



## EMPOWERING MUSLIM WOMEN THROUGH VOCATIONAL SKILLS

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## ABSTRACT

Education plays an important role in overall development of a person. It brings awareness of one's rights and responsibilities, jobs and participation in the social and political activities. Today, the human civilization has changed from agricultural society to cybernetic age where knowledge is considered as capital and knowledge industry is considered as the most demanding industry in the world. This societal change has little impact on women of the society, though less number of women, all over the world has achieved equal and sometimes higher status than men. But it has been viewed that Muslim girls are among the least educated sections of Indian society. The aim of this paper is to analyze empowerment of Muslim women by providing them vocational training. The efforts made by the NGO's in making them self-sufficient, to perform better future roles and be prosperous in their respective lives.

KEYWORDS : Empowerment, Muslim Women, Vocational Skills

## INTRODUCTION

In the history, women have been the vehicles and drivers of positive change and outgrowth. Muslim women are no exceptions. Women irrespective of religion have similar expectations and aspirations as their male counterparts. Public perception is that Muslim women are unequal and oppressed who needs to be identified, challenged and addressed both within the Muslim and wider communities. Muslim women can instigate the change to balance multitask and tackle the different challenges facing today. Hence, there is a need to empower and strengthen the leadership among Muslim women in different aspects of their life so that they can proactively support those who are vulnerable and use their knowledge and skills to support other women in the same community through individual and collective efforts. (DCLG, 2008)

Over the last two decades, it has been considered that the Muslim women are the most deprived segment of the country's population. Muslim women play a crucial role in well being and very survival of the Muslim families. But unfortunately for various reasons the gender disparity is very much conspicuous in Muslim society. The marginalized status of Muslim women is not well documented. Therefore, information on Muslim women, particularly on their social position, problems and prospects is very much needed for the sake of their empowerment, which is a priority area of our national development. The Muslim women, as of other women as a class, are more undernourished, more under compensated for their labor and more underrepresented in formal decision-making bodies than men, as a class. The only measure in which women collectively come out 'ahead' is lifespan, due to natural capability of survival strength. (Mondal, 2005)

## Muslim Women Empowerment and Vocational Skills

The concept of Women Empowerment was voiced in the International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985. In these conference women's empowerment was considered as 'a distribution of social power and centre of resources in favor of women' which is not possible without improving the educational participation of women in education. It has been argued that all doors to women empowerment open from their education, because education had been at the heart of all kinds of empowerment, including women's.

But the construct of women empowerment is more complex, multidimensional and related to mental, physical, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of one's life and society. So it also depends on the situational variables and should be considered from the point of view of demands or requirements of the respective population (Roy, R, 2009).

National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) is an initiative of the Government of India (GOI) for empowering women holistically. It is conceived as an umbrella mission with a mandate to strengthen inter-sectoral convergence and facilitate the process of coordinating all the women's welfare and socio economic development programmes across ministries and departments (PIB, 2013).

The aim of skill development in case of women is not only to prepare them for jobs but also to improve the performance of women workers by enhancing the quality of work in which they are engaged. Learning about business skills as well as health management skills, decision making, self confidence or conflict management among various other things like new products and marketing can make a big difference for many of rural poor particularly women folk. Thus skill development is key to improve household productivity, employability and income earning opportunities for women. It also enhances food security and promotes environmentally sustainable rural development and livelihood (Pitambaral & Choudhary 2017: 27-28).

Vocational Training programme is introduced to enhance livelihood opportunities of women who are at a disadvantageous position and have a scant exposure to technical skills and knowledge. The vocational training program for women aims to develop entrepreneurial skills among women. (Ahmad, Sinha & Shastri, 2016: 78)

## Objectives

1. To analyze demographic profile of the Muslim women enrolled in these institutions.
2. To study the impact of different nature of vocational training on empowerment of Muslim women.

