



## **Changes in Decision Making Process and Authority in Families in Rural Punjab: A Comparative Study**

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### **Author's contribution**

*The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.*

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study was planned to find the changes occurring in rural family institution in Punjab and its major consequences. This study was done in Sangrur and Ludhiana district of Punjab to analyse the changes occurring in family institution and it was found that structure of family system have been significantly changed. The present study was conducted to assess the causes and consequences of changing family institution in two districts of Punjab by taking a sample of 320 respondents, with the following objectives: (i) To highlight the changes occurring in the family structure of rural areas, (ii) to pinpoint the factors responsible for the changes in rural families, (iii) to examine the social, economic, cultural and psychological impact of changing role of families. Respect of elders by children has declined significantly, as 84% of the respondent feel that their importance had been decreased in the family. Place of giving birth to child has also been changed from home (26%) to Hospital (74%) at two point of time. Agriculture has loosened its position of prime occupation preference among farm families in recent past. Only 8 per cent of the respondents prefer agriculture for their children. Socialization process of children have changed as 82% of the respondents said that children use more technology in 2015 while, 29% and 41% replied that children do not attend family conversation and do not perform household work respectively. The use of technology of various types has increased significantly in family life from 1990 to 2015. A notable finding of study showed a shift from individual (male) to collective decision with regard to various issues of families,

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particularly the education of children. Similarly there is a decline in performance of various traditional rituals. Increased show off culture (85%), impact of urbanization (64%), lack of job opportunities (79%), self centred attitudes of family members (76%), increase use of technology (85%) came out as main factors responsible for generating changes in the institution of family. Lack of patience among members, increasing problem of aged and children, increasing conflicts among families and changing types of families were major consequences. Adequate interaction in family to keep the emotional bonding, judicious use of technology, inculcating moral values among children and shunning the materialistic tendency were some of the suggestions given for smooth functioning of families in the rural areas.

*Keywords: Agriculture; families; decision; Punjab; India.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Family is one of the most fundamental and universal social institution of mankind. It is the family where social life of the person starts. Its form or feature may vary from society to society, but its presence is much needed for a smooth and stable society. Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture [1,2,3]. Family can also be defined as a unit of two or more persons united by marriage, blood, adoption, or consensual union, in general constituting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other [4]. Institution of family is said to be the pillar of mankind as well. Since time immemorial the family has been playing its role in preservice of human race and advancement of civilization by fulfilling its necessary requirements of human life. History and importance of family, as a social institution is as old as the human beings started living in tribes, communities and societies [5].

Till last quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the green revolution by and large society was traditional. But after the introduction of industrial era in India, family system also changed. There is a shift from agriculture to industry to great extent, therefore the ties which held together the joint family have been loosened [6]. Since the family has been the basic social institution of rural social world, it is natural to expect that the whole social organization of agriculture aggregates has been stamped by the characteristics of rural family. However due to variety of factors the institution of family has experienced lot of changes. Many studies are indicative that role, nature and structure of family is changing in our society [7].

There are some visible factors generating changes in the institution of family. Among these, important are technological changes, mass media, exposure to other cultures, increase in education, lack of family values in Indian families, emerging trend of working women, increase in technology use, increase in materialism, industrialization, urbanization, migration of population from villages to cities, general spread of education, especially among women (female literacy rate was 82.14 per cent in 2011 as compared to 54.16 per cent in 2001). Family so far being a divinely instituted "union of souls" is seen to be the product of series of material in modern times [8]. After perusal of literature of family, studies indicate that changes in the family are generating many social, cultural, psychological consequences on the society as a whole. Some other consequences, which should be considered as vital are changing authority system of family, emerging trend of working women, emergence of new types of family, increase in divorce rate, and domestic violence [9].

