

Magnitude and Factors Affecting Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making among Married Women at Reproductive Age in Assosa, Western Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Background & aim: Women's economic empowerment for participation in decision making is the process of achieving women's equal access and control over economic resources and prerequisite for the Sustainable Development Goals and pro-poor growth. Women's economic empowerment is about rights and equitable societies and requires sound public policies. The present study aimed to determine the magnitude and factors affecting women's economic empowerment for participation in decision making among married women at reproductive age in Assosa, western Ethiopia.

Methods: This community-based analytical cross-sectional study was conducted on a total of 342 women at reproductive age in Assosa using simple random sampling. Structured interview questionnaire that was reviewed and adapted from different literature was used to collect data from the respondents. Descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation were used to analyze the data. Multivariate logistic regression was carried out to determine the independent predictor variables.

Results: The magnitude of women's economic empowerment for decision-making was 39.9%. Moreover, media exposure (AOR=14.90), experience of husband-wife discussion (AOR=4.90), women's attitude toward wife beating (AOR=8.33) and knowledge of family planning practice (AOR=1.00) were more likely associated factors influencing women's economic empowerment for participation in decision making.

Conclusion: Media exposure at least one times per day, husband-wife discussion on participation in decision making, women's attitude towards wife beating, and knowledge of family planning practice were the independent predictors of women's economic empowerment for participation in decision making. Thus policy related strategies should be designed to reach these special populations to promote Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making.

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Introduction

Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making is the process of achieving women's equal access and control over economic resources and ensuring their dominance over other aspects of their lives. This achievement is a global policy priority in light of its potential contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a critical issue in the process of personal and social change, occurring

over interlinked and mutually reinforcing psychological, political, social, and economic domains through which women individually and collectively gain power, make meaningful choices, and control their lives (1, 2).

Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making is about rights and equitable societies and requires sound public policies. Women have fair access to assets

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and services; however, programmatic strategies should be designed to benefit the pro-poor growth. In fact, the recognition of women's economic empowerment needs to focus on employment opportunities for both men and women which cannot substitute for the vast unpaid work (1). Women established grass roots of various kinds associated with gender and development in international agendas and programs. Women's contributions drew attention to the unequal power relations which restricted women's capacity to participate in different managerial and decision-making positions, help to influence development processes, and highlight the nature of the changes (3, 4).

There was a focus on women's subjectivity and consciousness as the inside power defined as the critical aspects of the change process. In terms of decision-making, it is important to provide women with valued resources to exercise greater control over the key aspects of their lives and participate in social activities. These contributions indicated the great significance of the need for women to come together collectively, both to acquire a shared understanding of the institutionalized (rather than individual and idiosyncratic) nature of the injustices they faced and act to tackle these injustices, a challenge beyond the capacity of uncoordinated individual action (3, 4, 5).

Gender inequalities interrelated with other forms of socio-economic inequality, race, ethnicity, and location which frequently exacerbated the injustices associated with them. The widely drawn distinction between women's practical gender needs and strategic gender interests partly helped to capture some of the differences and commonalities between women within a given context. Women's practical gender needs indicated the roles and responsibilities associated with their position within the socio-economic hierarchy and varied considerably depending on several factors, such as context, class, and race (2).

Women constitute most of the population and contribute to the development of countries, especially in all domains, in Ethiopia. However, women's contribution and participation in economic decision-making is not clearly understood in the study community (4, 6, 7, 8,

9). Therefore, the present study aimed to assess the magnitude and factors affecting Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making in Assosa.

Materials and Methods

This community-based cross-sectional study was carried out in Assosa in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, Ethiopia, with in January 1 to 20, 2018. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the College of Business and Economics of Jimma University (Ref. No. JU/CBE/1006/2017). Benishangul-Gumuz is one of the ten regional states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Assosa is the administrative town of Benishangul-Gumuz regional state which is located at 662 km to the western part of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. As projected based on the 2007 National Population Census, an expected population of the town in 2017/18 was estimated to be 33,929. The proportion of child bearing women (age range: 15-49 years) according to the total population of the town was reported as 24%. Accordingly, the expected number of women at child bearing age living in the town was calculated to be 8,143 out of which the number of married women at reproductive age in the town would be expected to be 4,025 (7).

The source population of the present study were married women at reproductive age who were in the union and living in Assosa for the last 6 months prior to the study period. However, the study populations were married women at reproductive age who were in the union and living in Assosa during the study period. The sample size of this study was determined using Epi Info software (version 7.4.1) based on two population proportion formulas regarding both objectives of a previous study (3); accordingly, the objective one was related to the magnitude of women economic decision-making empowerment, and the objective two was associated with the factors affecting women's economic decision-making empowerment.

