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 <https://doi.org/10.55463/issn.1674-2974.50.6.14>

Determinants of Women's Participation in Family Decision-Making Process in Bangladesh: Statistical Analysis

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Received: March 24, 2023 / Revised: April 21, 2023 / Accepted: May 25, 2023 / Published: June 30, 2023

Abstract: Decision making is an indicator of women's empowerment, and women's empowerment is an important factor affecting the socio-economic development of a country. These decisions include determining their own health care and children's health care, making large or small household purchases, and visiting family or relatives. In this study, an attempt has been made to find the determinants of women's participation in their family decision making process in Bangladesh. A study has been conducted at six divisions in Bangladesh on 400 families. Primary data were collected from 400 women using a stratified sampling technique using a self-administered questionnaire. Multivariate regression using logistic regression was performed to identify the determinants. Finally, the results show that the respondent's monetary contribution, respondents' and their husbands higher education, age at the time of marriage, inter spousal communication, wealth index, family structure, residence, and time spent on housework significantly affect the participation of women in the family decision making process. Some positively affect and some negatively compared to the reference category.

Keywords: determinants, women's participation, decision-making autonomy.

孟加拉国妇女参与家庭决策过程的决定因素：统计分析

摘要：决策是妇女赋权的指标，妇女赋权是影响一个国家社会经济发展的重要因素。这些决定包括确定自己的医疗保健和儿童的医疗保健、进行大型或小型家庭采购以及探访家人或亲戚。本研究试图找出孟加拉国妇女参与家庭决策过程的决定因素。孟加拉国六个省对400个家庭进行了一项研究。主要数据是通过分层抽样技术和自填问卷从400名女性中收集的。使用逻辑回归进行多变量回归以确定决定因素。最后，结果显示，受访者的金钱贡献、受访者及其丈夫的受教育程度、结婚时的年龄、夫妻间的沟通、财富指数、家庭结构、居住地、家务劳动时间等显著影响女性参与家庭生活的程度。家庭决策过程。与参考类别相比，有些产生积极影响，有些产生负面影响。

关键词：决定因素、妇女参与、决策自主权。

1. Introduction

Decision making is an indicator of women's empowerment, and women's empowerment is an important factor affecting the socio-economic development of a country. At present, women empowerment is the prime concern to achieve the goal of gender equality. Gender equality influences not only women but also society as a whole. Empowerment of women refers to decision making power in the social, economic and political spheres of life in their family and in workplace. Women's participation in family decision making is crucial for creating more egalitarian and harmonious families. This is the first step of women empowerment. Women empowerment should start from their own home. Women's position in the household determines women's autonomy in the family. It is worth examining whether can decide about household matters like buying household assets and jewelries, having access to money, having mobility to go to relatives' houses, or getting health care facilities. In the past and in the recent days women's voices were mostly ignored from important family decisions, with men making the final decisions regarding finances, education, healthcare, and other crucial issues. The World Bank study in Bangladesh highlighted that women have had a limited role in household decision making, limited access and control over household resources (physical and financial assets), low level of individual assets, heavy domestic workloads, restricted mobility and inadequate knowledge and skills that lead to women's vulnerability [1]. The status of women in Bangladesh has been ranked the lowest in the world on the basis of twenty indicators related to health, marriage, children, education, employment and social equality [2]. Evidence from developing countries showed that women's age and family structure was the strongest determinants of women's authority in decision making. Older women and women in nuclear households were more likely than other women to participate in family decisions. However, today more and more women are asserting their rights to be part of the decision-making process.

Women's participation in family decision-making is vital for creating healthy and supportive family environments. It is important for families, communities, and governments to support and encourage women's active participation in decision-making processes. Lots of factors can affect women's participation in family decision making. These can vary depending on the culture, societal norms, and economic status of the family, among other factors, there are some common factors that can impact women's participation in family decision making.

This research is helpful and is therefore undertaken to analyze the factors to understand the significant determinants that influence the participation of women in their family decision making process in Bangladesh.

