

Impact of Female Empowerment on Family Decision-Making: Evolving Roles in Marriage, Education, Employment, and Social Life

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The importance of women in family decision-making has repercussions for marriage, health, education, employment, and social life which is the potential goal of the current study. The data was collected by using structured interviews by using snowball sampling techniques and results described that majority of the women are still oppressing by male dominance. Results showed that 57% of participants have an understanding about patriarchal society. Results about contribution in family decision making were very interested especially about children's education 36% women have authority to decide about their education. But the situation was different about decision of children's profession, 36% described that they are deciding with mutual understanding about their children's professional career. And 28% of the results showed that fathers have authority to take decisions about it. But, in this modern time things are going to change. The reason of this change is concluded by education and job opportunities for females.

1. Introduction

In context of human culture, family is a group of people who have relations (by birth, marriage or other etc.), similarity in culture, language etc. (Letiecq, 2024). In context of sub-continent especially in Pakistani culture, family system is very strong with their relation, levies, customs and state society (Hussain et al., 2022). Family is one of the most basic institutions of human society (Florea, 2022). Its system, structure, roles and responsibilities changed with the passage of time (Zimmerman, 2023). Recently, the change motivated by economic development and transformation of modernity increase serious questions about capability of the family as a social institution.

Decision making is a procedure of creating the best choices by identifying problems, decision, collecting information and assessing other solutions (Thakkar, 2021). Women's role in family decision making is known as an important decision which in turn has implications for marriage, Health (reproductive behavior), education, employment and social life (Chowdhury et al., 2023). In this patriarchal system, women are neglecting since hundreds of years and the role of women within the family decisions or related to their own lives is very deprived of mind because joint family system is existing and in joint family system male dominance is providing clear image which is also known as patriarchal system (Saini, 2023). In patriarchal society or male dominant weather, they want education, better health facility, employment, social life and marital consent as well (Mahmood, 2002; Mahmood, 2023).

All nations and communities must use women and men as a resource (Sharma & McLean, 2025). Women have been essential to the development of the political, economic, and ecological settings in addition to the promotion of family well-being (Gonçalves et al., 2021). However, restrictions imposed by customs, government, religion, etc. on women's roles and social standing in the past. Women therefore have less opportunities than men to perform their part in society. Based on the gender status of men and women, the role of women and men in the relational pattern of decision-making and division of labor in the family is established. One of the key elements in the interaction between the husband and wife in the home is the gender roles. The primary function of a woman is that of a housewife, who oversees taking care of the home and raising children (Ja'far & Hermanto, 2021). One method of empowering women is through family decision-making (Lecoutere & Wuyts, 2021). Participation in household decision-making considers the presence of a female in the family. The subject of women's participation and how they contribute economically, socially, and culturally is regarded as being significant in all civilizations. The previous few decades have seen a change in how families make decisions. Women's changing roles, increased education, and increased labor market participation are crucial factors in altering how families make decisions.

1.1 Research Objectives

In past, male dominant culture, women's participation within family setup was very low. Specially, in decision making about children's education, professional career, marriages men have authority to decide about them and women were ignored. However, the conventional family

structure in Pakistan is currently undergoing a reorganization, which has altered the function of families. The status of women's family participations has changed in Pakistan because of increased female education, changes in occupation status and residential style that led to living in cities and new regions. As a result, the answer to the question of who makes decisions in the family may now be very different from in the past. The current study intends to investigate *“the factors affecting women's participation in family decision-making, such as children's schooling, children's jobs, and children's marriages in Pakistan's patriarchal society, given the significance of married women in family decisions.”*

2. Literature Review

Since the previous two decades, the idea of women's independence has become increasingly significant in social studies. The degree of access to and control over material and social resources inside the family, in the community, and in society at large is described as independence in early literature. There are multiple factors make educated women more independent in family decision making. In other side illiterate women have less access in social services and family infrastructure. The role of women in family decision-making is quite low in many Asian communities due to poor social standing and low levels of female independence within the family. Numerous studies show a strong link between women's independence and their participation in family decision-making (Agarwala and Scoot, 2006).

Women contribute significantly to the welfare of the family in developing nations. They are essentially seen as the future mothers and housewives. Therefore, it has been considered that one of the key elements that may have an impact on the family's well-being is the ability of women to make decisions inside the family. To attain equality and harmony in the family and the nation, it has been highlighted that women's active participation in decision-making at all levels is crucial. Despite the significance of women's involvement in family decision-making, women's decision-making power is somewhat constrained in third-world countries.

