

## Impact Of Education and Employment In Determining Social And Economic Status Of Muslim Women In Malappuram District, Kerala

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**How to cite this article:** Jumanath P J (2024). Impact Of Education and Employment In Determining Social And Economic Status Of Muslim Women In Malappuram District, Kerala. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 24832-24842

### Abstract

The study investigates the changing socioeconomic status of women in the Malappuram district, focusing on the role of education and employment in determining their economic and social standing. According to data from 111 respondents, higher education is strongly associated with increased employment opportunities, economic independence, and participation in decision-making, particularly financial decisions. Their socioeconomic development is hampered, nevertheless, by conservative views regarding women's employment, family obligations, and societal expectations. While educated women have difficulty balancing work and family, non-working women frequently experience financial dependence. The study concludes that changing societal perceptions and promoting gender equality in education and employment are critical to improving women's socioeconomic status.

**Key Words:** women's socioeconomic status, education, employment, Malappuram district, societal perceptions, gender equality.

### Introduction

Women account for nearly half of the human resource pool, and they unquestionably play an important role in the advancement of Indian society. Women account for roughly half of the Indian population and are critical to social, cultural, and economic progress. Regardless of faith, women share the same goals and aspirations as men. The consensus is that Muslim women face marginalisation and oppression in both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. Kerala's Muslim population has undergone significant transformation, and they now have a higher level of education and economic status than their counterparts in other Indian states. As a result, they can bring about change and address a wide range of contemporary issues. The heavy burden of household duties limits Muslim women's mobility in Kerala, keeping them at home<sup>5</sup>. Even with their increased level of education, women's engagement in the workforce remains low. Muslim women in Kerala have lower employment and educational participation rates than women from other communities.

There is a common argument that education helps women live better lives. Education is the most effective tool for achieving social and economic change. A population with adequate knowledge and skills is not only necessary for economic advancement but also for job opportunities. Landes claims that "the best clue to a nation's growth and development potential is the status and role of women." This quote indicates why investing in women and girls is the most efficient way to combat poverty and promote sustainable development on a global scale.

### Literature Review

The educational and employment status of Muslim women in India has been a subject of study,

reflecting both the social challenges they face and the empowerment opportunities available through education and workforce participation. Ahmad and Khan (2013) highlight disparities in literacy rates, dropout rates, and higher education attendance among Muslims compared to other religious groups, underscoring educational access as a primary hurdle. Bano (2018) further explores this by focusing on education's role in advancing Muslim women's social and economic status, emphasising that systemic barriers prevent equitable participation in education and work. Additionally, Kamau's (2019) research on women's empowerment through education and employment discusses how such engagement fosters self-reliance and decision-making power, which can significantly impact Muslim women in India, particularly in terms of economic and social inclusion.

In Kerala, the socioeconomic progress of Muslim women, despite the state's overall high literacy rate, presents a mixed picture. Verma (2018) examines how education affects the economic status of Muslim women in Kerala, showing that employment rates remain low while access to education has improved. Studies by Shabbir (2016) and Rajvanshi (2015) illustrate how globalisation and social mobility are interconnected, with education acting as a tool for upward social mobility and occupational advancement. However, Hossain (2020) notes that socio-economic limitations continue to inhibit many Muslim women from fully utilising educational qualifications for employment, despite the strides made in literacy and primary education.

The broader socio-political context also influences Muslim women's educational and employment opportunities, with the Sachar Report (2006) and subsequent government studies (Ministry of Minority Affairs, 2013) documenting significant gaps in Muslim women's social and economic integration. The World Bank (2011) and United Nations Development Programme (2010) underscore the global benefits of empowering women through education, with studies like Yasmin and Khan (2014) pointing to the ripple effect that employed women have in their communities by inspiring other women. Similarly, Abbasi (2019) and Barkat and Ullah (2017) provide regional insights into South Asia, showing that while education enhances individual autonomy, the barriers to full socio-economic integration remain prevalent across Muslim-majority areas, requiring policy interventions focused on sustainable development and inclusive growth.

### **Methodology**

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the socioeconomic status of Muslim women in Malappuram district, Kerala, with an emphasis on how education and employment shape their social and economic standing. A structured survey was used to collect primary data from 111 respondents, who were chosen to represent both rural and urban areas, ensuring a diverse sample with a range of educational and employment backgrounds. The survey collected information on respondents' demographic profiles, educational attainment, employment status, and perceptions of societal and familial roles. Relevant secondary sources were reviewed to supplement the survey data, including government reports, studies, and census data that describe the current trends in education and employment among Muslim women. This methodology allowed for a thorough understanding of the opportunities and challenges faced by Muslim women in Malappuram, especially concerning achieving financial independence, social mobility, and gender equity. Quantitative data were analysed statistically to identify patterns and correlations, while qualitative responses provided insights into cultural and societal barriers impacting women's socioeconomic development.