## Research Methodology

The current study is based on the data gathered from the primary sources (interactions with the students of various organizations enrolled in various vocational courses) and secondary sources such as going through the monthly and annual reports, brochures and various kinds of documents available on the internet. On the basis of objectives of the study the investigator worked towards preparation of research tools. The investigator prepared the tool i.e. an interview schedule for students of various organizations enrolled in various courses offered in vocational training. The interview schedule for Muslim Women had questions which were framed to elicit information about their aspirations from the training they receive, the benefits they acquire from various programmes for their social mobility, physiological changes they faced during the training programme, etc. The analysis of

the data and the conclusions drawn speak of the efforts of various NGOs in empowering the women through various kinds of vocational courses.

### Sample of the Study

To collect the sample for the study the researcher had selected 300 Muslim Women which were enrolled in various vocational courses from 10 NGO's (Non- Governmental organizations) located in Muslim concentrated areas in Delhi.

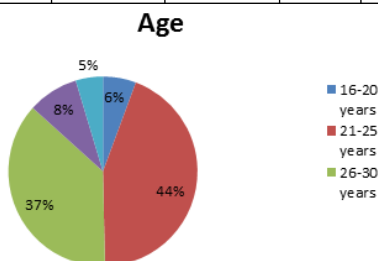
### Analysis & Interpretation of Data

In order to analyze the responses of the interviewers the researcher summarized the responses item wise which had been grouped into frequencies and percentages. In some cases there is more than one response from a subject. The total responses therefore, exceed the number of subjects.

#### Item 1-Demographic profile of students

**Table 1 Age of the respondents**

| S. No. | Age         | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------|-------------|-----------|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1.     | 16-20 years | 17        | 5.7        | 5.7           | 5.7                |
| 2.     | 21-25 years | 132       | 44.0       | 44.0          | 49.7               |
| 3.     | 26-30 years | 111       | 37.0       | 37.0          | 86.7               |
| 4.     | 31-35 years | 26        | 8.7        | 8.7           | 95.3               |
| 5.     | above 35    | 14        | 4.7        | 4.7           | 100.0              |
|        | Total       | 300       | 100.0      | 100.0         |                    |



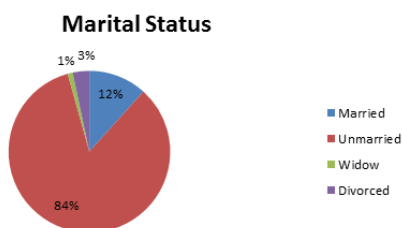
**Graph 1 Age of respondents**

Table 1 clearly suggests that the maximum number of respondents i.e., 44% fall in the category of age between 21 to 25. This further suggests these are the age groups of women who are mostly having the responsibility of their family upon them. While the least count was found among the women above the age of 35 years it is only 4.7%.

#### Item 2-Marital Status

**Table 2 Marital Status**

| S. No. | Status    | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1.     | Married   | 35        | 11.7       | 11.7          | 11.7               |
| 2.     | Unmarried | 252       | 84.0       | 84.0          | 95.7               |
| 3.     | Widow     | 3         | 1.0        | 1.0           | 96.7               |
| 4.     | Divorced  | 10        | 3.3        | 3.3           | 100.0              |
|        | Total     | 300       | 100.0      | 100.0         |                    |



**Graph 2 Marital statuses of Muslim Women**

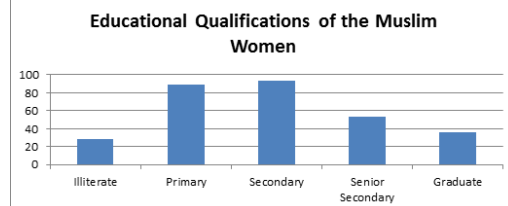
The marital status of Muslim women is classified in table 2 which indicates the level of responsibility they have with them.

According to Kristine (2002), "It is obvious that married women are mostly busy with their household responsibilities and hence they are unable to spare more time for training programs. The reason that could be given for, such a situation is that widow, separated and divorce women may be more in need of training as well as financial support. They might be aware of the fact that the financial needs could be met only by joining meaningful vocational training that in turn may help them to raise their income. Women experience a sense of empowerment, newfound freedom, and self-confidence as they negotiated traditional gender roles in a new social and cultural context". Ray (1999) also pointed out that, "Women without their spouse living with them are more inclined to join long duration of vocational courses in rural areas as compared to those living with their spouse. However, it could be suggested that Government or the voluntary organizations should organize such type of income generation programmes for those women who are widow, separated and divorce so that they can become self-reliant and self sufficient in order to cope with problem of single spouse. It is further suggested that providing training is not only the solution but also making available the proper market for their products should also be the responsibility of the state. This would certainly be one more step ahead towards alleviation of the poverty in the rural areas. There is a need for more comparative work with a focus on the local rather than on the macro level".

