

# Determinant Factors of Women Showing Interest in Pursuing Post Graduate Studies

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**Abstract:** This study is entitled “Determinant factors of women showing interest in pursuing post graduate studies”. The purposes of this study to find out the reasons which contribute to Muslim women’s interest in pursuing postgraduate studies. Quantitative research method has been applied to undertake this study. Primary and secondary data have been collected from the Muslim female graduates in the south eastern University of Sri Lanka in order to accomplish the purposes of this study. This study has been carried out having South Eastern University of Sri Lanka as the place of research and focusing on approximately 200 Muslim female graduates of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka who graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Islamic Studies and Arabic Languages from the year 2014 to the year 2019. For collecting primary data questionnaires were distributed among the female graduates who graduated from the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka after completing their bachelor’s degree from the year 2014 to the year 2019 and the data have been collected. For collecting secondary data books, university documents, newspaper articles, magazines and the contents of websites relevant to women’s education have been used to access the information required for the purpose of this study. Questionnaire data have been analyzed with SPSS statistical software using regression analysis method, through which the relationship between dependent and independent variables has been examined. The finding of this study Factors such as developing educational qualifications and gaining and expertise in a particular field are respectively the most influencing factors in Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies. Factors such as emerging as excellent resource person, securing promotion are the ones having extremely less influence in Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies. At the same time, the factor of becoming a best female leader has no bearing at all in Muslim women showing interest in pursuing post graduate studies.

**Keywords:** Postgraduate Studies, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Muslim women, Determinant, Interest

## I. INTRODUCTION

What is observed when we go back to world history to find out the status of women in early time is that women have been continuously subjugated by different races and religions in several ways. Women’s rights organizations, especially the ones which emerged in the 19th century after the renaissance, fought for having different rights of women secured. Feminism, having been the by-product of the activism of these organizations, led to revolutionary debates in relation to gender equality.

Prime among the rights which women were able to win consequent to the efforts of these movements is their right to

education. When the evolving status of women’s presence in education is observed in light of the above, the fact that is evident is that the number of women who were able to become successful in completing their postgraduate education has been bare minimum in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. For instance, in the year 1608, Juliana Morell obtained her doctorate in law in Spain. In the year 1636, Anna Maria van Schurman received her degree at a university in Utrecht, Netherlands. In the year 1644, Ursula Agricola and Maria Jonae Palmgren studied in one of the colleges in Sweden and graduated from there (John, 2019). These are few of the examples that can be cited as evidences to demonstrate that women had opportunities to pursue higher education.

The Bethlehem Female Seminary, which was established in 1742 in Germantown, Pennsylvania, is identified as the first institute of higher education for women. In the 1800s, women started to have wide educational opportunities. In 1821, Clinton Female Seminary was established. Similarly, in 1827, The Lindenwood School for girls was founded and continued to function as a university. This is the first institution of higher education for women located to the north of Mississippi. Columbia Female Academy, which was founded in 1833, is functioning by the name of Stephens College presently (John, 2019).

There are several similar examples which will shed light on the increasing educational opportunities for women. Moreover, the voices that were raised in European countries for women’s rights found simultaneously their echoes in eastern countries too. Sri Lanka also was not an exception to this phenomenon. In keeping with this, compulsory education policy for both genders and others was introduced in Sri Lanka in 1931. At early time women had had opportunities to receive education at Buddhist monasteries. However, that educational system was of limited nature. During the Portuguese era, Sri Lankan women had opportunities to obtain education through Catholic school system. When Sri Lanka was under British Rule, Sri Lankan women received education through Christian missionaries (Hasbullah Saifudeen, 2000).

In earlier days, the status of the education of Sri Lankan Muslim women was an embodiment of Quran Madrasa based educational system. Orabi Basha and Siddi Lebbe were instrumental in changing this system into a system encompassing modern thoughts. These thoughts brought changes among Muslim women.

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Muslim women constituted 40% of the entire female Muslim students. There had been 3 Muslim women who were able to read and write for every 100 Muslim women. From 1956 to 1964, the number of Muslim students who continued their education in Sri Lankan universities every year had stood at 1- 9. When this proportion is compared the present context, the educational status of women has progressed in such a manner that there are four female students for every one male student (Hasbullah Saifudeen, 2000).

