

Gender Differences in the Level of Economic Empowerment of Farm-Households of Manipur

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempts to capture differences in the level of economic empowerment between male and female members of the same household. The study was conducted in Imphal West district of Manipur taking a random sample of 69 farm-households. The primary male and female members of each household were personally interviewed. A gender neutral economic empowerment index comprising of six indicators was developed for the study. It was found that male respondents had significantly higher empowerment level in four indicators of empowerment viz.; access and control over productive assets; access and control over economic resources; autonomy & mobility and time. If the overall empowerment level was considered, the index for male respondents (0.71) was found to be significantly higher than that of female respondents (0.57). It was also revealed that land holding had a significant association with the empowerment of the female respondents whereas cosmopolitanism had significant association with the empowerment level of the male respondents.

Keywords: Gender differences, economic empowerment, farm-households, Manipur

Economic empowerment have many a time been conceptualised as the process of instilling in a person the real power to control and use one's own economic resources, to fully participate in any economic activity and in any economic decision making process. Amongst all the dimensions of empowerment economic empowerment is the most imperative form of empowerment at the intra household level and is intertwined with socially conceived gendered norms, roles and responsibilities. The consequences of these social factors have lead to the gender gap in the ownership and share of productive assets such as land, differences in the participation in the economic activities and involvement in decision making between a man and a woman of the same household but most importantly in the unequal distribution of household productive and reproductive work. These customary roles and responsibilities often acts as a barrier for both male and female in taking

up economic activities and decisions which does not conform to their gendered roles. But these intra-household inequality remains a neglected area of research in the current inequality discourse as women's work still up to a great extent remains unrecognized and formally unorganized despite the fact that women's contributions to the family are vital; in many cases women are the breadwinners and work longer hours than men (UNDP, 1995).

Moreover gender gap in terms of ownership of land affected the agricultural decision making of women farmers in adoption of new technologies as they lacked ownership and access to the land and had to convince their spouse for the adoption of the new technology (Caro, 2013). Also the inequality in term of ownership of land further constrained female in accessing institutional credits as they lack the leverage for getting the loans and financial assistance.

Regardless of the important key roles women play in agriculture by working along with men in production of crops right from the soil preparation until post-harvest activities, almost no woman had any say on agricultural-related financial decision making. While women could not make decisions on borrowing, many have decision-making autonomy when it comes to savings decisions (Deepti and Adhikari, 2015).

Manipur, a state well known for the women’s market, the Ima market, a state where women dominates the market, a state where women does not hide behind the veil but participated in social, political and economic activities. Manipuri women because of their significant and evidential participation in the market and social sphere is often considered as already economically empowered. But assumptions as such may be misleading as economic empowerment is largely a consequences of the household gendered roles and family dynamics. Despite the higher level of participation of Manipuri women in the field of marketing and social activities it would be wrong for us to assume that they enjoy the same level of freedom and power inside their household because after all male are still the dominant gender and are still prescribed with the role of family head and as the bread winner. With these views the present study therefore tries to capture if such gender inequalities exists in the household and if there are gender differences in the economic empowerment in the locale of the research.

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Imphal West district of Manipur. Imphal west was selected purposively out of the hitherto 9 districts of the state as the district has the highest female literacy rate and comparatively higher female labour force participation. The sex ratio of the district is 1031 females for every 1000 males and is well above the state sex ratio of 985. There are two Community and Rural Development Blocks in Imphal West. Two villages each were selected randomly from each of the two blocks. 69 farm households were randomly selected from the four villages. For the purpose of intra-household comparison, the primary male and primary female member of each of the selected households were taken as respondents. Thus a

total of 138 respondents constituted the sample of the study. Data were collected using pre-tested interview schedule during January-February 2017. For measuring, economic empowerment of the respondents, an Economic Empowerment Index was developed. Procedure followed for construction of the index is described hereunder.

Step 1: Identification of indicators

The index consists of six indicators selected from the set of indicators provided by International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) (Golla *et al.*, 2012) and the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) which was developed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Oxford Poverty and Human resource Development initiative (OPHI) (Alkire *et al.*, 2012). The indicators were selected based on relevance to the context of the study. The selected indicators are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of the respondents

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Categories	Frequency		
			Female (n=69)	Male (n=69)	
1	Age	Below 35 years	15(21.74)	4(5.80)	
		Between 35 and 52 years	50(72.46)	48(69.57)	
		Above 52 years	4(5.80)	17(24.64)	
2	Educational Qualification	Illiterate	9(13.04)	0(0.00)	
		Upper Primary	4(5.80)	1(1.44)	
		Lower primary	8(11.59)	6(8.70)	
		Secondary	30(43.48)	29(42.02)	
		Higher Secondary	13(18.84)	20(29.00)	
		Graduate and higher	5(7.25)	13(18.84)	
		Primary Occupation	Agriculture and allied	8(11.59)	7(10.14)
			Wage labour	11(15.94)	24(34.78)
			Service in formal sector	3(4.35)	19(27.54)
			Self-employed	5(7.25)	6(8.70)
			Handloom	16(23.19)	0(0.00)
			Home-maker	9(13.04)	8(11.59)
			Others	17(24.64)	2(7.25)

