

Status of Human Development of Muslim Women: A Case Study of Sultanpur District, Uttar Pradesh

**(SUMMARY)
DISSERTATION**

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Summary

The notion of development was initially in the sense of Gross National Product (GNP) and later on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been the measures of nation's economic performance. However, internationally it has been started realizing that the single goal of maximizing income growth has caused many social and environmental issues which have been reflected in the marginalization of many regions and groups of population along with increasing gap between rich and poor. It was in this context that human development had taken centre stage of measuring the nation's performances. Human development is the expansion of people's freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives; and to engage actively in shaping development equitably and sustainably on a shared planet. The UNDP has defined the Human Development as the process of enlarging people's choices which allow them to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living. Developing human capabilities is also related to investing in people so that an equitable growth can be enabled which would encourage people to pursue many different life goals. However, the most basic human capabilities includes; to lead long and healthy lives (i.e. good health), to be knowledgeable (i.e. educated), access to resources and social services needed for a decent life (i.e. standard of living), and to have capability of participating in community life (HDR, 2009).

Measurement is an acceptable and neutral process in the context of physical sciences; however, in the realm of social and political affairs, it loses its objectivity and opens the doors for judging the progress with subjective perspectives. Different indices were developed to measure overall and various specific dimensions of human development such as HDI, IHDI, GII, MPI and GDI. India's human development index (HDI) ranking for 2015 puts Asia's third-largest nation among a group of countries classified as "medium in the list, as different to "low" in the 1990s, due to the positive impacts of the factors such as an increase in life expectancy and mean years of schooling in the past 25 years. However, local disparities in education, health and living standards within the country have shaved off 27% from India's HDI score in the form of inequality. The Planning Commission of India used somewhat different indicators but followed a similar approach and calculated the HDI and accordingly ranked all the States and UTs.

Given this, there is a need to calculate HDI at district level which will help in developing the policy design and program implementation at the regional as well as district level. Given the social and spatial disparities prevailing in the state of Uttar Pradesh, it becomes important to analyse the district wise human development status. That becomes even more relevant as the state has distinct regions and geographical divisions and a comparative analysis would shed some light on important aspects regarding human development across communities. This study is an attempt to use the approach of measuring HDI for a comparative analysis across women of two religious communities, i.e., Hindu and Muslim, using indicators available on Health, Education and Standard of living from Annual Health Survey (AHS) at the district level. A field survey in two blocks of Sultanpur district of Uttar Pradesh was carried out under the present study to understand the block level human development following the UNDP's HDI methodology. The findings of the field study pointed towards the fact that both the blocks were way below the average national level of HDI in all three key dimensions of human life. Majority of respondents across both the blocks had limited access to important knowledge and a decent standard of living, e.g., availability of safe drinking water, toilet, electricity and essential consumer goods. Respondents from both the block lacked a good education, and in fact, a major share of them were illiterates. In the context of health, the majority of the respondents from both the place lacked the access to quality health services. Furthermore, the GDI measures gender gaps in human development achievements by accounting for disparities between women and men in three basic dimensions of human development—health, knowledge acquisition and living standards using the same component indicators as in the HDI.

The finding suggested that the status of women across two religious categories, in respect of the three dimensions of the human development in two blocks covered under the study. It has found that in general women of both the categories are still way behind men in respect of key human development index and are still denied appropriate health and education related rights. Most of the females in the survey areas left their education due to marriage and other social barriers. It was also shared by many; they still rely on unregistered medical practitioners for health. They lacked appropriate nutrition in their daily meals. It was also found that women lack awareness on important issues and it limits their capabilities of participating in decision making inside house and outside which was reflected in the survey. Their participation in the political process was limited, even though there is 33% reservation for them in Panchayatiraj system. It was also

revealed by the survey that women lacked appropriate information regarding women empowerment schemes and this also limited their level of participation in these activities. Findings of this survey indicated towards the need of a more inclusive development strategy in which both genders can have equal level of participation as any region/state or the nation cannot achieve the desired level of development unless it includes both genders on equal footings.

Field survey tried to cover important dimensions of lives, i.e., living condition, education, health, decision making, and empowerment, etc., of local women who are significant to assess their progress as per the HDI defined by UNDP. No significant differences between the living standard of Hindu and Muslim women were found in the field survey, especially in respect of availability of toilet facilities, access to safe drinking water, electricity and telephone. Although, it was revealed that Muslim women had a slight edge over Hindu women in respect of availability of toilet and access to the internet, however, Hindus covered in the study had slightly better electrification of households than their Muslim counterparts.

Coming to education, which is one of the important dimension of empowerment and development, it was revealed by the field survey that Hindu women, covered under the study had better performances in respect of upper primary, secondary and higher secondary level education. However, on the other hand, Muslim women had far better achievement in respect of primary and graduate level education. The survey further revealed that social issues and marriage are comparatively bigger issues in Muslim community which form the barrier in women education. Further indicates that Muslims community still needs internal reforms, which would support the education of women and girls. Furthermore, it was also found that Muslim women lacked the interest in learning and education pointing towards a need of addressing the normative stereotypes at family and social levels.

Achievements in respect of availability and access to health form one of the important dimensions in respect of enlarging individual's capabilities, which is at the core of their development. Findings of field survey suggest that there is no significant difference between Hindu and Muslim women in respect of various health-related parameters. Households of both the categories covered under the survey experienced an almost similar pattern of diseases and health-related issues. However, there is a slight difference in the preferred hospital as higher per

cent among Muslims preferred government hospital than their Hindu counterparts. Hindu households covered under the study preferred private hospitals. Similarly, a sizable population among Hindu households also visited Samudayik hospitals which are not observed among Muslims covered under the study. It was also found that all the Muslims households covered under the study preferred allopathic medicine system whereas Homeopathy and Ayurvedic medicine system was popular among some section of Hindu households. It was also found that majority of both Hindus and Muslims covered under the study preferred visiting registered doctors in case of any health-related issues. It was also found that there is no significant difference between Muslim households and that of Hindus in respect of availability of any hospital in their vicinity.

Field survey also revealed that few Hindu households had health insurance coverage. In respect of nutrition and diet, it was found that majority of women; especially the Muslims lacked proper dietary supplement. The survey revealed on the important difference between the nutritional pattern between Muslim women and their Hindu counterparts as almost two third of the former lacked the essential nutrition in their diet in contrast with only half among later. Similarly, the grassroots level situation regarding access to clean drinking water was very grim as per the survey results suggest. Above discussion suggest that ground realities in respect of health are almost similar among both the communities except few differences regarding nutrition pattern.

One of the major findings of the field survey has been in the area of decision-making capacity which is supposed to be one of the most important gender and equality related issues. It was reflected that Muslim women covered under the study did not enjoy the rights of decision making in family matters, in comparison to Hindus. Furthermore, participation in political processes was found to be very limited across both the communities. Although, initially the Gross National Product (GNP), and later on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), has been the measures of nation's economic performance, however, international community has started realizing, that the single goal of maximizing income growth has caused many social and environmental issues, which have been reflected in the marginalization of many regions and groups of population along with increasing gap between rich and poor. It was in this context that human development had taken centre stage of measuring the nation's performances. Human development is the expansion of people's freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives; and

to engage actively in shaping development equitably and sustainably on a shared planet. The UNDP has defined the Human Development as “the process of enlarging people’s choices which allow them to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated, to enjoy a decent standard of living. Moreover, access to resources and social services needed for a decent life and to have capability of participating in community life (HDR, 2009).