A Geographical Analysis of the Social Status of Females in the Bijnor District of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Bijnor district is geographically situated in the western region of Uttar Pradesh in an area rich in agricultural land. More than 50% of the population is engaged in agriculture. Over the years, this region had not been able to make much progress in the political, economic and social fields, which had a huge impact on the social condition of women. The condition of women was not good due to the dominance of a male-dominated society. But over time, the economic and social progress in western Uttar Pradesh tried to improve the condition of the women of this region, which gave them the right to such equality economically and socially. But this progress has not been equal, still many areas are left out. This research paper attempts an honest investigation of the social status of women in the Bijnor district through a comprehensive survey, despite the diverse physical and socio-cultural set-up of the region and to varying degrees. The study is based on primary and secondary data in which mainly primary data has been used. The data were properly structured and analyzed.

Keyword

Women, social status, equality.

Introduction

Women constitute nearly half of the total population and their contribution to the different fields is highly appreciated. Unfortunately, women are still being suppressed and oppressed in different forms of the social, economic and political spheres. Women in India are not free from different types of harassment, gender prejudices, or gender bias in different sphere of life. Social status underscores the relative position of an individual in a given society. At the global level, irrespective of the country variations, overall men and women are almost equal in numbers. In India, too males and females are almost fifty-fifty percent. Despite this encouraging ratio women in India lag far behind their male counterparts in all Socio-Economic Status indicators. In earlier times, women were exploited through every possible means by the society. They suffered a lot of criticism, lacked freedom and stood nowhere next to men. They were even deprived of the basic birthrights of a human beings. It took a lot of effort and courage for them to mark an impression of "women's power" and make a significant place in society. Although, we have already stepped into the twenty-first century, yet the patriarchal mindset prevails and the attributes of an ideal woman continue the same age-old tradition. The Indian society is marred with several paradoxes in the way women are treated. On the one hand, she is worshipped as a deity in many forms such as *Ma Durga, Ma Lakhshmi, and Ma Saraswati*, but on the other hand, the birth of a female child is looked down upon.

Preference for boys is still rampant in Indian society.

Study Area

Bijnor is one of the seventy-five districts of Uttar Pradesh. Administratively the District is part of the Moradabad Division. District Bijnor lies on the coordinates 29° 2' and 29° 58' North and longitude and 78° 0' and 78° 59' South latitude. The length (North to South) of the District Bijnor is 102 kilometers and the breadth (East to West) is 90 kilometers to- third of the population of the District lives in rural areas while one-fourth of the population of the District resides in urban centers. The District's Sex Ratio is 917 females per 1000 males which is a little higher than the Uttar Pradesh's average Sex Ratio of 912. The overall Literacy Rate of the District is 68.5% which is slightly higher than the Uttar Pradesh's Literacy Rate of 67.7%.

Objective of Study

In this study, an attempt has been made to examine the social Status of Women in the Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh on the basis of a field survey.

Data Source and Methodology

The study is primarily based on primary data and wherever necessary

secondary data has also been collected. The data are mainly collected from the field survey, Census reports of the government, National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), Registrar of India, etc. Survey Questionnaire was the mainstay of my research. The status of women in Uttar Pradesh in comparison with the rest of India is examined on the basis of different indicators, namely Female Literacy (FL), Female Workforce Participation Rate (FWPR), Gross Enrolment Ratio, Sexual harassment at the home of women, Role in decision making, and Women's Participation in Decision making/Women Empowerment.

The Survey Questionnaire contained a total of seventy-two binary/multiple choice and one objective question and one short answer question. The Survey Questionnaire was divided into eight sections. Section I *Demographic Details* contained nine multiple-choice and one short-answer question. Section II *Educational Attainment and Career Options* was composed of five multiple-choice questions. Section III *Family Type and Household Size* carried two binary and four multiple-choice questions. Section IV *Household Income and Economic Status* consisted of six binary and five multiple-choice questions. Section V *Household Type and Amenities* comprised of three binary and nine multiple-choice questions. Section VI *Health and Nutritional Status* possessed twelve multiple-choice questions. Section VII *Home Environment* contained seven binary and four multiple choice questions one binary and five multiple choice questions.

