

Assessment of Rural and Urban Women's Participation in the Decision Making in Family Matters

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Abstract

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. In order to assess the rural and urban women's participation in the decision-making in family matters, 150 women were taken as study respondents through stratified random sampling technique. It was found that a significant proportion of urban's respondents (83%) often consulted her family members about education of children which was higher than rural's respondents (40%) who often consulted her family members about the education of children. Rural and urban's respondents (5 and 11%) controlled over the budget respectively. It was also found that in the rural area a majority of the respondents' husbands (53%) accepted sometimes their wives' point of view, whereas, in the urban area respondents' husbands (67%) accepted openly their wives' viewpoint.

Keywords: Assessment, Women's participation, Decision making, Family matters

Introduction

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 (Bajwa, 1980). The position of women in any society is determined by what decision-making power women have in different spheres of life, what choices of freedom, what degree of control, what duties, rights and privileges they enjoy (Zafar, 1992).

As the Pakistani society is uniformly and unconditionally patriarchal and women are viewed as the property of men, hence girls are not allowed to develop as individuals with a defined sense of self. Rather they are encouraged and directed to form a sense of identity in relation to those males to whom they belong.

That's why their primary roles are considered only those of daughters, wives, and mothers. Their custodians (men) make all decisions about their lives. A typical Pakistani woman grows up in a fairly sheltered environment. "Others" make most decisions affecting her life. These "others" are, of course, men the fathers, the brothers and the husbands. Possessing little education, getting married mostly against her wishes, having to bear about seven children, and enjoying a life expectancy lower than that of man. Her situation is much worse in the rural areas.

For women's own good, man makes all the basic decisions, which determine her status in the society. Demanding from her an unquestioning loyalty, she defines her roles in a variety of activities. The decisions about getting married, receiving proper education, gaining employment, securing proper health care and migrating are all made for her, and not by her (Rani, 1992).

The women in our society normally play the role of wife or 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 measurement used, Pakistani women are considered to have a lower status than men, their status is also lower than the women in most other societies. The birth of a daughter implies an addition to the family's burden since she is regarded as a transient member of the household. Although as a young household member she contributes to the labour resources of the family, little investment is done to increase her potential productivity, for her value, as a future contributor is considered negligible. The very few women who participate in economic activities indicate the empirical evidence for this fact. (Shehnaz1996).

Decision-making at the household level is important because the very survival of the family depends on the way they constantly plan their activities. Decision-making is a gamble because there is a certain amount of risk involved in whatever decisions taken by individuals or small groups. That's why this fact is realized by most of the societies and peoples and they share the responsibility in decision making related to the matters that are important for the survival of the family. But the case is different in the

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Pakistani traditional society where most of the women folk are left behind even in the family matters. Most events in Pakistani woman's life like schooling, marriage, the number of children she has, and whether she works or not are greatly influenced by the attitudes of her immediate relatives (Zia, 1998). Considering these issues the purpose of this study is to assess the rural and urban women's participation in the decision-making in family matters.

Materials and Methods

A farm level survey was conducted during November 2001 at village Dhok Ramzania, Tarnol rural area, which is situated on Peshawar road and Sector I-10/2, the sites come under Islamabad capital territory. These two sites (rural & urban) were selected at random. From each selected site 75 women were selected as respondents at random. Thus, total number of respondents were 150. A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to achieve a representative sample. The data were collected through women's interviews using a well-structured questionnaire. The data thus obtained was analyzed to draw conclusions and make pertinent recommendations.

Results and Discussions

Family Size

The table 1 reveals that a significant proportion of urban respondents 68 and 16 % consulted often and sometimes other family members about the family size respectively which was high as compared to rural respondents 40 and 12% respectively. Whereas, a high proportion of rural respondents 48% had never consulted other family members about the family size as compared to urban respondents (36%).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents consulted on family size

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	30	40	51	68
Sometimes	9	12	12	16
Never	36	48	12	16
Total	75	100	75	100

Names of children

Table 2 reveals that a significant proportion of urban respondents (91%) often consulted her family members about naming of children which was higher than rural respondents (61%), whereas, more rural respondents (27%) had never consulted her family members about the naming of children than urban respondents (20%).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents about the consultation on names of children

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	46	61	68	91
Sometimes	9	12	4	5
Never	20	27	3	4
Total	75	100	75	100

Education of children

Table 3 reveals that a significant proportion of urban respondents (83%) consulted often her family members about education of children which was higher than rural respondents (40%), whereas, rural respondents (19%) had consulted sometimes her family members about the education of children. The table 3 also reveals that more rural respondents (41%) had never consulted her family members about education of children than urban respondents (31%).

Table 3: Distribution of respondents about the consultation on education of children

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	30	40	62	83
Sometimes	14	19	1	1
Never	31	41	12	16
Total	75	100	75	100

Career selection of children

Table 4 depicts that a high proportion of urban respondents (67%) consulted often her family members about career selection of children which was high as compared to rural respondents (27%) whereas, more rural respondents (24 %) had consulted sometimes her family members about the career selection of children than urban respondents (5%). While majority of rural respondents (49%) had never consulted her family members about career selection of children.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents about the consultation on career selection of children

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	20	27	50	67
Sometimes	18	24	5	7
Never	37	49	20	27
Total	75	100	75	100

Marriage of children

Table 5 reveals that like other matters of the family, women particularly of rural area (37%) were never given an opportunity of consultation this important decision. Whereas in urban area, respondents (69 %) were consulted about the marriage of their children.

