



DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY OF WOMEN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN LITERATE AND ILLITERATE WOMEN

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Abstract: Decision making is a very important component of women empowerment. So women's decision making in various fields of life determines her position in the family and society. The decision making in the family on household matters, earning, education, etc. determines women's position in the family and society. But, this decision making authority may differ from women to women and differ from literate to illiterate women. So, the target of this study is to know the difference between literate and illiterate women's decision making authority in the family and society among the Bodo and Rabha community's women of Baksa District, Assam. The methodology of the study is a descriptive analysis based on primary and secondary data. The primary data are collected from 320 respondent women from the district with a simple stratified random sampling technique. The quantitative data are analyzed in a descriptive statistical (percentage) method. The finding of the study reveals that though mild differences, but literate women are taking decisions more in most important areas like land property, education, household utensil purchasing, at expense of self-earning and payment to household workers than the illiterate women.

Index Terms: Decision Making Authority, Women, Literate and Illiterate.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Decision making by women is very important for women's identification and self-realization. The decision-making authority of women maybe it in personal life, family life, or in social life, but it is the only way to know her position in the family and society. Women are as capable as men and can take decisions in every sphere of life. So, women's boldness to take any decision in any field of life makes women capable to hold their position in the family and society. But it seems that women are not that much aware of her participation in various fields of life and they are lacking in participation as well as in decision making. The immediate example is women's participation in social life and political life as well as in economic life where women's participation is very measurable and the public-private dilemma is still hindering women to come out in public space and in village areas, women are still inside the household and waits for all decisions on man folk for her personal life as well as family life. As a result, they are always dependent on male members of the family. The Bodo and Rabha women are also not an exception to the situation. They are suffering first being women and secondly being Scheduled tribe as very conservative in behaving and suffering from patriarchal outlook. The participation of women in various fields of life and their decision making to hold her position in society is not exception than other community's women. They seem to be more sufferers being backward economically, educationally, and politically. In this field, education can be very encouraging to promote their self-confidence and increase participation in various fields of life and decision-making power among women so that we can expect equal development, self-confidence among them. Thus, the target of the study is to know the difference between literate and illiterate women's decision making authority in the family and society among the Bodo and Rabha women of Baksa District, Assam.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Review of literature is a very important part of any research work as it helps us to know more detail about the topic as well as help to avoid duplicity in our study. So, for this particular study, some related articles were studied and given here.

Ferdoos, A. & Zahra, S. (Dec.31, 2016)¹ studied on Patriarchy and Decision Making Power of Women and observed the influence of patriarchy on the decision making power of women. The finding of the study reveals that women though claiming to have the right to make their own decisions related to education, mobility, recreation, and marriage but they always take permission from someone close to them.

Namdeo, R. Pushpa. (June, 2017)² studied on Impact of Education on Decision making ability of women and found that the decision-making ability of educated women is more than uneducated women. Moreover, it is also found out that educated working women have more decision-making ability than educated non-working women.

Rathirane, Y. (January, 2013)³ studied on 'Women empowerment through Decision making focusing on women empowerment through decision making authority at household level'. In the study, it is recognized that there is a strong relationship between decision making authority and women empowerment. However, as per the study women are not allowed to take the decision at the household level due to cultural norms and other personal issues.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

Women's decision making authority in the family and society indicates their position in the family and society. Decision making by women in various fields of life is a sign of women's being empowered. But women's decision-making power is not the same in the case of all women. Some women are very determined and can take decisions on personal, family, and social life very confidently whereas others can't do the same. Moreover, some women are not allowed to make a decision as to their capability due to the restraint of family rules or social traditions. In our family life and social life also we experience such restrictions. But, education may make differences in the power of decision making. It looks like literate women are always more determinant, self-decided, and empowered than illiterate women. The Bodo and Rabha communities belong to Scheduled Tribe and they are less developed and economically backward in comparison to General caste's people. So, their literacy in comparison to General caste and women's literacy, in particular, is very low. So it is very important to know the differences between literate and illiterate women's decision-making power in the family and in the society so that we can understand how education can make difference in the empowerment of women.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The target of the study is to know the difference between literate and illiterate women's decision making authority in the family and society among the Bodo and Rabha women of Baksa District, Assam.

V. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The methodology of the study is descriptive analysis based on primary and secondary data.

5.1 Data and sources of Data

Data are analyzed and interpreted based on primary data collected from a thesis (Brahma, B. 2014) that studied on women's decision making in various fields of life. In the study, both literate and illiterate Bodo and Rabha women are targeted from the Baksa district of BTAD, Assam. A total of 320 respondents are targeted with a simple stratified sampling technique from the three subdivisions of the district. Moreover, in district 8 development blocks are there, so from each development block two villages are selected randomly one of which is Bodo village and another is Rabha village. From each village, 20 respondents are randomly selected for data collection among which 10 are literate and another 10 are illiterate. So, a total of 160 respondents are literate and another 160 are illiterate. The targeted group of women is between the age group of 18-45 years of age.

5.2 Data collection Tool

The tool and technique used for data collection is the questionnaire cum interview technique. A set of closed-ended questionnaire was prepared for the study and collected the data with interview technique as half of the respondents were illiterate and don't know how to read and write.

5.3 Data processing and analyzing plan

The data collection technique for primary data collection was a questionnaire cum interview technique. For quantitative data analysis, the descriptive statistical (percentage) method was applied.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE STUDY:

Analysis and interpretation is a very important part of our study. After the collection of data next step is analysis and interpretation of the data so that we can give relevance to our study.

6.1 Information related to household decision making

The household decision-making authority of women can change women's position in the family and society. Their participation and bold decision making in any area of the household can make them self realized and empowered.

Table 6.1: Literate and Illiterate Women's Decision Making for Child Reproduction

Items	Response In Total (%)					
	Literate			Illiterate		
	Herself	Husband	Both	Herself	Husband	Both
The decision of child reproduction was taken by	08 (5)	18 (11.25)	134 (83.75)	28 (17.5)	34 (21.25)	98 (61.25)

Source: Brahma, B. (2014)⁴

From the data in the table, it is observed that in child reproduction illiterate women are showing to take more initiative in taking decisions by themselves than literate women. Because in the case of literate women joint decision taken by husband and wife is preferred more than decision making by women or husband alone. On the other hand, in the case of illiterate women though they took the joint decisions then also personally they took the decision of child reproduction, where husbands' decision-making is comparatively more than the wife's decision making. Ultimately it can be concluded that in comparison to literate women more illiterate women are taking decisions in child reproduction. It may be due to ignorance of both women and men or any other reasons but women's decision-making authority for child reproduction among illiterate women is appreciable for us.

Table 6.2: Literate and Illiterate Women's Household Decision Making

Items	Response In Total (%)			
	Literate		Illiterate	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Respondent woman takes decision in household matter.	134 (83.75)	26 (16.25)	136 (85)	24 (15)
Respondent woman's opinion got priority when to take decision on land property.	69 (43.12)	91 (56.88)	51 (31.88)	109 (68.12)
Respondent woman's opinion got priority when to take decision in children's education.	131 (81.88)	29 (18.12)	118 (73.75)	42 (26.25)
Respondent woman's opinion got priority when to take decision on household work.	144 (90.00)	16 (10)	146 (91.25)	14 (8.75)
Respondent woman's opinion got priority when to take decision of purchasing of household utensils.	154 (96.25)	06 (3.75)	148 (92.5)	12 (7.5)

Source: Brahma, B. (2014)⁵

From the study on overall household decision making it is observed that though it is with a mild difference but more illiterate women are taking decisions in the household matter than literate women. Likewise, the study on getting priority of women's opinion to take decisions on household work revealed that with mild difference illiterate women's opinion is getting more priority than literate women.

On the other hand, the study on important issues like getting priority of women's decision on the land property of the family, priority of women's decision on the education of children's and decision on purchasing household utensils literate women's opinion is getting more priority than illiterate women.

