

**Dynamics of Minority Women's Empowerment
in West Bengal (2014-2024): A Comparative
Study Focusing on The District of Murshidabad
and Malda.**

**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in International Relations (Arts)**

**By
Situ Saikh
Registration No.: A00IR1401920**

**Under the Supervision of
Dr. Arup Bhattacharyya**

**Department of International Relations
Jadavpur University
Kolkata – 700032
WB | INDIA
2024**

Certified that the Thesis entitled

Dynamics of Minority Women's Empowerment in West Bengal (2014-2024): A

Comparative Study Focusing on The District of Murshidabad and Malda.

Submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the Supervision of

Dr. Arup Bhattacharyya

And that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere / elsewhere.

Dr. Arup Bhattacharyya

Countersigned by the

Supervisor :

Dated : 04/12/2024

Dr. Arup Bhattacharyya
Associate Professor
Dept. of International Relations
Jadavpur University
Kolkata - 700 032

Sitv Sain

Candidate :

Dated : 04/12/2024

Acknowledgment

The completion of my PhD thesis has been a challenging but rewarding journey, and it would not have been possible without the support and guidance of many professors at Jadavpur University.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Arup Bhattacharyya, for his invaluable support, guidance, and encouragement throughout this journey. Your insight and expertise have been instrumental in shaping this work, and your patience and understanding have been a source of inspiration in my life.

I am also deeply thankful to the members of my Research Advisory Committee, Professor Dr. Kamran M. K. Mondal and Professor Dr. Debajit Dutta for their constructive feedback, insightful discussions, and unwavering support. Your diverse perspectives have enriched my research and helped me grow as a research scholar.

I gratefully acknowledge the help rendered to me by different libraries and their staff. Among them, the Central Library, the Departmental Library of International Relations of Jadavpur University, National Library of Kolkata are worth mentioning.

I am indebted to every single professor of the Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, and especially to the head of the department (HoD) Professor Dr. Bijaya Kumar Das, whenever I needed him, I always found him beside me and that is unforgettable.

I am also thankful to our VC Professor Bhaskar Gupta, for giving us such a nice environment premises of the university, and facilities, that made my journey easy and convenient.

Special thanks to my colleagues and friends at Jadavpur University, who have provided supportive and stimulating circumstances. I am grateful for the countless opinions, shared experiences, and friendships that have made this journey more enjoyable and memorable.

I would also like to acknowledge that, the financial support provided by SVMCC which made this research possible.

On a personal note, I am eternally grateful to my family for their love, encouragement, and sacrifices. To my parents, thank you for your unwavering belief in me and for providing me with the foundation to pursue my dreams. To my better half beloved wife Monisha Khatun, who always boosts me up to carry forward this research and always unconditionally helped me without asking any questions at all, thank you for your patience, understanding, and constant support through the highs and lows of this journey.

Lastly, I would like to thank everyone who in one way or another, has contributed to the completion of this thesis. Your support has been invaluable, and I am deeply grateful to each one of you.

Situ Saikh

A00IR1401920

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Preface

The proposed study has opened up many sides regarding the actual developments of the minority women community in our society and will also direct the women empowerment issues to a new pathway, especially for the asking of minority women's empowerment in the regional sphere of Murshidabad & Malda.

Gender discrimination is a pervasive issue that affects individuals of all genders, including male and female. However, this study will focus specifically on women's empowerment, recognizing that women have historically faced greater barriers and inequalities in various aspects of life. The struggle for gender equality remains a critical issue, as women often encounter systemic discrimination that limits their opportunities for education, employment, and participation in decision-making processes, and many more obstacles like this. Understanding women's empowerment is essential for fostering a more equitable society where all individuals can thrive, regardless of gender discrimination.

The socio-economic condition of women in West Bengal is quite active and is moving at a faster pace due to government support programs and voluntary organizations. Women's empowerment has also been given a role by West Bengal's cultural and historical context. Women's movements have a long and rich legacy in the state fighting for rights and equality. The government has started several schemes to bring change in the socio-economic status of women in the state and the outcomes are synchronically assessed here in this research. Additionally, rural districts in West Bengal such as Malda and Murshidabad, are unique in their challenges with women empowerment. This

Patriarchal structure paired with economic constraints has kept women from reaching education or employment opportunities. In some cases, the schemes promoted by the government to boost women's rights have not been fully realized due to a scarcity of local governance and community resources.

In contrast, despite having many barriers, women in majority communities may also come across several difficulties, though they may be different. They face limitations on their opportunities due to traditional gender roles and expectations but have better access to resources than minority women but still experience problems like domestic violence and no decision-making power etc.

This means that any interventions that seek to mainstream women in these districts need to understand how women from both these backgrounds feel, think, and experience life. Education, vocational training, and health care should be viewed as priority areas for carrying out targeted programs, designed according to the capabilities of various communities, and equality for all. In other words, the cooperation of governmental ministries, non-governmental organizations, and communities is crucial to establishing the conditions that support the empowerment of all women in society at large. The findings cited above have been discovered through my comprehensive research efforts. It is noteworthy that my investigation has yielded many significant insights, many of which I have endeavored to explore in-depth, although not all are explicitly mentioned herein.

Place:

(Situ Saikh)

Date:

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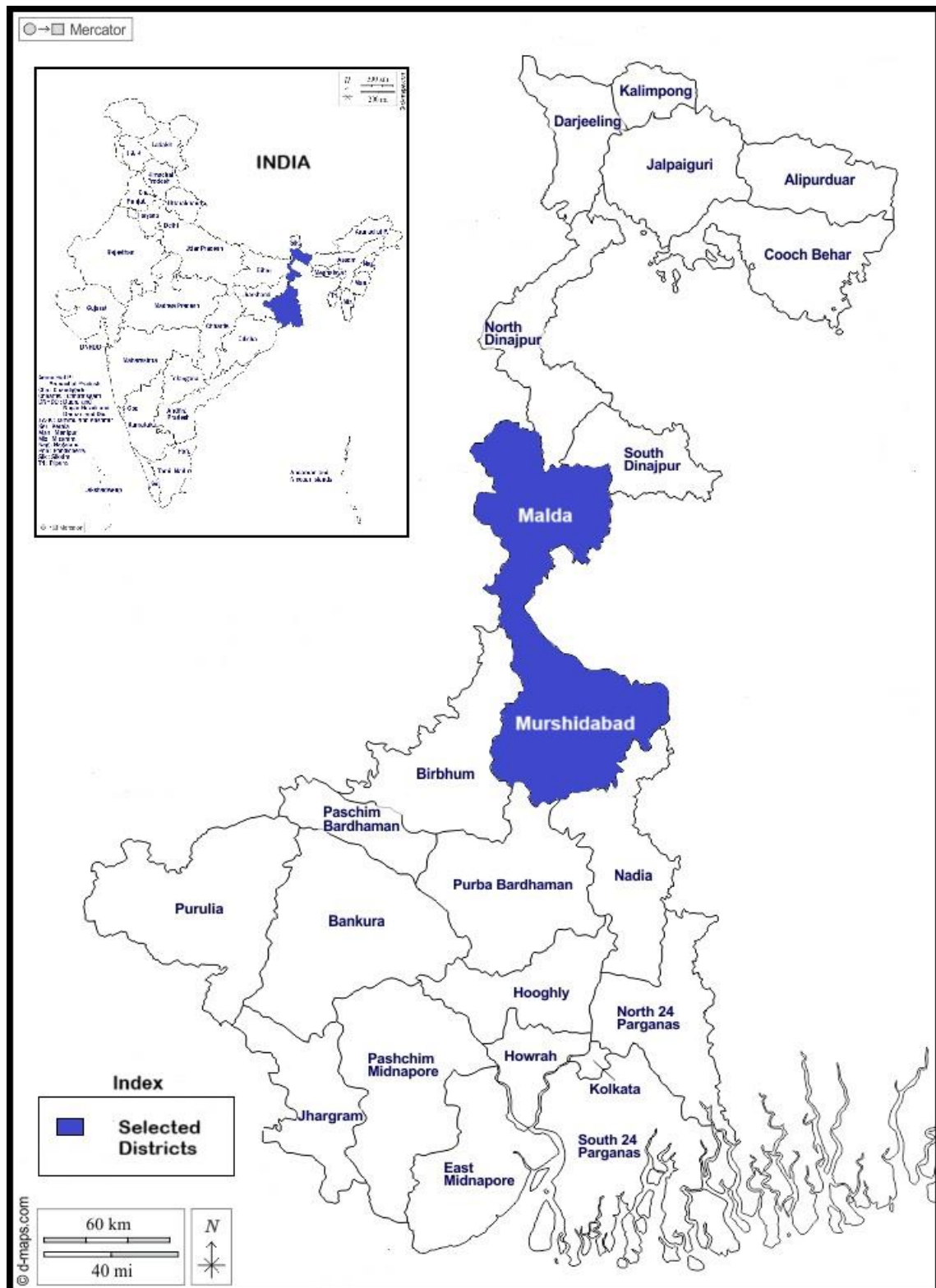
Abbreviations

<i>AIMWPLB</i>	-	<i>All-India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board</i>
<i>AIWC</i>	-	<i>All India Women's Conference</i>
<i>BDO</i>	-	<i>Block Development Office</i>
<i>CD</i>	-	<i>Community Development</i>
<i>CDB</i>	-	<i>Community Development Block</i>
<i>CS</i>	-	<i>Case Study</i>
<i>CDP</i>	-	<i>Community Development Programme</i>
<i>CR</i>	-	<i>Civil Rights</i>
<i>CLAA</i>	-	<i>Criminal Law Amendment Act</i>
<i>CWE</i>	-	<i>Culture and Women Empowerment</i>
<i>CR</i>	-	<i>Constitutional Rights</i>
<i>CAA</i>	-	<i>Constitutional Amendment Act</i>
<i>COSSS</i>	-	<i>Community Oriented Social Security Scheme</i>
<i>CM</i>	-	<i>Chief Minister</i>
<i>DC</i>	-	<i>Dress Codes</i>
<i>DPA</i>	-	<i>Dowry Prohibition Act</i>
<i>DVC</i>	-	<i>Domestic Violence Act</i>
<i>DW</i>	-	<i>Dalit Women</i>
<i>DVA</i>	-	<i>Domestic Violence Act</i>
<i>DWCD</i>	-	<i>Department of Women and Child Development</i>
<i>DWSW</i>	-	<i>Department of Women and Social Welfare</i>
<i>DM</i>	-	<i>District Magistrates</i>
<i>EPA</i>	-	<i>Equal Pay Act</i>

<i>FAOW</i>	-	<i>Forum Against Oppression of Women</i>
<i>GGI</i>	-	<i>Governor General of India</i>
<i>IS</i>	-	<i>Islamic Society</i>
<i>LGBTQ</i>	-	<i>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer</i>
<i>LR</i>	-	<i>Legal Right</i>
<i>LSG</i>	-	<i>Local Self-Government</i>
<i>MBA</i>	-	<i>Maternity Benefit Act</i>
<i>MTM</i>	-	<i>MeToo Movement</i>
<i>MCD</i>	-	<i>Minority Concentration Districts</i>
<i>MCB</i>	-	<i>Minority Concentration Blocks</i>
<i>MCT</i>	-	<i>Minority Concentration Towns</i>
<i>NGO</i>	-	<i>Non-Governmental Organizations</i>
<i>NFIW</i>	-	<i>National Federation of Indian Women</i>
<i>NPW</i>	-	<i>National Policy for Women</i>
<i>NCRB</i>	-	<i>National Crime Records Bureau</i>
<i>NFHS</i>	-	<i>National Family Health Survey</i>
<i>OTG</i>	-	<i>One-Time Grand</i>
<i>PCMA</i>	-	<i>Prohibition of Child Marriage Act</i>
<i>PMMVY</i>	-	<i>Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana</i>
<i>PCMA</i>	-	<i>Prohibition of Child Marriage Act</i>
<i>PBSSD</i>	-	<i>Paschim Banga Society for Skill Development</i>
<i>RTI</i>	-	<i>Right to Information</i>
<i>RW</i>	-	<i>Right to Work</i>
<i>RWEA</i>	-	<i>Right of Women to Education Act</i>
<i>SGH</i>	-	<i>Self-Help Groups</i>
<i>SDED</i>	-	<i>Save Daughter Educate Daughter</i>

<i>SGRY</i>	-	<i>Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana</i>
<i>SGSY</i>	-	<i>Swamjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana</i>
<i>SEWA</i>	-	<i>Self-Employed Women's Association</i>
<i>SMP</i>	-	<i>Substantial Minority Population</i>
<i>SSY</i>	-	<i>Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana</i>
<i>SSS</i>	-	<i>Sasthaya Sathi Scheme</i>
<i>UB</i>	-	<i>Utkarsh Bangla</i>
<i>WBSDM</i>	-	<i>West Bengal Skill Development Mission</i>
<i>WBWDU</i>	-	<i>West Bengal Women Development Undertaking</i>
<i>WIT</i>	-	<i>Women's India Trust</i>
<i>WF</i>	-	<i>White Feminism</i>
<i>WB</i>	-	<i>West Bengal</i>
<i>WRB</i>	-	<i>Women's Reservation Bill</i>
<i>WSWD</i>	-	<i>Women and Social Welfare Department</i>
<i>WPS</i>	-	<i>Women Police Station</i>
<i>WBSRLM</i>	-	<i>West Bengal State Rural Livelihood Mission</i>
<i>WDO</i>	-	<i>Women Development Office</i>

Map of West Bengal & highlighted the selected districts



Source: Downloaded from https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=9211&lang=en and edited by me according to my research.

Chapter – I

Introduction and Literature Reviews

Gender discrimination is a pervasive issue that affects individuals of all genders, including male and female. However, this study will focus specifically on women's empowerment, recognizing that women have historically faced greater barriers and inequalities in various aspects of life. The struggle for gender equality remains a critical issue, as women often encounter systemic discrimination that limits their opportunities for education, employment, and participation in decision-making processes, and many more obstacles like this. Understanding women's empowerment is essential for fostering a more equitable society where all individuals can thrive, regardless of gender discrimination.

Women empowerment in India has gained considerable attention over the past few decades. Recognizing the significant gender disparities in education, health, and economic participation, various initiatives have been launched at both national and state levels to promote the rights and opportunities of women. The Indian government has implemented numerous policies aimed at enhancing women's status, such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl Child) campaign, aimed at combating gender-based discrimination and promoting the education of girls.

However, much remains to be done at the organizational level; obstacles are still present, and they are rather serious ones. Female gender in Indian society is even to date threatened; Women suffer high incidents of gender-based

violence, and their roles across Indian society are restricted to domestic responsibilities and child care. Academic education remains a challenge to many girl child education due to poverty and poor perception towards girl child education especially in rural areas. In addition, women's access to employment is still restricted and while women are represented in the labour market, many of them work in vulnerable and low-paid jobs with no prospects of permanent employment and employment benefits.

This is because apart from caste, in India, the caste conflicts with class and religious beliefs to determine the position of women empowerment. The overall life experience and resource attainment of women from minority-status groups is constrained by multiple forms of oppression. These issues have to be fixed through every other means, both empowering the female through the provisions of their rights and doing away with discrimination in every sector of society.

The socio-economic condition of women in West Bengal is quite active and is moving to a faster pace due to the government support programs and voluntary organizations. The government has started several schemes to bring change in the socio-economic status of women in the state – Kanyashree Prakalpa is aimed at providing financial assistance to girls for continuing education and caused a decline in the school dropout rate of female students. However, women's self-help groups (SHGs) have also emerged as important in empowering women, employment creation as well as joint ventures.

Women's empowerment has also been given a role by West Bengal's cultural and historical context. Women's movements have a long and rich legacy in the state fighting for rights and equality. While we've made these advancements, gender-based violence and discrimination continue. Despite

all the progress made towards women's rights, issues like dowry-related violence, domestic abuse, and harassment continue to undermine these statuses.

Additionally, rural districts in West Bengal such as Malda and Murshidabad, are unique in their challenges with women empowerment. This Patriarchal structure paired with economic constraints has kept women from reaching education or employment opportunities. In some cases, the schemes promoted by the government to boost women's rights have not been fully realized due to a scarcity of local governance and community resources.

Amongst the complications associated with women's empowerment in rural India, Malda and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal exemplify a real social problem. Both districts suffer high levels of poverty and unemployment that most affect women. In these regions, gender roles are typically quite rigid and followed by tight societal norms for women including traditional responsibilities to care for children and conduct chores.

Women empowerment initiatives performed well in Malda. Significant development that has taken place of its setup is a self-help group that gave women opportunities to gain microfinance, engage in entrepreneurial activities, and develop skills that foment their economic independence. Improving the well-being of women has also been aided by programs directed towards educating women on health and reproductive rights.

Despite all that, Malda continues to have challenges. Even today there remain a lot of problems to be solved for women such as early marriage, domestic violence, inappropriate accessibility of education, and many more. Even though policies are designed to advance women's rights, enforcement and

awareness both remain serious problems. In this research, every single one of these asking has been focused on through the study of concerned districts.

The problems faced by women's empowerment are similar to those at Murshidabad. Though the district has advanced in promoting education for girls, cultural barriers are resistant to change. There are, however, initiatives in place that attempt to train and develop skills for women, predominantly with limited access, given their socio-economic background. Although the districts cover various bases in terms of religion and ethnicity, the majority of the minorities have their peculiarities in empowerment. That may be especially so for women in minority groups — Muslims, for starters, or scheduled castes — who face especially stiff barriers to empowerment. The world isn't fair for these women because cultural norms and economic disadvantages often intersect. Both systemic discrimination and cultural practices that value male authority can limit access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Women from these communities also often suffer stigma from the purpose of the social debates and marginalization that inhibits the capacity of women to claim their rights and seek avenues for upward mobility.

In contrast, despite hurdles, women in majority communities may also come across barriers, though they may be different. They may face limitations on their opportunities due to traditional gender roles and expectations but have better access to resources than minority women but still lapses like domestic violence and no decision-making power.

This means that any interventions that seek to mainstream women in these districts need to understand how women from both these backgrounds feel, think, and experience life. Education, vocational training, and health care

should be viewed as priority areas for carrying out targeted programs, designed according to the capabilities of various communities, and equality for all. In other words, the cooperation of governmental ministries, non-governmental organizations, and communities is crucial to establishing the conditions that support the empowerment of all women in society at large.

Sexism remains a major impediment to women's actual social engagement, as it limits them in everyday lives. Although much improvement has been made in India and West Bengal specifically in Malda and Murshidabad there is still a problem that needs constant effort and commitment.

Social and economic transformation is incomplete without empowering women that's why it's also a Moral responsibility. Training women in education, health, and employment provides leverage to every human being in society which leads to a healthy society. The struggle for eradicating sexism has to go on to make sure every lady can freely and happily achieve her goals no matter her origins. Understanding each one of the minority and majority group women of Malda and Murshidabad is important to form a society in which equality of gender is not just a dream or an ideal mode but a realizable state.

In my research the proposed study titled *“Dynamics of Minority Women's Empowerment in West Bengal (2014 to 2024): A Comparative Study Focusing on the District of Murshidabad and Malda”* is altogether purely not a noble project, meanwhile, this research will open up many sides regarding actual developments of minority women community in our society. There are a lot of articles regarding women's issues and minorities that have been published by Indian as well as Western scholars, they always open up some new research dimensions, similarly, my research will also direct the women empowerment

issues to a new pathway, especially for the asking of minority women's empowerment. I have reviewed plenty of articles to get some general information about the entitled topic. In ‘Empowerment of Women; The Indian Context’, here author Kiran Saxena shows many sides, which include the social status of women in India and their activity in the decision-making process. Although she does not distinguish between minority women and the majority women's community. She remarked on the transformation of women's activity basically how they are trying to achieve their goals and cope with social status. I implemented this thought on minority women and comparatively conducted this research in the regional sphere of Murshidabad and Malda.

The minority women empowerment issues do not emerge overnight; it has the legacy of the historical past. This research emphasizes the rights of minorities its women communities and how constitutional policy, prescriptions, and prejudices play a crucial role in preserving their rights. At the same time, this study also focused on the societal status of women as well as their empowerment procedures. Most of the research data has been collected through interviews, field surveys, and observations. However, my study especially focused on the political participation of minority women, their educational development status, and the empowerment procedures.

1.1. Importance of this Research:

Why this study is important? To answer this question, need to remind you, that my research was conducted basically after the Left Period in West Bengal, so we all know that after more than three decades of the Left rules new

government came into power in 2011, and my research is basically covered a decade (2014-2024) so generally, it becomes an important sphere regarding ‘minorities’ social status, specifically minorities women's social status. In this track-changing period, how minorities are dealing with society, how they have empowered themselves, are they educationally belong to the mainstream of society, does government implemented sufficient schemes to empower minority women in society, these are the rational quarries of this research, and I am optimistic that the research result would be shown on the actual improvement ratio.

Though the several schemes launched by the government for women empowerment but how come it helps the minority women's group? Is there any special scheme which launched only for minority women? All these are the fundamental issues regarding this entitled research proposal, I hope that these quarries would help my research to reach its goals.

1.2. Objectives and Research questions:

The following are the Objectives and Research questions of this study:

- To study the present status of Minority women’s positions in terms of Educational and Economical circumstances in Murshidabad and Malda districts in West Bengal under the present Government.
- To study the effectiveness of the various schemes and programs for minority women in society in the concerned district in West Bengal.
- Since there is very little participation of women in politics, especially minority women, who are not active in this sphere, what

is preventing minority women from participating in political activities in our society?

- Are the norms, practices, religions, customs, and prejudices social barriers to minority women empowerment?
- Minority women are far behind on the question of higher education and independence, what are the projects the can government implement to show interest in their higher education?
- To study the present status of women empowerment of all sects in the society after the lockdown period of the pandemic COVID-19 situation.
- To study the challenges faced by minority women in our society in getting involved in political participation and awareness programs.
- To find out the performance of the State Government schemes regarding women empowerment and minority women's satisfaction.
- To conduct a comparative study between minority-majority women's groups regarding the empowerment issues in the districts of Murshidabad and Malda.
- To find out the informing state and national policies on minority women's empowerment.
- How do constitutional laws, policies, prescriptions, prejudices, etc. impact women's empowerment issues?

1.3. Scope, Coverage and Rationality:

The rationality behind choosing these districts is, that there are 23 districts (The West Bengal cabinet has approved the creation of seven new districts on 1 August 2022. This will increase the number of districts from 23 to 30) in

West Bengal but only three districts where the minority communities form a majority group in number. So, I found that doing this research in Murshidabad and Malda districts would be a unique task. Although the minority communities are large in numbers, but not as much empowered as the Majority community, what are the basic reasons behind this phenomenon, this is the foremost asking of taking these districts as my research area, and also motivates me to take help of qualitative research method over the quantitative research methodology.

1.4. Data Collections and Sources:

Both Primary and Secondary data have been collected. Primary data have been collected from documents like observations, conferences, seminar proceedings, journal articles, field surveys, interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, etc. and secondary data have been collected from documents like thesis, dissertations, books, research articles, magazines, research journals, E-Journals, Report of different committees, official data of Govt. of West Bengal, Govt. of India, etc.

1.5. Research Methodology:

The methodology that has been used in this research is the qualitative social science research method through a mixture of demographic field research and some quantitative analysis of selected patterns among the minority and majority women communities. The main research tool was a semi-structured questionnaire conducted alongside detailed interviews of nearly a hundred

women from different communities like minority and majority. Out of the above number, approximately fifty percent are from the majority community and are remaining from the minority community women group. The numbers of women interviewed were evenly distributed among these two groups but it wasn't evenly distributed in every single block.

This research looks to browse the role of empowerment of minority women in achieving greater social inclusion based on political and social participation. The researcher conducted extensive interviews with Minority as well as Majority women communities based on an epistemological research procedure. The effort was to understand the various circumstances and obstacles of women negotiating in terms of social participation, empowerment, and the decision-making process.

Consequently, this study has focused on the socioeconomic and political status of Minority women. The study is based on extensive fieldwork carried out among the different women communities in several blocks in the state of West Bengal.

In addition to questions of the marginalization and exclusion faced by them in grassroots democratic processes, this study tries to give close attention specifically to whether these efforts at democratic decentralization have actually empowered and benefited the minority women community and also the scope of possible action that is available by the government.

1.5.1. Questionnaire, Interview Method, and Comparative Method:

Given this basic objective for the research, the study was structured around the collection of qualitative data by conducting extensive interviews with targeted women groups in six blocks namely Sagardighi, Raninagar-I, Farakk, Kaliachak-I, English Bazar, and Old Malda.

The questionnaire was designed for the various women's participation in this empowerment process. A semi-structured questionnaire was designed for the survey and collected the necessary data and information from the Majority-Minority women's community in the selected places of Murshidabad and Malda district, mentioned above. As well as the unstructured questionnaire was also been used to conduct the study during the interviews and observations. All the aspects relating to women's empowerment and my research objectives are considered with proper care. Basically 'open-ended' questions were included in the questionnaire.

Lengthy interviews and data collection were carried out on approximately hundreds of women within these six blocks. The data has been collected from a wide range of age groups, and socio-economic and educational backgrounds. There was also variation in the political awareness of the respondents, whether they are politically aware or not. While some of them had no knowledge regarding this, others had extensive experience with a natural tendency of modesty.

In the blocks that were chosen for this study, the focus was on carrying out substantive interviews with the targeted women communities, an endeavour was to interact with their male family members as well, to ensure the actual

patriarchal views about women empowerment. To ensure some degree of consistency in the collected data, a structured questionnaire was prepared which was used for the interviews. The questions were targeted at gathering factual information, about the age, educational qualifications, and socio-economic-political status of the respondents. This was followed by more open-ended questions where the respondent was allowed to express their opinions more freely. The effort was to understand the kinds of social, political, and economic pressures the minority women are subjected to, the problems they experience in carrying out their development, and barriers in the question of empowerment.

There is a lot of comparative work done among the various Women's groups (Minority-Majority) in terms of certain parameters which has been described in this thesis clearly in another chapter using the Comparative Research Designs.

Finally, the research sought to understand how their development perspective differs from that of other communities of women. To this end, the data collection also included data on the kinds of developmental works undertaken by the State Government and how much people in the society getting benefitted from these schemes, whether they are happy with the government schemes or not, what the obstacles that prevent in implementing the schemes are the relevant queries.

1.6. Chapterization:

A brief overview of the research and its design chapters have been shown in the following, here every single chapter has been summarized and showcased the main subjects of that.

1.6.1. Chapter – I

“Introduction and Literatures Review”

In the introduction, the whole concept of this research has been described, the objectives of this research, the rationality behind choosing the concerned districts, what methodology has been used, the sources of data collection, research questions, and the literature reviews have been shown very lucidly. It is a kind of index of this research, anyone can imagine the whole research objectives if one goes through the introductions.

1.6.2. Chapter – II

“Different Types of Empowerments that Empowering Women in Indian Society: A Pathway to Progress”

The chapter focuses on women's empowerment as the key to social change concerning the geopolitical context of India, with special reference to West Bengal. They have ways of how women's lives and chances are impacted by their religious and cultural inclinations, prejudice, and traditions. Therefore, the study focuses on the areas, namely, Murshidabad and Malda districts to

explore the prominent historical and cultural background of women's empowerment.

Thus, the chapter elaborates on the various prejudices inherent within India, specifically the state of West Bengal that hinder women's autonomy. This aspect brings out the impression of how the culture of racism, sexism, feudal system, and materialism in society exert a discriminative and demeaning impact on the treatment of women. These biases are fairly evident through gender stereotyping, sexism, and different types of discrimination such as casteism and economism which hinder women's rights to education, health care, employment, and leadership. Sexism is rated as a top problem that starts in childhood and persists throughout the female population's working careers and later into their middle age. Other times the media empowers prejudicial types that continue to oppress women and demoralize their importance in society.

Moreover, the caste system supplemental discriminates against Dalit women because of twofold prejudice of gender and caste which hinder them and enslave them further indicating that the caste system hampers Dalit women by confining them to their positions and not allowing them to grow or excel. I hope that these biases will be addressed so that society can provide women with the conditions that they need to succeed. Consequently, this study investigates the influence of culture on women in Indian society especially on women in West Bengal.

It focuses on four main sub-themes, norms of the general culture that prevails, the legal framework, religious beliefs and practices as well as practicing households. Cultural trends are finally improving gradually, women are now willing to acquire productive assets and gain more power in the home and the

household. Nevertheless, the culture and society suppress women and assign them an inferior status in many communities under analysis.

1.6.3. Chapter – III

“Impact of Religion, Customs, Prejudice, and Culture in Women’s Empowerment”

This chapter discusses the historical context and evolution of gender discrimination and feminism, emphasizing that these issues have persisted since the of civilization. It highlights the ongoing dominance of patriarchy, particularly in rural areas, while noting some progress in urban settings. The chapter distinguishes between freedom and tyranny in feminist demands, suggesting that some contemporary feminist movements may inadvertently create new forms of inequality by marginalizing men from power positions.

The chapter discusses the historical context and evolution of feminism, highlighting the persistent issue of gender discrimination and the patriarchal that have dominated society. It outlines four waves of feminism and different challenges of it, the first wave, emerging in the late 19th century, focused on women's rights and challenged the notion of female inferiority, primarily advocating for white women's rights. The second wave, during the 1960s and 70s, sought to redefine women's roles and was influenced by the Civil Rights movement, leading to the emergence of various feminist ideologies, including liberal feminism. The third wave in the 1990s celebrated individuality and addressed racial disparities. Women began embracing their uniqueness and rebelling against traditional ideas. The third wave of feminism happened in

the 1990s after women gained more rights and power from the second wave. Women began embracing their uniqueness and rebelling against traditional ideas. This wave of feminism also became more aware of racial issues. Paid more attention to racial disparities that were sometimes overlooked before. while the fourth wave, characterized by the influence of social media, emphasizes inclusivity and intersectionality, critiquing "white feminism" for neglecting the experiences of women of colour. In the fourth wave, feminism continues to consider intersectionality, which means understanding how different forms of discrimination overlap.

Critics call out "white feminism" for not recognizing the unique struggles of women of color and suppressing their ideas. One thing is clear, social media has played a crucial role in this new wave, bringing feminism into the digital age. It keeps building on the ideas of inclusivity and questions what empowerment, equality, and freedom means each wave reflects a shift in focus and understanding of gender equality, adapting to the changing societal landscape. These are the parameters of this research and also imply the same ideas in West Bengals women issues, especially in the districts of Murshidabad and Malda. Although my research area is West Bengal, without considering the world women's movements it is not possible to conclude the empowerment process in this research.

1.6.4. Chapter – IV

“Theme of Empowering Women and Navigating Constitutional Laws, Governmental Schemes, and Policy Prescriptions”

This chapter tries to explain the status of women in India especially West Bengal, constitutional and legal provisions, and policy measures for the protection of women's rights. Constitutional rights are the rights that are defined in the Constitution, legal rights which are established by the government by-laws. Out of all the articles these two are one of the principal articles heavily emphasizing the State's obligations and legal responsibility for the protection of women and their rights to equality. It also looks at individuated laws including the Equal Remuneration Act and the Maternity Benefit Act to ban gender wage inequalities and the status of women in the economic dimension.

The same chapter also deals with the relationship between minority politics and women's emancipation, especially under the banner of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act which draws attention to the plight of women from minority communities. Initiatives like "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao" aim to improve the education and well-being of girls, and what is the impact of it, especially in minority contexts in this state. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the Women's Reservation Bill, which seeks to increase women's representation in political decision-making, underscoring the ongoing efforts to create a more equitable society for women in West Bengal and beyond.

Chapter three presents an analysis of the effects of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India regarding local governance emphasizing the vindication of women through seat harboring in panchayat and municipal formations. The 73rd Amendment stipulates 33% of women for the panchayats, and the 74th Amendment similarly directs provisions for women to the municipal bodies and elemental advancement and solution to

gender-related concerns. The chapter also discusses such interventions as PMMVY for pregnant and lactating mothers and SSY to secure the financial destinies of the girl child.

The chapter highlights initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), which provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women, and the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY), aimed at securing the financial future of girl children. Additionally, it details specific programs in West Bengal, such as Kanyashree Prakalpa, which incentivizes girls to stay in school and delay marriage, and Rupashree Prakalpa, which offers financial support for daughters' weddings to alleviate the burden on low-income families. The Swasthya Sathi scheme is also mentioned, providing health coverage to families with a focus on women as the primary beneficiaries. Collectively, these initiatives reflect the state's commitment to enhancing women's economic, social, and educational status, thereby fostering a more inclusive society.

The chapter discusses various skill development and empowerment initiatives in West Bengal, focusing on programs like Utkarsh Bangla and Swavalamban. Utkarsh Bangla aims to enhance women's financial independence through skill training and employment opportunities, particularly targeting youth and women. The program is part of a broader commitment by the West Bengal government to improve productive employment through the West Bengal Skill Development Mission.

Sabooj Sathi, which is enhancing the effectiveness of providing bicycles to high school students made a special focus on female students from poor families to improve their educational attendance rate. On the same note, it has challenges in how it will fairly distribute its resources and meet the needs of

students who are disabled. A prime viewpoint of Swavalamban is to train and educate the ‘less privileged’ women, from the minorities, in skills and entrepreneurial techniques for their developmental and economic uplift. The chapter underlines that such programs should include community participation, and follow culturally appropriate practices, Utilizing women’s universities and colleges as anchors for education and skill development, the study seeks to empower minority women and girls to change their socio-economic status.

The chapter discusses the "Muktir Alo Scheme," initiated by the Bengal government to support sex workers and victims of trafficking. The scheme was started on September 4, 2015, to reform such a person by giving training, counseling as well as required equipment that will help to reintroduce in society. However, the goal of the program may be laudable, the program has been subject to criticism in terms of efficiency simply because a mere 75 individuals have claimed to have received benefits from it since its inception. The chapter is focused on the issues of sex workers, who had no other choice but to become prostitutes, and the necessity to establish stable help.

Further, the chapter also describes the formulation of the All-Women Police Stations in West Bengal precipitating the protection and rights of women. From 2011, these stations are intended to create a comfortable atmosphere for women which can help them to report a crime and obtain help. Expanding this strategy is the government’s aim to address the increase in gender-based violence and to recruit more women in the police services. In sum, the chapter focuses on the challenge of guaranteeing the rights and the restructuring of vulnerable women in society.

1.6.5. Chapter – V

“An Analysis of Comparative Study of Women’s Empowerment Manifestations: Minority vs Majority”

This chapter is built up through the primary research data. I have collected the whole data through interviews, field surveys, and observation, etc. In West Bengal total of two districts have been chosen and in between these districts 6 blocks have been chosen as research areas, out of these, 3 blocks belong to the Murshidabad district and the other 3 blocks are from Malda district.

In Murshidabad, I have chosen the Raninagar-I, Sagardighi, and Farakka blocks for my field survey. Similarly in the Malda district, Old Malda, English Bazar, and Kaliachak-I blocks have been selected for this research.

This chapter is completely based on primary sources of data, Some parameters have been selected for the survey questionnaire, like Marital Status, Political Awareness, Educational Institutions availability, Educational Literacy rate and ratio, Monthly Income, satisfaction of government schemes regarding women empowerment, etc.

Based on these questions, I have collected the data in two groups, the Minority Communities of Women's group and the Majority Community of Women Group. Meanwhile, shorted the age group without discriminating between the communities. Showcasing the data through the various figures, on emphasizing the governmental schemes and their benefiting people.

Finally, a comparative analysis was done on these groups based on collected data. Some portions are dominated by the Minority women’s community

meanwhile some portions are the Majority women's community. I have found a mixed response about the governmental scheme's implementation, most of the people from this concern region are not happy with this. They claimed that regarding women empowerment issues, governmental activities are not enough and not up to the mark. The government should be involved in every aspect of the women's empowerment questions. Until and unless the ground level women are not benefited the whole society will not able to be empowered.

The comparative analytical ways, that have been described are implemented in every single block of my research (Sagardighi, Raninagar-I, Farakka, Old Malda, English Bazar, Kaliachak-I). In these mentioned blocks, a comparative analysis of majority-minority empowerment issues took place.

In conclusion note, I definitely would like to mention that, real women's empowerment will take place when society as a whole is educated through a proper education system, without distinguishing the minority-majority sects.

Political awareness is an inevitable feature of the development. If women get involved in the political process then they will learn what is right or wrong for them, and that will be the initial steps for real women empowerment. Not only that, but women should also contribute to their families through empowering themselves. The concept, that women are only born to serve a particular patriarchal society, should be changed by us. Make them feel they are the same as you are, as a researcher my recommendations are, to implement these questions as soon as possible, so the question of empowerment will arise and achieve its aim.

1.6.6. Chapter – VI

***“Exploring the Social Mobilization and Contextualizing Women’s
Empowerment through the Lens of Majority-Minority Correlative
Dynamics.”***

This chapter is structurally built on the data collected from primary sources, offering in-depth comparative analysis between minority and majority communities on multiples of important societal and economic parameters. The objective of these comparisons is to reveal the underlying disparities, trends, and challenges that really exist between these communities in society. Although the previous chapter focused on analysing specific blocks and districts, relevant to the study, this chapter takes a broader different approach. No distinctions have been made based on geographical boundaries such as blocks or districts. Instead, the entire database has been utilized holistically, providing a comprehensive view of the statuses of both minority and majority communities on a larger scale of society.

implementation and effectiveness of government schemes are the Important areas that have been browsed in this chapter, focusing on how these initiatives impacted both the communities in society. By showing side by side the outcomes, the study highlighted potential inequalities in access, participation, and benefits. This analysis also enlightens whether these schemes are successful in promoting social inclusion or fall short, leaving certain groups marginalized.

In addition, to examining the governmental interventions, the chapter builds into several other critical dimensions, such as educational engagements,

literacy rates, political awareness activities, and participation within both communities. Political engagement, including the involvement of decision-making processes and civic activities, is assessed to standardize the extent of representation and empowerment. Furthermore, the chapter evaluates community feedback on government policies and initiatives, providing valuable insights into public perception and satisfaction.

Marital status like social indicators and other demographic factors has also been analyzed as well, as they often play a significant role in shaping individual opportunities and social outcomes. These elements can be viewed as stand-alone factors and in relation to their impact on broader issues like gender equality and women's empowerment.

In this detailed comprehensive and comparative analysis, this chapter tries to identify the barriers and obstacles that hinder women's empowerment process in society. The findings also provide a lucid understanding of the structural and social challenges that women's face, also helping to exact areas where targeted interventions and policy reformations are needed. By reconsidering these challenges, the chapter offers effective solutions and recommendations that could facilitate the empowerment of women and promote greater equality across all sections of society.

1.6.7. Chapter – VII

“Findings and Conclusion”

To summarize, this chapter highlights the essential conclusions arrived after the completion of the entire research, offering a brief account of the know-

how gained in the course of the research. It presents the general outcomes of the study with the emphasis laid on the trends, facts, and findings established in the ethnic comparison of the minorities and majorities. This summary assists the audience in grasping the central ideas and results that were presented in the course of the research, which in turn facilitates understanding of the interactional forces inhibiting women's empowerment.

Equally important is the fact that besides providing a synthesis of the results, the chapter provides some crucial recommendations meant for mitigating the identified problems. These are practical strategies advanced for bettering the position of women in the society. In particular, they correlate with increasing access to quality education, enhancing women's participation in political as well as social spheres, ensuring equity in the distribution of government services, and eliminating adverse cultural and social norms that hinder women's development.

The recommendations consider it vital to put in place all the necessary structures to ensure the successful implementation of the interventions meaning that it is not left to just government and non-government organizations or community leaders. They further provide for affirmative action policies that take into account disparities between minority and majority women in order to facilitate all-inclusive empowerment programs for women.

In the end, this chapter does not only provide an overview of the key findings of the research but also proposes the way to go in boosting women's empowerment as a policy. It acknowledges the need for more focus and active measures in the quest for gender balance and provides clear actions that need to be taken in order to address the current state of inequalities and empower women in all spheres of life.

1.7. Literature Reviews:

A. Ansari, in his book titled “*Understanding the Backward Classes of Muslim Society*”¹ deeply explained about the issue of women's empowerment. His research highlighted a very crucial and significant problem regarding education in the Muslim community. There are especially several challenges for Muslim girls for schooling and getting higher education.

The low priority given to education by some families and the early marriage of girls can prevent them from accessing quality of education and preventing reaching their full potential. When a significant part of society is being denied to have this education not only that part it but also a whole community is falling behind from the current progressive society.

This issue not only affects individual girls and their families but also has broader implications for the community as a whole. When a significant portion of the population is denied access to education, the community as a whole suffers from the loss of potential talent, skills, and contributions that could have been made by educated individuals.

For that reason. It is a very significant point to understand about the necessity of Education and to create a basic equal environment so that anybody can access to this Education easily. This may be possible through different welfare policies, awareness programs and initiatives that support education, recognise those societal barriers that may discourage certain community of group from pursuing education and not only provide equal chances for all individuals but

¹ Ansari, A. (1992). "Educational Backwardness of Muslims", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 27, No. 42, pp. 2289-2291.

also regardless of their backgrounds give equal facilities to gain that education they need to live in this society.

Through education, it is easy to create a better world with better opportunities for every individual and build a positive environment in the society which leads us to a prosperous and more equitable society for all individuals.

The book titled “*Rural Muslim Women and Role and Status*” by Sekh Rahim,² focuses on awareness concerning the distinctive problems which Muslim women encounter throughout rural areas of West Bengal. The work addresses the economic, social, and cultural situations affecting minority women within the region of West Bengal.

The economic status along with social circumstances of Muslim women in the West Bengal region seem broad and multidimensional. Despite the state includes a sizable Muslim population, Muslim women frequently experience prejudice as well as exclusion simply due to their sexual orientation, belief systems, and social and economic status.

From a cultural standpoint Muslim women in the state of West Bengal frequently face restrictions and limitations on their mobility, learning. And interpersonal relationships. They could be hindered or possibly banned from pursuing their educational goals or as searching for a position outside their homes, along with they could feel obligated to submit with existing social norms as well as obligations.

² Rahim Mandal, Sekh. (2005). "Rural Muslim Women: role and Status", Northern Book Centre, New Delhi, ISBN:9788172111595, 8172111592.

Additionally, Muslim women in the state might experience harassment and discrimination solely due to their beliefs and identification. Particularly during areas where there is severe communal stress or terror.

Through the final analysis, I am convinced that whereas the living conditions of Muslim women within the West Bengal region has benefited across recent decades but there were very serious problems remained. The condition and grassroots populations should work together to take down the financial, ethnic, and social status hurdles that restrict Muslim women from fully participating in society and achieving their full potential.

Thresi Varghese conducted a study on,” *Women Empowerment in Oman: A Study based on Women Empowerment Index*” in the year of 2011.³ The study’s focus upon expressing the capacities of women to exercise autonomy in domicile choice, influence financial selections, and possess liberty in movement which gives useful insights into the numerous elements of women’s empowerment.

It could be proficient to know for women's empowerment is an important concern throughout Oman, and the fact that the present research is focused on monitoring advancement for the Sohar region.

The implementation within statistical procedures and test of hypotheses deepens the research investigation and strengthens the legitimacy of the results obtained. Recognizing locations wherever women flourish along with areas wherever they're struggling advancement will impact policies and

³ Varghese, Thresiamma.(2011).”Women Empowerment in Oman: A study based on Women Empowerment Index”, Far East Journal of Psychology and Business, Vol. 2, No 2.

developmental strategies that will promote the advancement of women in Sohar and elsewhere. The analysis encourages keeping up efforts to advance awareness concerning the women's advantages and disadvantages.

From a personal standpoint this study's recommendations about continuing measures for improving understanding regarding woman's legal rights and responsibilities is of paramount importance since this may contribute to changing social expectations as well as views pertaining to the positions of women and positions.

In summary, this research has the opportunity to benefit the current endeavors towards achieving equal opportunities for women and women's empowerment in Oman and it could also function as an inspiration of similar research in various other areas.

Giriraj K. S and Basavaraja conducted the study on, ***“Educational Status of Muslim Women in Karnataka”***⁴ highlights the need to continue fighting gender inequality and discrimination in India.

When laws and policies help to create an enabling environment, women will be better off as a result. it is crucial to address the social norms and cultural practices that perpetuate gender discrimination. Active participation is required to accomplish this.

⁴ Girija, K.S and Basavaraja, G. (2014). "Educational Status of Muslim Women in Karnataka" International Journal of Humanities, Arts, Vol. 2, Issue 11, pp. 37-42.

A collaborative approach involving all stakeholders, such as government, civil society, and business community is essential to create a society that is more equitable and just for all members of society.

According to the study, the Indian government has taken various measures to address Issues affecting women in the country. These include being party to international covenants and conventions, ensuring constitutional rights, setting up commissions and committees, and implementing laws for the protection of women's rights.

Despite these measures, the position of women and minorities, especially Muslim women, remains deplorable. As stated in the statement, Indian society is not immune to sharp disparities and inequalities influence of caste, creed, religion, and gender. Women and girls remain the most disadvantaged and deprived members of society.

M Shunmuga, Subburaj Alagarsamy, Sekar M Conducted a study on, ***“Women Empowerment : Role of Education”*** on January 2015.⁵ It is regrettable that discrimination against women begins even before birth .It continues throughout their lives, leading to inequality and vulnerability in all.

In order to bring about rural development, it is important to empower women in all walks of life. Empowering women in all walks of life is essential to fight against the societal constructs of gender and to promote gender equality.

⁵ Sundaram, S. M.; Sekhar, M.; Subburaj, A. (2014), "Women Empowerment : Role of Education", IJMSS, Vol.2, Iss. 12, ISSN: 2321-1784, Impact Factor- 3.259.

It is encouraging to note that the findings of the study indicate that educational attainment plays a significant role in women's empowerment. This underscores the need for increasing women's education. Education not only educates women, but also teaches them how to live their lives and how to earn money for the family. Education gives women the courage to move forward in life and helps them take the tougher decisions in life.

Furthermore, education helps women to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, which can lead to their empowerment. It can also lead to a more gender-equal society, where women's contributions are valued and recognized. So we need to find different ways so that women can get good quality education everywhere. This should be especially noted in rural areas where women tend to lag behind due to the patriarchal social norms.

In conclusion it can be said Education increases the self-confidence of women, therefore, helps them to take life decisions, and to advance in life, so for that reason education should be made important in women's lives. Education gives women the skills and knowledge they need to challenge gender bias, it makes them informed decisions and become active participants in their communities.

Dr. Md. Sahnewaz Sanu conducted a study on ***“Empowerment of Muslim Women in India: A Study of Socio-Economic and Political Disparities”*** in 2018.⁶

The study told us women's empowerment indicators include participation in family decision-making, freedom to move outside the home, political

⁶ Sanu, Md. Sahnewaz. (2018), "Empowerment of Muslim Women in India: A Study of Socio-Economic and Political Disparities", SSRN, Electronic Journal, DOI:10.2139/ssrn.3847355.

participation, and access to education and meaningful employment. According to the study, regardless of how empowerment is measured, Muslim women in India are relatively disempowered compared to men and women of other communities.

Muslim women are under-represented in India when compared to other major communities, where the gender gap in educational attainment and employment is highest. Muslim women experience the greatest lack of independence and empowerment in household decision-making. They are one of the most disadvantaged sections of society due to lack of mobility, being a woman and a member of a minority community in society.

the study suggest that improving the education level of Muslim women will directly affect their socio-economic and political status, but achieving this goal depends largely on society's attitude towards gender equality.

Pradip Chouhan conducted his Study on , ***“A study on literacy and educational Attainment of scheduled castes population in Maldah District of West Bengal, India”***.⁷

This study explains about The disparity in educational attainment between Scheduled Castes and other groups in society can be attributed to social, economic and cultural factors. It is important for policy makers and stakeholders to assess the educational status of Scheduled Castes in Maldah

⁷ Chouhan, P. (2013), “A Study on literacy and educational attainment of scheduled castes population in Malda district of West Bengal, India”, Journal of Geography and Regional Planning, Vol. 11, No. 6 (1), pp. 19-30.

district so as to design effective interventions for their educational development. It is also important to address the issues of child marriage, child labor, and other socio-cultural practices that hinder the education of girls and women.

From my point it is important Providing equal opportunities and access to education for scheduled castes enables them to break the cycle of poverty and inequality and empower them to participate in the socio-economic growth of the country.

Indeed, education and literacy are very important factors that can influence many aspects of a person's life, including demographic behavior, health, and social status.

Jatish Tapader and Amalendu conducted the study on entitled of ***"Education and Development of Schedule Caste Community"*** in 2018, ⁸

They described the constitutional provisions for the educational development of SCs, special facilities for them including literacy and educational advancement. He also discussed the progress of higher SCs in education, educational disparity and reservation institutions for SCs in educational field This study focuses on analysing the enrolment SC ratios of schools as one of his key areas of study.

⁸ Tapader, Jatish ; P. Amalendu.(2018),"Education and Development of Schedule Caste Community", International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews Research Paper, Vol.5. Issue 3, E-ISSN 2348 – 1269, PRINT ISSN 2349-5138.

Apart from the effect of marriage on education, this study also examines the effect of marriage on SCs. The status of SCs in society can be improved by changing social attitudes through education, he suggested.

This article also discusses the disparity between SCs and non-SCs in education as well as the factors contributing to this disparity. There is also the issue of child labor which is discussed as a way to improve educational opportunities for SCs and how it can be eradicated.

In conclusion of this study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by SCs and how to improve access to education through policies and programs that promote educational development and social integration.

B. N. Goswami in his book titled "***Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes***" written in the year of 2003, Goswami's book focuses on the constitutional safeguards that have been put in place for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in India.⁹

One of the key objectives of the book is to compare the literacy rates between scheduled castes and the general population. According to Goswami, the disparity in literacy rates is due to a variety of factors that contribute to these differences. Additionally, the book examines the challenges faced by scheduled caste communities in obtaining education based on their block-level literacy rates. Another important objective of the book is to highlight the education-related issues faced by scheduled castes. Goswami discusses the

⁹ Goswami, B. N. (2003), "Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes", Rawat Publication, Rajasthan, ISBN-10 8170337631, ISBN-13 978-8170337638, pp. 10-290.

causes and effects of illiteracy among scheduled castes, including social and economic factors that contribute to low literacy rates. The book also examines the impact of education on the socio-economic status of scheduled castes and the role of education in promoting their empowerment

Additionally, the book describes the challenges these communities face in accessing education, as well as how education plays an important role in promoting their socio-economic advancement and empowerment.

Overall, Goswami's book provides a thorough overview of the legal and constitutional safeguards to protect the rights of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India. Additionally, the book discusses how education promotes the empowerment of scheduled castes and how it affects their socio-economic status. Throughout the book, the author describes the various laws and legislation enacted to protect the rights of this group.

Risley's study of *"The Tribes and Castes of Bengal"* provides insights into the origin of castes and the prevalence of infant marriage in Bengal.¹⁰ The book illuminates the region's complex social structures and practices, illustrating how caste and marriage practices affect social relations and identity. Overall, the works provide valuable insight into the complex social structures and practices that shape the experiences of marginalized communities in Benin.

¹⁰ Risley, H.H. (1998). "The Tribes and Castes of Bengal", Vol. I, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, pp. 454-457.

There is evidence that caste-based hierarchies have developed and continue to impact social relations and identities in the region, as well as the way those hierarchies continue to impact social relations and identities in the region.

Pradip Chouhan conducted his Study on “ *A study on literacy and Educational attainment of scheduled castes population in Maldah District of West Bengal, India.*”¹¹ It has been suggested that the disparities in educational attainment between scheduled castes and other social groups can be attributed to a variety of economic, social, and cultural factors.

Several other socio-cultural factors hinder the education of girls and women, such as early marriage, child labour, and other practices that are harmful to their health.

Understanding the educational status of Scheduled Castes in Maldah district can help policy makers and stakeholders in designing effective interventions for their educational development.

It Is important to provide equal opportunities and access to education for scheduled castes so that they can be empowered to participate in the socio-economic growth of the country by breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality.

¹¹ Chouhan, Pradip. (2013), "A study on literacy and educational attainment of scheduled castes population in Maldah District of West Bengal, India", Journal of Geography and Regional Planning, DOI-10.5897/JGRP12.028.

It is possible for Scheduled Castes to break free from the cycle of poverty and discrimination and contribute to the socio-economic growth of the country by providing them with equal opportunities and educational opportunities.

In fact, education and literacy is an important factor that can affect many aspects of a person's life, including his behaviour, health and social status.

Arifa Masarat and Dr Laxman kawale studies on the topic ***“Employment, Economic Independence and Autonomy Among Muslim Women”***.¹² This paper focuses on the status of Muslim women in employment, economic independence, And autonomy.

Arifa Masrat and Dr Laxman Kawal's research highlights the concerns Muslims face in achieving economic autonomy and independence, including social and cultural barriers, gender discrimination and limited access to ucation and employment opportunities.

The paper also draws attention to the need for policies and programs that promote women's economic empowerment and address the underlying social and cultural factors that contribute to gender inequality. These include increasing access to training and education, promoting gender-sensitive work environments and initiatives to support women entrepreneurs.

¹² M. Arifa; Kawale,Laxman. (2016)."Employment, Economic Independence and Autonomy Among Muslim Women", GJRA, Vol.5, Issue 2, ISSN No 2277 - 8160, pp. 585 106.

I agree with the fact that it is important to raise awareness and promote gender equality within the Muslim community, as well as advocate for policies and programs that support women's rights and empowerment.

Md Safikul islam and Lubna Siddiqui conducted the study on “*Assessing the Educational Status of Muslim Women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Malda district*”. This study focuses on the economic and social status of Muslim women in Malda district.¹³

It is true that education is essential for the overall development of a person Society, and Islam has placed a lot of emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge. The Quran says Muslims should seek knowledge and educate themselves and their children.

But Muslim women in many parts of India including Malda district Access to education continues to face significant challenges. Education rate is low The rate among Muslim women in the district is a cause for concern and efforts must be made The underlying problem that contributes to this problem will be addressed.

In my opinion after reading the article should try to give more Educational opportunities for Muslim women through establishment More schools and colleges in the region. Scholarships and Financial Incentives This can help encourage more girls to go to school and pursue higher education education.

¹³ Islam, M. S. ; Siddiqui, L. (2016). "Assessing the Educational Status of Muslim Women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Malda District", Vol. 3, DOI:10.5958/2455-6963.2016.00005.9, pp. 40-47.

Ultimately, the government and the entire community must work together
Ensure that Muslim women are equal in Malda district and other parts of India
Access to education and opportunities to achieve their full potential.

