

**MARRIED WOMEN'S DECISION MAKING POWER IN RURAL VS URBAN
HOUSEHOLDS IN PAKISTAN AND ITS PROVINCES**

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By

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at the impact of rural vs urban residence on married women's (aged 15-49) decision making power in Pakistani households, in the whole country and each of its provinces. By using multiple regression, the research has analyzed whether residence in rural vs urban areas affects women's decision making power after controlling for individual socioeconomic characteristics. Data has been taken from the Demographic and Health Surveys 2017-18 and has enabled the researcher to explore whether urban women (as opposed to rural women) are better off in terms of decision making in the Pakistani households. A comparison of the rural and urban areas within each province is also undertaken. Our findings suggested that urban women in Pakistan possessed higher decision making powers than rural women. However, our finding was not upheld in KPK where residence was not seen as a significant factor. The largest rural-urban divide was evident in Balochistan and age was seen to be the most significant predictor of women's decision making power in Pakistan overall and all four provinces.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Literature Review	9
3. Research Gap	16
4. Research Questions	17
5. Theoretical Framework	18
6. Conceptual Framework	21
7. Methodology	22
8. Results	27
7. Discussion	47
7. Conclusion	53
Bibliography	54
Appendix	61

INTRODUCTION

Similar to a sustainable democracy where there is a need for all members of society to be represented equally, households, too, must have members that operate at an equal basis i.e. both men and women are involved in the decision making process. This may expand views and increase creativity, eventually leading to an improved decision making process (Asuako, 2022). Since more than fifty percent of the world's population is that of women, their role, whether at a large (global economy) or a small scale (household level), must not be neglected. The advantages to society of gender equality and greater participation in decision making are apparent. At the household level, women contributing to the decision making process may give rise to more diversity and a variety of points of view, thereby leading to more efficiency in the decision making process. Hence, one of the steps towards understanding the balance of power within households is to analyze the differences in women's decision making powers in the rural and urban world and assess what factors might be responsible for any divergence that is found.

Previous research indicated major differences between rural and urban women in Pakistan in terms of status, education, occupation, experience and the amount they contributed to the household income, all of which determined the financial and economic health of the household (Urooge et al., 2022). Women in urban areas had access to more opportunities as opposed to women in rural areas. This is especially in terms of business opportunities that may have had a significant impact on the livelihood and lifestyle of women and the household in general, thereby affecting their decision making powers within the household (Bindary, Baxter & Hollingsworth, 1973).

These opportunities also held more value in urban areas as employment could be found more often in high value sectors such as services, manufacturing and commerce industries while rural women may have suffered from low income jobs only concentrated in the agriculture sector, or as unpaid family helpers. Similarly, there were less social barriers found in urban as well as rural areas that prevented women from reaching their true potentials. These may be deep rooted cultural norms, traditions, caste and religion (Byjus, 2022). Conservative ideologies that have become part of life in Pakistan showed that women were often considered only a means of child bearing and rearing. They were often denied basic rights and lagged behind due to several misinterpretations of Islamic injunctions. Such oppression and discrimination was backed by patriarchal elements that have long become part of the status quo. However, the urban areas showed a somewhat higher degree of liberalism as opposed to rural areas. (Akhunzada & Khattak, 2015).

According to the DHS Report (2018), women's participation in decision making rose with the level of employment they were engaged in. Accordingly, women who earned had more autonomy and were more likely to take decisions within the household than those who were unemployed. On the other hand, understanding provincial differences for both rural and urban women is also important in a country like Pakistan where provincial inequality is prevalent. Even something as simple as wage rate is not just different across rural and urban areas but also differs provincially. Women are often unpaid and their work is less valued. Hence, by contributing little or nothing to the household income, they are unable to become the main decision makers in the household. Similarly, it is often seen that women in urban areas have a better financial position as opposed to rural women and may be able to contribute in the household earnings, thereby

possessing a certain degree of decision making power. Therefore, those provinces that have a higher number of urban areas may be better off than those with more rural areas.

Moreover, an overview of Pakistan showed that a significant portion of women (almost 50%) were unable to be part of important household decisions. According to Lassi, Ali and Meherali (2021), residence, wealth, education and exposure to media were important elements in determining women's decision making within the household. By suggesting policies and actions to be taken in order to improve these areas, the study highlighted the disparities between the rural and urban world. Accordingly, it was seen that rural areas lagged behind in terms of educational and occupational opportunities for women. Poverty was also prevalent in such areas the most and patriarchal notions were more highly prevalent. Rights of inheritance were often denied to both rural and urban women. However, there was more awareness in urban areas. Hence, use of mass media to spread awareness regarding lack of women empowerment was also important. Unfortunately, access to media was lower in these rural areas as opposed to urban areas. Therefore, regions such as Punjab, Sindh and KPK enjoyed more women empowerment and hence, participation in household decision making. However, Balochistan, being less developed and comprising of more rural areas suffered from a lack of opportunities to attain or uphold women empowerment and participation in household decision making (Lassi et al., 2021).

The researcher has used the DHS database 2017-18, whereby a total of 7428 women were interviewed from urban areas across all Pakistani provinces while 8350 women were interviewed from rural areas. Hence, a total of 15778 women were interviewed from both areas all across the country. However, it should be noted that only married women aged 15-49 have been included in the study since decision making questions are asked only from these women.

Hence, this study has been carried out in order to understand rural and urban differences in terms of women's decision making in Pakistan and whether such differences also occur within and across provinces. The researcher has examined whether rural-urban differences between women still occur after controlling for their individual socioeconomic characteristics. It is generally believed that urban women may have more of a decision making power due to relatively better opportunities and higher empowerment levels in these areas. However, this study has explored whether this is in fact true or whether the opposite holds.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following studies, by consisting of similar variables found in our study, provided an adequate guideline for further research. Several of them pointed towards patriarchy as an underlying factor responsible for lower decision making within the household. Almost all literature supported and effectively made a strong urban vs rural comparison in terms of decision making.

The DHS report (2018) showed women's decision making power in terms of background characteristics. Women's decision making power in the 3 aspects, namely health care, household purchases and visits to relatives increased with age and education level. Women who earn (specifically in cash) were also better off in terms of decision making than those who were unemployed. Women in Sindh and Punjab, respectively, participated more in decision making within the household as opposed to those in KPK and Balochistan. However, according to the DHS report (2018) there was only a fine line between urban and rural areas in terms of women's decision making with the former performing slightly better than the latter. This research has added to the existing body of knowledge by assessing whether the differences in rural and urban areas persisted after controlling for women's socioeconomic characteristics.

Similarly, evidence from Pakistan linked empowerment with decision-making. A study by Abbas et al. (2021) suggested that urban women with a higher education and access to information were more empowered and participated significantly in decision making. Older women who earned more than their husbands, who belonged to a well-off family and had children were more likely to play a larger role in decision making within the household. However, the most important factor was not that of residence i.e. rural or urban, but that of

number of children. The most empowered women were those who had four to six children. Moreover, the study also highlighted “patriarchal customs and socio-cultural dynamics” that lead to unfair and unequal rights of inheritance and hence, a subordinate role for women in the household (Abbas et al., 2021).

Similarly, evidence from Tehsil Dera Ghazi Khan found that women’s decision making powers and status is determined by differences in the economic dependency of women in rural vs urban households. In this case, women dependency was more likely to be found in rural areas than urban areas. Despite the fact that women from both localities may be working, urban women seemed to be more financially independent and were seen to be having more of a say in the household. A major reason for this divergence of decision making powers between rural and urban women was the culture and norms that have long existed in the Pakistani patriarchal society. Women working outside the household were often frowned upon. This was especially the case in rural areas where men were expected to go out to work while women were to be restricted to activities in the household. Even for women involved in the farming process, there was hardly any decision making power within the household (Bhutta and Haider, 2013). Even something so simple as stepping outside the house to go to the market required permission from the male head of the household. Hence, the article made a rational contrast between rural and urban women in terms of decision making powers. However, since the research is geographical limited to a very small locality, a generalization of the whole country cannot be made on the said article alone as it exhibits an extreme view of women’s status within Pakistan (Bhutta and Haider, 2013).

Evidence from Faisalabad, Pakistan also carried out a comparison of urban and rural women specifically in terms of decision making with regards to family matters. The research was carried

out by collecting data from 150 women (Taj et al., 2004). It showed that there were certain aspects in the household where urban women had stronger decision making powers as opposed to rural women. These included education, family size and budgeting. Other areas where urban women had much more a say was children's career choice, household facilities and construction of the house. It was seen that urban women had more freedom to access health care centers as opposed to rural women. The study also indicated that in both areas, majority of men accepted their wives' decisions. However, the proportion was higher in urban than rural areas i.e. 67% vs 53%. Hence, the research effectively identified a number of factors determining women's decision making within the household and also made a strong urban vs rural comparison. However, the term 'family matters' may not be confined to the household alone and may entail decisions made out of the household as well, for example those related to extended family etc. In other words, it was often the case that family members such as grandparents or elder brothers may be making decisions for the household, despite living somewhere else, thereby undermining women's decision making role within the households (Taj et al., 2004).

Similar to the above study, research from Tamil Nadu, too, saw education as being imperative to women's decision making in the household. The more education the woman had, the more she was aware of her rights and empowerment schemes proposed by the government. The study also saw women's age and area of residence as significant factors in urban-rural differences in women's decision making. Nonetheless, women in urban areas were more likely to participate in decisions related to finances, marriage, health and family planning in their respective households. Hence, the findings suggested that urban areas were better off in terms of financial decisions, family planning and health seeking with empowerment data for urban women being much higher than rural women (Saravanakumar & Elizabeth Varakumari, 2019).

Boonto (2008) examined five influence factors in explaining the present status of women in rural areas and their standing in the household as opposed to their husband in terms of decision making power in Thailand. The influencing factors were that of women empowerment, family pattern and kinship influence, socioeconomic resource contribution to marriage, women opinion of gender role and responsibility in family, and women's characteristics.

