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RESEARCH ARTICLE

EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS OF WOMEN AMONG MUSLIM MINORITY: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract

India is the sixth-largest economy in terms of nominal GDP and the third-largest by purchasing power parity (PPP). Our country is moving globally and there are many factors that influence the economic growth and development of the country, such as education, political and social organizations etc. There is no doubt that education is the basic and fundamental demand for the development. It also creates an impact on national integrity and equality while, gender inequality in education frames the disparate position of women in the social system. Education can increase the efficiency and the manpower of individual countries cannot achieve their objectives without human efforts and organizational structure. In India, women constitute around 50% of the total population but they neither received a quality education nor a proper workplace. Among all religious communities, Muslim women are the least educated and suffering from backwardness as compared to Muslim men and non-Muslim women as well. Hence, it is necessary to take essential steps to recommend a positive attitude for the educational development of Muslim Minority women.

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Introduction:-

Education is an important process to enhance ability, develop critical thinking and guide the young generation. The development of a nation depends on the utilization of its resources. Human is an important resource where women constitute half of the total population. Economic development also depends on the education and productive skills of its entire workforce.¹ Women make 50 percent but they are often excluded in the main position of socio-cultural, economic and political structures. Female sex ratio is 943 for 1000 and female literacy rate is 65.46% according to the census 2011. There are many unfavorable conditions, attitude and cultural factors for female education which influence the low rate of enrollment.² India has not achieved the goal of gender equality and still there are many problems to sustain in the matter of women empowerment. The rights of education bill 2009 proposed free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, and ensured that every child should be enrolled in school and must complete the prescribed courses. The constitution of India provides equality and equal opportunities for all and

¹ Jackson, L. W. (2009). "Education the women and you change the World: Investing in the Education of Women is the Best Investment in a Country's Growth and Development," Baylor University School of law, <https://files.eric.ed.gov> (page 1-2)

² Sangameshwara, N. S. (2018). Gender Exclusion and Equality in Indian Society, SSRN Electronic Journal, researchgate.net (page 1-2)

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insure provisions against gender discrimination. Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India, where the number of Muslims is more than any other states of the country but the share of Muslim women in education and economic sector is less than other state according to the Sachar committee report 2001. So, it is obvious that they do not have full access of their rights, jobs and other opportunities. These socio-political and economic struggles are more common for Muslim women. A large number of Muslim women are not able to take proper education and not able to enjoy their freedom in democratic India. Political parties are ignoring their interests which make them deprived from main stream of society and they suffer educational disparity, economic deprivation and social exclusion.³

Objective of the study:-

1. To study the present educational status of women, especially the Muslim minority community in UP.
2. To analyze the reason for backwardness and challenges faced by Muslim women.
3. To examine the initiative is taken by UP government for the educational awareness of Muslim women.

Rational of the study

1. In this study, nine districts of Uttar Pradesh were selected on the basis of Muslim women population and educational conditions as per Directorate of Census Operations, Uttar Pradesh 2011.
2. The Four districts of Uttar Pradesh such as Goutam Buddha Nagar, Ghaziabad, Auraiya, Kanpur Nagar have high literacy rate but low rate of Muslim women participation in education.
3. Other five districts of Uttar Pradesh, such as Rampur, Bareilly, Bahraich, Budaun and Mathura where the Muslim population is high but literacy rate is low as per 2011 Census of India.
4. The high-level committee of the Prime Minister headed by Rajendra Sachar 2006, notified that the presence of Muslim woman in various walks of life is negligible.
5. The constitution of India make education as the fundamental rights of all as well as for Muslim minority woman.

Methodology:-

This paper is descriptive in nature and document analysis taken as the major method. Quantitative and Qualitative data were collected from various Districts Census reports of Uttar Pradesh and other resources.

Population of Muslim minority community in UP

India's Muslim population is 138 million (about 13.4% of the total population). Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India with a total population of 19,95,81,477. This is also one of the biggest states in India with a large geographical area and comprising 75 districts, 820 development blocks and more than lakh inhabited villages. The total population of males are 10,45,96,415, females are 94,985,062 and the sex ratio is 908 per thousand (census 2001). The Muslim population in UP is 38,483,967, it is 19.3% of the total population of UP and forms the second largest religion after Hindus. It made up of 52.40 percent males and 47.59 percent females (census 2011). The proportion of its rural and urban population is 68.84 and 31.16 percent at the national level. The Muslim population of Uttar Pradesh is more than 35 million and making this state the most populous in terms of Muslim population that one of the fastest growing religious states in the country. Thus, the Muslim minority is the largest minority community in comparison to the other socio-religious minorities such as Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain.