In the rural areas "Biradri" system was strong and marriages were usually arranged in the biradries or same families. Due to this reason rural's respondents (45%) were not consulted regarding the marriage decision of their children.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents about the consultation on marriage of children

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	28	37	52	69
Sometimes	13	17	6	8
Never	34	45	17	23
Total	75	100	75	100

Household facilities

Table 6 depicts that respondents of both rural and urban areas 59 and 87 % consulted often acquiring household facilities respectively in the study area. Whereas, mores rural' respondents (27 %) had never consulted acquiring household facilities from their other family members than urban's respondents (8%).

Table 6: Distribution of respondents about the consultation about the household facilities

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	44	59	65	87
Sometimes	11	15	4	5
Never	20	27	6	8
Total	75	100	75	100

Development of relations with others and kinship relationing

The table 7 reveals that rural and urban's respondents 56 and 72% consulted often on this issue respectively. Rural and urban's respondents 19 and 7 % consulted other family members to develop relations with others and kinship relation respectively in the study area. Whereas, rural and urban's respondents 25 and 21% never consulted the development of relations with others and kinship relation respectively in the study area.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents about the consultation about the development of relations with others and kinship relationing

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	42	56	54	72
Sometimes	14	19	5	7
Never	19	25	16	21
Total	75	100	75	100

Construction of house

Table 8 depicts that more urban's respondents 51 and 28% consulted often and sometimes construction of house than rural's respondents 40 and 13%

respectively. Whereas, rural respondents 47% never consulted construction of house.

Table 8: Distribution of respondents about the consultation about the construction of house

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	30	40	38	51
Sometimes	10	13	21	28
Never	35	47	16	35
Total	75	100	75	100

Purchase of domestic requirements and exchange of gifts

Table 9 reveals that a significant proportion of urban's respondents (88%) consulted often her family members regarding purchase of domestic requirements which was higher than rural's respondents (66%), whereas, more rural's respondents (23%) had never consulted her family members regarding purchase of domestic requirements than urban's respondents (7%).

Table 9: Distribution of respondents about the consultation regarding purchase of domestic requirements

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	53	71	66	88
Sometimes	5	6	4	5
Never	17	23	5	7
Total	75	100	75	100

Savings

Table 10 reveals that more urban's respondents (27%) consulted often her family members regarding saving than rural's respondents (15%), whereas, respondents of study area (above 60%)had never consulted her family members regarding saving.

Table 10: Distribution of respondents about the consultation on savings

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	11	15	20	27
Sometimes	16	21	10	13
Never	48	64	45	60
Total	75	100	75	100

Control over budget

Home being the main sphere of the women's activities, they generally do not have the freedom to take independent decisions about the home budget. As table 11 reveals that rural and urban's respondents (5 and 11%) controlled over the budget themselves respectively. In both rural and urban areas, majority of the respondents' husbands controlled over the

budget (70 and 48 %) respectively. A significant proportion of urban's respondents (41%) controlled over budget jointly, which was high as compared rural's respondents (24 %).

Table 11: Distribution of respondents about regarding the control over budget

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Self	5	6	8	11
Both	18	24	31	41
Husband	52	70	36	48
Total	75	100	75	100

Independence to approach health centers

Table 12 reveals that a significant proportion of urban's respondents (47%) consulted often her family members regarding to approach the health centers which was high as compared to rural's respondents (33%). The table 12 also depicts that majority of urban's respondents (41%) consulted sometimes her family members regarding to approach the health centers which was high as compared to rural's respondents (13%). Whereas, more rural's respondents (53%) had never consulted her family members regarding to approach the health centers than urban's respondents (12%).

Table 12: Distribution of respondents about independence to approach health centers

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	25	33	35	47
Sometimes	10	13	31	41
Never	40	53	9	12
Total	75	100	75	100

Independence to visit parents and relatives

Table 13 reveals that a significant proportion of urban's respondents (67%) consulted often her family members regarding independence to visit parents and relatives which was high as compared to rural's respondents (20%). Whereas, more rural's respondents (80%) had never consulted her family members regarding independence to visit parents and relatives than urban's respondents (33%).

Table 13: Distribution of respondents regarding the independence to visit relatives and parents

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	15	20	50	67
Never	60	80	25	33
Total	75	100	75	100

Acceptance of the women's viewpoint

Table 14 reveals that a significant proportion of urban's respondents (67%) consulted often her family members regarding acceptance of the women's viewpoint which was high as compared to rural's respondents (31%). More rural's respondents (53%) consulted sometimes her family members regarding acceptance of the women's viewpoint than urban's respondents (20%).

Table 14: Distribution of respondents regarding the acceptance of their viewpoint

Response Category	Rural		Urban	
	f	%	f	%
Often	23	31	50	67
Sometimes	40	53	15	20
Never	12	16	10	13
Total	75	100	75	100

Conclusions

- A significant proportion of urban' respondents 68 and 16 % consulted often and sometimes her family members about the family size which was higher than rural's respondents 40 and 12% respectively.
- A significant proportion of urban's respondents (83%) consulted often her family members about education of children which was high as compared to rural's respondents (40%).
- A notable proportion of urban's respondents (67%) consulted often her family members about career selection of children which was high as compared to rural's respondents (27%).
- Respondents of both rural and urban areas 59 and 87 % consulted often acquiring household facilities respectively in study area.
- More urban's respondents 51 and 28% consulted often and sometimes her family members about construction of house than rural's respondents. Whereas, rural's respondents 47% never consulted construction of house.
- Rural and urban's respondents (5 and 11%) controlled over the budget respectively in the study area.
- A high proportion of urban's respondents (41%) often allowed to approach the health centers which was high as compared to rural's respondents (13%).
- In the rural area a majority of the respondents' husbands (53%) accepted sometimes their wives' point of view, whereas, in the urban area respondents' husbands (67%) accepted oftenly their wives' viewpoint.

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