

# Gender Inequality among Muslims of Bangalore as Brought Out by Case Studies

F. Sadrnabavi<sup>1</sup>

Department of Family Studies, Mashhad branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran

**Abstract:** Case studies provide the depth of information those other methods of data collection lack. Here an attempt is made to analyze in detail 15 case studies of Muslim women from Bangalore in terms of various parameters starting with the number of sibling to the number of marriages that they contacted. In depth study of these case studies is expected to throw light on their socio-economic aspect in particular and Muslim of Bangalore in general. This method tries to fulfill the gap that is intrinsic in large-scale data collection, without which it would not have been possible to cover such a vast canvas.

Even a cursory analysis shows that the 'backwardness' of Muslim is due to certain inherent factors of their society like large number of children, early and multiple marriage, refusal to practice family planning methods etc. All these problems are because of lack of education. Thus only in 3 cases at least the husband is a graduate. Most of the families are educated only up to middle school.

**Key words:** Gender inequality, Women, Women status, Muslim women

## 1. Introduction

In order to cover a large geographical area, like a city as the present study endeavors, it is imperative the recourse is taken to sampling to ensure that the information collected reflects the universe in essential details. It is more easily said than done. Various factors come in to play making the sample 'biased' some form or the other. One of the easiest means to double-check the validity of the sampling technique is to check the result against a few case studies. The information collected from these case studies will be the basis of further research. As the present study was to be conducted in Bangalore information regarding that city is a must.

## 2. Profile of the Study Areas:

Majority of the people of Bangalore district lives in the urban area and the population of Bangalore Urban Agglomeration (BUA) constitutes 84% of its total population. The population is mixed and heterogeneous, consisting of the natives and migrants from both within and outside the state, presenting a mosaic picture of culture.

### 2.1. Socio-economic Profiles of respondents

The universe of the study consists of Muslim married women and men of more than 15 and 25 years respectively, working and living inside the 100 wards of Bangalore City Corporation. Two wards were selected, one with a high percentage of Muslims and the other with a low percentage of Muslims. As per information provided by Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP, 2008) Shivajinagar has high concentration of Muslims and Malleswaram a low concentration of Muslims.

An interview schedule was prepared specifically for this purpose. It consisted of structured statements; open ended and multiple choice questions besides other various background variables such as education, family size, family type, occupation, income, housing, asset ownership, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Corresponding author. Tel: +98-511-8664256; Email address: f\_sadrnabavi@yahoo.com

Of the 210 respondents (Table-2) nearly 75.34% are in the age group of 26 to 50 years, which is very appropriate for the development and the improvement of the household as these people have the potential for hard work, and are more productive. It further reveals that 9.59% men and 34.55% women are below 25 years. Only 1.37% men are above 66 years but not a single woman. The remaining 75.34% are between 26 and 50 years.

Table1. Age wise distribution of the respondents

Age in years	Bangalore city	
	Men	Women
Up to 25	9.59	34.55
26 to 50	75.34	60.91
51 to 65	13.70	4.54
More than 66	1.37	-
Total	100.0 (106)	100.0 (104)

Note: Figures in brackets are absolute numbers

Marital Status of individuals in a population affects its numerical growth, because fertility of any population is influenced by the number of co-habiting couples and not by the number of fertile males and females (Singh *et al.*, 1998). The extent of dissolution of marriage by death and divorce and practice of remarriage (of the affected men and women in the society) are also important. Data provided in Table-4 on marital status among Muslims for Bangalore City indicate that nearly two-third of women and 87% men are married and living with their spouses. The percentages of widowed and divorced are higher among females than males among Muslims in Bangalore City. The reason for high incidence of divorce and separation among Muslims may be attributed to their flexible marriage norms (Kazee, 1999).

Table2. Marital status of the respondents

Marital status	Bangalore city	
	Men	Women
Currently married	87.4	69.8
Widow/widower	4.6	6.8
Divorced/separated	8.0	23.4
Total	100.0 (106)	100.0 (104)

Note: Figures in brackets are absolute numbers

Occupation of respondents has been grouped into ten categories for a meaningful understanding and analysis. Table-5 reveals the gender disparity in the occupations between Muslim men and women in Bangalore. It shows that women work in jobs considered 'easy' whereas men work in jobs considered 'hard'. Thus most women work as teachers or housewives. Most men are hawkers, garage workers or petty shop owners.