In viewing the state of education level of Muslim women with other women in religion during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, according to the statistical report published in 1963, the number of Muslim girls in school education are 60,659. At the same time, the Sinhala girls are 8,94,246 in number. Further, in 1981 the literacy of the Muslim women is 68 per cent whereas it is 85 per cent for Sinhala women. Likewise, during the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the statistical report of 1991 details the ethnic ratios of educated girls in advanced studies.

The recently published data confirms the progression of women's education in Sri Lanka. In accordance with the census in 2015 the total number of schools and students are 10,144 and 4,129,534 respectively. Among these, the boys and the girls are 2,045,369 & 2,084,165 respectively, in number. (*School Census Preliminary Reports, 2015*)

Similarly, as per the census report in 2016, the total number of schools is 10,162 with the total number of students- 4,143,330 in Sri Lanka. This number amounts in 2,052,188 for boys & 2,091,142 for girls. Moreover, according to the census in 2017, the total number of schools and the students are 10,194 and 4,165,964 respectively. Among these, the boys and the girls are numbered with 2,059,805 and 2,106,159 in order. (*School Census Preliminary Reports, 2016*).

With regard to the census in 2017, the total number of schools is 10,194 in Sri Lanka. The details on ethnic wise schools and the ethnic wise defined students could be learned with the data given in table 2.5. Viewing in this manner, it is distinct that how the present education state and school entrance of Muslims are in contemporary period.

So, in viewing in absolute manner, the statistics identifies that annually, there seems an advance in the state of the education in Sri Lanka.

In addition, the university educational state of the Muslim women has been commenced since only the University of Ceylon was established in 1942. However, table 2.4 reveals that in comparing with other religious women, the university entrance of Muslim women is inadequate.

*Source:* Muslim Education in Sri Lanka, 2000 Pg.48

During the period the Sri Lankans learned in the Universities like Cambridge and got back home after their higher studies, there was a concept arisen that a University should be established in Sri Lanka, too. In result of that, as a state

organization- a University College attached to University of London was established in Colombo in January, 1921 as because of the emphasis of Sri Lankans to Britishers demanding the need of a University establishment in Sri Lanka, too. After many crises whether to be established in Kandy or Colombo, with the legislation of 2<sup>nd</sup> ordinance of university act in 1942, the particular University of Ceylon was erected in the first of July of the same year. During the period, until the building tasks for University of Peradeniya had been finished, it had been functioned only in Colombo. (Jalaldeen, 2017).

Since the University of Ceylon was established, the university entrance of Muslim students on higher education in the initial stage was as follows. The university admission for Muslim students as 2.8 % in 1946 were 1.7% in 1953 and 1.2% in 1963. In the course of this history, the Muslims who had already a drastic fall in university entrance, resumed to rise again. It was increased as 2.1% in 1971 and 3.9% in 1981. Continuing that, viewing the recent state of the education of Muslims, table 2.6 depicts rapid increase in university admissions in last certain years before.

Hence, in focussing the percentage of university entrance of the Muslims from the above table, it is distinct that the selection of universities is increasing annually. The yearly increase on university intake seems to be as the evidential identity for the progression of the Muslims' education.

In 2015 among the university undergraduate students the boys and the girls are 40% and 60%, respectively. In 2015, female students were 20% as the most number of undergraduates in the universities than the male students. In the same year, among the pass out graduates males and females were 32% & 68%, respectively. In the similar year, the students who got admissions to universities were 44% for boys & 56% for girls.

Focussing on the data given above, it is distinct that the girls are much interested in education than the boys as well as they are skilful for engaging in higher education.

The details on contemporary graduate studies in Sri Lanka are to be perceived with the facts on those who continue their Masters, PhDs and other graduate studies during the period of 2014 to 2018.

The details of registered students of post-graduate studies in 2014 are shown in table 2.7. Among them, the students- for PgD-35%, MA-52%, MPhil-6%, MD-05% and PhD-02% have registered in University Grants Commission to follow their programmes. For this year, the total number of students registered for post-graduate studies is 31,718 among which 14,438 are seen as the women.

