

**Role of Working Women in Decision Making about Family Matters in
District Poonch Azad Jammu and Kashmir**

Laiba Anwar,

M.Phil. Scholar International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Orusa Islam Asghar

M.Phil. Scholar International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Kanwal Ejaz

Lecturer Department of Sociology International Islamic University,
Islamabad.

Abstract

The present study aims at understanding the Role of working Women in Decision Making about Family Matters. Furthermore, to explore women's autonomy in decision-making among working women under a different family system such as nuclear and joint family in Poonch district AJK. It is generally assumed in Pakistani society that women's status is not equal to men and that men have the privilege of controlling and managing the women's lives. Women of study area, however, present a different picture. Although this study area was a male dominated, but the employed women, as the findings of the study revealed are more empowered and independent they makes their own as well as their family's decisions. They also make decisions regarding children's education. The present study also revealed that majority of the respondents perceived that their position in family is so sound because of their employment. In addition to, the participation of working women in each issue was a self as well as the joint with their husbands and other family members. This study concludes that the status of women enhances their involvement in the decision-making on the basis of their working conditions because through their employment they contribute for family income.

Keywords: family structure, decision making power, working women, male dominated.

Introduction

“A woman is the full circle. Within her is the power to create, nurture and transform.”

Diane Mariechild

The quote stated above demonstrates that women are the entirety of the world and have the absolute power to regulate society and cultural transition. Earlier, men have more responsibilities for bringing money to his family and women only have to do household and traditional tasks. But the situation is totally changed in current trends; women have started taking their feet outside the houses and start earning bread and butter for their families. Men's earned money isn't enough for the family's survival so women started working with men to support their family tree.

Throughout history, men have been entitled to take decisions in all aspects of life, both public and private. In the context of a patriarchal system that imposes itself at all levels, women's participation in the decision-making process has been limited (Nader Said-Foqahaa, 2011). With society's shifting perspective on women and its position in various activities both within and outside the family system, the father's conventional, male chauvinistic function as one to hold the family's best decision-making capacity has also undergone dramatic transformation (Anonymous, 2011). Without the meaningful participation of women and the inclusion of women's experiences at all decision-making stages, the aims of progress for equity and stability cannot be met (Karl, 1995).

Women empowerment is more influential in contemporary history than they have been at any other time. Women have also gained authentic status in society worldwide and have access to upgraded positions of authority that are much better than the past 30 years, e.g. parliamentary judiciary, from certified associations to boardrooms (Domingo & O'Neil, 2015).

Higher education has enabled women to access the most productive employment in the present era, which is really supporting women in bringing about a change in the economic power structure of the family (Patil, 2016).

Possession of economic capital, properties, jobs, services and allowing women to have more ownership and control of them, such as getting the power to make decisions at home—it is more valuable particularly when economic capital is combined with cultural and social, such as education (Klugman et al., 2014). Women's work is increasing their access to financial resources, managing the increase in income and reducing the burden of household spending. Because of their ability to share the income of the household, women will build up their position inside and outside the home and enhance the equality in family decisions (Krishnaraj & Chanana, 1989).

Working women in metropolitan fields with more command over their income are expected to be more probable than females in rural fields to be engaged in family planning conversations with their husbands. Adoption of family planning is more followed by women's education (Furuta, 2006). Economic cravings play a crucial part in configuring disparities between males and females. The significant dimension for assessing family status is the power of women over economic assets (Standing, 1991).

Married Women with paid employment and education are more probable to be involved in decision-making (Roth, 2001). Women's freedom in decision-making is definitely linked to jobs, schooling, number of kids and age. No independence in decision-making could be exercised by rural females without education (Ahmmed & Chakraborty, 2012).

Review of Literature

Women have been given very low social values and very little autonomy power in many of the societies of Asia. In this way they have been considered as a small role in household level decision making. Positive relationship between women autonomy and decision making has been shown in many of the reports. Currently in global economy, numbers of women are sharing borders for work purpose. It has become significant to realize women's relative power cross ways numerous frameworks and necessary measures required so autonomy remains flexible

enough to put up related changes. In Pakistani society male is considered as dominant power and its tradition to give male dominated power, control over resources, highest status and position than female. Women's autonomy is considered only when there is case of its inhibiting effect on productiveness and nursing child mortality. The women empowerment is low in many cases like physical movement and is considered high in economic decision making and in household decisions taking (Anwar et al., 2013).

A study in South Asia, especially in Pakistan's rural setting, which discovered a factor that affecting the women's autonomy is her age factor, it is proved from research that women age is influencing her personality however marital status is also affecting women autonomy in many ways. Results of the detailed interviews showed a lot of variations regarding their decision-making autonomy. Researches and daily observations viewed married women have better family decision-making autonomy than unmarried women doing same social work and from equivalent background. Married women encountered shared decision making practices in their families (Cheema, 2017).

