



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Role of General and Schedule Cast Females in Family Decision Making

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Abstract

The present study aims at comparison of role of females in family decision making between SC and general females of rural areas of Tissa and Salooni blocks of Chamba District in Himachal Pradesh. Overall female decision making covered 27 types of activities in which women were asked to indicate the extent of their participation in decision making. Scores for extent of role in family decision making were given from zero to 4 where zero means no participation and four means final decision of a female. Hypothesis of no difference is tested. It is inferred that though females have lesser role in family decision making yet, every female has equal role in family decision making irrespective of her cast. The difference in mean scores of SC and general females is not significant implying that females of both categories are having equal role in decision regarding all kinds of activities separately. It supports the fact that various policies and schemes launched to uplift scheduled caste females have worked pretty well which is healing as well.

Index Items: Family Decision Making, General Females, Household, Schedule Cast Females.

Introduction

Women and men are two sides of a same coin. Both have equal importance in the social, cultural and economic development of a country. But one side i.e. women are under estimated in terms of their role in different spheres. Even their contributions are not included in the GDP calculation. As a result, development of women has not been leveled at par with men in India. India has slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, becoming the third worst performer in South Asia.¹ This also supports the same fact. Thus women are still fighting directly or indirectly to attain the due place in the society. Even after 7 decades of independence of India, women have to face various kinds of inequalities despite their tremendous contribution in every sector. For empowering women, various schemes at centre and states are running. But still the gap persists in the participation of women in educational, economical, political and social activities and decision making also. The picture is worse in the rural areas of the country. They have lesser role in the family decision making also. In the past

¹ (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/wefs-gender-gap-index-india-slips-28-places-ranks-140-among-156-countries/article34206867.ece>, 2021)

times, caste based inequality also used to exist in rural areas which was driven by various orthodoxies. Women of reserved castes had to face more hard times than that of the general women. The narrowing of gap between the launching and implementing of policies and schemes to uplift SC females could be the major reason of reduction in inequality between SC and general females. The education, financial self reliance and better health of women have to be the major concern of the government so that every woman can achieve her deserved regard and status in the society.

Women's autonomy in decision making is positively associated with their age, employment and number of living children. Women from rural area have less autonomy in decision making in all four types of outcome measure. Interestingly, rich women are less likely to have autonomy to make decision in own healthcare. (Dev R Acharya, 2010). There is a positive and significant relationship between access to resources and women participation in decision making. Also between women's socioeconomic status and women participation in decision making observed a positive relationship. There is difference in female role orientation vis-à-vis their family type (joint or nuclear), age, and education and income levels. Females are found to play more positive role in the purchase of durables they personally use than the durables for the family usage. (Juyal, Role of Females in Family Buying Decision-Making—A Study among Females in Uttarakhand, 2009). Mortality of children was about three times higher in families with low decision making scores compared to those with high decision making scores. The proportion of vaccinated cases was higher for those with high decision making scores, high social capital, and better economic status. Conversely the proportion of vaccinated referents was higher for low decision making and social capital scores and low economic status (Mesganaw Fantahun, 2007). The highest proportion (42.8%) of the rural women was found playing medium decision making role while the rest 57.2% was equally shared by high and low decision makers. Correlation analysis indicated education, agricultural knowledge and non-localite behavior to have positive significant influence on family decision making role of the rural women.

It is hypothesized that there is no difference between role of both category females in family decision making.

Method

The present study is based on the rural areas of Tissa and Salooni blocks of Chamba District in Himachal Pradesh. The primary data was used for the study and reference period of data was 2019-20 year. For the collection of data, purposive and multistage random sampling has been used. In the first stage, Chamba district was selected purposively as it is the most backward district of Himachal Pradesh in terms of women exposure to various sectors. In the second stage two blocks of Chamba district were also selected purposively as status of the females in these blocks is comparatively poor than other blocks of Chamba district. In the third stage, all the panchayats of two blocks were arranged in ascending order on the basis of number of female population and 2 panchayats from each block were selected randomly. In the fourth stage, all the villages of selected panchayats were listed in the ascending order of number of female population and 10 villages from each panchayats were selected randomly. In the last stage, all the households were listed category wise (SC and general) on the same criterion and randomly 100 households were selected randomly out of which 50 of SC and 50 of general females were selected.

Data were collected through a well structured schedule. The overall family decision making was divided into broad six activities and each category was further divided into various sub activities. These are as follows:

1. Participation in Decision Making by Women in Domestic/Child Related Activities

- i. Purchase of food items
- ii. Buying domestic products
- iii. Home decoration
- iv. New house construction
- v. Renovation of old house
- vi. Education of children
- vii. Child/ women development
- viii. Programmes going to children's school function

2. Role in Decision Making in Money related Activities

- i. Buying and sale of Different items
- ii. Taking debit for domestic needs
- iii. Expenditure on different items
- iv. Giving loans
- v. Saving and investment

3. Role in Decision Making in Agriculture Related Activities

- i. Purchase of machinery
- ii. Purchase and sale of animals
- iii. Purchase and sale of land
- iv. Sale of Agriculture output
- v. Type of seed sowing
- vi. Use of fertilizer
- vii. Post harvest operations

4. Freedom of women to go outside home by purpose of visit

- i. Go to hospital/ doctor
- ii. Go to social function
- iii. Purchase something for herself
- iv. Go to market
- v. Go outside village for work
- vi. Go outside for recreation

5. Vote related activities

- i. Independency in vote casting

Thus overall female decision making covers 27 types of activities. On these activities women were asked to indicate the extent of their participation in decision making. Women with no participation in the decision making were given zero score and for only informed about decision score one was given. A score of two was given if women participate in decision making to some extent. If women participate in decision making to large extent a score of three was given and a score four was given if the women took final decisions (Baliyan, 2014).