Scholars have provided insightful analysis of the impact of education and employment in determining the social and economic status of Muslim women in India. Mashkooor Ahmad and Khalid Khan, in their study on the Status of Education and Employment of Muslims in India, look at Muslims' employment and educational prospects in India in comparison to other religious communities. To determine the status of Muslims in India in comparison to other

religious groups, various indicators of education and employment have been analysed. These indicators include the literacy rate, level of education, share in higher education, gross attendance ratio in school and higher education, dropout rates, reasons for dropout, mean years of schooling, work participation rate, and share of salaried workers by type of enterprise. The 64th round, 2007–08, and the 68th round, 2011–12, of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) provided the secondary data used in this study. The findings of the study demonstrate the significant disparities that have been noted in many educational measures, including the literacy rate, educational attainment, dropout rates, reasons for dropping out, and average number of years spent in school.

Teresiah W. Kamau's study on the impact of education and employment on women's empowerment shows that women's empowerment in terms of voice, control over resources, and decision-making is highly significantly positively correlated with employment and education. Women who have an education are more likely to be employed, and as employment builds economic strength and financial independence, it also contributes to their empowerment. When women are strong, they help other women become strong as well. In addition to offering a perspective on women's status, study findings will undoubtedly aid future scholars in understanding the impact of work and education on women living in developing nations and help them make better life decisions that will enable them and their families to achieve the capabilities they desire.

Balak Ram Rajvanshi's study on Muslim Women's Education and Social Mobility in the Perspective of Globalisation observes that education promotes active social mobility by attempting to build in people the ability and capability to attain greater rank, positions, or esteem. People can now travel throughout the world more easily and quickly connect with organisations that offer better lives because of globalisation. Education, on the other hand, is a key component of social development and is directly linked to occupational mobility and the ensuing improvement in economic status.

Firdaus Bano's study on Educational Status of Muslim Women in India: An Overview examines an overview of Muslim women's educational position in India with a focus on the value of education for their social and economic advancement. The purpose of the study was to provide a concise summary of Muslim women's educational status as well as to investigate potential future paths and tactics for empowering women from diverse backgrounds to play a significant role in creating and maintaining the 21st century. Of particular importance was the establishment of a just and equitable social structure that would grant women not only formal equality but also a life of dignity.

Md. Intekhab Hossain's study on Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Women: A Comparative Outlook observes that Muslim women in West Bengal lag in socio-economic status, education, empowerment, and political participation compared to other religious groups. The suggested study makes an effort to investigate Muslim women's situation in West Bengal from a comparative angle. An emphasis has also been placed on finding out how Muslim women in West Bengal participate in, are employed by, and are included in the workforce compared to women belonging to other religious groups. Additionally, an effort has been made to identify the elements that are acting as a roadblock to their social development and change, as well as to offer some recommendations and a path ahead.

The aforementioned studies demonstrate the connection between women's income, education, labour force participation, and socio-economic status. Similarly, the purpose of this study is to ascertain how education and employment affect Muslim women's social and economic status in one of the progressing districts of Kerala. According to the 2011 Census, 26.56% of Kerala's population is Muslim. With 70.24% of the population being Muslim, Malappuram is the district in Kerala with the highest concentration of Muslims. According to the 2011 census, 4,112,920 people are living in the Malappuram district, with 1,960,328 men

and 2,152,592 women. The Malappuram district had 793,999 families living there in 2011. The district of Malappuram has an average sex ratio of 1,098. In 2011, the district's overall literacy rate was 93.57%, below Kerala's average of 94%. Of the 3,311,315 literate people in the population, 1,597,404 were men and 1,713,911 were women. Additionally, the Malappuram district had a 95.76% male literacy rate and a 91.62% female literacy rate (Census, 2011).

There were 1,062,424 employed people in the Malappuram district out of the total population. Of the workers, 80.2% identified their work as Main Work (employment or earning longer than six months), while 19.8% engaged in marginal activities that supported them for less than six months. Among the 1,062,424 workers engaged in the primary work were 81,841 agricultural labourers and 45,710 cultivators (owners or co-owners). (2011 Census). This article examines how education and employment affect Muslim women's social and economic standing in the Malappuram district of Kerala using primary data. Data was gathered from 111 respondents in the Malappuram district's rural and urban areas using a survey. The demographic profile, economic and educational standing, and various opinions regarding education and work involvement are all included in the data.

