

Paper Title: Does Religion Matter? Religion and Women's Autonomy in Northern and Southern Ghana

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Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between religion and women's autonomy in northern and southern Ghana. Using data from the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey with an analytic sample of 2581 women, the results indicate that Muslim women are as autonomous as Christian women once region and socio-cultural factors are controlled. The influence of religion on women's autonomy, however, varies between the north and south. Muslim women are less autonomous compared to Christian women in the north; in the south, Muslim women are as autonomous as Christian women. Contrary to expectation, women in the north, disadvantaged in terms of education, early marriage etc., are more autonomous than women in the south (the developed setting which is expected to be more egalitarian). In general women are limited in decision-making in households and largely participate as opposed to having the major say.

Key words: Religion, Region, Women's Autonomy

Introduction

Better health status and wellbeing of women and children have been attributed to women's autonomy (Faour 1989; Cvorovic 2008; Boateng and Flanagan 2008). However, religion has been argued to undermine women's autonomy. Traditional ideals about gender roles have many roots in religion, which influences family values and patterns (Denton 2004). Both Christianity and Islam have elaborated moral codes that are meant to guide gender relations among partners (McQuillan 2004). Thus, Christians and Muslims negotiate their identities in light of cultural prescriptions concerning appropriate gender relations (Bartkowski and Read 2003). Many have argued that religion, Islam especially, play a significant role in undermining women's autonomy (Caldwell 1986; Cvorovic 2008; Faour 1989). Thence, the relevance of Islam for an understanding of women's autonomy has been persistent in the demographic literature (Obermeyer 1992).

In the literature, two hypotheses explain this thesis. The first argues that in Islamic settings, women occupy a separate and distinct position that effectively denies them education and autonomy (Caldwell 1986). Islam is argued to promote restrictions on women's power in ways that compromise women's autonomy to limit fertility or secure good health for themselves and their children. Women's lack of autonomy has been cited as the central factor underlying poor demographic outcomes including high fertility and child mortality experienced by Islamic societies (Caldwell 1986). The second argument is in favour of the regional social systems as opposed to religion as the driving force, demonstrating wide variations in the ways in which gender and behavioural norms are manifested across a range of Islamic countries

(Obermeyer 1992). It argues that it is the dominant influence of behaviour and norms imprinted by regionally prescribed social systems which undermines women's autonomy (Dyson and Moore 1983; Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001). Positing that region plays the major conditioning role, and once region is controlled, Muslim women exert about as much autonomy in their lives as do other women, wherever they reside (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001).

Evidence that Islam undermines women's autonomy is empirically unresolved and remains an open empirical question (Ghuman 2003). Studies have overlooked crucial factors of variability within and across sub-cultures and ignores the ambiguities inherent in the normative structure of societies (Obermeyer 1992). Thus, theories put forward to explain this phenomenon have focused on South Asian, Western (Koenig et al. 2003; Morgan et al. 2002) or Arab Muslim dominated countries (Faour 1989; Obermeyer 1992).

To evaluate the extent to which this evidence—a model that sees an insidious association between Islam and women—is universal and relevant especially in the Sub-Saharan context (Obermeyer 1992), this thesis is examined in a different context. Ghana is predominantly Christian with sizable Muslim minority (about 18%) (Ghana Statistical Service 2012), Ghana is governed by civil laws, characterised by mixed lineage systems under patriarchal structures, however, with regional differences (especially between the north and the south). Subcultures in Ghana are also quite different from what has been observed in South Asian or Western countries. For example in most South Asian countries culturally defined gender roles (e.g. women restricted to the domestic sphere) have been considered the reason for women's labour force behaviour and their restricted access to education. It is the one

most important demonstration of women being excluded from public spheres and restricted to domestic functions (Sathar and Kazi 2000). On the other hand, West African women's (including Ghanaian) customary independence or relative autonomy, in spite of the patriarchal ideology, has been considered the outcome of their relative independent economic activities (Hollos 1991).

This paper explores these assertions empirically by assessing similarities and differences in women's autonomy in northern and southern Ghana. Women's autonomy is examined in terms of traditional measures of women's autonomy and status such as age at marriage and education in the two settings. The paper also examines whether differences in women's autonomy can be attributed to religion or the north-south cultural difference and also whether the effect of religion on women's autonomy is different in the south and in the north.

