



Disparities in Decision-Making in Malwa Region of Punjab: Gender-wise Spatial Observations

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Abstract:

Based on primary data this study is focused on the largest traditional geographical region of Punjab. Stratified random sampling technique has been used for this purpose. Four districts of 'Malwa' region-Rupnagar, Ferozpur, Patiala and Mansa have been selected representing four types of areas in the region viz., foothill zone, tract adjoining Indo-Pakistan border, service centre and socio-economically backward area. Three villages from each district have been selected on the basis of their distance from district headquarter. Micro level analysis is undertaken to capture the contextual nuances regarding gender and areal disparities in decision-making. An effort has been made to identify key variables influencing the domestic decision-making in Malwa region. Among the socio-economic variables, patriarchy emerges as the major determining factor. Male domination is high comparatively in decision-making. Rural 'Malwa' is more prone to feudal norms in decision-making than that of its urban counterparts.

Keywords: Gender Disparities, Areal Disparities, Decision-Making, Patriarchy and Feudal Norms.

Introduction

The status of females is still not at par with the males in the world (UNDP, 2015). Generally, males are the breadwinners of the households. As a result, all the major household decisions are taken by male them and the females are supposed to respect their decision. It is commonly believed that the father's decision has a 'greater weight' and thus the father has the 'final say' in household

(David, 1994). Due to these binaries, the Indian society assumes male member as the head of the family.

It is significant to mention here that if women are at liberty to take decisions in domestic matters or outside household, then it could elevate their social status in the society. Because women's role in household decision-making is identified as an important dimension of their status and autonomy. Their participation in decision-

making is evidence of their household autonomy which is an integral part of women's empowerment (Gupta and Yesudian, 2006). Decision-making is the most established measure of women empowerment (Richardson, 2018). The position of women and their socio-economic status is reflected in their ability to take decisions in socio-economic matters in the household (Kaur et al., 2008). Equality between females and males in the sphere of decision-making is not only justified, rather it is needed for good composition of society and a healthy democracy. It further strengthens and promotes proper functioning of governance, economic growth and competitiveness (European Union, 2014). Every human being has the right to participate in decision-making whether it is inside or outside the four walls of house. This right is the foundation of the ideal of equal participation in decision-making among both women and men (Miranda, 2005). Thus, decision-making has been considered as the most important contributor/attribute for women empowerment in any society particularly where the male has been predominantly a decision-maker (Kabir and Jahan, 2013). Due to societal norms, it has been observed that women have been constantly deprived of their right to make crucial decisions in their life (Kabeer, 1997). These societal norms are more entrenched in those countries where the societies are patriarchal, especially in India and other

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South-Asian countries. Punjab is one of the north-western states of India where patriarchy is deeply rooted. In such a patrilineal environment, all decisions are directly or indirectly taken by the males, whether in domestic or external matters. On the other hand, the role of women in this context is nominal, because generally only emotional support to the male member of household is expected from them.

Thus, the nature and extent of women's involvement in decision-making, especially in a patriarchal society like Punjab demands empirical investigation. If there is a gender inequality in household decision-making, then this affects the economic well-being of women and children in the household. The involvement of men and women in decision-making in domestic matters is less explored issue, especially in the context of Punjab. Gender and areal differences are visible in this regard. Various social, economic and cultural factors are responsible for such differences. Therefore, the issue of gender inequality in decision-making requires deep thinking at a micro-level and close attention from policymakers and researchers. Moreover, the huge gender gap and less representation of women in decision-making process is a serious issue that needs attention. If status of women is to be studied to gauge the extent of their relative empowerment at the grassroots level, then their role in household

decision-making must be studied. Present study is an attempt to analyse/understand gender and areal disparities on different aspects of decision-making in *Malwa* region. The study includes rural as well as urban areas for micro-level analysis to check ground realities regarding.

Objectives:

1. To understand the gender and areal differences in terms of different aspects of domestic decision-making.
2. To analyse social category-wise disparities in domestic decision-making.
3. To investigate/observe the various factors responsible for such differentials.

Research Methodology:

Primary data has been collected from twelve villages and four urban areas of four districts namely, Patiala, Mansa, Rupnagar and Firozpur. Selection of districts is based on their geographical locations. Three villages from each district have been randomly selected on the basis of their distance from district headquarter such as less than 5 kms having facility of state highway or national highway, 5-10 kms having railway track and more than 10 kms remote area where no proper transport facility is available.

To portray a precise picture of decision-making, stratified random technique has been used to select the

households and respondents. Personal observation, interview schedule and focus group discussions have been conducted. Total 752 respondents (376 married males and 376 married females), 188 from each district have been selected. Different caste and occupation groups have been approached to examine the decision-making process from every corner of the society.

