



## Women and Household Decision making: A Study of Hiranagar blocks of Kathua District

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**Abstract-** Women constitute half of the world's population, two third of the world's work force but get one tenth of the world's income and one percent of the world's Wealth. Even in developing nations women have been doing paid, underpaid and largely unpaid work in homes, factories, fields, forests and mines. Over and above 3 Cs-cooking, cleaning and caring, large number of women do activities such as collection of fuel, fodder and water, animal husbandry, kitchen gardening, raising poultry that augment family resources. If women would not do this work, these goods would have to be purchased from the market. They contribute a significant part of the GDP of a country, yet, they are not treated at par with men in many aspects of life. In India, with the passage of more than seven decades of development, women still remain in the clutch of economic dependency and societal negligence which inhibits them from realizing their due place. The present paper sheds light on the role of women in household decision making and gender disparity in ownership rights in the Jandi and Chan Khatrian villages of Hiranagar block. and Hiranagar blocks. The findings of the study revealed the women's autonomy through their decision-making freedom regarding various aspects of life such as education, career, job, asset creation, investment, savings, education of their children etc.

**Keywords:** Women, Freedom, Household decision-making, ownership rights etc.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In the post-Independence period, Indian constitution provides equal opportunities to male and females of the country, but, still women remains in the shadows as compared to men (Titus 2017)<sup>1</sup>. Women are under-represented in decision-making process in almost every sphere of life from household, economically and politically worldwide (Profeta 2017)<sup>2</sup>. The development of society and the nation is highly dependent on the participation of women in all activities. Women's ability to make decisions affects the way of her lives, which is also an important part of empowerment. In order to evaluate the women's role in decision-making autonomy, information collected from the selected study area about various variables: decision-making of females in choice of education, in choice of marriage, in choice of career or job, decision making in household chores, females access to owned house and land property. The role of women is a special component that develops the human structure of family and society. The family is considered an important unit of society and also on a social, economic and political level (Maral and Kumar 2017)<sup>3</sup>.

The gender status is an important aspect which affects the decisions of males and females in any family and the components which impacts the force that spouses or wives employ in a family decides the dynamic cycle of the unit. Women empowerment defines as granting decision-making power in each sphere of life. It is a pre-requisite for gender parity and balanced development. The concept of empowerment includes the increased participation in decision-making, more equitable status of women in the family and community and increased self-esteem. Women's ability to affect or to take decisions which affects their lives and their futures is considered to be one of the main constituents of empowerment.

### II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Baliyen, et al (2014) studied the factors which affect the women's role in decision-making at the household level by conducting the primary research in Muzaffarnagar district of west U.P in India. The study exhibits that women do not have high degree of independence in taking decisions. Although they are contributing significant to enhance the economic activities. Women enjoyed freedom in decision-making only in case of decorating the house, buying of domestic goods, kitchen related activities, marriage of children but the decisions related to the children's education, choice of job/career and other financial regarding matters taken by the male members of the house. Outside the house, movement of women completely restricted. Patriarchic thinking and dominance over women still prevailed in the study area. They suggested that level of education and financial independence will definitely raise the women's involvement in decision-making.

Maral and Kumar (2017) examined the decision-making power of women among working and non-working under nuclear and joint family structure by selecting total 272 urban married working and non-working women, 144 nuclear and 128 joint families in Allahabad city. They found in their results that there were substantial variance in decision-making regarding domestic chores and societal issues among working and non-working women. Both working and non-working women enjoyed in decision making at higher scale in case of nuclear family as compared to joint family. Non-working women as compared to working women faces more hindrance in their decisions by other family members. The study concluded that participation of working women is higher in all cases than the non-working women, which reflects that economic interdependence of women plays an importance role for enhancing the women sovereignty.

Deb (2015) stated that the process of decision-making is determined by the joint efforts of both the spouses which is further influenced by the economic and non-economic factors mainly focused on how this process are influenced by the level of education, media and owned wealth of the individual. The gender status in the house also plays a vital role in the process of household decision-making. In his paper, author examined the various background characteristics which determine the family outcomes in India by using cross-sectional data given by the National Family and Health Survey, Third Round, (2005-06) of 29 states of India.