Issues concerning women's autonomy have become the primary concern of policy makers and researchers interested in women's status and wellbeing especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Even though gender inequality remains a feature of virtually every society, sub-Saharan Africa (including Ghana) possesses some of the most evident and persistent forms of gender disadvantages (Watkins 2005). In a continent where culture and religion are intertwined and cultural practices have been demonstrated to influence women's autonomy (Frost and Dodoo 2010) and religion has also been demonstrated elsewhere to influence women's autonomy (Cvorovic 2008); it is important to pay attention to the relationship between religion and women's autonomy.

Methodology

The ten regions of Ghana are grouped into two settings for the purposes of this study. However, this division falls in line with the distinct socio-economic features and the development pattern of the country. The Northern sector which comprise of the: Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions is the least developed part of the country. The Southern sector of the country is the most developed and comprises of: Greater Accra, Ashanti, Brong Ahafo, Western, Eastern, Central and Volta region.

Religion in Ghana

The arrival of the colonial masters (including Christian missionaries) on the coast of Ghana laid the foundation for development and Christianity in southern Ghana. The missionaries established schools and today almost all major secondary schools, especially exclusively boys and girls schools, are mission or church related institutions. However, Christians are well represented across the country. On the other hand, the spread of Islam into West Africa, beginning with ancient Ghana in the ninth century, was mainly the result of the commercial activities of North African Muslims. Islam made its entry into the country through the northern territories. Just like the Christian missionaries the Muslims established schools mainly for Islamic teaching; however some of them incorporated formal education along the way. Unlike Christianity, Islam is not well represented across the country like Christianity. This time lag between the time the southern sector and the northern sector came into contact with formal education may explain the north south development gap. The routes through which Christianity and Islam made its way into the country also

explains the high proportion of Muslim north and Christian dominated south in the country.

Ghana as indicated earlier is predominantly Christian (71.2%) with a sizable Muslim minority (about 18%). The Northern sector has close to a third (30.0%) of its population being Christian and about half (48.2%) being Muslim—Northern (Christian 21.0%, Muslim 60.0%), Upper East (Christian 41.7%, Muslim 27.1%) and Upper West (Christian 44.2%, Muslim 38.1%). On the other hand the Southern sector has eight in ten (79.7%) of its population being Christian and just about one in ten (11.3%) being Muslim—Western (Christian 82.2%, Muslim 9.4%), Central (Christian 83.2%, Muslim 8.7%), Greater Accra (Christian 83.2%, Muslim 11.9%), Volta (Christian 72.8%, Muslim 5.7%), Eastern (Christian 84.5%, Muslim 6.7%), Ashanti (Christian 77.8%, Muslim 15.2%) and Brong Ahafo (Christian 72.3%, Muslim 17.0%)(Ghana Statistical Service 2012).

Data and measurement

This study uses data from the 2008 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), a nationally representative sample survey that is conducted every five years. Respondents for this study are women aged 15–49 years who are currently married or living together with their partners. The sample is restricted to women who reported they were either Christian or Muslim since the scope of this study is to compare women affiliated to these two religions.

Autonomy has been defined in various terms as “the ability...to obtain information and to use it as the basis for making decisions about one’s private concerns and those of one’s intimates” (Dyson and Moore 1983: 45). Jejeebhoy

and Sathar (2001: 688) defined women's autonomy as "the control women have over their own lives—the extent to which they have an equal voice with their husbands in matters affecting themselves and their families, control over material and other resources, access to knowledge and information, the authority to make independent decisions, freedom from constraints on physical mobility, and the ability to forge equitable power relationships within families".

The literature suggest several separated but interdependent component of women's autonomy (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001). However, this paper considers five domains of women's autonomy: 1) their say in economic decisions; 2) control over wages; 3) their say in their own health care; 4) their say in freedom of physical movement (i.e., visiting friends and family) and, 5) their say in number of children. While this may not be exhaustive, these measures are quiet representative of various aspects of women's autonomy that women confront daily in Ghana.

Economic decision making is measured through a five point scale, constructed by summing responses to two questions on economic decision making within the household. A woman was asked who usually makes decisions about making: major household purchases and purchases for daily household needs. The index sums up these two questions in which the woman participates, assigning a score of 0 if she has no say, 1 if she participates in the decision and 2 if she makes the decision. The index ranges from 0 to 4.

