



# Studying the relationship between Family environment and Decision Making Power among Working and non-working Women in West Bengal

Anjali Sha<sup>1</sup>      Dr. Urmi Chakraborty<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M.Ed. Student, IEW Hastings House

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, IEW Hastings House

<p><b>Received:</b> 25.06.2026</p> <p><b>Accepted:</b> 01.07.2026</p> <p><b>Published:</b> 09.07.2026</p>	<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Family environment can be described as the collective physical, emotional and social conditions within a household. It encompasses the relationship, interactions and dynamics among family members that significantly shape an individual's personality, cognitive growth and behavioral aspects. Different components of family environment include family type, SES level, attitude of male and female members and so on. Decision making power is the ultimate driving force behind personal, professional and collective success. It is the cognitive process of selecting a path of action from multiple alternatives. Decision making power is a core of women empowerment. It is the ability to influence choices, affecting one's life from household finance to public policy. When women are integrated into decision making process it leads to tangible positive transformations. In the present study an attempt is made to collect response from 50 working and 50 home maker women in West Bengal from various family patterns on their power of decision making. A detailed tool was prepared with the selected items from Family Environment scale. It has been found that a majority of working women show higher and more favorable family environment score compared to non-working women. Further majority of working women display higher decision making power than their counter part (non-working women).</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Educated non-working &amp; Working Women, Decision making power, Family environment</p>
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## Introduction

Today, women are seen as active contributors to the economic, social, and cultural development of their families and communities. Education and employment have empowered women to redefine their roles, giving them greater visibility and voice within the family decision-making processes.

Moreover, women's participation in family life extends beyond economic roles. Whether employed or not, women contribute significantly through emotional support, care giving, and household management. Working women often face the challenge of balancing professional duties with familial responsibilities, leading to physical and emotional strain. On the other hand, non-working women may struggle with the undervaluation of their unpaid labor and limited recognition in family affairs. These challenges impact their confidence and autonomy in decision-making (Sultana 2013).

The structure of the family plays a significant role in determining the level of autonomy a woman experiences. In nuclear families, women tend to enjoy greater freedom, privacy, and opportunity for personal expression. Conversely, in joint families, women often experience less freedom due to generational hierarchy, male dominance, and societal expectations (Maral & Kumar 2017). The present research aims to investigate the effect of family environment decision-making power and the level of involvement of educated working and non-working women. It seeks to understand how these women participate in decisions related to household and socio-economic matters. The study specifically examines their roles in areas such as daily household expenses, personal financial management, the purchasing of assets (such as land, vehicles, or other property), savings, participation in social and community activities, decisions related to health care, children's education, and the resolution of family disputes.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- To study the relationship between family environment and decision-making power among educated working women.
- To study the relationship between family environment and decision-making power among educated non-working women.
- To compare the family environment among educated working & non-working women.
- To examine the decision-making power among educated working women.
- To examine the decision-making power among educated non-working women.
- To compare the decision-making power among educated working & non-working women.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

H<sub>0</sub>1: There will be no significant relationship between family environment and decision-making power among educated working women.

H<sub>0</sub>2: There will be no significant relationship between family environment and decision-making power among educated non-working women.

H<sub>0</sub>3: There will be no significant difference between the family environment of educated working and non-working women.

H<sub>0</sub>4: There will be no significant difference between the decision-making power of educated working and non-working women.

### **Operational Definition of Key Terms**

#### **Family Environment**

In this study, "Family Environment" refers to the emotional, psychological, and social atmosphere within the household that a woman experiences on a daily basis. It includes the nature of interpersonal relationships, communication patterns, expression of affection, encouragement of independence, problem-solving approaches, and the level of mutual respect among family. The family environment is a critical determinant of a woman's ability to express her views, participate in decision-making, and feel valued within the home (Moos & Moos 1994). A positive family environment fosters confidence, autonomy, and equal participation, while a restrictive or authoritarian environment may limit a woman's role in decision-making.

#### **Decision-Making Power**

“Decision-Making Power” refers to the extent to which a woman is involved in making key decisions within the household. These include decisions related to family expenditures, children’s education and health, social engagements, household management, and personal or family health issues. In this study, decision-making power is assessed across three dimensions: independent decisions, joint decisions, and non-participation in decisions.