3	Land holding	Marginal(<1ha)	8(11.59)	6(8.70)
		Small (1-2ha)	0	47(68.12)
		Medium (2.1-4 ha)	0	15(21.74)
		Semi-medium(4.1–10 ha)	0	1(1.47)
		Large (> 10 ha)	0	0.00
4	Annual Income (A.I)	Below ₹ 21,561	10(14.49)	1(1.45)
		Between ₹ 21,561 and ₹ 2,06,061	58(84.06)	52(75.36)
		Above ₹ 2,06,061	1(1.45)	16(23.19)
5	Cosmopolitaness	Low	10(14.49)	35(50.72)
		Medium	54(78.26)	30(43.48)
		High	5(7.25)	3(4.35)
6	Material possession	Low	12(17.39)	10(14.49)
		Medium	46(66.67)	43(62.32)
		High	11(15.94)	16(23.19)

Figures in parenthesis indicates percentage of the frequency to the total number of respondents

Step 2: Quantification of indicators

Appropriate measurement tool and scoring techniques were adopted for quantification of each indicator. The tools and techniques were translated in the form of an interview schedule for easy administration to the respondents.

Step 3: Normalisation of values

The value of indicators were normalised so as to bring their values under a suitable range and render it as a dimensionless measure or number, *i.e.*, 0-1 range (Feroze *et al.*, 2014). It was done by subtracting the minimum value from the observed value.

$$S_i(\text{normalised}) = \frac{(S_i - S_i \text{ min})}{(S_i \text{ max} - S_i \text{ min})} \quad \dots(i)$$

$$S_i(\text{normalised}) = \frac{(S_i \text{ max} - S_i)}{(S_i \text{ max} - S_i \text{ min})} \quad \dots(ii)$$

Where, S_i is the i^{th} indicator value.

The equation (i) was used for the variables with positive effect and equation (ii) was used for the variables with negative effect. Normalisation was done so as to aggregate and categorise the respondents according to the level of economic empowerment.

Step 4: Assigning of weights

The indicators after normalisation were aggregated with appropriate weights to obtain the index (I) using the following method described by Iyenger and Sudarshan (1982).

$$W_j = \frac{C}{\sqrt{\text{Variance } S_i}}$$

Where,

$$C = \frac{1}{\frac{1}{\sqrt{\text{Var } S_i}} + \frac{1}{\sqrt{\text{Var } S_i}} + \dots + \frac{1}{\sqrt{\text{Var } S_{ik}}}}$$

Moreover the difference in the weights of the same indicator over the two categories of respondents is because of the differences in the variance.

Step 5: Multiplication of the weights

The overall economic empowerment indicator was obtained by multiplying the weights to the respective normalised indicator values. The total of the indicators values gives us the economic empowerment index value. The formula is represented below:

$$Y = W_1 + W_2 + \dots + W_j S_{ik}$$

Where, 'Y' is the economic empowerment index.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the respondents

Details of the respondents are presented in Table 1. Majority of the female (72.46%) and (69.57%) male respondents were mid-aged. Cent percent of the male respondents were literate while literacy rate for female respondents was 86.96%. A little less than half of the respondents (43.38% female respondents and 42.02% male respondents) had a secondary level of educational qualification. Only 11.59% of the female respondents had ownership to land that too were marginal land holders, while all the male respondents had ownership to land, majority (68.12%) having small land holding. 84.06% of the female respondents had a medium level of annual income and 14.49% of the had a low level of annual income on the other hand 75.36% of the male respondents had a medium level of annual income but had only 1.45% of the respondent had a lower level of income. Majority

of the female respondents (78.26%) and half of the male respondents (50.72%) had a medium level of cosmopolitaness. 66.67% of female respondents and 62.32% of the male respondents had a medium level of material possession.

