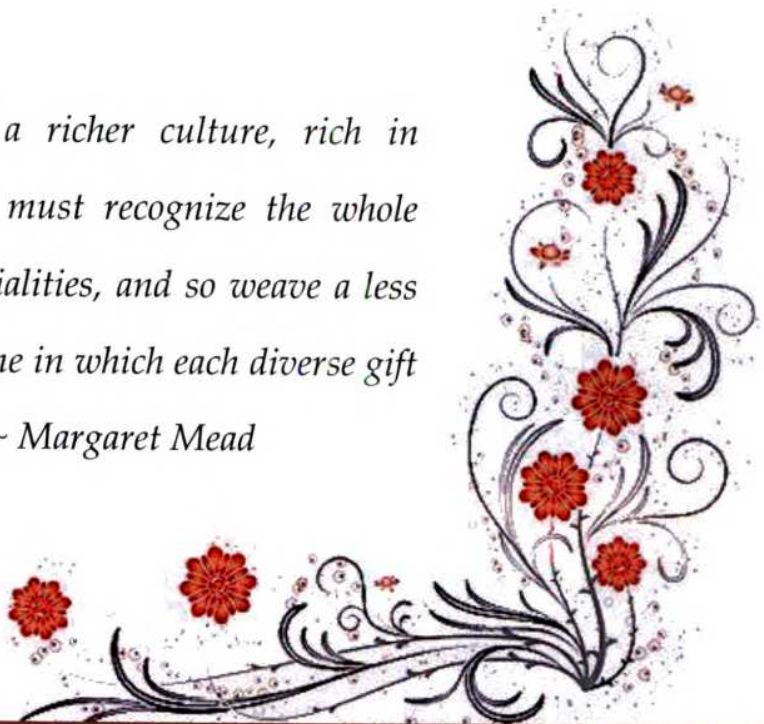


Chapter VII

Conclusion and Suggestions

If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse gift will find a fitting place. ~ Margaret Mead



CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

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CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

7.1 Introduction

The research was undertaken to study the status of employed Muslim women in the selected units in the organized sector in Chennai. The researcher adopted the Survey method to collect data. It was a challenging task as identifying employed Muslim women itself was arduous in the first place. It proved the fact to the researcher that Muslim women's participation in the labourforce is marginal. To extract data from Muslim women though educated and employed was an onerous job and it indicated that still Muslim women are in the grip of traditional upbringing. The study not only confirmed some known information about Muslim women employment but also brought to light some unknown particulars about employed Muslim women.

7.2 Conclusions arrived from the Study

- The study reveals that majority of the working Muslim women in the selected units in the organized sector in Chennai are of the middle age group. It shows a positive trend as the younger generation of Muslim women are inclined towards employment. **Swati Shirwadkar (1998)** inference from her study on the women of Marathwada in Maharashtra that there is a positive correlation between the two variables – younger age and positive attitudes towards employment corroborates with this conclusion.
- Urdu speaking Muslim community women are more predominant in the organized sector employment scenario of Chennai.
- Most of the employed Muslim women are married and it indicates that marriage is not a hindrance to employment. This supports the findings of **Ranade and Ramachandran (1970)** that employment of women is favoured by family members.

- Muslim women with Masters level of education dominate the organized sector employment and it proves that higher education is instrumental in making Muslim women get employed in the organized sector. This validates **Swati Shirwadkar's (1998)** statement: "It is interesting to note that urban women, especially educated women, are increasingly participating in the workforce and thus becoming more visible, hence becoming an important group for study." **Seema Parveen's (2005)** survey ('Women in Development – Challenges and Achievement') in Lucknow district also revealed that a highest proportion of employed female respondents were reported to be the highly educated females (65.22% post graduates and 14.58% graduates were working).
- Nuclear family appears to be the preferred type of family set up for career women as majority of Muslim women employed in the organized sector were living as a nuclear family.
- Majority of the Muslim women income level is below Rs.20000/- per month in the organized sector.
- The study reveals that Muslim women employed in the organized sector enjoy financial freedom as many of them had authority to spend what they earned. This reinforces **Rama J. Joshi's (1999)** observance ('Concept of Work in Indian Society') in a study that more than one half of professional women worked to attain economic independence, and through it social independence.
- Private sector Muslim women employees are comparatively more than Public sector Muslim women employees in the Chennai city. This implies that Muslim women living in Chennai have a preference for Private sector employment than Public sector employment.
- More Muslim women are engaged in administrative category of employment in Chennai and it suggests that many Muslim women of Chennai lack specialized knowledge and skill training. This endorses **Farida Hussain's (1994)** argument ('Problems of Muslim Women in India') that the government must make an effort to understand the changing profile of the workforce with the entry of women and to provide an appropriate environment for their advancement and growth.