For the analysis of data various statistical methods like average, percentage, mean, standard deviation and standard error of difference. For the test of significance of difference, t-test was used and calculations were done using MS-Excel.

Results

The overall family decision making was divided in the five major categories. The first category which is domestic/social/child related activities comprises of decisions related to 8 activities such as purchase of food items, purchase of domestic products, new house construction, house decoration, old house renovation, education of children, child and women development and going to child school functions. Maximum of SC females (24.75 per cent) had decision making in these activities to a large extent and general females are ahead of SC females as 46.25 per cent of general females participate in these activities to a large extent. Further, 26 percent of general females and only 23 per cent of SC females take final decisions related to domestic/social/child related activities. In the case of SC females, 5.75 per cent have no participation in any kind of above mentioned activities, whereas, general females are better as only 4.75 per cent of general females have no participation in the same activities (Table A).

The second category is decisions in money related activities which is further classified into 5 categories such as .Buying and sale of different items, taking debit for domestic needs, expenditure on different items, giving loans and saving and investment. Most of the SC females i.e. 30 per cent revealed that only their opinions are asked and 20 per cent SC females have even no participation in money related activities. General females (35.2 per cent) participate the most and far ahead of SC females in these activities to a large extent. An interesting fact is evident from the table that lesser general females (20.8 per cent) take final decisions in money related activities than SC females (20.8 per cent). Only 12 per cent of general females do not participate in these activities at all (Table A).

The third kind of activity is named as decision making related to agriculture activities. It is divided in to 7 kinds of sub activities as, Purchase of machinery, purchase and sale of animals, purchase and sale of land, sale of agriculture output, type of seed sowing, use of fertilizer and post harvest operations. Most of the SC females i.e. 34.57 per cent revealed that only their opinions are asked in agriculture related activities, whereas, most of the general females i.e. 34.86 per cent take decisions related to these activities to a large extent. Also more of the SC females (16 per cent) have no participation in these activities than that of general females (14.57 per cent). Opposite to this, more of the SC females (22 per cent) than general females (18.86per cent) take final decisions in agriculture related activities (Table A).

The next category named as freedom of females to go out of home for different purposes is divided into 6 parts which are go to hospital/ doctor, go to social function, go to purchase something for herself, go to market, go outside village for work and go outside for recreation. Most of the SC females (72.67 per cent) have to take permission to go outside and most of the general females (60.67 per cent) but lesser than SC females have to take permission of elder members or head of the family to go outside home for any purpose. More of general females (24 per cent) than SC females (21 per cent) can go outside home as they wish (Table 5.1). It means general females enjoy large autonomy to go outside home than SC females. It is evident that none of SC and general female is detained from going outside home which is a positive sign towards women empowerment.

The last but not least activity is vote related. In this activity autonomy of females to cast vote according to their choice is studied. It is found that most of the SC and general females i.e. 44 and 40 per cent respectively but more of SC females than general females cast their votes as per head of the family. Further, 30 per cent of general females and 24 per cent of SC females which is less than general females cast their votes by their choice every time. Another positive fact towards political awareness of females is noticed is that none of SC and general females has no participation in the vote casting (Table A).

Table A

Participation of SC and General Females in Different Activities of Family Decision Making

Type of Activities	Category of Females	No participation/ Not allowed/ (Score-0)	Only opinion asked/ Have to Obey/ have to cast as per head of the family (Score-1)	To some extent/ Have to take permission / sometimes by own choice (Score-2)	To a large extent / Have to inform only / most of the times own choice (Score-3)	Final Decision/ Can go out as they wish/ every time own choice (Score-4)	Total
A. Role in Decision Making in Domestic/Child Related Activities(Maximum Score 32)	SC Females	23 (5.75)	95 (23.75)	91 (22.75)	99 (24.75)	92 (23)	400
	General Females	19 (4.75)	76 (19)	16 (4)	185 (46.25)	104 (26)	400
B. Role in Decision Making in Money Related Activities(Maximum Score 20)	SC Females	50 (20)	75 (30)	28 (11.2)	37 (14.8)	60 (24)	250
	General Females	30 (12)	56 (22.4)	24 (9.6)	88 (35.2)	52 (20.8)	250
C. Role in Decision Making in Agriculture Related Activities(Maximum Score 28)	SC Females	56 (16)	121 (34.57)	50 (14.29)	46 (13.14)	77 (22)	350
	General Females	51 (14.57)	83 (23.71)	28 (8.00)	122 (34.86)	66 (18.86)	350
D. Freedom of women to go outside home by purpose of visit(Maximum Score 24)	SC Females	0 (0)	3 (1)	218 (72.67)	17 (5.67)	63 (21)	300
	General Females	0 (0)	0 (0)	182 (60.67)	46 (15.33)	72 (24.00)	300
E. Vote related activities(Maximum Score 4)	SC Females	0 (0)	22 (44)	12 (24)	4 (8)	12 (24)	50
	General Females	0 (0)	20 (40)	6 (12)	9 (18)	15 (30)	50
Total	SC Females	129 (9.55)	316 (23.41)	398 (29.48)	203 (15.04)	304 (22.52)	1350
	General Females	100 (7.41)	235 (17.41)	256 (18.96)	450 (33.33)	309 (22.9)	1350

