

Women Empowerment in Decision Making at Household Activities: A Case Study on Dashkahunia and Verchi

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ABSTRACT

The main motive of this study is to know the participation of women in decision making at household activities and how their participation contribute to women empowerment. The study was conducted to measure the contribution of women to their household activities in decision making process. The study was carried out two villages of Keshabpur upazila of Jessore zilla. Necessary data were collected from the predetermined standard questionnaire by personal interviewing of both of men and women of the family. The results of the study showed that the pattern of women's empowerment at household activities has been changed day by day. The study will help to know the real participation of women in decision making at household activities. This study is also the manifest of how women empowerment is improving in rural areas like, Verchi and Dashkahuni. The study was guided by some objectives: To determine the present conditions of women's empowerment in rural areas like Dashkahunia and Verchi, to identify the participation rate in decision making process at household activities and how can be improved their participation in decision making process. The target population for the study comprises 55.

Keywords: Women empowerment, household activities, decision making power.

INTRODUCTION

Women empowerment means giving permissible power to carry out the particular tasks like engagement in political activities, national and international policy and development related activities etc. Countries economical progresses are largely depend on women empowerment. It is suggested that the empowerment of women is largely depending on the gender based affiliation, different programs, schedules which are related to women empowerment. In addition to empowerment of women will help to enhance the social, economical and political progress across the local and national levels. Empowering women is a precondition for achieving economic growth and secure peace and harmony in the society. It also helps to arrange the institutional development and reduce poverty from their community. Women empowerment is important in the women policy priorities at decision making process and leadership for peace building in a society. In addition to it helps to reduce poverty

through collaborative decision on developmental activities in national and local priorities. It is acknowledged that if women are empowered they can contribute to the overall health and productivity and policy making for their families, communities and the whole nations. Gender equality is the requirement of equal participation of women and men in decision making about social problems as well as local and national developmental activities.

To ensure the proper participation of women and expressed their personal opinion our constitution has approved that man and women are equal in performing their activities. The preconditions of successful development basically depends on the fascination and obligation of members of the society, especially women, men, and youths. Every group, regardless of creed, class or sex, ought to have play an important role in the development of the country. The degree of cooperation and participation of members depends upon the quality and institutional knowledge of people

which encourage the awareness of their needs and how they are empowered to meet the needs. Bangladesh government has taken recent initiatives to develop the women participation in different developmental activities. It is regarded that a large number of women are not aware about their rights and they could not claim their demand. There has been a tendency to depend on their husband incomes. Generally women accomplish a lot of work but there has no mechanisms to recognition their works. A few days ago the activities of women are frequently neglected in the field of economic, trade and local and national development policies and planning because of socio-historical patterns and gender based inequalities. The present government has taken a numerous national and international initiatives to empower women in economically, socio-culturally, legally, politically and psychologically. This study, therefore, sought to bridge this gap by examining the influence of women's empowerment on their decision making roles among the villagers of Dashkahunia and Verchi. Empowerment of women should be started from the household activities through the participation in decision making process. But in a male dominated society like our country women are not allowed to take the decision even in household activities whereas women have contributed more.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are few number of literature have been found but no literature is directly connection Women Empowerment in Decision Making at Household Activities. 'Contribution of women to household income and decision making in some selected areas of Mymensingh in Bangladesh' conducted Roy, K.P, Haque, S., Jannat, A., Ali, M. Khan, Ms (2017) showed that the pattern of contribution has been changed because of women participating in income generating activities like crops production, post harvest activities, poultry rearing and management of domestic animals and fisheries. 'Women's autonomy in household decision making: a demographic study in Nepal' was conducted by Acharya, R.D., B.S, Jacqueline., Simkhada, P., Tejligen, E.R, Promod, R.R (2010) this article showed that women empowerment is largely depends on their employment, number of living children and their age. This article also shows that education of women is largely influence of household decision making. 'The role of women in household Decision making and their contribution to agriculture and rural development in Nigeria' was conducted by Baba, B. I, Rajeani, Z.M, Hussayn, U.I, Sanni,