**Table 1: Demographic, Economic, and Social Perceptions of the Respondents:**

Category	Sub-category	Details	Percentage (%)
<b>A. Demographic Profile</b>	<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>18–25</b>	<b>46.8% (52)</b>
		<b>26–35</b>	<b>29.7% (33)</b>
		<b>36–45</b>	<b>15.3% (17)</b>
		<b>46–55</b>	<b>5.4% (6)</b>
		<b>Over 55</b>	<b>2.7% (3)</b>
	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>57.7% (64)</b>
		<b>Single</b>	<b>39.6% (44)</b>
		<b>Divorced</b>	<b>2.7% (3)</b>
	<b>Employment (Married)</b>	<b>Status</b>	
		<b>Professional Degrees</b>	<b>7.80%</b>
		<b>Postgraduate Degrees</b>	<b>20.30%</b>
		<b>Degrees</b>	<b>29.70%</b>
		<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>4.70%</b>
		<b>Government</b>	
		<b>Employees</b>	<b>14.10%</b>
		<b>Private Employees</b>	<b>6.30%</b>
		<b>Home</b>	
		<b>Makers/Unemployed</b>	<b>46.70%</b>
	<b>Employment (Single)</b>	<b>Status</b>	
		<b>Students</b>	<b>72.70%</b>
		<b>Government</b>	
		<b>Employees</b>	<b>13.60%</b>
	<b>Employment (Divorced)</b>	<b>Private Employees</b>	<b>9.10%</b>
		<b>Status</b>	
		<b>Government</b>	
	<b>Family Structure</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>66.70%</b>
		<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>33.50%</b>
		<b>Nuclear Families</b>	<b>40.5% (45)</b>
		<b>Joint Families</b>	<b>59.5% (66)</b>

<b>B. Educational Profile</b>	<b>Education and Work (Family Structure)</b>	<b>Joint Family (Degree Holders)</b>	<b>47.00%</b>
		<b>Joint Family (Postgraduates)</b>	<b>22.70%</b>
		<b>Nuclear Family (Degree Holders)</b>	<b>23.90%</b>
		<b>Nuclear Family (Postgraduates)</b>	<b>17.80%</b>
		<b>Government</b>	
		<b>Employment Sectors</b>	
	<b>Employment (Family Structure)</b>	<b>Employees (Joint Families)</b>	<b>16.70%</b>
		<b>Professionals (Joint Families)</b>	<b>7.60%</b>
		<b>Self-employed (Joint Families)</b>	<b>3.00%</b>
		<b>Private Sector (Nuclear Families)</b>	<b>4.50%</b>
		<b>Residential Locations</b>	
		<b>Municipality</b>	<b>32.20%</b>
		<b>Panchayat</b>	<b>65.80%</b>
<b>C. Employment Status</b>	<b>Literacy</b>	<b>None Lacking Literacy</b>	<b>100.00%</b>
	<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>39.6% (44)</b>
		<b>Postgraduate</b>	<b>20.7% (23)</b>
		<b>High School/PDC/+2</b>	<b>12.6% (14)</b>
		<b>Professional Education</b>	<b>10.8% (12)</b>
		<b>Technical Education</b>	<b>1.8% (2)</b>
		<b>Primary School</b>	<b>1.8% (2)</b>
	<b>Age vs Education</b>	<b>Higher Than Degree/Postgraduate Holders (18–35)</b>	<b>Older Generation</b>
	<b>Employment</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>36.00%</b>
		<b>Unemployed</b>	<b>29.70%</b>
		<b>Government</b>	
		<b>Employees</b>	<b>15.30%</b>
		<b>Professionals</b>	<b>9.00%</b>
		<b>Private Sector</b>	
<b>D. Economic Status</b>	<b>Average Monthly Income</b>	<b>Employees</b>	<b>7.20%</b>
		<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>2.7% (3)</b>
			<b>65.88 %</b>
		<b>No Income</b>	<b>(73)</b>
		<b>Below Rs 3000</b>	<b>6.3% (7)</b>
		<b>Rs 3001 – Rs 5000</b>	<b>4.5% (5)</b>
	<b>Family Income</b>	<b>Rs 10,001 – Rs 20,000</b>	<b>9.9% (11)</b>
		<b>Over Rs 20,000</b>	<b>11.7% (13)</b>
		<b>Below Rs 3000</b>	<b>27.0% (30)</b>

