

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AMONG MARRIED WOMEN AGED 15 TO 49 IN MYANMAR

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The present study entails an investigation of the empowerment of married women aged 15 to 49 in Myanmar from socioeconomic and demographic perspectives based on data from the *Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16*. The dimensions of women's empowerment are categorized into two parts: women's control over their earnings, and women's participation in household decision-making (decisions on major household purchases, visits to family or relatives, their health care; and the well-being of their children). These two dimensions are combined to create an index of women's empowerment. A binary logistic regression is used, by means of odds ratios to assess the relationship between women's level of empowerment and their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Overall, the findings of the study show that a higher empowerment level is associated with women's employment, increased age, urban residence, a higher educational attainment, a higher wealth quintile, and a lower level of husband's education. In addition, women that have one child or up to four children are more likely to have a higher level of empowerment than women with no children. About three fourths of the women in the sample live in rural areas. Among those women, the ones with a higher level of empowerment are more educated, employed and have higher household income. Generating employment opportunities for women and educating women are important factors that can lead to an increase in women's income, and accordingly, help raise the levels of women's empowerment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Women are an important part of the domestic and global workforce. Despite this, women continue to experience different forms of discrimination worldwide. Some women suffer violations of their human rights throughout their lives, and realizing their human rights has not always been a priority. To achieve equality between women and men, it is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which women experience discrimination and are denied equality in order to develop appropriate strategies to eliminate such discrimination. The term "women's rights" encompasses many different areas, making it among the most difficult areas of law to define. Women's rights are most often associated with reproductive rights, domestic violence, and education and employment discrimination. Women's rights also include health care, housing, social security and public benefits, human rights, immigration, child custody, and international law. Accordingly, women's empowerment has become a subject of serious concern among scholars and policymakers in developed and developing countries. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes as one of its goals the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls (Goal 5). Hence, there is a need to examine the empowerment status of women in marital unions.

Background

In Myanmar, among the total population of approximately 51 million, 27 million are female (52 per cent) according to the 2014 Population and Housing Census. Among the women, 58 per cent are married and 87 per cent are literate.

Based on the 2014 Census, 67 per cent of the population in the working age of 15 to 64 is employed, with males comprising a higher proportion of labour force participation than women. The employment to population ratio is also much higher for the male population, at 82 per cent, as compared to 48.4 per cent for female population.

In the 2014 Gender Inequality Index, Myanmar ranks eighty-fifth out of 187 countries. The Government has been striving to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality by collaborating with the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and international non-governmental organizations. It has been making concerted efforts to promote the status of women, as conveyed through the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022) of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. The Plan provides a strategic opportunity to integrate

gender equality and women's rights into the Government's reform agenda. It is based on the 12 areas of women's lives outlined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and covers a range of sectors, government ministries and departments. Goals for gender equality and women's rights can be well embedded into the Government's reform agenda by implementing the Plan for the Advancement of Women and by ensuring that gender equality perspectives are woven into sector policies, plans, and programmes across government ministries (ADB and others, 2016).

With the encouragement of the Government, many women senior officers in the public sectors and entrepreneurs in the private sectors have emerged. In 2012-2013, the percentage of female executives in government ministries was 37.6 per cent, an increase of 39.4 per cent from the period 2010-2015. The share of women elected as members of Parliament has risen from 5.9 per cent over the period 2010-2015 to 14.5 per cent in 2016 at the Union Parliament. At the state and regional levels, the share of women elected as members of Parliament increased from 2.8 per cent over the period 2010-2015 to 12.5 per cent in 2016. Among 14 states and regions, there are two female prime ministers at the state and regional level of Myanmar. At the governance level, it appears that women in Myanmar are becoming more involved and their presence is increasingly being felt. Nevertheless, there are still areas where women's empowerment and equality need to be improved.

Women in developing countries take part in the production process in agriculture, as well as in the formal and informal sectors. Women take on responsibilities at home and outside of the home, but their domestic roles are often ignored and undervalued. Traditionally, married women in Myanmar are responsible for only childbearing and child-rearing and management of household chores, and are considered as the nurturer in the family. Aside from these roles, they are also an important source of labour for economic activities. Accordingly, women's empowerment among married women has become a vital role and one that can contribute significantly towards the development of the country.

Various efforts have been made to develop a comprehensive understanding of women's empowerment and gender equality from different points of view. As more evidence emerges on the link between gender equality and women's empowerment with regard to economic growth and sustainable development, the interest in understanding the indicators for women has grown. This present analysis adds to the growing literature, focusing specifically on women's empowerment among married women in Myanmar and influences of women's economic and social status on their participation in decision-making within the household.

Research questions

The objective of this study is to investigate the association of women's empowerment to economic, social and demographic status of married women aged 15

to 49 in Myanmar. To meet the research objective, the research questions posed for the study are the following:

- (a) How are socioeconomic and demographic characteristics related to women's control over their earnings?
- (b) How are socioeconomic and demographic characteristics related to women's participation in household decision-making?
- (c) How are socioeconomic and demographic characteristics related to overall women's empowerment?

