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An assessment of socio-economic profile of rural Muslim female population: A case study

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Abstract

The development of any country depends on the prosperity of its women but they are discriminated against for ages also have been suffering from given unequal treatment in connection with prospects, privilege, rights and status in numerous socio-economic and cultural spheres in the society. The condition of Muslim women is more pathetic as most of them are most deprived, economically impoverished and educationally marginalized as compared to other communities of India. Therefore having all these views into mind the present study has been brought out to highlight the socio-economic condition of Muslim women particularly living in rural areas. It has been also attempted to analysis the major problems being currently faced by them as well as the causes of their backwardness. The study is based on primary sources of data generated through the field survey, carried out during the month of April and May 2016 through the direct interview method to the respondents with the help of questionnaire. One Muslim majority village from each block of Bijnor District has been selected. Thus out of total 11 villages 280 Muslim household have been sampled randomly consisting 445 female respondents. The overall result reveals that rural Muslim women are lagging behind in terms of education, health status, household income, household amenities and facilities, gender equality as well as work participation rate on account of higher poverty, lower literacy, inadequate health and education facilities, traditional and conservative attitude, discrimination, early marriage, and perceived sense of insecurity etc. After forgoing observation of major findings and conclusion an effort has been made possibly to draw remedial measures to overcome the problems and to empower them.

Keywords: Muslim, women, Rural, Socio-Economic, Education, Development, Empowerment

Introduction

India is the second largest country having the Muslim population following Indonesia. India has the one of the most diverse indigenous population. People belonging to many religions like Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Christianity live in this country since time immemorial (Moinuddin) ^[21]. Muslim constitutes 14.2 percent of this country as per census of 2011 and the decadal growth rate among them is the highest (24.6 percent at the end of census 2011). They are not only the largest community but also their presence is visible in all the states and union territories. It is also evident that even being largest minority community in country Muslims socio-economic conditions are not fairly significant. They have to make a lot of struggle to be settled safely and respectively in the society. Nonetheless, discrimination, social stagnation, and educational marginalization have cumulatively resulted in growing backwardness of the Muslims in large parts of the country (Sikand, 2006). The condition becomes more critical when we observe the socio-economic status of Muslim women particularly living in rural areas where they are suffering from higher poverty, lower literacy, ill-health, low per capita income, inadequate means of livelihood, discrimination, malnutrition, on account of traditional and conservative attitude, poverty, lack of health and educational facilities, observance of purdah, higher unemployment rate, large size of family, lack of extension and knowledge etc. The accessible rough, statistical, and micro level studies on Muslim women restate that the mass of the Muslim women, at the present time, are most deprived, economically impoverished, and politically marginalized sections of the Indian society. Further the studies disclose that Muslim women, like other women, are not homogeneous rather they are differentiated along the fault-lines of community, class, caste and region. Their lives are similarly positioned at crossroads of family, gender and community within the dynamic context of Indian society,

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economy and polity (Hasan and Menon, 2004).

Muslim girls and women lag behind their male counterparts and women of all other Indian women in pursuance of the Constitutional commitment of equality and life with dignity as reflected in our National Policy of Education 1986 and its Revised Programme of Action 1992. India's Planning Commission's India Human Development Report 2011 findings shows improvement on a few indicators like poverty, education, health, etc., as regards Muslims but the rate of growth much lower than for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The situation has improved little after the Sachar Committee Report. According to the 2011 report, urban poverty is highest amongst Muslims, rural poverty amongst Muslims is also higher than that of other religious groups and, indeed, than that of other backward classes (OBCs). One-third of the Muslims in the country were living below the poverty line. The rate of decline in poverty has also been slowest in the Muslim community (Human Development Report, 2011). Muslim women have the lowest Work Participation Rate (WPR) among all the three religious categories (Hindus, Muslims and Christians). Sixty per cent of Muslim women are self-employed--the highest percentage among all three categories. Muslim women employment as regular workers in urban areas is 15.7 per cent as compared to 27.7 per cent for Hindu women and 51.5 per cent for Christian women highlight their marginal presence in salaried jobs. In rural areas the employment status for Hindu is 3.6 per cent and for Muslim 3.0 per cent (Kazi, 1991) ^[17].

