



# EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MUSLIM WOMEN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MALDA DISTRICT

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## Abstract

Malda is a popular region in West Bengal for various reasons. This region is highly significant and is the pages of Bengal and Indian history. However, social issues continue to prevail in this region pondering the educational status of people. The prevalence of demographic taboos continues to haunt this region which is primarily associated with the development this region has experienced over time. Notable steps have been taken up by the central, state and local governments alike to uplift the situation but the ingrained values prevalent in the society reflect the overall lack of awareness and cultural norms that exists in the region. Multiple news is recorded from time to time that depicts the education awareness in Malda, especially among women. Education among women is still a large factor that is required to be addressed in this society at large. Malda is one such region where education, especially for women still requires thorough attention. In this article, this issue has been discussed and conclusive results have been derived that focus emphasizes the social concern.

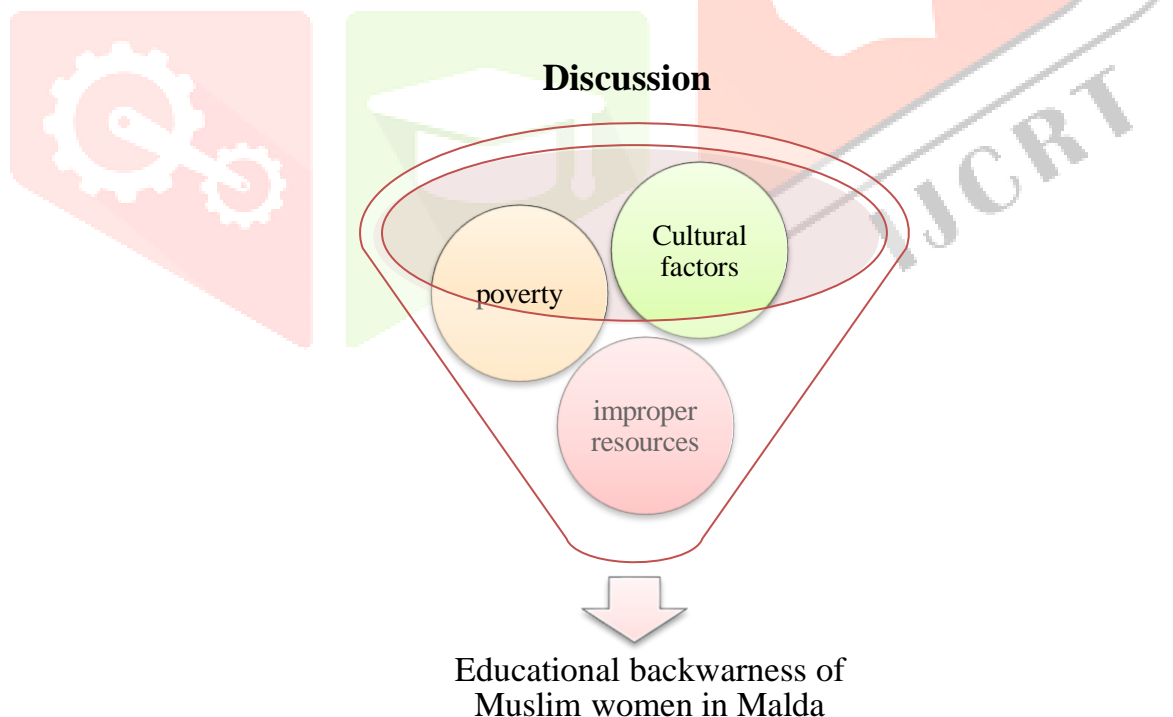
## Keywords

Muslim women, education, West Bengal, inequality, Malda, rural area

## Introduction

Malda is a popular district widely known all across West Bengal and in this country. The district is rich in history and is culturally iconic. However, there are certain instances that are needed to be taken into account in light of instances over the years that ponder the educational status of women in the region. India has been progressing forth at a rapid rate and is on the way to being one of the most eminent global powers. Education is one such factor that is required to be addressed among the general mass to propagate the values of progress and it will enlighten the thought process of people aligning them with the current pace of educational progress. However demographic issues have been an issue that has imparted effect on countrymen. Educational qualification is one such factor that requires thorough attention. Even in current times, education qualification for women is a concerning factor that requires to be addressed in India and the case of Malda, the education qualification of Muslim women requires attention.

There are certain factors that catalyse this concerning situation in the region that hinders the basic thought process of people in general. There is a demographic difference in Malda that ponders the ethnography and demographic alignment of society alike. This Muslim-dominant region of West Bengal experiences certain issues that inhibit the rate of educational progress of Muslim females. The factors include poverty, lack of awareness, focus on household work, and preference for male children. These factors are prevalent in almost all corners of India and other associated third-world countries of this subcontinent. The issues, the concerning factors and other associated statuses of Muslim women in Malda will be elaborated further in this review.



