

# Cross-Cultural Socio-Economic Status Attainment between Muslim and Santal Couple in Rural Bangladesh

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**Abstract**—This study compared socio-economic status attainment between the Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh. For this we hypothesized that socio-economic status attainment (occupation, education and income) of the Muslim couples was higher than the Santal ones in rural Bangladesh. In order to examine the hypothesis 288 couples (145 couples for Muslim and 143 couples for Santal) selected by cluster random sampling from *Kalna* village, Bangladesh were individually interviewed with semi-structured questionnaire method. The results of Pearson Chi-Square test suggest that there were significant differences in socio-economic status attainment between the two communities' couples. In addition, Pearson correlation coefficients also suggest that there were significant associations between the socio-economic statuses attained by the two communities' couples in rural Bangladesh. Further cross-cultural study should conduct on how inter-community relations in rural social structure of Bangladesh influence the differences among the couples' socio-economic status attainment.

**Keywords**—Bangladesh, Couple, Cross-Cultural Comparison, Muslim, Socio-Economic Status Attainment, Santal.

## I. INTRODUCTION

SOCIO-ECONOMIC status attainment around the world is the achievement aspect of human behavior across the social systems. An individual with his or her personal socio-economic status attainment not only occupies certain status in the family, group, community or wider society but also acquires certain prestige through which s/he meets his or her day-to-day human needs and solves personal physical, mental and social problems faced in a particular environment [1-30]. Eshleman and Cashion [31] and others defined socio-economic status as an assessment of person's education, occupation and income position within a particular social system. Likewise socio-economic status attainment refers to the achievement of persons' relative position of education, occupation and income within that particular social system [1-30]. This paper focuses on cross-cultural comparison of socio-economic status attainments and its interrelationships between Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh.

The socio-economic status persons singly or collectively attain is socio-culturally constructed and modified in every society. Social scientists separately suggest three approaches to study socio-economic status attainment: Prestige approach by National Opinion Research Center, functionalist approach by Duncan and others, and class approach by Marx and Weber, including its categorical and numerical variables. These approaches generally assume that socio-economic status attainment may vary across the class, caste, sex, religion, race, region etc. due to inequality in property, power and opportunity distribution in the hierarchical social structure in every society.

Based on the assumption relevant cross-cultural comparative studies conducted across the cultures reveal that socio-economic status attainment widely varies: people in the dominant market economy compared to the non-dominant ones achieve high status [3, 6, 9, 13, 19, 21, 25]. These studies argue that without high status achievement people in the highly modernized market economy cannot fulfill their human problems faced in that environment. Other comparative studies reveal that this socio-economic status achievement also varies among the different classes, castes, religions, races, regions within a given culture, because dominant class or cultural group always dominates, deprives and exploit non-dominant classes or cultural groups within a society [1, 10, 11, 15, 24]. Regarding this several researches investigated in multicultural societies indicate that every parental socio-economic status attainment of the cultural groups is transformed into the next generation. As socio-economic status attainment of minority parents or non-dominant groups (Black, Hispanic, Asian and African born) compared to the majority or dominant ones (White) is low, so their children's socio-economic status attainment is also low [26, 30]. In addition, it is widely reported that males' socio-economic status attainment compared to the females within the family and other formal organizations also varies in different cultures: socio-economic status attainment of males is higher than the females. These socio-economic status attainments: education, occupation and income are cyclical process in which low educational attainment by someone influences his or her low prestige job involvement that in turn influences low income rate in the particular social system [3, 28].

Several culture-specific [36, 37, 39-42] and even cross-cultural studies [38, 43-45] conducted across the sub-cultures

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in Bangladesh report that socio-economic status attainment of the dominant group (Muslim) is higher than the minority group (Santal) in rural Bangladesh. These studies clearly argue that most of the minority groups are the poorest of the poor; they have no land property and even settlement land; they, irrespective of male and female, are busy to collect their daily necessity as day laborers. As a result, many of them never go to school for their formal learning and never access to formal labor force participation because of formal learning and their annual family income is very low than the other community groups, such as the Muslim and the Hindu [43-45]. Our research questions on the problem situation: Are the Muslim couples' socio-economic status attainments higher than the Santal couples in rural Bangladesh economy? Are there significant differences in socio-economic status attained by the communities' couples? Are there significant associations between the socio-economic status attainments: education, occupation and annual family income in rural Bangladesh?