#### **Educated Women**

“Educated Women” refers to those who have attained at least a higher secondary level of education (Class XII or above). Educated women are generally more confident, informed, and capable of making rational decisions. Their level of education influences their cognitive abilities and worldview.

#### **Working Women**

“Working Women” are defined as those who are engaged in income-generating professional activities—whether in government, private, commercial, or self-employed sectors. They are financially independent, exposed to the outer world, and contribute significantly to the family’s socio-economic development.

#### **Non-Working Women**

“Non-Working Women” refers to women who are not engaged in any form of paid employment and are primarily involved in household responsibilities. Though their work is often unpaid and undervalued economically, their role in maintaining family and social structures is crucial. These women typically have less involvement in economic decision-making and are often more dependent on the family.

#### **Review of Literature**

**Verma, R., & Pandey, R. (2017). Comparative study on decision making pattern in household activities of working and non-working women, *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences (IJRESS)*, 7(6), 343-353.**; The study aimed to examine how working and non-working women differed in their decision-making roles within their households, and to identify the specific situations and challenges that both groups faced in making household decisions. The study was conducted in the Trans Yamuna area of Allahabad, with a sample size of 150 women, divided equally between 75 working women and 75 non-working women. Data were collected using an interview schedule. The study examined the types of decisions that working and non-working women made, either independently or jointly, across various household domains such as children’s matters, personal matters, hygiene practices, and purchasing decisions. The study found that the majority of the working women were employed in the education sector, particularly in schools and teaching positions.

**Happy, P.V. (2018). Role of Education and Women’s Decision-Making Power in Families, *JETIR*, 5(10).** The objectives of the study to analyze the role of education in enhancing women's decision-making power within the family. A descriptive survey method was employed, and a sample of 100 women from Irinjalakuda Municipality was selected through random sampling. The findings revealed a significant difference between the decision-making ability of educated and uneducated women. The study concluded that education played a crucial role in empowering women and enhancing their participation in household decision-making. Educated women enjoyed

greater autonomy and freedom in decisions related to their children's education, occupation, and financial matters, compared to their uneducated counter parts.

**Aftab, S., Younus, N. and Nisar, I (2022) Comparison between working and non-working women in household activities in decision making patterns *Journal of Business and Social Review in Emerging Economics* 8(2) 427- 448.** The objective of the study was to compare the decision making patterns among working and non-working women and to assess the challenges and hazards, they faced in household economic activities. It was found that the working women were more independent in decision making compared to non –working women. Further working women were more stronger than their non-working counter parts in case of taking decision for the society.

**Sharma, A. , Sahay, S.J. (2024). An Analytical Study of Decision Power of Women at Home in India. With special Reference to Agra District *International Journal of Science and Research IJSR* 13/ 7 1516- 1525** The objective of the study was to identify the factor that influenced domestic decision making ability among women It sought to compare the decision making power of educated and uneducated women regarding domestic matters in Agra district. The sample consisted of 50 women whose age ranged between 25 to 50 years. The study found that most women, despite their educational status were dominated by parents before marriage and by husband or in laws afterward. Overall, women's decision making power remained limited due to social and cultural restrictions.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The present study follows a descriptive and comparative survey design. It is descriptive as it aims to describe the existing conditions of family environment and decision-making power among educated women, and comparative as it compares these variables between educated working and non-working women.

### **Variables**

Independent Variable- Family Environment

Dependent Variable- Decision-Making Power

Categorical Variable- Educated, Working Women, Non-Working Women

### **3.4 Sample of the study**

In the case of the present study, educated women of West Bengal have been selected as the target population, including both working and non-working women. The accessible population consisted of all the educated working and non-working women available in different urban and semi-urban areas of West Bengal.

A sample is therefore selected to represent the entire population. In the present study, the researcher selected respondents conveniently from different areas of South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. A total of 100 educated women were taken as the sample, out of which 50 were working women and 50 were non-working women.

For the working women group, data were collected from teachers and staff members of different schools and colleges in the district. For the non-working women group, data were collected from housewives and female students who were not engaged in any regular employment. Thus, the sample was selected through the convenient sampling method, depending on the availability and

willingness of the respondents. The detailed distribution of the sample used for analysis is presented in Table-3.4.1

Table 3.4.1 *The distribution of the sample for carrying out the survey*

Group	Source	Number of Respondents
Working Women	Schools and Colleges	50
Non-Working Women	Housewives and Female Students	50
Total		100

### Tools Used for Data Collection

For the present study, data were collected with the help of a structured questionnaire prepared by the researcher. The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

A self-constructed Decision-Making Power Scale, and Selected items adapted from the Family Environment Scale (Bhatia & Chadha, 1993) covering three dimensions — Expressiveness, Acceptance & Caring, and Independence.

