

## Education of Muslim Women in the Slums of Kannur, Kerala

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper focuses on the education of Muslim women residing in the slums of Kannur district of Kerala. The objectives of the study were to find out the educational status of Muslim women in the slums of Kannur and to suggest remedial measures to enhance their education. Household survey was employed for the study. The sample consists of 220 Muslim women belonging to the age group of 18 to 24 years. The tools used were self administered questionnaire and interview schedule. Percentage analysis was used to analyse, tabulate and interpret data. The findings reveal that the Muslim women in the slums of Kannur are poor in their educational attainment including school level of education. They consider education as a secondary need. The main factors that prevent the education is poverty, unemployment, more emphasis for religious education, superstitious beliefs lack of awareness regarding various educational schemes and scholarships, lack of role models and good religious leadership. Therefore, this study suggests that policy makers, authorities and religious leaders should concentrate more on these areas to enhance quality education as they seem to be the most downtrodden segment of the Muslim community.*

**Key Words:** Muslim women, slum, Kannur

### INTRODUCTION

Education helps to develop perspective outlook towards life, to mould one's personality to attain positive and strong attitudes. It helps to overcome miseries and to improve the quality of life. Education is a necessity not only for the growth and development of an individual but of the community and the nation at large. Women constitute more than one half of the population of the country. In the recent times, where there is so much of emphasis on women education, women in the Indian society was seen as a downtrodden segment due to various factors such as poverty, unemployment, early marriage, baseless customs and traditions, etc. Sachar Committee report (2006) highlighted the fact that the Muslim community possess the lowest literacy rate in the country.

Islam granted equal opportunities and rights for both men and women. There was no limitation placed on women education. Knowledge and education were highly emphasised in Holy Quran. Knowledge was considered as a never ending process. Prophet (pbuh) said 'seek knowledge from cradle to

grave'. This shows that there are no age limitations to acquire knowledge and learning. It was believed that an educated woman should not only radiate her moral qualities in her home but, she should participate actively in all spheres of development. The higher status granted to Muslim women during the early Islamic period did not last long. This is because of the reappearance of various customs, social and cultural norms of pre Islamic period from conquered people and was identified with that of Islam. Here, women's role is to perform household chores and to take care of the family. Educated women were considered as bold and confident. According to Census 2011, Kerala holds first place in female literacy with 91.98%.

Sufaira (2013) studied the socio-economic condition of slum dwellers from Kannur Municipality and identified that policy failure, lack of fund utilization and implementation problems exist in slum areas. The educational condition of Muslim women is pathetic especially in the slum areas of Kannur district. Kannur is the 13th district lying along the West Coast in the State of Kerala. Here, slum is thickly populated coastal

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areas comprised of closely packed housing units in deteriorated condition. Slum residents belong to OBC (Other Backward Community) category. The chief occupations of people in this area are fishing and head loaders. There were people with severe health related problems and were unemployed. Majority of the women were homemakers and fall under no income category. Most of the girls were unable to get through their school education. The pass percentage of Muslim girls in secondary and higher secondary level of education seems to be very low. Instead of pursuing education, due to severe economic constraints the young girls after their school education were forced to work as daily wagers as dancers for the marriage functions of the community. The paltry amount received through this has been utilized for the daily survival of the family. They are ignorant and unaware about the various psychological exploitations that girls may face from the society. Majority of the people have blind belief in god man, superstitious beliefs and baseless customs which are still prevailing in the community. The girls were taught only about their duties and responsibilities and not their rights mentioned in the Holy Quran. Central and State Governments are providing various scholarships and packages for the education of children especially from the backward sections of the society. Unfortunately, the people of slums are aware only about the fisherman scholarships. It is against this background, the investigator felt to conduct a study of this kind.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the educational status of Muslim women residing in the slums of Kannur district of Kerala.
- To suggest remedial measures to enhance the education of Muslim women in the slums of Kerala.

#### METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out through survey method. Purposive random sampling method was used for the study. Primary source of data was employed for the study.