Conceptual framework

Women have been recognized as key agents of development. At the Fourth World Conference Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, the concept of women's empowerment was introduced to the meeting participants, which included State actors and Governments. The signatories of the Beijing Declaration, an outcome of the Conference, pledged to advance women's empowerment worldwide.

Their mission statement states the following: "The Platform for Action is an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making" (United Nations, 1996).

These fundamental notions of empowerment have been incorporated into the growing literature on the conceptualization of women's empowerment. Kabeer (1999) noted that women's empowerment represented "the expansion in women's capability to make strategic life choices in a context where this capacity was formerly denied to them." Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) proposed determining the general development of empowerment at different levels and in six dimensions: economic, sociocultural, familial/interpersonal, psychological, legal, and political. They defined women's empowerment as "a process of women gaining more power or security". Krishna (2003) described women's empowerment as "increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make effective development and life and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes". Parveen and Leonhauser (2004) identified women's empowerment as an essential precondition for the elimination of world poverty and upholding of human rights, in particular at the individual level, in that it helps build a base for social change.

The United Nations has defined women's empowerment as a process whereby women are able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices, and to control resources, which will

assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination (Malhotra, Schuler and Boender, 2002). Women's empowerment is a process that is related to the power of an individual to redefine her possibilities and options and to have the ability to act upon them (Eyben, Kabeer and Cornwall, 2008). It is also related to the influence of an individual on the social and cultural norms, informal institutions, and formal institutions in society. Women can be empowered in many dimensions — socially, economically, politically, and legally.

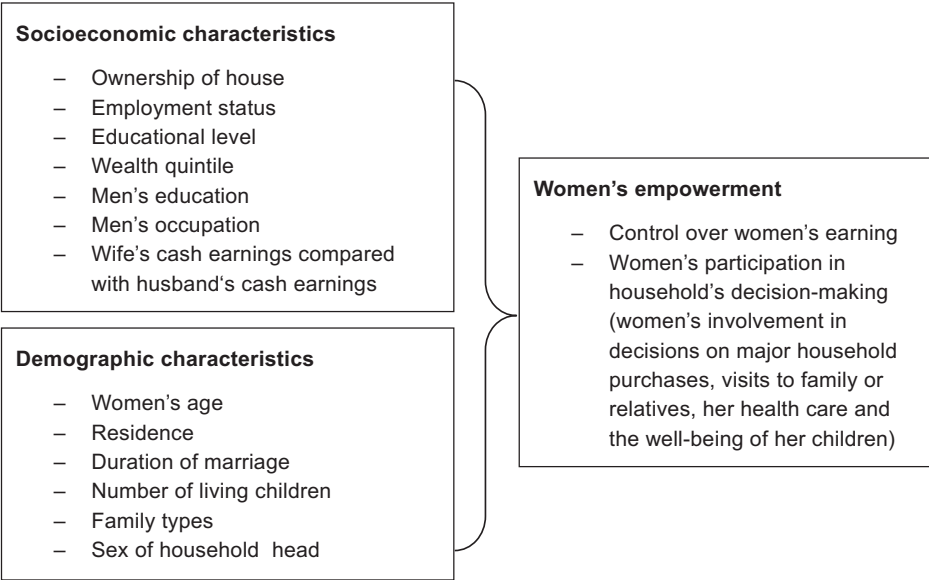
When defining women's empowerment, one of the similarities in the literature is the concept of women's decision-making power as an indicator of empowerment (Snijders, 2009). In the dimension of women's empowerment, gender equality and gender equity are terminologies that are interrelated. Equality implies the condition or quantity of being equal, and equality is the equality of rights. The concept of empowerment in gender and development often means working with women at the community level, building organizational skills. Wiklander (2010) stressed the importance of household-level statistics to investigate and reflect on the situation of all individuals within the household. Sharma and Shekhar (2015) also identified a positive relationship between women's empowerment and their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. The authors observed that women's empowerment encompasses voice, mobility, decision-making power in the household, and freedom of choice.

A study conducted in Burkina Faso shows that women's decision-making is positively associated with cash employment, formal education and higher household wealth (Wayack Pambè, Gnoumou/Thiombiano and Kaboré, 2014). In the study, high levels of human capital and financial autonomy have been found to influence women's participation in decision-making. In acceptance of traditional gender roles, neither education nor financial autonomy is sufficient to assert lack of women's empowerment. Boateng and others (2014) indicated that among married women in Ghana, wealthier women were significantly more likely to be involved in decision-making on their own health care. In addition, age, tertiary education, and employment significantly shape their involvement in household decision-making. Surprisingly, married women in the Upper East region of Ghana (the second poorest) are significantly more likely relative to women in the greater Accra region (the capital) to be involved in household decision-making, except for decisions on large household purchases.

