

Women's Household Decision Making Power: A Case Study of Rohtak District of Haryana

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ABSTRACT

Decision making power of women refers to the ability of the women to take decision related to her life and the area where she has been given the responsibility. However, it is well known fact that women do not have ability to take decision independently since the role of women was confined to the four walls of the house. Moreover, it is the husband who is considered as breadwinner and head of the household, consequently he becomes the major decision maker. Therefore the present study was undertaken to assess the decision making power of women within the household which is considered as the prime responsibility of the women. The study was undertaken by using primary data collected by using structured interview schedule. The results showed that women have considerable decision making power in some matters such as household related matters, children related matters and personal matters. However, in some decision making areas such as financial matters and mobility related matter she has lesser autonomy to take decision independently.

1. Introduction

The term empowerment is defined as "the process by which women take control and ownership of their lives through expansion of their choices". Therefore empowerment refers to having ability to make decision in spite of resistance from society to be subordinate to men. In Fourth world conference on women that took place in Beijing in 1994 it was emphasized that empowerment of women shall be the utmost important agenda for the development of society. It was also emphasized that "Women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account". Decision-making power has a multidimensional aspect such as economic, personal, civil, social, cultural and political and is bring out by providing motivating factors and removing restraining factors. Household decision making power of women refers to the women's capability to make decision related to her life despite of facing opposition from others.

Women play a vital role in the welfare of the family; they are viewed as home makers. Family is the smallest unit where women can have say in decision-making. Therefore empowerment of women should start from home itself i.e. it is need of the hour that women should take part in the household decision making process so that their needs and desires are taken into account. The status of women in household determines women's ability to take decisions. Women's ability to influence or make decision that affect their lives, their household and their future is considered to be one of the most important component of women empowerment. It is widely asserted gender equality in household will maximize the overall welfare of the household. Therefore, decision-making power being an important component of women empowerment, it would be worthwhile to assess household decision making power of women.

2. Review of Literature

Casique (2000) conducted a study to identify factors that affect decision making power of married women within the household by using National Survey of Family Planning, 1995. The results showed that women could take decision autonomously for family issue, child rearing and daily expenditure. However, women have very less autonomy in taking decision about whom to visit and spending money. It was also identified that women's education status, age and husband's education has positive impact on decision making power of women while rural accommodation and number of children has negative effect on decision making power on women.

Holvoet (2005) conducted a study to find out the impact of microfinance provided by Non-government organizations on decision-making power of female using quantitative and qualitative research methods. The study found that giving loans to the women in their names give incentives to women to take participate in decision-making process. It was also found that credit given through group savings has greater positive impact on decision-making area where generally men were the major decision makers.

Mekonnen and Asrese (2014) conducted study to examine participation of women in household decision making and to assess factors that lead to women's involvement in decision making. By using binary logistic regression model it was found that residence, education status and household income has positive impact on enhancing household decision making power of women. It was also found that cultural belief, restricted mobility of women, lack of confidence among women were the reason for low participation of women in decision making. It was recommended by the study to give property and land rights to the women which will enhance their bargaining power.

Twyman, Useche, and Deere (2015) conducted study to examine impact of land ownership on agricultural decision making of women by using data of Ecuador Household Asset Survey, 2010. It was found that individual ownership, relative share of women in household wealth and field work done by women has positive impact on participation of women in decision making. The study also found that women land owners have relatively lesser involvement in decision regarding use of farm inputs while they have considerable power to take decision regarding spending farm income.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the profile of the respondents on the basis of their socio- economic characteristics.
2. To examine the household decision-making power of the women in various matters concerning household i.e. household matters, financial matters, children related matters, personal matters and mobility related matters.

4. Research Methodology

The present study is based on primary data collected by way of employing structured interview schedule. A sample of 90 married women was taken randomly by the researcher from the Rohtak district of Haryana. Convenient sampling technique was used for analyzing women’s household decision-making. To assess the decision-making power of women questions were asked on 5 matters i.e. Household matters, Financial matters, Children related matters, Personal matters and Mobility related decision. The decision on these matters could be taken by four ways i.e. independently by women, their husband, and joint decision by husband and wife and by other family members including in-laws.

5. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This section of the presents major findings of the study of the study to assess the degree of autonomy enjoyed by women in household decision making.

▪ **Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents**

Table-1
Age structure of the respondents

Age Structure	No of Respondents	Percentage
21-30	28	31.11
31-40	26	28.89
41-50	25	27.78
51 above	11	12.22
Total	90	100

(Source: Field Survey)

The above table-1 shows the age structure of the respondents. It is observed that 31.11 per cent of the respondents comes under age group 21-30, 28.89 comes under 31-40 age group, 27.78 per cent comes under 41-50 while only 12.22 per cent comes under 51 above age group.

Table-2
Education status of the respondents

Education Status	No of Respondents	Percentage
Metric	9	10
Senior Secondary	20	22.22
Graduate	37	41.11
Post Graduate	24	26.67
Total	90	100

(Source: Field Survey)

The above table-2 shows the education status of the respondents that were surveyed. As depicted in the table-2, 10 per cent of the respondents were metric, 22.22 per cent of the respondents have done senior secondary, 41.11 per cent of the respondents were graduate while 26.67 per cent of the respondents were post graduate.

