

Trends of Elementary Education among the Muslim Girls in West Bengal

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Abstract

India is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic country. Muslims constitute the largest minority group in this country. Muslim women contribute approximately 12.16 % of total population in West Bengal which is not negligible. But their educational, social and economic status remains far below the normal. An effort has been made to investigate the trends of elementary education of Muslim girls in West Bengal, India. Comparatively lower percentages of Muslim girl children in West Bengal completed at elementary level of education before 2001 and a little progress of Muslim girls in West Bengal at elementary level of education after 2001 have been observed.

Introduction

India being a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic country, people belonging to various religious faiths live side by side. Muslims are one of them who comprise of the largest minority group in the country. With a population of 1210193422 in absolute numbers in India, the population in West Bengal is 91347736, the Muslim population is 24536001 which constitutes 26.86 % of the State population and thus put signature of the second state religious group and the largest minority group of West Bengal according to Census Report, 2011. Muslim women contribute about 12 % of the state population that can not be neglected in any sphere of life. The available data on socio-economic profile of Muslims confirm that Muslims, especially women, remain socially, economically and educationally backward (GOI, 2006).

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Every country or state is composed of material and human resources. Its development depends on proper utilization of material sources by human and gradual improvement of human resources. The development of human resources is primarily indicated through their educational status. Thus, education becomes the fourth necessity for man after food, clothing and shelter, in today's competitive world. Education is indeed a powerful tool to combat the cut-throat competition that man is faced with at every juncture in life. The importance of education in India is indeed rising with passing time. Though India has always been a great source of learning for many years, it still needs to improve not just on the quality of education but also on the number of people being educated.

Education helps women "in lightening the burden of tradition of ignorance and strict seclusion within the home, in equipping them with the expertise and knowledge required to play modern roles, in widening their horizons and in raising their general status in the society" (Akhtar 1992). Gender inequality in education is extreme. Various studies (Roy 1979, Menon 1981, Agrawal 1986, Hassan, Menon 2004) have shown that education has made a significant contribution in improving the status of women. Education of women is the most effective channel for reducing the inequalities between men and women and ensuring the maximum participation of women in the development process. Girls are less likely to access school, to remain in school or to achieve in education. Education helps men and women claim their rights and realize their potential in the economic, political and social areas. It is also the single most powerful way to lift people out of poverty. Education plays a particularly important role as a foundation for girls' development towards adult life. It should be an intrinsic part of any strategy to address the gender-based discrimination against women and girls that remains prevalent in many societies.

Educational status can be described in terms of literacy rates, enrolment percentages, mean years of schooling, drop-out rates, percentages completed etc. at primary, upper primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher level of education. Different organizations have used different indicators for educational status at different levels of education for different periods. So far as the education sector is concerned, during the Sixth Plan, an attempt was made to define educational backwardness in more precise terms with the help of the Fourth Education Survey of NCERT, 1978, according to which the national average of enrolment in elementary stage corresponding to age group 6 to 14 was 65%. All states with average enrolment below the national level were treated as educationally backward.

According to the Mandal Commission in India, 1979, the criteria to identify OBC on the basis of educational backwardness are:

1. Classes where the number of children in the age group 5-15 years who never attended school is at least 25% above the state average.
2. Classes where the rate of student drop-out in the age group 5-15 years is at least 25% above the state average.
3. Classes amongst whom the proportion of matriculates is at least 25% below the state average.

The aim of the present study is to present the trends of elementary education of Muslim girls in West Bengal, India.

Statement of the Problem

From the above literature and related studies, it is revealed vividly that Muslim women are educationally, socially and economically backward. In this context, the researcher tries to attempt to investigate the trends of elementary education of Muslim girls in West Bengal, India after independence.

Objectives of the study

Following objectives are earmarked for the present study:

1. To represent the trends of elementary education of Muslim girls in West Bengal and all other persons related to West Bengal and in India.
2. To analyse of the trends of elementary education of Muslim girls in West Bengal and all other persons related to West Bengal and in India.

Research Questions

Investigator has following research questions for the present study:

1. What are the trends of elementary education of Muslim girls in West Bengal and all other persons related to West Bengal and in India?
2. What are the differences between the trends of elementary education of Muslim girls in West Bengal and all other persons related to West Bengal and in India?

