.

Keywords: Muslim Girl Students, Rural Colleges, Financial, Cultural, Higher Education.

Introduction:

Murshidabad, a district in West Bengal, has a significant Muslim population, particularly in rural areas. Although education has made strides in recent decades, Muslim girl students in these areas still struggle with socio-economic barriers that hinder their access to higher education. Murshidabad, a district in West Bengal, India, is characterized by its rich historical heritage and significant Muslim population. Despite the cultural vibrancy, the region faces considerable socio-economic challenges, particularly concerning women's education. The socio-economic status of Muslim girl students at the college level in Murshidabad reflects a complex interplay of factors, including family income, parental education, cultural norms, and access to educational resources.

The socio-economic status of Muslim girl students in Murshidabad is predominantly influenced by family income and educational attainment. Many families belong to the lower economic strata, with a significant portion earning below the poverty line. According to recent surveys, a considerable number of families report a monthly income of less than INR 10,000, which places financial constraints on educational pursuits. These economic challenges often lead to a lack of access to essential resources, such as books, transportation, and tuition fees, ultimately affecting the academic performance and aspirations of students.

Additionally, parental education plays a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape for girls. In many cases, parents, particularly fathers, have low levels of educational attainment, which translates into a lack of encouragement and support for their daughters' educational ambitions. A significant percentage of Muslim parents in Murshidabad are either illiterate or have only completed primary education. This lack of educational background can hinder the aspirations of young girls, as families often prioritize immediate economic contributions over long-term educational goals.

Cultural factors significantly impact the educational journey of Muslim girl students in Murshidabad. Traditional gender roles often dictate that girls should focus on domestic responsibilities, leading to early marriages and limited educational opportunities. Many families still adhere to conservative beliefs that prioritize boys' education over girls', resulting in higher dropout rates among female students. Social stigma associated with girls pursuing higher education further exacerbates the situation, as community expectations can create barriers to academic success.

Review of Literature:

Gender disparities in education have been extensively documented, particularly in rural settings. According to a report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2020), girls face numerous obstacles, including societal norms and familial responsibilities, which often lead to higher dropout rates. Studies have shown that cultural attitudes towards gender roles significantly influence educational opportunities for girls, particularly in conservative communities (Mahmood, 2018). In India, girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by these gender biases, leading to inequitable access to education (Singh & Verma, 2021).

Parental education has been identified as a critical factor influencing children's educational outcomes. According to a study by Bhat & Suryanarayana (2018), higher levels of parental education are associated with increased educational aspirations for their children, particularly daughters. In many rural settings, parents with low educational attainment may lack the awareness of the importance of higher education for girls, which can lead to early marriage and reduced educational aspirations for their daughters (Siddiqui, 2019). This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in communities where traditional gender roles are deeply entrenched.

Cultural norms and practices play a pivotal role in shaping the educational experiences of Muslim girl students. Research by Khan & Singh (2020) indicates that cultural attitudes towards women's education, particularly in rural Muslim communities, often prioritize domestic roles over academic pursuits. This results in a significant gender gap in educational attainment. Additionally, cultural stigmas surrounding girls' mobility further restrict their access to educational institutions, as highlighted by Rahman (2019), emphasizing the need for community engagement and awareness programs to challenge these norms.

Significance of the Study:

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic conditions affecting Muslim girl students at the college level. By examining factors such as family income, parental education, and cultural constraints, the research aims to present a nuanced understanding of how these dynamics interplay to influence educational outcomes. This knowledge is crucial for educators, policymakers, and researchers who seek to understand the barriers faced by marginalized communities. Education is a fundamental right and a catalyst for social change. This study highlights the specific challenges faced by Muslim girls in accessing higher education, thereby drawing attention to the gender disparities prevalent in rural settings. By focusing on this demographic, the research seeks to advocate for equitable educational opportunities and contribute to the broader discourse on gender equality in education. In summary, the significance of this study on the socio-economic status of Muslim girl students at the college level in rural Murshidabad extends beyond

academic inquiry. It seeks to effect social change, inform policy, raise community awareness, and contribute to the empowerment of girls through education. By understanding and addressing the barriers faced by these students, the study aims to promote a more equitable educational landscape that benefits not only individuals but also society as a whole.