Based on the above-mentioned assumptions for objective one, 67.2% of the married women were observed to be more autonomous to decide on family planning use, and for objective two, 50.4% of women exposed to media at least once per day were more autonomous and

significantly associated. By considering this, the assumption for objective one gives the optimal sample size of a previous study. Based on this assumption, the expected sample size was 312 subjects. In addition, by the consideration of a 10% non-response rate, the expected maximum sample size was 342 women.

A simple random sampling of the households was carried out to obtain the desired sample size from the registration books of Urban Health Extension Workers together with the Women's Development Army (WDA). Married women at reproductive age who were in the union and living in Assosa for at least 6 months prior to the study period were included in the current study; however, the women who were reported as infertile and non-respondents were excluded from the study.

Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making (decision index) was categorized in the final model. Accordingly, those women who decided themselves or by a discussion with their partner on five decision-making power items were considered with decision-making power (as yes). Moreover, those subjects who did not decide at least on one of the decision-making items were regarded with no decision-making power (as No). In the final model, this is an independent variable and calculated as Yes: 1 and No: 0.

The Self-esteem Index (SEI) was measured by asking for wife beating according to one of the four items (i.e., leaving without telling husband; neglecting children; refusing to have intercourse; arguing with husband). If a woman answered yes for all the items, she had self-esteem, and if she answered no at least for one item among the four, she had no self-esteem. The wealth index (WI) of the respondents assessed by 19 items was adapted from the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) which was applicable for urban residences.

Subsequently, principal component analysis (PCA) was computed to categorize composite variables into five wealth categories. The components determining the WI of the respondents were divided into five wealth percentile quintiles as the 1st to 5th quintiles where the 1st and 5th quintiles were the poorest

and richest, respectively. The knowledge of the women was estimated by asking 10 knowledge-related questions. The knowledge scores were computed as 0 and 10 for minimum and maximum scores, respectively. Then categorization of knowledge scores were done based on the percentage of knowledge scores of the respondents. Accordingly, the knowledge was categorized as high or good for those with a knowledge level of 80% and above, moderate for the respondents with a knowledge level of 60-79%, and low or poor for those with a knowledge level of less than 60%.

A structured interview questionnaire reviewed and adapted from different studies was used to collect the data from the respondents. Data quality was evaluated by designing appropriate data collection materials and training data collectors. In addition, a pretest was conducted on 17 respondents (5% of the total sample size) in Bambasi, Ethiopia, to examine the questionnaire in terms of consistency. The reliability assessment was performed at a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.73. The validity of the interview questionnaire was determined using content validity.

The data were entered, edited, and coded by Epi Data software (version 3.1) and exported to SPSS software (version 21.0.) for analysis. The analysis of descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and cross-tabulation was carried out to show the distribution of the data and presented in tables and figures. The WI was computed as a composite indicator of living standards based on the variables related to the ownership of selected household assets as well as presence of used livestock and materials in the house. The computation was conducted using PCA, and the variables were generated by summing up the principal components. The adequacy of the model for PCA was checked by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.

The quintiles of the WI were generated using the composite score. Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making was classified into the categorical variables as with or without Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making based on five items of decision-making

empowerment. The knowledge of the respondents was assumed as the knowledge of decision-making on family planning practice and considered in the final model as good, moderate, or poor.

A 95% confidence interval (CI) was determined based on the data statistics. Those variables with a p-value of less than 0.25 in the bivariate analysis with crude odds ratio were selected by stepwise elimination (enter) method as candidate variables for multivariate analysis. The final model was fitted and checked for adequacy using the Hosmer-Lemeshow test ($P > 0.5$). In addition, the individual covariates were assessed by the Wald test corresponding to their levels of significance. Multicollinearity, interaction, and confounding effects of the independent variables were checked and removed from the analysis. Multivariate binary logistic regression analysis was used for the evaluation of the independent predictor variables. The adjusted odds ratios together with their corresponding 95% CIs were determined to measure the strength and level of significance of the associations.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of the College of Business and Economics of Jimma University in Jimma, Ethiopia. A letter of cooperation and support with the ethical approval letter obtained from the university was presented to the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state and Assosa administrations. The confidentiality of the study participants' information was ensured by assigning questionnaire identification numbers and removing names and other identifiers during the interview.

Results

The present study was carried out on a total of 338 respondents (98.8%) using simple random sampling.

