

DECISION MAKING AT FAMILY LEVEL IN CASE OF RURAL WOMEN**Dr. Ziya. A. Pathan**Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of Eswatini, Kingdom of Eswatini
zapathan@uniswa.sz**ABSTRACT**

Women are still endangered in relation to the decision making process at the family level especially in rural area. The present study is imperative to the societies urging for women empowerment and gender equality. The present study assesses the status of women in decision making at family level in Ambo District in Ethiopia which is limited to, Awaro kora Kebele. The research is conducted by obtaining relevant primary and secondary data. Questionnaire and general observation is used to gather relevant information. The sample size of 82 respondents is chosen through simple random sampling technique. The study reveals that, majority of the respondents are female and most of them are in the age group of either 26 – 30 years or 31 – 40 years of age. There is a significant association between family expenditure, child welfare, reproductive health, socio-cultural matter, patriarchal system and economic factors playing a great influence in hindering the status of women's decision making process at family level. It is recommended to mobilize community work towards awareness on the status of women in decision-making process at family level in rural areas.

Key Words: Family - Decision making - Patriarchy - Empowerment**Acronym:**

GBV	-	Gender based violence
GGI	-	General group index
HTP	-	Harmful traditional practices
ICDP	-	International child development program
IMF	-	International monetary fund

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The contribution of women in world's population is nearly 50 percent; women have a prominent role, which is either unexploited or underexploited by the mainstream society. The success and failure of women empowerment process very much depends on decision-making powers of women at domestic and socio-political level, IMF, (2013).

In 1960s sociologists were interested in examining the effect of wife's work participation and decision making as significant to understand women's status in the family. Several studies are conducted in field of social science to describe household decision-making power and balance between husband and wife in different models (Hou, 2012).

In the patriarchal social organization, the role of women is not considered as such significant and decisive in the domestic as well as public spheres (Mugamil Jan and Shubean Akhtar, 2008). From a human right perspective, such discriminatory practice and tradition gravely violates and negatively affects women's fundamental right, most importantly their right to participation in economic, social and political arenas.

Women are one way or the other deprived of their decision making power both at family and social level due to woman unfriendly culture. Women in 18th and 19th centuries started significant movement towards gender equality and women empowerment. In the same vein, modern feminist movement raised different questions were not the agenda of prior feminist movements as the way of addressing gender disparities inter alia

the rights to education; wage disparity; equal economic opportunities and decision making right. Infact, woman movement aimed at disestablishing the hindering traditional values, cultural setting, and religious patriarchy. The equality of decision-making and status of woman in all parts of world started to spring, (Shahang Parveen, 2013).

In the third world countries like Ethiopia, women play a vital role in the welfare of the family. They are viewed as potential mothers a homemaker hence. The issue of women's participation is considered to be important and changing role of women due to women's education and participation of women in the labor force play an important role in enhancing the decision making power in the family (Bloom, 2003).

2. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The present study entitled, "Decision making at family level in case of rural women", studies female's participation in house hold decision making in relation to planning and executing decisions regarding family expenditure, child welfare, reproductive health and socio-political matters. It is observed that, men and women have differences in personality, status, power and access to material resources etc. Women are placed at the bottom of pay and power and are overlooked in decision-making.

Disparities between men and women in the world over assets and household decision making as well as political process reveals that women are deprived which, limits the country's ability to achieve its potential (Biswas 2004). The present research tried to assess the various socio-cultural factors that are influencing women's position at household level, hence the decision making powers of women within the family has been looked upon as one of the key factors and is well acknowledged in the research.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess the socio- economic factors that affect women's decision making power at the house hold level in the study area.
2. To analyze the status of women in decision making in their family.
3. To study the impact of nature of family on women's decision making power.

4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the major factors that affect women's decision-making power at household level?
2. What are the foremost impediments of women in decision-making practices at family level?

5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant to the societies urging for women empowerment and gender equality. Women themselves are the beneficiaries and different stakeholders emphasizing on the issue. This study is also important to different societies in understanding how the women is underestimated in decision-making process and the means to uplift the status of women through systematic analyses.

The research serves as a source of encouragement for further studies on the similar topics and enriching research and academic knowledge. The findings may provide information to policy makers and other human rights Activists', governmental and non-governmental organization working on related theme.

6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study assesses the status of women in decision making at family level in Ambo District, and limited to, Awaro kora Kebele.

7 LITERATURE REVIEW

Patriarchy is a social system, signifying male dominance (Mary Holmes, 2007). As per, Estelle patriarchy is a system of social interaction, which highly promotes the superiority of men and the inferiority of women at various levels. It simply endorses the power of men to control women in the social, political and economic aspect of life.