The findings of the study revealed that education status of the women plays an important role in the male's decision regarding limiting the size of the family.

Banerjee and Roy(2015) investigated the freedom of female decision-making and factors which affects it across the states during the year 2005-06 by using NFHS-3 data in India. They found that various social factors like social backwardness, religious and conservative thinking affects the women's decision-making power. Increased in family income raised the female's autonomy status in the family which exhibits that economic or financial upliftment is an important factor for raising the level of autonomy in females in India.

#### **Objectives**

1. To examine the decision making role of women in choice of education, marriage and career/job in the study area.
2. To investigate the level of gender disparity in the ownership rights of house and land property in the study area.
3. To explore the extent to which the decision-making role of women is affected by other factors in the study area.

#### **Research Questions**

1. How far the women of the study area enjoyed the freedom of decision-making in case of their education, marriage and career.
2. Is there any kind of gender disparity prevails in the study area regarding ownership rights about house and other property.
3. What is the role of other socio-economic factors on decision-making role of women in the study area.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Selection of Study Area**

A multi-stage random sampling design has been used for the selection of the sample households. In the first stage, one district from the Jammu region, namely, Kathua was selected purposely. In the second stage, one block i.e.Hiranagarpurposely selected from the district by following the same criterion. In the third stage, two villages i.e.Jandi and ChanKhatrianhave been randomly selected from the Hiranagar blocks. In the final stage, 90 households selected randomly for field survey from the selected block. The present study was carried out in two villages i.e.Jandiand Chan KhatrianfromHiranagar block of Kathua district.

#### **Sample Size**

The total sample size of the paper was 90 households, 45 households from one selected village and rest 45 from the other selected village of the block.

#### **Tools and Technique**

The study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature.

### Data Collection

The present study was based on primary data, collected from each household, relating to various indicators of females decision-making role in households chores and level of gender disparity prevailed in the study area in this context, through well designed and structured questionnaire.

**Rationale of the Study:** Women constitute about half of the world population and play a crucial role in socio-economic context of the society and nation as a whole. Therefore, without equal upliftment of both the genders, the dream of equitable development is not possible. Gender disparities is seen in each and every societies. The role of gender equality in the growth of society and the economy and women's empowerment in developed countries have become increasingly relevant over time. Increasing women's autonomy in all areas of decision making, including access to livelihoods, education and health, as well as social, economic and political participation, is one of the main aspects of empowering women. Therefore, it is important in contemporary time to determine the role of women in the household decision-making because family is the sphere where women can share and control over the resources.

## IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Sampled Households in the Study Area**

Block	Villages	Total Sampled Households	Total Sampled Female Population	Total Sampled Male Population	Total Sampled Population
Hiranagar	Jandi	45	99 (47.14)	111(52.85)	210(100)
	ChanKhatrian	45	103 (44.78)	127(55.21)	230(100)
	Total	90	202 (45.90)	238 (54.09)	440(100)

Source: Field Survey

Figures in the brackets shows percentages.

Table 1 explained the demographic profile of selected households from the surveyed block i.e 45 households from village Jandi and 45 from village Chan Khatrian of block Hiranagar. Total sample size of the block was 90 households. Total sampled population from the district was 440 people, from which 45.90 percent were women and 54.09 percent male population. The surveyed population from the selected villages also reflected in the tabular presentation.

