

Role of Women in Decision-Making: A Case of AJ&K

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This paper present and analyze the nature and type of decisions taken by women at domestic level both in rural and urban areas of AJ&K and Identify that how married women's position within the household influence their power and autonomy. The analysis is done by getting primary data and information gathered through questionnaire, Group discussion and observation in the form of condition situation and behavior of Women in four districts of AJ&K. The results indicate that men play dominant role in decisions regarding the marriages of children and sale and purchase of livestock. Women with greater freedom to go outside are empowered. The study indicates that both urban and rural women in AJ&K have not much difference in decision-making at household level. Wife's position in the family is measured by the time she has been married, no. of children to have etc. The study indicates that women's decision-making power at household level play an important role in achieving gender balance. There are some social and cultural factors that prohibit women to make decisions independently. Men and other family members play dominant role in decision made at household level.

Field of Research: Human Resource Management

1. Introduction

Women's issues are society's issues. Women's rights are human rights. But women at any stage from girl to till becoming a woman are facing discrimination. Ours society is a male dominating. Women need to be active in the decision-making circle of the society. Barriers to equality are rooted in long-standing attitudes and traditions. This patriarchal system keeps women their lower status. In AJ&K the story of women deprivation starts from birth because girl child is not particularly wanted child. Her life is a journey of subordination. When she is young her father decides for her on matters ranging from whether she will get any education, to all the important matters of whom she would marry. After marriage husband and her in-laws get hold of her reins and decides matters on her behalf like shall she or shall she not have a child every year. Women are mostly involved in unpaid work. The world of men and women are different in term of employment, health, education etc. They do a lot of work as look after children, bring water, work in domestic poultry and livestock but their work is not acknowledged. Women still lack the legal right to inherit property.

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CIDA's indicator of social empowerment are as no. of women in local institution, extent of training or networking among local women as compared to men, control of women over fertility decisions. According to UNICEF (1994) five levels of equality as welfare, access, awareness raising, participation and control.

Factors considered in decision-making at household level are as access to hospital Mobility, purchases. There are also some social & cultural factors that Prohibits women to make decisions independently. Women are mostly involved in unpaid work. There is mostly joint family system. Men & other members of family play dominant role in decision made at household level.

Discrimination against women is serious and an international issue. It is violation of women's basic rights. In life the rights to participate in decision-making. It can be justified as many grounds for a country like Pakistan where inequality in education, health, work and other social obligations placed women, especially in rural areas in most vulnerable position. A study has not been done in Area of AJ&K as before. Due to patriarchal society men have control over women. Taking into account socio-cultural condition in AJ&K women are less empowered and effort must be made to follow CEDAW, DEVAW and human rights declaration.

The paper is organized into these sections as first describing definitions of empowerment and autonomy, the aspects of women's autonomy are as economic decision-making power, and their freedom of movement .The following section describes the literature review on empowerment. Most of the analysis focus on the household variables as both demographic position and married women's position as indicated by length of time she has been married, who decides; whether to purchase grocery, whether you should go outside, who decides the marriages of children, education of children, sale& purchase of livestock, how many children to have and the frequency with which she & her husband communicate about reproductive, community events and social issues. A subsequent section describes the methodology, findings/discussions. .After presenting the analysis the paper closes with a conclusion and recommendations.

2. Empowerment

Different terminology is used as women empowerment, gender equality, women's autonomy. Empowerment means to give freedom, liberty such as freedom of thought, freedom of expression, having decision-making power, having access to information and resources, assertiveness. Gender equality is the notion that women and men should enjoy similar benefits and outcomes accruing from their participation in society.

Equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that lead to social justice and human rights UN (2002).Human Rights convention provide redress for discrimination.

Convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) adopted by U.N general Assembly in 1979. The main concept of empowerment lies in the ability of women to control her destiny. There are two types of empowerment, one is social empowerment and other is economic empowerment.

