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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Myanmar and Korea have many similarities and are complementary relationship. Therefore, we believe that research exchange will expand mutual understanding between Myanmar and Korea, and will be the cornerstone for mutual development.

KOMYRA and YUE have co-published The Myanmar Journal since August 2014. So far, many scholars have published numerous papers through the journal, and We are sure that this journal has helped many people understand Myanmar and Korea more clearly and closely.

The Myanmar Journal covers various issues in Myanmar and Korea. It covers various topics that can promote bilateral development and mutual understanding, not limited to specific topics such as economy, industry, society, education, welfare, culture, energy, engineering, healthcare, and agriculture.

We hope that this journal will continue to promote understanding of the current status and potential capabilities of Myanmar and South Korea and promote in-depth international exchange and cooperation.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the editorial board and YUE and KOMYRA for their valuable support in The Myanmar Journal publication.

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Youngjun Choi *yj choi*

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This journal aims to promote the mutual cooperation and development of Myanmar and Korea through intensive researches in the entire field of society, economy, culture, and industry.

It will cover all general academic and industrial issues, and share ideas, problems and solution for development of Myanmar.

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Demography and Socio-economic Factors Affecting on Women's Empowerment Index in Sagaing Region, Myanmar

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ABSTRACT : Based on the Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS (2015-2016)), this article studied at women's empowerment among married women (aged 15-49) in Sagaing Region from demographic and socioeconomic perspectives. The relationship between women's empowerment and its determinants factors is investigated using a backward regression analysis. The cumulative women's that employment index and selected married women (age 15-49) in Sagaing Region, the decision-making index and self-esteem index, were used as dependent variables in this study. Sources of empowerment variables such as respondent age at first birth, children ever born, and education were found to have a net positive association with women's empowerment, whereas wealth and woman's age were found to be negatively associated with women's empowerment. Further investigation revealed that education, media exposure, wealth, and the number of children ever born remained significant factors influencing household decision-making and attitudes toward self-esteem. Education, respondent age, and occupation should be included to the list of determining factors, whereas variables that are negatively related with women's empowerment, such as wealth, should be excluded. Children ever born and educated women are important factors can be led to increase in women empowerment.

Key words : *Backward Regression Analysis, Cumulative Women's Empowerment Index, Decision-making Index, Self-esteem Index, Children Ever Born*

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I. Introduction

Because of its abstract and comprehensive nature, women's empowerment is difficult to measure. Empowerment is multidimensional and presents itself on several levels, although there is less consensus on which dimensions and levels are most important. For the Myanmar Demographic and Health Surveys (MDHS (2015-16)), some indices have been proposed, one of which includes an empowerment module. The MDHS country reports also include two empowerment indices, one based on decision-making questions and the other on the number of reasons a woman believes her wife should be beaten. Because not all questions are accessible in every survey and various items are evaluated in the indices, these indices are subjectively weighted and not strictly comparable.

The United Nations launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. Gender equity is included in many of the SDGs, and Goal 5 explicitly calls for gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Goal 5 aims to empower women and girls to achieve their full potential by providing them with equal opportunities to men and boys. This means putting an end to all types of discrimination and violence directed against them. The Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) have gathered and disseminated health data on a variety of indicators, such as female empowerment and other health statistics. Myanmar is one of the countries whose data is included in the database. Sagaing Region is Myanmar's second-biggest constituent unit and the largest of the seven regions with the country's fourth-highest population.

1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- (i) to investigate the effect of women's empowerment on decision-making in the Sagaing Region,
- (ii) to explore the effects of women's empowerment on their self-esteem in the Sagaing Region, and
- (iii) to examine the effects on the Sagaing Region's women empowerment index.

2. Material and Method

The current study used data from the Ministry of Health and Sports of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar's 2015-16 Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey (2015-16 MDHS), which was conducted in 2015-16. Married women ranging in

age from 15 to 49 years old were polled. An empirical analysis of the factors of women's empowerment in the Sagaing Region was conducted using a backward multiple regression analysis.