### 3. Sample of case studies

After having some idea of the socio-economic profile of the people can an attempt be made to study the individual cases in detail. As such more interesting case studies just two of them are presented here in summarised form for perusal. Afterwards the salient features that come out of the empirical research will be discussed.

#### 3.1. Case-1

Nageena resides at Malleswaram in Bangalore. They are four sisters and two brothers. None have gone to school as her father used to send them to work as maidservants and her brothers as helpers in automotive repair shops. She is 30 years old and has five children. Only two children are going to government nursery school because they cannot bear schooling expenses. Her husband is a pushcart vendor and they belong to lower income group. As they were unable to pay the rent of their hut they had to vacate it and are living in her father's house. Her husband is the son of her father's sister. At the time of marriage he was working at an

agarbathi factory as a packer. It was a love marriage and she was 20. The family where she was working for 15 years and other persons of the same community bore the marriage expenses. Though everyone was advising him to practice family planning only after the birth of the 5<sup>th</sup> child did he allow her to go for tubectomy. He rarely goes for work and depends on her earning. She cleans utensils in marriage functions to earn. He is very irresponsible and careless. As her other sisters are yet to be married the parents are asking them to leave their house and shift to their own house. Any financial help to him to start businesses is of no use, as he is not hard working.

### 3.2. Case-2

Shaleen has two children from her first marriage and three from the second. Her mother was a housewife. She had 7 brothers but no sister. Her parents loved her the most. She fell in love with a boy Rahim at 13 and wanted to marry. The family members objected and she was stopped from going to school. But the marriage took place due to her insistence. After two years a son was born. Delivery expenses were borne by her parents, although Rahim was ready to bear these. Three years later a daughter was born after which they purchased a site and built an independent house. Within six months Rahim died in a car accident and Shaleen became a widow at 21 with two children. As they were used to live in a joint family she called her brothers and mother to stay with her at the suggestion of her father-in-law. They agreed. The motor vehicles accident insurance claim filed on Rahim's behalf was awarded to her and her father-in-law and minor children. Shortly afterwards her third brother brought a proposal for marriage by exchange. He offered to marry a girl older than him provided her brother marries Shaleen. Shaleen and the elders agreed to the proposal. Both the marriages took place. Basheer, the new husband of Shaleen is SSLC failed, and works as a bus conductor. In contrast to Rahim he is very orthodox and insists on burqa and is the sole decision-maker in the family. Basheer takes care of all their expenses. Shaleen already has 3 children from this marriage – a pair of twin sons and a daughter. Although he is a good and caring husband, he is not agreeing for tubectomy.

## 4. Analysis:

Even a cursory glance at the 15 summarised case histories given, depicts certain features. It must be clarified at the outset that the case histories were not purposefully selected. These 15 families are part of the sample families taken from the two residential areas of Bangalore viz. Shivaginagar and Malleswaram. As explained earlier no purposive selection has been allowed to play any part.

Table3. Salient features of the case studie

Sl no.	siblings	Age at Marriage	Husband	Alcoholic	pardah	Children	Abuse	F.P.	Tubectomy	Step child	Second wife	Remarriage	Children	F.P.
1	12	26	Tr.oper.	Yes	Yes	4	Yes	No	Yes					
2	5	20	Doctor	No	No	1	No	Yes						
3	9	24	Busi.	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No		2	Yes			
4	3	26	Busi	Yes	No	1	Yes	NA				Yes	1	Yes
5	8	14	Busi.	No	No	2	No	Yes				Yes	3	No
6	3	14	Labor	NA	Yes	3	Yes	Yes				Yes	3	No
7	8	16	Gulf	Yes	No	2	Yes	Divorced				Yes	1	Yes
8	8	16	Thief	Yes	Yes	1	Yes	Divorced		3		Yes	1	Yes
9	3	13	Jeweller	No	Yes	3	Yes	No	Yes					
10	7	18	MBA	No	Yes	2	No	Yes						
11	6	26	Eng	No	No	No	No	Yes						
12	6	18	Vendor	Yes	Yes	5	Yes	Yes	Yes					
13	2	19	Clerk	NA	Yes	2	No	Yes				Yes	2	Yes
14	5	16	Mechanic	NA	Yes	4	Yes	Yes						
15	8	15	Constructi on worker	Yes	Yes	3	Yes	No						

