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PATTERNS AND DETERMINANTS OF SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG MUSLIM GIRLS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KRISHNA, VISAKHAPATNAM AND PRAKASAM DISTRICTS

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Abstract

The present study examines the patterns and determinants of school dropout among Muslim girls in Krishna, Visakhapatnam and Prakasam districts of Andhra Pradesh. The study specifically focuses on literacy status and educational attainment in relation to socio-economic background, along with the distribution and pattern of dropout across different educational levels. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from 300 Muslim girls who had discontinued formal education, with 100 respondents from each of the three districts. Convenience sampling was used, and the data were analysed using frequency distribution, percentage analysis, cross-tabulation, Chi-square test and related measures of association. The findings show that monthly family income was significantly associated with current literacy status, $\chi^2(9, N = 300) = 95.278$, $p < .001$, and with educational attainment, $\chi^2(12, N = 300) = 98.595$, $p < .001$. Educational attainment also differed significantly across the three districts, $\chi^2(8, N = 300) = 16.534$, $p = .035$. Age at dropout showed a strong association with the last educational level attended, $\chi^2(16, N = 300) = 470.204$, $p < .001$, with Cramér's $V = 0.626$. Educational discontinuation was concentrated at the secondary level (26.0%) and upper-primary level (25.7%), together accounting for 51.7% of respondents. The study concludes that socio-economic conditions, district-level variation, age and educational stage are important in understanding dropout patterns among Muslim girls. It recommends targeted financial support, district-specific interventions, and stronger retention and transition measures at the upper-primary and secondary stages.

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Keywords: Muslim girls, school dropout, literacy status, educational attainment, socio-economic background, Krishna, Visakhapatnam, Prakasam.

Introduction:

The Muslim community is considered as a socially and economically marginalized group within the Indian context, with distinct cultural, educational, and demographic characteristics. The study focuses specifically on Muslim girls, who experience a dual disadvantage arising from both gender and minority status. Their educational experiences are shaped by a combination of family background, cultural norms, and access to educational resources.

One of the critical challenges within the Indian education system is the issue of literacy and school dropout, especially among marginalized communities. Although overall literacy rates have improved over time, significant gaps remain between different socio-economic, regional, and demographic groups. Dropout from formal schooling continues to be a major concern, particularly at the secondary level, where a substantial number of students discontinue their education due to a combination of economic, social, and institutional factors. Marginalized communities, including religious minorities, are disproportionately affected by these challenges. Factors such as poverty, parental illiteracy, lack of access to quality schools, and socio-cultural constraints often limit educational participation and continuity among these groups.

Review of Literature:

Aminuzzaman (2025) examines the amount of education attained by Muslim women on a micro-regional scale, drawing attention to the differences that exist within particular local contexts. According to the findings of the study, socioeconomic situations, parental education, and access to educational institutions are major factors that have a substantial impact on the attainment of literacy and educational accomplishment among Muslim women. Additionally, it is suggested that lower levels of attainment are a result of traditional standards and a limited awareness of the significance of education. The study highlights the importance of doing context-specific analysis rather than drawing generalised findings by concentrating on a specific location (the setting). Because they highlight how local socio-cultural and economic factors impact educational results among Muslim women, the findings of this study are particularly useful for research that can be conducted in regional settings.

Kumar et al. (2023) Utilising longitudinal data, conduct an analysis of the factors that influence the decision to stop attending school among teenagers in India. This will provide a thorough understanding of the factors that influence educational discontinuation. Several factors, including socioeconomic position, parental education, gender, and school-related issues, were found to have a substantial impact on dropout rates, according to the study. It underscores the fact that girls are more likely to drop out of school due to the duties of staying at

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home, getting married at a young age, and gender conventions. The findings of this study highlight the significance of early interventions and ongoing assistance in order to successfully prevent students from dropping out of school. The findings give strong empirical data on dropout determinants, which can be applied to understanding comparable trends among Muslim girls. Although the findings are not limited to Muslims, they do provide this important evidence.

SateeshGouda and Sekher (2014) With the use of the National Family Health Survey-3, do an analysis of the factors that contribute to students dropping out of school in India. The findings of the study indicate that factors such as socioeconomic level, parental education, gender, and characteristics of households have a substantial impact on the rate of dropouts. It brings to light the fact that teenage girls are more likely to drop out of school due to the pressures of domestic responsibilities, early marriage, and the expectations of society. Additionally, the research highlights regional variations as well as the significance that institutional factors such as school quality and accessibility have in the equation. Strong empirical evidence on dropout predictors is provided by the study, which is valuable for understanding comparable patterns among Muslim girls. The study makes use of large-scale national data.