UNDP Gender in development Goals use language of empowerment focuses on mainstreaming gender, advancement of women. Propose promotion of women in policy and decision-making process and positions, emphasizing women's income generating activities and providing women access to empowering facilities. At the Millennium Development Goals Summit in 2000. Commitment to achieve eight goals, labeled the MDGs. Third goal on this to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Gender gaps are widespread in access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities, in power and in political voice. Women and bear the largest cost of these inequalities.

3. Literature Review

Many researchers K Mason (1984) and Caldwell (1979) have taken up this issue of empowerment in their Studies. Women autonomy by knowledge of outside world, autonomy of concerning their own lives and wellbeing and women autonomy to have access to and control over resources.

The paper is an attempt to study women's participation in decision-making at household level. The study relate women's decision at household level in AJ&K with their empowerment, who makes domestic decisions, whether women themselves, their Husbands or other members of family.

Women's decision-making authority is strongly related to the Context in which they live, urban women having an almost as an equal say as their husbands in domestic decisions, whereas Rural women report that most household matters are predominantly decided by their husbands & other members of family, There is clear Regional diversity in women's involvement in decision-making, Indicates to some extent the variability in power relations & gender Inequality across regions especially in rural areas (Nosheen 2002).

Similarly Zareen & Lubna (2002) connects two important aspects of Women decision regarding their participation in economic activities and how these decisions are made, everything remains constant, the chances of women to be paid and productive member of Society increases with education & improves significantly, the better Educated the women is, women's chances of being involved (generally in low skill, low paid economic activities) increases if they are coming from families which are located in rural areas, if The head of household is illiterate& employed as an unpaid family helper, In these conditions women are forced to seek employment to Supplement their family incomes. Women who are older, better Educated, female head of household, or coming from smaller better off urban families are more empowered to take

decisions on their own about whether to get a job or not, as compared to younger poorly educated women existence of patriarchal relations are dominant.

Sathar & Kazi (2002) overviewed women's autonomy as economic class has a weak & ambivalent influence on women's autonomy in rural Punjab, class Influence both education & employment of women. These remain the routes to empowerment in rural settings. Paid employment, though offset by other Restrictions on poor women, offers greater potential for women's autonomy. Education has lesser influence on female autonomy in rural Punjab context. Northern Punjabi women have lower economic autonomy but greater Mobility & decision-making authority than women in southern Punjab.

Women's autonomy is indeed multidimensional, at three dimensions Decision-making, mobility & access to economic resources are closely related in all settings irrespective of religion or region Je Jeebhoys (1998).

Ghuman participation in income generating activities is beneficial for women depending on dimension of their autonomy being considered. Women who retain their earnings have higher freedom of movement than those who are not working, unpaid or relinquish their wages, when it comes to decision-making in the home, women's retention of earnings or relative income contribution has no important association with participating in making household decisions about large purchases. Women's position may improve by virtue of their status as earners per se since this involves leaving the home to work, having access to money or increased respect in the home.

The net relationship of number of children to two of the three measures of autonomy and power was negative, that is the more children the women had, the lower was her power or autonomy but it is according to settings. But the social context is very powerful in explaining variation in women's autonomy and power. Oppenheim Women's participation in micro credit programs helps to increase women's empowerment M. Pitt. Husbands in Asian communities are most likely to ascribe higher autonomy to their wives than wives themselves in freedom of movement, decision-making related to children or other household matters Ghuman (2002).

Shukla (2004) studied the sum of direct and indirect measure of autonomy and their Suitability. The direct measures explain variation in women's autonomy as Well as relationship between women autonomy & other related variables inadequately & indirect measures (spousal age gap, preferred sex, proportion Education should be given to child) found to be comparatively more suitable.

Beijing Conference (1995) focused on women issue as global issue that poverty, inequity, denial of human rights, lack of freedom and justice, and absence of peace and security are no longer acceptable to world community. A pre-requisite for an effective democracy is the equal participation of women and men in decision-making in all spheres: from personal to the most public. Starting within the family, socio-cultural norms, legal inequalities and an

inequitable access to resources of all kinds deprives of women of decision-making power. This inequality permeates all structures of social economic and political activity, seriously impeding women's ability to contribute as full citizens in shaping their society.