In a similar manner, the specifics of registered students of post-graduate studies in 2015 are shown in table 2.8. Among them, the students- for PgD-34%, MA-49%, MPhil-10%, MD-05% and PhD-02% have registered for their programmes. In this year, the total number of students registered for post-

graduate studies is 31,117 among which 14,470 are seen as the women.

Furthermore, the detailed information of the students registered for post-graduate studies in 2016 is noted in near mentioned table. Among them, the students- for PgD-30%, MA-54%, MPhil-07%, MD-07% and PhD-02% have registered for their programmes. In this year, the total number of students registered for post-graduate studies is 29,857 among which 13,879 are seen as the women.

Besides, the facts of the students registered for post-graduate studies in 2017 are depicted in near mentioned table. Among them, the students- for MA-52%, PgD-32%, MPhil-07%, MD-07% and PhD-02% have registered for their programmes. In this year, the total number of students registered for post-graduate studies is 32,318 among which 15,413 are seen as the women.

And also, the particulars of the students registered for post-graduate studies in 2018 are indicated in the table mentioned beside. Among them, the students- for MA-59%, PgD-24%, MPhil-07%, MD-07% and PhD-03% have registered for their programmes. In this year, it is recorded that the total number of students registered for post-graduate studies is 34,739 among which 16,426 are seen as the women.

Such data depicts that the women are lower in level than men in continuing their post-graduate studies. Hence, it is vivid that in viewing the students keeping on higher education and post-graduate studies with comparison, the achieved grown level of women than men in higher education is lower than men in post-graduate studies.

Having attained progress in primary and higher education in this manner, women started to show interest in post-graduate studies. Whilst the educational status of women differs from area to area, the percentage of students selected annually for all the faculties of SEUSL (Arts, Islamic Studies, Management and Engineering) increased. At the same time, 90% of those selected for the faculty of arts of SEUSL are female students. However, there is a widespread opinion that Muslim women limit their studies to bachelor's degrees. The reason attributed for this is that Muslim women are confronted with plethora of challenges in pursuing postgraduate studies. The purpose of this study is to find out the factors that contribute to the interest of Muslim women in continuing their postgraduate studies.

#### *Research Problem*

Islam is a religion which urges all including men and women to seek knowledge while developing expertise in it. While Muslim women in some areas are optimizing the study-conducive environment and excellent educational opportunities in Sri Lanka, Muslim women in several areas are showing reluctance in embarking on postgraduate studies. This phenomenon leads to the dire repercussions such as the dearth of Muslim professionals, presence of Muslim women of limited skills and abilities, wasted opportunities of women,

validation of the claims of non-Muslims that Muslim women are backward, absence of proper guidance of Muslim women and the decline in the number of Muslim women having adequate knowledge in conducting researches. Further, studies have been undertaken to explore the challenges Muslim women are facing in education. Nevertheless, studies underscoring the factors that have a bearing on the interest of Muslim women in education are comparatively inadequate.

#### *Purpose of the Study*

To find out the reasons which contribute to Muslim women's interest in pursuing postgraduate studies.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

Quantitative research method has been applied to undertake this study. Primary and secondary data have been collected from the Muslim female graduates in the south eastern part of Sri Lanka in order to accomplish the purposes of this study.

### *1. Sampling*

This study has been carried out having South Eastern University of Sri Lanka as the place of research and focusing on approximately 200 Muslim female graduates of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka who graduated from the Faculty of Arts from the year 2014 to the year 2019.

#### *Primary Data*

Questionnaires were distributed among the female graduates who graduated from the South Eastern University of Sri Lanka after completing their bachelor's degree from the year 2014 to the year 2019 and the data have been collected.

#### *Secondary Data*

Books, university documents, newspaper articles, magazines and the contents of websites relevant to women's education have been used to access the information required for the purpose of this study.

### *2. Method of Data Analysis*

Questionnaire data have been analyzed with SPSS statistical software using regression analysis method, through which the relationship between dependent and independent variables has been examined.

