



Negotiation-Space for Gender Household Decision Making in Polygamous Homes in Rural Northern Ghana

Millar Katherine Kaunza¹, Maxwel Tengolzor Ba-An², Thomas Azagsiba Agana³, David Millar³

¹University for Development Studies (UDS), Tamale, Ghana

²Millar Open University, Yekene, Bolgatanga, Ghana

³Simon Diedong Dombo University of Business and Intergrated Development Studies (SDD UBIDS), Wa, Ghana

Email: katherinekaunza@gmail.com, baansepaat@yahoo.com, aganathom@yahoo.com, millarad1@yahoo.com

How to cite this paper: Kaunza, M.K., Ba-An, M.T., Agana, T.A. and Millar, D. (2022) Negotiation-Space for Gender Household Decision Making in Polygamous Homes in Rural Northern Ghana. *Open Access Library Journal*, 9: e8890.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1108890>

Received: May 17, 2022

Accepted: December 27, 2022

Published: December 30, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Open Access Library Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to broaden the scope and deepen the discourses of contemporary dialogues of women marginalisation. The study brings along a detailed understanding of the involvement of women in critical decision-making areas at their marital homes in northern Ghana from husband-wife; and wife-wife positions. The study adopted the mixed methods approach to research (qualitative and quantitative analysis); 42 Polygamous homes were purposefully sampled and interviewed. Response overlaps and unclear responses were encountered in populating the template. Analysis was further done by “Tabulations and Cross-Tabulations”, Within and Between Comparison were made by cross comparing columns and then by rows. The findings were that there is statistical significance of who plays the dominant role in critical decision areas concerning basic daily necessities (food, clothing, and shelter) of the household (further disaggregated into components of production, consumption, essential clothing, luxury clothing, ownership and control). Differences in voice and space were encountered between male household head and senior most wife; senior most wife verse junior wives; and male household head verse junior wives. Derived conclusions of the study were that most of the time the woman (Senior-Most Wives) takes the major critical decision as regards food, clothing, and shelter of the family. But when it comes to the household the men (Male Household Heads) take the critical decisions. The Junior Wives play subservient roles, ascribed by the Senior Wife, “until their times are due”. The study recommends an emphasis on disaggregated studies and targeted actions when it concerns issue of gender in rural northern Ghana. This will remove and blinkers that come along with sweeping statements and stereotypes.

Subject Areas

Social Science and Animal Science

Keywords

Gender, Negotiation-Space, Household, Decision Making, Polygamous

1. Introduction

Generally, the data on socio-cultural phenomenon in northern Ghana has been aggregated data hence leading to aggregate conclusions and positions. Some of these positions skew academic debate and even leading to policy misinform and also policy targeting. One such position is on gender and the lack of space and voice for expression of the northern Ghana rural woman on issues pertaining to her life and welfare at the household level. By extension most African Scholars are confronted with similar cliché about gender subjugation. The question we ask is, is this really *total*? Is the aggregation fair and a true reflection of the rural northern Ghanaian woman? How do we contribute to a better understanding of this concept and its operationalisation? How will our research contribute to better gender-related policy, strategy, and programmatic targeting?

The main purpose of this paper is to broaden the scope and deepen the discourses of contemporary dialogues of women marginalisation in Northern Ghana. The study brings along a detailed understanding of the involvement of women in critical decision-making areas at their marital homes in northern Ghana from husband-wife; and wife-wife positions in a polygamous family.

We think that this paper is very significant because having both men and women involved in decision-making broadens the perspectives, increases creativity and innovation, diversifies the pool of talents and competences, reduces conflicts, and improves the process of decision-making

All three researchers are of rural northern Ghana descent and in our growing up we have witnessed situations of disagreements in the making of decisions where the final say has been the prerogative of the other over the father. We have also witnessed the special role played by the first (most senior) wife vis a vis the husband, and most especially, between her and her rivals (in polygamous homes). This experience we wish to confront with various positions in literature that are intriguing. We also hope the findings will be interesting from colleague of other cultures (European/American) who might not be privy to our experiences growing up, to the complexities of the African Family.

2. Literature Review

The quest for gender equity in decision making process is relevant for effective gender mainstreaming. Women have been marginalized and underrepresented in organs of decision-making and in governance structures since time of imme-

morial (Kivoi, 2014) [1]. Gender equality was first declared a development agenda in the United Nations Charter of 1945, and was subsequently addressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) of 2000. Ghana is also a signatory to other international treaties on women empowerment, key among them being the African Union's Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003), the African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999) and the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the Dakar Platform for Action (1994). International fora, including the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994, Fourth World Conference on Women of 1995, and World Summit for Social Development of 1995, affirmed that inequalities still persist in women's decision-making representation despite the progress made globally in improving their status (Kivoi, 2014) [1].

The hegemony over the African Woman is well documented. Zulfiqar (2016) [2] in her book: "African Women Writers and the Politics of Gender", has been quite extensive on this subject. She has done a detailed chronology of the works of Mariama Ba (Senegal), Buchi Emechata (Nigeria), Chimamanda Adiche (Nigeria), Tsitsi Dangarembga (Zimbabwe) and Leila Aboulela (Sudan). These works are more than sufficient to establish, from the African perspective, the dominant and overbearing patriarchal systems that Africa has to contend with male dominance. These scholars of African origin have written extensively on the lack of space (the African Woman is rarely seen) and lack of voice (the African Woman is rarely heard) when it comes to family decision making.