According to the study, it was the woman in the household who took important decisions of daily spending, saving and contraception. On the other hand, certain areas existed in which joint decision making became imperative. These were property and other asset purchases, family migration, investment decisions and children related issues. Hence, the study concluded that factors such as women opinion of gender role, women modernization, women participation in empowerment projects and migration have had a positive impact on women's self-decision making. On the other hand, the study indicated that the urbanization of Thailand has led to a change in family type i.e. from extended families to nuclear families. Since, the kinship experience had a much larger role in terms of providing support to women's decision making role within the family, it seemed to be declining with the advent of urbanization, with people moving to urban areas leaving behind their kinship group. Hence, urbanization has had a negative impact on women's decision making within households. Therefore, while the study looked at important factors that may or may not have an effect on decision making, it is limited geographically and is confined to only northeast Thailand. However, it discussed women's decision making power both in the rural world and as a result of urbanization (Boonto, 2008).

On the other hand, research from Sri Lanka took both decision making and empowerment as separate factors, suggesting that both are positively associated. Similar to the study carried out in Indonesia, this research showed that women may take decisions related to daily purchases, health

care and family visits. However, unlike the previous study, it showed that women may abstain from making decisions related to property and assets. Differences between rural and urban areas existed in terms of cultural norms and beliefs. However, patriarchy played a major role in impacting women's decision making. There was also difference in women's decision making across rural and urban areas due to education and occupation levels, whereby men considered their wives as inferior due to women dependency. The study recommended gender workshops and family training in order to do away with the inequality that existed (Yogendrarajah, 2013).

Furthermore, evidence from rural Bangladesh showed that only 39 percent of women felt empowered in terms of household decision making (Mahmud et al., 2012). Women felt that their decision making role within the household was an indicator of their value and status within the family. The study also showed that women in their mid-twenties had more of a say in the household compared to older women. On the contrary, the analysis also suggested that women in wealthier households (despite having access to cash) had less of a decision making role due to men (as breadwinners) being more authoritative. However, the study suggested that decision making status did not represent women's personal autonomy and independence. Nonetheless, the study did recognize important patriarchal elements within the Bangladeshi society, especially in terms of rural areas, but did not show how previous cultural practices and norms may be evolving (Mahmud et al., 2012). While the study lent support to our research by thoroughly examining two variables mentioned in our research already, it also recognized patriarchal elements as part of society that may help to explain whether rural-urban differences persisted after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.

Similar to evidence from Pakistan, research from Nepal indicated age of women, employment status and number of children was positively associated to women's decision

making power within the household. However, the study showed the role of residence (rural vs. urban) did not affect women's decision making power at a significant level. Even though rural women seemed to be participating less in household decision making (as opposed to urban women), the analysis showed significant results on the basis of region, whereby women from the central region seemed to have more of a decision making role than those in the far west. However, women's education and employment was positively associated to their decision making power. Unlike Bangladesh, women from rich households participated more in household decision making. However, whether or not true autonomy existed is questionable as men (patriarchs of the family) in these households controlled the cash (Acharya et al., 2010).

Other than this, research from rural and urban areas in Ethiopia considered women's participation in decision making in terms of contraceptive use. The proportion of women using contraception was higher in urban than in rural areas i.e 87% and 72.8% respectively. Urban women were more prone to making decisions regarding contraception due to better information and awareness of contraceptive use, relatively higher gender equality in urban areas, more participation in children related decisions and other family matters. Moreover, rural areas also lagged behind in terms of family planning programs and husbands' acceptance of contraceptive use. On the other hand, in an urban setting, there was little fear of husbands' objection towards contraceptive use, as opposed to rural areas. Hence, the study effectively examined the rural and urban disparities in terms of women's decision making power but confined itself only to one aspect i.e. contraception (Bogale et al., 2011).

Furthermore, research from Nicaragua considered two aspects vital for women's decision making within the household. These were income and ideology. While the former determined financial decisions within the household, the latter determined decisions such as family planning.

Another important aspect that the said study considered is that of the rural urban comparison. Urban women seemed to have more opportunities to obtain paid work and hence, had strong bargaining positions within the household. This was because their income may reflect their independence and steady financial positions. On the other hand, rural women were often involved in unpaid tasks and were less likely to contribute monetarily in the household. Therefore, these women often lagged behind urban women in terms of household decision making (Bradshaw, 2013).

On the other hand, evidence from rural China showed that income and migration differences determined bargaining power in the household. Women's income was positively associated with their bargaining power as opposed to their husband's. The higher the women's income, the more likely was she to become a decision maker within the household. Moreover, if the wife had a comparative advantage in the job market, she may have been willing to give up her power within the household in order to focus on her career. Nonetheless, it was generally accepted that women had an inferior position as opposed to their husbands within the household. This was due to structural factors such as culture, deep rooted patriarchal norms, values and discrimination. However, all this could be reduced through appropriate governmental interventions for women's empowerment. Nonetheless, in the urban world, the upholding of women's decision making power in the household can be attributed to higher education levels. Hence, the research not only touched upon rural-urban migration but also made a subtle comparison of women's decision making power in both regions (Wang, 2020).

RESEARCH GAP

Several theories addressed the issue of gender inequality within households with special regards to the intra-household decision making process between family members. This study addressed the specific role of residence in rural vs. urban areas in terms of decision making power, after controlling for women's socioeconomic characteristics. This is done for each of the four provinces and the country as a whole using the DHS 2017-18 Dataset for Pakistan. Preliminary analysis published from this survey showed that rural women have lower decision making power than urban women.

The present study advanced the analysis by conducting an in-depth analysis of decision making power in rural vs. urban areas by using multiple regression. We examined whether the associations observed in bivariate analysis persisted after controlling for the women's socioeconomic background factors. **Therefore, we were able to look at the net effect of residence on women's decision making power.**

It has also filled in the gap through an analysis of women's decision making power in rural vs urban households within each of the four provinces of Pakistan since inter-provincial comparisons of this topic was a relatively under-researched area in Pakistan. **Hence, a separate analysis for each of the provinces was done to assess whether differences are present within and across provinces.**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This dissertation had two main objectives. First was to analyze how certain socioeconomic characteristics determined women's decision making power in rural vs. urban households in Pakistan and its four provinces. In other words, the study examined whether women's decision making power was uniform across rural and urban areas in various provinces of Pakistan or differed significantly. The second objective was to ascertain whether the differences in rural and urban areas persisted after controlling for the women's socioeconomic characteristics. However, it must be noted that the dissertation has considered only married women in the said households since the questions on decision making ask about the role that husband vs. wife plays in decision making. Hence, this study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is the association between individual socioeconomic characteristics and women's decision-making power in rural vs. urban households in Pakistan?
- Do the rural-urban differences in Pakistan persist after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics?
- Are there significant differences across provinces in terms of women's decision making power in rural vs. urban households?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Literature suggested that patriarchy acts as an underlying factor for women's decision making power and was deeply rooted in the Pakistani society. Hence, rural vs urban differences in women's decision making power may exist even after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics.

The term 'patriarch' was coined by the Latins, which meant a male who had supreme authority over his family and household. However, patriarchy went through several phases and variations over the ages. Initially, where it was seen as a structure where families and houses were headed and ruled by males, the term eventually evolved into one indicating, "an institutionalized pattern of male dominance in society." (Collins, 1986).

On the other hand, Pakistan inherited the system of Patriarchy right at the time of independence (Sivakumar & Manimekalai, 2021). Hence, in Pakistan, patriarchy is rampant and can be found in all spheres of life, including social, economic, political and religious aspects where men uphold the ultimate authority and women are deprived of several rights imperative to their existence.

According to Abbas et al. (2018), patriarchy in Pakistan is a historical process that is deep rooted in the society. However, women's place of residence i.e. rural or urban, decides which women may be better off than others. Evidence showed that rural women's social status is relatively lower than that of urban women due to lower levels of literacy and lack of access to public facilities in such areas. Hence, such disadvantages in terms of social status and education,

together with widespread patriarchy lead to women's decision making powers plummeting in the household as opposed to their husbands (Abbas et al., 2018).

The education system in Pakistan also favors patriarchy that is in turn affected by residence. It was seen that girls are subject to more household work than boys. Hence, school closures may aggravate gender inequality even more as girls, during school closures may become more accustomed to household responsibilities. Family members, too, may discourage the girls from going to school in order to maintain gender roles and ensure domestic work within the patriarchal household. Hence, lack of education may lead to less decision making powers for such women, which they may carry on into their households after marriage (Atrakouti, 2022).

However, patriarchy and the urban-rural divide becomes greater with the element of wealth being considered alongside education. It was found that due to unaffordability, rural women suffer in terms of education and may not have access to it. However, women from wealthy households residing in urban areas may attain private education, thus, exacerbating the rural-urban divide even more (Sathar & Kazi, 2000).