True, there are policies and programmes of central and state government to alleviate their problems but they are proportionately not sufficient and their implementation far from satisfactory. Much needs to be done in disseminating gender segregated data and gender bias in all aspects of agriculture, access to resources including land and natural resources, drudgery reduction, assuring nutritional security, diversification of activities of Self Health Groups and Street Shakti groups with emphasis on productivity including post-harvest technology, creation of marketing facilities, ownership to land and other allied resources rural electrification, outreach from the media, collectives of women and inter linking of SHGs, adult literacy, health awareness, gender sensitization of extension functionaries and financial institutions, awareness about pesticide hazard etc.

Muslims constitute India's largest minority as well as the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia. Educationally, Muslims constitute one of the most backward communities in the country causing concern. Muslim girls and women lag behind their male counterparts and women of all other communities. According to Census 2001, the literacy rate among Muslims (59.1%) was far below the National average (65.1%) and other socio-religious-communities (70.8%). The Muslim female literacy rate was 50.1 per cent below the Muslim male literacy rate (Census, 2001). As many as 25 per cent of Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 year have either never attended school or have dropped out. Muslims have the highest dropout rate in the country. Only one out of the 25 undergraduate students and one out of the 50 post-graduate students is a Muslim in premier colleges. The share of Muslims in all courses is low, particularly at the PG level and marginal in the science stream (Sachar, 2006) ^[25].

The concern of women's studies, having its fundamental objective to accumulate information on women and to explore their social position as well as problems and prospects, is attaining a great deal of magnitude during recent times in social scientific research and discourse. The ultimate objective of this sort of study is to empower the women in their movement for liberation and struggle in opposition to inequity. In this regard women's studies have also an immense importance in generating awareness about the multi-dimensional roles played by the women and their diverse social position in diverse societies from an empirical point of view and there are a number of policies and programmes of central and state government to alleviate their problems but in true, they are proportionately not sufficient and their implementation far from satisfactory. Their miserable conditions persist and they are still viewed the most vulnerable group of Indian society. Therefore, much needs to be done of effective efforts in empirical implementation to bring out them from their dismal and pathetic condition by assuring non-discrimination, access to household amenities and facilities, security of nutrition, improved health and educational status,

Therefore, the present study is an attempt to examine the socio-economic conditions of Muslim women particularly living in rural areas in order to bring out the causes of their backwardness and problems faced by them so that the academicians, policy makers, researchers may be concerned about their miserable conditions and adopt some effective programmes and schemes to be implemented vigorously.

Literature Review

Some reviews of significance studies regarding the various aspects related to Muslim women have been given below: Sarikhani, N. (2000) examined the Muslim women's work participation in India by using population census of 2001. The author has applied the descriptive research in this study. The result indicated that however the sex ratio of Muslim women is higher but the literacy rate is lower than the national average and they are the most disadvantaged group of Indian society. The study also founded there exists a wide gap between the works participation rate of males and females. Parveen *et. al.* (2004) quantitatively measures rural women empowerment of Bangladesh at household level. Education, training and exposure to information media have the potential to increase women's empowerment to a large extent. Ashraf W. and Ahmad A. (2009) have analyzed the status of education and empowerment of rural Muslim women in Aligarh district. The result reveals that socio-economic factors were more dominant to influence the empowerment and educational status of Muslim women rather than religion factors and their participation in decision making was found closely associated with domestic environment. Chaudhry *et. al.* (2009) made an empirical study showing diverse result of Muslim women empowerment in three different regions, viz. urban, rural and tribal areas of Southern Punjab (Pakistan). Besides education, access to media, socio-cultural norms of the community, job of women and household participation rate, a variable about the knowledge of an Islamic Concept of women empowerment has an effect upon women empowerment index constructed in the study. Hossain I. and Moinuddin (2013) ^[11] made an attempt to examine psycho-social circumstances of Indian Muslim women in sociological perspective with special indication to their

socio-economic, employment, educational attainment, rights and privileges, hindrances and restrictions, role and status as well as their major problems. Their tentative conclusion was that the socio-economic condition of Muslim women was far from satisfactory. They were found the victims of discrimination and their role in decision making was nothing while male counterparts had the key role in decision making power both inside and outside the household besides their domination in public and community affair. Lakshmi (2014) has tried to show the impacts of education on the socio-economic development of Muslim women. She also inspected the main causes of their educational backwardness. The author identified that the educational backwardness of Muslim women is the part of the overall educational lag of women in India especially those belonging to rural areas, backward regions, historically disadvantaged groups. Islam F. and Rahman A. (2014) made a comparative analysis of Muslim women's education and its impacts on their access to media, marital status family, and planning and political participation status for this purpose the authors selected 365 Muslim women respondents of Azamgarh District of U.P. (India). They found that education has had a possible impact on access to media and marital status of Muslim women in the district. However no influence of education was observed on family planning and political partition of Muslim women in the district

