

## Socio - Economic Background of Muslim Women at the Higher Secondary Level Student- A Brief Study

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**Abstract:** Education is the most important tool for women education. The present paper deals with the educational status of Muslim women socio - Economic Backgrounds. The research is conducted to study the Muslim women incomes, first Generation Muslim women, education and occupational background, social justice, gender discrimination of the problem faced by them. The study found that about 70% Muslim women socio economic problem in higher education. The study's quantitative data analysis. Among the group, Muslim women's socioeconomic status is notably low. The report also notes Muslim women's educational disadvantages and offers some solutions to raise their standing. According to this survey, Muslim women's socioeconomic progress is occurring at a faster rate.

**Keywords:** socio economic background, Higher Secondary level student, First Generation Muslim women, present Scenario, gender equality.

### Introduction:

“You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of it’s women”

- Jawaharlal Nehru

This study explores the socio -economic background of Muslim women at the higher secondary level of education. Socio economic background of the Muslim women and problem of their development and change have been pointed out by some scholars (Singh, 1973 Ahmed: 1983; Khan, 1984; Siddiqui 1984 Mandal, 1985 and peer, 1991). There is a belief that illiteracy and low educational attainment are the two most important reasons for the socioeconomic modernising setback experienced by Muslim society. Socioeconomic development of the Muslim minority in India and found that, compared to the majority society, the Muslim minority in India experiences far more socioeconomic disadvantage. Higher education is essential for social and occupational and mobility, for elite formation and for intellectual and personal development, on the other hand, higher secondary education would contribute much more effectively in abolishing gender equality by empowering women (Basu and Foster ,1998; Sharma, 2006). The current study was inspired by this paradigm of gender equality and empowerment. The first issue is Muslim women's poor income and lack of security, respectively. The prejudice that the majority community has towards Muslim Indians in all spheres of life is their second issue.

### Review of Related Literature:

The socio-economic background of Muslim women at the higher secondary level is a multidimensional issue influenced by various factors such as religion, gender, financial status, cultural practices, and educational policies. Several studies and reports have focused on the intersections of education, socio-economic status, and the lived experiences of Muslim women, offering insights into the challenges and barriers they face in pursuing higher education. This review highlights key themes and findings from existing literature related to this topic.

#### 1. Socio-Economic Factors and Educational Attainment:

The impact of socioeconomic determinants, including parental education, work status, and family income, on the educational results of marginalised populations has been extensively studied in literature (Broer et al., 2019). Muslim populations in India are systematically disadvantaged when it comes to employment, education, and socioeconomic mobility, as per the Sachar Committee Report (2006). The report revealed that Muslim women, in particular, are doubly marginalized due to their religious identity and gender, leading to lower educational attainment at higher levels, including the secondary stage.

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**Vaidyanathan and Nair (2001)** found that lower family income correlates strongly with poor educational performance among Muslim girls. Financial constraints often force young women to prioritize household responsibilities over education, contributing to high dropout rates. This is corroborated by the **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO, 2014)** data, which shows that Muslim households have lower average incomes compared to other religious groups, affecting their ability to invest in education.

## 2. Impact of Parental Education and Attitudes:

The educational background of parents, especially mothers, plays a crucial role in shaping the academic success of their daughters. **Majid and Sultana (2015)** argue that the level of education attained by mothers has a direct impact on the aspirations and academic performance of their daughters. Muslim women from families with educated parents are more likely to pursue higher education and show better academic outcomes.

However, in many conservative Muslim families, especially in rural areas, parents may have a preference for educating boys over girls. Studies such as **Hossain (2012)** indicate that cultural attitudes and gender biases contribute to a lower priority being given to girls' education. Early marriage and family expectations also limit the duration and quality of education received by Muslim women, as supported by **Azam and Kingdon (2013)**, who argue that familial obligations often lead to girls being withdrawn from school.

## 3. Gender and Cultural Norms:

**Bhatty (1998)** discusses how cultural norms and religious practices influence the educational participation of Muslim women. In many Muslim communities, girls are often expected to conform to traditional gender roles, which emphasize domestic responsibilities over career aspirations. This cultural pressure can limit their access to educational opportunities, particularly at the higher secondary level where mobility and independence are required.

**Jeffery and Jeffery (2005)** explore the ways in which purdah (the practice of female seclusion) impacts Muslim women's access to education. They note that in certain conservative Muslim communities, restrictions on mobility and interactions with men reduce the likelihood of women pursuing higher education. The social pressure to conform to traditional roles, coupled with limited support from family members, creates a challenging environment for Muslim women to excel academically.