Women play a pivotal role in agricultural and rural economies in all developing countries. The roles that rural women play and their position in meeting the challenges of agricultural production and development are quite dominant and prominent (Ogunlela & Mukhtar, 2009) [3]. Their roles vary considerably between and within regions and are changing rapidly in many parts of the world, where economic and social forces are transforming the agricultural sector. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes (SOAF Team and Cheryl Doss, 2011 [4]; Arshad *et al.*, 2013 [5]). Rural women play key roles in agriculture sector production by working with full passion in production of crops right from the soil preparation till post-harvest activities (Ahmad *et al.* 2004) [6]. They are integrated into the rural economy. However, their relevance and significance in agriculture cannot be overemphasized (Rahman, 2008) [7].

In the development community of the 1990s, the concepts of women's empowerment and transformative gender relations were articulated by thought lead-

ers such as Kabeer (1994 [8], 1999 [9]) and Sen (1997) [10] away from “a ‘zero-sum’ game with politically weak winners and powerful losers” towards “instrumentalist forms of advocacy which combine the argument for gender equality/women’s empowerment with...the possibility of achieving familiar and approved [development] goals” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 436) [9], such as poverty reduction and economic growth (Cornwall, 2016 [11]; Malhotra *et al.*, 2002 [12]). In the present-day development community, increasing gender equity and empowerment among women smallholder farmers to bring them on par with their male counterparts is recognized as integral to achieving global food security and development goals set forth by leading development organizations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF, 2016), Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR, 2016; Wouterse, 2017) [13], Feed the Future (McKenna, 2015) [14], Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO, 2013), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID, 2016), and World Bank (Croppenstedt, Goldstein & Rosas, 2013 [15]; Malhotra *et al.*, 2002 [12]; World Bank, 2018). According to USAID, gender integration seeks to recognize, consider, and account for the: differences and the inequalities between men and women in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. The roles of women and men and their relative power affect who does what in carrying out an activity and who benefits. Taking into account the inequalities and designing programs to reduce them should contribute not only to more effective development programs but also to greater social equity/equality (Gutierrez Pionce, 2016) [16].

This approach is particularly vital in sub-Saharan Africa’s agricultural sector, as it is widely understood that, even among husband-wife dyads within the same households, men and women smallholder farmers often differ in their needs and priorities, as well as in their access to key resources such as credit, extension trainings, and new technologies (Abdulai *et al.*, 2013 [17]; De La O Campos *et al.*, 2015 [18]; Petrics *et al.*, 2015 [19]). For example, research indicates that women smallholder farmers in sub-Saharan Africa are vulnerable to inequalities in access to and control over the plots they farm, access to agricultural inputs and credit, access to extension services and technical trainings, and control over agricultural decisions that directly affect their agricultural practices and/or productivity (Johnson *et al.*, 2016 [20]; McKenna, 2015 [14]; Oduro *et al.*, 2012 [21]). A number of regional studies in Ghana, including the Northern Region, have found similar results for Ghanaian women smallholder farmers (Apusigah, 2009 [22]; Dittoh *et al.*, 2018 [23]; Doss and Morris, 2001 [24]; Doss, 2002 [25]).

Another very informative book, “Gender inequality in key sectors in Ghana: Current trends, causes and interventions” by Appiah-Kubi *et al.*, (2020) [26], draws similar discourses near home, Ghana, and by extension, Northern Ghana where this study is located. This work is supplemented by writings like Amu (2005) [27] works on the role of the women in Ghana’s economy, Dako-Gyeke *et al.* (2013) [28], exploring factors contributing to gender inequality in rural Ghana, and Ferrant *et al.* (2014) [29] more recent work on analysing gender

gaps in labour outcomes. Consistently, all these works have pointers on under-valorisation of women contributions, gender discrimination, marginalisation and subjugation in livelihood activities, access, ownerships and the sharing of benefits. Women are hence “poorer and with a notoriously poor characteristics brought to bear on them by motherhood”.

This gloomy picture is undeniable; but the overarching question is; “Is it all doom and gloom? Is there not space for negotiation and manoeuvring?”

We share the position that women marginalization is real the world over (Jayachandran, 2015) [30]. Numerous and varied efforts and programmes exist to address women empowerment, inclusion, and a voice and space for decision making (Wrigley-Asante, 2008 [31]; Oduro *et al.*, 2011 [32]). All this is done from a gender perspective. The concept gender has profound socio-cultural ramifications for, especially, the rural women of northern Ghana. These implications are better situated within their cultural contexts. Much as it is important to address the issues of women’s rights, it is more important to make them conscious of these rights and thus assert themselves accordingly. Women empower is important but most important is to do so within a cultural context.

2.1. Research Objective

To establish the fact that although most literature portray the lack of voice and space (rarely seen or heard) of the Traditional African woman, when this space is disaggregated and investigate in-depth, the voices of these women can be heard; thus, querying the status quo.

2.2. Hypothesis

H0:

Women do have quality voice and space not too obvious to superficial investigations, and know where and when to use these voices to inure to their benefits of productivity and power.

H1:

Women do not have quality voice and space not too obvious to superficial investigations, and know where and when to use these voices to inure to their benefits of productivity and power.

3. Methodology

The emphasis was to use disaggregated data categories so a template was generated disaggregating the basic components of household gender decision making points; using very basics of the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943) [33], Food, Clothing, and Shelter.