Women's employment is sharing their contribution towards financial resources, getting control over income increase and lessening burden of household expenditure. Due to their ability to share family's budget, women are able to build up their position inside and outside the home and reinforce independence in family decisions (Krishnaraj & Chanana, 1989).

Involvement of both genders in decision-making results into healthy society which is only possible if the household is structured on the power balance. It is an accepted and acknowledged reality that women play a really significant and critical part in a family (Bajwa, 1980).

Study conducted in Multan exposed that 42.9% employed women need permission to go outside, 36% stated that their brothers got more freedom as compared to them from their parents (Issaquah & Ali, 2010). Addressing gender bias in Pakistan a number of issues arise yet our country is far from ideal situation

where abundant advantages to women in term of cash empowerment made by social protection projects has proved improved decision making authority for them. For reproductive health facilities, women are more expected to save households from transportation and nutrition to medical treatment, education, fuel, lighting, footwear and clothing (Batool, 2009).

Married Women with paid employment and education are more probable to be involved in decision-making. Women's freedom in decision-making is definitely linked to jobs, schooling, number of kids and age. No independence in decision-making could be exercised by rural females without education. Women with completed greater education are regarded to have marriage contract (93.3%), have greater purchasing authority (46.7%), are self-directed in policy-making choices (86.7%), while females who are illiterate have no freedom to speak in marriage choices, have null procurement authority (0.0%) and have 77.8% political decision-making. Contraceptive use is closely linked to decision-making autonomy rather than movement autonomy (Shelly, 2009).

Married women's labor market possibilities are one of the most probable external choices determinants compared to males. Although the impact of jobs (sometimes in a specific industry) and earnings labored as a consequence has been researched in a few papers before on negotiating authority or its results (Dharmalingm & Morgan, 1996; Anderson & Eswaran, 2009; Atkin 2009; Heath, 2014). The connection between labour market opportunities and bargaining power of women has observed very low consideration. It is noteworthy that a family bargaining theory forecasts a number of employment accessible to females and it is the most significant event in literature, irrespective of whether or not a female chooses to take part in the bonded labor market (or in a collaborative partnership), this will increase women's bargaining power within families (Majlesi, 2015).

Decision making about private and social matters affect the entire family members and the decision-making by men or women increases the individual

status in the family. Women support their family as a mother, wife, daughter and a sister living with multiple role and duties (Sultana, 1995).

The decision-making capacity of women is affected by several variables such as socio-cultural variables, religion, education, jobs, marital status and sort of household. Feminist interventions monitored to support the involvement of women in decision-making during work, in their community, in any organisation or in government lives. Feminism also led to the abolition of obstacles to acquiring d in Indian society (Menon, 1989).

Regulatory role in a family is accompanied with the oldest member, and decision-making power is focused in him/her (oldest person) for making any choice on behalf of the family members it occurs generally in the traditional dual family. The significance of women's household independence has long been recognized as imperative figure in affecting choice making, reproductive behaviour and other life style practices. Family is one of the world's most prominent institutions, but the meaning of the bond between household members considerably changes over nationalities (Sharma et al., 2014).

Chanda et al. (2006) findings stated higher education status women have freedom in choice making for a great level of buying the things in differentiate to uneducated women and primary education level of women. In political issues literate women enjoy full liberty to cost their vote anyone according to their choice. It is as easy for highly educated women to make decision in casting their votes to any candidate. Contrary to it, on other hand situation was completely changed in case of illiterate and middle level educated women or illiterate one. They can vote only according to their husband's wish (Maral & Kumar, 2017).

At nation level, women's jobs are seen as an important variable that places fertility and fertility modifications at the core of most illumination (Brewster & Rindfuss, 2000).

Improvements in women's education rates improve women's jobs percentage. The involvement of women in the labor force enables them to become

economically more autonomous and to hire the greatest possible access to social facilities and the use of contraception (Kabeer, 2005). Higher levels of domestic decision making power are also worthy to women's ability to control their fertility.

Today, in different respects, females are more powerful. Some surveys argue that only if a female exercises power over how her salary is consumed will jobs be allowed. Employment may not be substantially permissible unless females control their own revenue (Malhotra & Mather, 1997).

Acharya et al. (2010) discover that paid jobs are more well-meaning than unpaid jobs. This ties to the previous models suggested Manser and Brown (1980), which claims that work functions as a tool endowing females in their phase of intra-household negotiation. Employment allows females to interact with the outside world and allows females to immediately or indirectly control their authority.

Kabeer (1997) also describes that it is somewhat probable that unimportant plausibility to control her money will empower females. Employed female offering economic assistance to her household is stronger in making her own and household choices.

