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Women's participation in household decision-making: A case study of rural Jaipur division, Rajasthan

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Abstract

This study examines women's participation in household decision-making within the rural Jaipur Division of Rajasthan, India. It explores the socio-economic and cultural factors influencing women's roles in decision-making processes across five selected villages. The research highlights that while women's autonomy and involvement in decision-making are improving due to factors such as education and economic empowerment, significant challenges persist due to entrenched patriarchal norms. The study reveals variations in women's participation based on factors like household leadership, social categories, education levels, and employment types. Despite progress, the findings suggest that tailored interventions are necessary to enhance gender equality and empower women in rural households. The study concludes that promoting education, economic opportunities, and challenging traditional gender norms are essential to fostering equitable and effective household dynamics.

Keywords: Women's participation, household decision-making, rural Jaipur, gender equality, empowerment, socio-economic factors

Introduction

Women's involvement, in making decisions within the household is a concept that touches upon aspects of empowerment, independence and societal influences. Batliwala (2015) ^[3] characterizes empowerment as control over resources and decision making. Essentially it refers to how women participate in deciding and impacting family matters such as managing finances, education, healthcare and overall welfare. This participation can vary from engaging and having decision making power to playing more passive roles, with limited say or authority. In cultures traditional gender roles have traditionally placed women in roles within the home limiting their freedom and confining them to domestic responsibilities. Nonetheless changing economic landscapes, coupled with efforts to promote gender equality have triggered transformations in these dynamics although not across all contexts.

Women's participation in household decision-making is influenced by a myriad of factors, including cultural norms, socio-economic status, education levels, access to resources, and legal frameworks. Patriarchal structures embedded within societies often perpetuate unequal power dynamics, marginalizing women and relegating them to roles as caretakers and homemakers, with limited influence over important family matters. In such contexts, decisions regarding finances, children's education, healthcare, and even reproductive choices are predominantly made by male household members, reinforcing traditional gender roles and perpetuating inequalities.

In rural Jaipur Division of Rajasthan, women's participation in household decision-making is influenced by a complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and political factors. Even if women's autonomy and empowerment have improved, there are still many obstacles to overcome due to entrenched patriarchal ideas and traditional gender roles. In addition to addressing these systemic obstacles, initiatives to advance gender equality and women's empowerment must create a supportive atmosphere that honours and respects women's agency and voices in the home and in society at large.

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in the scenario of women's participation in household decision-making. Historically marginalized and relegated to roles primarily confined to domestic spheres, women are increasingly asserting their presence and influence in shaping household dynamics. This transformation is driven by various socio-economic factors, evolving cultural norms, and advancements in education and awareness (Kajal and Singh, 2021) ^[6].

Across many regions, there is a growing recognition of the invaluable contributions women make to the overall well-being and prosperity of households. Their roles extend beyond traditional care giving duties to encompass decision-making processes concerning finances, education, healthcare, and family planning. This shift is not merely symbolic but reflects a fundamental reconfiguration of power dynamics within households. Gender inequality index (GII) which is the measure of gender disparity with respect to reproductive health, empowerment and labour market reveals India ranking at 108 among the 193 countries with a score of 0.437. Over the last 10 years, India's rank in GII has become consistently better, indicating progressive improvement in achieving gender equality in the country (UNDP, 2022) ^[4].

One significant catalyst for this change is the rising educational attainment among women globally. As more women gain access to education, they acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to actively participate in decision-making processes. Education empowers women to challenge traditional gender roles and advocate for their rights within the family unit.

Moreover, economic empowerment plays a pivotal role in enhancing women's agency within households. With greater access to employment opportunities and financial resources, women are better positioned to assert their preferences and priorities in decision-making. Economic independence provides them with the autonomy to make choices that align with their interests and aspirations.