## III. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This study titled "Challenges Muslim women are confronted with in pursuing postgraduate studies" encompassed 200 graduates who obtained their degrees over the period of 5 years from 2015 to 2019. Out of these 200 graduates, 163 persons expressed their interest in continuing postgraduate studies. Interest of Muslim women in postgraduate studies has been used as the dependent variable of this study which was undertaken based on the data collected from 150 graduates out of the 163 graduates who were willing to embark on postgraduate studies, and emerging as an excellent female

leader, increasing educational qualifications, gaining expertise in a particular field, becoming a best resource person and seeking promotion have been employed as independent variables. Although there are several factors which have considerable influence on Muslim women wanting to continue post-graduate studies, the most appropriate determinants have been taken into consideration as variables. Therefore, the model to explore the relationship between variables is as below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1(M) + \beta_2(N) + \beta_3(O) + \beta_4(P) + \beta_5(Q) + U$$

Y : Interest of Muslim women in pursuing post-graduate studies (L)

M : Emerging as an excellent female leader

N : Increasing educational qualifications

O : Gaining expertise in a particular field

P : Becoming a best resource person

Q : Promotion

U : U Test

*Choosing suitable model*

In order to examine the factors influencing in women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies, the data of 150 persons have been analyzed as suitable model for the purpose of choosing the suitable model for this study. In this study “factors influencing in Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies” has been chosen as dependent variable and in order to Although the (R2) value in the table is 60% higher than all models, it can be observed that it is far higher in linear – linear model than the rest of the models. The variables chosen to explore the factors influencing in women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies can be concluded as being valid based on the value of the coefficient of determination. Moreover, it is noted that the adjusted R-squared value of the linear – linear regression is highest among the four models given.

In addition to the above, the value of F in linear – linear model is 114.7 and the Variance Inflation Factor value (VIF Value) lies between 1.1 – 4.5. Hence, it is evident that no multicollinearity problem exists among variables. Considering the fact that (DL= 1.665 < D.W > DU = 1.802) is within a parameter where it is impossible to come to a conclusion at 5%

Table 2: Results Of The Regression Analysis

Variables	Regression coefficient	“t”	P-value	VIF
epiyahdJ	7.053	24.017	0.000*	
M	-0.35	-1.393	0.166 <sup>ns</sup>	1.614
N	0.225	2.099	0.038*	1.779
O	0.382	9.158	0.000*	2.050

Based on the results, the value of the coefficient of determination in regression is 79.9%. Accordingly, all the

define the relationship between the independent variable and other variables Multiple regression models of SPSS namely linear – linear, linear - logistic, logistic – linear, logistic-logistic have been used. Correct regression model has been chosen subsequent to using various data with the objective of fixing on an appropriate model.

*Models*

$$L = \beta_0 + \beta_1(M) + \beta_2(N) + \beta_3(O) + \beta_4(P) + \beta_5(Q) + U$$

$$L = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log (M) + \beta_2 \log (N) + \beta_3 \log (O) + \beta_4 \log (P) + \beta_5 \log (Q) + U$$

$$\log L = \beta_0 + \beta_1(M) + \beta_2(N) + \beta_3(O) + \beta_4(P) + \beta_5(Q) + U$$

$$\log L = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log (M) + \beta_2 \log (N) + \beta_3 \log (O) + \beta_4 \log (P) + \beta_5 \log (Q) + U$$

Table 1: Choosing the Model

Models	(R <sup>2</sup> )%	Adj (R <sup>2</sup> )%	“F” Value	“P” Value	DW	VIF
Linear – Linear	79.9%	79.2%	114.7	0.000	1.74	1.1 – 4.5
Linear – Logistic	76.3%	75.5%	92.65	0.000	1.64	1.1 – 3.6
Logistic – Linear	78.5%	77.8%	105.43	0.000	1.53	1.1 – 4.5
Logistic – Logistic	74.5%	73.6%	84.14	0.000	1.45	1.1 – 3.6

significance level based on Durbin Watson Statistic , there exists no possibility to establish whether there is autocorrelation in residuals. Thus, according to DW Statistic, it is concluded that no autocorrelation is present in residuals.

Since the hypothesis relevant to the full test of linear – linear model P (F≥ 114.7)0.000 related to factors influencing in Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies is also rejected based on the outcomes, the linear – linear model can serve the purposes of this study. Accordingly, it is linear – linear model which is adopted for this study.

Therefore, the following table 4.2 indicates the outcomes of the variables identifies as the determinants of women wanting to continue postgraduate studies.