The study conducted by Zoya Hasan and R. Menon, titled ***“Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India,”*** focuses on analysing the contemporary state of education, employment, marriage, and various other arenas that signify the quality of life and transformation among Muslim women in India.¹⁴

The paper also seeks to explore the constraints that Indian Muslim women have to contend with to access education and the impersonal labour market in their quest for social mobility. It also covers social inequality when it comes to marrying an employee or going to an educational institution or joining workplace, focusing on the experiences of Muslim women.

The present research uses a qualitative research method and it is based on the fieldwork and interviews with the Muslim women from various areas of India. It reveals the relation between gender and religion and how Muslim women are situated in terms of socio-economic class, geographical location and community. Collectively, the paper offers understanding into the lives of Indian Muslim women and points to the need for adoption of policies and initiatives toward gender equity and diversity among women in India.

¹⁴ Hasan, Zoya.(2004).*“Unequal Citizens: A Study of Muslim Women in India”*, OUP India Publisher, ISBN-13 978-0195665352, ISBN-10 019566535X, pp. 10-290.

The research paper “***Muslim Women Education and Empowerment in Rural Aligarh (A Case Study)***” by Waseem, S. Ashraf, A. and Ahmad, Ayaz, A. also points to the need to work on education as essential for growth of rural territories.¹⁵ The authors’ concentrate on examining the education and the enhancement of the status of Muslim women in Aligarh district especially the rural areas.

This research work as distinct from the previous research paper is primarily relied on first-hand information. The authors have gathered data by using structured questionnaires and face-to- face interviews with Muslim women residing in rural part of Aligarh. This means that this approach offers more elaborate and refined knowledge about women living in rural Muslim areas, and how education may empower them.

The authors expose how the socio-economic status of women in the rural set up determine the status of the woman irrespective of the religion. As for the reasons they state that education is something that can help women to be empowered and enhance the socio-economic status.

Under the title “***Educational Status of Muslim Women in India***”, John, A. and Pande, S. Analyse that education plays a crucial role in the social and

¹⁵ Waseem, Syed ; Ashraf, A.; Ahmad, Ayaz.(2012).“Muslim Women Education and Empowerment in Rural Aligarh (A Case Study)”, Vol. 2, Issue 4, ISSN 2250-3153, pp.1-8.

economic development processes. Muslim girls are the least literate minority in India, the authors also explain this fact during the discussion.¹⁶

In the present study, the authors have collected the data from Census of India Report of 2001 which contains educational status of various population groups in India. They have also used these factors in analyzing the educational scenario of the Muslim women in India and the reason as to why the women have been awarded such little education.

In their conclusion, the authors argue that their study has important implications for Indian policy and law as it is written in the Article 15(1) of the Indian Constitution that

‘No person can be discriminated on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth’.

They assert that the expansion of education to every person regardless of origin is a right granted by the Indian constitution.

All in all, the research paper emphasizes on the importance of reducing disparities in education for Muslim women in India and to enable them access education in order to gain knowledge and skills that will enhance their lives socially and economically.

¹⁶ John, Annie; Shinde, S. V.(2012)."Educational Status Of Muslim Women In India", Vol.1, Issue 6, ISSN:- 2249-894X.

Nasrin in his research paper titled “***Education of Muslim Women – A Journey from Past to Present***” which was conducted in the year of 2013,¹⁷ has tried to highlight the changing educational scenario of Muslim women in India post independence. The author has been confined to the secondary data only for the purpose of analysing the socio-economic factors that led to low education of Muslim women.

In general, the arguments developed in the research paper stress the need for education in advancing the social and economic status of Muslim women in India. The primary importance which it points out is the need for education investment and the emergence of educational system that can take into consideration detailed possibilities and difficulties of Muslim women.

The research paper “***Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Women: In West Bengal: A Comparative Outlook***” written by M. I. Hossain in 2013, the experiences of such problems have been described.¹⁸ The author has ensured that she collected both primary and secondary data in her endeavour to present the socio-economic and the educational status of Muslim women in the region.

It is higher educated Muslim female culture points out that Muslims are the largest minority in West Bengal and Muslim women have many difficulties in education, social economic, and political field. There are various areas of

¹⁷ Nasrin. (2013). “Education of Muslim Women: A Journey from Past to Present”, International Journal of Management and Social Science Research (IJMSSR), Vol. 2, No 1. pp. 37-40.

¹⁸ Hossain, I. (2013). " Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Muslim Women: A Comparative Outlook ", IKSP, Vol.4, No. 10.

difficulties that the author lists, saying that poverty, discrimination, and cultural differences take significant roles among them. The paper also focuses on the improvement of such situations and needs of Muslim women's educations and socio-economic empowerments. Thus the author writes that one can try to solve the problems of Muslim women of West Bengal, through education opportunities, financial aid, and equity for women.

In conclusion, the work done in the research paper emphasizes the necessity to pay more attention and invest in the socio-economic and educational advancement of the Muslim women in West Bengal. This shows that there is need to redress the challenges that are faced by this group as well as enhance gender equality to foster more commensurate development in the region.

Kumar, S. and Mohammad Rizwan conducted a study in 2012 on, ***“Impact of Education on Women Empowerment”***.¹⁹ In order to test the hypothesis, the research focused on the social status of women in various eras namely the Vedic, the Buddhist, the Muslim, the British and the modern era. The study also sought to ascertain these change in women education reforms and the status of women in India.

According to the study, education played a significant role in enhancing the women and their subsequent development and welfare. The study thereby exposed that occurrence of education has substantially contributed towards

¹⁹ M. K. Samar; R. Mohammad. (2012). "Impact of Education in Women Empowerment", IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), Vol. 27, Issue 9, Series 1, e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845, pp. 61-63.

the betterment of the condition of women in India especially during the modern era.

Women in Vedic period were also educated and could specialize in different fields such as music and dance and writing among others. But the study also revealed that during the Buddhist periods women were allowed to study only the religion. In the Muslim period for women was only allowed limited education for them so they were basically allowed only education in religion. But the study imposed that some of the women were still able to gain education in certain areas like medicine and literatures.

During the British era women's education was restricted to only educating few women, those who went to missionary schools. But the research done for this paper revealed that the British period also marked the rise of women's organizations and reform movements that focused on the education of women and their condition.

In conclusion, the study conducted by Kumar and Palanisamy strengthens the argument of women education as an effective tool towards the status of women. The study also points towards the realization that more measures should be taken to educate and empower women in India.

Mukhopadhyay, H. conducted a study on, ***“The Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in a District of West Bengal, India: Women Empower through Education”***²⁰ Reflections on a Survey of Women

²⁰ Mukhopadhyay, H. (2008). "The role of education in the empowerment of women in a district of West Bengal, India: Reflections on a survey of women", JOUR, Vol. 10.
Retrieved From, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290748468_The_role_of_education_in_the_empowerment_of_women_in_a_district_of_West_Bengal_India_Reflections_on_a_survey_of_women.

Education being one of the important determinants of empowering women, the following study was conducted by Mukhopadhyay in 2008 to explore the position of women in the light of education in the district of Malda in West Bengal, India. Survey was used in the study with women in the district. The research also indicated that in the Malda district, women were in a lower status than the men. Some of the issues affecting women were injustices towards women, poor education and limited employment opportunities. It also showed that literature rate among women was less than that of men and they were constraint from getting education.

However, the study also revealed that education improved the status of women and empowered them in the society. It, therefore, became clear that education empowered women besides enhancing their social, economical and even political status.

Education empowered women so that they could be aware of their rights to participate in decision making and access better employment.

From the study, the researcher found out that education plays a vital role in the emancipation of women and changing of their status in society. The study also highlighted the fact that more needs to be done to ensure women education and economic emancipation in Malda district as well as other parts of India.

Thus, the study carried out by Mukhopadhyay is informative of the struggles of the female occupants of Malda district and the role played by education in empowering them. The findings of the study add to an understanding of the ways in which hostility towards gender equality, prejudice against women and

girls, and resistance to change in education systems remain components of social reality that require further exploration and eradication in India.

Rahaman, H. and Barman, H. conducted a study on, ***“Muslims and Education of West Bengal: Theory to Pragmatism”***. The study done by Rahaman and Barman in 2015 was designed to reveal the educational status of the Muslims in West Bengal.²¹ They also performed a theoretical study on sociological nature and used secondary information to form their opinions.

Therefore the research findings showed the following: There was a general low educational status among Muslims in West Bengal, and the Muslims were far off from other communities in regards to education. The authors opined that in regard to the socio-economic upliftment of Muslim in West Bengal, the government along with NGOs should stress on providing education.

The study concluded that the government should offer more educational chances to Muslim and make certain they are given equivalent education opportunities. Thirdly, NGOs should ensure that education to Muslim is enhanced by offering scholarships, grants and any form of support. In general, it looked at how education can facilitate the socio-economic improvement of Muslims in west Bengal.

²¹ Rahaman, H. and Barman, H. (2015). "Muslims and Education of West Bengal: Theory to Pragmatism", International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, Vol. 4, Issue 5, pp. 32-38.

Firdaus Bano conducted a study on ***“Educational Status of Muslim Women in India: An Overview”***.²² Agreeing with it to a certain extent, I can state that education for women is essential for enhancing the health, nutrition and poverty level status of households that are the building blocks of a nation’s economy; However, the social indicators including education where girls and women are concern, depicts that how passionately gender biased our social order is.

It Is also the case with India where the educations of boys and girls have been historically different but Muslim women are in particularly dire straits. The study that was carried out to determine education status of Muslim women and to also identify the future course of action and strategies to empower women without discriminating against them based on their religion, caste or creed is a positive step in this direction.

The study might have given insights into the situations of the Muslim women in education and the prospect of the Muslim women development and change Profiles of the challenges and measures that the Muslim women face in education and their development and social change, including scholarship and other means of financial assistance, accessible education and training, women’s rights and leadership.

The purpose of such a study would be to attain a world of fairness and a world that gives its women not only rights but also a decent life As women are empowered and given an opportunity to make their contributions towards the

²² Bano, F. (2017). "Educational Status of Muslim Women in India: An Overview", IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), Vol. 22, Issue 6, pp. 10-13.

society, the society will become a just society with everybody enjoying the fruits of the society.

Satyajit Saha conducted the study titled ***“Educational Status of Muslim Women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Chapra Block in Nadia District.”***

Knowledge is the key determinant of growth, prosperity and well-being of people and society.²³

And we know very well that no one can have exceptional growth and development without education. This is even more true for the weaker and neglected sections of society i.e. women. It has been found that there is a lack of social science research on Muslim society in India with special focus on women in West Bengal which constitutes a major limitation in the experience-based understanding of Muslim society.

It is in this context that the present paper is an attempt to examine the educational status of Muslim women, especially in the Chapra block of West Bengal. Forty-two years after India's independence, most Muslim women remained economically and politically marginalized in Indian society.

The study will try to find out the educational progress of Muslim women in selected blocks of Nadia district of West Bengal by collecting adequate data. The minority cell of the local block development office will also be consulted.

²³ Saha, Satyajit. (2020). "Educational Status of Muslim Women in West Bengal: A Case Study of Chapra Block in Nadia District", MOJNSOU, Vol.3, No.1, ISSN: 2581-5415.

This research is based on primary and secondary data and must have an impact factor and provide both to the government and civil society. The study will compare and contrast the educational empowerment of Muslim women in selected blocks through both primary and secondary data sources with interviews with the Minority Cell of the Block Development Office.

The results of this research could potentially be of great benefit to governments and civil society. It can be useful in illuminating the educational status of Muslim women in the region and in supporting policy and programmatic steps to improve educational opportunities and equality for Muslim women. It can also raise the awareness of civil society actors and inspire them to engage in efforts in favour of education for Muslim women. In short, this study can make a profound contribution to analyze the educational prospects and / or limitations of Muslim women in West Bengal and further develop its next phase.

Chandra Shekhar Sarkar and Gouri Mondal entitled her work ***“Women education and gender disparity in Murshidabad district of West Bengal”***. First, education gender discourse in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal and secondly, underscores the need for women education for the emanation of overall development.²⁴

According to the data the percentage of female literacy in this district is less as compared to that of female literacy in West Bengal state. It has also lower

²⁴ Sarkar, S. C.; Mondal, Gouri.(2020). "Women education and gender disparity in Murshidabad district of West Bengal", International Journal of Applied Research, ISSN Print: 2394-7500, ISSN Online: 2394-5869, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch.2021.v7.i1a.8141>.

ranking as compared to other districts of West Bengal. Although, there has been the enhancement of the female literacy rate within the last decade, hence there are improvements.

The study also reveals that female literacy rates in the district varies significantly between the blocks with comparatively good female literacy rates in some of the middle and southern blocks and lower rates in some of the northern blocks. In male-female disparity in literacy, the result here shows that some of the western blocks had higher literacy than some of the eastern blocks.

The study also stressed on awareness to eradicate gender inequalities in education as well as challenges in education in different blocks in order to ensure that males as well as females are given equal chance in education. The government needs to increase attention to raise the standards of education by offering better structures and equipment to schools especially in the regions where literacy rate is low.

There is also need to educate the parents and the community that educating a girl should be a priority and that there are social and cultural barriers that hinder girl child to attend school. Measures that can also be taken include offering scholarships and other kinds of financial incentives to make girls to complete their education.

Therefore it is recommended and resolved that political leadership and stakeholders of the district focus on the campaign of educating the districts people and in particular push for the achievement of gender parity and quality education for both boys and girls in the district. It is suggested that the

government should make relevant efforts to push the women education and eliminating the gap between male and female education.

Regarding educational status of women in west Bengal santu biswas has done a work where work is on this title. It is rather encouraging to note from this study that while analyzing the literacy rates in the state of West Bengal it is observed that the same for both men as well as women has been escalating in the recent past. This is also evidenced from the fact that from the Bar chart it is seen that West Bengal has always reported higher literacy rates than the national average rate. But as we have seen, the progressive increase of literacy rates especially for women in the past has been quite slow.

The literacy rates of females have improved greatly in the last decade or so and there is a vast difference when seen in terms of previous decadesinitially,. This is a positive development, which should continue and increase with the aim of allowing women in West Bengal to enjoy education and be engaged in the social, economic, and political activities within the country.

The paper prepared by Dr. Syed Nazmul Hussain, named “***Muslims of West Bengal: An Analysis of the Educational Status of a Minority Community in India.***” reveals the educational state of Muslims in West Bengal.²⁵ The study further focuses on education for the development of communities and West Bengal has a largest Muslim population.

²⁵ Hussain, S. Nazmul. (2009). "Muslims of West Bengal: An Analysis of the Educational Status of a Minority Community in India", JMMA, Vol. 29, Issue 2, pp. 249-260.

The study therefore aims at determining the distributional pattern of Muslims, the trend of the Muslim population, and the concentration pattern of the Muslims population across the state. Since there is no religion-wise data available for any other educational parameter at the district level for any year, the present study uses only the literacy data to analyse the state of Muslims' educational advancement in the region.

The author of the study also supports the idea that the Muslim community of the West Bengal is still comparatively less-educated, and this factor can be further traced as the reason for the relatively backward position of the Muslim community in the Indian context. It therefore makes policy relevant conclusions for future researchers studying minority education in India and also provides guide for policy makers who wish to improve the education quality of minorities in India. It makes one realize the challenges still faced regarding the education of the Muslims in West Bengal in relation to the overall population.

It looks that the Muslim community of West Bengal is educationally not very advanced and due to this the backwardness in economic terms evident in the case of Muslims in India is not unfounded. The conclusion of this study has significant theoretical and practical implications for developing the education of the minorities in India. In this respect, it becomes necessary to seek new ways to identify the existing scholastic gaps between the Muslim populace and the rest in the West Bengal. The study also recommends that policies that seek to enhance the educational status of Muslims should consider the spatial disparities in the distributional pattern of Muslims as well as the distribution of Muslim population in the state.

Nazmul Hussain , Md Zahir Abbas and Saba Owais conducted their study on, ***“Muslims in West Bengal: Trend Of Population Growth And educational Status”*** . The main focus of the study is to help analyze and prove the educational Status of Muslim minorities.²⁶

Although much has been written and spoken on the plight of Muslims in India, there is some truth in the fact that the Muslim community in West Bengal as well as in other parts of India is socially and economically disadvantaged. However, low participation in education still remains a problem that limits education for Muslim of the weaker sections of the population including the children.

Another weakness is the absence of reliable data on religion in relation to the statistics of education This hampers the planning of the education for Muslims in West Bengal as well as in India. To minimize prejudices one has to gather such information regarding religious and ethnic ratios and performance of students in order to discover gaps between them and investigate ways of their reduction.

It also necessary to accept the fact that the Muslims being a separate large group have their sub-groups which have different problems and barriers to education. It is therefore important that any of the policies and the programs that are likely to be formulated to enhance Muslims educational achievements should consider this diversity.

²⁶ Hussain, Nazmul; Abbas, Md Zahir; Owais, Saba.(2012),"Muslims in West Bengal: Trend Of Population Growth And Educational Status", Islam and Muslim Societies: A Social Science Journal, Vol. 5, No. 1.

There are, however, other areas that also influenced the poor social and economic state of the Muslim community, for instance, health needs, employment, and political issues.

In conclusion, it could be ascertained that hence, the social and economic has remained a backward area for the Muslims of West Bengal and in India in general, eradicating this problem is not an easy task because it needs more than simply lip service and it requires a sound and effective strategy.

K. Vasantha Gouri conducted a study of, ***“Women Education and Empowerment in India with Reference to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh”***.

²⁷ From this study I came to know that education and empowerments of women is very important element in the development of families and societies.

The educated women can improve the quality of their families and communities by have better health and child bearing responsibilities, quality child care for improved health and knowledge that can create better opportunities for economic development.

But the gender discrimination is still a huge factor that prevents women from getting education and getting proper jobs in India. The study therefore underscores the need to continue to create awareness, formulate policies and encourage investment on awareness campaigns, education and skill development for women. One can note, that giving a chance to women, the

²⁷ Gouri, K. Vasantha. (2017). "Women Education and Empowerment in India with Reference to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh", Journal of Community Guidance & Research, Vol. 34, No. 2, ISSN-0970-1346, pp. 394-414.

population can become much more fair and that is good for all subjects of society.

Thus, it is known that the education of women should be advocated for and developed to improve gender equality and the prospects of successful sustainable development. According to this view, educated women are in a position to benefit their families, their society, and the society at large. Therefore, it can be seen, that strengthening the education of girls and effective combating of the factors hampering the education of the girl child in India is the need of the time.

Mahafuzur Rahaman and Hasibur Rahaman conducted the study on “***Gnder Disparity in Literacy in Malda District***”, The contradictory finding of this research work reveals the male-female literacy difference in Malda district of West Bengal, India.²⁸

This signifies that although India has achieved Universalization of Elementary education for children the district still has very high rates of female literacy which is a major set back to the achievement of full literacy. The study relies on secondary data and analyzes the ratio of male and female literacy by using the Sopher method while assessing the Intra-block variation disparity from 1991 to 2011 using Coefficient of Variation.

As per the 2011 Census of India, the Malda district has a literacy rate of 61% for the population. 73 %, and the men in the text have a literacy rate of 66 %.

²⁸ R. Mahafujur; R. Hasibur. (2018). "Gender Disparity in Literacy in Malda District", International Journal of Research in Social Sciences, Vol. 8, Issue 10, ISSN: 2249-2496.

24%, women 56% literate etc. The results revealed that 35% of males were illiterate as opposed to 16% of females. But the same study pointed out that the trend of decline in literacy gender gap was significantly sharp after 1991 and the intra-block variability decreased by five times by 2011.

This finding calls for innovation of right strategies and suitable programs which include universal education provision especially at the elementary level to reduce the male-female literacy gap. The achievement of Universal Basic Education and attaining Education For All and achievement of literacy is a task that is not easy given the fact that there exist out of school aged illiterate population, especially girls. As a suggestion, the study proposes that an effective adult literacy program should be provided particularly for the female students who were left out at school and they are aged more than thirty years. In total, the issue of inequality of male-female literacy in Malda district is outlined, and it is stressed that it is high time to address the problem and provide girls and women with the basic human right – education.

Krishnendu Maji and Dr. Sumana Sarkar conducted their study on , ***“Gender Disparity in Literacy Level among Scheduled and Non-scheduled Population: A Case Study of Bankura District, West Bengal (India)”***.²⁹ It brings out the problem of differential enrolment and literacy between the male and female, the scheduled and the non-scheduled tribes of Bankura district in

²⁹ Maji, Krishnendu; Sarkar, Sumana. (2018), "Gender Disparity in Literacy Level among Scheduled and Non-scheduled Population: A Case Study of Bankura District, West Bengal (India) ", International journal of basic and applied research, ISSN 2249-3352 (P), 2278-0505 (E).

West Bengal. It supposes that this difference may be both dependent on socio-economic status and cultural and Oriental position.

Most of the families falling under the Lrawbo district are belonging to Socio-economically backward groups such as the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe populations, and it is quite evident that they had a lower literacy rate when compared to over all the literacy rate of the Lrawbo district. Further, the literacy rate among girls is much lower than boys and it is still lower in case of SCs and STs.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to offer a review on the said gender disparity with emphasis on educational levels in a cross sectional approach distinguishing between the scheduled as well as the non-scheduled tribes. Such information can be useful in understanding the reasons for such difference and as the basis for the strategies and measures set for increasing literacy and education in women, especially of the backward classes.

Manjunatha N.K. conducted study on , ***“A Discourse on Gender Disparity: A Study on Taluks Of Belagavi District”***. Therefore, the passage, which is a brief description of Belagavi District, throws a lot of light on the problem with gender by depicting such aspects as literacy and the sex ratio.³⁰

³⁰ N. K. Manjunatha; Hurakadli, S.M. (2017). "A Discourse on Gender Disparity: A Study on Taluks of Belagavi District", International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development, Vol. 1, Issue 5, ISSN: 2456-6470.

Retrieved From, <https://www.ijtsrd.com/humanities-and-the-arts/geography/2437/a-discourse-on-gender-disparity-a-study-on-taluks-of-belagavi-district/manjunatha-n-k>.

VB also quotes Kofi Annan to understand this tenet to mean that it is crucial for pushing the achievement of sustainable development as well as good governance. According to the secondary data cited in the study, the literacy rate in Belagavi District increased from 76.93% in 2001 to 82.90% in 2011, and the sex ratio improved from 960 in 2001 to 973 in 2011. However, there are still significant disparities between rural and urban areas in both literacy rate and sex ratio, with the urban areas showing higher ratios than rural areas. The author, when comparing the disparities of gender for the years 2001 and 2011 points out that even though there has been an improvement the pace is slow. In this regard, it indicates that there is a need to step up awareness to embrace gender equity in the district.

In a broader context, the study reveals that, the gender gaps in different socio cultural formatting and behavioural aspects is key reason to the failure in the achievement of sustainable development and good governance...

The study hence recommends that efforts should be made to reduce the gender disparities in different socio cultural and behavioural aspects in order to facilitate sustainable development and good governance.

Parikshit Chakraborty conducted a study on, ***“Educational Status of the Tribal West Bengal: Special References to the Paschim Medinipur District.”*** The paper also reveals the problem of educational backwardness of the Scheduled Tribe population in West Bengal, especially if it comes to Paschim Medinipur District.³¹

³¹ Chakraborty, Parikshit.(2019)."Educational Status of the Tribal West Bengal: Special References to the Paschim Medinipur District", JOUR, Vol.9.

The author observes that the tribal communities in India were previously dwelled in less accessible areas near the forests and natural resources and possess their own culture, custom, religion and beliefs which in terms, they are different from other communities. Because of their economic, marginalized, deprived communities, social and political backwardness, educational backwardness is the cause of their livelihood.

As per the census report of 2011, the literacy rate of the tribal community of West Bengal was 57%. In contrast, female literacy rate is only 97% which is still lower than the state and national literacy rates, which are 77. The study also reveals that the district tribal literacy rates are higher than the West Bengal tribal literacy rates and the Indian tribal literacy rates but still lower than the overall literacy rates of India and West Bengal.

The author clearly focuses on the factor of educational facility scarcity to eradicate the backwardness of Scheduled Tribes in their livelihood and other social and economic inequalities. This can be done by targeted efforts like enhancing enrollments in quality facilities, scholarships and monetarily supporting, and raising the prospects of vocational education and skills enhancement.

In sum, it becomes pertinent to stress on the awareness raising process for education amenities for the Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal as well as other regions in India for an inclusive and sustainable development.

Bikash Barman and Dr. Pradip Chouhan conducted the study, ***“Spatio-temporal Variation in Literacy among the Scheduled Caste Population: A***

Sub-divisional Scenario of Koch Bihar District, West Bengal, India."³² The study deals with the examination of literacy among SCs in rural and urban areas of Koch Bihar District, West Bengal.

The study shows the influence of space and time as well as the gender difference with regards to the literacy levels. The government of India has classified scheduled castes as a backward community in the Indian society and in Koch Bihar district its population is 53% of total population of the district.

The literacy rate of the total population in the district is 75.49%, which is slightly less than the state average (77.08%) but higher than the country average (74.67%). However, the SC literacy rate in the district is 73.56%, with male and female literacy rates at 80.67% and 58.04%, respectively. This shows a significant gender disparity in literacy rates among the scheduled caste population.

For the purpose of data analysis, statistical tools like Standard Score (Z-Score) and Sopher's Disparity Index has been employed in the study (Kundu and Rao, 1986). The study has also used maps and diagrams in its results through the use of GIS software to aid in cartographic presentation.

In general, the findings of the study suggest that education Literacy and difference between male and female are still prevail and needs to be addressed among the scheduled caste population of the Koch Bihar district. The aspects

³² Barman, Bikash; Chouhan, Pradip.(2017). "Spatio-temporal Variation in Literacy among the Scheduled Caste Population: A Sub-divisional Scenario of Koch Bihar District, West Bengal, India", IOSR-JHSS, Vol. 22, Issue 7, e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845, DOI: 10.9790/0837-2207100111.

of literacy and social mobilizations among the SC also avails them a better chance of social uplift and socio – economic betterment.

The author stresses the need to accord priority to the problem of educational disadvantage of the Scheduled Tribes in order to change their living condition and minimize gaps between them and other citizens. This can be done by the implementation of several focused programs like enhancing education standards and boosting literacy rate, providing and increasing the number of scholarships and financial aid, and encouraging vocational study and skill development schemes.

In general, the study suggests countries and policy makers to strive for ensure on the education of the ‘Scheduled Tribe’ in West Bengal and rest of the country to ensure inclusion and sustainable development.

The study was carried out by Dr. Patil N. A. and Dr. Suryawanshi A. S. ; entitled , ***“Disparity in the Level of Literacy a Spatio-temporal Case Study of Jalgaon District Maharashtra State (2001-2011).”***³³In the context of the above stated research objectives, the study wants to analyze the rural-urban literacy differential in each tahsil of the district in the following years: 2001 and 2011.

Disparity Index is used to measure the rate of literacy change between rural and urban areas. The study has clearly mentioned that there is a clear gap of

³³ N. A. Patil; A. S. Suryawanshi. (2019). " Disparity in the Level of Literacy a Spatio-Temporal Case Study of Jalgaon District Maharashtra State (2001-2011)", Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR).

literate rate between male and female in rural and urban areas of the tahsil in Jalgaon district.

As for the statement that literacy as one of the crucial indicators which define the quality of the population and socio-economic development. Literary mapping involves analysis of spatio temporal distribution of literacy and is useful in understanding the causes of disparities in literacy levels with intention of eradicating adult illiteracy. In Jalgaon District of Maharashtra, there appears to be a marked difference in rural and urban literacy as well as male and female literacy because cities tend to pull in more males for education and employment.

Dr. Prameela Margaret P, Conducted a study on ***“Women education in India”***. It is important to prioritize women’s education and empowerment in India and the National Education Policy (NEP). ³⁴ The NEP seeks to mainstream gender concerns in all educative processes, and the enrollment and retention of girls in formal and non-formal education.

The NEP also do support the employment of rural women as teachers and also the elimination of gender inclinations within the curriculum. Different measures have been incorporated for women education like the modified Blackboard Scheme which state that at least fifty percent teacher recruited should be women under the NFE program. Another ongoing scheme is one to

³⁴ P.P. Margaret.(2017).“Women Education in India”, International Journal of Development Research, Vol. 07, Issue 12, pp.17846-17848.

strengthen boarding and hostel facilities for girl students of secondary and higher secondary schools for higher retention of girl students.

To enhance women's participation in the educational process gender sensitization programs for the educational actors and parents across the country have initiated positive change for the girls' education. In conclusion, the essence of education and empowering the women of India is one of the key components of development thus the issue should not be let to fade out.

Kalpna Saxena carried out this study on, ***“Status of Women Education in India with Particular Reference to Women Empowerment and Development”***. Education of women is however a significant tool for the growth and development of any society.³⁵

As for women, our clothing doesn't only equip them to handle the challenge and disregard conventional roles of women but also makes them have a better life. Concerning the education of women in India, both the government and society have realized its significance and have tried to enhance it.

However, the progress of women's education in rural areas of India is slow, indicating that a significant portion of women in the country remains uneducated, vulnerable, backward, and exploited. Education is a powerful tool

³⁵ Saxena, Kalpna.(2017). "Status of Women Education in India with Particular Reference to Women Empowerment and Development", IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), Vol. 22, Issue 3, e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845, DOI: 10.9790/0837-2203070104, pp. 01-04.

for the progress and advancement of women in society, and it is important not to overlook its significance.

This paper examines the issue of women's access to education in India, highlighting some of the challenges and obstacles that women face in pursuing education. Based on the analysis of emerging issues, the paper proposes recommendations and suggestions for grassroots level interventions, key initiatives, and policy frameworks to improve women's access to education. By empowering women through education, India can move towards becoming a developed and prosperous nation.

Pinki conducted a study on, “*Educational Status of schedule Caste Women in Punjab and Hariyana : A Comparative Analysis.*” In this presentation, Amerden is compared to another organisation, which has an established programme in this area, so that lessons can be learned from them.³⁶

In this paper, the attempt is made towards highlighting the educational status of the SC women of Haryana and Punjab states of India. It also provides the comparison between the overall female literacy rate and the literacy rates of other women especially of small-scale farmers in the two states. In this paper the author looks at the enrolment in higher education and the level of education, the scheduled caste women attained.

³⁶ Pinki.(2022). "Educational Status of schedule Caste Women in Punjab and Hariyana : A Comparative Analysis", International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science (IJEMMASSS), Vol. 04, No. 02, ISSN : 2581-9925, pp.111-118.

However, it is worth to appreciate that education act as a basis for the human and economic development of second gender, caste, religion or tribe individuals. However some of the dispossessed of the society including the scheduled castes in India for example are still discriminated against and live in substandard conditions. Women in such communities have even higher problems and hindrances to education, and hence to their social and economical status.

Consequently, with such research and analysis, it is expected that the policymakers and the other stakeholders in the education system

Hossain M. I. made a study on, ***“Muslim Women of West Bengal: An Enquiry into their Minority Status”***, The author stated specific problems of Muslim women in West Bengal because of their minority status.³⁷

The study noted that Muslims are the most populated religious minority people in the state but less privileged as compared to other religious minorities. Some of the factors listed included poverty, illiteracy and joblessness, prejudice, and political dysfunction as the key determinate of their growth and transformation. The study also focused on the plight of the muslim women more so because such harassed individuals suffer from two fronts, their religion and their gender. A majority of the Muslim women of West Bengal have restricted mobility, restricted education, and restricted employment and most of them get trapped in the Patriarchal customs and

³⁷ Hossain, Intekhab.(2012). "Muslim Women of West Bengal: An Enquiry into their Minority Status", Journal Of Humanities And Social Science (JHSS), Vol.4, Issue 3, ISSN: 2279-0837, ISBN: 2279-0845, pp. 14-21.

practice of their society. This can result in loss of power and autonomy in decision making, high risk of domestic violence as well as other forms of abuse.

In conclusion the study concludes that there is need to address the socio-economic and gender facts affecting muslim women westbengal for their development. This implies that perhaps what is required to effectively address some of these challenges is either policy intervention through the development of specific policies or programmes and or community based campaigns aimed at challenging the still dominant traditional cultural beliefs.

Nures Salam conducted a study on ***“Education and Empowerment of Muslim Women in the District Murshidabad, West Bengal.”***³⁸ This study is centered on the progress of minority women in relation to the education of women in West Bengal with special attention to the Murshidabad district.

Women are very highly rated all over the world as the most precious being and human capital in the development of any nation. Despite the fact that there are many minority women who have become successful in society and act as role models for others, there are very few of them.

The article is very useful in that after I read the article I can now comprehend that the facilities such as the right to Equality, Protection of the Interest of

³⁸ Salam, Nures.(2019)."Education and Empowerment of Muslim Women in the District Murshidabad, West Bengal", IMPACT: IJRHAL, Vol. 7, Issue 3, ISSN (P): 2347-4564; ISSN (E): 2321-8878, pp. 235-242.

Minorities in regard to education, and the right to freedom had been granted and introduced by Our Indian constitution.

Khusboo Singh studies on *“The importance of Education in the empowerment of women in India.”* Thus, this Article mainly accentuates how Knowledge can protect the women community in India. ³⁹

It is essential to comprehend that women are the primary architects of a whole family as well as an educated society. I fully support Khusboo singh’s idea that education is one of the keys that provide women’s rights and help minimize gender inequality in India. This is quite regrettable given that the current rate of illiteracy amongst women in India is still lower than that of the male gender despite tremendous progress in the recent past. This underlines the need for society and government to encourage the female gender to go to school and remove obstacles and hindrances that deny them education.

As she said, education does not only enlighten individual women; it also contributes to the overall development of the society because women are vital in raising families and communities. Hence, supporting women education can be sure way of helping to achieve an integrated, fair and developed society.

³⁹ Singh, Khushboo. (2016). "Importance of Education in Empowerment of Women in India", Motherhood International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development, A Peer Reviewed Refereed International Research Journal, Volume I, Issue I, eISSN-2456-2831, pp. 39-48.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay and Basu book titled *“In Search of Space: The Scheduled Caste Movement in West Bengal after Partition”*⁴⁰ appears to be a comprehensive monograph which deals with various aspects of these communities viz. , their origin, characteristics, distribution pattern, and conditions – socio-economic, political and religious etc.

With focus on analyzing the historical and socio-cultural factors that impact SCs in West Bengal, Singh’s work is beneficial in understanding the prospects and issues SCs encounter. It can assist in the formulation of policies and intervention measures that can improve the social and economic status of SCs, and the conditions that have prevented it.

To avoid such generalizations It becomes crucial to understand that the experiences of SCs are mediated by factors such as their caste status, socio-economic status, the regions they originate from, and their mastery over education and resources. Therefore, by analyzing such factors in relation to West Bengal, readers of this book may be able to appreciate the complexity of the issue regarding SCs in this particular state and hence, strive to develop better approaches and policies in addressing the situations.

All in all, this body of work by Singh regarding the SCs of West Bengal has its utility as a resource for scholars, policymakers, and social activists to authenticate the narratives of this ostracized community of India with an intention to achieve social justice and equity.

⁴⁰ Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar; R. C. A. Basu.(2014), "In Search of Space: The Scheduled Caste Movement in West Bengal after Partition", Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, ISSN 2348 0297, pp. 05-22.

Sekhar Bandyopadhyay's book *"Caste, Culture and Hegemony – Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal"*⁴¹ critiques the historiography of the British India in Bengal especially focusing on the historiography of the scheduled Castes population that constituted 16 percent of Bengal's population. Thus to covering about 84% of the total population of the district.

The author has done a splendid job of reflecting on how the colonial administration and the Indian nationalist movement approached the question of caste, and the scheduled castes in particular. According to Bandyopadhyay, the colonial state was more of interested in ensuring law and order and hence tried to mediate caste relations through legal and bureaucratic means.

In conclusion, it can be stated that with Bandyopadhyay's book, historiography of caste in colonial Bengal has been enriched and the ways colonialism, nationalism and social inequalities passed through and constructed the realities of caste relations have been made complex.

Husain, Zakir on 2010 conducted a study on, *"Gender disparities in completing school education in India: Analyzing regional variation"*.⁴² Based on the results of this study, it is possible to conclude that existing gaps in the completion of school education between genders are indeed higher in

⁴¹ Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar.(2004). "Caste, Culture and Hegemony: Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal Hardcover", Sage India, ISBN-10. 0761998497, ISBN-13. 978-0761998495, pp. 10-250.

⁴² Husain, Zakir. (2010), "Gender Disparities in Completing School Education in India Analyzing Regional Variations". Retrieved From, <https://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/25748/>

North India than in the rest of the country. The research also shows that discrimination effects are high in Eastern India regardless of their place of residence.

The Gender Disparity Index which is adopted in the study aids in computing the degree of disparity of school education for the female gender across the various regions in India. The total results show that the gender-gap is more in North India for both total population and rural population at the time of census 2011. This conclusion points to the possibility that there is an existence of unique cultural and societal norms that augur poorly for enhancing equality for female education in this part of the world.

The investigation applied the Fairlie decomposition method of estimating the extent to which specific factors account for the differences in probabilities of completing school education across various regions. The findings further confirm that discrimination effects are likely to be more pronounced in Eastern India, arising from the findings that other factors such as socio-economic characteristics may not fully explained gender disparities in education in this region.

In conclusion, the study has shown that gender inaccessibility to education is an intricate problem that cannot be solved single handily. Efforts towards controlling cultural and societal imprints that fuel these gaps, besides focusing well grounded and directed efforts on empowering girls and women by offering them educational opportunities will go along way in lessening gender imbalances in education across the country.

Dr. S Santhi , Dr. R Radha, and Paranthaman conducted a study On “**Indian Women Status: A Historical Perspective**” in the year of 2019. This article is about Women’s Roles as portrayed in history The above statement of fact is very much true to some extent that Women in Ancient India had a much higher status than those of Medieval India more specifically.⁴³

This paper admits the fact about the fluctuating position Of women of India in the ancient era based on time and location. During the Vedic period women enjoyed a little economic independence and engaged in ritualistic processes. However, the medieval period became unfruitful in the social status of women as it became worse than the previous ages.

Thus, it should be pointed out that the position of women in contemporary India also remains somewhat different at different regions and cultures. All in all, I may state that women have taken an important part in the advancement of mankind’s race and their participation in social, economical, and household affairs should be respected and valued. The knowledge of the Indian women history makes it possible to understand their inputs and strive to have justice in the nation for all.

Dr. Ashish Kumar pal conducted a study on “**Trends and status of Muslim minority women :a case of West Bengal**”. It is hereby suggested that in order to understand the wealth of human conditions prevailing among the minorities and the effort that is required to overcome them, it becomes imperative to study the educational and social status of the minorities.

⁴³ S. S; R. R; G. P; Thailagam, G. Poornima. (2019). "Indian Women Status: A Historical Perspective", MJSSH, Vol. 3, Issue 2, ISSN: 2590-3691, pp. 258-266.

In this connection, the present research is mainly concerned with the education profile and future direction of the minority women selected districts of west Bengal, India. The objective of the given research is to analyse the potential of education in minority girls' emancipation as well as the minimisation of gender gap in society.

In this context, the results of the present study imply that education does in fact can increase women's output in economic processes, within various formal and informal activities. Furthermore, the issue of females education has engaged all the community even the minority girls as education acts as key tool among women for their emancipation and social and economic enhancement.

In total, it could be concluded that present research revealed a critical role of education towards the enhancement of gender equity and women's empowerment, especially among marginalized ethnic minorities. It requires more efforts towards the promotion of education and raising awareness and advocating for girl and women education and their equal access to education regardless of their standard income and cultures.

Dr. Rumpa Das conducted a study on, ***“Problems of Women in Achievement the Goal of Higher Education- A study”***, Thus the objective of the study is two pronged. Primarily it seeks to examine the extent of awareness among women as regards to higher education.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Das, Rumpa. (2020), "Problems of Women in Achievement the Goal of Higher Education- A study", Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt, 17(9). ISSN 1567-214.

This is important because the level of awareness to the career pathways is an important factor in any decision that women make to continue with their education to the higher learning institutions. Secondly, the main concern of the investigation will be to establish some of the challenges that beset women who are in the process of studying in higher institutions. It is therefore important in order to appreciate the obstacles to women's pursuit and completion of higher education.

In summary the findings of the present study highlight the concerns referring to women's education, and the issues which prevent them to pursue higher education. Education of women means not only the woman becomes empowered, but all rounded development of the societies and transformation of the nation take place.

Mahesh Verma produced a study on “***Gender Girl and Women Education.***”

⁴⁵ The gender disparity feature in Mahesh Verma's study where Muslim minority women and girls have been found to be marginalized in their bid to get an education. This work also points out the fact that education is not always a factor accredited much value in the improvement of status of women in Muslim families.

Mr Verma has rightly focused on developing leadership qualities among women which will contribute towards women's personality development and empower them. Women should be encouraged to embrace leadership roles so

⁴⁵ Verma, Mahesh. (1900). "Gender Girl and Women Education", Raj Publications, New Delhi, ISBN 10. 8189239236, ISBN 13. 978-8189239237.

that they can be more productive within the societies thereby reducing the barriers placed by gender unconstitutional norms.

However, Mr. Verma's recommendation on how society should fund women's organizations as well as take care of women's health is very vital in fostering gender equity. Educating people and making it possible for women to be promoted to higher levels in organizations will assist in changing society and bring equality of women to that of men.

All in all, from Verma's study, it becomes clear that Muslim minority women are also victims of the gender inequality issue and there are measures that can be taken to reduce such inequality. Still, the debate on this issue and the efforts to enhance women's rights and equality of opportunities should be sustained.

1.8. Conclusion:

Finally, this research ends with containing suggestions and recommendations for the empowerment of minority women in some specific blocks in Murshidabad and Malda in West Bengal along with the scope of further research.

I must mention one important subject of this research which is limitations, which I faced in every aspect during the interviews and interactions. It is very difficult to collect data from women's communities, as they are very modest in showing their feelings, sometime they may not feel comfortable sharing experiences with male people. They are very much introverted and possessed with family and not interested in sharing the cons of the family if they have

any of them. Some of them are not sharing their name as well, and many religious obstacles are there behind this act.

In the question of monthly income, they are not willing to share the exact date because of a misunderstanding, sometimes they have doubted me as an income tax officer, and many of them assumed me an agent of the central government who came to collect the data to implement the NRC.

Last but the least, after the COVID pandemic people are scared to interact with unknown people, that's why in many places I need to take the help of some local students who actually know me personally.

In this research, the most important part is the bibliography which follows APA reference styles, provided at the end of this discussion. The appendix section of this thesis contains different subjects, like, an abbreviation, questionnaires, figures (tables, charts, diagrams, pictures), etc.

Chapter – II

Different Types of Empowerments that Empowering Women in Indian Society: A Pathway to Progress

Gender bias and crucial differences between men and women have been prevalent since the very beginning of our society. Gender discrimination and the distinction between men and women are not new, this distinction has existed since the dawn of civilization. Regardless of numerous social difficulties that have been conquered through the years, there has been no active element of change in the context of patriarchal supremacy up to the present moment.

Yet while the gender disparity seems to have reduced in some ways in metropolitan areas, gender stereotypes remain prevalent within rural society. It is vital to recognize the difference between independence and authoritarianism whilst many of the demands that feminist groups make currently are centralized. . In this instance, as we evaluate feminist movements at various points, one may see that in the early stages, women merely complain toward about being present within society on an equal level with men, but their requirements inevitably modify toward a patriarchal culture.

Undoubtedly, if feminist thought exhibits such via hoping for that certain more boundaries are going to collapse from the patriarchal society, there will be a

significant possibility the fact that sexism will create additional inequality by prohibiting most men from future power positions of authority alongside at some point resulting in another form of discrimination for all genders.

2.1. A brief concept of feminism and its different waves:

To thoroughly research feminism, one must have a thorough understanding of its history. In West Bengal today, addressing women's welfare and empowerment is similar. In order to achieve this effectively, we must first examine the history of previous feminist groups, including their aims and demands. We will discuss these critical points in the following section.

Women's Rights is a centuries-old and important political movements committed towards eradicating disparities in gender and attaining equal opportunities among men and women. feminist thought is a vague expression having numerous implications, rendering it challenging to explain. Historical eras, typically referred to as "*waves*,"¹ could be used to explain the phenomenon.

Waves are often used to briefly gives the explanation of many different phases of feminism, but they also have limitations. This eradicated the complexity of ideas and contests between individuals. In reality, feminism's history is more complex as well as messy than linear growth. Feminism also has various sub-

¹ Baumgardner, J., and Richards, A. (2000). "Manifesta: Young women, feminism, and the future". New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux Publications, ISBN 9780374526221, 0374526222.

groups each of which expands on and frequently disagrees with the other subgroups. The wave metaphor, however, is a useful tool for understanding the history of feminism. There is no complete narrative, but it provides a framework for the story. At this point, feminism has been characterized by four main waves.²

The first wave of feminism began in the late nineteenth century and constituted the first coordinated political movement for equality for women in the Western world. There had been a few discussions about women's rights before, but this happened to be the first time they solidified into an influential campaign. Around 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft³ authored an influential book entitled *"Vindication of the Rights of Woman,"* which addressed the notion that women were inferior to men. During 1848 around 210 women were brought together at a church and issued more than 12 resolutions asking for special rights, including having the right to vote. They additionally encouraged for reproductive liberty which means they should be given the ability to determine whether or not to bear children.

Decisions about having children. It underwent a long period of labor, however in 1920, the United States Congress passed the 19th Amendment, allowing women the right to vote. It marked a tremendous accomplishment, but it took place more about 31 years after New Zealand established the first country to provide women the right to vote.

² Brunell, L., and Burkett, E. (2021). "Feminism", Encyclopedia Britannica, Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism>

³ Alhumaid, K. (2019). "Feminist perspectives on education and pedagogy: A Meta-synthetic insight into the thought of four American philosophers", Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies, 8(3), E-ISSN 2281-4612, ISSN 2281-3993, Doi: 10.36941/ajis-2019-0003, pp. 30-43.

The primary purpose of the first wave of feminism movement was to demonstrate and signify to the society that women weren't just objects or property, but beings of humanity with rights and dignity. Nevertheless it is also crucial to emphasize that those at the leading position of this movement were primarily focused on rights of white women and overlooking other community of women which created challenges for feminism in the years that followed next.⁴

The second wave of feminism happened during 1960s and 1970s which was a continuation of the first wave. The second wave was a challenge to traditional ideas about the role of women in society. As part of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, activists were inspired by the Civil Rights movement as well as protests against the Vietnam War. They wanted to understand and analyse why women were treated unfairly and held back in society.

During this they start asking and questioning regarding gender roles and expectations that limited women's opportunities and employment. As well as they also began exploring various theories about understanding and supporting LGBTQ+ people⁵. It was during this period that an array of significant victories occurred. For example The Equal Pay Act of 1963 passed to ensure women were paid equally for their work and *Roe v. Wade*

⁴ Beasley, Chris. (1999). "What is feminism anyway? Understanding contemporary feminism". Sydney: Allen and Unwin, ISBN 1 86448 4373, pp. 30-38.

⁵ Gruberg, Sharita; Mahowald, Lindsay; Halpin, John. (2020). "The State of the LGBTQ Community in 2020: A National Public Opinion Study", Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/state-lgbtq-community-2020/>

was decided by the Supreme Court in 1973, upholding their right to choose abortion.

During this time, a total of three different kinds of feminism emerged. Mainstream or liberal feminism tried to improve current organizations through lowering gender discrimination, boosting woman's possibilities within overwhelmingly male-dominated sectors, and advocating equal rights. The ideology of radical feminism wanted to become significantly rebuild society, considering it as mostly traditionally male-dominated and arguing that true the liberation demanded a complete reform. They complained because they thought men and women were equal. Cultural feminist movements had a similar perspective, stating that there is a separate and substantial feminine identity that divides women from men.

The third wave of feminism occurred in the decade of the 1990s, afterwards the second wave's advancement of women's rights and power. Women started embracing their distinctive personalities and have difficulty over conventional standards. Women flaunt themselves more independently which confounded second-wave feminists who attacked standard of femininity. Around this period there were several different opinions and movements and the most important rule was that there were no major laws, letting each woman to determine her own life path.

Third-wave feminism⁶ also developed more preoccupied regarding racial problems. The third wave cantered around formerly neglected disparities in race. In 1992, Rebecca Walker, at the time a 23-year-old Black bisexual

⁶ Blevins, K. (2018). "Bell Hooks and consciousness-raising: Argument for a Fourth Wave of Feminism". In J. Vickery and T. Everbach (Eds.), *Mediating Misogyny*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, DOI:10.1007/978-3-319-72917-6_5.

woman, created the phrase "third-wave feminism". With the development of the World Wide Web, feminists from all over this world could readily convey with one another about their views, rendering feminism more accessible and attracting a broader range of people.

Feminism develops more broad-based and deepens its boundaries. The fourth wave of feminism differs significantly from the prior waves. Some believe that we remained in the third wave, while others consider the fourth wave as a continuation of the movement's progress.

One thing is certain, the online world has been playing an integral part in this new wave, propelling feminist ideology towards the digital era. It expands upon the concepts of inclusion and explores what empowerment, equality, What does freedom genuinely mean? In the fourth wave, feminism continues to concentrate on intersectionality, which is essentially involves comprehending how various forms of oppression overlap. Critics charge **"white feminism"** of overlooking the specific difficulties of women from minority groups and oppressing their opinions.⁷

Transgender rights are also a significant in the conversations. Some feminists required to ensure that transgender women and individuals who do not match requirements gender norms feel at ease and welcomed. The fourth wave is challenging and complicated having multiple motions that frequently indicate or even clash. This strain is natural and should not be ignored. While certain

⁷ Savali, Kirsten West. (2016). "When and Where I Enter: The Racist Expectations of Whites-Only Feminism". The Root. Accessed on 27 December 2021.
Retrieved From, <https://www.theroot.com/when-and-where-i-enter-the-racist-expectations-of-whit-1790855079>

forms of liberalism can result in negative consequences, having a variety of points of view promotes feminism less exclusive and fruitful in the end.

2.2. Different Types of Empowerments and Progressive Pathway:

Empowering women is essential in India. It involves offering women the ability to make independent choices, equal opportunity, and getting involved in major decisions. India has made gains toward empowering women, but there are still barriers left. This article talks about the empowerment of women in Indian society, highlighting achievement accomplished remaining challenges, and what might be done to keep driving forward.

2.2.1. The Process of Economic Empowerment:

Women's economic empowerment is critical to altering their social position. across recent years, the number of women entering the labour and becoming entrepreneurs has grown across India, and West Bengal is also working to empower women in several areas. Women became able acquire skills, acquire loans, and begin enterprises owing to government endeavours such as the Skill India Mission and Start-up India. In addition, the introduction of maternity benefits, telecommuting alternatives, and legislation designed to encourage

equal opportunities for women have all helped foster the economic empowerment⁸ of women.

2.2.2. The Process of Political Empowerment:

Political engagement is a vital and very significant part of women's empowerment. In India reservation measures have been successfully used to encourage the representation of women in political participation. The Women's Reservation Bill, which seeks to secure the positions for women in the legislature. It is a significant advancement toward guaranteeing their political power strength.

In addition, grassroots efforts like Self Help Groups (SHG) have strengthened women on the local scale, empowering them to get involved with processes of decision-making and becoming change agents in their own communities.⁹

2.2.3. The Process of Educational Empowerment:

Education is an essential and important part for Women empowerment and with that breaking down gender stereotypes. The Indian government has opted several different kinds of measures designed to encourage female education ration , notably the Right of Women to Education Act (RWEA) and the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter- SDED)

⁸ Tamuli, Padmaja; Mishra Kaushik.(2023). "Economic Empowerment of Women in India: A Study on ASHA workers", Sunbeam Publisher, Infinite Horizons: Indian Women Reshaping Tomorrow, pp.249-253.

⁹ K,Shridhar.(2029). " POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA: An Experience and Expectation", E-ISSN 2348-1269, P- ISSN 2349-5138, 2018 IJRAR, January 2019, Volume 06, Issue 1.

campaign. Due to these attempts, more females are now going to school and college.

Despite these outstanding achievements, there are impediments that interfere with women from altogether gaining from educational empowerment, especially around remote areas. Violence based on gender early marriage, and social constraints present substantial challenges. These damaging practices could discourage females from obtaining an education. It is also limiting their potential for growth and success.¹⁰

It is essential to deal with Removal of these restrictions to properly Empower women through higher Education . Ensuring secure and encouraging environments for girls to go to school and acquire knowledge is crucial. Developing consciousness regarding the worth of education and preventing unfavourable mind-sets and preconceptions is also critical. Moreover, Enjoining families and community members in supporting girls' education might have a major difference in cultivating women's empowerment in India.¹¹

2.2.4. The Process of Social Empowerment:

The Idea for women's empowerment is going beyond education and includes various aspects of society. Giving Challenge to the patriarchal norms and systems is a key part of this movement. Since this movement seeks to refute

¹⁰ Abha Avasthi and A.K Srivastava ed.(2001). "Modernity, Feminism and Women Empowerment", Rawat Publication, New Delhi, pp. 170-173.

¹¹ Singh, Khushboo. (2016). "Importance of Education in Empowerment of Women in India", Motherhood International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, A Peer Reviewed Refereed International Research Journal, Volume I, Issue I, pp. 40-47.

conventional assumptions about women rights .The #MeToo movement in India had been an important move in this direction encouraging women to speak out against harassing and focusing emphasis on the prevalent problem of gender-based violence.¹² Government support have additionally helped greatly in confronting social concerns and cultivating gender equality. Such like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign had an important role in spreading consciousness about the necessity of and making investments in girls' education. Throughout this it expects to counteract the tendencies for male youngsters and lower gender discrimination and inequality.

In addition, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean india mission is a governmental project that greatly affected female empowerment in India. It promotes the establishment of their homes toilets which have a major effect on feminine safety and dignity by rendering them less susceptible to harassment and abuse when relieving themselves outside. Although these attempts are making progress , further progress is necessary to accomplish women's empowerment completely in India.¹³

It will be necessary for us to continually work on women's economic empowerment, healthcare, and employment by eliminating deeply ingrained patriarchal practices and beliefs . It involves promoting equal opportunity for men and women in every aspect of living , particularly in employment, education , and domestic responsibilities . Further, to achieve true

¹² Sharma, K.L.(1997)." Social Stratification in India: Issues and Themes", Sage Publication, New Delhi, p.16.

¹³ "Swachh Bharat Abhiyan: PM Narendra Modi to wield broom to give India a new image".(2014). The Times of India, Accessed on 2 October 2021.

Retrieved From, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Swachh-Bharat-Abhiyan-PM-Narendra-Modi-to-wield-broom-to-give-India-a-new-image/articleshow/44039120.cms>

independence, it is important to maintain effective enforcement of existing regulations and legislation that protect women .