Research also showed that even though patriarchy is rampant in the country, both rural and urban women's decision making is also affected by household wealth. It is often seen that the norm in wealthier households is for women to stay at home rather than engage in economic activities. On the other hand, women with less access to resources living in less wealthy households were more inclined to go out and work and engage in decision making processes in and outside the household. Typically, women with more household income or higher household wealth were found to be working less outside the household. As patriarchal values had

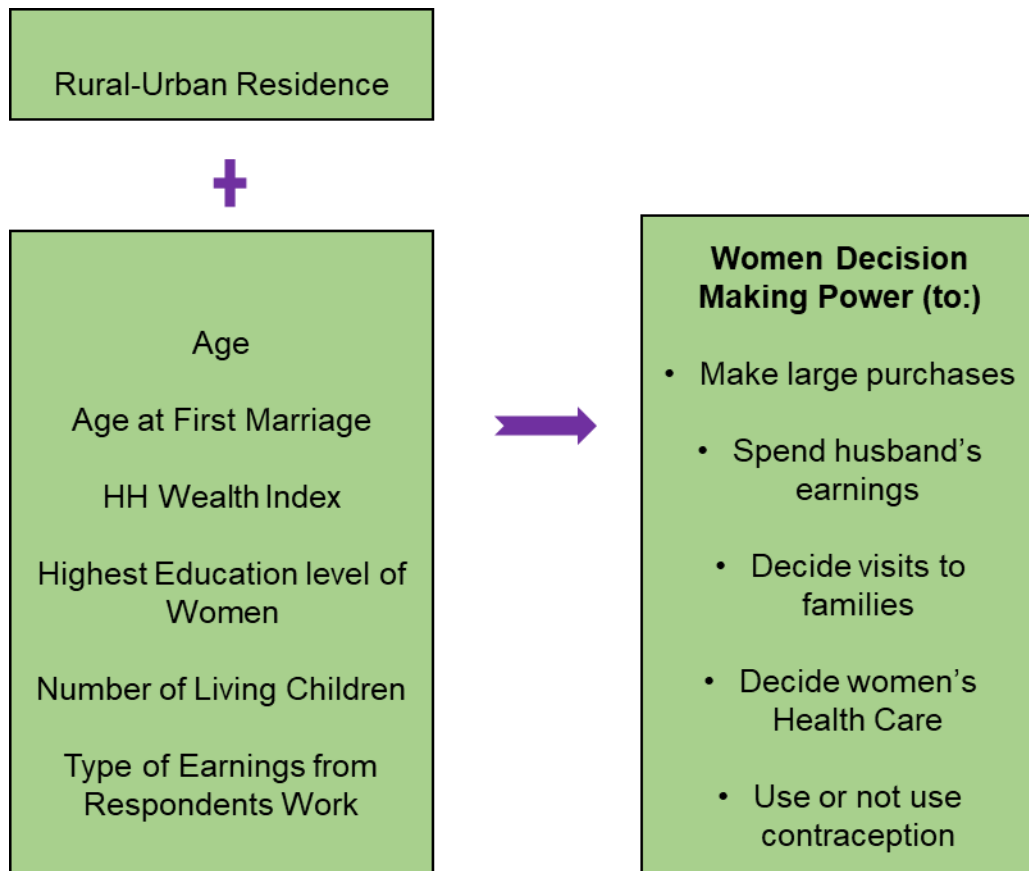
penetrated into the society, women staying inside the households was seen as more 'accepting' as opposed to going out to engage in economic activities (Sathar & Kazi, 2000).

Evidence from Pakistan suggested that women's autonomy both in the rural and urban setting was linked to patriarchy working alongside education and other socioeconomic factors. In this regard age was also an important element which was positively associated to women's autonomy. It was evident that the higher a woman's age, the more likely was she to be financially independent, have access to resources and hence, be able to become a decision maker in the household (Sathar & Kazi, 2000).

Similarly, a study carried out in Lahore showed women empowerment increased with the women's age and education level. This was because younger women or those who were less educated may not have had enough control over their lives as opposed to older or more educated women. However, with lack of education, women in rural areas may have suffered to become the decision makers, especially if they were younger (Hussain & Jullandhry 2020).

Therefore, Sanauddin & Owais (2016) suggested that urban areas were better off in terms of government infrastructure and services, security and a relatively liberal outlook towards women's education. Hence, urban women may be better off compared to rural women despite the patriarchal notions that have long crept and become embedded in Pakistan. With adverse cultural attitudes and gender specific roles and norms being more prevalent and stringent in rural areas, women in these areas then lag behind urban women in all aspects of life, especially decision making in the household. The rural urban divide becomes even greater when traditions and local customs are more highly regarded and followed compared to the national law (Sanauddin & Owais, 2016).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions stated in the study, secondary research was carried out using the Demographic and Health Surveys 2017-2018 for Pakistan. The research has used the DHS database 2017-18, where by a total of 7428 women were interviewed from urban areas across all Pakistani provinces while 8350 women were interviewed from rural areas. Hence, a total of 15778 women were interviewed from both areas all across the country. However, it should be noted that only married women aged 15-49 have been included in the study since decision making questions are asked only from these women. Hence, the research includes a total of 8334 observations.

Hypothesis of this study states that currently married women aged 15-49 residing in urban areas of the country experienced higher autonomy in terms of decision making as compared to women living in rural areas. To test the hypothesis, the study conducted a quantitative analysis in terms of descriptive and multivariate analysis.

Furthermore, in order to derive the net effect of rural vs. urban differences across the country and its provinces, multiple regression was carried out. In other words, in order to see whether rural urban differences persisted after controlling for socioeconomic variables, the study made use of multiple regression. Hence, the main question the study addressed is whether rural and urban residence affects women's decision making power after controlling for all other variables (individual socioeconomic characteristics) mentioned in the list below. This is imperative and has been done through multiple regression in order to see if rural-urban differences existed after controlling for individual socioeconomic characteristics. Therefore, the functional form is as follows:

$$\text{Equation for Pakistan: } Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \varepsilon$$

Where

Y= Women's Decision Making Power in Pakistan

X₁ = Household Residence in urban or rural area

X₂ = Age

X₃ = Age at First Marriage

X₄ = Household Wealth Index

X₅ = Highest Education Level of Women

X₆ = Number of Living Children

X₇ = Type of Earnings from Respondent's Work

Provincial Analysis

$$\text{Equation for Punjab: } Y_p = \alpha + \beta_{1p} X_{1p} + \beta_{2p} X_{2p} + \beta_{3p} X_{3p} + \beta_{4p} X_{4p} + \beta_{5p} X_{5p} + \beta_{6p} X_{6p} + \beta_{7p} X_{7p} + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation for Sindh : } Y_s = \alpha + \beta_{1s} X_{1s} + \beta_{2s} X_{2s} + \beta_{3s} X_{3s} + \beta_{4s} X_{4s} + \beta_{5s} X_{5s} + \beta_{6s} X_{6s} + \beta_{7s} X_{7s} + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation for Balochistan : } Y_b = \alpha + \beta_{1b} X_{1b} + \beta_{2b} X_{2b} + \beta_{3b} X_{3b} + \beta_{4b} X_{4b} + \beta_{5b} X_{5b} + \beta_{6b} X_{6b} + \beta_{7b} X_{7b} + \varepsilon$$

$$\text{Equation for KPK : } Y_k = \alpha + \beta_{1k} X_{1k} + \beta_{2k} X_{2k} + \beta_{3k} X_{3k} + \beta_{4k} X_{4k} + \beta_{5k} X_{5k} + \beta_{6k} X_{6k} + \beta_{7k} X_{7k} + \varepsilon$$

Hence, variables taken from the DHS data set were divided in 2 categories: those that represented household residence and women's individual socioeconomic characteristics (X variables) and those that indicated decision making (Y variables), each of which addressed the relevant research questions. These were analyzed further in terms of provincial differences

across Pakistan. Separate models were calculated for each province to determine the impact of rural-urban residence within each province using multiple regression. The Analysis at provincial level is valid since the survey data are representative for each of the four provinces, as stated in the sample design (NIPS, 2019, Page no.2) The independent variables used are as follows:

Independent Variables

Variable	Description	Coding Categories
URBAN-RURAL RESIDENCE	Whether resident resides in rural or urban area	1= Urban 2= Rural
AGE	How old the respondent is	1= < 30 2= 30-39 3= 40+
AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE	How old the respondent was when they got married	1= Less than 18 2= 18-22 3= 23+
HH WEALTH INDEX	Composite measure of household's cumulative living standard	1 = Poorest 2= Poorer 3= Middle 4= Richer 5= Richest
EDUCATION LEVEL OF WOMAN	The highest class completed	0= No education 1= Primary 2= Secondary 3= Higher
NUMBER OF LIVING CHILDREN	Total number of living children	1= < 3 2= 3-4 3= 5+
TYPE OF EARNINGS	The type of earnings from a respondent's work	1= Cash only 2= Cash, inkind and not paid 3= not working

However, the index for the dependent variable (women's decision making power) is as

follows:

Index for Dependent Variable

Variable	Description	Recoding
FINAL SAY ON MAKING LARGE PURCHASES	Person who usually makes decisions about household purchases	Respondent alone=2 Respondent and husband (jointly)=1 Husband alone/someone else=0
FINAL SAY ON SPENDING HUSBAND'S EARNINGS	Person who usually decides how the money earned by the husband will be used	Respondent alone=2 Respondent and husband (jointly)=1 Husband alone/someone else=0
FINAL SAY ON VISITS TO FAMILIES	Person who usually makes decisions about visits to families or relatives	Respondent alone=2 Respondent and husband (jointly)=1 Husband alone/someone else=0
FINAL SAY ON WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE	Person who usually makes decisions about health care for the wife	Respondent alone=2 Respondent and husband (jointly)=1 Husband alone/someone else=0
FINAL SAY ON USING OR NOT USING CONTRACEPTION	Person who usually makes decisions about using or not using contraception	Respondent alone=2 Respondent and husband (jointly)=1 Husband alone/someone else=0

Hence the equation for **Women's Decision Making Index** is as follows:

$$\text{HHLargePurchases} + \text{HusbandsEarnings} + \text{VisitstoFamilies} + \text{Women'sHealthcare} + \\ \text{Contraception(UsingORnot)}$$

If the respondent answered 0 for all 5 variables the equation would amount to 0.

However, if the respondent answered 2 for all 5 variables the equation would amount to 10.

Hence, the scale would then be 0-10 with 0 being the Least Decision Making Power and 10 being the Highest Decision Making Power.