The following were all coded in the same way: *control over wages*, a woman was asked who usually decides how the money you earn will be used. *Decision on own health*, a woman was asked who usually makes decisions

about health care for yourself. *Freedom of physical movement*, a woman was asked who usually makes decisions about visits she makes to family or relatives. *Decision on number of children*, a woman was asked who makes decisions about how many children to have. Each of these indices is generated by assigning 0 if the decision is taken completely by someone else, 1 if she participates, 2 if she makes the decision. Each of these index ranges from 0 to 2. For further analysis the values on each index is recoded to vary between zero and one; the aggregated index then sums up each of the five values and thus ranges from 0 to 5 (scale reliability coefficient 0.70).

Independent and control variables

The independent variables in this study is religion (Christian and Muslim) and region (north and south) is the moderating variable. The control variables examined include: age, number of years of schooling, type of place of residence (urban and rural), number of surviving sons, number of surviving daughters, ethnicity (Akan, Ewe, Mole-Dagbani and “other” (which includes: Guan, Gruma, Grussi, Ga-Dangme, Mande, and other)), economic status (earning wages or not), and marriage type (polygyny and monogamy).

Methods of analysis

The data is analysed using descriptive tools such as frequencies, means and percentages. The relationships between the variables are examined using logistic and ordinary least square regressions.

Findings

Socio-demographic characteristics of women and their partners

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of women and their partners in northern and southern Ghana. Contrary to expectations, early marriage is pronounced among Christian women in the north and the vice versa is true in the south where the difference is modest. On average Christian women in the north married a year earlier than their Muslim counterparts and the opposite pertains in the south. Women in the north (both Christians and Muslims) generally give birth to four children and women in the south have three (both Christians and Muslims). Generally, average age difference between partners is lowest among southern Christians and highest among northern and southern Muslims. A high proportion of northern and southern Christians were older than their partners compared to their Muslim counterparts. Nevertheless, men are generally older than their partners across settings.

Generally, of the Christians and Muslims in both settings, there are more Muslims in urban areas than Christians. Christian women are more involved in wage earning activities (earning either cash/kind) than Muslim women in both settings.

Comparisons between Christians and Muslims in northern and southern Ghana show very modest differences. A general overview of the Christian Muslim comparison shows a very inconsistent pattern to draw conclusions. However, northern women appear to be a little disadvantaged (e.g. early age at marriage, high mean age difference between them and their partners and less involvement in wage earning activities).

[Table 1 here]

Education among women and their partners in Northern and Southern Ghana

A large proportion of women and their partners, especially in northern Ghana have never attended school (Table 2). Both Muslim women and their partners are disadvantaged in terms of education in both settings. Generally women in southern Ghana are more likely to be educated than women in northern Ghana. The proportion of men and especially women with tertiary education (13 years and higher) is very low. While typical southern Christian and Muslim women have 7 and 5 years of education respectively, northern Christian and Muslim women have 3 and 2 years of education respectively. As expected partners are generally more educated than women; levels of education among women and men with some education is however similar within and across setting.

While it is evident that Muslim women are disadvantaged in both settings and that southern Christian and Muslim women are considerably better educated than Christian and Muslim women in the north. It is also evident that Muslim women in the south are more educated than both Christian and Muslim in the north, thus undermining the role of Islam in denying women education. Gender disparities in levels of educational attainment between women and men are evident in all settings (Table 2); highest disparities are found among northern Christians (partners 5+ years better educated) and southern Muslims and least among Muslim women in the north. Interestingly a higher percent of northern women, especially Muslim women (53%) have the same level of education as their partners.

[Table 2 here]

Women's autonomy in various domains

This article assesses five domains of female autonomy. Table 3 shows the distributions for all the autonomy measures and the mean values for each of the measures. Generally, women have limited economic decision making power. High proportions of women are excluded from both daily household and especially large household decisions and about a quarter across religion and setting are the main decision makers on large household purchases. However, quite a high proportion of women made decisions on daily household purchases. There is a pattern to the kinds of decisions in which women participate; they are far more likely to have the major say involving decisions that are perceived as routine in the family economy, such as those relating to purchases for daily use, than in decisions that involve large household purchases. Christian women exhibit a marginal economic decision making authority than Muslim women within and across settings and southern women on the other hand also exhibit a marginal decision making authority than northern women.

