

What does it mean to make a joint-decision?

Unpacking intra-household decision-making in agriculture

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RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
Climate Change,
Agriculture and
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Background

- Women in Sub-Saharan Africa traditionally portrayed as having low levels of decision-making authority
 - Production & domestic arenas
- Degree of decision-making authority indicator for women's empowerment
- Policy and Development programs: promotion of JDM processes in households as a way of transforming intra-household power-relations.



Background

- Policy acknowledges the lower decision-making authority of Ugandan women
 - National Country Vision 2040, National CSA Programme 2015-2025, Climate Change Policy 2015
- Deliberate inclusion of trainings to facilitate JDM within households
 - National Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan 2015/16 - 2019/20 for Uganda; GALS methodology

Policy and development programs do not clearly expound on what qualifies as a 'joint-decision'.

JDM brings often the unspoken assumption that women have participated as equal in the decision

Concept left vague in meaning and open to a variety of interpretations



Background

- Recent intra-household studies: men and women report in different ways DM
 - Gender differences in perceptions
 - JDM can be interpreted in different ways
- Most of DM studies based solely on surveys
 - Consequences in the way JDM might be understood
 - JDM as a dichotomous variable
 - **Black box in our understanding:** Does not consider different degrees of participation in a JD



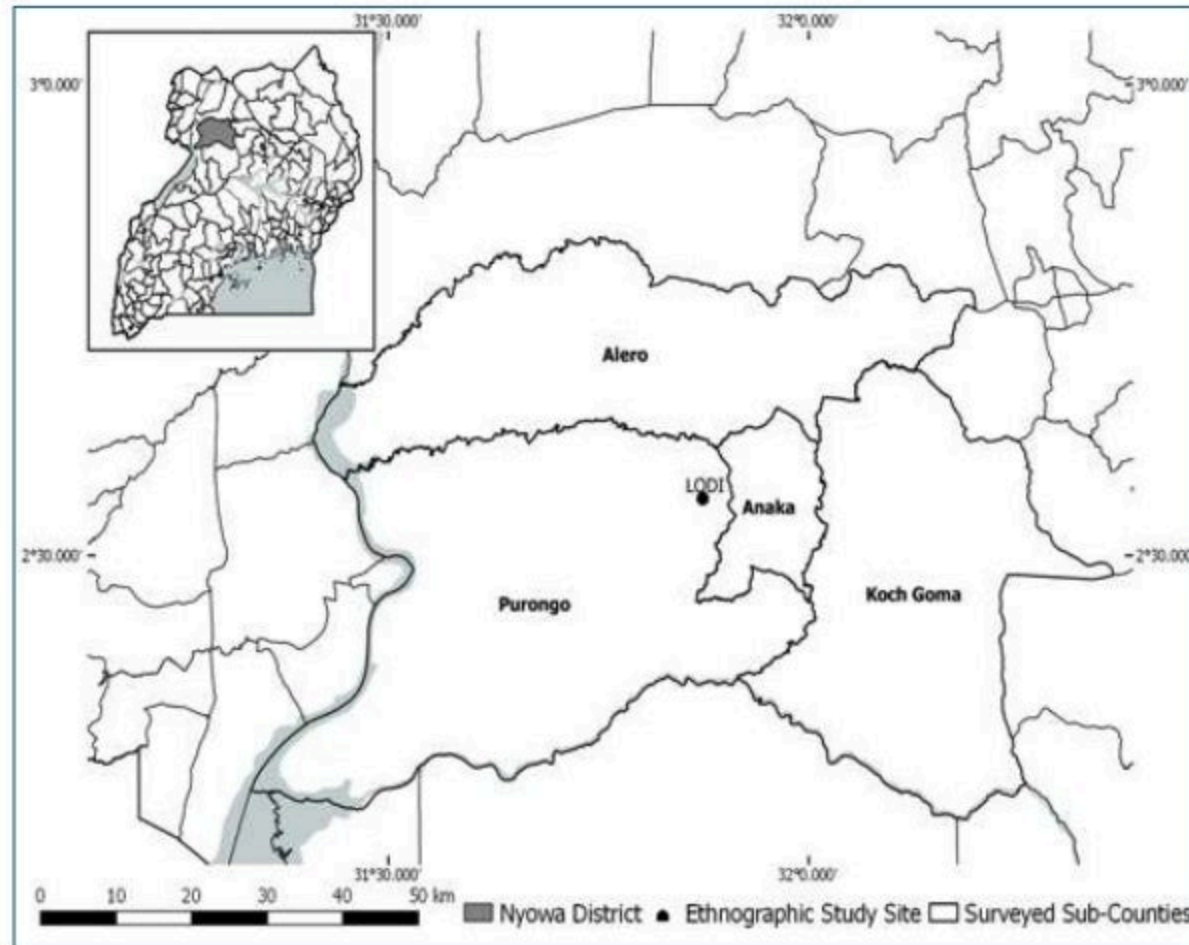
Research Questions

- *What are the intra-household decision-making patterns in the adoption of CSA practices? Are there any gender differences?*
- *What are the gender-differentiated meanings attached to taking joint agricultural and domestic decisions?*