Husain (2009) examines the patterns of enrolment and dropouts among Muslims in West Bengal, drawing attention to the substantial gaps in educational involvement that exist among this population. A comparison with students from other groups reveals that Muslim students, particularly female students, had lower enrolment rates and greater dropout rates than students from other communities. It connects these tendencies to socioeconomic deprivation, illiteracy among parents, and a lack of access to educational institutions of a high standard. Additionally, the data indicates that there is a regional concentration of Muslims in places that are relatively undeveloped, which further restricts educational options. The study offers unique insights into the structural determinants that affect Muslim education by giving empirical evidence on enrolment and dropout rates. As a result, the study is relevant for understanding similar trends in other geographical contexts because it provides these insights.

Research Methodology

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the literacy status and educational attainment of Muslim girls who have discontinued their education in relation to their socio-economic background.
2. To examine the distribution and pattern of girls' dropout across different levels of education among the Muslim community.

Hypotheses of the Study

Hypothesis for objective 1:

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Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant association between the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and the literacy status and educational attainment of Muslim girls who have discontinued their education.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant association between the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and the literacy status and educational attainment of Muslim girls who have discontinued their education.

Hypothesis for objective 2:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): $H_0$3: There is no significant association between the level at which Muslim girls discontinued education and their selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): $H_1$3: There is a significant association between the level at which Muslim girls discontinued education and their selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the status of Muslim literacy and girls' dropout in the selected coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. A descriptive research design is considered appropriate as it facilitates the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data relating to the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the Muslim community, literacy levels, educational attainment, and dropout patterns among Muslim girls.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The present study adopts a **convenience sampling method** for selecting respondents. A total of **300 Muslim girls who have dropped out of formal education** have been identified and included in the study.

The sample is distributed equally across the three selected districts:

- **Krishna - 100 respondents**
- **Visakhapatnam - 100 respondents**
- **Prakasam - 100 respondents**

Statistical Techniques Used

The collected data has been analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques with the help of **SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences)**.

Appropriate statistical techniques were employed to achieve the objectives of the study and to test the formulated hypotheses.

The following statistical tools were used:

- Frequency Distribution
- Percentage Analysis
- Cross-tabulation

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- Chi-Square Test

Data analysis and interpretation:

Table 1: Monthly Family Income and Current Literacy Status

Case Processing Summary						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Monthly family income * Current literacy status	300	100.0%	0	0.0%	300	100.0%

Table 2: Monthly family income * Current literacy status Crosstabulation

Monthly family income * Current literacy status Crosstabulation							
			Current literacy status				Total
			Cannot read or write	Can read only	Can read and write with difficulty	Can read and write fluently	
Monthly family income	Below Rs.10,000	Count	37	16	7	4	64
		Expected Count	17.3	16.0	16.0	14.7	64.0
		% within Monthly family income	57.8%	25.0%	10.9%	6.3%	100.0%
	Rs.10,001-Rs.20,000	Count	26	32	24	9	91
		Expected Count	24.6	22.8	22.8	20.9	91.0
		%	28.6	35.2	26.4%	9.9%	100.0

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		within Monthly family income	%	%			%
	Rs.20,001-Rs.30,000	Count	16	18	22	19	75
		Expected Count	20.3	18.8	18.8	17.3	75.0
		% within Monthly family income	21.3%	24.0%	29.3%	25.3%	100.0%
	Above Rs.30,000	Count	2	9	22	37	70
		Expected Count	18.9	17.5	17.5	16.1	70.0
		% within Monthly family income	2.9%	12.9%	31.4%	52.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	81	75	75	69	300
		Expected Count	81.0	75.0	75.0	69.0	300.0
		% within Monthly family income	27.0%	25.0%	25.0%	23.0%	100.0%

Table 3: Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)

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Pearson Chi-Square	95.278[a]	9	.000
Likelihood Ratio	98.885	9	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	82.013	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.72.			

