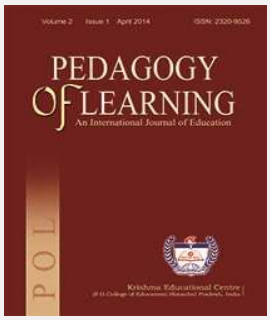
Pedagogy of Learning, Vol. 5, Issue 1, January 2019, 56-64

PEDAGOGY OF LEARNING (POL)
International Peer Reviewed/
Refereed Journal of Education
E-ISSN: 2395-7344, P-ISSN: 2320-9526
Abstracted and indexed in: Google Scholar, Research Bib, International Scientific Indexing (ISI), Scientific Indexing Services (SIS), WorldCat, Cite Factor,
Impact Factor: 0.787(GIF)
Website: http://pedagogyoflearning.com



Ethnographic Case Studies on Schooling of Muslim Girls

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Article History:
Received: 13 January 2019, Received in revised form: 25 January 2019
Accepted: 28 January 2019, Published Online: 30 January 2019

ABSTRACT

The Muslim community is under the process of revolution in terms of education of Muslim girls'. There had been an increase in the number of girls with respect to boys; this predicts the change in people's views towards girls' education. The present study involves ethnographic case studies, where ethnography provides an opportunity to explore the culture-based experiences and the case study provides a framework for in-depth study. The process of sampling in this study is purposive sampling this ethnographic research studies the educational conditions of Muslim girls in Muslim Minority schools with respect to their culture, beliefs, and practices, Case study provides an in-depth understanding of the views of Muslim parents in the context of education of Muslim girls. The tools used for this study are interview schedules, questions for focus group discussion, school records, and register and field diary. The three categories of schools that were adopted as cases for this study were Madrasah, Government, and Government-Aided schools. This paper explores the socio-cultural and socio-economic perspective of Muslim parents towards their daughters' education, the teaching-learning methodology adopted by the schools, and the challenges faced for the education of Muslim girls.

Keywords: Ethnography, Schooling, Muslim girls, Minority Schools.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Education is a fundamental human right that should be accorded to every individual. The relationship between education and growth is the main indicator of progress.The education of a child is influenced by many people, processes, and organizations. It is a broadly acknowledged fact that an individual to optimize their efficiencies from schooling requires the complete co-operation of their parents. Education is the key to improving girls' and their communities' lives everywhere. Girls without education have little hope of achieving their full potential and of playing a positive and equitable role in their communities, economies, nation, and the planet. Parent's approach to their children's development plays a significant role in deciding the children's enrollment and achievement (Horn and West, 1992). The parental approach indicates the encouraging or discouraging nature of the family for the child's education. Four major roles of parents had been identified by Turnbull (2012)- parents are decision-makers in education; parents as caretakers; parents as educators and parents as promoters/advocates.

Girls' education is a matter of concern worldwide."The educational process allows girls to take part in the community and household development because educated women exercise their rights to participate both in political and economic decision-making of the community and the household" (UNESCO, 2002). The educational involvement of girls in the developing world does not correspond with boys (Tietjen, 1991). As a result of their lower level of education and fewer resources for female participation in social life, women face disadvantages and difficulties in every step of their lives. Women do not use the same opportunities as men in any society in the world. Women work longer hours with less pay and have more limited life chances and choices than men do. These disparities are both the cause and the result of girls' unequal access to and performance in education (UNESCO, 2003). "Girls also makeup almost two-thirds of children who are exempted from basic education services, and thus, from a human rights point of view, education for girls is a top priority" (UNESCO, 2002). The campaigns, initiatives, and projects that have been carried out to increase the education ratio of girls have made significant changes in girls' education in recent years. However, the educational attainment of girls after primary education still poses a problem, particularly in certain areas (Mercan, 2010).

According to census 2011, the literacy rate of India is 74.04%, the overall female literacy rate is 65.46% whereas the male literacy rate is 82.14%. Despite taking several initiatives by the government for improving the female literacy level, they still lie much behind their male counterparts. Furthermore, the national literacy rate of women in India is 65.46%, whereas the literacy rate among Muslim females is 51.9% which is much behind the national literacy rate for females. The data obtained through the Sachar committee report, 2006 and Post Sachar evaluation committee report, 2014 reveals that the literacy rate of Muslim females is lowest as compared to females from other religious groups. The Sachar Committee report 2006, states that Very few Muslim girls continue their education after completing their schooling.As education levels increase, the division between the educational attainment of Muslims and other socio-religious groups increases. Nevertheless, some positive changes had been observed in terms of the level of educational attainment; however, the girls from the Muslim community had not progressed as rapidly as other socio-religious groups (Sachar Committee report, 2006).