Methods

- Study conducted in Nwoya, Northern Uganda



- Acholi sub-region
- Patriarchal society, male line of inheritance
- Rain-fed smallholder farming
- Groundnut, beans, maize, rice

Methods

■ Mixed-Method Approach

Intra-household Survey

- 585 HHs
- 464 Couples

Participant Observation

- Three families
- 21 days

Focus Group Discussion

- 24 agricultural and domestic decisions

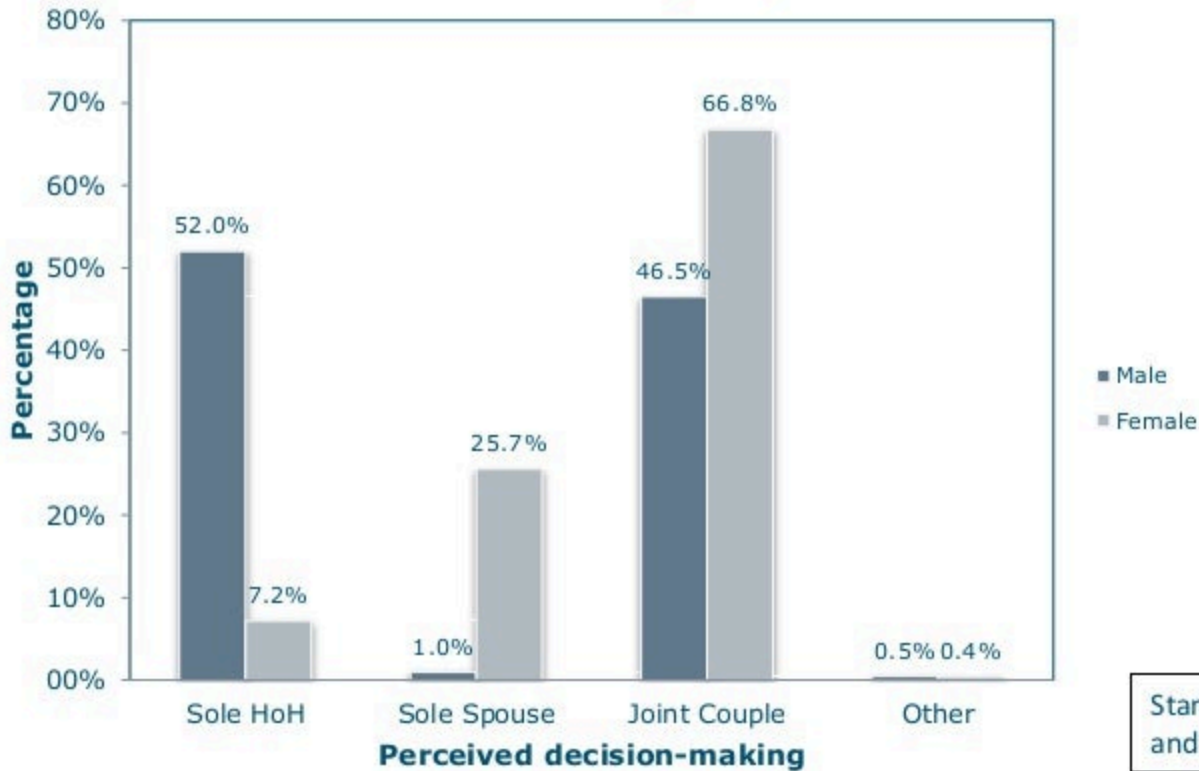
Experimental Game

- Maize and Beans varietal seed selection



Results

Perceived Decision-Making Adoption of CSA



CSA:

- **intercropping**
- **improved seed**
- **fallow**

Pearson's χ^2 Test: test statistic of 357,57 and p-value=2,2e-16

- Strong association between gender and decision-making perceptions on the adoption of CSA

Standardized Residuals in χ^2 test for independence of sex and decision-making on adoption of CSA

	Joint Couple	Sole Male Spouse	Sole Female Spouse
Male	-3.45	10.48	-8.08
Female	3.30	-10.01	7.72