Table Error: Reference source not found: Symmetric Measures

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.564	.000
	Cramer's V	.325	.000
N of Valid Cases		300	

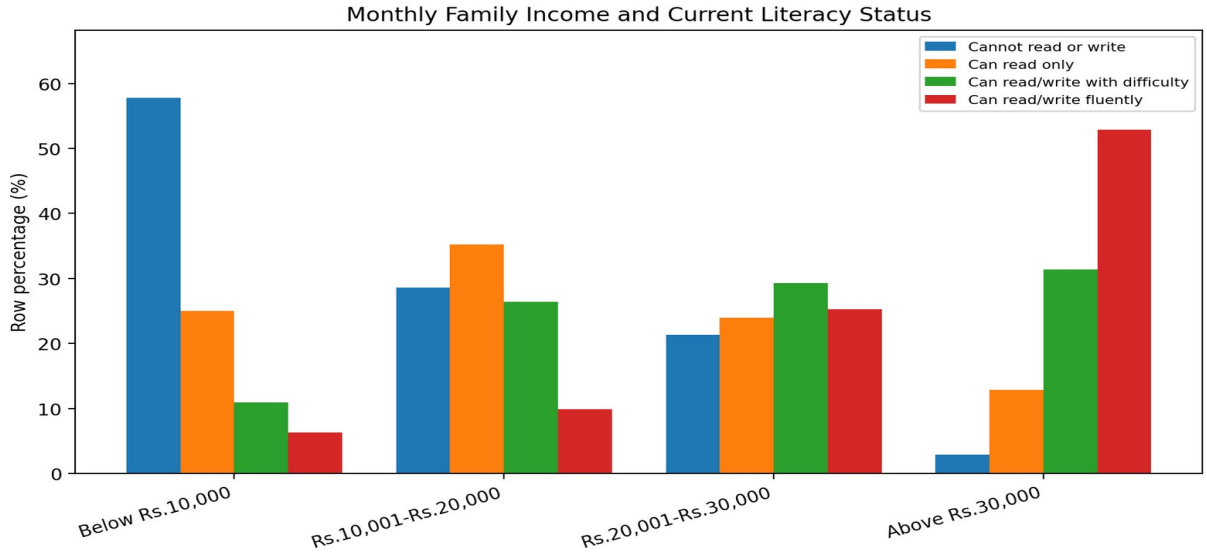


Figure 1: Monthly Family Income and Current Literacy Status

Interpretation:

The cross-tabulation revealed a clear association between monthly family income and the current literacy status of respondents. Among respondents belonging to families with a monthly income below ₹10,000, 57.8% were unable to read or write, whereas only 6.3% were able to read and write fluently. In contrast, among respondents from families earning above ₹30,000 per month, only 2.9% were unable to read or write, while 52.9% reported fluent reading and writing ability. Pearson's Chi-square test confirmed that the association between monthly family income and current literacy status was statistically significant, $\chi^2(9, N = 300) = 95.278$, p

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< .001. The assumptions of the Chi-square test were satisfied, as none of the expected cell frequencies were below five. Cramér's V of 0.325 indicated a moderate association between the variables. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant association between monthly family income and current literacy status is rejected, indicating that higher family-income categories were associated with higher self-reported literacy levels among the sampled respondents.

Monthly family income * Last class/level attended before dropout

Table 5: Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	98.595[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	109.204	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	81.966	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.89.			

Table 6: Symmetric Measures

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.573	.000
	Cramer's V	.331	.000
N of Valid Cases		300	

