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## Autonomy and decision making pattern of rural working and non-working women in home activities in Patna district of Bihar state

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### Abstract

Families today are seeing rapid changes due to the increased pace of growth and modernization. Indian women belonging to all classes have entered into various professions which causes stress in their personal and professional life. Women's exposure to educational opportunities is significantly higher than it was some years ago, especially in the rural areas. For the present study working and non-working women were selected from Patna district of Bihar state. The results showed a positive relation between women's autonomy and their role in decision making at household level. There should be balance of power between men and women. There is still a need to enhance women's autonomy and their role in decision making at household for the development in Indian society.

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### Introduction

The contribution of women to society cannot be ignored as they constitute almost one-half of the total population of the world that accounted for around 496 million as against total population of 1027 million. According to the world scenario, 60 percent of the working hour in the world go to women's share, it make up 30 percent of the official labor force, thus 50 percent share of world economy is contributed by them (**Department for International Development, (2000)**).

The status of women can be measured in terms of degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by them. Equal participation of women with men in decision making, free expression of their views and participation in the community life help them to get recognized in the society. The power of expression and ability to solve problems through their views and ideas, make women capable of getting attention from everyone. The financial independence along with employment opportunity makes a woman capable of asserting her voice in community as well as in the family (**Bala, 2004**).

Women's autonomy in decision making is associated with her ethnicity, deprivation level, and education. It was thought appropriate to study the present status of autonomy and decision making in backward area of India. Accordingly, the present investigation entitled "**Autonomy and decision making pattern of rural working and non-working women in home activities in Patna District of Bihar state**" has been undertaken with the following specific objective.



- To determine the decision making pattern of rural working and non-working women with respect to home activities.

### Methodology

The study was conducted in purposively selected district of Patna, Bihar. Four blocks namely Phulwari, Barh, Fatwah and Bihta were selected for the selection of respondents. 5 village panchayat were selected from each block. The villages were selected proportionately where working women were more in number. From each village, approximately 5 working and 5 non working women were selected proportionately making the total size of 180 working and 180 non-working women.

### Findings

#### Participation in Decision Making in Domestic Activities

Our survey revealed that farm women in the study region play a significant role in decision making related to domestic matters (Table 1). Around 51 per cent women said that family members mostly agree with them in decisions related to domestic affairs. Around 6 per cent women stated that they have taken final decision in these matters and 26 per cent women said that male members did not agree much with her decisions. Generally, in matters like decoration of house, purchase of domestic goods, etc. it is the women of the household who take the main decisions but in matters related to construction of new house, renovation of old house or whitewashing of house, in less than 50 per cent cases decision is taken with consent of female members of the house. The extent of participation of women in case of matters related to education of children, going child school's functions and others women and child development programmes was not so high Acharya, M. (1995), Jyoti, K.S. (1999).

**Table: 1**  
**Participation in Decision Making By Women in Domestic Related Activities**

Type of Activity	Final Decision	Only Opinion Asked	To Some extent	To a large extent	No Participation	Total
Purchase of Food Items	8 (4.45)	0 (0.00)	10 (5.55)	162 (90.00)	0 (0.00)	180 (100.00)
Buying Domestic Goods	8 (4.45)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	172 (95.55)	0 (0.00)	180 (100.00)
Home Decoration	8 (4.45)	0 (0.00)	8 (4.44)	163 (90.55)	1 (0.55)	180 (100.00)
New House Construction	6 (3.33)	6 (3.33)	124 (68.88)	43 (23.89)	1 (0.55)	180 (100.00)
Renovation of Old House	7 (3.88)	5 (2.77)	115 (68.88)	51 (28.34)	2 (1.12)	180 (100.00)
Education of Children	6 (3.33)	19 (10.55)	117 (65.00)	38 (21.12)	0 (0.00)	180 (100.00)
Child development Programmes	6 (3.33)	39 (21.66)	79 (43.88)	19 (10.55)	0 (0.00)	180 (100.00)
Going to children's	6	88	6	80	0	180



