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Topic: Access of Muslims to Higher Education: Strides and Dilemmas- A Case Study of
Azamgarh District

Keywords: Higher Education, Muslim Minorities, Strides, Dilemmas, Muslim Minority
Higher Educational Institutions

Finding

The study analyses the perception and barriers perceived by Muslims of Azamgarh district. Moreover, the study examined the major factors shaping the state of dilemmas among Muslim students pertaining to higher education. The study was conducted in Azamgarh district and major findings of the are as follows:

The finding of the study suggest that the respondents believe that higher education is beneficial in terms of improving the socio-economic status of an individual. But it is equally important to pay attention to some apprehensions, which have been recorded while taking responses regarding the perception of higher education. Firstly, the respondents wish to strike a balance between the religious education and the modern education and give importance to both. Secondly, some parents believe that educating their girls at a higher level may sometimes pose problems, leading to delay in their marriage. Thirdly, all the respondents perceive higher education to be unpredictable in terms of ensuring a job. It is worth mentioning that students face more problems at higher levels in comparison to school levels. Since at school levels, the community has the opportunity to send their children to schools in their locality, they find a number of schools which they think are suitable, in terms of their financial status and also appropriate from the cultural point of view. Financial constraints and issues of quality at the level of schooling are seen as a big problem.

There is a concept of '*pardes*' in the Azamgarh district, and it is a trend that Muslim youths go to the gulf countries for earning bread at an early age. This has proven to be a relief as far as the financial upliftment is concerned but in the long run it has become a setback in stepping towards higher education. The decision the students take in choosing higher educational institutions is regulated by their contextual setting. Sometimes their religious identity becomes a marker of their decisions. The insecurity due to their religious identity leads to withdrawal from a number of avenues available. Since maintaining their identity is a big challenge for them, they sometimes explicitly assert it through their behaviour.