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### THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING IN THE FAMILY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KAMRUP DISTRICT (ASSAM)

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#### ABSTRACT

No one can deny the fact that, both men and women perform certain roles in the society. Women are integral part of family and pivotal force in any kind of progress say in Socio-economic progress. Though women are physically weaker than men, yet women also are to perform certain role for social-economic development of the families as well as society. It is essential in any family that both men and women should have equal say regarding decision making in the family. These decisions may be regarding Children's schooling, employment, marriage, savings, food, family budget, land purchasing, purchasing of any valuable property etc. The present study is undertaken to analyse the role of women in decision making in the family of Kamrup District (Assam) regarding family planning, schooling of it children savings, food and family budget, Children's future, buying land or other valuable property etc. The study reveals that most of the women (60%) are found to have equal status in the family with regard to taking various decisions.

**KEYWORDS:** Women, Role of Decision raking in family, schooling of Children, Family Budget, savings families Menu.

#### INTRODUCTION

It was Gandhiji, the most outstanding world figure, Who first tried his level best for the emancipation of Indian women. The great Greek Philosopher Plato was perhaps the first world feminist who once wrote that, "as far as the state is concerned there is no difference between the nature of women and men. It is true that both men and women are equally important for the existence of human society. With regard to the day to day functioning and development of the family women play a very important role. But the society has a false belief that women are by nature less capable intellectually or physically than men. It exclusive women from academy, the forum and the market place. Therefore feminists are fighting for women's right. It is due to the efforts of the social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Dayanand Saraswati, Keshab Chandra Sen, the image of women in India, in modern times is radically changing. She is practically gaining more and more shave in running household affairs. She is consulted in all important household decisions. In the present period women are considerably awakened. They are not prepared to accept a low social status or to merely be a source of recreation for men to produce Children for them at their will. After independence, Government has laid down many measures for the improvement of women's status. Our constitution has granted equal right for everyone.

#### THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has theoretical importance in the sense that no theory has yet been evolved on the role of women in decision making in the family. It is universal truth that family is the basic unit of a society and for smooth functioning of the family including the socialization of children both men and women are to play important role. The well being of the members of the family and also the all round development of members of the family are the concerns of both men and women. The future of the children of family depends on certain important decisions generally taken by the parents. In this context that this study will attempt to formulate a theory regarding involvement in decisions making process in the family.

The study has practical importance also . Now a days much has been discussed about the status of women in the society. If women are not taken into confidence by male counterparts in the family, then questions of taking about women status would be meaningless. Keeping this point in view this study seeks to focus the participation of women in the decision making in the family.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Talking generally about Indian women Gandhiji once remarked- “women is the companion of men gifted with equal mental capacities”.

According to Mumtaz (1982) there are various family matters on which men generally take decisions. Women are quite often not even consulted. This is because of the feeling among men that women are incapable of expressing their decision due to illiteracy among them. It would mean if women are educated they would acquire the capacity to participate in decision making. Malkit (1998) conducted study on decision making power among women, related to social obligations, which include decisions regarding age at marriage, mate selection, dowry. Expenditure on marriage and education of Children also showed relatively high role of women. Dowry was more or less female domain with 78.3 percent women having high role in it, followed by decisions related to age at marriage of son or daughter.

Roth(2001) in his study found that wives tend to under-report their household decision making power. 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 decision than was case in couples without education or in which the wife did not work for pay. Decision making power of women as measured in this study was significantly related to the household having a plan for what to do in case of maternal emergency, but was not associated with place of childbirth or with having a postpartum checkup.

Women play a crucial role in the economic welfare of the family. Women perform different tasks depending on their socio-economic structure, number of members in the family, the nature of professions they are involved in and many other factors (Reddy and Narayan, 1987). The authoritarian Characters the traditional joint family entails decisions making powers concentrated in the position of the eldest male members (Rao, 1982)

With the changing outlook of the society towards women and her role in various activities both inside and outside the family system, the traditional, male Chauvinistic role of the father as one to possess the best decision making ability in the family has also undergone drastic transformation. Women, in most part of the world today are no longer compelled to be under the grab of veils and are coming out in the open, soldering responsibilities in various kinds of decision making and standing at par with men at every tread (Anonymous, 2011) without active participation of women and incorporation of women perspectives’ at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality development and peace cannot be achieved (Karl,1995)

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to examine the role of women indecision making in the family. The study will focus on the type of treatment given by the menfolk to the women folk.

The main objective of the study are-

1. To examine the involvement of women in decision making process in the family.
2. To provide suggestions regarding women’s decision making process.

## Materials and Method

The data were collected during July and October, 2014 from 1000 married women in Kamrup District (Assam). The study was based on primary data. Multistage sampling method was used for collection of data. The data were collected through the technique of direct personal investigation by using self made schedule comprising of 35 questions. The method helped to know the attitudes of the sample women towards their awareness about their rights.

In studying the role of women in decision making in the family in 8 selected points a four point rating scale was developed and design with four kinds of responses ranging from high participation to no participation in family decision making. The corresponding scores assigned for each response were 3,2,1 and 0 respectively. This family decision making participation score of a respondent in 8 selected points could range from 0 to 24.