Thus, this study is unique and crucial from the perspective of Bangladeshi women, where they can be more active in family decision making by improving their efforts considering the results of this study. It would also be applicable to the women of developing countries. The study is also important for social reformers and educationists to consider their role in promoting the concept of women empowerment through education and decision making autonomy.

1.1. Objectives

The main objective of this study was to identify the determinants of women's participation in family decision making in Bangladesh. The specific objectives are outlined below:

- i. To find the positive factors that affect women's participation in decision making in their families;
- ii. To determine the negative factors that affect women's participation in family decision making activities;
- iii. To put forward suggestions to make women more participative in family decision making.

2. Literature Review

Addissie [3] attempted to identify major socioeconomic determinants of women's participation in decision making in house-hold income in Debre Tabor Town in India. The study was conducted on 375 Indian women. Tipu [4] tried to find problems of women's decision making, factors responsible for keeping them away, and proposed that there will be possible solutions to unravel problems. Sudatta [5] investigates determinants of female autonomy across Indian states. This paper analyzes the condition of female autonomy and its determinants across states in India. Hora et al. [6] aimed to identify the status of women in Bedele town administration, Ethiopia as well as point out factors hindering women from participating in public and forward some possible recommendations for solving the problems identified through the study. Gebrat [7] practically investigated the determinants of women's participation in decision making in house-hold income in sekota woreda. For this study, data were collected from 309 rural women. Urban women were not included in the study. Khanam [8] showed that women have empowered positively in terms of mobility and decision-making autonomy. Acharya et al. [9] studied women's autonomy in household decision-making in Nepal. They used Nepal Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) 2006, which provided data on ever married women aged 15–49 years from 8257 respondents. The data consists of women's four types of household decision making; own health care, making major household purchases, making purchases for daily household needs, and visits to her family or relatives. Alemtsehay [10], tried to find the household decision-making status of women in

[illegible]

Continuation of Table 1

SSC	30	7.5	35	8.75	65	16.25
HSC	142	35.5	25	6.25	167	41.75
Graduation or above	150	37.5	18	4.5	168	42
Total	322	80.5	78	19.5	400	100
Husbands' education						
SSC	15	3.75	33	8.25	48	12
HSC	95	23.75	25	6.25	120	30
Graduation or above	212	53	20	5	232	58
Total	322	80.5	78	19.5	400	100
Residence						
Urban	270	67.5	20	5	290	72.5
Rural	52	13	58	14.5	110	27.5
Total	322	80.5	78	19.5	400	100
Family structure						
Nuclear	210	52.5	30	7.5	240	60
Joint	112	28	48	12	160	40
Total	322	80.5	78	19.5	400	100
Wives' Monetary Contribution						
No	8	2	30	7.5	38	9.5
Partial	130	32.5	22	5.5	152	38
Full	184	46	26	6.5	210	52.5
Total	322	80.5	78	19.5	400	100

3.3. The Description of the Respondent's Demographic, Social and Economic Situations

3.3.1. Age of Marriage of the Respondents

From the 400 sample data, 322 (80.5%) decision-makers and 78 (19.5%) non-decision-makers were interviewed for the study (Fig. 2). The result of the study shows that of the total respondents, 32.25% are within the age range of 20 to 25 years, 33.75% are between 25 and 30, 19.25% from 30 to 35 years, and the rest 14.75% are of age above 35 years. A higher proportion of decision-makers (30%) are from age group 25-30 years and non-decision-makers (5.25%) are found in the age group above 35 years.

Age Distribution

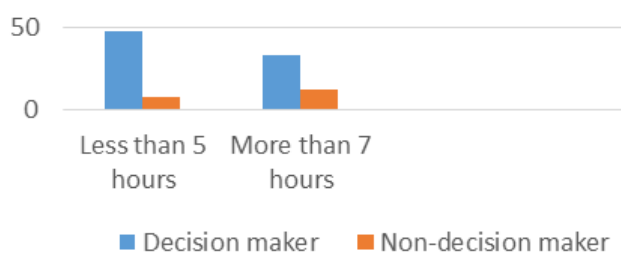


Fig. 2 Age distribution

3.3.2. Wealth Index

Among 400 respondents, 41 were taken from poor families, 158 were from the middle class families, and 201 were from rich families. From the total respondents, the highest portion (45.75%) of decision-makers belong to rich families and at the same time, the lower portion (4.5%) is also from the same group (Fig. 3).