- Majority of Muslim women employed in the organized sector in Chennai continued their work career without a break and it hints that Muslim women have the capability of work life integration.
- The average weekly working hours of majority of the Muslim women in organized sector employment is between 21-40 hours. It points to the fact that Muslim women work approximately eight hours per day. Majority of Muslim women also had 2-4 hours of leisure time. It denotes that Muslim women employed in the organized sector in Chennai managed their time efficiently.
- The decision to work was self made by almost all the Muslim women of the organized sector. Hence it signifies that Muslim women had the freedom to make decisions.
- The study reveals that many Muslim women got employed before marriage and continued their career after marriage. It connotes that marriage is not a hindrance for Muslim women of Chennai to continue their career. This substantiates the study of **Ruprekha Bordoloi Saikia (2004)** in Assam on married working women ('Glimpses of women's empowerment in India').
- Majority of the Muslim women employed in the organized sector in Chennai are from Chennai and it denotes that opportunities for Muslim women of Chennai are available in the organized sector in Chennai.
- Muslim women working in organized sector have taken up a career mainly for economic reasons and hence the fixed notion of the traditional Muslim communities that men alone are the bread winners of the family is set to change. This upholds **Kali Nath Jha's (2005)** view that the economic reason is one of the primary reasons among the majority of women going for work.
- Encouragement of family members plays a crucial role in Muslim women taking up employment as majority of the Muslim women employed in organized sector had encouragement from their families to take up employment.

- The study reveals that Muslim women selected their job in the organized sector to suit their knowledge and skill. Timing and company profile were the secondary deciding factors.
- Muslim women employed in organized sector had career goals but majority of them are challenged by hindrances to their career goals.
- The health status of Muslim women employed in the organized sector in Chennai is healthy. Occupational health problem is faced only by a negligible number of women.
- Among the parents more number of fathers are qualified educationally than mothers of the Muslim women. It's a positive sign that illiterate mothers had encouraged their daughters to achieve higher educational level. This verifies **Shariff's (1995)** observation that Muslim women were becoming aware of their need to get educated and that there was a growing consciousness to get employed.
- The study shows that majority of Muslim women employed in the organized sector in Chennai have taken up a career as soon as they finished their education. It indicates that more and more educated Muslim women are attracted towards employment.
- From work experience of the sample group it is ascertained that it is the younger generation which is keen on getting employed as majority of Muslim women of the sample had experience below five years. This defends the view of **Awadesh Kumar Singh (2004)** ('Muslims in India') that young generation of Muslim women is demanding more liberty and breaking the orthodox norms of Muslim community.
- Work values followed by Muslim women employed in the organized sector imply that Muslim women are keen to utilize their knowledge and skill and achieve high standards. They enjoyed the work they did. They also had helping tendency and maintained good relationship with colleagues.