Besides, it strongly maintains the powerlessness of women in the social interaction due to cultural settings. In patriarchal social structure, women are expected to be submissive, lenient and obedient to male, since the system stands to foster the interest of male and the hierarchical relationship between men and women. Moreover, the social structure created gender roles for members of its community.

In effect gender socialization benefits the male sex and disregards the female one. But gender role socialization varies from culture to culture and society to society. Thus, the system greatly advances the control of women by men or the control of powerless by powerful (Estelle Disch, 1997).

Family is “a group consisting of parents and their children living together as a unit. It is also, group of people related by blood or marriage, (Catherine Saone’s and Sara Hawker, 2008). As Barbara cited in Michael the traditional notion of family is defined as nuclear institution which has legal basis. But in the case of the study community, the institution of marriage has no legal basis rather on the custom of the community.

The family is the basic social unit and as such should be strengthened. It is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. In different cultural, political and social Systems, various forms of the family exist. The rights, capabilities and responsibilities of family members must be respected (the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action)

In most traditional social structures, the nuclear family structure assigned certain division of labor for males and females. In this respect, the female are expected to perform only the domestic affairs or to be homemakers while the male expected to do the public spheres among others, generating household income, providing the family consumption and controlling the behavior of the family. (Michael S. Kimmel).

There is division of labor based on one’s capacity but sometimes women engage in activities, which are considered, as manly in some societies such as plowing, milling, harvesting and weaving. Men also engage in tasks, which is assigned for women such as cooking, baking injera, spinning and taking care of children.

Women have been playing a key role, not only for family wellbeing, but also in socio-economic and political sphere.

8 THE STATUS OF ETHIOPIAN WOMEN

8.1. Health Status:

Ethiopian women live in one of the world’s poorest conditions and face highest of health problems. Prenatal care from skilled health care providers has reached close half of those in need, post-natal care remains negligible, rural mothers those who have less than secondary education are at disadvantage, receiving less material care from skilled health providers than their urban counterpart, despite these challenges the movement has made stride in improving women and girl's health (Helina, 2015).

8.2. Social Status:

Ethiopian women are vulnerable to harmful traditional practices (HTP) such as, early marriage, forced marriages, violence against girls. Sexual harassment by male teachers and peers, leading to poor academic performance and school dropouts, hindering their ability to participate in new policies and laws, which prohibiting Gender based violence (GBV), including the previous family code of HTP.

Ethiopian women spend more time in uncompensated labor both inside and outside the home, while men get paid and earn more for their productive work (Helina, 2015).

8.3. Economic Status:

Ethiopian women contribute one of the highest rates of economic participation in the world, but this rate is lower than that of men in the country, they tend to be employed more in the informal sector and are affected by unemployment. Males in Ethiopia are paid more than females for the same job across sectors, furthermore, most of the work is traditionally associated and ill paid (Bogalech Mengistu, 2007),

8.4. Access to Resources:

The Ethiopian government has explicitly stated its intention to ensure women full participation in the information and communication sectors and made headway in expanding female ownership of mobile phones between Jun 2014 and May 2015. 20% of new mobile subscribers were women, however, there is all sex-disaggregated data to shade lights on questions of gender equality in terms of mobile use and there is little information about women accessing internet (Helina 2015).

In developing countries women play a vital role for the welfare of family and are basically viewed as potential mothers and home makers, hence decision making power of women within the family has been looked up as one of the important factors for wellbeing of the family. Despite the importance of women's participation in decision making, in the third world countries like Ethiopia women's decision making power is limited to some extent.

9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**9.1 Research Approach**

This present study is designed to assess the status of women in decision making at family level. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are employed to acquire the reliable information from the respondents concerning the status of women in decision making at family level in rural society and factors affecting targeted place of study.

9.2 Locale of the Study

The study is carried out in Awarokora kebele of Ambo district west shewa zone oromia regional state of Ethiopia which is located between astronomical grades of 80 47'N- 90 21'N and 370 32 E-380 30 E (Ambo district finance and economics development, 2018). The capital of west shewa zone is Ambo, which is located at 125 km away from the capital of the country (Ethiopia). The total area is 81674 hectares. The elevation varies from 500 and 3200m above sea level.

9.3. Sampling techniques and size

The researcher applied simple random sampling technique as each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected from the target population.

The researchers used questionnaire method for 82 respondents in which researchers used printed forms to obtain information from the respondents.

9.4. Source of Data

In order to gather reliable information both primary and secondary source of data are used. The information is collected from primary source i.e., directly contacting the respondents and having face-to-face discussion with relevance to the research topic. Secondary data is collected from sources such as books, thesis, articles, government records, records of national and international organizations and internet.