A qualitative research approach was adopted (Creswell, 2005) [34].

- The area (Rural Northern Ghana) was chosen purposefully; so was the choice of polygamous households.
- Stratification was used to differentiate the respondent groups into Male

Household Head vrs Seniormost Wife/ Male Household head vrs Other Junior Wives/ Seniormost Wife vrs Junior Wives.

- Snowball Technique was used to reach samples for direct interviewing.

Purposeful sampling was done as per the template. Guided discussions were done. Findings were further triangulated using Focus Group Discussions, Checklists, and Key Informant interviews (Kirk and Miller, 1986) [35].

Data Collection and Analysis: *The 3 basic essentials of life for a household formed the basis of this research, FOOD, CLOTHING, AND SHELTER.* 42 Polygamous homes were purposefully sampled and interviewed. Response overlaps and unclear responses were encountered in populating the template. There were instances when aggregated investigation had to be disaggregated in order to induce responses. Example, ‘Farm Type, for which type of crops?’ Consumption; ‘What type of Food?’ Also, Proxy Indicators were used for the synthesis and classification of the data). This means that of the 42 respondents, if 30 of response category (71%) state a common or near common position, they are taken as common grounds of the respondents in that category and on that item. Analysis was further done by “Tabulations and Cross-Tabulations”, Within and Between Comparison by cross comparing by columns and then by rows. As live-responses, the Researchers are aware of a potential large margin of error but that is compensated by commonness in the Pattern of Response, *Typologies*. Hence the emerging picture is basically an analysis of typologies of responses.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic data was sought on age, level of education, marital status and occupation (Table 1). This was to ensure that all sections of the population were represented in the study.

Women were the main respondents in this study. The marital status was included to ensure that all the respondents are married into a polygamous home (the main target). The level of education here refers to the formal (western) form of education. With regards to the occupational level, trading, civil servant and apprenticeship; 5, 2 and 3 respectively, means that, the respondents also engaged in these occupations aside farming.

4.2. Tabulations and Cross Tabulations of Findings

First a synthesis of all data collected were done and categorised as in Table 2 below. Analysis was further done by “Tabulations and Cross-Tabulations” Within and Between Comparison by cross comparing by columns and then by rows.

4.3. Analysis of Table 2 Below

To make these findings more relevant and meaningful to this study, we discussed

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age (N = 42)	25 - 39	10	23.8
	40 - 59	20	47.6
	60+	12	28.6
	Total	42	100
Gender (N = 42)	Male	0	0
	Female	42	100
	Total	42	100
Level of Education (N = 42)	No formal Education	30	71.4
	Primary	5	11.9
	Secondary	0	0
	Tertiary	0	0
	Other	7	16.7
	Total	42	100
Marital Status (N= 42)	Polygamous married	32	0
	Separated	0	0
	Divorced	0	76.2
	Widowed	10	23.8
	Total	42	100
Occupation (N = 42)	Trading	5	11.9
	Government (Civil Servant)	2	4.8
	Farming	32	76.2
	Apprenticeship	3	7.1
	None	0	0
	Total	42	100

Source: This study, 2022.

with a cross-section of main respondents in the thematic area using various key informant interview sessions, as well as various focused group discussions, using the check lists as guide in the discussions to obtain their views on the household decision making with regard to food, consumption, clothing, luxury clothing, shelter and control.

4.3.1. Food

From the findings of the study with regards to production, participants in the study gave explanations on the following during various key informant interviews conducted:

SEED SELECTION/PROCESSING

Participants mentioned that in the area of seed selection and processing male

Table 2. Synthesis of findings.

BASIC DAILY NECESSITIES OF THE HOSEHOLD	COMPONENTS OF HOSEHOLD ESSENTIALS	CRITICAL DECISION AREAS	MALE HOUSEHOLD HEAD vs SENIORMOST WIFE	SENIORMOST WIFE vs JUNIOR WIVES	MALE HOUSEHOLD HEAD vs JUNIOR WIVES
FOOD	PRODUCTION	Seed Selection/ Processing	Collegially Jointly done	Jointly done	Only in labour use
		Land Preparation	Only Male with female as labour	Only Male with female as labour	Only Male with female as labour
		Seeding and Weeding	Woman as major Man as minor	Collegial	Woman as dominant
		Guiding and protecting	Both as minor	Senior as Minor	Oher wives as major
		Harvesting and Processing	Woman as lead	Junior wives as major	Junior wives as major
		Packaging and Storage	Woman as lead	Junior wives as major	Junior wives as major
		Farm Type	Collegial between them	Senior wife on advise of other women	Point for cross-checking only
		Farm Size	Collegial between them	Senior wife on advise of other women	Point for cross-checking only
		Farm Location	Collegial between them	Senior wife on advise of other women	Point for cross-checking only
		Farm Records	Woman as lead repertoire	Senior wife on advise of other women	Point for cross-checking only
		Farm History	Woman as lead repertoire	Senior wife on advise of other women	Point for cross-checking only
		CONSUMPTION	Who to Cook	Senior Wife decides	Collectively but with women dominance
	What to Cook		Collectively	Collectively but with women dominance	Purely a women's affair
	How to Cook		Collectively	Collectively but with women dominance	Purely a women's affair
	When to Cook		Senior Wife decides	Collectively but with women dominance	Purely a women's affair
	Who to Supervise		Senior Wife	Senior Wife	Purely a women's affair
	Who to decide on sale of produce		Male Head	Collectively	Purely a Men's affair
	Who to decide on Storage		Male Head	Collectively	Purely a Men's affair
	CLOTHING	ESSENTAIL CLOTHING	What to wear	Individualistic	Individualistic
When to wear			Individualistic	Individualistic	Individualistic
Who to provide			Individualistic	Individualistic	Individualistic
When to renew			Individualistic	Individualistic	Individualistic
Order of Renewal			Individualistic	Individualistic	Individualistic
Decision to pass on			Individualistic	Individualistic	Individualistic