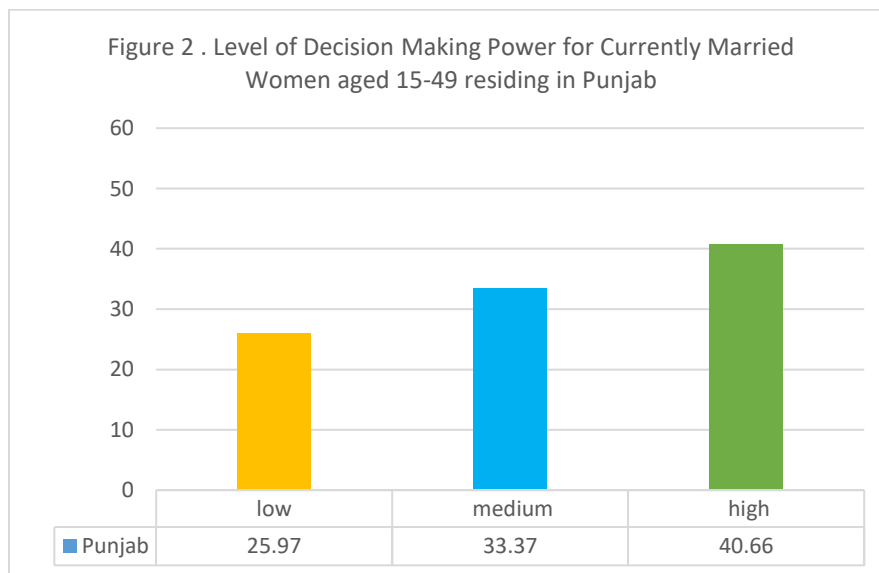
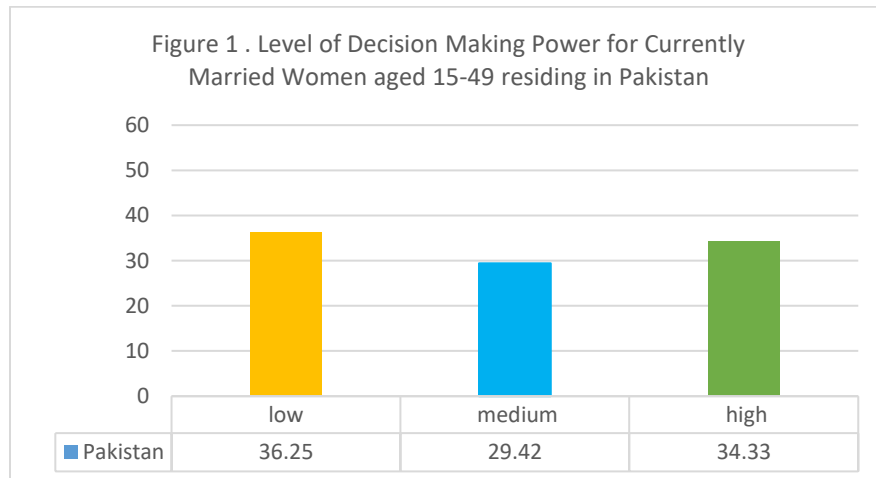
The index developed was a summation of all 5 dependent variables and was a continuous variable. The dependent variable used for the regression analysis was thus a continuous variable ranging from 0-10 with a mean score of 3.07.

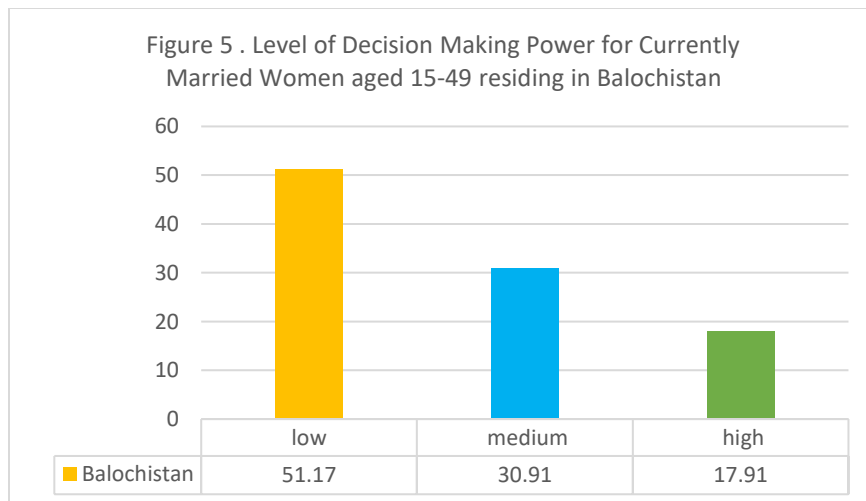
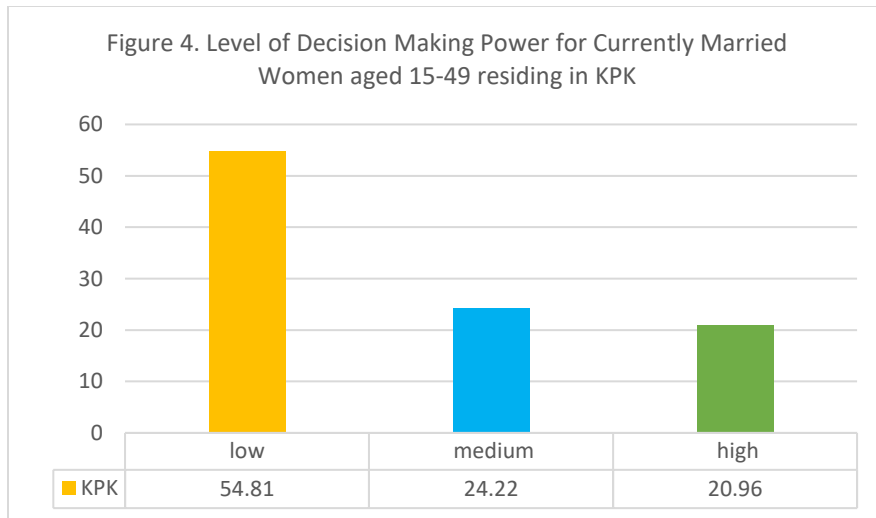
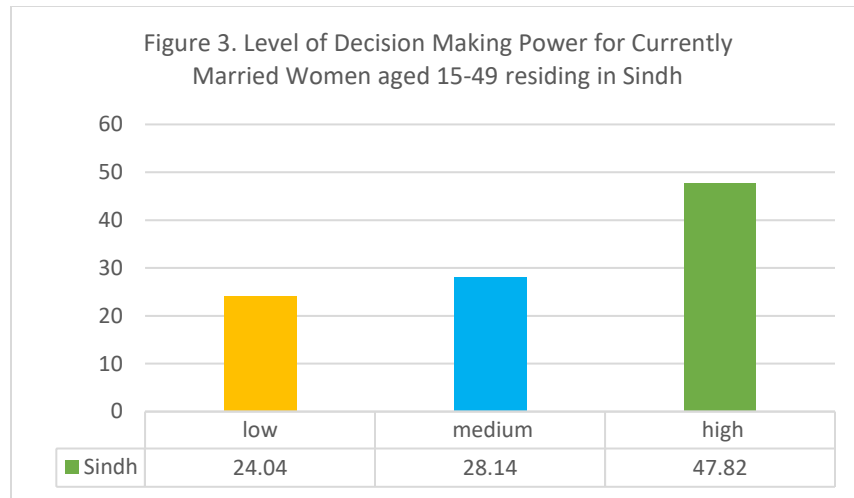
However, in case of cross tabulations, it was categorized according to the following criteria:

- Low = 0 - 1
- Medium = 2 - 4
- High = 5 - 10.

RESULTS

Figures 1-5 showed the decision making power of women in Pakistan and each of the four provinces, categorized as low, medium and high. For Pakistan as a whole, about 34 % women were categorized to have high power. Major differences were present between the provinces. About 41 % of the Punjabi women and 47 % of the Sindhi women had high decision making power. On the contrary only 21 % of the women in KPK and 18 % in Balochistan had high power.





The level of decision making power that Pakistani women possessed was cross-tabulated according to rural-urban residence and women's socioeconomic characteristics. These results were further branched out into the four provinces, namely, Punjab, Sindh, KPK and Balochistan, as shown in Tables 1-5.

In the context of overall Pakistan, urban women had significantly higher decision making power than rural women, with 38 % and 30 % respectively in the high power category (Table 1). All the socioeconomic variables included in our analysis were significantly associated with women's decision making power. The woman's age, age at marriage, and parity were positively associated with her decision making power. The higher the woman's age, the more likely was she to be a decision maker in the household. Similarly, the higher the woman's age at marriage, the more likely she was to participate in the decision making process. Other than this, there was also a positive association seen between number of living children and decision making power. If a woman had more than or equal to three children, her decision making power increased. However, decision making power declined for those who had five or more children. Women's education level made the largest difference. About 46 % of the women with above secondary education had high decision making power compared with only 30 % of those with no education. Also, as wealth went up so did women's decision making power. Consequently, the richest women possessed the most decision making powers within the household. Women who were not working had the least decision making power while those earning cash income had the most decision making power, with 32 % and 46 % having high power.

In Punjab, urban women had significantly higher decision making power than rural women, with 46 % of the urban and 37 % of the rural women reporting high power. In terms of the association of decision making power with women's socioeconomic characteristics, similar

patterns were found for most variables as in case of Pakistan as a whole. Age, parity, and education level had a significant positive association with women's decision making . Also, about 50 % of those earning cash income had high decision making power compared with only 39 % of those who were not working. However, in the case of age at first marriage and wealth the differences were not statistically insignificant.

Women in Sindh reported higher levels of decision making power than the other provinces, as shown in figures 2-5. In terms of rural-urban differences, 51 % of the urban women and 43 % of the rural women reported a high decision making power. Rural women from Sindh had higher decision making powers relative to rural women from the rest of the country. A possible reason for this may be that more than 25% of rural women from Sindh earn cash income compared with 15.3% in Punjab and 9.62% in Baluchistan (Appendix Table 2). The associations of socioeconomic characteristics with women's decision making power were similar to that of Pakistan, with the exception of wealth. Age, age at first marriage, parity and education level were positively associated with decision making power. Wealth was not significantly associated with decision making power

In KPK, the level of decision making power was much lower than in Sindh and Punjab. Women in urban areas had a significantly higher power than the ones in rural areas, 23 % vs 18 % reporting a high level of power. As in the other provinces, the woman's age, parity, and education level had a significant positive association with decision making. Wealthier women also had a significantly higher power than poorer women. Similarly, those earning a cash income had a significantly higher level of power than those who were not working. Age at first marriage was not significantly associated with women's decision making power.

