

Parental Occupation and Children's Influence in Family Buying Decisions in India – an Exploratory Study

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Abstract. This study examines the extent to which father's profession will affect the influence exerted by children across stages of the family buying decisions in the purchase of child product in Indian families. A cross-sectional survey method was carried out with "structured non-disguised" questionnaires to collect the primary data from 400 school going children in the age group 13 to 18 years and residing in families in rural and urban areas of Delhi, capital of India. Statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, paired t-test, and ANOVA have been used to analyze and interpret the surveyed data. It was hypothesized that: (i) children exert influence across the stages of the family buying decisions (H1), (ii) children's influence varies across the stages of the family buying decisions (H2), and (iii) father's occupation has significant impact on their children's influence in the stages of the family buying decisions (H3). The analyses results indicate that children in Indian families do influence the family buying decisions irrespective of their fathers' occupation. Thus, the analyses results lead to the acceptance of H1, partial acceptance of H2, and rejection of H3.

Keywords: Family, Family Buying Decisions, Parents' occupation, Paired t-test, ANOVA

I. Introduction

Family as a consumption unit is the most widely researched (Webster, 1994) topic in the field of consumer behavior. On a continuous basis, a large number of goods and services are consumed by families across the globe. The knowledge about the ways in which various purchase and consumption decisions are made in a family, and to what extent family members contribute in this process is of utmost importance for the researchers, policy makers, and marketers among others. Children being an integral part of a family constitute an important dimension of family buying decisions. Past researches in the area of children's influence (Ramzy et al., 2012) amply reveal that children have significant influence on purchase decisions for a wide array of products, and this influence is increasing over time (Madhavi et al., 2011). Past studies have also proposed that children's influence in family purchase decisions is moderated by the characteristics of

children (age, gender, siblings, and Internet usage), characteristics of their parents (mothers' employment, fathers' occupation, and parental sex-role orientations), and characteristics of their families (size, structure, and income).

Out of all these characteristics, parental occupation can have a strong reflection on the parenting attitude and upbringing of children and hence may have an important bearing on the influence exerted by them in family buying decisions especially in India where the families are predominantly patriarchal in nature. In such families, father assumes the role of head of the family, plays a dominating role in all decisions including the consumption related decisions. Hence, this study has been undertaken with two specific objectives: (i) to evaluate the influence exerted by children in purchase of child-use product across stages of family buying decisions, and (ii) to examine the variations in influence exerted by children in familybuying decisions across their fathers' occupations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An important source of variation in children's influence is the decision making stages (Mangleburg, 1990) where different individuals within the family may play different roles at different stages (Jenkins, 1979). One should expect the influence of children therefore, to vary across the different stage of the decision-making process (Darley and Lim, 1986).

Majority of the past studies have reported that children exert the maximum influence at the initiation stage and the influence declines significantly with the choice stage (Wang et al., 2004). Some of the past studies have also reported children's influence to remain consistent at all the stages of decision making process (Nancarrow et al., 2011), and very few of them have found children's influence to be significantly higher at the outcome stage (Lee and Beatty, 2002). Various factors have been identified in past research to explain these variations including the parental occupation.

Parental occupation can have a strong reflection on the parenting attitude and upbringing of children. Occupation primarily governs three vital aspects- availability of time, money and level of stress, all of which affects parenting. For instance, having long and erratic work schedules lead to being time-poor and consequently, parents become more indulgent (Ekstrom et al., 1987), possibly in the case of self-employed people. On the other hand, people employed in public

sector generally experience stable work timings which perhaps leads to more quality time for family. Children of such households are likely to be often monitored and corrected for their extravagances.

Neil and Greenburger (1994) examined the relations between different patterns of commitment to work and parenting and the level of role strain. Their study found that the relations between commitment patterns and role strain were conditioned by the occupational and social context of adults' lives.

Indian families are more or less patriarchal in nature which means that the family unit is based on the joint household structure, where only one male is a head of house. Usually this role does belong to a father. He makes choices in terms of marriage alliance for both daughters and sons, decision about buying and selling properties, and maintaining day-to-day life of family. Therefore, the impact of father's occupation on children's influence in family buying decisions can be explored further in Indian families. Extrapolating from the aforementioned discussion, it may be hypothesized that:

H1: Children's exert influence across the stages of the family purchase decision making process.

H2: Children's influence varies across the stages of the family purchase decision making process.