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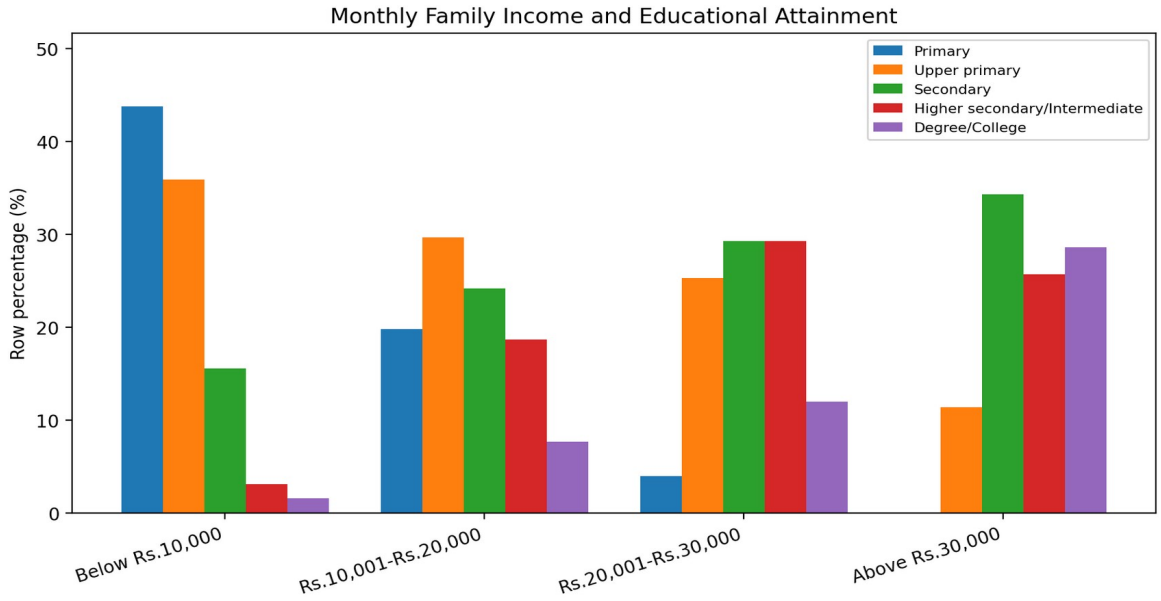


Figure 2: Monthly Family Income and Educational Attainment

Interpretation:

The cross-tabulation revealed a clear relationship between monthly family income and the educational level attained before discontinuation. Among respondents from families earning below ₹10,000 per month, 43.8% had reached only the primary level and 35.9% had reached the upper primary level, whereas only 1.6% had progressed to the degree/college level. In contrast, among respondents from families earning above ₹30,000 per month, none were in the primary-level category, while 25.7% had reached higher secondary/intermediate and 28.6% had reached the degree/college level. Pearson's Chi-square test showed that the association between monthly family income and educational attainment was statistically significant, $\chi^2(12, N = 300) = 98.595$, $p < .001$. The Chi-square assumptions were satisfied, as no expected cell frequencies were below five. Cramér's V of 0.331 indicated a moderate association between the variables. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant association between monthly family income and educational attainment is rejected for this comparison, indicating that higher family-income categories were associated with higher educational levels attained before discontinuation.

District * Last class/level attended before dropout

Table 7: Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.534[a]	8	.035

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Likelihood Ratio	16.723	8	.033
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.434	1	.064
N of Valid Cases	300		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 12.33.			

Table 8: Symmetric Measures

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.235	.035
	Cramer's V	.166	.035
N of Valid Cases		300	