Continued

	LUXURY CLOTHING	What to wear	Individualistic	Individualistic	Individualistic
		When to wear	Needs Man's approval	Needs Senioremost wife's consent	Individualistic
		Who to provide	Needs Man's approval	Needs Senioremost wife's consent	Individualistic
		When to renew	Needs Man's approval	Needs Senioremost wife's consent	Individualistic
		Order of renewal	Needs Man's approval	Needs Senioremost wife's consent	Individualistic
		Decision to pass on	Needs Man's approval	Needs Senioremost wife's consent	Individualistic
SHELTER	OWNERSHIP	Land and Structure	Man only Senioremost wife only informed	Junior Wives Only informed	Junior Wives only informed
		Siting and Location	Man and Senioremost wife	Junior Wives Only informed	Junior Wives only informed
		Building and Construction	Man and Senioremost wife	Junior Wives Only informed and provide labour	Junior Wives Only informed and provide labour
		Protection and Safety	Man only	Man only	Junior Wives Only informed and provide labour
		Rehabilitation and Repairs	Mostly women	Only informed and provide labour	Only informed and provide labour
		Inclusions and Expansion	Man and Senioremost wife	Only informed and provide labour	Only informed and provide labour
		Inheritance and Heritage	Man and Senioremost wife	Junior Wives Only informed	Junior Wives Only informed
		Disposal or Sale	Man and Senioremost wife	Junior Wives Only informed	Junior Wives Only informed
	CONTROL	Cleaning	Senioremost wife Superintend	Wives provide labour	Junior Wives Do the cleaning
		Arrangements of sections	Senioremost wife Superintend	Junior Wives Witnesses	Junior Wives Do the arrangements
		Occupancy	Man with Senioremost wife	Junior Wives Witnesses	Women only witness
		Cooking Areas	Senioremost wife	Other wives provide labour	Women only affair
		Living Areas	Man and Senioremost wife	Other wives provide labour	Women only witness
		Storage Areas	Man and Senioremost wife	Other wives provide labour	Other wives provide labour
Waste disposals		Senioremost wife Superintend	Other wives provide labour	Other wives provide labour	
Access Rights	Collective	Junior Wives Witnesses	Junior Wives Witnesses		
Benefit Sharing	Collective	Junior Wives Witnesses	Junior Wives Witnesses		

Source: This Study.

household head and senior most wife collegially jointly done it. Also, in terms of senior most wife and junior wives, it is also jointly done together. Another area was the male household and junior wives only take decision in labour use.

LAND PREPARATION

Findings from the study with regards to land preparation, male household head and senior most wife, participants made it clear that only male with female as labour does that land preparation. Also, in the area of senior most wife and junior wives, it still only male with female providing or helping with labour. Lastly participants explained that male household head and junior wives, only male with female only providing labour.

SEEDING AND WEEDING

Participants made it clear from the study that, in terms of decision on seeding and weeding the male household head and senior most wife women take the major decision while man takes minor decision, the senior most wife and junior wives they collegial take decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, women dominant in the decision.

GUIDING AND PROTECTING

Participants made it clear from the study that, in terms of decision on guiding and protecting the male household head and senior most wife women both are minor in taking decisions, senior wife and junior wives, the senior are minority in taking decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, other wives (junior wives) take major in the decision.

HARVESTING AND PROCESSING

Participants also explained the study that, in terms of decision on harvesting and processing, the male household head and senior most wife women, women take lead in taking decisions, senior wife and junior wives, the junior wives take major in decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, other wives (junior wives) take major in the decision.

PACKAGING AND STORAGE

Participants also explained the study that, in terms of decision on packaging and storage, the male household head and senior most wife women, women take lead in taking decisions, senior wife and junior wives, the junior wives take major in decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, other wives (junior wives) take major in the decision.

FARM TYPE

Findings from the study indicated that, in terms of decision on farm type, the male household head and senior most wife there is collegial between them in taking decisions, senior wife and junior wives, the senior wife take advice from other women in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is point for cross, checking only in the decision.

FARM SIZE

Findings from the study indicated that, in terms of decision on farm size, the male household head and senior most wife there is collegial between them in taking decisions, senior wife and junior wives, the senior wife take advice from

other women in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is point for cross, checking only in the decision.

FARM LOCATION

Findings from the study indicated that, in terms of decision on farm location, the male household head and senior most wife there is collegial between them in taking decisions, senior wife and junior wives, the senior wife take advice from other women in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is point for cross, checking only in the decision.

FARM RECORDS

Findings from the study indicated that, in terms of decision on farm records, the male household head and senior most wife, women save as lead repertoire decision making, senior wife and junior wives, the senior wife take advice from other women in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is point for cross, checking only in the decision.