Aims and Objectives

The study aims to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To analyze the demographic characteristics of rural Muslim women.
2. To examine the socio-economic status of Rural Muslim women.
3. To assess the living status by analyzing their accessibility in housing and other infrastructure facilities.
4. To investigate the major problems faced by them.
5. To find out the main causes of their backwardness.
6. To suggest some remedial measures to overcome their problems and to empower them.

Study Area

District Bijnor of Uttar Pradesh has been chosen purposively for the present study. The district lies in the west of Uttar Pradesh and geographically lying between the parallel of 29° 2' and 29° 27' North latitude and meridians of 77° 59' and 78° 56' East longitudes. It occupies an area of 4445 sq. km. It is surrounded on the East by the district – Udham Singh Nagar of Uttarakhand, on the West by the Muzaffarnagar on the North by Haridwar and Gharwal of Uttarakhand, on the North-West by the Saharanpur, on the South-West by Meerut, on the South by the Moradabad and on the East-South by district Jyotibaphule Nagar. District Bijnor is the gateway of hilly region of Uttarakhand. The largest and the holiest river of our country, The Ganga flows in its west forming the boundary of Meerut District.

7. The Length of the district from North to South is 99.2 km and its breath from East to West is 98. The district may be described topographically as plain tract with slight undulations caused by the valley of few rivers. The main crops of the area are sugarcane, wheat and rice. Although district Bijnor is a prominent agricultural district but the number of industrial units both big and small are also considerable.
8. Administratively, Bijnor District has been divided into five tehsils and further subdivided into 11 development blocks namely; Najibabad, Kiratpur, Mohammadpur Devmal, Jhalu, Kotwali, Afzalgarh, Nehtaur, Allhepur, Seohara, Jalilpur, Noorpur.
9. Demographically, it has the population 36,82,713 as per the census of 2011, out of which 19,21,215 are male and 17,61,498 female. The total literacy rate of Bijnor district is 68.89 percent. The female literacy is 59.7 percent and male literacy is 76.6 percent. The general density of district is 434 persons per square km. various groups of communities live in Bijnor district. Among them Muslim is the second largest community which constitute 43 percent out of total population.

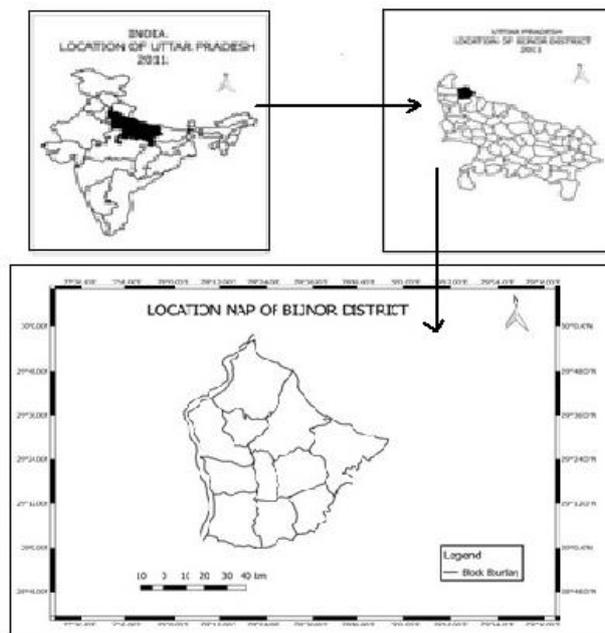


Figure 1

Data Base and Methodology

The present study is based on primary source of data that has been generated through the field survey during the month of April and August 2016 through the direct interview method to the respondents with the help of questionnaire pertaining the socio-economic aspects of Muslim women. The study was conducted in eleven villages of Bijnor district, selecting one Muslim majority village from each block. For the present study 280 households were selected by applying the random sampling method. Therefore, total 445 respondents were interviewed to assess their socio-economic status as well as causes and consequences. Only those respondents were considered for the analysis who belonged to working and mature age-group i.e. 15-60. Prior to the study, a pilot survey was conducted that helped in improving the questionnaire. The data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The method of simple percentage and average method was applied to analyze the data. The graphs and map of Bijnor district were prepared through excel 2010, QGIS and ArcGIS techniques. The information were collected about their demographic characteristics, educational status, household size, working status, types of works, working hours, average daily income, problems and causes of their backwardness. An attempt has been also made to suggest some remedial measures to improve their poor socio-economic conditions.

