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Topic of Research: **A Study of Educational and Psycho-Social Experiences of First Generation Learners Studying in Graduation Programmes**

Keywords: ***First-Generation Learners, Cultural Capital, Social Capital, Higher Education, Psycho-social***

## **Findings**

The study explored the educational and psycho-social experiences of first-generation learners (FGLs) enrolled in undergraduate programmes at Jamia Millia Islamia. The findings revealed that these learners, most of whom came from lower socio-economic backgrounds and rural areas, encountered a range of academic, financial, and social challenges during their journey in higher education. A significant proportion of the participants were female and belonged to reserved categories such as OBC and Muslim minorities. Their parents, often engaged in farming, labor, or low-wage jobs, had minimal formal education, which deprived these students of essential academic guidance and role models. The lack of preparedness due to poor school-level education, unfamiliarity with English, and difficulty adjusting to college culture resulted in low self-confidence and academic anxiety among many. Social and cultural mismatches led to feelings of isolation, lack of belongingness, and difficulties in peer interaction. Financial instability was a major barrier, forcing many students to take up part-time jobs and live in challenging conditions with limited study space and resources.

Despite these hardships, the study highlighted several positive experiences reported by FGLs. Students expressed that higher education broadened their perspectives, improved their communication skills, built confidence, and helped them develop a sense of independence and hope. Many became role models in their families and communities, challenging traditional norms and

inspiring others. They also displayed remarkable resilience and a strong sense of purpose, often relying on digital tools, peer support, and intrinsic motivation to cope with academic and personal challenges. Some students benefited from faculty guidance, though many felt the need for more accessible and proactive institutional support. The study concluded that while first-generation learners struggle with multiple disadvantages, they demonstrate exceptional strength and potential when given appropriate support systems. Their narratives underscore the need for universities to provide targeted interventions such as guidance programs, financial aid, personality development workshops, hostel preferences, and counseling services to enhance their academic integration and overall well-being in higher education.