Objectives of the study:

- To assess the socio-economic status of Muslim girls pursuing higher education in rural Murshidabad.
- To examine how family income, parental education, and cultural constraints impact their educational journey.
- To explore the role of government schemes in supporting these students.

Methodology:

Method: This research employs a cross-sectional survey

Sample and Sampling: The study has been carried out with a sample size of 100 respondents, chosen through random sampling from various colleges in rural Murshidabad.

Tool: The data collection tool was a structured questionnaire that included questions on socio-economic status, parental background, access to financial aid, and cultural challenges.

Statistical Analysis: The data was analyzed using percentage to present findings in a clear and organized manner.

Study Area: Murshidabad is a predominantly rural district in West Bengal. It has a high concentration of Muslim communities, many of whom face economic challenges due to low literacy rates, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of economic opportunities. This study focuses on female Muslim students enrolled in undergraduate programs across various colleges in rural parts of the district.

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation:

Table 1: Monthly Family Income of the Respondents

Family Monthly Income (INR)	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
Below 5000	35	35%
5000 – 10,000	40	40%
10,000 – 15,000	15	15%
Above 15,000	10	10%

The table shows that the majority (75%) of Muslim girl students come from families with monthly incomes below INR 10,000, with 35% of them belonging to households earning less than INR 5000. The economic limitations faced by these families significantly hinder the girls' access to adequate educational resources, such as textbooks, tuition, and technology, affecting their academic performance and continuity.

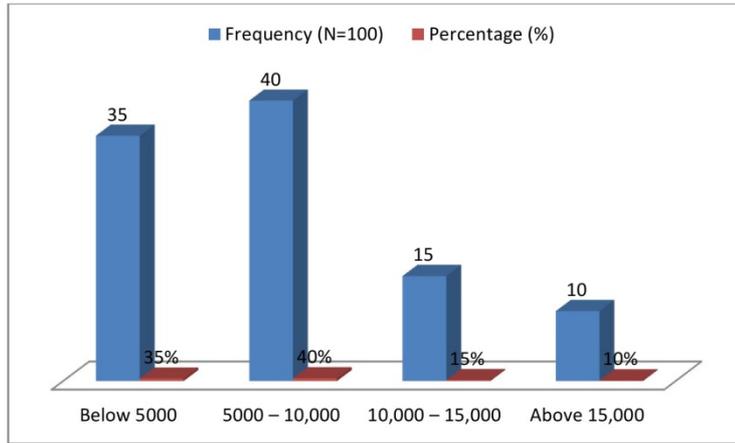


Fig.1 Monthly Family Income of the Respondents

Table 2: Parental Education of the Respondents

Parental Education	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	45	45%
Primary Education	35	35%
Secondary Education	15	15%
Higher Secondary and Above	5	5%

Parental education remains low, with 45% of respondents reporting that their parents are illiterate. Only 5% have parents who have completed higher secondary education. This lack of educational background within families often leads to a lack of support and guidance for students, limiting their academic aspirations.

