

Determinants of Women Empowerment among The Ijesa of Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

The term empowerment has become a popular concept especially in relation to women. Women empowerment has been seen as a panacea for social ills, high population growth rate, among others. Women's empowerment is necessary for ensuring women's welfare, as well as the well-being of their households. Empowerment of women is also important for the development of a country, because it enhances both the quality and quantity of human resources available for development. It is therefore important to promote and monitor the level of women's empowerment in Nigeria. The overarching question this paper addressed is what are the factors enhancing women's empowerment among the Ijesa of south western Nigeria. The principal focus of this paper therefore was to examine the factors enhancing women's empowerment among the Ijesa of south-western Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design using qualitative and quantitative techniques was employed. A multistage sampling technique, which involved purposive selection of four Local Government Areas (LGAs) with the predominance of the Ijesa was used. A random selection of 17 enumeration areas and 1,594 ever-married women of childbearing age was carried out using a structured questionnaire, indepth interview guide and focus group discussion guide. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and logistic regression at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Qualitative data were content analysed using thematic approach. The findings shows that husband's income, professional occupations among women (such as lawyers and doctors), higher education among women, are some of the factors enhancing women empowerment among the Ijesa of south western Nigeria. The study concluded that husbands' characteristics contributed less to women's empowerment compared to wives' characteristics.

Keywords: Empowerment, Determinants, Ijesa

Background

There are several important reasons for promoting and monitoring the level of women's empowerment in Nigeria. A major reason is that household health and nutrition is generally in the hands of women. Therefore, women's empowerment is necessary for ensuring their own welfare, as well as the well-being of their households. Empowerment of women is also important for the development of a country, because it enhances both the quality and quantity of human resources available for development (Kishor and Lekha, 2008). In addition, the success of development efforts depends on the fruits of development reaching men *and* women, boys *and* girls (World Bank, 2001). The extent to which this happens, however, depends critically on gender relations within the society that define the worth of one sex relative to that of the other. Another fundamental reason for promoting the empowerment of women is that failing to empower women to reach their full potential is a violation of their basic human rights.

Empowerment connotes a range of activities from individual self-assertion through collective resistance, protest to mobilisation that challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups, where class, caste, ethnicity and gender determine their access to resources and power, their empowerment begins when they not only recognise the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change the existing power relationships. Empowerment, therefore, is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systemic forces which marginalise women and other disadvantaged sections in a given context (Sharma, 1991–1992). Empowerment is thus a process and the result of that process. The goals of women's empowerment are to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality (family); and enable poor women gain access to and control material and informational resources.

It is in the light of the above that Sen *et al.* (1994) assert that promotion of women's empowerment – in concept, language, and practice – can help bridge the distance between women's rights language increasingly used in policy statements, and the actual implementation of population policies, which continues to emphasise contraceptive services. Although empowerment literally means -to invest with power, in the context of women's empowerment the term has come to denote women's increased control over their lives, bodies, and environments. In discussions of women's empowerment, emphasis is often placed on women's decision making roles, their economic self-reliance, and their legal rights to equal treatment, inheritance and protection against all forms of discrimination, in addition to the elimination of barriers to access such resources as education and information (Germaine and Kyte, 1995; United Nations, 1995).

Also appearing frequently in definitions of empowerment is an element related to the concept of human agency – self-efficacy. Drawing mainly from the human rights and feminist perspectives, many definitions contain the idea that a fundamental shift in perceptions, or “inner transformation”, is essential to the formulation of choices. That is, women should be able to define self-interest and choice, and consider themselves as not only able but also entitled to make choices (Chen 1992; Sen 1993; Rowlands 1995; Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2000; Kabeer 2001). Kabeer (2001) goes a step further and describes this process in terms of “thinking outside the system” and challenging the status quo.