H3: Father's occupation has significant impact on their children's influence in the stages of the family purchase decision making process.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Profile - A "structured non-disguised" questionnaire was used for the data collection. Data collection period was March 2015 to October 2015. Table 1 provides a profile of the sample used in the study. The primary data from 400 school going children in the age group 13 to 18 years and residing in families in rural and urban areas of Delhi, capital of India. Schools were selected on quota sampling basis to allow a reasonable representation of different socio-economic groups and cultures. The sample used for the study consisted of school going children:

- (i) having father as an earning family member; and
- (ii) in whose families at least one product (mobile/cycle) for child's own use had been purchased in the last one year.

Table 1: Sample Profile

Characteristics	Aggregate		Rural Families		Urban Families	
	Number (N = 400)	Percent	Number (N = 200)	Percent	Number (N=200)	Percent
Children's Age (years)						
13-14	152	38	64	32	88	44
15-16	164	41	96	48	68	34
17-18	84	21	40	20	44	22
Children's Gender						
Male	242	60.5	112	56	130	65
Female	158	39.5	88	44	70	35
Father's occupation						
Self-Employed	188	47	96	48	92	46
Public/Government Sector	108	27	62	31	46	23
Private Sector	104	26	42	21	62	31

Data for children's demographics were obtained across two variables, i.e., children's age, and gender. While the children pertaining to the age group of 13-14 years old and 15-16 years old were almost in same proportion (38percent and 41percent, respectively), the remaining 21percent belonged to the age group of 17-18 years old. In rural sample, the majority of the children (48percent) were in the age group of 15-16 years old, while the urban sample consisted of more of 13-14 years old children (44 percent). Majority of the children (242) were male children (rural = 112 and urban = 130).

Parental demographics data were obtained for one variable, i.e., fathers' profession across three types of professions: (i) self-employed; (ii) Public/Government Sector: and (iii) Private Sector. Majority of the fathers were self-employed (47 percent) followed by employment in public/government sector (27 percent) and private sector (26 percent).

Product Profile - Research has documented that children tend to have greater influence in purchase decisions involving products for their own use (Tustin, 2009). Consequently, a durable product (mobile/cycle) for the child's sole consumption was chosen in this study to measure children's influence in the purchase of this product purchased recently (in the last one year), in order to ensure a high probability of accurate recall.

Scale Used –Eleven item scale developed by Talpade and Talpade (1995) has been used for this purpose. Out of the eleven items, three items measured child’s influence in purchase initiation stage, two items measured child’s influence in information search stage, five items measured child’s influence in decision making stage, and one item measured child’s influence in the actual purchase stage.

Reliability Analysis - Scale reliability was measured by Cronbach Alpha coefficients (α) (Table 2). All the multi-item scales tapping various dimensions of children’s influence in family decisions making process are well above the required 0.60, thus adequately meeting the standards for the present research (Nunnally, 1967).

Table 2: Reliability Analyses of Measures

Scale Items (Decision Making Stages)	No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients (α)
- Purchase initiation stage	3	0.76
- Information search stage	2	0.66
- Final decision making stage	5	0.75
- Actual purchase making stage*	1	-

*Note: Cronbach Alpha coefficient could not be calculated for the actual purchase making stage as it consists of only one item.

Statistical Tools Used for Analysis- Descriptive analysis and interpretation along with statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, paired t-test, and ANOVA have been used to analyze and interpret the collected primary data.

RESULTS

To test the validity of hypothesis H1, i.e., children exert influence across the stages of the family buying decisions, children’s mean influence scores across all the decision stages in the family decision making process were calculated and are summarised in Table 3. The mean values clearly indicate that children have exerted considerable influence across all the four decision stages of the family decision making process as all the influence scores are above the mid-value (2.5). Hence, providing support for the acceptance of H1.

Table 3: Mean Scores, Standard Deviations for Children's Influence in DMS¹

Decision Making Stages (DMS)			
Stage 1: <u>Purchase initiation</u>	Stage 2: <u>Information search</u>	Stage 3: <u>Final decision making</u>	Stage 4: <u>Actual Purchase making</u>
Mean^{2,3}	Mean^{2,3}	Mean^{2,3}	Mean^{2,3}
3.69 (0.83)	3.59 (1.21)	3.20 (0.92)	2.59 (1.19)

Notes: 1.DMS: Decision making stages are: 1 = Purchase initiation stage, 2 = Information search stage, 3 = Final decision making stage, and 4 = Actual Purchase making stage.

