



Economic and Gender Interventions and Women's Household Decision Making Power: A Meta- Analysis

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Abstract

Can economic interventions by themselves enhance women's agency? Which other elements or interventions are needed to be encompassed within an implementation design of women's empowerment programs to enhance their agency? Governments, for profits and not for profits launch self-help groups and invest in microcredit schemes with an aim to increase women's financial independence. However, does this financial independence convert to increased agency? This paper uses women's household decision-making power on various topics like spending on healthcare of children and themselves, decisions about education of children, decisions to visit family etc. as a proxy for agency. The aim of this research is to understand whether self-help groups and microcredit schemes can increase women's agency. The meta-analysis summarizes 15 studies and 19 effect sizes and does not find evidence that "economic only" interventions can increase women's agency. Using mixed effects regression with and without random variance estimation, this paper finds evidence to support that when economic interventions are layered with gender-based workshops or trainings, there is an improvement in women's agency. There is heterogeneity in effects due to intervention type and the region in which the interventions were carried out. Using funnel plot and Egger's regression, I find no evidence of publication bias. However, more research is needed towards that end due to sample size constraints in this analysis. These findings have critical implications on how to layer women's empowerment programs in the most effective way to maximize financial outcomes and improve their agency.

Keywords: agency, gender workshops, implementation science, mixed effects regression, women empowerment.