## Statement of problem:

The socio-economic background of Muslim women, particularly at the higher secondary level, plays a significant role in shaping their educational opportunities, aspirations, and overall development. In many parts of the world, including India, Muslim women often face multiple layers of marginalization due to their gender, religious identity, and socio-economic status. These factors intersect to create barriers that may limit their access to quality education, career opportunities, and societal participation.

The purpose of this study is to explore the socio-economic background of Muslim women at the higher secondary level and how these factors influence their educational attainment. It aims to identify key challenges such as poverty, family expectations, cultural norms, and the availability of resources that either hinder or promote their educational progress. Moreover, the study seeks to understand the role of government policies, community support, and educational institutions in shaping the experiences of these young women.

Key questions include:

- How do socio-economic factors impact the education of Muslim women at the higher secondary level?
- What are the predominant barriers to their educational attainment?
- What role do family expectations and cultural practices play in shaping their educational and career aspirations?
- How effective are current policies and support systems in addressing the needs of Muslim women in education?

By looking at these variables, the study hopes to advance knowledge of the particular difficulties encountered by Muslim women at this critical juncture in their educational journey, offering insights that can guide interventions and policy changes intended to advance equality and empowerment via education.

## Objective of the study:

- (1) This study aims to examine the socio-economic conditions affecting Muslim women at the higher secondary level.
- (2) It focuses on identifying the challenges they face due to low income, lack of educational resources, and cultural norms.

(3) The study also seeks to propose measures that can help in improving the educational status and socio-economic conditions of Muslim women.

### Hypothesis of the Study:

Based on important socioeconomic, cultural, and educational issues, the study on the socioeconomic background of Muslim women in upper secondary school aims to examine the following assumptions:

1. **Primary Hypothesis (H1):**

- **H1:** The socio-economic background of Muslim women significantly influences their educational attainment at the higher secondary level.

2. **Sub-Hypotheses:**

**H2:** Higher family income levels are positively associated with the likelihood of Muslim women completing higher secondary education.

**H3:** Parental education levels have a significant impact on the educational aspirations and performance of Muslim women at the higher secondary level.

**H4:** Cultural and gender norms within Muslim communities negatively affect the continuation of education for Muslim women beyond the secondary level.

**H5:** Muslim women with access to scholarships, financial aid, or government support are more likely to complete higher secondary education compared to those without such support.

**H6:** Early marriage or family responsibilities contribute to higher dropout rates among Muslim women at the higher secondary level.

**H7:** The availability of educational resources (e.g., tutoring, libraries, internet access) in socio-economically disadvantaged households is directly related to the academic performance of Muslim women.

**H8:** Muslim women from urban areas are more likely to complete higher secondary education compared to their counterparts in rural areas due to better access to educational institutions and resources.

**H9:** Community and peer support positively influence the educational outcomes of Muslim women at the higher secondary level, encouraging them to pursue further studies.

### Null Hypothesis (H0):

- **H0:** There is no discernible correlation between Muslim women's socioeconomic status and their upper secondary education levels.

These hypotheses will be tested through data collection and analysis to better understand how socio-economic factors impact the educational experiences of Muslim women at this critical stage in their academic journey.

### Delimitations of the Study:

Delimitations establish the parameters and extent of the research to guarantee that it stays restricted and feasible. The following guidelines are provided for the study on the socioeconomic background of Muslim women in upper secondary education.

1. **Geographical Delimitation:**

- The study will focus on a specific region or set of regions within a country (e.g., India). The regions selected will have a significant population of Muslim women, covering both **urban and rural areas**. The study will not cover Muslim women from all regions or countries, limiting its findings to the selected geographical areas.

2. **Demographic Delimitation:**

- The study will concentrate on **Muslim women who are currently enrolled at the higher secondary level (Grades 11 and 12)**, aged approximately 16–18 years. Muslim women at other educational levels (e.g., primary, middle school, college) or those outside the age range will not be included.

3. **Socio-Economic Focus:**

- The study will primarily investigate **socio-economic factors** (e.g., family income, parental education, employment, living conditions). Other factors such as psychological, emotional, or health-related aspects, though potentially relevant, will not be the focus of this research.