Women in Balochistan had the lowest level of decision making power among all provinces, with only 18 % reporting high power compared with 47 % in Sindh. Like in other provinces, urban women had significantly more power than rural women; 23 % vs 11 % reporting a high level of power. Moreover, in the context of Balochistan, all 5 variables a part from type of residence and education level, were not statistically significant. More women (almost 51%) had least decision making powers in the province as opposed to only 18% who had the highest autonomy. Nonetheless, the more educated the woman, the more likely she was to become the decision maker in the household. However, age at first cohabitation and number of children did not show the same pattern for Balochistan as that of the country and other provinces. If a woman was between the ages of 18 to 22, she was more likely to possess high decision making powers. However, if a woman got married before the age of 18, her decision making power declined. Hence, this showed a positive association. Also, women with fewer children possessed higher decision making powers.

Table 1. Percentage of currently married women in **Pakistan** aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power

Type of Place of Residence	low	medium	high	Total	
urban	31.99	29.73	38.29	4158	Pr = 0.000
rural	40.49	29.12	30.39	4176	
Age					
less than 30	47.46	28.63	23.92	3203	Pr = 0.000
30 - 39	32.01	30.75	37.25	3187	
40+	24.74	28.55	46.71	1944	
Age at first marriage					
less than 18	39.37	29.13	31.5	3175	Pr = 0.000
18 - 22	35.57	29.4	35.03	3554	
23+	31.59	30.03	38.38	1605	
Number of living children					
less than 3	42.59	29.04	28.37	3468	Pr = 0.000
3 or 4	30.89	29.52	39.6	2629	
5 +	32.72	29.91	37.37	2237	
Highest education level					
no education	41.26	28.72	30.02	4443	Pr = 0.000
primary	33.81	30.59	35.59	1180	
secondary	33.13	29.63	37.24	1603	
Higher	23.29	30.69	46.03	1108	
Wealth index for urban/rural					
poorest	38.32	30.54	31.14	2007	Pr = 0.000
poorer	37.18	29.06	33.76	1724	
middle	38.11	27.27	34.62	1606	
richer	35.26	29.34	35.39	1571	
richest	31.21	30.79	38.01	1426	
Type of earnings from respondent's work					
cash only	18.68	35.15	46.17	1135	Pr = 0.000
cash, inkind and not paid	30.47	35.62	33.91	233	
not working	39.31	28.28	32.41	6966	
Total	36.25	29.42	34.33	100	
	3021	2452	2861	8334	

The index ranges from 0-10 and is categorized as low (0-1), medium (2-4) and high (5-10). It is a summation of all five dependent variables of women decision making power.

Table 2. Percentage of currently married women in **Punjab** aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power

Type of Place of Residence	low	medium	high	Total	
urban	21.2	32.51	46.29	1132	Pr = 0.000
rural	29.26	33.96	36.77	1637	
Age					
less than 30	37.59	35.55	26.86	979	Pr = 0.000
30 - 39	23.06	33.36	43.57	1097	
40+	14.14	30.3	55.56	693	
Age at first marriage					
less than 18	24.7	34	41.3	753	Pr= 0.534
18 - 22	26.88	33.93	39.19	1291	
23+	25.66	31.72	42.62	725	
Number of living children					
less than 3	34.43	33.56	32.01	1156	Pr = 0.000
3 or 4	21.77	32.86	45.36	992	
5 +	16.91	33.82	49.28	621	
Highest education level					
no education	28.03	33.24	38.73	1056	Pr = 0.000
primary	26.99	34.6	38.41	578	
secondary	27.5	32.85	39.65	691	
Higher	17.34	32.88	49.77	444	
Wealth index for urban/rural					
poorest	29.17	36.22	34.62	312	Pr= 0.088
poorer	22.69	35.92	41.39	476	
middle	29.02	30.07	40.91	572	
richer	24.74	34.7	40.56	683	
richest	25.48	31.82	42.7	726	
Type of earnings from respondent's work					
cash only	14.1	35.47	50.43	468	Pr = 0.000
cash, inkind and not paid	27.22	39.05	33.73	169	
not working	28.47	32.46	39.07	2132	
Total	25.97	33.37	40.66	100	
	719	924	1126	2769	

The index ranges from 0-10 and is categorized as low (0-1), medium (2-4) and high (5-10). It is a summation of all five dependent variables of women decision making power.

Table3. Percentage of currently married women in **Sindh** aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power

Type of Place of Residence	low	medium	high	Total	
urban	21.52	27.53	50.95	1315	Pr = 0.001
rural	27.51	28.97	43.51	956	
Age					
less than 30	32.23	29.04	38.72	878	Pr = 0.000
30 - 39	19.7	30.24	50.06	863	
40+	17.55	23.21	59.25	530	
Age at first marriage					
less than 18	27.38	28.37	44.25	913	Pr = 0.012
18 - 22	22.76	27.24	50	936	
23+	19.67	29.62	50.71	422	
Number of living children					
less than 3	27.86	29.65	42.49	1005	Pr = 0.000
3 or 4	19.97	27.73	52.3	696	
5 +	22.28	25.96	51.75	570	
Highest education level					
no education	27.23	28.08	44.69	1186	Pr = 0.001
primary	23.03	28.62	48.36	304	
secondary	22.27	28.07	49.65	431	
Higher	16.29	28	55.71	350	
Wealth index for urban/rural					
poorest	27.52	25.86	46.62	785	Pr = 0.061
poorer	23.65	27.39	48.96	482	
middle	23.29	28.86	47.85	395	
richer	22.36	28.26	49.38	322	
richest	18.12	34.49	47.39	287	
Type of earnings from respondent's work					
cash only	14.9	35.58	49.52	416	Pr = 0.000
cash, in kind and not paid	27.78	25	47.22	36	
not working	26.06	26.5	47.44	1819	
Total	24.04	28.14	47.82	100	
	546	639	1086	2271	

The index ranges from 0-10 and is categorized as low (0-1), medium (2-4) and high (5-10). It is a summation of all five dependent variables of women decision making power.

Table 4. Percentage of currently married women in **KPK** aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power

Type of Place of Residence	low	medium	high	Total	
urban	49.3	27.59	23.11	1004	Pr = 0.000
rural	60.78	20.58	18.64	928	
Age					
less than 30	69.41	19.72	10.87	791	Pr = 0.000
30 - 39	49.24	26.07	24.69	725	
40+	36.78	29.57	33.65	416	
Age at first marriage					
less than 18	54.73	23.92	21.35	857	Pr = 0.535
18 - 22	56.34	23.66	20	820	
23+	50.2	27.06	22.75	255	
Number of living children					
less than 3	67.36	20.29	12.35	769	Pr = 0.000
3 or 4	46.74	26.88	26.38	599	
5 +	46.28	26.77	26.95	564	
Highest education level					
no education	57.18	24.03	18.79	1107	Pr = 0.004
primary	59.19	22.87	17.94	223	
secondary	50.97	24.38	24.65	361	
Higher	45.64	26.14	28.22	241	
Wealth index for urban/rural					
poorest	54.43	30.7	14.87	316	Pr = 0.004
poorer	57.21	23.26	19.53	430	
middle	56.01	21.15	22.84	416	
richer	56.64	21.45	21.91	429	
richest	48.39	26.69	24.93	341	
Type of earnings from respondent's work					
cash only	27.42	34.68	37.9	124	Pr = 0.000
cash, inkind and not paid	18.18	45.45	36.36	11	
not working	56.93	23.37	19.7	1797	
Total	54.81	24.22	20.96	100	
	1059	468	405	1932	

The index ranges from 0-10 and is categorized as low (0-1), medium (2-4) and high (5-10). It is a summation of all five dependent variables of women decision making power.

Table 5. Percentage of currently married women in **Balochistan** aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power

Type of Place of Residence	low	medium	high	Total	
urban	44.13	32.39	23.48	707	Pr = 0.000
rural	58.78	29.31	11.91	655	
Age					
less than 30	57.66	28.47	13.87	555	Pr = 0.001
30 - 39	47.81	32.67	19.52	502	
40+	44.92	32.46	22.62	305	
Age at first marriage					
less than 18	52.91	31.44	15.64	652	Pr = 0.128
18 - 22	47.73	31.16	21.1	507	
23+	54.19	28.57	17.24	203	
Number of living children					
less than 3	52.23	30.67	17.1	538	Pr = 0.493
3 or 4	51.75	28.07	20.18	342	
5 +	49.59	33.2	17.22	482	
Highest education level					
no education	53.11	29.8	17.09	1094	Pr = 0.000
primary	54.67	30.67	14.67	75	
secondary	50.83	32.5	16.67	120	
Higher	19.18	45.21	35.62	73	
Wealth index for urban/rural					
poorest	48.82	33.67	17.51	594	Pr = 0.648
poorer	51.49	29.17	19.35	336	
middle	54.26	28.7	17.04	223	
richer	51.09	29.93	18.98	137	
richest	59.72	25	15.28	72	
Type of earnings from respondent's work					
cash only	39.37	33.07	27.56	127	Pr = 0.004
cash, inkind and not paid	76.47	17.65	5.88	17	
not working	52.05	30.87	17.08	1218	
Total	51.17	30.91	17.91	100	
	697	421	244	1362	

The index ranges from 0-10 and is categorized as low (0-1), medium (2-4) and high (5-10). It is a summation of all five dependent variables of women decision making power.