[Table 3 here]

Women's decision making authority over their wages is generally very limited. Nonetheless, a high proportion of women appear to be the main decision makers as opposed to just participating in decisions about their own wages. Muslim women are a little less autonomous in both settings and in general, southern women show a little more autonomy than northern women. In all the comparisons, women participated in decisions on their own health care rather than being the main decision makers. However, Muslim women are marginally less autonomous within and across settings. Albeit women

generally have some degree of power of mobility, their decision making authority is limited to participation rather than being the main decision makers. There is a little Muslim disadvantage in both settings; on the other hand women in the north are a little more autonomous with respect to mobility than women in the south. Just like the other domains of women's autonomy, women's decision making authority over number of children is very limited. A large proportion of women participate than having the major say in the number of children to have. That said, in general it appears they participate in the number of children than in any other decision. Muslims are less autonomous in this regard within and across settings and southern women appear to be more autonomous than northern women with respect to decision on number of children.

In general the results show limited autonomy for women in all spheres. On a 12 point scale the highest score is just above average (about 7). There is evidence of a marginal religious divide with Muslim women being less autonomous in the north and on the other hand equally autonomous as Christian women in the south. Muslim women are slightly less autonomous in general. The results also suggest a marginal regional difference with southern women being less autonomous in terms of decision making in general. This is contrary to the traditional measures of female autonomy and status discussed earlier (in the area of education and age at marriage) where northern women are disadvantaged.

Region and determinants of women's autonomy

Table 4 shows determinants of women's autonomy in the two settings. Autonomy is measured by summing up values of the five domains discussed above in Table 3. The scales for each of the five domains of women's autonomy are standardized to vary between zero and one to give each domain scale an equal weight in the summarized scale. Table 4 presents the results of ordinary least square regression analyses (OLS), which regress autonomy (0-5) on factors that measure autonomy.

[Table 4 here]

Interestingly, within each setting women's autonomy appears to be explained by a different set of determinants. In the north, Muslim women are less autonomous compared to Christian women. In the South however, Muslim women are as autonomous as Christian women. Age and education are significantly related to women's autonomy in the south, showing increase in autonomy with increase in age and education. Age and education are very important determinants of women's status and autonomy; however it is not related to women's autonomy in the North. As expected, women in rural areas are significantly less autonomous compared to women in urban areas. Earning wages are associated with women's autonomy, indicating that earning wages increases a woman's autonomy by about 1.3 in both settings. Contrary to expectations, women in monogamous marriages are more autonomous in both settings.

In general the results show that the traditional measures of women's status demonstrated elsewhere to influence women's autonomy—age, education, wage work—have more influence on women's autonomy in the South; the setting which is developed and supposed to have gender relations

that are more egalitarian than the North which is less developed and expected to have wider gender disparities.

The influence of religion and region on various domains of women's autonomy

Table 5 shows the results of logistic regression analysis, which regress the summarized index of the various domains of women's autonomy discussed earlier with factors that measure autonomy. Here each index is dummy coded (0 indicating no autonomy, 1 otherwise). The results show an inconsistent pattern in the effect of religion and region on women's autonomy. Also, it shows quite a different set of determinants for each domain of women's autonomy. Religion and region are significant in predicting women's autonomy in two and three domains respectively.

[Table 5 here]

Religion is significant in predicting women's autonomy in economic decision making within the household and control over their wages. The results show that Muslim women are less autonomous in these two domains compared to Christian women. However, Muslim women are as autonomous as Christian women when it comes to decision making about their own health care, freedom of movement and the number of children to have. Region of residence is significant in predicting economic decision making within the household, decision making about a woman's own health care and freedom of movement. Interestingly, southern women experience greater constrain on economic decision making within the household, their own health care and freedom of movement compared to northern women.

The influence of religion and region on women's autonomy

Table 6 shows the results of ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis of two models, predicting women's autonomy(0-5). Model 2 includes an interaction term to examine whether the effect of religion on women's autonomy is different between the north and the south. From Table 6, the results show that after controlling for region and other socio-cultural factors, religion is not significant in predicting women's autonomy. The results indicate that religion does not matter in women's autonomy once other variables are controlled. Region however, is significant in predicting women's autonomy, showing that women in the north region are more autonomous than women in the south net their religion and the other socio-cultural factors controlled for. In Model 2 the results for the interaction between religion and region indicate that the effect of religion on women's autonomy is significantly different in the north than the south.