Results

CSA Practice	Spousal Agreement on DM in CSA adoption			Spousal Disagreement on DM in CSA Adoption			
	Husband alone	Wife alone	Joint Decision couple	M: Husband Alone F: Joint Couple	M: Husband alone F: Wife alone	M: Joint Couple F: Husband alone	M: Joint Couple F: Wife alone
Intercropping (n=160)	2,5%	1,3%	40,6%	35,6%	9,4%	3,8%	6,9%
Fallow (n=99)	8,1%	0,0%	38,4%	33,3%	9,1%	4,0%	7,1%
Improved Seed (n=88)	3,4%	0,0%	23,9%	30,7%	29,5%	0,0%	12,5%
Mean	4,3%	0,6%	35,7%	33,7%	14,4%	2,9%	8,4%

Only for couples which agreed that the practice had been adopted at their house

Results

- Over the 3 weeks of participant observation, JDM processes were the most frequently referred to (**when asked directly**)
 - *'Whatever we do, there must be agreement between me and my wife'*
- **When not asked directly**, different realities emerged in action.
 - Contradictory statements (male spouse authoritarian statements)
 - Witnessed instances in which men took decisions unilaterally
 - Conversations reveal unequal say in reported JDM

"It is a joint decision when she gives an idea about it even if it is used or not. But at the end, as the household head, I make the final decision"

What to plant

"If he at least asks me, then I would feel part of the decision even if he makes the final decision"

Budgeting hh expenses



Focus Group Discussions

- 24 Decisions: With who do you associate the decision?
- JDM: most common raise card across most decisions in both groups



Decisions on What to plant

- Men associated it more (63%) with their individual decision
 - *'The woman doesn't know my land, it's me to plan and she should just plant where I show her'*
- Women associated it more (77%) as a joint decision:
 - *'Men always dictate, when you come up with your idea, they don't normally accept it if it does not side with theirs'*
- Men consider that is their decision because they tell their wives where to plant. Women perceive this as a joint-decision as there is an interaction between spouses.



Results

- **Experimental Game with 16 couples**
 - Couples were offered two varieties from which to choose one (for beans and for maize)
 - We observed whether spouses established a conversation as they chose the variety
 - 10 days after, we asked spouses individually whether they had felt part of the decision.



Results: Perceived JDM might not involve a conversation between spouses

Couple Interactions during Seed Selection (n=16)		Maize (%)	Beans (%)
Did not discuss		25,00	18,75
Discussed	Man dominated the discussion	50,00	18,75
	Woman suggested the variety, husband approves (final decision-maker)	12,50	62,50
	Equal say during discussions, man preferred variety chosen	6,25	0,00
	Instant agreement (both partners wanted the same variety)	6,25	0,00

?

- 25 % (4 couples) and 19% (3 couples) of couples did not discuss during the seed selection exercise
 - Maize: All spouses reported having felt part of the decision
 - Beans: All but one female spouse reported having felt part of the decision



What do Women understand by Joint-Decision Making?



What JDM can mean to women

<p>“Even after my husband has already done something and tells me (after the fact), I feel part of the decision because he has informed me”</p>	<p>No conversation between the couple</p>	<p>Man “informs” about the decision to the woman, <u>after the fact</u></p>
<p>“Sometimes I keep quiet and when I keep quite it means that I have accepted his proposal and participated in the decision”</p>		<p>Man “informs” about the decision to the woman, <u>before the fact</u></p>
<p>“The decision on how to spend the income is made jointly. In most cases he informs me, and by the fact that he has informed me I feel that I have participated in the decision”</p>	<p>Conversation between the couple</p>	<p>Man “informs” about the decision to the woman, <u>before the fact.</u> <u>Woman’s ideas not considered</u></p>
<p>“Anyone can come up with the idea to discuss about, we discuss it but it is the man who has the final say. He can either accept or refuse your idea”</p>		<p>Woman’s ideas are considered, but man has the final say</p>

Perception of participating in the decision came through being present in the same physical space, in which the husband communicated to her (before or after the fact) about the decision



Conclusion

No conversation between the couple

An actual conversation between the couple



- What constituted JDM in this context involved varying degrees of women's participation in the decision
 - In all cases: women had not an equal say as their spouses and male spouse as the final decision-maker

When the term JDM is interpreted locally it often undermines the empowerment discourse



Conclusion: Implications at 3 Levels

▪ **Methodologically:**

- Need to supplement DM studies with qualitative in-depth examinations
- 'Who' and 'How' lines of inquiry

