

Effects of Women's Education and Marriage Period on Their Decision Making Power at Household Level in Gujrat - Pakistan

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Abstract: Presently a change in decision making among the married women in Pakistan is observed. These two determinants, education and marriage period, have given a great deal of exposure to the women in decision making at household level. This study aims at analyzing the perceptions of married women about their decision making power at family level keeping in view their education and marriage period. It includes different categories about which perceptions regarding their decision making power were examined. 135 married women from the urban setting of the Gujrat were sampled and a survey was conducted. Chi-square test of homogeneity was used to see the difference in proportion of response categories. On the basis of the analysis it is concluded that the perceptions of educated women and women with more than six years of their marriage period are significantly associated with their involvement in the process of decision making, while illiterate women and those who have less than six years of marriage period are not perceiving their involvement.

Key words: Women's Perceptions • Decision Making • Education • Marriage Period • Chi-square Test of Homogeneity • Gujrat • Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

The education gives the humans an orientation about their rights and the guidance to live in a prosperous way. The other important role of the education is escalation in social mobility through their participation in the workforce and then ending at a significant inclusion in household decision making process. Various studies all over the world have been conducted to see the impact of education on the process: the women decision making, both micro (family) and macro (societal) levels. It can be stated that education is necessary for both men and women for pursuing their lives but it also provides them with a chance to change their statuses. Education is sometimes associated with the process of women empowerment in specifically deprived situations. As education enhances their chances to participate in economic activities and then in return, the economic contribution rewards them, to participate in the family related, decision making processes.

In Pakistan the education level of male and female is escalating day-by-day. According to Pakistan Social and Living Measurement p(PSLM), the literacy rate of females in the year of 2006-07 was 42%. Education is one

of the sectors determining change in the role of female at household and societal level too. On the other hand marriage period associated with the decision making process was introduced in the present study to see whether it has a significant impact on the decision making or not. The researchers were unable to find even a single study in Pakistan, addressing such kind of issue of marriage period and decision making process at household level.

The empowerment of women and improvement of their status are essential ingredients for realizing the full potential of economic, political and social development and ensuring sustainable development. Empowerment enables women to meet both their practical and strategic needs. The process of empowerment increases women's access to economic opportunities and resources; increases women's political power; raises women's consciousness about the symptoms and causes of oppression; and strengthens women's self confidence [1].

Equal participation of men and women is imperative for smooth running of society. No society can achieve its goals and make progress without equivalent partaking of both genders. Almost half of the population of Pakistan consists of women. If this half of the population does not

work in any field of life, the country will be deficient in the development panorama. Females can participate at different levels of societal axis.

Decision making regarding personal as well as social affairs of family is a big concern of family members [2]. A Woman in the capacity of a wife, a mother, a daughter and a sister gives full support to her family. In order to understand the status and importance of women in a society, it is essential to analyze their role not only in the public sphere but also with in the domestic domain. Social status of a woman is also a crucial determinant which plays a significant role and affects decision making of women. A woman has different social status in a family e.g. as a daughter, as a sister, as a mother and even as a wife. A father takes all decisions almost his daughter's life in Pakistani society, because it is a patriarchal society. While as a wife and as a mother, a woman sometimes has authority to take decisions about her household matters. Gender discrimination also affects the role of women in family decision making. Many a time, on the basis of gender, women are dominated. So, they are not able to take any decision about themselves, their children and even household matters.

The role of women in family decision making varies from culture to culture. It is concluded on the basis of the studies that in developed countries women are more autonomous in intra-family decision making, as compared to the developing countries' women. Sovereignty of decision making has always been an important measure in any social setting, for the progress of society, in both social and economic spheres. Decision making at family level, most of the time, involves the family network and it takes place in different situations.

According to Kannan [3] the decision is not made in isolation but are the product of influence and confluence of social correlates. There are different determinants which involve in the process of decision making, at family level like age, education, profession, education, marriage period, number of male and female children etc. Among these some are very effective relatively. Further adding to the issue Haddad [4] discussed in his study that there are many indicators of women's status in the literature. They all rank women in the countries of South Asia, low in status, as compared to other countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean. The indices are derived from the UNDP's (1997) Human Development Report. The indices and data in these tables indicate that women in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh have a considerably lower status than those in the Philippines, China, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. According to Economic Survey of Pakistan [5],

Pakistan's total population is 150 million; females are 49% and the house wives being 29.33%. Women constitute about half population of the country and their cooperation or participation in different fields of life is very important. Education is a favorable factor in determining change in the role of females. The education level and socioeconomic characteristics are more effective in decision making process in family matters.

