

## DECISION MAKING AUTONOMY AND HEALTH OF WOMEN IN REPRODUCTIVE AGE IN PAKISTAN

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### ABSTRACT

*For all individuals, regardless of their age, ethnicity or other attributes, reproductive health rights are everyone's right to make reproductive choices. Reproductive health privileges include the right to access RH related knowledge, insights and to encourage decisions along with the facilitation of reproductive health. The study focuses on the investigation of women's sovereignty in decision-making regarding their reproductive health. The data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus groups discussion to seek detailed information. A hybrid technique was used to figure out and analyze the data collected from 42 study respondents between age 15-49 years. Results reveal that husband's reported 47.61percent authority of decision making while the role of mother-in-law is reducing as the culture of nuclear family type is increasing. Women also are in a position to engage in decision making process. Patriarchal social practices, and polygyny marriages reduce the decision-making authority of women especially for their maternal health. Study is also backs up by existing studies showing that educational qualification improves the decision-making power of women. According to the Reproductive and Healthcare Rights Act 2013 by national policy of Pakistan, women have a right to reproductive health care information.*

**Keywords:** Reproductive health, women of reproductive age, decision making, reproductive rights, autonomy.

### INTRODUCTION

**Background:** A major international survey has revealed that nearly a quarter of women are unable to deny sex or make their own choices on receiving adequate health care. Most of the countries have legislation to ensure women's access to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Yet the situation faced by women is not different. UNFPA has evaluated women's reproductive decision-making in 57 countries, sexual and reproductive health rights laws from 107 countries (UNFPA, 2005). The results, among other statistics suggest that women's reproductive rights are deteriorating in more than 40 percent of the countries. One woman out of four in the countries which in sampled is unable to make her own health care choices (UNFPA, 2020).

As for as the description of women's reproductive health decision- making worldwide is concerned, UNFPA (2020) also summaries that only 50% women have the right to decide on their sexual and reproductive health. About one fourth of women are impotent to make their own choices on access to health care. As accumulated, countries have 73% of the laws and legislation that are in need to make sure the complete and fair accessibility to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Many states try to put judicial restrictions on some communities including women and youth that slow down the access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (UNFPA,2020)

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