Methodological Design

The study was carried out under the methodology of qualitative research in district Poonch AJK. Researcher was interested in qualitative methodology because her ontological and epistemological stance was interpretivist. A sample of 17 married working women was taken as per judgment of researcher because number of married working women was limited (purposive sampling). The data was gathered from respondents with the help of the interview guide in the present study. The interview guide was used as a tool to collect primary study data. An interview guide is a collection of questions asked in face-to-face interaction from the respondents. The gathered data was analyzed through the thematic analysis of the qualitative method. Codes were assigned to similar interviewee responses. This enabled me to recognize differences and similarities in the perception of the

respondents in respect of specific aspect of a phenomenon being investigated. I put together similar responses and derived themes from them. This helped me to get similar responses to themes.

Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

Present study excluded unmarried and non-working women as primary interest of researcher was to find out the role of married working women of the age category of 25-40 years.

Data Analysis

Several working women were interviewed as a part of this research. They were asked about how and how much they are involved in household decision making. They co-operated and replied happily and in detail. In response to question one of the respondents said *"My husband works abroad. He is not at home so I take all family related decisions myself. My husband has given me freedom. I share my decisions with my husband. I make family budget myself. If there is something that is to be bought or to be sold, I am independent in that too. As an employed woman is always an educated one, so she knows how to maintain the budget. She designs her budget keeping in mind the resources."*

This excerpt directs that, women's employment represents their access to financial resources, income control, and household spending contributions. They are able to strengthen their family position and strengthen autonomy in family decisions because of their ability to share family budgets.

Another interviewee holds similar views. She says, *"My husband and I take mutual decisions. Any decision related to family, buying and selling of property, children's education or marriages of children are taken mutually. We end up with our opinions to be adjusted 50% each in the final decision. It doesn't happen that my husband gives importance to his opinion and devalues mine. We have equal participation in decisions"*.

On questioning regarding freedom to choose the health institutions, one of the employed women shared how her husband has been very supportive for her

and allowed her to take important decisions of her life, due to her established position at home. She says, *“I have two daughters, and in both of my pregnancies, I choose the hospital myself. My sister is a doctor and she recommended me the hospital. I discussed with my husband and finalized that hospital. My in-laws had an objection that why did I chose the hospital myself. But my husband supported me and he gave importance to my decision. My babies were delivered in the same hospital which was chosen by me.”*

Autonomy of women in decision-making on health care is extremely crucial to enhancing reproductive and child health results and empowering women.

In response to a question regarding family planning, many respondents said, *“We have full freedom in family planning; we plan our family as we want. All children that we have are with our desires. Nobody, neither our in laws nor our husbands have imposed their will upon us that when and how many children are to be procreated”.*

This excerpt indicates that, most of the working women had positive responses towards their involvement in family planning and reproductive decision-making. Working women are in a position to make joint decisions on the method of family planning. Most working women enjoy greater freedom and greater power in matters of reproductive and family planning. Access of women to education, especially the advanced level of opportunities for education, increases the employment and income of women. This could expand their ability to make decisions.

Yet another employed lady highlighted how her relation with her husband is strong and friendly and she is free to decide how many children to produce. She says, *“My husband and I have a very friendly relationship. There is no burden upon me that when and how many children should I produce. I work, so I prefer to have fewer kids because i stay out of house from morning till evening. Instead of having many kids I think it is better to have few kids, so that children don't get ignored. I have two daughters, they are with my desire and as an*

educated woman I can understand that if we have more children we would not be able to afford them because of limited resources, I wish that I provide my daughters a safe and healthy life. I planned my family as I wished."

This excerpt highlights that, Married women who have paid for work and education are more probable to be engaged in decision making. Independence of women in decision-making is strongly related to jobs, education, number of children living and age.

CONCLUSION

Women participate in decisions concerning their family's significant domestic needs and budget, which are traditionally male- assigned roles, as a consequence of a better economic position for women in the home. Consequently, earning an independent income has led to an increase in capacity of women to exercise a 'voice' in the household decision-making process. It also confirms the fact that by becoming a cause of credit and family income, women's position in the household can be enhanced, leading to a revaluation of their contributions to household survival. This is important as it is a reflection of household level enhanced power resulting in greater choice in allocating household resources, especially for those previously disenfranchised.