**Table 2: Age structure of the Sampled Population in the Study Area**

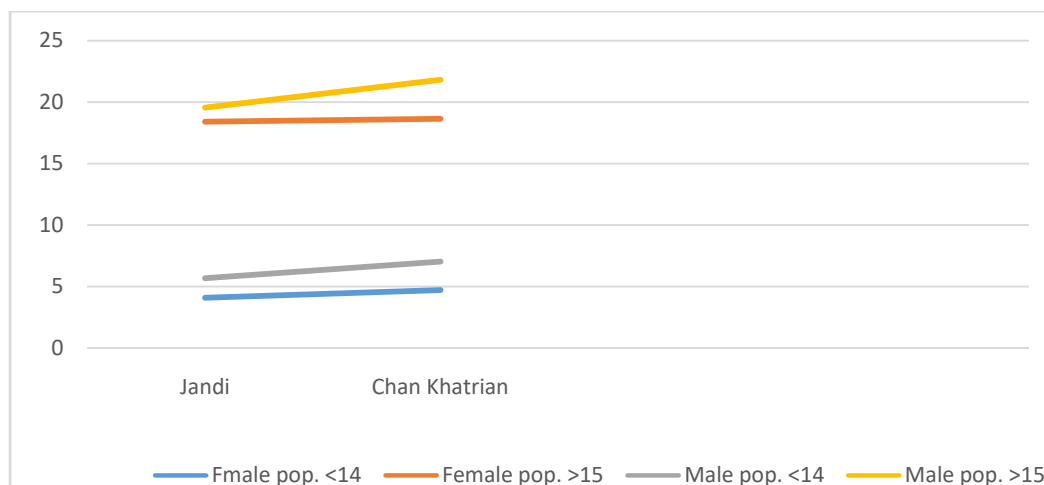
Block	Blocks	Female population below 14	Female Population above 15	Male Population below 14	Male Population above 15	Total Sampled Population
Hiranagar	Jandi	18(4.09)	81(18.40)	25(5.68)	86(19.54)	210(100)
	Chan Khatrian	21(4.77)	82(18.63)	31(7.04)	96(21.81)	230(100)
	Total	39(8.86)	163 (37.04)	56(12.72)	182(41.36)	440(100)

Source: Field Survey

Figures in the brackets shows percentages.

Table 2 represented the age structure of the sampled population of the study area, Out of total respondents of the district say 440, 8.86 percent females were below the age of 14 years as compared to 12.72 percent male children of the same age. Female population above the age of 15 were 37.04 percent as compared to 41.36 males population. It showed that sex ratio of the study area was low, males population were in higher number as compared to females population.

### Age Structure of the Sampled population of Village Jhandi and Chan Khatrian of Hiranagar Block



In the Jhandi and Chan Khatrian villages of block Hiranagar, the variance in the age structure of the sampled males and females population is clearly visualized in the diagram, the females less than 14 years were 4.09 as compared to 5.68 percent males and females sampled more than 15 years of age found in 18.40 percent as compared to 19.54 percent in Jhandi village. In Chan Khatrian village, the age structure of the male and female population were 4.71 percent females less than 14 years of age as compared to 7.04 percent males and 18.63 percent females were more than 15 years of age as compared to 21.81 percent male population.

**Table 3: Educational Attainment of the Male Sampled Population in the Study Area**

Block	Villages	Upto 12 <sup>th</sup>	Up to Graduation	Up to Post-Graduation	Total
Hiranagar	Jhandi	19 (17.11)	49(44.14)	43(38.73)	111(100)
	Chan Khatrian	25(19.68)	72(56.69)	30(23.62)	127(100)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>44(18.48)</b>	<b>121(50.84)</b>	<b>73(30.67)</b>	<b>238(100)</b>

Source: Field Survey

Figures in the brackets shows percentages.

Table 3 depicted the educational attainment of the male sampled population of the study area. Out of the total sampled population, in Hiranagar block of Kathua district, 18.48 percent males have completed their twelfth standard, 50.84 percent were graduated and 30.67 percent completed their post-graduation degree. Sampled villages represented different picture i.e Jhandi village ranks first place with 38.73 percent males sampled population have completed their post-graduation as compared to 23.62 percent in village Chan Khatrian. Highest percent of twelfth passed males found in Chan Khatrian village i.e 19.68 percent followed by 17.11 percent in Jhandi village, Same trend for graduate males represented in Chan Khatrian i.e 56.69 percent males have completed their graduation as compared to 44.14 percent in Jhandi village of Hiranagar block.