Figures 6-10 indicated the highest level of decision making power rural and urban women possessed throughout Pakistan and the individual provinces. It was evident that urban women possessed more decision making powers as compared to rural women throughout Pakistan and the four provinces. In terms of Pakistan, there was less discrepancy for rural and urban (38.39 vs 30.39) women as compared to individual provinces. Urban women from Sindh possessed the highest decision making power as opposed to the rest of the women throughout the country (50.95%). However, rural women from Sindh also possessed high decision making powers compared to other rural women from the rest of the country (43.51%). On the other hand, the number of women with the highest decision making power was lowest in Balochistan (11.91%).

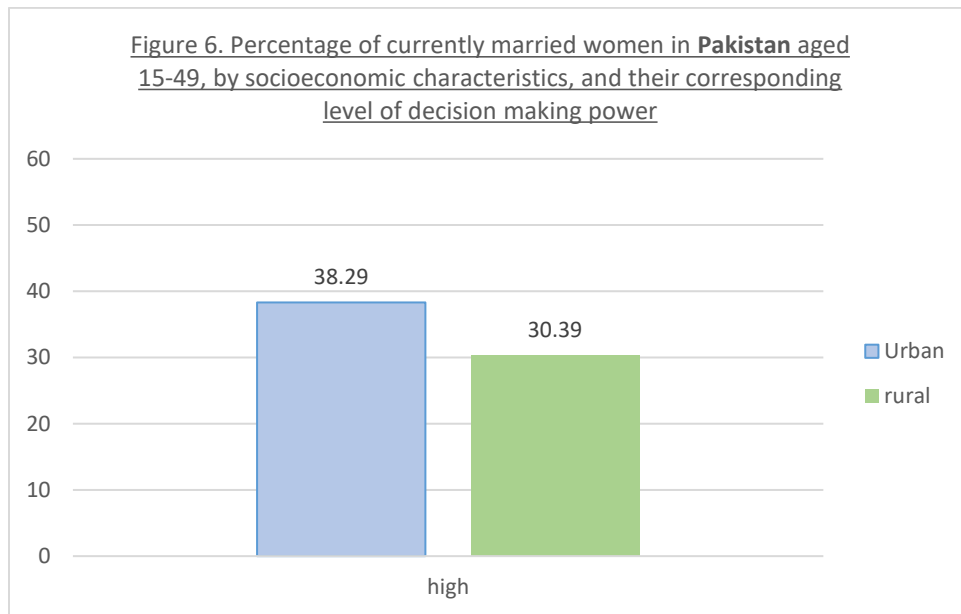


Figure 7. Percentage of currently married women in Punjab aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power

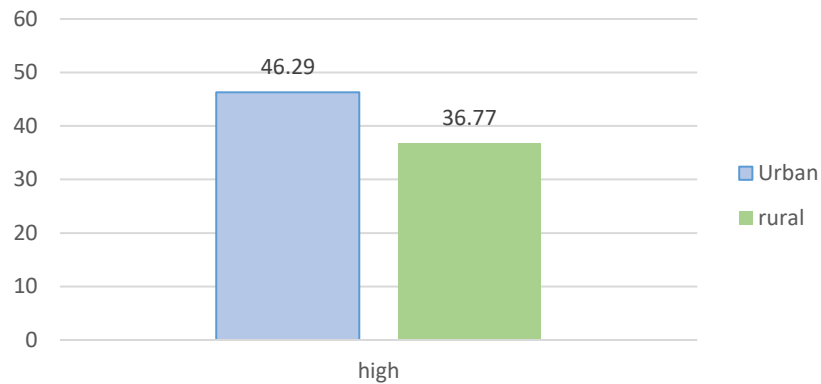


Figure 8. Percentage of currently married women in Sindh aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power

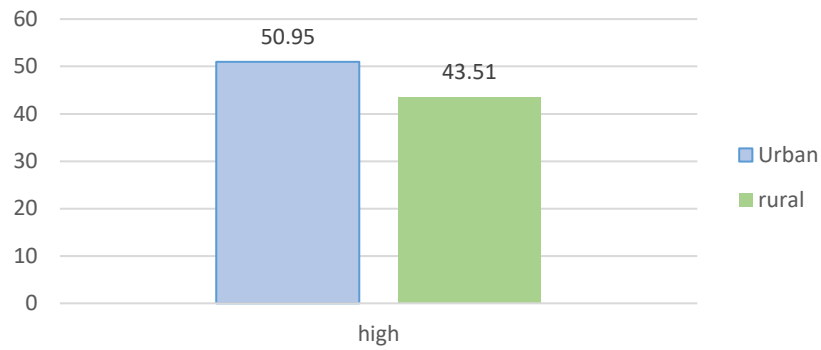
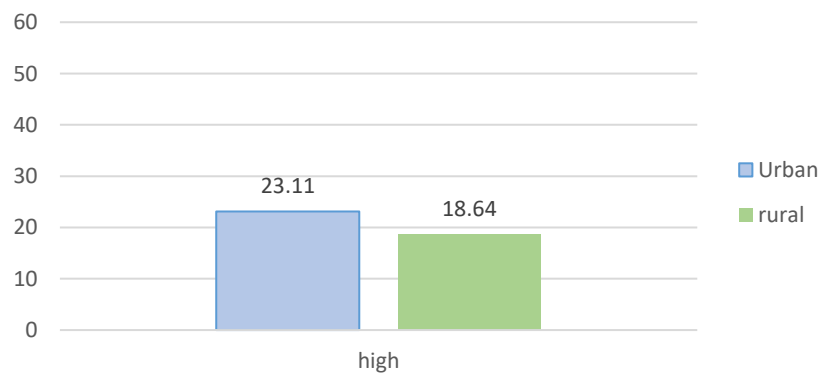
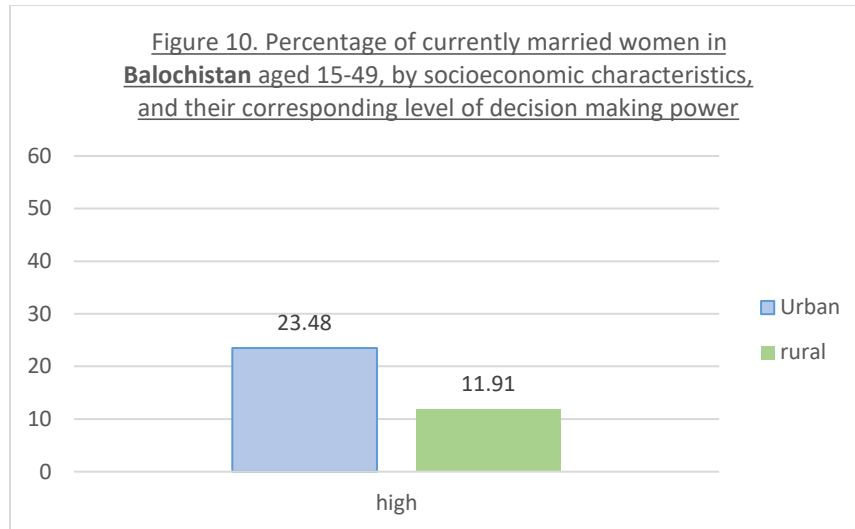


Figure 9. Percentage of currently married women in KPK aged 15-49, by socioeconomic characteristics, and their corresponding level of decision making power





Regression Analysis:

Regression analysis for Pakistan as well as each of the provinces indicated that the models explained a relatively small amount of variation in the dependent variable; about 10% for the country as a whole. The residence area of a woman showed a significant negative relationship with the decision making power of a woman in Pakistan (Table 6). A woman residing in a rural area was 0.232 points less autonomous in making decisions as compared to an urban woman, after controlling for various socio-economic variables. Thus, our hypothesis regarding the negative association between rural residence and decision making power was upheld.

The regression coefficients revealed that in terms of the socioeconomic variables, number of living children, age, level of education and type of earnings were significant predictors of women's decision making power in Pakistan. If a woman was between the age of 30 and 39, her overall autonomy in the household increased by 0.720 points compared to a younger woman aged less than 30; and by 1.37 points if she was aged 40 or more. Similarly, the education level of a woman showed a significant linear association with her decision making power. For

example, the autonomy of a woman with post-secondary education was 0.926 points higher than an uneducated woman. Compared to women who had cash earnings, those who were not working were significantly less autonomous. Contrary to expectation, women who got married at older ages (23+) had lower decision making power than the ones who got married at less than 18 years of age.

In the context of Punjab, same patterns as that of Pakistan were seen to be repeated. Residence was negatively associated with women's decision making power and a woman residing in a rural area was 0.301 points less autonomous in making decisions as compared to an urban woman, after controlling for other socio-economic variables. Almost all the socioeconomic variables were significantly associated with women's decision making power. Age, number of living children, and education level had a significant positive association with women's decision making power. However, women who had cash employment were more autonomous than unemployed women and those who had non-cash employment.

Like Pakistan, women residing in rural areas of Sindh were significantly less autonomous than those residing in urban areas; with a 0.288 lower mean score. However, some of the socioeconomic variables that were significant in Punjab were not so in Sindh. Older age and higher educational level remained significant predictors of women's decision making power after controlling for other variables. A woman who had a higher level of education was 0.610 points more autonomous than a woman with no education. Also, women who were not working were significantly less autonomous than those who had cash income.

On the other hand, contrary to the other provinces, KPK revealed that residence is not a significant factor and hence, did not have much of an impact on women's decision making power. Consistent with Punjab, number of living children, age, education level, and type of

earnings were highly significant variables. The number of living children, age and education had a significant positive relationship with women's decision making power while the unemployed women had significantly lower autonomy than those earning cash income. Wealthier women in KPK also showed a higher autonomy than poorer women. .

Similar to Pakistan as a whole, residence was highly significant in Balochistan and was negatively associated with women's decision making power within the province. Women residing in rural areas of Balochistan were significantly less autonomous than those residing in urban areas; with a 0.577 lower mean score. Women's age and education had a significant positive association with women's decision making power. However, contrary to the other provinces, number of living children had a negative association with women's decision making power. Moreover, similar to other provinces, unemployment had a significantly negative relationship with women's decision making power.