Table 1:- Religious Distribution of population, census-2001.

Religious distribution of population	India	Uttar Pradesh
Hindus	80.46	80.61
Muslims	13.43	18.50
Christians	2.34	0.13
Sikhs	1.87	0.41
Buddhists	0.77	0.18
Jains	0.41	0.12
Other	0.65	0.01
Religion not stated	0.07	0.04

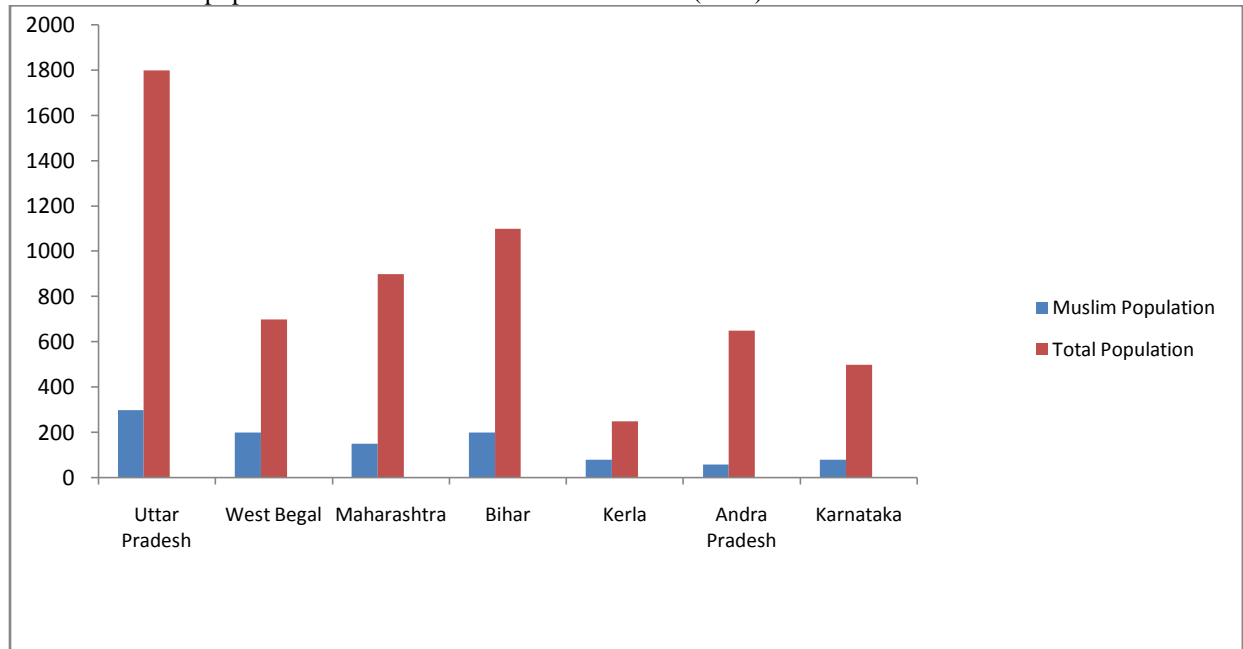
³Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India. (2006). Prime Minister's High-Level Committee. <https://www.actionindia.org>

*Source: Religion, Census of India 2001

Muslim population vary from district to district in UP

Muslims demographic areas have varied over different regions in UP state. Here are some figures about the distribution of the Muslim population is 31 million in Uttar Pradesh (census 2001). This state has been the largest population of ethnic composition (13% of the total population). Similarly, Uttar Pradesh consists a million plus Muslim population across various districts. While, three other states, like West Bengal, Bihar, and Maharashtra had over ten million Muslims. The majority of Muslim population live in these states such as Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Jammu & Kashmir have five to ten million Muslims. Islam is also professing in Lakshadweep and Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, west Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, and Bihar extensively. Despite of, Hinduism was professed by the majority and the most numerous in 28 states and 8 Union territories except in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab.