Models and Scales

Social status is a catchall phrase that takes into account a variety of "variables that characterize the placement of persons, families, households, census tracts, or other aggregates with respect to the capacity to create or consume goods that are valued in a society". Hauser & Warren, (1996) point out a number of SES indicators including, but not limited to, "educational attainment, by occupational standing, by social class, by income (or poverty), by wealth, by tangible possessions—such as home appliances or libraries, houses, cars, boats, or by degrees from elite colleges and universities" The socio-economic status of an individual or a group of individuals may be perceived as,

"The position or standing of a person or group in a society as determined by a combination of social and economic factors that affect access to education and other resources crucial to an individual's upward mobility". Shaikh & Pathak (2017), define socio-economic status as, "as an individual's or group's position within a hierarchical social structure. Socio-economic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth, and place of residence". Oakes & Rossi, (2003), taking a cue from Wohlfarth (1977), identify "SES as

differential access (realized and potential) to desired resources". By taking into account the three variables of income, education and occupation socio-economic status can be classified into three major categories namely (a) high; (b) middle (c) low. In order to measure the socioeconomic status of an individual or a family social scientists use quite a few scales.

The concept of the SES differs in the continental parlance. The American "approach" seems more ingrained in "objectivity" of key features of educational attainment and the income linked with a particular occupation. The British social scientists focused on "employment relationships" as Stevenson originally proposed, whereas, the Indian models combine the elements of both the American and British models. Here, I critically examine some of the important American, British and Indian models.

In India Rahudkar devised one of the earliest socio-economic scales in 1960. Afterward, various scales have been proposed by Indian social scientists such as B G Prasad Scale (1961) Udai Parikh Scale (1964), Jalota Scale (1970), Kulshrestha Scale (1972), Kuppuswamy Scale (1976), Shrivastava Scale (1978) and Bharadwaj Scale (2001). "Socio-economic Status (SES) is a critical measure that helps to correlate well-being and social status. SES plays a significant role in determining an individual's quality of life, health, social position, and class.
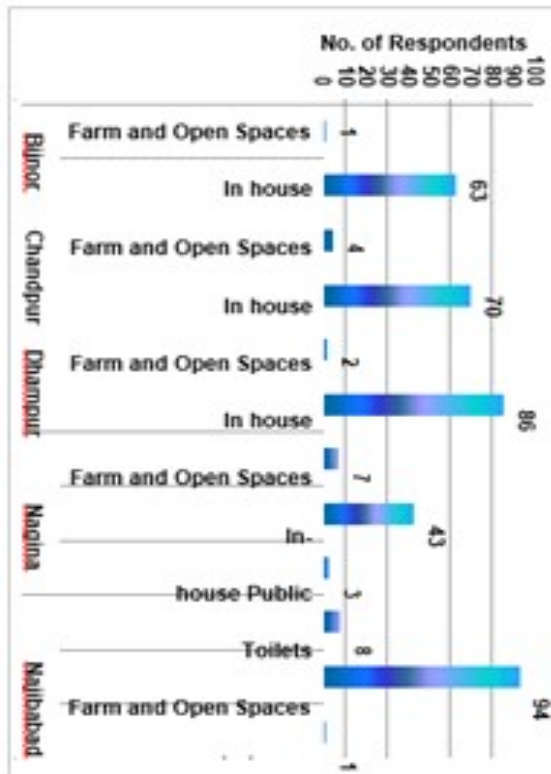
Results and Discussion

The Social status of women in the Bijnor district is examined on the basis of the following graphs which are obtained from a comprehensive study and analysis of primary data.
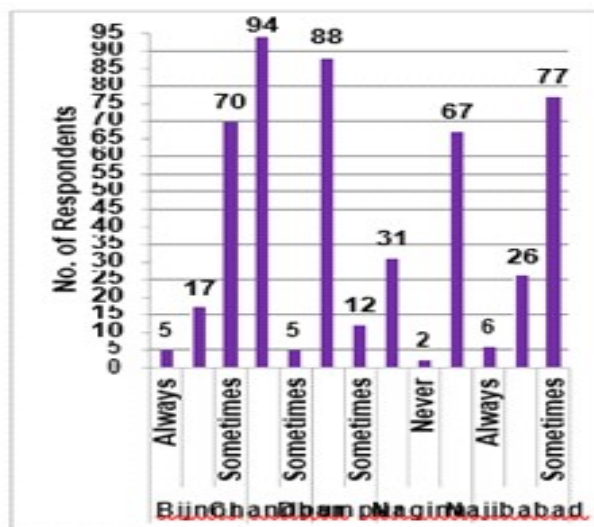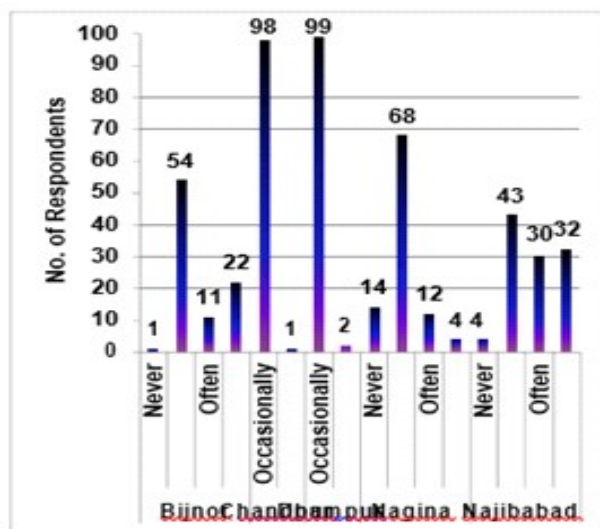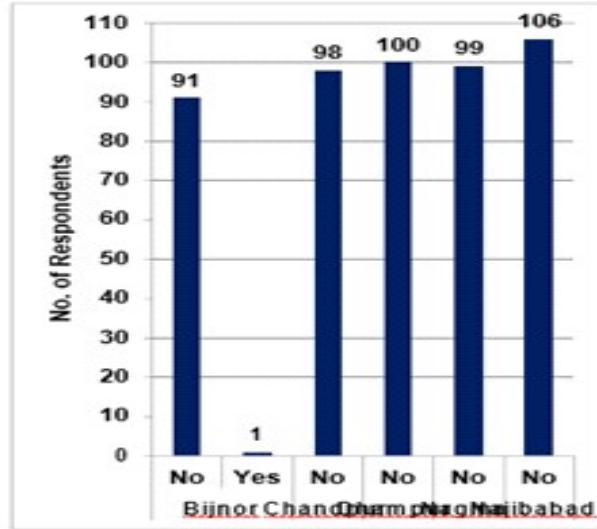