In total, the questionnaire contained 55 items, of which 25 items measured decision-making power and 30 items measured aspects of family environment. Each statement was rated on a five-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

### Development of the Decision-Making Power Scale

The Decision-Making Power Scale was developed by the researcher following systematic steps of scale construction as described below.

#### Step I – Review of Related Literature

Relevant research studies, journals, and existing tools (such as Jan, 2004) were reviewed to identify possible items and dimensions related to women's participation in family decision-making.

#### Step II – Selection of Items

Based on the literature review and study objectives, items were selected to represent four main areas:

- (a) Decision Making on Financial and Property Issues
- (b) Decision Making on Family Matters,
- (c) Decision Making on 'Self'

After careful screening, 25 items were included in the draft questionnaire.

#### Step III – Preparing the Questionnaire

After selecting the relevant items, the researcher prepared a structured questionnaire to measure the decision-making power of women. The preliminary questionnaire was then made ready for expert review.

#### Step IV – Finding out Reliability and Validity index of the tool

The draft scale was reviewed by ten experts in the field of Teacher Education for content validation. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated for the scale and the value was 0.85, which indicated that the scale was acceptable.

Further a pilot study was conducted with 30 participants. The internal consistency of the scale was measured with Cronbach's Alpha was 0.80 indicating good reliability.

#### Step V – Finalization of Items

After incorporating expert feedback, all 25 items that received approval from three experts were finalized for inclusion in the Decision-Making Power Scale.

### Adaptation Items from Family Environment Scale

To measure the family environment, relevant items were adapted from the Family Environment Scale (Bhatia & Chadha, 1993). Three major dimensions were selected for the present study: Expressiveness, Acceptance & Caring, Independence. A total of 30 adapted items (Expressiveness: 9, Acceptance & Caring: 12, Independence: 9) were finally included in the questionnaire.

### Scoring Procedure

The participants were requested to answer on a five-point rating scale with tick (✓) mark ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. For the negative statements where the scores were considered for Strongly Agree-1, Agree-2, Neutral-3, Disagree-4, Strongly Disagree-5. For the positive statements the scores would be reversed in the order. Table as follows-

Table:A-1 *scoring patterns of the items of family environment & decision-making power scale*

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Positive	5	4	3	2	1
Negative	1	2	3	4	5

### Collection of Data

In order to collect the required data for the study, the local community and educational institutions were visited by the researcher. The respondents included parents, students, teachers, and staff members who were approached to respond to the questionnaire. Among the respondents, parents and students (considered as non-working group) were 60 in number, out of which 50 completed the given questionnaire properly. Similarly, teachers and staff members (considered as working group) were 60 in number, and 50 of them completed the questionnaire.

After careful scrutiny of the responses, a total number of 100 valid questionnaires (50 from non-working women and 50 from working women) were retained and used for the purpose of the present study.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There will be no significant relationship between family environment and decision-making power among educated working women.

Table 1: *Correlation between Family Environment and Decision-Making Power among Working Women.*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Pearsons's correlation(r-value)	df
Family Environment	50	119.54	11.80	0.03	98
Decision-Making Power	50	86.94	14.50		

### Interpretation

From Table 1, it is observed that the correlation between family environment and decision-making power of educated working women is very low ( $r = 0.03$ ). It is lower than the table value of  $r$  (0.195) This indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant at 0.05 level.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hence, there is no significant relationship between family environment and decision-making power of working women but the relationship is positive in nature.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There will be no significant relationship between family environment and decision-making power among educated non-working women.

Table 2: *Correlation between Family Environment and Decision-Making Power among Non-working Women*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Pearsons's correlation (r- value)	df
Family Environment	50	109.24	15.60	0.26	98
Decision-Making Power	50	75	16.97		

**Interpretation:**

From Table 2, it is observed that the correlation between family environment and decision-making power of educated working women is low ( $r = 0.26$ ). It is lower than the table value of  $r$  (0.195). This indicates that the correlation is not statistically significant at 0.05 level.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted.