[Table 6 here]

The effect of Islam on women's autonomy is not significantly different between northern and the southern Muslims (Figure 1). Similarly, the effect of Christianity is higher in the south than in the north. Also, the graph shows very marginal difference between Christians and Muslims in the south and a significant difference between Christians and Muslim in the north, indicating that northern Christians have very high level of autonomy.

[Figure 1]

Discussion

The study sought to explore the relationship between religion and women's autonomy in northern and southern Ghana. The findings suggest that women's autonomy in terms of economic decision making, control over earning, decisions over their own health care, freedom of physical movement and decisions on number of children is limited in Ghana. The findings show that Ghanaian women are largely excluded from decision-making and in most cases they just participate as opposed to being the main decision makers

The data supports the "regional social system" argument as opposed to the "fateful triangle", which suggests that Muslim women are as autonomous as non-Muslim women when region is controlled. The findings show the importance of socio-cultural institutions that model gender within each setting defined here by region rather than the primacy of religion in explaining women's autonomy. A clear regional divide, net individual and household characteristics is also evident. Northern Ghana disadvantaged in the traditional factors that confer status are more autonomous than women in the south which is more developed and expected to be egalitarian. This finding is not in isolation, Boateng and Flanagan (2008) found that there was no significant effect of women's education on psychological access to health care in Ghana. Also, in Nigeria, Hollos (1991) found that women disadvantaged in education had considerable domestic autonomy even though their educational levels were low.

The findings show that the effect of Christianity and Islam on women's autonomy is significantly different between the north and the south. The results show that the effect of Christianity and Islam on women's autonomy is highest

in the south than in the north. However, the difference between Christians in the north and south is significantly higher than the difference between Muslims in the north and south. The north south difference can partly be explained by the traditional role ascriptions for women and their partners where men do not interfere with women's affairs unless it is something that concerns them. That said the religious divide within the northern region is difficult to explain.

The effect of religion and region on women's autonomy across various domains of women's autonomy is inconsistent. Controlling for other factors, not in a single domain of women's autonomy are Muslim women more autonomous than Christian women or northern women less autonomous than southern women. In three domains, Muslim women are equally as autonomous as Christian women (own health care, freedom of movement and number of children). Southern women are also equally as autonomous as northern women in control over wages, and number of children.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the traditional factors that confer status and autonomy do not necessarily enhance women's autonomy. For example education, which has been the rallying cry of gender empowerment, even though very important in enhancing women's status, does not necessarily enhance women's autonomy in certain context, which is very important for policy implications. Strategies to enhance women's autonomy need to go beyond education, employment, and delayed marriage as have been the case in the past. Sharing in the suggestion of Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001), more comprehensive, direct, and context-specific strategies need to be sought. These

include raising women's gender consciousness, enabling women to mobilize and access community resources and public services, providing support for challenging traditional norms that underlie gender inequities, facilitating the acquisition of usable vocational and life skills, enhancing women's access to and control over economic resources, and enabling women to establish and realize their rights.

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Tables

TABLE 1 Socio-demographic characteristics of women and their partners by setting

	Northern Ghana		Southern Ghana	
	Christian	Muslim	Christian	Muslim
Mean age of women (women aged 15-49)	32.8	32.1	32.7	32.5
Mean age of partners	41.6	41.5	39.0	42.1
Marital age (women aged 15-49)				
Percent married at 16 or younger	35.4	24.3	24.8	26.6
Mean age at first marriage (years)	18.1	18.9	19.6	19.1
Mean number of children ever born	3.7	3.7	3.1	3.3
Age difference between spouse				
Mean age difference (years)	8.8	9.5	6.3	9.6
Percent distribution of couples				
Wife older	4.4	2.1	4.1	1.5
Same age as husband	1.2	0.8	3.3	1.2
Partner 1-4 years older	24.6	24.9	37.5	23.2
Partner 5-9 years older	34.5	33.6	33.1	34.3
Partner 10 years older or more	35.2	38.6	22.0	39.8
Percent in urban areas	12.5	40.4	47.2	65.2
Earned wages in the last 12 months (% women)	82.7	55.2	86.2	73.3