Studies on family decision-making reveal that men typically hold sway over financial resources. Males frequently make decisions about how to handle the family's finances in general. The basis for many other elements of family life is established by this. In a study on professional men and their wives, decisions were categorized into those that were extremely important and those that were thought to be significant for both men and women. Wives only made a lot of extremely significant decisions, such as those involving money. Both frequently collaborated on big decisions like how to educate the kids. However, women were only in charge of decisions that were deemed insignificant and unimportant by both the husband and the wife, such as choosing the interior decor of the home. The level of involvement and role specialization of each family member, the quality of the marriage, the decision-making history of the family, and the effect of children are just a few of the variables that affect how each person influences decision-making.

Pakistani society is also having patriarchal society, where male has power to take decisions and control over all resources about family (Sathar, Callum and Kazi, 1988). Pakistan is a



patriarchal country, and the imbalanced separation of caste, class, and sexual preferences forms the foundation of its social growth. In society, tasks and responsibilities are assigned based on sexual distinctions, and social spaces are set up in accordance with the segregation of men and women (Naqvi and Shehnaz, 2003). Although women's roles in family decision-making on finances and other matters are adequate, they have very limited physical mobility (Haque, Islam, Tareque and Mostofa, 2011). The amount of influence that women have in family decisions also varies depending on where they live, with women having a much greater influence in urban areas than in rural ones (Sathar and Mason, 1993). The goal of this study was to identify the factors that contributed to married women's engagement in family decision-making in Pakistan's patriarchal society.

Families in Pakistan tend to spend more money on women's favored items (such clothing and education) when they have more influence over family decision-making. Family members are also more expected to enroll their children in school, especially girls (Hou, 2011). Researchers from various fields concur that family members can make distinct decisions. However, conflict makes final decisions less likely, particularly when both the male and female heads of the family are involved (McElroy & Horney, 1990; Chiappori, 1992; Basu, 2006). The majority of findings depending on income distribution, according to researchers, may be within the family. In Pakistan, there are about 20% female workers, making it possible to assess the influence of women in this area (Gitter & Barham, 2008). The study looks at the connection between human development and women's ability to make decisions on things like children's schooling. In general, women are stronger in the areas of nutrition, health, and education for children. These presumptions are supported by some empirical studies, but this study has challenged some of them. It demonstrates that if a woman has more decision-making power than a man, she will have access to a larger portion of the income generated by child labour and will therefore benefit from it (Felkey, 2005; Basu, 2006; Lancaster et al., 2006; Basu, 2006). The study investigates the fundamentals of rural Pakistani women's self-sufficiency. The majority of previous studies on women's status in Pakistan dealt with women's status in general or with metropolitan regions. Although Northern Punjabi women have less financial clout than Southern Punjabi women, they have more freedom of movement and decision-making power. Village-level gender structures are significant predictors of women's self-sufficiency (Zeba & Shahnaz, 2000). Women in India still have less chances than men, notwithstanding equal rights protections under the post-independence period's Indian constitution (India Today, 2015) The Bishop of Kenya emphasized, "Train a woman and you build a nation. Train a man and you train an individual" (Mehta & Saraswat, 2014). Gender roles in the family are related to the family, which appears to be interactive. As a daughter it implies that a mother or a father exists. The feminist movement has an impact on gender roles in several ways both inside and outside of the home. Women who work for pay or compensation are employed. Due to financial constraints, women must leave the safety of their homes, but once they do, they are left with little time to care for their children (Chusmir et al., 1990).

The traditional role of the housewife has gradually given way to a variety of working and domestic roles. Everyone's ability to earn a living is a manifestation of their economic independence (Chouhan et al., 2016). When it comes to changing thinking and attitudes, education and financial freedom are crucial. Women's general development and awareness are facilitated by education (Ahmed & Mistry, 2010; OECD, 2012). According to research, there are no significant differences between married and single women in terms of their decision-making abilities. Typically, women have less decision-making ability and rely primarily on male and family decision-making (Jan & Akhtar, 2008). Baliyan (2014) noted that women's roles were only shown to be significant in minor home difficulties. While males often made the final decisions regarding several important family matters, women frequently played an authoring role in these matters. In rural India, women's engagement in family financial decision-making is quite low, particularly in agriculture and other home economic affairs (Baliyan & Bano, 2014). This has an impact on women's socioeconomic standing, according to Bano. Women were kept from participating in many decisions affecting their everyday employment because of gender disparities. Women's choices and obligations are constrained by certain standards (Bano, 2014; Dost et al., 2011).