Relevant comparative literatures reviewed suggest that socio-economic status attainment not only significantly varies from one culture to another but it also varies among sub-cultures within given the culture. Although these comparative studies conducted in high and moderate market economy contribute to socio-economic status attainment, there is a paucity of comprehensive cross-cultural information on the couples' socio-economic status attainment and its relationships in agriculture-based economy like Bangladesh. Therefore, the first aim of this study was to examine and compare socio-economic status attainment by Muslim and Santal couples and second aim was to explore how the socio-economic status attainments: education, occupation and income of the communities' couples were inter-related to each other in rural Bangladesh economy. These findings of the study explored may contribute to social and behavioral sciences.

## II. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

### A. Background

Community is a group of people who not only share the same belief system but also acquire more or less the status in a particular environment. This community status may vary from other community. The *Muslim* in this country is the dominant group, while the Santal are the non-dominant group. Religiously, the former believe in Monotheism, but the latter believe in animism (Bongas). The former speak in *Bengali* language with the mixture of *Arabic-Urdu* preference. On the other hand the latter speak in *Austro-Mundari*, and sometimes speak in *Bengali* version with the other *Bengali*-speaking people [38, 43-45]. Based on their respective fundamental belief system both the communities interact with agriculture economy for their livelihood. Although about 75% of the rural people live in subsistent economy in which most of them are poor, minority groups such as the Santal are the poorest of the poor. One report indicates that 53% of the rural peoples are

poor and there are 55 million food insecure households and 62% adults are illiterate [32]. It is more interesting that although main occupation of the rural villagers is agriculture, man-land ratio is very low and many of them are landless or near the landless due to law of inheritance, land fragmentation and over-population. Some reports indicate that about 62% of the rural households are functionally landless [32, 33-42]. In the socio-economic situations socio-economic status attained by the Muslim and Santal couples is embedded in rural Bangladesh.

### a. Educational Status Attainment

Educational attainment is a basic criterion not only to acquire social status in the family as well as in the wider community but also the first one to access in formal labor force participation in any society. Educational attainment here refers to year of formal education/ learning recognized by a given society [11, 46]. Relevant cross-cultural researches report that timing of formal education in a particular education system not only varies from one person to another (such as sibling education difference) within a system but also varies between sub-cultures within given society influenced by the parental educational background, aspiration, educator's personal motivation and cognition in education achievement and pattern of job involvement for livelihood [1-14, 16-18, 20, 21, 23-30, 47, 48, 51]. Although education across the levels in Bangladesh is universal, most of the rural people are not motivated for education, because of traditional agricultural economic system in which they almost informally learn how to cultivate land and plant on it. Relevant culture-specific and cross-cultural studies reveal that educational attainment of lower class couples compared to the middle and high class ones is very low: They have no formal education. In cross-cultural studies Uddin [38, 43-45] and others [52-54] found that average years of Muslim couples' education was higher than the Santal couples, because of their high dominance in rural power structure and parental aspiration in education.

*Hypothesis 1: Educational status attainment of Muslim couples is higher than the Santal couples in rural Bangladesh.*

### b. Occupational Status Attainment

Occupational attainment of individual person in an economic system fully depends on his or her educational attainment. Regarding this relevant researches [1-30, 46, 51] reveal that formal education and skill training in any culture are essential involving in formal labor force participation. But what type of job a person will adopt depends on his or her level of education achieved. As most of the rural Bangladeshi are illiterate, so they adopt several occupations related to agricultural system. As many of them are landless farmers, so they work as day laborers. Regarding this Uddin [38, 43-45] and other [52, 53, 55-58] found that both Santal adult men and women take part in agriculture and any other fields as manual labor and work outside the family from dawn to dusk as laborers, because of their low education, landlessness and mass poverty. On the other hand, division of labor between

adult men and women in Muslim community is strictly maintained according to sex norms: Only Muslim adult men are the breadwinner of the family. So they work in agricultural field and other economic sectors. But Muslim women do not work on the agricultural field. They are mainly housewives.

