



Social norms or socioeconomic dynamics: determinants of gender-equal intra-household decision-making

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Received: 13 November 2021 / Accepted: 10 October 2022
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Abstract

While much of the empirical literature on intra-household decision-making has focused more on the factors associated with women's agency in autonomous decisions, this current study is concerned with the conditions supporting relative autonomy or joint decision-making. Literature suggests that only about 40% took sole or joint decisions about major household purchases. The ability of women to express agency as decision-makers at home has been attributed mainly to their socioeconomic characteristics. The central hypothesis of this study is that the style of decision-making within households will be strongly associated with sociocultural norms owing to the dominant patriarchal structure of Nigerian society. Therefore, this study examines household decision-making dynamics through structured interviews of 320 married individuals selected in Lagos State, Nigeria. The leading independent variables were gender role attitudes and religiosity. The other explanatory variables were the couple's relative differentials in age, educational levels, earnings, and asset ownership. Multinomial logistic regression was employed to predict the proxy variables of decision-making styles from the explanatory variables. The study finds that 25% of participants reported that decisions were joint, while 57.5% reported a male-dominant style concerning financial decision-making. The factors that most influenced household styles were gender role attitudes and religiosity. These findings suggest that policy interventions addressing social norms to tilt the gender balance of power would achieve much-desired outcomes beyond improving female access to resources.

Keywords Household decision-making · Female autonomy · Socioeconomic status · Gender roles · Religion · Dual-earner couples

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