			<b>Rs 3001 – Rs 5000</b>	<b>10.8% (12)</b>
			<b>Rs 5001 – Rs 10,000</b>	<b>11.7% (13)</b>
			<b>Rs 10,001 – Rs 20,000</b>	<b>17.1% (19)</b>
			<b>Over Rs 20,000</b>	<b>33.4% (37)</b>
<b>Property (Respondent)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>No Property</b>	<b>61.3% (68)</b>	
			<b>&lt;5 Cents</b>	<b>0.9% (1)</b>
			<b>6–10 Cents</b>	<b>4.5% (5)</b>
			<b>11–20 Cents</b>	<b>5.4% (6)</b>
			<b>&gt;20 Cents</b>	<b>5.4% (6)</b>
<b>Property (Family)</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>No Property</b>		<b>0.9% (1)</b>
			<b>&lt;5 Cents</b>	<b>12.6% (14)</b>
			<b>6–10 Cents</b>	<b>22.5% (25)</b>
			<b>11–20 Cents</b>	<b>26.1% (29)</b>
			<b>&gt;20 Cents</b>	<b>22.5% (22)</b>
<b>E. Perceptions Education Employment</b>	<b>on and Preparation Competitive Exams</b>	<b>for</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>46.8% (52)</b>
			<b>Few</b>	<b>37.8% 942)</b>
			<b>No</b>	<b>7.2% (8)</b>
			<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>8.1% (9)</b>
	<b>Generational Differences in Views</b>			<b>93.7%</b>
			<b>Yes</b>	<b>(104)</b>
			<b>Younger Generation Supports</b>	<b>66.2% (94)</b>
			<b>Older Generation Opposes</b>	<b>33.8% (48)</b>
<b>Experience Underemployment</b>	<b>of Yes (Work Education)</b>	<b>Matches</b>	<b>27.9% (31)</b>	
		<b>No (Work Not Matches Education)</b>		<b>11.7% (13)</b>
		<b>Not Applicable (Unemployed/Home Maker/Student)</b>		<b>60.4% (67)</b>
	<b>Reasons Underemployment</b>	<b>for No Job Matching</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>33.30%</b>
			<b>Family</b>	
			<b>Responsibilities</b>	<b>20.00%</b>
			<b>Conservatism</b>	<b>13.30%</b>
			<b>Family Restrictions</b>	<b>13.30%</b>
			<b>Busy Schedule</b>	<b>13.30%</b>

Source: Primary data.

### Result

This study offers a thorough understanding of the educational and socioeconomic characteristics of Muslim women in Malappuram, highlighting the intricate relationship between employment status, educational attainment, and marital status. It is clear that the majority of participants are younger adults because a sizable percentage of respondents (46.8%)

are between the ages of 18 and 25 and 29.7% are between the ages of 26 and 35. According to the survey, the majority of respondents (57.7%) are married, while 39.6% are single. This indicates that younger Muslim women are becoming more and more focused on their academic and career goals. The low divorce rate in the community or cultural stigma could be the cause of the small percentage of divorced respondents (2.7%). The respondents' occupational profiles demonstrate the advancements Muslim women have made in their educational attainment. There were no illiterate respondents, and a sizable portion (39.6%) had undergraduate degrees and 20.7% had graduate degrees. The findings, however, show a pattern whereby the number of respondents declines with increasing educational attainment. Compared to older generations, younger Muslim women appear to be more interested in higher education, as evidenced by the higher percentages of professionals and degree holders in younger generations. This generational trend reflects broader societal changes and highlights the community's increasing acceptance of female education.

The study finds that although a sizable percentage of respondents (36%) are students, a sizable portion (29.7%) are either unemployed or stay at home with their children. The majority of those who are employed work for the government (15.3%), with smaller percentages in the private sector (7.2%) and as professionals (9%). Women who work for themselves make up just 2.7% of the sample, suggesting room for expansion in entrepreneurial endeavours. The higher unemployment rate among educated women suggests that they may have trouble finding acceptable employment, possibly as a result of cultural conservatism, family responsibilities, and a lack of opportunities that match their educational background. Because they are primarily homemakers or students, more than two-thirds of respondents (65.88%) report having no personal income, according to economic statistics. The income of households varies greatly; 27% of families make less than Rs 3,000 per month, while 33.4% of families make more than Rs 20,000. This range suggests economic disparities within the community, where some households benefit from higher income sources, possibly linked to government jobs, while others remain economically constrained. It is noteworthy that 61.3% of respondents do not own any property, indicating a low level of property ownership. The community's attachment to land as an economic asset is reflected in the greater distribution of family land ownership, with 22.5% owning 6–10 cents and 26.1% owning 11–20 cents.