#### Item 3- Educational Qualification

**Table 3 Educational Qualifications of the Muslim Women**

| S. No. | Qualification    | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------|------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1.     | Illiterate       | 29        | 9.7        | 9.7           | 9.7                |
| 2.     | Primary          | 89        | 29.7       | 29.7          | 39.3               |
| 3.     | Secondary        | 93        | 31.0       | 31.0          | 70.3               |
| 4.     | Senior Secondary | 53        | 17.7       | 17.7          | 88.0               |
| 5.     | Graduate         | 36        | 12.0       | 12.0          | 100.0              |
|        | Total            | 300       | 100.0      | 100.0         |                    |



**Graph 3 Educational qualifications of Muslim Women.**

The most essential feature of empowerment is the educational attainment of a woman which makes them confident to face difficult situations in life. The above table 3 clearly demonstrates the same for Muslim Women who are learning vocational training skills in the organizations. It indicates that most of the Muslim Women do not get the opportunity to attain education due to patriarchy and false ideology and if so they manage to do it they are not allowed to study further.

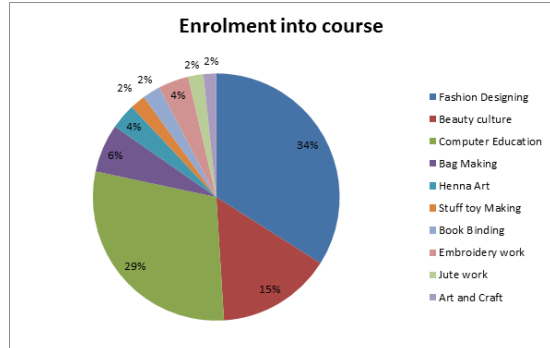
According to Rahman & Sultana (2012) in a research paper discovered that, most important feature in empowerment is education level of women which makes them confident to face contingencies. Education need is to be prioritized as it provides them an opportunity to earn which results in better living conditions, good health and support to their families".

#### Item 4- Enrolment in Course

**Table 4 Enrolment Muslim Women in various courses of the organizations**

| S. No. | Courses           | Frequency | Percentage | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------|-------------------|-----------|------------|---------------|--------------------|
| 1.     | Fashion Designing | 102       | 34.0       | 34.0          | 34.0               |

|     |                    |     |       |       |       |
|-----|--------------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| 2.  | Beauty culture     | 45  | 15.0  | 15.0  | 49.0  |
| 3.  | Computer Education | 88  | 29.3  | 29.3  | 78.3  |
| 4.  | Bag Making         | 19  | 6.3   | 6.3   | 84.7  |
| 5.  | Henna Art          | 10  | 3.3   | 3.3   | 88.0  |
| 6.  | Stuff toy Making   | 6   | 2.0   | 2.0   | 90.0  |
| 7.  | Book Binding       | 7   | 2.3   | 2.3   | 92.3  |
| 8.  | Embroidery work    | 12  | 4.0   | 4.0   | 96.3  |
| 9.  | Jute work          | 6   | 2.0   | 2.0   | 98.3  |
| 10. | Art and Craft      | 5   | 1.7   | 1.7   | 100.0 |
|     | Total              | 300 | 100.0 | 100.0 |       |



