



Women's Participation in Family Decision Making in Dumki Upazila of Patuakhali District

M. U. Rashid^{1*} and M. M. Islam²

¹Dept. of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development & ²Dept. of Management Studies, Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Dumki, Patuakhali, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author and Email: murashidpstu@yahoo.com

Received: 05 May 2011

Accepted: 26 November 2011

Abstract

The investigation was conducted to know the family decision making role of rural women in some selected villages namely Shreerampur, Jalisha, and Jhatra of Dumki upazila under Patuakhali district. Data were collected through interview schedule for seventy selected women during February, 2010. The selected characteristics of the rural women were age, education, family size, farm size, annual income, agricultural knowledge, non-localite behavior, training exposure, fatalism and media exposure. Decision Making Index (DMI) was developed to measure each of the items regarding different aspects of role. The DMI ranged from 98-165 against a possible range of 0-210. On the basis of DMI top aspects of decision making role were 'house construction' (165), 'education of children' (160), 'participation in social, religious and marriage ceremony' (160) and 'vaccination of children' (155). Overall, family decision making role indicated that the highest proportion (42.8%) of the rural women were 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.

Keywords: Rural women, decision making role, family

1. Introduction

Women play a crucial role in the economic welfare of the family. Women perform different tasks depending on their socio-economic structure, number of members in the family, the nature of professions they are involved in and many other factors (Reddy and Narayan, 1987). The authoritarian character of the traditional joint family entails decision making powers concentrated in the position of the eldest male members (Rao, 1982).

Women are traditionally less involved in decision making at all levels. Their important role is not recognized and therefore, are hardly not accepted in decision-making. The share of women in community decision-making

structures is very low and their participation is mostly stressed by political parties, more as elements of their own publicity and proof of democratization, than as a real interest and need. For example, only 3 percent women are members of political parties. They are also less active in professional associations and bodies (Slovenia, 1998). Gender equality in democratic governance is very uneven; in most of the world, women are under-represented in positions of power (Anonymous, 2011). While men make the decisions, implement laws and are responsible for distributing power and resources, the exclusion of women leads to their marginalization. There are various family matters on which men generally take decisions. Women are quite often even not consulted. This

is because of the feeling among man that women are incapable expressing their decisions, due to illiteracy among them (Mumtaz, 1982).

With the changing outlook of the society towards women and her role in various activities both inside and outside the family system, the traditional, male chauvinistic role of the father as one to possess the best decision making ability in the family has also undergone drastic transformation. Women, in most part of the world today are no longer compelled to be under the garb of veils and are coming out in the open, shouldering responsibilities in various kinds of decision making and standing at par with men at every tread (Anonymous, 2011).

Without active participation of women and incorporation of women perspectives at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality development and peace cannot be achieved (Karl, 1995). At a global level women are vastly under-represented in positions of power, which should be considered as one of the major barriers for development. Considering the above facts in mind, the present study was undertaken to: (i) explore and describe the decision making role played by rural women in the selected area; (ii) determine and describe the selected personal, social, economic and psychological characteristics of the rural women; and (iii) investigate the relationships between the selected characteristics of the rural women and their family decision making role.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in three villages namely Shreerampur, Jalisha and Jhatra of Dumki upazila under Patuakhali district. There were 415 rural women in the study area of which 70 were randomly selected as sample for this study. Data were collected during February, 2010 using interview schedule.

In measuring the family decision making role of the rural women in 10 selected aspects, a four point rating scale was developed and designed with 4 kinds of responses ranged from high

participation, medium participation, low participation and no participation in family decision making. The corresponding scores assigned for each response were 3, 2, 1 and 0, respectively. This family decision making participation score of a respondent in 10 selected items could range from 0 to 30. To have an in-depth insight into the family decision making role of rural women in selected items, frequency distribution and rank order of each problem was made by developing Decision Making Index (DMI).

$$\text{Decision Making Index (DMI)} = P_{\text{HDMR}} \times 3 + P_{\text{MDMR}} \times 2 + P_{\text{LDMR}} \times 1 + P_{\text{NDMR}} \times 0$$

Where,

P_{HDMR} = Number of rural women with high participation in decision making

P_{MDMR} = Number of rural women with medium participation in decision making

P_{LDMR} = Number of rural women with low participation in decision making

P_{NDMR} = Number of rural women with no participation in decision making

Decision Making Index (DMI) of any decision making item could range from 0 to 210, where 0 indicates no participation in decision making and 210 indicates high participation in decision making. Based on the extent of participation in family decision making indices, rank order was done for each selected decision making item.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Selected characteristics of the respondents

A summary of ten selected characteristics of the respondents has been presented in Table 1. The information presented in Table 1 indicates that majority of the respondents (47.2%) were middle aged and almost half of the respondent (47.1%) had primary level of literacy. Medium sized family is dominant in the locality. On the other hand, majority of the respondents had marginal to small size farm. Data also indicate that majority of the respondents had medium to low income.