One reason why the degree of consensus on the conceptualization of empowerment is not readily apparent in the literature is because of the variation in terminology used to encompass it. In this review, the concept of empowerment is not limited to theoretical or empirical work alone. The literature contains a range of terms, concepts, and data that may be relevant for assessing “empowerment”; for example, various studies have aimed at measuring women’s “autonomy” (e.g. Dyson and Moore 1983; Basu and Basu 1991; Jeebhoy and Sathar 2001), “agency”, “status” (e.g. Gage 1995; Tzannatos 1999), “women’s land rights” (e.g. Quisumbing *et al.* 1999), “domestic economic power” (e.g. Mason 1998), “bargaining power” (e.g. Hoddinott and Haddad 1995; Beegle *et al.* 1998; Quisumbing and de la Briere 2000) “power” (e.g. Agarwal 1997; Beegle *et al.*, 1998; Pulerwitz *et al.* 2000), “patriarchy” (e.g. Malhotra *et al.* 1995), “gender equality” (World Bank 2001a; 2000b), or “gender discrimination”. Often there is no clear demarcation between these terms. Mason (1998) and Mason and Smith (2000), for example, treat empowerment, autonomy, and gender stratification interchangeably. Similarly, Jeebhoy (2000) considers autonomy and empowerment as more or less equal terms, and defines both concepts. In contrast, other authors have explicitly argued that autonomy is not equivalent to empowerment, stressing that autonomy implies independence whereas empowerment may well be achieved through interdependence (Govindasamy and Malhotra 1996; Malhotra and Mather 1997; Kabeer 1998).

This paper examined the factors enhancing women’s empowerment among the Ijesa of south-western Nigeria. In other words, this paper examined the contributions of husband’s characteristics, women characteristics and the joint characteristics of the husband and wife to women’s empowerment. Examining the factors contributing to women’s empowerment is important in order to promote it, and also because women’s empowerment has been seen as the panacea for fertility reduction and a veritable force for female emancipation, reproductive rights, and achievement of female family size goals among others. Therefore, there is the need to explore the factors enhancing women’s empowerment among the Ijesa of south- western Nigeria.

Three hypotheses were tested in this paper, that:

1. the likelihood of women’s empowerment is dependent on the husbands’ socio-demographic characteristics.
2. the likelihood of women’s empowerment is dependent on the respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics.
3. the likelihood of women’s empowerment is dependent on the couples’ socio-demographic characteristics.

A cross-sectional survey design using qualitative and quantitative techniques was employed. A multistage sampling technique, which involved purposive selection of four Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Atakumosa West (346), Ilesa-East (448), Ilesa-West (450) and Obokun (350) with the predominance of the Ijesa was used. A random selection of 17 enumeration areas and 1,594 ever- married women of childbearing age was carried out. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data on socio-demographic characteristics, husband profile, women profile among others. Qualitative data were elicited from six Focus Group Discussions and 18 in-depth interviews conducted among different categories of men and women. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and logistic regression at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Qualitative data were content analysed using thematic approach.

Findings

The age of the respondents was 33 ± 6.2 years. They had been married for 9.0 ± 5.1 years, with a mean number of 3.0 ± 1.1 children. The age of their husband was 39 ± 7.5 years. Majority (86.6%) of the respondents’ husbands had secondary education and above, and 36.7% of them were traders.

Multivariate Analysis of Factors Enhancing Women’s Empowerment

The major objective of this paper is to investigate the factors enhancing women’s empowerment in Ijesaland. Based on this objective, it is hypothesised that women’s empowerment is positively affected by couples’ socio-demographic variables such as husbands’ individual characteristics, couples’ joint characteristics, wives’ individual characteristics, and cultural factors. Husbands’ individual characteristics include: education and occupation. Couples’ joint characteristics include: spousal age difference and family type. Wives’ individual characteristics include: women education, occupation, religion, marital status, age at first marriage and age

group. Cultural factors include: form of marriage contracted and family type. These characteristics are all known correlates of women's empowerment. For example, age, education and employments are all potential sources of empowerment. Further, age at first marriage, spousal age difference, family type, and place of residence are aspects of the settings for the empowerment because they reflect the opportunities available to women. This is very important in the sense that it enables the identification of the characteristics that predispose women to become empowered.