Reseraches related to girls' education among Muslims show that Girls percentage drop out is lower than boys in primary schools, but their number increases in higher classes. Though education in government primary schools is free parents prefer sending their children to Madrasah. Girls were not allowed to continue schools, as they had to do the household work, looking after siblings(Pande, 2006), Poverty, gender-based discrimination, parental support, lack of infrastructure (Khan, 2017), low standard of living and early marriages due to traditional customs (Khan, 2017; Pande, 2006). Parents prefer English medium schools for boys and Hindi or Urdu medium schools for girls (Pande, 2006). Lack of female teachers' acts as an important factor for girls attending schools, as it has a

positive impact on female students. Sanitation facility is also an important factor for girls' dropout by reaching puberty (Shahidul and Karim, 2015), Even if girls complete their education they are not allowed to aspire to work (Khan, 2017). Various reasons have been stated for the educational backwardness of Muslim women such as; social discrimination, household responsibility, the distance of the school, low economic status, lack of female teachers, lack of facilities in the school, poor quality of education (Kaushal, 2013; Khan, 2017).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The census 2011 data reveals that Jharkhand holds the second lowest literacy rate (66.41%) in India after Bihar, the female literacy level (55.42%) in Jharkhand is much below the national average. The data obtained through the Sachar committee report, 2006 and Post Sachar evaluation committee report, 2014 reveals that the literacy rate of Muslim females is lowest as compared to females from other religious groups. Very few Muslim girls continue their education after completing their schooling. The research study reveals that Muslim girls are last to be enrolled and first to be pulled out of schools.There is not just a marginalization of education among Muslim girls in our nation but at the global level. Gender disparity, drop-out, and inequality are closely linked to achieving formal education in various institutions (Abidi, 2015). Therefore this study was conducted as ethnographic research with multiple case studiesin a Government, Government-Aided minority schools (Urdu or Muslim) and a Madrasah to understand the prevailing situation of Muslim girls' education. The ethnographic case study helpsinan in-depth analysis of the effect of Muslim beliefs, culture, and values on the schooling of Muslim girls.The present study is an attempt to explore the factors that govern the education of Muslim girls. Making an effort to find out the quality of education, parental choices, and innovations and challenges of Muslim girls' education the present study is stated as "Ethnographic Case Studies on Schooling of Muslim Girls".

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To find out the socio-cultural and socio-economic perspectiveof parents for the schooling of Muslim Girls.
2) To find out the teaching-learning methodology adopted by the schools for the education of Muslim girls.
3) To find out the challenges in the education of Muslim Girls.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: An ethnographic research with multiple case study design has been adopted for this study. "Ethnographic design is qualitative research procedures for describing, analyzing, and interpreting a culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develops over time" (Creswell, 2012). The ethnographic part of the research provides a perspective of Muslim parents towards their daughters' education, the culture of the school as well as the classroom. The case is a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2009), Case study is an 'intensive' and 'holistic' description and analysis of bound phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). The case study in the ethnographic research acts as a tool for an in-depth study of the concerned phenomenon.

Sampling: A purposive sampling was used for this ethnographic multiple case study research. All sampling done with a purpose in mind is a purposeful sampling (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study" (Patton, 2015). The present study selected the three schools for the case study with a different background to look into the problem with different perspectives.

Sample of the Study: The sample of the present study includes a government school, a government-Aided minority school, and a Madrasah .Five teachers were selected from each school for the interview; a focus group discussion was done selecting eight students from each school, their parents

were selected for in-depth interviews. The nearby area of Muslim girls school was selected for interviewing out of school girls, 10 out of school girls and their parents were interviewed for the present study.

Tools of the Study: The tools administered to obtain the required data were such as**:** Interview schedule for Headteachers, Teachers, Guidelines for Focus Group Discussion with in-school Muslim Girls and Interview Schedule for Parents of in-school girls and out of school Muslim girls and their parents. Observation Schedule, sessions of informal interviews, and Fieldnotes of participant and non-participant observations.

Procedure of data Collection: Once the tools are prepared the next step is the collection of data. For data collection rapport was established with the school head and permission was taken to collect data from their school for the research work. Further interviews were conducted with the school-heads, teacher students, and their parents. Survey schedules were filled observing the conditions of the school; some data were collected from the school records.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data : The data obtained from the place of research were analyzed as per the objectives of the study. The process of analysis involved ethnographic content analysis and case study analysis.