Family and Disparities in Decision-Making:

Table and Figure 1 presents the spatial as well as gender-wise analysis of family and decision-making in the households of four selected districts of *Malwa* i.e., Patiala, Mansa, Rupnagar and Firozpur. Crystal clear picture emerges from the collected data indicates that about 66.80 percent of males and 53.50 percent females are of the opinion that major family decisions are taken by the husband only. According to the males relatively high proportion (70.20 percent) of major family decisions taken by them in Mansa district followed by Rupnagar (68.10 percent), Patiala (67 percent) and Firozpur (61.70 percent). Whereas in case of females, only 13.30 percent females of *Malwa* have the power to taken decisions in the family matters. As far as joint family decisions are concerned, about 22.60 percent males and 21.30 percent females have accept this norm. Rupnagar showed relatively high percentage (29.80 percent) in this regard followed by Patiala (20.20

percent), Firozpur (19.10 percent) and Mansa (16.00 percent) (Table 1). One interesting finding is that there is no involvement of in-laws in family decisions (claimed male respondents). On the other hand, 9 percent females of the region accept involvement of in-laws in family decisions which is more than wife's involvement in their own family. Relatively high (14.90 percent) involvement of in-laws recorded in Firozpur closely followed by Mansa (10.60 percent). Another interesting finding is that the husbands authorise their parents to take family decisions. About 7.20 percent male respondents of study area accepted that their parents take major family decisions whereas on the other

hand, only 0.80 percent females say that involvement of their parents in the major family decisions in household is comparatively very low.

Among all the selected districts, Mansa occupied the top position where most of the family decisions are taken by husband. However, it is accepted by both male and female respondents that In-laws involvement in family decision-making is relatively high in Firozpur and Mansa than in of other two districts. It has been observed that generally power of decision-making in the families is in the favour/hands of males in entire *Malwa*. Mansa district shows high percentage in this regard.

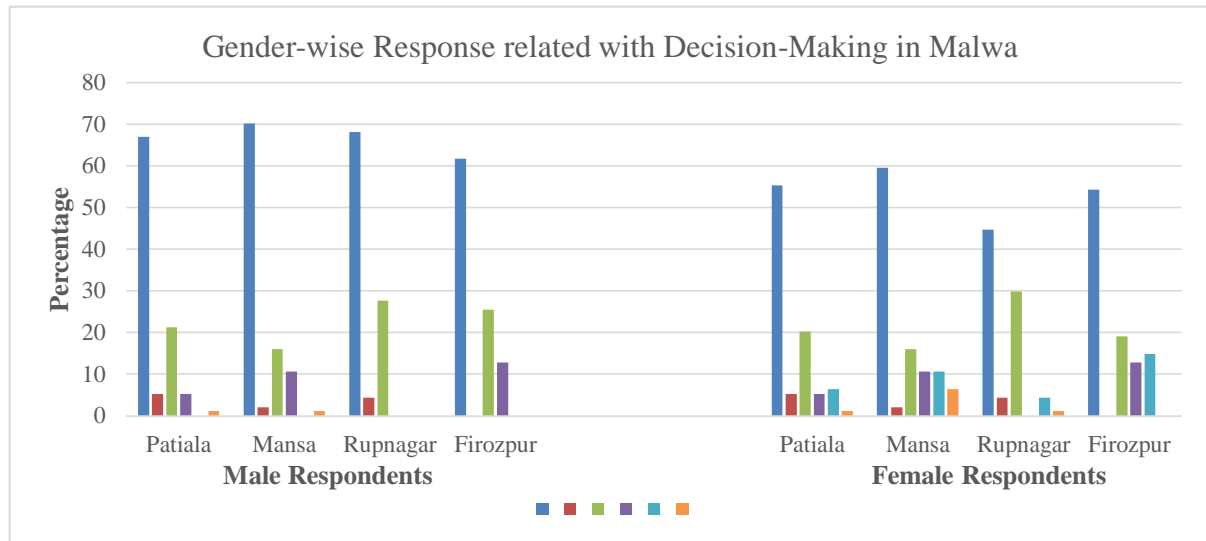
Table 1: Family and Decision-Making (Percentage)