To have an idea about the role of women in decision making in the family for the selected points a frequency distribution along with rank order of each point was made by using Decision Making Index(DMI). Where DMI is defined as follows:-

$$\text{DMI} = \text{PHDM} \times 3 + \text{PMDM} \times 2 + \text{PLDM} \times 1 + \text{PNDM} \times 0$$

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PHDM denotes the number of women with high participation in decision making.

PMDM Denotes the number of women with medium participation in decision making.

PLDM Denotes the number of women with low participation in decision making.

PNDM Denotes the number of women with no participation in decision making.

On the basis of the extent of participation in family decision making indices, rank order was made for each selected decision making point.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Social background of the respondent

Table-1 represents the summary of eight selected characteristics of the respondents (sample selected) Majority of the respondents (70%) were taken between the age group 30 to 50 years. Among the respondents 30 percents are graduate followed by HSLC level respondents of 26 percents.

Most of the respondents selected are house wife(40.5%) whereas Govt. Service holders found to 12 percent and weavers(sipini) are found 31.5 percent. Only 5.5 percent women have small business. The data shows that 40.5 percent respondent have no any income. 30% have income between Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000. Only 3 percent women earn Rs. 5000 and more. Highest percentage (72%) of the respondents have nuclear family and 28 percent have joint family. From table 6.1 it is observed that 62 percent family have small size family i.e. family members limited to 3 to 4. 35 percent have medium family size and only 3 percent have large family size having family members 7 and above.

### Role played by women (respondent) in decision making in the family

On the basis of the DMI calculated in table-2 it is observed that women play an important role in buying land and any other valuable property because this aspect have DMI of 2450 which is highest among all the subject matters selected to study the role of women in decision making. They also place important role in case of family planning which has DMI score of 2399 and children's schooling (2375) followed by children's future (2340). Most of women selected have their say in preparing family's menu (2290).

It is evident from the study that women play least role in decision making regarding the choice. That is their choice are least preferred by their male member which have DMI score of 1700 with ranking 10. Participation women in decision making in the family is found to have a DMI score of 2090 with rank 7. In case of preparation of monthly budget of the family the participation of women is poor with rank 9 out of 10 selected points. Women are less preferred by the man folk for pursuing higher studies after their marriage.

**Table:1 Table showing the Social Background of the sample (Respondent) of size 1000 selected by multistage sampling.**

Sl. No	Selected Characteristics	Categories	Respondent		Range	
			Number	Percentage	Min <sup>m</sup>	Max <sup>m</sup>
1	Age in years	20-30	150	15.0	20	70
		30-50	700	70.0		
		50-60	130	13.0		
		60-70	20	2.0		
2	Religion	Hinduism	710	71.0		
		Islam	245	24.4		
		Others	45	4.5		
3	Caste/tribe	General	800	80.0		
		SC	125	12.5		
		ST	30	3.0		
		OBC/MOBC	25	2.5		
		Others	20	2.0		
4	Education (Year in schooling)	Nil	90	9.0	0	23
		Upto HSLC	260	26.0		
		Upto H.S.	205	20.5		
		Graduate	300	30.0		
		Post Graduate	145	14.5		
5	Occupation	Own business	55	5.5		
		Govt. Service	120	12.0		

		Private Job/Company	105	10.5		
		Weaver (Sipini)	315	31.5		
		House wife	405	40.5		
6	Annual Income (in Rupees)	No income	405	40.5	0	5000+
		Below 1000	65	6.5		
		1000-3000	200	20.0		
		3000-5000	300	30.0		
		5000 and above	30	3.0		
7	Nature of family	Joint	280	28.0		
		Nuclear	720	72.0		
8	Family size (No. Of members)				3	7+
	Small(3-4)	620	62.0			
	Medium (5-6)	350	35.0			
	Large (7 and Above)	30	3.0			

**Table-2 Rank wise role of women (Respondent) in decision making in the family.**

Sl. No	Subject matter of decision making	Role played by Respondent				Total	
		High(3)	Medium (2)	Low(1)	Nil(o)	Score	Rank
1	Pursuing higher education after marriage	325	413	217	45	2018	8
2	Family planning	652	175	93	80	2399	2
3	Children's future	575	215	185	25	2340	4
4	Children's Schooling	560	310	75	55	2375	3
5	Buying land or any other valuable property	650	200	100	50	2450	1
6	Weightage about their choice	300	285	230	185	1700	10
7	Saving of money	520	265	115	100	2205	6
8	Construction of house	470	280	120	130	2090	7
9	Family's menu	515	285	175	25	2290	5
10	Monthly family budget	135	630	75	160	1740	9

N:B The size of the sample selected=1000

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusions

It essential in any family that both male and female should have equal say regarding decision making in the family. These decision may be regarding children's schooling , Children's future, family planning, savings, food, family budget etc.

From the study it is clear that now a days family is not concerned with men only but also concerned with women. In the family affairs both the husband and wife are equally important having equal responsibilities . From the study it is observed that most of the women participate in decision making process in the family. She is no more treated as subordinate to men. Women have been placed in a very respective angle in the society and about 60% women are enjoying equal status in the family.

### Suggestions

- We all know that education plays a very important role in every body's life and also in a family or in a society. So women folk should be well qualified to understand and to tackle each and every situation.
- In case of working women she should balance her working life and family life.
- She should try to understand the feelings and mentality of every member of the family.
- She should have a co-operative mind. She should try to co-operate with other family member in every step of life.

- e) Besides, husband and other family members should also have to give the proper importance and respect to the women. She should get her status in the family.

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