The body of evidence demonstrates how little women participate in making decisions. Women's poor participation in family decisions about careers, income, kids, or anything else has been shown by patriarchal culture. Men and women make the same choices when it comes to family and public life. Women occasionally even lack control over their time management. As in the literature mentioned above, it became important to research how women make decisions in the household. Home is viewed as the women's domain, which she essentially cultivates. Such a study can deepen our understanding of women, particularly as it relates to how we perceive choice circumstances.

3. Research Methodology

This study was conducted using a case study methodology. A case study is a detailed, in-depth analysis of one person or a small group of people. Usually qualitative in nature, these studies produce a narrative account of behavior or experience. Cause and effect analysis, generalizable truths, and prediction-making are not the goals of case study research. Instead, the investigation and description of a phenomenon are prioritized in case study research. The key traits of case study research are its ability to incorporate both objective and subjective data to reach an in-depth knowledge, its ability to provide a high level of information, and its tight emphasis.

In this study, qualitative research was employed. All married Pakistani women were included in the study's statistical population. 14 women were chosen via purposive sampling due to the specific character of the study population and the variety of ethnicities. These women almost spent their married life between 20 to 30 years. Selection of these females are very relevant about this study the reason is they all are mature and experienced, their children almost married and educated they were involved in all the procedures regarding children education decision,

their professional career and most important their marital decision. They have fieldwork designed as a combination of case studies, key informant interviews and secondary data collection. The percentage of women who participate in family decision-making and the factors that influence it are analyzed in the interview guide.

3.1 Data Collection Method

Data collection has been done through telephonic and recorded for in-depth interviews of 14 women who get marriages at-least 20 to 30 years before. It is not an easy task for researchers to identify the participants and take their consent. Even during data collection or interviews interviewers faced many issues including identification of participants, time issues, call interruption, participant's behavior and so many others. So, before taking interviews participant's consent was very necessary because without their consent it is not possible to find out the actual reason. Some females did not response in proper way. During data collection interviewers identify the participants through different links. All interviews are taken in recorded form with the consent of participant. These recoded interviews are helpful to explore the real issue of women where they are facing issue due to male dominance society.

3.2 Nature of Participants

Table No 1: Nature of Participants

Participant (Unreal Name)	Duration of Marriage Life	Marital Status	Qualification	Occupation	Family System	Family Size
Dr. Kasloom	26	Married	MBBS	Doctor	Joint	09
Ms. Alina	20	Married	Master	Teaching	Nuclear	04
Ms. Hina	25	Married	Bachelor	Data Administrative	Joint	06
Ms. Hajra	26	Married	Master	Housewife	Joint	08
Ms. Sonia	25	Married	Master	Housewife	Joint	07
Ms. Shazia	27	Married	MSc	Housewife	Joint	07
Ms. Farzana	22	Married	MPhil	Housewife	Joint	08
Ms. Hamida	21	Married	Master	Teaching	Joint	06
Ms. Kiran	24	Married	Master	Research Fellow	Nuclear	03
Ms. Naila	22	Married	Bachelor	Housewife	Joint	06
Ms. Nazia	20	Married	Master	Housewife	Nuclear	05
Dr. Amara	20	Married	PhD	Housewife	Nuclear	03
Dr. Umm e Habiba	26	Married	MPhil	Housewife	Nuclear	03
Ms. Ayesha	23	Married	PhD	Teaching	Nuclear	03

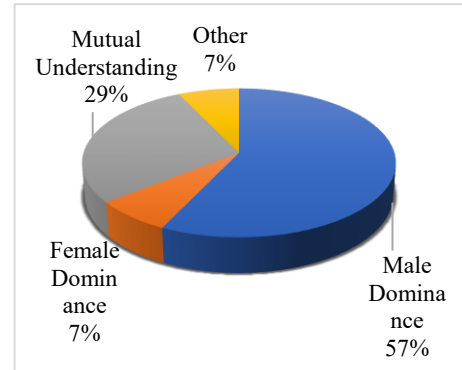
4. Research Results and Discussions

This section includes the research results and its detailed discussions.