Table 2:- Muslim population in some states of India- in million (2001).



Muslim population & Literacy rate in UP by District-2011 Census

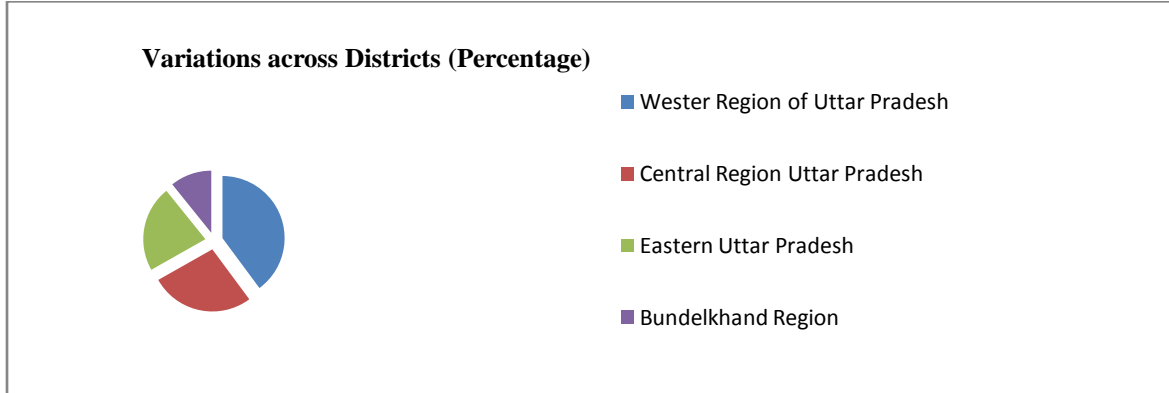
Table 4:- Proportion of total Population in selected Districts of U.P., Census-2011.

Uttar Pradesh (Districts)	Total Population	Muslim Population	Muslims (%)	Muslim Male	Muslim Female
Ghaziabad	4,681,645	1,186,776	25.35	622,836	563,940
Gautam Buddha Nagar	1,648,115	215,500	13.08%	115,983	99,517
Kanpur Nagar	4,581,268	720,660	15.73%	378,194	342,466
Auraiya	1,379,545	10,874	12.39%	5,733	5,141
Bareilly	4,448,359	1,536,534	34.54%	802,522	734,012
Mathura	349,909	60,259	17.22%	31,618	28,641
Bahraich	3,487,731	1,169,330	33.35%	611,012	558,318
Rampur	2,335,819	1,181,337	50.57%	613,724	567,613
Budaun	3,682,713	790,515	21.47%	412,064	378,451

It shows the huge variation of Muslim population in many regions as well as woman population of Uttar Pradesh as per the 2011 Census⁴. In the metropolitan districts of Uttar Pradesh where Muslim population is low, show high literacy rate. comparatively, in those districts where Muslim population is high, the level of education is low and the poverty level remain high.⁵

The distribution of Muslims in four regions of UP

The demographic profiles further divided in four regions of UP showed that Muslim population in the Western region of Uttar Pradesh is 26.21% which made this region populous concentration region. Central region of UP about 17.73%, Eastern 14.73% and the Bundelkhand is 7.1%. the share of Muslims is also high in some region but literacy ratio is low. while, the issue of education, fertility and mortality continued concerned among each district of UP.



Sex Ratio-

Sex ratio is differed across India. The Child Sex Ratio among the age group (0-6) in U P is 956 (census 2011). The birth rate of boys remain high, around 105 boys as per 100 girls. There are more men than women in India as the sex ratio is 912 per 1000 males (census 2011). The Muslim community shows a similar pattern of birth rate. The low and falling sex ratio of girls are result of two factors such as female infant mortality rate and female feticide rate is high.

Table 4:- Sex Ratio in selected districts of U.P., Census-2011.