Source: GDHS 2008 dataset

TABLE 2 Levels and patterns of educational attainment in Northern and Southern Ghana

	Northern Ghana		Southern Ghana	
	Christian	Muslim	Christian	Muslim
Women with some education (%)	41.0	26.7	84.0	63.5
Primary (1-6 years)	22.0	13.4	23.1	28.5
Junior secondary school (7-9 years)	6.2	7.3	33.0	17.9
Senior secondary school (10-12 years)	7.1	4.3	22.3	14.3
Above secondary (13 and higher)	5.7	1.8	6.2	2.8
Mean number of years of schooling				
All women	2.9	1.9	7.1	4.6
women some education	7.0	6.9	8.4	7.3
Partners with some education (%)	53.1	39.1	91.7	69.1
Primary (1-6 years)	10.0	6.6	6.8	11.6
Junior secondary school (7-9 years)	9.3	8.3	23.7	12.4
Senior secondary school (10-12 years)	14.0	10.0	39.9	26.6
Above secondary (13 and higher)	33.8	24.3	61.1	45.1
Mean number of years of schooling of partners				
All partners	5.6	4.1	9.7	7.0
Partners with some education	10.6	10.5	10.6	10.1
Gender disparity in education between wives and partners (%)				
Partner (5+ years better educated)	30.9	25.0	28.0	31.6
Partner (1-4 years better educated)	15.0	8.3	34.7	21.6
Wife better educated	15.3	13.4	13.1	23.5
Wife and partner same education	38.8	53.3	24.2	23.3

Source: GDHS 2008 dataset

TABLE 3 Women's autonomy in various domains in Northern and Southern Ghana

	Northern Ghana		Southern Ghana	
	Christia n	Musli m	Christia n	Musli m
Economic decisions				
Participates in decisions				
Large household purchases	36.7	32.6	44.5	33.8
Daily household purchases	29.2	33.6	35.9	32.4
Main decision maker				
Large household purchases	18.3	18.3	20.7	20.9
Daily household purchases	57.7	34.3	45.0	40.7
Index (0-4)	2.2	1.7	2.1	1.9
Control over wages				
Participates in decision	16.0	8.0	33.6	29.3
Main decision maker	54.3	35.7	45.9	38.3
Index (0-2)	1.3	0.8	1.3	1.1
Decision on own health care				
Participates in decision	47.2	38.8	44.5	35.9
Main decision maker	26.4	23.1	25.3	26.6
Index (0-2)	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9
Decision on mobility				
Participates in decision	51.2	43.7	64.8	61.7
Main decision maker	34.5	35.2	19.1	16.7
Index (0-2)	1.2	1.1	1.0	1.0
Decision making on number of children				
Participates in decision	62.3	54.7	68.6	58.1
Main decision maker	17.1	14.8	13.3	15.6
Index (0-2)	1.0	0.8	1.0	0.9
Aggregated index (0-12)	6.6	5.9	6.3	5.7

Source: GDHS 2008 dataset

TABLE 4 OLS regression of the determinants of women's autonomy in northern and southern Ghana

	Northern	Southern
Religion		
Muslim (ref. =Christian)	-0.32**	-0.13
Age	0.01	0.03***
Education	0.01	0.03***
Type of place of residence		
Rural (ref. =Urban)	-0.31**	-0.08
Wages		
Not earning (ref. =Earning)	-1.32***	-1.35***
Marriage type		
Polygyny (ref. =Monogamy)	-0.36***	-0.18*
Number of surviving sons	0.05	-0.06*
Number of surviving daughters	0.00	-0.04
Constant	3.94***	3.07***
Observations	694	1887
Adjusted R-squared	0.26	0.20

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Source: GDHS 2008 dataset

Note: this model does not control for ethnicity because of the limited number of Akan (7 cases) and Ewe (1 case) in the north.