4.1 Research Results

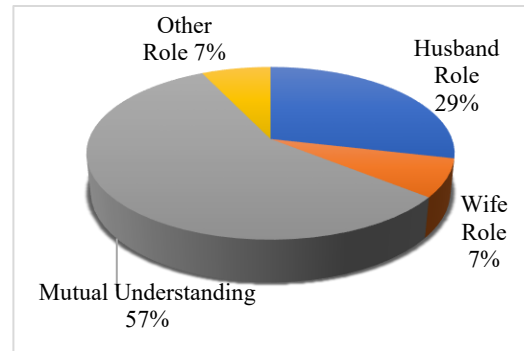
4.1.1 Understanding about Family Decision Making in Patriarchal Society

Decision related to household work are known as family decision making but in Pakistan's society 57% females thinks that role of male is dominant in family decision making because this is patriarchal society. These 57% participant's response shows that male elders including father-in-law or husband are dominant and playing a vital role in family decision making. Due to educational and employment opportunities things are changing right now. 29% of couples are taking decisions with mutual understanding within the family. Only 7% families have different situations where female have dominance about family decision making. And same 7% are those families where third persons like mother-in-law or father-in-law are taking decisions related to families.



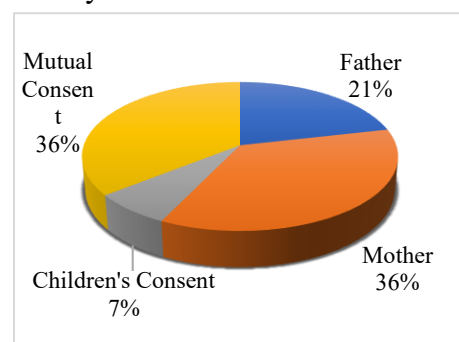
4.1.2 Division of Roles in Family

Education and employment opportunities for females are playing a vital role to change the situation of Pakistani society. As per results role of husband and wife are being change with the passage of time. Right now, 57% results explained that Husband and Wife are divided their roles equally with mutual understanding. In 29% families are still existing where male is sole person how are taking decisions. Only 7% families are existing where female are dominant and taking family decisions individually, they just inform their husband and do it what they want to do. Only in 7% families where other people like father-in-law, mother in law are involved in their family decisions.



4.1.3 Contribution in Children's Educational Decision

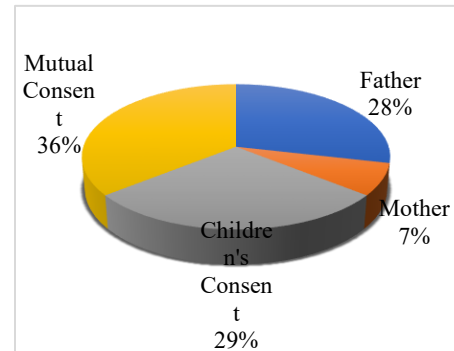
In a family both male and female are contributing equally but as per patriarchal background people's perception are different. So, after analysis the results of women contribution within the family related to their children's education, the results are given a different picture where 36% contribution of mother is prominent where they are deciding about their children's education or schooling. And 21% of participants responded that their participation is very low in household decisions and their husbands are dominant within the family, that is why their husband will decide about children's education. Participant's response



showing that scenario is going to change and 36% people are changing their minds related to their children education in Pakistani Society. They are deciding the educational future of their children with mutual understanding. Only 7% of participants answer that at this time their children are too young but when they grow up, they will decide themselves as per their performance and interest.

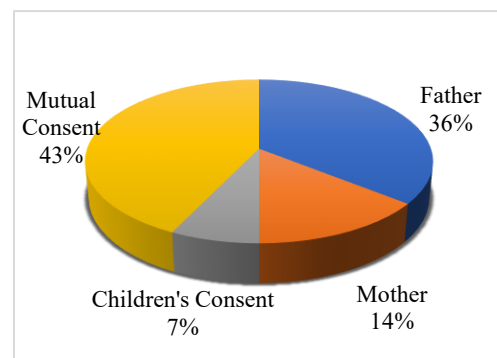
4.1.4 Contribution in Children's Professional Career Decision

In the matter of children's education mothers are more conscious and passionate. They are more interested in their schooling, but things have changed a little bit about the professional career of their children. So, the results show that the contribution of mothers and their fathers is equal as 36% of participants decided that their children's future career depends on their interest and academic performance. So, they are taking decisions as per their interests and performance. Whereas 28% of participants respond that their husbands are taking decisions about their children's professional career. And 29% of participants respond about children professional career is up to their children because it is related to their performance and interest. Only 7% of mothers respond that they are taking decisions about it.



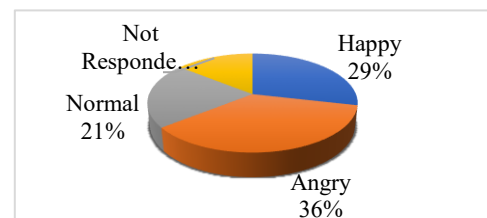
4.1.5 Contribution in Children's Marital Status Decision

About children's marital decision mother's contribution is equal as father, 43% of the participants respond that they are deciding about their children marriage with mutual consent and 36% participants respond that their husbands are deciding about it because they are dominant in their families. 14% of participants respond that they are deciding, or their opinion is very valuable about their children's marriage decision. Just 7% of participants respond that they did not force their children and it's up to them where they are interested or want to marry.