**Table 4: Educational Attainment of the Female Sampled Population of the Study Area**

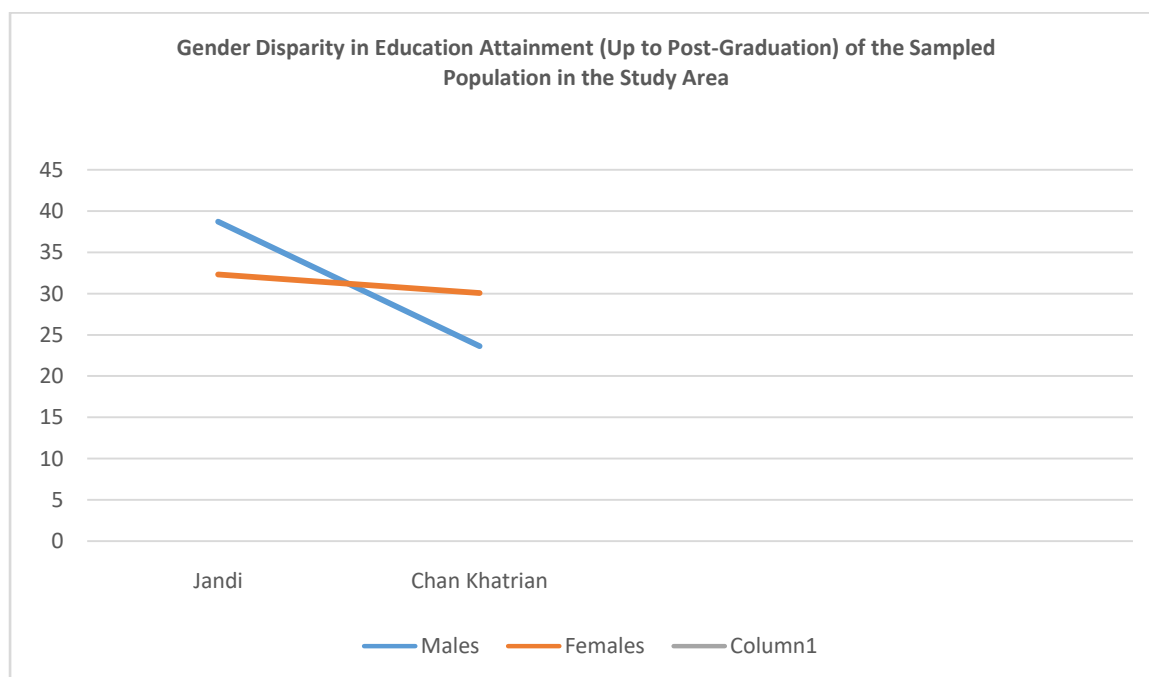
Block	Villages	Upto 12 <sup>th</sup>	Up to Graduation	Up to Post-Graduation	Total
Hiranagar	Jhandi	9(9.09)	58(58.58)	32(32.32)	99(100)
	Chan Khatrian	21(20.38)	51(49.51)	31(30.09)	103(100)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>30(14.85)</b>	<b>109(53.96)</b>	<b>63(21.18)</b>	<b>202(100)</b>

Source: Field Survey

Figures in the brackets shows percentages.

Table 4 represented the educational attainment of the female sampled population of the study area. Out of the total sampled population, in Block Hiranagar, 14.85 percent females have completed their twelfth

standard, 53.96 percent were graduated and 21.18 percent completed their post-graduation degree. Disparity in educational attainment of female population in village Jandi and Chan Khatrian clearly reflected that Jandi ranks first place with 32.32 percent female sampled population have completed their post-graduation as compared to 30.09 percent females in Chan Khatrian village of block Hiranagar.



Source: From Field Survey

**Table 5: Income Level of the Sampled Households Per Annum**

Block	Villages	Below 50,000	50,000 to 1,000,00	From 1 lac. To 3 lac	More than 3000,00	Total
Hiranagar	Jandi	4(8.88)	12(26.66)	13(28.88)	16(35.55)	45(100)
	Chan Khatrian	7(15.55)	11(24.44)	12(26.66)	15(33.33)	45(100)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11(12.22)</b>	<b>23(25.55)</b>	<b>25(27.77)</b>	<b>31(34.44)</b>	<b>90(100)</b>

Source: Field Survey

Figures in the brackets shows percentages.

Table 5 described the income status of the sampled households, out of the total households, 12.22 percent households have income below 50.000 per annum, 25.55 percent have an income slab of 50,000 to One lakh. In the income slab of one lakh to three lakh 27.77 households were there and 34.44 percent owned the income level more than three lakhs per annum. Annually income earned by the households of the Jandi village was different than the village Chan Khatrian. Highest households have high level of annual income found in Jandi village of Hiranagar block.