4. Methodology

Data were collected from AJ&K. In AJ&K, four districts were chosen for the sample. 164 married women between ages of 18 to 47 were randomly selected from four districts out of which 88 women were belong to urban areas and 76 belong to rural area. The questionnaire comprises of household information. The questions consist of marriage Duration, employment status, mobility etc. Mirpur district (20) women, Muzafarabad (20), Rawalakot (20) women & 104 women were selected from District Kotli. The marriage duration is 3 to 25 years. Mostly are above the middle class education. Out of 164, only 65 were working women. The age of 18 has been selected because in AJ&K mostly the girls get married at the age of 18. The age of 47 is selected to analyze the decision-making autonomy after 40. Mostly women with longer marriage duration and older age are empower in decision-making as compared to younger and short marriage duration.

This paper relied on primary data as data from different authors/publications and also from direct interview from respondents. It is mainly an analysis of the empowerment of women with regard to household level study.

The variables used in the analysis are whether women have access to hospitals, can go outside alone, can take decisions about the household purchases, women's contribution about the marriages and education of children. Nine variables are used in the study.

F-distribution is applied to examine the determinants of women's empowerment in four districts of AJ&K. The sum of squares & mean squares of these variables are shown in ANOVA (analysis of variance) table to test the hypothesis. The analysis indicate that women 'decisions regarding the buying cloths & access to hospital are greater than other variables, these decisions have higher sums as 193.5 and 171.5, then mobility 154.8, buying grocery 147.1, Spending of their income 141.2, family planning 90.8, and education of children 80, children marriages 46 and then sale purchase of livestock 38.8.

We formulate the appropriate null and alternative hypothesis: a

Ho: Mean of factors of empowerment are equal.

H'o: District Means are equal.

H'1: At least one mean of factor of empowerment is not equal.

We specify the level of significance as: $\alpha=0.05$

The test statistics to be used:

$$F1 = \frac{S^2_F}{S^2_\epsilon}$$

$$F1 = \frac{S^2_d}{S^2_a}$$

We had variance of the least statistics to be used.

	M	AH	EC	FP	BC	BG	SP	SI	CM	Ti.	T ² _i
Kotli	54.8	36.5	0	30.8	63.5	22.1	3.8	21.2	1	233.7	54615.7
Mzd.	15	45	10	0	40	25	0	60	0	195	38025
Mirpur	35	25	25	20	20	45	15	0	35	220	48400
Rawlakot	50	65	45	40	70	55	20	60	10	415	172225
T·J	154.8	171.5	80	90.8	193.5	147.1	38.8	141.2	46	1063.7 T _{..}	313265.7 ∑T ² _i
T·J ²	32963.04	29412.25	6400	8244.64	37442.25	21638.41	1505.44	19937.44	2116	150659.47 ∑T ² ·J	
∑X _{ij} ²	6953.04	8207.25	2750	2948.64	10932.5	6163.41	639.44	7649.44	1325	47568.71 ∑∑X _{ij} ²	

1. C.F (Correction Factor) = $\frac{T^2}{RC}$
 C.F (Correction Factor) = 31429.37

2. Total Sum of Squares(S.S)
 Total Sum of Squares (S.S) = ∑∑X_{ij}² - C.F
 Total Sum of Squares (S.S) = 16139.34

3. Factors of Empowerment (S.S) = $\frac{\sum T^2 J}{r} - C.F$
 Factors of Empowerment (S.S) = 6235.49

4. District (S.S) = $\frac{\sum T^2 i}{c} - C.F$
 District (S.S) = 3377.93

5. Error (S.S) = Total (S.S) – Factors of Empowerment(S.S) – District (S.S)
 Error (S.S) = 6525.92

Analysis of Variance Table

Source of Variance (S.V)	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Fraction Ratio
Empowerment Factor	8	6235.49	F1 = 2.86
District	3	3377.93	
Error Sum of Squares (S.S)	24	6525.92	F2 = 4.14
Total	35		

