



The Role of Livelihood Choices on Women Economic Empowerment, the Case of Kilte Awlaelo Woreda, Tigray Region, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Feminist poverty is not only consequence of lack of income, but also the result of the deprivation of capabilities and gender biases. In Ethiopia, the women particularly the female-headed households suffer from economic poverty, social discrimination, and cultural challenges which undermine their human worth and dignity. This paper attempts to investigate the determinants of women economic empowerment in Ethiopia by examining the situation prevailing in one particular woreda kilte Awlaelo in Tigray region using the information gained from 196 women. Since the women economic empowerment level determined by different demographic and socioeconomic factors, this paper attempts Tobit model analysis to explore the possible determinants of the women economic empowerment. The result shows that the women economic empowerment level is considerably influenced by age, family size, education, access to media, asset holdings, marital status, livelihood choices, job training, access to credit service, access to self-help group, access to safety net, access to women group and transportation service. Apart from the other economic empowerment variables, a variable farming livelihood choice shows significant positive impact on the economic empowerment level. Additionally, to test the independency of asset holdings of the households across different livelihood choices (farming, trade and daily labor) chi square test were used; besides, to compare mean value of women economic empowerment level across livelihood choices ANOVA test were used. Finally, it recommended that the economic empowerment could improve by concentrating on the negative factors, which affects the rural women of the woreda, and consequently poverty levels will be reduced.

Key words: livelihood choices, empowerment, tobit

INTRODUCTION:

Ethiopia is one of the largest populated countries in Africa. Its population is around 73.918 million. About 84 % of the total population in the country lives in rural areas, while the remaining 16 percent lives in urban areas. Out of the total 84% of the rural population, 91% of the rural economically active population, employed in agriculture and agriculture related activities (CSA, 2007).

The country's economy has shifted to a higher growth trajectory since 2003/04. During the last 5 years, overall real GDP has grown rapidly at an average of 11% per annum (MoFED, 2010). Additionally, Teshome (2010) showed that the per capital income increased by 9.9 percent per year and the income poverty index reduced to 29 percent at the end of 2008/09 as compared to 39 percent in 2004/05. According to the UNDP (2010) Human Development Report, Ethiopia scored HDI improvement from 0.250 to 0.328 (2.73 % growth rate) in the year between 2000 and 2010, this was the third fastest average annual HDI growth rate in the world.

Even though, these successes were achieved, Ethiopia is still one of the poorest countries in the world, which put the country at a rank of 157 out of 169 countries (UNDP, 2010). Besides, MoFED (2008) and Fekadu (2010) added that poverty remained widespread in Ethiopia. Moreover, Ethiopian women constitutes 49.5% of the population and there are large number of female-headed households in rural Ethiopia who suffered to economic poverty, social discrimination, and cultural subjugations in gaining productive resources and decision-making power (CSA, 2007; FAO 2006; OSRA, n.d).

Therefore a due emphasis has to be given to women to make them economically powerful. Accordingly, making women economically independent and self-reliant, as well as ensuring equal property rights through organizing, creating job opportunities, improve their access to credit and other inputs, enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and upgrading their decision-making power in overall spheres of development has enormous policy relevance (Mukessa and Nije 2001, cited in Multa 2008).



Particularly, the incidence and severity of poverty are largely identical in Tigray region. Tigray region is the poorest followed by Amhara region, Southern region, and Afar region with a poverty index of above 50% followed by Oromiya region with a poverty index of slightly less than 50% (Coompson, 2004).

Moreover, Tigray region is characterized by a sparse and highly uneven distribution of seasonal rainfall and by the frequent occurrence of drought, however, like most regions of Ethiopia, agriculture is the dominant sector and biggest employer of the economically active population (CANGO, 2007). Additionally, it is believed that women must not handle plough oxen; they, therefore, have to rent work force to have their land ploughed, this puts the single them at a double disadvantage because their fields are planted later and each day's delay in sowing reduces their final yield. Then, at harvest time, they have to share part of the harvest with the farmer who ploughs her field (CANGO, 2007).

To mitigate the problem, the Ethiopian government puts different policy measures (PASDEP and GTP) and has taken a range of measures to increase women's participation in political, social and economic affairs (MoFED, 2010).

In addition, in the 2010 Ethiopian millennium development goals report, the government of Ethiopia has also declared its commitment to gender equality, equity and the empowerment of women by stipulating the rights of women in its constitution, by issuing the Ethiopia women's policy and by revising the family law and the criminal law.