While there currently have been a few beneficial develops, women in Indian culture continue to encounter a variety of challenges. Gender-based violence, that includes abuse at home, assaults on women, and the dowry crimes, is an important concern.¹⁴ These negative activities not only endanger woman's mental and physical wellness, but also limit what they can do to live lives that are satisfying. Patriarchal views that have become vehemently established within culture frequently limit women's choices and liberty. These thoughts might hinder their entry to higher education, job prospects, and decision-making procedures. likewise, the movements of women may be limited, making it harder for them to achieve what they want. Despite developments disparities in income between men and women still remain. Women often encounter a gender-based pay gap, receiving a lower salary than males for doing the same job.

It is believed that economic disparities do not only undermine their financial liberty, but also diminish their ability to provide for themselves and their dependents on a daily basis. As a result, women's access to decent health care is often restricted, particularly in rural areas where adequate health care may be lacking. There could be serious consequences for their health and well-being if they do not have access. Additionally, women are undervalued in managerial positions in a variety of subjects, which includes politics, industry, and other enterprises. A lack of representation in decision-making processes

¹⁴ Ibid. No.12.

leads to an voluntary increase in gender disparities and inequality in the society which actually lowers women position in common world.

In order to achieve genuine empowerment for women in India, regularly it is essential to tackle such problems meticulously. These may include creating and maintaining comprehensive regulations and legislation for safeguarding and securing women from any assault ,violence and intolerance. It also include advocating equal treatment for men and women through educational and awareness endeavors which aimed at challenging as well as deteriorating beliefs and standards. Promoting and giving support in women's financial engagement and responsibility through assisting measures may assist in shorten the disparity in pay between men and women and boost women's representation inside positions of prominence.¹⁵

In order to accelerate and boost women empowerment in Indian society every person has to work together. It is crucial to guarantee that the laws are maintaining women's rights are sufficiently put in place, which requires boosting the legal structures. Giving girls educational benefits in economically disadvantaged regions may improved chances of receiving excellent education. It has the potential to substantially increase their long-term empowerment. Reducing negative social and cultural standards is also vital. It could be addressed through campaigns to raise awareness, community engagement, and encouraging media messaging. Women's political and economical independence calls for motivating them to consider taking up positions of power, and additionally offering instructing and skill development

¹⁵ Ibid. No.10

opportunities. The moment we all work together, we can make India's women more equitable, significant, strong and influential.

Women's empowerment is a significant catalyst for the larger development of Indian society. While improvement has been made across multiple areas, further attempts have to be made to solve the remaining difficulties. By stimulating economic opportunity, political participation, educational opportunities, and equal treatment in society, India can foster an environment in which women may thrive, contribute to national prosperity, and motivate future generations. Women's empowerment is more than purely a women's concern; it is an urgent need for a better and more adequate future.

2.3. Connecting Movements Regarding the Women's Empowerment and Recognition in Our Society:

The movements of women in India have been successful as well as significant in promoting gender equality, questioning patriarchal procedures, and fighting prejudice and abuse towards women. These campaigns have influenced the path of society for decades, resulting in significant advances in social attitudes, legal frameworks, and political participation. These continuing efforts have not only empowered women, yet also raised awareness of the significance of gender justice and diversity. Let's observe some of the significant actions taken by women that have made an extended impact on India's social fabric.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, India witnessed an emergence of ground-breaking social reform communities aimed at challenging firmly established cultural customs while advocating female equality and schooling.

There are a number of leaders of social democracy who have impacted Indian society uniquely and have made an everlasting impact on Indian society in general, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Pandita Ramabai. It is their relentless efforts that laid down the foundation for significant developments in women's advancements and the eradication of damaging practices that have made such significant progress possible. As we move forward, we are going to take a closer look at the extraordinary contributions they made:

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, frequently referred to as the "***Father of the Indian Renaissance***,"¹⁶ was a renowned social reformer who challenged traditional ideas and advocated for women's rights. He was strongly opposed to Sati, an awful celebration in which widows were obligated to commit personally on their husband's funeral pyre. He convinced British authorities to criminalize Sati in 1829, marking an important prevail for the safety of women and dignity.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, an outstanding educator and a reformer, worked to abolish child marriage and promote women's education. He was persuaded that education was a powerful weapon for elevating women and benefiting community as a whole. Vidyasagar was important in pushing widows to get

¹⁶ Baugh, Anup. (2021), "RAJA RAM MOHAN ROY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND EDUCATION: ITS CURRENT RELEVANCE", An indexed refereed and peer-reviewed journal of higher education, ISSN No. 0974-035X, pp. 388-396.

married again, advocacy for their rights, and ensuring their access to education.¹⁷ As a pioneer in the discipline of women's intellectual growth and society participation, his efforts have contributed bring down barriers while offering fresh possibilities for women.

Pandita Ramabai ¹⁸ was an exceptional social reformist and rights for women activist who worked carefully to enhance the circumstances of widows and deprived women. She developed organizations like the Sharada Sadan in Kolkata to support the widow women's with secure accommodation, giving education and proper schooling, and vocational training, and also permitting them to live independently in society .Her reliable and intense commitment toward bettering women's lives obtained her worldwide praise and compassion.¹⁹

These social activists challenged deep rooted customs and immigration, generating a surge of social a shift and progressive thought. Their advertisement for women's learning and rights paved the way for a more fair society, allowing women to overcome customary confinement and contribute to all aspects of life. Throughout history women's legacies have endured and their spirit of empowerment continues to guide future generations, reaffirming their power to shape a better and more inclusive future.

It was during the time of early 20th century that Indian women made up their mind to fight for their right to vote after being inspired by suffrage movements

¹⁷ Adam, William. (1977). "A Lecture on the Life and Labours of Rammohun Roy. A Lecture on the Life and Labours of Rammohun Roy", Calcutta: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, pp. 1-18.

¹⁸ K. Priyadarshini. (2022). "Pandita Ramabai and Woman Empowerment: A Symbiosis", Vol. 7 No. 1 October 2022 E-ISSN: 2456-5571.

¹⁹ Kosambi, Meera. (1989). "Woman Emancipation and Equality: Pandita Ramabai contribution to Woman's Cause", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.23, No.44.

happening in other parts of the world. In this movement women became the voice, advocating and supporting for women's political participation and the right to vote. Leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, and Kamini Roy, who became the fore front voice of this movement.

The dedicated work of these groups had a tremendous impact on the achievement of women's right to vote in India . There is no doubt that these women have demonstrated an outstanding amount of courage and determination in their attempts to make history and to contribute to the opening up of the political process for women.

2.3.1. The Chipko Movement:

which commenced in the decade of the 1970s, was an exceptional effort pioneered by women dedicated to safeguarding and securing forests from devastation. This movement evolved in the rural region named Uttarakhand, a state in India, with women in the lead of the dedication. They adopted an advantageous position through holding trees to actively block loggers from sawing them down, displaying their strength, persistence, and determination to defending their environment and communities.²⁰

Notwithstanding its environmental significance, The Chipko movement had ample implications in the society. It demonstrated the essential role that women played in shielding the ecosystems they live in and promoting the

²⁰ Singh, Malvika; Mishra, Kaveri Devi. (2019). "Eco-Feminism and Folk Media: A Case Study of the Chipko Movement", International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research, Vol.8, Issue 11, ISSN 2277-8616 3569. Retrieved from www.ijstr.org

continued development of their communities. This movement crushed prejudicial views as well as questioned the stereotype that roles for women were strictly within the home.

The Chipko movement persists to stand as a motivation and a symbol of indigenous action, especially women developing as major transformation participants not merely regarding environmental conservation but also in influencing the development of their own lives and those of their communities. Their determination to protect forests, which had become essential in sustaining their livelihoods, sparked an atmosphere of empowerment and cooperation among women in Uttarakhand.²¹

The movement's legacy continues to inspire conservation of the environment and women's empowerment movements all through the entire globe. This serves as an example of woman's determined spirit and the capacity to generate forward revolutionary change not just for the betterment of their communities, nevertheless for the greater good of the natural world in particular.

In Indi feminist movement developed tremendously during the 1970s. Women groups and organizations emerged throughout the entire nation, emphasizing issues like as assault based on gender, dowry, committing rape and dissimilar access to medical care and schooling. During this point in time, significant organizations included the Women's India Trust (WIT) and the Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW).²²

²¹ Joshi, G. (1982). "Chipko and women", Monthly P.U.C.L Bulletin, People's Union for Civil Liberties, New Delhi. Retrieved from, <http://www.pucl.org/from archives/Gender/chipko.html>

²² Bose, P. (2011). "Forest tenure reform: Exclusion of tribal women's rights in semi-arid Rajasthan", India. International Forestry Review, pp.220-232.

2.3.2. Right to Work Movement:

During the 1970s, the "Right to Work" movement developed as an integral campaigner for women's economic potential. Around this particular period, women throughout every continent mobilized to request the opportunity to wage labor and earn a living on the same terms as men.²³ The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was among of the key communities involved with this grassroots effort. The "Right to Work" (RW) an initiative aimed at challenging societal norms that constrained the participation of women within employment sectors and propagated a gender based disparities in salaries. Women attempted to steer off with stereotypes and retake their correct place in the employment system by obtaining equal job possibilities and financial autonomy.

“According to Article 39(d) and Article 41 of the Indian Constitution, both men and women are entitled to equal pay for equal work.”

The movement produced an enormous effect because it educated people about the urgency for women being financially empowered while additionally promoting regulations adjustments that protect and advance their freedoms at work. As women grouped together, their combined strength rose, resulting in them served a key role in establishing broader labour practices and societal

²³ Article 41, Constitution of India, 26 January 1950.

Within the limits of its economic capacity and development, the State shall make effective provisions for securing the right to work, education, and public assistance in unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and other cases of undeserved want.

views about women in work environments. The "Right to Work" movement's history continues to inspire continuing initiatives to improve gender equality today.

The "Right to Work" campaign keeps motivating efforts that strive for gender parity as well as equitable opportunities for employment to women. Organisations such as SEWA keep on working carefully to support women in the informal economy, to guarantee their opinions are heard, their rights were secured, and their services to community are appreciated and valued. As we move upward, it will be critical that our efforts continuing focusing on improving economic opportunity for women, breaking down obstructions, and creating a society that is more equitable and just for every individual.

2.3.3. Nirbhaya Movement:

The Nirbhaya Movement also commonly known as the Delhi gang rape protests, shook India in 2012. This exceptional case is an made India upside down in public anger the vicious savage murder and sexual assault of a female student in Delhi. The victim had been covered up and referred with the name of “Nirbhaya,” which means fearless.²⁴

. The campaign had been a historic turning point in the country’s fight against sexual assault, forcing important legislation improvements to address this critical issue. The calamity prompted widespread outrage all around the country, providing debates concerning sexual assault, disparities between sexes, and the urgent requirement for greater security for women. The tragic

²⁴ "Nirbhaya case: Four Indian men executed for 2012 Delhi bus rape and murder".(2020). Retrieved from, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-51969961>.

night of December 16, 2012, a 23-year-old physiotherapy intern boarded a transport in Delhi with her friend. In the bus she was gang raped and viciously murdered by 6 men. They also attacked and abused her male friend. Then after that from the running bus those perpetrators throw both of them out of the it.

The young woman was struggling for her life but sadly passed away from injuries received only thirteen days later, unleashing an outpouring tremendous grief, anger, and fury across the country. The nation joined together in demand of justice for Nirbhaya and a commitment towards eradicating any form of sexual abuse against the women.

The protests became an emblem of rebellion to the authoritarian perspective that permitted such awful crimes to occur occur with repercussion. These went beyond local to regional cultural, as well as social and economic boundaries, demonstrating everyone's desire to establish a happier and more fair society.

The protests became an emblem of rebellion to the authoritarian perspective that permitted such awful crimes to occur with repercussions. These went beyond local to regional cultural, as well as social and economic boundaries, demonstrating everyone's desire to establish a happier and more fair society.

The Nirbhaya movement²⁵ motivated women from all facets of life to stand out regarding sexual abuse, giving them the courage to abandon the silence to reveal their very own horrible events. Those who survived of domestic violence discovered the confidence they needed to speak up, elimination of the associated shame which society usually places on them. The program

²⁵ Talwar, Rajesh. (2013). "Courting Injustice: The Nirbhaya Case and its Aftermath", Hay House India Publisher, New Delhi, ISBN-10. 9381398496, ISBN-13. 978-9381398494.

created a safe atmosphere over survivors to express their traumatic events and seek healing.

The mainstream media played an important role in magnifying activists' voices while paying attention their consciousness of the serious problem of assault on women in India. Social discussions and debates revolved around the urgent requirement needed fundamental shifts to guarantee women's rights and protection.

The Legal Reforms (LR), Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2013. In accordance with the powerful public desire for justice and responsibilities, government officials adopted the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act of 2013. The legislation seeks to strengthen the regulatory framework for handling allegations of sexual assault and enforce stronger implications on those who break the law.²⁶

The amendment expanded the definition for sexual crimes along with mandated death sentence for cases of significant sexual abuse that killed the victim or rendered her in a prolonged vegetative condition and increased punishment for other sexual crimes. The legislation also made illegal stalking, acid attacks, and voyeuristic behaviour among other offenses.

However, there remains a significant challenge when it comes to enacting legislative changes and offering an exhaustive remedy to sexual abuse. The Nirbhaya Movement unforgettable movement that we must continue to fight for the equal treatment of women and for the safety of them from all corners of society. The Nirbhaya case was a significant turning point in Indian history

²⁶ Santharam, V and R, Vinod. (2016). "Nirbhaya Case - A Turning Point in Juvenile Offence", Media House Publisher, Delhi, ISBN 9374956438.

bringing to the forefront of the national debate the issue of sexual assault against women. This widespread problem was addressed through the adoption of significant legal measures in response to this. It mobilized the country to make a demand for justice and responsibility as a result of the action.

The Nirbhaya movement marked as an important and vital turning moment in Indian history that prompting debates regarding gender equality, equality for women, and social accountability. It functioned as a wake-up call to the country for paying attention to the fundamental concern about violence against women with an endeavor to establish a healthier atmosphere around everybody. The movement's impact and aggression went beyond constitutional advancements as it fostered an overall change in views against the act of sexual violence. It improved understanding, awareness, unanimity and solidarity for survivors of sexual assault as well as lowering the perceived stigma of denouncing such crimes

The movement motivated and pushed those who survived to speak out and break their silence which caused to an evolution in perceives regarding acts of sexual assault. Although the fight against sexual harassment keeps happening the Nirbhaya movement's aftermath is an important symbol about the Indian individual united strength for seeking transformation and attempting towards creating a healthier and more equal environment for women. It illustrates the population's fierce determination as they collaborate cooperatively to establish an equal, secure and caring society for every individual in the society.

2.3.4. MeToo Movement (MTM):

The MeToo movement was a far and wide gathered momentum throughout India in the year 2018 ²⁷, when women disclosed allegations and their stories of sexual assault and abuse. The movement ignited an intense public conversation and debates on the prevalence of comparable incidents and the necessity for changes in structure.

2.3.5. Women's Right Movement:

The rights of women's movements raised to significance upon democracy. Organizations such as the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) handled difficulties and issues like gender-based violence, equal rights, and financial growth. Women played a very significant role on establishing legislation regarding women's rights and welfare.²⁸

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) represent informal organizations which promote women in their surrounding areas. the SEWA program (Self-Employed Women's Association) provides resources and help to women who worked in informal sectors, supporting economic independence and entrepreneurship.²⁹

²⁷ Roy, Abhery. (2018). "The Year When #MeToo Shook India" ET Bureau, The Economic Times. Retrieved from, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/2018-the-year-when-metoo-shook-india/2018-the-year-of-metoo-in-india/slideshow/66346583.cms>

²⁸ Heuer, Vera. (2015). "Activism and Women's Rights in India", Education About Asia: Online Archives, Volume 20:3 (Winter 2015): India: Past, Present, and Future, India, Singapore. Retrieved from, <https://www.asianstudies.org/publications/eaa/archives/activism-and-womens-rights-in-india/>

²⁹ Howard, Spodek. (1994). "Review: The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India: Feminist, Gandhian Power in Development", Economic Development and Cultural Change, University of Chicago Press, pp. 193–202. doi:10.1086/452141. JSTOR 1154338. S2CID 155233844.

The anti-dowry movement developed in responses to widely used murders and assaults happened because of dowry practices. Activists and a group have taken action against marriage harassment, domestic violence increasing consciousness and pushing for more stringent laws and change in the society.

2.4. Contextualising the Concept of Minority and Majority:

In India, the caste system breaks down individuals between groupings determined by their place of origin, occupation, as well as social standing. It's an intricate structure, and the terms "minority" along with "majority" won't be explicitly recognized or just established elsewhere.³⁰ The hierarchy of castes supplies a system of hierarchy through which members enjoy restricted circulation within different organizations.

As per Indian caste hierarchical system, Dalits (formerly known as "untouchables") are the lowest castes. Only a few tribal communities can be considered disadvantaged or marginalized

In terms of their level of standards The members of these groups have traditionally come to accept racism, discrimination, social exclusion, and other oppressions as a result limited access to resources and job opportunities. However this is very crucial and important to note that the phrase "minority" is often associated with groups that are numerically smaller or have less and limited access social and political power compared to the dominant or privileged groups or organisation in a society.

³⁰ Smith, Brian K. (1994), "Classifying the Universe: the Ancient Indian Varna System and the Origins of Caste", New York: Oxford UP, ISBN-10, 0195084985, ISBN-13, 978-0195084986.

On the contrary, the concept of “majority” relates to being dominant groups or organizations who have more social, financial, and political power. These categories of people frequently benefit from more social prestige, better distribution of resources, and stronger ability to make decisions.

The Central Government informs and notifies the already-mentioned minority communities. Then they analyze their geographic contribution. The National Commission for Minorities Act held in 1992 protects minority communities in India which include Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis also known as Zoroastrians. In accordance to the 2011 Census, minorities account for around 19.3% of the overall population. out of this

Contributions of Different sects.	Holding Percentage
Muslims	14.2%
Christians	2.3%
Sikhs	1.7%
Buddhists	0.7%
Jains	0.4%
Parsis	0.006%

Figure 2.1: Populations of different Minority sections in Indian Society³¹

The process of defining Minority Concentration Areas involved using backwardness metrics and demographic data from the 2011 Census to identify Minority Concentration Districts (MCD), Minority Concentration Blocks, and Minority Concentration Towns.

³¹ This table shows us the different minority sections of Indian society and their population contributions. Retrieved From, <https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/>

The term "substantial minority population (SMP)" in the Prime Minister's New 15 Point Plan indicates that a district is relatively backward if at least 25% of their total population is from minority groups.³² This is accomplished by identifying Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs), Minority Concentration Blocks (MCBs), and Minority Concentration Towns (MCTs). Within states or union territories once a minority population identify is based on 15% of the minority population, compared to the majority-minority community. Unique state or union territory. Inequality characteristics used to determine Minority Concentration Districts (MCD) have two sets of indicators.

Religion-specific socio-economic indicators at the district level	Basic amenities indicators at the district level
(i) Literacy rate (Sikhsha) (ii) Female literacy rate (Parivarik Sikhsha) (iii) Work participation rate (Professional proficiency) (iv) Female work participation rate (Women's workforce)	(i) Percentage of households with pucca walls (Concrete home) (ii) Percentage of households with safe drinking water (Edible water) (iii) Percentage of households with electricity (Lighting Power)

*Figure 2.2: Determination of Minority Concentration Districts and Its Indicators.*³³

³² All the data about the census in India and different sections of Indian society has been collected from the official website, which is empowered by the Indian government.

Retrieved from, <https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/>

³³ Ministry of Minority Affairs, GOI. (2021). "Minority Concentrated Districts", Press Information Bureau. Retrieved From, <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1780952>

According to backwardness parameters and demographic data from the year 2011 Census, 90 Minority Concentrated Districts, 710 Minority Concentrated Blocks, and 66 Minority Concentrated Town have been identified. All ninety MCDs undertook the Multi-Sectoral Development Programme's deployment during the eleventh Plan and the 2012–13 duration. On the flip side, the Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MSDP) went into effect in 66 MCTs and 710 MCBs between 2013–14 and 2017–18.

2.5. A Brief Identity and Demographic Consideration of Concerned Districts and Rationality Behind Considering.

Like any other kind of project, we need targeted goals to be able to move forward with the research we are doing. For this reason, I have chosen the two regions, especially within West Bengal; nonetheless, allow us to first offer a summary of every district in West Bengal. We may understand why I chose of the two specific places for the research better once we possess knowledge of the specific characteristics and information of each district. To learn a bit more about this decision's motivation and possible implications to feed the study we are conducting, we're going to look deeper. as concerning present time, West Bengal has been divided into 23 districts, Alipurduar, which was created on June 25, 2014. Kalimpong, which was formed on February 14, 2017. Jhargram, which was formed on April 4, 2017. And the partition of the former Bardhaman district into Purba Bardhaman district and Paschim Bardhaman district, which was constructed on April 7, 2017.³⁴

³⁴ Districts - West Bengal, GOI, "A one-point source to access Indian Government Websites at all levels and from all sectors". Accessed on 22 Feb, 2022.
Retrieved From, <https://igod.gov.in/sg/WB/E042/organizations>

For the brief introductions, all the districts in West Bengal have been shown in the following figure, as well as presents the nominal information and population participations of these districts.

S/N	District Name	Total Populations	Hindu Population in Percentage	Muslim Population in Percentage	Others
1	Alipurduar	1,491,250	80.07%	8.74%	11.19%
2	Bankura	3,596,674	84.34 %	8.08 %	7.58%
3	Paschim Bardhaman	2,882,031	84.75%	13.32%	1.93%
4	Purba Bardhaman	4,835,532	73.75%	25.14%	1.11%
5	Birbhum	3,502,404	62.29 %	37.06 %	0.65%
6	Cooch Behar	2,819,086	74.06 %	25.54 %	0.40%
7	Darjeeling	1,846,823	74.00 %	5.69 %	20.31%
8	Dakshin Dinajpur	1,676,276	73.55 %	24.63 %	1.82%
9	Hooghly	5,519,145	82.89 %	15.77 %	1.34%
10	Howrah	4,850,029	72.90 %	26.20 %	0.90%
11	Jalpaiguri	3,872,846	81.51 %	11.51 %	6.98%

12	Jhargram	1,136,548	86.60%	2.46%	10.94%
13	Kolkata	3,988,845	76.51 %	20.60 %	2.89%
14	Kalimpong	251,642	60.94%	1.59%	37.47%
15	Malda	3,988,845	47.99 %	51.27 %	0.74%
16	Paschim Medinipur	5,913,457	85.52 %	10.49 %	3.99%
17	Purba Medinipur	5,095,875	85.24 %	14.59 %	0.17%
18	Murshidabad	7,103,807	33.21 %	66.27 %	0.52%
19	Nadia	5,167,600	72.15 %	26.76 %	1.09%
20	North 24 Parganas	10,009,781	73.46 %	25.82 %	0.72%
21	Purulia	2,930,115	80.99 %	7.76 %	11.25%
22	South 24 Parganas	8,161,961	63.17 %	35.57 %	1.26%
23	Uttar Dinajpur	3,007,134	49.31 %	49.92 %	0.77%

Figure 2.3: List of all the districts in West Bengal and their details populations.³⁵

³⁵ List of all the districts in West Bengal and their details and highlight the chosen district that has been surveyed in this research.

At a glance of the above list, it is clearly seen that there is an untenable pattern within West Bengal's demographic landscape orientation, including an apparent shift in the relationships among the majority and minority groups in every one of the 23 districts.³⁶

More specifically, the three districts have experienced an appearance of minorities as the majority, signifying an unusual Muslim demographic information the overwhelming majority in these areas. The districts that demonstrate an elevated level of Muslim supremacy include North Dinajpur, Malda, and Murshidabad.

For the purposes of this study, the complex nature of Murshidabad and Malda is going to be the focus of attention. The two of these districts had been identified as the primary focus of the research given that they represent significant areas experiencing this demographic shift and due to their unique population demographics composition, resulting in a call for a thorough examination.

The significance of acquiring an understanding of these areas prior to starting any study could not be understated. Conducting a thorough study in a specific region necessitates an in-depth awareness of its distinctive social, cultural, and economic parameters. Researchers can only envision deriving substantial deductions and figuring out the true roots of the observed changing demographics by gaining such knowledge.

As a result of this, the forthcoming study into Murshidabad and Malda will be an important update to this complicated system of interconnected changing

³⁶ West Bengal- Districts of India, Govt. of West Bengal, "Districts Of West Bengal [As per LGD]:" Accessed on 20 Feb, 2022.
Retrieved From, https://shgsewb.gov.in/ssp_portal_doc/WBSSP=Code%20List=District-Code-List.pdf

demographics and characteristics impacting the dominant position of Muslims in these districts. Through this comprehensive study, we prefer to learn more concerning the larger implications for that region as well as provide relevant data to acquire further knowledge about West Bengal's demographic dynamics.

2.5.1. A Glimpse of Historical and Cultural Overview – Murshidabad:

West Bengal, which is an Indian state, includes the region of Murshidabad. It is situated beside the Bhagirathi River, which serves as a Ganges River distributary. The geographic centre and other facts regarding Murshidabad are offered here. Murshidabad is situated concerning at a latitude 24.18° N.³⁷

In light of its proximity with the territory of Bihar, the eastern Indian district of Murshidabad was advantageously situated. Murshidabad is one of the biggest cities in the area, some 200 kilometers north of Kolkata, the capital city of West Bengal.

With its numerous periods of history and independent lineages depicted, This city was extremely significant. Throughout the leadership of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb,³⁸ it was proclaimed the capital of Bengal in 1717. The city was given the name for the first Nawab of Bengal, Nawab Murshid Quli Khan.

³⁷ Murshidabad, Govt. of WB, "District Map", Accessed on 22 March 2023.
Retrieved From, [https://murshidabad.gov.in/districtmap/#~:text=Murshidabad%20is%20in%20the%20middle,Malda%20and%20Rajshahi%20\(Bangladesh\).](https://murshidabad.gov.in/districtmap/#~:text=Murshidabad%20is%20in%20the%20middle,Malda%20and%20Rajshahi%20(Bangladesh).)

³⁸ L. S, S. O. Malley. (1915), "Bengal District Gazetteers (Murshidabad)", Published by The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta.

Because of its favourable position on the Ganges River, the city was an important place for commerce, politics, and culture during the period.

Considering Murshidabad was the province of Bengal's capital during the rule of the Mughal Empire, it holds remarkable significance in history. The the Nawabs of Bengal, who had been selected by the Mughal Emperors, utilized it as their headquarters. Representing its rich heritage of culture, the area is overflowing with ancient sites, which includes extravagant palaces, tombs, mosques, and temples.

This neighborhood is renowned for its historical landmarks and architectural wonders. Among the well-liked tourist destinations is Hazarduari Palace also commonly known as the Palace of a Thousand Doors. It is an exquisite fortress developed in the 19th century during the reign of Nawab Nazim Humayun Jah. The palace, which combines Indo-European and other architectural forms .This is home to a museum that displays antiquities, weaponry, and other items. Katra Temple is the architectural marvel from the 18th century, this mosque has a spacious courtyard, terracotta artwork, and elaborate patterns. It is among India's biggest mosques. The largest imambara (a Shia Muslim gathering place) in India is called Nizamat Imambara. The imambara complex includes a clock tower, graves, and a prayer hall. The tower clock is renowned for its mechanism that displays not only the time but also the phases of the moon.

Mootijheel is a large lake and has numerous lovely gardens and mansions throughout this sizable lake. The surface of the lake has boating facilities and is a popular location for picnics. Mosque Footi, The old mosque offers a

distinctive feature due to its tilting towering minaret .The minarets themselves were believed to have been tipped amid an 18th-century earthquake.³⁹

It has a reputation for possessing an extensive history of culture that includes age-old transactions which includes metalworking, ivory carving, and silk weaving. The region that was additionally hosts an assortment of fairs and festivals that emphasize local traditions, musical performances, dancing, and food. With magnificent ancient sites, rich heritage of culture, and breathtaking scenery, Murshidabad welcomes travelers and history enthusiasts people all over the world, giving a glimpse into the grandeur of the past.

Murshidabad is renowned worldwide due to its rich history of culture and traditional craftsmanship. The town is renowned because of its weaving of silk sectors, and the silk sarees from Murshidabad are highly sought after given their stunning designs and exquisite craftsmanship. Those silk sarees have become highly popular by people throughout the entire country since of the skill with which they are handmade by artisans and weavers.

Throughout Murshidabad, residents of this city celebrates festivities like Eid, Durga Puja, and Muharram with an enormous amount of zeal and excitement. During these occasions, the city came alive with vibrant procession, traditional displays, and religious rites that showcase this area's peculiar social and cultural heritage.

For history enthusiasts, architectural experts, and anybody who loves discovering more about West Bengal's rich cultural past, Murshidabad constitutes a genuine treasure trove because of its astonishing architectural

³⁹ Department of Tourism, Govt. of WB, "Motijheel Park" Accessed on 18 Aug, 2022
Retrieved From, <https://wbtourism.gov.in/most-popular/properties?id=5>

feats, rich history, and happiness cultural heritage. Visitor are taken back to a previous age by this city's past significance, especially is apparent in its royal residences, mosques and and tombs. This city preserves the heart of Bengal's ancient past via its lively culture, and this is reflected in its traditional arts and crafts, ceremonies, and hospitable personality.

2.5.2. A Wall of History, Culture, and Natural Beauty – Malda:

Within the heart of the Indian state of West Bengal lies the fascinating Malda District, and this is tucked away in coordinates 25.1786° N, 88.2461° E. This area encourages tourists who want to go out on an educational adventures because the area constitutes a combination of heritage, culture, and the natural world. the Malda region area, the state capitol of West Bengal, positioned around 347 kilometers north of Kolkata and has a centuries-old legacy.⁴⁰

It has a personality can be observed in its diversified terrain and booming industry. Malda District, a region widely recognized for manufacturing silk thread, jute fibre and mangoes in particular expresses pleasure in the harmonious relationships of the inhabitants and the condition of the land.

Maldah, or the Malda region, is a district within the state of West Bengal in India. This is located amid the eastern shore of the renowned Mahananda

⁴⁰ Malda District, Govt. of WB, "About District", Accessed on 28 Sept. 2022.

Retrieved From, <https://malda.gov.in/aboutdistrict/#:~:text=Malda%20is%20a%20district%20covering,km%20international%20border%20with%20Bangladesh.>

River and incorporates an extensive mosaic encompassing cultural heritage, history, and stunning scenery.

The Maldah district is recognized for its rich history, magnificent buildings, fascinating occasions, and amazing environment, making it a tempting option for tourist and travellers.

The area in question is filled with cultural significance featuring an extended history earlier times. The region was earlier included within the medieval kingdom of Gour,⁴¹ which served as an influential political as well as artistic center throughout prehistory and the medieval period. The entire area saw the development and demise of several different monarchies among of them are the Palas, Senas, and Bengal Sultanate. Archeological memorials, ruins, and magnificent structures extend through the region and remain permanent memorials about these earlier eras.

Another for the district's greatest architectural marvels consists of the Adina Mosque, formerly referred to as the Adina Masjid. It had been constructed in the fourteenth century during the rule of the Bengal Sultanate and constitutes one of the nation's the largest mosques and with superb craftsmanship. This mosque's grandiosity featuring its lofty domes, and broaden decorations, and charging foundations, demonstrates the sculptural brilliance of that time period. In addition noticeable shrines within the region consist of the Lattan Mosque, Eklakhi Mausoleum, and Gour Kormosala, each of which has an individual style of architecture as well as has historical significance.⁴²

⁴¹ Malda District, Govt. of WB, "History", Accessed on 28 Sept, 2022
Retrieved From, <https://malda.gov.in/history/>

⁴² Ibid.

Maldah district represents an amalgamation of diverse cultures and customs. The people who lived in the surrounding area celebrated many different kinds of festivities alongside immense determination and the level of effort. Durga Puja, Eid, Kali Puja, and Rath Yatra are all performed amid elaborate procession groups, brilliant ornamentation, and cultural festivities. Those occurrences exhibit the vicinity's diversity of culture and offer travelers to completely immerse themselves with traditional beliefs and conventions.

Maldah Region offers an environmental wonderlands, which was consisting with amazing views as well as tranquil atmosphere. Considering an outstanding river designated Mahananda rushing meticulously around this region, which makes it additionally wonderful. Alongside the banks of the water, there are also distinctive spots designated as ghats and parks where individuals can take breaks and enjoy leisurely strolls.

And this is not everything; this area is surrounded by fields of gorgeous vibrant plant life, delicious mango fruit orchards, and even some plantations of tea. Every single one of these elements collaborates to form an introspective and rejuvenating ambiance, which is comparable to an effective treatment that nurtures the spirit world.

In addition to the past, fun things to discover around Malda District won't be restricted to past tales or immigration; there is simply stimulating items to feed travelers! Another town identified as Gour claimed to be quite highly influential as the capital of the Bengal Sultanate. It's essentially an ancient mine of ancient artifacts including ruins and sites that visitors can dig up to find out about antiquity. When people visit here they will enjoy the place.

In addition to that Ramsagar Wildlife Sanctuary is rather large.⁴³ That is where many various kinds of creatures and plants live. When it comes enjoy outdoor activities, you're sure to have an excellent time here. It's essentially an exclusive habitat for plants and creatures, and one can explore them all.

The surrounding area additionally includes the historic Pandua railway station, and was officially recognized as a historic landmark because of outstanding historical value as well as relationship with this region's railways history.

To put it simply, the Malda regions offers a wonderful golden treasure unparalleled excellence. There are a few historical tales as well as fantastic construction, which and when the celebrations comes around, the whole city springs bursting with color and energy. Nature additionally serves a significant role, presenting beautiful vantage points which render people feel at ease, optimistic, cheerful and smiling.⁴⁴

When every one of those variables are taken into account, the Maldah neighborhood takes shape as an exceptionally incredible and unusual location. It's basically a time machine which transfers people back to the previous while people continues experiencing enjoyment within the present moment. Discovering history, witnessing local celebrations, and observing the lovely surroundings render the Maldah zone an adventure individuals will definitely

⁴³ Rimi, R.H.; Rahman, F.; Latif, M.B. (2015). "Biodiversity Status and its Management at Ramsagar National Park at Dinajpur in Bangladesh", *Journal of Environmental Science and Natural Resources*, 6 (1): 22, doi:10.3329/jesnr.v6i1.22035.
Retrieved From, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramsagar_National_Park

⁴⁴ Ahsan, Md. Modinul. (2016). "Management Effectiveness Assessment of PAs of Bangladesh", Bangladesh Forest Department, Dhaka, Bangladesh. p. 54. ISBN 978-984-34-2393-1.

never forget. So, when it comes to visiting, there as well prepared to be totally surprised and displayed!

2.6. Conclusion:

The question raised at the conclusion of this chapter is significant, why would minority political discourse overwhelmingly revolve around the Muslim community, whilst ignoring other religious groups including Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Jews, and others. While addressing this inquiry, it can be necessary that you assess the practicality and breadth of those conversations. Participating in comprehensive discussions regarding all religious minority groups would undoubtedly be challenging and require considerable dedication.

As a consequence, it was chosen to concentrate on the Muslim community, especially Muslim women, in this study stems from practical considerations. Concentrating on an individual group lets you conduct an even more comprehensive and concentrated investigation regarding their particular challenges, situations, and viewpoints. By decreasing their scope, investigators could delve additionally towards the challenges affecting Muslim women and obtain an improved understanding regarding the subtleties associated with their sociocultural environment.

It Is important to understand that different religion minority groups possess particular types of challenges as well as issues, as well as each requires care and consideration upon its own merits. Different investigations for every religious minority group, contrary to popular belief, would prove both highly

resource-intensive as well as may dilute the depth of study required to establish a significant distinction.

By the discussion on the minority Muslim women's community, this research may provide knowledge on the distinctive challenges and potential they experience within the wider structure of minority politics. The results of this study and lessons learned from this particular observation could be utilized to affect programs and initiatives to deal with the problems of those in this particular demographic, resulting in a society that is more equitable and inclusive.

In the end, although it is essential that governments remain encompassing as well as attentive for the hardships among all religious minority groups, specializing in the Muslim community, especially Muslim women, in this study enables a more comprehensive and practical analysis of the obstacles and dreams that they encounter throughout the minority political environment. Considering the distinctive circumstances of women throughout the world, this study would like to contribute effectively toward the development of their liberties and overall happiness.

A crucial aspect of this discussion is the recognition that specific communities tend to dominate regions that experience the most development .. Nevertheless, in spite of Muslim dominance in specific destinations, there currently have been little enhancements, specifically in Muslim community and the social standing of Muslim women. Consequently, this research aims to chart a new course by investigating the underlying obstacles that have delayed the development of this community.

In past centuries, areas that have an overwhelmingly Muslim population encountered economic and social issues that impeded their advancement. Limited opportunities for acceptable education, weak medical facilities, financial potential, and also cultural obstacles mentioned among the obstacles that needed to be considered. Muslim women have endured substantial limitations, which led to discrimination and diminished participation in the community.

Overcoming these obstacles demands an integrated approach that requires consideration of the complex relationship between identifying and social and economic factors. Addressing the primary motives of gender disparity, either via unfair laws, social conventions, or historical legacies, was significant. This study attempts to draw attention to Muslim women's distinctive circumstances and difficulties within the Muslim community. This research uncovers obstructions to independence including fulfillment in education, job performance, medical treatment, especially community involvement. Specific measures may greatly enhance consequences.

Additionally, This study will focus on efficient case investigations and initiatives that have contributed to the socioeconomic status of Muslim women. Evaluating beneficial methods as well as paradigms may help determine subsequent legislation and initiatives for communities. this study attempts to encourage development and advancement within Muslim-dominated communities, particularly a concentration on elevating the socioeconomic position of Muslim women. By dropping obstacles for development and well-being, we desire to create an increasingly welcoming and equitable society that encourages advancement for everyone in it.

Chapter – III

Impact of Religion, Customs, Prejudice, and Culture in Women's Empowerment

Women's empowerment plays a major role in the developed society. In order to make it fair and to be advanced in every field empowerment of women is necessary. Many aspects can influence women's empowerment such as Faith and beliefs, customs and traditions, Biases and discrimination, and cultural as well as values.

"You educate a man, you educate a man, you educate a woman, you educate a generation." ...By Brigham Young¹

Women empowerment considers women to be a rational human being. For this reason she must free from all kinds of exploitation in the society. Women empowerment stands for equal social, economic and political order into a new social order which will establish equality between male and female not only in political but also in social economic and cultural field. It wants to transform the patriarchy order into a new social order. Every women pursues their

¹ "You educate a man, you educate a man, you educate a woman, you educate a generation" This famous quote was delivered by Brigham Young in an open statement in the USA, an American religious leader and politician. He was the second president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints from the year 1847 to 1877, until his death.

enternal quest for love, for sympathy, for understanding, for happiness and in her heart in the great holy yearning for motherland.

Women empowerment helps in improving the Standard of life of women in rural as well as metro areas. it helps in preventing the cruel crime of female foeticide and reducing gender inequality in society.² The empowerment of women has also brought a lot of economic and social gains. It is important solving societal issue like poverty, unemployment. Empowered women can contribute to nation building, by joining any sector like an army, social service, politics, education, corporate section, in every field of employment.

India is a country of different cultures religions traditions. These are the factors which has a great influence on the women who lived in here.³

West Bengal is a unique blend of several different cultures, traditions, and beliefs. The women lives have a great affect from these aspects of society .The Purpose of this Research is to lead us to the fact , how these factors affect the empowerment of Indian women.

This Study raises a few queries which are relevant and important to know the answer, like, Firstly, what major role do customs and traditions play in women advancement in society? Second, Do the religious practices, beliefs, or faith as well as cultural rules create any difficulty or help in women empowerment?.

² Dollar, David; Gatti, Roberta (2010), "Gender inequality, income, and growth: are good times good for women", Policy research report on gender and development working paper series; no. 1 Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.
Retrieved From, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/251801468765040122/Gender-inequality-income-and-growth-are-good-times-good-for-women>

³ Chaudhuri, Sanjukta (2013), "A Life Course Model of Human Rights Realization, Female Empowerment, and Gender Inequality in India." World Development, Elsevier, vol. 52(C), DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2013.07.001, pp. 55-70.

Third, What are the roles of race, caste, and discrimination that hinders women's progress in society according to its standards?. Fourth, Is there any progress or advancement in women's empowerment and what works still remains?

By looking through these questions we can get a transparent and clear picture of the problems for women rights and remaining works to make women empowerment more fairer and more equitable for the world.

Our Study will help us to understand different cultures traditions religious and ways because this study preliminarily research into the history of women empowerment of all over India but specifically our study focuses on the women residing in Malda and Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

Murshidabad is known for its rich cultural heritage, British colonial past, and Islamic laws which offers a unique distinctive lens through which we can explore the topic of women empowerment.⁴

Malda is a core of trade and cultural exchange but after all of these developments this district also faces many obstacles in terms of economic growth and cultural enlightenment.

By studying about these two districts will allow us to gain the knowledge how women rights and equality hold back by the socio economic culture.

Analysing the impact of societal changing events on women's lives, Identify distinctive challenges and opportunities in these areas, Develop a refined understanding of women's empowerment . In addition, this extensive

⁴ L. S, S. O. Malley (1915), "Bengal District Gazetteers (Murshidabad)", Published by The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, Calcutta.

understanding will enable us to develop strategies to promote gender equality and empowerment in these regions and elsewhere.⁵

3. 1. Women's Empowerment and Religious Perspective – Pan-Indian and West Bengal:

India is a country of diversity , with distinction individual beliefs, customs and social rules. It is place numerous faiths, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism. In addition to its doctrines, practices, rituals, ceremonies, and traditions, each religion has its own set of beliefs , teachings, and beliefs that design the follows points of the world and how do they live their lives. The intangible elements of religion that affect women's living are societal norms , unwritten rules governing behaviours, relationships, and gender roles . All these influences have significant impacts on women's lives by influencing their roles in the family and community. Approach to knowledge and education, employment. and economic, and social chances, and the capability to make choices about their lives, health, and well-being, and societal status and respect within their populace. Opportunities for leadership and decision-making through a better understanding of the interplay between religion, culture, and gender it is possible to better address the challenges and opportunities for women and work to build a new equitable world for all.

⁵ Salman, Nures (2019), "Education and Empowerment of Muslim Women in the district of Murshidabad, West Bengal", IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts, and Literature, ISSN (P): 2347-4564; ISSN (E): 2321-8878, Vol. 7, pp. 235-242.

In the land **Hinduism**, the highest population religion , holds more than one billion adherents, as well as having complex and varied viewpoint on women. Ancient texts such as the Vedas⁶ and Upanishads depict women in respected and significant roles, often emphasizing their spiritual and intellectual contributions. However, later texts like the Manusmriti ⁷imposed restrictive norms limiting women's freedoms and opportunities .

*“The Manusmriti is that scripture which is most worshipable after Vedas for our Hindu Nation and which from ancient times has become the basis of our culture-customs, thought and practice. This book, for centuries, has codified the spiritual and divine march of our nation. Even today, the rules which are followed by crores (millions) of Hindus in their lives and practice are based on the Manusmriti. Today The Manusmriti is the Hindu Law. That is fundamental”.*⁸

In old days, things like Sati, where women were forced to burn themselves after the death of their husband during their funeral , and the dowry system, where the bride's family had to give a lots of gifts to the groom's family, were

⁶ Nagalaxmi, V. (2022), "The Role and Position of Women in Vedic Period in India", International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, ISSN (Online): 2319 – 7722, ISSN (Print): 2319 – 7714, Vol.11, pp. 151-153.

⁷ N.M, Naseera (2022), "The Sexual Politics of the Manusmriti: A Critical Analysis with Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Perspectives", Journal of International Women's Studies, Volume 23, Article 3, Issue 6, 7th World Conference on Women's Studies Special Issue: Transnational Feminisms--Contexts, Collaborations, Contestations: Toward a Liveable Planet.

⁸ V. D, Savarkar (2000), “Women in The Manusmriti’ in Savarkar Samagar (collection of Savarkar’s writings in Hindi)”, Vol. 4. New Delhi: Prabhat, pp. 415-416.

quiet common and made life tough for women. However fortunately Sati was stopped, in 1828, Lord William Bentinck took over as the Governor-General of India (GGI) and joined with Raja Rammohan Roy to face the big social issues. They both zeroed in on getting rid of Sati, polygamy, child marriage, and the killing of baby girls. With Bentinck at the helm a major law was passed in 1829 that got rid of Sati in British India, saving tons of lives and setting the stage for more social changes. Now, dowry is illegal, but these old traditions still stick around.

In addition to this, modern feminist movements within Hinduism continue to challenge traditional rules and advocate for equal rights and opportunities for women. It is quite evident that these ongoing efforts reflect a broader trend within Hindu society towards redressing gender disparities, striving to build an inclusive and equitable community.

The interplay of Islam in India is multifaceted, encompassing both progressive and restrictive elements. On one hand, Quranic teachings advocate for education, encouraging learning for all, including women. Additionally, Islam places great importance on gender respect, valuing the dignity and rights of women.⁹

Islam's gender roles based on Quranic precepts are colored by two key principles, firstly, belief in spiritual equality between women and men, and secondly, the expectation that women embody femininity and men embody masculinity. Spiritual equality between women and men is detailed in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*,

⁹ Bouhdiba, Abdelwahab (2013), "Sexuality in Islam", United Kingdom, eBook, ISBN:9781135030377, 1135030375 pp. 200–230.

“Verily, the Muslims: men and women, the believers: men and women, the Qanit: men and the women, the men and women who are truthful, the men and the women who are patient, the Khashi`: men and the women, the men and the women who give Sadaqat, the men and the women who fast, the men and the women who guard their chastity and the men and the women who remember Allah much with their hearts and tongues, Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.”¹⁰

However, on the other hand, cultural habits sometimes minimise women's freedom. For example, the Pardah system, the veil system that restricts women's movement and visibility, varies across different regions. In northern India, such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and the Ghoonghat culture, women often wear the veil with salwar kameez or Anarkali suits. In Kashmir, the Pheran (long gown) with a headscarf serves both cultural and practical purposes. In Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, the Burqa, a full-body covering or abaya, flowing cloak is worn.

In Kerala, there is a more liberal approach, emphasizing education and empowerment, along with minimal veiling practices. In the Bengal area, the Saree with orna (traditional Bengali head covering) is common, though habits vary within communities and families, influenced by education, urbanization, and personal beliefs. ¹¹However, places like Murshidabad and Malda, situated in this area, simply follow the same cultural habit.

¹⁰ Kathir, Ibn. "Tafsir Ibn Kathir (English): Surah Al Ahzab", Quran 4 U. Tafsir, 33:35.
Retrieved From, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Islam#cite_note-Quran_4_U3-35

¹¹ "Learning about traditional Indian clothing and dressing up in Indian attire", Accessed on 22 December 2023.

Minimising women's ability to move freely and make choices Muslim women's organizations are working to challenge these norms and promote equality.

Describing these phrases, the eminent writer Taslima Nasrin's famous quote cannot be avoided. Taslima Nasrin is a Bangladeshi feminist writer and activist who is well known for her infuriating works that explore Islam, feminism, and sexuality, as well as challenging traditional Muslim values, sparking intense debates and controversy.

“I support the rights of all people to practice their religious beliefs privately, but I oppose the idea of respecting religions. In truth, I have no respect for any religion. I believe religion is not compatible with human rights, women's rights, or freedom of expression.”¹²

From the above statement, it is evident to us how clear Taslima Nasrin's point of view is. She did not ignore by saying that she doesn't agree with the usual beliefs Muslims are shown. This creates another question, should we think of her as a leader of the movement for Muslim women rights or just as someone with a biased view, It is tough to give a simple answer, but maybe more deeper digging will guide us to understand better.

Retrieved From, <https://www.euroschoolindia.com/blogs/learning-about-traditional-indian-clothing-and-dressing-up-in-indian-attire/>

¹² Nasrin, Taslima (2015), "Why Secularism Is Necessary for Women", Vol. 35, No. 2.
Retrieved from, <https://secularhumanism.org/2015/01/cont-why-secularism-is-necessary-for-women/>

Muslim activists, thinkers and scholars have been dealing with how religion changes over time by mixing in what the government says and what the community does. They used the idea of Islamic Society (IS) to share their goals and aim to find a way to keep old traditions but also welcome modern ideas about building a country. Basically, "*Islamic Society*" is all about how religion, government power, and social progress work together in today's society, showing the generalization of beliefs, power, and moving forward.

The controversial practice of Triple Talaq,¹³ or "*talaq- e-bid'ah*" allows a husband to instantly divorce his wife by uttering the word "talaq" three times, without her consent. This practice creates many problems and intense debate, particularly in the case of women's rights and gender equality.¹⁴

Recent years have seen enormous efforts as well as actions taken to reform this practice and create a more just and equal society in which women's rights are safeguarded and prioritized. Removing triple talaq, Men's instant divorce should be stopped. Efforts to improve access to education and job opportunities, and societal development as well as increase women's participation in public life and decision-making areas, demonstrate the value of collective and mutual action and harmonizing religious practices and teachings with human rights and gender equality.

¹³ "Triple Talaq verdict: What exactly is instant divorce practice banned by court ". Hindustan Times. 22 August 2017.

Retrieved 18 September 2020 from, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/triple-talaq-verdict-what-exactly-is-instant-divorce-practice-banned-by-court/story-mhQ1SbxnCUUgySQq82sdbJ.html>

¹⁴ Schacht, J. ; Layish, A.(2000), "Ṭalāq". In P. Bearman; Th. Bianquis; C. E. Bosworth; E. van Donzel; W. P. Heinrichs (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Vol. 10 (2nd ed.), Brill. pp. 154-155.

Christianity has had a profound effect on women's empowerment. Especially by demonstrating educational institutions. Missionaries like educational institutions demonstrated women from different socioeconomic backgrounds emphasizing the individual development, overall growth, and economic independence.

Christian institutions have enriched the welfare of women through facilitating vocabulary and educational achievements. Empowering them to conquer any struggle like poverty and marginalization. Traditional gender stereotypes and conservative practices in the church persist in hindering women's full involvement in religious and social activities. Women continue to seek more representation, leadership opportunities and a better understanding of their position in the church and society.¹⁵

The Christian faith has greatly influenced women's empowerment. Missionary educational institutions showed women from different socioeconomic backgrounds emphasizing individual development, intelligence, and creativity. Although conservative groups sometimes encourage women to excel academically and become involved in groups, there are substantial barriers to women's leadership and full involvement in social life.¹⁶

¹⁵ Srinivasan, K. and Mohanty, S. K. (2004), "Deprivation of Basic Amenities by Caste and Religion: Empirical Study Using NFHS Data", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 39, No. 7, Mumbai, Samiksha Trust, pp. 726-735.

¹⁶ Das, Panchanan; Sengupta, Anindita (2017), "Christianity, Women Empowerment and Tribal Welfare – The Role of Missionaries in India", *Salesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, Section Article, ISSN: 0976-1861, DOI: 10.51818/SJHSS.8.2017.71-80, pp. 71-80.

Protestant Christianity, especially among its progressive variations, has actively worked toward the independence of women. Protestant denominations have created educational institutions that provide women potential for personal achievement, intellectual growth, and economic independence. Many Protestant denominations recognize female pastors and governance, promoting gender equality as well as inclusion in both the church and society.

Despite improvement, challenges linger in traditional and Protestant cultures. Women striving for higher engagement, leadership opportunities and a better understanding of their responsibilities while blending traditional ideals with contemporary aims for equality. Gender equality and the advancement of women continue to represent top goals in Christianity.

Religion serves a complex function in promoting women in West Bengal, nevertheless it may additionally contribute to beneficial economic growth. This is because of the regions distinctive heritage and customs. Brahmo Samaj, a Hindu community, has made significant endeavors aimed at improving women's lives. They encourage women's education and allow widows to remarry. Pioneers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar have made major contributions to these campaigns.¹⁷

Similarly, Muslim women in the state of Bengal have achieved development. Organizations that include the All-India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board (AIMWPLB) promote for women's rights and object to harmful practices.

¹⁷ D, Aparna, (2020), "Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar on gender justice and women empowerment", International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, Online ISSN: 2349-4182, Print ISSN: 2349-5979; Impact Factor: RJIF 5.72, Vol. 7, Issue 5, pp. 26-31.

West Bengal's diverse cultural and historical background has ended up in a more forward-looking approach to empowering women, with both Hindu and Muslim communities working towards positive improvements.

3.2. Customs and Women's Empowerment:

In India, indigenous social customs and traditions influence the equality of women in many different ways. Gender stereotypes and negative actions, which include child marriage and dowries, may hinder women's ability to obtain education, financial freedom, and political participation.

Certain practices empower women by encouraging principles including respect and resilience. A number of initiatives among them '*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*' and '*Sanskara*', highlight girl's education and independence. Achieving gender equality requires challenging harmful customs and appreciating those that encourage women.

3.2.1. Dress Codes:

Islam expect women to dress modestly Traditional attire like sarees, salwar kameez, and burkas often come with societal expectations that restrict women's choices and autonomy. In Islamic culture women were guides by their religion to wear modest clothing which can cover their body parts and protect themselves from evil eye. It has also mentioned in religious book of Islam as well, some of its examples is like,

***"Whoever wears a dress of fame in this world; Allah will clothe him with a dress of humiliation in the day of resurrection, then set it afire."*¹⁸**

With the explanation of this quote, one thing is very clear about, there is some restrictions and selective dress codes for women in Muslim society, many people in our society will describe it as a symbol of backwardness, meanwhile many of us will explain it as a symbol of modesty. So we get different opinions on this.

3.2.2. Festivals and Ceremonies:

Indian festivals and rituals perpetuate gender roles as a result of their celebrations. Karva Chauth and Raksha Bandhan are festivals that reinforce or promote gender equality, gender diversity, and inclusion, empower women, and foster connections and mutual respect. It is challenging negative stereotypes and paving the path toward more fairer and more welcoming society.¹⁹ This development underscores an overall cultural shift toward greater sexual equal treatment.

¹⁸ Badawi, J. A. (2014), "The Muslim Woman's Dress", According to the Qur'an and Sunnah. Retrieved From, <https://www.instituteislam.com/the-muslim-womans-dress-by-dr-jamal-a-badawi/>

¹⁹ Harshananda, Swami. (1977), "Hindu Festivals and Sacreddays", sixth edn., Vol. 8, pp. 205-6.

3.2.3. Marriage Practices:

Traditional customs like dowry, child marriage, and arranged marriages prevent women from being empowered and definitely increase gender inequality. Those practices can bring many problems like monetary burdens, and dowry demands which can position the girl and their families in debt. Constrained autonomy and child and arranged marriages can restrict women's education and independence.