- As far as work sharing at home is concerned still the old societal norms appear to be in practice. Majority of Muslim women did the cooking and cleaning work at home.
- The employed Muslim women in the organized sector had some knowledge of Muslim women's rights and personal law. The awareness level of Muslim women about their rights shows positive trend.
- Political participation of Muslim women is supported by majority of the employed Muslim women in the organized sector. Exposure in organized sector could have possibly created this trend.
- The employed Muslim women in the organized sector feel that attempts should be made by women scholars to construct a legal system of reforms within the mandate of the Quran to make women as moral agents at all levels of human society. It indicates that Muslim women are willing to take leadership roles.
- There is a wavering of opinion among employed Muslim women in the organized sector as far as the question of practice of Uniform civil code in a country is concerned.
- Majority of the employed Muslim women in the organized sector support the idea that Muslim women employment will alleviate poverty. They strongly feel that opportunities for Muslim women are plenty and Muslim women labour force participation can be improved as Muslim women had the right to work and religious customs are not a hindrance to employment of Muslim women. This augments **Zainab Rahman's (2005)** ('Women and Society') argument that the concept of Hijab or Purdah, if understood and practiced properly, does not restrict a Muslim woman from doing anything that she has been allowed to do by religion, like acquiring education, doing business or working outside home.
- Physical and mental stress, lack of adequate rest and sacrificing other interest due to time constraint are the challenges employed Muslim women in organized sector had to face.

- Muslim women require safety measures, maternity leave with pay and equal treatment and opportunity on par with men to improve their working conditions. This finding strengthens **Iffat Ara's (1993)** ('Muslim Women – Problems and Prospects') statement that if employment prospects of Muslim women are to be improved: provision should be made for child care centers, working conditions should be improved by removing accommodation problems, providing quick transport and avoiding frequent transfers. Their security should be ensured: pay-scales, leave benefits, training facilities and medical care facilities should be made available.
- Muslim women feel that the primary duty of a woman is to take care of the family but a job can give her independence and at the same time help the family prosper better.
- Educational qualification of parents plays a motivating role in getting their wards educated.
- Muslim women's educational qualification whether high or low does not hamper their work continuity process. When the circumstances force they take a career break.
- If Muslim women are highly educated they make their own decision to work otherwise they tend to fall a prey to compulsion.
- Higher educational qualification of employed Muslim women gives them to gain authority over the income they earn. This complements **Kali Nath Jha's (2005)** study that highly educated women control their self-earned money because they are in the higher economic group and they have higher educational and economic status.
- Work satisfaction attained by Muslim women employed in the professional and administrative category of work is at same level.
- Work values followed by Muslim women employed in the professional and administrative category of work is same.

- Work satisfaction attained by Muslim women employed in the public and private sector is at same level.
- Overall views on jobs preferred by Muslim women differing in their educational qualification are same.
- Overall opinion on the benefits of being employed by Muslim women differing in their educational qualification differs. Higher the education, the benefits enjoyed also is higher. Better opportunity and better pay may be the reasons.
- Overall opinion on the negative effects of being employed by Muslim women differing in their educational qualification is not different. Higher or lower the education, the negative effects are the same. Physical and mental stress, lack of rest and social interaction and forgoing other interests are the same for all employed women.
- Overall suggestion on improving the Muslim women labour force participation by Muslim women differing in their educational qualification is different. It may be due to better awareness among Muslim women who are highly qualified.
- Higher the educational level, the consciousness level of Muslim women's rights is also higher, because of their understanding capacity. This authenticates **Arun Chandra Bordoloi's (2004)** ('Glimpses of Women Empowerment in India') statement that Social workers, learned writers, eminent lawyers, political leaders, women organizations etc. have played a key role in the last twenty to twenty five years to make women more and more conscious of their actual position and exploitation and moulded their new progressive character.
- Overall views on jobs preferred by Muslim women differing in their marital status are same.
- Overall opinion on the benefits of being employed by Muslim women differing in their marital status differs. Married life bringing in more demands may be the reason.

- Overall opinion on the negative effects of being employed by Muslim women differing in their marital status is same. Married or unmarried, physical and mental stress, lack of rest and social interaction and forgoing other interests are the same for all employed women.
- Muslim women of all age groups are satisfied with their work.
- Overall views on jobs preferred by Muslim women differing in their age group are different. May be younger generation is ready to take in more challenges.
- Overall opinion on the benefits and negative effects of being employed by Muslim women differing in their age group is same.
- Overall suggestion for improving the Muslim women labour force participation by Muslim women differing in their age group is same.
- Muslim women employed in the organized sector are more satisfied with the sort of work they do, their colleagues and security than timing, journey, utilization of ability and prospects.
- Muslim women employed in the organized sector prefer jobs which are safe, in Islamic background and considered honourable than working with men, engaging in out-door work or transfer.
- Muslim women employed in the organized sector consider using knowledge and skill to be the first benefit of employment followed by self identity gain and satisfaction attained.
- Muslim women employed in the organized sector consider physical and mental stress to be the first negative effect followed by lack of rest and sacrificing other interests.
- Muslim women employed in the organized sector consider that Muslim women have the right to work, improving the labour force participation of Muslim women is possible and opportunities for Muslim women to be employed are present.