4. **Sample Size Limitation:**

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- The study will be limited to a sample of **300–500 Muslim female students** at the higher secondary level. While this sample aims to represent different socio-economic backgrounds and locations, the findings may not be generalizable to all Muslim women in higher secondary education.
5. **Time Frame:**
    - The study will focus on **current socio-economic conditions** and their impact on education. While historical trends and developments may be discussed briefly, the study will not provide a detailed historical analysis of socio-economic conditions over time.
  6. **Institutional Scope:**
    - The study will include students from **government and private higher secondary schools**, but it will not focus on students from alternative educational systems such as **madrasas or non-formal education programs**. This delimitation is to maintain a consistent comparison of educational experiences within the formal education system.
  7. **Policy Focus:**
    - The study will examine **existing educational policies** affecting Muslim women at the higher secondary level, but it will not delve into broader political, economic, or religious policies unless directly relevant to the education sector.
  8. **Cultural Context:**
    - The research will focus on how **cultural norms within the Muslim community** affect education, but it will not investigate the broader influence of global cultural factors or inter-religious comparisons in detail.
  9. **Language Limitation:**
    - The study will be conducted in **English and/or the local language** of the region being studied. Data collection tools, such as surveys and interviews, will be provided in these languages. Participants who do not speak these languages fluently may not be included in the study.

#### Method of Data Collection:

This study aims to investigate the socio-economic status of Muslim women enrolled in upper secondary education via a mixed-methods design (Ivankova and Creswell, 2009). The primary goal of the data collecting procedure will be to compile thorough data that represents the various experiences of Muslim women in various socioeconomic circumstances. The methods of data collection will include:

##### 1. Survey Method:

**Purpose:** To gather quantitative data from a large sample of Muslim women at the higher secondary level regarding their socio-economic background, educational experiences, and challenges.

##### Tools:

- **Structured Questionnaire:** A detailed questionnaire will be designed to capture key socio-economic indicators such as family income, parental education levels, living conditions, and access to resources. It will also gather information on educational aspirations, academic performance, and barriers to education.

##### Distribution:

- Surveys will be distributed through schools, colleges, and community centres, as well as online platforms to reach a broader demographic. The target population will include Muslim female students at the higher secondary level from both urban and rural areas.

##### Sampling:

- **Sample Size:** A sample of 300–500 Muslim female students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Sampling Method:** To guarantee representation from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic areas (rural and urban), and educational establishments (public and private), stratified random sampling will be employed (Iliyasu and Etikan, 2021).

##### 2. Interviews:

**Purpose:** Acquiring comprehensive qualitative understanding of Muslim women's experiences and perspectives of the socioeconomic elements affecting their educational opportunities.

##### Tools:

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- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews will be conducted with selected Muslim female students, their parents, and teachers to explore their views on cultural norms, financial challenges, and educational aspirations. This method will help uncover underlying factors that are not easily captured in surveys.

**Participants:**

- **Students:** 30–40 Muslim female students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.
- **Parents:** A sample of parents to understand the family's role in shaping their daughters' educational opportunities.
- **Teachers and Educational Administrators:** To gain perspectives on the institutional challenges and support systems available for Muslim women at the higher secondary level.

**3. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):**

**Purpose:** To facilitate group discussions that highlight shared challenges, community dynamics, and the influence of peer networks on the education of Muslim women.

**Tools:**

- **Discussion Guide:** A guide will be prepared to steer the conversation around topics such as socio-economic barriers, cultural norms, family expectations, and educational policies.

**Participants:**

- Each focus group will consist of 6–8 Muslim female students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Multiple focus groups will be conducted in both urban and rural areas to gather diverse perspectives.

**4. Document Review:**

**Purpose:** To collect secondary data and contextual information that supports the study.

**Sources:**

- **School Records:** Attendance rates, dropout rates, and academic performance data for Muslim women at the higher secondary level.
- **Government Reports and Policy Documents:** Relevant reports on Muslim women's education, scholarships, and socio-economic development programs.
- **Previous Research:** A review of existing literature and studies related to the socio-economic background of Muslim women and education.

**5. Case Studies:**

**Purpose:** To provide detailed narratives of individual Muslim female students, showcasing how socio-economic factors uniquely impact their educational journey.

**Selection:**

- 5–10 case studies will be developed, each representing different socio-economic backgrounds, geographical locations, and educational outcomes (e.g., successful completion, dropout).