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in two districts of Punjab state. In order to achieve stipulated objectives multistage sampling procedure was adopted for selection of districts, blocks, villages and respondents. Ludhiana and Sangrur district of Punjab were purposively selected in this investigation. Ludhiana is one of the highly industrialized and urbanized district in the State of Punjab and hence taken for study as it may bear more influence on social institution. The Sangrur is comparatively less urbanized and mostly having a rural base, hence it was selected for present investigation. To meet the objective of study, one block far from the city and one block near to the city were selected to make this study representative. Following the above mention procedure, Ludhiana 1 and Machiwara blocks

were selected from Ludhiana district and Sunam and Dhuri blocks were selected from Sangrur district. From the selected blocks four villages each were selected for collection of data. At the final stage of sampling, from sampled villages of each block, 20 respondents were selected from each village randomly representing various sections of village society. So, 160 respondents from Sangrur and 160 respondents from Ludhiana district were selected for the present study making a grand total as 320 respondents. Efforts were made to collect data on changes occurring in family institution overtime. The responses from respondents were taken for two points of time i.e. 1990 and 2015. An interview schedule was prepared and used for collection of relevant data. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 6) software was used to analyse the data.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 Changes in Decision Making Authority of Family Regarding Education of Children**

Power and authority in traditional family stood generally in inverse relationship. Authority and decision making was based upon generation, sex and relative age [10]. The modern family is democratic based on equality between husband and wife, with consensus in making decision and with increasing participation by children as they grow older [11]. Keeping this in view, an effort was made to observe the changes that took place in decision making process of families in the year 1990 and 2015. Z value was calculated which shows that there is difference between the responses on the situation of year 1990 and situation of 2015. These responses were recorded by same respondents. As the respondents were aged persons so they were able to tell about the situation in 1990 and 2015 as well. Data presented in Table 1 revealed that 30.63 per cent of the respondents said the decision making authority regarding children education would be the husband only in the year 1990, while in the year 2015 about 47 per cent of the total respondents reported that collective decision by all family members was taken so far education of children is concerned. About 27 per cent of the sampled respondents reported that the parents were the decision making authority regarding education in the year 2015. About 8.13 per cent of the total respondents reported that children were free to take decision as an individual with respect to their education in the

family. It may be concluded that decision making authority has been changing significantly during the period 1990 to 2015. People believed in collective decision more extensively in the recent times than earlier. Parents were also emerged as important decision making authority in the recent years.

#### **3.2 Changes in Decision Making Authority Regarding Family Expenditure**

Decision regarding family expenditure affects all members of family. Table 2 showed that majority of the respondents (34.06 per cent) reported that husband was the main authority to take decision regarding family expenditure in the year 1990. Corresponding to this year, individual either wife (30.31 per cent), or husband (34.06 per cent) was the main decision making authority regarding family expenditure in 1990. However, in the year 2015, majority of the respondents (35.94 per cent) reported they take collective decision after discussing with all members. Nearly one-fourth of the total respondents (25.31 per cent) reported that husband and wife together was the decision making authority in year 2015. Hence, the people more believed in collective decision regarding family expenditure in recent years as compared to 1990.

#### **3.3 Changes in Decision Making Authority Regarding Profession of Children**

Agriculture has not been generating remunerative income in the recent years due to one or another reason in the Punjab state [12]. Therefore people engaged in agricultural profession preferred some other non-farm profession for their children. The information generated with respect to changes in decision making authority decided profession of children in the year 1990 to 2015 as given in Table 3. Data regarding this issue showed grandparents and parents were the main authority to decide profession of the children majority of respondents in the year 1990. This was reported by nearly 20 and 21 per cent of the total sampled respondents. On contrary to this, majority of the respondents (41.56 per cent) taking into consideration collective decision while deciding the profession of children in the year 2015. Children as an individual were also free to decide their profession in the year 2015, as this was reported by 24.69 per cent of the total respondents in the study area.

