

# The Relationship Between Household Gender Attitudes and Women's Poultry Production

## Evidence from Burkina Faso

Jessica Leight, Elena Martinez, Jessica Heckert, and Aulo Gelli

### Introduction

Enhancing women's participation in agricultural production, including livestock production, has the potential to generate a range of benefits for rural households in the developing world. These benefits include enhanced economic welfare, investment in children's health and nutrition, and empowerment for women. However, attitudes and norms may shape the ability of women to engage in a broader range of productive activities if those activities are not viewed as traditionally female domains. The attitudes of women themselves and their husbands may be particularly salient: if women do not view livestock production as an appropriate activity to pursue based on their perception of community norms, they may not be responsive to economic incentives designed to encourage their involvement. Similarly, if husbands do not view ownership and control over assets or the sale of agriculture as appropriate roles for their wives, it may be very challenging for women to maintain or increase their role in household agricultural production.

This project note reports on the relationship between men's and women's gender attitudes, measured using a survey scale, and women's ownership of poultry, as well as revenue and sales from poultry in rural Burkina Faso. The findings suggest that in this context, gender attitudes reported by men and women do not show any clear correlation with women's poultry production.

### Context and Data

Poultry production is a major contributor to the agricultural economy of Burkina Faso and an important economic activity for large numbers of rural households (Gning 2005). Data from the 2010 Agricultural Census show that 99 percent of poultry producers are smallholders (defined as owning a flock of between 5 and 50 animals) who own 98 percent of the total flock in the country, and produce 99 percent of the supply of meat and 86 percent of the supply of eggs (FAO 2018).

In addition to its salience for the rural economy, poultry production has important implications for the economic role of women, who often manage the daily care of poultry animals. Men are generally responsible for sales, however, and qualitative data suggest that social norms can constrain women's participation in poultry production. In particular, women may be required to limit their interaction with men from outside the household, such as extension workers or traders (Eissler et al. 2020).

IFPRI researchers recently concluded a large-scale randomized controlled trial evaluating the *Soutenir l'Exploitation Familiale pour Lancer l'Élevage des Volailles et Valoriser l'Économie Rurale* (SELEVER) intervention that targeted enhanced poultry production in rural Burkina Faso (Gelli et al. 2017). The trial included a sample of 60 communes (rural and peri-urban) within three targeted regions (Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-Ouest, and Hauts-Bassins). Two villages were selected within each commune (the commune is the higher level of administration), and households with a woman 15–35 years of age and a child 2–4 years of age living together were eligible for inclusion. A full household census was conducted to identify eligible households, and 15 households were then randomly selected for inclusion in the sample, with oversampling of large poultry producers (flock size of more than 20 mature birds).

Data were collected at baseline in 2017 and at endline in 2020. In each wave, sex-disaggregated data on poultry production (including inputs, flock size, marketing, revenue, and profits) were collected. The first survey respondent for the poultry module was the male household member who was identified to be most knowledgeable about the household's poultry activities (usually the head of household), and the second survey respondent was the female member identified as most knowledgeable about poultry production among the household's women. The reference period for the variables of interest was generally the previous six months: for variables such as input cost, revenue, and profits, the respondent reported the total amount spent or earned over this period. Flock size and the estimated value of the flock were reported as of the day of the survey.

## Research Question and Findings

The objective of this note is to explore the correlation between gender attitudes expressed by men and women, and women's engagement in poultry production. Our hypothesis is that men who have more equitable attitudes around gender-related issues (that is, they are more positive about women's engagement in education and economic activities, and they do not agree that men and women should necessarily engage in traditional gender roles) may provide more support for their wives to engage in poultry production. This could include financial support, time allotted for women to engage in poultry production, or non-tangible support (approval and encouragement). Women who have more gender-equitable attitudes may similarly have a greater propensity to pursue poultry production.