Women might also face domestic violence, emotional manipulation, and social isolation by means of vulnerability to abuse. These practices are still exist in many places of India particularly in rural and traditional communities. It is also possible that cultural rules often override legal protections, despite the fact that there are legal guidelines to fight with them such as like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) in 2006, the Dowry Prohibition Act (DPA) on 1961, and the Domestic Violence Act (DVC) in 2005. Changing the deep rooted traditions as well as practices is crucial for advancing women's empowerment and gender equality in India.²⁰

Along with Hindu believe system Islam significantly improved women's rights and roles in Arab region and society . its influence eventually extended throughout the world, transforming their position in a patriarchal environment. IN Pre-Islamic Arabia women were treated as commodities with no freedom, put through infanticide, lack of property rights, nominal social mobility, no right to choose marriage or divorce, and no liberty of expression or political participation.

²⁰ Swaraj, Ipsa. (2019), "Marriage in Indian Society: Forms, Types, Rules, and Changing Patterns", Vol.-XV, No.- 2, ISSN 0974 7222, pp. 641-50.

Also Inviting women to choose their spouses and conduct divorces in a safe and respectful manner. This tradition was changed by Islam. It acknowledges women's intrinsic worth and dignity. Offering women access to higher education, property ownership and succession Facilitate female involvement in spiritual social, and political sphere-shaped, protect women from corruption and harassment, advocate equal rights for all women, and confront patriarchal methodologies.²¹

Customs in the West Bengal region have pushed for as well as encouraged women's empowerment. The state's heritage of culture has solidified stereotypes regarding gender and restrictions. Certain customs have pointed out feminine power and individuality. Women in West Bengal are able to exert enormous societal and financial influence since they inherit the property family lineage through family customs. This has led to increases in an exceptional cultural dynamic where women exercise substantial influence and respect. The state's holidays that are such as the Durga Puja, glorify female deities like the Hindu deity Durga, who symbolizes feminine strength, authority, and abilities. Cultural respect for female deities improves societal views regarding women and encourages a constructive outlook as well.

3.3. Prejudice and women empowerment:

Women's empowerment in India and West Bengal is hampered by deep-rooted preconceptions, casteism, and socioeconomic inequalities. Biases rooted in cultural, societal, and economical norms impede women's possibilities for

²¹ Jones, R.M.; Douglas, J.C.; Caldwell; and R.M. D'Souza (Eds.), "The continuing demographic transition" Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, pp.210-305.

education, healthcare, financial possibilities, and political representation. Ego manifest in multiple shapes like stereotypes or conventional thought regarding gender, racism, caste discrimination, classism, religious bias, and more. Biases limit women's capacity to use their rights, making enlightened choices, and realize their full potential. To remove themselves from their deep-rooted biases is crucial for attaining gender equality, social justice, and inclusive development in India.²²

Customs in the West Bengal region have pushed for as well as encouraged women's empowerment. The state's heritage of culture has solidified stereotypes regarding gender and restrictions. Certain customs have pointed out feminine power and individuality. In West Bengal, women possess wonderful societal and financial influence as they take on property and family lineage through familial customs that exist. This has led to increases in an exceptional cultural dynamic where women exercise substantial influence and respect.

The state's holidays that are such as the Durga Puja, glorify female deities like the Hindu deity Durga, who symbolizes feminine strength, authority, and abilities. Cultural respect for female deities improves societal views regarding women and encourages a constructive outlook as well.

Despite equal qualifications, women often earn less and are overlooked for leadership roles, affecting their economic status and reinforcing the notion that they are less capable. Gender bias also manifests in physical, emotional, and sexual violence against women, creating an environment of fear and insecurity. This violence harms women and limits their freedom and

²² Singh, Seema; Singh, Antra. (2020), " Women Empowerment in India: A Critical Analysis", ISSN:2320-0693, Vol.19, Issue.44, pp. 227-53.

opportunities which is very ineffective in empowering them in our society. Women's choices and decisions are restricted by societal norms and expectations, pressuring them to conform to traditional roles. This limits their autonomy and prevents them from pursuing their interests and ambitions

Women are unable to take control of their rights, make informed decisions, and reach their full potential due to discrimination. It is crucial that, we confront and overcome entrenched biases if we are to achieve gender equality, equity in society, and inclusive prosperity in India.²³

3.3.1. Gender Partiality:

It is generally the case that masculine education is prioritized over that of females, which as a result causes unequal chances for girls to learn. The right for women to get an education may not be obligatory due to upcoming commitments, such as marriage. A woman education may not be mandatory due to upcoming commitments that may include getting married, which renders it even more essential to raise boys for a successful their existence in society. This reduces girl opportunities, enhancing dependency and impoverishment.

Women are often depicted in a harmful and stereotypical manner by the media, with gender biases being reinforced and their treatment and value in society consequently being adversely affected. Women's voices and opinions are often silenced or dismissed, limiting their influence in decision-making processes and perpetuating gender inequality.

²³ Kasarda, J.D.; Billy, J.O.; and West, K. (1986), "Status enhancement and fertility: Reproductive responses to social mobility and educational opportunity", Academic Press, New York, pp. 203-208.

Throughout history, women have been blamed for many social problems, regardless of their true causes. Discrimination has led to a substantial disadvantage for women compared to men. Women have been subjected to hostile treatment beginning very young in their lives and persisting throughout their lives.

Women are frequently treated with partiality beginning at an early age, limiting their chances for advancement and good health throughout their lives. Eliminating these biases is a necessity in developing a society where women can prosper in reaching their full potential. Gender bias may manifest as anything from an affection for male over girls even before birth. This deep-rooted ambition leads to practices which include sex-selective abortions, whereby denigrate girls' lives and impact how they are handled throughout life.

A gender-based bias can have a negative impact on the lives of women and inhibit their full potential. Challenging deeply ingrained opinions, language acquisition, and behavior can be a challenging task. Recognizing and confronting bias is essential to building a more gender-balanced society. By fostering an environment that encourages women to pursue their dreams and make a contribution to society as a whole, equality and equity can be fostered.²⁴

Dalit women in India had experience prejudice which hinders their capacity to live lives that are rewarding. They endure discrimination regarding their sexual orientation and race. This double weighs down prospects and perpetuates inequality.

²⁴ Ibid.

A gender -based bias can have a negative impact on the lives of women and inhibit their full potential. Challenging deeply ingrained opinions, language acquisition, and behaviour can be a challenging task. Recognizing and confronting bias is essential to building a more gender-balanced society.

3.3.2. Casteism:

We cannot talk about empowerment unless we consider and treat the Dalit women equally as well as giving them equal status in society. We need permanent empowerment that embraces every aspect of our society. Dalit women are treated unfairly solely due to their religious background, thereby placing their homes at the bottom of the social ladder. This prejudice has become deeply ingrained in Indian society and penetrates each component of their lives, making it impractical to break through the cycle of discrimination and poverty.

The identical twin burden of gender bias and caste discrimination greatly hinders Dalit women's access to an outstanding education. Many Dalit females are denied educational opportunities either because to lack of funding or cultural standards that favor males being educated. This prejudice is deeply rooted in Indian society and affects every area of their lives, making it impractical to break from the cycle of poverty and discrimination.²⁵

Additionally, prejudice against Dalit women and sex discrimination severely hinder their ability to obtain a high-quality education. Several factors prevent

²⁵ Lal, Resham. (2024), "An Introduction to the Caste-wise Socio-political Status of Women of Sonbhadra District of Uttar Pradesh", *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Management Studies*, ISSN No. 2395 0692, Vol. 10, No. 04.

Dalit women from accessing higher education due to financial constraints and social norms. Consequently, they have fewer opportunities for advancement and growth, which hampers their professional and personal advancement.

Dalit women address considerable barriers to employment. They can often be relegated to low-income earners careers with no chance for advertising. Discrimination in selection processes results in it being challenging for extremely capable people to find permitted work.²⁶ Consequently, they encounter fewer employment opportunities.

Dalit women (DW) face major obstacles to social mobility additionally. The combined use both gender stereotypes and racial prejudice causes it to be challenging for them to boost their social status and daily lives.

The strict caste system, in addition to gender norms, puts individuals in a downward spiral of impoverishment and limited potential clients. Dalit women possess major obstacles in terms of acquiring healthcare. They generally have limited access to healthcare resources and services. which causes mediocre health outcomes. The shortage of medical attention makes them more susceptible to illnesses and prevents their ability to live healthy lives.

Dalit women are in addition underrepresented in the political process. They have little standing in decisions and political processes, thereby their desires and concerns are frequently neglected. In light of an absence of representation, those who are marginalized have no opportunity to make decisions about

²⁶ Sharma, Gopal. (2015), "Women empowerment in India", Rupali Publication, Kolkata, ISBN: 9789381669884.

legislation that affect their lives.²⁷ Dalit women suffer limited possibilities for social assistance and protection. As a result of discrimination at both communal and institutional levels, people are unable to obtain adequate support and help, which restricts their ability to improve their quality of life.

Inequality towards Dalit women perpetuates a cycle of repression, limiting their potential and encouraging injustice. To stop the cycle of repetitiveness gender inequality and racism must be approached equally. Dalit women would get help from appropriate possibilities for getting knowledge and education, job opportunities, healthcare, and political participation, as well as social capabilities that enable them to realize their full potential. To attain equal rights, opportunity, and justice, we must try to acquire an inclusive culture that accepts everyone, regardless of their differences.

In West Bengal, Especially Murshidabad and Malda, the previously mentioned stereotypes are common in every jurisdiction. Despite the increased the amount of female participation in political engagement, women continue to live with prejudicial views. Programs such as Lakshmir Bhandar focuses on correcting the financial imbalance of women but deeper changes in structure must be implemented. Women are enthusiastic contributors in political interactions, especially regarding elections.

The Naxalite organization fosters political knowledge and advocacy by contacting for feminine equal opportunity and reform of the constitution. Female literacy is difficult to attain, particularly in remote rural regions. To raise empowerment and educational possibilities, discrepancies throughout villages and cities needs to be reduced, and this includes caste-based cultural

²⁷ Talukdar, Deblina; Mete, Jayanta. (2021), "A Journey of Oppressed Dalit Women in Indian Society", Vol. 15, Issue. 8, DOI:10.37896/jxu15.8/001.

standards. Financial autonomy relates to social mobility... Economic independence has connections to social mobility. West Bengal ought to encourage female labor force participation while offering specific professional development that will eradicate caste-based inequalities and improve earnings for vulnerable women. In conclusion, the empowerment of women in West Bengal requires perpetuated strategies to eradicate prejudice, promote education, and develop an inclusive political atmosphere. Acknowledging historical faces and conflict for racial justice might contribute to a more equitable country.

3.4. Culture and Women Empowerment:

The overview of outcomes on the influence of tradition on women in Indian society, especially regarding West Bengal's gender-inclusive regulations in the environments of social monumental, examines four main subdivisions, cultural diversity, systems of justice, the practice of religion, as well as household frameworks like a monogamous, polygamous and women-headed households. It was uncovered that social norms are continually improving, however slowly.

Traditional customs are advancing but slowly. Women are progressively acquiring productive assets and exercising authority regarding domestic issues, particularly obtaining financing from the government.²⁸ The study determined that cultural and social systems, especially gendered practices,

²⁸ Smile Foundation. (2023), "The Role of Culture in Women's Empowerment".

Retrieved From, <https://www.smilefoundationindia.org/blog/the-role-of-culture-in-womens-empowerment/>

family traditions, celebrations norms, and laws, continue to establish women in dependent roles throughout many communities investigated. The devaluation of marital relationships, evident in practices that involve wedding costs and planned marriage ceremonies, establishes the reduction of women to reduced amounts of privilege.

In the context of legal structures, a combination of statute and customary laws exerts an enormous effect on women being empowered. Land ownership, and availability of agricultural goods, marriage, succession, and separation are every instance of traditions in rural areas, include all of those examined. Traditional standard regulations typically fail to recognize critical rights for females, which include contractual weddings and sexual orientation, reproduction wellness privileges, birth control, and addressing premature births.

Communities suffer from obstacles whereas promoting gender parity due to the interrelated components involving oral tradition, aboriginal belief systems, prohibitions, norms and laws, and family rituals. The study demonstrated that traditional acts in the explored communities frequently impede women's empowerment. These customs limit feminine fairness in making choices and exerting power over fabrication, resources, income, leadership, and time.

The concurrent existence of legal systems inhibits women's rights and being empowered, inhibiting their involvement in the social economic, and Political life.²⁹

²⁹ Florence, K. (2022), "Women Empowerment and Role of Law in India", *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 5657 – 5665.

Religion, the empowerment of women Research shows that spiritual views may empower or constrain individuals, particularly women. The questionnaire includes Muslims, Christians, and Hindus who embrace native or traditional religions. The majority of respondents declare religion gives them valuable lessons to apply in everyday life. However, both primary religions typically promote a patriarchal organization with fundamental inequalities. Women are usually taught to obey their partners.

In Christianity, it is almost impossible to break up a marriage, regardless of whether it has failed utterly. In Islam, men are allowed to have up to four wives if they can afford it, and divorce depends on their choice of spouses. In Hindu culture, also known as Sanatani culture, men must wed once in their entire life, absolutely no second marriage.

Certain beliefs are prejudiced towards women and girls in inheritance and property distribution upon divorce or separation. Traditional beliefs, particularly mythology, practices, restrictions, the totems, and communal art, may encourage prejudiced behaviors and marginalize women. Our research emphasizes socioeconomic and religious modifications, involving racial or cultural norms, and social standards. Despite shifts the fundamental concept remains the same: women confront social constraints and challenges in their positions of employment.³⁰

This picture is also present amongst minority groups. They are a socially disadvantaged group. The education of women is not highly regarded in these groups. Some consider that women's primary objective is to wed and bear

³⁰ Bhat, Manzoor Ahmad (2015), "Position of women in the Indian society", International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education, Vol. 2, Issue 5, ISSN 2349-0373 (Print) and ISSN 2349-0381, PP 1-7.

children after they reach a certain age. However, today's society has achieved significant strides. Women have made major developments at all facets of society, particularly caring for families.

This chapter focuses on how ideologies and social norms hamper women's development in society. Although my investigation focuses on Murshidabad and Malda, analogous situations can be seen throughout India nowadays. After having discussions with multiple groups during my personal visits to my assigned districts, I concluded that governmental strategies and philosophical discussions alone will not solve the problem at hand. As a matter of fact, an integrated approach is crucial: the participants will be able to help their families through actual employment and education, which requires proper colleges and government aid for independent women.

The later chapters of the study provide a more detailed appraisal, which makes it more appropriate. I did not need any hypothesis for this discussion since all the data that I initially collected to conduct this study, data were collected in my presence. So, I hope that if we evaluate in the next chapters, it will be possible to easily report what are the insights or trends of our research.

Chapters – IV

Theme of Empowering Women and Navigating Constitutional Laws, Governmental Schemes, and Policy Prescriptions

India, a country of diverse cultures and heritage, recognizes the importance of women's empowerment to promote progress in society. Over the years, the country has implemented numerous constitutional provisions and policies dedicated to the advancement of women's status and rights. Further, this research discusses the impact of education on the socio-economic status of scheduled castes as well as its role in promoting their empowerment. To ensure their empowerment, it is important to stay abreast of the latest developments in these districts.

The purpose of this discussion is to outline the key constitutional and policy measures to promote women's empowerment in India as in West Bengal. All rights guaranteed in a constitution are legal rights, but they are not all constitutional rights. Apart from these statements as a researcher, I can emphasize the importance of national projects aimed at empowering women in West Bengal.

West Bengal is a part of India, so its national influence is always present. Before proceeding to the main discussion, it is important to understand the basic differences between constitutional rights and legal rights. Constitutional rights represent those that are specifically and informally guaranteed in a country's constitution. These rights are considered essential and are often enshrined in the supreme law of the country's government. Constitutional rights (CR) are generally held in high esteem because they are protected and upheld by the Constitution, which is its supreme law. On the other hand, legal rights encompass a broad category of rights recognized and protected by government or laws made by governments. Any State Govt. These laws may include laws, regulations and other legal instruments. In many countries, including India and the United States, constitutional rights are generally found in a certain article of the constitution, such as the Bill of Rights or the Fundamentals Rights section.

Constitutional rights generally carry greater significance in the eyes of the law because of their status as a fundamental principle.

Legal rights are subject to and may be changed through legislative process. They vary based on specific laws or regulations. So all constitutional rights are considered as legal rights because they are embedded in the Constitution, which is the supreme legal document in a country. Although constitutional rights are a subset of legal rights, not all legal rights are guaranteed by the Constitution. Legal rights may be established through statutes, administrative rules or common law precedents. Constitutional rights generally carry greater significance in the eyes of the law because of their status as a fundamental principle.

However, not all legal rights are constitutional rights, mainly because some legal rights may arise from statutes or other sources that are not part of the Constitution.

If we can trust the above arguments, it is very clear that keeping aside the policies of countries regarding women's empowerment, we cannot elaborate the schemes of the state because they are legal rights, not constitutional ones. Article 15(3) specifically states:

“Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision For women and children.”¹

This provision recognizes the importance of addressing the unique needs and vulnerabilities of women and children in society. Although we will only focus on women because that is what my research is about. And it recognizes that some problems are inherently gender-based. Women are a group that may require special attention and affirmative action to ensure their rights and equal participation in various fields.

Article 15(3) specifically states that states have the right to adopt such schemes to give women a stronger position in our society. So we can say West Bengal as a state that has implemented several policies and schemes related to this article.

¹ Ministry of Law of Justice, GOI, The Constitution of India 1950, art 15 (3). It reads: “Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children”

The term "special provision" refers to positive discrimination. This provision can provide steps that state can take to uplift the status of women which includes policies, programs and initiatives designed to provide additional Opportunities, protection and benefits for women.

By special permission Recognizing the Constitution's historical disadvantage for women, It tries to deal with them through targeted measures.

The opening phrase "Nothing in this article shall prevent..." emphasizes that Article 15(3) is an exception to the general rule against discrimination on grounds of cause of religion, caste, colour, sex or place of birth (mentioned in Article 15(1))

In practical terms, this provision allows the government to formulate and Implement policies, laws and programs that specifically focus on welfare, Education, health care and overall empowerment of women.

Concerning the Indian Constitution, Article 39(a) and Article 39(d) stated that,

“The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, Men, and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood.” And “The State shall, in particular, strive to promote equal pay for equal work for both Men and women.”²

² Ministry of Law of Justice, GOI, The Constitution of India 1950, art 39(a) and (b). It reads: “The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the citizens, men, and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood” and “The State shall, in particular, strive to promote equal pay for equal work for both men and women”

In emphasizing the above articles, we can relate to equivalent projects The Remuneration Act of 1976, which primarily focused on the principle of affirmative action Equal pay for equal work without discrimination on the basis of sex. The theme of the Equal Pay Act (EPA) revolves around the promotion of gender equality Eliminates the gender wage gap in the workplace Employees performing the same or similar work.

The central theme of the Act is: Eliminating the gender wage gap. It is mandatory that employers Paying equal remuneration to male and female employees for the same work or Works of a similar nature.³ This law prohibits employers from discriminating Against employees on the basis of gender in recruitment, Wages, promotions and other employment-related conditions. Ensures equal Remuneration, the law aims to contribute to the broader goal of gender equality Workplace It recognizes the importance of creating a fair and inclusive workplace Environment that values the contribution of both male and female employees.

The Act provides a legal framework and a proposal to eliminate wage disparity Remedy for breach. It gives employees the ability to search Redress through legal channels if they believe they are not getting equal Pay for equal work. The law emphasizes proper roles The authority ensures effective implementation of its provisions. It is Establishes equal pay enforcement and enforcement mechanisms Addressing complaints of wage discrimination that contributes Promotes the larger goal of gender equality and women's

³ Ministry of Labour & Employment, GOI, "Equal Remuneration Acts and Rules, 1976". Retrieved From, <https://labour.gov.in/womenlabour/equal-remuneration-acts-and-rules-1976>. Accessed on 27 March 2021.

empowerment in India And this process of empowerment will gradually spread to the states.

Women's empowerment is a multifaceted concept that encompasses many aspects Dimensions including economic, educational, social and political aspects. Maternity Benefit Act (MBA) 1961, 4 plays an important role in the development of women Empowering women by addressing their unique challenges Labor force during pregnancy and childbirth. This landmark law confirms Women workers who are given maternity benefits, such as paid leave, Protecting their health and well-being during the critical period of motherhood.

By ensuring maternity financial support and job security, The Maternity Benefit Act⁴ aims to empower women economically, allowing them Balancing their professional and family responsibilities Recognizes the importance of creating a work environment that respects and Supports women's reproductive rights, thereby contributing to their overall well-being Empowerment and building more inclusive and equitable societies.⁵

Minority politics and women's empowerment intersect in complex ways, Especially in the context of legal systems like protection Women from Domestic Violence Act (DVA), 2005⁶. of this Act while speaking Domestic

⁴ Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Bill, 2016 passed in the Parliament". pib.nic.in. Accessed on 12 June 2021.

Retrieved From, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170612224620/http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=159039>

⁵ "Maternity Leave in India: The Law, Importance and Benefits". Accessed on 27 Aug, 2022. Retrieved From, <https://www.onsurity.com/blog/maternity-leave-in-india/>

⁶ Chandra, Bipan; Mukherjee, Mridula; Mukherjee, Aditya .(2008). "India Since Independence". Penguin Books India, p. 374, ISBN 978-0-14-310409-4.

violence plays a leading role in empowering women from minorities Community that their gender and minority status. Law not only provides a legal framework for fighting But recognizes that domestic violence requires a nuanced approach Considers different cultural contexts within minority communities. By offer Also, protection and support for women experiencing domestic violence Among the minority background, this Act contributes to the empowerment of women communities. It reflects a commitment to affirming women regardless They have the right to be free from violence based on their religious or ethnic identity and Linked to broader goals of equality, gender equality and social justice. Minority politics, when integrated with women's empowerment initiatives, Legal frameworks enhance inclusion and promote more equity the society.⁷

As a comprehensive policy framework, the National Policy for Women (NPW), 2001, addresses the diverse challenges and opportunities that women face today in India. Throughout the context of this policy, minority women are given particular attention.⁸ Due to factors such as religion, ethnicity, or linguistic differences, minority women may face unique needs and vulnerabilities, and so the policy emphasizes the importance of inclusive and targeted measures for ensuring the benefits of women.

⁷ Gupta, Monobina. (2006). "Malevolence for women's law – Men go to PM against female 'terrorist activity'". The Telegraph, Calcutta. Retrieved From, https://web.archive.org/web/20121016131533/http://www.telegraphindia.com/1061027/asp/frontpage/story_6923154.asp Accessed on 21 Jan, 2022

⁸ Ministry of Women & Child Development, GOI, "National Policy for The Empowerment of Women" 2001, Accessed on 22 Feb, 2023. Retrieved From, <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/National%20Policy%20for%20Empowerment%20of%20Women%20001.pdf>

All sections of society can benefit from empowerment, including minority communities. By acknowledging and addressing the specific concerns of minority women, the National Policy for Women, 2001, aims to foster an equitable and just society where women from diverse backgrounds can actively participate in social, economic, and political spheres. As a result, the policy promotes rights and well-being of minority women alongside those of the majority, fostering a sense of inclusion and equality.

“Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao” (Save the Girl, Educate the Daughter) Government initiatives in India to address the declining child sex ratio and promoting the education and well-being of girls. In the minority context The impact of this program on women in West Bengal is significant.

The initiative “Beti bachao, beti padhao” has played an important role in raising awareness in this regard The importance of educating and empowering girls among these minority groups.⁹ Creates a positive environment for women’s birth and education Children, this initiative aims to challenge deep-rooted gender bias. In the west Bengal, where minority communities make significant contributions to the state There is potential to empower minority women through population, programs Promoting gender equality, education and socio-economic development.

Through targeted interventions and awareness campaigns, the initiative strives to create a more inclusive and supportive society for the well-being and advancement of girls, including girls from minority backgrounds, in West Bengal.

⁹ Ministry of Women & Child Development, GOI, "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao". Accessed on 1 April, 2023.
Retrieved From, <https://wcd.nic.in/bbbp-schemes>,

As far as I know, the Women's Protection Bill in India mentions a proposal Legislation aimed at reserving a certain percentage of seats in the Lok Sabha Lower House of Parliament of India and State Assemblies for Women The bill seeks to address gender disparity in political representation and empower women in the decision-making process.¹⁰

The bill is still there though Progress is being made, and only the future will tell what its impact will be in the country This is the bill. Regarding its possible impact on West Bengal or any other state, The Women's Reservation Bill (WRB), if enacted, could have a significant impact Political representation in state legislatures.

West Bengal is known for activism Political landscape and cultural diversity, will likely see increased participation Women in political leadership roles. The bill aims to provide women with a Building a more equitable platform to contribute to policymaking and governance A more inclusive political environment.¹¹

A key component of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India is the issue of local governance, especially for rural local authorities such as panchayats.. Although the 73rd Amendment guarantees the representation of women at the grassroots level by reserving one-third of panchayat seats for

¹⁰ Kumar, Meira. "Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar calls for women's empowerment". The Times of India. 9 March 2013.
https://web.archive.org/web/20130505090251/http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-03-09/india/37581570_1_international-women-s-day-women-s-reservation-bill-speaker-meira-kumar,
Accessed on 30 Dec,2022

¹¹ "Rajya Sabha passes Women's, Reservation Bill". (2010). The Times of India. 9 March 2010. Retrieved from, http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-03-09/india/28137030_1_unruly-scenes-women-s-reservation-bill-constitution-amendment-bill Accessed on 28 Dec 2022

them , it is not passed individually in twenty other states apart from West Bengal and it increases to half of the total number of seats Women in Local Self-Government (LSG). However, it is important to note that the 73rd The amendment deals with rural local bodies, and makes reservations for women At the applied level.¹²

74th Amendment deals with municipal organizations. Like 73rd Amendment, 74th Amendment also provides reservations for women in municipal organizations . Women's increased representation could lead to a more equitable municipal system. Women have increased Representation can lead to policy formulation that better addresses gender— Specific issues and concerns. Additionally, it can motivate and encourage more Women of West Bengal including minority communities Active participation in politics and public affairs.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) is a maternity benefit scheme in India aimed at providing financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women. Although PMMVY does not specifically target minority women, it plays an important role in promoting not only minority women but all section of women.

In addition, maternity and lactating women will receive conditional cash transfers for first live births, with an emphasis on promoting proper nutrition and health practices. PMMVY contributes to the empowerment of minority women in the context of economic well-being and healthcare by reducing

¹² National Portal of India. (2992)."The Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act" , Retrieved From, <https://www.india.gov.in/my-government/constitution-india/amendments/constitution-india-seventy-third-amendment-act-1992>, Accessed on 28 Dec, 2022

maternal and child mortality rates and ensuring healthy outcomes for both mothers and children.¹³

Additionally, the implementation of PMMVY involves awareness campaigns and outreach activities, to ensure that women from minority communities are informed about the scheme and can avail its benefits. As a result of this proactive approach, information gaps are addressed and inclusion in government welfare programs is promoted. As part of the empowerment of minority women, PMMVY contributes to their economic well-being and healthcare.

Empowering minority women through financial support during pregnancy and breastfeeding not only addresses their immediate needs but also aligns with larger goals of gender equality and social inclusion.

This savings scheme was launched by the government as part of the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY). An organization in India that aims to provide financial security to girl children. By offering attractive interest and tax benefits, SSY encourages families, especially those in economically distressed areas, to invest in their daughters.

Through Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, women are empowered in various ways, such as financial independence and financial inclusion. As SSY combines attractive interest rates and tax benefits, it encourages families to invest in the education and future of their daughters. The scheme not only helps in breaking

¹³ Ministry of Women and Child Development, GOI, "Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana(PMMVY)", Accessed on 30 April 2023, Retrieved From, <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/FINAL%20PMMVY%20%28FAQ%29%20BOOKLET.pdf> Accessed on 12 Jan, 2023.

gender stereotypes but also acts as an agent of empowerment by laying a solid financial foundation for women. Parents are encouraged to invest in long-term savings for their daughters, encouraging a culture of financial planning for their daughters ' education and marriage.

This initiative is in line with the larger vision of empowering women through inclusion of financial and educational resources, as well as contributing to the overall development and empowerment of women in the country by achieving economic independence.

West Bengal has taken significant steps in implementing various women empowerment schemes specifically designed for the economic, social and educational upliftment of women across the state.¹⁴

The government has been unwavering in its resolve to building a more diverse and inclusive society For women. Below are few of the outstanding women empowerment projects which have organised in West Bengal led the way.

4.1. Prohibition of Child Marriage Act:

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 is a law in India that prohibits child marriage (PCMA). According to the law, girls can marry at the age of 18 and boys at the age of 21. However, even with this law in place, many West Bengali girls still get married early. According to a study conducted in 2007-08 (DLHS-3), West Bengal ranks fifth in child marriages nationwide. In this state, almost half of the girls (54.7%) marry when they are

¹⁴ Dhawan, Sunil. "What is Sukanya Samridhi Yojana? All you need to know", Economic Times, 17 Jan, 2019.

still children. There is a big problem with this, not only in rural areas but also in parts of Kolkata, where more than a quarter of girls are married before they turn 18, which is a very serious issue.¹⁵

Most attempts at child marriages are those of girls, rather than boys. Thus, it has turned into one of the most common ways for young girls to be forced to go through wicked experiences, more akin to a type of abuse specific to girls. Early marriage can easily ruin their health, and the health of their future children. Forced child marriage usually results in the husband not providing his wife with any money, and she has no social power and is therefore easy to be forced into child labor, trafficking, and other forms of calamity. However, what is important and interesting to point out is that the areas of West Bengal where early marriage is highly spread contain a major problem of trafficking.

There are major problems associated with getting married early and leaving school. Only 33% of people who are 5-17 years old are still attending school, according to the National Family Health Survey III (NFHS), 2005- 2006. Although elementary education is free for everyone in India, moving from primary to high school can be quite challenging. High school isn't free, and some parents who don't have a lot of money don't want to spend on their daughters' education. Instead, they may marry them, thinking it will keep them and their families safe. However, this choice often causes girls to face money problems and not feel safe. Research shows that many women are forced to work later in life, but if they don't finish school or get work

¹⁵ "The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act". (2006). Act No.6 of 2007, Accessed on 10 May 2023.
Retrieved From,
https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/6843/1/child_marriage_prohibition_act.pdf

experience, it's hard for them to get a job. There are many reasons why women marry early, including poverty, so it makes it difficult for women to escape poverty. It is also hard for women to escape poverty because they are more likely to be poor and taken advantage of throughout their lives. So, being poor, which is one reason for getting married early, can also lead to a life of poverty.

As soon as the PCMA 2006 law started, the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) began a campaign against child marriage. The government told people it was not okay and supported enforcing the law with penalties for adults involved. But, it turned out that just having rules and saying it's wrong isn't enough to stop child marriage. In fact, it turned out that just having rules and saying it's wrong isn't enough to stop child marriage.¹⁶ One problem is that India has lots of laws that make it difficult to determine what is the best age for girls to get married.

Furthermore, because people think child marriage is a long-standing tradition for girls and it is believed that girls need to be protected from it, there is more to stopping it than just rules and messages we need real efforts to make social changes so that young girls can make their own decisions instead of being forced into hard choices due to their age and gender.

¹⁶ Mahapatra, Dhananjay.(2013)."Tough to fix marriage age for girls, Supreme Court says", Accessed on, 12 May 2024. Retrieved From, https://web.archive.org/web/20130726183228/http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-07-25/india/40792255_1_marriageable-age-ncw-underage-girls

4.2. Kanyashree Prakalpa:

Kanyashree Prakalpa wants to make things better for girls, especially those from low-income families.¹⁷ The organization uses Conditional Cash Transfers, which means: Encouraging girls to stay in school longer and finish high school or other learning opportunities. This helps them have a better life with more opportunities. Telling girls not to marry before 18, when it is legal. It can prevent problems like early pregnancy, which is bad for both mother and baby.

The plan wasn't just about giving money, It wanted to help girls feel more in control. Because of this, the benefits are deposited directly into the girls' accounts, allowing them to decide how to spend it. Thus to prevent negative consequences such as staying in school longer and postponing the time of getting married, the strategy also concentrates on empowerment of the girls. This is accomplished by constructively communicating with them. My initiative not only explains to girls why they need such an event but also offers pleasant: campaigns, contests, Kanyashree clubs, and seeing strong women as role models. This helps build their emotional and social capital. As more girls stay in school, we hope they'll use the chance to learn skills and Knowledge, making them more independent with money.¹⁸ Even if some girls get Married

¹⁷ Kundu, Indrajit. (2017). "UN honors Mamata Banerjee with highest public service award for girl child project Kanyashree", India Today, Kolkata, Jun 23.

¹⁸ "Kanyashree akhon Biswashree", Accessed on 12 Jan 2021, Retrieved from, https://wbkanyashree.gov.in/kp_4.0/index.php,

soon after turning 18, we think their education and feeling more sure of Themselves will help them start their adult lives better. Over time, as more groups of women only get married after being more independent, we hope that child Marriage will stop completely. Then, women can have their rights to health, Education, and the same opportunities in society.¹⁹

Kanyashree aims to ensure that girls stay in school and avoid early marriage, at Least until they reach 18. They use a straightforward approach known as Conditional Cash Transfers, which has been successful for children and teenagers Worldwide.

In Kanyashree, it involves two main parts, firstly, Girls aged 13 to 18, studying in Class VIII or above, receive Rs. 1000 every year if they remain in school and are unmarried. Secondly, When a girl turns 18 and if she is in school or working she is given Rs. 25,000 if unmarried.

This financial assistance helps pay for education at the middle school level, upper Secondary school level, various courses related to job training, and even sports. It is mainly targeted at the girls from households earning Rs 1,20,000 a year or Less. Nonetheless, girls with disability, orphans and children in child care Institution are not subjected to the income restriction. Furthermore, girls with special Needs can also apply for the annual scholarship even if they are attending a class lower Than class eight.

¹⁹ Banerjee, Monideepa. (2017). "Kanyashree Scheme For Girls In Bengal Wins UN Award", NDTV.com, June 24, Accessed on 30 March 2021. Retrieved From, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/kanyashree-scheme-for-girls-in-bengal-wins-un-award-1716321>,

4.3. Rupasree Prakalpa:

Rupashree Prakalpa is one of the considerate schemes introduced by the Government of West Bengal. In Particular, it aims at providing the families with insufficient funds during the Wedding of their daughters. Under this program, such identified families are provided. A massive lump sum amount inclusive of a one-time grant of twenty-five thousand rupees. The Community Oriented Social Security Scheme (COSSS) Manual registration and Validation of Benefits 2007 describes the aims of this project as facilitating lower income families' burden when they are helping their daughters find husbands. Few of these households, however, escape this reality and end up borrowing money to cover up costs for the functions but at exorbitant interest charges. This type of program will help many families in need and was implemented on April 1, 2018. This is valid for weddings occurring on or after this date, ensuring that there is no shortage of families in West Bengal regions who will avail of this assistance. The scope of the program does not only focus on one region of the state but it is applicable to all the districts of the state so that families living in such areas can access this assistance.²⁰

For advantages to be awarded under this stipend scheme a woman intending to marry and wishing to be honoured with such is required to satisfy what is consequently stated in her application, The applicant must be at least eighteen

²⁰ Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, Govt of WB, "Rupashree Prakalpa", Accessed on 24 March 2022.
Retrieved From, https://wbcdwdsw.gov.in/User/rupashree_prakalpa.

years old. She should be unmarried at the time of submission of her application.

It must be noted that the proposed marriage shall be the first time an individual is entering into a marriage. It should either have been a woman who is still alive today or a woman who died from some other causes have been born in West Bengal or has been residing in West Bengal for 5 years at least. It may be that one of her parents has been a resident of West Bengal for the last 20 years, On the other hand, both her parents should be permanent residents of West Bengal. Her family's annual Income should not cross Rs. 1. 50 lakh and her groom must be currently 21 years old, She should have an active bank account with she is the sole account holder

4.4. Swasthya Sathi Prakalpa:

Another program that the West Bengal government has introduced is Swasthya Sathi through which the need for the upliftment of the women's health has been highlighted. This importance is based on the fact that the whole family can benefit from this scheme although the card is issued in the name of the female head of the house hold.²¹ This can be said to be an indirect form of women empowerment in west Bengal in this sense. Such policies have been initiated first by the state governments of West Bengal and then spread

²¹ West Bengal Health and Family welfare Department (e-WBHFWD), "Swasthya Sathi", Accessed on 24 March, 2022, Retrieved From, <https://swasthyasathi.gov.in/>

to the rest of the country. Therefore, it will now be beneficial to deviate this discussion toward a comprehensive analysis of these revolutionary programs.

That is why Swasthya Sathi was launched through Cabinet No – 2625 on February 17, 2016. And Finance Department letter no – 1104-F (P) dated 25 February 2016. The official launch was done on 30th December 2016 by the Hon’ble Chief Minister of West Bengal.

Another option was the health coverage up to Rs.5 lakhs per annum per family for the secondary as well as tertiary Care, it has also paperless, cashless, and smart card based systems all of which existed well before all kinds of diseases, family planning is not restricted, parents include both from husband’s and wife’s side And dependent physically challenged persons an all cost incurred by the State Government; there is even no way in which the beneficiaries are supposed to contribute in any way Smart card issued for Swasthya Sathi which is enrolled on the same day no paper work involved.²²

Such activities include IT platforms management right from the initiation of the project, empanelment over internet and gradation of hospitals with respect to services/hardware provided. 100% online pre-authorization Card blocking and with a 24 hour turn around, action involving use of short messaging service to inform the beneficiaries.

Uploading of E-health records, especially on discharge, is real-time, Online grievance Monitoring mechanism , these are all the features of this scheme. Though directly many of them are the same as several features mentioned in

²² "West Bengal Swasthyasathi Health Insurance Scheme" Accessed on 24 March 2022.
Retrieved From, <https://vikaspedia.in/schemesall/state-specific-schemes/west-bengal/west-bengal-swasthyasathi-health-insurance-scheme>

the previous scheme. Not an issue for my research but we should not lose sight of the fact that the cardholder is solely Given by head of the female member of the family so it is symbol of women's. Empowerment, but if this kind of facts were ignored then we cannot proceed for the further research.

4.5. Utkarsh Bangla Scheme:

This skill development and employment generation scheme also has the advantage of empowering women through training them or employment openings. It was meant to empower women to be on their own and financially independent. The Government of West Bengal is committed to broad spectrum skill development. Especially for its youth in terms of improving productive employment and entrepreneurship. This commitment is delivered through the WBSDM (West Bengal Skill Development Mission), an organization funded by the Honourable Chief Minister of West Bengal. In agreement with this, the Department of Technical. The Government of West Bengal is done by the Department of Education, Training and Skill Development. announced the “Utkarsh Bangla” flagship scheme on February 16, 2016, under the on behalf of the PBSSD (Paschim Banga Society for Skill Development).²³

This is not only an effort to empower the youth but also focuses on women's employment as a key factor in the skill development process. These involve

²³ Department of Technical Education, Training and Skill Development Government of West Bengal, "Utkarsh Bangla", Accessed on 14 April 2022.
Retrieved From, https://www.pbssd.gov.in/about_pbssd/about_us

the short-term skill trainings that are directly linked to placement, aimed at opening up suitable opportunities for women in the State of West Bengal. Anyone willing to seek employment and those who are women can therefore apply for all short term skill development training that PBSSD, Government of West Bengal undertakes to promoted youth employment and women employment.

4.6. Sabooj Sathi Prakalpa:

Out of all the programs which are defined and described in the book, Sabooj Sathi is the most successful and exemplary one in terms of well-thought-out policy, commitment to ideals, and efficient implementation. Fairness is the policy whose main goal is to give each high school student equal chance regardless their origin. Learners most especially those from needy background learning in poor equipped public schools, struggle in exerting effort in accessing schools hence high dropout rate, especially to girl child who has always been a subject of discrimination.²⁴

Realizing that the issue of inaccessibility is a big problem, the government came up with ways to make it more possible by offering bicycles to every high school learner. It has also been more effective than other programs because it has adopted a universality feature, thus enhancing the realization of the scheme. There is an increased usage of technology that creates openness in

²⁴ "Saboojsathi Prakalpa", West Bengal Government order number. SBCW-166/17, dated 17/7/2017, Accessed on 12 May, 2022, Retrieved From, www.wbsaboojsathi.gov.in/download.

areas like the use of online processes for supplier identification and bicycle delivery.

In addition to enhancing access to high school educations, Sabooj Sathi has transformed the society by enhancing mobility among the society especially the girls.²⁵ The distributed bicycles needed for learning other activities such as going to the market, health centers, cinemas and local fairs among others as well.

However, a number of problems should be highlighted. Concerns should be exercised to ensure that no extra costs are incurred from students, distribution record irregularities are corrected, and facilities made available to disabled student. Thus, opening the grievance tab on the website is important to enable the students to make complaints and suggestions. To ensure that the scheme is sustained and does not affect other works in other departments, special arrangements concerning human resources should be made.

The problems that have been highlighted under the implementation issues can be solved through policy changes while the analysis shows that there is a dire need for policy change in the education sector.²⁶ The statistics therefore show a significant reduction in enrolment of girls in the higher secondary level

²⁵ Pratiche Trust, 2017, "Formative study to enhance the understanding about reasons for smooth transition among boys and girls to secondary schools: West Bengal Report", Study commissioned by UNICEF India, ERU Consultants Private Limited, New Delhi

²⁶ Department of Backward Classes Welfare, Government of West Bengal, "Revised report of the task force set up for the scheme of distribution of bicycles to students of classes IX to XII in the state", March 2015.

especially in some districts and the low participation of students from the weaker background such as Adivasis and Muslims.

That is why such effective implementation of Sabooj Sathi integrates useful lessons that need to be used in their entirety to deal with fundamentals of education delivery as such . The present study will explore a different dimension by using the information that is collected from the official website of the Government of West Bengal. This particular concern deals with the effect of the programme on higher learning institutions arguing the fact that, while the government is giving away bicycles, it is also reducing the gaps in learning in higher learning institutions. The following table will display the empirical evidence of the decrease in girls' schooling enrolment across the various strata of the society. ²⁷

4.7. Swawlamban Bharosa (Geriatric Care) Scheme:

Swalamban, is an initiative taken by the government to ease the lives of distressed women and girls. It involves transgender, trafficked people, sex workers and other women with moral problems, aged between 18 and 35 years. Its partners in providing job training are non-governmental organizations (NGO). It is mainly aimed at empowering socially vulnerable

²⁷ Muralidharan, Karthik, and Nishith Prakash. (2017). "Cycling to School: Increasing Secondary School Enrollment for Girls in India." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9 (3): 321–50. DOI: 10.1257/app.20160004
Retrieve From, <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/app.20160004>

women especially those who may be involved in immoral activities to earn a living.

This program is ensured by the West Bengal Women Development Undertaking (WBWDU) which is a part of the Department of Women and Social Welfare (DWSW), Government of West Bengal. They have been operating it since 2006-2007. The results of a rhetorical analysis are persuasive; This strategy aims to convince the audience and act in a certain manner. For example, Kolkata can propose projects and only those recommended at the district level by the District Magistrates (DM) are further scrutinized with the PAC headed by the Hon'ble Minister in charge of the Women and Social Welfare Department.²⁸

Swalamban, an NGO launched by the West Bengal government, can be hailed as a symbol of women (socially distressed) empowerment. This program has no limitations as it pertains to minority women where women with special needs are also considered. Here, in this article, we will try to study and analyze the efforts of Swavalamban schemes in West Bengal and how minority women in the state are being empowered by the government.

Swavalamban is a program established by the state to empower and support women and girls in distress, such as trans women and girls, trafficked women and girls, sex workers, and women and girls at moral risk between the ages of 18-35. The implementation of this project involves partnering with NGOs,

²⁸ Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, Govt of WB, "Swawalamban Scheme", Accessed on 24 June 2022. Retrieve From, https://wbcdwdsw.gov.in/User/scheme_swawalamban#:~:text=Swawalamban%20is%20a%20State%20sponsored,imparted%20in%20collaboration%20with%20NGOs.

especially in providing vocational training to socially disadvantaged women to promote their economic independence.

Under the larger framework of Swavalamban, the focus is on minority women with a special focus on special issues of minority women. Minorities, both in numbers and in facilities, face social, economic and educational problems in the society and Swavalamban understands the need to provide kosher solutions to empower these marginalized sections of the people.

There is a reason to believe that minority women may be more discriminated against than members of other vulnerable social groups, and therefore the purpose of Swavalamban may be quite important for economically empowering socially marginalized women. Vocational training for minority women helps such individuals acquire skills that will enable them to get jobs and thus provide for themselves financially. Education is another important aspect of self-reliance as it has also been considered as a priority by the organization. This scheme provides employment and education opportunities to minority women who cannot afford education in this field. Apart from boosting their morale, it also brings better employment opportunities for them.

Well aware of the situation and needs of minority women, Swavalamban consists of consciousness and enlightenment programs for culturally sensitive minority women. This ensures that these initiatives do not pose a risk to people's cultural sensitivities by emphasizing minority diversity.

In West Bengal, the Women and Social Welfare Department's West Bengal Women Development Undertaking is particularly involved in implementing Swavalamban schemes. As you know, KSCDC is the State Level Nodal

Agency for the implementation of the program and as such it is directly responsible for the proper implementation of the program and ensure the minority women reaps best of the program.²⁹

Swavalamban get active participation of the community for minority women so as to create a favorable environment for them. Incorporation of the minorities involves ensures that the programs are in harmony with what the specific minority groups want and this makes the result lasting and efficient.

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Programmes in West Bengal like Swavlamban schemes that are implemented for the women especially the minority women are an efficient example of multi-sectoral intervention. For these reasons, it can be seen that initiatives touching on economic, education and culture spheres play a crucial role in overcoming the barriers and providing the African minority women with chances for success. While the government of India continues to invest on and develop Swavlamban, young minority women are able to come up with a better society for everyone.

4.8. Women's Universities and Colleges in WB:

In West Bengal Women's Colleges and Universities are greatly effective in empowering the women as well as Minority women in this state. The creation

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ "Swabalamban (Norad)", Accessed on 24 June, 2022.

Retrieved From, <http://wbcs.gov.in/schemes/swabalamban.htm>

of women's universities and colleges in West Bengal represent a positive shift in a direction which involves the promotion of education for women. This study will focus on how these institutions have helped shape the lives of minority women within the state and how they have helped to emancipate the female gender.³¹

Women's universities and colleges do not only focus on the quality education, but also skill acquisition. It is more relevant for the minority women as they can experience different barriers when it comes to employment. Through imparting of skills in these institutions, women are empowered in the job market hence economic power and social power. Being aware of the cultural competency, women's universities and colleges of West Bengal include multiculturalism in their curriculums. It helps to provide an appropriate Minority perspective respect to cultural diversity minority and their educational experience.³² A better understanding of cultural difference leads to better interpersonal relationships and also helps create a tolerant society.

Women's universities and colleges therefore reach out to the community level in their operation. Such institutions are involved in the process of empowering the minority communities through community engagement efforts. In this way, they help to eliminate stigmatization, increase people's knowledge and encourage a transformation of the socio-economic situation in these communities.

³¹ "Women's universities and colleges in West Bengal", Accessed on 1 July 2022. Retrieved From, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Women%27s_universities_and_colleges_in_West_Bengal

³² Ibid.

West Bengal women's universities and colleges are a way of building up leadership qualities among the minority women. Through granting women chances to lead in the different sectors, the institutions help in developing women who can transform the nation and other societies.

Women's universities and colleges in West Bengal have come a long way but there are still issues that need to be addressed like infrastructure facilities, the problem of accessibility and concerns specific to the minority women. Realising that these are challenges that are full of opportunities for the improvement of these institutions guarantees that these remain to be proactive institutions of empowering centres.

Women's universities and colleges have developed in response to the growing needs of society through continuous improvement and adaptation. In these institutions, a beacon of progress stands out, which develops a future where every woman, regardless of her background or social position, has an equal opportunity to achieve her full potential. But the true measure of the success of these organizations depends on the concrete development they have achieved for the minorities.

As they continue to evolve, it is essential to closely monitor and address the specific challenges faced by minority women, to ensure that the benefits of empowerment are equitably distributed to all segments of society. There is no doubt that women's universities and colleges can play an increasingly important role in making society better through sustained efforts and targeted interventions, paving the way for a more inclusive, equitable and empowered society that benefits women from all walks of life.

SL/N	Universities/Colleges	ESTD	Districts
1	Alipurduar Mahila Mahavidyalaya	2007	Alipurduar
2	Arambagh Girls' College	1995	Hooghly
3	Asansol Girls' College	1950	Paschim Bardhaman
4	Balurghat Mahila Mahavidyalaya	1970	Dakshin Dinajpur
5	Banipur Mahila Mahavidyalaya	1999	Habra
6	Bankura Zilla Saradamani Mahila Mahavidyapith	1973	Bankura
7	Basanti Devi College	1959	Kolkata
8	Berhampore Girls' College	1946	Murshidabad
9	Bethune College	1879	Kolkata
10	Bijoy Krishna Girls' College	1947	Howrah
11	Calcutta Girls' College	1963	Kolkata
12	Cluny Women's College	1998	Kalimpong
13	Deshbandhu College for Girls	1955	Kolkata
14	Dhupguri Girls' College	2013	Jalpaiguri
15	Diamond Harbour Women's University	2013	South 24 Parganas
16	Durgapur Women's College	1980	Paschim Bardhaman
17	East Calcutta Girls' College	1992	Kolkata
18	Gokhale Memorial Girls' College	1938	Kolkata
19	Government College of Physical Education for Women	1985	Coochbehar
20	Government Girls General Degree College, Ekbalpur	2016	Kolkata

21	Hiralal Majumdar Memorial College for Women	1959	Kolkata
22	Hooghly Women's College	1959	Hooghly
23	Jhargram Raj College (Girls' Wing)	2014	West Midnapore
24	Jogamaya Devi College	1932	Kolkata
25	Kanyashree University	2020	Nadia
26	Krishnagar Women's College	1958	Nadia
27	Lady Brabourne College	1939	Kolkata
28	Loreto College, Kolkata	1912	Kolkata
29	Maharajadhiraj Uday Chand Women's College	1955	Bardhaman
30	Maharani Kasiswari College	1964	Kolkata
31	Mahishadal Girls' College	1969	Purba Medinipur
32	Malda Women's College	1970	Malda
33	Milli Al-Ameen College for Girls	1975	Kolkata
34	Muralidhar Girls' College	1940	Kolkata
35	Netaji Nagar College for Women	1986	Kolkata
36	Nistarini Women's College	1957	Purulia
37	P.D. Women's College	1950	Jalpaiguri
38	Pritilata Waddedar Mahavidyalaya	2007	Nadia
39	Purni Devi Chaudhuri Girls' College	2004	Birbhum
40	Raja Narendra Lal Khan Women's College	1957	Midnapore
41	Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan	1961	Kolkata
42	Rani Birla Girls' College	1961	Kolkata

43	Raniganj Girls' College	1980	Paschim Bardhaman
44	Sarada Ma Girls' College	2006	North 24 Parganas
45	Sarojini Naidu College for Women	1956	Kolkata
46	Savitri Girls' College	1972	Kolkata
47	Serampore Girls' College	1981	Hooghly
48	Seth Soorajmull Jalan Girls' College	1958	Kolkata
49	Shri Shikshayatan College	1955	Kolkata
50	Siliguri Mahila Mahavidyalaya	1981	Darjeeling
51	Sister Nibedita Government General Degree College for Girls	2015	Kolkata
52	South Calcutta Girls' College	1932	Kolkata
53	Sivanath Sastri College	1961	Kolkata
54	Southfield College	1961	Darjeeling
55	Swami Niswambalananda Girls' College	1978	Kolkata
56	Surendranath College for Women	1884	Kolkata
57	Thakur Panchanan Mahila Mahavidyalaya	1981	Cooch Behar
58	Victoria Institution (College)	1932	Kolkata
59	Vidyasagar College for Women	1931	Kolkata
60	Vivekananda College for Women	1961	Kolkata
61	Women's Christian College	1945	Kolkata
62	Women's College	1937	Kolkata

Figure 4.1: List of women's colleges and universities in West Bengal.³³

³³ The data has been collected by accessing all Universities & colleges's official websites.

4.9. Muktir Alo Scheme:

The respected justices of the Supreme Court of India was their opinion that we must look for new avenues for identifying, rescuing and rehabilitating those in sex work/prostitution or have been trafficked for sex work. Therefore, the government in West Bengal decided to launch a large-scale initiative known as Muktir Alo for supporting the sex workers and victims of trafficking. This particular plan was approved in a meeting by the government in the 13th of June, 2014. Presumably, the authorities of West Bengal who are responsible for the affairs of women and children have formulated this plan.

When the government agreed to the plan, they penned a letter informing the public of the development. They said that they will collaborate with a good organization to achieve this plan. The Muktir Alo plan was officially launched on 04th of September 2015. In a specific ceremony, where formalities were conducted, the top executive of the region West Bengal, the Chief Minister, announced it. This plan is all about assisting and helping the sex workers and any other persons who have been compelled into such a challenging life.³⁴

Even now in the eve of the th scrape of the new millennium prejudice remains, linked to elements like religion, race, and occupation. Despite the modernity and sophistication of our present society and culture, they are able to overlook the deep core of humanity with those they encounter, whether in

³⁴ Department of Women & Child Development and Social Welfare, Govt. of West Bengal, "Status of Muktir Alo Scheme for F.Y. of 2015-16 & 2016-17 (as on 30.6.16)", Accessed on 4 Sept, 2022. Retrieved From, https://wbcdwds.wb.gov.in/User/scheme_muktirallo

prostitution or of different races. The social practice of passing judgments in the form of looks of scorn and words muttered behind ones back is fortunately a thing of the past. However, it is important to note that regardless of the nature of such violations and despite the fact that sex work is a profession that is subjected to a certain level of social censure, sex workers are not defined solely by their work. In essence, they are human beings like any other five human beings in people's society and existence.³⁵

Unfortunately, they are often accountable to society and are therefore subjected to rigidity, being checked, and going through many barriers. Though, the West Bengal Government has started a revolutionary project called 'Muktir Alo Scheme' with an aim to enlighten the life of the sex workers. Initiated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on September 4, 2015, this scheme is intended to help sex worker and underprivileged women and assist them to participate in the society.

