

Changes in decision making process and authority of family in Rural Punjab: A comparative study

ABSTRACT

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. But nowadays many changes are taking place in our family institution which is affecting other institutions as well. 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, 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.

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 (Krishna 2007, Burgess and Locke 1953, Bell 1967). Family can also defined as a unit of two or more persons united by marriage, blood, adoption, or consensual union, in general consulting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other (Rao, 2006). 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 (Shah 1973).

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

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

68 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

69 **The present study was conducted in two districts of Punjab state.** In order to achieve stipulated
70 objectives multistage sampling procedure was adopted for selection of districts, blocks, villages and
71 respondents. Ludhiana and Sangrur district of Punjab were purposively selected in this
72 investigation. Ludhiana is one of the highly industrialized and urbanized district in the State of Punjab
73 and hence taken for study as it may bear more influence on social institution. The Sangrur is
74 comparatively less urbanized and mostly having a rural base, hence it was selected for present
75 investigation. To meet the objective of study, one block far from the city and one block near to the
76 city were selected to make this study representative. Following the above mention procedure,
77 Ludhiana 1 and Machiwara blocks were selected from Ludhiana district and Sunam and Dhuri blocks
78 were selected from Sangrur district. From the selected blocks four villages each were selected for
79 collection of data. At the final stage of sampling, from sampled villages of each block, 20 respondents
80 were selected from each village randomly representing various sections of village society. So, 160
81 respondents from Sangrur and 160 respondents from Ludhiana district were selected for the present
82 study making a grand total as 320 respondents. Efforts were made to collect data on changes
83 occurring in family institution overtime. The responses from respondents were taken for two points of
84 time i.e. 1990 and 2015. An interview schedule was prepared and used for collection of relevant data.
85 SPSS software was used to analyse the data.

87 **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**88 **Changes in decision making authority of family regarding education of children**

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

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

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

109 *Significant at 1 % of level of significance

110 **Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total**

111 **Changes in decision making authority regarding family expenditure.**

112 Decision regarding family expenditure affects all members of family. Table 2 shows that majority of
113 the respondents (34.06 per cent) reported that husband was the main authority to take decision
114 regarding family expenditure in the year 1990. Corresponding to this year, individual either wife
115 (30.31 per cent), or husband (34.06 per cent) was the main decision making authority regarding
116 family expenditure in 1990. However, in the year 2015, majority of the respondents (35.94 per cent)
117 reported they take collective decision after discussing with all members. Nearly one-fourth of the total
118 respondents (25.31 per cent) reported that husband and wife together was the decision making
119 authority in year 2015. Hence, the people more believed in collective decision regarding family
120 expenditure in recent years as compared to 1990.

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

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

123 ***Significant at 1 % of level of significance**

124 **Figures in the brackets indicate per cent to the total**

125 **Changes in decision making authority regarding profession of children**

126 Agriculture has not been generating remunerative income in the recent years due to one or
127 another reason in the Punjab state (Kumar *etal*2014). Therefore people engaged in agricultural
128 profession preferred some other non-farm profession for their children. The information generated
129 with respect to changes in decision making authority decided profession of children in the year 1990
130 to 2015 as given in Table 3. Data regarding this issue showed grandparents and parents were the main
131 authority to decide profession of the children majority of respondents in the year 1990. This was
132 reported by nearly 20 and 21 per cent of the total sampled respondents. On contrary to this, majority
133 of the respondents (41.56 per cent) taking into consideration collective decision while deciding the
134 profession of children in the year 2015. Children as an individual were also free to decide their

135 profession in the year 2015, as this was reported by 24.69 per cent of the total respondents in the study
136 area.

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

	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
Profession of young children			
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*

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

143 **Changes in decision making authority for agriculture related activities**

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

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

	1990(n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
Agriculture decisions			
Only husband	113 (35.31)	98 (30.63)	1.83 ^{NS}
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 ^{NS}

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

154 **Changes in decision making authority in marriage of children**

155 Marriage is said to be the major step in one’s life and right decision in this regard would be
 156 very important decision. Table 5 indicated that elders in the family were the main authority to take
 157 decision regarding marriage of children in the year 1990. Majority of the respondents (21.56 per cent)
 158 reported that grandparents were the main authority to take decision of marriage of children in the year
 159 1990, while about 31 per cent of the respondents reported that this decision was taken by husband and
 160 wife together in the year 2015. It was reflected from the data that husband as an individual was also
 161 an important authority of taking decision with regard to marriage of the children in the year 1990 as
 162 reported by 20.94 per cent of the total respondents, whereas 23.44 per cent of the sampled
 163 respondents reported that collective decision was taken into account with respect to marriage of the
 164 children in the year 2015.

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

	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
Marriage of children			
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*

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

169 **Changes in decision making authority in buying and selling of land**

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

179

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

	1990 (n=320)	2015 (n=320)	
Decision making members	Number	Number	Z value
Buying and selling of land decisions			
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*

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

184 **Changes in decision making authority in household matters**

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

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

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

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

191 decisions regarding households in the year 1990, however the trends has been changed in the year
 192 2015 and most of the respondents i.e. 24.38 percent reported that all the important decision regarding

194 households were taken by husband and wife together in this year. Children as an individual decision
195 making authority, collective decision by all family members together were also emerged as another
196 important decision making authority in the year 2015 and Z-test indicated the significant changes in
197 this regards.

198 CONCLUSION

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

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