Extended Abstract

Gender differentials in transition to household headship: Evidence from the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System, Thailand

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Introduction

During the past several decades, households have undergone numerous changes. Studies from different parts of the world have revealed that new forms of co-residence have emerged; some of them, such as female-headed households have increased dramatically. Even in developing countries where households are traditionally headed by senior males, the households headed by females are becoming common; in some places they account for as many as one-third of total households.

In Thailand, national statistics show that the proportion of female-headed household increased from 15.2 percent in 1980 to 25.5 percent in 2000, an increase of 68 percent (Economic Statistics Division, 1995; National Statistical Office, 1996, 1997, 2003). Corresponding increase is also observed in the provincial level as indicated in the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System (KDSS). Here female-headed households accounted for 28.4 percent in 2000 and 32.9 percent in 2004, an increase of 16 percent in only a five-year period.

Levels and trends in female-headed households are important indicators of household situation and vulnerability because headship is often assumed to imply socioeconomic dominance (Lampietti & Stalker, 2004). Much of the research interest in this phenomenon arises because of the belief that female-headed households are more 'vulnerable' to poverty and are disadvantaged in terms of social support and social integration often resulting in fewer opportunities for their members. Some studies found that households headed by widowed, separated or divorced women are less able to provide significant economic support to their members. Thus it is more difficult for them to achieve the same level of welfare attained by the households headed by men (Joshi, 2004 ;Arias & Palloni, 2006; Busapathumrong, 2006).

Based on the gender perspective, this analysis aims to understand transition to household headship and to identify factors affecting differential transition to the headship of males and females.

Data and Method

To meet the objectives above this analysis employ panel data which allow a close examination of transition to household headship of the sample male and female and to understand effect of gender differential over time. The rich panel data are drawn from the Kanchanaburi Demographic Surveillance System (KDSS) conducted in Kanchanaburi Province, West of Thailand.

The KDSS had been conducted by Institute for Population and Social Research (IPSR) from 2000 to 2004 with support by The Wellcome Trust of United Kingdom. The major purpose of this panel study is to monitor population change within the 100 field sites communities. These communities were selected on the basis of ecological diversity, socio-economic and population features. The sample villages were obtained through stratified systematic sample technique. All households in the sample villages were interviewed. Data are available at three levels, household, individual and community; this analysis focuses on the household and individual data only. Eligible cases for the analysis clued 34,849 male and female aged 15 years and above who were not household heads at the starting time (i.e. in 2000). Discrete time logistic regression of event history analysis is employed.

Results

Descriptive analysis reveals that transition from non-head to head of household among females is slightly greater than among males. Over the period from 2000 to 2004, 13.4 percent of females who were not head in the starting year (2000) became head compared to 11.7 percent among males (Fig. 1). Descriptive analysis also suggest that females are relatively better off in terms of transition to household headship even when marital status is taken into consideration, except for those who were currently married (Fig. 2). Transition to household headship seems to favor female among households of lower soci-economic quintiles, but in the higher quintile the gap is reduce to the extent