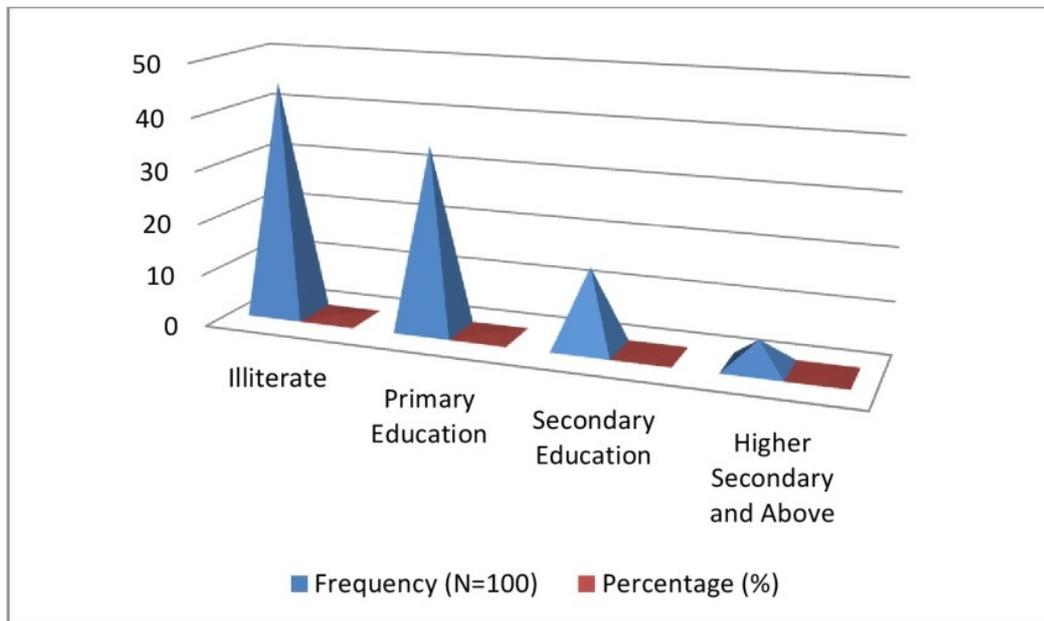


Fig.2 Parental Education of the Respondents

Table 3: Access to Government Schemes

Access to Government Schemes	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	65%
No	35	35%

A positive outcome of the study is that 65% of the respondents have accessed government schemes such as scholarships and minority welfare programs, which have helped mitigate some financial barriers. However, 35% of the students reported not having access to such schemes, pointing to a gap in awareness or bureaucratic challenges in accessing benefits.

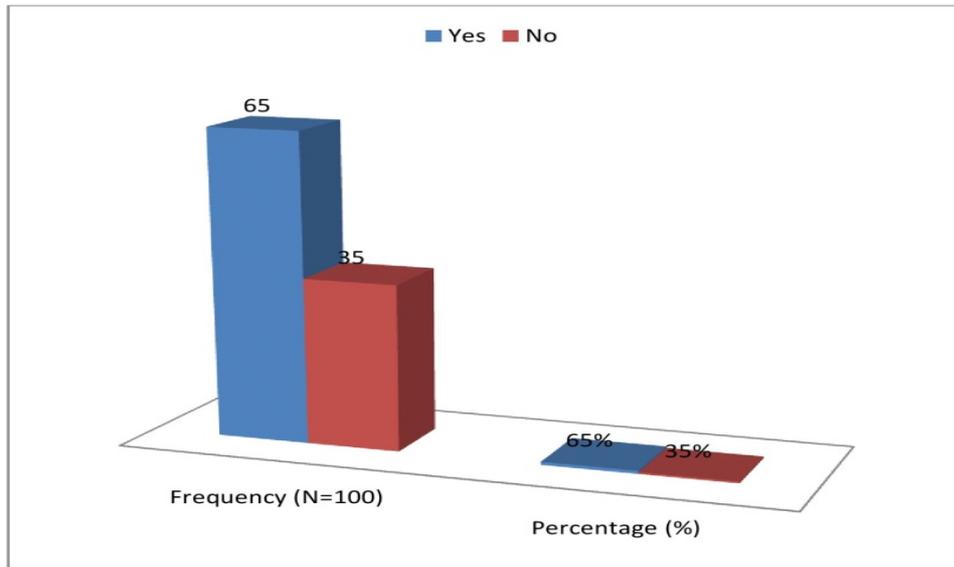


Fig.3 Access to Government Schemes

Table 4: Cultural Constraints of the Respondents

Cultural Constraints	Frequency (N=100)	Percentage (%)
Yes	60	60%
No	40	40%

Cultural factors continue to play a significant role in limiting educational opportunities for Muslim girls. 60% of the respondents indicated that they face cultural constraints, including pressure to marry early, restrictions on mobility, and prioritization of domestic responsibilities over education. These constraints are rooted in traditional gender roles, making it difficult for girls to pursue education beyond a certain level.

Discussion:

The socio-economic challenges identified in this study highlight the multifaceted issues Muslim girl students face in rural Murshidabad. Poverty, lack of parental education, and cultural barriers are key factors that hinder their academic success. Despite the availability of government schemes, the impact of these socio-economic conditions creates a challenging environment for continued education.

The data indicates a strong correlation between low family income and difficulty in accessing quality education. Students from poorer households struggle to afford necessary educational materials, leading to high dropout rates and a lack of academic continuity.