The magnitude of Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making was reported as 39.9%. The mean age of the study participants was 27.7 ± 5.2 years, with a minimum and maximum of 18 and 45 years, respectively. The majority of the respondents in this study with a power of decision-making were Oromo ($n=75$; 65.22%) followed by Amhara ($n=57$; 39.8%) and Gumuz ($n=9$;

37.5%). Regarding media exposure, most of the participants with a power of decision-making in this study had exposure to television ($n=82$; 60.2%) followed by magazines ($n=15$; 32.7%) (Table 1).

This histogram depicts that among the parameters used to measure the Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making, 78.1% and 76.6% of the women decided jointly with their husbands for mobility and large household purchases, respectively (Figure 1).

In this study, 51 women (41.50%) with a power of decision-making had an attitude toward refusing intercourse, and 112 subjects (75.2%) with a power of decision-making had good knowledge of family planning utilization (Table 2).

In this study, 29 (41.8%) and 104 (37.20%) Women's with Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making were in the second quintile WI and with the age of ≥ 18 years at the first marriage, respectively (Table 3).

Candidate Variables for Multivariate Analysis

The factors affecting Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making among married women at reproductive age in Assosa, such as SEI, media exposure, WI of the respondents, knowledge of the subjects regarding family planning utilization, and experience of spousal communication and discussion, were tested by stepwise enter method in bivariate analysis. The variables with a p-value of less than 0.25 were considered to identify candidate variables as the clinical importance of multivariate analysis.

The potential confounders were adjusted, and the model was checked for the goodness of fit using the Hosmer-Lemeshow test ($X^2=6.56$; $df=8$; $P=0.58$). Accordingly, media exposure, spousal communication (i.e., husband-wife discussion), SEI, knowledge of family planning, and other factors indicated below were determined as the independent predictors of women's economic decision-making empowerment in the present study area (Table 4).

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of study population (n=338)

Variable	Decision-making empowerment		Total N (%)
	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	
What is your ethnicity?			
Oromo	75 (65.22)	40 (34.78)	115 (100.00)
Amhara	57 (39.8)	86 (60.1)	143 (100.00)
Berta	02 (11.12)	16 (88.88)	18 (100.00)
Gumuz	09 (37.5)	15 (62.5)	24 (100.00)
Shinasha	09 (40.9)	13 (59.10)	22 (100.00)
Others**	08 (50.00)	08 (50.00)	16 (100.00)
What is your religion?			
Orthodox	63 (38.20)	102 (51.8)	165 (100.00)
Muslim	23 (27.7)	60 (72.30)	83 (100.00)
Protestant	44 (50.00)	44 (50.00)	88 (100.00)
Catholic	30 (81.10)	07 (18.9)	37 (100.00)
Woman's educational level			
Informal	11 (28.2)	28 (71.80)	39 (100.00)
Formal: 1-12 th grade	83 (38.10)	135 (61.91)	218 (100.00)
Tertiary: higher than 12 th grade and college)	31 (38.3)	50 (61.7)	81 (100.00)
Husband's educational level			
Cannot read and write	07 (36.9)	12 (63.1)	19 (100.00)
Can read and write	05 (33.4)	10 (66.6)	15 (100.00)
Primary (1-8)	19 (32.3)	40 (67.7)	59 (100.00)
Secondary (9-12)	39 (35.45)	71 (64.5)	110 (100.00)
Tertiary (>12)	55 (40.7)	80 (59.25)	135 (100.00)
What is your occupation?			
Housewife	49 (34.02)	95 (65.9)	144 (100.00)
Government employee	25 (39.1)	39 (60.9)	64 (100.00)
Student	14 (41.2)	20 (58.80)	34 (100.00)
Merchant	20 (39.2)	31 (60.78)	51 (100.00)
Day laborer	17 (39.3)	28 (60.7)	45 (100.00)
What is your husband's occupation?			
Government employee	52 (42.6)	73 (58.4)	125 (100.00)
Student	10 (37.1)	17 (62.9)	27 (100.00)
Merchant	42 (36.3)	74 (63.7)	116 (100.00)
Day laborer	21 (30.0)	49 (70.0)	70 (100.00)
Are you exposed to media at least once a day?			
No	29 (14.15)	176 (85.85)	205 (100.00)
Yes	96 (72.2)	37 (27.8)	133 (100.00)
Kind of media			
Radio	18 (20.5)	70 (79.5)	88 (100.00)
Television	82 (60.2)	54 (39.8)	136 (100.00)
Internet	10 (14.8)	58 (85.2)	68 (100.00)
Magazine	15 (32.7)	31 (67.3)	46 (100.00)
Husband-wife discussion			
No	37 (28.25)	94 (71.75)	131 (100.00)
yes	88 (42.52)	119 (57.48)	207 (100.00)

