

# Decision-Making Roles among Husbands and Wives

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## ABSTRACT

The study aimed to describe the decision-making roles among the 3 husbands and wives in Tuguegarao City regardless of race, age, economic status, and tenure of work. It aimed further to know the factors that couples take into consideration when making decisions on their career, household concerns, children's education, and problem-solving. This study used the descriptive-qualitative research design where data collection was through a Focus-Group Discussion (FGD). Further, the FGD was recorded and was transcribed by the researcher for analysis.

**Key words:** Focus-Group Discussion, Household Concern, Children's Education, Problem-Solving

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Decision making becomes an integral part of every one's daily life. Some decisions are made in an instant that people forget to consider much of their thoughts while other decisions are made with much attention because of the great impact they may create.

Thinking on what to do and learning to make wise decisions are in dire need to make things flow smoothly. People tend to take several advices to make generous advice. It is likely observed that one believes on suggestions provided by their closed ones or partners. Married couple or partners, discuss with each other on making good choices in their day-to-day life. As observed, some couples want to take dominating roles in making choices for their family while the rest cling on the truism that

both should have on the personal interests and preferences of one another. They are both willing to express more or meet halfway in reaching mutual compromises [1-2].

According to some couples, "sharing decisions means spouse has to neither be wrong nor lose since they both share the results. There is no resentment aroused by the attitudes of "who was right and who was wrong" because there is the mutual growing together by the sharing decisions." But with the responsibility laid upon the shoulder of the father (earning individual), the dominating roles of decision making is automatically laid by father. However, with the changing era and women being classified into earning category, mothers also make decisions. This creates a comparison between a mother

and a father in terms of decision-making in the family set-up.

In the traditional utility model, the household is assumed to operate as one decision-making unit, pooling resources together to maximize utility [3-5]. Under the assumption of this model, the head of household which is the father makes financial decisions and other concerns on behalf of the other members [4].

In the modern sex role model, the behaviours expected of each spouse are becoming less predictable because of the increased flexibility and freedom associated with their role. Consequently, the decision making process for those couples has become more complex. In a recent study, Bertocchi, Brunetti, and Toricelli found the probability that the wife is in-charge of economic and financial decisions [6]. The gender status depends on the gender power, which may refer to education, money, income, wealth, social roles, etc. This just means that a wife can have more power if she possesses these [7].

The formation of the family and its structure across societies are expected to depend on the choice of both parties but the major family decisions involving their children, their income, financial aspects, work preference and a lot more sometimes create a chaos in a family if it is not taken into consideration. Economists believe that the family's decision making process is the outcome of conscious choices, interaction and the decision-making power of each spouse. A vital aspect that influences the decision making in family is the gender status as well as the power that husband or wife wielded in a family. In Turkish families husband has dominant roles

in the decision making over the wife. The overall decisions came from him as the head of the family [8].

On the contrary, the academic literature has widely analysed the choices made by husband and wife to understand the decision making process of the families [9]. The determinants of family decision making power on economic and financial choices have found the probability that the wife is in-charge in India [6]. It is therefore implicit that the women's status remains particularly crucial for the family's decision making. The gender status depends on the gender power, which may refer to access to education, money, income, wealth, social roles etc. It is predictable that there have been some changes on the woman's status with regard to the authority and decision-making. The recent research findings also seem to indicate the empowerment of women having impact on the family [10].

In studies it is observed that, the power is perceived as control over one's partner and the ability to make decisions [11]. Women say they feel more powerful in relationships when they make unilateral decisions and have economic independence. Men feel powerful when they have control over their partner and bring home money [12]. Respondents agreed that women make decisions about household matters and children, while men make decisions related to money.

In the decision-making process, families can address the differences among members [13] and negotiate their needs for closeness and independence [14]. In decision-making, values are communicated within the family group and

they will become part of a family's assumptive foundation as its members coordinate future action [15].

The power of the husbands as described by their wives varied directly with their socio-economic status [16]. It was also found that the relative power of the wife was greater if she worked. The authors believe that these two findings support their view of the primary importance of economic resources. However, during the preschool age of children, the wife is difficult to work outside the home which makes the husband more dominant [17]. The role of the man is to provide financial needs and is responsible for the security of the woman and children in the patriarchal societies.

The power position to be the most important aspect of family structure; where power was defined as the potential ability of one partner to influence the other's behaviour. Partner who contributes the greater amount of resources to the marriage (where a resource is defined as anything that can be transmitted to the other to help the latter satisfy his/her needs or attain her/his goals), the greater the power of that individual over the other [16].

Power in family decision making has also been related to social class [18], self-concept of power [19] and the impact of children on the distribution of power [20]. With these studies, the consciousness and the desire of the researchers to know who dominates in the decision-making among couples and the factors that affect their decisions ignited. These reasons highly motivate the researcher to investigate who makes dominant roles on decision making of the three couple-participants in Tuguegarao,

City. He wants to find out if the head of the family has a greater part with regard the family needs and other concerns or the other way around.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### *2.1. Research Design*

This study made use of the descriptive-qualitative research design. In this design, data collection is carried out in the structured process through focus-group interview/discussion. In this study, it was designed along the lines of a descriptive research to identify who is more dominant in decision - making in the family as well as the roles being played by each of them.

### *2.2. Participants of the Study*

The participants of the study were three couples named as A, B and C. They were residents of Tuguegarao City, Philippines regardless of age, race, family status and tenure of work.