Graph 1
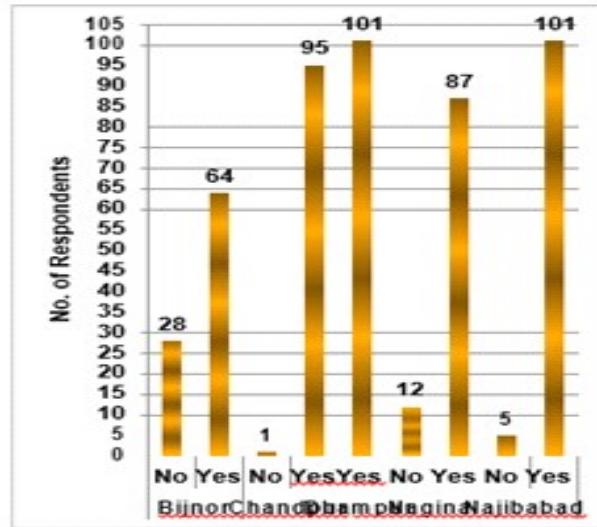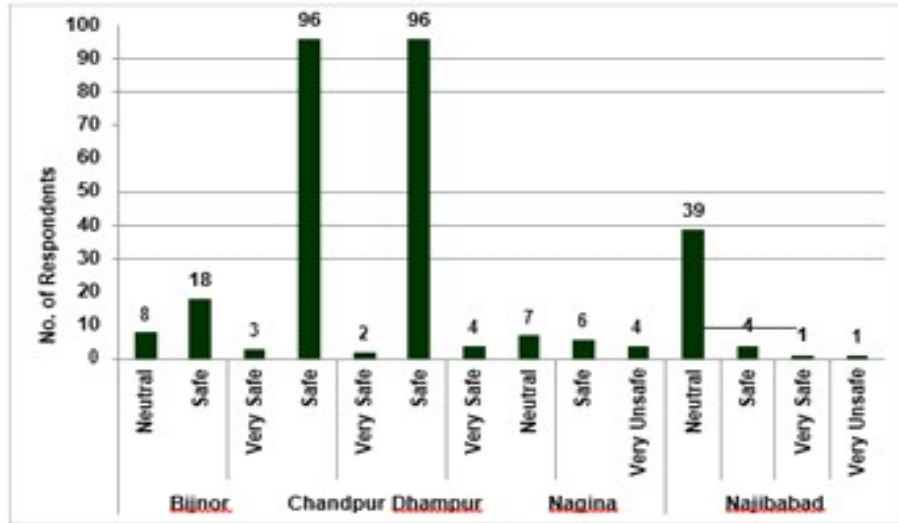
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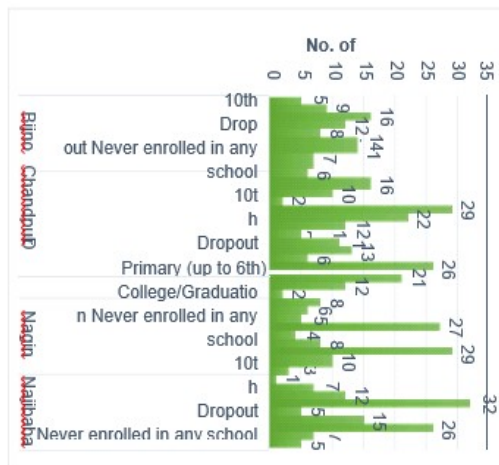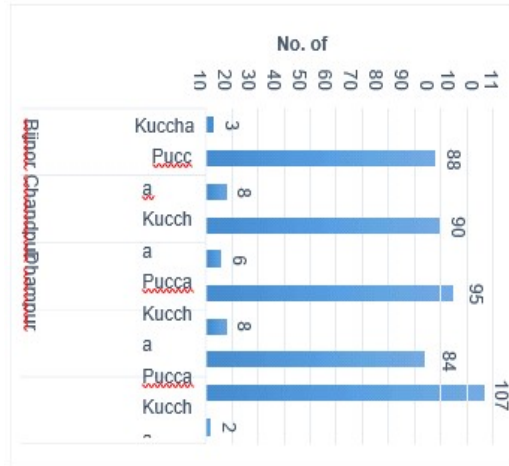
Graph 2