| District/Region | Male | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
| Patiala | 67.00 | 5.30 | 21.30 | 5.30 | 0 | 1.10 |
| Mansa | 70.20 | 2.10 | 16.00 | 10.60 | 0 | 1.10 |
| Rupnagar | 68.10 | 4.30 | 27.70 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Firozpur | 61.70 | 0 | 25.50 | 12.80 | 0 | 0 |
| Malwa | 66.80 | 2.90 | 22.60 | 7.20 | 0 | 0.50 |
| District/Region | Female | | | | | |
| | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
| Patiala | 55.30 | 5.30 | 20.20 | 5.30 | 6.40 | 1.10 |
| Mansa | 59.60 | 2.10 | 16.00 | 10.60 | 10.60 | 6.40 |
| Rupnagar | 44.70 | 4.30 | 29.80 | 0 | 4.30 | 1.10 |
| Firozpur | 54.30 | 0 | 19.10 | 12.80 | 14.90 | 0 |
| Malwa | 53.50 | 2.90 | 21.30 | 7.20 | 9.00 | 2.10 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

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Figure 1



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Geographically, it is a semi-arid area which leads to a highly volatile economy. Consequently, males are dominant in such a patriarchal environment. Social norms are feudal, that is why the females of this area are mostly confined to household chores. Due to low-income sources, most of the people of this area refrain from educating their girls. Consequently, socio-economic backwardness affects the decision-making process. Areas with low female education and literacy rate recorded relatively low female decision taking power. It ultimately leads to high gender disparity in Mansa. Because education is the most influencing factor that affects the decision-making power of female. Moreover, educated women whether working or non-working are consulted and have more authority to make decision in the family.

Being a district with majority of marginal farmers and low agricultural

productivity, their household barely survives. It has been observed that due to high mental pressure in such an economy, most of the people of this area consume home brewed alcohol. Alcoholism is directly related to physical and sexual violence in this area. Domestic violence caused by alcoholism in this area is a direct and indirect restriction on women's decision-making in household. For instance, one female respondent from rural area said that:

“My husband is addicted to alcohol, he does not give any money for household expenses, on the contrary, he takes away the money that I have. He and his mother run the house. If I speak in any family matter, then he beats me brutally”.

Relatively high number of respondents (60.11 percent) out of all responded that husbands are taking major family decisions in household (Table 2). As far as the decisions making in the

family by different social groups of *Malwa* are concerned, it varies from one social group to another (Table 2 and Figure 2). In case of general category, the highest number of respondents (59.12 percent) said that husband takes the family decisions followed by joint husband and wife (23.72 percent), wife (7.66 percent), in-laws (4.38 percent), parents (3.28 percent) and others (1.82 percent). Among the SCs, relatively high number of respondents (61.11 percent) claimed that major family decisions are taken by husband. Similarly in case of OBCs, higher proportion of respondents (59.56 percent) gave the same response.

It has found that among all the three social groups, involvement of husband in family decisions is relatively high among the SCs than that of general and OBCs. Analysis reveals that males have higher autonomy of decision-making in the families as compared to females among all the social groups. It has been observed that females are not included in the decision-making process and the opportunities and benefits available in the society are monopolized by males only. Being dominated by a feudal and patriarchal society male dominance is obvious in all the activities, inside and outside the household. Females are more pressurized by social norms and tradition. In such an environment, female's participation in socio-economic, cultural and political activities depends upon the attitudes of their husbands/ father/ parents/

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male relatives (UNDP, 2015). Females are generally involved in household activities such as cooking, taking care their children and collecting woods and grass. Most of their time is spent on these activities. On the other hand, male member of the family fulfilled all the necessities of females, children and parents. Females of household must respect all the decisions which are taken by male member because in patrilineal society power of decision-making is in the hands of males. Some female respondents said that:

“Man is like God and nobody can be equal to a God”.

“Females have no power of decision-making of any kind in the house”.

“Most of the decisions in the house are taken by men because women are considered incapable of making them”.

These field voices clearly reflect that males are considered as heads of the families and chief decision makers. On the other hand, the role of females in this context is insignificant.

It has been observed that economic factor plays a significant role in this regard. It is a well-established fact that if a female has greater economic participation, she would have greater power of decision-making in household (Acharya and Benett, 1981). It has been found that most of the male respondents who say about their wives' involvement in decision-making are the ones whose wives are earning hands. Those females are the source of income for the household. As a result,

these females have relatively high involvement in decision-making as compared to other housewives. Relatively low access of females to employment, wealth and income has a negative effect in