FARM HISTORY

Findings from the study indicated that, in terms of decision on farm history, the male household head and senior most wife women save as lead repertoire decision making, senior wife and junior wives, the senior wife take advice from other women in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is point for cross, checking only in the decision.

4.3.2. Consumption

Focused group discussions were conducted; 7, 8, 6, 10 and 11 in each focused group discussion, to obtained information on consumption, which consist of the following sub-topics. The focused group discussions were aided with the check lists.

WHO TO COOK

Participants in this study stated that, in terms of decision on who to cook, the male household head and senior most wife, senior wife decides or takes decision, senior wife and junior wives, collectively but with senior wife dominance in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, purely a women's is point affair.

WHAT TO COOK

Participants in this study stated that, in terms of decision on what to cook, the male household head and senior most wife, there is collectively in making decision, senior wife and junior wives, collectively but with senior wife dominance in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, purely a women's is point affair.

HOW TO COOK

Participants in this study stated that, in terms of decision on how to cook, the male household head and senior most wife, there is collective in making decision, senior wife and junior wives, collectively but with senior wife dominance in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, purely a women's is point affair.

WHEN TO COOK

Participants in this study stated that, in terms of decision on how to cook, the male household head and senior most wife, senior wife makes decision, senior wife and junior wives, collectively but with senior wife dominance in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, purely a women's is point affair.

WHO TO SUPERVISE

Participants in this study stated that, in terms of decision on who to supervise, the male household head and senior most wife, senior wife supervise junior wives, senior wife and junior wives, senior wife dominance in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, purely a women's is point affair.

WHO TO DECIDE ON SALE OF PRODUCE

Participants in this study stated that, in terms of decision on who to decide on sale of produce, the male household head and senior most wife, male household head takes that decision, senior wife and junior wives, there is collective in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, purely a men's is point affair.

WHO TO DECIDE ON STORAGE

Participants in this study stated that, in terms of decision on who to decide on sale of produce, the male household head and senior most wife, male household head takes that decision, senior wife and junior wives, there is collective in making decision. Also, male household head and junior wives, purely a men's is point affair.

4.3.3. Clothing*WHAT TO WEAR*

The research findings show that, in terms of decision on what to wear, the male household head and senior most wife, it is individualistic, senior wife and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

WHEN TO WEAR

The research findings show that, in terms of decision on when to wear, the male household head and senior most wife, it is individualistic, senior wife and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

WHO TO PROVIDE

The research findings show that, in terms of decision on who to provide, the male household head and senior most wife, it is individualistic, senior wife and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

WHEN TO RENEW

The research findings show that, in terms of decision on when to renew, the male household head and senior most wife, it is individualistic, senior wife and

junior wives, there is individualistic decision making. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

ORDER OF RENEWAL

The research findings show that, in terms of decision on order of renewal, the male household head and senior most wife, it is individualistic, senior wife and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

DECISION TO PASS ON

The research findings show that, in terms of decision on order of renewal, the male household head and senior most wife, it is individualistic, senior wife and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

4.3.4. Luxury Clothing

WHAT TO WEAR

The research findings also show that, in terms of decision on what to wear, the male household head and senior most wife, it needs man's approval, senior wife and junior wives, it needs senior most wife's consent. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

WHO TO WEAR

The research findings also show that, in terms of decision on who to wear, the male household head and senior most wife, it needs man's approval, senior wife and junior wives, it needs senior most wife's consent. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

WHO TO PROVIDE

The research findings also show that, in terms of decision on who to provide, the male household head and senior most wife, it needs man's approval, senior wife and junior wives, it needs senior most wife's consent. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

WHEN TO RENEW

The research findings also show that, in terms of decision on when to renew, the male household head and senior most wife, it needs man's approval, senior wife and junior wives, it needs senior most wife's consent. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

ORDER OF RENEWAL

The research findings also show that, in terms of decision on order to renewal, the male household head and senior most wife, it needs man's approval, senior wife and junior wives, it needs senior most wife's consent. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

DECISION TO PASS ON

The research findings also show that, in terms of decision on decision to pass on, the male household head and senior most wife, it needs man's approval, senior wife and junior wives, it needs senior most wife's consent. Also, male household head and junior wives, there is individualistic decision making.

4.3.5. Shelter

LAND AND STRUCTURE

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on land and structure, the male household head and senior most wife, man only but just need to only inform senior wife, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives only inform. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform about the decision.

SITING AND LOCATION

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on siting and location, the male household head and senior most wife, man and senior wife, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives only inform. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform about the decision.

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on building and construction, the male household head and senior most wife, man and senior wife, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour.

PROTECTION AND SAFETY

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on protection and safety, the male household head and senior most wife, man only, senior wife and junior wives, man only. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour.

REHABILITATION AND REPAIRS

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on rehabilitation and repairs, the male household head and senior most wife, mostly women, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour.

INCLUSIONS AND EXPANSION

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on inclusions and expansion, the male household head and senior most wife, man and senior wife, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour.

INHERITANCE AND HERITAGE

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on inheritance and heritage, the male household head and senior most wife, man and senior wife, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives only inform. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform.

DISPOSAL OR SALE

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on disposal or sale, the male household head and senior most wife, man and senior wife, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives only inform and provide labour.

4.3.6. Control

CLEANING

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on cleaning, the male household head and senior most wife, senior wife superintend in decision making, senior wife and junior wives, other wives provide labour. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives do the cleaning.