Graph 3

Graph 4

Graph 5

6

Graph 6

Graph 7

Graph 8

Graph 1 shows the dispersion of **educational qualifications of women** respondents in District Bijnor. In Tehsil Bijnor 26 respondents were high school, 62 studied up to 12th, 50 were graduates , 69 were dropouts, 93 held masters degrees, 103 were educated up till 8th, 120 never enrolled in any school while, 59 were educated up till 6th , while 10 held professional degrees.

Graph 2 shows the dispersion of the **house type of women** respondents in District Bijnor. In Bijnor 464 respondents lived in *Pucca* house while 37 lived in *Kuchcha* house.

Graph 3 shows the **defecation place of women respondents** of District Bijnor. In Bijnor 22 respondents go to Farms and Open Spaces while 363 use in-house toilets for defecation.

Graph 4 shows the **gender-based discrimination in the household** of women respondents of District Bijnor. In Bijnor 44 respondents said that they always faced gender-based discrimination at home, 227 said Never and 231 said Sometimes.

Graph 5 shows the **Decision-Making role played by women** respondents of District Bijnor. In Bijnor 19 respondents replied Never, 362 Occasionally,76 Often while 48 Very Often play a role in the Decision making in the household

Graph 6 shows the dispersion of **sexual harassment at the home of women** respondents of District Bijnor. In Bijnor 494 respondents replied that they had never been a victim of sexual harassment at home while 1 was a victim of sexual harassment at home.

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Graph 7 presents the dispersion of **the Decision-Making role played by women** respondents of District Bijnor. In Bijnor 19 respondents replied Never, 362 Occasionally,76 Often while 48 Very Often play a role in the Decision making in the household

Graph 8 demonstrates the dispersion of the **workplace safety level** of 291 women respondents of District Bijnor. 54 respondents were Neutral in their response, 222 women described the workplace safety level as Safe, 10 women responded the workplace safety level was very safe and 5 responded as very unsafe.

Some of the major findings of my research based on the primary data are:

1. Almost 60% of the respondents were middle-aged women between 21-50 years. Around 90% of the women respondents were married and nearly 70% of the married women observed family planning. Well over 90% of the respondents were never subjected to domestic violence..

2. A roughly equal number of respondents lived in Joint Families and Nuclear Families.

3. A close to one-fourth of the respondents were never enrolled in any school, 18% studied up to Middle whereas the Drop Out rate was as high as around 16% (graph). Marriage emerged out as the single biggest factor for the discontinuation of studies among the respondents followed by the disinterest of the women respondent, poverty and the orthodox attitude of the parents/ guardians.

4. Slightly more than 72% of the respondents were homemakers. Two-thirds of the respondents held their personal saving banks accounts (graph). More than 90% of respondents lived in their own *Pucca* houses and 70% used toilets built-in their house for defecation. Around 77% of respondents used LPG as fuel in the kitchen.

5. Approximately 80% of the respondents described their homes as "Safe" and 44% felt "Safe" at the workplace.

6. A slightly more than 70% of the respondents "Occasionally" play a role in major household decisions like a marriage proposal and buying household items

My study was limited only to District Bijnor of Uttar Pradesh and the unit of analysis was Tehsil. Based on my model, for the policy making at the national level, with respect to improving the Socio-Economic Status of women as well as women empowerment in India it is imperative to consider the following points:

1. Periodic revision of Indian Socio-Economic Scales.

2. State/Union Territory may be considered as a Unit of Analysis.
3. A proportionate Sampling method may be applied to ensure that the entire women population of the country is accounted for.
4. Current and updated national spatial data may be made use of for carrying out SES studies of women.

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