▪ **Conceptually:**

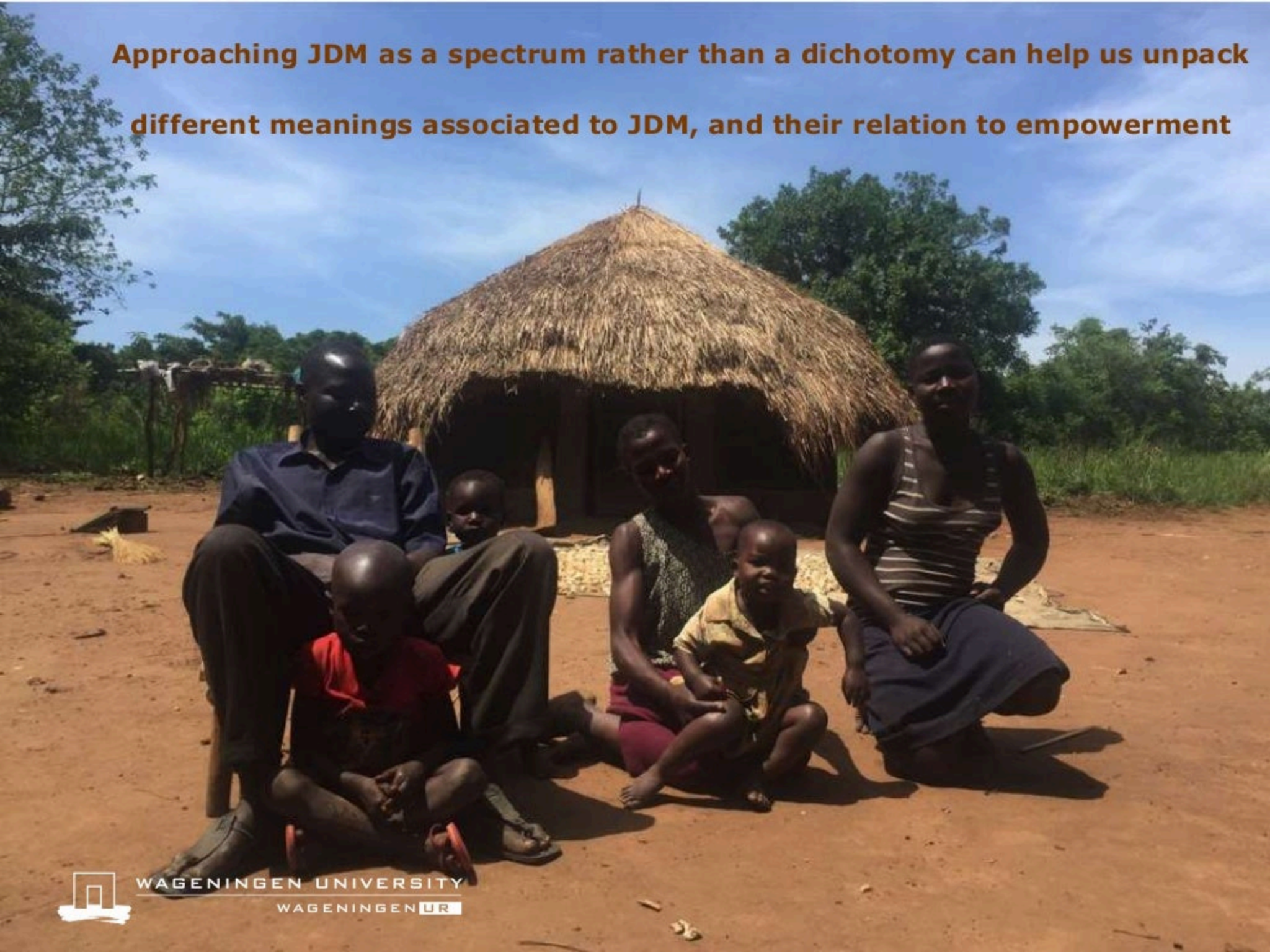
- JDM carry the often-unspoken assumption that spouses have an equal say in joint processes of decisions
- What kinds of perceived JDM can be used as an indicator women's empowerment?

▪ **Politically:**

- Ambiguity of the concept allows it to be widely used by development actors without many practical implications
- 'Dialogue of the deaf' – development actors & local villagers make reference to JDM, but with profound differences. Implications to the degree in which a spousal decision empowers women



Approaching JDM as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy can help us unpack different meanings associated to JDM, and their relation to empowerment



Outlook

- JDM is an indicator of empowerment, not the desired impact itself.
- Empowerment, the desired impact, difficult to assess
- How do we operationalize the participation in joint decision-making processes?



Thanks!



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