Result and Discussion

Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Rural Muslim Women in Bijnor District

Category	Percentage
Age-structure	
15-30	51.46
31-45	31.23
46-60	17.31
Total	100.00
Marital Status	
Married	50.56
Unmarried	43.59
Widower/Divorced/Separated	05.84
Total	100.00
Household Size	
≤4	05.71
4-6	40.00
7-9	44.18
≥9	10.11
Total	100.00
Age at marriage	
16-18	21.23
19-21	45.28
22-24	19.08
more than 24	14.41
Total	100.00

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2016

An examination of the data contained in table 1 regarding the age-structure of Muslim women shows that majority of women (51.46 percent) belong to age-group 15-30 followed by 31-45 (31.23 percent) and 46-60 (17.31 percent) respectively.

An analysis of the data on marital status reveals the fact that out of total Muslim women, 50.56 percent are married and

43.49 percent unmarried while the rest 5.84 percent comprised of widower, separated or divorced.

The information about the household size of family of Muslim women has also been given in table-1. The census of India defined 'household' as "a group of persons who normally live together and take their meals from a common kitchen unless the exigencies of work prevent any of them from doing so. Persons in a household may be related or unrelated or a mix of both. However, if a group of unrelated person live in a census house but do not take their meals from the common kitchen, then they are not constituent of a common house hold. Each such person was to be treated as a separate household". The data related to the household size depicts that below of 4 members per household comprised only 5.71 percent. The household with 4-6 members recorded 40.00 percent while the household having 7-9 members comprised the highest percentage (44.18 percent). The percentage lowered 10.11 in the households with the members above of 10. This analysis unfolds the fact that Muslim women have the heavy burden of large size which is the major cause of their poor socio-economic standard.

Further examination of the data regarding the age at marriage points out that out of total married women, 21.23 percent were married in 16-18 age-group, 45.28 percent got married between the age of 19-21. The fraction of women who got married in age-group of 22-24 was only 19.08 percent followed by above 24 age-group (14.41 percent) in all villages. This shows the trend of early marriage among muslim belonging to rural areas.

Level of Literacy and Educational Status

Education has been recognized as an essential agent of social change and development in any society of country. Education is considered as a potent instrument through which process of modernization and social change come to the existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas and provides necessary. Hence to think harmonious development of the country without women is impossible. A number of earlier studies have recognized the fact that the educational backwardness of Muslim women is part of the overall educational lag of women in India especially those belonging to rural areas (Lakshami, 2014) [20]. The literacy level and educational status of Muslim women in rural Bijnor given in this table-2 reveals that 50.56 percent were literate and 49.44 percent were illiterate. Out of total literate women 31.11 percent got only primary education, 25.77 percent were educated upto the higher secondary, 15.55 percent upto intermediate, 13.33 percent upto the graduation. The percentage of women educated up to post-graduation was only 5.34 while the ratio of female having the education of madaris and others courses (others indicate to professional degree holders) constitute 5.55 percent and 2.22 percent respectively. It would be seen from the data contained in table that the share of Muslim women in Bijnor district decreases as the level of education increases. It shows their lower attainment of higher education. Nearly about one-fifth of the women received the degree of graduation and post-graduation.

