

Status of Women in Pinjara Community: A Sociological Analysis

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Abstract: In Islam, there are two Sects mainly, they are Sunni and Shiya. Most of the Muslims in India belong to the Sunni community and people of the Shiya community are rarely found here. Muslims in India are Sunni communities with numerous subgroups. The Pinjara (Pinja, Penja, Bahna, or Dhunia) are named after the phrase pinjala/pinjna, which means "cotton weaver." Cleaning and reeling cotton to manufacture pillows, blankets, and even beds is their traditional vocation. Pinjara women labour as hard as their husbands. The woman also has a branch for heritage work. Pinjara girls and women have a vital role in the traditional occupation that both men and women share. Women perform nearly all of the tasks performed by males, and their partnership is also active in market issues. Despite the fact that they are illiterate, they are well-versed in business.

Keywords: Pinjara, Pinjara Culture , Dalit Muslims, Muslim Subcaste, Converted Muslims

Introduction:

Islam, a systematic religion, originated in the sixth century, around 1400 years ago, with Muhammad Paigambar recognized as its last prophet. The Quran, the holy scripture of Islam, guides followers in principles and rituals. Islam is divided into two main sects: Sunni and Shia, with India primarily having Sunni Muslims. Shia communities are more prevalent in Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan-Afghanistan.

The Pinjara community, with a history dating back 500 years, converted to Islam during Aurangzeb's reign. Named after "pinjala/pinjna," meaning "cotton weaver," they traditionally weave cotton for various products. With approximately 3 million members, the Pinjara people are skilled cotton weavers, gaining expertise after converting to Islam.

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In terms of religious distribution, Hindus constitute a significant portion, with Muslims mainly Sunni, and Christians and Jains also present. The Pinjara community spans India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, residing in around 500 districts and speaking languages like Kannada, Marathi, Bhojpuri, Nepali, Maithili, and Urdu.

Origin of the word – Pinjara:

The term "Pinjara" finds its origin in the weaving term "Pinjana" for cotton. In Andhra Pradesh, they are known as Dodekula, while in North India, they are referred to as Mansur. The Urdu term for Pinjara is Nadaf. Originating from local converts to Islam, the community has traditionally been involved in cotton ginning and commerce. Some Pinjaras claim Rajput ancestry, having migrated from Rajasthan to Gujarat under Ran Singh's rule. Major castes within the community, like Rao, Deora, Chauhan, and Bhati, still identify as Rajput clans, with the majority tracing their roots to Afghanistan.

In Karnataka, Pinjara and Nadaf are considered synonymous, signifying carding or combing cotton. The Pinjara community follows Sunni beliefs in Islam, with Urdu as their mother tongue, and in northern India, they are known as Behana, associated with cotton combing.

Despite their historical significance and prevalence in various districts of Karnataka, engaging in traditional occupations like cotton farming and bedding production, the Pinjara/Nadaf community faces backwardness in education, economics, and social development. Classified as one of Karnataka's most backward castes, they are listed in Category-I, order 94.

Research focusing on the Pinjara community reveals their cultural practices, with Pinjara women playing significant roles as craftsmen. They craft items such as colored wooden rattles (Gilganji), woolen bracelets, provide traditional services like ear and nose piercing, engage in tattooing, and produce Kaajal in a ceremonial manner.

However, Pinjar women face challenges due to globalization. Traditional practices like nose and ear-piercing services are diminishing as doctors offer more sanitary alternatives. The significance of woolen bracelets has faded, replaced by simple black threads. Traditional singing practices, like Menarche ceremonies, have been abandoned, along with the creation of wooden toys and traditional fabric-stuffed birds (Gubbi Chet), replaced by inexpensive plastic alternatives.

Pinjar women adapt by manufacturing additional home-made items and working as domestic servants if unable to engage in traditional employment. The Pinjar community, embodying traits from both Hindu and Muslim communities, faces a decline in regional, occupational, and cultural significance due to the intolerance of majority communities.

