

# Educational Status of Muslim Women

## A Sociological Analysis of Kundhar, Pokhara, Kaski

 Shanti BHUSAL

### Abstract

This research analyses the educational status of Muslim women aged between 16-40 years of Kundhar area that lies in ward numbers 10 12 and 13 Pokhara sub metropolitan Kaski. A total of 60 Muslim women aged between 16-40 years were purposively selected as respondents. It primarily focuses on the participation of the women in education and the obstacles they face in attaining it. Marriage and religious beliefs have been found as the main factors hindering educational achievement for these women. These factors have limited the role of many respondents to being a house wife only.

**Keywords:** Muslim women, educational status, obstacles, religion, marriage

### 1. Background

Nepalese society is a blend of a number of castes, ethnic groups, languages, cultures, religions and so on. Prithvi Narayan Shah had rightly called Nepal “a common garden of 4 ‘barna’ and 36 ‘jaat’”. “Unity in diversity” is what Nepalese exhibit in international arena and religious tolerance resides in everyone’s heart, mind and soul. A cultural tradition of interaction, interrelation and interdependence has descended from ancient time to this present age among people of these diversified cultural communities. Nepal, being a melting pot of multiple religions, has given them the freedom to follow, practice and preserve the existing cultures. All these people from various cultural backgrounds have helped in shaping strong national culture. Muslim community is one of them.

CBS (2002) has recorded two cultural groups within Muslim: i) Musalman ii) Churoute. Musalman, who are greater in number live in Terai whereas Churoute, live in the western hill districts. The total number of Muslims according to 2001 census is 9, 75,949 which is 4.2% of total population. Among them 0.69% reside in Kaski district alone. As per the field study, approximately 3000 persons live in Kundhar.

In this contemporary age, education is the fundamental right of every people. Education is a process of passing knowledge, skills and morals from one person to the other. It grants an individual knowledge and skills

which helps him/her to earn a livelihood. The transmission of knowledge is either by formal or informal methods. The concepts of socialization and learning are related to, in fact often inseparable from, the concept of education. Although education is often thought of in terms of schooling; effective training for the individual's role both as a group member and as an autonomous person is a constant process. The main function of the educative process is to pass down knowledge from one generation to the other—a process that is essential for the development of culture. Formal education is primarily designed to inculcate crucial skills and values central to the survival of the society or to those who hold effective power. Inherent in education, in all periods of man's history, is a stimulus to creative thinking and action which accounts in part for culture change which is itself a powerful stimulus for further innovation. But educational status is pitiful in Nepal where patriarchy is predominant. Women are considered as secondary sex limiting them to the four walls of a house. Load of household chores, involvement in agriculture for maximum time, orthodox nature and blind faith, belief that a woman should handle other's house are some of the notable reasons for the backwardness of women. Muslim community also suffers from the same problem. So, many Muslim women do not get a chance to receive education.

## 2. Problem

The right to education has been described as a basic human right since 1952 A.D. by the UNO. All people should have an equal access to quality education irrespective of their social status, caste affiliation, class or any other differences. School Sector Reform Plan clearly writes “a code of conduct will be enforced for the protection of the integrity of all children, with particular focus on Dalits, girls and marginalized populations (MOE, 2009)”. Education is a prime medium for achieving high social status and learning skills for creating and utilizing different opportunities. But people from developing countries do not have enough access to it. In Nepalese scenario, though law considers both male and female equal, there is still discrimination prevalent in social, cultural, religious, economic, political and educational sectors. This is mainly due to patriarchal social structure. Poverty and traditional norms and values have also exaggerated this condition. So, all women do not get an opportunity to receive education. This study was carried out with a view to analyze the educational status of Muslim women. During the research, following questions were considered.

- a) What is the current educational status of Muslim women of Kundhar?
- b) Are there any obstacles in obtaining education?
- c) What are the reasons for those obstacles?

### **3. Objective**

The general objective of the study is to explore the educational status of Muslim women of ward 10, 12 & 13 of Kundhar. The specific objectives are:

- a) To find the participation of Muslim women in education.
- b) To explore the reasons for obstacles and difficulties in obtaining

### **4. Research methodology**

In this study, both exploratory and descriptive research design were used to fulfill the research objectives. Primary and secondary data as well as both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed.

60 households of ward 10, 12 & 13 of Kundhar were selected. Sixty women from age group 16-40 years were considered, one from each household. Purposive sampling technique was used during the selection of respondents. Since one representative from every 60 household was considered, census method was used. For the collection of data, both open and closed interview schedules were used.