ARRANGEMENTS SECTIONS

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on arrangements sections, the male household head and senior most wife, senior wife superintend in decision making, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives witnesses. Also, male household head and junior wives, junior wives do the arrangements.

OCCUPANCY

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on occupancy, the male household head and senior most wife, man with senior most wife take decision, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives witnesses. Also, male household head and junior wives, women only witnesses.

COOKING AREAS

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on cooking areas, the male household head and senior most wife, senior most wife take decision, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives provide labour. Also, male household head and junior wives, women only affair.

LIVING AREAS

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on living areas, the male household head and senior most wife, man with senior most wife take decision, senior wife and junior wives, other wives provide labour. Also, male household head and other wives provide labour.

STORAGE AREAS

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision storage areas, the male household head and senior most wife, man with senior most wife take decision, senior wife and junior wives, other wives provide labour. Also, male household head and other wives provide labour.

WASTE DISPOSALS

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on waste disposal, the male household head and senior most wife, senior most wife superintend the decision, senior wife and junior wives, other wives provide labour. Also, male household head and other wives provide labour.

ACCESS RIGHTS

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on access rights, the male household head and senior most wife, man with senior most wife take collective decision, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives witnesses. Also, male household head and junior wives' witnesses.

BENEFIT SHARING

From the findings of the study and participant observation of the researcher it was very clear that, in terms of decision on benefit sharing, the male household head and senior most wife, man with senior most wife take collective decision, senior wife and junior wives, junior wives witnesses. Also, male household head and junior wives' witnesses.

4.4. Key findings from Table 3 Below

Table 3 shows the statistical significance of who plays the dominant role in critical decision areas concerning basic daily necessities (food, clothing, and shelter) of the household in essential components (*i.e.*, production, consumption, essential clothing, luxury clothing, ownership and control) between male household head and senior most wife, senior most wife verse junior wives, and male household head verse junior wives. The data was first analyzed, with thematic data being processed by giving codes to the themes. Following that, the codes were processed to create content analysis, which created quantifiable frequencies and percentages from the various thematic codes collected. As a result, the study used One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with a 95% confidence interval to establish the statistical relationships that exist within and between groups using column and row comparisons.

According to the findings in **Table 3** below, no statistical difference of significance ($F = 1.167$; $p\text{-value} = 0.388$) exists between and within groups of male household heads and senior most wives in terms of seed selection/processing, land preparation seeding and weeding, grinding and protecting, harvesting and history. *However, depending on the choice area best suited for and moulded by culture antecedence, each group category (i.e., male household head or senior most wife) has a vital dominant function to play. The study also revealed no significant difference in who plays a dominant role in the crucial decision areas regarding output between senior most wife and junior wives ($F = 0.570$; $p\text{-value} = 0.652$) and male household head and junior wives ($F = 0.604$, $p\text{-value} = 0.633$).*

When it came to food, identical results were seen between the male household head and the senior most wife ($F = 0.803$; $p\text{-value} = 0.531$), the senior most wife

Table 3. ANOVA Results on who dominates who in household critical decision areas in basic daily necessities based on essential components between and within groups comparisons.

ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Production--Male household head verse Senior most wife	Between Groups	11.333	3	3.778	1.167	0.388
	Within Groups	22.667	7	3.238		
	Total	34.000	10			
Production--Senior most wife verse Junior wives	Between Groups	5.212	3	1.737	0.570	0.652
	Within Groups	21.333	7	3.048		
	Total	26.545	10			
Production--Male household head verse Junior wives	Between Groups	6.727	3	2.242	0.604	0.633
	Within Groups	26.000	7	3.714		
	Total	32.727	10			
Consumption--Male household head verse Senior most wife	Between Groups	12.848	3	4.283	0.803	0.531
	Within Groups	37.333	7	5.333		
	Total	50.182	10			
Consumption--Senior most wife verse Junior wives	Between Groups	8.727	3	2.909	2.036	0.197
	Within Groups	10.000	7	1.429		
	Total	18.727	10			
Consumption--Male household head verse Junior wives	Between Groups	22.848	3	7.616	2.104	0.188
	Within Groups	25.333	7	3.619		
	Total	48.182	10			
Essential clothing--Male household head verse Senior most wife	Between Groups	0.727	3	.242	0.848	0.510
	Within Groups	2.000	7	.286		
	Total	2.727	10			
Essential clothing--Senior most wife verse Junior wives	Between Groups	0.727	3	.242	0.848	0.510
	Within Groups	2.000	7	.286		
	Total	2.727	10			
Essential clothing--Male household head verse Junior wives	Between Groups	0.727	3	.242	0.848	0.510
	Within Groups	2.000	7	.286		
	Total	2.727	10			
Luxury clothing--Male household head verse Senior most wife	Between Groups	2.667	3	.889	0.848	0.510
	Within Groups	7.333	7	1.048		
	Total	10.000	10			
Luxury clothing--Senior most wife verse Junior wives	Between Groups	6.061	3	2.020	0.848	0.510
	Within Groups	16.667	7	2.381		
	Total	22.727	10			

