

Gender in Food Purchasing Decisions and Household Food Insecurity Based on Dietary Energy Deficiency: An Application of Oaxaca and Blinder Decomposition

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Abstract

Women empowerment reduces the risk of households' food insecurity. For designing food security policy, understanding the extent and causes of differences in prevalence of food insecurity between the households with female and male food decision-makers is important. Whether the food insecurity difference arises from the differences in households' characteristics or from the different ways two categories of households react to changes in these characteristics, have gained little attention. To fill this literature gap, we use *Household Integrated Economic Survey* of Pakistan data and estimate logistic regression to explore the role of the gender of food purchase decision maker in explaining food insecurity differences across households. Using Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, we decomposed the difference in food insecurity prevalence between the two groups into differences in their observed characteristics and behavioral responses. We found households with female food purchase decision-makers have lesser risk and prevalence (4% less) of food insecurity compared to households where males decide food-purchases. And 55%-66% of food insecurity group-difference is explained by differences in households' characteristics and 34%-45% by behavioral differences. Income status, education, household-size, and age of household head are significant determinants of food insecurity and food insecurity gap between the two populations. Therefore, we imply policies which empower women should be promoted to improve households' food security. Significant contribution of behavioral differences in explaining food insecurity differences highlight that group specific policies should be designed to reduce food insecurity.

Keywords: Food insecurity gap, Characteristics, Differences, Decomposition

JEL Classifications: D12, D13, I3, J16, R29

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