Methodology

The study followed descriptive method and both the qualitative and quantitative approach. The entire population was Muslim girls and women in India. The present study focuses on the Muslim girls and women in West Bengal, India. The literature review, published journal and books served as the source of the collected information. Since continuous data for specific parameters for educational status of Muslim girls are not available, the researcher used the percentage completed at primary level and upper primary level of education as an educational parameter of elementary level of education for which Sachar Committee Report (2006) served as source of data from 1948 to 2001, enrolment percentages for the period from 2002 to 2014 for which All India School Education Survey, seventh in the series of All India Educational Surveys (AIESs) conducted with reference date as September 30, 2002; and the Flash Statics: Elementary Education in India: Progress towards UEE and District Information System for Education (DISE) data developed by the National University of Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi acted as sources for data for the periods from 2002 to 2006 and 2006 to 2014, respectively.

Trends in Primary Education

The percentage of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male and female children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education has been depicted in Figure 1 for the period from 1948 to 2001. It clearly reveals that:

1. The percentages of all other children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education were the highest for the above period.
2. The percentages of all other children in India and all other female in West Bengal completed at primary level of education were the second highest for the above period.
3. The percentages of Muslim children in India and Muslim male children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education were the third highest for the above period. Percentages of Muslim male children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education were comparatively higher than that of Muslim children in India before 1991, but became lower after 1991.
4. The percentages of Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education were the lowest for the above period.

5. The trends from 1948 to 2001 show that the percentage of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male and female children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education had increased from 1948 to 2001 with different rates. The rate of percentage increase was the maximum for all other female children in West Bengal and was the minimum for Muslim male in West Bengal. Though, the rate of percentage increase for Muslim female children was much higher than that for Muslim male in West Bengal and close to that of all other female children in West Bengal, the percentage of Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education was the lowest for the above period.

The difference in percentages of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education has been represented in Figure 2. The salient features emerged from this figure are as follows:

1. The difference in percentages of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education in all cases gradually increased from 1948 to 1971 except Muslim male children in West Bengal and after 1971, it had decreased slowly.
2. The percentages of Muslim female children completed at primary level of education in west Bengal were far below (>25%) from that of all other children and female children in West Bengal and all other children in India for the said period that indicated the educational backwardness of Muslim female children in West Bengal according to Mandal commission's indicator of educational backwardness.
3. The percentages of Muslim female children completed at primary level of education in west Bengal were lower than that of Muslim children in India by almost same value (10-15%) throughout the period.
4. The differences in percentage of Muslim male children completed at primary level of education in west Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal were continuously decreasing from 1948 to 2001 and in 2001, there was actually no difference. It also indicates that the percentage of Muslim female children completed at primary level of education in West Bengal was also increasing.

The enrolment percentages of girls with respect to all other persons in India and West Bengal, Muslims in India and West Bengal; and the enrolment percentages of Muslim girls with respect to all other female in India and West Bengal at primary level of education from 2002 to 2014 has been depicted in Figure 3. The enrolment percentages of girls varied from 47.38 to 50.13%. The enrolment percentages of girls had increased slowly from 2007-2008 to 2013-2014 in all cases. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls to all other female in India were much higher in the period of 2002-2006. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls to all other female in India and West Bengal had a gradual increase from 2007-08 to 2009-10, a decline during 2010-2011 and then increased slowly from 2011-12 to 2013-14. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls were much lower in the period 2011-2014 than that in the period 2002-2010. The enrolment percentages of girls and Muslim girls with respect to all other persons in India and West Bengal, Muslims in India and West Bengal at primary level of education from 2002 to 2014 achieved just below 50%.

Trends in upper primary level of education

The percentage of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male and female children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education has been exhibited in Figure 4 for the period from 1948 to 2001. It clearly reveals that-

1. The percentages of all other children in West Bengal and in India, and all other female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education were much higher than that of Muslim male in India and in West Bengal, and Muslim female in West Bengal.
2. The percentages of Muslim male in West Bengal completed at upper primary level were higher than that of Muslim in India before 1991 and became lower after 1991.
3. The percentages of Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education were the lowest for the above period.
4. The trend from 1948 to 2001 shows that the percentage of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male and female children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education had increased from 1948 to 2001 with at different rates. The rate of percentage increase was the maximum for all other children in India and was the minimum for Muslim male in West Bengal. Though, the rate of percentage increase for Muslim female

children was much higher than that for Muslim male in West Bengal, the percentage of Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education was the lowest for the above period.