In studies conducted in Nepal, Acharya and others (2010) and Furuta and Salway (2006) reported that women's higher socioeconomic status, namely women's increasing education and participation in wage work, were positively related to women's greater decision-making in the household. In an analysis of women's empowerment in Monywa Township, Myanmar, Thida Htay (2016) found that women with a high level of income were most likely to have a high level of empowerment; media exposure showed a significant relationship with women's empowerment, whereas family structure and type of residence had no impact on empowerment.

As discussed above, various scholars and organizations have offered definitions of women's empowerment and have examined women's empowerment from different perspectives. To observe women's empowerment in this study, different dimensions of women's empowerment covering a wide range of attributes are considered and their relationship with socioeconomic and demographic characteristics is investigated. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework



Source: Authors' own compilation (2018).

II. DATA AND METHODS

Data

To analyse women's empowerment, a wide variety of political, social, and economic determinants can be used, as empowerment is a multidimensional concept. Moreover, women's empowerment can be explored at the international, national, community, and household levels. The focus of this study is on women's empowerment at the national level in a household-based analysis in which only socioeconomic and demographic aspects are considered.

The newly available national *Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16* is used to develop the analysis datasets. The survey is based on collected data for multiple indicators of demographic and health information (Myanmar, Ministry of Health and Sports and ICF, 2017). Approval was obtained from Myanmar's Ministry of Health and Sports and the DHS Program to use the data for this study.¹

The data analysis of this study focuses only on married women aged 15 to 49. Although data on 12,885 women are available from the *Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16*, this study was limited to 7,870 of them. To obtain nationally representative estimates, sampling weight is applied and the final weighted samples include 7,758 married women aged 15 to 49, except for the variable on control over women's cash earnings, where only 5,114 married women aged 15 to 49 who are working are considered.

Key variables and measurements

The identification and measurement of dependent and independent variables are considered for fitting six models in this study and is shown in table A.1 in the annex. For each of the independent variables, women are considered to exercise control over earnings or decision-making if they do so alone or jointly with their husband or partner.

Statistical analysis

For the multivariate analysis, a binary logistic regression model is used when the dependent variable is dichotomous, such as women's participation in decision-making. Using Stata version 15.1, data analysis is carried out in multiple phases. First, by means of binary logistic regression analysis, five different models (Models 1 to 5) are fitted for one item in the control over women's own earnings, and four items in the decision-making dimensions of women's empowerment — women's own decision on major household purchases, women's own decision on visits to family or relatives, women's own decision on health care, and women's own decision on the well-being of their children. The independent variables used are mentioned in the annex, table A.1. Second, an overall women's empowerment index is calculated based on these five different variables. The overall women's empowerment index of 0 to 3 and 4 to 5 are considered as low and high levels, respectively. Finally, the binary logistic regression model (Model 6) for overall women's empowerment level is carried out to determine the socioeconomic and demographic factors related to women's empowerment.

¹ The Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey data are publicly available free of charge from the DHS Program in the form of standard recoded data files, which are available at www.dhsprogram.com/Data/.

III. RESULTS

Descriptive analysis

In the annex, table A.2, information on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of women included in the study is provided, along with descriptive statistics on their participation in household decision-making. By age, the group is divided almost equally between ages 20 to 25 and 35 to 49, with only 3 per cent aged 15 to 19. Approximately nine out of ten of them live in a household headed by a male. The vast majority of women, 74 per cent, live in rural areas, 47 per cent of them have a primary-level education, 64 per cent are currently employed, 41 per cent are in the poorest or poorer wealth quintiles, and 39 per cent have cash earnings that are less than their husband's.

Women's participation in decision-making

Concerning participation in decision-making, table A.2 in the annex shows the following: 92 per cent of the women participate in decisions on control over their own earnings; 91 per cent participate in decisions on the well-being of their children; 83 per cent participate in decisions on major household purchases; 82 per cent decide on visits to family or relatives; and 82 per cent make decisions on their own health care. Women with higher levels of education and women in urban areas are more likely to participate in all the types of decisions; this also applies to employed women and women in the wealthiest household quintile. The older the woman, the more likely she is to participate in these decisions. The same is true when the wife's cash earnings are more than the husband's or the same, but not for control over women's earnings. Women with no children are less likely to participate in all the types of household decisions. Female household heads are more likely to participate in household decisions apart from control over women's earnings and well-being of children.

Multivariate analysis

Model 1

A binary logistic regression model is performed on women's control over their own earnings, using the independent variables presented in table A.2 in the annex. The summary results are shown in the annex, table A.3. As table A.3 shows, employment status, education level, age, duration of marriage, and number of living children are statistically significant among employed women and have a positive association with women's control over own earnings. In contrast, men's education level is statistically significant and has a negative association with women's control over own earnings. Men with a skilled manual occupation and men working in agriculture are statistically significant variables, but in opposite directions. Compared with women whose husbands

work in unskilled manual labour, women whose husbands have a skilled manual occupation are more likely to have control over their own earnings, while women whose husbands have an agricultural occupation are less likely to control their own earnings, net of other factors. Moreover, the variable on wife's cash earnings compared with the husband's cash earnings is statistically significant. If women's cash earnings are less than their husband's, the women are less likely to control their own earnings than if their cash earnings are more than or the same as their husband's earnings, controlling for other factors.

