

1 Changes in decision making process and authority in families in Rural Punjab: A  
2 comparative study

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6 **ABSTRACT**

7 Family is one of the most fundamental and universal social institution of mankind. It is the family  
8 where social life of the person starts. Its form or feature may vary from society to society, but its  
9 presence is much needed for a smooth and stable society. Family is a group of persons united by ties  
10 of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household interacting. But nowadays many  
11 changes are taking place in our family institution which is affecting other institutions as well. This  
12 study was planned to find the changes occurring in rural family institution in Punjab and its major  
13 consequences. This study was done in Sangrur and Ludhiana district of Punjab to analyse the changes  
14 occurring in family institution and it was found that structure of family system have been significantly  
15 changed. The present study was conducted to assess the causes and consequences of changing family  
16 institution in two districts of Punjab by taking a sample of 320 respondents, with the following  
17 objectives: (i) To highlight the changes occurring in the family structure of rural areas, (ii) to pinpoint  
18 the factors responsible for the changes in rural families, (iii) to examine the social, economic, cultural  
19 and psychological impact of changing role of families. Respect of elders by children has declined  
20 significantly, as 84% of the respondent feel that their importance had been decreased in the family.  
21 Place of giving birth to child has also been changed from home (26%) to Hospital (74%) at two point  
22 of time. Agriculture has loosened its position of prime occupation preference among farm families in  
23 recent past. Only 8 per cent of the respondents prefer agriculture for their children. Socialization  
24 process of children have changed as 82% of the respondents said that children use more technology in  
25 2015 while, 29% and 41% replied that children do not attend family conversation and do not perform  
26 household work respectively. The use of technology of various types has increased significantly in  
27 family life from 1990 to 2015. A notable finding of study showed a shift from individual (male) to  
28 collective decision with regard to various issues of families, particularly the education of children.  
29 Similarly there is a decline in performance of various traditional rituals. Increased show off culture  
30 (85%), impact of urbanization (64%), lack of job opportunities (79%), self centred attitudes of family  
31 members (76%), increase use of technology (85%) came out as main factors responsible for  
32 generating changes in the institution of family. Lack of patience among members, increasing problem  
33 of aged and children, increasing conflicts among families and changing types of families were major  
34 consequences. Adequate interaction in family to keep the emotional bonding, judicious use of  
35 technology, inculcating moral values among children and shunning the materialistic tendency were  
36 some of the suggestions given for smooth functioning of families in the rural areas.

37 Keywords:.....?

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38 **1. INTRODUCTION**

39 Family is one of the most fundamental and universal social institution of mankind. It is the family  
40 where social life of the person starts. Its form or feature may vary from society to society, but its  
41 presence is much needed for a smooth and stable society. Family is a group of persons united by ties  
42 of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household interacting and intercommunicating  
43 with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and  
44 daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture-[1, 2, 3](Krishna 2007, Burgess and Locke  
45 1953, Bell 1967). Family can also defined as a unit of two or more persons united by marriage, blood,  
46 adoption, or consensual union, in general consulting a single household, interacting and  
47 communicating with each other-[4](Rao, 2006). Institution of family is said to be the pillar of

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48 mankind as well. Since time immemorial the family has been playing its role in preservice of human  
49 race and advancement of civilization by fulfilling its necessary requirements of human life. History  
50 and importance of family, as a social institution is as old as the human beings started living in tribes,  
51 communities and societies [5](Shah 1973).

52 Till last quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century, before the green revolution by and large society was traditional. But  
53 after the introduction of industrial era in India, family system also changed. There is a shift from  
54 agriculture to industry to great extent, therefore the ties which held together the joint family have been  
55 loosened [6](Beteille 1964). Since the family has been the basic social institution of rural social  
56 world, it is natural to expect that the whole social organization of agriculture aggregates has been  
57 stamped by the characteristics of rural family. However due to variety of factors the institution of  
58 family has experienced lot of changes. Many studies are indicative that role, nature and structure of  
59 family is changing in our society [7](Mukharjee, 1979).

60 There are some visible factors generating changes in the institution of family. Among these, important  
61 are technological changes, mass media, exposure to other cultures, increase in education, lack of  
62 family values in Indian families, emerging trend of working women, increase in technology use,  
63 increase in materialism, industrialization, urbanization, migration of population from villages to cities,  
64 general spread of education, especially among women (female literacy rate was 82.14 per cent in  
65 2011 as compared to 54.16 per cent in 2001). Family so far being a divinely instituted “union of  
66 souls” is seen to be the product of series of material in modern times [8](Sonawat 2001). After  
67 perusal of literature of family, studies indicate that changes in the family are generating many social,  
68 cultural, psychological consequences on the society as a whole. Some other consequences, which  
69 should be considered as vital are changing authority system of family, emerging trend of working  
70 women, emergence of new types of family, increase in divorce rate, and domestic violence.

