
The Challenges of Minority Communities in India: A Study of Educational Status of Muslims

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ABSTRACT

In any community, education is the one among of the most significant tool for social and economic development. There are many different religions, castes, classes, and communities in India. Because the educational outcomes of each faith and community differ, it raises concerns about the educational obstacles that such minority communities face. The condition of the Muslim minority in education is the subject of this paper. Muslims are India's second-biggest religious group and the country's largest minority group. Muslims in India are deprived, marginalized, and educationally behind, despite the existence of various schemes and initiatives aimed at their advancement. The paper attempts to comprehend the status, concerns, and challenges of Muslim education in India using secondary sources. It highlights the causes and circumstances that contribute to Muslims in India having a low level of higher education. It also looks into the role of minority institutions in Muslim higher education. It also emphasizes on the religious educations institution which also plays an important role in shaping the Muslims. It goes on to examine the steps taken by the Indian government to improve their educational situation.

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Introduction

Minority communities in India have a number of issues, one of which is education. They have low school-level education system access, participation, and retention. Many minority populations exist in India, including Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jain, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, and others. Muslims, on the other hand, are India's largest minority, accounting for 14.23% of the overall population as per Census 2011. Minority populations in India are socially marginalized, economically underdeveloped, and educationally disadvantaged, according to data. Despite several initiatives to improve educational opportunities, minority communities have limited access and engagement. The Muslim community has remained a development priority. In India, education is a critical component of their empowerment. According to the most recent U-DISE 2019-20 data, they have limited access to and engagement in education.

A large proportion of Muslim children are not even enrolled in elementary school. The rising number of Muslim students dropping out of school raises a number of concerns concerning educational policies and programs. Muslims have a poor level of school education, and their percentage share of those with a higher education is significantly lower when compared to other scheduled castes (AISHE, 2015–2016).

The current paper focuses on the Muslim community's position in higher education. It highlights the causes and circumstances that contribute to Muslims in India's low educational attainment. It investigates the concerns of Muslim exclusion and inequity in India. It also looks into the role of minority institutions in Muslim higher education. It goes on to examine the steps taken by the Indian government to improve their educational situation. The study examines the educational situation of the Muslim minority in India at both the school and higher education levels, based on secondary data and reports.

The introduction is the first of six sections in the paper. Muslims in India: Problems and Challenges is the first segment. The second segment looks at how Muslims are treated in higher education. The third segment examines the elements that influence educational illiteracy. The function of minority institutions in Muslim education is discussed in the fourth part. The Indian government's initiatives for the educational development of Muslims are discussed in the fifth part. The sixth portion concludes the discussion with some closing remarks.

MINORITIES DEFINED

In various fields of study, the term 'minority' has been examined and contested. The term 'minority' can be described as a tiny group or community with ethnic, religious, cultural, or linguistic traditions in a country. In sociology, the minority does not have to be a numerical minority; it can also refer to any group that is marginalized in terms of social standing, education, employment, political structure, religious freedom, and cultural practices in a plural society. Minorities, according to UN-Women, are groups that (a) are smaller in number than the rest of a state's population; (b) are in a non-dominant position; (c) live in the state, either as nationals or as a group with long-standing ties to the state; (d)



have ethnic, religious, or linguistic characteristics that differ from the rest of the population; and (e) exhibit a sense of solidarity directed toward preserving their distinct collective identity.

Minority has been referred to by a variety of words, including marginal group, ethnic community, sub-cultural group, and so on. The term "minority" appears in Articles 20 to 30 and 350A to 350B of the Indian Constitution. The constitution, on the other hand, does not define a minority or offer details on the geographical and numerical scope of the idea. It appears that the constitutional structure anticipates this being decided at the national level. Article 30 gives religious minorities the right to establish educational institutions of their choosing.

Education is one of the most significant tools for a community's social and economic transformation. According to Article 30(1) of the Indian Constitution, "all minorities shall have the right to establish and run their own education institutions." To treat education as a critical condition for minority populations, the government addresses minorities' educational backwardness, particularly among Muslims, who make up the majority of minorities. Several minority populations exist in India, each with its own religious and linguistic identity. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Parsis are the principal five groups of minorities, according to the National Commission on Minority Act of 1992.