### *2.3. Instrumentation*

The researcher made use of focus group discussion (FGD) in which the researcher acted as the facilitator. Questions were asked to the participants to gather the data needed in the study. Tape recording was done to ensure the accuracy of the data elicited from the participants. The recorded FGD was transcribed immediately so the nuances would not be lost over time.

### *2.4. Data collection*

The researcher wrote a request letter directly addressed to the immediate concerned persons

informing them of the date, time and focus of the interview.

### 2.5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed, interpreted and summarized after transcription.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are several factors that couples take into consideration when making a decision. The decision making is based on following considerable points:

### a. Career:

Career is important aspect for a family as it provides good financial and economical conditions. The data revealed that most of the families had only earning personnel as husband. The couple A revealed that earlier, only the husband was the bread earner, which led to financial stress over the family of seven. In today's fast growing and inflated era, it is important to have dual-earner couples, that is, both husband and wife participate in earning equally to run a family and their needs [21].

The couple B revealed that they lost their business, which led to financial downfall in their life. The situation worsen as only husband was involved in all money making. Due to loss in business, the wife decided to apply for job and help the family financially. Since ages, man is looked upon as businessman and majorly gets involved in these activities. [22]. The husband tends to take decisions and wives really participate in such activities. Socio-economic reaction tends to think that husbands take better decision than wife [23]. This single

handled working sometimes lead to major losses creating financial and social problem for family.

The couple C were newly married and were living independently. They believe that there is a need to live equally and with financial freedom. This means that it requires involvement of both husband and wife [24].

Moreover, when they were asked who should have a job, they all answered that both of them should work. This is supported with the idea of Baxter and Montgomery,1996 that both should negotiate their needs [14].

### b. Children's education:

Children's education is necessary planning for every couple and they prefer to provide the best. There are many sources of good education. The basic learning is provided at the home and then at school. Parents choose to send their kids at public or private school according to their financial strength [25]. The couple A stated that their children's education is free as the husband is teacher of that institute which gave them privilege to have their children's education free. However, the daily allowance was a problem but with the help of the wife's wages the problem was solved.

The couple B earlier enrolled their kids at a private school in elementary. But due to loss in their bussiness they transferred their kids to public school. The couple C does not have any kid but they will consider factors like the interests of their children.

Moreover, according to the these couples, the decision on who should decide on their children's education lies on the husband. This is

opposed to the study conducted by Harvey, Beckman, Browner, and Sherman (2002), which states that women make decisions about their children [11].

The privilege they get, the resources they have, and the interest of their child are some consideration in children's education.

*c. Household concerns:*

Managing family and household chores belongs to both the partner. Earlier, all the outside activities belonged to husband whereas the household chore to wives. But with changing time and roles, the responsibilities also switched depending upon the availability of any partner [26-27]. The couple A stated that husband surrenders his salary to his wife for proper planning and its usage. The wife plans the whole month accordingly and the incharges are given. All the necessities are then fulfilled and any shortage will be suffered by the wife.

The couple B stated that earlier, when husband was the only bread earner he spent the money and managed all the household concerns. But now as the wife is earning, they both share their wages in paying the bills and spending in other expenses. However, since the workplace of the wife is in a remote area and that the husband works in an urban area, he pays all the bills and purchase groceries. Hence, the dual earning helps them in distributing the tasks and money accordingly for smooth functioning of family.

The couple C stated that the husband keeps the salary and spends according to all the monthly expenses. He shares all the expense with his wife and acknowledges her with all the monthly budget.

Moreover, they said that in terms of the decision-making on what to buy for household, the husband still does the honors which was contrary to the study by Harvey, Beckman, Browner, and Sherman (2002) that women make decisions about household matters [11].

When the source of income is single, the family suffers and compromises on many decisions. When the source of income is dual, the partners share the household chores and make decisions together.

*3.1. Problems couple encounter in decision making*

The couple A said that they had a problem in making decisions when they want to acquire something - like when they have to decide the place where they will buy and build a house. However, the final decision still lied from the father being the head of the family.

The couple B informed that they have problem in decisions making, as one does not like the idea by another. The husband, sometimes, just makes a decision without discussing with the wife; as he knows that the wife will disagree. However, most of the time, the husband still consults decisions to his wife but the final decisions still taken by him. Studies show that most of the decisions are taken by husbands and involvement of wives are considered when feminine works are involved [28].

The couple C said that the husband cannot just decide alone as they both disagree on many decisions. However, they will listen with each other and weigh each other's inputs. But basically, the husband still decides much as he is the head of the family. This idea is supported

mainly by the traditional utility model that the husband being the head of the family decides financially and other concerns [29].

### 3.2. Couple resolving the problem

The couple A and B informed that they solve their problems by talking and sharing the concern with each other. They do not like to stretch the problems and try to resolve it at the earliest. Studies reveal that couples who discuss the problem and situations tend to take better decision as compared to self made decisions. The couple C said that they solve their problems by hearing the ideas of one another, then weigh and consider. The couples with constant communication and open talks have healthy relation and prosperous family [30]. The kids also grow stressfree and have a sense of family values.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

- a. In terms of work / career, husband and wife should work for the family to suffice the needs and allowances needed.
- b. There are always factors to consider when making decisions regarding children's education like privileges and money.
- c. There are problems encountered by couples especially financial matters; however, they solve immediately.
- d. Being the head of the family, generally, the husband decides for the welfare of the family.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following are recommended:

- a. More participants should be involved in order to really justify the reliability of this study.
- b. Participants profile should be considered.
- c. Further researches should be conducted to ascertain the findings of this study especially focusing into the ideas that oppose other researches.

## 6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

NA

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