Thus, as per the study the more literate women are taking decision in very important issues of life like land property, education of children etc. than the illiterate women.

6.2 Information related to decision making in earning:

Earning of women is very important to hold her position in the family and society. An earner women's status is definitely different from the women who are not earners. So their ability to earn, decision taking in earning issues may depend on education or on their literacy. So to have a look at it the study might be conducted on the following issues.

Table 6.2.1: Literate and Illiterate Women's Decision Making in earning

Items	Response In Total (%)			
	Literate		Illiterate	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Respondent woman's husband hand over his earning to her to run the family.	69 (43.12)	91 (56.88)	54 (33.75)	106 (66.25)
Being earner woman is free to take self decision in monetary business.	93 (58.12)	67 (41.88)	82 (51.25)	78 (48.75)

Source: Brahma, B. (2014)⁶

The study on women's decision-making on earning matter revealing that more literate women's husbands hand over their earnings to run the family in comparison to illiterate women. Moreover, literate women are showing more freeness to take the decision in monetary business than illiterate women. So in earning related decision making literate women are showing more liberal and authority to decide than illiterate women.

Table 6.2.2: Literate and Illiterate Women's Household Maintenance on Finance

Items	Response In Total (%)							
	Literate				Illiterate			
	H	H*	B	H**	H	H*	B	H**
Family's budgeting and marketing is done by	16 (10)	72 (45)	64 (40)	8 (5)	17 (10.62)	104 (65)	38 (23.75)	1 (0.63)
Family's payment to servant or daily or weekly laborers is maintained by	18 (11.25)	79 (49.37)	52 (32.5)	11 (6.88)	17 (10.63)	104 (65)	38 (23.75)	1 (0.62)

Note - H= Herself, H*= Husband, B= Both, H**= Head of the Family

Source: Brahma, B. (2014)⁷

In this table, the study on women's decisions related to financial matters on budgeting and marketing and payment to the servant or daily or weekly workers reveals that, though the difference is mild but illiterate women are doing budgeting and marketing more than literate women. On the other hand, with mild difference more literate women are doing payment to servants and daily weekly workers than the illiterate women.

VII. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The major finding of the study reveals that:

In the case of child reproduction more illiterate women are making decisions by themselves than literate women, where literate women preferred joint decisions taken by both husband and wife.

In the case of decision making in the household matter and getting priority to take decisions in household work, then more illiterate women are showing to make decisions than the literate women. But in the case of land property matter, children's education-related matter and purchasing of utensil matters more literate women are taking decision than illiterate women.

In the case of decision making in earning and finance more literate women are showing freeness to make decision on their own earning and husband also hand over his earnings for the smooth running of the family than the illiterate women. Moreover, though more illiterate women are taking decisions in budgeting and marketing issues with a mild difference payment to servants and the daily worker is maintained by more literate women.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The dwelling place of the Bodo and Rabha community is mostly in the villages. They live with their customary laws and traditions. They are not much aware of differences lying between males and females and about their deprivation and rights. They always prefer easy-going life by nature. So, the data collected from the thesis done on women's decision-making on their family life and social life and financial matter, etc. is not revealing much difference between literate and illiterate women. Then also observing literate women's more decision making authority on some important issues like land property matter, children's education, purchasing of utensils and decision making power on own earning, payment power to household workers we can say that literate women are being more competent than illiterate women though it is with mild differences. In other fields like child reproduction, household decision making, getting priority of own views, budgeting, and marketing more illiterate women are showing their smartness to take decisions than literate women.

So, we can conclude that many differences are not there between literate and illiterate women's decision making authority in different issues among Bodo and Rabha communities women. May be due to simple village life their life is going easily denying all modern changes of materialism.

The recommendation that I want to suggest is that both Bodo and Rabha women's literacy is to be increased. In villages still, many women are not literate. They are unknown about male and female differences, their rights their equal power, and their decision making. So, literacy can be one vital means to bring awareness and participation in various fields of life otherwise half the people's development will lack behind.

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