*Hypothesis 2: Occupational status attainment of the Muslim couples is higher than the Santal couples in rural Bangladesh economy.*

#### c. Annual Family Income Attainment

Income of couples depends on their aggregate educational and occupational attainment. Relevant researches reveal that the higher the educational and occupational status the higher the income attainment. Several cross-cultural studies in multicultural societies reveal that annual or monthly family income of dominant group is two-fold higher the minority ones because of their high educational and occupational attainment [1, 10, 11, 15, 24]. Like wise Uddin [38-45] in his cross-cultural studies found that annual income of the Muslim families was higher than the minority families, especially the Santal and Oraon families in rural Bangladesh, because the former had more land property, business and other source of income compared to the later ones.

*Hypothesis 3: Annual family income of Muslim couples is higher than that among the Santal couples in rural Bangladesh economy.*

#### d. Relationship in Socio-Economic Status Attainment

Cross-cultural studies explore that variable of socio-economic status attainment especially education occupation and income are consistently inter-related. That is high educational attainment by respective member of social system influences high job involvement that in turn influences high income [1-30]. Based on relevant literatures review this study mentioned that educational and occupational status attainments of the Muslim couples were higher than the Santal couples in rural area of Bangladesh [43-45]. So, the annual family income of former cases was higher than that among the later cases. Uddin [44, 45] in his cross-cultural studies explored that like higher educational and occupational attainment average annual income of the Muslim families was two-fold higher than the Santal families studied. Therefore, higher educational and occupational attainments of the Muslim couples compared to its counter ones linearly influence more family income.

*Hypothesis 4: there are positive linear relationships between educational, occupational and annual family income attainment by the Muslim and Santal couples in the study area of Bangladesh.*

### B. Methodology

#### a. Samples

Based on the several specific hypotheses derived from the relevant literatures review mentioned in above section this study cross-culturally investigated socio-economic status attainment between Muslim and Santal couples in rural

Bangladesh. In so doing the village *Kalna*, situated in *Tanore Upazila* of *Rajshahi* district, Bangladesh was purposefully selected for this study, where two distinct cultural communities: Muslim and Santal were living side by side as a neighbor. In this village, there were about 380 eligible couples (families): 200 couples were Muslim's and the rest of them were Santal's. In order to collect data from the couples, two separate sampling units were developed: one for Muslim and another for Santal. Each sampling unit was considered as a cluster and each individual person of both the cluster couples was accounted for as a study unit and then 288 couples, 145 couples (72.5%) from the Muslim and 143 couples (79.44%) from the Santal, were randomly selected through cluster sampling. The mean age of the selected samples, who actively participated in this study, was 23.05 for husbands and 15.11 for wives for the Muslim and 20.71 for husbands and 14.34 for wives for the Santal respectively. The samples selected by this sampling procedure were cross-culturally equivalent for cross-cultural comparison of socio-economic status attainment between the communities in rural Bangladesh.

#### b. Variables and Measures

The main comparison areas of this study were to examine and measure the Muslim and Santal community couples' socio-economic status attainments and its interrelationships in rural Bangladesh context. In so doing socio-economic status attainment was categorized into education, occupation and income that were converted into the nominal, ordinal and interval variables [18]. First of all *Community* was nominally measured and coded as 1= Muslim, and 2= Santal; *Couple* was nominally categorized into Husband=1 and Wife=2; *Age* of both husband and wife was numerically counted in year. However, selected couples' socio-economic status attainment characteristics were measured and coded in the following ways:

1. *Education status attainment* was numerically measured in years and then it was categorized into 1= Illiterate (0 year of education), 2= Primary (1-5 years of education) and 3= Secondary (6 and above years of education).

2. *Occupation status attainment* of both husband and wife was nominally measured. For example, husband's occupation (1= Farming only, 2= Farming + Business, 3= Farming + Employment, 4= day laboring, wife's occupation (1= Housewife only, 2= Housewife and Employee, 3= Housewife + Day Laboring).

3. *Yearly total income attainment* was numerically measured in Taka (1 US\$ = 68 Bangladesh Taka in currency exchange) and then it was categorized into 1= Low Income Couple (>20,000), 2= Middle Income Couple (21000-30,000) and 3= High Income Couple (31,000+).

#### c. Instrument and Procedure

This study used cross-cultural descriptive survey design in which quantitative variables (education and income) of the socio-economic status attainment were categorized into several classes to make equivalence with the occupational

attainment, as it was categorical in nature. Based on the measure semi-structural questionnaire with open-ended and close-ended questions on the variables of the socio-economic status attainment was designed, following from several comparative studies [1-30], especially Uddin's [38, 43-45] cross-cultural instruments. As most of the respondents were low socio-cultural statuses, interview technique with the questionnaire was applied for data collection. According to the questionnaire author as a data collector was individually asked for relevant answers to every couple of the community. Sometimes the questions were proved to the specific respondents who could not understand.