The purpose of this section is to acquaint readers with the analytical procedure adopted in explaining the likelihood of women's empowerment by couples' socio-demographic characteristics. First, a logistic regression model was used to examine the relationship between likelihood of women's empowerment by husbands' socio-demographic characteristics. This is to understand the contribution of husbands' characteristics to women's empowerment. The second model examined the relationship between respondents (women) characteristics and their empowerment. The third model combined the socio-demographic characteristics of the husband and the respondents to ascertain the changes if any, in the contribution of the characteristics to women's empowerment.

Multivariate Analysis of the Likelihood of Women's Empowerment by Husbands' Socio-demographic Characteristics

The basic assumption underlying the specification of this logistic regression model is that the likelihood of women's empowerment is dependent on the husbands' socio-demographic characteristics. The results of the logistic regression model in Table 1 show that the model chi-square is statistically significant at $p < 0.0001$. The results show that some categories of husbands' occupation are statistically significant with the likelihood of women's empowerment. From the table, it could be observed that respondents whose husbands' have secondary and tertiary education are likely to be empowered as those whose husband has no formal education. The implication of this is that husbands' education is not contributing significantly to women's empowerment in the study area.

Table 1: Logit Model of Likelihood of Women's Empowerment by Husbands' Socio-demographic Characteristics

| Characteristics | Odd Ratio | S.E. |
|-------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Husband Education | | |
| None (r) | - | - |
| Primary | 0.560 | -0.251 |
| Secondary | 1.427 | 0.485 |
| Tertiary | 1.136 | 0.417 |
| Husband Occupation | | |
| Farming / Fishing (r) | - | - |
| Trading | 0.585 | -0.107** |
| Artisan | 0.450 | -0.098** |
| Teaching | 1.008 | 0.286 |
| Office Work (Admin/Clerk) | 0.255 | -0.016** |
| Professional/Others | 0.488 | -0.126** |
| Husband Monthly Income | | |
| Below N10,000(r) | - | - |
| N10,001- N20,000 | 1.146 | 0.485 |
| N20,001- N30,000 | 1.906 | 0.804 |
| N30,001- N40,000 | 2.022 | 0.852 |
| Above N40,000 | 2.253 | 0.951* |
| Log likelihood = -933.136 | | |
| Number of Obs. = 1445 | | |
| LR Chi-Square (12) = 92.40 | | |
| Prob. < 0.0001 | | |
| R ² = 0.0472 | | |

r- Reference category
 *- Significant at <0.01
 **- Significant at < 0.05

Moreover, with respect to husbands' occupation, only respondents whose husbands are teaching are likely to be empowered as those whose husbands are farmers. Respondents with husbands from other occupation categories are less likely to be empowered when compared to those whose husbands are farmers. However, the logistic regression results show that as the income of a husband increases, so does the likelihood of his wife's empowerment. Respondents whose husbands are earning above N30, 000 naira a month are at least two times

more likely to be empowered compared to those whose husbands are earning below N10, 000 naira a month. Husband income is therefore an important factor in women's empowerment in the study area. Husband income of above N40, 000 naira is found to be statistically significant with women's empowerment.

Multivariate Analysis of the Likelihood of Women's Empowerment by Respondents' Socio-demographic Characteristics

The basic assumption underlying the specification of this logistic regression model is that the likelihood of women's empowerment is dependent on the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. The results of the logistic regression model in Table 2 show that the model chi-square is statistically significant at $p < 0.0001$. The results further show that some categories of respondents' religion (protestant, pentecostal, and traditional) are statistically significant with high likelihood of women's empowerment. The same pattern is observed for other variables under consideration. Those who practice traditional religion are about 4.7 times more likely to be empowered compared to adherents of Roman Catholic. On the contrary, those that are protestant, pentecostal, and islam are less likely to be empowered as Roman Catholics. Those who are in marital union are 25 per cent less likely to be empowered compared to those who are separated or divorced. Widows are 1.5 per cent more likely to be empowered than separated respondents. Only those who are professionals among the respondents are 1.2 per cent likely to be empowered as those in farming/fishing occupation.

