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Spousal Agreement and women participation in decision making in rural Vietnam

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Introduction

Women's participation in decision making is likely to improve outcomes for women and their children. Most of the recent literature on this component of empowerment has focused on the African continent. We contribute to the literature by analyzing the determinants of spousal agreement and wives' participation in decision making in Vietnam. We use logistic regression to estimate the probability of couple agreement in decision authority, and of wife's participation in decision according to their husbands and to themselves.

Data

The data comes from a rural household survey conducted in July and August 2016 in Lao Cai province, Vietnam. The survey included four districts (Bac Ha, Sa Pa, Muong Khuong and Si Ma Cai). The survey questionnaire contained a set of questions about 14 farm, consumption, child rearing and credit access decisions. Both husband and wife were asked who is in charge of making these decisions: themselves, their spouse, or if they make these decisions together. The survey contains information for 369 households with male and female heads of household.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Couple's agreement in decision making authority, Lao Cai Vietnam 2016

Decision	Husband says women participates in decision		Wife says she participates in decision		diff	p-value
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
Production and adoption						
1 ... what crops to grow?	60%	49%	70%	46%	-11%	0.00
2 ... whether to sell or consume the harvested crop?	67%	47%	76%	43%	-9%	0.00
3 ... where and whom to sell the harvested crop?	59%	49%	68%	47%	-8%	0.00
4 ... who attends training and/or workshop related with agricultural production?	41%	49%	41%	49%	0%	0.38
5 ... whether or not to adopt a new agricultural technology in the farm?	62%	49%	64%	48%	-2%	0.51
6 ... what varieties to use?	60%	49%	69%	46%	-9%	0.00
7 ... how much money to spend on farm inputs?	60%	49%	69%	47%	-8%	0.00
Consumption						
8 ... what food items to buy?	71%	46%	80%	40%	-9%	0.00
9 ... how much money to spend on food?	69%	46%	78%	42%	-9%	0.00
10 ... who allocates food to each household member every meal?	81%	39%	89%	31%	-8%	0.01
Child Rearing						
11 ... how many children to raise in the family?	85%	36%	89%	31%	-4%	0.03
12 ... who attends training and/or workshop related with child rearing, vaccinations and other health-related topics?	57%	50%	56%	50%	1%	0.92
Credit						
13 ... how much to borrow?	62%	49%	71%	46%	-9%	0.00
14 ... who manages the money after borrowing?	65%	48%	73%	44%	-8%	0.00

Method

Following Anderson(2017) we measure agreement in decision making by taking the difference between husband and wife responses to each question, we generate a binary outcome variable that equals 1 if the couple agrees and 0 otherwise. We also estimate whether the husband assigns decision authority to his wife, and whether the wife considers that she participates in decision making. We two binary dependent variables and estimate the probability of decision making authority.

Results

Couples tend to disagree about who makes decisions. Husbands tend to respond that they make decisions by themselves, whereas wives tend to respond that decisions are made jointly (Table 1).

Table 2. Correlates of Couple's agreement in decision making authority Lao Cai Vietnam 2016

Decision	Female Head Characteristics					Differences between male and female heads					Household characteristics				
	Age in years	No schooling =1	Poor health =1	Time farming (min)	Time domestic /child rearing (min)	Diff age in years	Diff no schooling	Diff poor health	Diff time farming (min)	Diff time domestic /child rearing (min)	Asset count (owned)	Time road (hours)	Total area less than 5 (Ha)	Number male less than 5	Number female less than 5
1 ... what crops to grow?															
2 ... whether to sell or consume the harvested crop?															
3 ... where and whom to sell the harvested crop?															
4 ... who attends training and/or workshop related with agricultural production?															
5 ... whether or not to adopt a new agricultural technology in the farm?															
6 ... what varieties to use?															
7 ... how much money to spend on farm inputs?															
8 ... what food items to buy?															
9 ... how much money to spend on food?															
10 ... who allocates food to each household member every meal?															
11 ... how many children to raise in the family?															
12 ... who attends training and/or workshop related with child rearing, vaccinations and other health-related topics?															
13 ... how much to borrow?															
14 ... who manages the money after borrowing?															

Green indicates variables are statistically significant p-value<0.10

Determinants of the probability of agreement (Table 2)

- Time allocation to farming and off farm activities reduces the probability of agreeing in consumption decisions.
- More isolated households seem to agree more in who makes decisions in comparison with less isolated ones.
- Couples in better off households in terms of joint asset ownership tend to agree in who makes decisions.
- Education only plays a role on agreement in two of the 14 decisions analyzed.

Results cont.

Table 3. Correlates of Wives' assignment of decision making authority to themselves Lao Cai Vietnam 2016

Decision	Female Head Characteristics					Differences between male and female heads					Household characteristics				
	Age in years	No schooling =1	Poor health =1	Time farming (min)	Time domestic /child rearing (min)	Diff age in years	Diff no schooling	Diff poor health	Diff time farming (min)	Diff time domestic /child rearing (min)	Asset count (owned)	Time road (hours)	Total area less than 5 (Ha)	Number male less than 5	Number female less than 5
1 ... what crops to grow?															
2 ... whether to sell or consume the harvested crop?															
3 ... where and whom to sell the harvested crop?															
4 ... who attends training and/or workshop related with agricultural production?															
5 ... whether or not to adopt a new agricultural technology in the farm?															
6 ... what varieties to use?															
7 ... how much money to spend on farm inputs?															
8 ... what food items to buy?															
9 ... how much money to spend on food?															
10 ... who allocates food to each household member every meal?															
11 ... how many children to raise in the family?															
12 ... who attends training and/or workshop related with child rearing, vaccinations and other health-related topics?															
13 ... how much to borrow?															
14 ... who manages the money after borrowing?															

Green indicates variables are statistically significant p-value<0.10

Determinants of wives' perceptions of decision making authority (Table 3):

- Contrary to what we expected education does not play a key role in most decisions.
- Having children younger than 5 years of age reduces the probability as well as couple's ethnicity.
- Time allocated to domestic activities and child rearing reduces the probability in production and access to credit decisions.
- Higher level of schooling increases the probability in production decisions.

Conclusion

Husbands and wives disagree on who makes decisions at the household. To better understand intra-household dynamics, questions about decision making need to be asked to both male and female heads of household. Cultural traits and having small male children are correlated with a reduce probability of women perceiving themselves as participants in decision making. Next steps on this research include analyzing participation in decision making with outcomes for women and children.

Reference

Anderson, C. L., Reynolds, T. W., & Gugerty, M. K. (2017). Husband and Wife Perspectives on Farm Household Decision-making Authority and Evidence on Intra-household Accord in Rural Tanzania. *World Development*, 90, 169–183.