We formulate the rejection region

$$1. F1 \geq F_{.05}^{(8,24)}$$

$$2.86 > 2.36$$

$$2. F2 \geq F_{.05}^{(3,24)}$$

$$4.14 > 3.01$$

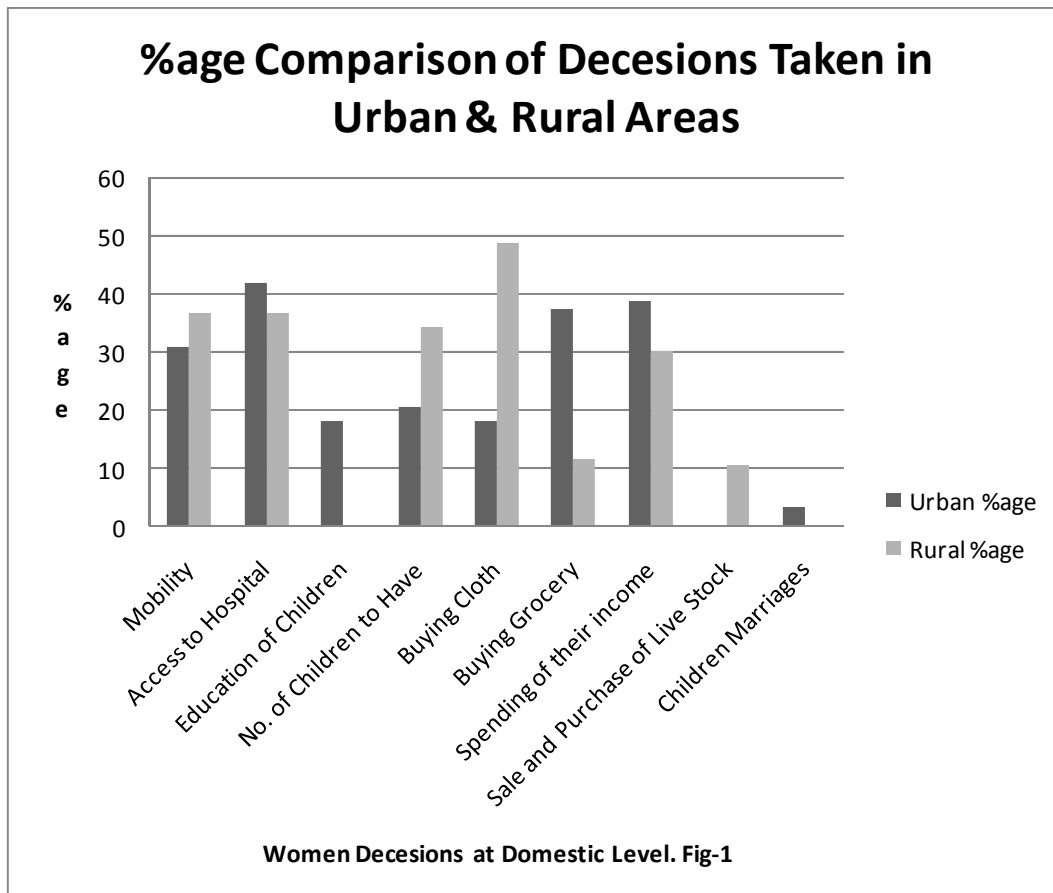
5. Findings/discussions

Table 1

%age of decisions taken in rural and urban areas

Factors of Empowerment	Urban (NO.)	%age	Rural (NO.)	%age
Mobility	27	30.7	28	36.8
Access to Hospital	37	42	28	36.8
Education of Children	16	18.2	0	0
No. of Children to Have	18	20.5	26	34.2
Buying Cloth	16	18.2	37	48.7
Buying Grocery	33	37.5	9	11.8
Spending of their income	34	38.6	23	30.3
Sale and Purchase of Live Stock	0	0	8	10.5
Children Marriages	3	3.4	0	0

The percentage distribution with regard to decision-making as, decision-making For going outside (mobility), urban women are 30.7% whereas rural women are 36.8% decision-making with regard to treatment of child (access to hospital) urban women are 42% whereas rural women are 36.8%, decision regarding the schooling or education of child 18.2% in urban women while rural women have not any contribution in this Regard. In case of having final decision about purchase of food 37.5% in urban & 11.8% in rural women, Decision about buying cloth percentage is 18.2% in urban& 48.7% in Rural women, rural women are empowered than urban in this regard. Decision-making At household level is not only depends on women but also husband and other family members are involved especially in rural areas.