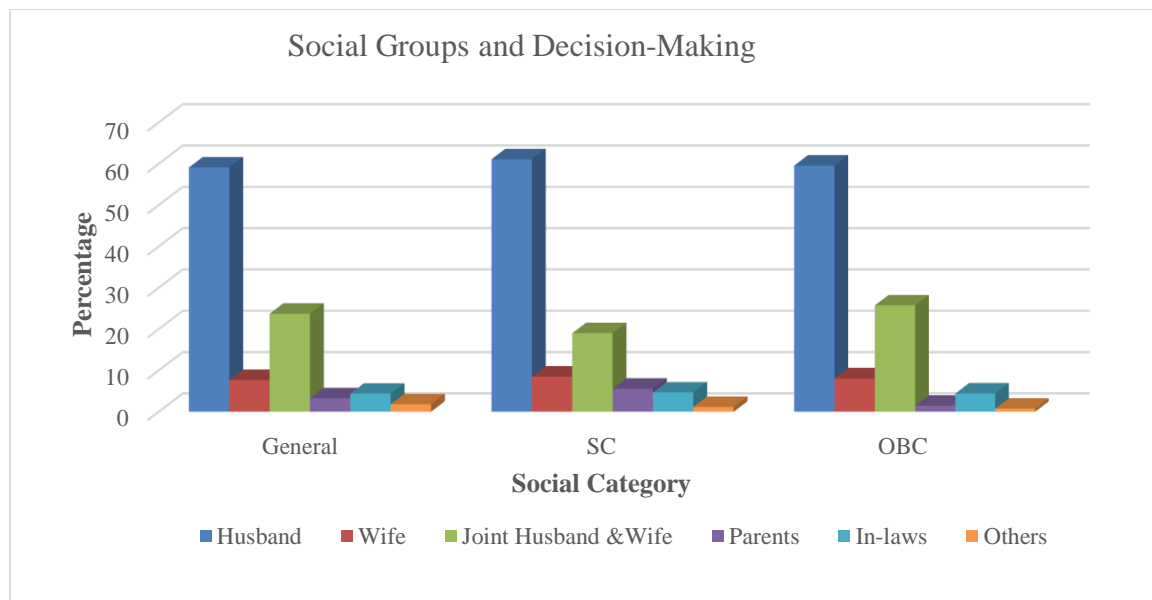
this regard (Ghimire, 2009). It has been observed that if females contribute economically, then they gain more power in decisions making in family matters.

Table 2: Social Groups and Decision-Making (Percentage)

| Social Group | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| General | 59.12 | 7.66 | 23.72 | 3.28 | 4.38 | 1.82 |
| SC | 61.11 | 8.48 | 19.01 | 5.56 | 4.68 | 1.17 |
| OBC | 59.56 | 8.09 | 25.74 | 1.47 | 4.41 | 0.74 |
| Total | 60.11 | 8.11 | 21.94 | 3.99 | 4.52 | 1.33 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Figure 2



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 3: Decision-Making in Rural and Urban Areas (Percentage)

| Gender | Area | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
|--------|-------|---------|-------|----------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Male | Rural | 70.83 | 3.41 | 19.32 | 5.68 | 0 | 0.53 |
| | Urban | 57.14 | 1.79 | 30.36 | 10.71 | 0 | 0 |
| Female | Rural | 57.95 | 12.12 | 18.94 | 0.76 | 8.33 | 1.89 |
| | Urban | 42.86 | 16.07 | 26.79 | 0.89 | 10.71 | 2.68 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Among all the males and females respondents of rural and urban *Malwa*, about 70.83 percent of males and 57.95 percent females in rural areas and 57.14 percent of males and 42.86 percent of females in urban areas responded that family decisions are mainly made by the husbands closely followed by both husband-and-wife (Table 3).

It is significant to mention here that male respondents give more preference to their parents than their wives to take decisions in both the rural and the urban areas. It has been observed that there is a greater difference in rural and urban areas as responses given by both males and females regarding decision-making. It is very clear from the analysis that in both the areas, involvement of females in decision-making in family is comparatively very low. No doubt the male supremacy still overhead on females in every sphere of life including decision-making. Patriarchal norms are comparatively more entrenched in the rural areas than that of its urban counterparts. Female work participation and employment opportunities are very low in rural areas. Areas with low economic participation of females reported relatively low decision-making power of females. Due to high literacy and more job opportunities the females of urban areas have comparatively more exposure to

outside activities and are more aware about their rights. Areas with high economic participation of females recorded relatively high decision-making power. In addition to it, female literacy rate is relatively low in rural areas than that of urban areas which ultimately affects the decision-making power of rural females. Females of rural areas are relatively less aware about their rights, consequently, it leads to concentration of decision-making power in the hands of rural males. In Punjabi culture, when parents get their daughters married, they advise them not to participate in family decisions. They just have to say yes. Such cultural and social constraints are also responsible for reducing female's participation in domestic decision-making.