The Constitution (103rd Amendment Bill), which grants constitutional status to the National Commission for Minorities, envisions a shift in the definition of minorities. The Cabinet is said to have approved a plan (May 2007) to identify minorities by state in accordance with several Supreme Court decisions, including the T. M. A. Pai case.

MUSLIMS' STATUS IN EDUCATION

Muslims make up India's largest minority group. Despite this, Muslims are behind the times in terms of social, economic, educational, and other aspects of life. In comparison to other minority populations such as Jain, Buddhist, Christian, and Zorastrians, they have a serious educational disadvantage. Six religious communities i.e. Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and Parsi are notified as Minorities in India by the Union Government. As per Census 2011, the total population of Minorities in the country is approximately 19.3 % out of a total population of 1210 million.

**Figure 1.1 Population of Minorities in India
(% of total population Census 2011)**

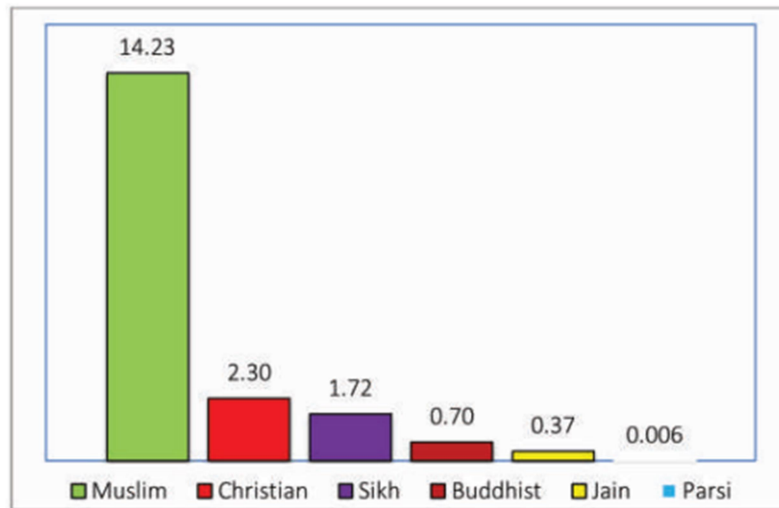


Image source: (Azad & Foundation, n.d.) May 2017.

Among Minorities, the population divisions are: Muslim 14.23 %, Christian 2.30 %, Sikh 1.72 %, Buddhist 0.70 %, Jain 0.37 % and Parsi 0.006 %. Muslims are the largest minority community of India with a population 172.24 million. It is to be noted that among all the minorities, Muslims are educationally, the most disadvantaged community in India. Besides economic reasons, low accessibility to educational institutions is a major cause for the backwardness of the community.

As per Census 2011, literacy percentage rates of Minorities are: Jain 94.88, Christian 84.53, Buddhist 81.28, Sikh 75.39 and Muslim 68.53 against the national average of 72.98%.

The information presented gives a clear picture of minority communities and their literacy status in relation to their population share. It also brings up the topic of India's low Muslim literacy rate.

Figure 1.2 Minority Literacy Gap against National Average (Census 2011)

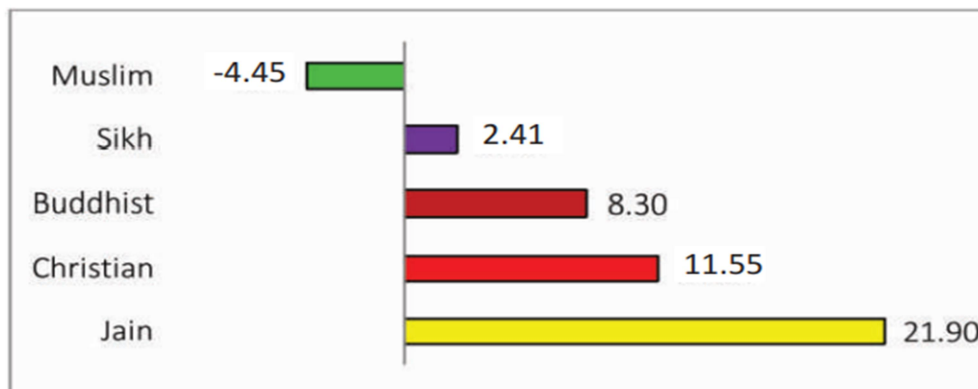


Image source: (Azad & Foundation, n.d.) May 2017.