Continued

Luxury clothing--Male household head verse Junior wives	Between Groups	0.727	3	.242	0.848	0.510
	Within Groups	2.000	7	.286		
	Total	2.727	10			
Ownership--Male household head verse Senior most wife	Between Groups	14.303	3	4.768	2.177	0.179
	Within Groups	15.333	7	2.190		
	Total	29.636	10			
Ownership--Senior most wife verse Junior wives	Between Groups	24.909	3	8.303	3.229	0.091
	Within Groups	18.000	7	2.571		
	Total	42.909	10			
Ownership--Male household head verse Junior wives	Between Groups	28.182	3	9.394	3.653	0.072
	Within Groups	18.000	7	2.571		
	Total	46.182	10			
Control--Male household head verse Senior most wife	Between Groups	11.212	3	3.737	3.567	0.075
	Within Groups	7.333	7	1.048		
	Total	18.545	10			
Control--Senior most wife verse Junior wives	Between Groups	65.636	3	21.879	38.288	0.000
	Within Groups	4.000	7	.571		
	Total	69.636	10			
Control--Male household head verse Junior wives	Between Groups	114.545	3	38.182	14.848	0.002
	Within Groups	18.000	7	2.571		
	Total	132.545	10			

Source: This study, 2022.

and the junior wives ($F = 2.036$; p -value = 0.197), and the male household head and the junior wives ($F = 2.036$; p -value = 0.188).

On clothing as a basic necessity in the household, the study discovered that statistically, there was no significant difference in who plays the dominant role between male household head and senior most wife ($F = 0.848$; p -value = 0.510), senior most wife verse junior wives ($F = 0.848$; p -value = 0.510), and male household head verse junior wives ($F = 0.848$; p -value = 0.510) in critical decision areas such as what to wear, when to wear, and how it is provided, decisions on renewal, and or order of renewal and passing on of these information.

On shelter as a basic necessity in the household, although the study found statistically no difference in who plays the dominant role on ownership between male household head and senior most wife ($F = 2.177$; p -value = 0.179), senior most wife verse junior wives ($F = 3.229$; p -value= 0.091), and male household head verse junior wives ($F = 3.653$; p -value = 0.075) in critical decision areas such as land and structure, siting and location, building and construction, pro-

tection and safety, rehabilitation and repairs, inclusion and expansion, inheritance and heritage and disposal or sale.

However, the study found a significant statistical difference in control between senior most wife and junior wives ($F = 38.288$; $p\text{-value} = 0.00$) and male household head verse junior wives ($F = 14.848$; $p\text{-value} = 0.002$), with the exception of male household head verse senior most wife ($F = 3.567$; $p\text{-value} = 0.075$), indicating that there was no significant statistical difference in who controls what between and within the variable groups.

According to the findings, there was no significant difference in who plays the dominant role in basic daily necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter (based on ownership) between male household head verse senior most wife, senior most wife verse junior wives, and male household head verse junior wives. However, when it comes to shelter control, the study discovered that there is a considerable difference in who plays dominance in shelter control roles between senior most wife and junior wives, and male household head and junior women, in terms of fundamental components of household decision areas.

5. Summarised Conclusions

- Majority of women (senior most wives) make a major critical decision with regard to production and control for the household.
- Minority of men (Male household heads) make a critical decision with regard to production of food for the household.
- There is also little shared responsibility among male household head (male), senior most wife and junior wives.
- In term of critical decision making with regards to consumption a major decision is normally taken by the senior most wife.
- Also, there is collective critical decision with consumption especially male household head, senior wife and other junior wives.
- There were also women dominance in critical decision making with regard to consumption and control in the household.
- There is also very little of male head and men's affairs in critical decision making with regards to consumption and control in the household.
- In critical decision making in the area of essential clothing almost all of the participants contacted in the study said that it depends on individual decision making.
- Also, the findings of the study indicated that, major critical decision making in area of luxury clothing needs senior most wife's consent.
- Minority or few of the participants also made it clear that it needs men's approval.

6. Recommendations

The aim of the paper was to understand the involvement of women in critical decision-making areas in the marital homes in northern Ghana. It described the

results from the field, research data. It explored and presented through qualitative and quantitative analysis data for the purpose of the study.

There are emerging from this research two (2) critical gender related roles and power distribution when it comes to development intervention. The hitherto voiceless women's position in decision making and action is debunked in this study. These are the positions recommended:

- Senior wife/wives (hence women) have dominant critical decision-making role in the area of food production, consumption and control of production resources and shelter *at the household/family level*.
- The male household head has the critical decision-making role in terms of food production, consumption and control of production resources and shelter *at the level of the compound* (more than one household) level.