Some girls end up in sex work by circumstances which are mostly unfortunate like lack of job opportunities or even kidnapping. In some occasions they are taken to other states and left there with no resources or ways to escape or go back home. Even though the girls have their own families, they are considered as 'orphans' who will be enabled to become self-reliant through the Muktir Alo project by giving them opportunities to be rehabilitated, being supported by government funding, being counselled, and being trained in various fields. The government provides the trainees with foods and other necessities for the

³⁵ Dutta, Elina. (2022). "মাথা তুলে বাঁচবেন যৌনকর্মীরাও, পথ দেখাচ্ছে রাজ্য সরকারের মুক্তির আলো", EiSamay.Com, Accessed on 23 October 2022.

Retrieved From, <https://eisamay.com/government-schemes/state/know-about-state-government-muktir-alo-scheme/articleshow/93353374.cms>

duration of their training and counsel them on how to reintegrate into society. The project also has a training component in different subjects in order to make these people to be self-reliant. Being associated with the ‘Muktir Alo project it involves Block Printing, Spice Grinding, ‘Cafeteria Management,’ and ‘Recycling of Tire Tubes. ‘Many sex workers from this state have already availed this scheme which reveals the government imperative to empower women from the sex trade and pull them up in the social strata. This particular programme aims to empower the trafficked women and girls, sex workers and their derivative children to free themselves from the vice of being exploited and uplift them to become productive citizens of the society.

However, there is some doubts as to the actual efficiency of these schemes. Can this initiative really be deemed as beneficial with an aim of improving the status of the marginalized society, or are such plans just emptyhanded? It requires an understanding that sustainable implementation in our society is a long-term process. Regarding this the Minister of Women and Child Welfare in the state Shashi Panja expressed.

“The primary focus of the Muktir Alo Project is on helping sex workers. Rehabilitating them is a challenging task, so merely counting the numbers doesn’t capture the complexity of the effort. Even if we can successfully reintegrate just one woman back into mainstream society, that’s a significant success. If more organizations join in, they too can reap the benefits of this scheme,”³⁶

³⁶ "রাজ্য সরকারের 'মুক্তির আলো' প্রকল্প থেকে ৩ বছরে সুবিধা পেয়েছেন মাত্র ৭৫ জন", Indo-Asian News Service, Mar 11, 2019. Accessed on 23 September 2022.

Retrieved From, <https://www.ndtv.com/bengali/only-75-sex-workers-have-been-benefitted-from-wb-govt-scheme-muktir-alo-2005898>

A good example is the ‘Muktir Alo’ plan made by the West Bengal government, it has assisted only 75 people in the last three years. This news has been gathered through a paper that was filed by a lawyer based in Kolkata using the Right to Information (RTI). The strategy, also known as the ‘Muktir Alo’, started in the year 2016 has the aim of providing different streams of income to women in prostitution who want to exit the industry as well as those who never had a choice but to engage in it due to trafficking. The following year lawyer Bipan Kumar felt the need to file an RTI to know the effectiveness of the plan. He said,

“I wanted to know how many people wanted to join this plan. Then I found out that only one organization can apply to join. This time, six groups applied, but only two were accepted. The surprising thing is that only 75 sex workers and rescued women have gotten help since the plan started.”

He believes that people Implementing the ‘Muktir Alo’ freedom plan should not only depend on organizations. They should also make gestures towards sex workers as well as women who have been rescued from the business of human trafficking. As per the data from NCRB, 2016 shows that 3, 579 people were trafficked from West Bengal only³⁷ and it accounts to 44 percent of the total number of all the trafficked persons in the country. Dahir responds that more of these people should be able to receive benefits from the project.

³⁷ Retrieved From, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/8132-cases-of-human-trafficking-reported-in-2016-average-63-victims-rescued-a-day/story-OguqzIq50jiFZrvG51hrmL.html>, Accessed on 13 July 2023.

4.10. Women's Run Police Station:

In West Bengal, they began to create special police stations for women and it was done in other parts over time. This was a big step in order to assist and protect women in the society, thus indeed exhibiting their concern in the welfare and safety of women. It started in the year 2011 when the Home Department came out with an official notification giving an idea that All-Women Police Stations were meant to do. They began with ten of such special stations which was the initial process.

To enhance the message that this group is very serious about women and ensuring they are protected and have rights were not enough. They went on to commission more of such All-Women Police Stations between 2014 and 2016 across the state. These special police stations are not only for cases where something went wrong to a woman; they use their work to make women feel safer and empowered by their surroundings.

On 28th of March of the year 2012, the West Bengal directorate posted list of important activities and tasks of All-Women Police Stations. This move was deemed appropriate by the leadership, they thought these special units were not operating at the optimum level.³⁸ The designated activities include case follow-up, gathering information on crimes against women, sensitisation tours to girls' institutions, liaison with the District Protection Officer in cases of

³⁸ These data are gathered from the official website of the government of West Bengal police department. Accessed on 23 September 2023.

Retrieved From, <https://womenpoliceindia.org/state/west-bengal>.

domestic violence, liaison with the Women’s Commission and any other activity that is relevant.

The government is deploying these special police stations juxtaposed to ensure that in the environment where any woman is uncomfortable being harassed, she knows that there are people that would take her seriously if she reported the issue she encountered. This is not just how the law can be enforced differently, but also similar to a billboard to remind people that the government cares for women and wants them to live well protected and content in their societies. This step by step creation of police stations is in the process of ensuring that women have their rights, and to bring equality for women in West Bengal.

SL/N	Districts and Commissionerate	Number of All Woman Police Stations	SL/N	Districts and Commissionerate	Number of All Woman Police Stations
1	North 24 Parganas	2	14	Bankura	2
2	South 24 Parganas	3	15	Cooch Behar	2
3	Jhargram Police District	1	16	Dakshin Dinajpur	1
4	Purba Medinipur	2	17	Uttar Dinajpur	1
5	Hooghly	3	18	Murshidabad	2
6	Nadia	2	19	Howrah (Rural) District	1
7	Jalpaiguri	1	20	Alipurduar	1

8	Birbhum	2	21	Howrah Police Commissionerate	1
9	Burdwan	1	22	Siliguri Police Commissionerate	1
10	Malda	1	23	Barrackpore Police Commissionerate	1
11	Darjeeling	2	24	Bidhannagar Police Commissionerate	1
12	Paschim Medinipur	2	25	Police Commuisionerate of Asansol Durgapur	2
13	Purulia	2			

Figure 4.2: List of Women's Police Stations in West Bengal.

Out of the total proposed number of 65 all-women police stations, 20 are to be set up across the districts in West Bengal, according to the Chief Minister of the state, Mamata Banerjee, considering the rising rates of crimes against women.³⁹

That being said, as of now there are only 40 All Women Police Stations functional in West Bengal, which has been depicted in the above chart with equal clarity. During my study, two districts are on concern, namely Maldah and Murshidabad and these two districts have only one police station for women and two police stations respectively.

³⁹ Press Trust of India. (June 29, 2011). "All-woman police stations in West Bengal", Accessed on 30 December 2023. Retrieved From, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/all-woman-police-stations-in-west-bengal-459895>.

Banerjee further remarked that these police stations would have women officers in charge and completely guarded by female personnel only. The first component in this regard is to establish twenty such police stations and for this, one thousand one hundred Women Police personnel would be employed.

The main reason for this program is to respond to the increased cases of gender-based violence especially in the state. Further, CM Banerjee underlined that this move will encourage women to come forward and join the police service of West Bengal.

Chapter – V

An Analysis of Comparative Study of Women's Empowerment Manifestations: Minority vs Majority

The chapter “*An Analysis of Comparative Study of Women's Empowerment Manifestations: Minority vs Majority*” of my research emphasized specifically the social existence, financial freedom and sources and its problems, working statuses, social identity, and many more things that are similar to women's empowerment as well as minority women's empowerment. Two districts on which this study has been carried out are mainly Murshidabad and Malda. We have already discussed some areas on which our research is based. Data has been collected in various ways over the past few years between these two districts, in Murshidabad data has been collected through interviews, observations, and field surveys specifically on some blocks like Sagardighi, Farakka, Raninagar-I, and in Malda district, some blocks are like Old Malda, English Bazar, and Kaliachak-I.

In comparing minority and majority women's issues and discussing their employment and social presence, educational status, and more like this, it is very much important to collect data from specific fields and their true analyses. The table below presents all the information about the areas where primarily focused in my research.

Districts	Blocks	Villages	No of Interviewees
Murshidabad	Sagardighi	Monigram	20
		Harhari	
		Parulia	
		Sagardighi	
		Sankadanga	
		Noapara	
	Raninagar-I	Lochanpur	22
	Farakka	Farakka Barrage	12
Malda	Old Malda	Dhumadighi	16
		Mangalbari	
	English Bazar	Raigram	14
		Malda Town	
	Kaliachak-I	Dalugram	16
		Mahespur	

Figure 5.1: Locations of the samples of the concerned research area. ¹

From the above table, we can easily get an idea about which area or location this research has given more importance and which information has helped us to take this chapter forward. This study of mine is not only

¹ This table has been generated by me based on the primary source of data regarding the Locations of the samples of the concerned research area.

qualitative but also quantitative, it is discussed in a mixed method so a thorough discussion of each data is very necessary.

However, since our research work is done on two different districts, naturally we will discuss the two districts separately. Initially, all the regions in Murshidabad, which are related to my research work are determined and a comparative discussion is attempted between Minority and Majority groups of women community with the collected relational data.

5.1. Murshidabad District:

The two districts that were given special importance in this research work are Murshidabad and Malda, and three blocks within this Murshidabad district were prioritized to take this research forward, these are Sagardighi, Raninagar-I, and Farakka block. The comparative study regarding Minority-Majority women empowerment on these three blocks are separately given below.

5.1.1. Sagardighi Block:

Sagardighi is a Block in Murshidabad District in the state of West Bengal, India. Headquarters of this block is Sagardighi town. Basically, It surroundings to the Murshidabad City, Baharampur City, Paschim Punropara City, and Dhulian City.

Sagardighi is one of the areas that I have included for my research under the Murshidabad district. As far as the location of this region is concerned,

it is mainly located in the central region of Murshidabad. Peacefully the Majority and Minority communities are living together in this region. The history of communal riots is not so visible. But how much the region has progressed as a whole indirectly judges the progress of the women's community in this region.

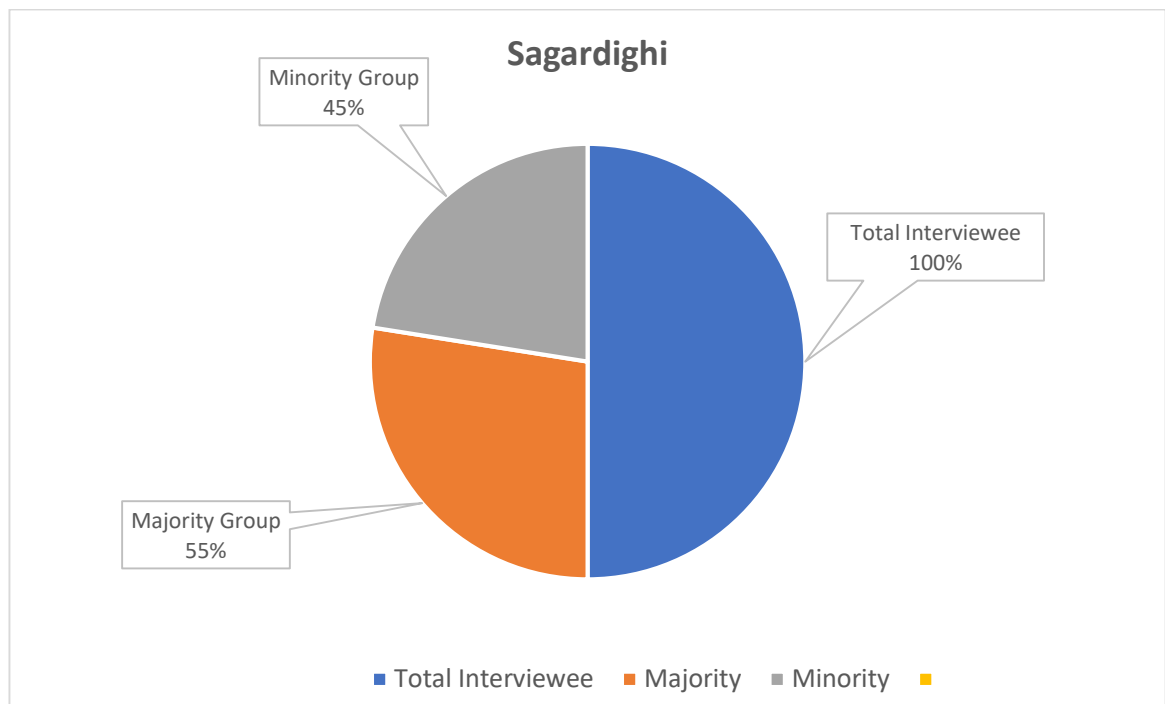


Figure 5.2: Showing the Interviewee percentage from different groups in Sagardighi Block in Murshidabad.²

The study was conducted mainly on 20 women in this region, and their perceptions about the state of the society were taken. They are interrogated with a variety of questions about how they live their lives, are they satisfied with it, or do they have many demands that are not prioritized in any way.

² I have collected the data through the interview & field survey in the Sagardighi block and then analyzed and represented through the pie chart in percentage form.

This inquiry was done basically with 45 percent of the plaintiffs in the minority community and 55 percent in the majority community.³

However, no distinction has been drawn between the minority and the majority community in terms of age grouping, the maximum number of the age groups on which this study is conducted is occupied by the female group between the age group of 20 to 30 years. And the lowest number is 18 to 21 years. This is natural because this age is the age of learning, although at this age they are getting a good education in society and learning how to become strong citizens of the future.

Similarly, the interview rate for women age group of 31 to 40 years is 15 percent. The same number applies to women aged of 40 to 50, and only ten percent of women are interviewed between 51 and 60 years of age group, which is essentially retirement age.⁴

One thing that I have observed in this age classification, whether minority or majority community, girls of every category feel that the ability to work or their active participation in work is not mandatory to bring women back into the mainstream of society. They aren't confident at all whether their work is only optional or not, they are very indifferent and ignorant to the fact that they too can equally participate in the development process of society. So, I think it is never possible to destroy this indifference if various schemes and vocational training are not given to them by the government.

³ The data has been using this paragraph is collected by me as primary source of data through the interviews, field survey and observations.

⁴ Ibid.

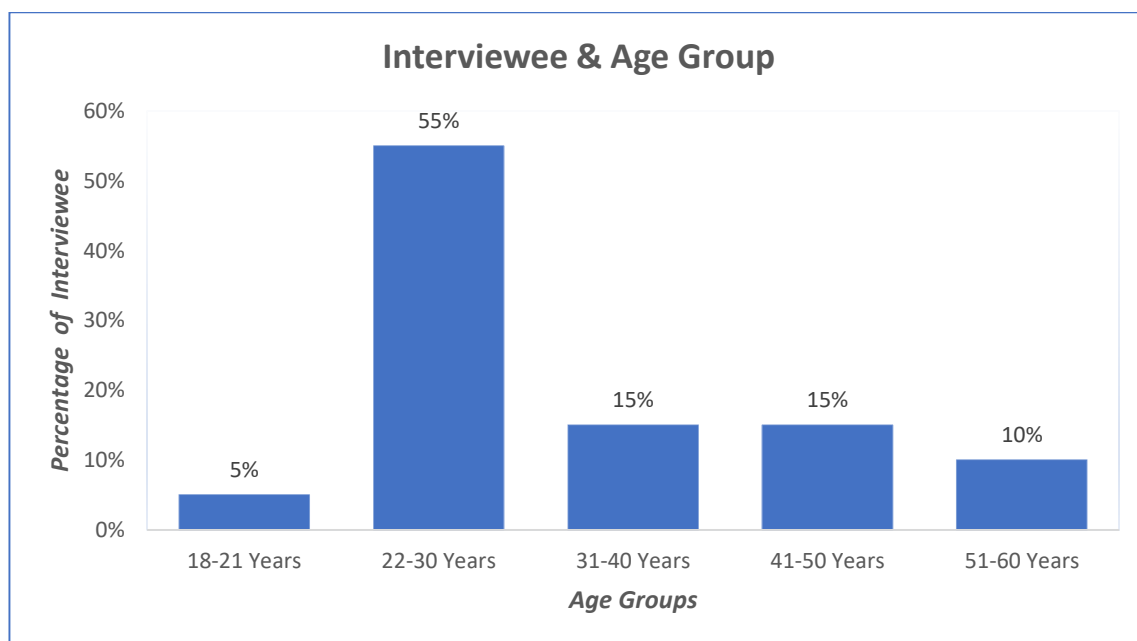


Figure 5.3: Percentage of interviewees and their age group in Sagardighi block in Murshidabad.⁵

Only writing articles, findings questions, and implementing the various schemes which are only bound to the paperwork, is not enough to get them back to the women empowerment process, we should focus them positively and should have to educate them accordingly, which will help them to get through this red tape of patriarchal society.

I conducted my interviews with the women of these regions with multiple parameters and analyzed by the criteria that, are the largest number of women benefited from the government's schemes or not, the Sasthya Sathi health Scheme, by this scheme's 80 percent of women are covered under this scheme and they are enrolled in this card as the head of their household.

⁵ This figure shows us the percentage of interviewees who belong to the different age groups in the Sagardighi block, the data has been collected as a primary source and analyzed according to my research design.

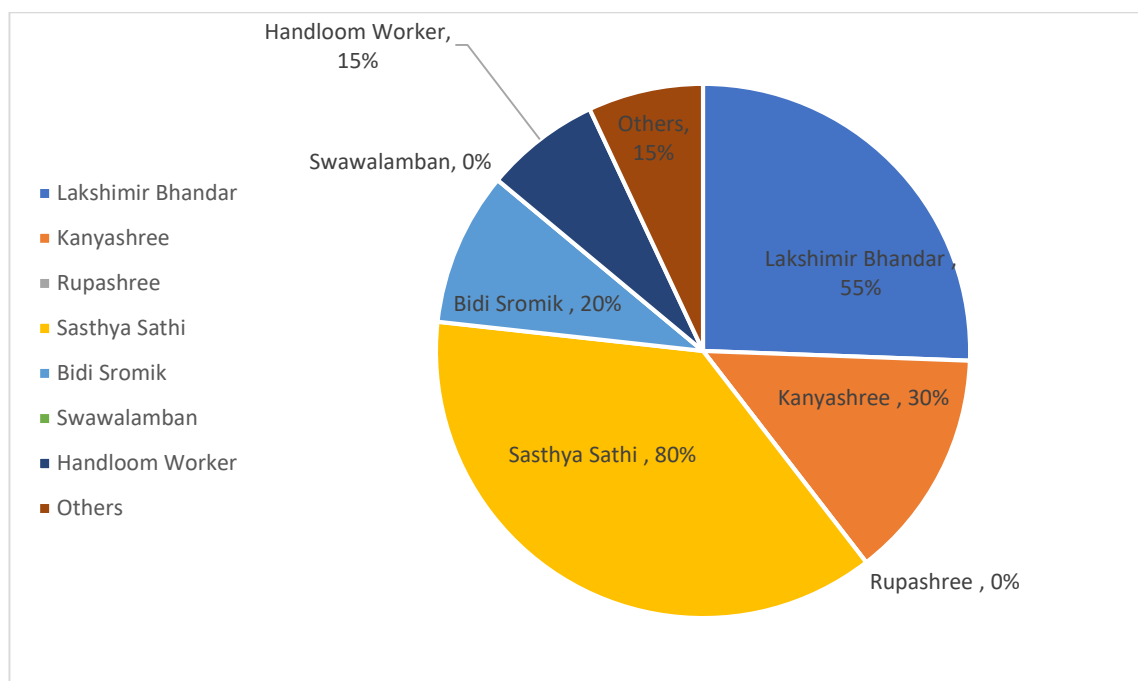


Figure 5.4: Adjuvant data of governmental and private schemes beneficial to the women's community in Sagardighi Block in Murshidabad.⁶

But this scheme, while guaranteeing their physical fitness and their family's well-being, but does not say anything about how effectively they will serve society through this scheme in terms of empowerment.

The scheme that has benefited the most after Sasthya Sathi is the Lakshir Bhandar Prakaalpa. 55 percent of women under this scheme was benefited, it is only a grant paid by the government, with the money received through this scheme every woman can establish a small cottage industry and earn their living if they wants.⁷ Though this is a very small amount of money, it helps them to fulfil their own needs, they do not always have to put pressure on their husband for that, indirectly through this scheme women

⁶ Through that figure, as a primary source of data observations from interviewee's opinions and field survey, different schemes of government, as well as private initiatives which have helped to empower women's community in Sagardighi Block at different sects of society have been shown.

⁷ Mentioned percentage data has been collected through the Interviews from different sections of Sagardighi block in Murshidabad.

can think about their own development. Therefore, through such small projects, an attempt has been made through the women of the society can establish their own identity one day.

The success of the government's self-reliance scheme which is known as the Swanirvar and Rupashree scheme, is among the lowest. 20% of women in this region are especially known as bidi workers, they have received bidi worker cards from the government and this is how they live their lives. And 15 percent of the women do other work to meet their own needs, other work here is poultry rearing, small handcraft work, growing some vegetables in the backyard, and taking them to the local bazaar to earn some money.⁸

One thing I have noticed in my research is that there is no significant difference in the benefits of these schemes between the minority and majority communities, women of all strata are benefiting equally as well as, facing the same challenges, so I have not done this discussion separately. Essentially, the same benefit applies equally to all, whether minority or majority independent.

Since this study was mainly conducted in minority and majority women communities, First, I created a separate data chart for the women of minority group, which is discussed in detail in this paragraph.

⁸ Ibid.

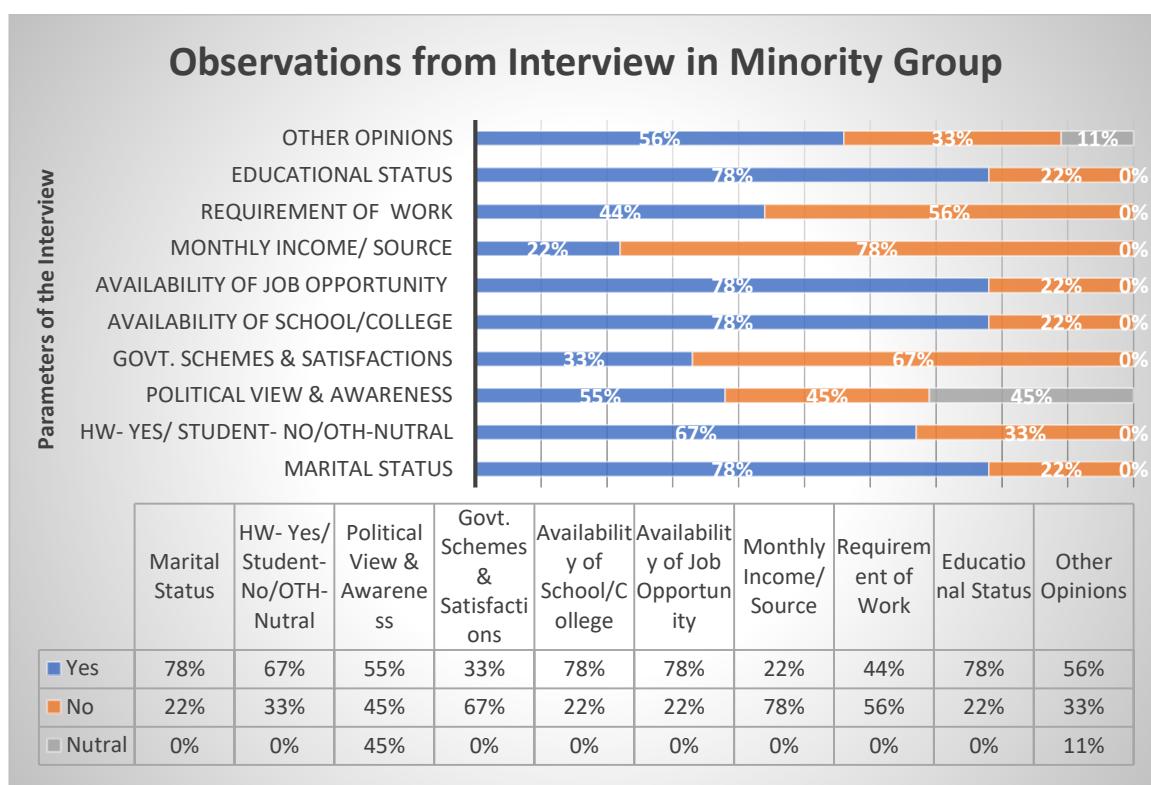


Figure 5.5 : Collected data and their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Minority groups in Sagardighi block in Murshidabad⁹

Some of the criteria, on which I conducted this study were the percentage of married women and the percentage of unmarried women who completed the survey, in this case, my observations were conducted on 78 percent of married women and 22 percent of unmarried women. Among these 78 percent married women, 67 percent women who identify themselves as housewives only, are not involved in any separate work. At the same time, 33 percent of women claim to be involved in small societal activities.¹⁰ We observed apathy among these women about the actual character of the political sphere and society and participation at every level of politics,

⁹ Collected data considered as a primary source in Sagardighi block in Murshidabad & their analyses from the various parameters in Minority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc. has been describing in details through the above figure.

¹⁰ The data has been used in this paragraph considered primary data.

especially among minority groups. 55 percent of women have special knowledge in the political field, and at the same time 45 percent of women do not want to share their opinion, among these 45 percent of women, 33 percent of women see the current politics of the society negatively, they have hardly any positive opinion about the government. They feel that all the schemes undertaken by the government are not enough to improve women's condition in this society. Again, 22 percent of women think that the projects undertaken by the government will truly take women forward in the future through the empowerment process.¹¹

When they were asked by me, how much the schemes undertaken by the government have improved women and whether they have benefited from these schemes, only 33 percent of women expressed the opinion that they have benefited from the governmental schemes.

Meanwhile, 67 percent of women feel they have not benefited at all. They claim that no real initiative can't be taken by the government in terms of various developmental aspects.

Another measure of our research was the comparative discussion of their progress or backwardness in the field of education, in this case, in response to whether there are enough schools and colleges in the region, 78 percent of the women felt that there were enough schools and colleges and the remaining 22 percent of the women felt that there are not enough schools and colleges.¹²

As a researcher, I can conclude that there is no lack of abundance of schools and colleges in this area, but, I think it is unreasonable to comment that they will improve properly only through general education. I think they

¹¹ I have conducted the interviews and my observations In the Sagardighi block and collected the data through the random sample collection process.

¹² Ibid.

also need technical and vocational education for real improvement of women's employment.

In response to the question of how easy it is to find work in the workplace, 78 percent of women feel that there are plenty of job opportunities, but only 22 percent of them earn a fixed monthly income. In other words, even though they think that there are job opportunities, in reality, they do not get any benefits in terms of work.¹³

When I asked them personally whether they wanted to do work or not, 44 percent of women came forward to show interest in that, it is surprising that 56 percent of women do not want to work, they feel that their responsibilities are over when they are only housewives.¹⁴ They are less aware of the fact that women have come a long way in society. However, it is not that they are behind in education, 78 percent of the women in this region, especially in my research, whose sample collection has been done, are educated, if we look at this region in general that is, although they are educated, not everyone has an empowered mentality, but this proves that.¹⁵ At present, women in all parts of the world want to work, and want to empower themselves, but, the majority of women in these regions are unwilling to work, especially among minority groups.

As a researcher, I must add something to this, until and unless we are able to change their mindset about the social responsibility and their existence and role in the family, it will not possible to get them bring back to the mainstream of society at all. Many of them are simply unaware of their duties of being a woman in society. They must be taken participation in the

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

political process in society and gradually that will help them to get out of this misunderstanding world.

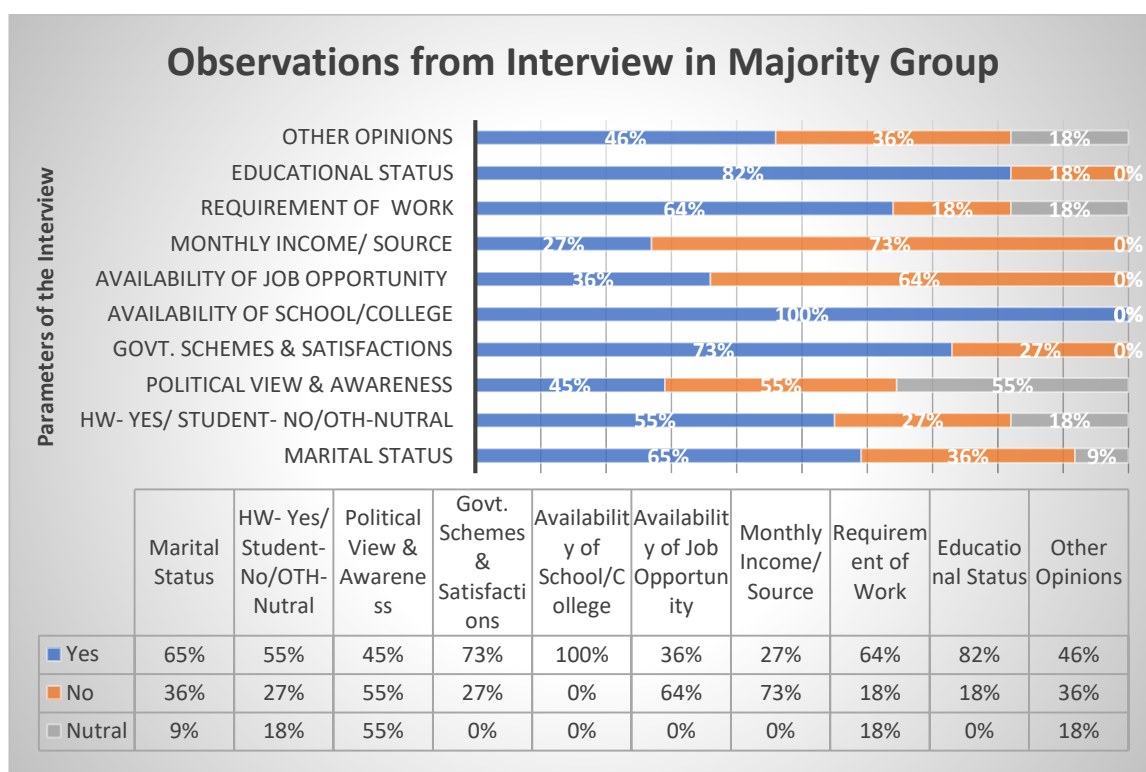


Figure 5.6 : Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Majority groups in Sagardighi block in Murshidabad¹⁶

When I took interviews of the majority group in this Sagardighi block of Murshidabad district, the same norms were put forward in the same way as they applied to the minority group. Among the majority group, 55 percent of married and 36 percent of unmarried women were surveyed, with the remaining 9 percent refusing to provide their personal information. All of these 55 percent of women feel more comfortable identifying themselves as housewives. Also, the study was conducted on 27 percent female students and 18 percent who are involved in various activities in society.

¹⁶ Collected data considered as a primary source in Sagardighi block in Murshidabad & their analyses from the various parameters in selected Majority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc.

When asked about awareness and participation in politics, only 45 percent of women have practical knowledge of it, out of this 45 percent, 36 percent view current politics negatively and only 9 percent think it has a role. What is surprising is that 55 percent of women are reluctant to comment at all.¹⁷ They are ready to accept the conventional system of society, they do not have any negative or positive views. In other words, these special numbers of women are lagging behind the mainstream of society. Therefore, I think that if we do not educate them politically, they will not be able to participate in the development of women's power in the future. 73 percent of women are satisfied with the various schemes run by the government, while the remaining 27 percent of women pointed fingers at the government in various ways.¹⁸

The adequate numbers of schools and colleges in the region are clearly reflected in the interviews among these demographic groups, 100% of women feel that the region has an adequate presence of schools and colleges. However, despite the presence of schools and colleges, the low presence of work is evident when only 36 percent of women feel that there are job opportunities. Majority of the society, where approximately 64 percent of women feel that there are not enough job opportunities.¹⁹

Among the majority group in this Sagardighi region, especially among the female group, 73 percent of women do not earn any fixed monthly income, and only 27 percent of women earn monthly which is very low. 64% of women feel that if there are job opportunities they would want to be

¹⁷ I conducted the interviews and my observations in the Majority group In the Sagardighi block and collected the data through the random sample collection process.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

involved in work, 18% of women play a negative role in this regard and the remaining 18% do not want to say anything.²⁰

Another important measure of this study is to determine how far ahead or behind in education, what is the literacy rate of this region, 82 percent of women are ahead in education, but to that extent, there is no scope for work in this area.

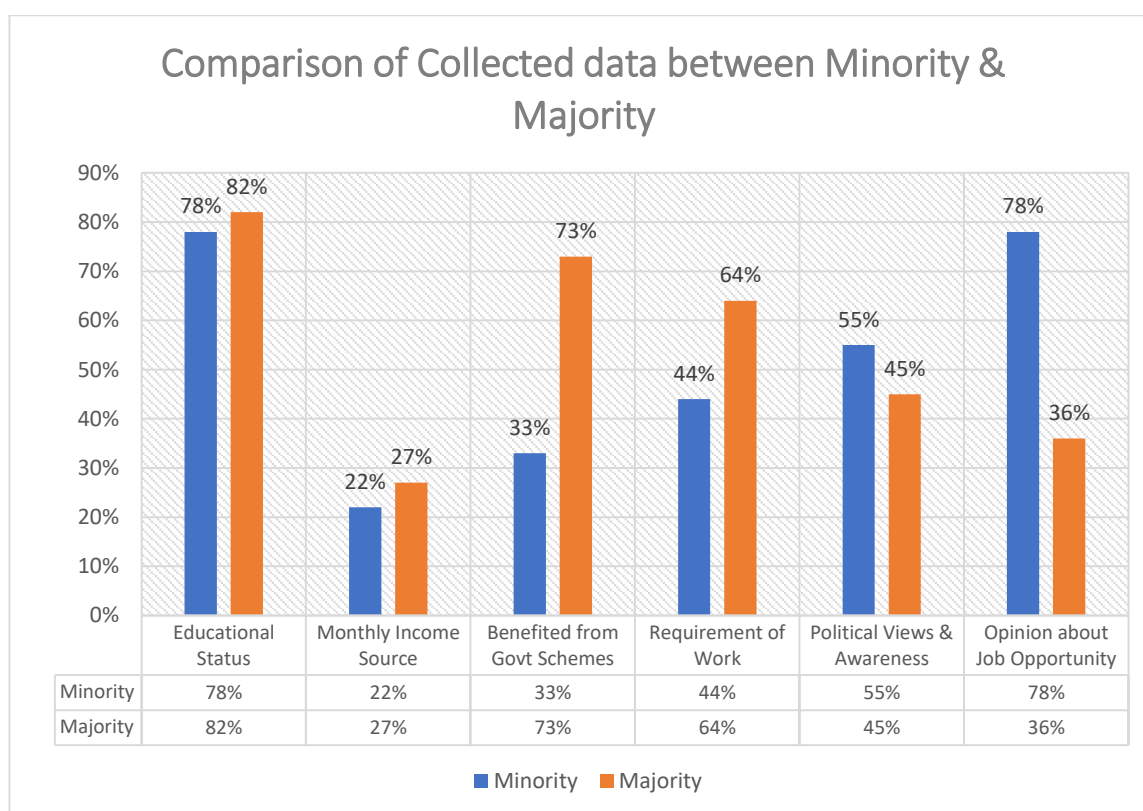


Figure 5.7: Comparative study of Collected data & their analyses based on our research from the various parameters between Minority - Majority groups in Sagardighi block in Murshidabad²¹

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ In Sagardighi village, a remote village of Murshidabad district which is situated in a middle portion of this district, a comparative discussion has been done between the minority and majority groups of this region based on the reviews of the need for research, all the data has been collected as the primary source by me through the interviews.

This study was conducted between minority and majority women groups in Sagardighi block in Murshidabad district and comparative discussion between them was done. All the aspects that emerge before us are as follows, The criteria given special importance in the comparative discussion are educational literacy rate, monthly income, whether they have benefited or not from government schemes, how willing they are towards work, how politically astute they are and whether or not they have real job flexibility in the society. Considering all these criteria, the research has progressed.

If we look at the minority groups in the region from this collected data, we can see that 78 percent of the women are educated here, and have basically passed at least class eight. Similarly, if focused on the majority groups, then it can be seen that this number is slightly ahead, that is 82 percent of women in this region are educated. That is we can say 4 percent of women are ahead from the other group. In terms of monthly income and earnings, the women of the majority group are also far ahead, 27% of the women earn fixed monthly income, this number is 22 percent for the minority group.²²

A stark difference was observed between the two groups, when asked whether the schemes undertaken by the government had improved women's situations in society or not, with answering this question, 33 percent of women from minority groups realized that they had benefited from genuine government schemes, compared to 73 percent of women from the majority group, that they too have benefited from government schemes. That is, 40 percent more majority group of women felt benefited than minority groups.²³

²² I conducted the interviews and my observations in between Majority & Majority group In the Sagardighi block and collected the data as a primary source.

²³ Ibid.

Also on the list of work needs, minority groups with 44 percent of women feeling that they need work, are far ahead of women in the majority group on this scale with 64% of women feeling that they need work, meaning that the tendency to work is more prevalent among the majority group.

How far ahead or backward are the women in the participation of the political field, in this question, data shows us that 55% of the women who belong to the minority group have a more conscious role in the political field, similarly 45% of the women who belong to the majority group have holding the minimum political knowledge, that is, the minority group of the region is politically more active.

In response to the question of how much work is available, to this quarry, in the minority community, 78 percent of the women feel that there is a sufficient number of work opportunities, while 36 percent of the women who belong to the majority group feel that there are minimum work opportunities, 64 percent of the women feel that there is hardly any work opportunities and no facilities for women in working or being empowered. In other words, in this case, there are two types of opinions between the two groups. ²⁴As an impartial researcher, it is my main responsibility and duty to present two opinions, so I did not express any of my personal opinions here.

²⁴ Ibid.

5.1.2. Raninagar-I Block:

Raninagar-I is a local community area in Murshidabad, West Bengal, India. It's nestled in the Raninagar plain, near the northeastern edge of the Bagri region. The area is divided by the Bhagirathi River into two main parts likely Rarh to the west and Bagri to the east. To the north, the Padma River separates Murshidabad from neighboring districts in India and Bangladesh. The Raninagar Plain is a low lying area prone to flooding, with lots of swamps and rivers like the Jalangi and Bhairab flowing through it.²⁵

In this block, Lochanpur is the village where the maximum percentage of interviews and field surveys for this research have been done. The total number of interviewees is 22, which is almost 23 % of the total strength of this study.

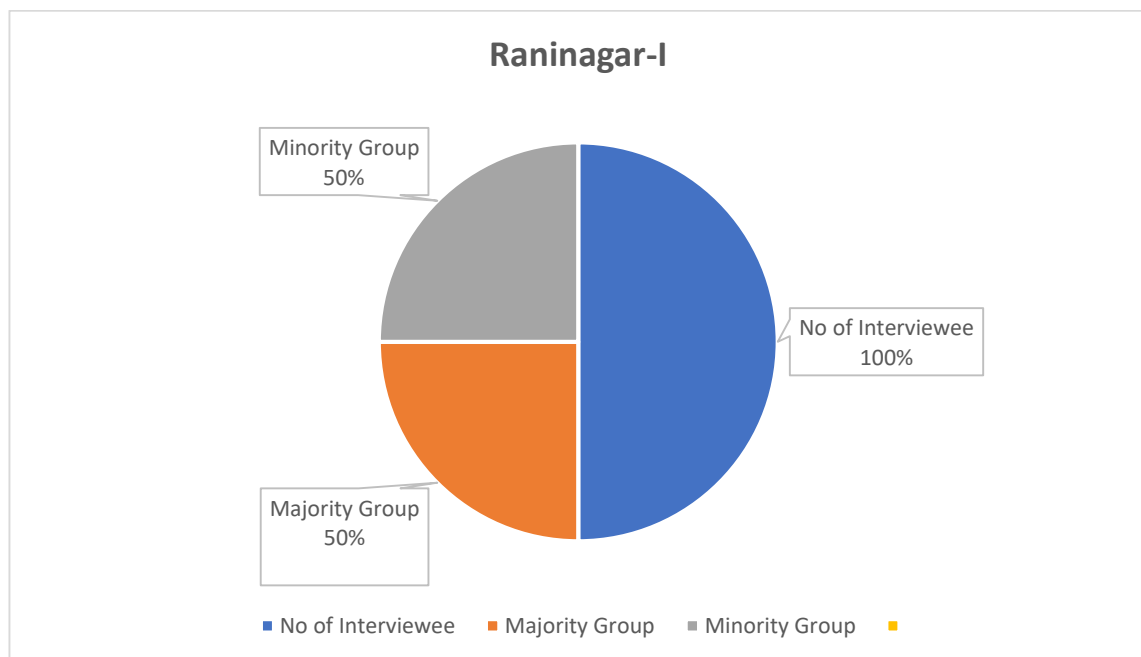


Figure 5.8: Showing the Interviewee percentage from different groups in Raninagar-I Block in Murshidabad.²⁶

²⁵ Geography Of Murshidabad, Murshidabad district authorities. Retrieved on 24 July 2023. The data has been collected from online sources from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raninagar_I

²⁶ I have collected the data through the interview & field survey in the Raninagar-I block and then analyzed and represented through the pie chart in percentage form.

The research carried out in the Raninagar-1 block of Murshidabad district mainly focuses on minority and majority groups of the community equally. That is, 50 percent of the total research sample collection was done on minority women groups and 50 percent on women groups from the majority, so I hope this discussion will provide an equal standard in this research. Here an attempt has been made to analyse the views of each group to give weight to their views on society based on the same criteria and, politics and the role of government in empowering women in society.

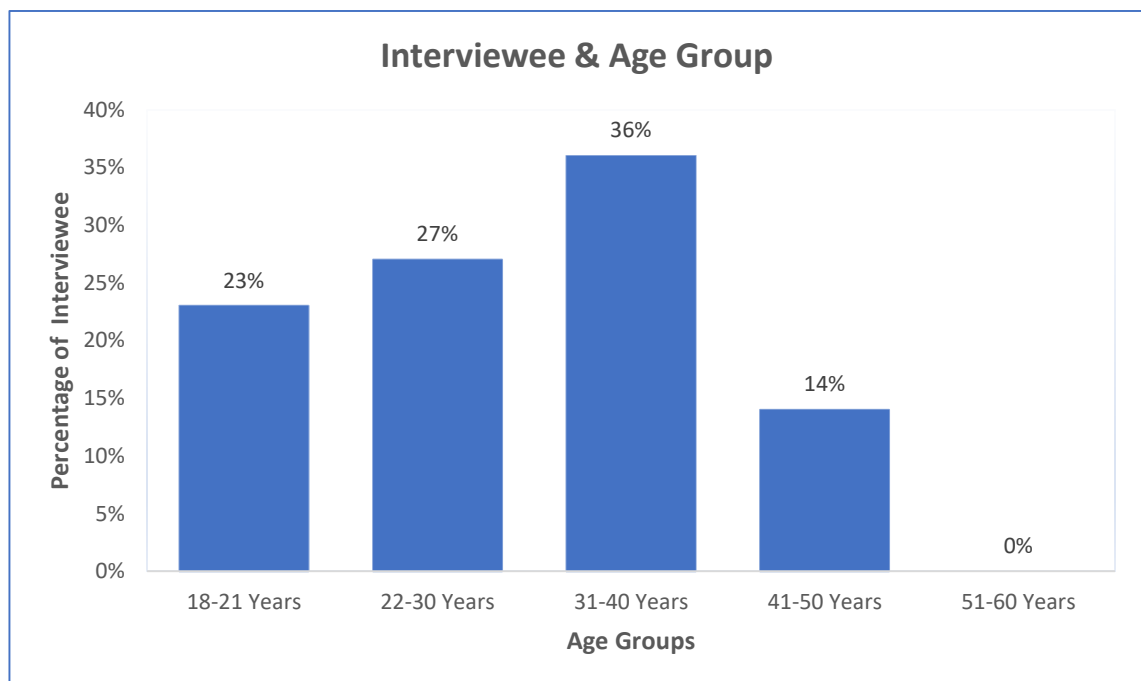


Figure 5.9: Percentage of interviewees & their age group in Raninagar-I block in Murshidabad.²⁷

When interviewing each block, there was no distinction had been made on the age classification within each female group. But one thing, that is observed here is that no interview was conducted among the 51 to 60 year old female group, and it was done coincidentally. The largest number of

²⁷ This figure shows us the percentage of interviewees who belong to the different age groups in the Raninagar-I block, the data has been collected as a primary source and analyzed according to my research design.

women, who accounted for 36 percent of the total interviews were mainly done within the 31 to 40 age group. One thing that can be noticed in this age group is, the girls who are between 18 to 40 years of age are more active and working-minded, and political aspects of society. Meanwhile, 23 percent of women are between 18 and 21 years of age group, similarly, 27 percent of women between 22 and 30 years and 36 percent between 31 and 40 years and 14 percent between 40 and 50 years of age groups were conducted in this study. However, in this case of drawing, no majority or minority group of women has been discriminated against in this study.

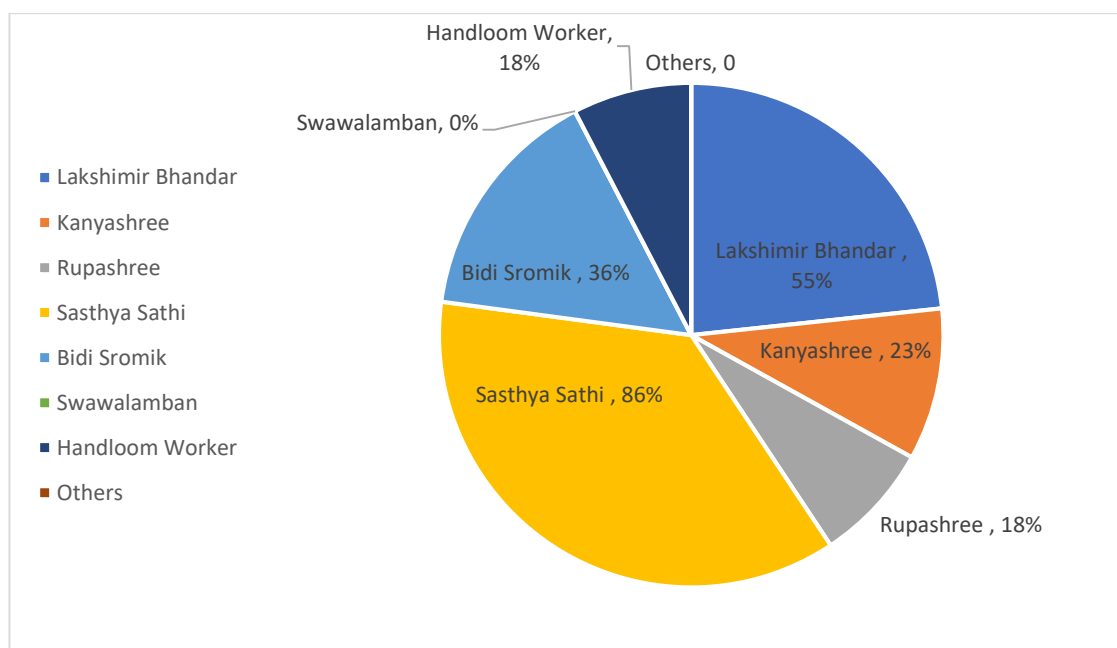


Figure 5.10: Adjuvant data of governmental & private schemes beneficial to the women's community in Raninagar-I Block in Murshidabad.²⁸

If we ask both minority and majority groups how much government schemes or private schemes have been implemented overall or how much they have benefited from these schemes, we find that all the semi-

²⁸ Through this figure, as a primary source of data observations from interviewee's opinions and field survey, different government schemes and private initiatives, which have helped to empower women's community in Raninagar-I Block at different sects of society have been shown.

government-assisted self-help groups are absent in this region. It will not be wrong to say, that, one-sided, only government projects are more prominent in this region. For example, at its highest peak is the Sasthya Sathi Prakalpa, 86 percent of women in the region are benefiting from this special scheme without differentiating the minority and majority. Only the women of the family can be entitled to this card and the rest of their family members can be included in this card, that is, the scheme adopted by the West Bengal government has played an important role in providing empowerment to women or giving them an active role in society.

Through the Laxmir Bhandar Prakalpa, A monthly allowance for married women is also seen directly in the community, with 55 percent of women in the region currently receiving benefits under the scheme. However, not all government projects have been particularly and equally effective, Selp-Help Group (SGH), The self-reliance project by the government is absent here, due to the lack of political knowledge, no implementation of this project has been observed in this region.²⁹

Rupashree Prakalpa has also been implemented only 18% Among the minority and majority groups in this region, minority, and majority, each group is claiming the same, that despite fulfilling all the mentioned criteria to get the benefits of this scheme, they have to suffer a lot of frustration and inconvenience to get these projects, when inquiries are made through government offices, they are not always available to help them, they charged bribe to forward the proposal, which is not acceptable at all and simultaneously various officers do not inquire properly and reject the applications if the demanded were not fulfilled. Due to all these constraints, the Rupashree scheme has not been effective in the region, Kanyashree

²⁹ Data has been collected by me, and my observations and field survey helped to conclude the above statements.

scheme also says the same, only 23 percent of women have benefited from this Kanyashree scheme.

But one thing to appreciate is the diversity of women in the region who earn their own money, they have some monthly income whether they are small or big. For example, 18% of women earned their livelihood through handicrafts and cottage industries, or by raising chickens, somewhere or by growing vegetables in some part of the backyard etc. etc. In this Raninagar-1 region, some presence of bidi workers can be observed, who mainly support their families financially through making bidi work and this figure of 36 percent, it is truly commendable. And these bidi workers are especially supported by the West Bengal government. They are given loans by banks at low interest rates and also given various fringe benefits, which is a helping hand from the government in sustaining this livelihood.

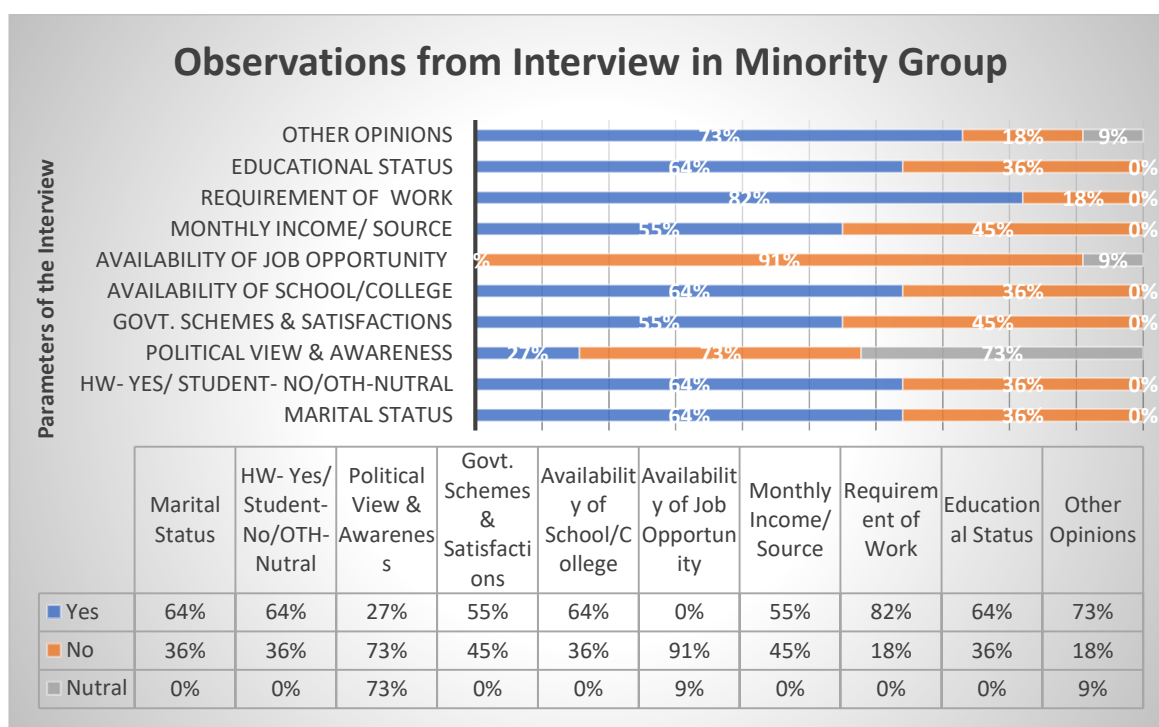


Figure 5.11: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Minority groups in Raninagar-I block in Murshidabad³⁰

³⁰ Collected data considered as a primary source in Raninagar-I block in Murshidabad & their analyses from the various parameters in Minority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied

In the Raninagar-1 Block, comparative research focused in this study is to compare minority and majority women groups in terms of some criteria. If we look at the minority groups here, we find that 64% of the total studies have been conducted on married women and 36% on unmarried women, which means that 64% of women are housewives. 27 percent of women are students, who still have no means of earning income.

In response to the question, how aware they are in the political field, we got a very disappointing answer. In this study, 73 percent of women are reluctant to make any political comments, they are not willing to answer any question in the context of the current society, and 27 percent of women are interested in answering this question. 27 percent, out of this 27 percent expressed a negative view of the current government's initiatives for the advancement of women. They feel that these schemes do not deserve any credit for the upliftment of women.

When I asked how satisfied they were with the various schemes taken by the government, only 55 percent of women of this minority group felt that they were satisfied, while the remaining 45 percent of women felt that these cannot be the only reason for satisfaction.

When the question comes to education, one thing cannot be left out, and that is the availability of schools and colleges in the field of education. Because, if there are not enough numbers of schools and colleges then there can be many obstacles to getting the proper education. However, 64 percent of women in the region feel that there are enough schools and colleges and 36 percent commended that there are not enough schools and colleges and that more are needed.

with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc. has been describing in details through the above figure.

School-college education has no value without employment opportunities, in this case, it is no exception when they are asked whether they have enough job opportunities in the current society, can they join if any job they have been offered? Only 0 percent of women surveyed feel that there are enough jobs in today's society. 91 percent of women felt that there is no work arrangement and the remaining 9 percent of women felt that they have no knowledge about it and prefer to remain silent.



Figure 5.12: A self-reliant 60 year old woman is opening a small vegetable shop in Murshidabad³¹

³¹ A 60 year old woman, known for her self-reliance, is opening a small vegetable shop in Murshidabad. Though many people are ashamed to start such type of business, but she proved that if you want to work, no profession is smaller or better than any other, we consider her as a symbol of rural women empowerment.

55 percent of women, who earn some monthly income through cottage industries and small endeavours, and the remaining 45 percent have no fixed monthly income at all.

