CHAPTER 2

SELECTED EMPIRICAL STUDIES IN FAMILY DECISION MAKING

Sharp and Mott (1956), while analysing the roles of husbands and wives in arriving at certain economic decisions such as purchase of car, insurance, food, house and vacation by metropolitan family, found that the type of decision had a bearing on spousal influence. It was also found that the age, working status of wives and the rise in their level of income, affected the husband-wife influence structure. They reported the decisions on vacation and housing were most likely to have been made jointly by both spouses. Husbands were dominant influencers for automobile purchase decisions, but exerted less influence in deciding how much to spend on food. In their study, questions were rephrased in hypothetical terms in case of respondents who had not made any one of these decisions. Using area-probability sampling method, 749 wives were personally interviewed for this study.

Kenkel (1957), using a sample of 25 couples, selected through a systematic sampling process, found that the degree of influence in a family decision making was related to the performance of traditional spousal roles. However, husbands were found more likely to have a higher degree of influence than wives in all decisions. Data were collected through personal interviews and observation. The limitation of this study was that it used a hypothetical decision
situation and a homogeneous sample, viz., married students only. Hence caution needed to be exercised in generalising the results of the study.

While describing the roles of husbands and wives in making purchase decisions, Wolgast (1958) showed that husbands took a major role in car purchase and the wives played a major role in home appliances purchase. Both husbands and wives were equally involved in handling money and bills, and savings. Younger couples showed a very high frequency of joint decision making than older couples in almost all the decisions studied. She also discovered that wives with children of pre-school age had less independence in decision making than other wives. Data for this study were collected from the urban segments. Personal interview method was used to collect data from the couples. Respondents were selected through multi stage area sampling method. The responses of husbands and wives were compared on the aggregate basis.

Replicating his earlier study, Kenkel (1961) developed an interaction-process model for spending decisions and concluded that the husband was the influential spouse as he (the husband) was found to be the idea man, having contributed more of the ideas and suggestions than his wife did in the purchase situations. Kenkel also identified culturally determined sex-roles, social class status and ethnic effects as major factors affecting family interactions, although the exact relationships between the factors were not specified. However, his study was restricted to an investigation of the relationship between the behaviour of spouses in a decision making session and decision outcome, without making any attempt to identify who was the most
influential spouse across different decisions. The decision problem for his study involved the spending by the couples on a hypothetical gift of $300. About 50 couples were chosen, using a convenience sampling method. Data were collected through personal interviews and observation. The couples were recently married students. They were asked to discuss together on how they would spend the money and reach an agreement, within half-an-hour, on a list of items they would prefer to purchase. The ensuing decision making session was tape-recorded. The spouse who talked more was considered influential.

Davis (1970) has emphasised the variability of marital roles in two durable purchases viz., automobile and furniture. A sample of 97 couples were selected for this study using a convenience sampling method. He found that decision roles in the purchase of automobiles were not related to decision roles in the purchase of furniture; within each of these product categories, roles were further differentiated by the nature of the decision. For example, in the case of two decision elements—where to buy the automobile and where to buy furniture, the former was characterised by a husband dominated decision while in the later, both spouses had equal influence. The study, however, found husband dominance for automobiles but joint influence for furniture decisions. It also showed that the responses of husbands and wives were very similar when compared on an aggregate basis but dissimilar on a within-family basis, with the percentage of agreement for any given decision rarely exceeding 50 per cent.

The only study available on FPDMB (Family Purchase Decision Making Behaviour) in the Indian context was done by Madappa (1970) who, while
studying the variation in the pattern of marital influence for five kinds of decisions (when to buy, where to buy, how much to spend, what brand and colour to choose) in ten durable and non-durable products among four income groups found that husbands exerted more influence than wives in the purchase of durable goods and less influence in the purchase of non-durable goods. The study also showed that the extent of influence of husband and wife in the purchase decision making process varies between income groups and between the families of different literacy standards. Stratified random sampling method was adopted in selecting a sample of 36 couples for this study. The products analysed include soap, toothpaste, hairoil, powder, cooking stove, radio, tape recorder, wall clock, sofa set and bed sheet. The scope of his study, however, was limited to the faculty and staff residing on the campus of an Institute.