P	-0.349	-11.428	0.000*	3.109
Q	-0.995	-10.906	0.000*	1.660
R – Sq =79.9 %, Prob ( F – Statistic ) = 0.000				

Stationary  
 \* Of 5% significance level  
 Ns – Non-significant

response variable (dependent variable) and the explanatory variables (independent variables) connected to Muslim

women showing reluctance in postgraduate studies show 67.4% influence. Moreover, conquest to the fact that the p-value of F is lower than 0.05% in variables starting from N to Q, the F test indicates that the model is statistically significant. Due to the fact that the P-value of F in M variable is higher than 0.05, it transpires that the variable is non-significant.

Further, it becomes possible to explain about the independent variables chosen for the study based on the table. Among the factors identified as influencing ones in Muslim women's inclination towards postgraduate studies, factors such as securing promotion, increasing educational qualifications, developing high degree of expertise in a particular field and emerging as an excellent resource person remain as significant challenges at 95% confidence level. Further, emerging as a best female leader constitutes as non-significant at 95% confidence level.

Based on the outcome, the regression equation relevant to the factors influencing in Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies will be as below:

For the purpose of this study when we seek to analyze the table 4.2, which contains the outcomes relevant to the factors influencing in Muslim women wanting to pursue higher education, it can be observed that the p-value of the relationship between women's interest in postgraduate studies and the factor of developing educational qualifications stands at 0.038 whilst the regression coefficient of the factor of developing educational qualification is 0.225. Therefore, while the factor of developing educational qualifications constitutes as the significant one in influencing Muslim women wanting to pursue higher education, it shows the positive correlation. Based on this, what is observed is that an increase by 1 percent in the objective of developing educational qualifications, there is also an increase in Muslim women wanting to continue postgraduate studies by 0.225%.

Further, the P-value of the relationship between Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies and the factor of gaining an expertise in a particular field is 0.000 while the regression coefficient of the factor of gaining an expertise in a particular field is 0.382. As a result, the factor of gaining an expertise in a particular field remains as significant factor influencing in women wanting to continue postgraduate studies, while showing positive relationship. In this vein, what can be construed is that an increase by 1 percent in the objective of gaining an expertise in a particular field, there is also an increase in Muslim women wanting to continue postgraduate studies by 0.382%.

Moreover, the P-value of the relationship between Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies and the factor of emerging as an excellent resource person is 0.000 while the regression coefficient of the factor of emerging as an excellent resource person stands at 0.349. Therefore, the factor of emerging as an excellent resource person significantly influences in women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies

while showing negative correlation. In keeping with this, what can be understood is that an increase by 1 percent in the objective of gaining an expertise in a particular field, there is a decrease in Muslim women wanting to continue postgraduate studies by 0.349%.

Further, the P-value of the relationship between Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies and the factor of securing promotion is 0.000 while the regression coefficient of the factor of securing promotion is -0.995. Consequently, while the factor of securing promotion is significant in influencing in women wanting to continue postgraduate studies, it shows negative correlation. In this context, what becomes evident is that an increase by 1 percent in the factor of securing promotion, there is a decrease in Muslim women wanting to continue postgraduate studies by 0.995%.

#### *Findings*

1. Factors such as developing educational qualifications and gaining and expertise in a particular field are respectively the most influencing factors in Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies.
2. Factors such as emerging as excellent resource person, securing promotion are the ones having extremely less influence in Muslim women wanting to pursue postgraduate studies.
3. At the same time, the factor of becoming a best female leader has no bearing at all in Muslim women showing interest in pursuing post graduate studies.

#### *Recommendations*

1. Muslim women's inclination towards postgraduate studies is the timely need nowadays. Women's extensive role is crucial in creating effective social structure. It is essential that the factors such as emerging as an excellent resource person, gaining an expertise in a particular field, which can contribute fruitfully for the excellent social structure, are given emphasis without confining the objectives of postgraduate studies only to developing educational qualifications and gaining expertise in a particular field.
2. Parents and relatives should be more supportive in women attaining their educational objectives.
3. Social service organizations should focus on organizing workshops and seminars to promote women's higher education.
4. Women should strive to explore their avenues and in pursuant to them they should persevere to achieve their goals.

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