Model 2

The results of the binary logistic regression analysis on women's decision on major household purchases using the same independent variables and the summary results are presented in table A.3 in the annex. They indicate that women's education level, age, duration of marriage, and number of living children are statistically significant and have a positive association with women's involvement in decisions on major household purchases. However, men's education level is statistically significant and has a negative association with women's decision on major household purchases. Men working in agriculture is a statistically significant variable and has a negative association with women's decision on major household purchases. Compared with women whose husbands work as unskilled manual labourers, women whose husbands have an agricultural occupation are less likely to be involved in decisions on major household purchases, net of other factors. Moreover, the variable on wife's cash earnings compared with husband's cash earnings is statistically significant. If women's cash earnings are less than their husband's, and if a husband does not bring in money and or the woman does not know the amount of her husband's or partner's income, the women are less likely to be involved in decisions on major household purchases than if their cash earnings are more than or the same as their husband's earnings, controlling for other factors.

Model 3

The results of the binary logistic regression analysis for women's decision on visits to family or relatives, using the same independent variables, are shown in the annex, table A.3. Women's employment status has a positive association and is statistically significant. Women's decision on visits to family or relatives is higher among employed women than unemployed women. Women's wealth quintile has a positive association and is significant. The higher the wealth quintile, the higher the women's decision-making power with regard to visits to family or relatives. The number of living children has a positive association and is statistically significant. Women's decision on visits to family or relatives among women with one or two children, and three or four children is higher than among women with no children. Men's education level has a negative association and is statistically significant. When their husbands have secondary and

higher levels of educational, women are less likely to make their own decisions on visits to family or relatives than when their husbands are uneducated.

Model 4

A binary logistic regression model is performed for women's decision-making about their own health care, using the same independent variables. The summary results are displayed in the annex, table A.3. Women's employment status has a positive association and is statistically significant. Women's decision-making about their own health care is higher among employed women compared with unemployed women. Women's high education level has a positive association and is statistically significant. Women's decision-making about their own health care is higher among women with more education compared with uneducated women, controlling for other factors. Women in the middle, richer, or richest wealth quintiles show a positive statistically significant association regarding control over own health care. The higher a woman's wealth quintile, the more likely she is to make decisions on her own health care. Residence has a positive and statistically significant association. Women's decision-making power on their own health care is greater among women living in urban areas than those living in rural areas. The number of living children has a positive association and is statistically significant. Women's decision-making about their own health care is higher among women with children than women with no children. However, men's education level has a statistically significant negative association. Women's decision-making about their own health care is lower when their husbands have a secondary or higher education compared with no education. Sex of household head is statistically significant. Women's decision-making over their own health care is higher for female household heads than when the household head is male.

Model 5

The results of a binary logistic regression analysis for women's decision-making on the well-being of their children, using the same independent variables, are shown in the annex, table A.3. Wealth quintile has a positive association and is statistically significant. The higher the wealth quintile, the greater the women's decision-making on the well-being of their children. The number of living children also has a positive association and is statistically significant. Women's own decision-making on the well-being of their children is higher for women who have children than for women who do not have children. Men's secondary education level is statistically significant. Women's decision-making on the well-being of their children when men have a secondary education is lower than when men are uneducated, controlling for other factors. Men's occupation is statistically significant. Women's decision-making on the well-being of their children is less likely when men's occupation is "others" — clerical, sales, household and domestic, and services — compared with unskilled manual labour, controlling for other factors. Women's cash earnings is also statistically significant. When a wife's cash earnings are

less than her husband's, her decision-making power on the well-being of her children is lower, which is also true when her husband or partner does not contribute money to the household (and for "don't know" responses), controlling for other factors.

In summary, the models show different significant variables. Among independent variables included in the conceptual framework, the number of living children is significant for all the types of women's decisions, while women's employment status is significant, except for the well-being of their children, and women's wealth quintile is significant apart from control over women's own earnings. Surprisingly, ownership of a house and family type do not have any association with women's empowerment in the models.

Model 6

An overall women's empowerment index is computed based on five variables: women's own control over their earnings; own decision on major household purchases; own decision on visits to family or relatives; own decision on their health care; and own decision on the well-being of their children. As already mentioned, a score of zero to three on the index is considered as a low level of women's empowerment, while a score of four to five is considered as a high level. According to this index, 82 per cent of married women aged 15 to 49 in Myanmar have a high level of women's empowerment as shown in the table below.

Table. Overall women's empowerment level

Overall women's empowerment level	Per cent
Low (0-3)	17.74
High (4-5)	82.26

Source: Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16.