- From the foregoing table it is becomes amply clear that the families of orientation of most of the respondents were large. Thus Munwara Khatoon had as many as 12 siblings followed by case No.3 with 9, 5, 7, and 8 with 8 siblings each. These were followed by others with 5, 6, and 7 siblings. With the earning of only one person the economic conditions of the families can well be imagined. The situation becomes all the more critical when it is found that even the sole bread earner of these families is practically illiterate. As such his meagre income has to be enhanced by the earnings the wife and later the children. Thus, to their way of thinking, the extra children, instead of becoming a drain on the source becomes extra sources of income.
- Very soon however, especially in the case of girls, these extra avenues for income become causes of embarrassment and have to be got rid of. The most convenient way of getting rid of an adolescent girl is to get her married. The conventions of Islam viz. early marriage of girls immediately on attaining puberty on one hand and multiple marriage for men (up to four wives), came in very handy. Thus, in as many as 5 cases, the girl was married for the first time before she was 16. In another 4 cases she was married before she crossed 20 years.
- Due to almost total absence of education, in only three cases viz. case no.2, 10 and 11 are the husbands holding white collared jobs. Many are petty business-men. Some are even labor or even vendors of scrap.
- Most of the husbands are found to be alcoholic and abuse their wives. The degree and extent of abuse varies from physical abuse like occasional to regular beatings to psychological abuse like locking up a child of 5 in a dark toilet for 5 hours.
- Divorce being permitted by Islam, both men and women in cases of incompatibility often takes recourse in divorce. Thus in these 15 case studies in 3cases initiative for divorce has been taken by the girl.
- Remarriage being permitted in Islam getting a divorced or widowed girl remarried is not a problem. Thus in the sample 7 out of 15 cases have remarried either after divorce or after the death of the first husband. In fact the problem is simplified by the law which allows a man to have as many as four wives simultaneously. At the same time the practice that allows a man to divorce by simply uttering the word *talag* thrice, hangs as a sword of democlese over the women.
- A vast majority of the 15 ladies who have been covered by the case studies stated that their husbands were opposed to family planning. Most of them, especially the wives of uneducated men categorically stated, that their husbands did not allow them to use IUD or any other temporary methods of birth control.
- The terminal method of birth control viz. tubectomy was resorted to when it was decided that no more children were desired. It was never used till at least one son was born.
- Apparently education is given the least importance among the 15 case studies. Only 3 of the 15 girls have been married to graduates and only 4 are graduates themselves. Only 5 of these 15 women want to see their children well educated.

## 5. Conclusion

As has been stated earlier, the paper is based on 15 case studies from the city of Bangalore in the course of a research project. As such it is not expected to come out with many far-reaching conclusions. Nevertheless certain inevitable conclusions are apparent. These are:

1-The general economic condition of Muslims is poor. 2- Even now the Muslims do not practice family planning. 3- Most of the women had large families of orientation and were denied the advantages of education and had to start earning early and were also married of at an early date. 4- Many of them started having children in their teens. 5- Alcoholism, abuse of wife and children is rampant.

Thus it seems that the study, though small, has been able to throw some light on the poor economic and social conditions of the Muslims and the reasons thereof. Although lots of efforts are being made at various levels to ameliorate the socio-economic condition of the people in general, and the poor people in particular clearly these is a lot that remains yet to be done. Focusing on the Muslims, there seems to be total a total disregard for education. Apparently they are not interested to know or try anything that is new. Proper

education, whether formal or through Madrasa, will help in opening them up to new vistas of life. They will then realise the mistakes that they are committing daily and thereby are remaining in the same quagmire as before. Possibly the only way to achieve this end is through the efforts of some voluntary organisation.

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