The major causes of their lower engagement in higher education investigated through the field survey are poverty, low level of income, large size of family, inaccessibility of transportation, observance of purdah, absence of separate educational institute, opposition to secular education for

girls, perceived sense of insecurity and discrimination, domestic works, early marriage and traditional attitude. Causes of educational backwardness in Indian society, as summarized by the Backward Classes Commission, are as follows: 1. Traditional apathy for education on account of social environmental condition or occupational handicaps. 2. Poverty and lack of means among the communities to educate their children. 3. Lack of sufficient number of educational institutions in rural areas. 4. Living in inaccessible areas and lack of proper communications. 5. Lack of adequate educational aid, in the form of scholarship, monetary grant for the purpose of books, clothing and hostel facility (Ramkrishnaya, 1986). Moreover, (1). Insistence on religious education, (2). early marriage, (3). Seclusion and (4). absence of socially defined occupational role for women in Muslim community are another reasons which obstruct their progress. However, many of programs and schemes to promote the enrolments of Muslim girls in higher education have been launched by the efforts of government and other committee and institutions. As the result of field observations shows that their implementation has been uneven and ineffective on account of lack of information and poor communication.

Table 2: Percent Distribution of Literacy Level and Educational Status among Rural Muslim Women in Bijnor District

Level of Literacy	Percentage
Literate	50.56
Illiterate	49.43
Total	100.00
Educational Staus	
Primary	31.11
Higher Secondary	25.77
Intermediate	15.55
Graduation	13.33
Post-graduation	5.34
Madaris	06.66
Others	02.22
Total	100.00

Source: Based on Field Survey: 2016

Economic Status

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Working Status and Types of Work among Rural Muslim Women in Bijnor District

Working Status	Percentage
Worker	22.92
Non-worker	77.08
Total	100.00
Types of work	
Category	Percentage
Teaching	09.83
Health-workers	04.9
Sewing	15.68
Cattle rearing and Dairy management	17.64
Agricultural Laborer	06.86
Bidi-making	05.88
Basket and mat knitting	04.91
Maid-servant	02.94
Net-weaving	16.66
Weaving	03.92
Running the shop	02.94
Begging	01.96
Others	05.88
Total	100.00

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2016

Employment is critical for poverty reduction and for enhancing women’s status. However, it is potentially empowering and liberating only if it provides women an opportunity to improve their well-being and enhance their capabilities. On the other hand, if it is driven by distress and is low-paying, then it may only increase a woman’s drudgery. To understand women’s work status in India’s rural areas and to examine the trends and nature of women’s employment, this paper analyses data from large-scale national surveys. An assessment of the data about the working status of women contained in table-3 shows that out of total sampled Muslim women only about one-fifth (22.92 percent) were worker while fourth-fifth of them were non-worker. The further analysis of the data given in same table depicts the types of works of working Muslim rural women. According to the table cattle rearing, dairy management, net-weaving, and sewing carry the highest percentage of workers which amounts nearly one-half (49.98 percent), whereas 9.83 percent workers were engaged in teaching. The ratio of the workers involved in bidi-making and basket and mat knitting was 5.88 percent and 4.91 percent respectively. The proportion of women working as health workers constitutes only 4.9 percent, as maid servant 2.94 percent, and as agricultural laborer 6.68 percent. 3.92 percent women out of total female workers were engaged in weaving, 2.94 percent in running the shop, and 1.96 percent in begging. The share of total working women involved in other types of works such as constitute only 5.88 percent.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Average Daily Income among Rural Muslim Women, 2016

Income (in rupees)	Percentage
Below 50	49.1
50-100	27.45
101-150	11.7
151-200	07.84
Above 200	03.91
Total	100.00

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2016

The percentage distribution of average daily income earned by rural Muslim women workers has been given in Table-4. An analysis of the data reveals that 49.1 percent workers earned below 50 rupees per day, 27.45 percent gained 50-100 rupees per day, and 11.7 percent got the rupees 101-150 in a day. 7.84 percent were observed earning the rupees 151-200 per day. Only 3.91 percent workers were recorded earning more than 200 rupees per day.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Working Hours among Rural Muslim Women Workers, 2016

Working hours	Percentage
less 5	15.68
5-7	18.62
8-9	22.54
10 and more	43.16
Total	100.00

Source: Based on field survey, 2016

Table-5 presents the percentage distribution of daily working hours among rural Muslim women workers. An examination of the data shows that 15.68 percent workers worked less than 5 hours in a day, 18.62 percent worked in a day for 5 to 7 hours and 22.54 percent for 8-9 hours. 43.16

percent have recorded working in a day for 10 and more hours.