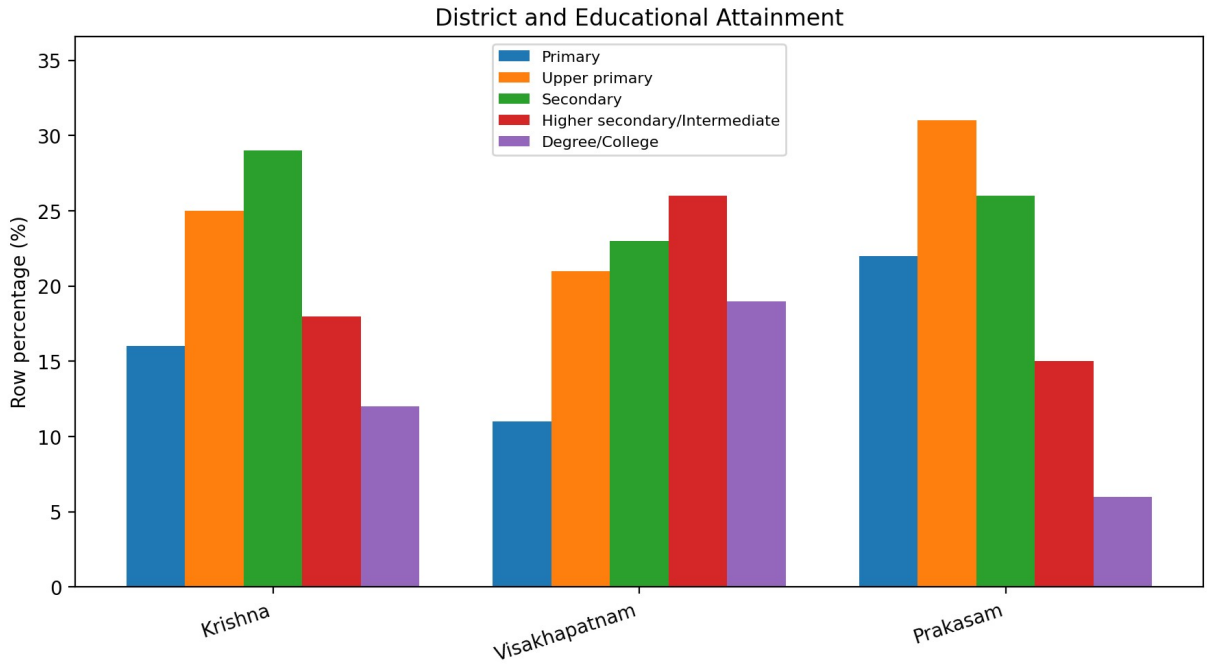


Figure 3: District and Educational Attainment

Interpretation:

The educational level attained before discontinuation varied significantly across the three study districts. Respondents from Visakhapatnam showed comparatively greater representation at higher secondary/intermediate and degree/college levels, whereas respondents from Prakasam

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were more concentrated at the primary and upper-primary levels. Pearson's Chi-square test confirmed a statistically significant association between district and educational attainment, $\chi^2(8, N = 300) = 16.534$, $p = .035$. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no association between district and educational attainment is rejected for this comparison.

Age at Dropout × Last Educational Level

Table 9 : Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	470.204[a]	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	459.302	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	237.627	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	300		
a. 2 cells (8.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.69.			

Table 10: Symmetric Measures

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	1.252	.000
	Cramer's V	.626	.000
N of Valid Cases		300	

Interpretation: Pearson's Chi-square test showed a statistically significant association between age at dropout and the last educational level attended, $\chi^2(16, N = 300) = 470.204$, $p < .001$. The assumptions of the Chi-square test were acceptable, as only 8.0% of the cells had expected frequencies below five and the minimum expected count was 4.69. Cramér's V of 0.626 indicated a strong association between the two variables. The distribution demonstrates a clear progression in the pattern of educational discontinuation, with younger respondents discontinuing predominantly at lower educational levels and respondents in the higher age categories discontinuing predominantly at higher educational levels. As age at dropout and educational progression are inherently related, the strength of this association is interpreted as a

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pattern of educational discontinuation rather than as evidence of an independent effect of age on the level of discontinuation.

Table 10: Distribution of Last class/level attended before dropout

Last class/level attended before dropout					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Primary level	49	16.3	16.3	16.3
	Upper primary level	77	25.7	25.7	42.0
	Secondary level	78	26.0	26.0	68.0
	Higher secondary/Intermediate	59	19.7	19.7	87.7
	Degree/College level	37	12.3	12.3	100.0
	Total	300	100.0	100.0	