Field work for this research was conducted from January to June 2007. In order to collect real and valid data from the selected couples of the communities with the questionnaire the author built up rapport with the respondents to create consciousness about the research purposes and objectives, to make easy them for conversation and to encourage them to active participation in the research. It continued until the completion of data collection. First 4 months of the data collection period were used to build up rapport with the respondents and 2 months were worked for data collection. Most of the respondents of the communities, especially the husbands in the Muslim community and both the husband and wife in the Santal community worked from morning to midday and even round the day in agricultural field. So, the necessary data were collected at afternoon when the respondents of both the communities were leisured, and each individual person of the couple was met within the family setting where they were intensively interviewed for one hour. After completion the interview especial thanks were given to each husband and wife for further contact. In so doing the author conversed in *Bengali* language with the respondents because they all did converse in Bengali language and then the responses of the selected respondents were converted in English by author, because he was skillful in both languages: Bengali as a mother tongue and English as a second language [43-45].

#### *d. Reliability*

The responses given by the selected respondents on the qualitative variables of socio-economic status attainment were reliable in the sense that the interview technique with the semi-structural questionnaire was applied in which both the open-ended and close -ended questions were included and the author as an interviewer was skillful in that technique.<sup>1</sup> In so

doing the author built up rapport with the respondents in which interpersonal trust between the interviewer (author) and the respondents was developed. Based on the interpersonal relationship (subjectivity) the author intensively interviewed every husband and wife of the couples with the questionnaire schedule aimed to collect objective data within one hour in their personal and familial settings [59-61]. In addition, the author also considered cultural and status factors of both the parties (interviewer and respondents) when he interacted with the respondents for data collection. However, although there were many quantitative methods to test reliability of the collected data, this research followed qualitative techniques: rapport building with the respondents, one hour structural interview for per husband and wife of the couple, interview in personal and familial settings, and controlled interpersonal cultural factors to collect reliable responses presented in the result section.

#### *e. Data Analysis*

Based on the main research objective, including the four hypotheses the analysis of collected data was carried out by SPSS. Especially both Pearson's Chi-Squire test and Inter-correlation techniques were applied to find out similarities or differences and associations in the socio-economic status attainment: education, occupation and annual family income distributions between Muslim and Santal couples in the study village *Kalna*, Bangladesh. These statistical techniques to find out cross-cultural differences and interrelationships for the socio-economic status attainment variables included were more relevant, because most of the variables used were numerical (quantitative) in nature [43-45]. The findings of the analysis with frequency distribution and test scores were presented by cross-tabulation.

### III. RESULTS

#### *Differences in Socio-Economic Status Attainment*

In order to compare socio-economic status attainment by Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh, education, occupation and income in the study were measured and compared. In addition, this study also analyzed how education and occupation of the Muslim and Santal couples influence their annual family income in the study area of Bangladesh. The findings of the analysis are given in the tables, 1-6.

#### *A. Educational Status Attainment*

Table 1 and 2 presents data on educational attainment by Muslim and Santal couples studied. The overall data clearly show that educational status attainment of Muslim couples was higher than the Santal couples. Most of the Santal

<sup>1</sup> Because he involved in several research projects for field work. 120 working-days fieldwork (internship) experience at "Family Planning Association of Bangladesh (FPAB)" Rajshahi City, Rajshahi; and "Rural Social Services Program", Mohan Pur, Rajshahi, as a part of B.S.S. (Honors) and M.S.S. curricula respectively.

In both B.S.S. and M.S.S. field practice, I engaged in counseling and motivating persons in adopting program goals. During my field practicum, I learned the skills of applying social work methods. I conducted survey, formed and organized group, motivated the group members, and accelerate social actions for the wellbeing of target groups and underprivileged population.