**Data Collection Timeline:**

- **Survey and Interview Design:** 1 month
- **Pilot Study (Testing Survey and Interviews):** 2 weeks
- **Main Data Collection (Surveys, Interviews, FGDs):** 2–3 months
- **Document Review and Case Studies:** Concurrent with data collection

**Ethical Considerations:**

- **Informed Consent:** The goals of the research will be explained to each participant, and their agreement to participate will be requested.
- **Confidentiality:** Responses and personal information will be kept private and used only for study.
- **Voluntary Participation:** It will be voluntary for individuals to participate in focus groups, interviews, and surveys, and they may opt out at any moment.

**Research Gap:**

The study of the socio-economic background of Muslim women at the higher secondary level is an area that has not been extensively explored, particularly within the context of specific intersections between gender, religion, and socio-economic factors. The existing body of research on Muslim women and education often focuses on broad categories without delving deeply into the unique challenges faced by those at the higher secondary level. The following research gaps have been identified:

**1. Limited Focus on Higher Secondary Level:**

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- Most studies on Muslim women's education tend to focus either on primary education or on higher education, leaving the higher secondary level largely underexplored. However, this stage is critical as it serves as a transitional phase where decisions about higher education, vocational training, or early marriage are made. Research is needed to specifically address the socio-economic barriers and opportunities faced by Muslim women during this pivotal stage of their academic journey.

## **2. Inadequate Attention to Socio-Economic Factors:**

- While some studies touch on the socio-economic challenges faced by Muslim women, few have thoroughly examined the relationship between socio-economic status and educational outcomes at the higher secondary level. Factors such as family income, employment status, parental education and access to resources like tuition and internet are often mentioned but not systematically analysed in relation to this specific educational stage.

## **3. Intersectionality of Religion, Gender, and Culture:**

- There is a lack of research that examines how the intersection of religion, gender, and cultural norms uniquely impacts Muslim women's education at the higher secondary level. Many studies treat Muslim women as a homogenous group, without recognizing the diversity in experiences based on varying socio-economic, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. More research is needed to understand how these intersections create specific challenges in accessing and completing higher secondary education (Islam and Siddiqui, 2016).

## **4. Geographical Disparities (Urban vs. Rural):**

- The socio-economic background and educational opportunities for Muslim women often differ significantly between urban and rural areas. However, research has not adequately compared the educational experiences of Muslim women in these settings at the higher secondary level. Studies often focus on urban areas where educational facilities are more accessible, while the experiences of rural Muslim women, who may face greater socio-economic and cultural barriers, remain understudied.

## **5. Impact of Government Policies and Interventions:**

- Existing research rarely evaluates the effectiveness of government policies as well as interventions specifically aimed at Muslim women at the higher secondary level. Programs such as scholarships, reservations, and other support mechanisms are designed to bridge educational gaps, but there is insufficient evidence on how well these initiatives are working for Muslim women in different socio-economic settings. More research is needed to assess the reach and impact of these policies.

## **6. Limited Qualitative Research:**

- Much of the existing research on Muslim women's education is quantitative in nature, focusing on enrolment rates, literacy levels, and other statistical measures. While these are important, there is a lack of qualitative studies that explore the lived experiences of Muslim women in higher secondary education. Research that includes personal narratives, case studies, and interviews with students, parents, and teachers is needed to provide a deeper description of the socio-economic challenges they face.

## **7. Cultural and Familial Expectations:**

- The role of family expectations, cultural norms, and early marriage in shaping the educational outcomes of Muslim women at the higher secondary level has not been adequately explored. Research often overlooks how societal pressures around gender roles, family responsibilities, and marriage affect the decision-making processes of young Muslim women in continuing their education.

## **8. Dropout Rates and Reasons:**

- There is limited research focusing on the dropout rates of Muslim women at the higher secondary level and the reasons behind it. While dropout rates among girls in general are documented, there is a need for research that specifically addresses why Muslim women at this stage are more prone to discontinuing their education, whether due to financial reasons, early marriage, cultural restrictions, or lack of access to quality education.

## **9. Role of Peer and Community Support:**

- The role of peer influence, community networks, and educational role models in shaping the educational aspirations of Muslim women is understudied. Understanding the social dynamics within Muslim communities, both positive as well as negative, that affect education at the higher secondary level could offer new insights into how to support Muslim women in overcoming socio-economic challenges.