that in the highest quintile both male and female are hardly different (Fig. 3). The descriptive results seem to suggest that single-headed households are more likely to be headed by females more than males. However, results of survival analysis show that the chance of being a household head between females and males is not significantly different as shown in Fig. 4.
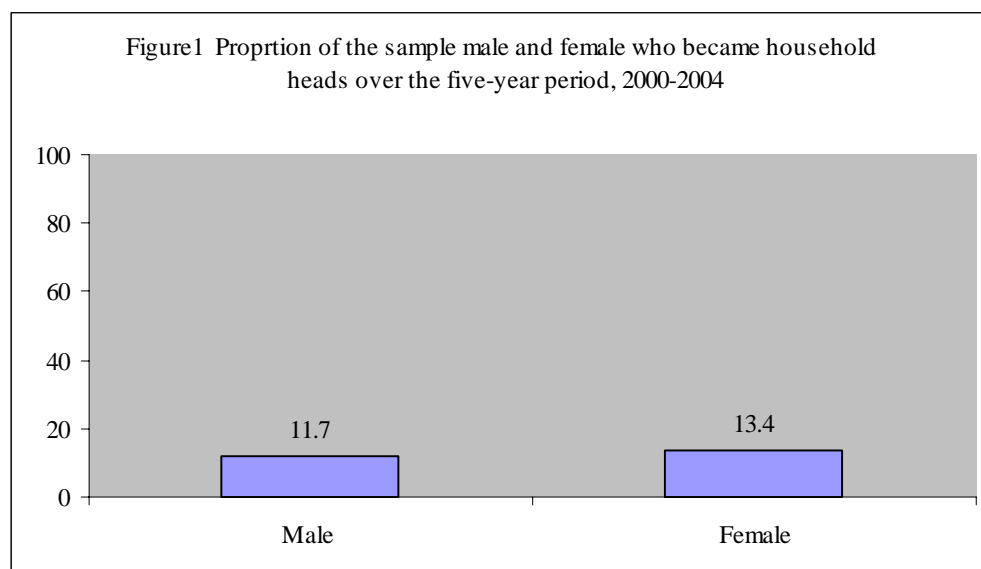
To assess effect of gender and other measures on transition to household headship, three models of discrete time logistic regression are performed. The first model is for male; the second is for female, and the last model is for both sexes together. Results show that as a whole and after controlling for all other variables there is no significant difference between male and female in transition to household headship. Except marital status and socio-economic status, all other measures do not have significant effect on transition to household headship of both male and female (model 1). For marital status, it is found that single or married persons are less likely to become head of household while compared to separated or divorced status. With regard to socio-economic status, the analysis reveals that compared with persons in the highest quintile (fifth quintile) those in the lower quintiles are more likely to experience transition to household headship. The odds of transition to headship are significant but not so strongly except for the lowest (1st) quintile.

However, this is not the case when only male or only female is taken into consideration (Model 2 and 3). For male, socio-economic status is the only measure that is found to have some significant effect on transition to household headship, while for female both marital and socio-economic statuses show significant effects.

Discussion

The findings of this analysis lead to a general conclusion that being a male or a female dose not makes a significant difference in transition to headship. What makes it difference is the measure of marital status. For male, marital status does not have significant effect on the transition whereas for female those who are divorced, separated and widowed are like likely to become head of the household. This difference may be explained in terms popular practice in Thai society in particular, and in most other