Consequently, the area of residence was negatively associated to women's decision making power. The discrepancy between rural and urban women in terms of decision making power was widely evident in Balochistan (0.577) while Sindh showed the least difference (0.288). However, Pakistan overall also showed that urban-rural differences in women's decision making power less i.e. 0.232 after controlling for individual socioeconomic factors.

Table 6. Association between place of residence and women's decision making power among currently married women in **Pakistan** aged 15-49, after controlling for other socioeconomic characteristics

Linear regression - Pakistan				
Women Decision Making Power				
Index	Coef.	St.Err.	p-value	Sig
Type of place of residence				
urban	1			
rural	-0.232	0.053	0.000	***
Number of living children				
less than 3	1			
3 or 4	0.268	0.061	0.000	***
5 +	-0.015	0.075	0.840	
Age				
less than 30	1			
30 - 39	0.720	0.063	0.000	***
40 +	1.372	0.076	0.000	***
Wealth index				
poorest	1			
poorer	0.110	0.072	0.127	
middle	0.142	0.076	0.060	*
richer	0.118	0.080	0.140	
richest	0.011	0.090	0.904	
Highest education level				
no education	1			
primary	0.481	0.074	0.000	***
secondary	0.602	0.073	0.000	***
higher	0.926	0.093	0.000	***
Age at first marriage				
less than 18	1			
18- 22	-0.017	0.055	0.750	
23 +	-0.149	0.075	0.048	**
Type of earnings from respondent's work				
cash only	1			
cash, inkind and not paid	-0.357	0.157	0.0230	**
not working	-0.829	0.071	0.000	***
Constant	2.868	0.096	0.000	***

Number of observations	8334
Mean dependent variable	3.07
SD dependent variable	2.279
R-squared	0.103
Adj R-Squared	0.1016
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$	

Table 7. Association between place of residence and women decision making power among currently married women in Punjab aged 15-49, after controlling for other socioeconomic characteristics

Linear regression - Punjab				
Women Decision Making Power				
<u>Index</u>	<u>Coef.</u>	<u>St.Err.</u>	<u>p-value</u>	<u>Sig 5%</u>
type of place of residence				
urban	1	.	.	
rural	-0.301	0.091	0.001	***
number of living children				
less than 3	1	.	.	
3 and 4	0.347	0.098	0	***
5 above	0.348	0.125	0.005	***
age				
0 and 30	1	.	.	
30 and 39	0.687	0.103	0	***
40 and 49	1.391	0.123	0	***
wealth index				
poorest	1	.	.	
poorer	0.242	0.149	0.104	
middle	0.344	0.146	0.018	**
richer	0.271	0.148	0.067	*
richest	0.085	0.161	0.598	
highest education level				
no education	1	.	.	
primary	0.224	0.111	0.043	**
secondary	0.378	0.119	0.002	***
higher	0.858	0.153	0	***
age at first cohabitation				
less than 18	1	.	.	
18 and 22	-0.325	0.096	0.001	***
23 and 47	-0.438	0.121	0	***
type of earnings from respondent's work				
cash only	1	.	.	
cash, inkind and not paid	-0.601	0.184	0.001	***
not working	-0.594	0.106	0	***
Constant	3.167	0.178	0	***

Number of observations	2769
Mean dependent variable	3.532
SD dependent variable	2.141
R-squared	0.120
Adj R-Squared	0.115
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$	

Table 8. Association between place of residence and women decision making power among currently married women in **Sindh** aged 15-49, after controlling for other socioeconomic characteristics

Linear regression - Sindh				
Women Decision Making Power				
Index	Coef.	St.Err.	p-value	Sig 5%
type of place of residence				
urban	1	.	.	
rural	-0.288	0.111	0.009	***
number of living children				
less than 3	1	.	.	
3 and 4	0.192	0.117	0.1	
5 above	-0.153	0.146	0.295	
age				
0 and 30	1	.	.	
30 and 39	0.658	0.121	0	***
40 and 49	1.09	0.148	0	***
wealth index				
poorest	1	.	.	
poorer	0.194	0.131	0.138	
middle	0.006	0.147	0.966	
richer	0.113	0.165	0.496	
richest	-0.152	0.186	0.413	
highest education level				
no education	1	.	.	
primary	0.313	0.148	0.035	**
secondary	0.37	0.15	0.014	**
higher	0.61	0.18	0.001	***
age at first cohabitation				
less than 18	1	.	.	
18 and 22	0.084	0.107	0.432	
23 and 47	-0.054	0.148	0.717	
type of earnings from respondent's work				
cash only	1	.	.	
cash, inkind and not paid	-0.11	0.381	0.773	
not working	-0.448	0.123	0	***
Constant	3.363	0.171	0	***

Number of obs	2271
Mean dependent var	3.675
SD dependent var	2.252
R-squared	0.066
Adj R-Squared	0.0596

Table 9. Association between place of residence and women decision making power among currently married women in **KPK** aged 15-49, after controlling for other socioeconomic characteristics

Linear regression - KPK				
Women Decision Making Power				
Index	Coef.	St.Err.	p-value	Sig 5%
type of place of residence		.	.	
urban	1			
rural	-0.133	0.107	0.215	
number of living children		.	.	
less than 3	1			
3 and 4	0.602	0.13	0	***
5 above	0.445	0.161	0.006	***
age		.	.	
0 and 30	1			
30 and 39	0.739	0.134	0	***
40 and 49	1.493	0.164	0	***
wealth index		.	.	
poorest	1			
poorer	0.14	0.164	0.395	
middle	0.38	0.169	0.025	**
richer	0.296	0.172	0.086	*
richest	0.382	0.192	0.046	**
highest education level		.	.	
no education	1			
primary	0.143	0.163	0.38	
secondary	0.487	0.147	0.001	***
higher	0.643	0.188	0.001	***
age at first cohabitation		.	.	
less than 18	1			
18 and 22	-0.237	0.11	0.031	**
23 and 47	-0.319	0.172	0.064	*
type of earnings from respondent's work		.	.	
cash only	1			
cash, inkind and not paid	-0.074	0.684	0.914	
not working	-0.946	0.209	0	***
Constant	2.081	0.263	0	***

Number of observations	1932
Mean dependent variable	2.343
SD dependent variable	2.299
R-squared	0.122
Adj R-Squared	0.115
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$	

Table 10. Association between place of residence and women decision making power among currently married women in **Balochistan** aged 15-49, after controlling for other socioeconomic characteristics

Linear regression - Balochistan				
Women Decision Making Power				
Index	Coef.	St.Err.	p-value	Sig 5%
type of place of residence				
urban	1	.	.	
rural	-0.577	0.113	0	***
number of living children				
less than 3	1	.	.	
3 and 4	-0.178	0.141	0.209	
5 above	-0.328	0.155	0.034	**
age				
0 and 30	1	.	.	
30 and 39	0.549	0.138	0	***
40 and 49	0.87	0.168	0	***
wealth index				
poorest	1	.	.	
poorer	0.23	0.135	0.088	*
middle	0.067	0.157	0.667	
richer	0.02	0.191	0.918	
richest	-0.273	0.253	0.281	
highest education level				
no education	1	.	.	
primary	-0.071	0.231	0.759	
secondary	0.166	0.195	0.393	
higher	1.271	0.261	0	***
age at first cohabitation				
less than 18	1	.	.	
18 and 22	0.229	0.115	0.046	**
23 and 47	-0.234	0.164	0.154	
type of earnings from respondent's work				
cash only	1	.	.	
cash, inkind and not paid	-0.889	0.494	0.072	*
not working	-0.509	0.185	0.006	***
Constant	2.473	0.215	0	***

Number of observations	1362
Mean dependent variable	2.151
SD dependent variable	1.970
R-squared	0.086
Adj R-Squared	0.076
*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .1$	

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis of this study stated that currently married women aged 15-49 residing in urban areas of the country experienced higher autonomy in terms of decision making as compared to women living in rural areas. Our results for Pakistan overall and three of the four provinces were consistent with the above hypothesis. Hence, we can infer patriarchal values were more deeply embedded in rural areas as opposed to urban areas of Pakistan. According to Abbas et al. (2018), patriarchy had long crept into the Pakistani society affecting women's social status, maintaining the patriarchal structure and thereby, adding to women's subordinate role.

The situation becomes even more dismal when the rural-urban divide is brought into the picture. Wang (2020) explained the case of China and how patriarchy stemmed from the rural areas that still followed and were influenced by the Confucian ethics and "patriarchal culture norms". Hence, the male dominated ideology prevailed in these areas more profoundly than the urban areas, where women, despite having a financial standing, were unable to participate in household decision making. Being so deeply shaped by the patriarchal norms and values, women did not fight for an improved role and social status. **In case of Pakistan, men are considered as household heads and breadwinners while the primary role of women is that of a wife and mother. These norms are more deeply entrenched in rural than urban areas.**

Our analysis indicated that notable differences were present in the level of women's decision making autonomy across the four provinces. Women in Sindh (47.8%) and Punjab (40.6%), participated more in decision making within the household as opposed to those in KPK (20.9%) and Balochistan (17.9%). Thus, women played a greater role in decision making within the family in Sindh and Punjab compared with KPK and Balochistan. In the bivariate analysis,

differences between rural and urban women were statistically significant in each of the four provinces.

After controlling for other socioeconomic factors in our regression analysis our hypothesis was upheld for Pakistan i.e. women residing in urban areas of the country experienced higher autonomy in terms of decision making as compared to women living in rural areas. Our findings were consistent with those of Taj el al (2004) who reported for Faisalabad that there was a widespread discrepancy in decision making with urban areas performing better than rural areas (Taj tal., 2004). Moreover, the situation in Ethiopia was also consistent with our findings. This indicated that due to more awareness and education, urban women were more likely to make decisions (especially in terms of contraceptive use) as opposed to their rural counterparts. “This can be explained with the more egalitarian society in urban and patriarchy in rural” (Bogale, 2011).