### **5. Presentation of the findings**

In this study, sociological analysis of the educational status of Muslim women of ward 10, 12 & 13 was done in an effort to reveal their present status of education. Facts and data pertaining to the participation of respondents in education and the reasons hindering them from receiving education were collected using above mentioned research methods. From the collected data following conclusions were drawn.

#### **Age of respondents**

Age is an important characteristic of population. It plays an important role in determining status, role, right, duty and decision making capacity of an individual. Economically active and inactive people can be differentiated with the help of age.

**Table 1:Age group of respondents**

| Age group     | Number of respondents | %          |
|---------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 16-20         | 10                    | 16.67      |
| 21-25         | 18                    | 30         |
| 26-30         | 9                     | 15         |
| 31-35         | 9                     | 15         |
| 36-40         | 14                    | 23.33      |
| <b>Total:</b> | <b>60</b>             | <b>100</b> |

*Source: Field survey, 2070*

Table 1 displays age group of respondents. As shown in above table, respondents from age only in between 16-40 years were considered. So, this research covers only economically active population. Out of 60 respondents, there were 10 persons (16.67%) under the age group 16-20 years, 18 persons (30%) under age group 21-25 years, 9 persons (15%) under the age group 26-30 years, 9 persons (15%) under the 31-35 age group and 14 persons (23.33%) under the age group 36-40. It is clear from above table that the maximum number of correspondents i.e. 18 persons fall under the age group 21-25 years.

### **Marital status:**

Marriage is a social and legal union of male and female. It is an important social institution. It has its own customs, traditions, norms, and types. It plays an important role in social development and socialization process. After marriage, both male and female should have equal rights and duties. But, in context of Nepal, due to male dominated nature of society, the women don't get rights as per their duties after marriage. They mainly are limited within the four walls of the house. They singly have to manage household chores. These among other various reasons ultimately hinder them from continuing their education.

**Table 2: Marital status of respondents**

| Marital status | Respondents number | %     |
|----------------|--------------------|-------|
| Married        | 42                 | 70    |
| Unmarried      | 17                 | 28.33 |
| Single         | 1                  | 1.67  |
| Total          | 60                 | 100   |

*Source: Field survey, 2070*

Table 2 clarifies the marital status of the respondents. As per the table depicted above, out of 60 respondents, 42 (70%) were married, 17 (28.33%) were unmarried and 1 (1.67%) was single. So maximum number of them were married.

## Educational status

Education determines the social status of an individual. It opens door to different job opportunities which increases the economic wellbeing and thus makes an individual independent. Different facts and data concerning the present educational status of respondents were collected. Those data are now tabulated below.

### i) Class/level passed

**Table 3: Class passed by respondents**

| Class passed/level      | No. of respondents | %     |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| Didn't attend any class | 7                  | 11.66 |
| 1-4                     | 10                 | 16.67 |
| 5-9                     | 19                 | 31.67 |
| SLC                     | 5                  | 8.33  |
| +2 and above            | 19                 | 31.67 |
| Total:                  | 60                 | 100   |

*Source: Field survey, 2070*

In table3, class passed by respondents is depicted. As shown in the above table, 7(11.66%) respondents didn't get an opportunity to go to school. 10(16.67%) respondents belonged to class interval 1-4, whereas 19(31.67%) respondents belonged to class interval 5-9. Meanwhile 5(8.33%) respondents were able to pass SLC. 19(31.67%) respondents had passed +2 and above levels.

### ii) Types of schools attended

There are mainly two types of schools in Nepal i.e. government and private. As private schools are more expensive than government schools, they are only within the reach of economically sound family. In this regard, the attempt was made to find out the school from which the respondents completed their school education; the following table gives data regarding this:

**Table 4: Types of the schools**

| Type of school | No. of respondents | %     |
|----------------|--------------------|-------|
| Government     | 39                 | 73.58 |
| Private        | 14                 | 26.42 |
| Total:         | 53                 | 100   |

*Source: Field survey, 2070*

Table 4 represents the types of schools attended by the respondents. 39 (73.58%) respondents had attended governmental schools for education whereas the remaining 14(26.42%) attended private schools. So, majority of respondents had attended government school. Private schools are

considered better for education as they have ample teachers, better infrastructures and resources compared to government schools. Due to these reasons, most of the students from the private schools get better education than the students from the government schools.