The difference in percentages of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education has been represented in Figure 5. The salient features emerged from this figure are as follows:

1. The difference in percentages of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education in all cases gradually increased from 1948 to 1971 except Muslim male children in West Bengal and then had fluctuating tendencies.
2. The percentages of Muslim female children completed at upper primary level of education in west Bengal were far below (>25%) from that of all other children and female children in West Bengal and all other children in India for the said period that indicated the educational backwardness of Muslim female children in West Bengal according to Mandal commission indicator of educational backwardness.
3. The percentages of Muslim female children completed at upper primary level of education in west Bengal were lower than that of Muslim children in India by almost same value (5.8-4.3) throughout the period.
4. The differences in percentage of Muslim male children completed at upper primary level of education in west Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal were continuously decreasing from 1948 to 2001 and in 2001, there was actually no difference. It also indicates that the percentage of Muslim female children completed at upper primary level of education in West Bengal was also increasing.

The enrolment percentages of girls with respect to all other persons in India and West Bengal, Muslims in India and West Bengal; and the enrolment percentages Muslim girls with respect to all other female in India and West Bengal at upper primary level of education from 2002 to 2014 has been depicted in Figure 6. The enrolment percentages of girls varied from 44.9 to 61.14%. The enrolment percentages of girls had increased slowly from 2007-2008 to 2013-2014 in all cases. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls to all other female in India were much higher in the period of 2002-2006. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls to

all other female in India and West Bengal had a gradual increase from 2007-08 to 2009-10, a decline during 2010-2011 and then increased slowly from 2011-12 to 2013-14. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls were much lower in the period 2011-2014 than that in the period 2002-2010. The enrolment percentages Muslim girls with respect to all other Muslims in India and West Bengal; and all other females with respect all other persons in India at upper primary level of education from 2002 to 2014 attained above 50% and continued to increase from 50% slowly from 2002.

Conclusion

The percentages of Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at primary and upper primary level of education were the lowest for the period from 1948 to 2001. Though, the rate of percentage increase for Muslim female children was much higher than that for Muslim male in West Bengal and close to that of all other female children in West Bengal, the percentage of Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at primary and upper primary level of education was much lower for the above period. The percentages of Muslim female children completed at primary and upper primary level of education in west Bengal were far below (>25%) from that of all other children and female children in West Bengal and all other children in India for the said period that indicated the educational backwardness of Muslim female children in West Bengal. The percentages of Muslim female children completed at primary and upper primary level of education in west Bengal were lower than that of Muslim children in India by almost same value of 10-15% at primary level and 5.8-4.3% at upper primary level throughout the period.

The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls to all other female in India and West Bengal at primary level of education had a gradual increase from 2007-08 to 2009-10, a decline during 2010-2011 and then increased slowly from 2011-12 to 2013-14. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls were much lower in the period 2011-2014 than that in the period 2002-2010. The enrolment percentages of girls and Muslim girls with respect to all other persons in India and West Bengal, Muslims in India and West Bengal at primary level of education from 2002 to 2014 achieved just below 50%.

The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls to all other female in India and West Bengal at upper primary level of education had a gradual increase from 2007-08 to 2009-10, a decline during 2010-2011 and then increased slowly from 2011-12 to 2013-14. The enrolment percentages of Muslim girls were much lower in the period 2011-2014 than that in the period

2002-2010. The enrolment percentages Muslim girls with respect to all other Muslims in India and West Bengal; and all other females with respect all other persons in India at upper primary level of education from 2002 to 2014 attained above 50% and continued to increase from 50% slowly from 2002.

Comparatively lower percentages of Muslim girl children in West Bengal completed at elementary level of education before 2001 were due to economic, social, institutional, cultural and individual reasons. The little progress of Muslim girls in West Bengal at elementary level of education after 2001 was probably as a result of adaptation and implementation of policies, programmes and schemes related to improvement of women education and also for minority groups by Government and non-Government organizations and was also for awareness for the necessity of education for improvement of status of Muslim women.

Legends of Figures

Figure 1. The percentage of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male and female children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education for the period from 1948 to 2001.

Figure 2. The difference in percentages of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at primary level of education for the period from 1948 to 2001.

Figure 3. The enrolment percentages of girls with respect to all other persons in India and West Bengal, Muslims in India and West Bengal; and the enrolment percentages Muslim girls with respect to all other female in India and West Bengal at primary level of education from 2002 to 2014.