Cultural shifts and evolving social norms also contribute to the changing landscape of women's participation in household decision-making. There is a growing recognition of gender equality as a fundamental human right, leading to increased efforts to dismantle patriarchal structures that restrict women's agency. Movements advocating for women's rights and gender equality have gained momentum, prompting policymakers and communities to address systemic barriers to women's empowerment.

women's participation in household decision-making in rural division of jaipur, Rajasthan is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by factors such as education, economic empowerment, and shifting cultural norms. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to ensure full gender equality and empower women to actively contribute to decision-making processes within their households and communities.

Review of Literature

The reviewed literature presents a comprehensive exploration of women's participation in various socio-economic contexts and its impact on household decision-making. Firstly, in middle-class families in Kolkata, employed women are found to exert varying degrees of influence in household decision-making processes, thus illuminating the dynamics of gender equality within such households (Dutta, 2002) ^[5].

A comparative study between Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu reveals significant disparities in women's autonomy in decision-making, with women in Tamil Nadu exhibiting greater independence across various domains, including healthcare choices and financial control (Roy and Niranjana, 2005) ^[10].

Moreover, socio-economic factors such as education and employment are identified as crucial determinants of

women's autonomy in household decision-making. As women attain higher levels of education and income, they exhibit increased agency in managing household affairs, leading to lower fertility rates and improved family health (Baliyan, 2014 and Adhikari, 2016) ^[2, 1].

Microfinance initiatives, particularly facilitated by self-help groups (SHGs), play a pivotal role in empowering rural women in Punjab, enabling them to engage in income-generating activities and assume decision-making roles within their households (Kapila *et al.*, 2016) ^[8].

Additionally, phenomenological research underscores the complexity of women's involvement in household decision-making, revealing a delicate balance between personal aspirations and familial expectations. Women often seek consent from both family members and spouses, navigating between individual desires and communal harmony (Titus *et al.*, 2017) ^[12]. A comprehensive study utilizing secondary data from the National Family Health Survey highlights the evolving landscape of women's decision-making within households over time. This study underscores a positive correlation between household decision-making and factors such as education and employment, further emphasizing the importance of socio-economic empowerment in fostering women's agency within households (Kajal, 2022) ^[7].

Furthermore, the literature discusses the high participation of women in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in rural Rajasthan, suggesting a positive impact on women's empowerment. However, the specific influence on household decision-making remains unaddressed in this context (Meena, 2021) ^[9].

Finally, the involvement of women in agricultural self-help groups (SHGs) is highlighted as a significant factor in enhancing their role within households, with studies indicating an increase of 8-13 per cent in decision-making. Specifically, joint decision-making in agriculture is promoted, contributing to women's empowerment in rural settings (Padmaja *et al.*, 2023) ^[11].

Overall, the reviewed literature underscores the multifaceted nature of women's participation in decision-making processes within households, highlighting the diverse socio-economic contexts and factors influencing this dynamic.

Objectives

1. To analysis of the socio-economic profile of the respondent's household.
2. To analysis the degree of women in household decision making power.

Methodology and Data

Primary sources have been used to achieve the objectives of the present study. Primary data/first-hand information has been collected with the help of questionnaire from selected households in rural Jaipur division of Rajasthan. For the collection of primary data, a multistage random sampling method has been used. The study is covering all the five districts of Jaipur division of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Dausa, Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Alwar. In the first phase, one village has been selected from each district of Jaipur division, a total of 5 villages have been selected from all the five districts. Finally 40 households have been randomly selected from each village. This includes a total sample of 200 households.

Statistical analysis: for the purpose of studying the degree of women in household decision making power in rural

division of Jaipur, Rajasthan, statistical tools of percentage and measures of central tendency were used with the application of MS-EXCEL.