I was also a data collector in the "Child Survival Project" of UNICEF at Rajshahi office at two phases, on 1 July – 30 August 1993, 1 January – 30 March 2005. In addition, he himself collected data for his Ph. D. research entitled "Family Structure in a Village of Bangladesh: A Cross-Cultural Study. He also involved in periodical researches for doing field work.

husbands (68.53%) compared to the Muslim ones (29.66%) never went to school. Educational attainment of Muslim husbands at both primary (43.45% for Muslim, 22.38% for Santal) and secondary levels or so (26.89% for Muslim, 9.09% for Santal) was higher than the Santal husbands. Like husbands' educational status attainment most of the Santal wives (72%) compared to the Muslim wives (40.69%) had no formal education. In addition, Santal wives' educational attainment at both levels (44.83% and 14.48% for Muslim and 24.48% and 5 cases for Santal respectively) was also lower than the Muslim ones (See Table 2). The findings presented in the tables suggest that the husbands' educational attainment compared the wives in both the communities across the educational levels was higher in the study village, Kalna. However, based on Pearson's Chi-Square test these frequency distributions for both husband and wife's educational attainment were significantly different between the communities at  $p < 0.01$  level.

TABLE I  
RESULTS OF PEARSON'S CHI-SQUIRE TEST ON HUSBAND  
EDUCATION ATTAINMENT BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL  
(N=143), VILLAGE KALNA, BANGLADESH, 2007

Husband's Education attainment	Muslim Frequency	Santal Frequency	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Illiterate	43	98	141	82.65* (.000)
Primary	63	32	97	
Secondary+	39	13	52	
Total	145	143	288	

Note: df= 11, \*  $p < 0.01$

TABLE II  
RESULTS OF PEARSON'S CHI-SQUIRE TEST ON WIFE'S EDUCATION  
ATTAINMENT BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL (N=143), VILLAGE  
KALNA, BANGLADESH, 2007

Wife's Education Attainment	Muslim Frequency	Santal Frequency	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Illiterate	59	103	141	72.29* (.000)
Primary	65	35	97	
Secondary+	21	5	52	
Total	145	143	288	

Note: df= 11, \*  $p < 0.01$

#### B. Occupational Status Attainment

Table 3 and 4 presents data on occupational attainment by the Muslim and Santal couples in the agriculture-based economy of Bangladesh. Occupational distribution by the couples shows that although main occupation of this country is agriculture, most of the Muslim husbands (62.07%) compared to the Santal ones (5.59%) were farmers. That is most of the Santal husbands (83.92%) were day laborers because of landlessness or severe poor. Least of them adopted other occupations, such as employment or business for livelihood. Like husbands' occupational attainment most of the Santal wives (90.21%) adopted day laboring, including house wife role because of the same cause, while the Muslim wives (91.72%) were only housewives due to high gender role segregation. The results of Pearson's Chi-Square test on

educational attainment by the communities' couples were also significantly different at  $p < 0.01$ .

TABLE III  
RESULTS OF PEARSON'S CHI-SQUIRE TEST ON HUSBAND'S  
OCCUPATION ATTAINMENT BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL  
(N=143), VILLAGE KALNA, BANGLADESH, 2007

Husband's Occupation Attainment	Muslim F	Santal F	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Farming	90	8	98	195.05 * (.000)
Farming+ Business	28	10	38	
Farming+ Employee	9	5	14	
Day Laboring	18	120	138	
Total	145	143	288	

Note: F= Frequency, df= 4, \*  $p < 0.01$

TABLE IV  
RESULTS OF PEARSON'S CHI-SQUIRE TEST ON WIFE'S  
OCCUPATION ATTAINMENT BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL  
(N=143), VILLAGE KALNA, BANGLADESH, 2007

Wife's Occupation Attainment	Muslim F	Santal F	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Housewife only	133	8	141	249.86 * (.000)
Housewife+ Employee	7	6	13	
Housewife+ Laboring	5	129	134	
Total	145	143	288	

Note: F= Frequency, df= 2, \*  $p < 0.01$

#### C. Annual Family Income Attainment

Table 5 shows data on annual family income by the Muslim and Santal couples. Data presented in the table clearly suggest that annual family income of the Muslim couples were relatively higher than the Santal couples. Regarding this data by category-wise distributions suggest that low income couples (>20,000 Tk. yearly) in the Santal community were 80.42% compared to the Muslim couples (33.10%). But high income (31,000+) and middle income (21,000-30,000 Tk.) among the Muslim couples (40% for high and 26.90% for middle income respectively) were higher than that among the Santal couples (6 cases for high and 15.38% for middle income respectively). In this respect results of Pearson's Chi-Square test suggest that there were significant differences in annual family income earned by the Muslim and Santal couples at  $p < 0.01$  level.