The result in Table 2 further shows that the higher the level of education of the respondents, the more their likelihood of being empowered. Those with primary education are about 3.3 times more likely to be empowered when compared to respondents with no formal education. Respondents with secondary and tertiary education are respectively 5.7 times and 6.4 times more likely to be empowered than those with no formal education. Respondents who married between the ages of 20 and 24 years are about 2.5 per cent more likely to be empowered than those who married at 19 years or below, while those who married between 25 and 29 years are about 1.9 times more likely to be empowered than the respondents in the reference category.

Multivariate Analysis of the Likelihood of Women's Empowerment by Couples' Socio-demographic Characteristics

The basic assumption underlying the specification of this logistic regression model is that the likelihood of women's empowerment is dependent on the couples' socio-demographic characteristics. The hypothesis was tested by running a logistic regression model analysis. The model examines the relationship between the likelihood of women's empowerment and the above mentioned variables. The result of the logistic regression model reported coefficients and odd ratio on a woman's chances of being empowered associated with the variables under consideration.

The results of the logistic regression model in Table 3 show that the model chi-square is statistically significant at $p < 0.0001$. The results further show that some categories of the respondents' religion, marital status, form of marriage contracted, family type, education, age at first marriage, age group, and couples' joint characteristics such as spousal age difference in the study area is statistically significant with women's empowerment. A detail examination of the logistic regression model shows that respondents who are in traditional religion are three-times more likely to be empowered than those who belong to Roman Catholic religion. Those who practice Islam are about 1.4 times more likely to be empowered than their counterparts who are in Roman Catholic religion. Protestants and pentecostals are less likely to be empowered than Roman Catholics. With regard to marital status, the logistic regression model shows that those widowed are about two-times more likely to be empowered relative to those separated or divorced.

Currently married women are about 18 per cent less likely to be empowered compared to their counterparts who are separated or divorced. The reason for this pattern may be due to cultural factors as explained by some respondents in the qualitative data. Some respondents maintained that some men are opposed to the idea of women's empowerment, a major factor hindering women's empowerment in the study area. Some of the assertions in relation to the role of culture as a hindrance to women's empowerment are couched this way:

Yes, cultural factor because our culture demands that women should always give men honour at all times... so, that belief is still hindering the empowerment of the women. It is only when the generally accepted cultural belief of male supremacy over women is jettisoned that real empowerment for women can be experienced. **(IDI, Male Principal)**

Part of the hindering factor is our culture that does not permit any woman to take a leading roles or position... Another factor is like that of olden day's standard, where a woman is totally, economically, financially, subjected to her husband. So, if a woman nowadays is still under such condition and situation there is no how she can be empowered, and some of the roles attached to women position in the family such as domestic work, cooking, taking care of children and husband etc. If a woman is so or too busy in all that and she cannot even think of doing something economically to develop herself in order to improve her living status, she

cannot be empowered. **(FGD, Male 40 Years and above)**

The factor that hinders women's empowerment is our culture, because in our culture we believe women are second class citizens, the idea of asking women to sit and look on as the husband takes all the decisions. **(FGD, Female Principal)**