Parents' low levels of education contribute to a lack of motivation and support for their children's education. Parental attitudes towards education, particularly for girls, are often shaped by traditional gender roles that prioritize marriage and household responsibilities over academic achievement.

While government scholarships and schemes provide some relief, there is a significant portion of students who remain unaware or unable to access these benefits. Enhanced efforts are needed to ensure these schemes reach all eligible students, particularly in remote rural areas.

Findings:

- 35% of the respondents belonging to households earning less than INR 5000
- Parental education remains low, with 45% of respondents reporting that their parents are illiterate
- 35% of the students reported not having access to such schemes, pointing to a gap in awareness or bureaucratic challenges in accessing benefits
- 60% of the respondents indicated that they face cultural constraints, including pressure to marry early, restrictions on mobility, and prioritization of domestic responsibilities over education.

Recommendation:

Improved Access to Financial Aid: Strengthen the implementation of government scholarship programs to ensure that all eligible students benefit from financial aid.

Parental Awareness Campaigns: Conduct community-level awareness programs to educate parents about the importance of girls' education and the long-term benefits it can provide.

Cultural Sensitization: Promote programs that challenge traditional gender norms and encourage girls to pursue higher education without fear of cultural restrictions.

Skill Development Programs: Establish vocational and skill-development programs alongside formal education to equip girls with skills for employability.

Conclusion:

The socio-economic status of Muslim girl students in rural Murshidabad presents a complex intersection of poverty, gender, and education. (Paria & Maity, 2022) While there are encouraging signs of progress, such as access to government schemes, the overwhelming challenges of poverty and cultural constraints continue to limit their academic potential. There is an urgent need for targeted interventions, including awareness campaigns, parental education programs, and community engagement, to empower Muslim girls through education.

References:

- Kamalika Basu (2024;) Educational status of Muslim women in India: Insights from census, International Journal of Geography, Geology and Environment, IJGGE 6(1): 425-429 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22271/27067483.2024.v6.i1f.247>,

- Desai N, Thakkar U. Women in Indian Society. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India; c2001
- Census of India. Government of India; c2001.
- Dash T, Halder T. Journal for Educational Research Perspectives. Kolkata: Rita Book Agency; c2015. ISBN 978-93-84472-08-5.
- Rahaman H, Barman H. Muslims and Education of West Bengal: Theory to Pragmatism. Int J Humanit Soc Sci Invent. 2015;4(5):32-38.
- Gulati S. Women Education in 21st Century. Jaipur: ABD Publishers; c2006.
- Halder S. Literacy progression of women in developing countries of South-East Asia with special reference to West Bengal, India. Asia Pac J Soc Sci. 2012;4(2):88- 107.
- Jafri MH. Organizational commitment and employee's innovative behavior: A study in retail sector. Journal of Management Research. 2010;10(1):62-68.
- Jewitt D, Agarwal J, Li J, Weaver H, Mutchler M, Larson S. Disintegrating asteroid P/2013 R3. The Astrophysical Journal Letters. 2014 Mar 6;784(1):L8.
- Chowdhury A, Hossain MN, Mostazir NJ, Fakruddin M, Billah M, et al. Screening of Lactobacillus spp. from Buffalo Yoghurt for Probiotic and Antibacterial Activity. J Bacteriol Parasitol. 2012 Oct;3(8):156.
- Hoque MR. An empirical study of M-Health adoption in a developing country: The moderating effect of gender concern. BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making. 2016 Dec;16(1):1-10.
- Sachar R, Hamid S, Oommen TK, Basith MA, Basant R, Majeed A, et al. Social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India. East Asian Bureau of Economic Research; c2006 Jan.
- Menon M, Hemal AK, Tewari A, Shrivastava A, Shoma AM, Ein AH, et al. Robot-assisted radical cystectomy and urinary diversion in female patients: technique with preservation of the uterus and vagina. Journal of the American College of Surgeons. 2004 Mar;198(3):386-393
- Paria, M. & Maity. A. (2022), Gender Disparity In Teacher Education: The Experience In West Bengal / IJAAR/ Vol.2 Issue. 10 May-June 2022.

Citation: Mallick. P., (2024) “Socio-Economic Status of Muslim Girl Students at College Level: A Study on Rural Murshidabad, West Bengal”, *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (BIJMRD)*, Vol-2, Issue-8, September-2024.