

Relational Facilitators of Women's Empowerment at the Family Level: Women and Men Have Different Perceptions in Rural Ghana



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Background

- Women's empowerment (WE) has shown to be associated with health and nutrition outcomes.¹
- A local understanding of WE is crucial for effective interventions.
- Relational factors (reciprocity of expectations, interdependency of roles, and mutual decision-making) are essential to WE.²

Objective

To compare women's and men's perceptions of the relational facilitators of WE at the family level in rural Ghana.

Study Context

- A quasi-experimental nutrition-sensitive intervention in six communities in the Eastern region of Ghana.
- **Intervention arm:** female who were members of a farmer-based organization (FBO) and an adult male family member. The FBO women received agriculture-based inputs as a subsidized loan and nutrition/health and business training.
- **Control arm:** female non-FBO members in the same communities and an adult male family member.

Methods

- Focus group discussions (FGD) probed into the domains of empowerment to gain a local understanding of perceived facilitators and barriers.
- Four FGDs (out of 15) were analyzed (2 with women, 2 with men).
- Transcripts were translated, transcribed, and coded inductively and deductively, using MAXQDA

Results

Women's and men's expectations in terms of facilitators to WE often match. However, differences between women's and men's perceptions of expectations in terms of financial responsibilities

and decision-making power were shown to potentially add a financial burden on women, without choice or prior common agreement.

References

1. Santoso et al. Adv Nutr. 2019; 10(6): 1138-51
2. Shearer NB. Res Theory Nurs Pract. 2004; 18(4):357-70

Themes (Facilitators)

Men's Perception

Women's Perception

Distribution of Financial Responsibilities



"She works very hard and through that she got money [...] If the children need money to pay their school fees, she is able to give them." (Man, 33 years)

"If the man know that his wife is hardworking, if it is time to pay school fees for the children, [...] he will say he has no money [...] they leave everything to you." (Women, age unknown)

Decision-Making Power



"A woman who is empowered has knowledge and accepts advice from others. She obeys her husband, so the husband supports her." (Man, 70 years)

"He is the owner of the house therefore his decisions will be accepted more." (Women, age unknown)

Farm and Domestic Work Support



"Her children and her husband help her. If she is going to sow any crops, her children go with her to the farm." (Male, 33 years)

Resource Support



"Because this woman is hardworking in the her family, they buy chemicals for her to spray her farm" (Women, age unknown)

Skill-Building Support



"The family sent her to school and they made her learn a skill and that made her get to where she is now." (Women, 35 years)

Advice



"The family stood by her and supported with good advice." (Women, 34 years)

Conclusion

- According to our analysis women and men share both similar and differing views on the relational facilitators of WE.

- The areas where there are differences are those that could potentially influence household nutrition and health.
- Understanding relational facilitators should be considered in the design of future interventions.

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