N.A (2015) this article stated that the role of women in household was minimal. Previously women have no contribution on their family matters. But now days they have contributed a lot in production sector like agriculture and small business firms. Women performs very crucial role in domestic and national economic sectors. 'Women's Contribution to household Food and Economic Security: A Study in the Garhwal Himalayas India' was conducted by Shiv, N.S., Sharmistha, B (2011) showed that previously women work are non market household activities but today they are engaged in paid market activities. They are the part of income source of their particular family. So they imposed their positive decision to their family matters. They can contribute from the out of indoor and participate in the formal economy. 'Women's involvement in household decision- making and strengthening social capital- crucial factors for child survival in Ethiopia' was conducted by Fantahun, M. Berhane, Y., Wall, S., Byass, P., Hogberg, U (2007) showed that women literacy has influenced more in decision making as well as their social capital and economic status has the strongest and iconic player in the influential matters of household decision making. They emphasis on equal weight on all component of household decision making that means ensure equal participation of man and women at any decisions. 'Women's participation in household decision – making and higher dietary diversity: findings from nationally representative data from Ghana' was conducted by Dicson, A.A., Anna, L., Elizabeth, M. K., Blessing, M. (2016) stated that women empowerment has ensured through the power of purchasing the quality food for their family members and ensure of women nutrition that improve the women decision making power. High levels of education help to choose the quality food for their children. 'Women's decision – making in rural and urban households in Nicaragua: the influence of income and ideology' was conducted by Bradshaw, S (2013) stated that only the women who can involve in income generating activities are largely influenced their family decision making as well as their fertility. But this study showed that only urban women can more focus on decision making in compare to rural women. Because there are few opportunity for rural women in the involvement of income generating activities and contribute their family in the crisis time. 'Gender equality and women's empowerment' conducted by Kabeer, N (2003) argued that gender equality and women empowerment can be ensured through access to education, access to paid work, and political representation of women. By acquiring

those qualities women have a power to influence the men in their family and contribute in the decision making process.

Methodology

The study is based on both literature review and questionnaire survey. The researchers have collected some secondary data from different books, online resources, research papers, journals, magazines as well as daily and quarterly newspapers, informal interviews, content analysis.

Women Empowerment in Dashkahunia and Verchi

Our working areas were two villages named Dashkahunia and Verchi in Keshabpur upazila of Jessore zilla. These are rural areas where people are not aware of women rights because most of the people are lack of taking the fruits of basic education. As a result majority percent of women are working as a housewife. They do only household chores and involvement in the non- formal economical activities. But situation is changing day by day. Women come out of home and involve themselves in economic activities as well as local and national policy making programs. Besides they are more aware about their rights. Education is the main instrument which makes them more conscious about their individual right. A few number of women are involve in economic activities but the portions are very little. As their economic condition is very poor, they have to depend on husband incomes for their daily expenditures. They take care of their family and do everything for the sake of their family, yet they are not allowed to take decision even in family matters. Women perform different tasks depending on their socio- economic structure, number of members in the family, the nature of professions. Government took different programs in these areas to make women more conscious about their rights and responsibilities and introduce different income generating activities where they participate and earned money which is ultimately helps their families. Social media, Non-government organizations are working for improvement of women empowerment.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Men and women are an essential resources for the development of all nations and societies. Women have been playing a key role, not only in the improvement of family welfare, but also in the national development of social, economical, political, and cultural environments. However the role and social status of women in the past were limited by tradition, law,

