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Occupational Status of Muslim Women: A Case Study of Muslim Community in Mysore City, Karnataka

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Abstract

Work has been defined as activities for 'pay or profit', though now, in keeping with the suggestion of the system of National Accounts 1993, the term 'economic activity' rather than 'work' is used in official statistics. The income-oriented approach to the definition of work can capture only those who are in wage and salaried employment, self-employment. Many activities, which are for self-consumption, do not count as work. The invisibility of Muslim women's work in economic accounting systems is thus due to the flawed definition of economic activity. Among the Muslim women in Mysore city who participated in this research, the majority of them were housewives and those who worked, were self-employed. Work participation of Muslim women, even though it is of a very tiny amount, varies in rural and urban areas. A minority of Indian Muslim women work throughout their lives, yet official statistics recognizes only certain types of work measured in terms of wage-earning economic activity as productive and that are counted in the measurement of national income. The research paper aims to answer this question. Should Muslim women and men be identical in occupational status? Should Muslim women give up their obligations towards the family and the children and take to various jobs? Should a Muslim woman be a soldier, a merchant, a farmer, a factory worker exactly as a Muslim man? What are the barriers, restrictions, impulsions and obstacles on the way of Muslim women empowerment in Mysore city?

Keywords: *Occupation, Muslim women, Empowerment, Occupational status*

Introduction

When we talk of job preference for women, especially Muslim women, it is not a question of totally non-active person now taking to contribute to the economy. It is more a question about the shift of the job from what is done in house to what it is meant to be an outside of house occupation. Whether such a shift is desirable or not is not easy to answer because, it (shift) has social, cultural, ethical and religious as well as emotional implications. Family is the basic social organization in Muslim communities that decide whether a woman should work outside of her house or not. We cannot understand the occupational role of Indian Muslim women today unless we study their historical position in the society.

In Muslim community most of the women do not have the autonomy to make decision about their own work. It is mostly decided by the parents, especially the father before marriage and husband after marriage in many cases after marriage girl leaves her job as husband don't allow to continue with job after marriage. Most Muslim families are conservative and patriarchal, and cultural norms govern women's work outside and often not consider good. The family responsibilities that drive men seek employment serve to keep women at home. Therefore very less number of women decides about their work themselves. But nowadays women taking this responsibility of deciding about work by themselves and this trend vary from rural to urban areas.

A comparative position of the status of Muslim women in careers in the past and their current position would give us a good idea of the preferences of the present day Muslim women in the choices of careers and occupational status. However, a more objective assessment of the career preferences of the present day Muslim woman would be of academic interest only. There is a global movement for emancipation and empowerment of the woman. Indian women's movement is deeply affected by the global movement. Job preferences of Indian Muslim women cannot be isolated from the social influences. Muslim women not free to decide on merits as they like. Even their thinking and psyche are deeply affected by the historical influences. The occupational status and job preferences of Indian Muslim women, however modern, liberal and

enlightened they may be, are yet a product of their religious, ethical and cultural as well as social complexes. A study of the religious and social influences is therefore a must in understanding the job preferences of the modern Indian Muslim woman.

Review of Literature

Raju and Bagchi (1993) argue that traditionally, work has been defined as activities for 'pay or profit', though now, in keeping with the suggestion of the system of National Accounts 1993, the term 'economic activity' rather than 'work' is used in official statistics. The income-oriented approach to the definition of work can capture only those who are in wage and salaried employment, self-employment. Many activities, which are for self- consumption, do not count as work.

The invisibility of Muslim women's work in economic accounting systems is thus due to the flawed definition of economic activity (Haq, 2000) Among the Muslim women in Mysore city who participated in this research, the majority of them were housewives and those who worked, were self-employed. Work participation of Muslim women, even though it is of a very tiny amount, varies in rural and urban areas. The traditional picture of Muslim women is very different than what is today. Women have played a key and largely unrecognized role in the rapid economic and social development worldwide. Women have been entering the workforce in record numbers, over the last decades. In fact, the majority of women who wish to pursue a career face the problem. Domestic and outside work often caused imbalances and gender discrimination is a common phenomenon (Hasan and Menon 2005).