** Gurage and Tigre

Figure 1. Histogram of frequency of respondents regarding items of Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making included in study

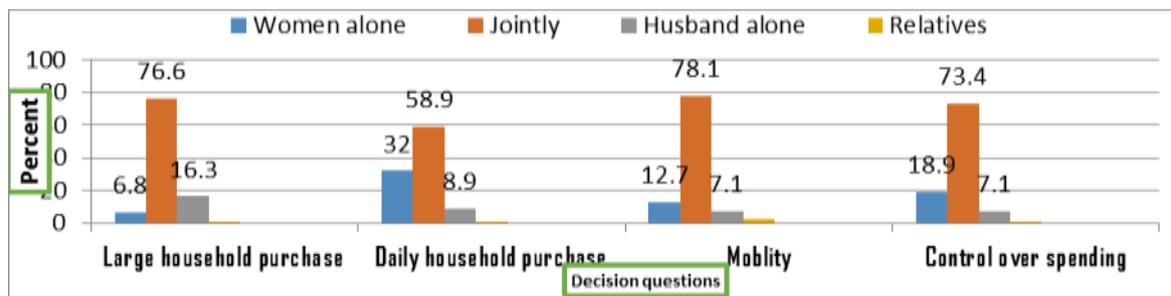


Table 2. Descriptive analysis of autonomy in study population (n=338)

Variable	Decision-making empowerment		Total N (%)
	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	
Attitude toward refusing intercourse			
No	74 (34.5)	141 (65.5)	215 (100.00)
Yes	51 (41.5)	72 (58.5)	123 (100.00)
Knowledge/decision-making on family planning			
Good	112 (75.2)	37 (74.8)	149 (100.00)
Moderate	8 (7.6)	98 (92.4)	106 (100.00)
Poor	5 (6.1)	78 (93.9)	83 (100.00)
Self-esteem Index (attitude toward wife beating)			
No	40 (17.3)	192 (82.7)	232 (100.00)
Yes	85 (80.2)	21 (19.8)	106 (100.00)

Table 3. Socio-economic status of study population (n=338)

Variable	Decision-making empowerment		Total N (%)
	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	
Wealth Index			
First category	17 (26.6)	47 (73.4)	64 (100.00)
Second category	29 (40.8)	42 (59.2)	71 (100.00)
Third category	27 (39.1)	42 (60.9)	69 (100.00)
Fourth category	25 (34.8)	47 (65.2)	72 (100.00)
Fifth category	27 (43.6)	35 (56.4)	62 (100.00)
Number of alive children			
No child	02 (10.0)	18 (90.0)	20 (100.00)
≤3 children	06 (12.3)	43 (87.70)	49 (100.00)
4-6 children	104 (75.9)	33 (24.1)	137 (100.00)
≥7 children	13 (9.90)	119 (90.1)	132 (100.00)
Age at first marriage			
≤17 years	21 (36.3)	37 (63.7)	58 (100.00)
≥18 years	104 (37.2)	176 (62.80)	280 (100.00)

According to the obtained results of the present study, those women who were exposed to any media at least once a day were (AOR=14.9; 95%

CI: 3.81-58.67) more likely empowered on economic decision-making than those who were not exposed. In this regard, the results showed a statistically significant association. In particular,

women who received information via television were (AOR=5.91; 95% CI: 3.17-10.99) more likely empowered on Participation in economic

decision-making than those who obtained information from radio.

Table 4. Independent predictors affecting Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making among study population (n=338)

Variable	Decision-making empowerment		COR	AOR (95% CI)	P-value of AOR
	Yes	No			
Are you exposed to media at least once a day					
No	29	176	1.00	1.00	
Yes	96	37	15.74	14.9 (3.81-58.67)	<0.001*
Husband-wife discussion					
No	37	94	1.00	1.00	
Yes	88	119	1.87	4.90 (1.39-17.60)	0.01**
Knowledge/decision-making on family planning					
Good	112	37	1.00	1.00	
Moderate	8	98	0.27	0.02 (0.004-0.089)	<0.001*
Poor	5	78	0.21	0.006(0.001-0.033)	<0.001*
Self-esteem Index (attitude toward wife beating)					
No	40	192	1.00	1.00	
Yes	85	21	19.42	8.33 (2.17-31.89)	0.002**
Wealth Index					
First category	17	47	1.00	1.00	
Second category	29	42	1.99	4.74 (0.85-26.32)	0.075
Third Category	27	42	1.77	5.47 (0.87-34.37)	0.070
Fourth category	25	47	1.47	3.31 (0.55-19.91)	0.191
Fifth category	27	35	2.13	0.32 (0.38-17.49)	0.32