religion, and restriction of male dominated attitudes etc. Therefore, women have less opportunity to play their role in the society in comparison to men. The role of women and men in the relationship pattern of decision - making in the family, are determined based on the gender status of men and women. The decision-making in family is one of the ways of the female empowerment. Participation in decision-making process in household matters considers that a female is accounted for in the family. In all societies, the issue of women's participation and how they participate economically, socially and culturally is considered to be important. Family decision-making has changed over the last several decades. Changing roles of women, increasing women's education, and increasing participation of women. We had selected 30 female respondents and 25 male respondents for our study. Some were educated and some were illiterate. Even there were few women who think that women are not capable to take the right decision only men can do it. It is acknowledged that women are capable to do any tasks but it is regret that a few numbers of women have got the chance to take the right decision. They claim that the participation is poor because of slavery mind of male dominated society, lack of women in pursuing the basic education, lack of consciousness, lack of women freedom in participating household decision making process, economical dependency on husband incomes, and spread the superstition of religious matters. We asked a respondents named Ruma Khatun who is 26 years old that 'what does she think women can take the right decision?' Her answer surprised us. She answered that- Women can take right decision but they shouldn't do it" just because she thinks that men are only responsible to take decision and if she does it over her husband it'll be a big sin according to his religion. In addition to this matter religion is a big factor which is working as a great hindrance to women empowerment. Male respondents gave positive feedback on women empowerment especially in well educated men. They inspire their female family members to participate in decision making process. Even they discussed with their wives when a decision is to be made and took their opinion. They said that women empowerment is improving but slowly because of women illiteracy. At the same time some respondents said that a few number of male have a tendency to over dominate their female members but the number is very poor. We were thinking that women empowerment will be very poor in the remote area like Verchi and Dashkahunia. But

after the investigation the conception was changed and we realised that it was completely wrong prediction. Nowadays the contributions of women are improving and too much impressive. Women empowerment is incredibly increasing by educating themselves and getting more conscious about on their family as well as local and national matters. Women contributed their household decision making through participating different government and nongovernmental training programs which stimulates the large number of women engagement in decision making process. Major portion of male have created the space for their women to express their opinion about the betterment of their family matters. It is interesting to the fact that previously only the women whose are involving in income generating activities, they can participate in decision making process but the picture has changed in the recent time. Most of the female are concerns about the women empowerment through participating in political, social, and cultural activities. The perception of male dominated culture has been changed day by day. Male members of family encourage their female members to take the basic vocational education which help them to know how to participate in domestic and national level decision making process.

Data Obtained from Female

Distribution of Respondents by Age

The age distributions of the thirty (30) respondents were as follows:

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	7	23.33%
31-40	12	40%
41-50	7	23.33%
51+	4	13.24%
Total	30	100%

From the above Table- it has been found that large number of the respondents (23.33 %) fall in the age group 21-30 and the least (13.24%) of them fall into age group 51+ . And then 40 % fall into age group 31-40 and 23.33% fall into age group 41-50. Age group reveal that large amount of the respondents were young people.

Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

The occupational status of the respondents was as follows:

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	6	20%
Teacher	5	16.66%
Home Business	5	16.66%
House Wife	14	46.67%
Total	30	100%

From the above statement, here we can see that the large number of the respondents (46.67%) are engaged in house wife. 20 % of respondents are student, 16.66% are teachers and rest of 16.66% are engaged in home business. It is clear to us that most of the female members in research areas doing the household activities for ensure the happiness for their family members. Respondents said that there are many reasons why they cannot participate in household decision making. They stated some reasons like they only do in general activities in house like cooking, child producing etc but most of the respondent said that this is not enough to participate in such decision making process. Some respondents blame the male dominant societies because most of the male are reluctant to engage the women in household activities.

Distribution of Respondents by Education Level

Education is the backbone of any nation. It helps to identify which is better or not. But it is bitter truth that a large numbers of female doesn't know how to read and write. It is acknowledging that education broadens the mind set and helps to take the right decision. The education levels of the respondents were as follows:

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
PSC	4	13.33%
JSC/JDC	17	56.67%
SSC	6	20%
HSC	3	10%
Total	30	100%

From this above figure we have found a large number of 56.67% respondents were passed JSC level and 20% respondents were passed SSC level. And rest of the respondent which 13.33% were passed PSC and 10% were passed HSC level. It is clear of us that most of the female are not well educated.