**Table 1. Distribution of respondents on the basis of changes in decision making authority of family regarding education of children, 1990 to 2015**

Decision making members	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	Z value
	Number	Number	
<b>Education</b>			
Only wife	10(3.13)	0(0.00)	42.16*
Only husband	98(30.63)	57(17.81)	6.83*
Both (husband, wife)	55(17.19)	0(0.00)	26.91*
Grand parents	10(3.13)	0(0.00)	42.16*
Parents	67(20.94)	87(27.19)	3.36*
Children	45(14.06)	26(8.13)	7.10*
Collective decision	35(10.94)	150(46.88)	16.01*

\*Significant at 1 % of level of significance  
 Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total

**Table 2. Distribution of respondents on the basis of changes in decision making authority regarding family expenditure**

Decision making members	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	Z value
	Number	Number	
<b>Family expenditure</b>			
Only husband	109(34.06)	14(4.38)	20.07*
Only wife	97(30.31)	25(7.81)	15.34*
Both (husband, wife)	23(7.19)	81(25.31)	14.56*
Grand parents	32(10.00)	35(10.94)	1.19
Children	26(8.13)	25(7.81)	0.53
Parents	5(1.56)	25(7.81)	19.02*
Collective decision	28(8.75)	115(35.94)	15.75*

\*Significant at 1 % of level of significance  
 Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total

**Table 3. Distribution of respondents on the basis of changes in decision making authority regarding profession of children**

Decision making members	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	Z value
	Number	Number	
<b>Profession of young children</b>			
Only husband	55(17.19)	10(3.13)	18.45*
Only wife	14(4.38)	28(8.75)	9.16*
Both (husband, wife)	35(10.94)	64(10.00)	7.66*
Grand parents	65(20.31)	45(4.06)	4.74*
Children	46(14.38)	15(24.69)	13.59*
Parents	67(20.94)	25(7.81)	11.97*
Collective decision	38(11.88)	133(41.56)	14.33*

\*Significant at 1 % of level of significance  
 Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total

### 3.4 Changes in Decision Making Authority for Agricultural Related Activities

Agriculture was the main occupation of farm families and right decision at right time with respect agriculture may enhance the agricultural production. Table 4 showed that husband as an

individual was the main decision making authority in the year 1990 and 2015, as reported by 35.31 and 30.63 per cent of the total respondents, respectively. Most of the decision with respect to agriculture decision was taken by male member of the family, and no significant changes were observed with regard to this issue.

**Table 4. Distribution of respondents on the basis of changes in decision making authority for agriculture decisions 1990 to 2015**

Decision making members	1990(n=320)	2015 (n=320)	Z value
	Number	Number	
<b>Agriculture decisions</b>			
Only husband	113(35.31)	98(30.63)	1.83 <sup>NS</sup>
Only wife	21(6.56)	16(5.00)	3.76*
Both (husband, wife)	43(13.44)	67(20.94)	5.69*
Grand parents	37(11.56)	45(14.06)	2.57**
Children	10(3.13)	12(3.75)	2.13**
Parents	41(12.81)	33(10.31)	2.16**
Collective decision	55(17.19)	49(15.31)	1.51 <sup>NS</sup>

\*Significant at 1 % of level of significance, \*\*Significant at 5% of levels of significance, Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total

### 3.5 Changes in Decision Making Authority in Marriage of Children

Marriage is said to be the major step in one's life and right decision in this regard would be very important decision. Table 5 indicated that elders in the family were the main authority to take decision regarding marriage of children in the year 1990. Majority of the respondents (21.56 per cent) reported that grandparents were the main authority to take decision of marriage of children in the year 1990, while about 31 per cent of the respondents reported that this decision was taken by husband and wife together in the year 2015. It was reflected from the data that husband as an individual was also an important authority of taking decision with regard to marriage of the children in the year 1990 as reported by 20.94 per cent of the total respondents, whereas 23.44 per cent of the sampled respondents reported that collective decision was taken into account with respect to marriage of the children in the year 2015.

### 3.6 Changes in Decision Making Authority in Buying and Selling of Land

Table 6 indicated that the decision regarding buying and selling of land was mainly taken by the male members of family in year 1990 as 35 per cent of the total respondents reported that only husband as an individual take care of buying and selling of land in this year. Only 11.25 per cent of the respondents reported that only husbands were the main decision making authority for buying and selling of land in the year in 2015. Corresponding to the year 2015, majority of the respondents (30.31 per cent) said that they take collective decision and 25.31 per cent of the respondents replied that both husband and wife took decision regarding buying and selling of land. Thus, there exist significant changes with respect to decision making authority with regard to buying and selling of land in the recent years.