However, our hypothesis was not upheld in KPK, where residence was not a statistically significant factor, even though the coefficient was in the expected direction. This showed that residence may not have had as large an impact in the province as opposed to other individual socioeconomic factors. Hence, this may lead to the inference that in KPK, patriarchy may be as deeply entrenched in the urban areas as it is in the rural areas. This may be due to various cultural practices, deep rooted patriarchal norms, values and widespread discrimination still prevalent in the area. An alternative explanation may be the relatively smaller difference in the educational level of rural and urban women in KPK compared with the country as a whole (see Appendix Table 1). Findings from Nepal were similar to the results from KPK. These suggested that age of women, employment status, education and number of children was positively associated to women’s decision making power within the household and in fact, residence may

not be as imperative as other socioeconomic factors. It seemed that ideological values inspired from traditions played a key role responsible for lower women's decision making powers within the household, hence maintaining the subordination of women in both the rural and urban areas of the province (Acharya et al., 2010).

Moreover, another important finding from our study indicated that the rural and urban difference in women's decision making power was largest in Balochistan as compared to the rest of the provinces. This may have been due to the difference in education levels in rural and urban Balochistan. It is evident that approximately 22% urban women in the province have secondary and higher education while only 6% rural women approximately have attained education at these levels (Appendix Table 1). Other than this, Boonto (2008)'s findings may help to explain the situation of Balochistan. In a traditional community such as that found in rural Balochistan, patriarchal norms and cultural practices may have been so deeply embedded that women were unable to uplift their position in such a strong patriarchal setting (Boonto, 2008).

Another key reason for the rural-urban difference may have been the higher economic dependency of women in rural areas. Employment for cash earnings was more easily available in urban areas and enabled these women to attain greater decision making power. In rural areas men were expected to go out to work while women were to be restricted to activities in the household (Bhutta and Haider, 2013). Women employed as unpaid family helpers may be an exception to the above. However, in terms of income, Bradshaw (2013) stated that urban women in Nicaragua were more likely to obtain paid work due to better infrastructure and ideology provided in these areas. Hence, with more opportunities at their disposal, urban women were more likely to contribute monetarily in the household and thus, had stronger bargaining positions as opposed to rural women (Bradshaw, 2013).

We found that a woman's age, education, number of living children and cash income had independent positive associations with women's decision making power. However, the level of significance for these characteristics differed across the provinces.

Age of the woman was found to have the largest impact on autonomy in Pakistan as well as each of the provinces. Older persons in Pakistan generally command higher degree of respect in Pakistani families, and older women's opinions may therefore be given greater weight in decision making. Evidence from Balochistan showed a similar pattern related to freedom of mobility and resource control and how decisions in this regard rose as a woman's age increased (Mahmud et al., 2012). Our results were similar to that of a study in India that showed that as a woman's age rose, so did her decision making power within the household as opposed to a younger woman. However, if such a women resided in an urban area, her empowerment levels were likely to increase even more (Saravanakumar & Elizabeth Varakumari, 2019). Also in Nepal, older women were more likely to make decisions regarding healthcare, major household purchases, daily purchases and visits to family and friends. One of the possible reasons age may be positively associated to women's decision making is that as a woman ages, she is more likely to break away from an extended family or her natal kin that may have had an influence on her earlier (Acharya et al., 2010).

The education of a woman is seen to be a significant predictor of women's decision making in Pakistan and all 4 provinces. Since urban areas have a better educational infrastructure and facilities, a larger percentage of women in these areas were educated than rural women. This may help to tackle the patriarchal notions present in the society as the more educated a woman is, the more she is aware of her rights and empowerment schemes proposed by the government. She may be able to assert her opinions within the household and participate in the decision making

process (Saravanakumar & Elizabeth Varakumari, 2019). On the other hand, rural women may lag behind due to the poor educational infrastructure and lack of public services in rural areas. Thus, these women may suffer from lower social statuses and illiteracy. Such an imbalance can be attributed partially to the patriarchal superstructure prevalent in the country, especially in these rural areas, where women are bound to work either in the house or in the fields, lacking access to education (Abbas et al., 2018).

Age at marriage showed an unexpected result and women who got married at older ages had lower autonomy than those who married at younger ages. It is likely that age at marriage had multicollinear effects on the dependent variable. However, these results need further exploration. Similarly, wealth did not show a clear significant association with decision making in Pakistan, or any of the provinces except KPK where richer women appeared to have greater autonomy. The lack of association between wealth and autonomy may again be explain by the possible multicollinearity with other variables such as education. Our findings were, however, consistent with research from Bangladesh which suggested that wealth may not have had a significant impact on women's decision making power and their participating role within the household. In fact, women in wealthier households were less likely to be decision makers within the household due to their husbands acting more as family patriarchs than joint decision makers within the household (Mahmud et al., 2012).

Thus, rural-urban differences in women's decision making power were clearly present across the country. These differences persisted after controlling for socioeconomic characteristics in all four provinces except KPK. It is important to note that the most widespread rural-urban discrepancy was found in Balochistan. While a better understanding of the KPK results requires further study, it is possible that patriarchal normative structures were as deeply

embedded in urban areas as in rural areas, with a slower pace of change than in the other provinces Finally, age of the woman was the most significant, positive predictor of women's decision making power in Pakistan overall and all four provinces.

CONCLUSION

Currently married women's decision making power was higher in urban compared with rural areas in Pakistan and all its four provinces. Differences between rural and urban areas persisted after controlling for other socioeconomic characteristics. The largest rural-urban divide was identified in Balochistan as opposed to the rest of the provinces. However, in terms of KPK where residence was not a statistically significant predictor of women's decision making power, it is perhaps safe to infer that patriarchy may be as deeply rooted in the urban areas of KPK as it is in the rural areas.

Age of the woman had the largest positive impact on decision making power. Education was also an important variable while wealth reflected less of an impact. Our findings re-affirmed the inequality in women's lives in rural and urban areas, reflected clearly in the lower decision making power of the former. Ability to contribute to major decisions within the household such as seeking health care and using contraception may play a vital role in improving a woman's quality of life, and benefit the whole family. Hence, empowerment policies should be especially focused on rural areas to elevate the position of women and bridge the gap between rural and urban areas.

This study provides clear policy implications for program planners who are responsible for designing strategies to uplift the status of women in the country. They must recognize the vast disparity between the decision making role that women in rural and urban areas play within the household.

Our findings suggest important implications for women's decision making role within the household. Women from rural areas have relatively limited access to knowledge especially with regards to empowerment schemes, as compared to urban women. Similarly, their control over

resources is also restricted. Awareness programs should be put into place to increase access to information including women's rights within and outside the household.

However, most importantly it is evident from our research that education and cash income have a direct impact on women's decision making power. Evidence also suggests that increased employment opportunities especially in terms of cash income leads to higher contribution to household income, thereby uplifting the position of women within the household. It is also seen that the more educated the woman, the more likely she is to have a decision making role within the household. Therefore, the government should introduce schemes targeted at increasing work opportunities, cash income and education levels of women so that the rural-urban gap could be filled.

Moreover, if a woman has greater autonomy in decisions regarding her health care, she may be able to seek better health care. Also, if she has a greater say in using contraception she may be more capable of making choices about the number and spacing of children. Thus, programs should pay special emphasis to enabling women's autonomy in rural areas of the country.

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APPENDIX

Table 1. Row wise percentages of currently married women aged 15-49, by residence, and their corresponding level of education

Province / Country	Type of Place of Residence	Highest Educational Level					Significance
		no education	primary	secondary	higher	Total	
Pakistan	Urban	38.79	14.26	25.66	21.28	4158	Pr=0.000
	Rural	67.77	14.06	12.84	5.34	4176	
	Total	53.31	14.16	19.23	13.29	8334	
Punjab	Urban	20.23	20.05	32.86	26.86	1132	Pr=0.000
	Rural	50.52	21.44	19.49	8.55	1637	
	Total	38.14	20.87	24.95	16.03	2769	
Sindh	Urban	31.1	15.29	28.52	25.1	1315	Pr=0.000
	Rural	81.28	10.77	5.86	2.09	956	
	Total	52.22	13.39	18.98	15.41	2271	
KPK	Urban	46.91	11.45	23.01	18.63	1004	Pr=0.000
	Rural	68.53	11.64	14.01	5.82	928	
	Total	57.3	11.54	18.69	12.47	1932	
Balochistan	Urban	71.29	7.07	12.59	9.05	707	Pr=0.000
	Rural	90.08	3.82	4.73	1.37	655	
	Total	80.32	5.51	8.81	5.36	1362	

Table 2. Row wise percentages of currently married women aged 15-49, by residence, and the type of earnings received

Province / Country	Type of Place of Residence	Type of Earnings from Respondent's Work			Total	Significance
		cash only	cash, inkind and not paid	not working		
Pakistan	Urban	11.9	0.58	87.52	1135	Pr=0.000
	Rural	15.33	5	79.67	233	

	Total	13.62	2.8	83.59	6966	
Punjab	Urban	15.37	0.97	83.66	1132	Pr=0.000
	Rural	17.96	9.65	72.39	1637	
	Total	16.9	6.1	77	2769	
Sindh	Urban	13.31	0.38	86.31	1315	Pr=0.000
	Rural	25.21	3.24	71.55	956	
	Total	18.32	1.59	80.1	2271	
KPK	Urban	8.17	0.7	91.14	1004	Pr=0.000
	Rural	4.53	0.43	95.04	928	
	Total	18.32	1.59	80.1	1932	
Balochistan	Urban	9.05	0.14	90.81	707	Pr=0.000
	Rural	9.62	2.44	87.94	655	
	Total	18.32	1.59	80.1	1362	