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Topic of Research: Problems of Muslim students pursuing higher education in Doda district: A case study

Keywords: Muslim students, Higher education, Doda district, Problems, Case study

Findings:

In Doda district, the percentage of Muslim students enrolling in higher education varies significantly from college to college. Moreover, there is a significant difference between the number of male and female students enrolled in colleges. Some colleges of the district offer multiple courses and streams, whereas there are also a few which limit the options. As Arts is the most desirable stream in all colleges, thus it becomes an easy option available. In Doda district, the socio-economic class of Muslim students in higher education varies, but the majority of them (53%) fall into the average category. 25% of students fall into the above average SES category, suggesting that some students come from good backgrounds. There are small groups in the high 4%, below average 14%, and poor 4% groups, showing the different range of socio-economic status (SES) among students. Data also reveal the differences in access to high-quality education, financial assistance, and other factors that affect academic performance, especially for those in the poor and below average range. In the Doda district, the GER of Muslim students is 9.4%, which is below the national average of 27.3% and the J&K UT average of 25%. This shows that there is a huge gap in higher education opportunities for Muslim students. In Doda district, the GER of male students is 11.5% compared to the GER of female students 7.3%, this indicates cultural barriers and a lack of awareness of the importance of girls' education in society. GER in Doda is lower than the overall UT average, which shows that there are considerable internal differences within the Jammu and Kashmir UT, even the overall UT average seems to be the same as the national average.

In Doda district, 75% of Muslim students said that drug addiction was a major obstacle to higher education for them or their family members. Early marriage was also cited by 60% of students as a reason for not going to college. Political unrest was also a major factor for 55% of students, causing them to feel uncertain about their future. 80% of female students experienced discrimination based on their gender, which limited their educational opportunities and entry points. 45% of the respondents said educational choices were restricted by their strict religious beliefs. Higher education was also discouraged due to social and cultural restrictions, particularly for girls. 65% of students experienced limited access due to a lack of institutions. 35% of female students did not have access to separate institutions. Students from remote areas experienced physical obstacles due to institutions that were not accessible to them. Classroom facilities were poor for 70% of students. Hostel facilities were poor for 85% of students, forcing them to commute or stay in unsafe accommodation. Transportation options were limited for 50% of students, making it difficult for them to gain institutional access. 80% of students' holistic development was hindered due to a lack of recreational and sports facilities. 60% of students,

comprehension were hindered by a lack of English proficiency. 55% of students' knowledge was limited outside the classroom due to a lack of educational resources in their native languages. 80% of participants reported difficulty understanding the instruction language. Problems with speaking and understanding English made it difficult to participate and communicate. Problems with English writing made it difficult to complete and communicate assignments. Only 45% of faculty members spoke multiple languages, some students felt excluded from the full experience of participation. The top three reasons for low enrolment are high institutional fees, poor financial aid, and high day-to-day expenses. Expensive living and transportation expenses are challenges to pursuing higher education. In addition to the high cost of attending college and lack of financial assistance, the daily financial burden of expenses has a major impact on achievement.

One of the main reasons for low enrolment is that there are no reputed institutions and there are not many courses available. Dissatisfied teaching jobs, ineffective teaching methods, and inadequate funding. The primary reasons for low enrolment are a lack of suitable career guidance, a lack of understanding of scholarships, and a feeling that affirmative action is being disregarded. College attendance was also affected by similar concerns, such as feeling discriminated against and not having access to government programs. Additionally, low success rates are also attributed to the lack of clear reservation policies, limited affirmative action, and limited access to information. Unemployment, income inequality and poverty play a significant role in the barriers to higher education attainment. Women did not have access to mentors, resources and support. This prevented them from getting the help they needed to pursue their studies. Militarism and the rise of popular uprisings created a climate of fear and insecurity, leading to lower education standards, teacher shortages and college shut-downs. According to participants, continuing education was seen as a waste of time because of the distance between education and employment. Finding employment opportunities in the local area after college was a major factor in the decision to drop out. Educational choices were influenced by parent's ignorance, traditional beliefs and cultural biases. Challenges include limited access to education, lack of professional courses and geographical restrictions.

In short, the study recommends a holistic and inclusive approach to address these identified issues, unlocking the full potential of the region's diverse and talented students and making a positive impact on the socio-economic growth of the region.