On the other hand, marital status (more specifically marriage period) also provides a chance to the women, to participate in decision making process. Previously few studies have been conducted to measure the impact of marital status on decision making process. But researchers were unable to find any study focusing on impact of marriage period and its influence on their involvement, in decision making process. It is assumed that there is a positive association between the marriage period of women and their inclusion in decision making processes at household level.

In contrast to education, the marriage period is also an influential factor affecting the process of decision making, at household level. The marital status overall provides a change in the nuclear family system and allows the women to participate in certain activities, like small purchases for daily consumption, children's schooling, children's careers, children's marriages, etc. According to Taj *et al.* [6], the woman in our society normally plays the role of a wife or a mother. As a wife she is under the dominance of her husband and together with her husband enjoys authority over her children. She has very little role in decision-making within the domestic matters, be the monetary or social. Regardless of any criterion used, Pakistani women are considered to have a lower status than men; their status is also lower than the women, in most other societies.

There are numerous other studies conducted on household decision-making and the distribution of power within the family. Some of these studies have been summarized in [7, 8, 9]. All these household studies documenting decision-making point to the inference that household decision-making is not a static phenomenon but it evolves with economic growth, changing social norms and customs and changes in the institutional environment. In societies where there are few opportunities for women, social norms inhibit the participation of women in the work force and in the educational process. Most of the household decision-making is likely to be under the control of men. However with social and economic changes, this process is expected to change favorably with women acquiring more

decision-making power. The speed at which this process evolves depends on social and institutional norms prevalent in the respective society [10].

Research Questions:

- What is the impact of education in developing perceptions of married women about the decision making power at household level? Does education have any influence on the perception of females about their decision making?
- What are the impacts of marriage period on the perceptions of married women about their decision making power at household level? Does marriage period influence perceptions of married women about decision making power, at household level?

Hypotheses:

- Higher the levels of women' education higher will be the decision making power at household level.
- Marriage period has a positive association with women decision making power at household level. Further, the marriage period leads to the women's involvement in household decision making process.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Survey research method was used in the present study. Face to face interview method was used to collect information through a well structured questionnaire.

This questionnaire was consisted of two sections. The first section was related to the demographic information and second was having the question related to perception of women about family decision making. Five point Likert scale was used in the second section. To check the validity of the questionnaire pre-testing was conducted and suitable changes were made. Urban, married women belong to middle class family and in reproductive age were the respondents of the study. Tehsil Gujrat was target population of the study. Five Colonies selected through simple random sampling from Gujrat city. 135 married women were selected through these colonies by simple random sampling. Five point Likert scale was converted into three categories for analysis purpose. Chi-square test of homogeneity was used to see the difference in proportion of response categories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Table No. 1 female respondents' age structure is categorized into two groups, 20-35 and 36-49 years. Mostly females (54%) belong to 20-35 age groups and remaining 46% are between 36-49 years. In the next section of the table marriage period of respondents is presented, as it is crucial for the present research. Further researchers will use this period for inferential analysis. This part of the table depicts that 44% females have spent 6 years and less marriage period. 56% respondents fall in the second category that have spent more than 6 years of marital life.

Table 1: Age Structure, Marriage Period, Education, Family Structure, and Professions of Respondents:

Attributes	Frequency	Percentage %
Age Structure of the Respondents		
20-35	73	54.0
36-49	62	46.0
Marriage Period of the Respondents		
6 years and less	60	44.0
More than 6 years	75	56.0
Education of the Respondents		
Illiterate	42	31.0
Matriculation and below	51	38.0
Above matriculation	42	31.0
Family Structure		
Nuclear	81	60.0
Joint	54	40.0
Profession		
House wife	81	60.0
Working women	54	40.0
Monthly Income		
Nothing	89	66.0
Less than 1000-3000 thousands	5	4.0
3001-8000 thousands	26	19.0
More than 8000	15	11.0

Table 2: Women should have the power of decision making about household matters

Education		Frequency	Chi-square value	p- value
Illiterate	Agree	20	5.143	.076
	Neutral	14		
	Disagree	8		
	Total	42		
Matriculation and below	Agree	47	36.255	.000
	Disagree	4		
	Total	51		
Above matriculation	Agree	40	72.429	.000
	Neutral	1		
	Disagree	1		
	Total	42		

Next section is dealing with the education of the respondents, for this respondent were categorized into three categories i.e. i) illiterate; ii) matriculation and below; and iii) matriculation and above. The data shows that 31% married women were illiterate, 38% having education matriculation and below and remaining 31% are above matriculation.