**Table 6: Percentage Distribution of Women enjoyed freedom in Choice of Education, Career in the Study Area**

Block	Villages	Choice of Education		Choice of Career/Job		Choice of Marriage		Total
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Hiranagar	Jandi	16(35.55)	29(64.44)	14(31.11)	31(68.88)	8(17.77)	37(82.22)	45(100)
	Chan Khatrian	11(24.44)	34(75.55)	9(20)	36(80)	6(13.33)	39(86.66)	45(100)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>27(30)</b>	<b>63(70)</b>	<b>23(25.55)</b>	<b>67(74.44)</b>	<b>14(15.55)</b>	<b>76(84.44)</b>	<b>90(100)</b>

Source: Field Survey

### Figures in the brackets shows percentages

Table 6 explained the freedom enjoyed by the females in the households for deciding their own choice of education in the block Hiranagar. In the block Hiranagar, out of total households, only 30 percent households reported that their women enjoyed the freedom in deciding their own choice of education. Village-wise variations perceived between the both selected villages, highest percentage of females i.e 35.55 percent reported from village Jandi who admitted that they enjoyed the freedom of education in the study area followed by 24.44 percent from Chan Khatrian village.

Female decision-making in choice of career/job in the block Hiranagar presented that the percentage of women who enjoyed the freedom to take decisions regarding their job confined to only 20 percent, which reflected that very few women enjoyed the power to take decision for their own choice of career or job. Village-wise analysis depicted that in both blocks not even half of the surveyed households enjoyed female's autonomy. The percent of women found high in village Chan Khatrian i.e 31.11 percent as compared to 25.55 percent in village Jandi.

Women's autonomy in choice of marriage also presented very miserable condition, only 15.55 percent women reported from the block Hiranagar that they enjoyed the freedom to do marriage according to their own choice. Village Jandi enjoyed more females' autonomy with 17.77 percent followed 13.33 percent in Chan Khatrian village.

**Table 7: Gender-wise distribution of sampled households in ownership right of house and Land Property in the Study Area**

Block	Villages	Owned House		Owned Land Property		Total
		Males	Females	Males	Females	
Hiranagar	Jandi	38(84.44)	7(15.55)	37(82.22)	8(17.77)	45(100)
	Chan Khatrian	41(75)	4(25)	40(44.44)	5(11.11)	45(100)
	Total	79(87.77)	12(13.33)	77(85.55)	13(14.44)	90(100)

Source: Field Survey

Figures in the brackets shows percentages

Access to property in form of house and land helps to empowered the women. But in the table 7, massive gender variations found in in owned house and owned land property. In the Hiranagar block, out of the total surveyed households, 87.77 percent houses owned by the male members of the family as compared to 13.33 percent females. Similarly, selected villages data also explained the same trend, with 84.44 percent male members owned the house in Jandi village as compared to 15.55 percent females and in Chan Khatrian village, 75 percent houses owned by the male members of the family as compared to 25 percent females owned the houses in which they resides. In context of owned land property, out of total respondents from the block Hiranagar, 85.55 percent land owned by the male members of the family and 14.44 percent land property owned by the female members of the family. Between the villages, Jandi ranks first with 17.77 percent land property owned by the female members of the family followed by 11.11 percent in Chan Khatrian village.

**Table 8: Percentage Distribution of Decision Making Role of Females at Household Level in the Study Area**

Block	Villages		Investment	Savings	Domestic chores	Education of children	Social functions
Hiranagar	Jandi	Yes	11(24.44)	31(68.88)	27(60)	18(40)	30(66.66)
		No	34(75.55)	14(31.11)	18(40)	27(60)	15(33.33)
		Total	45(100)	45(100)	45(100)	45(100)	45(100)
	Chan Khatrian	Yes	7(15.55)	26(57.77)	21(46.66)	11(24.44)	22(48.88)
		No	38(84.44)	19(42.22)	24(53.33)	34(75.55)	23(51.11)
		Total	45(100)	45(100)	45(100)	45(100)	45(100)