Numbers in the parenthesis show percentage value

On the basis of overall family decision making, most of the SC females (29.48 per cent) have recorded score-2, whereas, general females (33.33) have recorded score-3 the most. Almost equal autonomy is enjoyed by both SC (22.52 per cent) and general females (22.9 per cent) to take various final decisions related to family. With that more of the SC females (9.55 per cent) participate not at all than general females (7.41 per cent) in overall family decision making (Table 5.1). Thus it can be concluded that in terms of no participation in family decision making, SC females are lacking behind. But overall, no female category can be put on higher step of family decision making scale than other as SC females are heading in some categories and on the other hand general females are heading in other categories than SC females. Thus it is inferred that though females have lesser role in family decision making yet, every female has equal role in family decision making irrespective of her cast. It can further be concluded that the various policies and schemes launched to uplift scheduled caste females have worked pretty well which is healing as well.

Comparison of Role in Family Decision Making between SC and General Females

It is concluded that females of both categories have highest mean scores (SC females-18.84, general females-21.64) in domestic and child related activities than other activities where minimum and maximum possible score ranges from 0 to 32). Meaning thereby females are consulted more in domestic activities as they are dealt more with domestic activities. Females have more autonomy in child related activities as mothers have more roles in the overall development of children. This supports the fact that mother is the first teacher and guide of the child (Table B).

Further, females of both categories have the least autonomy to go outside home for any purpose as lowest mean scores (SC females-9.92, general females-11.1) are recorded in the category of freedom of women to go outside home where minimum and maximum possible score ranges from 0 to 24 (Table B).

Table B Comparison of Role in Family Decision Making between SC and General Females

Type of Activities	Category of Females	Mean	SD	SED	t-value	Remarks
A. Role in Decision Making in Domestic/ Social/Child Related Activities(Maximum Score 32)	SC Females	18.84	8.71	1.66	1.68**	not significant
	General Females	21.64	7.89			
B. Role in Decision Making in Money Related Activities(Maximum Score 20)	SC Females	9.58	7.43	1.39	1.76**	not significant
	General Females	12.02	6.41			
C. Role in Decision Making in Agriculture Related Activities(Maximum Score 28)	SC Females	13.34	9.84	1.93	1.18**	not significant
	General Females	15.62	9.41			
D. Freedom of women to go outside home by purpose of visit(Maximum Score 24)	SC Females	9.72	6.78	1.40	0.99**	not significant
	General Females	11.1	7.17			
E. Vote related activities(Maximum Score 4)	SC Females	2.12	1.22	0.25	1.04**	not significant
	General Females	2.38	1.29			
Over all Mean and SD	SC Females	10.71	9.17	1.32	1.39**	not significant
	General Females	12.55	9.39			

**Significant at both 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance.

In case of overall family decision making in different activities, value of 't' at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance for 98 degree of freedom is 1.98 and 2.63 respectively. Whereas, the calculated value of 't' is 1.39 which is far less than then table values at both level of significance (Table B). Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted at both levels of significance and it may be concluded that there is no significant difference between means score of SC and general females. Thus both SC and general females occupy same place and autonomy in their family decision making.

The mean score of general females is more than that of SC females in all type of activities. This difference is highest in domestic and child related activities which is 2.8 and lowest in vote related activities i.e. .26. But the calculated 't' value for this difference is less than the table value for 98 degrees of freedom at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance in case of all kinds of activities (Table B). Therefore, null hypothesis is accepted and it is inferred that difference in mean scores of SC and general females is not significant implying thereby that females of both categories are having equal role in decision regarding all kinds of activities separately.

Conclusion

Overall, no female category could be put on higher step of family decision making scale than other as SC females were heading in some categories and on the other hand general females were heading in other categories than SC females. Thus it was concluded that though females have lesser role in family decision making yet, every female had equal role in family decision making irrespective of her cast. It supports the fact that the various policies and schemes launched to uplift scheduled caste females have worked pretty well which is healing as well. It was further inferred that difference in mean scores of SC and general females is not significant implying thereby that females of both categories are having equal role in decision regarding all kinds of activities separately.

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