Level of economic empowerment

The gender disaggregated mean score of the six indicators of economic empowerment and the overall economic empowerment index is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative analysis of mean score and significant difference

Sl. No	Indicators	Mean score		t test
		Female n = 69	Male n = 69	
1	Access and control over productive assets	1.31	1.57	9.901**
2	Access and control over economic resources	2.45	2.77	3.833**
3	Autonomy and mobility	0.77	0.95	7.725**
4	Access to market	0.41	0.44	1.635
5	Psychological and physiological wellbeing	1.06	1.07	0.491
6	Time	0.49	0.57	1.935*
	Economic empowerment	0.57	0.71	4.803**

For finding out in the differences in the mean indicator scores of the male and female respondents, paired t-test was employed. Results are presented in Table 2. From the table it can observe that the mean score of male respondents is higher than that of the female respondents in all the six indicators. Significant difference in the mean score was observed in the indicators access and control over economic resources, access and control over productive assets and autonomy & mobility at 0.01 level of significance. Difference in the indicator time was recorded at 0.05 level of significance. No significant difference was found in case of access to market and psychological & physiological wellbeing. If the overall economic empowerment index is considered, the mean score of the female respondents (0.57) was found to be significantly lower than that of male respondents (0.71) at 0.01 level of significance indicating that male respondents indeed enjoyed a higher level of economic empowerment which

discloses that Manipuri women despite their evidential participation in market and social activities are still not at par as men in terms of the level of economic empowerment.

The result of the comparatives analysis goes on to point out that primary women in a household are lesser privileged economically as men are since most of the time they are bounded by the societal roles and responsibilities of a women robbing them from the opportunities for participating in out of the house economic activities and from utilizing their productive skills.

As most primary female members didn't have ownership to land and have lower material possession (Table 2) and had to rely on the primary male members who had the ownership of land and other materials in order to initiate any production and economic activities justifies the significant difference in access and control over productive assets. Moreover the disparity in terms of access and control over economic resources signifies that the male members had more control over the decision making over the use of economic resources and had a higher level of saving and income as compared to the female respondents who had 1.45% of the respondents in higher income group against 23.19% of male in the group.

Again the gap in autonomy and mobility shows that the female members are often confined to only the household works and had lower autonomy and mobility while male members moves outside the locale for work and for economic activities at a cosmopolite location. There was a disparity in the time allocation indicator which reflects the fact that female members worked for more hours than male members and were unsatisfied with the amount of time spent on leisure activities. Time itself acted as a constraint to many female respondents as they didn't have sufficient time to participate in economically productive activities owing to the reason that they spent most of their time in household reproductive and care work which were largely uneconomic while male members went outside the houses to participate in high paying economic activities. The disparity between male and female in terms of the overall economic empowerment score highlights the fact that female are indeed at a state of discrimination as they lack the power to control and participate in economic

decision making and that they lack access and control over the productive assets despite having a heavier workload than the male members.

Association of economic empowerment with selected variables

For finding association of economic empowerment with selected dependent variables, appropriate statistical tools were used viz; Spearman rank order correlation (ρ) and Pearson coefficient of correlation (r). Details are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Association of economic empowerment with selected independent variables

Independent variables	Statistic tool	Female	Male
Age	r	.078 NS	-.167 NS
Annual income	r	.111 NS	.016 NS
Cosmopolitaness	r	-.103 NS	.222 *
Material possession	ρ	-.164 NS	.164 NS
Level of education	ρ	0.57 NS	.171 NS
Size of land holding	ρ	.268**	.105 NS

** Significant at 0.05 level of probability; * Significant at 0.1 level of probability; NS = Non-significant

It is revealed that land holding had a significant and positive association with the female respondent's level of economic empowerment. Since, land is the base of all the economic activities and is also a factor of production and ownership of land implies autonomy to indulge in their own economic activities, which is rare as only 11.59% women, own land. As for male respondents, cosmopolitaness was found to have a positive and significant association with the level of economic empowerment. The association can be validated by the fact that cosmopolitaness widens a person's social contact leading to more economic opportunities. Given the higher ownership of assets and resources, a higher cosmopolitaness provides additional economic advantage for men. Variables like, age, education, annual income, primary occupation and material possession were found to have no significant association with the economic empowerment level of either gender. However in Pakistan, Sheikh and Sadaqat (2015) revealed that age of woman, education, working status, income, ownership of property, savings, physical assets

had statistically significant relation with women's economic empowerment.

CONCLUSION

The study disproves the assumption that women of Manipur are empowered in all the spheres of empowerment as it was revealed that there was indeed a significant difference in the level of economic empowerment and other indicator of the economic empowerment with male having a higher mean economic empowerment score of .71 while female respondents had a relatively lower score of 0.57. The differences reflect the fact that women in the locale of study despite being active participants in market and social activities are still deprived from participating in economic decision making and activities at a household level and their lack of control over productive and economic resources.

Moreover the study also disclosed a discriminatory ownership of land as cent percent of the male respondents had land ownership while only 11.59% of the female respondents had ownership of land. Over and above land holding was also found to have a positive and significant association with the female's economic empowerment which further ascertained the requirement of educating the general public as well as the administrators and policy makers over the importance of equal share and ownership of land and how having ownership to land can directly deliver economic opportunities to women. Lastly the finding also discloses the need for gender sensitization over the issues like sharing of household activities and care work so that women are left with ample time to engage in out of the house economic activities giving them a way to economically empower themselves.

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