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Women's autonomy in household purchasing decision making in Sri Lanka

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This study aims to identify factors associated with decision making autonomy regarding household purchases of women in Sri Lanka. The modern world places high importance on equality of all aspects. Gender equality has been foremost among this. Sri Lanka has already accomplished an outstanding milestone in female empowerment by producing the world's first female Prime Minister. Female decision-making autonomy has been an interesting subject of research in this area. The level of autonomy exerted by women depends not only on their personal characteristics but also influenced by traditions. This research studies the factors that affect autonomy regarding purchasing decisions of a household, namely major household purchases and daily household purchases. The data used for this research was obtained from the Sri Lanka Demographic and Health Survey 2016, conducted by the Department of Census and Statistics of Sri Lanka. First, the important predictors were identified using the chi-square test of association and then the significant predictors were included in the baseline category logit model. Using the Wald test, significant predictors in the baseline category logit model were identified. The goodness of fit of the model was tested using the Hosmer Lemeshow test. The results of the study indicate that for major household purchases, age, being resided in the urban sector, wealth status, number of children, being employed (specifically in the high skilled occupation group) and the age gap between the partners affect positively while education and husbands being employed in the low and high skilled occupation groups affect negatively to women's autonomy in major household purchases decision making. It could be seen that for daily household purchasing, age, is residing in the urban sector, education, wealth status, number of children and employability affect positively to women's autonomy while husbands being employed in high skilled occupation groups and age gap between the partners have a negative impact. Certain significant factors showed variations in results. However, most importantly, this study reveals that couples in Sri Lanka tend to make decisions jointly in most of the cases, as opposed to one person being autonomous. It can be advised to conduct a more improved study by including more extensive variables on the subject area, as it could not be done in this study due to the use of a secondary data source.

Keywords: Baseline category logit model, Gender, Women's autonomy