In contrast to the conventional opinions of older generations, 93.7% of respondents believe that younger generations support education and employment for Muslim women, indicating a shift in attitudes regarding these topics. According to more than half (66.2%), younger women want to improve their career prospects, frequently by getting ready for competitive exams. The majority consider underemployment to be a problem, but women's potential is constrained by conservative views, family obligations, and restrictive family laws. According to these results, younger women aspire to economic and educational independence despite enduring social norms, reflecting a complex community mindset.

### **Discussion**

It is clear from looking at the aforementioned perceptions that women's socioeconomic status is defined in large part by their employment and educational attainment. The majority of women who responded stated that it is clear that more young girls are taking competitive exams, such as the civil services, which may be seen as a means of raising their social status. The socioeconomic status of most women is clearly defined by their education and employment, as the majority of women believe that educated women have a higher socioeconomic status than illiterate women and that working women have a higher status than unemployed women. The overwhelming majority of 111 respondents support women going to college and finding work after marriage, as these actions surely improve their socioeconomic status. The majority of women think that when it comes to family decision-making, particularly when it comes to money, educated and working women are given preference. Most women are

in favour of raising the marriage age for girls because it will enable them to obtain an education and increase their participation in the workforce. This can be used to determine socioeconomic status. The traditional views of women regarding equality, individuality, and independence have changed as a result of education and labour participation. And since most women agree that their education and employment have an impact on their socioeconomic standing, we need to acknowledge that these factors are essential to promoting sustainable development and ending poverty. Women's views are rather disheartening, as it appears that teenage girls frequently leave school for a variety of sociocultural reasons, such as early marriage, household duties, poverty, parental choices, etc.

They were asked if they had any suggestions for raising the social and economic status of Muslim women in the Malappuram district after looking at the different viewpoints on how education and employment involvement impact social and economic status. One important recommendation from most respondents is to increase family support, especially from husbands. According to some respondents, parents of girls in particular need to be educated about the importance of education and employment engagement to improve their social and economic standing. Women marry in the expectation that the groom's family will help them with their post-marriage education, according to some respondents. Although this might be the case in some homes, girls suffer from depression and most families do not have such situations. These people believe that waiting until one has completed school and found work before getting married is preferable. But in many low-income households, the idea that daughters should be married off as soon as possible is common. It has been proposed that this is unquestionably having an impact on their education and careers, which causes social and economic status to be distorted. As a result, the great majority of people think that changing how society views girls' higher education is important.

According to some, removing restrictions from one's own family and spouse's home allows one to make independent decisions regarding one's education and career, which will surely raise one's social and economic status. Some claim that societal problems disproportionately affect women, with economic problems being the most common. Encouraging women to pursue education and employment is the first step in eliminating them, and government programs must be implemented successfully to accomplish this. Girls' ages naturally increase as they pursue higher education, and they may find themselves without suitable partners for marriage, according to one of the primary concerns expressed by the respondents. To address this, some are suggesting that the marriage age for women be raised. Some have argued that it is crucial to raise awareness of education among the orthodox sectors. Raising community awareness is also crucial for promoting higher education and preventing young marriages among women. Working women face many challenges, according to some women, because of people's conservative and patriarchal attitudes.

### **Conclusion:**

The study's goal is to better understand how women's socioeconomic status in the Malappuram district is changing in terms of employment and educational opportunities. According to the data collected from 111 respondents, work and education have a significant impact on social and economic status, particularly for women. Higher levels of education are associated with better social expectations and economic returns. Women who receive an education are more likely to find work, boosting their economic strength and independence. The study found that women's participation in decision-making, particularly financial decisions and family management, is significantly positively correlated with education and employment.

According to the 111 respondents, the majority of women believe that work and education have a significant impact on women's socioeconomic status. Women suffer a variety of consequences as a result of a lack of education and employment. According to the report, the



vast majority of Muslim women recognise the importance of education and work. It is acknowledged that working women find it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. Housewives and other non-working women, on the other hand, are concerned about the hardship of not being able to support themselves and having to rely on their spouses or other people to meet their basic needs. It is common practice in our society for educated women to avoid working due to family responsibilities, family restrictions, social stigmas, conservatism, girls' early marriage, and so on. It undoubtedly impedes their cognitive and socioeconomic development.

The findings show that the absence of economic dependency, social conditions and attitudes towards women obtaining employment, social norms and biases against women working outside the home, the presence of conservative norms, and religious beliefs all contribute to women's inability to find suitable employment. It is critical to change societal perceptions of women as housewives, mothers, and dependents. Promoting awareness of both men's and women's roles in changing society's conservative attitudes is critical to encouraging the growth of female employment. Women should have the ability to improve their socioeconomic status in this way by eliminating all obstacles preventing them from obtaining education and employment.

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