Table 6: Percentage Distribution of the incidences of diseases among Rural Muslim Women in Bijnor District

Diseases	Percentage
Anemia	16.18
Joint pain	12.22
Back pain	12.00
Blood pressure	11.21
Diabetes	11.19
Typhoid	09.21
Gastroenteritis	07.00
Asthma	06.25
Jaundice	05.35
Tuberculosis	04.21
Stone in gall bladder	03.19
Eye blindness	02.00
Total	100.00

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2016

The Women's health and nutritional status is inextricably bound up with social, cultural, and economic factors that influence all aspects of their lives, and it has consequences not only for the women themselves but also for the well-being of their children (particularly females), the functioning of households. Since the turn of the century, India's sex ratio has become increasingly favorable to males. The percentage distribution of incidence of diseases among rural Muslim women has been given in table-6. The table envisages that most of women have been reported to be suffering from various diseases due to inadequate health facilities, low level of socio-economic condition, unconsciousness towards health, unavailability of drinking water, male-nutrition etc. An observation of the data given in table-11 shows that anemia was the major problem among women. 16.18 percent women were found to be suffered from this disease. The problem of joint pain, back pain and blood pressure are other major problems suffered by women. The ratio of these diseases was 12.22 percent, 12percent and 11.21respectively. In addition, 11.19 percent of them have the disease of diabetes, 9.21 percent typhoid, 7 percent gastroenteritis, and 6.25 percent asthma. 14.75 percent women were seen having the diseases of joidners, tuberculosis, stone in gall bladder, and eye blindness.

Household infrastructure facilities and amenities

The data regarding the type of dwelling by construction reveals that about two-fifth Muslim women (19.36) live in kutchha house and about half of the total Muslim women (49.56 percent) reside in pucca house, whereas 29.08 percent stayed in semi-pucca house. Only 2 percent accommodated in hut.

The further analysis of table-7 containing the data about the dwelling room availed by women shows that more than four-fifth (81.19 percent) of women live in one room house while 14.31 percent were observed living in two room house. Only 3.06 and 1.44 percent women accommodated the three and four or above room houses respectively.

An examination of data on sources of drinking water facility depicts that main sources of drinking water among the women was private hand-pump which constitute 65.24 percent of the total sampled Muslim women's household while 28.29 percent having no facility of drinking water within their premises use the public handpump. 5.41 percent

have the submersible as the means of drinking water. Remaining 1.06 percent use the well as the source of drinking water.

An analysis of the data given in table-7 pertaining the type of latrine facility availed by Muslim women shows the significant portion of women 65.65 percent using the flush toilets within their household by effective implementations of government schemes and efforts. 16.15 percent have private toilets within premises of dwelling while 18.20 percent who do not facility of any type of toilet within their dwellings go to open fields.

The further analysis of data on bathroom facility makes it clear that less than one-half (47.25 percent) of women's households have the facility of bathroom while more than one-half (52.75 percent) have no facility of bathroom.

The further examination of the table about the kitchen facility discloses that 47.25 percent of total sampled household have facility of kitchen while 63.73 percent do not have ant facility of kitchen within their premise.

Table 7: Percent Distribution of Household infrastructure facilities and amenities availed by Muslim Rural Women in Bijnor District

Category	Percentage
Types of dwelling	
Kutchha	19.36
Pucca	49.56
Semi-pucca	29.08
Hut	02.00
Total	100.00
Number of dwelling room	
One	81.19
Two	14.31
Tree	03.06
Four and above	01.44
Total	100.00
Drinking Water Facility	
Well	01.06
Handpump	65.24
Public Handpump	20.00
Submersible	05.41
Tap	08.29
Total	100.00
Latrine Facility	
Flush/Septic	65.65
Private	16.15
Open field	18.2
Total	100.00

Source: Based on field survey, 2016

The percentage distribution of household durable goods availed by rural Muslim women has been given in table-8. An assessment of the data reveals that the proportion of women having the availability of bicycle within their household is the highest (71 percent). The second most dominating item possessed by women is pressure cooker (67.3 percent) followed by mobile 62.29 percent, iron 39.11 percent, motorcycle 30.35 percent, L.P.G. 25.55 percent and sewing machine 22.24 percent. The percentage of costly items possessed by them is not sufficient. The share of women who possessed the television, refrigerator, washing machine and inverter is 20.01 percent, refrigerator 15.45 percent, 11.41 percent and 12.50 percent respectively. The ratio of women having the facility of tractor, computer and

car within their premises is 3.55 percent, 2.05 percent and 1.15 percent respectively.

Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Household Durable Goods availed by Rural Muslim Women in Bijnor District, 2016

Durable goods possessed by	Percentage
L.P.G.	25.50
Refrigerator	15.45
Washing machine	11.41
Invertor	12.50
Television	20.01
Mobile	62.29
Motorcycle	30.35
Computer	02.05
Iron	39.11
Bicycle	71.00
Tractor	03.55
Car	01.15
Sewing machine	22.24
Pressure cooker	67.3
Radio	18.21

Source: Based on field survey, 2016

Causes of Backwardness

Analyzing the major causes of Muslim women's backwardness living in villages is the main thrust of this study. Before discussing how to improve their miserable condition it is essential to know why they are suffering from these poor conditions. The thorough knowledge of causes of their backwardness is essential for the effective implementation of schemes and policies to uproot this from society. However many of studies have been carried out concerning the causes of their backwardness but there is lack of studies which have passed through the in-depth inspections of the reasons on very micro level. Therefore, in present study, an attempt has been made to explore the reasons due to which they are lagging behind as compared to other communities. The table-9 presents the data on percentage distribution of causes of Muslim rural women's backwardness.

The table clearly shows that poverty is the most important causes of their poor socio-economic status. Out of total selected women, 18.31 percent women are forced to live in dismal condition on account of poverty. Being illiterate and unskilled, their spouses or other earning working members of family get involved in manual and elementary jobs which require neither high skilled workers nor high qualification of education. In such types of works, they are paid very low wages which are insufficient to satisfy even the basic requirements of their dear ones. Second most important reason of backwardness was illiteracy which accounted 17.19 percent. It is obvious that Muslim is the most illiterate community among all communities of India. The ratio of illiterate women belonging to rural areas is higher than their urban counterparts on account of inaccessibility of better educational facilities within their domicile and absent of good connectivity of roads and improved facilities of transportation to reach educational institutions located far from their villages. Illiteracy itself becomes the major cause of their other miseries. The third main cause of backwardness was low level of household income (16.45 percent). During survey it was observed that most of male earning workers of their household were either casual laborers, small land marginal farmers or seasonal agricultural laborers who were least able to earn satisfactory

earnings to provide basic household amenities and facilities for their families. On the other Muslim women due to traditional attitude and for sake of household duties including childcare were restricted to go out of home to work. Thus these poor women are deprived not only of modern assets but also of satisfactory basic facilities and amenities. Large size of family is another cause of their backwardness constitutes 15.12 percent among all accuses. In Muslim community birth control is considered a sin. Thus the size of family remains large. On account of large family size the size of land holding is declining and Landlessness is increasing among Muslim. It has become a significant reason of poor status of life of Muslim women living in rural areas which accounts for 13.00 percent. Muslim women are generally not aware about the family planning because of illiteracy. In fact family planning is restricted in Muslims. Thus the size of family keeps on increasing. This is an important cause of poor quality of life leading them behind in terms of socio-economic condition. This type of cause amounted 11.23 percent. In India, the proportion of women in work participation in comparison of men is very low. This gap among Muslims is wider on account of their traditional and conservative attitudes. The low work participation rate of Muslim women in study area as a major cause of their backwardness comprised 11.19 percent. In survey it was found that most of muslim families do not send their girls to colleges because of the fear of insecurity and discrimination. This reason accounted 9.12 percent. Moreover, other important causes of backwardness are educational institutions, inadequate health facilities which recoded 7.99 percent and 5.98 percent respectively followed by early marriage (6.12 percent), superstitions and conservative attitude(4.89) and low participation in decision making (4.33 percent).

Table 9: Percent Distribution of Socio-Economic Causes of Backwardness of Muslim Rural Women in Bijnor District

Causes	Percentage
Poverty	14.21
Lower Literacy	12.11
Low level of household income	11.23
Large Size of Family	10.10
Landlessness	09.00
Unawareness toward family planning	08.00
Low work participation Rate	07.04
Perceived sense of insecurity and discrimination	06.43
Absent of separate girls educational institutions	06.31
Inadequate health facilities	05.00
Early marriage	05.05
Superstitions and conservative attitude	03.33
Low participation in decision making	02.19
Total	100.00