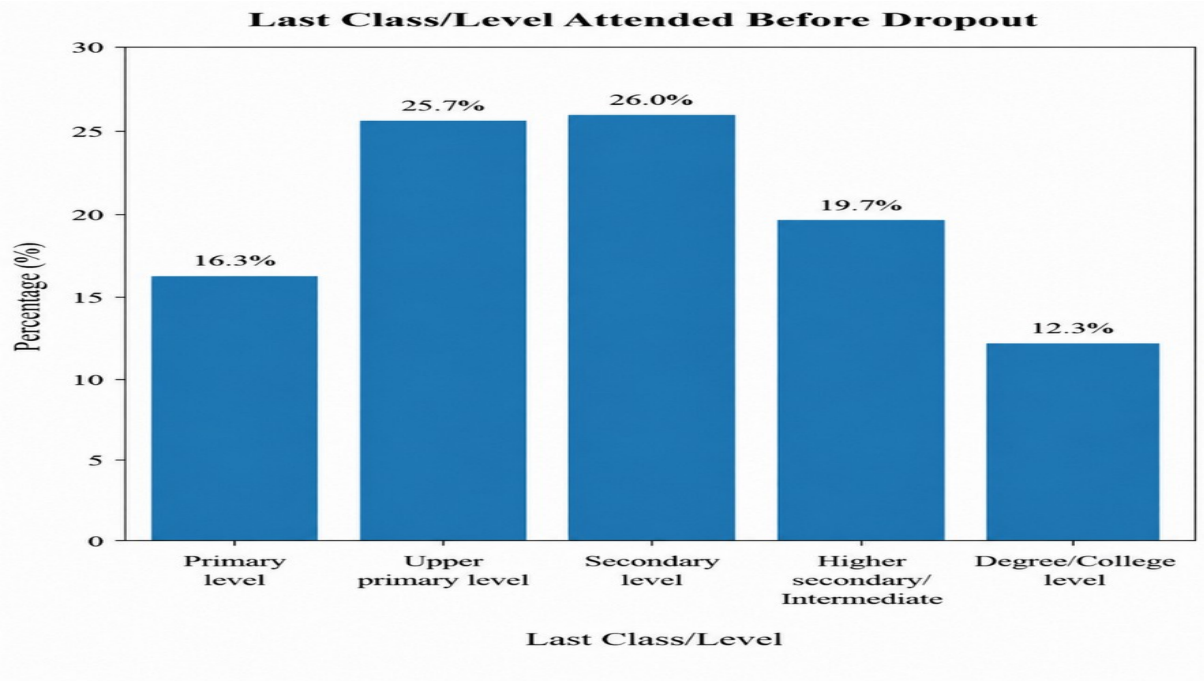


Figure 4: Last Educational Level Attended Before Dropout

Interpretation:

With regard to the **last educational level attended before dropout**, the largest proportion had reached the **secondary level (26.0%)**, closely followed by the **upper primary level (25.7%)**. A further **19.7%** had reached higher secondary/intermediate, while **16.3%** discontinued at the

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primary level. Only **12.3%** had reached the degree/college level before discontinuation. The distribution therefore shows that educational discontinuation among the sampled respondents was most concentrated at the **upper-primary and secondary levels**.

Findings

1. Monthly family income showed a statistically significant association with current literacy status, $\chi^2(9, N = 300) = 95.278$, $p < .001$, with Cramér's V of 0.325, indicating a moderate association.
2. Monthly family income was significantly associated with educational attainment, $\chi^2(12, N = 300) = 98.595$, $p < .001$, with Cramér's V of 0.331, indicating a moderate association.
3. Educational attainment differed significantly across districts, $\chi^2(8, N = 300) = 16.534$, $p = .035$; degree/college attainment was 19% in Visakhapatnam, 12% in Krishna and 6% in Prakasam.
4. Age at dropout was strongly associated with the last educational level attended, $\chi^2(16, N = 300) = 470.204$, $p < .001$, with Cramér's V = 0.626, indicating a strong association.
5. Educational discontinuation was concentrated at the secondary level (26%) and upper-primary level (25.7%), which together accounted for 51.7% of respondents.

Suggestions

1. Because family income was significantly associated with literacy status, $\chi^2 = 95.278$, $p < .001$, financial assistance should form an important component of literacy and educational-continuation programmes for economically disadvantaged families.
2. Since only 1.6% of respondents from households earning below ₹10,000 reached degree/college level, compared with 28.6% from households earning above ₹30,000, financial support should continue across secondary, higher-secondary and college transitions.
3. Because educational attainment differed significantly across Krishna, Visakhapatnam and Prakasam, district-specific educational interventions should be developed rather than applying an identical strategy across all three districts.
4. Since age at discontinuation was strongly associated with educational level reached (Cramér's V = 0.626), interventions should be designed according to the age and educational stage of the student, rather than through a single uniform model.
5. Because 51.7% discontinued at upper-primary or secondary level, special retention and transition programmes should be concentrated around these educational stages.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the literacy status and educational attainment of Muslim girls who discontinued education are closely associated with their socio-economic background. Monthly family income showed a statistically significant relationship with both literacy status

and educational attainment. Respondents from lower-income households were more likely to report poor literacy and lower educational attainment, while those from higher-income households showed comparatively better literacy and greater progression to higher secondary and degree/college levels. Educational attainment also differed significantly across Krishna, Visakhapatnam and Prakasam districts, with Visakhapatnam showing relatively higher representation at advanced educational levels and Prakasam showing greater concentration at the primary and upper-primary stages. The pattern of discontinuation also varied by age and educational stage. A strong association was found between age at dropout and the last educational level attended, indicating that younger girls tended to discontinue at lower educational levels while older respondents discontinued at relatively higher levels. Overall, dropout was concentrated at the upper-primary and secondary stages, which together accounted for 51.7% of respondents. These findings suggest that interventions should be sensitive to income, district, age and educational stage. Financial assistance, targeted transition support, district-specific strategies and age-appropriate retention measures are important for reducing educational discontinuation among Muslim girls in the study area.

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