Qualitative evidence from the existing literature suggests that gender norms constrain women's engagement in agriculture through a variety of mechanisms. First, men are often considered the head of the household and thus control income and productive resources (Hillenbrand and Maruka 2019). Gender norms that limit women's mobility in public spaces and communication with male non-relatives limit their ability to access training sessions, markets, and other resources outside of the home. Gendered expectations that women will take on household and reproductive work also limit how much time women have available to participate in agriculture (Hillenbrand and Maruka 2019; Fletschner and Kenney 2014).

In addition, gender norms that dictate how women and men should participate in agriculture can shape institutions (Badstue et al. 2010). For instance, many agricultural extension services and development

programs consider the male head of household to be the farmer or keeper of livestock, and thus do not consider women to be farmers, reducing women's access to information about agriculture (Hillenbrand and Maruka 2019; Marshall, de Haan, and Galiè 2019).

The variables that we use to capture gender norms are drawn from the Gender Norm Attitudes Scale. This scale asks the respondent to indicate whether he or she agrees or disagrees with a series of items. The Gender Norm Attitudes Scale was developed through a health-focused study in Egypt (Nanda 2011) and has been applied in Afghanistan, South Africa, and Uganda in surveys focused on HIV prevention, gender-based violence, and gender attitudes. The scale includes two subscales: the rights and privileges of men subscale and the equity for girls subscale. The items included in each scale are summarized in Box 1. Both male and female respondents in the household answer this set of questions.

In addition, we use data about women's poultry production as reported by the female respondents. To summarize the characteristics of the sample, at baseline the average household included nine members and was led by a male head of approximately 45 years of age. Only 7 percent of household heads had completed primary education, and about half of households were polygynous. Virtually all households were engaged in poultry production, reporting a flock of around 44 birds total (29 mature birds) at baseline. Approximately 80 percent of birds owned were designated as owned by the male, while only 20 percent were owned by women. Revenue and profits over the previous six months were between five and ten times higher for poultry owned by men, compared to poultry owned by women.

### **Box 1: Summarizing the Gender Norm Attitudes Scale**

The respondent states whether she or he agrees with each of the following statements.

#### **Rights and privileges of men subscale items**

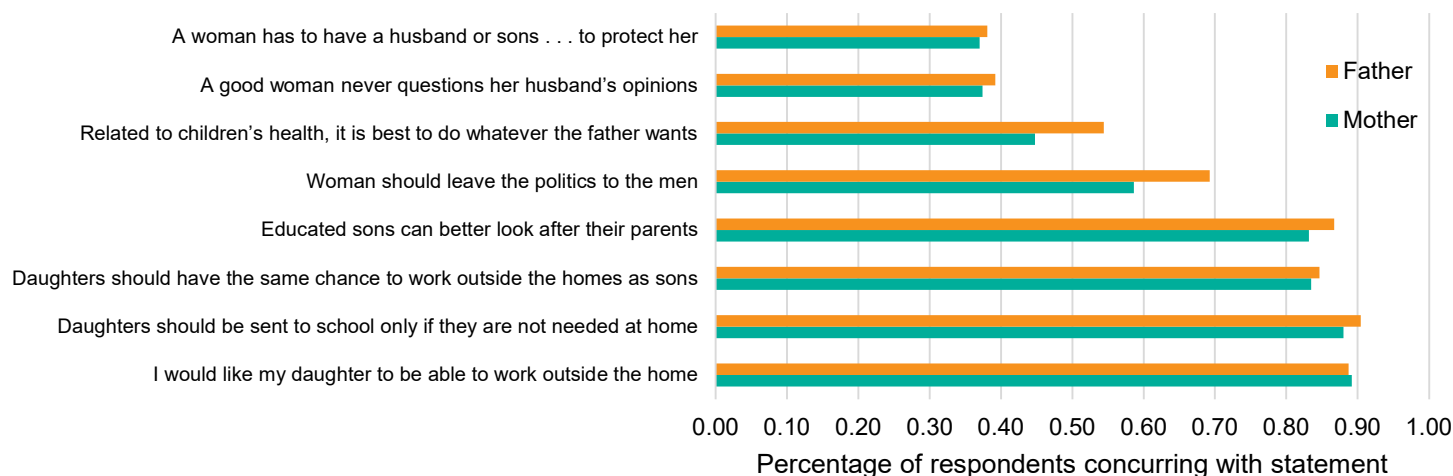
- 1) It is important that sons have more education than daughters.
- 2) Daughters should be sent to school only if they are not needed at home.
- 3) The most important reason for sons to be more educated than daughters is that they can better look after their parents when they are older.
- 4) If there is a limited amount of money to pay for tutoring, it should be spent on sons first.
- 5) A woman should take good care of her own children and not worry about other people's affairs.
- 6) Women should leave politics to the men.
- 7) A woman has to have a husband or sons or some other male relative to protect her.
- 8) The only thing a woman can really rely on in her old age is her sons.
- 9) A good woman never questions her husband's opinions, even if she is not sure whether she agrees with them.
- 10) When it is a question of children's health, it is best to do whatever the father wants.