In response to the question of how willing they would be to work if they were given the opportunity in society, 82 percent of women felt that they would participate positively enough. And 18 percent of women do not need any work.

Among the interviews conducted in this study, in terms of educational standards and literacy rate, only 64% of women are educated, who have passed at least class eight, and 36% of women are illiterate and have not attended any school or college, not even getting primary education.³²

To keep all of these various parameters in front, we are getting disappointing answers in many cases. In other words, to increase women's power and bring them into the mainstream of society, the government must take a positive role in their development and progress in education. Not only should govt. try to implement the projects legally, we should also look at the proper implementation of these projects at the ground level.

In this comparative study, when we conducted observations among women of the majority groups based on these same criteria as they have applied to minority women communities, 91 percent of married women and 9 percent of unmarried women were surveyed in the Raninagar -I block. Among these, 91 percent of women, are housewives, and 9 percent are students, who are still involved in studies.

³² The mentioned data has been collected through interviews, field surveys, and observations, considered as primary sources of data.

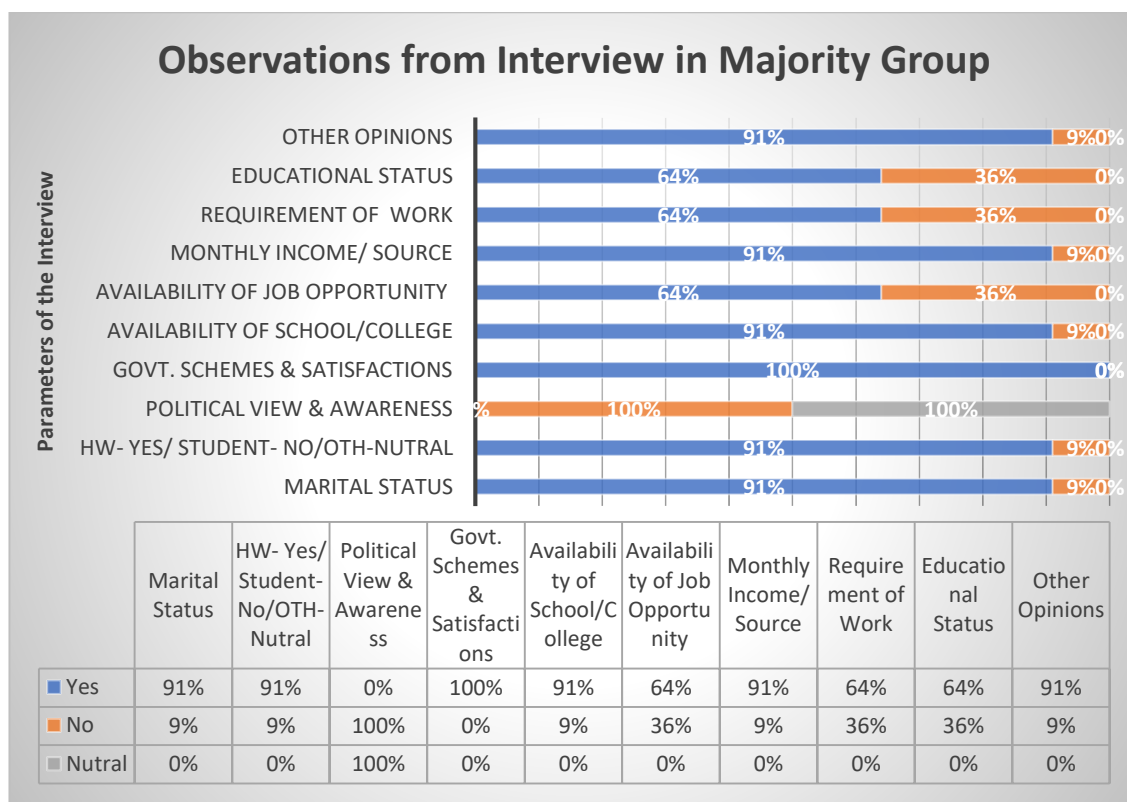


Figure 5.13: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Majority groups in Raninagar-I block in Murshidabad.³³

On the question of political attitudes and awareness, we found very disappointing results in this region, where 0 percent of women in this majority group have political knowledge or political awareness. 100 percent of women in this region regardless of their unwillingness to give their opinion, they have not made any negative or positive comments in the political field. They even refused to answer when asked why they did not want to make any such statement or comment. When they are asked whether the schemes taken by the government in the field of women empowerment are effective or not, 100 percent of the women answer yes,

³³ Collected data considered as a primary source in Raninagar-I block in Murshidabad & their analyses from the various parameters in selected Majority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc.

that is, they think that the way the government has taken measures for the development of women in the present society has a perpetual important role.

When asked whether there are adequate schools, colleges, and educational facilities in the region, 91 percent of the women in the majority group felt that everything was adequately provided. The remaining 9 percent of women felt that there was not enough provision.

In response to the question of how many women's employment opportunities have in the local society where they belong, 64 percent of women felt that there were various employment opportunities, and 36 percent of women felt that there were no employment opportunities in current local societies.

A slightly different picture is observed, in terms of monthly income, 91 percent of the women do something and have a monthly income, which may be why they do not express any negative attitude towards the government. They all say the same thing that we have to do everything ourselves and it is not right to become dependent on the government for everything. When asked, are they interested in doing work if they have any chance of it, 64 percent of women thought that they need work and 36 percent of women are happy with the way they spent their days, and showed no need to work.

64% of the majority of women in this group are educated, where the standard of education is defined as at least class Eight pass and the remaining 36% of women have not even facilitated any primary education. The thing we have observed is, that there is no difference between minority

and majority in terms of education but all are very backward in nature and have hardly any knowledge about how they will empower themselves.

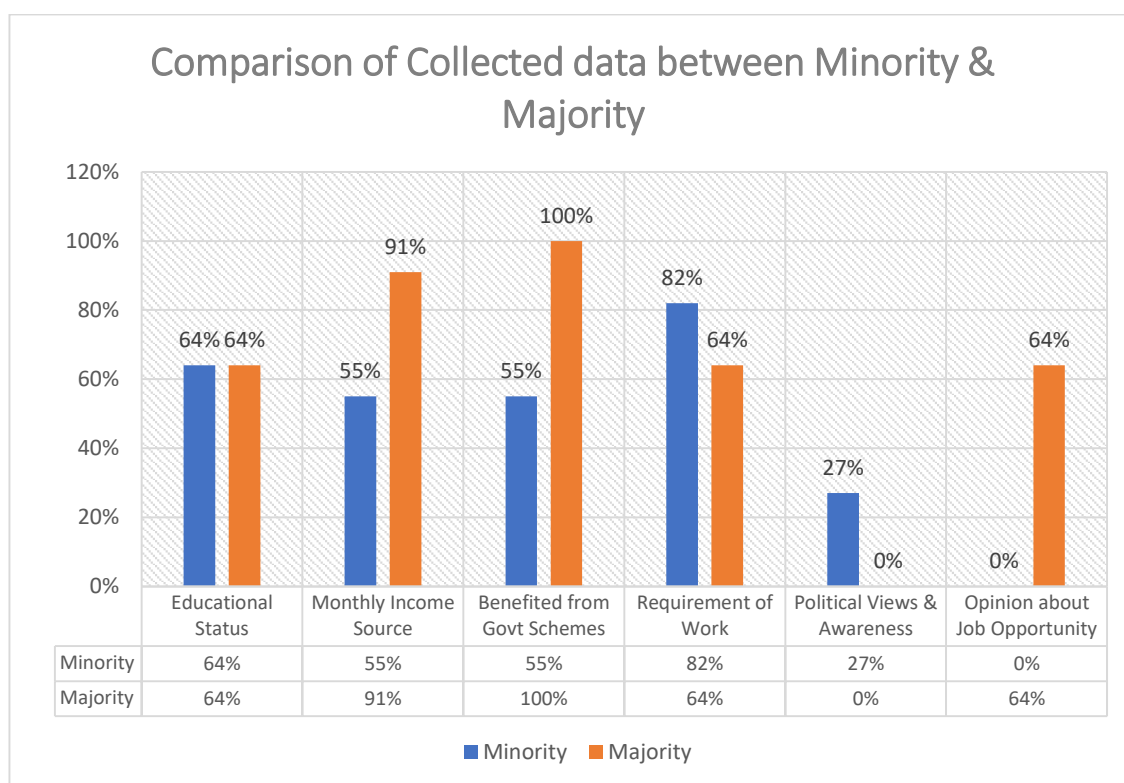


Figure 5.14: Comparative study of Collected data & their analyses based on our research from the various parameters between Minority - Majority groups in Raninagar-I block in Murshidabad³⁴

In the case of this study of Raninagar-1 block, mainly based on the different criteria, the data has been collected between the minority and the majority female group, if we conducted a comparative discussion, then the contrast, as well as similarity, will be observed in the different areas.

³⁴ In the Raninagar-I block, many villages, which are remote villages of Murshidabad district which is situated in an eastern-middle portion of this district, a comparative discussion has been done between the minority and majority groups of this region based on the reviews of the need for research, all the data has been collected as the primary source by me through the interviews.

In terms of education literacy rate, we observe a parity between the two groups that is, only 64 percent of women in both minority and majority groups are educated, no difference is observed here. here we must say that the two groups are far behind in terms of educational effectiveness in society. Until and unless we can make this number 100 percent, It is nothing but folly to claim that we can improve the status of women in society.

A large contrast between the two groups is observed in terms of monthly income ratio, with only 55 percent of minority women earning a fixed monthly income, but in the case of the majority community, a much higher figure, almost 91 percent of women have their monthly income. The women of the majority groups in the region are very active in terms of work.

Only 55 percent of women who belong to minority groups thought that they have benefited from government schemes, in the same question, where women from the majority group express their opinion that 100 percent are satisfied with the government and its implemented schemes. They feel that they have to come forward by themselves for their development, and it is foolishness and stupidity to become dependent on the government for everything.

Employment and work demands are also high among minority women communities, 82 percent of women want to do work but are not sure about what job would be rightly fitted for them. In this same question, only 64 percent of women in the majority group felt that they needed work, but in most cases, women in this group preferred to choose their work and start a job on their own initiative.

In the question of making a developed society, the extent to which the women of that society have political knowledge or not, and how active they are in participating in the political process, these indicators play a very important role in making a developed society. In this regard, women from minority communities are far ahead of the women from majority communities, but it is not enough, only 27 percent, only 0% of women have political knowledge in the majority group, so 100% of women from majority communities refrain from commenting on any political matter or the existing situation of the society.

When asked whether there are enough job opportunities or not in our circumstantial society, minority groups of women give a negative response, with 0 percent of women in this group experiencing that there are enough job opportunities. But this number is different among women in the majority group, there are 64% of women in this group are optimistic and think enough job opportunities are there, if one wants to do work. Therefore, a positive opinion is observed among the majority group of women.

So, through all these discussions above we can understand that both the groups are reluctant by comparing the women of a majority and minority group. None of them possess real political awareness. As we have seen, 100 percent of women who deviate from the majority group refrain from making any political comments and are debarred from making any feedback, they do not make any positive or negative comments about the current state of society. Somewhere or the other, this is also leading the current women's society towards a deprived future. Until a group needs to make their demands and express any negative comments towards the government, the proper development of that society is not possible.

In my opinion, for every woman, it's really important that, no matter from where she comes from or what she believes or not, but she must has the power and knowledge to participate in the political process. This means she should be able to put her vote, she must express her opinions, and have an opinion on making decisions that affect her life in every perspective. However, this cannot be completed by an individual people or the organizations who work alone. The government needs to interfere in it and provide support to making sure that all women have equal opportunities to be politically empowered and educated.

5.1.3. Farakka Block:

Farakka Block also known as Farakka Community Development (FCD) block is situated in the region of the northwestern part of the Rarh, within the Murshidabad district. The Bhagirathi River acts as a natural divider, separating the district into two distinct physiographic regions, first, the Rarh region to the west and the Bagri region to the east, and second, The Rarh region extends into the neighboring Santhal Pargana division of Jharkhand. Characterized by a slightly elevated and undulating terrain, featuring numerous swamps and old riverbeds.³⁵ The Rajmahal Hills, originating in Jharkhand, are located just a few miles from Farakka's western boundary, with the presence of smaller hillocks within the block.

The Padma River forms the northern boundary of Murshidabad district, separating it from Malda district, as well as the Chapai Nawabganj and Rajshahi districts of Bangladesh. The region's soil composition is predominantly clay and lateritic clay. Farakka block shares borders with several neighboring blocks, like, Kaliachak block in Malda district to the north, across the Ganges, Barhwarwa block in Sahibganj district of Jharkhand, to the west, Pakur block in Pakur district of Jharkhand, and to the south, and Samserganj block to the east. Notably, the Bhagirathi River diverges from the Ganges at Khejurtala, approximately 40 kilometers downstream from Farakka.³⁶

According to the census of 2011, the population of Farakka block comprises of 184,074 Muslims (67.15% of the total population), 88,353

³⁵ E-source. "Farakka (community development block)", Accessed on 1st Jan.2023, Retrieved from, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farakka_\(community_development_block\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farakka_(community_development_block))

³⁶ Ibid.

Hindus (32.23%), ³⁷and 1,684 individuals from other religious groups (0.62%). Between 1991 and 2001, the Muslim population increased from 59.34% to 62.76%, while the Hindu population decreased from 40.36% to 36.65%.

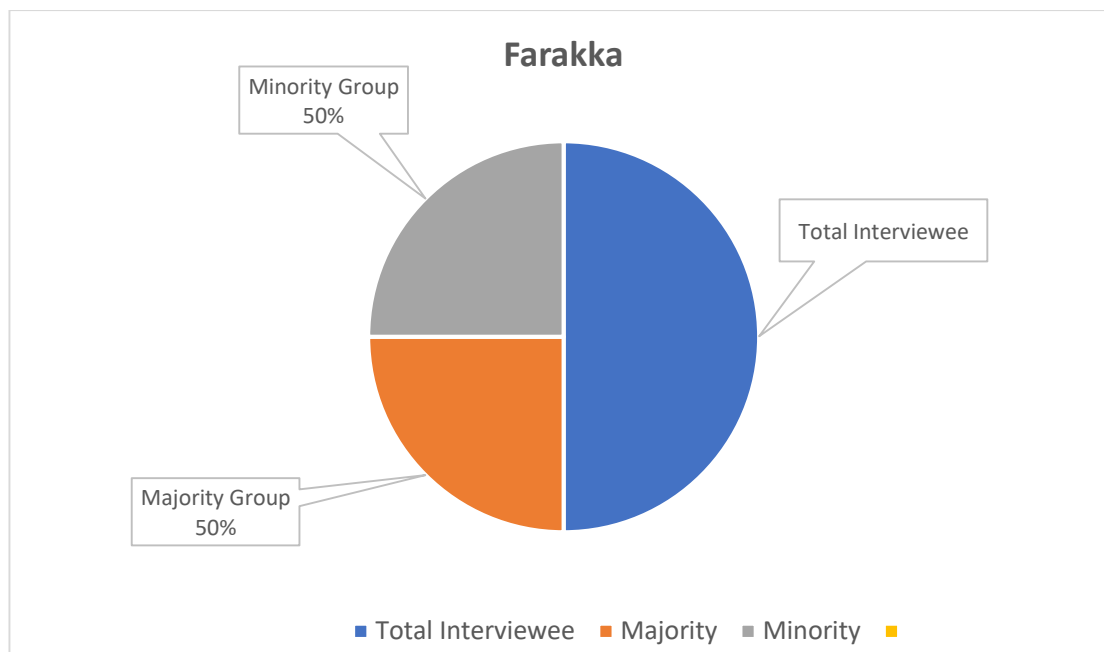


Figure 5.15: Showing the Interviewee percentage from different groups in Farakka Block in Murshidabad district³⁸

This research study was conducted in the Farakka block in Murshidabad district, where the emphasis was on the minority and majority groups equally, like, 50 percent of the total research interviews were conducted on minority groups and 50 percent on women of majority groups. Hence, I hope this study will provide an equal standard, in this discussion. Here an attempt has been made to analyze the views of each group based on the

³⁷ "District Census Handbook, Murshidabad " (2011). "Industry, Directorate of Census Operations", West Bengal, Series 20, Part XII, pp. 22-23. Retrieved From, <https://www.census2011.co.in/data/town/313830-farakka-barrage-township-west-bengal.html>

³⁸ I have collected the data through the interview & field survey in the Farakka block in Murshidabad and then analyzed and represented through the pie chart in percentage form.

same criteria and their views on society, politics, and the role of the government in the empowering process of women have been given more importance.

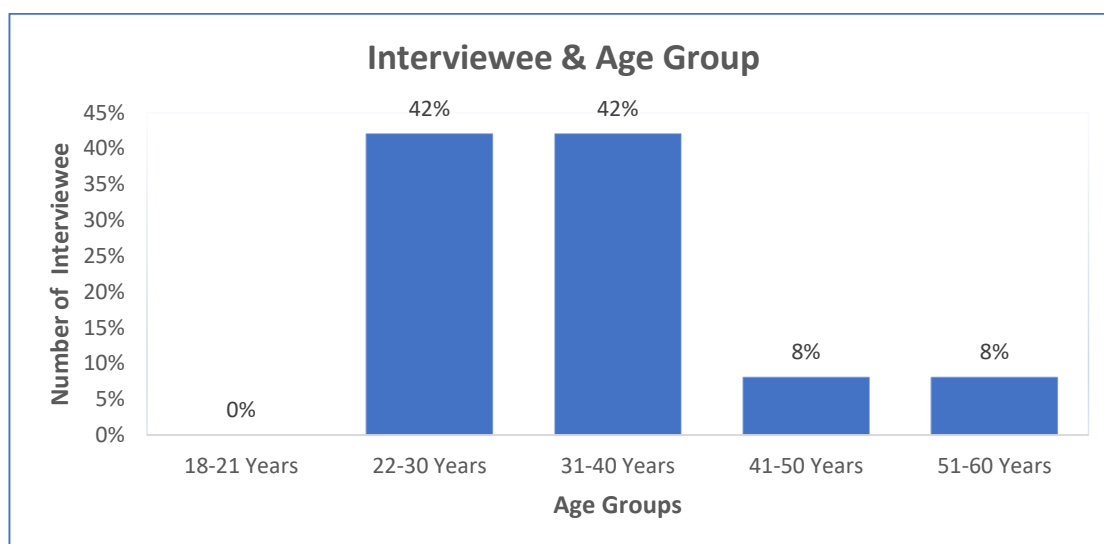


Figure 5.16: Percentage of interviewees & their age group in Farakka block in Murshidabad district³⁹

The age classification of each female group at the time of interviewing in this block has been normalized. However, it is observed that, by coincidence, here no interview was conducted among the women age group of 18 to 21 years. The largest number of women in the society, 42 percent of the total interviews were done mainly within the 22 to 30 and 31 to 40 years of age groups. Among this age group, we can observe that girls, who are between the age of 22 to 40 years are more active in working mentality and political aspects of the society. ⁴⁰Similarly, 8 percent of women between 41 and 50 years, and 8 percent of women between 51 and

³⁹ This figure shows us the percentage of interviewees who belong to the different age groups in the Farakka block, the data has been collected as a primary source and analyzed according to my research design.

⁴⁰ Mentioned information has been collected by me as the primary source of data through the interview and observations in the concerned targeted group and the society,

60 years of age, interview were conducted in this study. However, while making these classifications in this age group no majority or minority has been discriminated, the collected data shows us a piece of general societal information.

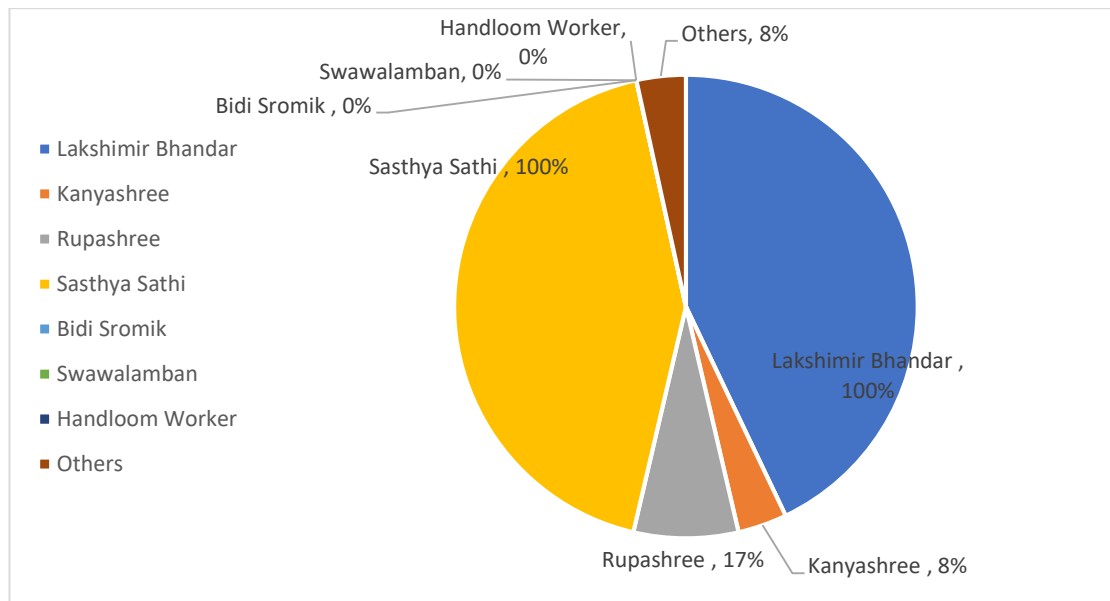


Figure 5.17: Adjuvant data of governmental & private schemes beneficial to the women's community in Farakka Block in Murshidabad⁴¹

It would not be wrong to say, that all the self-help groups, that are aided by the semi-government, are absent in the region. In terms of the overall implementation, the government projects and private projects on both the minority and majority groups or the extent to which they have benefited from these projects. Only government projects are more prominent in this region. For example, the Sasthya Sathi Prakalpa is at its highest peak, 100 percent women of in this region are benefiting from this special service. Only the women of the family can be entitled to this card and the rest of their family members can be included under it, that is, this scheme adopted

⁴¹ Through that figure, as a primary source of data observations from interviewee's opinions and field survey, different government schemes and private initiatives which have helped to empower women's community in Farakka block in Murshidabad at different sects of society have been shown.

by the West Bengal Government has played an important role in directly and indirectly providing empowerment to women or giving them an active role in the society as well as boosts the self-confident.

Laxmi Bhandar scheme is provided to married women to help them with a small number of monthly remunerations, but that is also directly observed in this society, currently, 100 percent of women in this region are taking benefit under this scheme.

However, not all government projects have been particularly effective. The self-reliance project which is known as 'Swabolamban' by the government is absent here, due to the lack of political knowledge, no implementation of this project has been observed here. The Rupashree scheme has also been implemented by only 17% of women groups between minority and majority in the region, but in reality, they face a lot of harassment to get these schemes, and government offices are not always helpful when it comes to inquiry, each group claims the same. It doesn't enquire properly and aborts the application. Due to all these constraints, the Rupashree scheme has not been effective in this block. Kanyashree scheme also says the same, only 8 percent of women have benefited from this Kanyashree scheme.

In the Farakka Block, this research focused on a comparative study amongst the minority and majority communities based on some criteria which is equally applicable to both communities. If we look at the minority group or community, here we find that the research is done on 100% married women, it is desirable to say that 100% of women are housewives. How aware are they in the political field, we got a very complimentary response to this question. In this study, 100 percent of the women gave their political comments, expressing their own views in the context of the current society. Out of these 100 percent, 100 percent expressed a negative

view of the projects undertaken by the current government for the advancement and empowerment of women. They felt that these schemes did not deserve any credit for the upliftment of women.

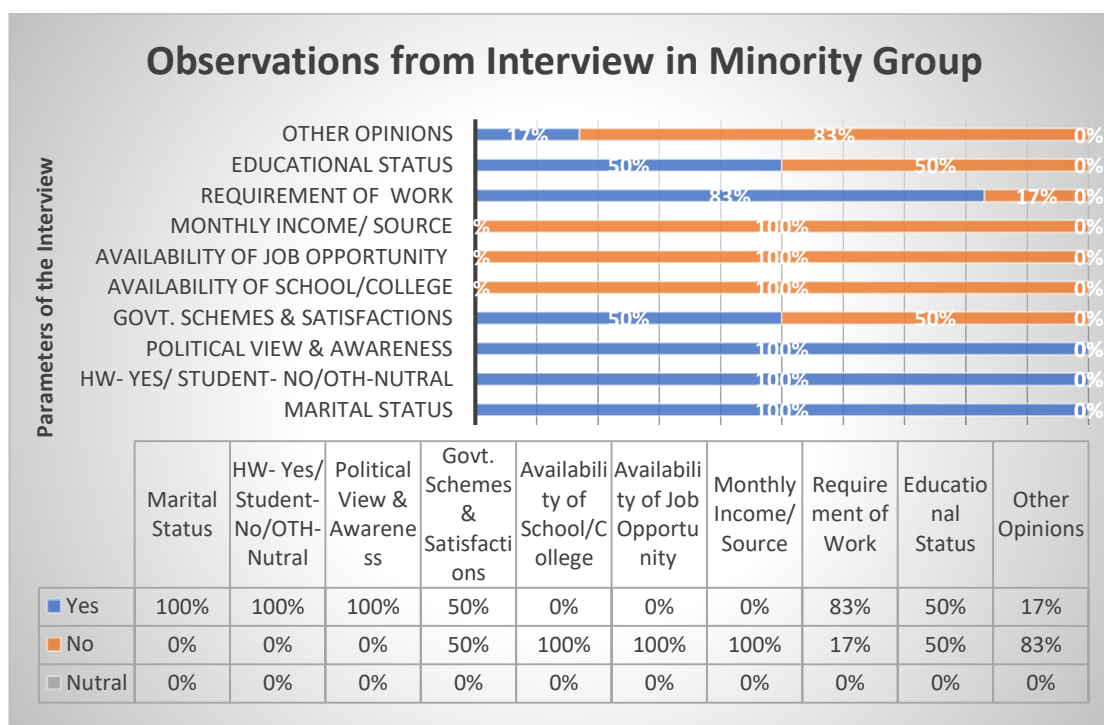


Figure 5.18 : Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Minority groups in Farakka Block in Murshidabad⁴²

In response to the question of how satisfied they are, with the various schemes taken by the government only 50 percent of women of this minority group feel that they are satisfied and the remaining 50 percent of women feel that these cannot be the only reason for satisfaction.

⁴² Collected data considered as a primary source in Farakka block in Murshidabad & their analyses from the various parameters in Minority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc. has been describing in details through the above figure.

When the question comes about education, the presence of schools, colleges, and other educational institutions plays a very crucial role. Because if there are not enough schools and colleges, then there can be many obstacles to getting a proper education. However, 100 percent of the women in the region feel that there are not enough schools and colleges here.

School and college education have no value without employment opportunities, and this is no exception when they are asked whether they have enough job opportunities in today's society, can they be involved in any work they want, only 0 percent of women in this question think that there are enough jobs opportunities in today's society. 100 percent of women feel that there is no job opportunity at all, which has become a major barrier to women's empowerment. In this block, 100 percent of women have no fixed monthly income sources.

When asked how willing they would be to work if they were given the opportunity in society, 83 percent of women expressed their opinion that they would participate positively enough, and 17 percent said they did not need any work.

Among the interviews conducted in this study, in terms of educational standards, only 50% of the women are educated, who have passed at least class eight, and 50% of the women are illiterate and have not attended any school or college or even primary education.

Meanwhile, If we keep all these various parameters in front of our study, we can see that, in many cases, we have got a disappointing answer, that is, to make women's power effective and bring them into the mainstream of the society, the government has to take a positive role for their development and progress in education. Not only should we try to

implement the projects legally, but we should also look at the proper implementation of these projects at the ground level of our society. At the same time, an adequate number of schools and colleges should be constructed in this region, which is the basic demand of this block.

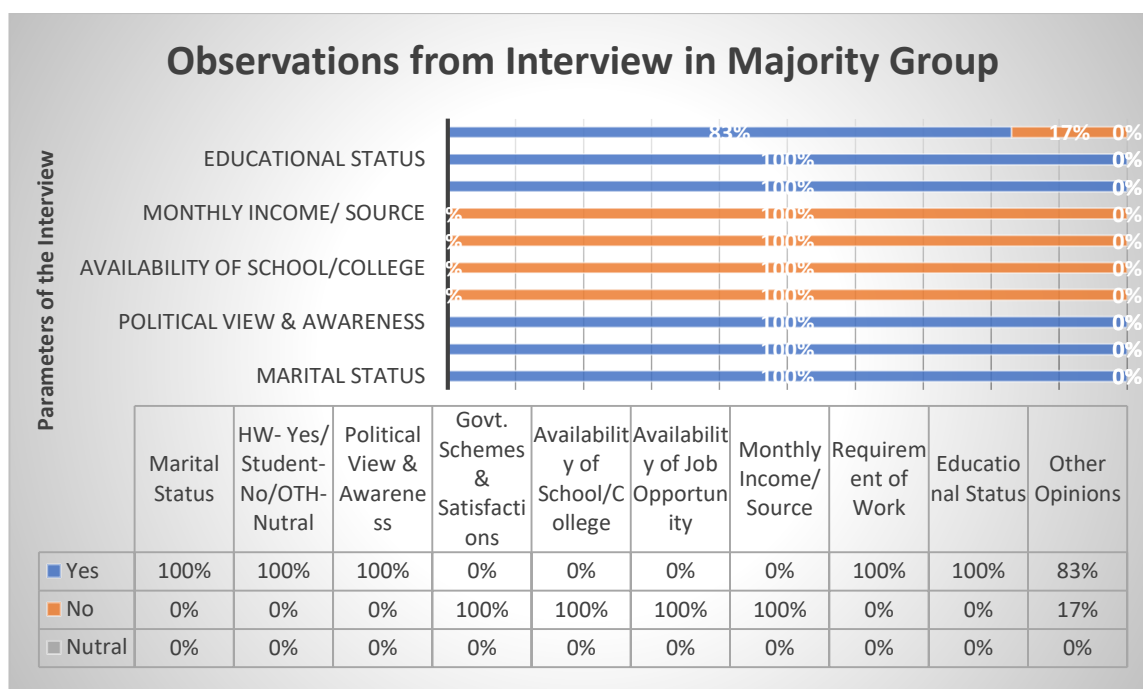


Figure 5.19 : Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Majority groups in Farakka block in Murshidabad⁴³

In this comparative study, when we conducted observations among the women of the majority groups based on the same criteria, as well, we found that the study was conducted on 100 percent of married women in this region, and these 100 percent of women are housewives. On the question of political views and awareness, we have found promising results. in this block, where 100 percent of women of the majority group have political

⁴³ Collected data considered as a primary source in Farakka block in Murshidabad & their analyses from the various parameters in selected Majory group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc.

knowledge or show political awareness. When asked their opinion whether the schemes taken by the government in terms of women empowerment are effective or not, 100 percent of the women commented no, which means they didn't think govt schemes in reality, executed here, they think in the current society the way of women uplifted schemes are absent, as well as, all the measures taken by the government are not enough.

In response to the question of whether there are adequate schools, colleges, and educational facilities available in this block, 100 percent of women in the majority group gave the opinion that there are not enough facilities.

In response to the question of is there enough opportunities for women in terms of employment in society, 100 percent of women think that there are no employment opportunities and aren't playing an active role.

A hard rock different picture is observed here in terms of monthly income, 100 percent of women have no monthly income or any income sources. Maybe this is why they express a negative attitude towards the government. They are all saying the same thing, they have no job opportunities in society.

Amongst the interviewees, 100% of the women in the majority group are educated, where the standard of educational status indicates at least a class eight pass means secondary education. We have observed that in terms of education, the minority group is far behind in comparison to the majority group.

In this research, during the study of Farakka Block, the data has been collected based on the different dimensions between the minority and the majority female groups, if we make a comparative discussion, then there are similarities as well as contrasts that have been seen in different areas.

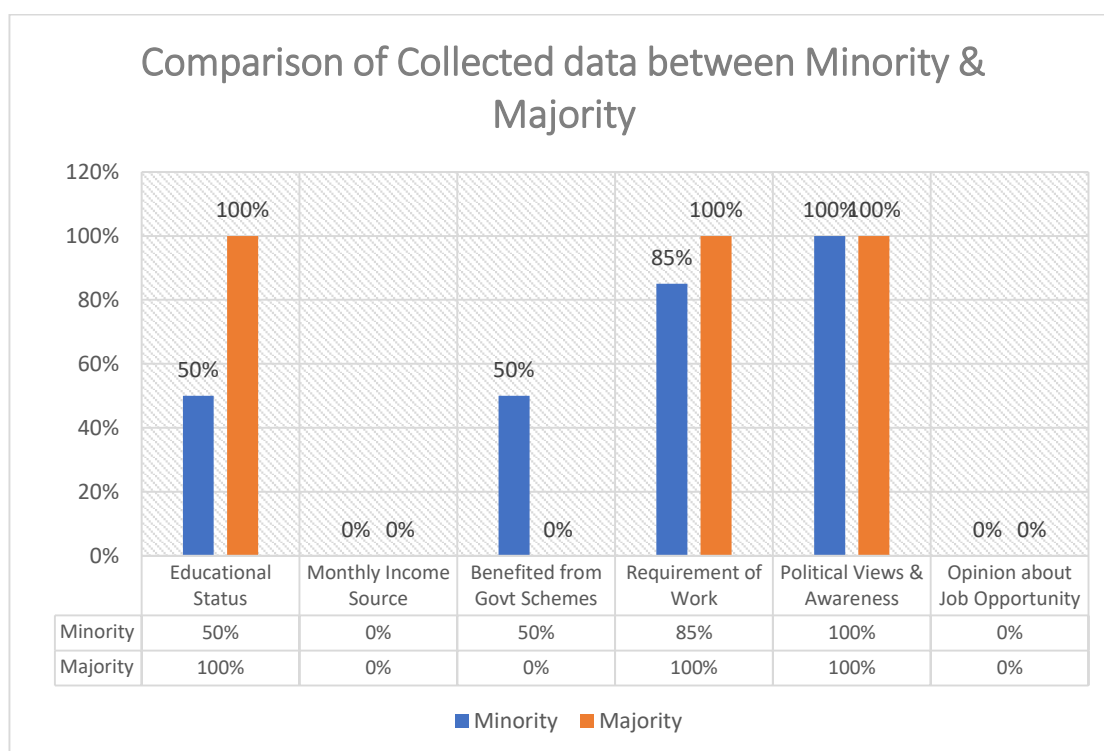


Figure 5.20 : Comparative study of Collected data & their analyses based on our research from the various parameters between Minority - Majority groups in Farakka block⁴⁴

In terms of education or literacy rate, we observe a difference between the two groups, 50 percent of the minority group is literate and 100 percent of the majority group of women are literate. We can say that between the two groups, the minority group is far behind in terms of education. It is nothing, but a folly claim that we can improve the status of women in society, until and unless we can make this number 100 percent.

Meanwhile, a similar condition is observed between the two groups in terms of monthly income, with only 0 percent of women in the minority and majority groups having a fixed monthly income. Well, it is very clear that, when both the groups are claiming the same, then it is easy to believe,

⁴⁴ In Farakka block, which is situated in Murshidabad, a comparative discussion has been done between the minority and majority groups of this region based on the reviews of the need for research, all the data has been collected as the primary source by me through the interviews.

there is hardly any employment opportunity in this Farakka block, especially for the women community.

Only 50 percent of women belonging to minority groups felt that they have benefited from government schemes, and on the same question, 0 percent of women consent to the same, who belong to the majority group.

Employment demand among minority women is also relatively low, with 85 percent of women wanting to work, but not knowing which job would be right for them, and how could they start the business. In this same question, 100 percent of women in the majority group feel they need work.

In a developed society, political knowledge and the participation of women play a crucial role. The society's progress depends significantly on women's involvement in politics. Specifically, women from minority communities play a vital role, as 100% of the minority group and the majority group have been given their feedback. These women's communities have spoken out and demonstrated awareness of various political areas, where they faced challenges.

After comparing the views of majority and minority women groups, we found that they have shared similar concerns. When asked about the impact of school and college attendance on society, both groups expressed similar opinions. They are deprived in terms of educational facilities. Not enough numbers of educational institutions are there. Many women expressed their disappointment with the government, which is contributing to and making sense of hopelessness among women communities between the different sections of the society.

To address this, we need to make sure every woman, regardless of her background, is not only personally but also politically aware. This requires adequate education and support. The government must take responsibility

for ensuring women's education and empowerment. Only then can we create a more informed and active female population as well as an empowered women's society.

5.2. Malda District:

In this Malda district, three blocks have been chosen, these are Old Malda, Kaliachak-I, and English Bazar block. The comparative analytical study of different women's communities is as follows,

5.2.1. Old Malda Block:

Old Malda is a town in Malda district in West Bengal, this block is rich in history and culture as well. It is located on the western bank of the Mahananda River, it has been an important place for many centuries. The town is close to ancient Gour, which was once the capital of the Bengal kingdom, adding to its historical importance.⁴⁵

Old Malda has a long history connected with the Pala, Sena, and Bengal Sultanate dynasties. You can still find old temples, mosques, and buildings that show us stories of its past. The mix of Hindu and Islamic influences gives the town a unique charm and makes it a great spot for history lovers.

Not only historical significance, but this block also has a lively market and trade center as well. The town buildings, art, and local traditions reflect its heritage, which offers a glimpse into Bengals rich history and culture. All overall, Old Malda is a place where the past and present meet, making it a fascinating destination for anyone interested in West Bengal history and culture.

⁴⁵ Malda district, Govt. of West Bengal, Accessed on 11 Sept. 2023.
Retrieved From, <https://malda.gov.in/aboutdistrict/#:~:text=Old%20Malda%2C%20the%20town%20which,prosperous%20cotton%20and%20silk%20industries.>

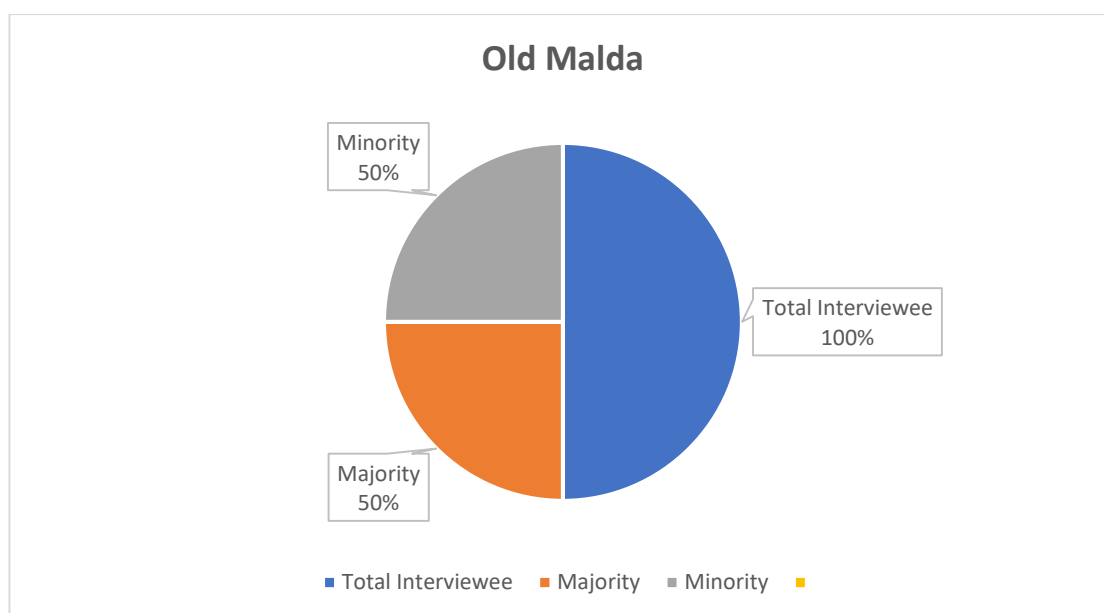


Figure 5.21: Showing the Interviewee percentage from different groups in Old Malda Block in Malda district.⁴⁶

The total strength of the study in the Old Malda Block of Malda District mainly focuses on minority and majority groups equally. 50 percent of the total research sample collection is on women from minorities and the remaining percentage is from majority groups of women community, so I am optimistic, that this discussion will provide an equal standard. Here an attempt has been made to analyse the views of each group on the basis of the same criteria and their activities in politics, the role of the government in terms of empowering women, and their views on society have been given importance.

In this block, interviewees were stratified by age, coincidentally it was observed that no interviews were conducted in the 41 to 60 age group of women, the highest number of 76 percent of women were interviewed mainly in the 22 to 40 year age group.

⁴⁶ I have collected the data through the interview & field survey in the Old Malda block and then analyzed and represented through the pie chart in percentage form.

Meanwhile, we have noticed in this age group, women, between 18 to 40 years of age are more active and working-minded and political aspects of society. 25 percent of women between 18 and 21 years, 38 percent between 22 and 30 years, and 38 percent between 31 and 40 years of age were surveyed. In this case, no majority or minority is discriminated, this data is aggregated as well as got the same views in their opinion.

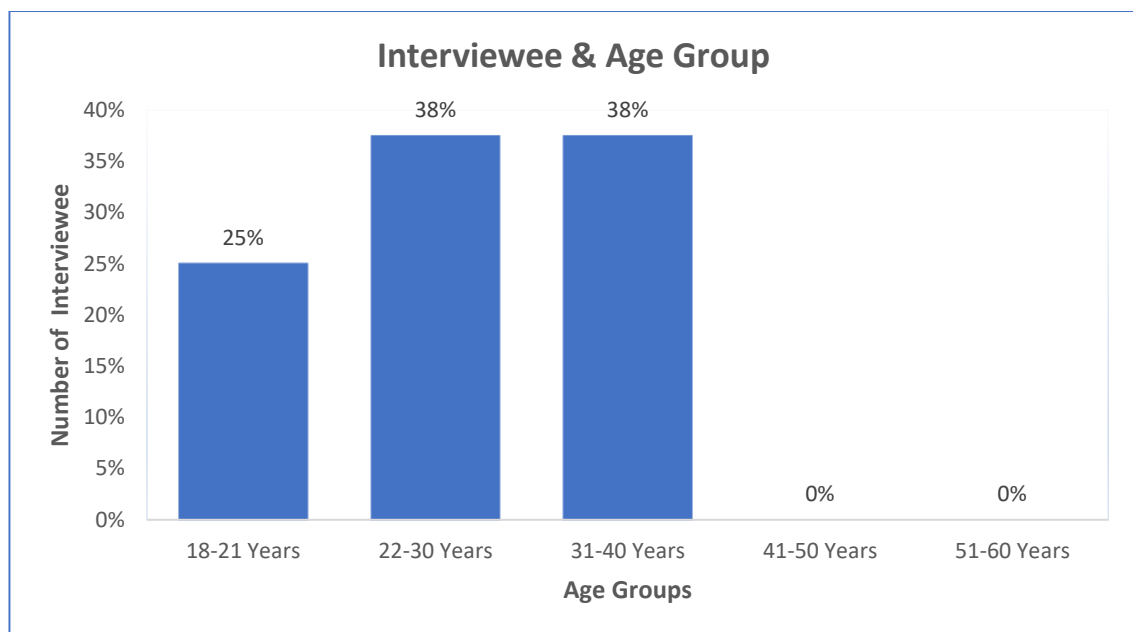


Figure 5.22: Percentage of interviewees & their age group in Old Malda block in Malda.⁴⁷

During the interviews, when we asked them, about the role of the overall implementation of government projects or private projects on both the minority and majority groups are effective or not, it would not be wrong to say that, all the self-help groups that are supported by the semi-government are absent in this block. No initiative has been taken by private companies to empower the women of this region. They have got very nominal help from governmental schemes in every aspect.

⁴⁷ This figure shows us the percentage of interviewees who belong to the different age groups in the Old Malda block, the data has been collected as a primary source and analyzed according to my research design.

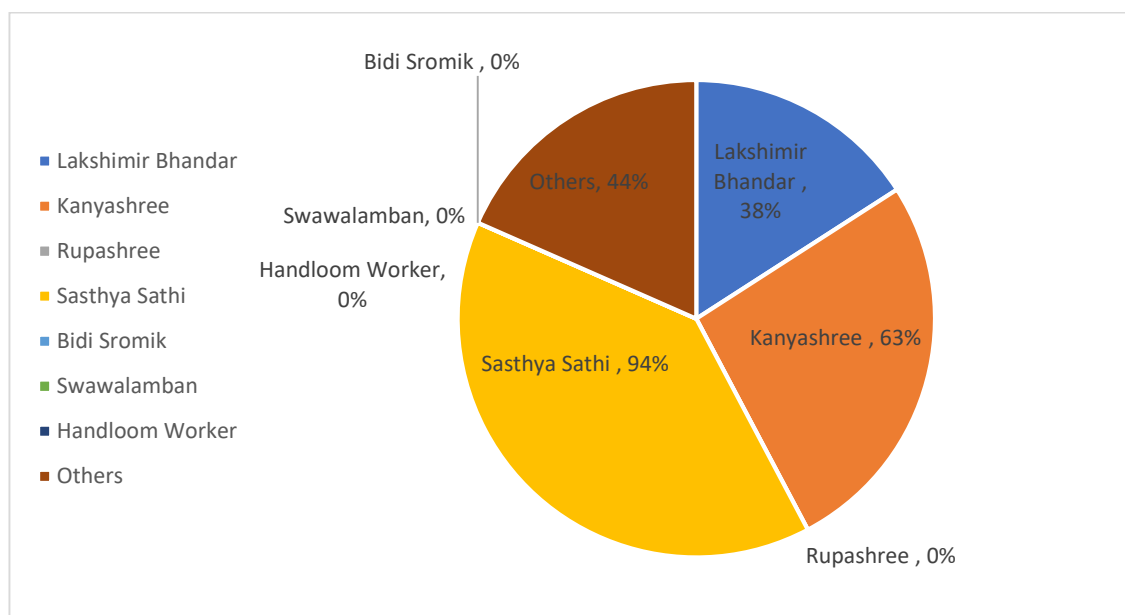


Figure 5.23: Adjuvant data of governmental & private schemes beneficial to the women's community in Old Malda Block.⁴⁸

The observable thing is the government projects or prakalpa are more prominent in this block. As the Swasthya Sathi Prakalpa is at its peak, 94 percent of women in the block are benefiting from this special service. This scheme adopted by the West Bengal Government has played an important role in giving women an active role in society, indirectly, with 94 percent of women benefiting from this particular health scheme, but it is suspicious how this will empower and help them financially, clear ideas are not defined here.

Married women are also provided with monthly assistance through the Laksheer Bhandar Prakalpa, this is directly observed in the society, currently only 38 percent of women in the region are receiving benefits under this scheme. However, not all government projects have been equally and particularly effective. The self-reliance project which is known for Swavalamban schemes by the government is absent here, due to the lack

⁴⁸ Through that figure, as a primary source of data observations from interviewee's opinions and field survey, different government schemes and private initiatives which have helped to empower women's community in Old Malda block at different sects of society have been shown.

of political knowledge, no implementation of this project has been observed here. Among the minority and majority groups in the region, the Rupashree project was also not implemented effectively, each group claims the same that despite fulfilling all the mentioned criteria they face a lot of retapes to get these projects, do not make proper inquiries, and reject the applications, . Due to all these constraints, the Rupashree scheme has not been effective in this region, The Kanyashree scheme also says the same, only 63 percent of women have benefited from this scheme.

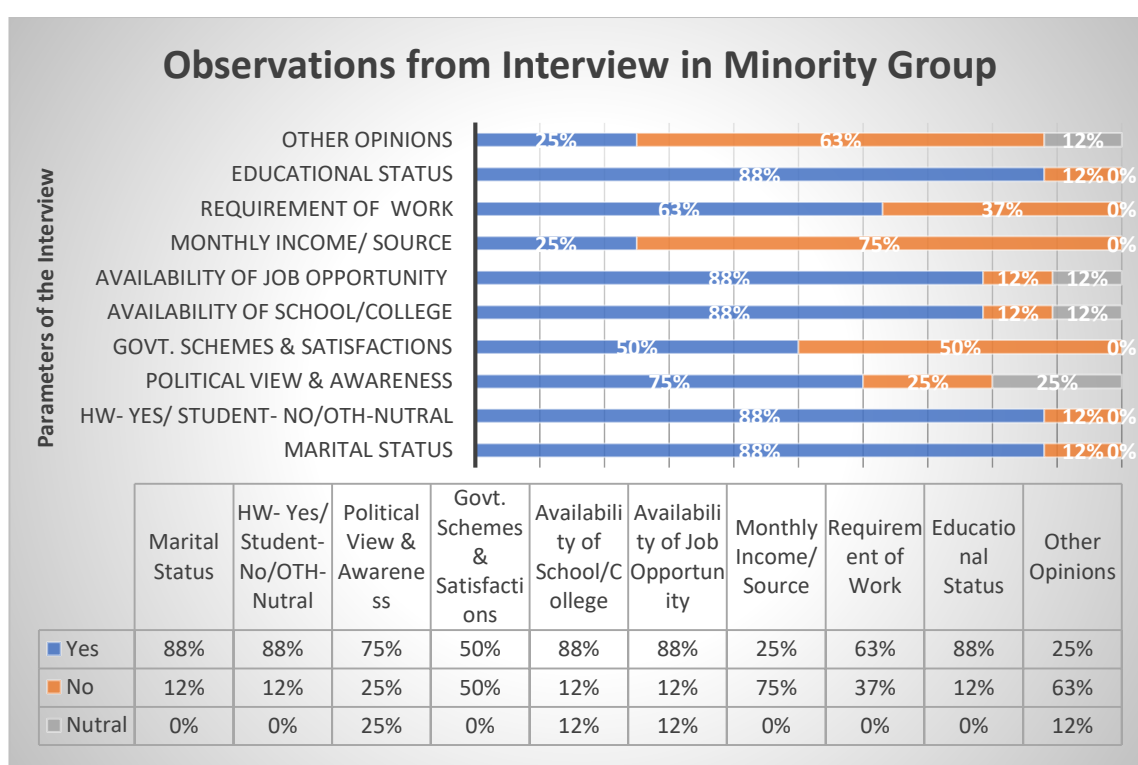


Figure 5.24: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Minority groups in Old Malda block in Malda.⁴⁹

In the Old Malda block, this research focuses on the comparative study of minority and majority women groups in terms of certain criteria. Here, if

⁴⁹ Collected data considered as a primary source in Old Malda block in Malda & their analyses from the various parameters in Minority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc. has been describing in details through the above figure.

we look at the minority groups, we find that 88% of the total research interviews were focused on married women and 12% on unmarried women. It is desirable to say that 88 percent of women are housewives.

In response to the question of how much they are aware of politics or how much they hold special social knowledge, we got a very promising answer. In this study, 75 percent of women have political knowledge, they answer various questions in the context of the current society. 25 percent of women do not express interest in answering this question, out of which 75 percent express a negative view of the projects undertaken by the government for the empowerment of women. They feel that these projects are not enough to empower women.

In response to the question of how much they have benefited from the various schemes adopted by the government, only 50 percent of women of this minority group feel that they are satisfied and the remaining 50 percent of women considered it cannot be an indication of satisfaction.

In terms of education and literacy ratio, the presence of schools and colleges plays a special role. Because if there are not enough schools and colleges then they may face many obstacles in the field of education. However, 88 percent of women in the region feel that there are enough schools and colleges and 12 percent feel that there are not enough schools and colleges and more are needed.

School and college education have no value without creating employment opportunities, in this case, it is no exception when they are asked whether they have enough job opportunities in the current society or not, and can they join any work if they want, In this survey, 88 percent of women feel that there is enough work in the current society. 12 percent of women feel that there are no opportunities at all, and 12 percent of women who also

belong to the satisfactory group, feel that even if there are job opportunities, more job opportunities are needed.

25 percent of women earn some monthly income through cottage industries and small endeavors, the remaining 75 percent have no monthly income.

Asked how willing they would be to work if they were given the opportunity in society, 63 percent of women felt they would participate positively in work, and 37 percent of women said they did not need any work, taking it as an optional.

In terms of education standards, 88% of women are educated and got secondary education, and have passed at least class eight, 12% of women are illiterate and have not attended any school or college, not even got a primary education.

We were getting disappointing answers in many cases in this inquiry. In order to advance women's empowerment, the government needs to take a positive role in promoting their development and education. The government should also come to the ground level and monitor the proper implementation of these projects, not just try to implement the projects legally or officially but in reality, they should be seen from every perspective.

Based on these same criteria, the majority of women groups were observed, and in this comparative study, 100 percent of the unmarried women in the region were surveyed, and all of them were students, who were still engaged in education. In terms of political views and awareness, we have found very promising results in this region, where 100 percent of women in this majority group have political knowledge or show political awareness.

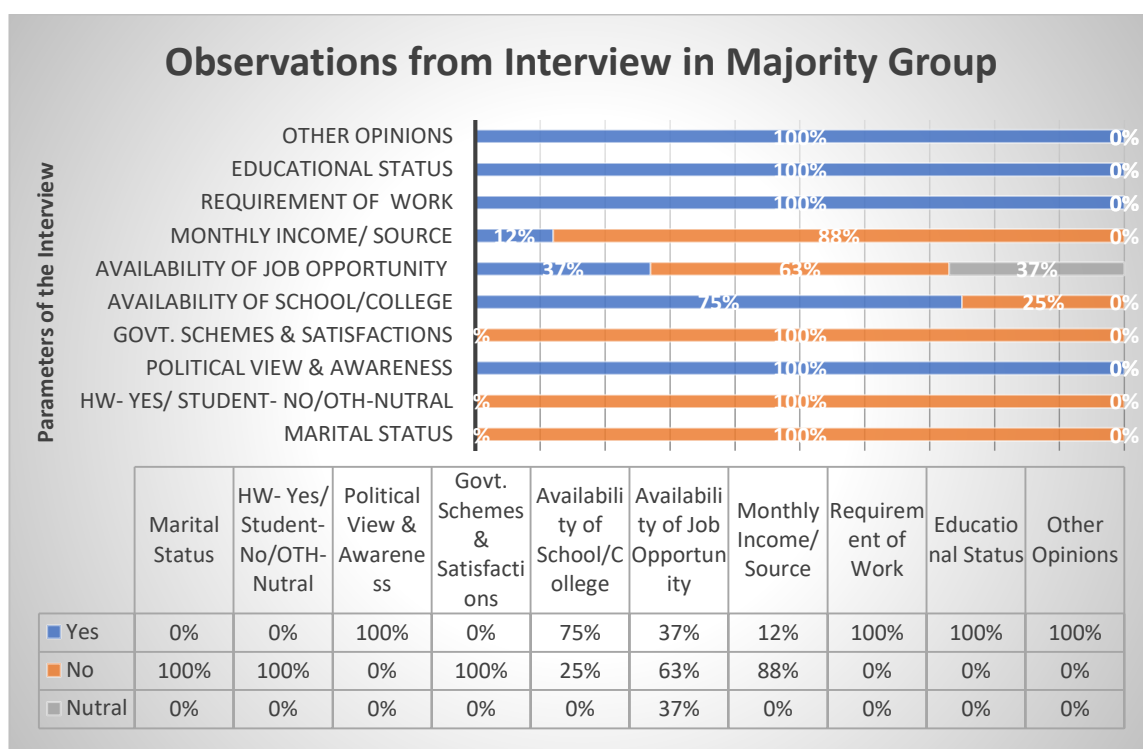


Figure 5.25: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Majority groups in Old Malda block in Malda.⁵⁰

However, they have seen the current political situation negatively, they are very worried about their future. In their minds, many have chosen education only to gain knowledge. As a researcher, if I cannot change this negative view about education and job opportunities, then they will be reluctant in the future.