The figures show that among all minorities, it is the literacy rate of only the Muslims that is less than the national average. Muslims are the only minority community that has a literacy gap in minus points as compared to the National Average. Muslim Literacy is less than the National Average in the States of Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

FACTORS AFFECTING MUSLIM'S EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS

In India, the Muslim population is one of the largest groups with socioeconomic and educational disadvantages. They've been dealing with a variety of issues and challenges. The current part focuses on the socioeconomic and familial factors that contribute to the Muslim community's educational backwardness. The following are the recognized variables influencing the Muslim population in India, based on Sachar Committee Reports and other NIEPA research articles and reports.

HAVING A BAD SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Muslim youngsters are obliged to work in the informal sector or in low-wage employment due to their low socioeconomic standing. This puts pressure on students to drop out of school at a young age. They are responsible for supporting their families and contributing to the household revenue.

FAMILY-OWNED AND OPERATED

Muslim parents typically want their children to work in the family's traditional industry. It is one of the major issues that have caused people to drop out of school. It's also difficult for them to leave their family business and pursue a new career.

MUSLIM GIRLS ARE LESS EDUCATED.

In India, Muslim girls are trailing behind in terms of educational attainment. Muslim parents are thought to be unable to fund their daughters' schooling due to poverty and financial constraints. In some circumstances, radical ideology has an impact on Muslims' ability to educate their children.

DOMINANCE OF THE PATRIARCHY

One of the reasons for Muslim women's backwardness in India is patriarchy. The family's decisions are made by the male heads. As a result, they were unable to continue their study as they desired. They marry at a young age, and as a result, they finish their studies at a young age.

WOMEN'S POOR SITUATION

Muslim women's terrible living conditions, both at home and in public, have an impact on their quality of life. They have a restricted amount of space in which to exercise their rights. Due to a lack of awareness and education among female members of the family, Muslim girls have a low educational participation rate.



IN MUSLIM EDUCATION, THE IMPORTANCE OF MINORITY INSTITUTIONS

The section discusses the importance of minority institutions in education development, with a particular focus on the Muslim population. As previously stated, Article 30(1) of the Indian Constitution guarantees Minority communities the right to create and govern their own educational institutions. Minority' rights and interests are protected by the Indian constitution in order to defend minorities' interests. According to Article 30(2), the state is required to treat all educational institutions equally when providing financial assistance; minority institutions are not to be treated differently. The importance of minority institutions in understanding the situation of Muslim education in India is crucial.

In the case of Muslim education, higher education institutions should prioritize Muslim students' access, engagement, and retention. Muslim institutions must play a proactive role in enabling high-quality, performance-based higher education. Despite the presence of Muslim institutions, Muslim youngsters have a low educational level. Some of India's most famous universities help Muslims get an education at the national level. They provide a variety of courses, programs, and degrees to help India's educational progress.

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING

Some of them were founded for the educational advancement of Muslims, such as Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), which was founded in 1920 and evolved from the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College (MAO College), which was founded in 1877 by the great visionary and social reformer Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

AMU is one of India's best central universities, with 12 faculties and 98 departments offering a wide range of postgraduate and postgraduate programmes. It has five colleges that offer academic degrees in medical, dentistry, and engineering, as well as Abdullah Women College, which was founded in 1930 and has been supporting the cause of women's education ever since. There are 15 centers, three institutions, and three academics at the university. These centers, institutions, and universities provide specialized study programs in a variety of inter-disciplinary and emerging fields. AMU also promotes remote learning programs and provides education, particularly to people from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, notably minorities.