Ferber and Lee (1974) investigated the feasibility of identifying the "family financial officer (FFO)" (The FFO refers to the individual who carried the main responsibility for the family finances from the point of view of both decision making and execution with reference to (a) looking after the payment of bills (b) keeping track of expenditures in relation to budgets and (c) use of money left over at the end of the pay period) among young married couples and whether differences in the identity of the FFO seemed to affect the purchasing behaviour of these couples. It was found that the families were not homogeneous in their financial and purchase behaviour. They found that if the husband was the FFO, the couple was more likely to save a higher proportion of income and in the form of negotiable securities, real estates etc., and less likely to purchase an automobile. Whereas if the wife was the FFO, ownership of marketable
securities and real estate was indeed less frequent. The study also showed that differences in wife's education or employment status had no influence on which spouse was the FFO. Personal interview method was used to gather data from the couples. It should be noted that the focus of their study was restricted to the newly married couples only.

While examining the influence exerted by husbands and wives for 25 economic decisions ranging from kitchenware to car, using a convenience sample of 73 Belgian couples, Davis and Rigaux (1974) found that the husband-wife influence roles differ according to various decision phases in the decision process as well as the product category, thus exemplifying the results of the earlier study by Davis (1970). For all the product decisions, they used just three buying decision processes, namely, problem recognition, search for information and final decision. Their study made use of direct questions and revealed a high level of agreement between the spouses on an aggregate basis. They used a three-point scale to measure influence level. Their study found that household role specialisation (who decides) was a function of the perceived influence of the husband and wife.

Using a three-point scale for measurement of influence, Hempel (1974) presented cross-cultural comparisons of husband-wife interaction in specific house buying decisions. A sample of 523 couples were chosen using random sampling process. The data on house buying decisions were collected through personal interviews and self-administered questionnaires. The results showed that influence roles vary by sex of the respondent and stage in the decision process.
than the cultural context of the purchase. That is, irrespective of cultural background, influence structure of the purchase decisions depend on the type and nature of decisions. Husbands were more involved as the initiator of home buying process and on decisions concerning price, mortgage and when to buy (financial and instrumental decisions). The study also showed the evidence that accurate and reliable insights into FPDMB cannot be obtained from husbands or wives in isolation.

Cunningham and Green (1974) were concerned with the changes that had occurred over the past years in the roles of husbands and wives in family purchase decision making and the comparison of results with Sharp and Mott's (1956) study. While wives and husbands were found dominant in groceries and life-insurance respectively, decision on automobile, vacation and housing were found to be joint decision making. The study also showed that the environmental changes and trend toward sex role egalitarianism might result in the joint decision behaviour in household purchasing roles, though all products were not affected in the same way. This study used a sample of 248 wives, identified through random sampling process. Self administered questionnaires were used for gathering data.

While measuring the spousal influence on various decisions in the house purchase situation on a five-point scale, Munsinger, Weber and Hansen (1975) focused their attention on analysing the relationship between dominance in decision making and husband-wife response agreement concerning the dominance. The study found that incongruent self responses [an incongruent self
response indicates that husbands and wives attribute greater dominance to themselves than attributed to them by their spouses. This is similar to "vanity" as showed by Davis and Rigaux (1974; p.58)] which is associated with husband dominance and incongruent spouse responses (An incongruent spouse response indicates that husbands and wives attribute greater dominance to their spouse than the spouse attributes to himself or herself. This is similar to Davis and Rigaux's (1974) definition of "modesty") which is associated with wife dominance. The association of incongruent self responses with husband dominance and incongruent spouse responses with wife dominance was statistically significant for the decision to seek residence, and choice of floor plan and style; the association occurred, but was not statistically significant for the location and size decision elements. The rent or buy decisions were strongly associated with husband dominance. However, couples differing with respect to dominance-congruence were not distinguished by their socio-demographic characteristics. In their study, the dominance measure was calculated by averaging respective perceptions of their relative influence on the part of the husbands and wives. A sample of 138 couples were selected using random sampling method. The data were collected through self administered questionnaire.