**Graph 4 Enrollment of Muslim Women into various courses**

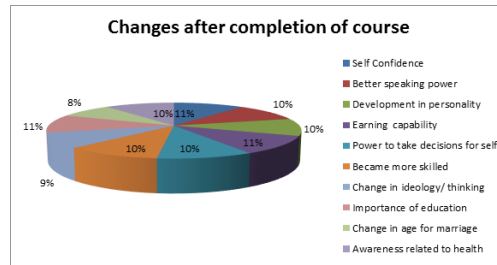
Table 4 clearly indicates the vocational interest of Muslim Women who are enrolled in different courses. In other words, it could be said that these Muslim Women could do a job in the future or would work from home based on these vocations which will generate income for them in the future. According to Christine (2010) "The Vocational education and training, which aimed at developing knowledge and skills valuable in the economic sphere, are important ingredients for economic development. The rapid industrialization coupled with liberalization and globalization call for a matching pool of skilled workforce and makes it necessary for incorporation of job-oriented courses in the curriculum as also establishment of vocational and training institutes charged with the responsibility of imparting technical and vocational courses. Advocates for these programs argue that facilitating women's greater access to capital will benefit women by enhancing their economic and political power and, in doing so, will make the societies in which they live more equitable politically and more competitive economically.

In the words of Rekha (1997), "The majority of women had interest to join tailoring and embroidery courses. Embroidery and tailoring courses are most popular among rural women in poverty group as compared to other types of training activities. Women throughout the developing world engage in economically productive work and earn incomes".

#### Item 5- Personality Development

**Table 5 Changes after completion of course**

| S.No. | Valid Options                    | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1.    | Self Confidence                  | 299       | 99.7       |
| 2.    | Better speaking power            | 289       | 96.3       |
| 3.    | Development in personality       | 283       | 94.3       |
| 4.    | Earning capability               | 299       | 99.7       |
| 5.    | Power to take decisions for self | 292       | 97.3       |
| 6.    | Became more skilled              | 294       | 98         |
| 7.    | Change in ideology/ thinking     | 248       | 82.7       |
| 8.    | Importance of education          | 297       | 99         |
| 9.    | Change in age for marriage       | 227       | 75.7       |
| 10.   | Awareness related to health      | 295       | 98.3       |



**Graph 5 Changes after completion of course**

Table 5 clearly demonstrates about the various types of changes that are inherited among Muslim Women after the training of a course is over. This further suggests that almost all the girls believed that they have become empowered after attaining training from these organizations. According to Rahman & Sultana (2012) "support to family and economical independence is high as maximum numbers of respondents are financially and economically weak and their requirement is to satisfy basic necessities. Change in psychological factors i.e., security, self satisfaction, self confidence are high followed by self determination and the reason for this is the ideology of organization in collective ownership. With earning capability women were able to develop positive attitude, new ideas and ability to face challenges. Change is seen in sense of responsibility followed by good recognition and participative decision making. The reason is the confidence build up because of earning capability. Other social factors are very low as these women belonged to the disadvantaged section of society so the driving force is satisfying basic needs. Income generation and contribution towards children education, health and marriage are high when compare with other factors. The reason is earning one's bread and butter through positive contribution of organization in empowerment of women. Savings, accumulation of assets and liberation from debts are moderate as individual lives of women were transformed by the new work ethics and promoted their self-confidence and taught them self reliance".

#### CONCLUSION

The neglect of Muslim women's education has been a persistent feature of public policy in many states. There are many reasons for this and the main fault lies in the attitude of the families towards girl's education. The notion of adjustment, tolerance and sacrifice are embedded in cultural ideology and therefore restraint, obedience and sacrifice are important elements in a girl's training. (Chanana, 1979)

It can be concluded by indicating that the students have selected to be enrolled into these vocational courses because they believe that after learning these vocational skills they will be able to become an earning hand for their families. Since these Muslim Women belong to BPL (Below Poverty Line) background so most of them were unable to complete their further education because of which they have decided to join such training courses which will in turn make them self sufficient. Most of the Muslim Women after completion of course aim to complete their incomplete education along with the job. The Muslim Women have observed that they have gained more confidence in them, various changes in terms of physical and psychological, their thoughts have widened, they have attained positive attitude towards education for themselves as well as for others, they could also speak up for the good of themselves and for others in all matters related to social issues. After acquiring such training most of the Muslim Women admitted that the rate of violence has reduced a lot, in respect to girl education and age of marriage; etc. Therefore, it could be said that these students have now become empowered in various aspects after learning such vocational skills which lead them towards women empowerment.

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