Name of Districts	Sex Ratio (Average)	Child Sex Ration(0-6)
Ghaziabad	881	850
Gautam Buddha Nagar	851	843
Kanpur Nagar	862	873
Auraiya	899	884
Bareilly	887	903
Mathura	881	860
Bahraich	892	935
Rampur	909	924
Budaun	871	899

*Source: District Population, Caste, Religion Data Uttar Pradesh- Census 2011

Educational Status of Muslim Women

In 2002, Education become fundamental right through the 86th amendment by inserting a clause in the constitution, Article 45 which now read as "the state shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they completed the age of 6 years". Despite this commitment the numbers of girls in this age group have

⁴District Religion Data- Population Census. (2011). Uttar Pradesh. <https://www.census2011.co.in>

⁵ Ahmad, H. (2008). Regional Disparities in the Levels of Education in Uttar Pradesh <https://core.ac.uk>

remained out of school (Sachar committee report, 2006). This matter is more serious for Muslim women as well. The educational condition does not remain securely held for Muslim religious community due to conservative norms and regulations. The literacy rate among Muslim women in 2001 was 50% this is far below the national average 65%. Further the Literacy rate is expectedly high for male comparison to female. This huge gap of education between man and women brings gender inequality. The rate of female literacy has been enhanced over 59% and with a jump of 17% in UP districts⁶, but the regional variation in education is appeared everywhere as Muslim women are struggling hard to access the equal opportunity. Therefore, they are facing triple kind of marginalization in education as discrimination, disadvantage, and inequality. It shows that woman education is not in a priority list of their families, without support of the family they felt disparities in every level of society.

Literacy and Level of Education-

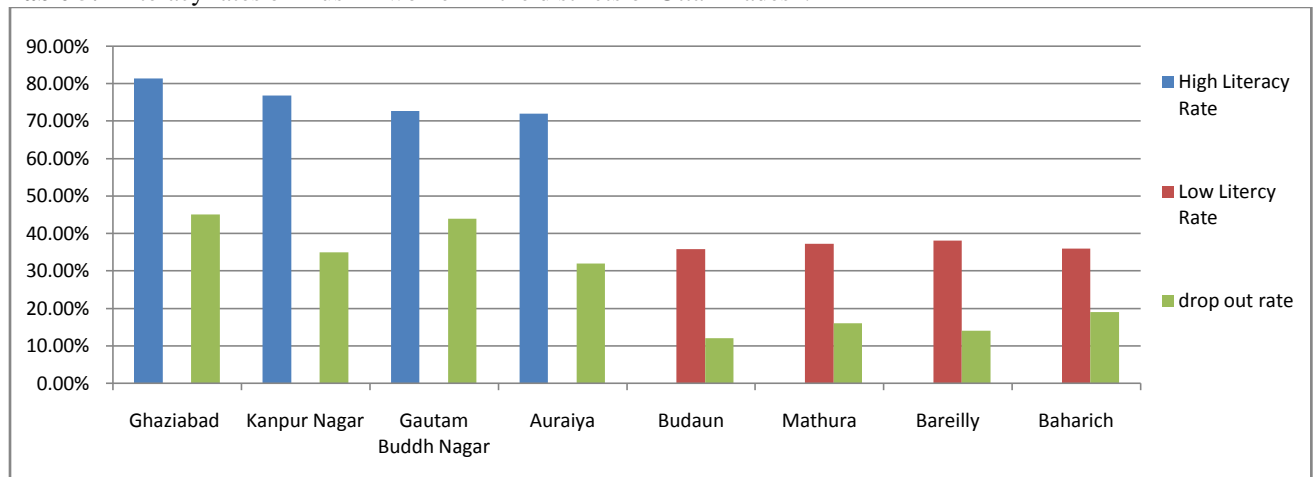
literacy rate is generally associated with the development of individual as well as social and other dimensions as modernization and industrialization which enhance the economic condition. The overall literacy rate is 64.8%, male literacy rate is 75.3% and female is 53.7% (census 2001). Further, the year of 2011 is 74.04%, 82.14% for males and 65.46% for females (census 2011). Similarly, the literacy rate of Uttar Pradesh is 76.26%, male literacy stood at 77.02%, and female at 59.61% (census 2011). Thus, the educational gap is showing in all years between man and women.

Table 5:- Literacy Rate- Uttar Pradesh, Census- 2011.