## 71 **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

72 **The present study was conducted in two districts of Punjab state.** In order to achieve stipulated  
73 objectives multistage sampling procedure was adopted for selection of districts, blocks, villages and  
74 respondents. Ludhiana and Sangrur district of Punjab were purposively selected in this investigation.  
75 Ludhiana is one of the highly industrialized and urbanized district in the State of Punjab and hence  
76 taken for study as it may bear more influence on social institution. The Sangrur is comparatively less  
77 urbanized and mostly having a rural base, hence it was selected for present investigation. To meet the  
78 objective of study, one block far from the city and one block near to the city were selected to make  
79 this study representative. Following the above mention procedure, Ludhiana [1] and Machiwara blocks  
80 were selected from Ludhiana district and Sunam and Dhuri blocks were selected from Sangrur  
81 district. From the selected blocks four villages each were selected for collection of data. At the final  
82 stage of sampling, from sampled villages of each block, 20 respondents were selected from each  
83 village randomly representing various sections of village society. So, 160 respondents from Sangrur  
84 and 160 respondents from Ludhiana district were selected for the present study making a grand total

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85 as 320 respondents. Efforts were made to collect data on changes occurring in family institution  
 86 overtime. The responses from respondents were taken for two points of time i.e. 1990 and 2015. An  
 87 interview schedule was prepared and used for collection of relevant data. SPSS software was used to  
 88 analyse the data.

**Comment [P6]:** What software did you use to analyze your data? and the version.

### 90 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 91 3.1 Changes in Decision Making Authority of Family Regarding Education of Children 92 Changes in decision making authority of family regarding education of children

93 Power and authority in traditional family stood generally in inverse relationship. Authority and  
 94 decision making was based upon generation, sex and relative age [9](Singh 1984). The modern family  
 95 is democratic based on equality between husband and wife, with consensus in making decision and  
 96 with increasing participation by children as they grow older [10](Ahuja 2002). Keeping this in view,  
 97 an effort was made to observe the changes that took place in decision making process of families in  
 98 the year 1990 and 2015. Z value was calculated which shows that there is difference between the  
 99 responses on the situation of year 1990 and situation of 2015. These responses were recorded by same  
 100 respondents. As the respondents were aged persons so they were able to tell about the situation in  
 101 1990 and 2015 as well. Data presented in Table 1 revealed that 30.63 per cent of the respondents said  
 102 the decision making authority regarding children education would be the husband only in the year  
 103 1990, while in the year 2015 about 47 per cent of the total respondents reported that collective  
 104 decision by all family members was taken so far education of children is concerned. About 27 per  
 105 cent of the sampled respondents reported that the parents were the decision making authority  
 106 regarding education in the year 2015. About 8.13 per cent of the total respondents reported that  
 107 children were free to take decision as an individual with respect to their education in the family. It  
 108 may be concluded that decision making authority has been changing significantly during the period  
 109 1990 to 2015. People believed in collective decision more extensively in the recent times than earlier.  
 110 Parents were also emerged as important decision making authority in the recent years.

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

	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
<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

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### 3.2 Changes in Decision Making Authority Regarding Family Expenditure Changes in decision making authority regarding family expenditure.

Decision regarding family expenditure affects all members of family. Table 2 shows 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.

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

	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
<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

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### 3.3 Changes in Decision Making Authority Regarding Profession of Children 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 [11](Kumar *et al* 2014). Therefore people engaged in agricultural

134 profession preferred some other non-farm profession for their children. The information generated  
135 with respect to changes in decision making authority decided profession of children in the year 1990  
136 to 2015 as given in Table 3. Data regarding this issue showed grandparents and parents were the main  
137 authority to decide profession of the children majority of respondents in the year 1990. This was  
138 reported by nearly 20 and 21 per cent of the total sampled respondents. On contrary to this, majority  
139 of the respondents (41.56 per cent) taking into consideration collective decision while deciding the  
140 profession of children in the year 2015. Children as an individual were also free to decide their  
141 profession in the year 2015, as this was reported by 24.69 per cent of the total respondents in the study  
142 area.