II. Literature Review

A brief assessment of the literature on the elements that influence women's empowerment and the relationship between empowerment and various demographic and socioeconomic aspects is provided (Musonera & Heshmati, 2016).

In order to provide a proper specification of the model and conduct a sensitivity analysis of the results, the baseline model was specified in three ways:

- (i) $CEI = f(\text{Age, Educ, Wealth, PaidWork, Resid, Media, Children, AgeFM})$.
- (ii) $DEC.IND = f(\text{Age, Educ, Wealth, PaidWork, Resid, Media, Children, AgeFM})$
- (iii) $EST.IND = f(\text{Age, Educ, Wealth, EmpCash, Resid, Media, Children, AgeFM})$

Where, the cumulative empowerment index (CEI) is calculated by combining the decision-making and self-esteem indices. The decision-making index is DEC.IND (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). The self-esteem index is denoted by the symbol EST. IND. The respondents' age is given as their age. Educ is a respondent's level of education. Wealth refers to a respondent's wealth, which is classified into five categories (poorest, poorer, middle, richer and richest) (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). Emp Cash is defined as a respondent's employment status, which can be either employed for cash or not (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). A respondent's residence is referred to as his or her reside (either in an urban area or rural area). The term "media" refers to media exposure, which can be defined as either regular media exposure or no media exposure (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). Children are the various types of children who have ever been born. Age FM denotes a respondent's age at first marriage.

The current study relies on data from the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS). The respondents were married women between the ages of 15 and 49 (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Two indicators were used to investigate women's empowerment: household decision-making and attitudes toward gender roles.

1. Outcome Variables

The dependent variables used in this study were the cumulative empowerment index (the main component) and its constituents, that is, the decision-making index,

self-esteem index (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

1) Decision-making Index

"Respondents were asked different questions regarding who had the final say on different household decisions such as respondent's healthcare, visits to family and relatives, large household purchases, decision on what to do with the money that the husband earned. The responses were coded (1) if the decision was taken by the respondent alone, (2) if the decision was jointly taken by the respondent and her husband, (3) if the decision was taken by the respondent and another person, (4) if the decision was taken by the husband/partner alone, (5) if the decision was taken by someone else, and (6) for others" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). "The decision-making index was computed by assigning scores to different responses. A (2) was assigned to every response where the decision was taken alone by the respondent, (1) was assigned to every response where the decision was jointly taken and (0) otherwise. Then individual scores for the different decisions were added to get total scores out of ten (ten is the maximum score), that is, 2 (marks maximum/decision) * 5 questions" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

2) Self-esteem Index

"Respondents were asked questions about their attitudes towards gender roles and norms. Respondents were asked whether wife beating was justified under one of the following circumstances:

- (i) When she goes out without telling her husband.
- (ii) If she neglects children.
- (iii) If she argues with her husband.
- (iv) If she refuses to have sex with her husband.
- (v) If she burns the food" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

"Responses were coded (1) if the respondent said (yes) and (0) if the respondent said (no). In the current study, the scores assigned to different responses were: (1) was assigned to every response where the respondent said (no) and (0) to every response where the respondent answered (yes). Finally, individual scores were added to get the total scores out of five (maximum 1 mark *5 questions)" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). The value of either the decision-making index or the self-esteem index should fall in the interval (0-1) or alternatively (0 per cent -100 per cent) (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

3) Cumulative Women's Empowerment Index

"During the DHS, respondents were not asked to assign weight to various indicators of women's empowerment. As a result, we assumed that all of the indicators were equal in weight and computed the cumulative empowerment index using a non-parametric method, as shown by:

$$CEI=(W1*Dec.Index+W2*S.Est.Index)/2$$

where W1 and W2 are weights assigned to each women's empowerment indices which reflect weights attached to each indicator in the aggregation" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

"Dec.Index is the decision-making index which was obtained by adding the scores obtained from different responses on different questions about household decision-making" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

"S.Est.Index is the self-esteem index which was obtained by adding scores of different responses about respondents' attitudes towards justifications for wife beating" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Authors in previous studies, such as Musonera and Heshmati (2016), used the same approach to compute women's empowerment.