The study by Green and Cunningham (1975) examined the differences that exist in influence structure of spouses in family decision making between families in which the wife was characterised by varying attitudes toward the woman's role. The study used a random sample of 257 wives as respondents. The products studied included insurance, groceries, savings, house, furniture,
appliances, automobile, family doctor, money and bills. The feminine role orientation was measured by using Arnott's (1972) autonomy inventory, a 10-item Likert scale instrument. The study showed that the husbands of wives with contemporary attitudes were making fewer purchase decisions on their own than was the case for husbands of either moderate or conservative wives. Their findings also suggested variation between contemporary and traditional families, particularly within age and income categories. However, the study indicated that this pattern may be product-specific, rather than generalised across all product categories. The study used hypothetical decision making situation.

Extending their earlier (1974) work, Hempel (1975) found that husband - wife role structure in family house buying decisions is affected by household demographic characteristics like age, years married, education, occupational prestige and wives' employment status. A sample of 523 couples were identified for this study through a random sampling process. Personal interview and mailed questionnaires were used in gathering the data for the study.

In his working paper, Woodside (1975) showed that marital roles can be predicted from information on demographic and psychographic variables. The psychographic questions were selected from a 300 factor analysis questionnaire developed by researchers at Purdue University (Tigert, 1969). Substantial variation in spousal influence was found between different decisions and different products. Husbands, in this study, were found to be dominant in automobile decisions while wives were found dominant in carpets and rugs decisions. Husbands and wives were jointly involved in the purchase of washing...
machine and television. The study used a three-point scale for measuring the influence. Random sampling method was adopted to identify 200 couples for this study. Data were collected from the respondents through personal interviews.

Shuptrine and Samuelson's (1976) study was a partial replication of Davis (1970) study. Although samples were selected from a consumer panel, the study did not mention about the sampling method used. A sample size of 350 couples was used in this study to analyse automobile and furniture purchase decisions. Using a five-point scale to measure the marital influence in automobile and furniture purchase, it was found that the husband had displayed a definite dominance in the decision to purchase an automobile whereas the wife had displayed a stronger, but not as dominant, role in the purchase of furniture. The study also showed that the spouse who was dominant for most pre-purchase decision components also tended to make the real decision to purchase. Further, it was found that the higher the cost of the commodity, the more likely would the influence be balanced between the spouses. It should be noted that the measurement of the roles of each spouse in the purchase decision, in this study, did not pair each husband against his wife, but grouped all husbands against all wives.

Burns and Granbois (1977), using a sample of 101 couples, studied the conflict in the family automobile purchase decision. The results of the study suggest that when a couple undertakes decisions on a series of product features, several characteristics are distinguishable within the process. From the outset, the couple probably will express a considerable number of instances of agreement on
first choice preferences for each decision. The findings, although limited to one product class, suggest that spousal preference discrepancy is a less common phenomenon than is implied in the literature. Furthermore, the results point to the conclusion that certain product feature decisions inherently represent greater potential for spousal agreement than others. The results also suggest that preference disagreement is probably not a significant factor in the family automobile purchase decision. However, it may be with other products, and the identification of joint decision areas combined with spousal preference discrepancy information could aid the practitioner in focusing on strategies which could facilitate resolution.

As an attempt to break away from the customary concentration on only married couples, Hendon and Hamilton (1977) examined the purchase decision making process of unmarried college student couples of varying attachment, including "engaged" and "going steady" for four product categories viz., automobile, apparel, entertainment and furniture ("engaged" are unmarried couples who live together for relatively short periods of time and then choose new partners. For example, "going steady" in Hendon and Hamilton (1977) study was defined as having three out of the last five dates with the same person). Simple random sampling method was adopted in choosing 363 university students (couples) for this study. Self administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Assuming that married, engaged, and going steady couples represent different degrees of partnership independence, with married being the least independent, going steady the most independent, and engaged falling between the two extremes, the study showed that as
independence in partnership increases, independence in decision making would also increase. Male-female partners in his study were found to differ in regard to the influence exerted by one or both partners on buying decision process for different product categories when compared on time-stage of life-cycle, that is, tentative and inured couples [tentative period was operationalised as the period in which the partners in the married or unmarried couple are experimenting with each other and an inured period in which the couple has entered into a habitual or routine relationship (Hendon and Hamilton, 1977, pp. 340-341)]. However, joint decision making increased as the price of the product increased. The study further revealed that sex and traditional sex-roles influence the purchase decision for all product categories. Their study, however, made no attempt to match partners within couples.