Table 2: Logit Model of Likelihood of Women's Empowerment by their Socio-demographic Characteristics

| Characteristics | Odd Ratio | S.E. |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| Religion | | |
| Roman Catholic (r) | - | - |
| Protestant | 0.369 | -0.075** |
| Pentecostal | 0.460 | -0.099** |
| Islam | 0.729 | -0.181 |
| Tradition / Others | 4.679 | 2.124** |
| Marital Status | | |
| Separated/ Divorced (r) | - | - |
| Widowed | 1.503 | 0.760 |
| Married | 0.247 | -0.064** |
| Women Education | | |
| None (r) | - | - |
| Primary | 3.352 | 1.510** |
| Secondary | 5.734 | 2.487** |
| Tertiary | 6.346 | 3.007** |
| Women Occupation | | |
| Farming/Fishing (r) | - | - |
| Trading | 0.681 | -0.187 |
| Artisan | 0.522 | -0.157* |
| Teaching | 0.641 | -0.228 |
| Office Work (Admin/Clerk) | 0.344 | -0.122** |
| Professional /Others | 1.236 | 0.500 |
| Women Age at First marriage | | |
| Less or Equal 19 (r) | - | - |
| Between 20-24 | 2.456 | 0.501** |
| Between 25-29 | 1.877 | 0.422** |
| 30yrs- Above | 0.631 | -0.196 |
| Women Age Group | | |
| 20-24 years (r) | - | - |
| 25-29 Years | 0.299 | -0.094** |
| 30-34 Years | 0.128 | -0.041** |
| 35-39 Years | 0.237 | -0.084** |
| 40-44 Years | 0.341 | -0.118** |
| 45-49 Years | 0.210 | -0.091** |
| Log likelihood = -841.721 | | |
| Number of Obs. =1517 | | |
| LR Chi-Square (23) =352.83 | | |
| Prob. <0.0001 | | |
| R ² =0.1733 | | |

r- Reference category

*- Significant at < 0.01

** - Significant at < 0.05

Some respondents expressed the view that the ego of men, coupled with the opinion that empowerment of women will lead to disempowerment of men are hindrances towards women's empowerment:

One of the factors is the ego of men that if women are empowered the men will no longer have authority over them at home and that if women are highly placed in the society that they will not have respect for their husband again. Men are the most hindrance for women's empowerment because men would not want women to be in high position above them even religiously, both Christian, Muslim and traditional religion have higher placement for men than women. **(FGD, Female, 15-34 Years)**

The factor that hinders women's empowerment is their male counterpart... because women are not given the chance to hold political posts because men believe that they are the head. **(Male FGD, 40 Years and above)**

A FGD participant elaborated on these views by linking cultural to religious factors. She opined that God has ordained man to be the head of the family and a good woman should be under the authority of the husband:

One of the factors hindering women's empowerment is culture because in our cultural setting husband is the head of the family even as ordained by God. It is through the permission of the husband we can do anything. So as a good woman you need to be under the authority of your husband. Though you may be educated more than your husband you are to submit yourself to his authority and obey his order.... (FGD, Female 35-49 Years)

Table 3: Logit Model of Likelihood of Women's Empowerment by Couples Background Characteristics