Wealth Index

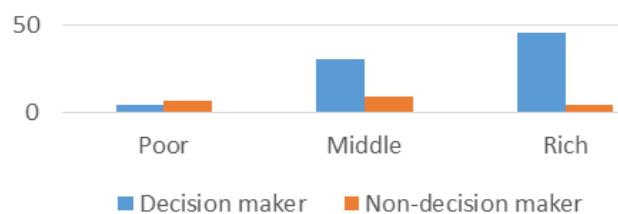


Fig. 3 Wealth index

3.3.3. Time Spent on Housework

It is an important characteristic that affects women's decision making process. It is seen from Fig. 4 that time spent on household work has a relation with decision making by the women, and the table shows that women who spent less time in household work have more participation in family decision making.

Time Spent on Household work

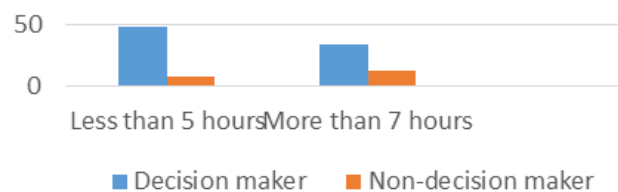


Fig. 4 Time spent on housework

3.3.4. Education Level of the Respondents

Fig. 5 shows that higher portion of the sample respondents are decision-makers 150 (37.5%) who are in the group graduates or above and lower portion of non-decision-makers only 4.5% are also from this group. Thus, it can be easily understood that education plays an important role in women empowerment through the decision making process.

Education

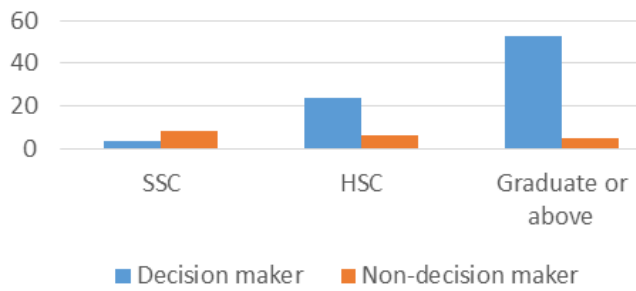


Fig. 5 Education level

3.3.5. Education Level of the Husbands

Fig. 6 shows that higher portion of the sample respondents are decision-makers whose husbands are in the group “graduates or above and a lower portion of non-decision-makers only 5% are also from this group. Thus, it can be easily understood that education plays an important role in women empowerment through the decision making process.

Husband's Education

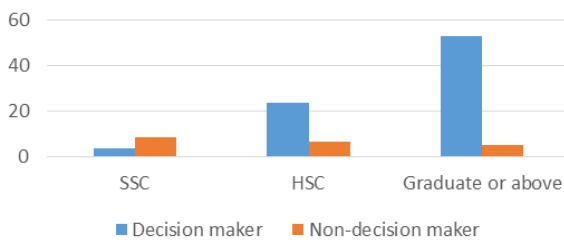


Fig. 6 Husbands' education

3.3.6. Residence

From the 400 respondents 290 are from urban and 110 are from rural. A higher proportion of decision-makers (67.5%) are from urban groups, and a lower non-decision-maker proportion (5%) is also found in the age group urban (Fig. 7).

Residence

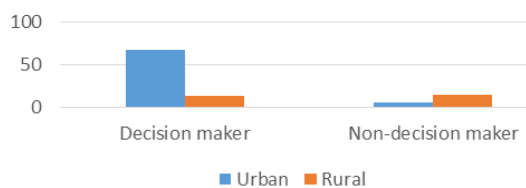


Fig. 7 Residence

3.3.7. Family Structure

Data reveals that among 400 respondents 210 are

decision-makers who are from nuclear family and this is the highest portion, on the other hand, the lower portion is also from this group. So in nuclear families, women are more spontaneous to take any decision (Fig. 8).