Table-3
Occupation status of the respondents

Occupation Status	No of Respondents	Percentage
Housewife	30	33.33
Self-Employed	38	42.22
Employed	22	24.44
Total	90	100

(Source: Field Survey)

The table-3 presents occupation status of the respondents. It is observed that most of the respondents were self employed i.e. 42.22 per cent, 24.44 per cent women were employed while 33.33 per cent of the women were housewife.

Table-4
Caste composition of the respondents

Caste Composition	No of Respondents	Percentage
General	66	73
OBC	17	17
SC/ST	9	10
Total	90	100

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-4 shows the caste composition, wherein 73 per cent of the respondents comes under general category, 17 per cent comes under OBC category while only 10 per cent of the respondents comes under SC category.

Table-5
Family type of the respondents

Family Type	No of Respondents	Percentage
Joint Family	60	67
Nuclear Family	30	34
Total	90	100

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-5 depicts the family type of the respondents. It is observed from the above table that 67 per cent live in joint family while only 34 per cent lives in nuclear family.

▪ **Household decision making power of women**

Table-6
Decision-Making on Household Matters

Decision Variable	Decision Maker				
	Self	Husband	Others	Both	Total
Cooking	56 (62.22)	3 (3.33)	12 (13.33)	19 (21.11)	90 (100)
Household Chores	47 (52.22)	9 (10)	9 (10)	25 (27.77)	90 (100)
Family Matters	1 (1.11)	22 (24.44)	16 (17.77)	51 (56.66)	90 (100)

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-6 depicts the decision taken on household matters, it is observed that 62.22 per cent of the women could take decision independently on cooking, 52.22 per cent of the women have autonomy in taking decision related to petty household chores while only 1.11 per cent could take decision independently on family matters.

Table-7
Decision-Making on Financial Matters

Decision Variable	Decision Maker				
	Self	Husband	Others	Both	Total
Purchasing Jewellery	23 (25.55)	27 (30)	9 (10)	31 (34.44)	90 (100)
Selling and buying Property	0 (0)	44 (48.88)	16 (17.77)	30 (33.33)	90 (100)
Spending Money	38 (42.22)	25 (27.77)	2 (2.22)	25 (27.77)	90 (100)

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-7 depicts the decision taken on financial matters, it is evident from the table-2 regarding purchasing jewellery 25.55 per cent of the women could take decision independently, in respect of buying and selling property no women could take decision independently. However, women have relatively more autonomy in spending money as responded by 42.22 per cent of the women.

Table-8
Decision-Making on Children Related Matters

Decision Variable	Decision Maker				
	Self	Husband	Others	Both	Total
Children's Health	16 (17.77)	17 (18.88)	7 (7.77)	50 (55.55)	90 (100)
Children's Education	35 (38.88)	10 (11.11)	4 (4.44)	41 (45.55)	90 (100)

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-8 depicts that decision taken on children related matters i.e. children's health and education. It is evident from the table-8 that 17.77 per cent of the women could take decision independently on children's health while relatively greater percentage of women could take decision on children's education independently i.e. 38.88 per cent.

Table-9
Decision-Making on Personal Matters

Decision Variable	Decision Maker				
	Self	Husband	Others	Both	Total
To Study	33 (36.66)	37 (41.11)	7 (7.77)	13 (14.44)	90 (100)
To Work	37 (41.11)	35 (38.88)	5 (5.55)	13 (14.44)	90 (100)
Where to Work	38 (42.22)	28 (31.11)	4 (4.4)	20 (22.22)	90 (100)
Purchase something for her	47 (52.22)	29 (32.22)	2 (2.22)	12 (13.33)	90 (100)

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-9 depicts the decision taken by the women on matters related to their personal life. It is observed that 36.66 per cent of the women can take decision independently on decision to pursue further studies after getting married, 41.11 per cent could take decision independently on working after marriage, 42.22 per cent of the women could take decision herself regarding where to work and 52.44 per cent of the women could take decision independently to purchase something for herself.

Table-10
Decision-Making on Mobility Related Matters

Decision Variable	Decision Maker				
	Self	Husband	Others	Both	Total
Visit Market	54 (60)	23 (25.55)	8 (8.88)	5 (5.55)	90 (100)
Visit Relative	16 (17.77)	43 (47.77)	10 (11.11)	21 (23.33)	90 (100)
Visit Social Gatherings	18 (20)	31 (34.44)	8 (8.88)	33 (36.66)	90 (100)

(Source: Field Survey)

Table-10 depicts the decision taken by women on matters related to their mobility, it is evident from the table-10 that only 17.77 per cent of the women could take decision independently to visit relatives, 60 per cent of the women could take decision independently to visit market and 20 per cent of the women could take decision independently regarding visit to social gatherings.

6. Conclusion

The core objective of the present study is to assess the degree of autonomy enjoyed by women in decision making within the household and to assess profile of the respondents on the basis of their socio-economic characteristics. The study found that women have relatively greater decision making power in some decision variable under different sub categories i.e. household matters (cooking and household chores); financial matters (spending money); children related matters (children's education); personal matters (to work, where to work and to purchase something for her) and mobility related matters (visit market). However, women have lesser autonomy in some decision variables i.e. in household matters (family matters), financial matters (purchasing jewellery and buying property); children related matters (children's health); personal matters (to study) and mobility related matters (visit relatives and visit social gatherings). To conclude women have lesser autonomy

in financial decision and mobility related decisions which suggest that patriarchal beliefs still holds true. Further, to enhance the bargaining powered women, it is recommended

that property rights of women should be strengthen, women should be encouraged to participate in labor force and education of women should be given priority.

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