TABLE 5 Women's autonomy in various domains

	Economic	Control over wages	Own health care	Freedom of movement	Number of children
Religion					
Muslim (ref. =Christian)	0.62*	0.51***	0.85	0.88	0.89
Region					
Northern (ref. =Southern)	1.50*	0.75	1.71***	1.53*	1.29
Age	1.07*	1.07***	1.03***	1.03**	1.03**
Education	1.04*	1.04**	1.02	1.05**	1.05***
Type of place of residence					
Rural (ref. =Urban)	0.91	0.9	0.78*	0.85	1.11
Wages					
Not earning (ref. =Earning)	0.45**	-	0.74*	0.50***	0.50***
Marriage type					
Polygyny (ref. =Monogamy)	0.67*	1.05	0.78*	0.71*	0.69**
Ethnicity (ref. =Akan)					
Ewe	0.92	1.09	0.63***	0.94	0.79
Mole-Dagbani	1.04	0.64*	0.58**	0.99	0.72
Other	0.86	0.82	0.62***	0.79	0.84
Number of surviving sons	0.93	0.90*	1.00	0.99	0.96
Number of surviving daughters	0.90	1.00	0.95	1.03	0.93
Observations	2581	2581	2581	2581	2581
Pseudo R-squared	0.07	0.09	0.03	0.04	0.04

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

Source: GDHS 2008 dataset

TABLE 6 OLS coefficients of the influence of socio-cultural, economic and demographic characteristics on women's autonomy

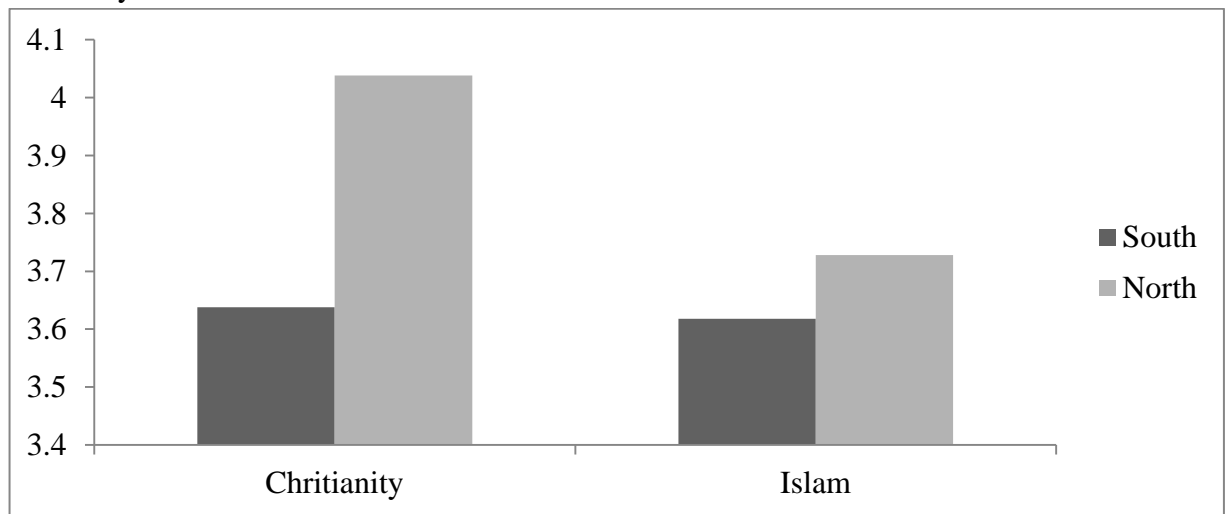
	Summary index of autonomy	Summary index of autonomy ^a
Religion		
Muslim (ref. =Christian)	-0.15	-0.02
Region		
Northern (ref. =Southern)	0.27**	0.40***
Muslim*Northern	-	-0.29*
Age	0.02***	0.02***
Education	0.03***	0.03***
Type of place of residence		
Rural (ref. =Urban)	-0.11*	-0.11*
Wages		
Not earning (ref. =Earning)	-1.33***	-1.32***
Marriage type		
Multiple wives (ref. =One wife)	-0.23**	-0.23**
Ethnicity (ref. =Akan)		
Ewe	-0.13	-0.13
Mole-Dagbani	-0.19	-0.22*
Other	-0.23**	-0.27**
Number of surviving sons	-0.02	-0.02
Number of surviving daughters	-0.03	-0.03
Constant	3.40***	3.40***
Observations	2581	2581
Adjusted R-squared	0.226	0.227

* p<.05, ** p<.01, ***
p<.001

Source: GDHS 2008 dataset

^aModel 2 includes an interaction term between religion and region

FIGURE 1 Graph showing the interaction effect of religion on women's autonomy in Northern and Southern Ghana



Source: GDHS 2008 dataset