- Muslim women employed in the organized sector consider safety to be the first thing to be given priority to improve the work conditions followed by maternity leave with pay and equal opportunities.

7.3 Suggestions

The results of the analysis reveal that education, attitudes of family members, opportunities and comfortable work conditions are the main factors that need attention to improve Muslim women's labour force participation. Based on the study the following suggestions are made.

- Higher educational level is a must if Muslim women are to enter the organized sector employment. Muslim women should become aware of this fact and take steps to get educationally qualified. Educational backwardness is an aspect of economic backwardness. Higher education is a potential factor contributing to progress.
- Muslim women should qualify professionally if they are to take up leadership position in organizations. With increasing participation in the professional employment, a whole range of changes can be triggered.
- The younger generation keen on getting employed should be provided the opportunities to make them involve in the development of society.
- Equal pay for equal work policy adaptation is necessary to enable Muslim women earn better salaries.
- Muslim women's career aspirations must be welcomed and supported by family, community and society to enable Muslim women to climb higher in the ladder as many Muslim women are now employed in the administrative category of employment only.
- Family members should support and encourage employed Muslim women to facilitate the right atmosphere for Muslim women to thrive in their work career and accomplish.

- Health status of Muslim women should be given appropriate care for them to prosper in their career lives. Occupational health hazards must be prevented. Minimizing the discomforts of chronic diseases with appropriate treatment will find more Muslim women entering the labour force.
- Muslim employed women should learn the efficient time management strategies to make time for their social interactions and pursue some of their other interests.
- Muslim women should be guided to make better use of their leisure time to rejuvenate them to overcome their physical and mental stress. They can enroll in physical and mental conditioning programs.
- In the nuclear family type, which is predominant, men should come forward to share household work.
- Muslim women should be made to become aware of their rights in order to overcome the traditional patriarchal discriminations and stereotyping of gender.
- Muslim women should familiarize with Muslim personal law which binds them in order to avoid exploitations in the name of law.
- Muslim women should take up political participation in order to influence the policy decisions.
- Muslim women scholars should construct a legal system of reforms within the mandate of Quran to make women play the role of moral agent in all aspects of human society.
- Muslim women should make use of the employment opportunities available to lift their status in society.
- Muslim women instead of waiting for an opportunity only in Islamic background should avail the openings present.

- Working conditions of Muslim women should be made safe and secure to inspire more women to enter the employment arena and induce the existing players to continue with willingness.
- Sexual harassment at workplace which is dreaded by Muslim women should be prevented by enforcing stringent laws.
- Maternity leave for employed women without loss of monetary and social benefits should be given.
- Work satisfaction is greatly influenced by work values followed and hence Muslim women should follow work values and work to achieve high standard in the field of their work.
- Muslim women should not only seek employment if they are qualified but also motivate other qualified Muslim women to take up employment to utilize their knowledge and skill and serve the society in the capacity possible by them.

7.4 Recommendations

Women are the key to economic growth in developing countries. Potential Muslim women are a human resource that cannot be ignored. Hence raising the economic productivity of Muslim women assumes significance. Hence the following recommendations are proposed:

- The role of education as an agent of social change is well known and recognized. Education determines the level of aspirations, productivity and efficiency which are the basic factors influencing the process of development. The literacy rates of Muslim women are very low. Hence the government and the Non-government organizations should work together to provide free education for Muslim girls at the lower level and scholarships at the higher level to increase their labour force participation. Muslim girls drop out from schools is on the higher side due to economic reasons and traditional practices. Necessary arrangement should be made to stop drop outs from school by giving economic support and creating awareness about the importance of education among the Muslim Community.