This research has collected primary data from 670 respondents through questionnaire. The outcome of the data has been discussed below;

Preference for Girls Education

Table.No.1			
Do you prefer higher education for Girls	Percentage	Respondent s	Tota l
Yes	73.7	494	670
No	26.3	176	670

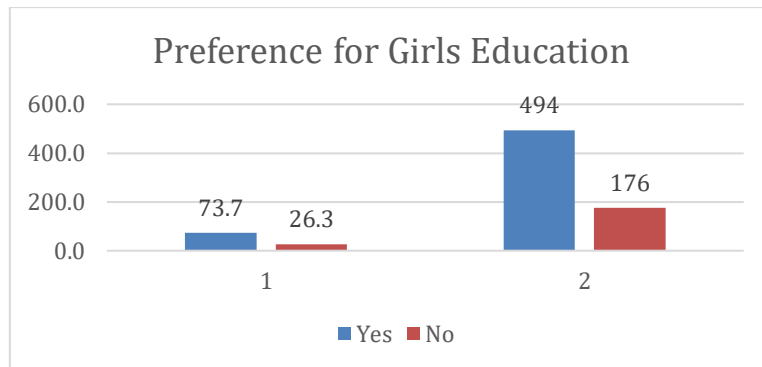


Table No. 1 indicates a positive attitude towards higher education for girls among the surveyed respondents. The data reveals that a significant majority, 73.7% of participants, reported a preference for higher education for girls, while 26.3% stated otherwise. This information reflects a progressive mindset within the community, where a substantial portion recognizes the importance of providing educational opportunities for girls. The high percentage in favor of higher education for girls suggests a commitment to gender equality and empowerment through education. Understanding the factors influencing these preferences can provide insights into the community's attitudes towards gender roles, educational aspirations, and the potential for positive social change within the surveyed population.

- The younger generation has a positive opinion about Girls education
- The older generation had negative opinion about girls education as they are with of opinion that women are meant to take care of the family core works and it is her responsibility to take care of the children and if they go outside then family will loose its strength.

Women Participation in Family Decision

Table.No.2			
Does the women in your family be part of family decision	Percentage	Respondent s	Tota l
Yes	53.7	360	670
No	46.3	310	670

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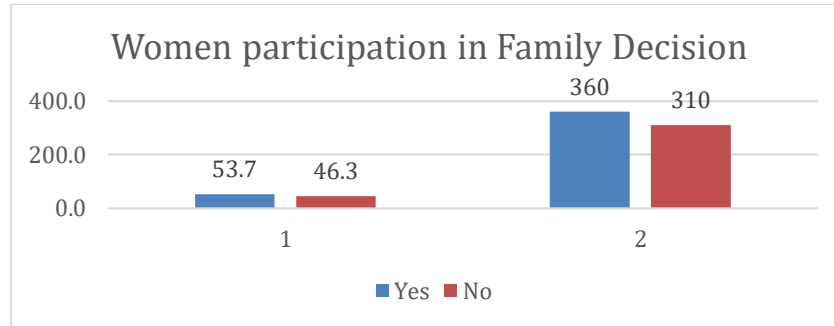


Table No. 2 indicates the level of participation of women in family decisions among the surveyed respondents. The data reveals that 53.7% of participants reported that women in their families are part of family decisions, while 46.3% stated otherwise. This information reflects a mixed pattern in terms of the involvement of women in family decision-making processes within the community. The percentage of affirmative responses suggests that a substantial portion of families values the input and participation of women in important family matters. However, the relatively high percentage of negative responses indicates that there is still room for improvement in achieving more inclusive and gender-equitable decision-making structures. Understanding the factors influencing the inclusion or exclusion of women in family decisions can provide insights into gender dynamics, familial relationships, and the potential for enhancing women's roles within the surveyed community.

- Most of the families allow female to enter into family decisions as they are also the bread earner of the family and contribute to the economic conditions of the family.
- There is an opinion that it is not necessary for the women to participate as they are not the earner in the family.

Gender preference for Child

Do you have preference for boy or girl child	Percentage	Respondents	Total
Yes	28.1	188	670
No	71.9	482	670

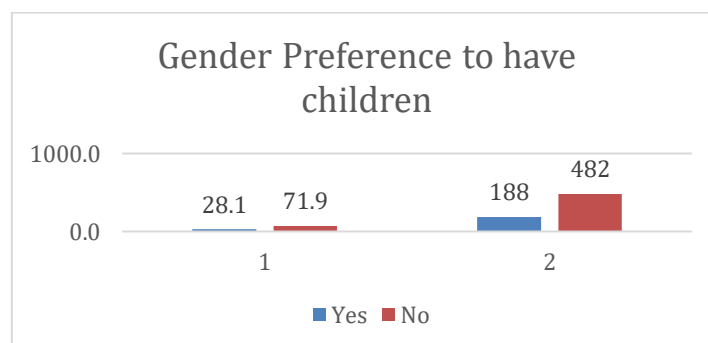


Table No. 3 reveals insights into the preferences for a boy or girl child among the surveyed respondents. The data indicates that 28.1% of participants reported having a preference for either a boy or a girl child, while the majority, 71.9%, stated otherwise. This information suggests a relatively low percentage of individuals expressing a preference for the gender of their child. The majority not having a specific gender preference may indicate a growing awareness and acceptance of gender equality within the community. Understanding the factors influencing gender preferences can provide insights into societal attitudes, cultural norms, and the evolving perspectives on gender roles and equality within the surveyed population.