However, In Ethiopia, regardless of their significant role in the economic survival of their families', they are victims of violence and harmful traditional practices, they have the least access to productive resources, health care, basic education, employment opportunity, and decision-making processes; this all exposes them to a greater risk of poverty and power lessness (UNIFEM and DAW, 2001 as cited in Rad *et al.*, 2010; UN, 2009).

Similarly, Tigray regional state, particularly the study area Kilte Awlaelowedra is relatively dry, subject to frequent drought, low crop productivity, high soil degradation, and high number of female-headed households under absolute poverty due to the long year civil war (FAO, 2006; Hailu and Edwards, 2006). Moreover, the livelihood of most women's in the woreda largely dependent on sharecropping

agriculture, daily labor activities and small petty trade (CANGO, 2007).

In spite of that, although, there is no research on the role of livelihood choices on women economic empowerment, some studies related to this have been carried out in different countries.

For instance, Chaudhry (2009) in Pakistan showed that women empowerment is multidimensional concept and considerably influenced by different socio economic factors, including, access to education and media, and socio-cultural norms of the community. He analyzed the data using ordinary least square method. In addition, Rahman *et al.* (2007) has studied determinants of women empowerment at domestic and non-domestic issues in Bangladesh. The data was analyzed using logistic regression and concluded that place of residence (urban and rural), level of education, mass media facilities, living in combined family, age at marriage has strong and positive significant impact on decision-making power of women.

However, In order to measure empowerment level, these researchers developed separate index, used different determinants and different methods and techniques of analysis. Since, the women empowerment issue varies from region to region and culture to culture, the socioeconomic, environmental variation and the livelihood choices of rural women vary in according to their particular settings. According to this, the livelihood choices and women economic empowerment level of *kilteAwlaelowedra* has not been studied.

Realizing this, therefore, the main concern of this research is studying the issue of women empowerment in relation to their livelihood choices in this *woreda*. It is also unique in its nature because of its focus on ensuring how livelihood choices affect the women economic empowerment level analyzed using Tobit Model analysis.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study used both primary and secondary sources of information. While the secondary data related to the study were collected from various books, reports, publications (organizational and governmental), journals, and thesis papers. The Primary data also collected through survey, structured questioner, case study, key informant interview and field observations.

Two *Tabias* out of 18 *Tabias* in *kilteAwelaeloworedawere* selected purposively for the study. These are *Abreha Weatsbeha* and *Negash*. Both *Tabias* have their own lower administration unit (*Kushet*). *AbrehaWeatsbeha* includes 3 *Kushets*, such as, *Mendae*, *Selam* and *AbrehaWeatsbeha*. On the other hand, *Negash* includes four *Kushets* including, *Kalhable*, *Ma'ago*, *Adiekliand* *Adikasho*. The total populations of the female-headed households of the two *Tabias* are 350 and 628, respectively. Total 196 sample respondents based on 10% calculation of the total 978 of female-headed households. From this 98 sample respondents taken from FHHs and 98 samples of married households also taken proportionally. All taken using stratified random sampling technique.

In this research both qualitative and quantitative method of data collection used. While the quantitative data collected through household survey, the qualitative data were collected using direct observation, key informant interview, structured questionnaire, and case study.

To analyze the collected data the researcher used both the quantitative and qualitative method of data analysis. In quantitative analysis tobit model were used:-

$$Y_i = \beta_1 + \beta_2 X_i + u_i \text{ if RHS} > 0 \\ = 0 \text{ otherwise}$$

Where, RHS is right hand side, β is Intercept, X is independent variables, Y is dependent variable, and U_i is error term; to analyze the determining factors of economic empowerment level the researcher used Tobit model of analysis.

- To compare mean value of empowerment level across livelihood choices the researcher used ANOVA techniques.

Determinant of Economic Empowerment

Variables		Coefficient(β)	Std.err	t-value	P-value
Log for Income		-1.906672	0.21274	8.96	0.0**
Education level	Primary & secondary	0.633115	0.696328	0.91	0.364
	High school & greater	0.543448	0.673085	0.81	0.42
Livelihood choice		0.615497	0.26008	2.37	0.019**
Participation in women association		0.111801	0.258923	0.43	0.666

- To compare asset holdings of the households across livelihood choices, the researcher used chi-square test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Econometrics Analysis

3.1.1. Determinants of Economic Empowerment

This section presents the determinants of women economic empowerment based on the result of the tobit model analysis. The tobit model results based on the total sampled respondents presented in the table below. It suggests that almost more than half of the variables are significant and 60 percent variation in women economic empowerment explained by the explanatory variables. The slope estimates of families' per capita income, educational level of the household, livelihood choices, media exposure, access to credit service, access to job training, land holding, livestock assets, participation in women's association and participation in self-help groups are variables which have the positive signs except marital status, family size and age of the respondent that have negative signs. However, marital status, family size, and per capita income had a negative relationship with economic empowerment; the variables like livelihood choices, land holding were statistically significant at the 5 percent levels and have a positive impact on women economic empowerment. Similarly, participation in self-help groups, family size, and livestock assets are statistically significant variables at the 10 percent confidence level.