Family Structure

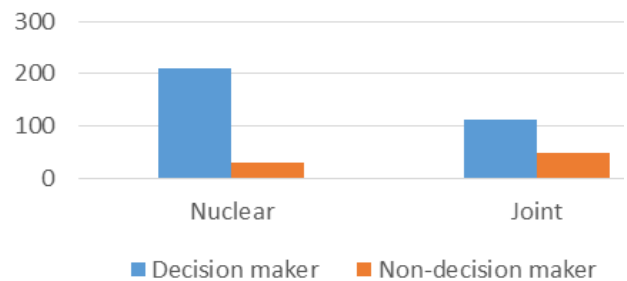


Fig. 8 Family structure

3.3.8. Wives' Monetary Contribution to the Family

From the total respondents, the highest portion (46%) was a decision-maker who spent the full portion of her earnings on the family. Thus, it can be said that monetary contribution is an important factor that affects women to participate in the family decision making process (Fig. 9).

Monetary Contribution

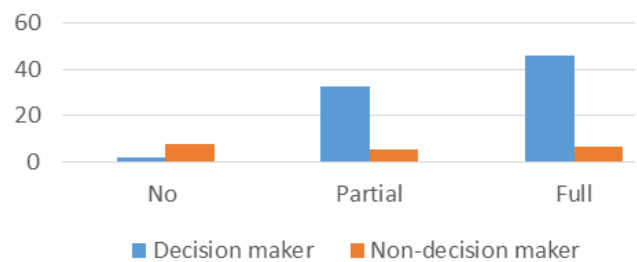


Fig. 9 Monetary contribution

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Logistic Regression Analysis for Women's Participation in Household Decision Making

Age is a significant variable and it affects women's decision making positively at 1% level of significance with a probability of 0.005 in range of 25-30 as compared to 20-25 years old, and it is also significantly and positively affected at the age of 30-35 years old compared to 20-25 years old (Table 2).

Table 2 Significance of women participation in household decision making

Variables	Categories	Coefficient	The coefficient of log odd estimation	Significance
Age	(20-25)			
	25-30	.57851	1.115	0.005***
	30-35	.092431	2.433	0.001***
	35+	.023344	.328	0.440
Wealth Index	(Poor)			
	Middle	.094911	1.628	0.005***
	Rich	.215048	4.609	0.000***
Education	(SSC)			
	HSC	.291411	2.042	0.004***
	Graduates and Above	.414840	3.361	0.000***

Continuation of Table 2

Husband's Education	(SSC)			
	HSC	.094142	2.493	0.004***
	Graduates and Above	.303841	6.261	0.000***
Residence	(Rural)			
	Urban	.492311	1.666	0.071*
Family Structure	(Nuclear)			
	Joint	-.06157	.323	0.000***
Wives' Monetary Contribution	(No Contribution)			
	Partial	.254311	1.173	0.000***
	Full	.546327	1.734	0.000***
Time Spent on housework	(Less than 5 hours)			
	More than 5 hours	-.06561	.328	0.037***

Note: Reference categories are in the parenthesis; *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$