## **Methodology of the study:**

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The research will be conducted in five systematic phases to ensure a comprehensive and methodical approach. Phase 1 involves the collection of secondary data from a variety of credible sources, including government reports, academic studies, policy documents, and school records. This data will provide essential background information and help establish the broader context of the study (Ajayi, 2017). In Phase 2, the secondary data will be analysed to identify and delineate the specific geographic areas for fieldwork, ensuring that the selected locations reflect a diverse range of socio-economic and educational conditions among Muslim women at the higher secondary level.

Phase 3 focuses on the development of the initial questionnaire for the pilot survey. This preliminary instrument will be designed to test the effectiveness and clarity of the questions in capturing the required information. Phase 4 involves conducting the pilot survey within the delineated study area (Bujang et al., 2024). The findings from this phase will help refine the questionnaire and finalize the list of participants for the main survey, ensuring the inclusion of a representative sample. Finally, Phase 5 encompasses the execution of the final survey at multiple levels. This phase will involve the full-scale administration of the survey instruments, interviews, and focus group discussions to gather in-depth data for the study. Each phase builds upon the previous one to create a robust framework for analysing the socio-economic and educational realities of Muslim women in the selected regions.

### Findings of the Study:

The conclusions drawn from the data gathered using the previously described technologies. The variables in this study are measured, including demographics, financial position, educational attainment, and issues that higher secondary students encounter. Additionally, the study will explore the impact of socio-cultural factors, family support, and institutional resources on the educational experiences of these students, highlighting disparities and challenges specific to their socio-economic backgrounds. This data will offer insights into how these factors collectively influence students' academic outcomes as well as future aspirations.

### Analysis of Data:

SL NO	Complete Opinion	Partial Opinion	Different Opinion
1	7	17	76
2	21	18	61
3	4	10	86
4	15	20	65
5	26	24	50
6	30	46	24
7	11	5	84
8	88	2	10
9	12	3	85
10	83	12	5
11	48	27	25
12	25	32	43
13	91	2	7
14	25	9	66
15	17	9	75

16	32	39	29
17	10	14	76
18	88	4	8
19	43	41	16
20	37	37	26

Source: Field of survey

**Interpretation:**

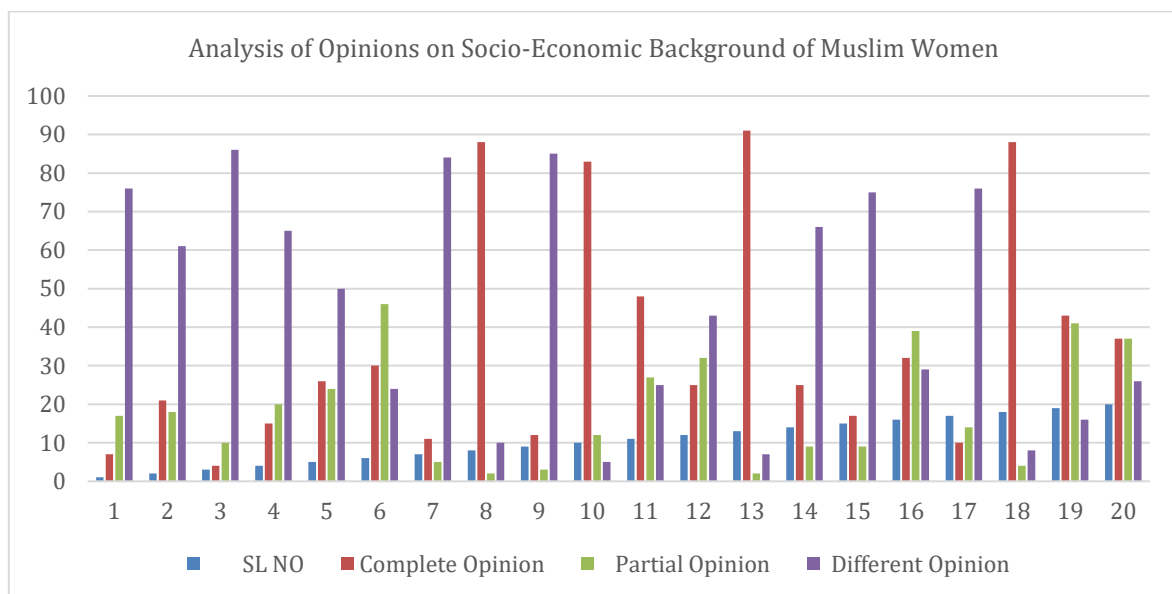
The table provided captures a range of opinions from the participants on various aspects, potentially related to the socio-economic background of Muslim women at the higher secondary level. The respondents' answers are categorized into **Complete Opinion**, **Partial Opinion**, and **Different Opinion**. Here's a breakdown of potential interpretations for this study:

**1. Socio-Economic Factors of Muslim Women:**

- **Complete Agreement** (e.g., Question 8 with 88 respondents) suggests that certain socio-economic characteristics, such as income level or family support, may be common across a significant portion of the surveyed population.
- **Partial Opinion** (e.g., Question 6 with 46 respondents) may indicate that some aspects of socio-economic conditions, like education, employment, or access to resources, are variable within the community. There is some agreement, but these may vary between different socio-economic strata within the group.
- **Different Opinions** (e.g., Question 1 with 76 respondents) suggest that there are significant differences in experiences, which could reflect variations in social status, family background, or regional disparities among the women surveyed.

**2. Educational Challenges:**

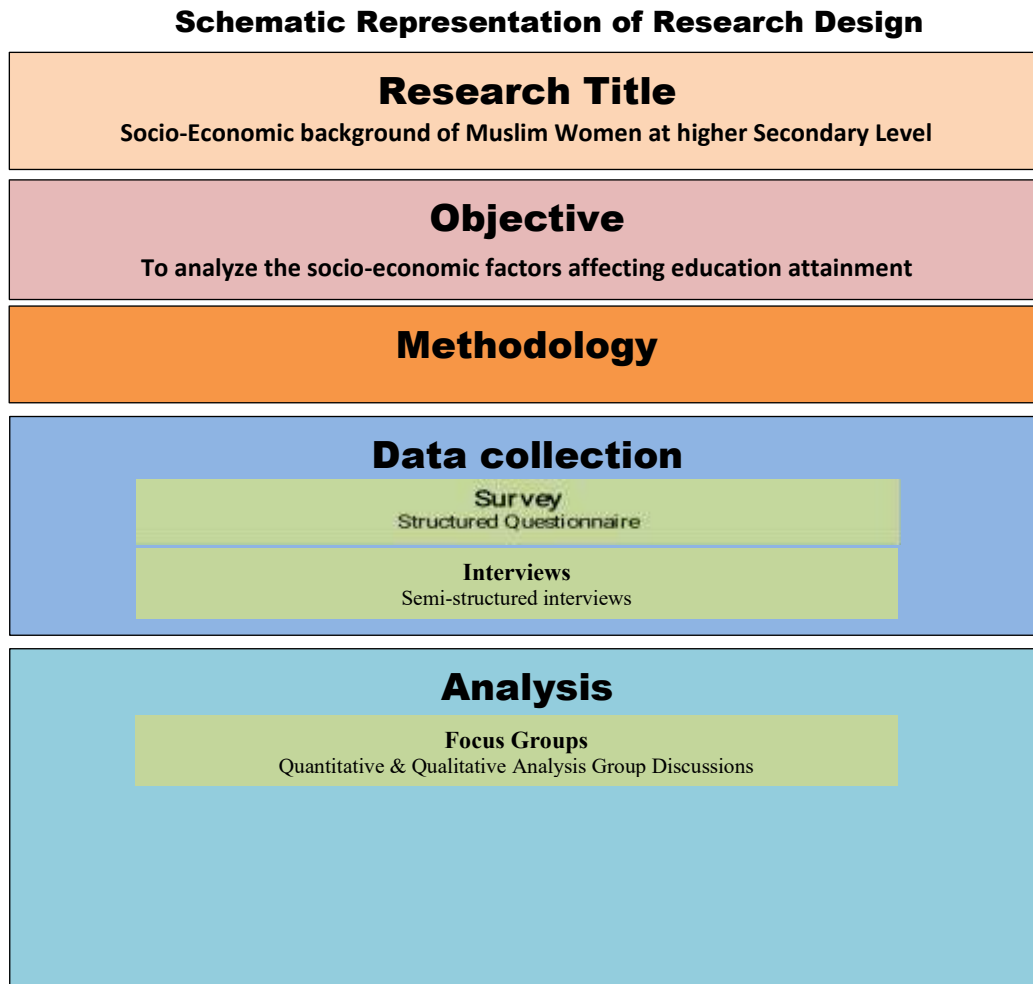
- There is evidence of strong agreement in some responses (e.g., Question 13, where 91 respondents agree completely). This might indicate that there is a general consensus on the importance of education, access to higher secondary education, or challenges like financial constraints or societal norms that affect women's education.
- On the other hand, some responses reflect a divided opinion, such as Question 12, where **Complete, Partial, and Different Opinions** are relatively evenly distributed. This could highlight the mixed impact of socio-economic factors on access to education or the perceived quality of education.