Participation in self-help group	0.482463	0.252186	1.91	0.057*
Media exposure	0.0924	0.204492	0.45	0.652
Access to credit	0.282355	0.208941	1.35	0.178
Access to job training	0.268536	0.216144	1.24	0.216
Livestock asset	0.071107	0.041175	1.73	0.086*
Land holding	0.51937	0.261731	1.98	0.049**
Family size	-0.11451	0.064823	-1.77	0.079*
Age of respondent	-0.01147	0.009449	-1.21	0.227
Marital status	-1.69708	0.213062	-7.97	0.0**
Number of observation=196				

Note: * and ** indicates significant at 10 percent ($p < 0.1$) and significant at 5 percent ($p < 0.05$)

3.2. Mean comparison between Empowerment level and livelihood choices

H0 = economic empowerment is similar across different livelihood choices

H1 = economic empowerment is different across different livelihood choices

The significance value of the F test in the ANOVA table below is significant at less than 5% confidence level. Thus, the null hypothesis rejected because the mean economic empowerment level is not equal across livelihood choices. This implies that different livelihood choices provide different economic empowerment level.

Mean comparison economic empowerment level across livelihood choices (using ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	156.783	3	52.261	17.536	.000
Within Groups	572.207	192	2.980		
Total	728.989	195			

3.3. Comparison of Asset holdings across Livelihood choices (using chi square test)

This section discusses about the comparison of asset holdings of the households across their livelihood choices using the chi-square test. Before the chi square test; the null hypothesis set, which is a livelihood choice cannot provide the households with asset holding. As a result, the chi-

square result for land holding and saving is significant at less than 5% and 10% confidence level, respectively. This implies that the livelihood choices provides the household with land and saving. Therefore, the null hypothesis rejected. On the other hand, the chi- square result for livestock holding is not significant at both 5% and 10% confidence level. This implies that livelihood choices cannot provide the households with livestock assets.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

3.2. Conclusion

The general objective of this study was to explore the role of livelihood choices on women economic empowerment level using Tobit model analysis based on primary data collected from Kiltawlaelowedra. The Index for women economic empowerment was constructed, consisting decision making power on daily expenditure, health expenditure, on purchase of house equipment, on personal and family income, on output, decision making to rent in /out land and going out to home to market by own will.

The variables like; age, marital status ,family size, the households per capita income, educational level of the household, farming livelihood choice, media exposure, access to credit service, job training, households land holding, livestock assets, participation in the women association and in the self-help groups were used. The livelihood choices, households land holding, and marital status were statistically significant at 5 percent confidence level and have positive impact on women economic empowerment, except marital status that have a negative relationship with economic empowerment. Similarly, participation in self-help group, family size, and livestock assets are statistically significant variables at 10 percent confidence level.

4.2. Recommendation

As a result of fertilizers price increment from time to time; the poor female-headed households and farmers in general cannot afford the price. Therefore, availability of fertilizer and improved seed with low cost is highly important to poor farmers, thus the concerned body should provide subsidy as well as provision of this inputs with minimum cost to the poor is highly essential.

In this study, it was observed that, there is a negative environmental externality in the study area, like, flooding and land degradation. This reduced productivity and destroyed all crops produced in this *tabia*. Therefore, the concerned body should provide food subsidy to those vulnerable peoples.

Almost more than half of the female-headed households have land but none of them can farm their land by their own

(entered to share cropping arrangement with male farmers) due to they are highly restricted by culture. Therefore, those concerned body should focuses on cultural transformation.

Since, the female-headed households have no labor force, technological innovation is much more important to empower those women economically. Therefore, the concerned body should provide improved technology innovation.

Even though, the married women have different asset, they had no decision making power on their family asset. Therefore, the government and other concerned body should create awareness about equal property right for both male and women.

The availability of credit facility in the communities is also important in reducing capital constraints of households' to access agricultural inputs and engaged in trade. It is also important for both Muslim and Christian religion. Thus, the wordas' micro finance institution should focus its attention in facilitating and credit provision in heterogeneous way for both religions.

Having high number of family size was one of negatively affecting variables of women economic empowerment. Therefore, family planning institutions should provide appropriate service to household.

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