- There is no preference for male child or female child in particular at present generation, but it is notable that there was sentimental attachment towards male child in the older generation which has changed along with education and social change in the society.

Ownership Of Property within the Family

Do you keep property in the name of women of your family	Percentage	Respondents	Total
Yes	55.4	371	670
No	44.6	299	670

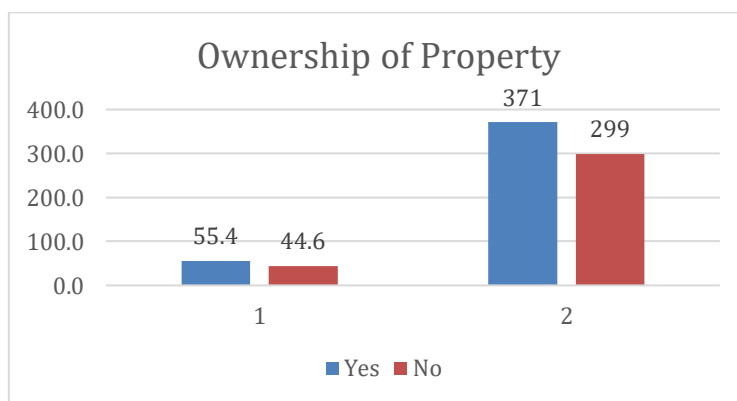


Table No.4 reveals insights into the ownership of property in the name of women within the surveyed respondents' families. The data indicates that 55.4% of participants reported keeping property in the name of women, while 44.6% stated otherwise. This information suggests a moderate level of engagement in empowering women through property ownership within the community. The affirmative responses reflect a positive trend towards recognizing and securing women's financial independence and assets. The minority not keeping property in the name of women may have various reasons, such as cultural norms or individual choices within the community. Understanding the motivations behind property ownership decisions can provide insights into gender dynamics, financial empowerment, and the evolving roles of women within the surveyed population.

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- Even though Pinjaras have Patriarchal family setup they do prefer keeping properties in their head of the family if she is women. This happens where the elderly male of the family is expired.

Financial Freedom of Women

Do the women of your family are free to take decisions in financial aspects	Percentage	Respondent s	Tota l
Yes	54.5	365	670
No	45.5	305	670

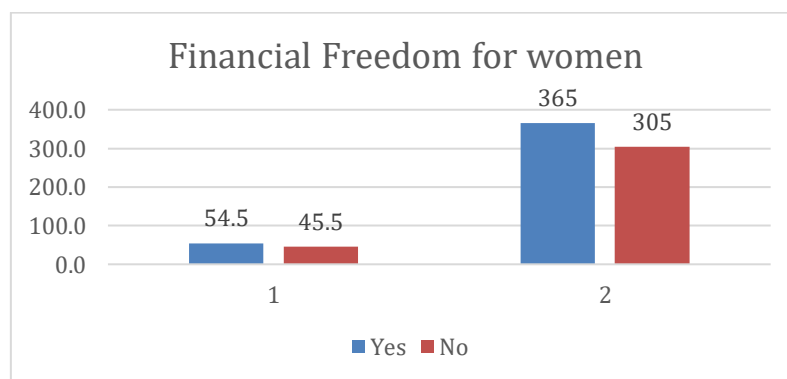


Table No.5 indicates the level of autonomy that women in the surveyed respondents' families have in making financial decisions. The data reveals that 54.5% of participants reported that women in their families are free to take decisions in financial aspects, while 45.5% stated otherwise. This information suggests a relatively balanced pattern in terms of women's autonomy in financial decision-making within the community. The affirmative responses reflect a positive trend towards granting women agency in financial matters. The minority reporting limitations on women's decision-making may have various reasons, such as cultural norms or individual choices within the community. Understanding the factors influencing financial decision-making dynamics can provide insights into gender roles, economic empowerment, and the evolving roles of women within the surveyed population.