Another central university, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), was founded to serve the Muslim community's higher education needs. JMI, which was founded in 1920 in Aligarh, United Provinces, India, became a Central University in 1988 as a result of an act passed by the Indian Parliament. Jamia and Millia are Urdu words that signify "university" and "national," respectively. Nine faculties, 39 departments, 31 centers, and seven schools comprise JMI. They provide educational services at both the school and university levels (<http://jmi.ac.in/>).



One of the prominent universities for minority education is Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU). MANNU, on the other hand, is a university that focuses on distant and open learning. It is a national university created in 1998 by an act of Parliament to promote and enhance the Urdu language, as well as to provide vocational and technical education in Urdu using traditional and distant learning methods. The University's headquarters are spread across 200 acres in Gachibowli, Hyderabad. There are seven on-campus colleges of studies that oversee 24 departments. These departments provide post-graduate programs as well as M.Phil. and PhD research opportunities.

In Hyderabad, Bangalore, and Dharbanga, respectively, MANNU has developed three Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) and three Polytechnic Colleges. Urdu is the medium of instruction for all disciplines offered in ITI and Polytechnic, achieving one of the University's goals of teaching technical subjects in Urdu. Furthermore, the University created three Teacher Training Colleges in Srinagar, Darbhanga, and Bhopal, where teachers can improve personally and intellectually via various teacher training programs (<http://www.manuu.ac.in/EngPhp/overview.php>).

Muslim communities have access to higher education through 25 state universities and 37 technical and professional institutions.

Madrasahs' Function In India, the educational system of Madrasahs has been a source of political and educational dispute. Various types of intellectuals and policymakers have also disputed and discussed the relevance of Madrasahs. Madrasahs are accused of producing fundamentalist minds, radical professors, and so-called terrorist ideology. Madrasahs, on the other hand, are designed to develop Islamic scholars who can interpret Islam in light of current events (Alam, 2002).

Madrasahs are a sort of Islamic educational institution that serves Muslims. For the Muslim community's youngsters, madrasahs were the only educational institutions available. The Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasahs (SPQEM; 2009) was launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of India in 2009 to address educational backwardness among Muslims. In the year 2009, India has a total of 9,120 Madrasahs operating under this scheme.

According to data presented to the Lok Sabha by Mr. Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Human Resource Development, the central government has spent more than Rs. 1,000 crores to modernize Madrasahs in the last seven years as of August 1, 2016.

The government boosted spending on the 'Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasahs (SPQEM)' from Rs 46 crores to Rs 294 crores in 2009–2010. During the last seven years, over 48,000 Madrasahs in Uttar Pradesh (UP) got financial aid, the most of any state, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. Madrasahs in Uttar Pradesh received the most money.

INDIAN GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES TOWARDS THE MUSLIM EDUCATION

Various minority education plans and programs, notably for the Muslim population, have been implemented by the government. The state shall promote, with particular care, the education and



economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation, according to Article 46 of the Indian Constitution.

During the XIth Five-Year Plan, the Ministry of Human Resource Development took a number of key initiatives, which are being continued/accelerated during the XIIth Five-Year Plan, as mentioned below. Under a larger framework of national-level educational schemes, the following schemes and initiatives strive to provide an inclusive educational approach.

- i. Madrasa Education Improvement Scheme (SPQEM)
- ii. Infrastructure Development Scheme for Minority Institutions, Aided and Unaided (IDMI)
- iii. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
- iv. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs)
- v. Madrasas/Maqtabs Extension of Mid-Day Meals (MDM) Scheme
- vi. Saakshar Bharat is the name given to the Indian state of Saakshar Bharat.
- vii. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)
- viii. Jan Shikshan Sansathan (JSS)
- ix. Strengthening of the National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (NCPUL)
- x. Establishment of the National Commission for Minority Educational Institutions (NCMEI)
- xi. List of Minority Concentration Districts
- xii. Sub-mission of Poly methods under the Coordinated Action for Skill Development
- xiii. Hostel Program for Women
- xiv. Initiating the establishment of model schools

The Ministry of Minority Affairs has established several key programmes for the welfare and educational advancement of Muslims.