Bhasin (1986) also writes that women in addition to work outside as paid or self-employed work they have to spend many hours attending to household chores-cooking, fetching water child care and so on. Women therefore bear the burden of "paid worker" (as a part of the workforce) and "unpaid work" (in the home). She further writes that this double burden also makes it difficult for women to get better jobs, to get training and to move up the professional ladder. Because of fewer opportunities for education, women get into less skilled and lower paid jobs. Muslims in

general and Muslim women in particular, suffer in this competitive era owing to their low academic standards. No doubt some radical change is apparent in the fields of economics and sociology on which rests the society's structure, yet the majority are not in an enviable position.

Siddiqui and Zuberi (1993) write that the Islamic polity suggests ways and means of improvement as well as accommodation and adjustment in the present day framework of living. One needs not to imitate the western style of living and yet benefit from it as far as possible following the guidelines provided by the Quran and Sunnah. A broader outlook on western economics without ignoring Islamic doctrines is essential in the modern world. And yet the Muslims tend to be more, theoretical and less pragmatic in their daily concerns of life. Azim (1997) argues that employment is one of the important determinants of social status of a person. Although it is an economic activity, it is a social necessity and a source of self-esteem. The participation of women in economic and social activities is important not only for their own development, but also for the progress of the nation.

Hassan and Menon (2004) in their study cite two major reasons for the low work participation of Muslim women. First is their restricted engagement in agriculture owing to differential patterns of land ownership in rural areas and their exclusion from low-level jobs in urban areas. The second reason, that is, the limited access to low level jobs is particularly important in view of the large proportions of Muslims residing in urban areas who would be potentially interested in such jobs. As Muslims and as women, they are twice as disadvantaged in access to jobs generally and possibly even low level jobs in the informal sector and casual labour. NSS data show that of the uneducated Muslim women, only 8 percent finds employment as casual labour in public works, when compared to 21 percent of Hindu uneducated women. The opportunities for Muslim women seem to have not improved at all. Most Muslim women are simply not in competition with males, or other women, are absent from the sub sectors of manufacturing, and if they happen to be working at all they would be concentrated in low-paying and low- skill jobs that are extension jobs that are really extensions of the domestic domain, and this type of work could easily be the most disadvantaged.

Rehman (2005) writes that impact of employment has been heavier on women than men and this decline in women's employment is likely to have serious and far reaching effects on fertility, mortality and nutrition. Female work participation rate has always been lower than that of males in India. In the post-independence period, with a rapid increase in modern and organized sector, the share of household industries declined drastically. Since household industries constituted the biggest traditional source of women's employment outside agriculture, women were the main victims of this process of economic change; secondly women's participation in modern industry shows a decline because greater specialization and new technology training are required which women lack due to illiteracy among them. Those traditional occupations which were exclusively feminine are now being taken up by men also because they are providing lucrative, eg. Chikankari Embroidery work of Lucknow.

Shinde & John (2012) in her study on "Educational Status of Muslim Women in India" analyzed education status of Muslims which is based on Secondary data. It clearly showed that education is a factor for human development among Muslims, but girls are least educated. It believes that there can never be a substitute for a mother in the socialization of children. Nevertheless, Islam does not forbid women from seeking employment in times of need, particularly in the positions which suit their nature, and in which society needs her services most, as for instance, in professions like teaching, nursing and medicine (Ibid).

Bhat, Fayaz Ahmad (2011) writes that, there is no rule in Islam, which forbids women from seeking employment whenever there is a necessity for it; moreover, there is no restriction on benefitting from women's exceptional talent in any field. In Jammu and Kashmir Muslims mostly prefer their daughters to work in the field of teaching and in medical, as they consider these two jobs as most suitable for girls. Many Muslims do not consider important for the women to work outside family and ignore domestic sphere. During field study from table 3.20 it was observed that 8.5 percent respondents out of which 5% were rural and 3.5% were urban were of the view that working of women result in neglect of children and children does not get a proper attention of mother, whereas 9.5 percent respondents out of which 6 percent were rural

