

Socio-Cultural Instigations in Decision making at Domestic Level

Abstract

The present study entitled “Socio-cultural instigations in decision making at domestic level”, is imperative to the societies urging for women empowerment and gender equality. Household decision making power/autonomy is defined as women’s ability to determine events in their lives. In many countries women have less Education, and limited decision making power. It is widely asserted that increased gender equality within the house hold is a pre-requisite for achieving improvements in all matters of development. The study is carried out in Awarokora kebele of Ambo district west shewa zone oromia regional state of Ethiopia. The present research is conducted by obtaining relevant primary and secondary data. Questionnaire and general observation is used to gather relevant information where the sample size of 82 respondents is chosen through simple random sampling technique. The study reveals that, majority of the respondents were 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 works towards awareness on the status of women in decision making process at family level.

Keywords: 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 monitory fund

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 sociologist 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 have been conducted in field of social science to describe household decision making power and balance between husband and wife in different models (Hou, 2012).

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

7 Woman are one way or the other deprived of their decision making power
8 both at family and social level due to woman unfriendly culture. Woman in
9 18th and 19th centuries started significant movement towards gender equality
10 and women empowerment. In the same vein, modern feminist movement raised
11 different questions were not the agenda of prior feminist movements as the way
12 of addressing gender disparities inter alia the rights to education; wage
13 disparity; equal economic opportunities and decision making right. Infact,
14 woman movement aimed at disestablishing the hindering traditional values,
15 cultural setting, and religious patriarchy. The equality of decision making and
16 status of woman in all parts of world started to spring, (Shahang Parveen,
17 2013).

18 In the third world countries like Ethiopia women play a vital role in the
19 welfare of the family they are basically viewed as the potential mothers and
20 home maker, hence in all societies the issue of women's participation is
21 considered to be important and changing role of women due to women's
22 education and participation of women in the labor force play an important role
23 in enhancing the decision making power in family (Bloom,2003).

24 25 26 **Statement of Problem**

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28 The present study entitled, "Socio-cultural instigations in decision making
29 at domestic level", studies female's participation in house hold decision
30 making in relation to planning and executing decisions regarding family
31 expenditure, child welfare, reproductive health and socio-political matters.

32 It is realized that men and women have differences in personality, status,
33 power and access to material resources etc. Women's are at the bottom of pay
34 and power and are disregarded in decision making.

35 Disparities between men and women in the world based on education,
36 employment, income opportunities, control over assets and house hold decision
37 making as well as political process reveals that women are deprived which,
38 limits the country's ability to achieve its potential. (Biswas 2004).

39 Women have limited role in household decision making, access and
40 control over house resource - both physical and financial assets. Generally
41 speaking, women have secondary status in decision making in various sectors
42 i.e., from family to the highest institutional level.

1 The present researches examines and assess women's participation in
2 household activities and the role of social cultural factors affecting the status of
3 women at household level in relation to decision making powers in the family.
4

5 **Objectives of the Study**

6

- 7 • To assess the socio- economic factors that affect women's decision
- 8 making power at the house hold level in the study area.
- 9 • To analyze the status of women in relation to decision making at
- 10 domestic level.
- 11 • To study the impact of socio-cultural factors affecting women's
- 12 decision making power.
- 13
- 14

15 **Research Questions**

16

- 17 1. What are the major socio- economic factors that affect women's
- 18 decision making power at household level in the study area?
- 19 2. What are the major problems of women in decision making practices at
- 20 family level?
- 21
- 22

23 **Significance of the Study**

24

25 The study is significant to the societies urging for women empowerment
26 and gender equality. Women's themselves are beneficiaries and different
27 stakeholders emphasizing on the issue. This study is also important to different
28 societies in understanding how the women are underestimated in decision
29 making practices as compared to men?

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

The study assesses the status of women in decision making at family level in Ambo District, and limited to, Awaro kora Kebele. The research underwent several limitations and mostly on respondents' participation in the research due to hesitation.

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 Soanes 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 unit of society 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 housewives 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 gender ability or capacity of the individuals. Women engage in activities which are considered as men in neighboring societies such as plowing, milling, harvesting and weaving. Men also engage in tasks which are assigned for women such as cooking, baking enjera, spinning and taking care of children.