Next segment in the table is dealing with family structure, 60% representing were experiencing nuclear and remaining 40% belong to joint family setup. Professions information was asked and presented here in the table after the family structure. Most of the females were housewives because sample has been selected from Gujrat city, which does not offer too many job opportunities to them and if there are a few opportunities, females are subdued by cultural practices and restricted to household affairs. Majority of women (60%) were engaged in the housewifery and considered housekeeping a full time profession. Only 40% women were economically active.

Following the profession, information about the Income was asked and data shows that majority (66%) women have no monthly income as they were involved in unproductive household activities in which they were bonded to serve the family for lengthy hours. 23% of the respondents earn income from less than 1000 to 8000. On the other hand data revealed that only 11% females were getting over 8000 rupees monthly.

Section-A: Education as a Determinant of Women Decision Making Power at Household Level: To see the effect of education on perception development about decision making power participants are divided into three groups: illiterate, below matriculation and above matriculation. To see the effect at both levels educated or literate persons were divided into two groups. All the participants were asked five category responses. But for

analysis purpose five category responses were converted into three category responses vis-à-vis i) disagree; ii) neutral; and iii) agree.

There are different questions which give the idea about perception of women about their decision making power. In fact these questions give the indication that they want to have this power or not. In the above mentioned categories of the women in respect of their education, 20 percent women do agree regarding the possession of power to the women at household level while 14 percent remained neutral and 8 persons disagree with this statement. Test of homogeneity was used to test the equality of proportion but in the illiterate category result was not significant between the categories of responses. While in the remaining two categories test of homogeneity remained significant. So it can be said that education has its pivotal role in creating the sense of awareness among married women about their decision making power at household level.

Table No. 3 shows the responses regarding question “women have rights to take part in the child’s marriage.” The data revealed that illiterate respondents have no significant difference between response categories with respect to proportion. But other groups show significant difference among response categories. Most of the respondents in literate groups agree with the statement and are in favor of this type of rights. It shows that education creates a sense of responsibility and further it guides them how to acquire this responsibility but on other hand the illiterate women are blindly bonded to patriarchy, where they have to follow the direction of their spouses.

Table No. 4 shows the responses on question regarding the role of women in their children’s education career. This is one of the major domain of the household decision making process. The main purpose was to measure whether illiterate and educated women have any

Table 3: Women have a main role in their child's marriages

Education		Frequency	Chi-square value	p- value
Illiterate	Agree	20	4.000	.135
	Neutral	12		
	Disagree	10		
	Total	42		
Matriculation and below	Agree	41	51.294	.000
	Neutral	7		
	Disagree	3		
	Total	51		
Above matriculation	Agree	38	27.524	.000
	Disagree	4		
	Total	42		

Table 4: Mothers have important role in children education career

Education		Observed N	Chi-square value	p- value
Illiterate	Agree	20	4.429	.109
	Neutral	13		
	Disagree	9		
	Total	42		
Matriculation and below	Agree	42	55.882	.000
	Neutral	7		
	Disagree	2		
	Total	51		
Above matriculation	Agree	35	47.571	.000
	Neutral	5		
	Disagree	2		
	Total	42		

Table 5: Husband and wife should consult each other in family matters

Education		Frequency	Chi-square value	p- value
Illiterate	Agree	20	5.143	.076
	Neutral	14		
	Disagree	8		
	Total	42		
Matriculation and below	Agree	47	79.529	.000
	Neutral	3		
	Disagree	1		
	Total	51		
Above matriculation	Agree	39	67.000	.000
	Neutral	1		
	Disagree	2		
	Total	42		

difference in identifying their key role in their children's education career. The data shows that illiterate respondents have not significant difference among response categories. 13 out of 42 in neutral situation shows that mostly women are in undecided situation. It also depicts weak decision making power. But the two categories of educated respondents were well aware of their role in the process of decisions regarding the education careers of their children. Most of the respondents were agree with the statement and are in favor of this type of right. Education has instigated the

married women to participate in issues related to their children's education.

