

## **IMPACT OF ATTITUDES OF MUSLIM WOMEN TOWARD EMPLOYMENT: A STUDY BASED ON BALANGODA URBAN AREA**

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Attitudes play a crucial role in determining human behavior. Among Muslim women, it is evident that their attitudes are shaped by several factors including the Islamic doctrine and norms related to social institutions, the social environment, the level of education and exposure to outside world. Regarding the employment of Muslim women, both internal and external factors have an unavoidable influence. The attitude of Muslim women is one of the strong internal driving forces that lead them to take decisions regarding employment. Therefore, the broad objective of this study was to identify the attitudes of Muslim women and to analyze how they influence their choices of employment. The qualitative research approach was applied in this empirical study, which was conducted in the Balangoda urban area. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 15 respondents from three different categories. Accordingly, respondents represented the categories of Muslim female students following higher education, Muslim working women, and Muslim housewives. The data collection was done using in-depth interviews, and the collected data were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that Muslim women have both positive and negative attitudes towards employment. These women have developed a strong desire to work outside their homes, which highlights a progress in their attitude. Yet, the study revealed that the stereotypical ideas that they possess, the extent to which the Hijab is permitted, the distance from workplace to their homes, security problems, fear and hesitance to deal with other ethnic communities and the reluctance to challenge the existing principles in society regarding employment have a strong impact on their employment choices. It can be concluded that the attitudes of Muslim women have a strong impact on their career choices. It was found that the positive attitudes of women towards working outside their homes has increased. However, the negative attitudes have imposed limitations on their employment choices. Some Muslim women have limited their choices to narrow fields such as teaching, thus hiding their true potential. The Hijab and the cultural dress code also play a major role in determining employment choices of women. Consequently, some Muslim women's workplace participation becomes limited to a narrow field. Some women were unable to do a paid job outside their homes. Therefore, in addition to addressing the external factors in society, the attitudes of Muslim women towards employment need to be paid attention to in improving the situation with regard to the participation of Muslim women in the workforce.

*Keywords:* Muslim Women, Attitude, Employment

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