Conception about Women Empowerment

This was the first question of our research to know the conception about women empowerment. It is interesting to the fact that most of them are aware the terminology of women empowerment. But very little number of respondents are not aware the term.

Conception about women empowerment the respondents were as follows:

Conception about WE	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	70%
No	9	30%
Total	30	100%

From the above statement, it has shown that most of the respondents responded (70%) “Yes” and rest of the respondents responded (30%) “No”. Most of them are concern about the women empowerment. The respondents believed that women participation is important to make a fruitful household decision. Respondents stated that the culture has been changed day by day and they believed that women are part and parcel of families. A large number of respondents stated that only male’s sole decision making pattern has been changed because of taking proper and ethical education. At the same time little number of respondent are not concern about women participation. They believed that male is responsible for taking any kind of decision through applying their proper knowledge.

Necessity to Participate Both of Men & Women

This was another question to know the necessity of women participation in household decision making activities. In that question they confirmed that women participation is necessary to boost up their family condition.

Necessary to Participate	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	17	56.67%
No	13	43.33%
Total	30	100%

This table showed that (56.67%) respondents answered “Yes” to necessary participate both men and women and rest of the respondents responded (43.33%) “No”. large number of respondent agreed that participation of women are important and they also state that before participating in decision making activities women education should be ensured. Because without being proper knowledge they feel shy to participate in decision making process. At the same time, respondent demand that government should play an important role by incorporating different empowerment related seminars, programs, and workshops which inspire the rural women to participate with the male people. Besides government, different non government organizations should be taken different schemes to train up the rural women to create awareness about the sustainable benefits of women participation in household activities. Respondents depicts that very recently different non government organizations have arranged different training programs and lending finance to rural women to continue their small business which actually creates a floor to participate in household decision with man.

Level of freedom to give their opinion

Level of freedom to give their proper opinion is basically depends on mind set of male dominated societies. Level of opinion are largely depends on their income.

Level of Freedom	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	3	10%
Agree	5	16.67%
Moderate	9	30%
Disagree	9	30%
Strongly Disagree	4	13.33%
Total	30	100%

From the above figure, it has been found most of the respondents (30%) opined “Disagree” with level of freedom. They think that, they have no right to give opinion always time. 30% respondents are “Moderate”. And rest of the respondents 10% “strongly agree” 16.67% agree and 13.33% “Strongly disagree”. The figure said that most of the male does not prefer to give them to express their opinion regarding this matter. Female respondents said that they are the parts of families but it regrets that most male think that their opinion is valueless for any decision making. Some respondent said that only the women who are engaging the income generating activities they can express their opinion in family decisions. The culture has been changed day by day.

Data Obtained from Male

Distribution of Respondents by Age

The age distributions of the twenty five (25) respondents were as follows:

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	6	24%
31-40	10	40%
41-50	5	20%
51+	4	16%
Total	25	100%

From the above Table, it has been found that most of the respondents (24 %) fall in the age group 21-30 and the least (16%) of them fall into age group 51+ . And then 40 % fall into age group 31-40 and 20% fall into age group 41-50. Age group revealed that most of the respondents were young community people.

Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	5	20%
Teacher	7	28%
Businessman	8	32%
Others	5	20%
Total	25	100%

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From the above statement, total number of respondents (20%) are engaged in students and rest 28 % of respondents are teachers, 32% are businessman and rest of 20% are engaged in others.

Distribution of Respondents by Education Level

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
PSC	3	12%
JSC/JDC	5	20%
SSC	6	24%
HSC	11	44%
Total	25	100%

From this table we have found those 44% respondents were passed HSC level and 24% respondent were passed SSC level. And rest of the respondent which 12% were passed PSC and 10% were passed JSC level.