It is necessary for both husband and wife to consult each other for the prosperity of family. The data shows that illiterate women don't consider it important to consult each other. While on other hand educated women consider it an important aspect of the family to consult each other for the better functioning of their family. Again neutral proportion is very high in the case of illiterate so they are not in phase of clear decision.

Table 6: Women should be able to go out alone for shopping/work

Education		Frequency	Chi-square value	p- value
Illiterate	Agree	19	4.429	.109
	Neutral	8		
	Disagree	15		
	Total	42		
Matriculation and below	Agree	34	29.059	.000
	Neutral	3		
	Disagree	14		
	Total	51		
Above matriculation	Agree	31	31.286	.000
	Natural	4		
	Disagree	7		
	Total	42		

Table 7: Women should have the power of decision making about household matters

Marriage Period		Observed N	Chi-square value	p- value
6 Years and Less	Agree	37	21.900	.000
	Neutral	13		
	Disagree	10		
	Total	60		
More than 6 Years	Agree	70	121.520	.000
	Neutral	2		
	Disagree	3		
	Total	75		

Table No. 6 deals with the responses of women regarding their rights to go outside the home for shopping and work. In Pakistani society women are considered vulnerable to go outside the home alone. They are not provided with such rights generally to visit even close relatives alone. Keeping in view the cultural hindrances, a question was included to this study to measure the difference between the perceptions of the illiterate and literate women. Test of homogeneity gave same results as in the above cases. Illiterate group is not creating significant results but others do. The reasons behind such perceptions of illiterate women are obvious because they only accept whatever their partners decide for them but on the other hand education give a new orientation to the women and liberate them to go outside the home for shopping and job.

According to Acharya [11] education may help a woman gain a better understanding of her rights and responsibilities and make her more confident about her possibilities. Further Roth and Mbzyo [12] opined that in couples with both partners educated and in couples in which women work for pay, both partners were significantly more likely to report that both of them participate in the final decisions than was the case in couples without education or in which the wife did not

work for pay. The above mentioned study shows that economic activism and higher education levels raises the perceptions among the women of having equal opportunity in the decision making process, same has been revealed in the present study as most of the educated married women do perceive that they should have all the equity in decision making process at household level. A healthy society can only exist if the family is structured on the balance of power and an even participation of both genders in decision-making. It is an accepted fact that a woman plays a very crucial and significant role in a family [13]. On the other hand Jan and Akhtar [14] stated that women are traditionally less involved in decision making at all levels. Their important role is not recognized and, therefore, still not accepted in decision making. But higher education can increase the involvement of females in household decision making process and to break the traditional barriers, which inhibit them to involve in this process.

Women's possibilities should increase with education, i.e. with additional education and the critical point after which the woman will leave the husband should fall, all else equal. As a result, a woman who has a bachelor's degree, for example, should have a greater influence in family decisions than her counterpart who

has only a high school education. Therefore, we would expect a statistically significant, positive association between a woman's education and the probability that she has some say in decisions related to her and her household. Education provides a chance to the women to stand equal to their counterparts in the process of decision making at household level [11]. Further Oyediran and Odusola [15] the consensus in the literature is that women with greater control of financial resources tend to have greater inputs into domestic decision making process.

Section-b: Marriage Period as a Determinant of Women Decision Making Power at Household Level: To see the effect of Marriage period on perception development about decision making power, participants are divided into two groups, 6 years and less and more than 6 years. All the participants have given their response into three categories which are i) disagree, ii) neutral and iii) agree.

Marriage period is very important determinant of women decision making power. To check the effects of marriage period on the perceptions of women regarding their involvement in the decision making process was included in this research. In this section, same questions were asked to measure the influence of marriage period on the perceptions of women regarding their decision making at household level. To see the difference between two groups, test of homogeneity was applied.

Both groups (married women with less than six years of marriage period and married women with 6 years and above marriage period) have significant results but chi-square values show that second group is producing more significant result because higher the difference in response categories higher would be the chi-square value. The difference can also be seen in neutral category; 13 out of 60 are in neutral category in 6 years or lesser group but only two persons in other group. It shows that very few females in the second group are still in the transition phase. It means more the marriage period, more would be the awareness in the females about their decision making power.