societies in general, where female often assumes headship when potential male head is absent or does not exist in the household (Podhisita, 1994). The finding suggests that with the increasing rate of divorce, separation and widowhood more females will become household heads when compared with males. For males, divorce, separation or widowhood hardly changes their status as the household head; they are almost always heads regardless of their marital status. However, it not clear as to what account for the finding that transition to household headship is more likely to take place among male and female of lower socio-economic quintiles. Overall, the finding seems to suggest that in the long run the increase of female-headed households in the lower socio-economic status is very likely. Previous studies have revealed that female household heads differ from male household heads in that the former are often single-head whereas the latter have spouses (Dreze & Srinivasan, 1997; Panda, 1995; Posel, 2001; Schmidt & Sevak, 2006). If this is the case, the programs aimed to address household poverty should target those with the female heads.
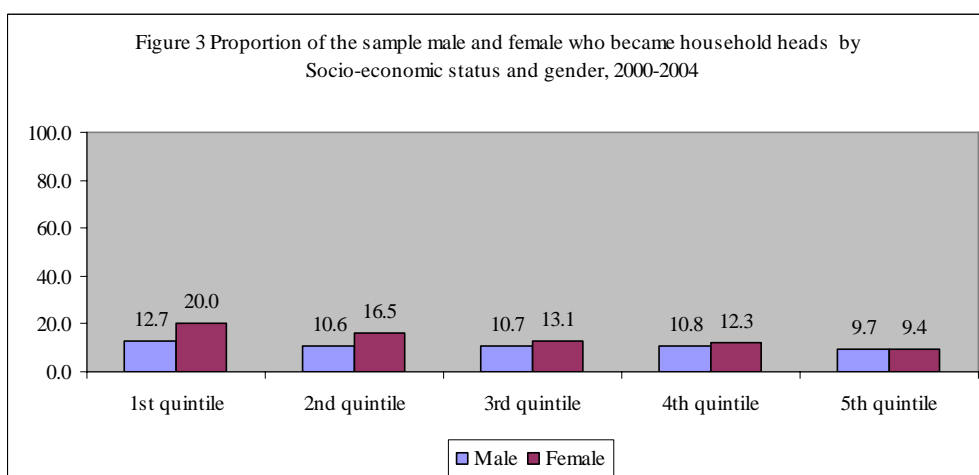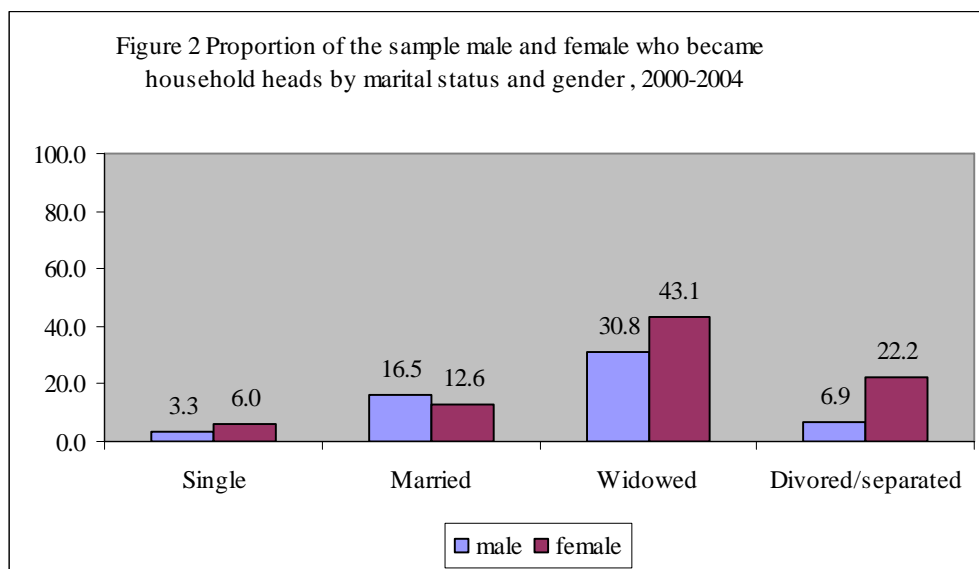

Figure1 Proprtion of the sample male and female who became household heads over the five-year period, 2000-2004

Figure 2 Proportion of the sample male and female who became
household heads by marital status and gender , 2000-2004

	Single	Married	Widowed	Divored/separated
male	3.3	16.5	30.8	6.9
female	6.0	12.6	43.1	22.2

Figure 3 Proportion of the sample male and female who became household heads by
Socio-economic status and gender, 2000-2004