A binary logistic regression model is performed again to determine the overall women's empowerment level, using the same independent variables. A summary of results for significant independent variables is shown in the annex, table A.4. As the table shows, women's employment status has a positive association and is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. The odds ratio indicates that employed women are 1.43 times more likely to have a high women's empowerment level compared with unemployed women, controlling for other factors.

Women's higher education level has a positive association and is statistically significant at the 5 per cent level. Women with higher education are 1.47 times more likely to have a high women's empowerment level than uneducated women, controlling for other factors. Women's wealth quintiles of richer or richest has a positive association

and is statistically significant at the 1 per cent level. Women in the richer or richest quintiles are 1.49 times more likely to have a high empowerment level compared with poor or poorer women, controlling for other factors.

Women's ages of 20 to 34 and 35 to 49 have positive associations and are statistically significant at the 5 per cent and 1 per cent levels, respectively. The odds ratios indicate that women ages 20 to 34 and 35 to 49 are 1.85 and 2.16 times more likely, respectively, to have a high empowerment level compared with women aged 15 to 19, controlling for other factors. Residence has a positive and statistically significant association, at the 10 per cent level. Urban women are 1.26 times more likely than rural women to have a high empowerment level, controlling for other factors.

The number of living children (one to two, and three to four) has a positive association and is statistically significant at the 1 per cent and 5 per cent levels, respectively. Compared with women with no children, women with one or two children are 1.72 times more likely to have a high empowerment level, and women with three or four children are 1.45 times more likely, controlling for other factors.

Men's education of secondary and higher levels are statistically significant at the 5 per cent and 1 per cent levels, respectively. Women whose husbands have an education at secondary and higher levels are 0.68 and 0.44 times less likely, respectively, to have a high empowerment level compared with women whose husbands are uneducated, controlling for other factors.

In the analysis, ownership of household and family type are not found to be associated with the overall level of women's empowerment, as measured by the index of five variables.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Women's empowerment is the right of women and a part of basic human rights which is one of the central concepts in the 2030 Agenda. There is widespread agreement that women must be empowered to play an effective part in national development. Women's empowerment is essential for sustainable development and economic growth of the country. It is evident that gender equality is important for economic growth, poverty reduction, and enhanced human well-being.

It is important that women's economic rights and empowerment, and gender equality are integral elements of mandates and operating procedures in the country. Policies and strategies should be focused on economic growth and on generating decent employment for women, and should entail the allocation of resources to the sectors in which poor women work, such as agriculture and the informal sector, less

developed regions and states where poor women live, and the factors of production they possess (low-skilled labour).

Women's lack of power over resources and decision-making has caught the attention of academicians and policymakers. It is essential to analyse the determinants of women's empowerment to inform policies for national development. Accordingly, in the study, the socioeconomic and demographic factors related to women's empowerment in Myanmar are explored.

The investigation of the relationship between women's empowerment and their socioeconomic and demographic characteristics reveal the following points:

- Women who are employed, educated, in a high wealth quintile, residing in an urban area, and whose husbands have a lower level of education have a higher level of participation in decision-making.
- Women with one or two children tend to have a higher level of empowerment than women without any children, while the level of empowerment for women with three or four children is slightly lower than that of women with one or two children.

Based on the findings of this study, key areas of policy priority are the following:

- (a) Increasing the number of women in the workforce
- (b) Increasing the number of female high-level officials and political representatives
- (c) Reducing gender bias in the labour market
- (d) Developing rural areas
- (e) Continuing to remove gender differences in education.

By showing that high levels of education, employment status, wealth quintile, and residence significantly influence women's participation in decision-making, the analysis is consistent with previous studies on women's decision-making in other countries (Wayak Pambè, Gnoumou/Thiombiano and Kaboré, 2014; Boateng and others, 2014; Acharya and others, 2010). While this study raises many questions, it provides answers regarding the relationship between women's socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. It also supports the relationship of husband's education level and number of living children with women's empowerment. It is found that an increase in male education is associated with less women's empowerment. This may be because women in Myanmar are respectful of the traditional gender norms and give more respect to husbands who are more educated than their wives; consequently, women's participation in decision-making is lower. Moreover, the results of the study are consistent with the findings of a study by Thida Htay (2016), which focused on Monywa

Township, Myanmar, in terms of the significant impact on women's empowerment of household wealth, place of residence, and the lack of significance of family structure.

While this study enhances the understanding of women's empowerment in Myanmar, it has a number of limitations. It cannot show a causal relationship between the dependent and independent variables because the *Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16* is a cross-sectional survey. In addition, even though the Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey response rate was high, missing data may affect the findings of the study. Though the ownership of land by women is considered an independent variable, multicollinearity is found. Accordingly, this variable is omitted in the data analysis. In this study, women's employment status is considered, but type of women's occupation is excluded; it should be considered in a further study. Because of data availability, only women's empowerment at the household level is highlighted and only socioeconomic and demographic characteristics are emphasized.