**Table 5. Distribution of respondents on the basis of changes in decision making authority in marriage of children, 1990 to 2015**

Decision making members	1990(n=320)	2015 (n=320)	Z value
	Number	Number	
<b>Marriage of children</b>			
Only husband	67(20.94)	39(12.19)	6.89*
Only wife	10(3.13)	26(8.13)	12.40*
Both (husband, wife)	47(14.69)	99(30.94)	9.21*
Grand parents	69(21.56)	35(10.94)	8.54*
Children	35(10.94)	22(6.88)	6.12*
Parents	59(18.44)	24(7.50)	11.10*
Collective decision	33(10.31)	75(23.44)	10.14*

\*Significant at 1 % of level of significance  
Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total

**Table 6. Distribution of respondents on the basis of changes in decision making authority in buying and selling of land, 1990 to 2015**

Decision making members	1990(n=320)	2015 (n=320)	Z value
	Number	Number	
<b>Buying and selling of land decisions</b>			
Only husband	112(35.00)	36(11.25)	13.28*
Only wife	9(2.81)	26(8.13)	13.59*
Both (husband, wife)	23(7.19)	81(25.31)	14.56*
Grand parents	47(14.69)	20(6.25)	10.72*
Children	50(15.63)	25(7.81)	8.82*
Parents	44(13.75)	35(10.94)	3.01*
Collective decision	35(10.94)	97(30.31)	12.18*

\*Significant at 1 % of level of significance  
 Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total

**Table 7. Distribution of respondents on the basis of changes in decision making authority in household matters, 1990 to 2015**

Decision making members	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	Z value
	Number	Number	
<b>Household decisions</b>			
Only husband	110(34.38)	28(8.75)	15.39*
Only wife	33(10.31)	43(13.44)	3.48*
Both (husband, wife)	35(10.94)	78(24.38)	9.91*
Grand parents	52(16.25)	25(7.81)	9.26*
Children	45(14.06)	53(16.56)	2.14**
Parents	25(7.81)	35(10.94)	4.46*
Collective decision	20(6.25)	58(18.13)	12.86*

\*Significant at 1 % level of significance, \*\*Significant at 5% level of significance  
 Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total

### 3.7 Changes in Decision Making Authority in Household Matters

So far as household decision were concerned, the results presented in Table 7 revealed that 34.38 per cent of the total respondents reported that only husband took all major.

Decisions regarding households in the year 1990, however the trends has been changed in the year 2015 and most of the respondents i.e. 24.38 percent reported that all the important decision regarding households were taken by husband and wife together in this year. Children as an individual decision making authority, collective decision by all family members together were also emerged as another important decision making authority in the year 2015 and Z-test indicated the significant changes in this regards.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Family was still considered to be the prime institution but the problems and consequences of

changes have changed its value over period of time. Family is more becoming less important for its members. There are many factors which led to many changes in this prime institution. Introduction of technology, urbanization and industrialization has been said to be the main factors behind changes. These changes were on social, economical, psychological and even emotional role of family towards its members. Structure and functions performed by ancient family has changed significantly. But now its high time when the role of family needs to be checked. So people should give more time to their family and family members. On the basis of study some suggestions are made which may help to check the problems prevailing in family institution: As the study indicated that spending time with the children by parents is decreasing and consequently communicational gap is increasing. So, effort should be made by the parents to spend adequate time with their children to keep the emotional bonding alive and proper socialization. Usage of technological sources have increased to a great extent in families. These new entertainment sources have

replaced traditional entertainment sources. Family members should avoid excessive use of technological sources. Best way of inculcating moral values among children in education. So, there should be some educational programme or course at school or college level when teenagers are in forming years of life. Material possession and show off culture among the rural families is increasing day by day. This material dependency is creating many problems in family. So family members should avoid there materialistic and show off attitude in family. Studies also indicated that respect of elders by the younger is declining. So, the new generation should also sensitized to pay due respect to their elders. As the expenditure on marriage and death rituals are increasing substantially, there is need to follow a affordable way which could save the families of rural areas from entering into conflicts.

#### CONSENT

As per international standard informed and written participant consent has been collected and preserved by the authors

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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