**Figure 1: Educational backwardness of Muslim women in Malda**

(Source: Self-created)

Education is the path to enlightenment that allows people to develop their perspective towards progress. It enhances the potential of people in general to create clear and concise individual progress. In third-world countries, there is however a disparity in terms of education, especially among males and females. This issue is most observed in rural regions. Globally, gender-based inequality has been observed and India that case is no brighter, the country currently ranks 135 among the 146 countries in terms of the global gender gap report of 2022 and terms of educational attainment, the country ranked 117 out of 146 countries (feminisminindia.com, 2023). This issue is mostly associated with the social taboos that still prevail in various regions and households of the country. Malda is a Muslim populous region where 53.27% of the population belongs to the Muslim community. As opined by Roy *et al.* (2021), the country and associatively the region of Malda still uphold the aspects of cultural diversity. However, issues continue to prevail in the rural region which is catalysed by cultural and societal dogmas. Resultantly the collective growth of the society is hindered.

In Malda education for Muslim women is still a concerning factor which is moisty deep-rooted and ingrained with the thought process and cultural aspects that prevail in the region. Primarily this approach is emboldened by the thought process of preference for a male child. According to Parveen and Mondal (2021), in the Indian community aspect continuation of lineage is a concerning factor that affects the overall educational qualification and strata of women. This issue is also prevalent in the case of Malda. The average female literacy rate in Malda is 57% which is much lower compared to the overall female literacy rate in West Bengal which is 71.6% (researchgate.com, 2023). This shows the disparity of educational rights that exist in the Malda region, especially in cases of Muslim women. Issues like child marriage, male child preference and other social practices have influenced this factor. The average literacy rate of Muslims in West Bengal is 57% which is 11% lower than the average literacy rate for non-Muslim in West Bengal (ijhssi.org, 2023). In this case, cultural values play a major role in defining the overall course of upbringing. In the case of Malda often the inaccessibility and unavailability of resources combined with the lack of awareness regarding education and its importance affect the overall gender disparity and education status of Muslim women in Malda.

The Indian government has taken steps to ensure a legal framework regarding the educational rights of people of all demographic sections. The ***Right to Education of 2009*** mandates that children belonging to the age group of 6 to 14 are required to have a basic education (dse.education.gov.in, 2023). This has been ensured in the Malda region as well and hence out of an educated section of Muslim women in Malda, the majority of them have received an upper primary level of education. A collective approach is ought to prevail in the community and general awareness is to be propagated in the community to profess the importance of the education of women. According to Mehaboob, (2020), the Muslim women of the region is quite educational backgrounds as compared to the overall educational census of the state. Hence notable measures are to be taken up by the local government and leaders alike to promote educational equality in society and curtail the factors of social taboos that hinder the academic growth of Muslim women in that region.

## Results

Multiple surveys have been conducted over years to take note of the status of the education status of Muslim women in the survey suggests that social factors have been influencing the issues of the education of Muslim girls. As opined by Yeasmin and Mandal (2020), primarily this issue is associated with the lack of awareness among the Muslim household regarding the empowerment of female education. Furthermore, the issues are critical in rural regions where education is discouraged by conducting marriage for girls at a very early age and to further emboldened this aspect child marriages are also carried out. As opined by Choudhuri (2022), around 30% of Muslim women in rural regions are married at an early age. This is practised at par with the social thought process that women should not get much liberated. This orthodox mentality is required to be curtailed from the roots to promote educational equality in the country and its rural regions, especially in cases of Muslim women. A similar issue is faced by Muslims in Malda where the dropout rate of Muslim women is 17.6% which is higher than 13.2% of the national average dropout of Muslim women in the country (ijcrt.org, 2023). The social taboos in the rural region o Malda have played a major role to facilitate this situation.

Over time issues shave comfort regarding the status of women in the country which has hampered the gender equality that is ought to prevail in the country to maintain collaborative growth in the country. Also, the teaching and learning process in the country still follows an archaic system. According to Saravanakumar and Padmini Devi (2020), the interactive approach or smart education process is still confined within the bounds of the urban education process. Certain measures are thought to prevail in the local communities as well that make the education process attractive to the students and general awareness is required to prevail in the communities alike that preach of the importance of education of women, especially in current times. As opined by Mukherjee and Khatun (2022), the Madrasas and Maktabas play a major role in propagating awareness among the Muslim community, especially in rural regions. These measures will be highly effective for the education of Muslim women, especially in the Malda region.

In rural regions like Malda poverty plays a major role. As opined by Swim *et al.* (2020), a lack of quality education among parents also impacts the education growth of their children, especially in the case of women who are considered to enlighten the gender conformity of household chores and boys who are meant to take on the outside world. Hence it calls for major awareness to prevail among the parents to facilitate proper educational facilities for their children.

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