Ethical Considerations : Ethical concerns are indispensable for any ethnographic research since it is a truth for any ethnographic research scientist to enter the field; they need to have the ethical approval of informants and the institutions concerned (Tabatabaei,2016). According to LeCompt and Schensul (2015), Ethics comprises principles, standards, and laws that govern the behavior of people in order not to harm anyone. However, strict principles were followed to maintain research ethics in this study.

Results and Interpretations : In this study, the socio-cultural and socio-economic perspective of Muslim parents towards girls' education, the methodology adopted for teaching-learning processes, and the innovations and challenges of girls' education were explored. The results of the study are discussed under respective sub-headings:

MAJOR FINDINGS

A. The Socio-Cultural and Socio-Economic Perspectiveof Parents for Schooling of Muslim Girls

Socio-Cultural Perspectives

- **Perseverance of Socio-Cultural Values:** The findings concerningthe perseverance of the socio-cultural value reveals that Muslim parents' choice for girls' schooling should be such that it preserves the socio-cultural values of Islam. The environment of the school must be such that it promotes Islamic social practices like Islamic ways of greetings, prayers, and behavioral practices. The uniform of the school is according to the Islamic values and norms.
- **Preparedness for Matrimonial Demands:** Parents' preferred early marriages of their daughters. Therefore they preferred schooling that prepares the girls for matrimonial support like tailoring, home science, basic literacy like reading and writing.
- **Education with Segregation of Boys and Girls:** Parents preferred segregation of education for boys and girls, due to religious norms. There was evidence of violence against girls than boys are beating their girls' counterparts have been noticed. The girls study in this school, whereas the number of girls in Unisex school is much higher, as the parents feel the Unisex school is better than co-educational schools for girls.
- **Co-operative School Environment:**Parents feel that their daughter might feel discriminated against in other government schools; therefore, they preferred sending girls to the schools that were run by the community members. These schools were chosen as they provide a non-

discriminatory, socio-emotionally safer environment for the psychological development of girls'.

- **Girls as Household Support:** Most of the girls were found to be living in joint families where most of the household works are carried out by the females; girls act as helping hand for the household work in such families. Some parents explicitly deny that girls' education is important as they have to go to some other home and have to look after some other family. As the family has a patriarchy system at home so it is the male members of the family who take a decision and girls are not allowed to interfere.

Socio-Economic Perspectives

- **Socio-Economic Status:** One of the important factors for the decision of girl's education is parents' socio-economic status; parents' with lower socioeconomic status had alignment towards free education, parents with medium socio-economic status preferred education of girls at a minimal cost. So somewhere it could be said that the education of girls is dependent on the socio-economic status of parents.Some parents send their girls to these minority schools because their fee structure is very low and they are easily approachable for them. Some parents are much concerned about the scholarship their daughters get from the pre-matric scholarship government scheme, if they come on time or not, more than the quality of education.

- **Girls as Support in Earning:**The findings of this study explored that due to lower socioeconomic status in some families some girls were earning heads for the family or participated in earning along with parents or looked after the household to support the family earnings. For such girls parents preferred evening schools or some alternative sources of education.

- **Social Upliftment:** Some parents considered education as a means of social upliftment; therefore they provided equivalent education to both boys and girls. Education is thought to be as the mere means for their social upliftment, to take up a different job profile for girls as well as boys.

- **Future Benefits:**It was investigated through this research that some parents did not observe future benefits from the education of girls, as girls settle down with their in-laws. Boys' education is thought of as a future investment. The finding that boys are preferred to be sent to better quality schools or rather English medium private schools and girls were sent to Urdu medium minority schools or Madrasah coincides with the findings of Pande(2006) described in her case study on Muslim girls education in Hyderabad.

B. The Teaching-Learning Methodology adopted by the Schools

The present study involves three categories of schools: Madrasah, Government, and Government Aided schools. The teaching-learning strategies adopted by these schools are discussed as under:

- **Teaching Learning Strategies:** For younger children of primary classes 1 and 2 all the schools under a study conducted some activity-based learning. In Madrasah schools rote memorization was also used for the younger kids. At the secondary levels**,** most of the teachers use lecture and question-answer method for teaching.

- **Teaching-Learning Materials:** Science or mathematics teachers rarely use science kits or mathematics kits. The most commonly used teaching-learning materials were chalk, board, dusters, textbooks. None of the teachers were using self-made TLMs, neither at primary or secondary levels.