According to the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (2011), there is a substantial gap between the female and male labour force participation rates, at 54 per cent and 82 per cent, respectively, and underemployment is also more prevalent among females (at 41 per cent) compared to 35 per cent among males (Myanmar, Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development and others, 2011). Considering the gender parity in enrolment at the primary and secondary school levels and the larger proportion of women in higher education, the differences in the male-female labour participation rates and women's underemployment are concerns. The gap between women's education and employment calls for more rigorous exploration; it certainly points to the inadequate realization of women's rights and lack of optimization of women's potential for sustainable human development. It is, therefore, necessary to continue further analysis on gender dimensions in employment and education to gain a better understanding of this subject.

On average, although the ratio of women to men for hourly wages in industry has declined over time, it has been as high as 90 per cent. Gender segregation by industry and occupation and differences in human capital or productivity are arguably factors that lead to wage differentials (ADB and others, 2016). This points to the need for policies and programmes to reduce gender differences in the labour market. Accordingly, women's empowerment in the workplace should be investigated as a further study.

Lower enrolment rates of young men in higher education may also reflect the fact that they are more likely to find employment at an earlier age than young women and that young women are more likely to pursue a career (for example, as a teacher, which is a much admired and respected job in Myanmar) and hence should continue their studies at higher education institutions. Cultural traditions have also been identified as influencing this trend. The low salaries of teachers likely make these professions less appealing to men, who may be under social pressure to be the main breadwinner and

can obtain higher income in other sectors of the economy, often without a higher education. Myanmar women dominate the unprotected informal sector; they continue to bear the major responsibility for unpaid care work, especially in rural areas, in addition to their paid jobs, while men are typically the household heads (ADB and others, 2016).

Accordingly, an analysis is needed from the point of view of traditional cultural norms, spousal relationships and community gender attitudes, as religion and cultural experiences play vital roles in shaping women's empowerment in some countries. Moreover, reducing violence against women is also important in empowering women. Hence, in further research, it is necessary to study women's empowerment from the perspective of experiencing domestic violence. In addition, a significant aspect, the psychological dimension, should be considered as a further study.

Despite these limitations, this study has important implications. The major determinants for women's empowerment are employment status, age, residence, education level, wealth quintile, husband's education, and number of living children. On the whole, the findings confirm the major role that these factors play in women's empowerment in terms of participation in household decision-making. It demonstrates the importance of gender equality in higher education and employment opportunities. The national policies for rural development and programmes aimed at improving women's status in Myanmar should strive for gender equality and to empower them.

ANNEX

Table A.1. Identification of dependent and independent variables

Dependent variables	Independent variables
Model 1	Ownership of the house
Control over women's earnings	$X_1 = 1$ if woman does not own the house
$Y = 1$ if women alone and	$= 2$ if woman alone, woman jointly owns and woman
women and husband/partner	alone and jointly owns
$= 0$ if husband/partner alone,	
someone else and others	Women's employment status
	$X_2 = 1$ if woman is currently unemployed
	$= 2$ if woman is currently employed
Model 2	
Women's own decision on major	
household purchase	Women's educational level
$Y = 1$ if women alone and	$X_3 = 1$ if no education
women and husband/partner	$= 2$ if primary
$= 0$ if husband/partner alone,	$= 3$ if secondary
someone else and others	$= 4$ if higher
Model 3	Wealth quintile
Women's own decision on visits	$X_4 = 1$ if poorer and poor
to family or relatives	$= 2$ if middle
$Y = 1$ if women alone and	$= 3$ if richer and richest
women and husband/partner	
$= 0$ if husband/partner alone,	Women's age
someone else and others	$X_5 = 1$ if 15-19 years
	$= 2$ if 20-34 years
	$= 3$ if 35-49 years
Model 4	
Women's own decision on	
health care	Duration of marriage
$Y = 1$ if women alone and	$X_6 = 1$ if 0-9 years
women and husband/partner	$= 2$ if 10-19 years
$= 0$ if husband/partner alone,	$= 3$ if 20-29 years
someone else and others	$= 4$ if 30 years and above

Table A.1. (continued)

Dependent variables	Independent variables
Model 5	Residence
Women's own decision on well-being of children	$X_7 = 1$ if rural = 2 if urban
Y = 1 if women alone and women and husband/partner	No. of living children
= 0 if husband/partner alone, someone else and others	$X_8 = 1$ if no children = 2 if 1 and 2 children = 3 if 3 and 4 children = 4 if 5 children and above
Model 6	
Overall women empowerment	
Y = 1 if high level of empowerment indices	Men's educational level
= 0 if low level of empowerment indices	$X_9 = 1$ if no education = 2 if primary = 3 if secondary = 4 if higher
	Men's occupation
	$X_{10} = 1$ if unskilled manual = 2 if skilled manual = 3 if professional/technical/managerial = 4 if agricultural (self-employed and employee) = 5 if others
	Wife's cash earnings compared with husband's cash earnings
	$X_{11} = 1$ if more than him or same with him = 2 if less than him = 3 if husband/partner doesn't bring in money and don't know the earnings
	Family type
	$X_{12} = 1$ if nuclear family = 2 if extended family
	Sex of household head
	$X_{13} = 1$ if male = 2 if female

Source: Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16.