9.5. Method of Primary Data Collection

9.5.1 Questionnaires: Questionnaire method is applied to collect information from the respondent with the pre-ordained questions posed to the respondents.

9.5.2. General observation: General observation is one of the most common methods for qualitative data collection; it is a method that is used by physically appearing in the study area and observing the social environment and the setup. In general observation, the area of study is physically observed by the researcher but without any interaction with people.

10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Information is collected through questionnaire method. The information is presented in tabular form and simple percentage technique is used.

I. Background of the Respondents

Table No.1: Sex-wise distribution of the respondents

Sl.No.	Sex	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	30	36.59
2	Female	52	63.41
	Total	82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

According to the above table, the sex composition of the respondent is exhibited. It reveals that, about 52(63.41%) of the total respondents are females and 30(36.59%) of the total respondents are males. It implies that the female respondents are more as compared to male respondents in the study area.

Table No.2: Age Composition of the respondents

Sl.No.	Age group	Frequency	Percentage
1	20 -25	12	14.63
2	26-30	20	24.39
3	31-40	25	30.49
4	41- 50	18	21.95
5	51 -60	7	08.54
6	Above 60	0	00.00
	Total	82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

As presented in the above table, out of 82 respondents 12 (14.63%) of them are in the age categories of 20-25 years old, 20(24.39%) are under age categories of 26-30 years old, in addition 25(30.39%) respondents are in age group of 31-40 years old. 18(21.95%) of respondents lies under age group of 41-50 years old and the remaining 7 (8.54%) between the age group of 51-60 years old.

On the basis of the above table, it can be deduced that, majority of the respondents are either in the age group of 26 – 30 years or 31 – 40 years of age.

Table No.3: Marital Status of the Respondents

Sl. No	Marital status	Frequency	Percent
1	Married	71	86.56
2	Divorced	04	04.88
3	Widowed	07	08.54
4	Other	00	00.00
Total		82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Marital status has to do with family size and family heads which in turn has an impact on decision making. The organizations of connected data Table No. 3 reveals that 71 (86.56%) responds were married whereas 4 (4.88%) are divorced and 7 (8.54%) are widowed.

Table No.4: Ethnic group of the Respondents

Sl.No	Ethnic Group	Frequency	Percentage
1	Oromo	75	91.46
2	Amhara	02	02.44
3	Tigre	00	00.00
4	Other	05	06.10
Total		82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table No. 4. exhibits, out of total respondents 75 (91.46%) belongs to Oromo ethnicity, 02 (2.44%) Amhara, 05 (6.10%) other and there is none belonging to Tigre. Based on the information, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents are Oromos.

Table No. 5: Religious Status of Respondents

S1.No	Religious	Frequency	Percentage
1	Orthodox	26	31.71
	Protestant	29	35.36
	Catholic	09	10.98
2	Muslims	11	13.41
3	Others	07	08.54
Total		82	100.0

Source : Field Survey, 2020

Other : Includes Wagafata

The above Table No. 5 indicates that the majority of the respondents are Christian i.e., 64(78.05%) which includes protestant, 29(35.36%), Orthodox 26(31.71%) and 09(10.98%) are Catholic. Muslims contributes 11(13.41%) and remaining 07(08.54%) comes under other category.

Table No.6: Educational status of Respondents

S1.No	Educational Background	Frequency	Percentage
1	Illiterate	30	36.59
2	Literate	23	28.10
3	Grade 1-12	16	19.51
4	Diploma	08	09.78
5	Degree	05	06.10
Total		82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Educational status is the basic parameter for any development activities. As shown in Table No. 6. Out of total respondent 30(36.59%) are illiterate, 23(28.1%) are literate, 16(19.51%) are grade one up to twelve,

8(9.78%) are diploma holders and remaining 5(6.1%) are graduates. The information reflects that, majority of the respondents falls in the category of either illiterate or literate.

Table No.7: Occupational status of Respondents

S1.No	Occupational Status	Frequency	Percent
1	Farmer	37	45.12
2	Merchant	21	25.61
3	Daily laborer	11	13.41
4	Civil servant	06	07.32
5	Other	05	06.10
Total		82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Other: Includes unemployed & street beggars

Occupational status defines the source of income of an individual and standard of living, here Table No. 7 depicts the occupational status of the respondents. 37(45.12%) of the respondents are engaged in farming, 21(25.61%) are in business, 11(13.41%) are daily laborer, 06(07.32%) are civil servants and remaining 05(06.10%) fall in other categories.