2. The responses were measured on a 5-point scale: 5 = very high, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low, and 1 = nil.

3. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

To test the second hypothesis, i.e., children's influence varies across the stages of the family buying decisions paired *t*-test was used. The respective analysis results (Table 4) clearly show that the influence exerted by children is maximum at the purchase initiation stage (M = 3.69), followed by information search stage (M = 3.59), decision making stage (M = 3.20), and actual buying stage (M = 2.59). Paired *t*-test was used to find out if these differences across the decision making stages are statistically significant or not. Except the difference in mean influence of children at purchase initiation and information search stages ($t = 0.17$, $p = 0.863$) all other differences are found to be significant: purchase initiation and decision making stages ($t = 11.33$, $p = 0.000$), purchase initiation and actual buying stages ($t = 4.15$, $p = 0.000$), information search and decision making stages ($t = 11.60$, $p = 0.000$), information search and actual purchase stages ($t = 4.15$, $p = 0.000$), and decision making and actual purchase stages ($t = 5.05$, $p = 0.000$). These results provide partial support for the acceptance of H2.

Table 4: Children's Influence in the stages of Family Decision Making Process: Paired *t*-Test

Decision stages	Mean	Paired <i>t</i> -test		
		Purchase initiation	Information search	Decision making
Purchase initiation	3.69 (0.83)			
Information search	4.08 (1.21)	0.17		
Decision making	3.20 (0.92)	11.33*	11.60*	
Actual purchase	2.59 (1.19)	4.15*	4.15*	5.05*

Notes: 1. *Significant at $p \leq 0.01$

2. The responses are measured on a 5-point scale where 5 = very high, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low, and 1 = nil.

3. Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

The third hypothesis to be tested in this study concerns father's occupation, i.e., father's occupation has significant impact on their children's influence in the stages of the family purchase decision making process. A one-way between groups' analysis of variance ANOVA and post hoc LSD test were used to explore the impact of father's occupation on child's influence in the stages of family decision making process. The analysis results are presented in Table 5. For the purpose of analysis, father's occupation was broadly being considered on three categories: self-employed, employed with public sector, and employed with private sector. ANOVA results in Table 5 clearly indicate that the influences of children across the decision making stages varied marginally as per the occupation of their fathers.

Children whose fathers were self-employed, in general have exerted the maximum influence across three decision stages than the children whose fathers were employed in any other occupations. The maximum impact of father's occupation on child's influence was observed in case of information search stage ($F = 2.51$, $p = 0.082$), followed by the impact at purchase initiation stage ($F = 1.77$, $p = 0.171$), decision making stage ($F = 0.31$, $p = 0.737$), and the minimum at actual purchase stage ($F = 0.14$, $p = 0.867$). However, the values of F-ratio (ANOVA) were found to be insignificant, hence, H3 is rejected. One significant inference can be drawn from this observation that in general, children in all the families exert influence irrespective of their fathers' occupation.

Table 5: Effect of Father's Occupation on Child's Influence in Family Decision Making Stages: ANOVA

Decision stages	Aggregate (N = 400)	Self-employed (N = 188)	Government job (N = 108)	Private job (N = 104)	F-ratio
Purchase initiation	3.69 (0.83)	3.52	3.38	3.52	1.77
Information search	3.59 (1.21)	3.54	3.32	3.52	2.51
Decision making	3.20 (0.92)	3.10	3.07	3.13	0.31
Actual purchase	2.59 (1.19)	3.32	3.27	3.28	0.14

*Significant at $p \leq 0.01$, **Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has been conducted with two specific objectives: (i) to evaluate the influence exerted by children in purchase of child-use product across stages of family buying decisions, and (ii) to examine the variations in influence exerted by children in family buying decisions across their

fathers' occupations. The context under study was Indian families. It was hypothesized that: (i) children exert influence across the stages of the family buying decisions (H1), (ii) children's influence varies across the stages of the family buying decisions (H2), and (iii) father's occupation has significant impact on their children's influence in the stages of the family buying decisions (H3). The analyses results indicate that children in Indian families do influence the family buying decisions irrespective of their fathers' occupation. Thus, the analyses results lead to the acceptance of H1, partial acceptance of H2, and rejection of H3. These results are important for the researchers (for further extension), marketers (for strategy developments), and government (for formulation of rules and regulations).

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