In Table No. 8 response of the question regarding the involvement of the women in their children marriage both groups produced significant results but statistical decision based upon chi-square value instead of p-value. Here second group is again producing more significant result as compare to first one. It means more the marriage period, more would be the awareness in the females about their decision making power.

In the third question which is about the role of mothers in the education career of their children both groups produce same results as above. But decision is again based upon the chi-square value. Higher the difference in response categories higher would be the chi-square value. It means second group has more awareness about this type of perception.

Table 8: Women have a main role in their child's marriages

Marriage Period		Observed N	Chi-square value	p- value
6 Years and Less	Agree	35	17.500	.000
	Neutral	15		
	Disagree	10		
	Total	60		
More than 6 Years	Agree	64	91.760	.000
	Neutral	8		
	Disagree	3		
	Total	75		

Table 9: Mothers have important role in children education career

Marriage Period		Observed N	Chi-square value	p- value
6 Years and Less	Agree	37	21.900	.000
	Neutral	13		
	Disagree	10		
	Total	60		
More than 6 Years	Agree	60	75.120	.000
	Neutral	12		
	Disagree	3		
	Total	75		

Table 10: Men and women should consult each other in family matters

Marriage Period		Observed N	Chi-square value	p- value
6 Years and Less	Agree	37	22.300	.000
	Neutral	14		
	Disagree	9		
	Total	60		
More than 6 Years	Agree	69	116.240	.000
	Neutral	4		
	Disagree	2		
	Total	75		

Table 11: Women should be able to go out alone for shopping/work

Marriage Period		Observed N	Chi-square value	p- value
6 Years and Less	Agree	34	15.600	.000
	Neutral	10		
	Disagree	16		
	Total	60		
More than 6 Years	Agree	50	42.000	.000
	Neutral	5		
	Disagree	20		
	Total	75		

It is the response of this very important statement “Men and women should consult each other in family matters” which shows the identity of women in household matters. Results are same as discussed in the above cases of marriage period section. Again proportion of neutral category within the group is higher in first group as compared to second group. It shows effect of marriage period on perception development of females about decision making power.

The last question about decision making whether going for shopping/ work alone, many females are against in this case in first group. But the results are same as discussed in above questions of marriage period and same conclusion can be drawn on the basis of test of homogeneity. There was no such relevant study to the second section which gives us ideas about the impact of marriage period on the perceptions of decision making processes in Pakistan. But there are some studies generally referring to the marital status and the influences of the status of women before and after marriage on decision making. Such studies can only give us a clue whether there is any impact of marital status or not. In this reference one study which was conducted in the Kashmir by Jan and Akhtar [14] reveals that there is highly significant difference between married and unmarried women, related to their empowerment. Women generally possess low decision making power and are mainly dependent on authority for decision making. Wife's

decision making refer to women's ability to express their opinion and influence family decision processes, while indicators for wives' autonomy are referred to married women's capacity of taking initiatives in performing actions without asking for their partner's approval. The results show that on average most women reported making decisions jointly with their husbands but those Mexican married women do very poorly in terms of autonomy [16]. Further in another study Casique [17] shows in the research that there is highly significant impact of the age of the wife on the decision making power, at household level in such a way that, “the largest increases in power are caused by increases in wife's education and wife's age.”

The present study shows that the marriage period increases the perception regarding their involvement also increases. In a number of questions it was inquired whether they should be involved in the process of decision making or not. The results repeatedly shows of those females who have spent more time in marital status have greater concern about their participation in the decision making. So, it can be stated that marriage itself orientates women to take part in all sort of activities and they should take part equally because they are also the stakeholders. Although there are some ideological constraints which held them apart from the process of decision making but the perception of women are working otherwise.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the results shown in the study it can be concluded that there is a highly significant association between the education of the women, marriage period and the decision making process at household level in Gujrat. On the basis of the analysis it can also be concluded that the perceptions of educated and women with higher than six years of their marriage period are significantly associated with their involvement in the process of decision making while illiterate and those who have less than six years of marriage period are not perceiving their involvement should be considered. So, the escalation in the perception of the married women can be measured through the statistics presented in the present study. Education along with marriage period significantly linked to the development of the perception of women in all sorts of decision making processes in Gujrat.

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