Here is the bar chart representing the analysis of opinions on the socio-economic background of Muslim women based on the data provided. The chart shows the distribution of responses for "Complete Opinion," "Partial Opinion," and "Different Opinion" across the 20 serial numbers.

- **Red** bars represent "Complete Opinion."
- **Green** bars represent "Partial Opinion."
- **Purple** bars represent "Different Opinion."

**Schematic Representation of Research Design:**



**Reliability and Validity of the Study:**

Ensuring the validity and reliability of study findings is crucial while investigating the socio-economic background of Muslim women at the higher secondary level. This is how the study will approach these ideas:

**1. Reliability:**

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the data collected in the study. To ensure data reliability, standardized instruments, like structured questionnaires, will be used to maintain consistency across participants. Pilot testing with a small sample will identify unclear questions and issues. Multiple data sources, including surveys, interviews, focus groups, and document reviews, will be utilized for triangulation, enhancing result credibility. Inter-rater reliability will be ensured by involving multiple researchers in coding qualitative data, reducing bias. Clear protocols for consistent data collection, such as standardized interview and survey procedures, will be followed to ensure uniform participant experiences, further supporting data reliability.

**2. Validity:**

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Validity is the extent whereby research accurately evaluates the construct it is meant to assess. To ensure validity, the questionnaire will be developed based on literature and expert input in gender studies and education, ensuring content validity. Construct validity will be achieved by accurately defining and operationalizing key concepts like socio-economic status as well as cultural norms, using established scales where applicable. Face validity will be enhanced through expert reviews and focus groups of Muslim women. External validity will be ensured by sampling diverse participants from various socio-economic backgrounds and regions. Longitudinal follow-up will also provide insights into long-term trends. Peer reviews will help identify biases and methodological weaknesses, further strengthening validity.

#### Further Research Study:

1. This study discusses the problems in various aspects of Muslim women's education. But the next research can investigate the solution to this problem.
2. In this study, only school-level females were studied. But later on, school or college went beyond to do research on Muslim women at the university level.

#### Variables:

- Independent Variables: Socio-economic background, Muslim women, higher secondary level student, gender equality.

#### Conclusion:

society is always changing and in accordance with this society, various changes have come in the education system. As the researcher has problems in various aspects of Muslim women's education, the researcher has chosen this work here. Based on the data obtained from the schools of different districts, the researcher freely explains the problems faced by the Muslim women in their education. As a result, naturally, from the whole research, the researcher has come to the conclusion that the problem in their education sector can only be solved when the government parents will try to deal with these problems in education by having a positive attitude towards them. As a result, many Muslim women in the future like Begum Rokeya, writer Taslima Nasreen, Chandbibi etc. It is expected to become. The Muslim community's cream layer favours science and social science-based modern education. According to this study, the Muslim population's social mobility process has to be accelerated in order to advance the population's socioeconomic progress. The present researcher recommends for proper implementation of these programmes.

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### Suggestions:

#### 1. Broaden Research Scope:

- Involve people from a variety of geographic backgrounds (rural, semi-rural, and urban).
- Research different educational establishments, such as madrasas, private schools, and government schools.

#### 2. Enhance Methodology:

- Employ a mixed-methods strategy that includes focus groups, interviews, and surveys.
- Take into account longitudinal research to track changes over time.

#### 3. Focus on Key Variables:

- Examine the educational background and profession of parents and how these affect their daughters' schooling.
- Examine how family and NGOs may help the community.

#### 4. Address Cultural Factors:

- Analyse how religion beliefs, perspectives on gender, as well as cultural standards affect schooling.

#### 5. Policy Implications:

- Advocate for improved educational policies and scholarship programs for Muslim women.

#### 6. Utilize Technology:

- Use online surveys and social media to reach a wider, younger audience.

#### 7. Community Engagement:

- Include families, community leaders, as well as interested parties in the study.
- To guarantee sensitivity to culture along with improving findings, hold feedback sessions.

#### 8. Future Research Directions:

- Examine how education affects employment as well as financial freedom.
- Make recommendations for comparative research between various ethnic and religious communities.