The probability of women's decision making increases by 5.78 percent as the respondent woman is in the age of 25-30 years old as compared to the age 20-25. Similarly the probability of women's decision making increases by 9.24 percent as the respondent woman becomes in the age of 30-35 years as compared to 20-25 years. The result indicates that there is a positive relationship between the educational status of the respondents and women's decision making, and this is significant at 1% level of significance. The probability of women's decision making increases by 41.48406 % as the respondent women complete tertiary level of education, which is university level, and by 29.14% who completed secondary level of education compared with respondents who had secondary level of education. Again, the result indicates a positive relationship between the educational status of the respondents husband and women's decision making, and this is significant at 1% level of significance. The probability of women's decision making increases by 30.3% as their husband completed the tertiary level of education, which is university level, and by 9.4% who completed the secondary level of education compared with respondents' husbands who had the secondary level of education. The area of residence is a significant variable and it affects women's decision making. The results show that the probability of decision making increases by 49% from the respondents living in urban areas compared with those living in rural areas. The results show that joint family is a negative factor compared to nuclear family in the participating in the family decision making process. On the other hand, the time spent on housework is significant at 1% level of significance and it negatively affects the probability of women's decision making. The probability of women in decision making declined by 6.5% as women spent more time on household work. The justification of this variable is that when women do not have any employed job she will spend most of the time and she will not have any paid income that leads to a decline in the probability of becoming a decision-maker in their family. The probability of wife in decision making is increased by 25.4% when wife has partial monetary contribution to the family and increased by 54.6% when they spent full money for their family compared

with those who have no monetary contribution.

One open ended question there in the questionnaire to find the suggestions from the respondents on how to make women more participative in their family decision making process and the result is shown through Table 3 and Fig. 10.

Table 3 Factors influencing women's status of decision maker

Factors	Frequency
Husbands' education	140
Respondents' education	145
Holding job or other activities	190
Restriction of early marriage	130
Inter spousal communication	100
Nuclear family	120
Socialization	80

To Make Women More Participative in Family Decision Making

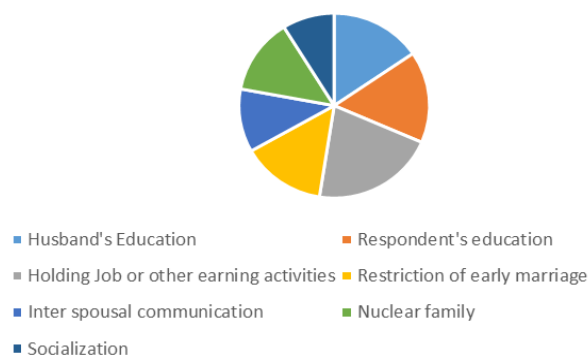


Fig. 10 Suggestions on women's decision-making status

5. Conclusion

Women, especially in developing countries, are not empowered from a family decision-making perspective. Most of them depend on their father or husband in several ways. But recently this scenario is getting changes in Bangladesh and women are getting more empowered in decision making autonomy. The main objective of the study was to identify major socioeconomic determinants of women's participation in the family decision making process in Bangladesh. To achieve this objective, primary data were collected from a sample of 400 respondents from six divisions in Bangladesh. Data are regressed using a binary logit model. The estimated logit model found that age 30-35 at the time of marriage as compared to the group 20-25,

secondary and tertiary education level both respondent's and their husband's as compared to primary education level, middle class and rich family as compared to poor family, urban women as compared to rural women, wives' partial or full monetary contribution to the family compared to their no contribution are positively and significantly affect the participation of women in family decision making process. However, the time spent on household work, joint family affects negatively and significantly compared to respondent spent less time and respondent belongs to nuclear family. Finally, we can say that women have appeared to be empowered very significantly in terms of decision-making autonomy.

From the existing literature it is seen that some researchers tried to find problems of participation of women in the smooth and proper development process is indispensable especially a country like Bangladesh which has huge numbers of women as a human resource and suggests that there will be possible solutions to unravel problems. Some researchers tried to find the determinants of women's participation in their household economy in some other countries not in Bangladesh. The present study is a new and innovative one in the sense that this study tried to find the factors that influence women's decision making in their own household in Bangladesh and sample has been taken from both urban and rural areas. The findings would be helpful not only for Bangladeshi women but also for women in this subcontinent and the developing countries. There is an ample scope of conducting further research on this issue as it would be beneficial for society and for the country as well. Women empowerment should start from their own home by taking part in the decision-making process in their family. This research shows them the right way where to put emphasis and which factors should be considered most. Social reformers and educationalists should pay attention here as they are the key persons to change the existing state of things for the betterment of society. Once women get empowered and can claim their rights and access to land, leadership, opportunities and choices, economies of the country would grow more with huge prospects of further development of the country and the improvement of future generations.

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