School Functions	(3.33)	(48.88)	(3.33)	(44.45)	(0.00)	(100.00)
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### Participation in Decision Making Related to Children

Table 2 shows the extent of participation in decision making by women in matters related to children like education and admission of children in schools, choice of occupation for children, selection of spouse and expenses to be incurred on the marriages of children. Only around 4 percent women said they took final decision in these matters, while 63 percent women said that their advice was mostly accepted. About 23 percent women said that their advice accepted only to a little extent, while around 13 percent women said that family members or head of the family only contacted to her on these matters. Around 4 percent women respondent reported no participation on these matters. The extent of participation of women was highest in case of matters related to marriage of children. But women did not enjoy an important role with respect to decisions like education of children and choice of occupation **Bala , M.(2004)**.

**Table 2**  
**Participation in Decision Making of Women in Children Related Matters**

Matters Related to Children	Final Decision	Only Opinion Asked	To Some extent	To a large extent	No Participation	Total
Education of Children	4 (2.22)	8 (4.45)	53 (29.44)	114 (63.33)	1 (0.55)	180 (100.00)
Level of children's education	4 (2.22)	25 (13.88)	43 (23.88)	100 (55.55)	8 (4.45)	180 (100.00)
Children's marriage	5 (2.77)	23 (12.77)	37 (20.55)	107 (59.44)	8 (4.45)	180 (100.00)
Children's occupation	4 (2.22)	14 (7.77)	44 (24.44)	114 (63.33)	4 (2.22)	180 (100.00)

### Socio-personal characteristics and their relationship with the decision making pattern of rural working women

Regression analysis confirms our findings (Table 3). Thus, age and Person days spent on agriculture are found to have a strong positive impact on DMI, while family income has a negative impact. Caste, status of women in family and education has an expected positive impact on DMI, but regression coefficients are not significant. Size of family also has a negative impact, but not statistically significant. The value of R square is 0.28. This indicates that the factors determining women participation in decision making are quite complex and depend upon a number of socio-economic factors including traditional social and cultural values **Oluwatayo (2009)**.



**Table: 3**

**Linear Regression between Decision Making Index and Socio-Economic Variables**

Independent Variable	Coefficient	Std. Err.	T value	P>t
Constant	20.292890	7.016450	2.890	0.004
Age	0.640798	0.090154	6.110***	0.000
Caste	2.199857	2.029740	1.080	0.280
Occupation	1.602343	1.171908	1.570*	0.173
Education	0.821884	0.582760	1.410	0.160
Size of family	-0.506255	0.381336	-1.330	0.186
Income	-0.000013	0.000006	-2.310**	0.022

No. of observations=180, F (7, 232) =14.37, Adj R-squared=0.3814

**Decision Making Power of Women**

To conclude, it appears that women in the study area do not enjoy a high degree of autonomy in decision making in the family in spite of their significant contribution to economic activities. Only in purely domestic matters like decoration of house, purchase of domestic goods, marriage of children, etc. Women are given freedom to take their own decisions. But in matters related to children's education and occupation and money related matters they enjoy limited freedom. The movement of women outside home is also restricted. Thus, the patriarchic forms of decision making and dominance over women still continue in the study area. These attitudes have to undergo a change before women are able to fully enjoy the autonomy as an individual. Education and improvement in their economic independence will help in increasing women's involvement in decision-making in family **Kritz (1999)**.

**Conclusion**

Women are silent workers and good partners of the socioeconomic development of the country in general and the family in particular. Economic pressure is forcing them to break away their traditional roles of housewives into wage earners. The contribution of women in different activities as well as in total family income was substantial. It was found that the pattern of autonomy and decision making of women's in household started changing in backward areas of India. In order to improve the overall economic condition and to reduce their economic, social and political constraints, logistic supports such as health care facility, credit facility, input supply, agricultural extension services, need-based training, etc. need to be provided in order to increase their participation in income generating activities and different household decision making events.

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