Table 1. Selected characteristics of respondents with basic statistical values (n=70).

Selected characteristics	Categories	Respondent		Scoring method/unit	Range		Mean	SD
		Num.	%		Min	Max		
Age	Young (19-30)	22	31.4	Year	19	60	37.7	10.51
	Middle aged(31-45)	33	47.2					
	Older (46-60)	15	21.4					
Education	Illiterate (0)	8	11.4	Year of schooling	0	14	4.95	3.537
	Can sign only (0.5)	6	8.6					
	Primary schooling(1-5)	33	47.1					
	Mid schooling (6-8)	10	14.3					
	S.S.C and above (9 and above)	13	18.6					
Family size	Small (2-4)	22	31.4	No. of family members	2	13	5.92	2.33
	Medium (5-6)	28	40.0					
	Large (7 and above)	20	28.6					
Farm size	Marginal (up to 0.20)	33	47.1	Hectare	.01	12.12	0.873	1.71
	Small farm (0.21-1.0)	20	28.6					
	Medium (1.1-3.0)	12	17.2					
	Large (>3)	5	7.1					
Annual Income	Low (15-37)	25	35.7	"000" Taka	15	410.70	77.00	73.49
	Medium (37.01-75)	24	34.3					
	High (above 75)	21	30					
Agricultural Knowledge	Low (4-11)	18	25.7	Score	4	23	19.94	4.80
	Medium (12-18)	34	48.6					
	High (19-23)	18	25.7					
Nonlocalite behavior	Low (0-1)	30	42.9	Score	00	21	5.10	5.47
	Medium (2-15)	26	37.1					
	High (9-21)	14	20.0					
Training exposure	Low (0-1)	52	74.3	Days	00	180	6.25	24.32
	Medium (2-15)	12	17.1					
	High (16-180)	6	8.6					
Fatalism	Low (0-4)	20	28.6	Score	00	15	7.91	4.50
	Medium (5-11)	31	44.3					
	High (12-15)	19	27.1					
Media exposure	Low (0-2)	21	30	Score	00	22	6.04	5.16
	Medium (3-8)	31	44.3					
	High (9-22)	18	25.7					

Almost half (48.6%) of the respondents had medium agricultural knowledge. Majority of the respondents (42.9%) had low movement from their own locality to the other. Almost two third (74.3%) of the respondents had low training exposure. A dominant proportion of the respondents (44.3%) had medium fatalism, while majority women (44.3 per cent) had medium media exposure.

3.2 Decision making role played by rural women

Decision making indices (DMI) of rural women on ten selected aspects regarding educational, social, developmental and economical affairs ranged from 98-165 against a possible range of 0-210 (Table 2). The DMI of four aspects were over 150 while two aspects showed less than 100. However, the important aspects of decision

making were: (a) house construction (165) (b) participation in social and religious ceremonies (160) (c) Education of children (160) and (d) vaccination of children (155). From Table 2 it is evident that women mostly play their decision making role in the educational, social and development aspects of the family rather than economic aspects. Hoque *et al.* (2008) in their study found that with few exceptions majority of the men take decision alone related to economic aspects rather than consulting with women. Davis and Rigaux (1974) and Bonfield (1978) in their study in United States of America explored that husbands perceived the insurance, savings, and automobile decisions to be their area of influence control, and decisions regarding vacations, children's education, and housing to be more jointly determined.

Table 2. Rank of family decision making aspects by the respondents.

Sl No.	Subject of decision-making	Nature of role				Total score	Rank
		High (3)	Medium (2)	Low (1)	Not at all(0)		
1	Buying or selling of land	34	14	7	15	137	5
2	Taking or giving land on lease	18	19	7	26	99	8
3	Receiving credit	24	11	4	31	98	9
4	House construction	42	18	3	7	165	1
5	Vaccination of children	40	16	3	11	155	3
6	Participation in social, religious and marriage ceremony	36	23	6	5	160	2
7	Education of children	38	19	8	5	160	2
8	Selection of crops, vegetables and fruits for plantation	25	23	14	8	135	6
9	Cultivation of crop	25	18	9	18	120	7
10	Rearing of poultry, goat and cattle	31	22	9	8	146	4

Table 3. Distribution of respondents based on their level of participation in family. decision making.