References

- Acharya, D. R., Bell, J. S., Simkhada, P., Van Teijlingen, E. R., & Regmi, P. R. (2010). Women's autonomy in household decision-making: a demographic study in Nepal. *Reproductive health*, 7(1), 15-19.
- Ahmed, S., & Chakroorty, M. (2012). What determines female autonomy? Evidence from Bangladesh. *Journal of Development Economics*, 90(2), 179-191.
- Anderson, S., & Eswaran, M. (2009). What determines female autonomy? Evidence from Bangladesh. *Journal of Development Economics*, 90(2), 179-191.
- Anonymos, G. (2011). Taking Action to Improve Women's Health through gender equality and women's empowerment. *The Lancet*, 365(9458), 541-543.

- Anwar, B., Shoaib, M., & Javed, S. (2013). Women's autonomy and their role in decision making at household level: a case of rural Sialkot, Pakistan. *World Appl Sci J*, 23(1), 129-136.
- Atkin, D. (2009). Working for the Future: Female Factory Work and Child Health in Mexico, 33(1), 1-4.
- Bajwa, S. K. (1980). A Study of rural women participation in work and decision making on farms. M.Sc. Thesis, Dept. Rural Sociology, Univ. Agri. Faisalabad, 8(16), 15.
- Batool, A. G. (2009). Economic mobilization and women empowerment: A case study in village karimabad. *Explorer*, 2, 457-468.
- Brewster, K. L., & Rindfuss, R. R. (2000). Fertility and Women's Employment in Industrialized Nations. *Annual Review of sociology* 26, 271-296
- Chanda, K.S., Howlader, H., & Nahar, N. (2006). Educational status of the married women and their participation at household decision making in rural Bangladesh. *International Journal of Advancements in Research and Technology*, 1(6), 2278-7763.
- Cheema, K.S. (2017). Educational status of the married women and their participation at household decision making in rural Bangladesh. *International Journal of Advancements in Research and Technology*, 1(6), 2278-7763.
- Dharmalingam, A., & Morgan, S. P. (1996). Women's Work, Autonomy, and Birth Control: Evidence from two South Indian villages. *Population Studies*. 50(2), 187-201.
- Furuta, D. (2006). Education, Employment and Women's say in Household Decision Making in Pakistan, 4(16), 35-37.
- Heath, R. (2014). Women's Access to Labor Market Opportunities, Control of Household Resources, and Domestic Violence. *World Development*, 57, 32-46.
- Issaquah, M. Z., & Ali, M. (2010). The Socioeconomic and demographic determinants of Women work participation in Pakistan. *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 24(2), 351 – 367.

- Kabeer, N. (1997). Women, wages and intra-household power relations in urban Bangladesh. *Development and Change*, 28(2), 261–302.
- Kabeer, N. (2005). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 13-24.
- Karl, H. (1995). Perception of working and non-working women on their relative empowerment in self decisions in urban families. *Indian Psychological Review*, 60(1), 10-16.
- Klugman, B., Moorti, T., & Sharma, R. (2014). Participation of rural women in decision making. *Indian Journal of Extension Education*, 29, 40-47.
- Krishnaraj, F. & Chanana, M. (1989). Women, wages and intra-household power relations in urban Bangladesh. *Development and Change*, 28(2), 261–302.
- Majlesi, K. (2015). Labor market opportunities and women's decision making power within households. *Journal of Development Economics*, 119, 34-47.
- Malhotra, A., & Mather, M. (1997). Do schooling and work empower women in developing countries? Gender and domestic decisions in Sri Lanka. *Sociological Forum*, 12(4), 599–630.
- Manser, M., & Brown, M. (1980). Marriage and household decision making: A bargaining analysis. *International Economic Review*, 21(1), 31–44.
- Menon, M. (1989). Marriage and household decision making: A bargaining analysis. *International Economic Review*, 21(1), 31–44.
- Nader, S. F. (2011). Decision making power among women in joint and nuclear families. *Asian Journal of Home Science*, 9(1), 29-34.
- O'Neil, T., & Domingo, P. (2015). The power to decide: Women, decision-making and gender equality. *London*, 6(16), 49-51.
- Patil, M. (2016). Stress level of working and non-working women. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 3(4), 31-37.
- Roth, A. (2001). studying the factors associated with women's participation in family decision making (Case study: Northern Khorasan, Iran). *European Journal of Experimental Biology*, 4(1), 553-556.

- Sharma, N., Jan, M., Masoodi, F., & Ghan, I. (2014). Decision making power among women in joint and nuclear families. *Asian Journal of Home Science*, 9(1), 29-34.
- Shelly, M. (2009). Perception of working and non-working women on their relative empowerment in self decisions in urban families. *Indian Psychological Review*, 60(1), 10-16.
- Standing, F. (1991). The role of women in decision making in the family with the special reference to Kamrup District. *International Journal of Engineering Sciences and Technology*, 4(6), 440-444.
- Sultana, D. (2003). Role of rural women in decision making with respect to animal husbandry practices. *Indian Journal of Home Science*, 14(2), 18-21.