Analysis and Finding

In the beginning, the percentage of the socio-economic characteristics of sample households is calculated and these are summarised in Table-1

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of the respondent's household

Sr. No.	Characteristics		No. of Household				
			Jhar Bassi (%)	Peepalkheda (%)	Mukandpura (%)	Dadiya (%)	Kajra (%)
1	Gender of head	Male	90	85	95	85	77.5
		Female	10	15	5	15	22.5
2	Social Category	General	32.5	50	25	20	38.6
		SC	27.5	20	40	15	11.4
		ST	30	0	25	10	9.1
		OBC	10	30	10	55	40.9
3	Level of Education of Head of the household	Illiterate	7.5	30	15	7.5	12.5
		Primary	20	17.5	27.5	25	20
		Secondary	20	15	17.5	22.5	17.5
		sr. secondary	17.5	17.5	15	17.5	15
		Graduation	22.5	7.5	15	15	10
		Post Graduation	10	12.5	10	12.5	20
		above	2.5	0	0	0	5
4	Nature of Employment of Head of the household	Formal	42.5	25	30	37.5	35
		Informal	50	60	50	52.5	57.5
		Unemployed	7.5	15	20	10	7.5

Source: Researchers' Calculation

The table provides a detailed analysis of various characteristics of households across five villages: Jhar Bassi, Peepalkheda, Mukandpura, Dadiya, and Kajra. Each characteristic is broken down into different categories with the corresponding percentage of households fitting each category.

Firstly, the gender of the head of household shows a clear trend across all villages, with the majority of households headed by males. Mukandpura stands out with the highest percentage of male-headed households at 95%, while Kajra has the lowest at 77.5%. Conversely, female-headed households are most prevalent in Kajra at 22.5% and least in Mukandpura at 5%.

Secondly, the distribution of households across different social categories varies significantly among the villages. Peepalkheda has the highest percentage of general category households at 50%, whereas Dadiya has the lowest at 20%. Mukandpura has the highest percentage of Scheduled Castes (SC) households at 40%, while Kajra has the lowest at 11.4%. Jhar Bassi has a significant Scheduled Tribes (ST) population at 30%, whereas Peepalkheda has none. Dadiya has the highest representation of Other Backward Classes (OBC) at 55%, contrasting with Mukandpura and Jhar Bassi, both at 10%.

Thirdly, the educational attainment of household heads shows diverse patterns. Peepalkheda has the highest percentage of illiterate household heads at 30%, with both

Jhar Bassi and Dadiya having the lowest at 7.5% each. Mukandpura leads in household heads with primary education at 27.5%, while Jhar Bassi has the lowest at 20%. Similar trends are observed in secondary education, with Mukandpura and Kajra both at 17.5%, and Peepalkheda at the lowest with 15%. Both Jhar Bassi and Peepalkheda have 17.5% of household heads with senior secondary education, while Mukandpura has the lowest at 15%. In terms of graduation, Jhar Bassi has the highest percentage at 22.5%, and Peepalkheda the lowest at 7.5%. Post-graduation is most common in Kajra at 20%, with Mukandpura and Jhar Bassi both at 10%. Only Jhar Bassi (2.5%) and Kajra (5%) report any households with education above post-graduation.

Lastly, the nature of employment of the head of the household varies as well. Formal employment is most prevalent in Jhar Bassi at 42.5%, and least in Peepalkheda at 25%. Informal employment is highest in Peepalkheda at 60% and Kajra at 57.5%, whereas Jhar Bassi and Mukandpura both have 50%. Unemployment rates are higher in Peepalkheda at 15% and Mukandpura at 20%, compared to Kajra and Jhar Bassi, both at 7.5%.

This analysis highlights the variations in household characteristics across the five villages, providing insights into gender distribution, social categories, education levels, and employment nature among the household heads.