Conception of Respondent about Women Empowerment

It is interesting to know that most of the male respondents are concern about women empowerment. They agree with the statement that women empowerment is possible only when women are concerned their rights. Women should more concern about their vocational education.

Conception about WE	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	21	84%
No	4	16%
Total	25	100%

From the above table, it has seen that most of the respondents responded (84%) "Yes" and rest of the respondents responded (16%) "No".

Participation should be Equal in Decision Making by Respondents

Participation in Decision Making	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	5	20%
Agree	9	36%
Moderate	5	20%
Disagree	4	16%
Strongly Disagree	2	8%
Total	25	100%

From the above table, it has been found most of the respondents (36%) opined "Agree" with equal level of participation in decision making. They think that, women have right to participate in decision making at household activities. As a result man should give the floor to engage women and respect their decision regarding the betterment of family condition. 20% respondents are "Moderate". And rest of the respondents 20% "strongly agree" 16% disagree and 8% "Strongly disagree" on that point some respondent argued

that women participation is not necessary for decision making. They thought women are only responsible for cooking and child producing and raring their child.

Inspiration by Male Members to increase Women Participation in Decision Making

Inspiration by Male Members	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	80%
No	5	20%
Total	25	100%

From the above table, it has seen that a large number of the respondents responded (80%) "Yes" that means they tries to inspire women for participating in decision making and rest of the respondents responded (16%) "No". Most of the male participants stated that they tries to inspire the women to participate in their household decision making process. They encourage their female members to take the proper education which helps them to learn the mechanisms to participate at family matters. Male respondent state that government should play important role through providing vocational educations and taught them how to participate in male dominated societies. Male members should create an open floor for women to participation on different government and non government organization programs, workshops and seminars etc.

Strong Economic Condition Increases the Women Participation in Decision Making

Economic Condition in Decision Making	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	9	36%
Agree	10	40%
Moderate	5	20%
Disagree	1	4%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%
Total	25	100%

From the above table, it has been found most of the respondents (40%) opined "Agree" with level of economic condition in decision making. They think that, economic condition can increase decision making. 20% respondents are "Moderate". And rest of the respondents 36% "strongly agree" 4% disagree.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Government should create proper vocational educational systems by arranging different programs, seminars, workshops, training programs;
- Male should change the dominate culture;

- Different financial institutions should come forward to providing their helping hand through financial supports to women to develop their small business;
- Social superstition should be changed on women participation in household decision making process;
- Awareness should be created on the importance of vocational education
- Spread out the benefits of women participation on household decision making activities;

CONCLUSION

The motions of development in any country mainly depend upon the people's participation including women. Women encompass half of the total population of the country. They can play a vital role in development of their family and nation. But in Bangladesh; the scenarios are different. Bangladesh is typical traditional Muslim country. For these reason, the status of women is domestic in nature. They have been measured as mild daughter, favourable wife and dependent mother. The remote area like Verchi and Dashkahunia these problems are strong. Basically, it has been thought that their (women) main responsibility is to maintain the household activities and give birth to the children and raise them. Women of Verchi and Dashkahunia had few choices to do economic activities. As they are cost-effectively dependent they are not able to take any decision even at the household activities. Mainly men are accountable to earn and only they can take any kind of decision. Though women take care all over household activities even they are not allowed to take the decision at household activities. Lower educational recommendation of women and more economical yearning deprived them of right of decision making. These problems work as cramps in empowering women of Verchi and Dashkahunia. Social obstacles and deeply religious beliefs are one of the main problems for empowering the women of Verchi and Dashkahunia.

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Citation: Md. Nasir Uddin, Rehanuma Tabasum, Md. Hashem Reza, "Women Empowerment in Decision Making at Household Activities: A Case Study on Dashkahunia and Verchi", *Journal of Public Administration*, 2(2), 2020, pp. 1-7.

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