### iii) Grades

Grade divides students into different categories. In this research three types of grades were considered viz. excellent, good and satisfactory. Grades are the basis for awarding different prizes and scholarships to the students. Respondents were divided into different categories according to the average division they had secured during their schooling. Respondents securing first division and above were kept under excellent, second division under good and third division under satisfactory.

**Table 5: Grades of respondents**

| Grade        | No. of respondents | %     |
|--------------|--------------------|-------|
| Excellent    | 5                  | 9.43  |
| Good         | 26                 | 49.06 |
| Satisfactory | 22                 | 41.51 |
| Total:       | 53                 | 100   |

Source: Field survey, 2070

Table 5 depicts grades of the respondents. Among 53 respondents, excellent grade was obtained by 5(9.43%). 26(49.03%) respondents had obtained good grades whereas the remaining 22(41.51%) had obtained satisfactory grade. The respondents with excellent grades stated that they had got scholarships and prizes in schools which further encouraged them to work harder.

### **Obstacles blocking access to formal education:**

“Education for all” is popular motto of the twenty-first century. In general, this motto means every child must be given a chance to get formal education. But if an individual has poor economic and educational status, he/she can't grant an opportunity for his/her children to obtain education. Besides, orthodox beliefs and patriarchal structure of society can also hinder this process. Lack of knowledge about necessity of education can also discourage an individual to receive education. And in some case, an individual can himself opt not to gain education due to poor chance of receiving a decent job in future. Current status of their formal education was asked to respondents whose answers are presented below.

**Table 6: Current status of formal education**

| <b>Formal educational status</b> | <b>No. of respondents</b> | <b>%</b> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Currently studying               | 15                        | 25       |
| Stopped                          | 38                        | 63.33    |
| Didn't get a chance              | 7                         | 11.67    |
| Total:                           | 60                        | 100      |

*Source: Field survey, 2070*

Table 6 represents the current educational status of the respondents. As per above table, 15 respondents (25%) are currently studying. 38 respondents (63.33%) stopped and 7 respondents (11.67%) didn't even get a chance to receive education.

**Table 8: Reasons forcing Respondents to Discontinuing their Education**

| <b>Reasons</b>                                  | <b>No. of respondents</b> | <b>%</b> |
|---|---------------------------|----------|
| Marriage  | 18                        | 47.36    |
| Weak economic status                            | 10                        | 26.31    |
| Lack of knowledge about importance of education | 9                         | 23.68    |
| Job   | 1                         | 2.63     |
| Total   | 38                        | 100      |

*Source: Field survey, 2070*

Table 8 represents reasons hindering 38 respondents to continue their education. 18 respondents (47.36%) said marriage, 10 respondents (26.31%) said weak economic status, 9 respondents (23.68%) and 1 respondent (2.63%) said job to be responsible behind this. So it is obvious that marriage was main reason encouraging respondents to stop receiving education.

**Table 7: Obstacles blocking access to formal education**

| <b>Reasons</b>       | <b>No. of respondents</b> | <b>%</b> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|----------|
| Religion             | 3                         | 42.85    |
| Weak economic status | 2                         | 28.57    |
| Look after siblings  | 1                         | 14.29    |
| Household chores     | 1                         | 14.29    |
| Total:               | 7                         | 100      |

*Source: Field survey, 2070*

Table 7 represents the obstacles responsible for completely blocking access to formal education. 7 respondents didn't get a chance to obtain education due to various obstacles including religious matters, household chores, weak economic background, etc. Religion was considered the prominent

obstacle, with 3 respondents pointing it. Weak economic condition was also presented as a serious obstacle with 2 respondents quoting it. Remaining 2 respondents stated that household chores and responsibility of taking care of their siblings as the obstacle.

## 6. Conclusion

In this research, Muslim women aged between 16-40 years were considered to be respondents. Educational status was the main concern of this research. Many respondents did get a chance to go to school and study, but only a few were able to pass Master's degree. Some had left after passing upto primary level, others upto secondary level and remaining upto Bachelor's degree. Few were not even able to start their schooling. Marriage was the main cause responsible for the respondents not being able to continue further education. Religion was also responsible for some respondents not being able to receive formal education. All these factors have limited the role of many respondents to being a house wife only. They are unable to get any decent job vital in elevating the economic status of the family. Now, many respondents are aware about importance of education, so they are working hard to give a chance for their children to go to the school and complete their studies and ultimately secure a prosperous future.

## References

- Central Bureau of Statistics.(2003). *Population monograph of Nepal*.  
Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu: CBS
- Ministry of Education.(2009). *School sector reform plan 2009-2010*.  
Kathmandu: Ministry of Education