- **The Medium of Instruction:** As this school was established as linguistic minority Urdu, at the time of establishment till 10 years back the medium of instruction was Urdu but due to lack of books and demands of the present competitive world, the medium of instruction has been changed to Hindi. In Madrasah schools the medium of instruction was mostly Urdu up till secondary level, and in government schools the medium of instruction was Hindi.
- **Curriculum:**Government-aided minority schools and government schools followed the curriculum prescribed by the Jharkhand Academic Council for school education. But the Madrasah schools followed the syllabus of the Madrasah board which was under Jharkhand academic Council similar to the government schools in general subjects different in some of the religious subjects.
- **Textbooks:** The schools under study followed the JCERT textbooks.
- **Assessment:** The process of assessment follows the continuous comprehensive evaluation (CCE) as prescribed by the state government. Questions for assessment are provided from the district level authorities. The Madrasah only conducts quarterly exams for assessing learners' progress.

C. Challenges in the Education of Muslim Girls

- **Government Negligence towards Government-aided Minority Schools:** The school head described that the Urdu/ Muslim minority schools are the last to be benefitted from the government schemes and programs. The Authority of the school is constituted by a secretary which the highest post the president followed by the headteacher and a teacher representative. Under the SamagraShikshaAbhiyan that subsumes the three SarvaShikshaAbhiyan, RashtriyaMadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan, and teacher education, it is running a program called Gyansetu for improving the learning outcome of the students filling the learning gap they had with their prior education, but the minority schools are yet not benefitted by these programs.
- **Infra-structure Development:** In the case of government-aided schools,for the infra-structure development these schools are self-aided. The development fund is taken as a negligible amount from the students at the time of admission. As the students come from a very poor background they cannot be burdened with fees, they do get any government aid for school furniture, laboratory maintenance, and other infrastructure facilities. The toilet facility in school is not very good so sometimes they need to leave schools during their periods. In government school the classroom conditions were poor, the walls were tricking during the rainy season, blackboards were not painted and there wasa lack of classrooms as compared to the number of students.
- **Quality of Education:** Schools do not get books on time; it acts as a hindrance tothe education of girls. Urdu medium minority schoolswere established for preserving the culture of Urdu language but due to dearth of Urdu medium teachers and Urdu medium books the medium of instruction has been changed to Hindi.They have laboratories but they are not in use. Some girls say that school does not follow the time-table properly. They are mostly taught through the lecture method so there is a lack of experiential learning among girls.For fulfilling the needs of the books students are asked to provide their books once they complete their annual exams to their juniors, till the books are not available to the school, once they get their books students to return their borrowed books to their seniors.
- **Early Marriages of Girls:** Early marriage of girls is one of the major problems with the education of girls, parents feel that their daughters marriage is more important than their education, therefore, they want their daughters to get married and settled as early as possible, as they do not aspire to get into the job through education.

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- **Unawareness of Parents towards Education:**It found in the study that the education of girls is not given much importance.Most of the parents were in small scale jobs and wanted their children to get some skill-based training to enter the labor market.This unawareness was more towards girl's education, where,Muslim parents gave priority to boys' education more than that of girls. In some families, it was observed that girls' were acting as the earning heads for the family to teach their brothers.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

i. Community members should conduct an orientation program for parents who do not send their daughters to school.

ii. More involvement of educated girls or female activists to promote the education of Muslim girls, as they may set their examples for the uplifting of the community.

iii. The government should provide better support and facilities to government-aided minority institutions for enhancing the educational level of girls.

iv. Orientation programs for uneducated masses for awareness towards education will help to raise the educational level of girls.

v. Regular monitoring of Schools should be done at block and district levels to assess the quality of education provided at schools.

CONCLUSION

Socio-cultural and socio-economic factors are the major factors that influence the parents' choice on the education of girls. The ethnographic research with multiple case studies to elaborate study under different backgrounds found that for Muslim parents conservation of Islamic values plays a significant role in the education of girls. Education of girls is suppressed by the household needs and family earning support. Male dominance is also one of the dominating factors for the decision of girl's education, where all decisions are taken by males. Education of boys is preferred over girls as boys earning is considered as a support for parents at their old age. The teaching methodology adopted by the schools under study was mostly lecture and question-answer methods, and predominant teaching-learning materials in all these schools were chalk, duster, blackboard, and textbooks. Very few teachers utilized self-made teaching-learning materials. The challenges of girls' education were early marriages, poor quality of education, and lack of infrastructure facilities and unawareness of parents towards girls' education.

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How to cite this Article:

Qudsi, H. and Behera, L. (2019). Ethnographic case studies on schooling of muslim girls. *Pedagogy of Learning, 5* (1), 56-64. Available at: http://pedagogyoflearning.com.

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