4.1.6 Reaction on Against Decision

Normally we think that people feel angry, and their reaction is very harsh when things are happening against their consent or expectations. But here the result shows that there is a minor difference between happy and angry reaction when decisions are taken against their expectation or consent. Results show that only 36% female feel angry when their husbands or their family has been taken decisions against their consent and 29% females are happy or satisfy on their husband and family decisions. But as per participants results the things are different in joint family decision because in joint family elders or male are taking decision that is why women



ignored in decision making decision that is why 21% women's reaction is normal at the time of decision which are taken against their consent. Only 14% of participants did not respond to their reaction.

4.2 Discussion

After analysis researchers summarized the results about women role in family decision making especially in patriarchal society of Pakistan where men are very dominant. Results shows that majority of the women are still oppressing due to male dominance. As per results almost 57% participants respond that about understanding of patriarchal society is male dominant because in their family their husband, their father-in-law are deciding about their family decisions and 29% results shows that men and women are deciding their family matters with mutual understanding. When researcher explore about division of role within the family, the scenario was different the results shows that 57% women responds that they have division of roles within the family with mutual understanding. Women are controlling internal matters e.g children's education, daily household works, relative's meetings and external matters are controlled by their husband. Only 29% women responds that their husbands still have hold in their families because all decisions are taking men.

On the questions about contribution in family decision making about children, 36% women respond that as a mother they are very caring and possessive about their children that is way they are deciding and handling children's education matters. And same percentage 36% women responds that they are taking decisions with mutual understanding but it's depending on their academic performance and interest field. But in the decisions about children professional career the situation is different because 36% women respond that they decide future career of their children with mutual understanding. 29% women respond that their father decide about children future career. And with same 29% females respond that it up to their children consent, performance and their interest as well. On the question about marital status of their children, 43% of participants respond that they are deciding about their children marriage with mutual understanding. 36% women respond that their husbands are deciding about children's marriages. Finally, the question about reactions to those decisions which were taken against them. Almost 36% women respond that they were angry at that time when their elders or husband took decisions against their consent. And 29% female respond that they were happy on their elder's or husband's decisions.

So, results of current study are showing that Pakistan still have patriarchal culture where female are still oppressing and facing many issues about their decisions. Still, they cannot move or decide about their personal lives because they are still dependent on male. But, in this modern time things are happening change and women are participating in family matters. The reason of this huge change is concluded by education and job opportunities for females. People are more aware of each other's rights, that is why they are participating in family matters and taking decisions with mutual understanding.

5. Conclusion

Decision making means to resolve the issues by authentic solutions. And those decisions which are resolved within the family are known as family decision making. Therefore, in the current study, researchers explore how women contribute to decision-making in the household, particularly in this patriarchal environment where men are more prominent. Although still male dominance is existing, but situation of their dominance is going down, because women are involving in family matters and male also providing space in family matters. The reasons of this huge change are education and employment opportunities for female, which are playing a vital role to aware both male and female about their rights and role of women in family. After awareness, both husband and wife are doing work with each other and taking decisions with mutual understanding related to their family, their children's education, future career and their marital status.

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ANNEXURE

Interview Guide (Individual Participants)

**IMPACT OF FEMALE EMPOWERMENT ON FAMILY DECISION-MAKING:
EVOLVING ROLES IN MARRIAGE, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND SOCIAL
LIFE**

PARTICIPANTS' BIOGRAPHY

Name (Optional) : _____

Marital Status : _____

Qualification : _____

Family System : _____

Family Size : _____

Occupation : _____

- What is your understanding about family decision-making?
- Do you have an understanding about family decision making in patriarchal society?
- Who is the sole decision maker in your family?
- How much do you contribute to your family decisions?
- In what matters, you are sufficient independent in decisions?
- How are roles divided between you and your husband?
- On which basis is the role is decided for you in your family?
- In making decisions about children's educational careers, how much your consent is important in your family set up
- In making decisions about children's professional careers, how much your consent is important in your family set up
- In making decisions about children's marital status how your consent is important in your family set up
- What was your reaction after those family decisions which were taking against your consent?
- What is your role in other decisions (family planning, savings, resources utilization etc.)?