Hence, there is no significant relationship between family environment and decision-making power of working women but the relationship is positive in nature.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There will be no significant difference between the family environment of educated working and non-working women.

Table 3: *t-test for Family Environment (Working & Non-working Women)*

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Working Women	50	119.54	11.80	5.25	0.000001456
Non-Working Women	50	109.24	15.60		

**Interpretation:**

From Table 3, it is seen that the mean family environment score of working women ( $M = 119.54$ ) is higher than that of non-working women ( $M = 109.24$ ).

The calculated  $t$ -value = 5.25 and  $p$ -value = 0.00, which is less than 0.05. This means the difference is statistically significant.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Thus, there is a significant difference in the family environment of working and non-working women.

\*\*\*From Table 3 it is observed that there is a clear difference in the mean scores of family environment between working women ( $M = 119.54$ ,  $SD = 11.80$ ) and non-working women ( $M = 109.24$ ,  $SD = 15.60$ ). The mean difference has been shown in the above graph (Figure 4.3.1).

To check whether this difference is statistically significant or not, an independent samples t-test has been applied. The calculated  $t_{(72)}$  value is 5.25 and the p-value is 0.000001, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the difference between the two groups is significant. From the t-test it can be concluded that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hence, there is a significant difference between the family environment of educated working and non-working women.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There will be no significant difference in the decision-making power of educated working and non-working women.

Table 4: *t*-test for Decision-Making Power (Working & Non-working Women)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Working Women	50	86.94	14.50	3.78	0.000268
Non-Working Women	50	75	16.97		

#### Interpretation:

Table 4 reveals that working women have higher decision-making power ( $M = 86.94$ ) than non-working women ( $M = 75$ ).

The obtained t-value = 3.78 and p-value = 0.00, which is less than 0.05, indicate a highly significant difference.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Thus, working women have significantly higher decision-making power compared to non-working women.

\*\*\*From Table 4 it is observed that the mean score of decision-making power is higher for working women ( $M = 86.94$ ,  $SD = 14.50$ ) compared to that of non-working women ( $M = 75.00$ ,  $SD = 16.97$ ). The mean difference has been presented in the above graph (Figure 4.3.2).

To determine whether this difference is statistically significant or not, an independent samples t-test has been applied. The calculated  $t_{(98)}$  value is 3.78 and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the difference between the two groups is significant. It can be concluded from the t-test that the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hence, working women have significantly higher decision-making power compared to non-working women.

#### Major Findings

The major findings of the present investigation are as follows:

- A majority of working women show higher and more favourable family environment scores compared to non-working women.
- A majority of working women display higher decision-making power than non-working women.

- The correlation between family environment and decision-making power among working women is not significant.
- The correlation between family environment and decision-making power among non-working women is also not significant.
- There is a significant difference in family environment between working and non-working women ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- There is a significant difference in decision-making power between working and non-working women ( $p < 0.05$ ).
- Working women show better communication, independence, acceptance and caring in their family environment.
- Non-working women show comparatively lower autonomy and decision authority within the household.

### **Discussion**

The findings of the study revealed clear differences in the family environment and decision-making power among educated working and non-working women.

Working women demonstrated a higher mean score in both family environment and decision-making power. This may be attributed to their financial independence, social exposure, professional experience, and higher autonomy.

Among both working and non-working women, the correlation between family environment and decision-making power was found to be not significant. This indicates that family environment alone does not determine women's decision-making authority. For working women, workplace responsibilities and financial status contribute more strongly to decision-making ability than family environment.

The t-test results showed significant differences between the two groups in both variables. Working women enjoy better communication patterns, emotional support, and independence within their families, which enhances their confidence and ability to make decisions.

Non-working women, despite being educated, often have limited decision-making power due to greater dependency on family members and traditional household roles.

Thus, employment plays an influential role in shaping decision-making power and improving the family environment of women.

### **Conclusion**

The study concludes that employment status plays a major role in determining women's decision-making power. Working women have a more favourable family environment and significantly higher decision-making ability than non-working women. The relationship between family environment and decision-making power was not significant for either group, indicating that factors like economic independence and social exposure influence decision-making more strongly. The results emphasize the need to support women's participation in the workforce and create family environments that encourage autonomy, communication and mutual respect. Enhancing women's empowerment leads to stronger families, healthier relationships and overall societal development.

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