| Characteristics | Odd Ratio | S.E. |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Religion | | |
| Roman Catholic (r) | - | - |
| Protestant | 0.391 | -0.083* |
| Pentecostal | 0.501 | -0.114* |
| Islam | 1.404 | 0.463 |
| Tradition / Others | 3.152 | 1.510* |
| Marital Status | | |
| Separated/ Divorced (r) | - | - |
| Widowed | 1.968 | 1.223 |
| Married | 0.177 | -0.052* |
| Women Education | | |
| None (r) | - | - |
| Primary | 2.883 | 1.381* |
| Secondary | 4.758 | 2.202* |
| Tertiary | 4.925 | 2.487* |
| Form of Marriage Contracted | | |
| Traditional (r) | - | - |
| Christian | 0.527 | -0.089* |
| Islam | 0.318 | -0.108* |
| Court | 0.588 | -0.121* |
| Family Type | | |
| Polygamous (r) | - | - |
| Monogamous | 1.362 | 0.212* |
| Women Occupation | | |
| Farming/Fishing (r) | - | - |
| Trading | 0.732 | -0.225 |
| Artisan | 0.619 | -0.207 |
| Teaching | 1.016 | 0.400 |
| Office Work (Admin/Clerk) | 0.516 | -0.202 |
| Professional /Others | 1.658 | 0.745 |
| Husband Education | | |
| None (r) | - | - |
| Primary | 0.826 | -0.368 |
| Secondary | 1.872 | 0.760 |
| Tertiary | 1.713 | 0.748 |
| Husband Occupation | | |
| Farming / Fishing (r) | - | - |
| Trading | 0.850 | -0.189 |
| Artisan | 0.720 | -0.186 |
| Teaching | 1.701 | 0.581 |
| Office Work (Admin/Clerk) | 0.458 | -0.130 |
| Professional/Others | 0.655 | -0.203 |
| Women Age at First Marriage | | |
| Less or Equal 19 (r) | - | - |
| Between 20-24 | 2.215 | 0.479* |
| Between 25-29 | 1.767 | 0.441* |
| 30yrs- Above | 0.676 | -0.226 |
| Spousal Age Difference | | |
| Same or Older than Him (r) | - | - |
| Less than 5 | 0.538 | -0.249 |
| Between 5 and 10 | 0.517 | -0.239 |
| 11yrs and Above | 0.280 | -0.143* |
| Women Age Group | | |
| 20-24 years (r) | - | - |
| 25-29 Years | 0.302 | -0.103* |
| 30-34 Years | 0.131 | -0.045* |

| | | |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| 35-39 Years | 0.240 | -0.091* |
| 40-44 Years | 0.030 | -0.123* |
| 45-49 Years | 0.171 | -0.000* |
| Log likelihood = -789.039 | | |
| Number of Obs. =1487 | | |
| LR Chi-Square (38) =414.37 | | |
| Prob. <0.0001 | | |
| R ² =0.208 | | |

r- Reference category

*- Significant at < 0.05

As could be seen above, one of the factors hindering women's empowerment as mentioned by almost all the respondents is the culture of Ijesa people. The study area is patriarchal in nature, hence women are to subject themselves or be under the control of their husbands. In this setting, therefore, women's empowerment is bound to be misunderstood.

Table 3 indicates that those women who are educated are more likely to be empowered than those who are not. While those with primary education are about 2.9 times more likely to be empowered than those without formal education, those with secondary and tertiary education are about 5 times more likely to be empowered than those without formal education.

The qualitative data supported the above result. Most of the respondents interviewed alluded to the fact that education is a major factor that enhances women's empowerment. Below are some quotes to support this contention:

Some of the factors that contribute to women's empowerment are education, and exposure.

(IDI, Male Pastor, Similar is also expressed by male councillor)

...education is one of the factors that contribute to women's empowerment in Ijeshaland. **(IDI, Male Community Leader)**

Some respondents illuminated this view by asserting that women themselves should see the need for education:

So it has to start from the women themselves as they need education... so women have to be educated **(IDI Female Principal)**

Factors enhancing women's empowerment in Ijeshaland are education, civilization, socialization, exposure and political involvement **(IDI Nursing Mother, This view is also shared by IDI Male Pastor)**

I believe that the major factor in the community to empower women is education. If a woman is educated she will be able to talk in the public and community and be able to stand to say something and face anybody in the community. **(IDI, Female Headmistress, This view is also shared by FGD Female 15-34 years Educated)**

Women can also be empowered through proper education, also through involvement in governance in our town and economic issues **(IDI, Female Pastor)**

Some respondents during the course of in-depth interview (IDI) also stressed the importance of education by alluding to the fact that lack of education on the part of women hinders their empowerment and could also lead to poverty. Below are some of the excerpts in this regard:

Lack of proper education and enlightenment hinders women's empowerment... **(IDI, Female Principal)**

Education and economic reasons are the major reason hindering women's empowerment...because if a woman is not well informed she will not know what it means to be empowered. **(IDI, Male Councillor. Similar view is also shared by FGD male, 40 years and above)**