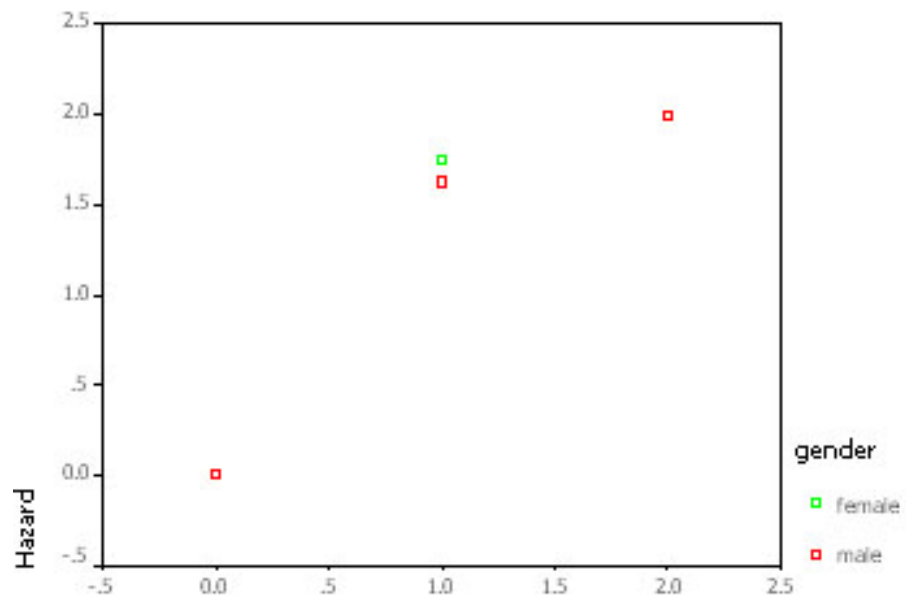|	1st quintile	2nd quintile	3rd quintile	4th quintile	5th quintile
Male	12.7	10.6	10.7	10.8	9.7
Female	20.0	16.5	13.1	12.3	9.4

Figure 4. Hazard Function

Table 1 Discrete time logistic regression of event history analysis determining the effect of gender and other measures

Variables	Model 1 Male and Female		Model 2 Male		Model 3 Female	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Male	-0.195	0.823				
Age at a time of being head	-0.004	0.996	-0.005	0.995	-0.004	0.996
Marital status at a time of being head						
Married ®						
Single	.102	1.108	-0.270	0.764	0.307	1.359
Widowed	.630*	1.877	-0.324	0.724	0.990**	2.690
Divorced/separated	.928*	2.528	-0.829	0.436	1.273**	3.573
Education one year before being head						
Secondary ®						
Not enroll	0.290	1.337	0.537	1.711	0.123	1.131
Primary	0.240	1.272	0.506	1.658	0.070	1.072
Employment status one year before being head						
Unemployed	-0.059	0.943	-0.155	0.857	-0.048	0.953
Relationship to old head of household one year before being head						
Spouse ®						
Son/daughter	-0.093	0.911	-0.089	.915	-0.112	0.894
Others	-0.164	0.848	0.218	1.243	-0.433	0.649
Status of old head of household at a time of being head						
Died ®						
Stay at home	-0.007	0.993	-0.301	0.740	0.236	1.266
Stay away	0.106	1.112	-0.135	0.873	0.363	1.437
Household size at a time of being head	-0.012	0.988	-0.112	0.894	0.012	1.012
Number of person age 15 and above at a time of being head	0.084	1.088	0.161	1.175	0.082	1.086
Number of work contributor at a time of being head	-0.041	0.960	-0.052	0.949	-0.035	0.966
Socioeconomic status one year before being head						
1st quintile ®						
2nd quintile	-0.732**	0.481	-1.256**	0.285	-0.572*	0.564
3rd quintile	-0.474*	0.623	-0.635	0.530	-0.408	0.665
4th quintile	-0.429*	0.651	-0.379	0.685	-0.457*	0.633
5th quintile	-0.425*	0.654	-0.861*	0.423	-0.243	0.784
Geographical area						
Urban/semi urban ®						
Rice field	0.197	1.218	0.237	1.267	0.181	1.198
Plantation	-0.076	0.927	-0.388	0.678	-0.010	0.990
Uplands	0.080	1.083	0.160	1.174	0.043	1.044
Mixed economy	0.032	1.032	0.087	1.090	0.055	1.056
Constant	0.457	1.580	1.103	3.012	-0.066	0.936

** $p<.01$ * $p<.05$

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