COR: Crude odds ratio AOR: Adjusted odds ratio * Significant at level of <0.001 ** Significant at level of <0.05

Regarding the experience of husband-wife discussion (i.e., spousal communication for any decision), those women who had practiced spousal communication were (AOR=4.90; 95% CI: 1.39-17.60) more likely empowered on economic decision-making than their counterparts, which was statistically significant. The women with moderate and poor knowledge of family planning practice and decision-making were 20% and 99.4% less likely participated on economic decision-making than those with good knowledge(95% CI: 0.004-0.089 and 0.001-0.003), respectively. This finding indicated that women with good knowledge were 80% more likely to have economic decision-making power than those subjects with moderate knowledge of family planning practice and decision-making (Table4).

Discussion

The present study was carried out on a total of 338 respondents using simple random sampling giving a response rate of 98.8%. The magnitude of Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making in this study was reported as 39.9%. This finding was lower than that obtained in another study conducted in Ethiopia on women's autonomy and reproductive healthcare use in which about 44% of women participated in domestic decision-making [13]. Moreover, 18.6%, 6.8%, and 13.34% of the participants were Orthodox, Muslim and Protestant which were not comparable with the EDHS of 2011 and 2016 [6, 10, 11]. The reason for this discrepancy might be the difference in the study setting and type of participants.

Media exposure at least once a day had a highly significant association with women's participating on economic decision-making (AOR=14.9; 95% CI: 3.81-58.67) in this study. This finding is in line with the results of studies

conducted in Rwanda and Ethiopia on women's autonomy and reproductive healthcare in which media exposure was positively associated with an increased likelihood of respondents' decision-making (5, 12,13). This comparability might be due to access to media in the study community and increased attitude of people toward media through time.

The results of the current study revealed that the frequency of women who had a discussion and decided together, especially on large household purchases, was 39.9%. This result was strongly associated with Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making (AOR=1.87; 95% CI: 1.17-3.001). This finding is similar to the results of a study conducted in Ethiopia on the in-depth analysis of 2011EDHS. This similarity might be due to the gradual improvement of men and women in life settings and advantage of joint decision-making over time.

In the present study, those women with an attitude toward wife beating or SEI were (AOR=8.33; 95% CI: 2.17-31.89) more likely empowered on Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making than their counterparts. The results of the current study were similar with the finding of a study conducted in Rwanda indicating that living in a rural area and getting married at a younger age were observed to be negatively associated with both the cumulative empowerment and decision-making. Accordingly, there was a positive association between self-esteem and education as well as wealth and age of the respondent (4).

However, different studies conducted so far in Rwanda and by the United Nations Population Fund and EDHS in Ethiopia indicated that wealth category, educational level, residence, age at the first marriage, and number of desired children were significantly associated with Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making (4, 8, 9, 12). Nevertheless, in the present study, there was no significant association between the above-mentioned variables, especially in multivariate analysis. This discrepancy might be explained by the difference in the study setting and narrow gap in the educational coefficient in the study population.

The results of the current study also revealed that women with moderate and poor knowledge of reproductive healthcare services, especially family planning, and moderate/poor sociocultural attitude/knowledge were 80% and 99.4% less likely empowered on economic decision-making than their counterparts (95% CI: 0.004-0.089 and 0.001-0.003), respectively. This finding was in line with the results of another study conducted in Ethiopia (95% CI: 0.004-0.089 and 0.001-0.003, respectively). This finding was also comparable with the findings of a study conducted in Bedelle, Ethiopia, in which backward socio cultural attitudes, negative attitudes, knowledge of men toward women, and lack of women's confidence were other factors affecting Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making (5, 14).

One of the limitations of the present study was the limited number of studies conducted on the study setting leading to the restriction of further discussion and comparison. Due to the cross-sectional design of the study, it was difficult to show the cause-effect relationship between the outcomes and predictor variables which might allow for the possibility of optimistic fallacy and external validity. Regardless of the aforementioned limitations, the findings of this study provide the decision-makers in the study setting with appropriate interventions for the promotion of women's decision-making.

Conclusion

According to the obtained results of the present study, the magnitude of Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making was 39.9%. Exposure to at least one media once a day, husband-wife discussion, knowledge of decision-making on birth spacing practice, and attitude toward wife beating were the independent predictors of women's economic decision-making empowerment in the studied community. Therefore, it is recommended to provoke husband-wife discussion on Women's Economic Empowerment for Participation in Decision making using the WDA, setting policies and strategies targeting women's participation on decision to increase women's knowledge in this regard, and perform further operational studies

with male involvement through a qualitative

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Conflicts of interest

Authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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