Table A.2. Per cent distribution of women participation in the decision-making by socioeconomic and demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Woman's participation decision making					
	Per cent	Control over women earning	Major household purchase	Visit to family or relatives	Own health care	Well-being of children
Ownership of house						
Woman does not own	33.4	91.1	83.2	81.9	83.2	88.9
Woman alone and woman jointly owns	66.6	92.1	83.6	82.7	83.6	92.6
Woman's employment						
Unemployed	36.4	88.5	82.0	80.6	82.0	90.3
Employed	63.6	92.2	84.3	83.4	84.3	92.0
Women education						
No education	15.4	90.1	81.1	80.4	81.1	89.5
Primary	47.1	91.1	82.6	82.2	82.6	91.7
Secondary	29.5	92.7	84.1	82.6	84.1	91.5
Higher	8.0	96.5	90.5	87.3	90.5	92.6
Women age						
15-19 years	2.9	78.1	70.4	74.8	70.4	74.1
20-34 years	46.4	90.5	83.0	81.6	83.0	90.5
35-49 years	50.7	93.7	84.6	83.6	84.6	93.1
Wealth quintile						
Poorest and poorer	41.3	90.2	79.9	79.1	79.9	89.6
Middle	20.1	91.5	84.9	83.4	84.9	92.3
Richer and richest	38.6	93.8	86.5	85.4	86.5	92.8

Table A.2. (continued)

Characteristic	Per cent	Woman's participation decision making					Number of women
		Control over women earning	Major household purchase	Visit to family or relatives	Own health care	Well-being of children	
Duration of marriage							
0-9 years	37.7	89.2	81.7	80.9	81.8	87.9	2 928
10-19 years	35.2	93.5	84.1	82.6	84.1	93.3	2 729
20-29 years	23.9	92.7	85.1	84.3	85.1	93.6	1 858
30 years and above	3.2	95.0	83.6	83.3	83.6	93.4	243
Residence							
Rural	73.9	91.2	81.8	80.9	81.8	91.0	5 736
Urban	26.1	93.7	88.1	86.5	88.1	92.3	2 022
Living children							
No children	11.8	87.2	74.4	74.2	74.4	75.0	916
One child or two children	52.3	92.4	85.4	84.3	85.4	93.7	4 061
Three or four children	27.1	92.6	84.3	82.9	84.3	94.2	2 098
Five children and above	8.8	92.1	81.1	80.3	81.1	90.6	683
Men's education							
No education	16.1	93.2	83.0	81.7	83.0	90.1	1 248
Primary	40.0	91.5	83.2	82.5	83.2	92.4	3 103
Secondary	37.6	91.0	83.3	82.4	83.3	90.6	2 915
Higher	6.3	94.5	86.5	84.1	86.5	92.7	490
Men's occupation							
Unskilled manual	36.8	91.6	81.5	80.9	81.5	91.3	2 853
Skilled manual	19.4	94.5	84.8	83.5	84.8	92.5	1 508
Professional/technical/managerial	7.4	95.5	88.0	85.7	87.9	90.2	573
Agricultural	25.5	89.2	82.4	81.0	82.5	91.0	1 980
Others	9.6	91.1	87.3	87.0	87.4	91.4	745

Table A.2. (continued)

Characteristic	Per cent	Woman's participation decision making					Number of women
		Control over women earning	Major household purchase	Visit to family or relatives	Own health care	Well-being of children	
Wife's cash earnings compared with husband's cash earning							
More than his or same as his	26.2	91.5	85.4	85.0	85.4	93.9	2 033
Less than his	38.7	92.1	83.1	81.8	83.1	90.6	3 003
Husband or partner doesn't bring in money and don't know husband's or partner's earnings	1.0	86.1	87.3	88.2	87.3	88.6	79
Family type							
Nuclear family	53.1	92.3	83.9	82.8	83.9	91.6	4 119
Extended family	42.0	91.1	83.1	82.1	83.1	91.2	3 260
Sex of household							
Male	87.1	91.9	83.2	82.1	83.2	91.7	6 759
Female	12.9	91.6	85.1	84.3	85.1	89.4	999
Total	100	91.8	83.4	82.4	83.4	91.3	7 758

Source: Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16.