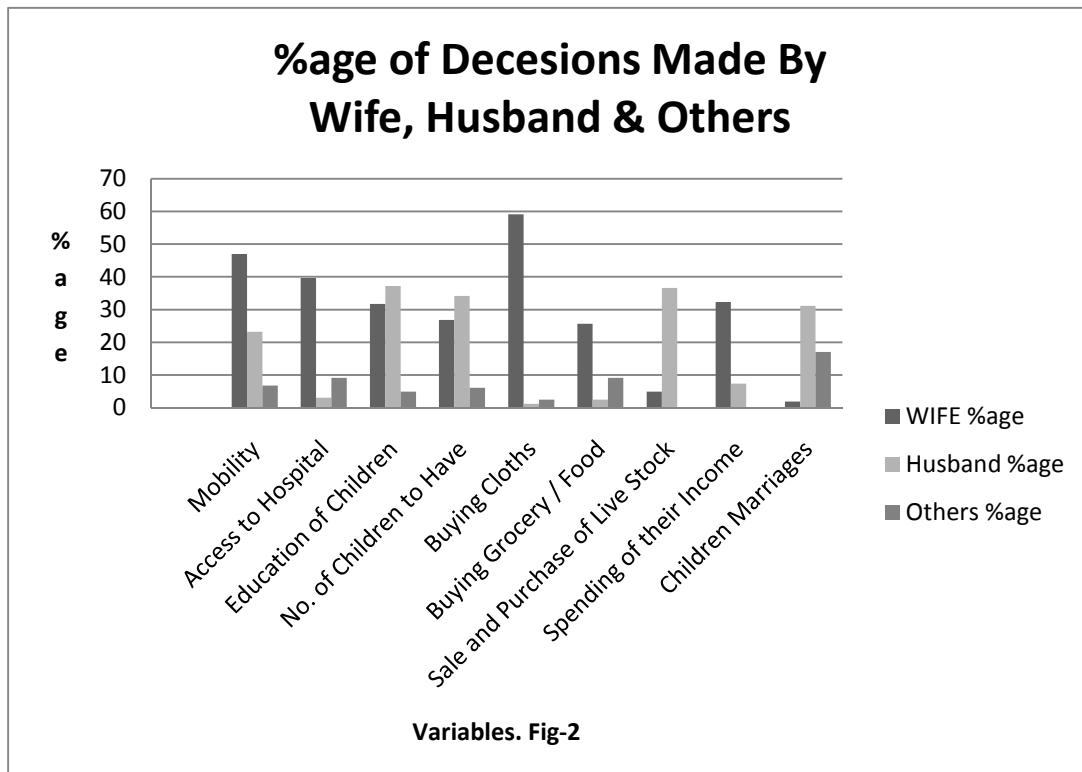
By concluding overall data both from urban & rural areas of AJ&K as reported in (table 2), the participation of women in decision-making is as Decision with regard to go to outside alone 46.95% wives take decision independently whereas 23.19% by their husbands and 11% by other members (mother in law). The involvement of wives in the decision about purchase of food 25.60% and decision taken by both husband and wife 50.60% and other family members 9.14%, whereas women's access to hospital 39.6% and both husband wife decision 39% & others 9%. Decision about schooling of

children 31.7% by wives whereas husbands 7.1%. Working women are empowered to spend their income independently as 81.5% and by getting permission from husband 1.8% decision regarding buying a cloth 59.1% by wives and 25.6% by husbands.

Table-2
Who Makes Decisions?