Table 2: Degree of women in household decision making power

Sr. No.	Characteristics	No. of Household					
		Jhar Bassi (%)	Peepalkheda (%)	Mukandpura (%)	Dadiya (%)	Kajra (%)	
1	Main occupation of women	Housewife	47.5	60	45	77.5	37.5
		Agricultural worker	40	10	45	7.5	42.5
		Self-employed	0	2.5	2.5	5	0
		Daily wage Worker	10	25	5	2.5	20
		Govt Job	2.5	2.5	2.5	7.5	0
2	Decision taken by whom about women's work	Head of HH	20	25	5	25	27.5
		Husband	40	10	5	30	17.5
		By Herself	40	40	62.5	32.5	47.5
		All Family	0	25	27.5	12.5	7.5
3	Decision taken by whom about use of money that women earned	Head of HH	25	40	10	22.5	40
		Husband	40	10	15	30	22.5
		By Herself	30	22.5	47.5	27.5	30
		All Family	5	27.5	27.5	20	7.5
4	Bank account of women	No one	5	7.5	2.5	2.5	0
		All	95	92.5	97.5	97.5	100
		Someone	0	0	0	0	0
5	Decision taken by whom about treatment of women	Head of HH	20	20	2.5	12.5	10
		Husband	50	20	65	65	72.5
		By Herself	30	30	2.5	2.5	10
		All Family	0	30	30	20	7.5
6	Women allowed to go to market	No	0	0	0	2.5	0
		Yes	100	100	100	97.5	100
7	Women allowed to study outside area/ state	No	80	67.5	80	85	82.5
		Yes	20	32.5	20	15	17.5
8	Women allowed to take consumption decisions	No	7.5	12.5	10	0	2.5
		Yes	92.5	87.5	90	100	97.5
9	Women allowed to attend classes through online mode during COVID-19	No	40	45	25	57.5	55
		Yes	60	55	75	42.5	45

Source: Researchers' Calculation

This table provides a detailed comparison of various characteristics across five villages: Jhar Bassi, Peepalkheda, Mukandpura, Dadiya, and Kajra. The characteristics include the main occupation of women, decision-making authority on various aspects of women's lives, and their access to certain freedoms and resources.

In terms of the main occupation of women, the majority occupation across all villages is housewife, with the highest percentages observed in Dadiya (77.5%) and Peepalkheda (60%). Agricultural work is also a prominent occupation, particularly in Jhar Bassi (40%), Mukandpura (45%), and Kajra (42.5%). Being self-employed is the least common occupation, showing very low percentages across all villages. Daily wage work is more common in Peepalkheda (25%) and Kajra (20%) compared to other villages. Employment in government jobs is minimal, with the highest representation in Dadiya (7.5%).

When it comes to decision-making about women's work, there is significant variation. In Kajra (27.5%) and Dadiya (25%), the head of the household is the primary decision-maker. Husbands have significant influence in Dadiya (30%) and Jhar Bassi (40%). Women themselves have the highest autonomy in Mukandpura (62.5%) and Jhar Bassi (40%). Family involvement in decision-making is most influential in Peepalkheda (25%).

Regarding decisions about the use of women's earned money, the head of the household has the highest decision-making authority in Kajra (40%) and Peepalkheda (40%). Husbands are major decision-makers in Jhar Bassi (40%) and Dadiya (30%). Women themselves have the highest autonomy in Mukandpura (47.5%). Family involvement in

financial decisions is notable in Peepalkheda (27.5%) and Mukandpura (27.5%).

In terms of access to bank accounts, nearly universal access is observed, with the highest percentage in Kajra (100%). Very few women do not have bank accounts, with the highest percentage in Peepalkheda (7.5%).

When it comes to decisions about the treatment of women, the head of the household is most significant in Jhar Bassi (20%) and Peepalkheda (20%). Husbands predominate in Kajra (72.5%) and Dadiya (65%). Women themselves have the highest decision-making power in Peepalkheda (30%) and Jhar Bassi (30%). Family involvement in treatment decisions is notable in Peepalkheda (30%) and Mukandpura (30%).

Regarding market access, almost all women are allowed to go to the market, with negligible restrictions, the highest being in Dadiya (2.5%).

When it comes to educational opportunities, permission for women to study outside their area or state is limited, with the highest restriction in Dadiya (85%) and Kajra (82.5%). Peepalkheda has the highest percentage of women allowed to study outside (32.5%).

Women have high levels of autonomy in making consumption decisions, with very high percentages, especially in Dadiya (100%) and Kajra (97.5%). Only a few villages show any significant restriction, with Peepalkheda having the highest percentage of women not allowed to make consumption decisions (12.5%).

Lastly, during COVID-19, access to online education for women shows mixed results. The highest restrictions are seen in Dadiya (57.5%) and Kajra (55%), while

Mukandpura has the highest percentage of women allowed to attend online classes (75%).