TABLE V  
RESULTS OF PEARSON'S CHI-SQUIRE TEST ON YEARLY FAMILY  
INCOME ATTAINMENT BY MUSLIM (N=145) AND SANTAL (N=143),  
VILLAGE KALNA, BANGLADESH, 2007

Range of Income Attainment in Taka	Muslim Frequency	Santal Frequency	Total	X <sup>2</sup>
Low	48	115	163	153.79* (.000)
Middle	39	22	61	
High	58	6	64	
Total	145	143	288	

Note: Low Income= >20,000, Middle Income= 21,000-30,000, High Income= 31,000+, df= 42, \*  $p < 0.01$

#### D. Relationship in Socio-Economic Status Attainment

Socio-economic status attainment characteristics, such as education, occupation and annual family income are consistently interrelated. Data mentioned above showed that educational and occupational status attainments of Muslim couples were higher than the Santal couples. As a result annual family income of the former was also higher than the later. For more understanding table 6 presents data on Pearson's inter-correlation coefficients of education, occupation and annual family income attainments of the Muslim and Santal couples in the village studied. Data reveal that there were significantly positive and inverse relationships between the variables of socio-economic status attainment at  $p < 0.01$  level. That is husbands' educational attainment was negatively related to their occupational attainment ( $r = -.346$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ) in turn was positively related to annual family income attainment ( $r = .499$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ). In addition, wives' educational attainment in turn was negatively related to their occupational attainment ( $r = -.379$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ) was positively related to annual family income attainment ( $r = .399$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ) between the communities in rural Bangladesh.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

Purpose of the study was to compare socio-economic status attainment between Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh. For this, we formulated four hypotheses: (1) Educational status attainment of Muslim couples was higher than the Santal couples, (2) Occupational status attainment of the Muslim couples was higher than the Santal couples, (3) Annual family income of Muslim couples was higher than that among the Santal couples, and lastly there were positive linear relationships between educational, occupational and annual family income attained by the Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh.

TABLE VI  
RESULTS OF PEARSON'S INTER-CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS  
BETWEEN NUMBER OF COUPLES, HUSBAND'S EDUCATION,  
WIFE'S EDUCATION, HUSBAND'S OCCUPATION, WIFE'S  
OCCUPATION AND FAMILY INCOME AMONG MUSLIM AND  
SANTAL COUPLES (N= 288), KALNA VILLAGE, BANGLADESH, 2007

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Number of Couples	1				
2. Husband's Education	-.407* .000	1			
3. Wife's Education	-.363* .000	.531* .000	1		
4. Husband's Occupation	.676* .000	-.389* .000	-.354* .000	1	
5. Wife's Occupation	.871* .000	-.409* .000	-.403* .000	.611* .000	1
6. Annual Family Income	-.500* .000	.451* .000	.401* .000	-.455* .000	-.500* .000

Note: \* $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed test)

In order to examine and compare the hypotheses 288 active couples (per 145 husbands and wives for Muslim and per 143 husbands and wives for Santal) from the village

Kalna, Bangladesh, were randomly selected by cluster random sampling. The selected couples were singly interviewed with semi-structural questionnaire method. The findings of *Pearson Chi-Square Test* suggest that there were significant differences in socio-economic status attainment: education, occupation and income between the Muslim and Santal couples in the Kalna village studied. In addition, these variables of socio-economic attainment were significantly related to each other. However, the findings of the study confirm the hypotheses previously determined in rural Bangladesh.

##### A. Educational Status Attainment

Educational attainment was the main comparison area of socio-economic status attainments by Muslim and Santal couples in rural Bangladesh. Regarding this we hypothesized that educational attainment of Muslim couples was higher than the Santal ones in rural Bangladesh. Our findings reveal that most of the Santal couples (68.53% for husband and 72% for wife) compared to the Muslim ones (29.66% for husband and 40.69% for wife) never went to school. At both primary and secondary levels educational attainment of the former couples was also higher than the later cases. Pearson's Chi-Square test suggests that these frequency distributions on educational attainment by the couples were significantly different between the communities at  $p < 0.01$  level. These findings of the study are supported by several cross-cultural studies in abroad [1, 11, 23, 27, 51] and Bangladesh [38, 43-45, 49, 54]. These studies clearly argued that parental low socio-economic status and aspiration and structural inequality were the main causes to access to educational opportunity and educational attainment for the lower class and minority people in abroad. Likely Uddin [43-45] in his studies interpreted that most of the minority people such as the Santal compared to the dominant group (Muslim) never went to school because of their mass poverty and structural deprivation and cultural dominance to them. As a result their educational attainments across the levels were lower than the dominant group in this country.

