



Women's Ownership and Access: Effects on Intra-Household Decisions

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ABSTRACT

We examine the effect of women's ownership of, and access to resources (economic autonomy) on their relative decision-making power in households using an Instrumental Variable approach. We utilize neighbouring women's exposure to different forms of media as a source of exogenous variation to identify this effect. While we find robust causal impacts of greater economic autonomy on their relative position in the decision-making process, there is evidence of a diminishing marginal effect of autonomy. Exploring the components of relative decision-making power and autonomy further, we suggest that sole ownership of financial assets rather than physical assets are the main drivers of economic autonomy for women, resulting in changes in their bargaining positions. These effects are highlighted for older women; unemployed women; households where husbands are less educated; and rural areas.

Keywords: Economic autonomy, ownership, relative decision-making, media exposure, instrumental variable, India