EMPOWERMENT VIA EDUCATION

- Scholarship Programs: There are a variety of scholarship opportunities available.
 - a. Pre-matric Scholarship
 - b. Post-matric Scholarship
 - c. Merit-cum-means-based Scholarship



- Coaching Schemes
 - a. Naya Savera-Free Coaching and Allied Scheme
 - b. Exclusive new component for meritorious Science students
- 'Nai Udaan'-Support for students clearing their exams conducted by UPSC, SSC, State Public Service Commissions, and others in preparation for the mains examination.
- 'Padho Pardesh'-Interest subsidy on educational loans for abroad studies,
- Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) and Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF) are two programmes that are implemented by the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) and Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF), respectively.
 - a. Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship for deserving minorities' girls in grades XI and XII
 - b. Grant-in-aid to NGOs
- Area/Infrastructure Development: b. Grants-in-Aid to NGOs
 - Economic Empowerment through the Multi-sectoral Development Program (MsDP)
 - a. Skill development:
 - i. Minority skill development effort 'Seekho aur Kamao' (Learn and Earn).
 - ii. Developing Traditional Arts and Crafts Skills and Training (USTTAD)
 - iii. 'Nai Manzil'—a program that provides education and skill training to minorities' youth.

The Prime Minister's New 15-Point Plan for Minority Welfare

The Prime Minister's 15-point plan for minorities' welfare (Ministry of Minority Affairs) was announced in June 2006, with the following goals:

(1) increasing educational opportunities, (2) ensuring an equitable share of minorities in economic activities and employment through existing and new schemes, enhanced credit support for self-employment, and recruitment to state and federal government jobs, (3) improving minorities' living conditions by ensuring an appropriate share of infrastructure development schemes, and (4) preventing and controlling communal disharmony and violence.

Follow-up on the Report of the Sachar Committee

In 2005, the Sachar Committee was tasked with preparing a report on the current social, economic, and educational situation of India's Muslim community.



The report of the Sachar Committee is based on a comprehensive, holistic, and inclusive study of the Muslim minority in India. The Sachar Committee's proposals cover all social, economic, cultural, educational, and institutional aspects of the Muslim community's growth in India (Sachar Committee Report, 2006).

In terms of educational development, the Muslim community has been a government target population. Many inclusive, integrated, and multi-faceted strategies have been implemented to address and minimize the Muslim community's educational issues. Despite the existence of numerous programmes, Muslim children's participation in education is still under-represented and under-performed in national data. There is no specific strategy in higher education to encourage Muslim children to enroll and engage.

REMARKS AT THE END

To summarize, the paper focuses on the Muslim community's educational backwardness in India. The report stated, based on secondary literature, that the low level of enrolment of Muslim children is due to a variety of socioeconomic and family factors. The report examines the poor enrolment and participation of Muslim children in school and higher education using the most recent data. They are behind in all aspects of the educational system. As a result, the Muslim community's socioeconomic status has deteriorated.

They labor in low-wage jobs such as masonry, construction, plumbing, mechanic work, rickshaw pulling, and other low-wage activities.

The report emphasizes that statistics data on the Muslim population and their educational profile, constrained to a specific setting. The Sachar Committee Report is one of the most important sources of comprehensive and comprehensive data and information regarding India's Muslim community. However, no other comprehensive study of the Muslim population in India has been conducted since the Sachar Committee Report (2006). Furthermore, the Sachar Committee's recommendations have not yet been adequately implemented. As a result, there has been no considerable improvement in the Muslim community in India.

One of the most crucial cornerstones of the educational system is higher education. The Muslim community's engagement is under-represented and under-emphasized. Muslims have an extremely low enrolment and participation rate when compared to other minority groups. The Muslim population has a high dropout rate due to familial, societal, and economic concerns. Many plans and programs for the educational development and welfare of the Muslim community have been created and financed by the government. Government-run machinery and ministries carry out and oversee the schemes. Despite this, there is little evidence of effective Muslim education outcomes or standing in India.

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