4) Decision-making (alone or jointly)

Different decisions were labeled based on who made the decision. Any decision made by the respondent herself was labeled with a '2' (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). A decision made jointly by the respondent and her husband or jointly by the respondent and another person was labeled '1'. Finally, other previously mentioned options were labeled '0' (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016)

5) Agreeing with Justifications for Wife Beating

"The agreement with any of the five reasons was coded (1), whereas the rejection of wife beating for any of the five reasons was coded (2). Others have been coded (0)" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). This method of computation is similar to that used by Musonera and Heshmati (2016).

2. Covariate Variables

Covariates associated with women's empowerment include variables at the household and community levels. "These variables include age in years, number of children born, regular media exposure, cash employment, age at first marriage, rural

residence, and household wealth. Some of these variables, such as age, media exposure, educational level, and cash-based employment, are thought to be potential sources of empowerment" (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Other variables are viewed as aspects of a setting for empowerment (children born and rural residence, wealth, and age at first marriage) (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Age: According to a majority of religions around the world, women's age is positively associated with their level of empowerment, especially when women's empowerment is measured using indicators that measure household decision-making (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016). Nonetheless, it is unclear whether empowerment is positively associated with age when measured using indicators of attitudes toward gender equality.

Number of children ever born (CEB): According to (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016) state that women who have children are treated more favorably. Nonetheless, predicting the direction of causality between the number of children born and attitudes toward gender roles is difficult.

Education and media exposure: Education and media exposure equip women with information and means that can allow them to effectively adapt to the changing modern world thus increasing their level of empowerment. People with higher education are exposed to new ideas and alternative behaviors and gender norms and roles. Thus, education is a critical source of empowerment. For example, women with higher education are less likely to accept wife beating for any reason and are more likely to believe that it is a woman's right to refuse sex with her husband (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Employment for cash: Earning cash is more likely to increase women's bargaining powers within households. This gives women a sense of personal achievement and it also helps in creating awareness about the fact that they are like men and can provide financial support for their families. In addition, off-farm professional occupations potentially empower women through financial autonomy and alternative sources of identity and social exposure to new structures of power free of kin networks (Kishor and Subaiya, 2008).

Media exposure: Media exposure (watching television on a regular basis, reading newspapers and listening to the radio on a regular basis, access to the internet) has the same direction of causality as education in that it exposes women to new ideas, gender roles, and norms. According to this theory, women who are frequently exposed to the media are less likely to accept that women being beaten is justified for any reason, and they are more likely to accept that it is a woman's right to refuse sex with her husband when necessary (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Age at first marriage: A younger age at first marriage is negatively associated

with women's empowerment because it eliminates a woman's access to sources of empowerment such as education (Kishor and Subaiya, 2008). Furthermore, a younger age at first marriage is associated with a greater likelihood of a woman agreeing that wife beating is justified for any reason (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Urban residence: In cities there are people from different backgrounds doing a variety of off-farm jobs with a variety of services including easy access to education and regular media exposure. Hence, as compared to rural women, urban women are more likely to reject wife beating for any reason. These women are of the view that women have the right to refuse sex with their husbands (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

Wealth: Wealth and gender equality do not always go together. On the one hand, household wealth is a source of empowerment because it provides education, media exposure, and access to intellectual networks; however, wealthier households are more likely to be strongly attached to patriarchal gender norms (Musonera and Heshmati, 2016).

III. Empirical Analysis

This study aims to examine what factors influence women's empowerment in the Sagaing Region using family decision-making and self-esteem measures. The findings will help us better understand characteristics that can serve as a source of empowerment or a setting for empowerment. Myanmar Demographic and Health Survey (2015-16 MDHS) data was used (MOHS & ICF, 2017). Married women between the 15 and 49 years were polled. A backward selection procedure is used in stepwise regression analysis to empirically analyze the determinants of women's empowerment in Myanmar.