Lack of education can hinder women's empowerment... **(FGD, Female, 15-34 Years)**

Poverty is one of the hindrances to women's empowerment because if you look at this area there is no much industry... **(IDI Headmaster)**

I think what is affecting them for now is because they have not been well supported financially... If they are supported...they can be empowered. **(IDI, Caretaker Councilor, Male)**

With regard to form of marriage, those who contracted Christian, Islam, and court marriages are less likely to be empowered compared to those who contracted traditional form of marriage. Among these categories those who contracted court marriage have the lowest chance of being empowered. This is contrary to expectation, since civil marriage tends to convey more enlightenment and liberal family setting. The result further shows that people in monogamous form of family type are about 1.4 times more likely to be empowered than people in

polygynous form of family type.

In relation to women's occupation, those who are traders, artisans and clerks in offices are less likely to be empowered relative to those who have farming or fishing as their occupation, while teachers are likely to be empowered as those in farming/fishing profession. At the top of the hierarchy of the occupational categories are those who are professionals, such as lawyers, medical doctors, architects and others, who are about 1.7 times more likely to be empowered compared to those who have farming/fishing as their occupation.

It should be mentioned at this point that the kind of work a woman is doing could go a long way in determining whether she will have money at her disposal or not. According to the respondents interviewed, money is an important factor that enhances women's empowerment. They put this assertion as follows:

Money is the number one factor that enhances women's empowerment because without money one cannot be economically empowered. **(FGD, Female, 15-34 Years)**

Money is the main factor because if a woman has money she becomes empowered. **(IDI, Women Leader)**

Table 3 also presents the effects of husband demographic characteristics on women's empowerment. It is interesting to note that respondents whose husbands have primary education are about 82 per cent less likely to be empowered compared to those whose husbands have no education. While respondents with husbands who have secondary and tertiary education are about 1.8 and 1.7 times more likely to be empowered than those with husbands without education respectively. Among the categories of husbands' occupation, those whose husbands are clerks are less likely to be empowered compared to those whose husbands engage in farming and fishing profession. Those likely to be more empowered among husbands' occupational categories are those whose husband are teachers, who are about 1.7 times more likely to be empowered relative to husbands engaged in farming/ fishing.

Respondents in the qualitative data alluded to the fact that husbands' occupation can have significant effects on women's empowerment. A respondent has this to say:

The factors that contribute to the empowerment of women include the type of work the husband is doing, the financial status of the husband, and the level of financial exposure of the husband which will somehow affect the financial condition of the wife, and hence her empowerment. **(IDI, Headmaster)**

The logistic regression model shows that the older the age of respondents at first marriage the lower the likelihood of empowerment. For instance, the result indicates that those who were between the ages of 20 and 24 years when they married are about 2.2 times more likely to be empowered than those who married at 19 years or below. Those who married at 35 years and above are 68 per cent less likely to be empowered as those who married at 19 years or below. This is in agreement with Mason (1986, 1987) who states that an early age at first marriage is likely to have a negative effect on empowerment by virtually terminating a women's access to some sources of empowerment, such as formal education. With regard to the spousal age difference and its effects on women's empowerment, those whose husbands are older by five years or more are less likely to be empowered relative to those who are of the same age or older than their husbands. Literature has shown that women's empowerment researchers often use inter-spousal age differential to measure the relative status of husbands and wives (Abadian, 1996; Jejeebhoy, 2000; Frankenberg and Thomas, 2001). One study demonstrated that such measures influence marital decision-making power (Frankenberg and Thomas, 2001).

Respondents who are 25 years and above were also found to be less likely to be empowered compared to those between the ages of 20-24 years.

Conclusion

In summary, it was observed that husbands' characteristics contributed less to women's empowerment compared to wives' characteristics. It was also seen that when the husbands and wives' characteristics were combined, respondents' joint characteristics contributed more to women's empowerment than husbands' characteristics. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that women and joint characteristics are major determinants of women's empowerment in the study area.

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