Uttar Pradesh (Districts)	Literacy Level (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
Ghaziabad	81.42%	69.79%	85.42%
Gautam Buddha Nagar	80.12%	70.82%	88.06%
Kanpur Nagar	79.65%	75.05%	83.62%
Auraiya	87.2%	83.23%	90.88%
Bareilly	58.49%	48.3%	67.5%
Mathura	74.97%	68.84%	80.4%
Bahraich	49.36%	39.18%	58.34%
Rampur	53.34%	44.44%	61.4%
Budaun	51.29%	40.09%	60.98%

*Source: District Population, Caste, Religion Data Uttar Pradesh 2011

Table 5:- Literacy rates of Muslim women in the districts of Uttar Pradesh.



⁶Sex Ratio, Density, Literacy Rate. (2021). Uttar Pradesh Population <https://census2021data.in/uttar-pradesh-population-2021>

It mentioned that the literacy rate of women is not in a good condition but some districts showed better achievement in education such as Ghaziabad has 81.42%, Kanpur Nagar is 79.65%, Gautam Buddha Nagar is 80.12%, Auraiya 87.2% and other districts like Lucknow, Etawa, Banaras, Allahabad, Meerut and Ambedkar Nagar, remain in a good condition⁷. It proves that metropolitan cities support female education than rural and non-developed areas. National Family Health Survey has found that "the dropout rate among Muslims is 17.6% higher than all India average of 13.2%". The enrollment ratio of Muslims at elementary level is lower than their share of population⁸. Across India, half of Muslim children who completed middle school dropout during secondary school. Similarly, Muslim women have a low literacy rate than the Uttar Pradesh average literacy rate is 73% as per NSO Report. (National Statistical Office). Thus, many districts of Uttar Pradesh where Muslim women population is high, the access of education remains low, and the enrollment ratio in primary, secondary and higher education is also low in comparison to the other socio-religious community across various districts of UP.

Challenges Faced by Muslim Minority Women

During Vedic period women enjoyed equal status and right in all aspects of life but in the late medieval and early modern periods rarely women had participated in the administration. Only some royal women had rights to enroll in some sort of work. There are very few areas where women found opportunity to share the administrative position with men. Generally, they were separated from the political, diplomatic and economic influence. It was very difficult for women to hold execution and government that do not exist in ancient and medieval periods as well. The rights of women are influenced by the customs like 'hijab' or 'purdah' which made them lag behind. Many reformers voiced for their empowerment that after remained in a bad position during British period. After independence women have been working in a government and private sector as a scientist, doctor, engineer, lawyer etc. which earlier not considered good for women. Undoubtedly, education makes them self-aware, empowered, and independent. But the question of education for Muslim women remains in a very bad condition, still there are many factors that neither changed nor given proper attention for enhancing their condition⁹. Therefore, they are facing backwardness. The educational problems are very common for Muslim women that they are facing considerable challenges in UP such as-

Religion and cultural related causes of educational backwardness of Muslim women

Principal Secretary of Social Welfare Department, S. N. Haque said, that there are various problems for Muslim women in society but it starts from their family "many families would go with "Parda" means not allow to go in front of any other like man or other family members. Nothing allowed her to go outside without a man or wearing "burqa" or "hijab". Further, he included that "Islam prefers women being covered and being properly dressed with minimum exposure of skin. Even men do not allow going in public place wearing short of knee length, watching TV or going to cinema are generally not encouraged by religious reasons. They are considering "Najayez" in Islamic religion". Many Muslim families go with Madarsa education for their girl child. They do not send them to modern school because they felt that "the religious literature is effective to adopt manners that is compulsory for women; acquiring knowledge is important for male but not essential for females". Therefore, rigid religious rituals which start from their families played a major role to make them backward.

What Islam really says about women education

"The Prophet Muhammad urged Muslims to acquire knowledge irrespective of any age or gender for a successful life in the world and hereafter "Every Muslim man's and every Muslim woman's prayer should be: My Lord! Enrich me with knowledge" (Qur'an, 39:33). The universally accepted meaning of education today is continuous unfolding of one's potentialities; it is a lifelong process as this sound is an echo of the Hadith- "Muslim do scientific research 'whoso bringeth the truth and believeth therein such are the dutiful" (Quran, 20:114).