Figure 4. The percentage of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male and female children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education from 1948 to 2001.

Figure 5. The difference in percentages of all other children in India and West Bengal, Muslim children in India, Muslim male children in West Bengal, and all other female children in West Bengal from Muslim female children in West Bengal completed at upper primary level of education from 1948 to 2001.

Figure 6. The enrolment percentages of girls with respect to all other persons in India and West Bengal, Muslims in India and West Bengal; and the enrolment percentages Muslim girls

with respect to all other female in India and West Bengal at upper primary level of education from 2002 to 2014.

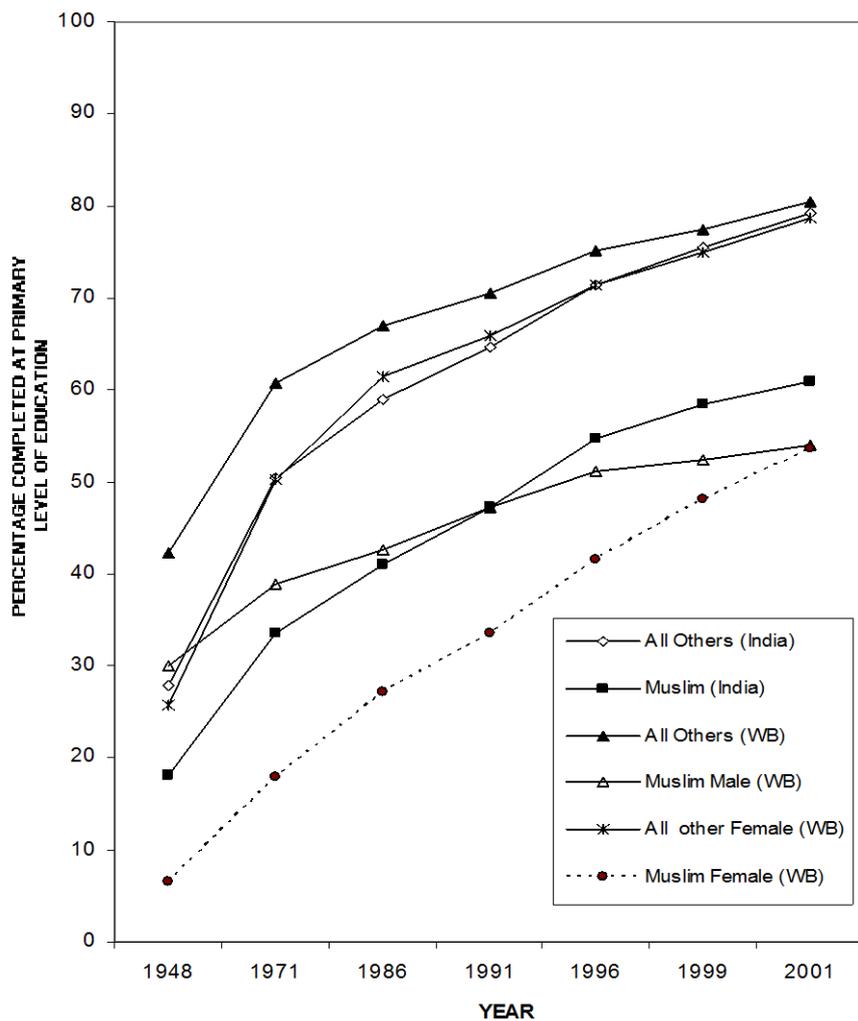


Figure 1

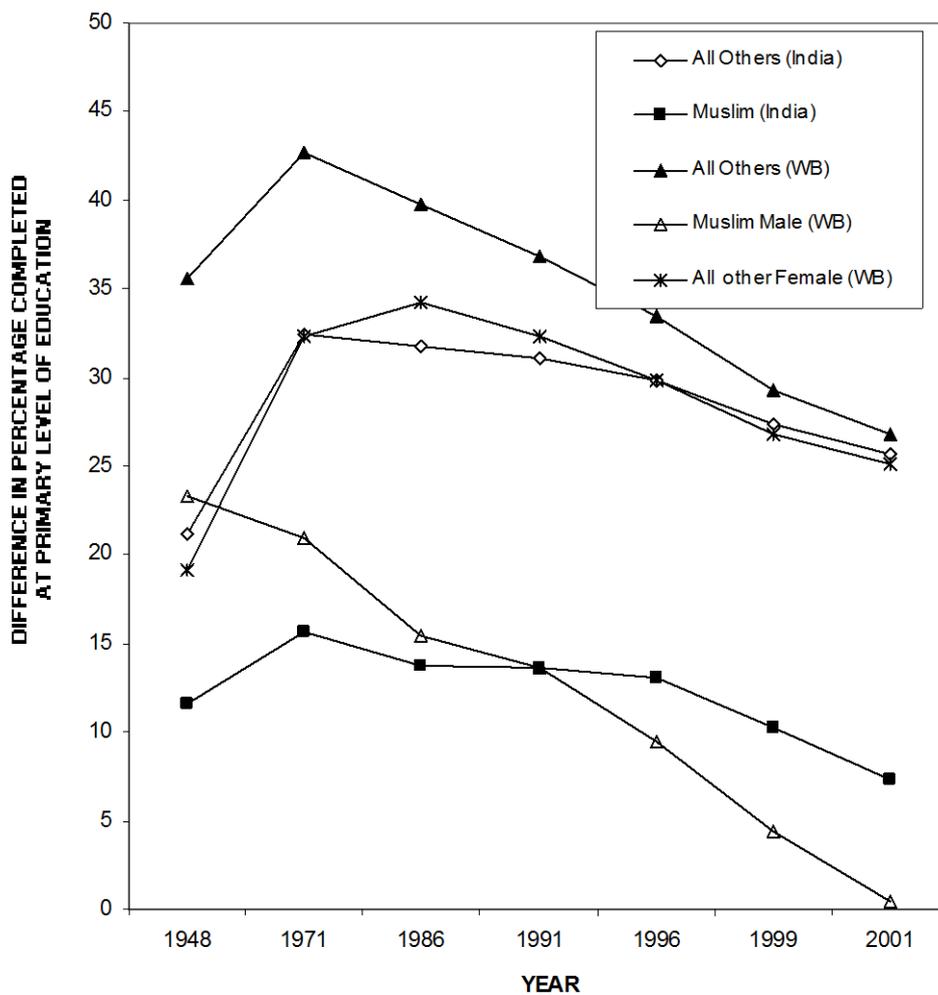