Gender Disparities in Decision-Making for Expenditure on Marriages and other Ceremonies:

The person who manages and controls the expenditure power in the family holds an important position in making the main decisions about it. Disparities have been vary by gender, social groups and rural-urban areas. Table 4 reveals that 62 husbands managed the family budget followed by both husband and wife (29.80 percent), their parents (4.80 percent), their wives (3.20 percent) and others (0.30 percent).

**Table 4: Decision-Making for Expenditure on Marriages and other Ceremonies
(Percentage)**

| District/Region | Male | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
| Patiala | 64.90 | 4.30 | 24.50 | 5.30 | 0 | 1.10 |
| Mansa | 70.20 | 2.10 | 18.10 | 9.60 | 0 | 0 |
| Rupnagar | 66.00 | 4.30 | 30.90 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Firozpur | 46.80 | 3.20 | 45.70 | 4.30 | 0 | 0 |
| Malwa | 62.00 | 3.20 | 29.80 | 4.80 | 0 | 0.30 |
| | Female | | | | | |
| | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
| Patiala | 53.20 | 17.00 | 23.40 | 1.10 | 3.20 | 2.10 |
| Mansa | 53.20 | 6.40 | 22.30 | 1.10 | 10.60 | 6.40 |
| Rupnagar | 40.40 | 19.10 | 34.00 | 1.10 | 4.30 | 1.10 |
| Firozpur | 59.60 | 9.60 | 17.00 | 1.10 | 12.80 | 0 |
| Malwa | 51.60 | 13.00 | 24.20 | 1.10 | 7.70 | 2.40 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Males are ahead (70.20 percent) in decision-making about expenditure in family functions in Mansa followed by Rupnagar (66 percent), Patiala (64.90 percent) and Firozpur (46.80 percent). Whereas 59.60 percent females from Firozpur district opine that decisions to how to spend money on ceremonies are taken by their husbands, followed by Patiala and Mansa (53.20 percent) and Rupnagar (40.40 percent) as well (Table 4). Only 17 percent joint (both husband and wife) decision-making has been observed in Firozpur. Another significant aspect of the present study is that the participation of parents of husbands is

relatively high than that of their wives. It has been observed that traditional social norms of feudal system still prevail in the region. Consequently, more preference is given to their parents. Few of the male respondents say:

“How much to spend on weddings and other ceremonies is in the hands of man, if the women of the house start doing all this, then consider the house is ruined”.

“If the father is present in the house and the female of the house tells him how and where to spend, then the men is considered as effeminate”.

Generally, such socio-cultural norms are common in semi-arid tracts and

areas adjoining the international border with Pakistan. Relatively low female work participation rate, high levels of patriarchy, relatively low levels of female education and literacy rate are the prominent factors in these areas which affects negatively on decision-making power of females.

Husbands are ahead by recording relatively high percentage (59.06) among the SCs followed by general (55.84), and OBCs (52.94). Whereas only 8.82 percent

OBCs, 8.77 percent SCs and 6.93 percent of general category showed decision-making power in the hands of wives only. According to the field observation among the OBC category, joint decision-making is common as compared to rest of the two categories. Participation in the process of decision-making of in-laws, parents and others is less than five percent in all three social groups.

Table 5: Social Groups and Decision-Making about Expenditure on Marriages and other Ceremonies (Percentage)

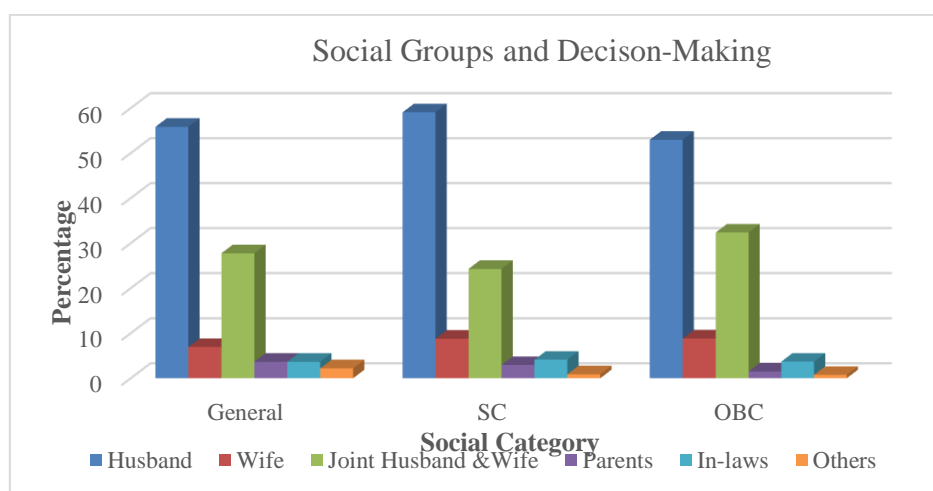
| Social Group | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| General | 55.84 | 6.93 | 27.74 | 3.65 | 3.65 | 2.19 |
| SC | 59.06 | 8.77 | 24.27 | 2.92 | 4.09 | 0.88 |
| OBC | 52.94 | 8.82 | 32.35 | 1.47 | 3.68 | 0.74 |
| Total | 56.78 | 8.11 | 26.99 | 2.93 | 3.86 | 1.33 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