II. General information about study

Table No.8: Factors affecting Women Decision Making

S1.No	Factor Affecting Decision Making	Frequency	Percent
1	Family Commitment	16	19.51
2	Lack of Confidence	34	41.46
3	Low Academic Education	06	07.32
4	Lack of Motivation	14	17.10
5	Lack of Experience	12	14.63
Total		82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

As indicated in the Table No. 8 decision making is affected by family commitment, lack of confidence, academic education, motivation and experience. From the total respondent 16(19.51%) have family commitment 34 (41.46 %) lacks confidence, 6(32%) feels low academic qualification and 14(17.1%) lacks of motivation and remaining 12(14.63%) express lack of experience of women affects decision making.

It can be derived that, most of the respondents feel that either lack of confidence or family commitment are the major factors affecting decision making

Table No.9: Decision Maker on Family Planning

S1.No.	Alternative	Frequency	Percent
1	Women	06	07.32
2	Men	56	68.00
3	Both	20	24.39
Total		82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table No. 9 indicates that men are the most dominant to decide on family planning in household, it contributes 56(68%) from total respondents. Women decision maker contributes to only 06(07.32%) and 20(24.39%) held common decision. As, men are more dominant in decision making there is also contribution of women i.e., 07.32 % which reflects the widowed respondents who are soul bread earner.

Table No.10: Decision maker on financial matter in the Family

S1.No.	Alternatives	Frequency	Percent
1	Men	48	58.54
2	Women	11	13.41
3	Both	23	28.05
	Total	82	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Majority of the respondents opines that, men are more dominant in taking decision on financial matters and it contributes 48(58.54%) of the respondents, women have less participation in taking financial decisions i.e., 11(13.41%) and remaining 23 (28.05%) have joint decision.

Table No. 11: Suggestions on improving women's decision making In the Family

Sl.No.	Opinion on Education	Frequency	Percent
1	Educating women	30	36.59
2	Educating men	20	24.40
3	Educating the society	32	39.10
	Total	82	100.0

Source: Field survey 2020

Education and awareness plays a tremendous role in bringing favorable changes in the society. Access to various sources of information system is possible through proper education and awareness.

Education and awareness are like two sides of a same coin, which is reflected in Table No. 11, out of total respondents 30(36.59%) suggests that educating and giving awareness to women is necessary for women empowerment in general and taking family decision in particular.

32(39.10%) of respondents supports the view of educating the entire society is important to enhancing women's decision making in family matters and remaining 20(24.4%) advocate educating the male member of the society.

11 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Household decision-making power/autonomy is defined as women's ability to determine events in their lives. Even though, men and women differ in their wishes. In many countries, women have less Education, and limited decision-making power. It is widely asserted that increased gender equality within the household is a pre-requisite for achieving improvements in all matters of development.

Patriarchal System also hinder women's decision-making system at home. Patriarchal family gives prominence to the male member in the family and it is the male who protect and controls all activities in the household due to this reason they did not consider women as equal to men in decision-making practice at home.

Women are battered by their husband in rural area as men is considered to be physically stronger and tries to control women by using the physical force and the women is always looked down or subordinate to the male member in the family.

Women have different role in community, which is socially constructed in community through different way. Based on the result of the study, women's roles can change over-time and vary according to change in cultural thinking. So, as the finding of the research shows that the majority of the respondents get low status by the society in decision making at family level. The main cause of women's reduced decision-making powers is influence by the factors such as religious beliefs and cultural thinking.

Majority of the respondents indicated that poor value to women's work by male affect women in different ways. Giving poor value (low recognition) to women's work is highly rampant in our society and this adversely affects the performance of women participation. There is some association on socio-cultural factors that minimize the status of women's, decision making at house hold level, due to this, women have low status in the society. The major factors that are responsible for gender inequalities are the socio-cultural norms of the society. The respondents lack motivation at various levels like family, social, organizational and governmental hindering efficiency of women.

Low academic performance is their main factor affecting women's decision-making at household level. According to the research findings, reproductive activities are considered as the responsibility of women's and women's participation is in feeling of being subordinate. As a result of this, women have low participation, no empowerment and economically dependent along with low educational background.

The findings of the study reveal that, cultural believes and social attitude were the main problems, which hinders and influence the power of women.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following recommendation be taken for improvement of the status of women in decision-making process at family level.

- Government should encourage participation of women's in the community development by undertaking community workshops targeted for women population.
- Ensuring equal access to education, job opportunity and empowerment.
- Community leaders should give awareness to the community by minimizing their negative attitude and cultural believes against women and supporting women's participation at every sphere of life.
- Consistent, property right of women are equal with men as mentioned in the constitution, kebele leaders and administration must fill the gap.
- Launching programs and schemes to train and provide skill development so that, womenfolk of the society attains self-sufficiency and self-dependence.

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