Clothing however has no skewness of balance in favour of other gender.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- [1] Kivoi, D.L. (2014) Factors Impeding Political Participation and Representation of Women in Kenya. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, **2**, 173-181. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.hss.20140206.15>
- [2] Zulfiqar, S. (2016) African Women Writers and the Politics of Gender. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Cambridge.
- [3] Ogunlela, Y.I. and Mukhtar, A.A. (2009) Gender Issues in Agriculture and Rural Development in Nigeria: The Role of Women. *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal*, **4**, 19-30.
- [4] SOFA Team and Cheryl Doss (2011) Measuring Ownership, Control, and Use of Assets. Policy Research Working Paper 8146, World Bank Group, Africa Region Office of the Chief Economist.
- [5] Arshad, *et al.* (2013) Women's Participation in Livestock Farming Activities. *The Journal of Animal and Plant Sciences*, **23**, 304-308.
- [6] Ahmad, *et al.* (2004) Pro-Poor Intervention Strategies in Irrigated Agriculture in Asia: Poverty in Irrigated Agriculture: Issues and Options. International Water Management Institute, Colombo. <https://doi.org/10.5337/2011.0043>
- [7] Rahman, S.A. (2008) Women's Involvement in Agriculture in Northern and Southern Kaduna State, Nigeria. *Journal of Gender Studies*, **17**, 17-26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589230701838347>
- [8] Kabeer, N. (1994) The Structure of Revealed Preference: Race, Community and Female Labour Supply in the London Clothing Industry. *Development and Change*, **25**, 307-331. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.1994.tb00517.x>
- [9] Kabeer, N. (1999) The Conditions and Consequences of Choice: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. Vol. 108, UNRISD, Geneva, 1-58.
- [10] Sen, G. (1997) Empowerment as an Approach to Poverty. Working Paper Series 97.07.
- [11] Cornwall, A. (2016) From "Gender Equality" and "Women's Empowerment" to Global Justice: Reclaiming a Transformative Agenda for Gender and Development. *Third World Quarterly*, **36**, 396-415.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1013341>
- [12] Malhotra, et al. (2002) Measuring Women's Empowerment as a Variable in International Development. Background Paper for World Bank Workshop on Poverty and Gender. New Perspectives.
- [13] Wouterse, F. (2017) The Role of Empowerment in Agricultural Production: Evidence from Rural Households in Niger. *The Journal of Development Studies*, **55**, 565-580. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2740623>
- [14] McKenna, T. (2015) Does Gender Equality Matter in Agriculture? Yes! Here's Why. Feed the Future.
- [15] Croppenstedt, A., Goldstein, M. and Rosas, N. (2013) Gender and Agriculture: Inefficiencies, Segregation, and Low Productivity Traps. *The World Bank Research Observer*, **28**, 79-109. <https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lks024>
- [16] Gutierrez Pionce, E.G. (2016) Agricultural Performance in Northern Ghana: A Gender Decomposition. Doctoral Dissertation, Kansas State University, Manhattan.
- [17] Abdulai, et al. (2013) Technical Efficiency of Maize Production in Northern Ghana.
- [18] De La O Campos, et al. (2016) How Does the Choice of the Gender Indicator Affect the Analysis of Gender Differences in Agricultural Productivity? Evidence from Uganda. *World Development*, **77**, 17-33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.08.008>
- [19] Petrics, et al. (2015) Enhancing the Potential of Family Farming for Poverty Reduction and Food Security through Gender-Sensitive Rural Advisory Services. FAO, Roma.
- [20] Johnson, et al. (2016) Gender, Assets, and Agricultural Development: Lessons from Eight Projects. *World Development*, **83**, 295-311. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2016.01.009>
- [21] Oduro, et al. (2012) Measuring the Gender Asset Gap in Ghana.
- [22] Apusigah, A.A. (2009) The Gendered Politics of Farm Household Production and the Shaping of Women's Livelihoods in Northern Ghana. *Feminist Africa*, **12**, 51-67.
- [23] Dittoh, et al. (2018) Promoting Ecosystem-Friendly Irrigation Farm Management Practices for Sustainable Livelihoods in Africa: The Ghanaian Experience. *Agricultural and Food Economics*, **6**, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40100-018-0109-1>
- [24] Doss, C.R. and Morris, K. (2001) How Does Gender Affect the Adoption of Agricultural Innovations? The Case of Improved Maize Technology in Ghana. *Agricultural Economics*, **25**, 27-39. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-5150\(00\)00096-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-5150(00)00096-7)
- [25] Doss, C.R. (2002) Men's Crops? Women's Crops? The Gender Patterns of Cropping in Ghana. *World Development*, **30**, 1987-2000. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(02\)00109-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(02)00109-2)
- [26] Appiah-Kubi, J., Ceter, A. and Luboder, Z. (2020) Gender Inequality in Key Sectors in Ghana: Current Trends, Causes, and Interventions. *Ulisa: Journal of International Studies*, **4**, 75-87.
- [27] Amu, N.J. (2005) The Role of Women in Ghana's Economy. Friedrich Ebert Foundation Report.
- [28] Dako-Gyeke, M. and Owusu, P. (2013) A Qualitative Study Exploring Factors Contributing to Gender Inequality in Rural Ghana. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*, **4**, 75-87.
- [29] Ferrant, G., Pesando, L.M. and Nowacka, K. (2014) Unpaid Care Work: The Missing Link in the Analysis of Gender Gaps in Labour Outcomes. OECD Paper.

- [30] Jayachandran, S. (2015) The Roots of Gender Inequality in Developing Countries. *Economics*, **7**, 63-88. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-080614-115404>
- [31] Wrigley-Asante, C. (2008) Men Are Poor but Women Are Poorer: Gendered Poverty and Survival Strategies in the Dangme West District of Ghana. *Journal of Geography*, **62**, 161-170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291950802335541>
- [32] Oduro, B.W. and Boakye-Yiadom, L. (2011) Measuring the Gender Assets Gap in Ghana. University of Ghana and Woeli Publishing Services, Accra.
- [33] Maslow, A.H. (1923) Preface to Motivation Theory. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, **5**, 85-92. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00006842-194301000-00012>
- [34] Creswell, J.W. (2005) Mixed Methods Research: Developments, Debates, and Dilemmas. Books.google.com.
- [35] Kirk, J. and Miller, M.L. (1986) Understanding the Validity of Qualitative Research. Little Blue Book. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985659>