## Source: Field Survey

### Figures in the brackets shows percentages

Table 8 exhibited the percentage of decision making role of females at household level, in context of investment, out of the total respondents, highest percentage of women role found in Jandi village (24.44 percent) followed by Chan Khatrian village with 15.55 percent women. Women's role in household decision making presented that highest role of women realized in context of saving from Jandi village i.e 68.88 percent women reported that they decided about their family savings, followed by 60 percent on domestic chores in the same village. For the education of their children in Jandi village 40 percent women reported that they enjoyed the role in this context followed by Chan Khatrian with 24.44 percent women. More than half of the females from the sampled households i.e 66.66 percent from Jandi village reported that they took decisions for participate in social functions as compared to 48.88 percent in Chan Khatrian village.

- Women autonomy

#### **Impact of other socio-economic factors on decision-making role of women in the study area.**

Women's autonomy in household decision-making is very essential for better and equitable development of the societies. Various factors identified which affects the decision-making roles of women in the study area such as educational attainments, type of family, employment status etc.

**Educational Attainment of the Women:** Educational attainment affects the women decision making power of the females in the study area. As the percentage of women who have completed their post-graduation found in Jandi village as compared to Chan Khatrian village of Hiranagar block. Therefore, in Jandi village the percentage of women who enjoyed more freedom to participate in decision-making regarding their children and domestic chores was higher. It means if woman will educated and then she will be economically and mentally active in any work and her decision-making power will be greater than other uneducated women (Baliyan et, al 2014).

**Type of the Family:** Type and size of the family affects the women's autonomy in various spheres. It observed from the study area that in nuclear family both the spouses jointly took decision regarding their children matters and household chores of thefamily.

#### **Working status of the Women:**

The power of decision-making more perceived in working women rather than non-working women in the study area. Along with the structure of the family, distribution of decision-making process varies from one family to another because of job status.

## V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

❖ Women were given autonomy in order to take their own decisions but in context of their children's education, marriage the whole responsibility relied on the shoulders of the male members of the family.

❖ In Jandi village, only 35.55 percent women out of total households (45), reported that they took the decision of their education themselves followed by village Chan Khatrianwith 24.44 percent women.

❖ Decision regarding their own career /job, only 31.11 percent women took decisions by themselves in Jandi village followed by Chan Khatrian village with 20 percent.

❖ In choice of marriage, only 17.77 percent women from Jandi village reported that they enjoyed freedom in this context following by Chan Khatrian village with 13.33 percent. And total 15.55 women reported from the block Hiranagar from the total sampled households.

❖ Gender inequality found in the ownership rights of house and land property in the study area. From Jandi village 84.44 percent house ownership belonged to male members followed by 75 percent from Chan Khatrian. Only 15.5 percent females enjoyed the house ownership in Jandi village and 25 percent from Chan Khatrian.

❖ In case of land property also the difference was so huge i.e from blockHiranagar 82.22 percent land property belonged to male members and rest 17.77 percent given to females in the study area.

❖ In the present paper, only factors like women's education, family structure and working status of the females were discussed and analyzed that these factors impacts a lot the women's decision-making process.

It is concluded that women do not enjoy more power of decision making in various domestic fields their decisions mainly restricted to preparation of food, saving, assets creation, decoration of houses etc., But, in decisions for their children's life and others household chores they enjoy limited freedom. Women's autonomy can produce many positive far reaching effects for the other household members of the family because women are always took decisions by keeping their children and whole family at a central point. High role of decision-making by the women leads to the family at better health care, nutritional level, gender neutral atmosphere. The patriarchic types of decision-making and predominance over the women still prevails in the study area. These perspectives need to go through a change before ladies can completely appreciate the self-sufficiency as a person.

It is suggested that by keeping the whole findings of the study that stressed should be laid on empowerment of women, the patriarchal values should be changed. Proper ownership rights grants to the women. Employment/ job status of the females plays a part by providing then the power of economic decision making. Education attainment plays a very vital because it observed that in Jandi village more females have completed post-graduation than Chan Khatrian village and in decision-making process Jandi ranked first followed by Chan Khatrian village. So, it presented the direct nexus of educational attainment and decision-making power.

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