Figure 2

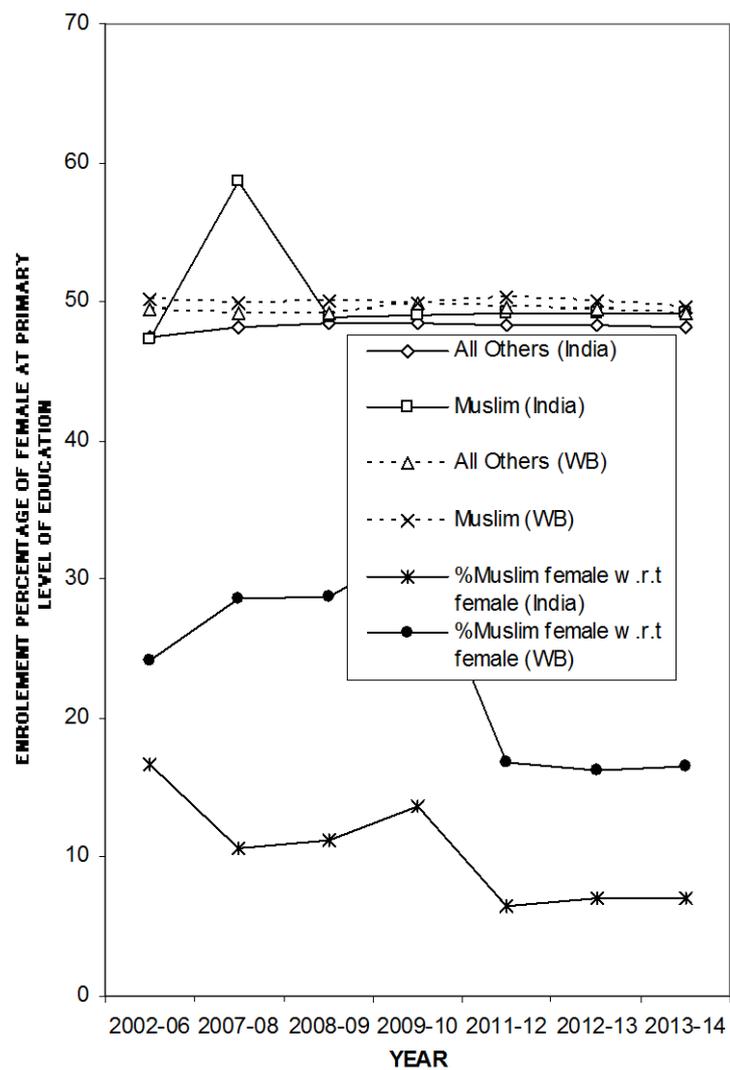


Figure 3

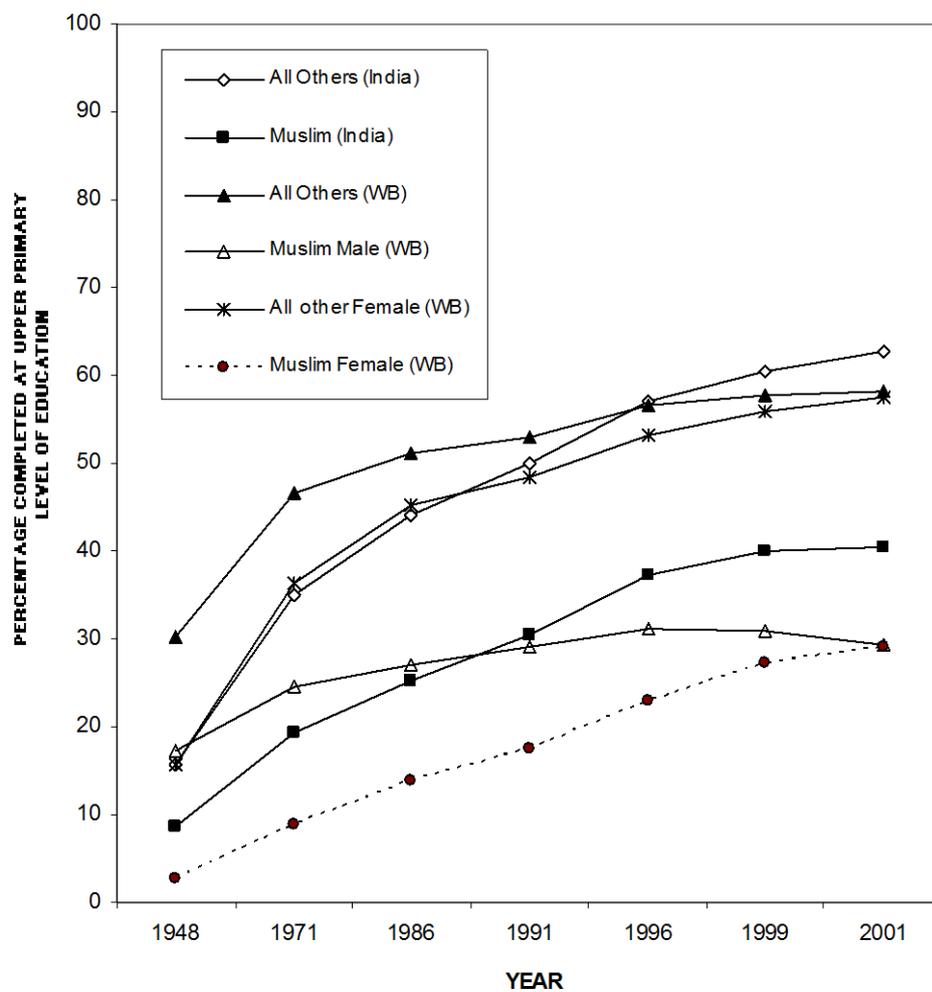


Figure 4

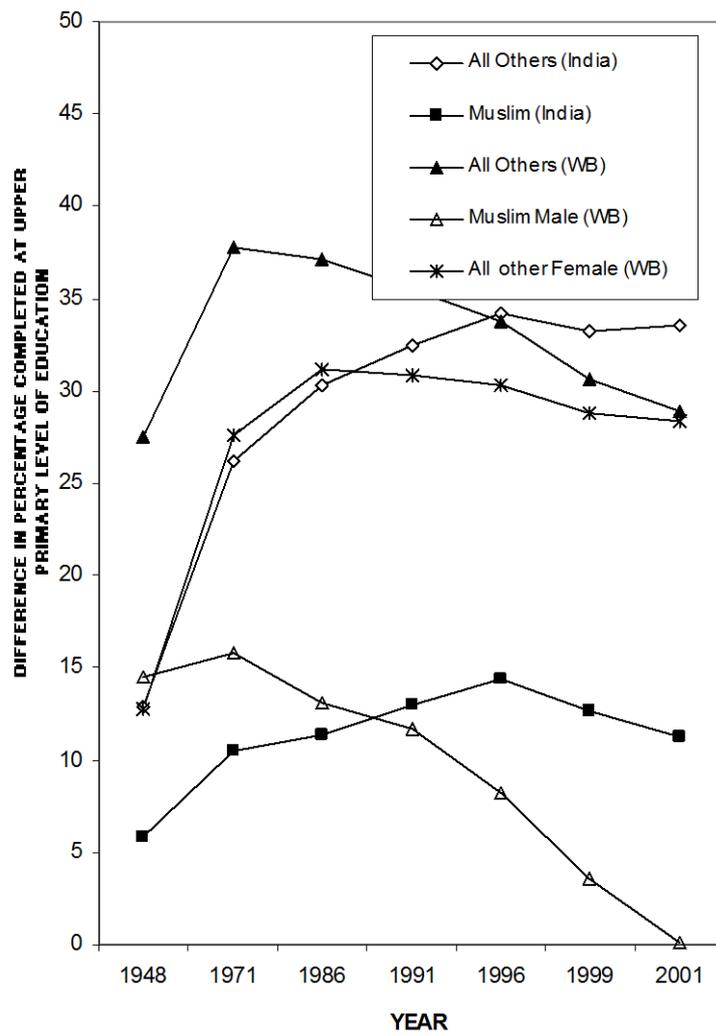


Figure 5

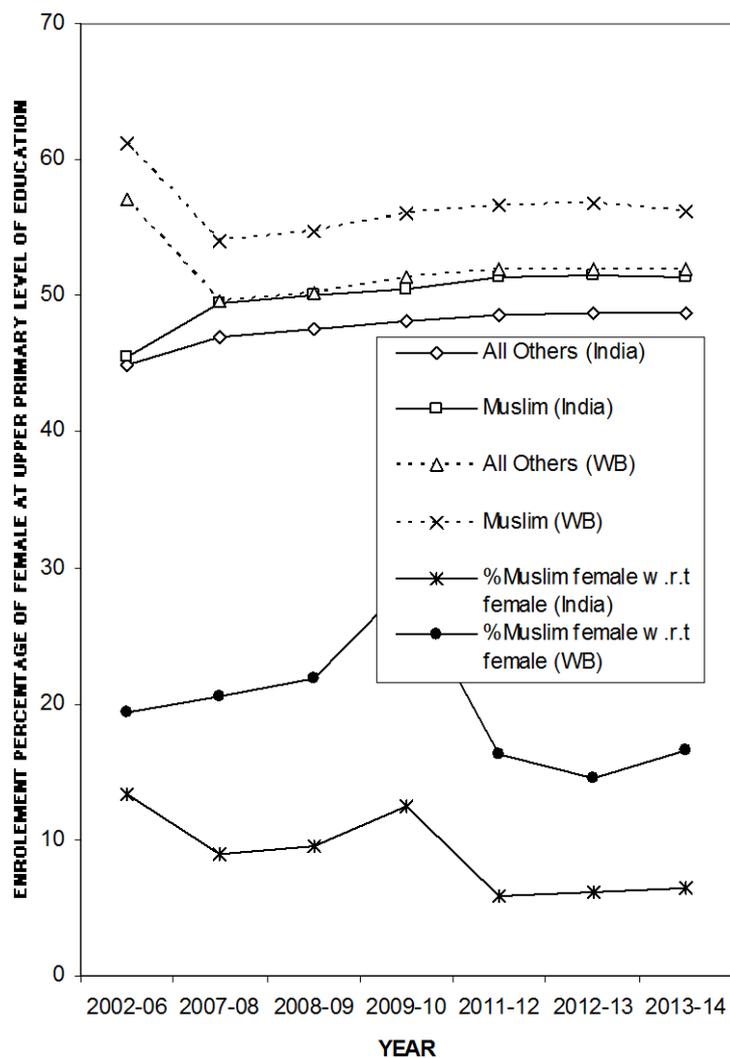


Figure 6

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