1. Relationship between Women's Empowerment and Its Determinant Factors

Backward regression analysis was utilized to look at the demographic and socioeconomic aspects that influenced women's empowerment indices. Women's empowerment (decision-making index, self-esteem index, and cumulative women's empowerment index) is one of the outcome variables. Women's empowerment covariates include woman's age, total children ever born, respondent's age at first birth, place of residence (rural =1; urban =0), media exposure (yes =1; no =0), respondent education: primary, secondary, and higher [primary (primary =1, others =0); secondary (secondary =1, others =0); higher (higher =1, others =0)], respondent

currently working (paid work =1; others =0), and wealth (Non-poorest =1, Poorest = 0) The results of a backward regression analysis of women's empowerment (decision-making index, self-esteem index, and cumulative women's empowerment index) and its determinant components are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

1) Relationship between Decision-making Index and Its Determinant Factors

According to table 1, the adjusted coefficient of determination (adjusted R²) is 0.445, implying that demographic and socioeconomic factors account for more than 44.5 percent of the variation in the decision-making index. The F statistic and p value are 139.711 and 0.000, respectively. As a result, the calculated regression model was statistically significant at the 1% level. The relationship between the choice index and its determinant factors is shown in Table 1. The relationship between the decision-making index and its determinant components is shown in Column 4. Some criteria, such as resident age at first birth, number of children ever born, and media exposure, have a strong positive relationship on women's decision. The age, secondary education, and wealth among women have a significant adverse relationship on the decision-making.

Table 1. Women's Decision-making Index and Its Determinant Factors

Factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig. P-value	VIF
	B	Std.Error				
(Constant)	1.248***	0.376		3.316	0.001	
No. of Children Ever Born	0.278***	0.041	0.219	6.745	0.000	1.974
Woman Age	-0.023***	0.008	-0.087	-2.815	0.005	1.805
Age of Respondent at 1st Birth	0.119***	0.007	0.529	17.551	0.000	1.700
Education: Primary	-0.311**	0.138	-0.058	-2.260	0.024	1.237
Media Exposure	0.479**	0.195	0.058	2.462	0.014	1.038
Wealth	-0.447*	0.231	-0.046	-1.936	0.053	1.073
Adj	0.445					
F value	139.711***				0.000	

Source: MDHS (2015-2016)

***, **, *: 1%, 5%, and 10% level of significance, respectively

2) Relationship between Self-esteem Index and Its Determinant Factors

According to table 2, the adjusted coefficient of determination (adjusted R^2) is 0.058, implying that demographic and socioeconomic factors account for more than 5.8% of the variation in the self-esteem index. The F statistic and p value are 11.61 and 0.000, respectively. As a result, the calculated regression model was statistically significant at the 1% level. The association between the self-esteem index and its determining components is shown in Table 2. The relationship between the self-esteem index and its components is shown in column 4. This column shows a significant positive relationship between women's self-esteem and some of its variables, including the number of children born in a lifetime, the resident's age at first birth, and education (primary, secondary and higher). The age of a woman has such a significant negative relationship on her self-esteem.

Table 2. Women's Self-esteem Index (attitude toward agreeing with justifications for wife beating) and Its Determinant Factors

Factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig. P- value	VIF
	B	Std.Error				
(Constant)	7.381***	0.354		20.879	0.000	
No. of Children Ever Born	0.192***	0.045	0.185	4.297	0.000	2.036
Woman Age	-0.025***	0.009	-0.114	-2.868	0.004	1.754
Age of Respondent at 1st Birth	0.018**	0.007	0.096	2.438	0.015	1.709
Education: Primary	0.715***	0.233	0.169	3.070	0.002	3.330
Education: Secondary	1.272***	0.254	0.290	5.008	0.000	3.695
Education: Higher	1.715***	0.328	0.213	5.235	0.000	1.817
Adj	0.058					
F value	11.610***				0.000	

Source: MDHS (2015-2016)

***, **, *: 1%, 5%, and 10% level of significance, respectively

3) Relationship between Cumulative Women's Empowerment Index and Its Determinant Factors

According to table 3, the adjusted coefficient of determination (adjusted R^2) is 0.289, implying that demographic and socioeconomic factors contributed for more than 28.9% of the variation in the total combined women's empowerment index. The F statistic value is 61.412, and the p value is 0.000. As a result, the calculated

regression model was statistically significant at the 1% level. The relationship between the choice index and its determinant components is shown in Table 3. The relationship between the cumulative women's empowerment index and its variables is shown in column 4. It is clear from this column that women's empowerment and several of its variables, such as the number of children born in a lifetime, resident age at first birth, and education, have a significant positive relationship (primary, secondary and higher). Women's empowerment has a significant negative relationship between both age and wealth (non-poorest).