Green, Verhage and Cunnigham (1981) reported the results of family decision making study that had compared purchasing roles of samples of spouses from the United States and the Netherlands, two economically advanced countries which are of importance to international markets. A total sample of 398 wives from the United States and Netherlands were used in this study. Groceries, furniture, major appliances, life insurance, home, automobiles, vacation, family savings, doctor, money and bills were the products and services considered in this study. Significant differences were found to exist between the two national samples. The U.S. wife was found to make more decisions autonomously than the Dutch wife. The Dutch families were characterised by joint decision making, thus suggesting the possibility of a more egalitarian decision making structure
with regard to many product and services than in the U.S. families. In addition, these differences were found regardless of the employment status of the wife.

The impact of a spouse's sex role orientation on the patterns of influence for various family decisions was investigated by Qualls (1982) using a sample of 117 couples. Convenience sampling process was used to identify the couples. In-home personal interviews and observation were used in gathering data from the respondents. The products/services considered in this study included insurance, housing, children's education, family education, family vacation, savings and automobile. The study found that couples with modern sex role orientation tend to perceive a more egalitarian distribution of family decision influence and thus there existed an increased interaction between them in purchase situations than the traditional couples. The study used a 100-point constant sum scale for measuring the influence. The study also was based on hypothetical family purchase situation. Moreover, the study used just one durable and that too, included only one decision element (what type of automobile the family should buy?). With this one single decision question, he measured spousal influence for automobile without considering the other sub-decision elements.

Utilising a modern multivariate technique "correspondence analysis", Green et al., (1983) focused on the cross-cultural dimension of FPDMB roles as an attempt to test Rodman's (1972) theory of resources in a cross-cultural context. Data were collected from samples representing five nations viz., the U.S., France, Holland, Venezuela and Gabon representing three of the stages in Rodman's typology (patriarchy, modified patriarchy and transitional stage). The
sample consisted of 805 wives drawn from the five countries, using a random and convenience sampling technique. Purchase decisions relating to groceries, appliances, furniture, automobile, savings, vacation and insurance were analysed in this study. The study reported that the husbands in the less developed nation (Gabon and Venezuela) made significantly more decisions than the husbands in the developed nations (the U.S., France and Holland). Joint decision making was reported to occur more in the developed nations. The study showed that groceries were wife dominated decision area, and automobiles and insurance were husband dominated decision areas in all five nations. However, in less developed nations, furniture and vacation decisions were reported as more husband dominated and savings and appliances as more wife dominated than in the more developed countries. The study was narrowed down to the samples consisting of middle and upper-middle class women only.

Rosan L Spiro (1983) in a study of family decision making tried to examine the strategies used by individual spouses in making accommodative decision for furniture and major durable purchases. Children's influence on purchase decision was not considered in this study. This research was based on the widely accepted premise that it is the couple rather than the individual that is the critical decision making unit for many consumer purchase decisions. The focus was on the different influence strategies used by husbands and wives in attempting to resolve their inevitable differences of opinion. In general, people who are more traditional in their life style and attitudes are more likely to use persuasive influence. A notable exception is the young married individual with pre-school children. Those who are further along in the life cycle also tend to use
less of the various types of influence. This study provides an empirical evaluation of how husbands and wives attempt to resolve conflicts arising in their joint decision making by attempting to influence one another. A sample of 196 couples were selected using a random sampling technique. The telephone directory of Knoxville, Tennessee was used as the sampling frame.