Extent of participation in family decision making	Number	%	Mean	SD	Range	
					Observed	Possible
Low (7-14)	20	28.6				
Medium (15-24)	30	42.8	19.65	6.30	7-30	0-30
High (25-30)	20	28.6				
Total	70	100				

The decision making role score of the respondents ranged from 7 to 30 against a possible range of 0-30 and with an average of 19.65(± 6.30). On the basis of decision making role score, the respondents were classified into three categories namely low, medium and high. Majority (42.8%) of the rural women played medium decision making role, while the rest was almost equally shared by low (28.6 %) and high (28.6%) decision making role players (Table 3). It might be due to the fact that in the coastal area as agriculture including other income generating activities are not so developed, as a result a significant proportion of the male population migrated to other places for their earnings and women has to play

significant role in family decision making. Anonymous (2009) in his study in Malta also reported similar result.

3.3 Relationship between the selected characteristics of the respondents and their opinion on family decision making role

Table 4 shows that out of ten possible correlations three variables namely education, agricultural knowledge and non-localite behavior had positive significant relationship with the respondent's family decision making role. Jan *et al.* (2008) in her study also found that decision-making process is generally influenced by the level of knowledge.

Table 4. Summary of correlation between dependent and independent variables

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Family decision making role
1	Age	-0.033
2	Education	0.310**
3	Family size	0.083
4	Farm size	-0.099
5	Annual income	0.035
6	Agricultural knowledge	0.259*
7	Non-localite behavior	0.236*
8	Training exposure	-0.039
9	Fatalism	-0.179
10	Media exposure	-0.065

Table value of 'r' at 0.01=0.305, 0.05=0.235, with 68 d.f.
 * indicate significant at 0.05 level of probability
 ** indicate significant at 0.01 level of probability

Mumtaz and Aysia (1982) in their study stated that if women are properly educated they would acquire the capacity to participate in decision-making. Roth (2001) in his study found that educated couple educated participates in final decision making more compared to couple with less education.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Women play significant decision making role in the educational, social and development aspects of the family leaving comparatively less participation in economic activities of the family. Nearly half of the respondent had medium participation in family decision making role, while the rest of the women had high and low participation in equal proportion. Out of ten selected characteristics of rural women education, agricultural knowledge and non-localite behavior seemed to have significant relationship with decision making role.

It is evident that educational qualification of women helps to play significant role in family decision-making. Therefore, it is essential to take comprehensive programs to enhance women's educational status. Women having sufficient agricultural knowledge can better contribute in family decision making. So, special agricultural program is necessary to provide women modern agricultural knowledge.

References

- Anonymous. 2011. Gender: Women as decision-makers. <http://wvasiapacific.org/gender/women-as-decision-makers.html>.
- Anonymous. 2009. Perceived Obstacles to the Participation of Women in Decision-making. www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=2009.
- Bonfield, E. H. 1978. "Perception of Marital Roles in Decision Processes: Replication and Extension." In Proceedings of the Association for Consumer Research (ed.) J. Keith Hunt, (Ann Arbor, MI: ACR), 300-307 pp.
- Davis, H. L. and Rigaux, B. P. 1974. "Perception of Marital Roles in Decision Processes." *Journal of Consumer Research*, 1: 51-62 .
- Hoque, M. and Y. Itohara. 2008. Participation and Decision Making Role of Rural Women in Economic Activities: A Comparative Study for Members And Non-Members of the Micro-Credit Organizations in Bangladesh. *Journal of Social Sciences*, July, 2008.
- Jan, M. and S. Akhtar. 2008. An Analysis of Decision Making Power among Married and Unmarried Women. *Stud. Home Comm. Sci.*, 2(1):43-50.
- Karl, M. 1995. Women in Empowerment, Participation and Decision Making. New Jersey: Zed Books Publishing House.
- Mumtaz, K.A. and Aysha N. 1982. Status of Rural Women in India. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 16-34 pp.
- Rao, P.V. 1982. Marriage, Family and Wome in India. New Delhi, Hertage Publishers, 156-196 pp.
- Reddy, G.N. 1987. Women and Child Development. Allahabad : Chugh Publishing House.
- Roth, D.M. and Mbzyo, M.I. 2001. Promoting Safe Motherhood in the Community. New Delhi: Afry Reprod. Health.
- Slovenia, M.M. 1998. Women and Family in Rural Development. New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.