Decisions	Wife	%age	Husband	%age	Others	%age
Mobility	77	46.95	38	23.17	11	6.71
Access to Hospital	65	39.63	5	3.05	15	9.15
Education of Children	52	31.71	61	37.2	8	4.88
No. of Children to Have	44	26.83	56	34.15	10	6.1
Buying Cloths	97	59.15	2	1.22	4	2.44
Buying Grocery / Food	42	25.61	4	2.44	15	9.15
Sale and Purchase of Live Stock	8	4.88	60	36.59	0	0
Spending of their Income	53	32.32	12	7.32	0	0
Children Marriages	3	1.83	51	31.1	28	17.07

Women’s ability to move alone indicates their independence. Women with longer marriage duration are empowered in household decision-making. Women’s decision or involvement in household purchases as food & clothing is satisfactory as compared to purchase of furniture. See Fig-2

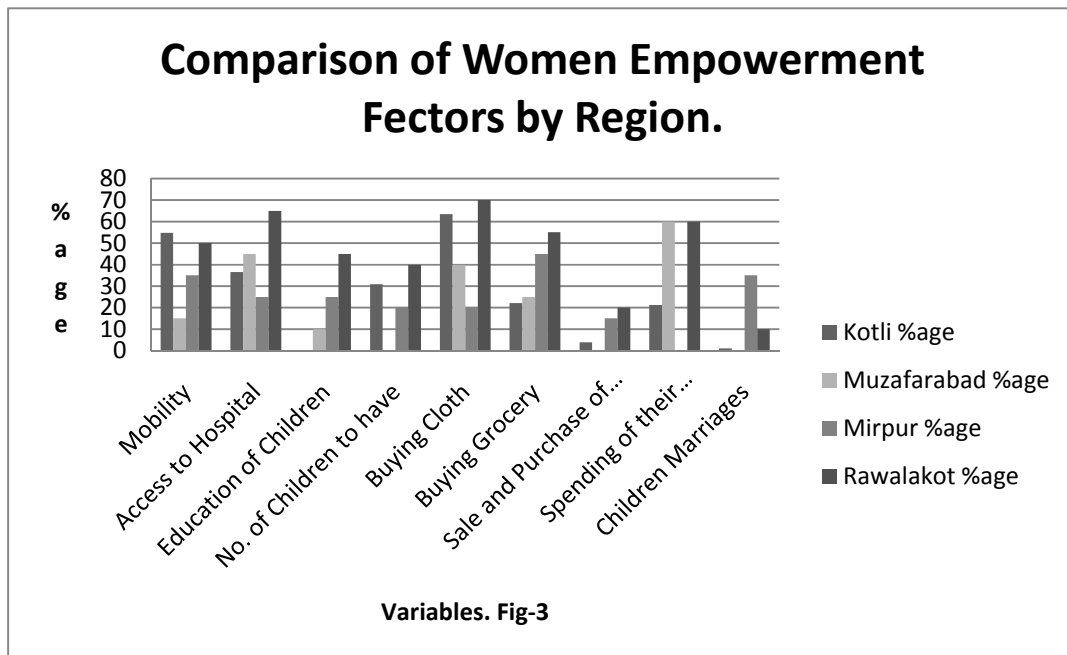


The district wise percentage of women's participation are as decision regarding to go outside alone (mobility) Women of Kotli district are reported in table-3, 54.8% Whereas in Muzafarabad 15% lower than Kotli , 35% Mirpur district & 50% in Rawalakot district. Decision with regard to child treatment (access to hospital) women of Rawalakot are more Empowered than other districts as 65% whereas 36.5% in Kotli,45% Muzafarabad & 25% Mirpur Decision about the schooling of children women of Rawalakot Districts has more autonomy than other districts as 45% while 25% in Mirpur & 10% in Muzafarabad. The Involvement of women in the decision regarding buying a cloth 63.5% in Kotli 40% in Muzafarabad, 20% in Mirpur & 70% in Rawalakot. Women of Kotli, Mirpur & Muzafarabad Are less empowered than women of Rawalakot District. The percentage of spending their income independently by employed women are 60% in Muzafarabad as well as 60% In Rawalakot District whereas 21.2% in Kotli District.