In summary, women in these villages predominantly work as housewives or agricultural workers. Decision-making authority varies widely, but a significant portion of women have autonomy, especially regarding their work and financial matters. Access to bank accounts is nearly universal. Almost all women are allowed to go to the market, though educational opportunities outside the area are limited. Women generally have a high level of autonomy in making consumption decisions. During COVID-19, access to online education was restricted in some villages. This table highlights the socio-economic and cultural variations affecting women's roles and autonomy in different villages.

Summary

The analysis provides a comprehensive overview of household characteristics and women's participation in decision-making across five villages in rural Jaipur Division, Rajasthan: Jhar Bassi, Peepalkheda, Mukandpura, Dadiya, and Kajra. The data reveals a predominance of male-headed households, with Mukandpura having the highest percentage at 95% and Kajra the lowest at 77.5%. Social categories vary, with Peepalkheda having the highest percentage of general category households at 50% and Dadiya the lowest at 20%. Educational attainment among household heads shows significant diversity, with Peepalkheda having the highest percentage of illiterate heads (30%) and Jhar Bassi the highest percentage of graduates (22.5%). Employment types also vary, with formal employment most common in Jhar Bassi (42.5%) and informal employment highest in Peepalkheda (60%).

In terms of women's roles, most women are housewives, especially in Dadiya (77.5%) and Peepalkheda (60%). Agricultural work is also significant, particularly in Mukandpura (45%) and Kajra (42.5%). Decision-making authority regarding women's work and finances shows that women in Mukandpura have the highest autonomy (62.5% for work decisions and 47.5% for financial decisions). Access to bank accounts is nearly universal, with Kajra at 100%. Women's involvement in market access is high, with minimal restrictions, though educational opportunities outside their area are limited, especially in Dadiya (85%) and Kajra (82.5%). During COVID-19, access to online education varied, with Mukandpura showing the highest allowance (75%).

Conclusion

The study on Women's Participation in Household Decision-Making across five villages in the Rural Jaipur Division reveals a complex and varied landscape influenced by multiple socio-economic and cultural factors. Key conclusions drawn from the data are as follows:

- 1. Gender and Household Leadership:** The majority of households in the study are male-headed, with notable regional variations. Mukandpura has the highest percentage of male-headed households, while Kajra has the highest proportion of female-headed households. This variation reflects differing cultural attitudes towards gender roles across the villages.
- 2. Social Categories and Education:** The distribution of households among different social categories—general, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and

Other Backward Classes (OBC)—varies significantly. Educational attainment among household heads also shows substantial disparities. Peepalkheda has the highest illiteracy rates, while Jhar Bassi leads in graduation and post-graduation. These educational differences are likely to impact women's participation in decision-making processes and access to resources.

- 3. Employment and Economic Participation:** Employment patterns among household heads indicate a mix of formal and informal work, with notable differences across villages. Jhar Bassi shows higher formal employment rates, while Peepalkheda and Kajra have higher informal employment and unemployment rates. This economic variation affects women's financial independence and their influence in household decisions.
- 4. Decision-Making Authority:** Women's decision-making authority varies widely. In some villages, women have significant autonomy regarding their work and financial matters, while in others, decisions are predominantly made by male heads of households or husbands. Mukandpura and Jhar Bassi stand out for higher female autonomy, while Kajra and Dadiya show more traditional patterns of male decision-making dominance.
- 5. Access to Resources and Opportunities:** Access to bank accounts is nearly universal, but restrictions on educational opportunities outside the area are significant in Dadiya and Kajra. Women's autonomy in consumption decisions is high in most villages, though market access and online education opportunities during COVID-19 vary, reflecting broader issues of resource access and technological adaptation.
- 6. Overall,** the findings highlight the need for tailored interventions that address specific local challenges. Promoting education and economic opportunities, alongside efforts to challenge traditional gender norms, can enhance women's participation in decision-making and contribute to more equitable and effective household and community dynamics.

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