- Minor financial decisions are taken by the women for the family where daily maintenance is involved. Major financial decisions are taken by the men in the family

Status of Family Restrictions on women

Do you allow your family women to stay outside overnight	Percentage	Respondent s	Tota l
Yes	54.5	365	670
No	45.5	305	670

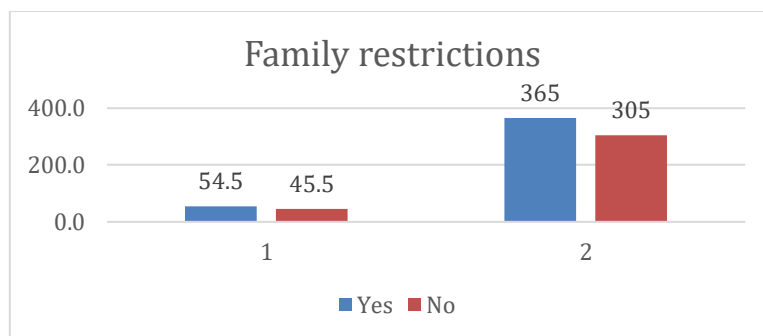


Chart No. 6 depicts the perspectives on allowing family women to stay outside overnight among the surveyed respondents. The data shows that 54.5% of participants reported allowing their family women to stay outside overnight, while 45.5% stated otherwise. This information suggests a balanced pattern within the community regarding the freedom and autonomy granted to women in terms of staying outside overnight. The affirmative responses reflect a considerable percentage of individuals who are open to providing women with the autonomy to make decisions about their time and activities. On the other hand, the respondents who do not allow overnight stays may be influenced by cultural norms, safety concerns, or individual preferences within the community. Understanding the factors shaping decisions on allowing women to stay outside overnight can provide insights into cultural practices, gender dynamics, and the evolving roles of women within the surveyed population.

- There are no restrictions to stay outside for family functions or for the purpose of work. But the older generations use to be at home before sunset. Life style has changed among Pinjara community along with education and social change. Now there is a need to go outside the village.
- As part of Islam, women are not expected to go outside the home, but Pinjaras don't have such kind of orthodox restrictions within the community

Travel Freedom to women

Do you allow women to travel alone to another place	Percentage	Respondents	Total
Yes	54.2	363	670
No	45.8	307	670

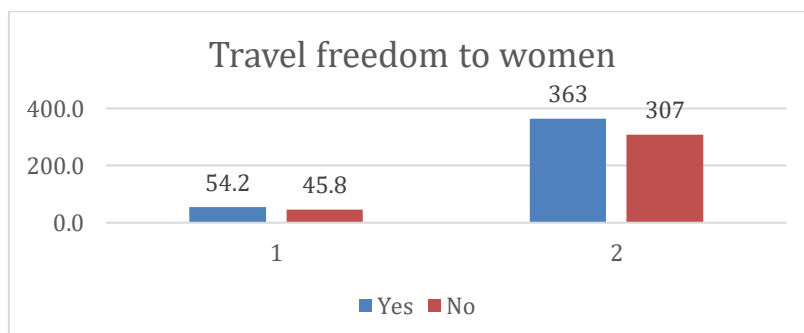


Table No.7 outlines the perspectives on allowing women to travel alone to another place among the surveyed respondents. The data reveals that 54.2% of participants reported allowing women to travel alone, while 45.8% stated otherwise. This information suggests a balanced pattern within the community regarding the autonomy and freedom granted to women in terms of solo travel. The affirmative responses reflect a significant percentage of individuals who are open to providing women with the independence to travel alone. On the other hand, those who do not allow solo travel may be influenced by cultural norms, safety concerns, or individual preferences within the community. Understanding the factors shaping decisions on allowing women to travel alone can provide insights into cultural practices, gender dynamics, and the evolving roles of women within the surveyed population.

- Pinjara community has accepted changes along with social change, there where no restrictions for women to travel. There is no restriction among Pinjara community women in the name of religion as most of the women contribute to family earning.