Table-3
Compare the %age of decisions by region

	Kotli (No.)	%age	Muzafarabad (No.)	%age	Mirpur (No.)	%age	Rawalakot (No.)	%age
Mobility	57	54.8	3	15	7	35	10	50
Access to Hospital	38	36.5	9	45	5	25	13	65
Education of Children	0	0	2	10	5	25	9	45
No. of Children to have	32	30.8	0	0	4	20	8	40
Buying Cloth	66	63.5	8	40	4	20	14	70
Buying Grocery	23	22.1	5	25	9	45	11	55
Sale and Purchase of Live Stock	4	3.8	0	0	3	15	4	20
Spending of their Income	22	21.2	12	60	0	0	12	60
Children Marriages	1	1	0	0	7	35	2	10

This reveals that involvement of Women in decision-making at household level is not satisfactory except Rawalakot Dist. See Fig-3



The result indicates that education of women has not any significant role in decision-making at household level. The women having longer duration in marriages are empower in decision-making as compared to short duration married women.

6. Conclusion

The study indicates that women’s decision-making power is related to their mobility. The Women having power to take decisions regarding to go outside alone or go to make household purchases are empower in decision-making. The result indicates that both urban& rural women in AJ&K have not much difference in decision-making at household level. The result suggests that participation of women in jobs can empower them. Government should provide equal opportunities to women in every field to men. Efforts should be made to brainwashing of men in order to empower the women to keep gender balance. The situation of women in AJ&K is not satisfactory. Patriarchy culture is deeply entrenched and gender biases are perpetuated by men and women as part of social order. This cause poverty, unemployment ill health and discrimination in all walks of life. Having children frequently speculates to enhance women’s authority because it fulfills her basic obligation to continue the family. Generally older women have autonomy in decision-making. The women’s presence in public and private sphere is condemned under the guise of culture and norms.

Wife’s position in the family is measured by the time she has been married, no. of children to have, spend their income independently, their mobility, access to and control over the resources, all these measures related to women’s autonomy and power. Wives are less likely as their husband reports that they can make decisions regarding children. Women and girls are trapped

in vicious circle. Within the family socio-cultural norms, legal inequalities prevent women from playing their role.

7. Recommendations

Review and amendment of laws to enhance women's decision making power in the family. The empowerment of women, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, thus contributing to the moral ethical, spiritual and intellectual needs (Beijing conference). To provide Equal rights, opportunities and access to resources. Develop Women's morality by building their confidence. Empowerment factors have a strong influence in reducing gender bias in society. Provide with employment opportunities for women in all fields of life. Media campaigns to encourage gender balance. Create awareness to improve women's participation. Remove obstacles to women's decision-making in the family. Increase women's participation in assembly in AJ&K. There is need to set up a separate women development department in AJ&K in order to focus on women's issues. Enforcement of the quota in jobs Include the role and importance of women in both formal and informal educational programs. NGO'S should be encouraged to focus on awareness campaigns about women's rights. Women's rights are human rights. Women's empowerment and gender equality and equity are separated but closely related concepts. Economic, social, cultural, legal and within each dimension which women may be empowered.

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Name:			
Location:			
Age:			
Marriage duration:			
Family Structure:	Joint:		Separate:
Profession:			
Husband's education:			
Husband's profession:			
Husband's income:			
No. of family members:			
Nature of work inside home:			
Work outside home:			
	Wife	Husband	Others
Who decides to go outside to visit relatives or others?			
Who take the sick child to the hospital?			
Who decides about the education of children?			
Who decides about the no. of children to have?			
Who decides about the marriage of children?			
Who decides to purchase cloths?			
Who decides to purchase groceries?			
Who decides to sale and purchase of livestock?			
Who purchase furniture?			
	Yes		No
If you disagree with your husband on some issues, do you fear of punishment?			
Can you spend your income independently?			
Does your husband give you money?			
Can you spend that money without consent of your husband?			
Can you spend the money independently or you need to have permission from other family members which is sent by your husband from abroad			