According to the male respondents among the ruralites 66.67 percent decision-making power is in the hands of husbands. Whereas 27.27 percent decisions are made

jointly by husbands and wives. Only 3.41 percent wives, 2.27 percent parents and 0.38 percent others register their involvement in this regard.

Figure 4



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 6: Gender and Area-wise Decision-Making about Expenditure on Marriages and other Ceremonies (Percentage)

| Gender | Area | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Parents | In-laws | Others |
|--------|-------|---------|-------|----------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| Male | Rural | 66.67 | 3.41 | 27.27 | 2.27 | 0 | 0.38 |
| | Urban | 50.89 | 2.68 | 35.71 | 10.71 | 0 | 0 |
| Female | Rural | 57.20 | 11.36 | 20.83 | 1.14 | 7.20 | 2.27 |
| | Urban | 38.39 | 16.96 | 32.14 | 0.89 | 8.93 | 2.68 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

According to the male respondents among the ruralites 66.67 percent decision-making power is in the hands of husbands. Whereas 27.27 percent decisions are made jointly by husbands and wives. Only 3.41 percent wives, 2.27 percent parents and 0.38 percent others register their involvement in this regard. Whereas 57.20 percent the female respondents of rural areas accepted that decision power in this regard is in the hands of husbands only followed by joint husband and wife (20.83 percent), wife (11.36 percent), in-laws (7.30 percent), others (2.27 percent) and parents (1.14 percent) (Table 6). Males have more power to take decisions related to expenditure on marriage and other ceremonies as compared to females in the rural *Malwa*.

Among the urbanites, more than half of the male respondents stated that husband take all the decisions in this respect while 38.39 percent female respondents said the same. Males are

having dominant position to take these decisions than that of females even in the urban areas.

Dominance of males in decision-making regarding expenditure on family functions is significantly high in rural areas as compared to urban counterparts. Rural females are more dependent on males than that of urban females due to patriarchal norms of male dominated society. Economic reliability of females is significantly very low in rural areas. Majority of females in urban areas generally contribute to family income. It ultimately leads to rural-urban disparity in decision-making regarding financial matters in the study area.

Disparities in Decision-Making about Visits of Wives to their Parental House:

About 62.50 percent decision about the visits of their wives to parental house are made by the husbands, closely followed by joint husbands and wives (28.70 percent). Only 4.50 percent male

respondents told that their wives made decisions regarding their visits to parental house. Mansa district is ahead of all by recording 70.20 percent male decision makers, followed by Rupnagar (66.00 percent), Patiala (62.80 percent) and Firozpur (51.10 percent) in this regard. However, about 42.60 percent male respondents of Firozpur stated that they, both husband and wife, take decisions in this regard. It is worthwhile to mention here that the percentage of male respondents is very low who give freedom to their wives to take decision in this matter.

On the other hand, overall among all the female respondents, about 46.50 percent stated that generally their husbands take decisions in this respect, followed by jointly husband and wife (31.40 percent),

wife (16.00 percent) and someone else (6.10 percent). Firozpur district is ahead regarding males decision-making by recording 51.10 percent, followed by Patiala (48.90 percent), Mansa (47.90 percent) and Rupnagar (39.40 percent). Out of all the female respondents, the highest number of female respondents (37.20 percent) told that both husband and wife take decisions in this regard belong to Firozpur, while the lowest percentage (23.40 percent) of female respondents belong to Patiala. It has been noted that the number of female respondents is relatively low who said that they themselves take decisions about visits to their parental house. Mansa lags behind in this regard by indicating the lowest percentage (3.20) than that of other selected areas (Table 7).