##### B. Occupational Status Attainment

Occupational attainment was one of the socio-economic status attainment comparisons by the Muslim and Santal couples. For this we hypothesized that occupational status attainment of Muslim couples was higher than the Santal couples in the agriculture-based economy of rural Bangladesh. The findings of this study reveal that most of the Muslim husbands (62.07%) were farmers, while most of the Santal husbands (83.92%) were day laborers. Regarding wife's occupational attainment most of the Santal wives (90.21%) adopted day laboring, including house wife role, while the Muslim wives (91.72%) were only housewives due to high gender role segregation. The results of Pearson's Chi-Square test on educational attainment by the communities' couples were also significantly different at  $p < 0.01$ . These findings are confirmed by Uddin's cross-cultural studies [38, 43-45]

conducted in rural Bangladesh. According to his research although main occupation in this region of Bangladesh is agriculture, most of the minority people are landless and severe poor and even they have no settlement /housing land, as are many lower class Muslims. As a result most of the minority people, including both adult and non-adult sexes are involved in day-laboring. In addition, occupational mobility like many lower class Muslims was very low because of proper and sufficient education, including skill training in rural Bangladesh.

#### C. Annual Family Income Attainment

Lastly this study compared annual family income contributed by both husband and wife. We also hypothesized that annual family income attainment of Muslim couples was higher than its opposite group, the Santal. The results of the study show that low income couples (>20,000 Tk. yearly) in the Santal community were 80.42% compared to the Muslim couples (33.10%). But high income (31,000+) and middle income (21,000-30,000 Tk.) among the Muslim couples (40% for high and 26.90% for middle income respectively) were higher than that among the Santal couples (6 cases for high and 15.38% for middle income respectively) that were significant differences at  $p < 0.01$  level. These findings are also supported by Uddin's several cross-cultural studies [43-45] in rural Bangladesh. In these studies he argued that low educational and occupational attainment, unemployment and landlessness and mass poverty of the Santal compared to the Muslim were the fundamental affecters on their low annual family income in rural Bangladesh economy.

#### D. Relationship in Socio-Economic Status Attainment

Lastly, socio-economic status: education, occupation and annual family income attained by the couples are consistently interrelated. Data mentioned above showed that as educational and occupational status attainments of Muslim couples compared to the Santal ones were higher, so their annual family income was also higher. Pearson's correlation coefficients reveal that there were significantly positive and inverse relationships between the variables of socio-economic status attainment at  $p < 0.01$  level. That is husbands' educational attainment was negatively related to their occupational attainment ( $r = -.346$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ) in turn was positively related to annual family income attainment ( $r = .499$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ). In addition, wives' educational attainment in turn was negatively related to their occupational attainment ( $r = -.379$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ) was positively related to annual family income attainment ( $r = .399$ ,  $p = .000^*$ ) between the communities in rural Bangladesh. These findings are confirmed by Covello & Bollen [25], Rivera-Batiz [26], Kaur & Kalaramna [28] as well as Uddin's studies [44, 45].

#### V. CONCLUSION

Socio-economic status attainment of married couples is the building block of family social structure. The couples with

their socio-economic status attainment not only occupy certain statuses and prestige in the family and the community but also meet human needs and solve familial problems faced in a particular socio-cultural environment. In order to compare socio-economic status attainment, including education, occupation and income this study randomly selected 288 couples, 145 for Muslim and 143 for Santal and interview method with semi-structured questionnaire was applied for data collection. The data collected were analyzed by Pearson Chi-Square test and Pearson inter-correlation techniques. Based on the tests our findings suggest that socio-economic statuses of the Muslim couples were higher than the Santal couples that were significantly varied and inter-related to each other between the two communities in the study village, Kalna, Bangladesh. The results of the study are supported by several studies conducted in abroad and Bangladesh. Based on these studies' findings the present study argues that inequality, deprivation and dominance in rural power structure between the two communities influence variations among the couples' socio-economic status attainment in the study area. Further cross-cultural study should conduct on how inter-community relations in hierarchical rural social structure of Bangladesh influence their respective couples' socio-economic status attainment.

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