In their study of "Determinants of Role Structure in Family Financial Management", Rosen and Garnbois (1984) found that sex role attitudes and education level of spouses were the most important variables in determining the role structure. The study used a sample of 82 couples identified through stratified random sampling technique. Personal interviews were conducted in gathering information from respondents. Spiro (1983) in the same year, also showed that traditional family ideology, income, gender, age of the youngest child, education level of spouses, wife's employment and her income as significant determinants of influence in household durable purchase decisions. However, the latter's study used hypothetical purchase situations, and, that too, without mentioning what type of durable was or were to be purchased.

Imperia et al., (1985) compared the Mexican-American and anglo-wives' perception of purchase influence for major durables like appliances, furniture, automobile and house. Multi-stage disproportionate stratified sampling technique was used in identifying 350 wives for this study. Self administered questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. It was found that Mexican-American families tend to be more husband dominant than anglo-wives families where the purchase of these major durables were concerned.
Anglo-wives' families appeared to be engaged in more joint purchase decision-making. The study also showed that wife-dominant decisions on major durables were rare in both cultures.

The impact of sex role orientation on the outcome of a family home purchase decision was examined by Qualls (1987). Eighty nine couples were identified through a convenience sampling technique. In-home personal interviews were conducted to collect data from the respondents. A relatively strong relationship was found between sex role orientation and the degree of household influence. This study explained that the family decision behaviour could be well structured in the context of a theoretical network of household relationships rather than through a series of bivariate family relationships. However, like his earlier study (Qualls 1982), Qualls included a hypothetical purchase situation.

Robert A Peterson et al., (1988), conducted a study to explore husband-wife report disagreement in two Western nations, France and the United States, and one middle Eastern nation, Libya. Random sampling process was used in identifying 313 couples for this study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Products considered in this study include groceries, furniture, jewellery, automobile, household appliances and clothing. Spousal disagreement appears to be minimal when reports from husbands and wives are respectively aggregated and averaged. Analysis of intraspousal disagreement on family member characteristics resulted in the discovery of several distinct patterns. This study focused on the existence of disagreement. It did not attempt
to determine which spouse's variable report is likely to be more valid or accurate in different nations and/or for different topics. In conclusion, until more is understood about the phenomenon of spousal report disagreement for demographic characteristics and purchase decision making, data should be collected from both the members of the dyad.

A recent study by Kirchler (1988) showed that while influence varies across product categories and purchase decision elements, it depends on the level of information about the product on the part of husbands and wives. Interestingly, spouses' RRC was found to have had no effect on their level of influence. Influence disproportionalities in purchase decisions owing to happiness/unhappiness of the spouses were also noted. Further, the study found that couples were keeping a record of each other's influence debts; that is, if one spouse had the say in a past decision process, he or she needed to pay back his or her gains and yield in an upcoming decision. Couples in his study were asked to complete a retrospective diary during a period of 28 days. It should be noted that his study utilised only the wife's response in case of divergence's between husbands and wives responses. The sample size was 21 couples identified through a process of convenience sampling technique. Interview and diary completion method were used to gather data for this study.

Samsinar MD Sidin (1994) using a sample of 240 families, sought to uncover patterns of family decision making in Malaysia and to investigate whether the influence of wives varies with factors such as social class and cultural groups. Simple random sampling technique was used in identifying the
respondents. Decisions pertaining to purchase of furniture, electrical appliances, groceries and eating out were considered in this study. This research has uncovered general patterns of family decision making in Malaysia. The results of this study will increase marketer's understanding of how families make purchase decisions. Families have been shown in the past to be private and closely knit groups, with strong buying power (Qualls, 1984). The findings of this study will benefit marketers of products in Malaysia. It may be inferred from this study that very often, in decision making with regard to purchase, members of families (in this research referred to as husbands and wives) act together as a unit. The obvious limitation on the results and the terms of generalisation of this research are with reference to product choice and sampling. The results were product specific. The choice of the sample, which was non-probabilistic in nature, is the other limitation. These facts limit the feasibility of generalisation of the results. This research is, however, a necessary step in identifying useful concepts and relationships for future research involving a probabilistic sampling design.