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

	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
<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 (hHusband, 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*

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

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149 | **3.4 Changes in Decision Making Authority for Agricultural Related Activities**  
 150 | **Changes in decision making authority for agriculture related activities**

151 | Agriculture was the main occupation of farm families and right decision at right time with respect  
 152 | agriculture may enhance the agricultural production. Table 4 showed that husband as an individual  
 153 | was the main decision making authority in the year 1990 and 2015, as reported by 35.31 and 30.63 per  
 154 | cent of the total respondents, respectively. Most of the decision with respect to agriculture decision  
 155 | was taken by male member of the family, and no significant changes were observed with regard to  
 156 | this issue.

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

	1990(n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
<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 (hHusband, 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>

159 | \*Significant at 1 % of level of significance, \*\*Significant at 5% of levels of significance,

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160 | *Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total*

161 | **3.5 Changes in Decision Making Authority in Marriage of Children**  
 162 | **Changes in decision making authority in marriage of children**

163 | Marriage is said to be the major step in one’s life and right decision in this regard would be  
 164 | very important decision. Table 5 indicated that elders in the family were the main authority to take  
 165 | decision regarding marriage of children in the year 1990. Majority of the respondents (21.56 per cent)  
 166 | reported that grandparents were the main authority to take decision of marriage of children in the year  
 167 | 1990, while about 31 per cent of the respondents reported that this decision was taken by husband and  
 168 | wife together in the year 2015. It was reflected from the data that husband as an individual was also  
 169 | an important authority of taking decision with regard to marriage of the children in the year 1990 as  
 170 | reported by 20.94 per cent of the total respondents, whereas 23.44 per cent of the sampled  
 171 | respondents reported that collective decision was taken into account with respect to marriage of the  
 172 | children in the year 2015.

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

	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
<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*

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

177 | **3.6 Changes in Decision Making Authority in Buying and Selling of Land**  
 178 | **Changes in decision making authority in buying and selling of land**

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

187 recent years.

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

	<b>1990 (n=320)</b>	<b>2015 (n=320)</b>	
<b>Decision making members</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Z value</b>
<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 (hHusband, 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*

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

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193 | **3.7 Changes in Decision Making Authority in Household Matters** *Changes in decision making*  
 194 *authority in household matters*

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

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

	<b>1990 (n=320)</b>	<b>2015 (n=320)</b>	
<b>Decision making members</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Z value</b>
<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 (hHusband, 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*

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

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201 | *Decisions regarding households in the year 1990, however the trends has been changed in the year*  
 202

203 2015 and most of the respondents i.e. 24.38 percent reported that all the important decision regarding  
204 households were taken by husband and wife together in this year. Children as an individual decision  
205 making authority, collective decision by all family members together were also emerged as another  
206 important decision making authority in the year 2015 and Z-test indicated the significant changes in  
207 this regards.

#### 208 | **4. CONCLUSION**

209 Family was still considered to be the prime institution but the problems and consequences of  
210 changes have changed its value over period of time. Family is more becoming ~~a~~-less important for its  
211 members. There are many factors which led to many changes in this prime institution. Introduction of  
212 technology, urbanization and industrialization **has been** said to be the main factors behind changes.  
213 These changes were on ~~the~~-social, economical, psychological and even emotional role of family  
214 towards its members. Structure and functions performed by ancient family has changed significantly.  
215 But now its high time when the role of family needs to be checked. So people should give more time  
216 to their family and family members. **On the basis of study some suggestions are made which may help**  
217 **to check the problems prevailing in family institution: As the study indicated that spending time with**  
218 **the children by parents is decreasing and consequently communicational gap is increasing. So, effort**  
219 **should be made by the parents to spend adequate time with their children to keep the emotional**  
220 **bonding alive and proper socialization. Usage of technological sources have increased to a great**  
221 **extent in families. These new entertainment sources have replaced traditional entertainment sources.**  
222 **Family members should avoid excessive use of technological sources. Best way of inculcating moral**  
223 **values among children in education. So, there should be some educational programme or course at**  
224 **school or college level when teenagers are in forming years of life. Material possession and show off**  
225 **culture among the rural families is increasing day by day. This material dependency is creating many**  
226 **problems in family. So family members should avoid there materialistic and show off attitude in**  
227 **family. Studies also indicated that respect of elders by the younger is declining. So, the new**  
228 **generation should also sensitized to pay due respect to their elders. As the expenditure on marriage**  
229 **and death rituals are increasing substantially, there is need to follow a affordable way which could**  
230 **save the families of rural areas from entering into conflicts.**

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