Table A.3. Summary results of women's empowerment

Independent variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)
Constant	2.61** (1.28-5.6)	1.78 (1.02-3.13)	2.27** (1.19-4.30)	1.66 (0.86-3.23)	2.11** (1.00-4.66)
Woman's employment					
Unemployed	1		1	1	1
Employed	1.42** (0.94-2.14)		1.35** (1.03-1.76)	1.38** (1.06-1.81)	
Woman's education level					
No education	1	1		1	
Primary	1.39** (1.01-1.92)	1.33** (1.03-1.73)			
Secondary	2.10*** (1.37-3.22)	1.54*** (1.15-2.07)			
Higher	3.95** *(1.67-9.34)			1.76** (0.99-3.12)	
Wealth quintile					
Poorer and poor			1	1	1
Middle			1.36** (1.05-1.77)	1.45*** (1.11-1.88)	1.51** (1.07-2.13)
Richer and higher			1.50*** (1.14-1.98)	1.52** (1.15-2.00)	1.57** (1.10-2.25)
Woman's age					
15-19 years	1	1			
20-34 years	1.66* (0.95-2.90)	1.79** (1.14-2.81)			
35-49 years	2.61*** (1.32-5.15)	2.15*** (1.34-3.45)			
Duration of marriage					
0-9 years	1	1			
10-19 years	1.52 *** (1.04-2.25)	1.24* (0.97-1.57)			
20-29 years					
30 years and above					
Residence					
Rural			1		
Urban			1.35** (0.99-1.84)		

Table A.3. (continued)

Independent variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)	OR (95% CI)
Number of living children					
No children	1	1	1	1	1
One child or two children	1.38* (0.97-1.96)	1.34*** (1.04-1.72)	1.55** (1.18-2.06)	1.86*** (1.42-2.44)	5.11*** (3.57-7.30)
Three and four children			1.36* (0.95-1.95)	1.67*** (1.18-2.35)	6.00*** (3.73-9.64)
Five children and above				1.66** (1.02-2.69)	3.09*** (1.65-5.77)
Men's education level					
No education	1	1	1	1	1
Primary	0.64** (0.43-0.95)	0.68*** (0.52-0.88)			
Secondary	0.48*** (0.31-0.73)	0.52*** (0.40-0.69)	0.73* (0.53-1.02)	0.64*** (0.46-0.89)	0.66** (0.42-1.02)
Higher	0.44** (0.20-0.99)	0.67* (0.41-1.08)	0.44*** (0.25-0.77)	0.40*** (0.23-0.69)	
Men's occupation					
Unskilled manual	1				1
Skilled manual	1.46* (0.96-2.22)	0.74*** (0.60-0.93)			
Professional/ technical/managerial	0.72** (0.52-1.00)				0.57** (0.35-0.93)
Agricultural (self-employed)					
Others					
Wife's cash earnings compared with husband's cash earning					
More than his or same as his	1				1
Less than his	0.38*** (0.18-0.79)	0.62*** (0.51-0.76)			0.62*** (0.48-0.81)
Husband or partner doesn't bring in money and doesn't know husbands' or partners' earnings		0.44** (0.21-0.92)			0.30*** (0.14-0.68)
Sex of household head					
Male	1	1.30* (0.96-1.77)		1	
Female				1.30* (0.96-1.77)	

Source: Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16.

Notes: ***, **, *, 1 per cent, 5 per cent, and 10 per cent level of significance, respectively. OR: odds ratio, CI: confidence interval. Only covariates with a significant association are shown. Results are adjusted for ownership of house, women's employment, women's education, wealth quintile, men's education, men's occupation, wife's cash earnings compared to husband's, women's age, residence, duration of marriage, number of living children, family type, and sex of household head.

Table A.4. Summary results of overall women's empowerment level

Independent variables		Odds ratio	95% confidence interval	
			Lower	Upper
Constant		0.88	0.48	1.59
Woman's employment	Unemployed (ref)			
	Employed	1.43***	1.12	1.84
Woman's education level	No education (ref)			
	Higher	1.47**	0.89	2.43
Wealth quintile	Poor (ref)			
	Richer or richest	1.49***	1.15	1.93
Woman's age group	15-19 years (ref)			
	20-34 years	1.85**	1.11	3.07
	35-49 years	2.16***	1.24	3.75
Residence	Rural (ref)			
	Urban	1.26*	0.95	1.66
Living children	No children (ref)			
	1-2 children	1.72***	1.34	2.22
	3-4 children	1.45***	1.04	2.02
Men's education	No education (ref)			
	Middle	0.68**	0.5	0.93
	Higher	0.44***	0.27	0.79

Source: Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey 2015-16.

Notes: ***, **, *: 1 per cent, 5 per cent, and 10 per cent level of significance, respectively. Only covariates with a significant association are shown. Results are adjusted for ownership of house, women's employment, women's education, wealth quintile, men's education, men's occupation, wife's cash earnings compared to husband's, women's age, residence, duration of marriage, number of living children, family type, and sex of household head. Overall, women's empowerment is based on an additive index composed of five items: control over earnings; decision-making on major household purchases; visits to family or relatives; own health care; and children's well-being; and is separated into high empowerment (4-5 items) and low empowerment (0-3 items).

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