Social and Political causes of educational backwardness of Muslim women

There are many social and political factors such as poverty; parent's education; culture and tradition; parent's attitude; political inference etc. that influenced the role of women education specially in the rural areas which belongs to poor access in educational opportunities in UP. Consequently, they do not want to get admission their

⁷District Religion Data- Population Census. (2011). Uttar Pradesh. <https://www.census2011.co.in>

⁸Muslim Population in Districts. (2021). Uttar Pradesh <http://muslim-census.com>

⁹Suhail, N. F. (2016, October 18) Muslim Women and some Challenges <https://www.thehindu.com>

children in school especially girls as compared to boys. 'They consider the girl's education is only the waste of time and money because they would not be benefited for their family after marriage than parents select their sons because he is responsible for caring household income'. Based on Sachar Committee report (2006) that 'women education discourages through socio-religious communities and they do not have equal opportunity'. In addition, there are other factors like social class, family size and occupation that effect girls' education. The Union Education Minister said in the Lok Sabha 'among the states, Uttar Pradesh has the highest with 41 Educationally Backward Districts (EBDs), accounting for nearly 55 percent of the total districts in the state'. In most backward areas of UP where families have negative attitude towards girl's education. In rural area of Uttar Pradesh have not sufficient schools and existing school do not fulfill the basic needs of education. Hence, these factors that negatively affects girl's education up to the secondary and higher level.

Challenges for Economic development of Muslim Women

The highest percentage of OBC Muslims have engaged in self-employment activities in informal sector among all socio-religious groups (Sachar committee report 2006). At the lowest, only 14.1 percent of Muslim OBCs were part of the salaried workforce during both period 2004-2005. "A majority of Muslim OBCs are engaged in low-level of occupation like masonry, cycle repairing, tea shop, carpentry, barber, vendor, tailor and drivers of tempo these trades are passed on over generation, it included that all petty shop owners irrespective of the level of organization, and it does not either due to the inclination to these type of self-employment works or non-expectation of jobs in the formal sector"¹⁰. Further, Alam & Kumar (2019) in Social and Economic Status of Backward Muslim in Uttar Pradesh: Need for an Inclusive Policy explained that "the unemployment rate is high due to poverty and lack of educational opportunity which forces them to enrolled unstructured workplace Specially the most disadvantage class of Muslim, 80% women are engaged in agriculture-based work to support their families". The table shows that 99% of the Muslim workforce is engaged in the unorganized sector, these sectors neither provides social security nor safe environment.

Table 6:- Source of livelihood of Muslims.

Type of Livelihood Source	Overall Workforce (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)
Self-Employment(Agriculture)	5.4	5.6	5.1
Self-Employment(Non- Agriculture)	2.0	4.4	1.7
Casual Labour	78.6	80.0	79.1
Govt. Job	1.0	1.1	.9
Pvt. Job	4.3	2.2	4.7
Shop/Business	3.0	3.3	2.9
Vender	1.9	1.1	1.9
Other	3.7	2.2	3.7

*Source: ActionAid India Organization

Thus, Muslims are engaged in traditional occupation in various districts of Uttar Pradesh for instances in Varanasi, 60% Muslim households are engaged in traditional occupation (weaving), Lucknow (17%), and in Fatehpur (13%) households engage in traditional sources of livelihood¹¹.

UP Government Initiatives and Programs for Welfare of Muslim Minority Women

1. **National Literacy Mission**- focuses on acquiring the skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic and the ability to apply them to one's day to day life.
2. **Swarna Jayanti Shahri Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY)**-the share of Muslims in UP, who constitute about 23.6% of the poor is also unsatisfactory. It ranges between 3% and 14 %, with the exception of programs like **SJSRY** and small-scale industries in which Muslims' share in over 16%.