They feel that it is almost impossible to get a government job in today's society.

When asked whether there are adequate schools, colleges, and educational facilities in this block, 75 percent of the women in the majority group felt

⁵⁰ Collected data considered as a primary source in Old Malda block in Malda & their analyses from the various parameters in selected Majority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc.

that everything was adequately provided. The remaining 25 percent of women feel that there is not enough provision regarding that.

In response to the question of how many employment opportunities women have in this society, 37 percent of women feel that they have a variety of employment opportunities, and 63 percent of women feel that there are no employment opportunities, which means the majority number of women thought, getting being employed is a hard task in the society.



Figure 5.26: Somewhere in Mangalbari some primitive aboriginal people are working in the field to serve their family.⁵¹

88 percent of women are deprived in terms of monthly income, and 100 percent of women feel that they need work when asked if they are interested or not.

⁵¹ Somewhere in Mangalbari some primitive aboriginal people are working in the field to serve their family

100% of the women in the majority group are educated, here the standard of education means at least class eight passes, which means secondary education. We have observed that the majority group is much ahead compared to the minority group in terms of education.

In this study of Old Malda block, mainly, the data collected is based on the different standards between the minority and majority women groups, if we conduct a comparative discussion, then the similarities and the same way differences contrast will be observed in these areas.

In terms of education or literacy rate, we observe the difference between the two groups, that is 88 percent of the minority group and 100 percent of the majority women communities are educated.

A large contrast between the two groups is observed in terms of monthly income and earnings, with only 25 percent of minority women earning a certain monthly income, but this number falls far behind only 12 percent among majority women. The women of the minority groups in the region are very active in terms of work.

Only 50 percent of women belonging to the minority group feel that they benefit from the government schemes, while on the same question women of the majority group express their opinion that 0 percent are satisfied with the government, well we have found contradictions between the groups in this question.

Employment demand among minority women is also much lower, they are unable to identify what job would be right for them, and only 63 percent of women want to work, in this same question, 100 percent of women in the majority group felt they needed work. Well, we observed that the charms of women's empowerment are active in this majority community.

In terms of the development of the society, whether the women of that society have any political knowledge or not, and how active they are in participating in politics, plays, and social work, particularly plays a very important role in the development of that society. In this respect, women from the majority community are far ahead of those from the minority community, 100 percent of the majority of women are politically knowledgeable, and this number is 75 percent among minority groups.

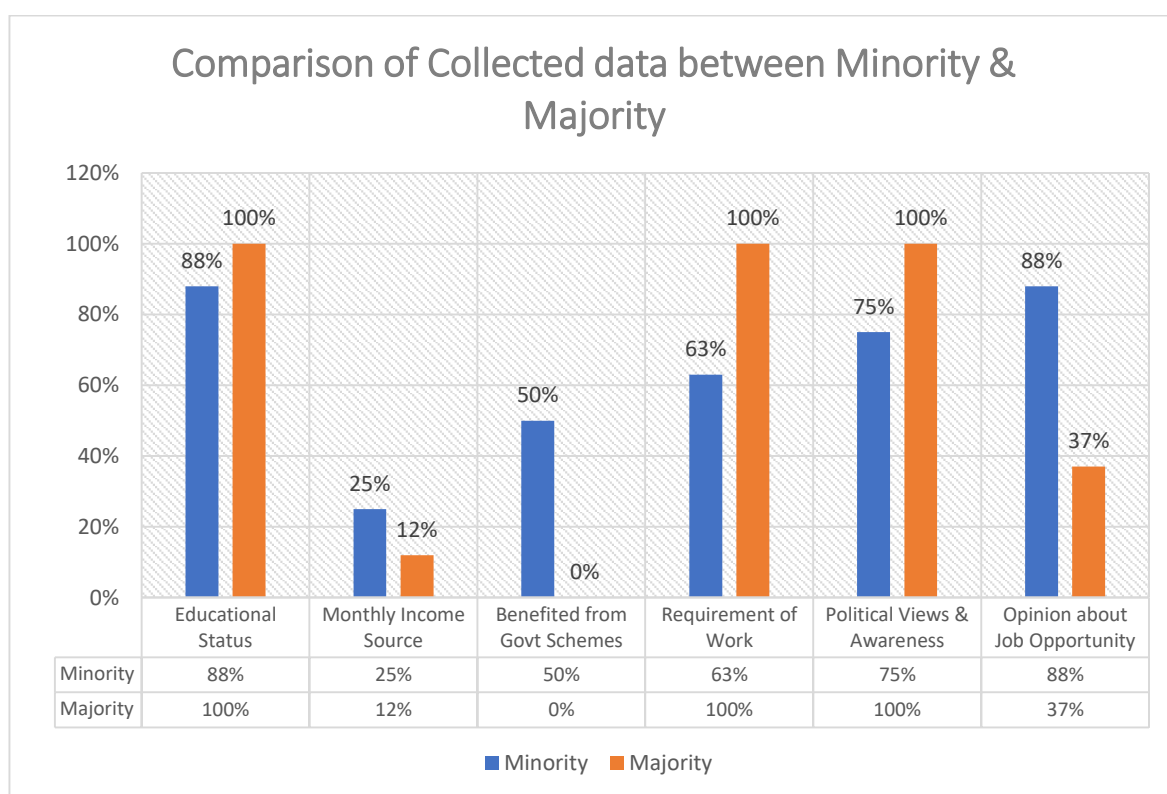


Figure 5.27: Comparative study of Collected data & their analyses based on our research from the various parameters between Minority - Majority groups in Old Malda block.⁵²

In response to the question of whether there are enough work facilities in Old Malda block, the majority group of women gave a negative answer, 37

⁵² In Old Malda block, which is situated in the Malda, a comparative discussion has been done between the minority and majority groups of this region based on the reviews of the need for research, all the data has been collected as the primary source by me through the interviews.

percent of women in this group think that there are enough work facilities. However, the number is different among women from minority groups, where 88 percent feel that there are enough work benefits, so a positive opinion is observed among the minority women in this group.

In conclusion, these discussions reveal that both the majority and minority women groups lack genuine political awareness, despite their differences, women from both groups demonstrate a similar lack of understanding of political issues. 100% of women from the minority group expressed negative views on politics. The ignorance about the self-rights, liabilities, and other duties will lead society to a worse situation. To mention this, we need to ensure that every woman, without considering her background, should receive political education and become politically literate. This requires adequate opportunities for their education. Individual efforts alone cannot achieve this goal. The government must actively interfere to make political education accessible to all women, regardless of their caste or background.

5.2.2. Kaliachak-I Block:

Kaliachak-I is one of the community development blocks within the Malda Sadar subdivision, it is situated in the Malda district of West Bengal, and this block has played a crucial role in administering local programs and services for its residents and also holds a rich cultural heritage and diverse population. Kaliachak I block is committed to fostering inclusive growth and development.

Islam is playing the role of the dominant religion in this region; it comprises of nearly 90 percent of the total population. Based on the 2001 census data and according to the 2014 District Statistical Handbook, Muslims in the Kaliachak-I block numbered 274,825, roughly making up 88.39% of the population.⁵³ Hindus totaled 35,896, which is nearly 11.54%, while Christians were only 36 in number that representing 0.01%. Other religious groups totaled 178, forming 0.06% of the population.

Geographically, Kaliachak-I block is bounded by in the east Mahananda River and shares borders with Kaliachak-II and Kaliachak-III blocks. The headquarters is located in Kaliachak, which serves as the administrative and commercial center during the Gupta Empire. Once upon a time, it served as the heart of the Pundravardhana region.

According to 2011 Census of India, Kaliachak-I block had a total population 392,517, it had seen a significant community spread across rural and urban areas both. Out of this population, 269,058 people (roughly around 69%) lived in rural areas, while the remaining 123,459 (31%) were part of the urbanization.⁵⁴ Relatively, the gender distribution was balanced,

⁵³ Census (2011) Government of India. Accessed on 14 August 2023. Retrieved From, <http://censusindia.gov.in>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

where males are 51% (200,451) and females make up 49% (192,066) of the total population. Our study is based on female participation in societal activities, whether it is political, social, or in comprehensive.

Regarding the social composition of different sects, Scheduled Castes represented 3.83% (15,033) of the population, while the Scheduled Tribes community was smaller, making up just 0.39% (1,542) of the total. This image of the society provides a glimpse into the demographic and social circumstances of the Kaliachak-I community development block in 2011, highlighting its rural-urban divide, gender distribution, and social diversity.

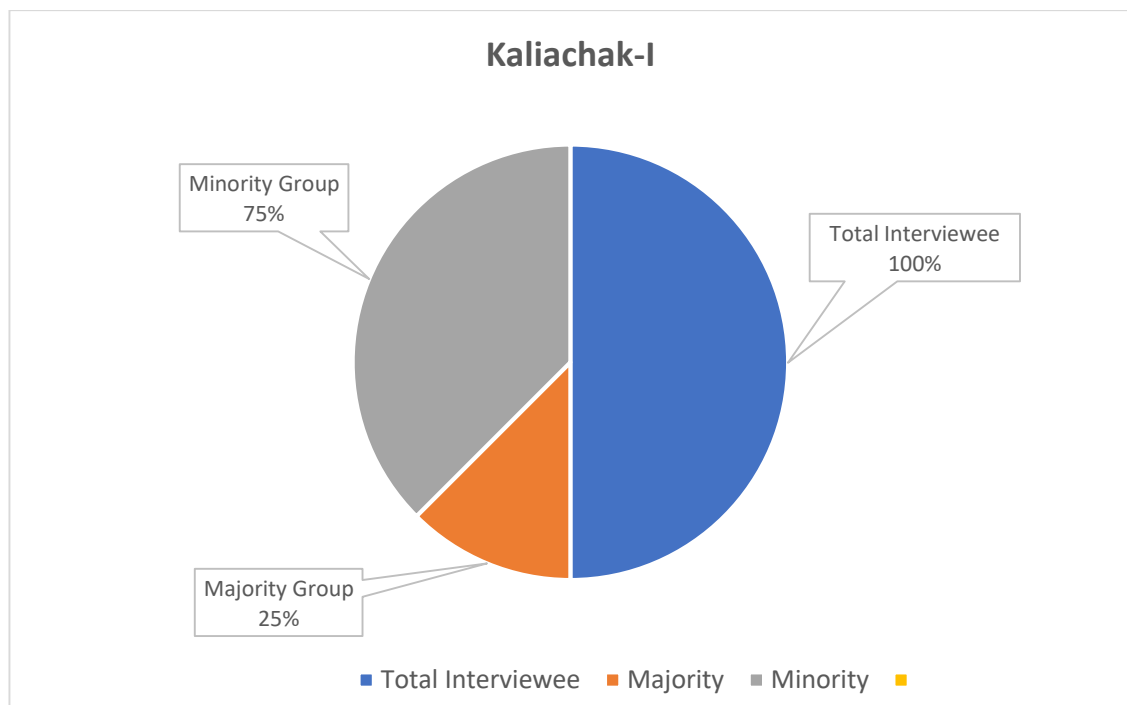


Figure 5.28: Showing the Interviewee percentage from different groups in Kaliachak-I Block⁵⁵

Through this chart, it is easy to understand that among the various groups in the region as a whole, especially the minority and majority communities,

⁵⁵ The data has been collected by me through the interview & field survey in the Kaliachak-I block and then analysed and represented through the pie chart in percentage form.

75% of the minority communities have been interviewed and 25% of the majority communities have been interviewed.

As a whole, the total number of interviewees in this block is 16, which is 16% of the total strength. Out of this 12 belong to minority communities and 4 from the majority communities. During my observation, I noticed many flows and ignorance which led them backward. I hardly manage to take interviews from 18 to 21 years of age group people, who are shy and introverted to express their feelings, which is a barrier to presenting themselves in this competitive world.

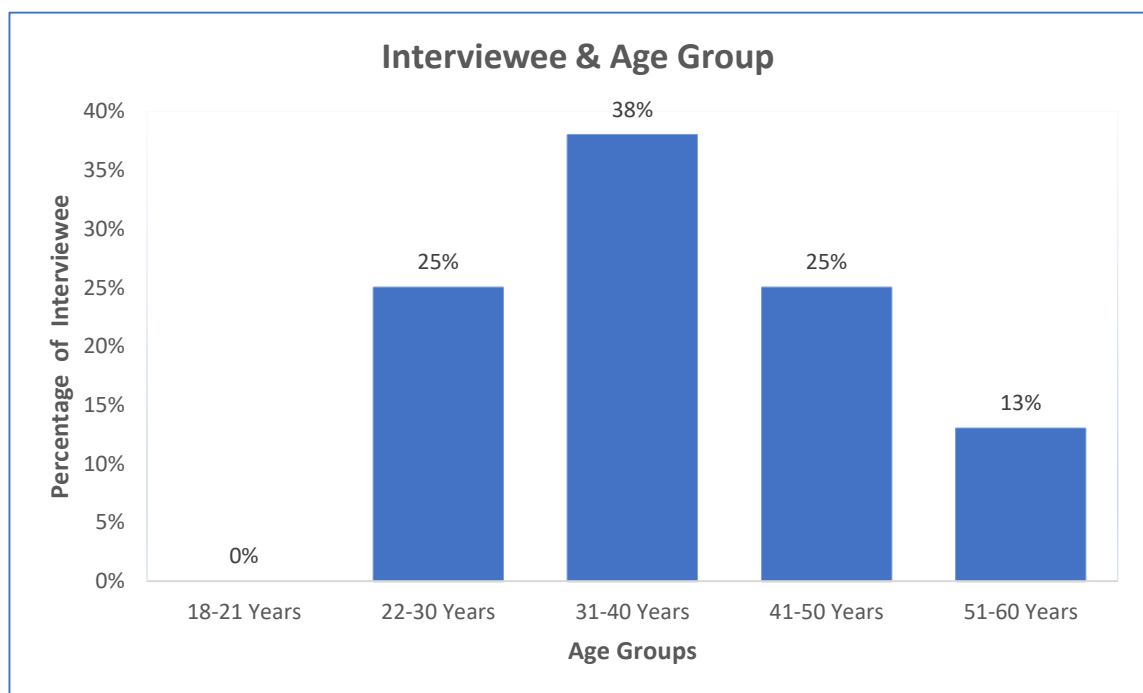


Figure 5.29: Percentage of interviewees & their age group in Kaliachak-I block⁵⁶

Though minority groups belong to many sectors of our society like Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, and many more, but in my research, only the

⁵⁶ This figure shows us the percentage of interviewees who belong to the different age groups of the Kaliachak-I block, the data has been collected as a primary source and analyzed according to my research design.

Muslim community has been shown as a source of data collection, because there is hardly any other community in this region that are available to face the interviews. Similarly, Hindus are considered the majority community, well we can place this as a comparative study of Hindu–Muslim based on women empowerment issues. Educational and Economic perspectives are the key factors to determine and answer the research questions.

Although this is a comparative study, but while making this 'age group' we didn't distinguish the minority-majority age group separately, because in my observation there is no different opinions in these groups, probably the atmosphere and village environment make them similar, the only difference I have seen that is their following of religions, that's it. They belong peacefully, here most of the festivals are enjoyed by both communities regardless the religious beliefs.

In this region age group of 31 to 40 years is more active in the working field, nearly 38%, and the least participation has been seen in the group of 18 to 21 years age group, compared to the other blocks here 51 to 60 years of aged women group are profound in the question of empowerment.

Meanwhile, the differences I have noticed between these two communities are probably the political participation in the society. Where women from the majority community are more active, they hold the knowledge of various perspectives of our society, which is seen downgrade in the majority community. But the question is why this difference has been seen in these communities, because patriarchal culture is purely active in the minority community, still, they think women don't need to participate in the political process in society, it belongs to the man, these stereotypes thought is not only pulling back the women's community but also weakening them as whole.

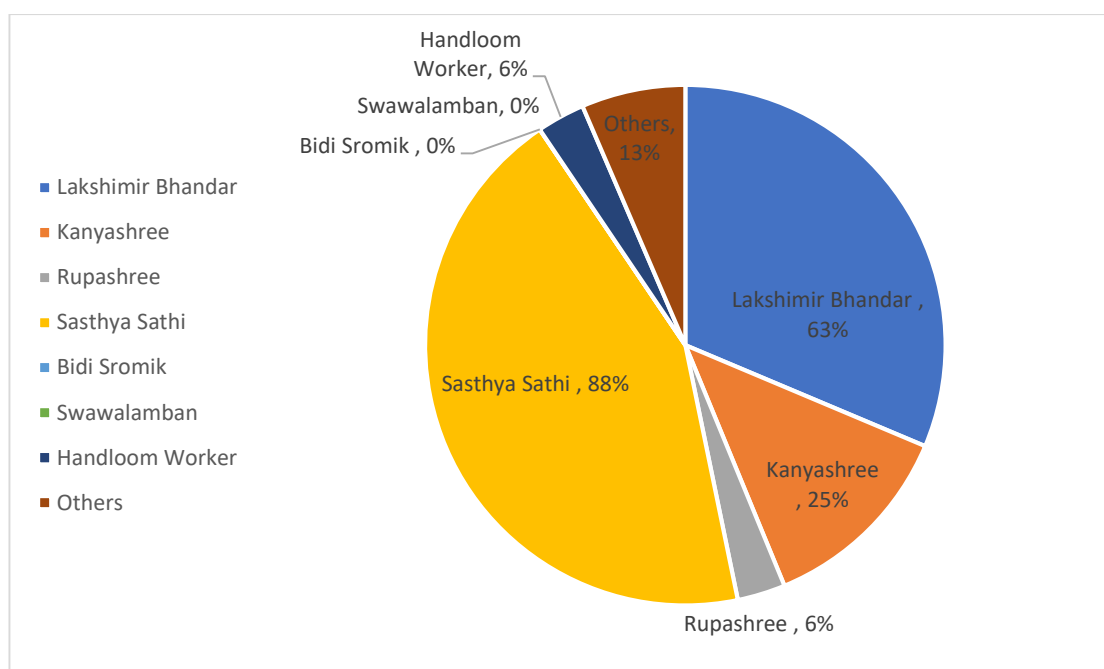


Figure 5.30: Adjuvant data of governmental & private schemes beneficial to the women's community.⁵⁷

Analyzing the above figure, as a primary source of data observations from interviewees' opinions and field survey, different schemes of government, as well as private initiatives have helped to empower women's communities in different sects of society. The grant of money, to be provided under the name of "Rupashree Prakalpa", is aimed at mitigating the difficulties that poor families face in bearing the expenditure of their daughters' marriages, for which they often have to borrow money at very high interest rates, and gradually they sunk in interest trap, from there no way out of leaving, to break the ice of this situation govt of West Bengal had initiated this prakalpa.

But in reality, the data has been collected through my field survey showing the different side of it which is only 6% of the sample which is very

⁵⁷ Through that figure, as a primary source of data observations from interviewees opinions and field survey, different schemes of government as well as private initiatives which have helped to empower women's community in different sect of society have been shown.

disturbing in the figure. To find the answer to this phenomenon, many of the interviewees claim the procedure of getting this scheme is not easy, sometimes local officials demand money to move forward the files, inspection is not done properly by the local staff, and nepotism as well as popular individuals' recommendation are the obstacles to implementing this scheme. These situations are the same for the minority and the majority communities of our society. Out of a total of 16 interviewees sample, only 1 is being helped by the “Rupashree Prakalpa” which is only 6% of the total data collected from this Kaliachak-I block in Malda district⁵⁸. So in conclusion I must say until and unless the government has taken this issue seriously for implementation and makes it easy to complete the procedural formalities, is not possible to empower them and bring them under the roof of independent status.

Similarly, the most benefited government scheme in the region is the Swasthya Sathi scheme. Through this scheme, 88% of women get government assurance of their family's and self's health and lead a healthy life.⁵⁹ This is a scheme of the West Bengal Government through which only the women of the family can get this card and the rest of the family members can also be included in this card. Indirectly through this effect women empowerment is said, and here is no exception.

Lakshi's Bhandar project has also made girls very independent. In the speech of the Chief Minister of West Bengal, he mentioned that many women do not get any annual or monthly money from the family to meet their own needs, but a woman is not only limited to household work, she can also have some personal needs and through this Lakshi Bhandar

⁵⁸ Out of 16 interviewees sampled only 1 which is 6% of the survey strength of Kaliachak-I block is helped by the Rupashree Scheme, the concerned data is a source of primary data.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

scheme, these personal needs The government believes that much will be fulfilled. In my experience of doing research in this area, I have observed that the local residents of women from all walks of life regardless of the minority-majority but respect the project. And I don't find any difference here women from all walks of life are benefited by this project and they feel that this project will help them a lot in future. But the real question is not the end here, is the employment that is being talked about through this project is really creating any real employment or is it slowly making them wait for the government.

Similarly if we talk about the Kanyashree project, only 25 percent of the people in this Kaliachak-I village who mainly fall under the women group have benefited from this project.⁶⁰ The answer to why this number is so low is that many people claim that the number of government offices that have to be visited to get the money paid for the scheme and when the report finally comes, it is not done for any reason. Local officers also tend to make different demands which has led to a reluctance among the minority and majority classes and gradually they start believing it useless and do not make many demands.

The women of the region are not too skeptical about the government scheme called Swavalamban, especially for the upliftment of women. They do not know what benefits are given to them by the government through this influence. I think they are staying away from all these projects today due to a lack of adequate political knowledge.

Between these government and private schemes, I have not drawn any group conflict or any distinction between minority and majority. One thing

⁶⁰ Out of 16 interviewees sampled only 4 which is 25% of the survey strength of Kaliachak-I block is helped by the Kanyashree Scheme, the concerned data is a source of primary data.

I noticed in particular within each group was that it gave rise to almost identical views. Within each class of the region there is a similar outlook and not much difference is observed in their social views and political awareness.

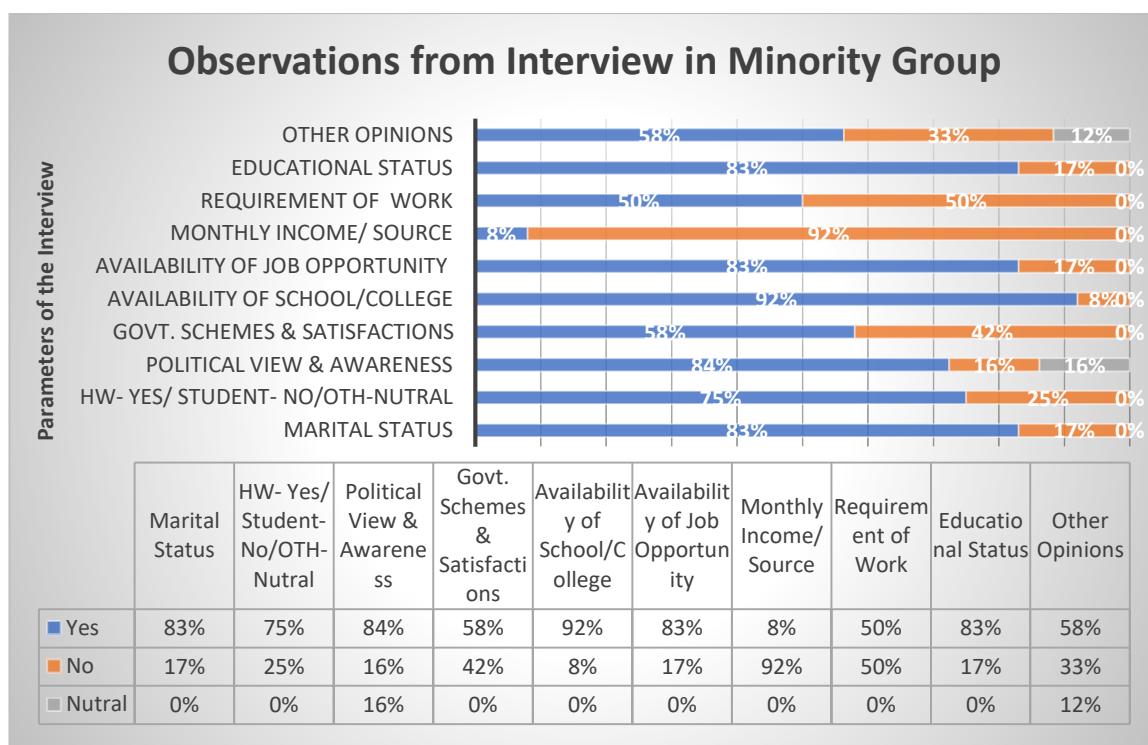


Figure 5.31 : Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Minority groups in Kaliachak-I block in Malda.⁶¹

In this region, I conducted my interview work on a few specific bases to take this research forward. Some of them are, the progress rate of women in that region in terms of education, the criteria of their job requirements, how many of them have monthly income or not, whether there are any government or public job opportunities in that particular region, whether

⁶¹ Collected data considered as a primary source in Kaliachak-I block in Malda & their analyses from the various parameters in Minority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc.

there are enough colleges or schools as per requirement, which is basically the first step in the advancement & empowerment of women, and how politically aware they are, etc.

But in this research case I have made a comparative discussion between the minority and the majority in each case, in this paragraph I have brought forward how the level of all these factors is appropriate in the minority group. Among these interviews, 83 percent of married women and 17 percent of unmarried women were interviewed. Of these 75 percent live as housewives only and 25 percent are involved in other aspects of society.

But how politically astute leaves us with a big question and from that point of view we can see that 84 percent of these minority women have some political knowledge and 16 percent have no contribution whatsoever. But while this 84 percent may seem like a lot of political knowledge, they are actually only willing to answer with yes or no. They have no specific advisory role personally.

When I asked them whether they were satisfied with the government schemes, or if they had any particular demands, 58 percent of the women said they had no particular negative comments. They are ready to accept everything the way it is being conducted at present. Similarly, 42 percent of women have the opposite religious view, they feel that the government has not played much role in empowering women at present.

In response to the question of how important it is in terms of education, whether there are enough educational institutions in the region or not, I can roughly say that 92 percent of the people are satisfied, even if there are no new educational institutions, there is no problem. Since this is the majority number, we can easily say that there is an abundance of educational institutions in the right amount. And that's really evident when I discuss the

education rate, 83 percent of the women in the region are ahead in terms of educational initiation, in my study class 8 pass is the criterion to define as literate.

It will be very surprising when the question is raised about whether they have job requirements. 50 percent of women feel their work is essential. And the remaining 50 percent of women feel that their lives are going well as they are, not wanting to get involved in any new work.

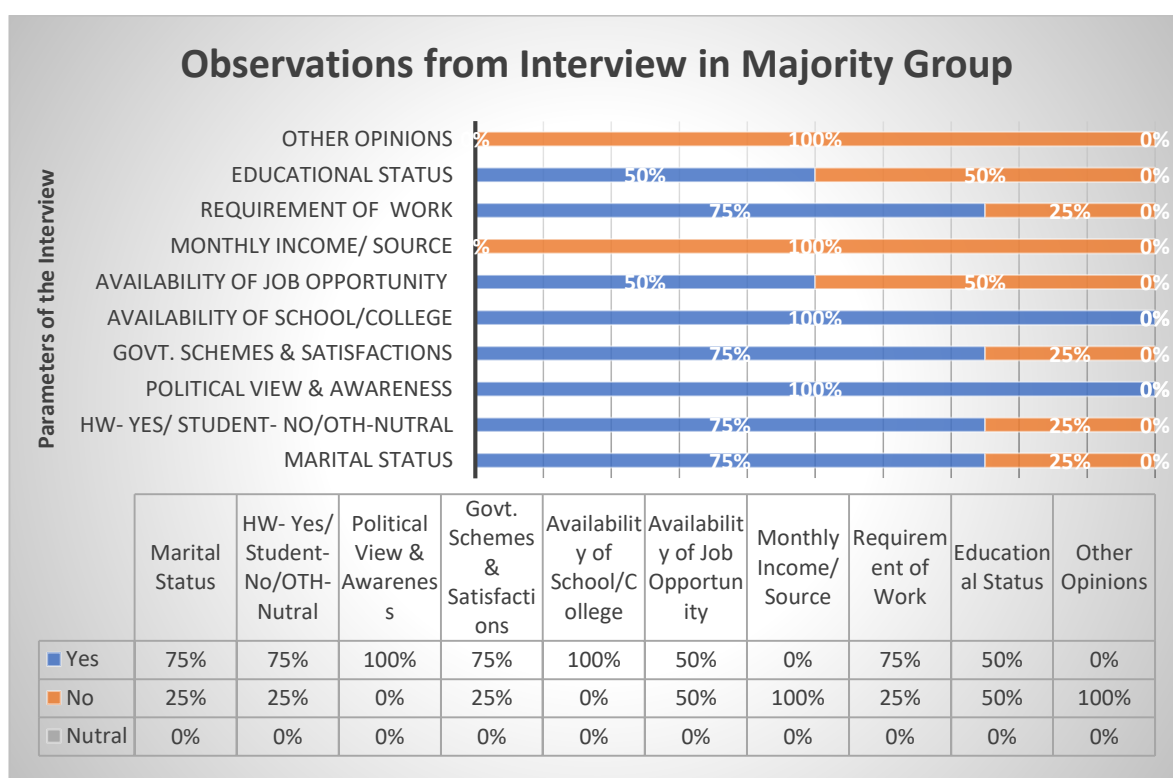


Figure 5.32: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Majority groups in Kaliachak-I block in Malda.⁶²

On this same scale if we look at the majority groups again a different pattern is observed. Here, the same aspects as before have been kept as

⁶² Collected data considered as a primary source in Kaliachak-I block in Malda & their analyses from the various parameters in Majority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc.

main topics of discussion. 75% of the women interviewed here are married and 25% are single. Similarly, 75% of these women are associated with housework and identify themselves as housewives, while the remaining 25% are still students. In response to the question of how politically advanced they are, it can be said that 100% women are aware of the current political situation. The only reason this number is high may be that the study was conducted on a small sample number of women. Maybe if the sample size was more then maybe this number could be less but this is the result of my research.⁶³

In reality, there are many protests against the government, but the results of the research say otherwise. Among the minority groups as well, we found that the majority expressed satisfaction with the government's scheme, and this was no exception among the majority group. Here 75 percent of the women feel that the schemes provided by the government for them deserve appreciation, and the remaining 25 percent feel that the government has no role to play. Similarly, ask the question whether there are sufficient number of schools and colleges, then 100 percent of them think that there are enough schools and colleges.⁶⁴ But even if there are enough schools and colleges, if we look at the education literacy rate, here, we will see only 50 percent who have studied more than class eight.

The data that I got based on monthly fixed income statistics is very disappointing, 0 percent of women have fixed monthly income and earn. Well, in this context, if they are asked if they really have job opportunities in this area? The answer might be expected to be no, but in reality it has different statistics. Only 50 percent of them make this claim. The remaining

⁶³ The data has been used in this paragraph are collected by me through the interviews and observation in the various fields of the concerned village considered as primary data.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

50 percent feel that there are plenty of job opportunities but don't want to or don't know how to do it. When asked if they want to work, 75 percent of the women agree that they want to work, while the remaining 25 percent want to stay as they are and do not need any changes.

We have seen here, that even though 100 percent answered how politically knowledgeable they are, when asked what advice they would personally like to give to the government or what projects they could take to improve women, none of them agreed to answer. That means they 100 percent don't want to share their own experiences. So here it becomes a problem, at the same time it raises a big question of why they don't want to share any of their experiences even if they have political knowledge. To mention one more thing, 75% of women are unwilling to reveal their names.⁶⁵

So naturally a question comes before us, do they spend their days in any doubt?, if they express their opinion then can they face any kind of problem or circumstances? If we cannot find the answer to this question, then the women's empowerment has no meaning.

⁶⁵ Ibid. No 11.

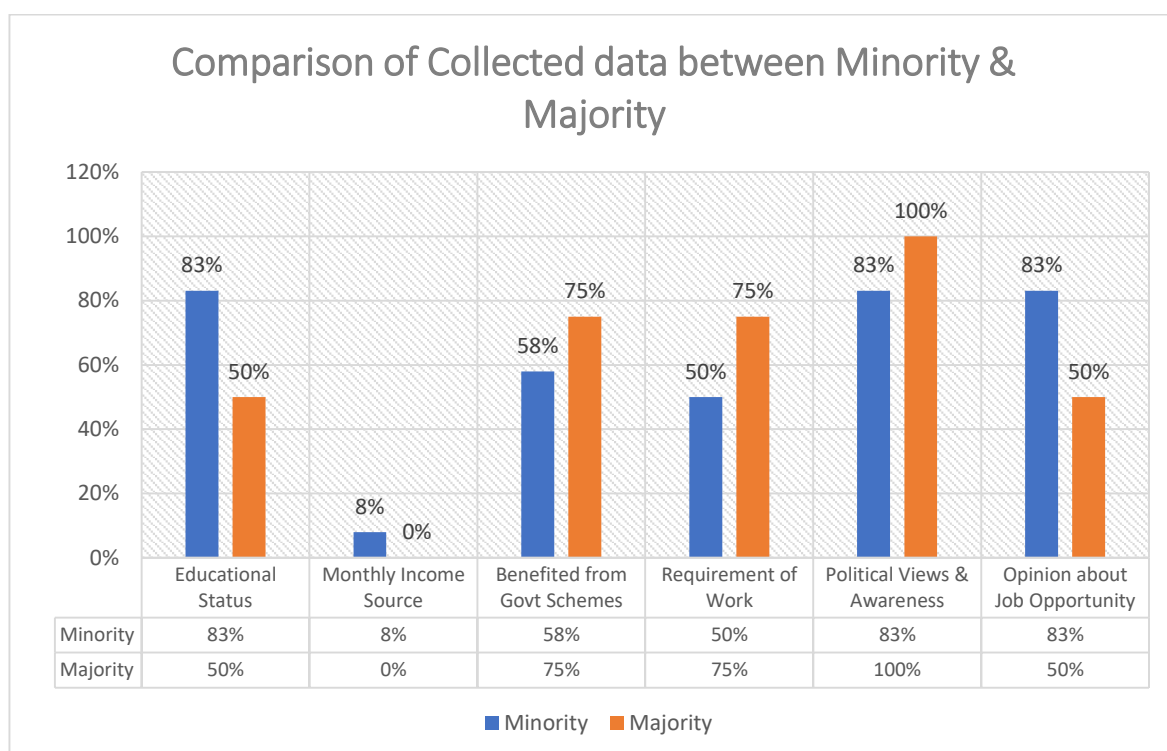


Figure 5.33: Comparative study of Collected data & their analyses based on our research from the various parameters between Minority - Majority groups in Kaliachak-I block in Malda district⁶⁶

The main theme of this chapter is to introduce a comparative study between minority and majority groups of women by focusing on specific aspects of women's empowerment. It is given special importance in this paragraph. Here we are looking at some criteria such as educational literacy rate, monthly income, whether they have benefited from any government schemes or not, whether they have a need for work, how ignorant or knowledgeable they are about politics, and whether there is an abundance of work or livelihood. These are considered as criteria for comparative discussion of this chapter and the discussion between the two groups was carried forward on that basis.

⁶⁶ Mahespur, a remote village of Malda district, a comparative discussion has been done between the minority and majority groups of this region based on the reviews of the need for research, all the data has been collected as the primary source by me through the interviews.

This chart uses blue and saffron colors, where blue represents minority groups and saffron represents majority groups. First, if we look at the level of education, we can see that the minority group is much ahead in this regard, 83 percent of women are educated here and have at least passed class eight or above, in the same case, if we look at the majority group, we can see that this number is only 50 percent. In the case of the majority group where we can't see any monthly income there, eight percent of women of the minority group earn a certain monthly income, in this case, also we see the minority group first in terms of women empowerment.

As 75 percent of women from the majority group feel that the schemes taken up by the government for the upliftment of women are effective, the same information is available from the minority women group only 58 percent, women from the minority group feel that in other way. Government schemes have not been effective enough for them.

In other words, 50 percent of minority women feel that their work is necessary, while 50 percent do not. In the case of majority group this number is 75 percent, majority group women are more likely to work than minority group women.⁶⁷

When asked about political awareness and social knowledge, 100 percent of majority group women indicated activism, compared to only 83 percent of minority group women. When asked how many job opportunities there are in this particular region in the current situation, 83 percent and 50 percent of women from minority and majority groups respectively gave a positive opinion.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Mentioned data has been collected by me through the interviews of various groups amongst the Minority and Majority communities.

⁶⁸ Ibid. No.16

That is, from the above discussion, we can easily conclude that there are various ideological differences between the minority and majority groups in the society. The opinions of different groups of women are different in different parameters of society. But on one question everyone agrees that perpetual women empowerment in real world is not possible unless their active participation is done politically and in the politics of the society and unless the government creates employment specifically for women.

Even though there is a sufficient number of schools and colleges, but the education rate has not increased like that, even though there are employment benefits, many of them are spending their days in unemployment. If we limit them only through the number of research, it will never be possible to bring back our women to the mainstream of society.

The right decisions and the right employment and implementation of projects will be arranged for them by the government will bring them back into the societal status. That is, regardless of the minority-majority distinguish, women from every level of society should be actively guided. If necessary, women should be made proficient in special education, only then we think the women of our society will be empowered.

5.2.3. English Bazar Block:

In this English bazaar block, some parts of my research have been conducted. Before getting into the research, we must know about this region from bird eye view. To understand this place, you first need to know a little bit about Malda, which was already conducted in my previous research block.

The English Bazar block has existed for over 150 years and has developed significantly over the time. Looking further back, the English Bazar was once part of the ancient cities of Gour and Pandua, which served as the capitals of Bengal and the key centres of power in different periods.⁶⁹

This Block played a significant role in the period of the Maurya and Gupta dynasties, and simultaneously, the boundaries of Gour shifted throughout history. Ancient historical texts, scriptures, and inscriptions show that this region was also a part of other different dynasties, like the Pal kingdom, during that time Buddhism was spread throughout the territory and built important institutions in this region. Today, the English Bazar is a vibrant block with a rich heritage, reflecting centuries of important history and evidence of evolutions.

The study conducted in the English Bazar Block which is in Malda District focuses on the perspectives of women from both communities like minority and majority. Out of the total research interviewees, 29 percent of women are from minority groups, while the remaining 71 percent are women from majority groups. This research attempted to analyze the views of both

⁶⁹ Accessed on 24 Oct. 2023, Retrieved From, <https://www.englishbazar municipality.org/>

groups based on the same criteria, some of this like, looking at their involvement in politics, the government's role in empowering women in society, and their opinions on societal issues.

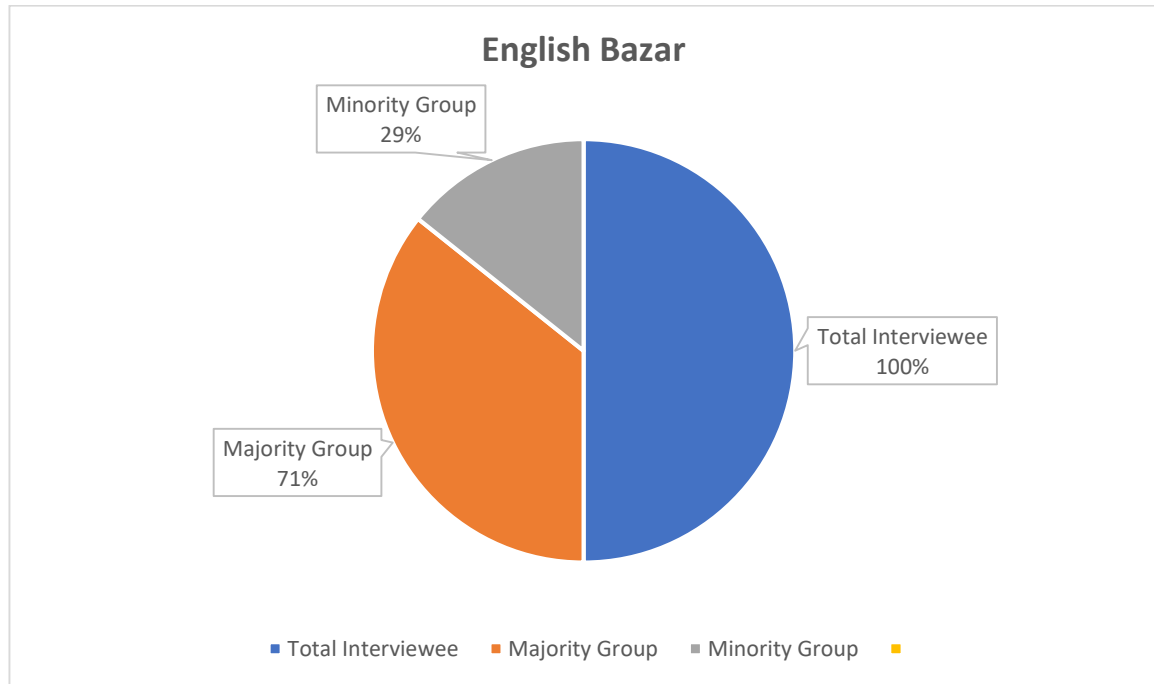


Figure 5.34: Showing the Interviewee percentage from different groups in English Bazar Block in Malda.⁷⁰

In this research study, participants were grouped by their age. Interestingly, no interviews were conducted to the women aged of 18 to 21. The majority of the interviews, almost 64 percent were with women in the 31 to 40 years of age group. We observed that women between the ages of 31 and 50 years are to be more active and engaged in political and social activities. The survey included 7 percent of women from 22 to 30 years of age.

⁷⁰ I have collected the data through the interview, field survey, and my observations in the English Bazar block in Malda and then analyzed and represented through the pie chart in percentage form.

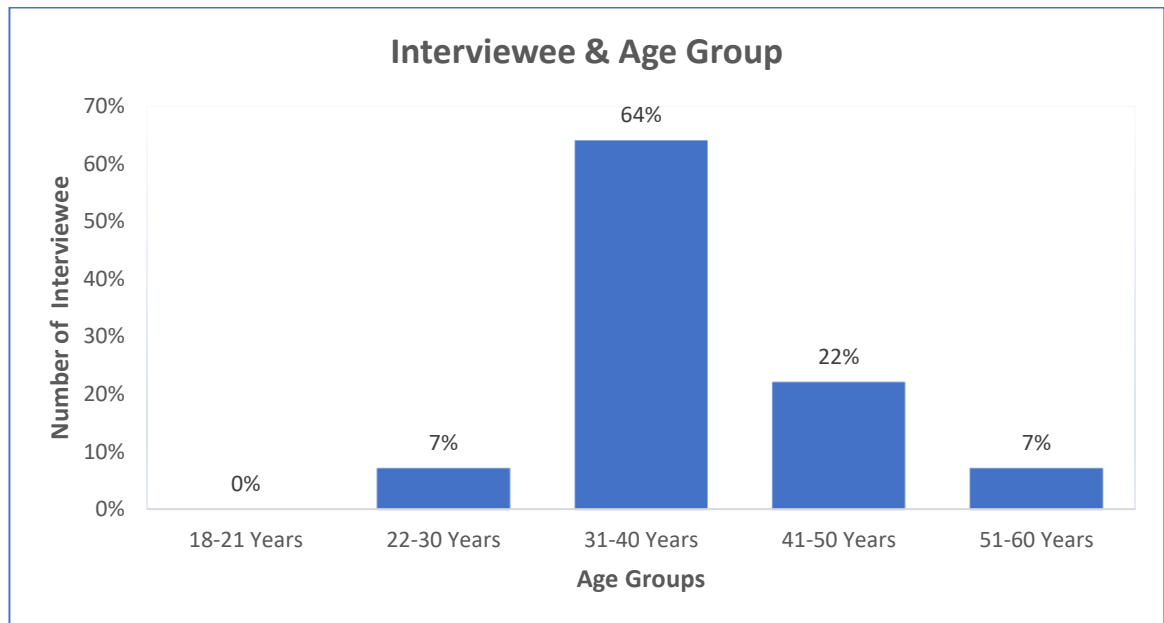


Figure 5.35: Percentage of interviewees & their age group in English Bazar block in Malda.⁷¹

64 percent are aged 31 to 40, 22 percent are from 41 to 50 years of age, and 7 percent are aged 51 to 60 years. The data has been collected without any bias toward either majority or minority groups, and it revealed that women across these age groups share similar perspectives on key issues of this research question.

During the interviews, we asked to the participants that, whether the implementation of government and private projects had been effective for both minority and majority groups or not. It became very clear that no self-help groups supported by government-aided bodies are not present in this block, and private entrepreneurs have not taken any initiatives to empower the women in this region. Moreover, women have received very limited assistance from the government launched schemes like Swavolomban.

⁷¹ This figure shows us the percentage of interviewees who belong to the different age groups in the English Bazar block in Malda, the data has been collected as a primary source and analyzed according to my research design.

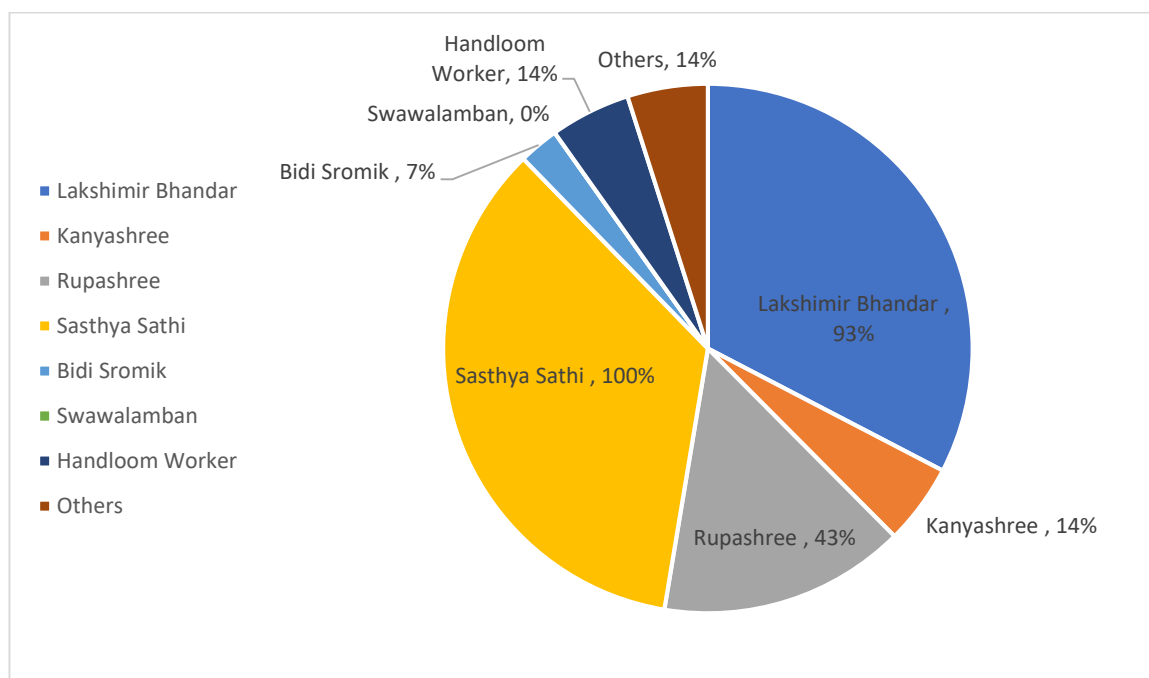


Figure 5.36: Adjuvant data of governmental & private schemes beneficial to the women's community in English Bazar Block.⁷²

One noticeable observation is the effectiveness of government projects in this block. For example, the Swasthya Sathi scheme is widely implemented, with 100 percent of women in the block benefiting from this health schemes. While this initiative, by the West Bengal Government, has played a significant role in involving women in society, although there is uncertainty about how it will help them financially, as its economic impact remains unclear.

In this block, married women receive monthly assistance through the Laksheer Bhandar Prakalpa, with a 93 percent of women currently benefiting from this scheme. But that means not all government projects have been equally effective. The Swavalamban scheme is absent in this block, due to a lack of political awareness, and it has not been implemented.

⁷² Through the above figure, the data has been collected as a primary source, through the observations from interviewee's opinions and field survey, different schemes of government, as well as private initiatives which have helped to empower women's community in English Bazar block in Malda.

The Rupashree project has also seen limited implementations, reaching only 43 percent of the eligible women groups, and the 63 percent of women benefited from Kanyashree scheme. Overall, most government schemes have not been effectively implemented. On the positive perspective, unlike other blocks, this area does have some representation of handloom workers which is 14 percent and others, each making up about 14 percent of the interviewees.

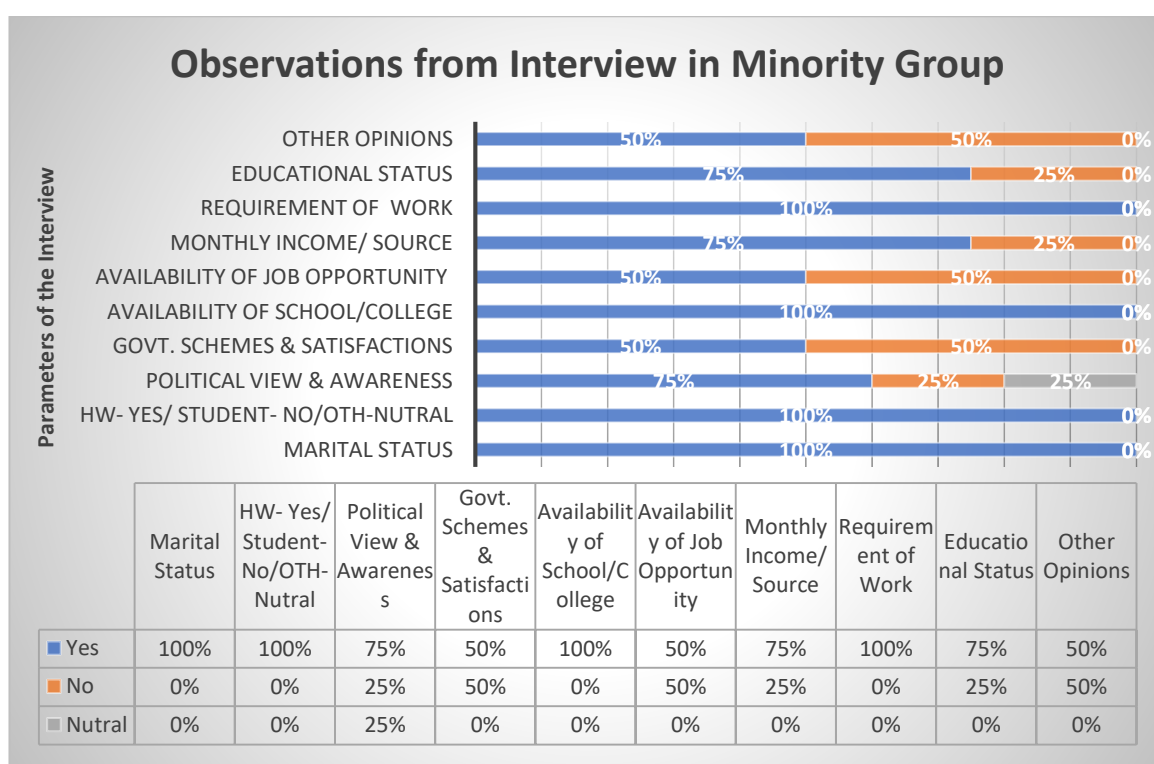


Figure 5.37 : Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Minority groups in the English Bazar Block in Malda.⁷³

In this research, based on some specific criteria, we have compared women from minority and majority groups in the English Bazar block. For the minority group, all of the women interviewed were married and 100

⁷³ Collected data considered as a primary source in English Bazar block in Malda & their analyses from the various parameters in Minority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc. has been describing in details through the above figure.

percent were housewives. When asked about their awareness of politics and social circumstances, 75 percent of the women showed a good understanding and provided thoughtful answers, while 25 percent of women showed no interest. Among those who were involved in this research, there were mixed opinions on the effectiveness of government projects aimed at empowering women, with many of them feeling that, the government should be more active in this block in the question of women empowerment.

In regard to their satisfaction with the benefits of government schemes, half of the women felt satisfied, while the other half were not pleased at all. On education, all women agreed that there are enough numbers of schools and colleges present in this area, suggesting that access to education is not a problem. However, when asked about how job opportunities are there, only 50 percent thought there were enough job scopes, while the other 50 percent disagreed regarding this statement.

Almost 75 percent of the women earn some monthly income through cottage industries or small businesses run by themselves, while 25 percent have no income at all. All the women expressed a willingness to work, if given the opportunity, indicating that they are active to do that and looking for jobs. In terms of education or literacy rate, 75 percent of the women have at least a secondary education, who have passed at least class eight, while 25 percent are illiterate, they have not received any formal education.

The research of this English Bazar block highlighted the numerous challenges and obstacles, and also some disappointing results. If we want to empower women in this society, the government needs to take a more active role in supporting their development and made them educated by giving them special opportunities. It should also be observed closely and

ensure that projects or any initiative are implemented by the government must be started from the ground level in the block, not just on formal paper.