- Muslim women have always worked with Muslim men to satisfy various needs of social life since time immemorial. With industrialization and modernization they are pushed back due to lack of skill development and training. Hence the government and non-government organizations should come forward to provide free skill development and training programs to equip Muslim women with the necessary ability to face the change process. They should be motivated to be part of the change process to enable them to alleviate poverty.
- There are many laws safe guarding the welfare of working women. The maternity benefits act 1961 is applicable to all those who are not covered under the Employee state insurance scheme. Under this act, a woman can get 12 weeks maternity leave, six weeks before and six weeks after delivery. The benefit consists of payment of average daily wages and provision regarding nursing breaks. Various acts also make provision for setting up crèches for children of working women. The Equal Remuneration act 1976 provides for the payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers and prevention of discrimination on grounds of sex in matter of employment. It also provides for setting up advisory committees for helping working women. These laws are not implemented effectively. Hence middle agents should be appointed by the government to check the proper implementation of the laws and redress the grievances of working women.
- The women of the minority communities suffer from dual handicap of being women and belonging to minority communities. They form a large group in the lowest economic categories. Demanding equitable treatment for these women is to recognize that they form a very vital force whose potential if fully utilized could transform the nation. Harnessing the full potential of this section is challenging and requires an integrated approach. There is a need to improve their employment quantitatively and qualitatively to ensure the balanced development of human resources. Hence specific policies and target oriented programmes have to be formulated in the five year plans to bring them into mainstream of national development, not as mere beneficiaries but as contributors and partakers along with men.

- It is recommended that Government or the non-government organizations should undertake national surveys on the role of Muslim women in the basic sectors of the economy, study the possibility of increasing their employment and provide the opportunities.
- A well defined policy should be framed by a government resolution to prevent employers from debarring Muslim women from certain jobs unless the basis of unsuitability is clearly specified.
- A cell should be created within the Ministry of Labour and Employment both at central and state levels under direction of a senior officer to deal with problems of religious minority women.
- Penalties for evasion of laws concerned with women employment should be made more stringent.
- Representatives of women religious minorities should be included in the trade unions.
- It is recommended to reserve a definite quota for Muslim women in the labour force training to motivate them to participate.
- It is recommended to create specific provisions for part-time employment of Muslim women by suitable revisions in the recruitment rules and service conditions.
- It is recommended to develop a women's cadre in the service to provide employment information and assistance to women.
- Provision for special leave without pay, subject to a maximum of five years during service to enable women to take care of their young ones and return to the career path later is highly recommended in all occupations.
- Overall Muslim women are a potential human resource element and hence strategic planning, intentional policy decisions and deliberate actions from the

government are recommended to maximize the prospective Muslim women labour force participation.

7.5 Conclusion

The socio-cultural environment of India has changed rapidly in the last five decades. Women today have become aware of their rights and their potential and are proving themselves in various fields. The latest mantra for improving the status of women is empowerment. By this it is generally meant, economic independence and political participation of women. Both these conditions are improving. But it is far from being satisfactory. These are only small steps in the right direction. This study is also a step to bring to the forefront the position of employed Muslim women in Chennai city whereby their needs could be understood and measures could be adopted to improve Muslim women's labour force participation as they are part of the Muslim community which constitutes 13.4 percent of the Indian population. Moreover Muslims occupy the highest share in Urban poverty population in India which is 36.92 percent and this study is an attempt to bring to light the requirements of Urban Muslim women of Chennai to alleviate their poverty by taking up gainful employment from studying the present prevailing conditions and gathering opinions and suggestions from their own community working women. Universities especially women's universities have a valuable role to play in Muslim women's lives if they are to be absorbed in organized sector employment scenario. This research on employed Muslim women in organized sector in Chennai city by a Muslim woman for empowering the employed Muslim women is a propping tool produced through a Women's university.

Employed Muslim women are important instigators of radical change – change in the freedom to spend, in being able to pursue their careers and in achieving a measure of flexibility in the role relationships at home. These are no small changes although they had been brought about by individual efforts of these employed Muslim women. Their efforts need to be supplemented by a more serious realization and greater efforts by various sections of the urban society to develop mechanisms whereby the assimilation of working Muslim women within its fold is made easier.