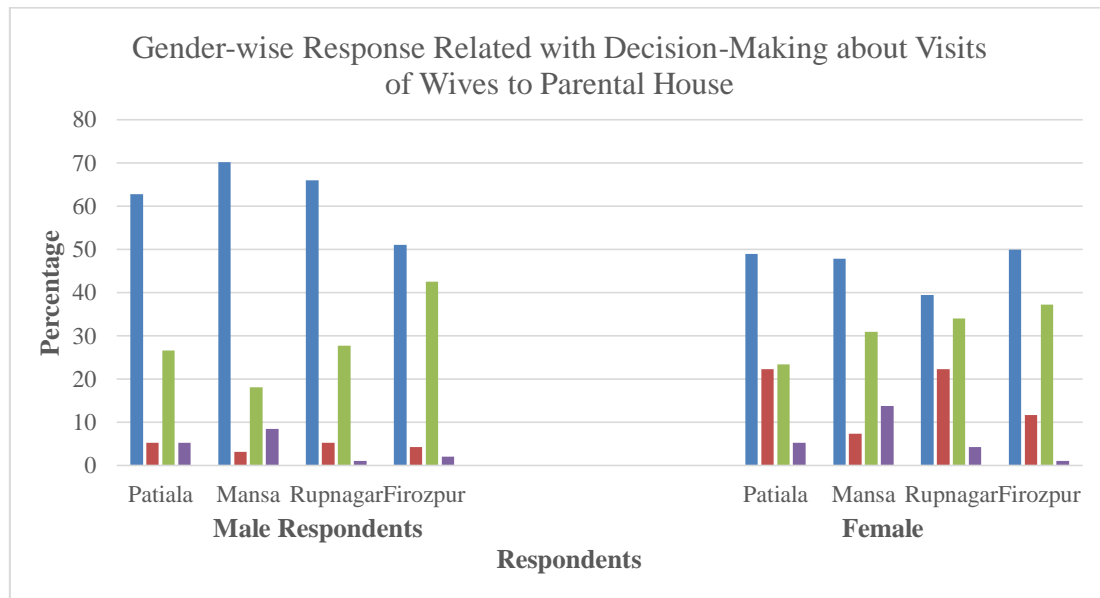
Table 7: Gender-wise Decision-Making about Visits of Wives to Parental House (Percentage)

| District/Region | Male | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| | Himself | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Someone else |
| Patiala | 62.80 | 5.30 | 26.60 | 5.30 |
| Mansa | 70.20 | 3.20 | 18.10 | 8.50 |
| Rupnagar | 66.00 | 5.30 | 27.70 | 1.10 |
| Firozpur | 51.10 | 4.30 | 42.60 | 2.10 |
| Malwa | 62.50 | 4.50 | 28.70 | 4.30 |
| | Female | | | |
| | Herself | Husband | Joint Husband & Wife | Someone else |
| Patiala | 22.30 | 48.90 | 23.40 | 5.30 |
| Mansa | 7.40 | 47.90 | 30.90 | 13.80 |
| Rupnagar | 22.30 | 39.40 | 34.00 | 4.30 |
| Firozpur | 11.70 | 50.00 | 37.20 | 1.10 |
| Malwa | 16.00 | 46.50 | 31.40 | 6.10 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

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Figure 5



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

It is very significant to mention here that the authority of husbands in decision-making regarding visits of their wives to parental house is considerably very high in Malwa region. Some female respondents said in this regard:

“Going to own parents’ house without informing the husband is unthinkable, even if you want to go to someone’s house or shop in the village, you have to inform your husband”.

“If I want to visit my parents, my husband would decide the day and time to go”.

“Both my husband and I consult each other about this matter, but since my husband is the owner of the house, so the final decision rests with him”.

It is crystal clear from the field voices that a male member has full authority over his wife. Usually everything comes under his control. If she has to go then her husband would decide when and for how many days she can go. This is a disguised patriarchy of which majority of females in Malwa region suffer.

Table 8: Social Groups and Decision-Making about Visits of Wives to Parental House (Percentage)