¹⁰Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India. (2006). Prime Minister's High-Level Committee. <https://www.actionaindia.org>

¹¹Alam, t., & Kumar, S. (2019). Social and Economic Status of Backward Muslim in Uttar Pradesh: Need for an Inclusive Policy. <https://journals.sagepub.com>

3. **Early Age Development and Nutrition Programs-** to aspect of human development, and investment in reducing infant and child mortality and improving children nutrition would along with education, effect the development across regions.
4. **Place of Delivery and Health Care-** for this purpose government establish decentralized health infrastructure and has provide health personnel at local level.
5. **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** - the ICDS is the comprehensive program to address this issue amongst the (0-6) years (Pre-School) children across regions, especially in the rural areas and amongst the poorer communities.
6. **Mid-Day-Meal Beneficiaries-** provided by government structure across India. The coverage of Muslims has been poor in most of regions. It has main objective is to ensure enrolment and retention of children in schools. A school feeding program for all children presents the best result.
7. **State Backward Classes & Minorities Departments/Corporation-** there are some schemes for minorities which are implemented by the minority welfare or backward class department/ corporations. The term of benefit to minorities in Uttar Pradesh the share of Muslims in the total expenditure of Rs.539crore is as high as 98%. The expenditure is high in UP on account of grant for teachers' salaries and the coverage of a large number of students for **Pre- Matriculation Scholarships** by the department of minorities.
8. **Fellowship for Minority Student-** UP government schemes to provide better education for the welfare of minorities. It provides meritorious student from minority communities. Scholarship programs- thescholarship programs for **Pre-Matric(9-10), Post-Matric (11-12), Post-Matric(Institute)** and university students is implemented by Department of Higher Education since 2008, to provide financial assistance to the minority student by the **Board of High School and Intermediate Education Allahabad and Social Welfare Department** Uttar Pradesh Luck now.
9. **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas Resolution-** the UP government announced UP Women from Minority Communities to get Rs 20,000 for their marriage. The government has approved Rs 5crore for the implementation of this scheme.
10. **Banking Correspondent Sakhi-** the UP government moves to appoint female banking agent in all 58000-gram panchayats in the state. The 'Sakhi' will door to door visit to become the main link between female customers, particularly those who are associated with 'Self-Help Groups' and the bank.
11. **NirbhayaEk Pahal-** under this scheme women will get connected with state banks, get loans at cheaper interest rates and be able to avail benefits of state subsidies under PM 'Mudra Yojana' for three months.
12. **Women Empowerment-** UP government has launched the 'Kayakalp Project' to improve schools' condition. 'Suposhan Yojna' under which families get funds to ensure nutritious food. Women who lost their husband to covid-19 with the existing widow 'Pension Scheme' that offers Rs. 6000 per annum. UP government launched various programs for enhancing the quality of personal and social life of women through various different schemes 'One District, One Product' and 'Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana', 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK).

Suggestions Regarding Educational Betterment:-

This study arrives at some suggestions of educational attainment of Muslim minority woman such as:

1. The government should take essential steps to sensitize social communities through awareness programs, activities which provide them adequate information about importance of woman education. High-level supervisory staff should appoint in schools for gender equality by the local government in all districts of UP.
2. Poverty is one of the major obstacles in the way of Girls' education. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that secondary education should be free for Muslim Minority woman. Poor Muslim students should be given financial assistance and scholarships for educational betterment.
3. Early marriage badly affects girls' education at secondary level. Majority of the parents consider the marriage of their daughters as their foremost duty, due to marriage at an early age female drop out rate is high between secondary and higher education. Therefore, government should encourage social welfare programs and give grants to non-government organizations to reduce the rate of early marriage of girls.
4. Government especially education department should design the special campaign and framework to control the accelerating school dropouts after completing the primary education in the rural areas where women literacy level is not in a good condition.
5. Different empowerment programs regarding health, education etc. were launched through radio and television and it should be transmitted to schools.

Conclusion:-

Education plays important role to reduce inequality, discrimination, and poverty. It enhances the social, political and economic condition of individual. But still there are various problems such as illiteracy of the parents; poor financial status; positive attitude towards religious education for girls; and household factors, misinterpretation of religious text has affected Women's education and their daily lives. It also negatively affect girls 'enrollment ratio in education, if we see the 25% of Muslim children in the age group of 6-14 years have never attended school or dropped out and got married at a young age. A good number of Muslim girls are going to madrasa for education, but the quality of madrasa education is not in a good condition and teaching learning process is also old and traditional which make them backward. the dropout rate is also high and higher education is biased towards poor and lower caste women who suffer from social disadvantage as compared to other socio-religious groups of women as well as Muslim men, so they still lag behind in educational attainment which is observed in almost all districts of Uttar Pradesh. Therefore, Policy Makers should consider the whole situation and try to create a conducive educational environment for Muslim women

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