Women Participation in Family Functions

Do you feel it's important for women to be part of family functions	Percentage	Respondents	Total
Yes	52.4	351	670
No	47.3	317	670

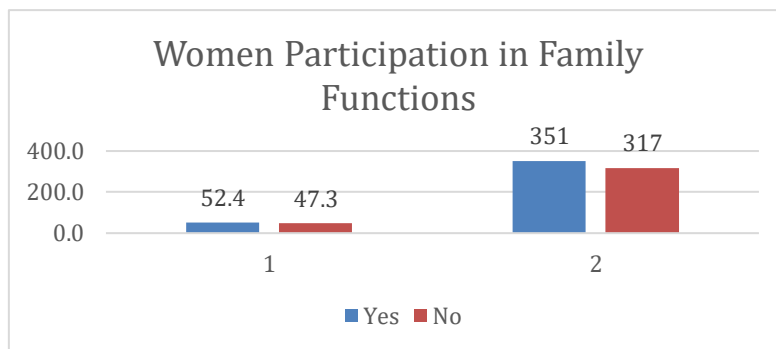


Table No.8 provides insights into the perceived importance of women being part of family functions among the surveyed respondents. The data reveals that 52.4% of participants feel it is important for women to be part of family functions, while 47.3% believe otherwise. This information suggests a relatively balanced perspective within the community regarding the inclusion of women in family gatherings and events. The affirmative responses reflect a significant portion of individuals who recognize the importance of women's participation in family functions. On the other hand, those who do not emphasize women's participation may have varying reasons, such as cultural norms or individual preferences within the community. Understanding the factors influencing perceptions about women's involvement in family functions can provide insights into cultural values, gender dynamics, and the evolving roles of women within the surveyed population.

- Women are given equal importance among Pinjara community, she takes major decisions in the family functions. They are not kept in the sideline of the community.

Recommendations:

Socio-Economic Development:

Skill Development Programs:

Introduce skill development programs focused on enhancing traditional craftsmanship while also providing training in modern skills. This will empower Pinjara women to diversify their economic activities.

Entrepreneurial Initiatives:

Encourage entrepreneurship among Pinjara women by providing financial support, business training, and access to markets. This can help them move beyond traditional crafts and explore new economic opportunities.

Market Linkages:

Facilitate linkages between Pinjara women and mainstream markets to ensure fair pricing and a broader consumer base for their handmade products.

Financial Literacy Programs:

Implement financial literacy programs to enhance the economic decision-making capabilities of Pinjara women, promoting savings and investment in sustainable ventures.

Educational Development:

Educational Initiatives:

Establish educational initiatives targeting Pinjara women, providing access to formal and vocational education. Focus on adult education programs to uplift those who may have missed out on formal education.

Promote Digital Literacy:

Introduce digital literacy programs to empower Pinjara women with skills necessary for online markets, communication, and access to information.

Scholarship Programs:

Initiate scholarship programs to support girls within the Pinjara community in pursuing higher education, encouraging them to break gender and socio-economic barriers.

Awareness Campaigns:

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Conduct awareness campaigns within the community, emphasizing the importance of education for women and challenging traditional gender roles.

Political Participation:

Leadership Training:

Provide leadership training and workshops to empower Pinjara women to actively participate in local governance and community decision-making processes.

Quota Representation:

Advocate for and ensure the inclusion of Pinjara women in local governance bodies, considering potential quota systems to enhance their representation.

Legal Awareness Programs:

Conduct programs to enhance legal awareness among Pinjara women, ensuring they are informed about their rights and can actively engage in political processes.

Cultural Preservation and Integration:

Cultural Heritage Initiatives:

Support initiatives that preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the Pinjara community, ensuring that traditional crafts, rituals, and practices are valued and passed down to future generations.

Inter-Community Dialogues:

Encourage dialogues and interactions between the Pinjara community and other communities to foster understanding, tolerance, and collaboration.

Celebration of Cultural Festivals:

Facilitate the celebration of cultural festivals and events, creating opportunities for the Pinjara community to share their traditions with a wider audience.

By focusing on these recommendations, it is possible to contribute to the holistic development of Pinjara women, addressing socio-economic, educational, political, and cultural aspects, and promoting inclusivity and empowerment within the community.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the multifaceted recommendations outlined above offer a comprehensive framework for the holistic development of Pinjara women, addressing crucial aspects of socio-economic, educational, political, and cultural empowerment. By implementing skill development programs, encouraging entrepreneurship, facilitating market linkages, and promoting financial literacy, we can uplift Pinjara women economically. Initiatives in

education, digital literacy, and scholarships aim to break barriers and enhance opportunities for personal growth. Through leadership training, quota representation, and legal awareness programs, political participation can be fostered. Additionally, the preservation of cultural heritage, inter-community dialogues, and celebrations can ensure a more inclusive and empowered future for the Pinjara community. These recommendations collectively aspire to create lasting positive change and contribute to the overall well-being and progress of Pinjara women.

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