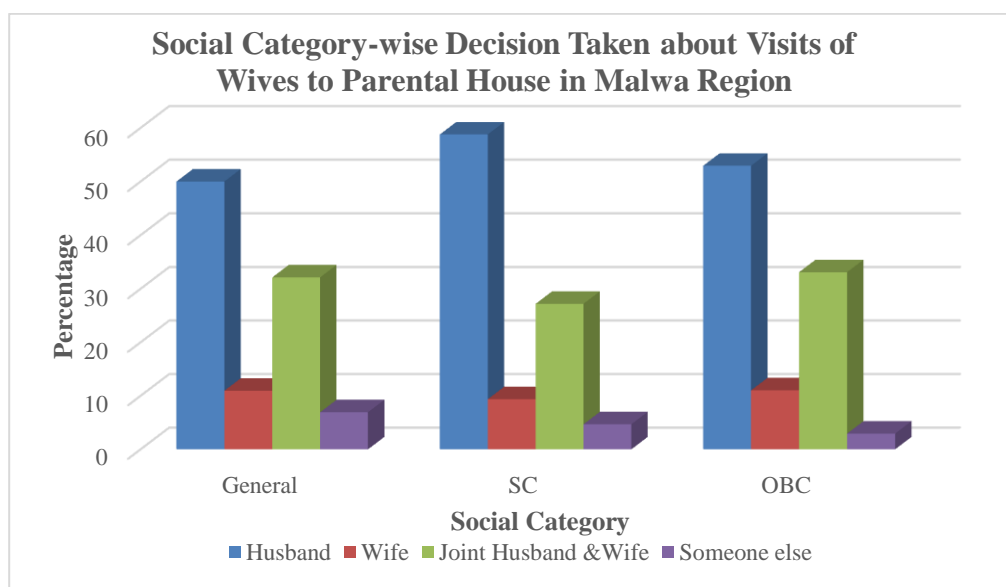
| Social Group | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Someone else |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| General | 50.00 | 10.95 | 32.12 | 6.93 |
| SC | 58.77 | 9.36 | 27.19 | 4.68 |
| OBC | 52.94 | 11.03 | 33.09 | 2.94 |
| Total | 54.52 | 10.24 | 30.05 | 5.19 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Decision-making power about visits to parental house varies from one social group to another. In case of general category, half the respondents show that husbands take decision about visits of their

wives to their parental house followed by joint husband and wife (32.12 percent), wife (10.95 percent) and someone else (6.93 percent) (Table 8 and Figure 6).

Figure 6



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

In case of SC category, about 58.77 percent respondents said that mostly husbands take final decision in this regard followed by joint husband and wife (27.19 percent), wife (9.36 percent) and someone else (4.68 percent). Among the OBCs, more than half of the respondents stated that the husbands take decision in this respect. About one-third respondents of

this category responded that both husband and wife take decision about it. It has been observed that SC males have more power of decision-making about the visits of their wives to parental house as compared to other social groups. Broadly, it has been found that usually males of every social group decide how and when their wives can visit their parental house.

Table 9: Decision-Making about Visits of Wives to Parental House in Rural and Urban Malwa (Percentage)

| Gender | Area | Husband | Wife | Joint Husband & Wife | Someone else |
|--------|-------|---------|-------|----------------------|--------------|
| Male | Rural | 65.91 | 5.30 | 26.51 | 2.27 |
| | Urban | 54.46 | 2.68 | 33.93 | 8.93 |
| Female | Rural | 52.27 | 14.39 | 28.03 | 5.30 |
| | Urban | 33.04 | 19.64 | 39.29 | 8.04 |

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

In rural *Malwa*, the highest number of male respondents (65.91 percent) said that decision about visits of wives to their parental house is usually made by husbands followed by joint husband and wife (26.51 percent), wife (5.30 percent) and someone else (2.27 percent). Whereas female respondents (52.27 percent) of rural areas told that the decision power in this respect is in the hands of husbands only followed by both husband and wife (28.03 percent), wife (14.39 percent) and someone else (5.30 percent) (Table 9). It is pertinent to note that rural males possess relatively high decision-making power regarding visits of their wives to parental house than that of rural females.

Majority of the urban male respondents (54.46 percent) stated that decision about visits of wives to their parental house is taken by the husbands only while very less (2.68 percent) of male respondents said that their wives take decision in this regard. Among the urban female respondents, about one-third said that mostly the husband make decision in this regard. About 39.29 percent female respondents of urban areas responded that both husband and wife take decision in this respect followed by wife (19.64 percent) and someone else (8.04 percent).

It has been found that rural males are more possessive in this regard than the urban males. Similarly, urban females have slightly more freedom in this regard than the rural females. The prevalence of

complex and deep-rooted male domination in the rural society affect the decision-making. The fear of physical violence among the females stop them to raise their voice against their right. Relatively low awareness level among the rural females is also responsible for it.

In addition to it, relatively low literacy and educational levels, low work participation rate, less job opportunities for females, the prevalence of patriarchy, fear of physical violence and low awareness among females are major factors for gender disparity in domestic decision-making in *Malwa* region of Punjab.

Findings:

Study reveals that there are differentials (gender and spatial) in domestic decision-making in *Malwa* region of Punjab. It has been observed that males have relatively high power in decision-making as compared to females. It has been noted that among all the selected areas, Mansa district recorded relatively high gender disparity in this regard. Many socio-economic and cultural factors are responsible in this respect. The present study also points out that the domination of husband in family decisions is relatively high among SCs than that of general and OBCs. It has also been found that the dominance of males in decision-making process in all aspects is significantly high in rural *Malwa* as compared to its urban counterparts.

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