#### **Equity for girls subscale items**

- 1) Daughters should be able to work outside the home after they have children if they want to.
- 2) Daughters should have the same chance to work outside the homes as sons.
- 3) Daughters should be told that an important reason not to have too many children is so they can work outside the home and earn money.
- 4) I would like my daughter to be able to work outside the home so she can support herself if necessary.

Figure 1 captures the respondents' reactions to selected items capturing gender norms, showing the four items that respondents are most and least likely to agree with, respectively.

**Figure 1: Gender attitudes among men and women**



**Source:** SELEVER endline data, 2020.

**Note:** Graph shows responses to select gender norm survey items at endline.

The analysis is a simple cross-sectional correlation. We regress three variables capturing women's participation in poultry production (value of poultry owned by women, revenue from women's poultry production, and profits from women's poultry production) on the variables capturing gender norms as reported by both spouses. Standard errors are clustered at the commune level. The analysis includes 1,001 households.

Table 1 reports the results. We see the estimated coefficients are small in magnitude and not statistically significant, suggesting that neither men's nor women's gender attitudes meaningfully predict poultry-related outcomes. It does not seem that household reports of gender norms shape women's choices around poultry production. It may be that other attitudes are more important in determining women's engagement in poultry production, or that this engagement primarily responds to variation in the local economic environment. If we analyze similar patterns in the subsample of monogamous and polygynous households, we observe the same null relationship.

**Table 1: Association between gender norms and women's poultry outcomes at endline**

	Revenue	Value of chickens	Profit
Gender Norm Attitudes Scale			
Rights and privileges of men subscale (mother)	0.001 (0.154)	-0.103 (0.292)	0.053 (0.124)
Equity for girls subscale (mother)	0.354 (0.314)	0.939 (0.772)	0.090 (0.252)
Rights and privileges of men subscale (father)	-0.238 (0.195)	-0.215 (0.332)	-0.280 (0.169)
Equity for girls subscale (father)	-0.535 (0.358)	-0.571 (0.776)	-0.423 (0.324)
Number of observations	1,001	1,001	1,001

**Source:** SELEVER endline data, 2020.

## Conclusion

This analysis has explored the relevance of men's and women's gender attitudes in shaping the propensity of women to raise poultry and to benefit from revenue and profits earned from poultry production in rural Burkina Faso. We report only cross-sectional correlations, and thus there are limits to the potential causal conclusions that we can draw from the analysis. With these limitations, the empirical patterns reported suggest that gender attitudes are not a significant predictor of women's poultry production in this context.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jessica Leight is a Research Fellow in the Poverty, Health and Nutrition division at IFPRI. Elena Martinez is a doctoral student at Tufts University. Jessica Heckert is a Research Fellow in the Poverty, Health and Nutrition division at IFPRI. Aulo Gelli is a Senior Research Fellow in the Poverty, Health and Nutrition division at IFPRI.

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1201 Eye Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005 USA | T. +1-202-862-5600 | F. +1-202-862-5606 | Email: [ifpri@cgiar.org](mailto:ifpri@cgiar.org) | [www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org) | [www.ifpri.info](http://www.ifpri.info)

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