1 Women have been playing a key role, not only for family wellbeing, but
2 also in the development of economic, political, social and ecological
3 environments.

4 5 6 **The Status of Ethiopian Women**

7 8 *Health Status*

9
10 Ethiopian women live in one of the world's poorest countries and face
11 highest of health problems while antirational care from skilled health care
12 providers has reached close half of those in need, post-natal care remains
13 negligible, rural mothers those who have less than secondary education are at
14 disadvantage, receiving less material care from skilled health providers than
15 their urban counterpart. Despite these challenges the movement has made
16 stride in improving women and girl's health (Helina, 2015).

17 18 *Social Status*

19
20 Ethiopian women are especially vulnerable to harmful traditional practices
21 (HTP), such as early marriage, abduction and forced marriages, violence
22 against girls such as sexual harassment by male teachers and peers leads to
23 poor academic performance and school dropouts hindering their ability to
24 participate in new policies and law prohibiting various types of gender based
25 violence (GBV), including the previous family code of HTP.

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

29 30 *Economic Status*

31
32 Ethiopian women contribute one of the highest rates of economic participation
33 in the world, but this rate is lower than that of men in the country, they tend to
34 be employed more in the informal sector and they are affected by
35 unemployment, more frequently than men. Males in Ethiopia are also paid
36 more than females for the same job across sectors, furthermore, most of the
37 work is traditionally associated and ill paid (Bogalech Mengistu, 2007).

38 39 *Access to Resources*

40
41 Ethiopian women have one of the highest rates of economic participation
42 in the world, but this rate is lower than men comparatively. The Ethiopian
43 government has explicitly stated its intention to ensure women full
44 participation in the information and communication sectors and made head way
45 in expanding female ownership of mobile phones between Jun 2014 and May
46 2015, 20% of new mobile subscribers were women, however, there is all sex-
47 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.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

This 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 and factors affecting in the targeted place of study.

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 8⁰47'N-9⁰21'N and 37⁰ 32 E-38⁰30 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.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

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

Sample Size

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

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.

Method of Primary Data Collection

Questionnaires

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

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.

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 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, 2019

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 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, 2019

As presented in the above table out of total 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 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, 2019

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 3 reveals that 71 (86.56%) responds were married whereas 4 (4.88%) are divorced and 7 (8.54%) are widowed.

Table 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, 2019

Table 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. On the basis of the information, it can be deduced that majority of the respondents are Oromos.

1 **Table 5. Religious Status of Respondents**

S1.No	Religious	Frequency	Percentage	
1	Christian	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	

2 Source: Field Survey, 2019

3 Other: Includes Waqafata

4
5 The above Table 5 indicates that the majority of the respondents are
6 Christian i.e., 64(78.05%) which includes protestant, 29(35.36%), Orthodox
7 26(31.71%) and 09(10.98%) are Catholic. Muslims contributes 11(13.41%)
8 and remaining 07(08.54%) comes under other category.

9
10 **Table 6. Education 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

11 Source: Field Survey, 2019

12
13 Educational status is the basic parameter for any development activities.
14 As shown in Table 6. Out of total respondent 30(36.59%) are illiterate,
15 23(28.1%) are literate, 16(19.51%) are grade one up to twelve, 8(9.78%) are
16 diploma holders and remaining 5(6.1%) are graduates. The information reflects
17 that majority of the respondents fall in the category of either illiterate or
18 literate.

19
20 **Table 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

21 Source: Field Survey, 2019

22 Other: Includes unemployed & street beggars

23
24 Occupational status defines the source of income of an individual and
25 standard of living, here Table 7 depicts the occupational status of the
26 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 8. Factors affecting Women Decision Making

S1.No	Factor Affecting Women 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, 2019

As indicated in the Table 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 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, 2019

Table 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 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, 2019

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 11. Suggestions on Improving Women's Decision Making

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, 2019

In the Family 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 11, out of total respondents 30(36.59%) suggests that educating and giving awareness to women is mandatory 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.

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 house hold 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's the male who protect and controls all activities in the household due to this reason they didn't 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 society and this adversely affects the performance of women participation. There an association between socio-cultural factors minimizing the status of women's, decision making at house hold level, due to this, women has 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 woman's 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.

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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