and 3.5 percent were urban respondents were of the view that women should take care of domestic life only. Besides this there were 3 percent respondents who consider working of women against the principle of Islam that included 2 percent rural and 1 percent urban respondent. The unfavorable nature of respondents towards women's employment cannot be attributed to their belief that Islam forbids women to seek employment but other factors were more dominating. Family responsibility and child care were the major factors besides illiteracy among the women's in Bhaderwah for not doing any job. Educational Level and Employment, Education play an important role in enabling women to qualify for taking up employment and their children also get inspired from them. Thus Education plays an important role in changing the attitude of Muslims towards the employment of women and also helps the women to acquire the job of their choice. Education helps the women to get employment and type of employment depend on their educational level. Therefore, in the above table 3.21 we have seen that 5 percent respondents out of which 3 percent were rural and 2 percent urban working respondents were illiterate. Whereas 11 percent working respondents out of which 6 percent were rural and 5 percent urban were school educated. On the other hand 19.5 percent respondents were graduates out of which 9.5 percent were rural and 10 percent were urban respondents. Whereas 20 percent working respondents were post graduates out of which 7 percent were rural and 13 percent were urban respondents, and 7.5 percent were working respondents were professionals that included 2.5 percent rural and 5 percent urban respondents. It was observed that Muslims prefer at least high school and college education for their daughters.

Methodology

The present study is conducted with a view to understand the occupational status of women in the Muslim community of Mysore city, Mysore district. One hundred and seventy two informants were selected on the basis of purposive sampling techniques for the purpose of primary data collection. The primary data are gathered by administering the interview schedules to the female informants who lived in Mysore city that belong to the Muslim community of the city. They were mainly settled in Mandi Mohalla and Banni Mantap localities. The present study

is also systematically carried out on the basis of relevant secondary data such as 'reports of the high-power committee on regional development, selected books on occupational, economic and communication development, articles from professional journals, proceedings of national and international seminars and conferences, media reports and other publications related to the research topic'. The independent variables of the research are Age, Religion Division, Gender, Education, Occupation and Monthly Income. The Muslim women of Mysore city, who were selected for the present study, were handed over interview schedule comprising of few questions regarding their occupational status, social welfare, economical challenges, occupational preferences and restrictions and impulsions. The data which were collected from them is the basis for the present study to know the occupational status of Muslim women in Mysore city.

Results

It is clear that in the Muslim community of Mysore, women are seemed to be oppressed by the male society. The rule of the men has always an obstacle for them to enter various businesses and apply for jobs. In Mysore city, Muslim women usually stay at home and are mostly housewives staying at home moms, etc. and the only persons earning money are the men like fathers and husbands. This can be referred to as a big obstacle since they cannot continue their studies so they will not be well skilled. There is not a well maintained interaction between the females and the society so the experiences and skills will apparently decrease and therefore, there will be very less opportunities for them in order to enter business and find an occupation. The Muslim women among the respondents were very few since they were not able to communicate in English and the quality of interaction was very low due to many factors such as religious restrictions (they should not communicate with a man that is a stranger), family impulsion (they are not allowed to participate in such programs since their husbands, brothers and father are not allowing them), socio-cultural issues the Islamic society will not allow them to join such programs because it has formed a negative mindset throughout the time. Muslim women in Mysore city have less occupational opportunities due to religious restrictions and family impulsion. Surprisingly, among 172 female Muslim informants, the occupational statuses

of only 12 of them were positive and that was nothing but working as self-employed in beauty salons. The rest of them were either housewives or unmarried unemployed women. Due to the obstacles imposed on them by family and society, religious and ethical restrictions and cultural barriers, their chances of getting involved in the business industry are very low and unfortunately it causes them not to seek further education.

Conclusion

Present academic research on the occupational status and job preference of the Muslim women of Mysore city focuses on defining their social conditions, determining the range of choices and interest, certain restrictions and barriers imposed on them in order to keep them at home either for their own safety or to make them focus on more important issues such as taking care of the household or raising children as well as measuring the level of education of Muslim women in Mysore city. This research empirically investigates the status of occupation of Muslim women in various places of Mysore city. A questionnaire is used to gather adequate data in order to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The study used a survey instrument for collecting data such as an appropriate interview schedule. The survey participants were female individuals following Islam as their religion who reside in Mysore city. Qualitative method was used when it was difficult to develop problem statements or research objectives because it is necessary to provide richer information, fresh approach and to learn how a phenomenon happens in its natural setting. Field research defined as studies are done once and represents a snapshot of one point in time not repeated and over an expected period.

According to the results of the research, the majority of the Muslim women in the Mysore city are housewives. Men are the major earners and the empowerment of Muslim women in Mysore need major improvement which depends on several factors as motivating them, encouraging them and giving them proper education and ensuring them that they can equally enjoy their talents and skills in the society and they should not limit themselves to their houses. Government should take action and consider them as part of the society that needs to be well educated in order to enter various occupations without any restrictions and impulsions.

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