Table 3. Cumulative Women's Empowerment Index and Its Determinant Factors

Factors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig. P-value	VIF
	B	Std.Error				
(Constant)	22.816	1.211		18.845	0.000	
No. of Children Ever Born	1.019	0.143	0.268	7.145	0.000	2.056
Woman Age	-0.103	0.028	-0.129	-3.662	0.000	1.814
Age of Respondent at 1st Birth	0.285	0.023	0.422	12.335	0.000	1.709
Education: Primary	1.502	0.746	0.097	2.013	0.044	3.392
Education: Secondary	2.357	0.828	0.147	2.847	0.005	3.889
Education: Higher	3.981	1.057	0.135	3.767	0.000	1.875
Wealth	-1.722	0.789	-0.060	-2.182	0.029	1.096
Adj	0.289					
F value	61.412***				0.000	

Source: MDHS (2015-2016)

***, **, *: 1%, 5%, and 10% level of significance, respectively

IV. Discussion of the Results

This research was designed to measure women's empowerment index in Sagaing region using indices of household decision-making and self-esteem. The results show that women with more children are found to be more empowered than women with fewer children. Number of children ever born is increasingly related with decision-making index, self-esteem index and cumulative women's empowerment index. A possible explanation for the positive relationship between women's empowerment, decision-making, self-esteem and child bearing is that more

empowerment and status are accorded to women with more children and this goes hand in hand with a woman's age.

Age at first birth had a significant positive relationship among decision-making index, self-esteem index and cumulative women's empowerment index. Younger age at first birth was expected to be negatively associated with decision-making, self-esteem and women's empowerment while a higher age at first birth tends to be positively associated with decision-making, self-esteem and women's empowerment.

The findings also reveal that women's educational levels are positively associated with their level of empowerment. Women with higher education are more empowered than those with primary education. Women with higher education seem to have higher self-esteem than women with primary education (see Table 2) and a possible explanation for this is that higher education exposes women to new ideas and alternative gender norms and behaviors, thus having a gender-egalitarian view of the world. However, women's secondary education had negatively association with the decision-making index.

Media exposure is increasingly related with decision-making index. This can be attributed to the fact that the media exposes women to the world outside their homes including to new ideas and non-traditional roles for women. No relationship was found between media exposure and self-esteem index and cumulative women's empowerment index in Sagaing Region. The findings also reveal that women were negatively associated with their level of empowerment. Women with higher education were among decision-making, self-esteem and women empowerment. It can be concluded that younger women are more likely to be empowered than older women.

Wealth is found to be negatively associated with the cumulative empowerment and decision-making indices. Women from the poorest families seem to be more empowered and had higher decision-making ability than those from poorest families. However, wealth is not associated with household self-esteem.

V. Conclusion

The most important observation of the study is that the number of children born, woman age at first birth, media exposure, and education (primary, secondary and higher) all have a direct link to women's empowerment. This study also finds that respondents' wealth and age have an indirect relationship with women's empowerment. It can be found that women's empowerment can be gained through education, involvement in the labor force, media exposure, effective transfer of negative traditional cultural norms, non-poverty, and a focused on integrated

networks.

It can be explained by the nature of gender differences, especially reflect men's higher self-esteem and confidence than women. More research, such as a national study using the more rigorous research method and a more specialized tool, is suggested in order to study more about women's empowerment and gender equity in Myanmar. As a consequence, appropriate policies and development programs for women's empowerment and gender equity in Myanmar can be implemented.

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