#### SAMPLE

The sample for the present study comprises of 220 Muslim women residing in slums of Kannur district of Kerala belonging to the age group of 18-24 years.

#### TOOLS USED

Self administered questionnaire containing 20 items and interview schedule from 20 families was used for the study.

#### STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

Percentage analysis was done to analyse, tabulate and interpret the collected data.

#### RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

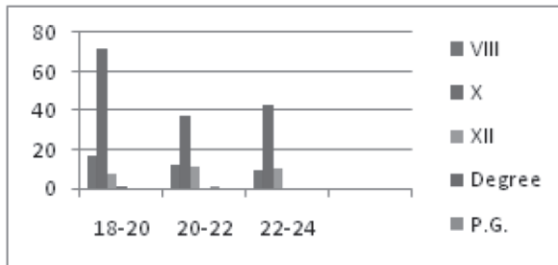
Table 1: Educational Status of Muslim Women in the Slums of Kannur.

Sl.No.	Age group	Educational Status							Total No. of respondents
		VIII	X	XI	Degree	P.G.	Professionals	others	
1	18-20	17	72	7	1	-	-	-	97
2	20-22	12	37	11	-	1	-	-	61
3	22-24	9	43	10	-	-	-	-	62
	Total	38	152	28	1	1	-	-	220

From the above table, it was clear that the educational status of Muslim women residing in the slums of Kannur seems to be primitive and low. Most of them were dropouts at secondary level of education. Only 0.45% of girls are pursuing graduate and post graduate courses. The study reveals that there was no single girl hiring for professional and other job oriented diploma courses.

This shows that the education of Muslim women in slum areas is far behind when compared to those belonging to other parts of the district. The study which was conducted by the investigator in other parts of Kannur found that there were more number of graduates, post graduates and professionals from this community. The benefits of non creamy layer or concession (OBC) are rarely benefitted by the slum residents. Instead, this has been mostly utilized by the middle class family of the community. This study shows that, there is an urgent need of the hour to generate awareness

for the educational upbringing of the Muslim community in general and particularly in slum residents.



**Graph1.** Graphical Representation of the Educational Status of Muslim Women in the Slums of Kannur.

Suggestive measures to improve the education of Muslim women in the slums of Kannur.

- Poverty and unemployment of parents is one of the main causes that prevent the education of Muslim women. Authorities and policy makers can concentrate more on these areas to render various educational scholarships and schemes for the educational enhancement of Muslim women.
- Free and quality tuition classes can be provided to girls in order to make them get in to higher education.
- Awareness and guidance classes and cells can be organised in the slum areas by the concerned authorities to provide sufficient information on various educational programmes, courses and to make the people aware about the importance of modern education along with religious education.
- Religious leaders can play an important role in the educational enhancement of the community through their insightful and thought provoking speeches and talks on Islamic principles and rights granted to women.
- Majority of the Muslim women revealed that their parents are daily wagers with meagre earnings. They need financial assistance even to fulfil their primary needs. The parents

as well as the daughter(s) consider their education as secondary need and the option of higher education remains as a dream for them. Hence, authorities should take initiative by convening meetings with educational standing committees and other social agencies to provide necessary information by way of brochure and home visits to the parents cum students.

- Teachers are considered as second parent and role models for the students. Majority of the teachers have an assumption that Muslim girls will not complete their education successfully. This prejudice from the part of the teachers needs to be changed. The students especially from slum areas need to be motivated, encouraged and inspired by the teachers.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident from the study that the education of Muslim women residing in the slums of Kannur seems to be poor in their education including higher and professional. There are several factors which hinder the education of Muslim women such as economic, social, religious, cultural and psychological. Various suggestive measures were put forward for their educational enhancement. The study highlights that the Muslim women need awareness, motivation and role models within the community. Religious leaders can play an important role for the upbringing of the community through their insightful and thought provoking talks and speeches. Authorities and policy makers should concentrate more on the slum area by providing awareness about various educational schemes and scholarships for enhancing their education.

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