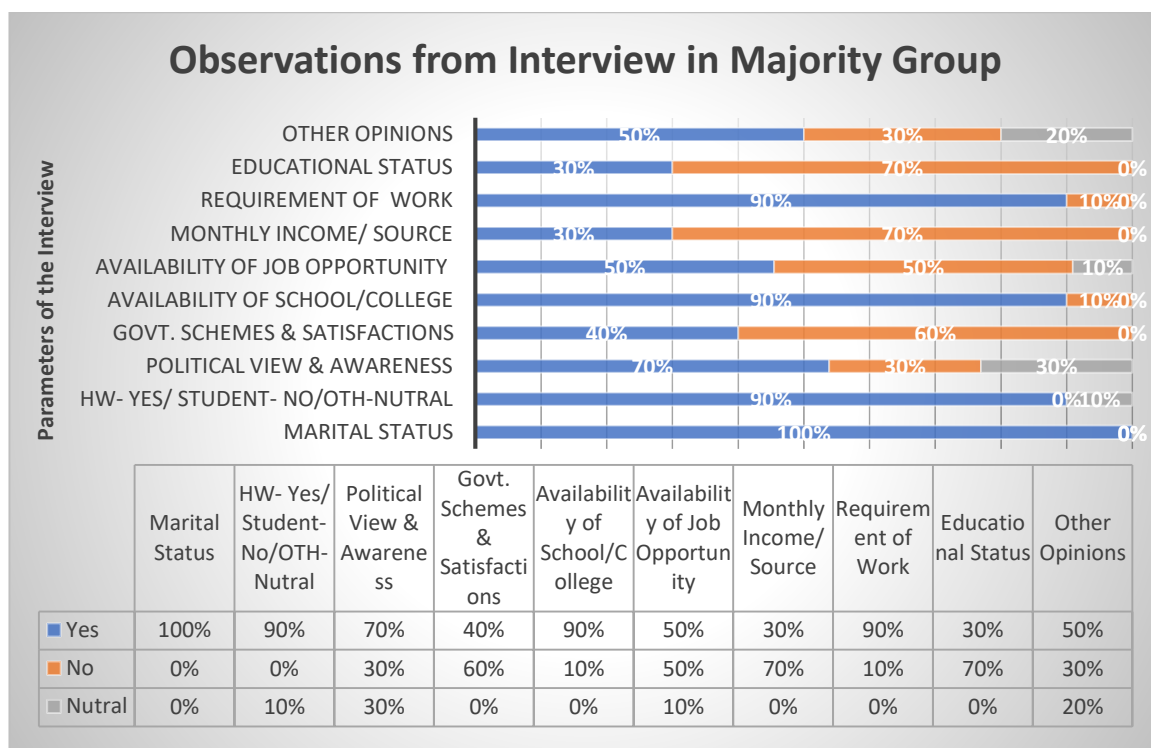


Figure 5.38: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Majority groups in English Bazar Block in Malda.⁷⁴

Using the same criteria, the study was also conducted on the majority group of women community, survey was done on 100 percent of the married women in this block. Out of these, only 70 percent have political knowledge or awareness. When asked about the availability of schools, colleges, and other educational facilities in their area, almost 90 percent of the women claimed that they were enjoying a sufficient number of institutions, while 10 percent felt there were not enough opportunities.

⁷⁴ Collected data considered as a primary source in English Bazar block in Malda & their analyses from the various parameters in selected Majority group, like Educational status, Marital status, whether they belong to the student group or housewife, Political views and awareness, whether they are satisfied with governmental schemes or not, do they have monthly income sources, do they have got enough opportunity to get the job, etc.

Regarding the existence of job opportunities, opinions were split, 50 percent of the women said there are many employment opportunities in the concerned society, while the remaining other 50 percent believed there are none of these benefits present. This shows a divided nature in how easy or hard they think it is to find work in the community.

In terms of monthly income or any income sources, 70 percent of the women do not have a steady monthly income, and 90 percent expressed a need or desire to work if given the chance them to do so. Only 30 percent of women in the majority group have received at least a secondary education, considered as completing class eight. Compared to this data, the minority group is significantly ahead in educational status.

In this study of the English Bazar block, data was collected and highlighted the differences and similarities between minority and majority women groups in that society. When comparing between these groups, both similarities and contrasts were found in various areas.

In the question of education, there is a significant difference has been seen, 75 percent of women in the minority group are educated, while only 30 percent of women in the majority group have an educational status. A similar contrast also exists in monthly income, with 75 percent of minority women earning a regular income, although the amount is small, but compared to that, just 30 percent of majority women have a regular income. This indicates that minority women are more active in work.

When asked about their satisfaction with government schemes, only 50 percent of women from the minority group experienced they were benefitted, while 40 percent of women from the majority group were benefitted, it is showing a slight difference in their experiences with government support.

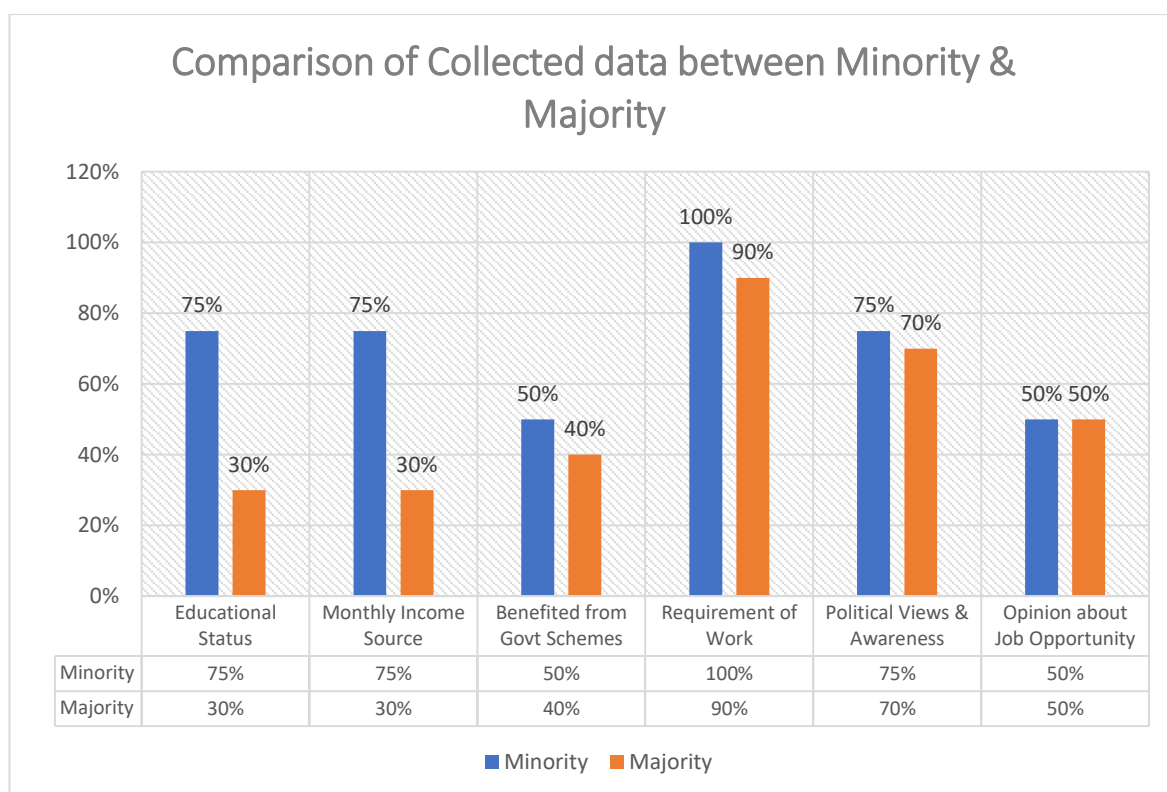


Figure 5.39 : Comparative study of Collected data & their analyses based on our research from the various parameters between Minority - Majority groups in English Bazar in Malda.⁷⁵

Regarding the employment opportunities, 100 percent of minority women expressed a desire to work, while 90 percent of majority women commended the same. This indicates that the drive for the women's empowerment is strong in the both groups of the society.

Political knowledge and political participation also play a crucial role in the question of community development. Here, 75 percent of minority women and 70 percent of majority women were aware of political matters, when I asked about the availability of job opportunities, 50 percent of

⁷⁵ In the English Bazar block in Malda, a comparative discussion has been done between the minority and majority groups of this region based on the reviews of the need for research, all the data has been collected as the primary source by me through the interviews, Field survey and from Observations.

women from both groups felt there were enough opportunities, while the other half did not agree with this statement at all.

The study of this research reveals that, despite the presence of some differences, both the groups of women show a lack of deep and potential political awareness. Many minority women expressed negative views about the current government's political activities, but they failed to recommend advice to the government. The lack of understanding about their rights, duties, and responsibilities can hinder the progress of society. Therefore, it is important to ensure that all women, regardless of their background, should receive political education and that will make them politically literate. We need adequate educational opportunities to achieve this goal, which cannot be achieved through individual efforts alone. The government must take an active role in making political education accessible to the all-women communities, regardless of caste, color, creed, religion, or background history.

Chapter- VI

Exploring the Social Mobilization and Contextualizing Women's Empowerment through the Lens of Majority-Minority Correlative Dynamics.

Throughout the research, the only thing that was emphasized was the empowerment of women's community as a whole and its sectional dimensions. Minority-Majority perspective is the main content of this study. In this chapter, I have focused on summarizing the data I collected through field surveys, interviews, and observations in different women's communities in concerned society. Based on multiple dimensions a comparison has been made in this chapter between minority community women and majority community women. In previous chapters of this study, we have seen that a comparative study has been made in every single block in the selected research area. Meanwhile, here we conduct a whole comparison between minority and majority communities.

Two districts have been selected as my research areas, Murshidabad and Malda, within these districts six blocks have been chosen as core research areas, three blocks (Sagardighi, Raninagar-I and Farakka) from Murshidabad district, and three blocks (Old Malda, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I) from Malda district. A dimensional comparative study of every single block has been made in earlier chapters of this research, but in this chapter, I'm going to generalize the whole community into two sects and conduct a comparative study of social mobilization between them.

West Bengal, India									
Malda			Murshidabad			<i>Districts</i>			
English Bazar	Kaliachak-I	Old Malda	Farakka	Raninagar-I	Sagaridighi	<i>Blocks</i>			
14	16	16	12	22	20	<i>Total No of Interviewees</i>			
14%	16%	16%	12%	22%	20%	<i>Percentage Strength of Interviewees</i>			
10	4	8	6	11	11	<i>Total No of Interviewees in Majority Groups</i>			
71%	25%	50%	50%	50%	55%	<i>Percentage Strength of Majority Groups</i>			
4	12	8	6	11	9	<i>Total No of Interviewees in Minority Groups</i>			
29%	75%	50%	50%	50%	45%	<i>Percentage Strength of Minority Groups</i>			
30%	0%	12%	0%	91%	27%	<i>Percentage of Empowered Women in Majority Groups</i>			
75%	8%	25%	0%	55%	22%	<i>Percentage of Empowered Women in Minority Groups</i>			
30%	50%	100%	100%	64%	82%	<i>Literacy Rate of Percentage in Majority Groups</i>			
75%	50%	88%	50%	64%	78%	<i>Literacy Rate of Percentage in Minority Groups</i>			

Figure 6.1: Strength of Interviewees and Differentiations of the Blocks and Communities.¹

The total number of women who have been interviewed during this research is 100, which is considered 100 %, out of the number 50 women, which is

¹ Details of the selected research areas and strengths of the interviewees of different women communities, and multiple parameters of this research have been shown in this table, all the data that have been used in this table are primarily collected by me as a primary source of data.

50% are from the Minority women community and the remaining 50% from the Majority women community. This data is collected from both the districts of Murshidabad and Malda, although we have conducted a comparative study that's why the interview strength is exactly same from the both communities, and that will help to conduct this study and reach its aim. below this figure shows us the holding percentage capacity of the interviewees.

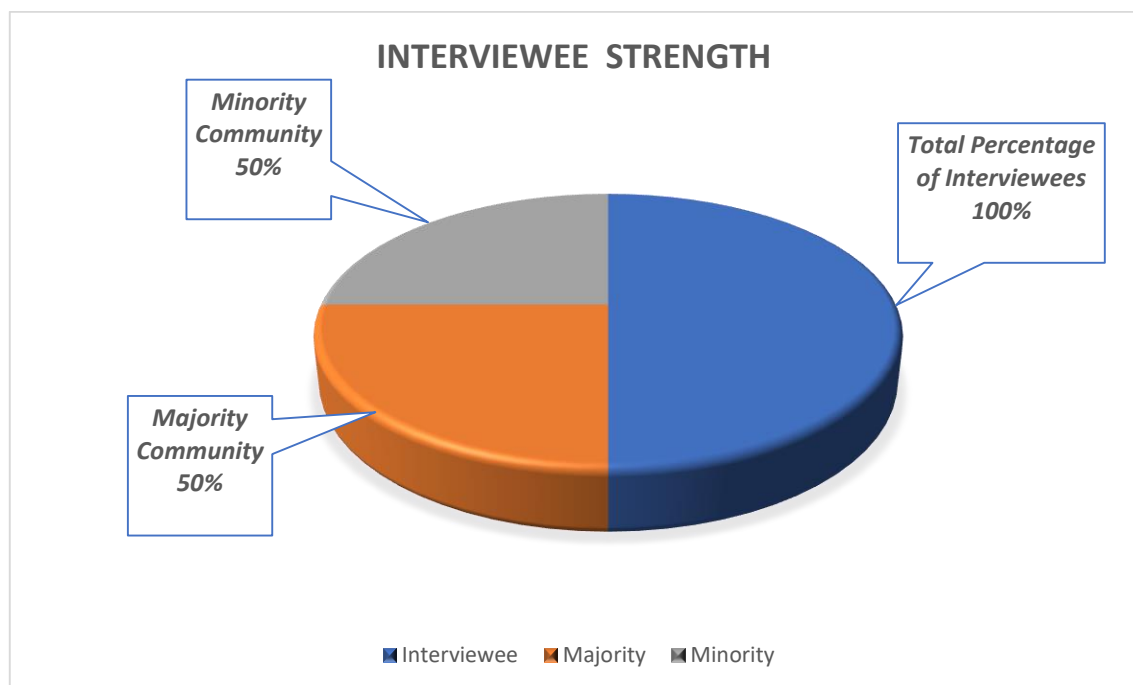


Figure 6.2: Interviewee strength of this research and their holding percentages.²

The prominent percentage of the age group is 31 years to 40 years old of women, this group of women acquired 38 percent of the total strength of this study, after that, 22 years to 30 years of age group held the second position, which is 35 percent, meanwhile, 41 years to 50 years holding 14

² This figure shows us the Interviewee strength of this research and their holding percentages, the mentioned data is considered as a primary source of data collected by me through the field surveys, and interviews.

percent and remaining 18 years to 21 years and 51 years to 60 years holding 7 percent and 6 percent respectively.

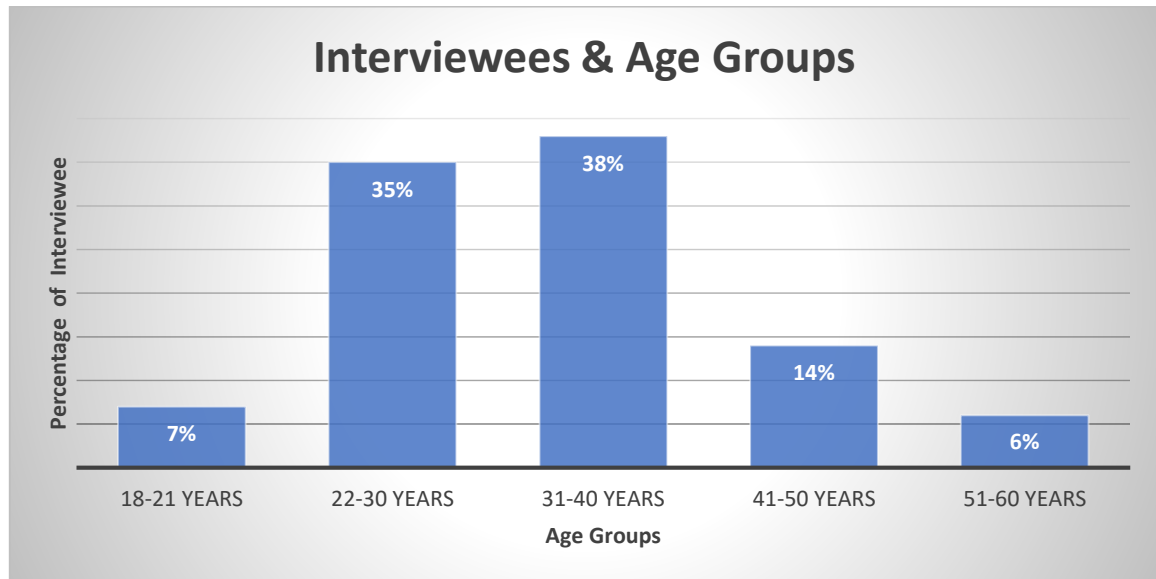


Figure 6.3: Percentage of the Interviewees and their age groups.³

Although this research is based on a comparative analysis of women's empowerment from different parameters of data that have been collected from the beginning of the research, nevertheless in these age groups I didn't stratify the communities, it's generalized data from the different women communities from concerned research areas.

In the question of governmental schemes and satisfaction, minorities, as well as majority groups, are facing the same obstacles, in generalization we can show the data following, Sasthyasathi schemes which passively empowered the women community in Bengal and made them feel prioritized because we all know the main enrolments of cardholder should be from women, and considers as head of the state in this regards.

³ This figure shows us the percentage of interviewees who belong to the different age groups in this research, the data has been collected as a primary source and analyzed according to my research design.

91 percent of women are getting the benefits of this scheme, the second position is 65 percent, which is Lakshir Bhandar schemes, 14 percent is from Kanyashree schemes, and many more sectors consider as others hold the position of 13 percent.

Regarding the empowerment question, self-initiative and entrepreneurship cannot be ignorable, meanwhile, this is not satisfying in number here.

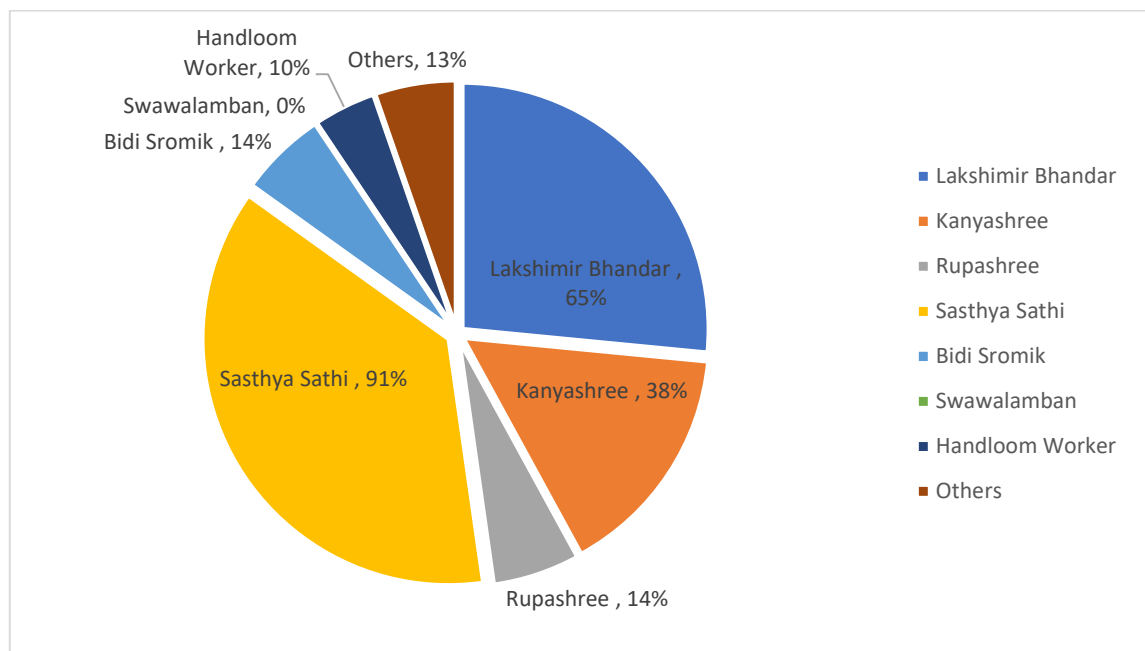


Figure 6.4: Adjuvant data of governmental & private schemes beneficial to the women's community in concerned research areas.⁴

In this research, we can observe that only 10 percent of women are engaged as handloom workers, and 14 percent of women are engaging themselves in serving as a bidi sromik, concerning this number, it is not suitable to empower the women's community. Until and unless women are not starting their self-dependency the empowerment outcome will not flow in society. Without discriminating against the minority-majority communities, this picture shows the same result in society. In concluding of this statistical

⁴ Through that figure, as a primary source of data observations from interviewee's opinions and field survey, different schemes of government, as well as private initiatives which have helped to empower women's community have been shown.

comparison, when examining the relationship between governmental schemes and public satisfaction, there appear to be no significant differences between minority and majority communities. Both groups seem to experience similar satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels, indicating that these schemes are likely perceived and received in comparable ways across diverse sections of the population.

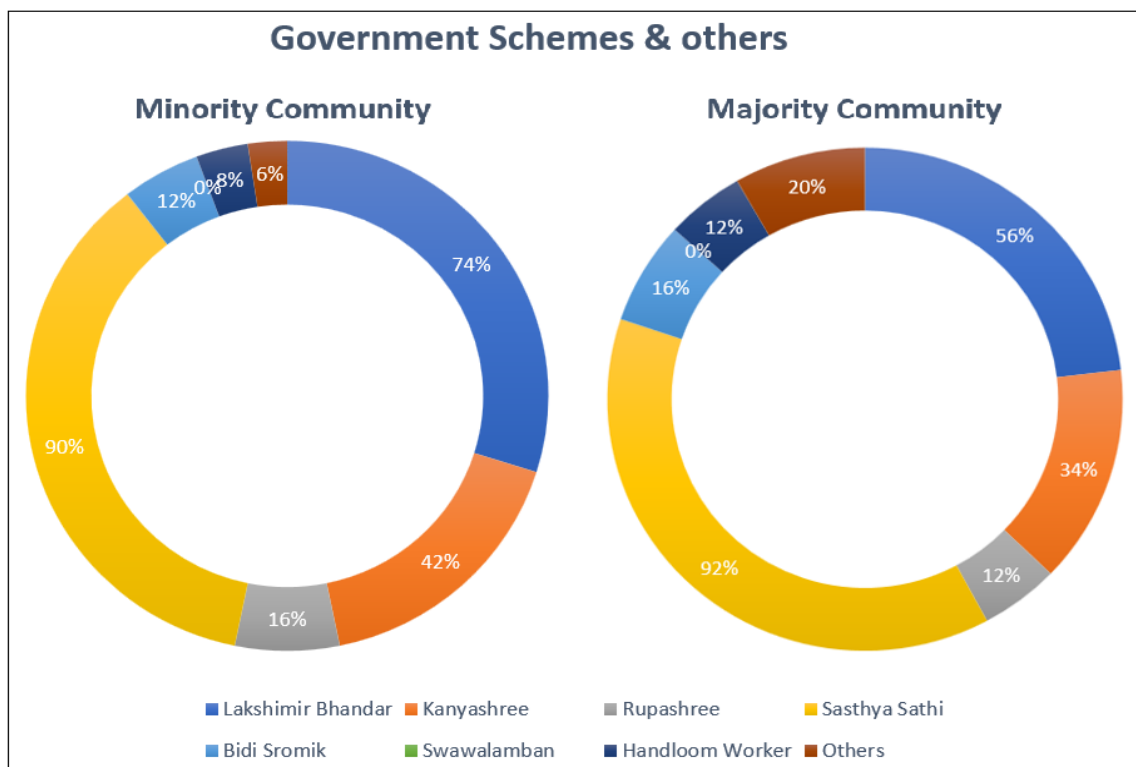


Figure 6.5: Comparison of Minority-Majority regarding the governmental & private schemes that are beneficial to the women's community in concerned research areas.⁵

In this study, the most important aspect of this chapter is to make a comparative discussion on the implementation of government projects between minority and majority communities. Among the schemes promoted by the West Bengal government, especially the Swasthya Sathi

⁵ In this figure a comparative analysis has been made between the minority and majority women community regarding the governmental schemes and satisfaction.

scheme, 90% have been implemented among the minority groups, while the figure is slightly higher among the majority groups at 92 percent. certainly, there is not much difference between the two groups. The next project to be mentioned is the Lakshmi Bhandar Scheme where 74 percent of the women from the minority community have benefited from this scheme, which is far behind the majority community where only 56 percent of the women have benefited from this scheme.



Figure 6.6: The picture was captured during the field survey; I was interviewing a woman in the Farakka block regarding empowerment by structured question design.⁶

42 percent of the minority community and 34 percent of the majority community benefited directly in the Kanyashree project. Similarly, in the implementation of the Rupashree prakalpa, there is reluctance in both groups, 16 percent in the case of the minority group and 12 percent in the

⁶ During my field survey, I was communication with many women communities regardless the minority – majority, this picture was one of them, I was interviewing a woman in farakka block regarding empowerment by structured question design.

case of the majority group respectively. Besides, women of both groups did not get much growth in the Bidi Sramik, Swabalamban Scheme, and in the field of handicrafts. Finally, it can be said that despite the comparative discussion, in reality, not much difference can be observed between the two groups. It calls into question how effective the government-sponsored schemes to improve women's communities have been. Both the minority and the majority communities have not developed women in their respective communities sufficiently for the betterment of society. Compared to a few decades back, the work of empowerment has increased, but the improvement of women's society in India has not been achieved in the same way as compared to Western countries.

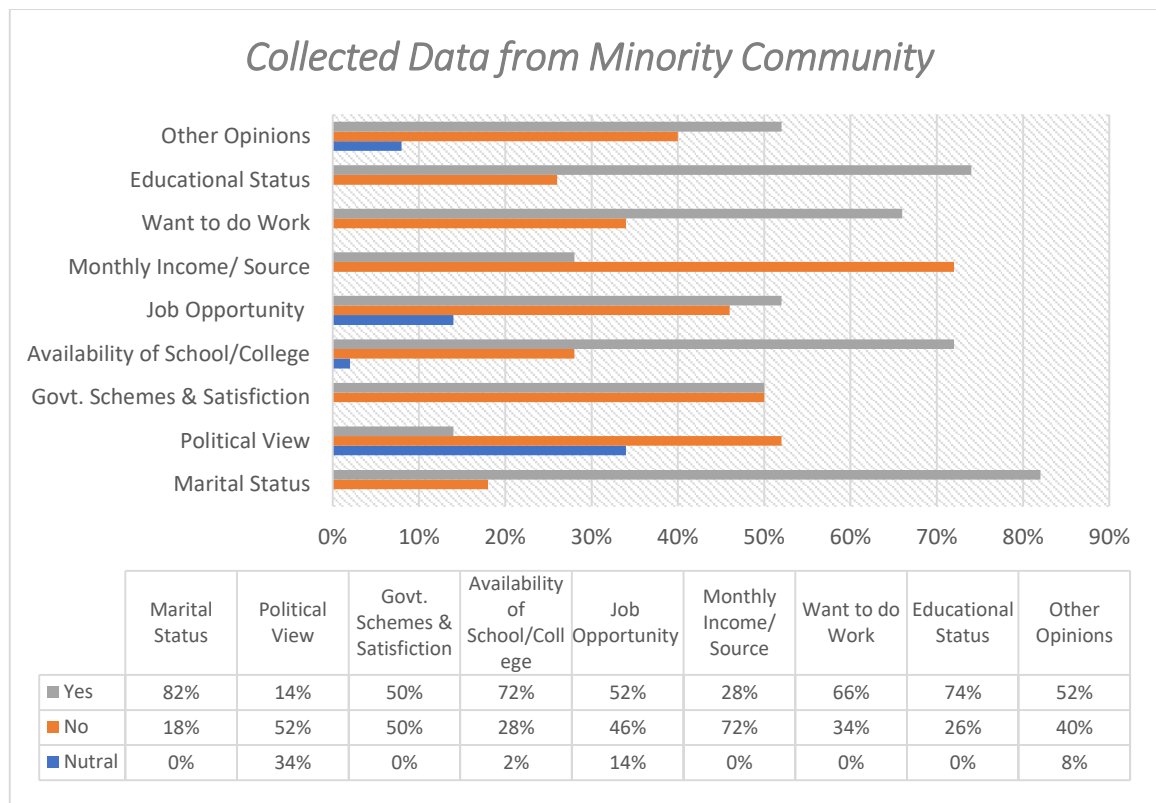


Figure 6.7: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Minority groups from all the selected districts of research areas in general.⁷

⁷ The data has been collected by me from various blocks in selected districts, as a primary source of data and analyzed according to my research design.

The focus discussed in this study is based on some certain criteria comparison of minority and majority female groups. If we look at the minority groups here, we find that 82% of the total studies were conducted on married women and 18% on unmarried women. Well, we can say this interaction will play a more active and prominent role in getting some ideas about empowerment.

34 percent of women are not willing to make any political comment about awareness of political activities, they are not willing to answer any question in the context of the present society, 66 percent of women are basically interested in answering this question, out of this 66 percent, 52 percent are holding a negative view about the current government for the advancement of women and expresses a negative attitude towards this area.⁸

When asked how satisfied they are with the various schemes adopted by the government, only 50 percent of the women in this minority group feel that they are satisfied, rest of the people aren't.

When the question comes to education, one thing cannot be left out, and that is the presence and availability of schools and colleges in the field of education. Because there can be many obstacles, if there are not enough schools and colleges. However, 72 percent of women in the region feel that there are enough schools and colleges and 28 percent feel that there are not enough schools and colleges and more are needed.

Education has no value without employment opportunities, in this case, it is no exception, when they are asked whether they have enough job opportunities in society, can they join any job if they want? In this study, only 52 percent of women feel that there is enough work in the current society. 46 percent of women feel that there is no job system at all and 14

⁸ Mentioned data has been collected through the interviews and field surveys in concerned districts

percent of women feel that they have no knowledge about it or have mixed feelings about it.

28 percent of women earn some monthly income through cottage industries and small endeavors, and the remaining 72 percent have no fixed monthly income, when asked how willing they would be if society allowed them to work, 66 percent of women responded positively, and 34 percent of women do not need any work.

In terms of educational standards among the interviews conducted in this study, 74% of the women are educated, who have passed at least class eight, and 26% of the women have not received any school or college or even primary education. In front, keeping all these various parameters we can say that to increase women's power and bring them into the mainstream of society the government has to take a positive role in their development and progress in education.

Based on the same criteria as we used to compare the empowerment process in the minority group, we examine the women empowerment process of the majority groups, we find that a total of 70 percent of the married women and 30 percent of the unmarried women of the region were studied, and most of these 70 percent of women were housewives.

On the question of political views and awareness, we found very disappointing results in this region, where 40 percent of women in this majority group are politically ignorant. Only 4 percent of women applauded the schemes undertaken by the government, which is highly unacceptable. 56 percent of women have a negative opinion of the government's role in promoting women's empowerment.⁹

⁹ Ibid.

52 percent of women answered positively to whether the projects taken by the government have worked or not, that is, they think that the way the government has taken measures for the advancement of women in the present society has taken a moderate approach. When asked whether there are enough schools, colleges, and educational facilities in the region, 74 percent of the women in the majority group felt that there were adequate facilities for it. The remaining 22 percent of women felt that there was not enough provision and 4 percent had no comment.

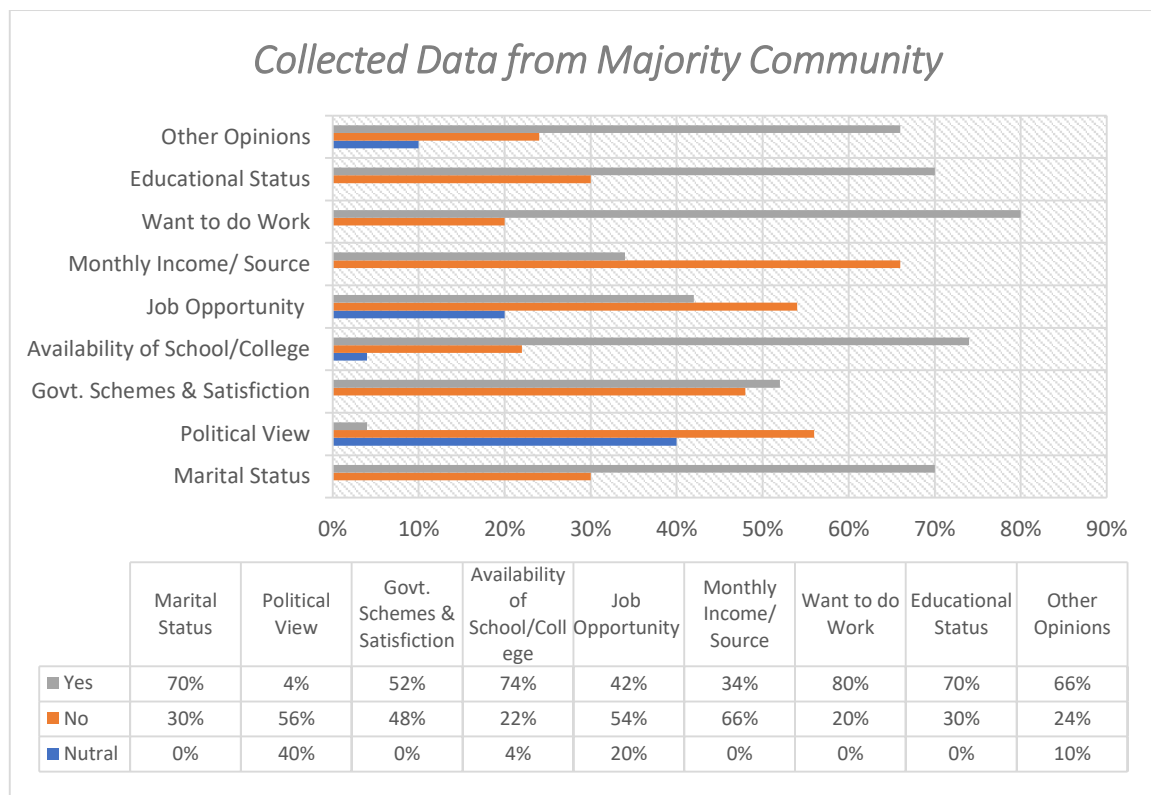


Figure 6.8: Collected data & their analyses from the various parameters of the interviews in Majority groups from all the selected Research areas in general.¹⁰

In response to the question of how many employment opportunities women get in society, only 42 percent of women think that there are various

¹⁰ The data has been collected by me from various blocks in selected districts from majority community, as a primary source of data and analyzed according to my research design.

employment opportunities, 54 percent of women think that there are really no employment opportunities and 20 percent of women are ignorant.

In terms of monthly income, 34 percent of women have some monthly income, and 66 percent express a negative view of the government, they do not earn, and when asked how they need work, 80 percent of women feel that they need work. The majority 70% of the women in this group are educated, and the remaining 30% of women have not gotten any education at all.



Figure 6.9: The picture was captured during the field survey; I was interviewing a woman in Old Malda block regarding empowerment by structured question design.¹¹

Basically, if a comparative discussion is done in this study on the basis of the data collected on the different standards between the minority and the

¹¹ During my field survey, I communicated with many women communities regardless of the minority-majority, this picture was one of them, I was interviewing a woman in Old Malda block regarding empowerment by structured question design.

majority women group, then the contrast & similarity are observed in different areas.

In terms of education literacy rate, we observe a parity between the two groups that is, minority 74 percent and the majority 70 percent women are educated, similarity can be observed between women of both groups. That is, we can say that the two groups are far behind in terms of education in the society. Until we can make this number 100 percent, we cannot improve the position of women in society.

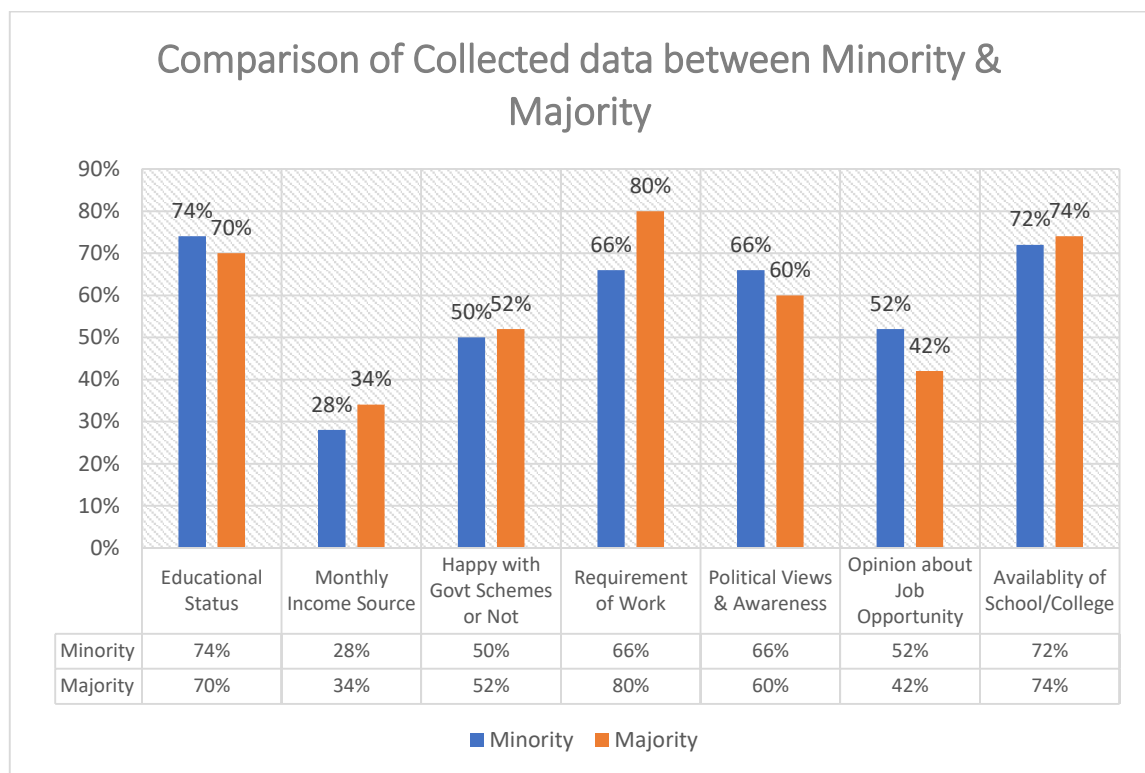


Figure 6.10: Comparative study of Collected data & their analyses based on our research from the various parameters between Minority - Majority groups in all blocks of Selected Research areas.¹²

A large contrast was observed between the two groups in terms of monthly income and earnings, getting disappointing results between the two groups.

¹² A comparative discussion has been done between the minority and majority groups of this research based on the reviews of the needs, all the data has been collected as the primary source by me through the interviews & field surveys.

Only 28 percent of women from minority groups earn a fixed monthly income, and the number is slightly higher at 34 percent among women from majority groups.

Only 50 percent of women of the minority group feel that they are benefited from the government schemes, this same question is 52 percent of the women of the majority group, that is to say, women of both groups feel that half of the women in the society are benefited by the government schemes while the other half are still neglected. The demand for employment is also very high among the majority of women, 80 percent of women want to work but do not understand which job would be suitable for them. In this same question, only 66 percent of women in the minority group feel that they need work, but in most cases, women in this group find it difficult to choose their own work and start a job on their own initiative.¹³

How much political knowledge women have in the society and how active they are in participating in politics, this plays an important role in improving or developing a society. In this case, women from minority communities are slightly ahead of women from majority communities, but it is not enough, only 66 percent of women are political. Knowledgeable, and this number is 60 percent in the majority group. Minority groups of women gave mixed responses to the question of whether there were sufficient job opportunities or not, with 52 percent of women in this group feeling positive. But the number is different among women in the majority group, with only 42 percent feeling there are enough work opportunities in the society.

On the question of whether there is adequate attendance in schools, colleges, or any educational institution, we can say that there is an

¹³ All the data that has been used to express this percentage are collected as the primary source of data through the interviews & field surveys of selected blocks in Murshidabad and Malda.

advantage to getting enough education, 72 percent of women from minority groups expressed a positive opinion, and 74 percent of women from the majority community expressed the same view.

Well, at the end of this study, I must conclude the findings, which will clarify my chapter properly. In this chapter, I found several things where making any discrimination between minority and majority will be a heavy task because I found both the communities facing the same problem regarding empowerment issues, which I already discussed in this chapter. In a broader sense, the empowerment process is not bound to any particular community, if we can get back every community to the mainstream of society then real women empowerment will take place. This will not be possible to implement by any individual initiatives, the government should be involved in it actively to make them fruitful.

Chapter – VII

Conclusions and Findings

Therefore, this thesis has aimed to reveal the complex context of women's empowerment in the two districts of West Bengal, namely Malda, and Murshidabad, with focusing on the Local specificities influencing the lives of women in these areas. By discussing different empowerment schemes and constraints and the local context, the research proves that Women's Empowerment is not only a prerequisite of gender advancement but also crucial for these districts' prosperous and sustainable development.

7.1. Key Findings:

To conduct this research, initially, I have drawn some relevant research objectives which was the starting force of this research. Spent a few years, analyzing thousands of articles and books and conducting surveys and interviews. I finally came to the end of this project and found several subjects that I must mention here, The following are the findings of this research,

- In terms of independence and monthly income, minority and majority women communities are not getting satisfactory outcomes. According to my research sample, only 28 percent of minority women can earn some monthly income, whereas, in the case of the majority, it's 34 percent. Well, we must say that the majority and minority women in this district are in the same situation regarding empowerment.

- In this study, I found minority communities women are more active in literacy rates compared to the majority community, where majority communities 70 percent of women are educated but this number in minority communities is 74 percent. Therefore I must draw conclusions that educationally both communities are improving themselves, and that will change the conventional footprint of women's empowerment in these districts of Murshidabad and Malda.
- To empower the women of Bengal, the state government has launched various schemes, like Knyashree, Rupashree, Sasthyasathi, Lakshmir Bhandar and many more similar to this, but in the application of these schemes I found dissimilarities among them in minority and majority communities. Almost all the schemes are prominently implemented within the minority community compared to the majority community. Kanyashree scheme's 42 percent claiming rate in minority communities which is less implementation had been seen in the majority community, 43 percent only. Lakshmeer Bhandar scheme's 74 percent implemented in the minority community and in the majority community 56 percent, Rupashree scheme 16 percent in the minority community and 12 percent in the majority community, Sasthyasathi is the only scheme where the majority community is only 2 percent ahead of the minority community, which is 92 percent. Well, we must say minority communities are gradually becoming active in terms of women's role in the society and question of empowerment.
- In the quarries of political participation and awareness, I found a very low response between both communities. 66 percent of minority women are aware of present circumstances of political activities and making

statements of present governments, whereas, for the majority community, it's only 60 percent. Meanwhile, I must mention the fact that both communities are not satisfied with the governmental role of making women empowered in society, they are asking for more active governmental decision-making authority and schemes.

- Regarding minority women empowerment, while carrying forward my research, I found the norms, practices, religious activities and prejudices are playing very inactive roles. Sometimes women are not allowed to choose their job profile according to their preferences, supposed to say that, during my interviews, I found a girl who qualified for the IBPS exams, which served for the banking sector job, but not allowed her to join in that. According to Muslim theology, interest is haram (prohibited) that is why she wasn't joined. This is the one of my examples, I found a lot like these. Well, I must draw my statements that if we want real empowerment of women in society we must consider these types of activities through the lance of social needs, not hypothetical ones.
- I found very low participation in higher education from minority community women. The reason behind this is early marriage, In the interviews for this research almost 82 percent of women are married, this number is less in terms of the majority community. In minority communities, Sometimes I found their families are ignorant about the need for higher education, they think marriage is the only goal, and whenever this criterion is fulfilled, she achieves her goal, education is secondary, this mindset should be changed for the greater interest of the society and women empowerment.

- The global COVID-19 Pandemic situation has also impacted and limited the women's role in society, minority as well as majority communities are facing the same issues. While conducting the study and interviewing, I observed this trend mainly among women communities, post-Covid 19 has greatly reduced the working mentality among women. They are now averse to work and have become idle-minded too, which has become a hindrance to the progress of the women's community at large.
- In this research I also found several constitutional provisions and governmental policies that are playing very crucial roles in terms of women's empowerment in society. 'Equal pay for equal work' is the motto of article 39(d), this attempt tries to reduce paternal activeness and inequality in society. We Indians consider the constitution of India to be the highest source of the law of the country, and these provisions empower the women community without discriminating against the minority-majority consequences.

Not only these but also the research findings of the present study point out several important facts related to the status of women's empowerment in Malda and Murshidabad.

- Education recurred as one of the most substantial factors leading to empowerment. From findings, we found out that the female literacy rates have shown a decrease but still have disparities and much more so in the rural prevalent areas. Interviews and findings qualitatively substantiated the need to strengthen education as a tool for improving women's self-esteem, decision-making ability, and socio-economic status. According to the study findings, women with the highest level of education engaged much more in income-generating activities and exercising decision-making in the community.

- Economic self-representation was found to be an essential determinant of sexual agency in Malda and Murshidabad. What has further been realized in this research was that the involvement of women in microfinancing and self-help groups (SHGs) has resulted in a fairly high level of economic liberation, although I could not find the maximum number of involvement of women in this section had happened at all. But yes, the trend to participate in this type of financial institution has been increasing nowadays. The women who participated in these initiatives highlighted increases in their; financial management, savings, and earnings. Yet there were systematic constraints including market constraints in access to markets, gender-biased norms, and infrastructural constraints which slowed the progress. Eliminating these barriers, however, is very central to enhancing the plus for the economic empowering efforts.
- Another important area of this work was political participation. This research showed that despite the improvements in women's participation in the local government in Malda and Murshidabad in terms of their participation in the Panchayati raj institutions, these women continue to be poorly represented in some of the most important decision-making structures.

However, it is imperative to understand that culture and social expectations significantly determine women's roles and prospects. Thus, the results revealed that there are still a great number of restrictions that prohibit women from having more choices in extreme situations, and traditional gender roles remain the cornerstone of people's activities. Though

numerous NGOs and government programs attempt to defy these norms, traditional thinking acts as an impediment to a woman's real emancipation.

In this chapter mentioned above all are the summaries of this research tentatively, many more quarries are also included in it. To conduct this study, I faced numerous experiences regarding societal circumstances and consequences. Many of them aren't revealing their name as well, not exposing their occupation, some of them consider me as a governmental resource and collecting the data to use in implementing NRC, and some of them consider me an income tax officer, if they expose their income, I may cause them harm or obstacles. So, it wasn't an easy task to gather all the data that I have shared in this research. And I hope this research will open up many sides of women's empowerment situations in the future.

7.2. Recommendations and Solutions:

The consequences of these observations are quite apparent and far-reaching. The authorities should pay more attention to the problem and recommend gender-sensitive approaches that reflect the situation among women in Malda and Murshidabad. This entails, the provision of equal quality education, vocational training, and economic enfranchisement. The plans should be developed based on local requirements to enhance the ownership and implantability of programs.

In addition, broad capacities of SHGs and microfinance activities should be improved as well. This is so because when women are given markets, with financial literacy training together with business skills, their economic status will greatly improve. The policymaker needs to work closely with governmental and non-governmental organizations, and representatives

from local communities to develop a conducive environment for the women entrepreneurs.

Political education and awareness programs should also be enhanced, and political self-enhancement activities are also needed. The women's leadership development training that can be tied to the promotion of women's engagement in leadership, governance, and other decision-making initiatives is also important. Involving men as a counterpoint advances the cause of gender equality and contributes also to the favorable perception of women's rights.

One thing I realized while conducting my research work is that men in every family want their girls to participate in work and help the family financially. But when the actual time comes, they are largely apathetic and do not want female members to do any work outside the family. Well, they are typically biased, If this kind of mentality cannot be changed then it is not possible to improve the women in the minority group. Male activities should be flexible and not be imposed on the female, passive patriarchy is seen here.

7.3. Future Research Directions:

While this thesis has contributed significantly to understanding women's empowerment in Malda and Murshidabad, it also opens avenues for future research. Further studies could delve into the intersectionality of gender with caste, class, and religion, providing a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges faced by diverse groups of women in these districts. Additionally, longitudinal research tracking the impact of empowerment initiatives over time would offer valuable insights into their sustainability and effectiveness.

Exploring the role of technology in facilitating women's empowerment is another promising area for future investigation. As digital literacy becomes increasingly important, understanding how technology can bridge gaps in education, economic participation, and social networking will be critical.

Any type of comparison study made any of the projects fruitful, and this research is moreover based on a comparative study of minority-majority women empowerment issues, and this will help future scholars to make more accurate and precise solutions to eradicate the gap between the communities, and that will be my pleasure to be a pioneering part of it.

7.4. Final Reflections and Conclusions:

All in all, the process and development of women's empowerment in Malda and Murshidabad are significant as well as multidimensional at the same time. Consequently, the study establishes that genuine capacity involves a separate method aimed at zeitgeber control, education, government, and communal phases. As this thesis has illustrated, the economic enrichment of women is not a matter of enhancing personal well-being alone; it is part of human development.

This research consequently proclaims a rallying point for all stakeholders, including government authorities, non-governmental organizations, community, and scholars to act to advocate women's rights and empower them. Therefore by empowering women and helping them to achieve their full potential we not only are supporting the cause of giving women equal opportunities as men but also supporting the growth and development of Malda, Murshidabad, and other districts. The empowerment journey is unrelenting though if everyone is willing to make the change the vision of achieving an empowered society is not far away.

According to me, coordinated action across these areas will not only improve women's status but also will be beneficial for social and economic development. So, when women are empowered, it will be easier to bring about change in the family and hence, within the larger society so that justice prevails for everyone. If the mother's education comes first, the child will learn from the mother's arms.

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Declaration:

The data that has been collected, will be extremely used for the study on the Socio-economic and Political Inclusion of minority women in the selective districts of rural Bengal through the interviews and observations and not for any other purpose. Collected data will not be shared by me with other third parties and the names have not been exposed

- **Questionnaire for Collection of Data Regarding the Dynamics of Minority Women Empowerment in Rural Bengal of Selective Districts.**

- **Respondents Profile:**

A. Basic information of the Interviewees:

1. Name of the Respondent:
2. Gram Panchayat:
3. Block:
4. District:
5. Member/head of any org. (if any):

B. Socio-economic Characteristics:

1. Age:

2. Religion

- (1) Islam (2) Hinduism (2) Buddhism (3) Christian (4) Others

3. Caste Category:

- (1) General (2) OBC (3) SC (4) ST

4. Educational Status:

- (1) Illiterate (2) Primary (class 1-8) (3) Secondary (class 9-10)

(4) Higher Secondary (class 11-12)

(5) UG/PG, and above

5. Marital status:

(1) Married

(2) Unmarried

(3) Divorced

(4) Widowed

(5) Others

6. Earning members (if any):

(1) One

(2) two

(3) three

(4) four

(5) more than four

7. Self-Residency or Home:

(1) Yes

☐

(2) No

☐

8. If yes- types:

(1) Kacha

(2) Pucca

(3) Others,

9. Occupation:

(1) Animal culture

☐

(2) farming

☐

(3) bidi worker

☐

(4) handloom worker

☐

(5) pottery worker

☐

(6) teacher /tutors

☐

(7) Others, if any (mention)

10. Head of the Family: Male

☐

Female

☐

11. Monthly income (if any): Per month.

(1) Less than Rs.5000

(2) Rs.5000-10000

(3) Rs.10000-20000

(4) Rs. 20000/- to More

12. Member of any SHG or not: Yes ☐ No ☐ if Yes

(1) Monthly savings of your SHG?

- Less than Rs.5000 p.m
- Rs.5000-10000 p.m
- Rs.10000-20000 p.m
- Rs 21000- More

(2) Group size/Strength?

- Less than 10
- More than 10
- More than 20

(3) Duration of the membership of the group?

- Less than a year
- More than a year and less than 5 years
- More than 5 years
- More than 10 years

(4) Anyone who motivated you to join SHG?

(a) Family (b) relatives (c) friends (d) Gram Panchayat

(e) Others, (mention)

(5) Objective for joining SHGs?

(a) Self-employment (b) Livelihood (c) Economic empowerment

(d) Others, if any (Specify)

13. What problems are you facing while being empowered by any work or employment?

- a) Lack of government facilities assessment
- b) Lack of vocational training
- c) Lack of knowledge of marketing
- d) Lack of capital for the initial investment
- e) Lack of family members cooperation
- f) Obstacles in fetching bank loans
- g) High interest rates on bank loans
- h) Others, if any (Specify)

14. What are your suggestions to improve women's position in our society?

- a) More investors in the Working field of women.
- b) More marketing of products made by handloom workers
- c) Govt. help to have own shops for the products
- d) More involvement of women into the socio-political engagements
- e) More cooperation and joining in SHG
- f) Educational improvement and scholarship
- g) More government facilities regarding women employments.
- h) Others, if any (mention)

- **Women Empowerment regarding Survey Questionnaire in specified districts of Murshidabad & Maldah. (Unstructured Questions)**

Name: _____ N/A <input type="checkbox"/>		Religion: _____
Dist: Murshidabad <input type="checkbox"/> Maldah <input type="checkbox"/>		Village: _____ Block: _____
Age: _____	Married <input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried <input type="checkbox"/>	Education: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Occupation: Housewife <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> other _____		Monthly Income: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> N/A

Opinion:

- **Women Empowerment regarding Survey Questionnaire in specified districts of Murshidabad & Maldah. (Structured Questions)**

Name: N/A <input type="checkbox"/>		Religion:	
Dist: Murshidabad <input type="checkbox"/> Maldah <input type="checkbox"/>		Village: Block:	
Age:	Married <input type="checkbox"/> Unmarried <input type="checkbox"/>	Education: _____ or N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Occupation: Housewife <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> other _____		Monthly Income: N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	
Political View: Negative <input type="checkbox"/> Positive <input type="checkbox"/> No Opinion <input type="checkbox"/>		Want to do Work: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Happy with Govt Schemes related to Women's Empowerment: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
Is there enough number of School/ College: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but Need More <input type="checkbox"/>			
Is there enough number of Job opportunity: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, but Need More <input type="checkbox"/>			
Lakshimir Bhandar Prkalpa : <input type="checkbox"/> Kanyashree Prkalpa : <input type="checkbox"/> Rupashree Prkalpa : <input type="checkbox"/> Sasthya Sathi Prkalpa: <input type="checkbox"/>		Bidi Sromik : <input type="checkbox"/> Swawalamban: <input type="checkbox"/> Handloom Worker <input type="checkbox"/> Others: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Others: [Opinion/ Wants/ Complain]			

- General overviews about the research subjects and my opinion & observations of specified districts.

Dist: Murshidabad <input type="checkbox"/> Maldah <input type="checkbox"/>	Village:	Block:
Observation Age Group:	Other:	

My Observations:

- **The Male Perspective on Women's Empowerment & General overviews of the research subjects in West Bengal.**

Dist:	Village:	Block:
Age Group:		Other:

Opinions & Their Views :



Appendix Figure: Women are engaging themselves in the working process



Appendix Figure: In a college, a regular class is occupied by female students rather than male students.