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2016

Problems

The problems being faced by Muslim rural women in society have become an issue of much concern for policy makers, development authorities, and planners. The concern of women's studies, having its fundamental objective to accumulate information on women and to explore their social position as well as problems and prospects, is attaining a great deal of magnitude during recent times in social scientific research and discourse. Therefore, it has been attempted to investigate the major problems being faced by muslim women in Bijnor district. The percentage

distribution of the socio-economic problems of Muslim rural women in Bijnor district has been shown in table-10. It is clear from the table that out of total women 51.93 percent are suffering from the poverty, low household income, and low status of education. Poor health status is another major problem being faced by 10.34 percent women. The problems like large size of family and landlessness or small size of landholding are important prevailing problems faced by them which recorded 10.00 percent and 9.15 percent respectively. While 7.00 percent are deprived of household infrastructure and facilities and 6.12 percent women are victims of discrimination in terms of education and wages. Dowry system is also an existing problem faced by 6.00 percent of rural Muslims women.

Table 10: Percent Distribution of the Problems among Rural Muslim Women in Bijnor District

Problems	Percentage
Poverty	21.21
Low household income	18.67
Low status of education	11.51
Poor health condition	10.34
large size of family	10.00
landlessness or small size of landholding	09.15
Deprivation of household infrastructure and facilities	07.00
Discrimination	06.12
Dowry system	06.00
Total	100.00

Source: Based on Field Survey, 2016

Conclusion

By evaluating the overall facts and findings, it can be concluded that the situation of Muslim women is not satisfactory especially regarding their socio-economic status, educational attainment, health status, work participation, etc. The overall analysis of the study reveals most of them are living in very miserable and pathetic condition where they are deprived not only of the education but also of basic amenities and facilities. They are suffering a lot from malnutrition, poor health status, deprivation of basic amenities and household infrastructure facilities, burden of large family, domestic violence, discrimination in terms of education, health and wages. Moreover, the study exposes that their backwardness is not merely the result of religion but a reflection of the socio-economic status of community. Therefore, to make them economically independent, physically sound, educationally developed, there is an urgent need to empower Muslim women, to reduce rate of child birth, to usher in religious and social reforms, there is great need to improve general economic condition which in turn will improve educational status of Muslim women and that in turn will bring in greater awareness for change.

Suggestions

To overcome the problems faced by them and improve their poor and miserable socio-economic and educational condition, an attempt has been made possibly to suggest some remedial measures, which have been given below-

- Development schemes for Muslim community must be favorable. As coeducation for Muslim girls after a certain level acts as a major hindrance in their progress. Therefore, separate educational institutes should be set up to promote their educational level.

- The Ulamas of madrasa should help to uproot the Muslims' socio-economic and educational problems by mobilizing their views through their lectures and normative.
- To control the birth of children is considered a sin in the Muslim community. This belief has played a significant role in keeping the family size large. Most of women consider the children the gift of God. They say "Who give birth, must give food" such conservative views play very important role in population explosions. If the number of members in family is large they are not developed in good way. They are unable to be educated in good manner. They are not able to enjoy the balanced diet and sufficient cloths. Government has launched many schemes to control the extreme population growth. Family planning is one of them. So the Muslim should be awarded to adopt family planning.
- Even in this advanced scientific Era, many of many Muslim women in rural areas suffer from cheap superstitions, fate dominates them. They consider every deed done according to the will of god so do not attempt to reform their condition even in case of illness they go to tantric to for treatment as they consider the diseases the curse of divine power. The sensitive socialists and matured minded inhabitants should make possible efforts to convince them above these useless activities. They should remove such foolish superstitions and false belief.
- In survey a number of Muslim women were found living in very pathetic and dismal condition. They were deprived of basic amenities and facilities such as inadequate balanced diet, sufficient cloths, and appreciable medical treatment. Most of them particularly belonging to the agricultural laborer and unskilled employee were observed struggling a lot to provide the food and clothes to their kids. Therefore there is felt an urgent need to improve their poor economic conditions. Many of centers of craft work, weaving, sewing, and knitting should be set up. So that these women may be trained and enabled to earn their livelihood.
- The government provides reservations in various schemes for women particularly belonging to SCs and STs. It is a step in right directions. However, no reservation has been made for women of Muslim community. This requires immediate rectification.
- Awareness programmes regarding health hygiene, SHGs should be conducted.

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