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The Relationship Between Women Empowerment and Child Nutrition In Bangladesh

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Introduction



Question

Is there any relationship between female empowerment and child nutrition?

Hypothesis

An increase in female empowerment (measured in 5DE score) might result in decreases in child stunting and children being underweight, and a decrease in female empowerment might lead to increases in child stunting and children being underweight

Methodology

Investigate how changes in average 5DE scores in different divisions of Bangladesh affected the numbers of cases of child stunting and children being underweight

Overall Picture

- Individuals from BIHS_child_2011_15 dataset having ages equal to or below 18 in 2011 and 2015 were inspected for stunting and being underweight. Also, the changes in average 5DE scores for the leading males and females in only their corresponding families were investigated.
- A visual inspection of Figure 1 suggests that females became more empowered on average across all divisions between 2011 and 2015, and the gender parity gap between males and females on average decreased.
- Overall, with the increase of female empowerment, the different types of cases of stunting and being underweight decreased on average across all divisions.

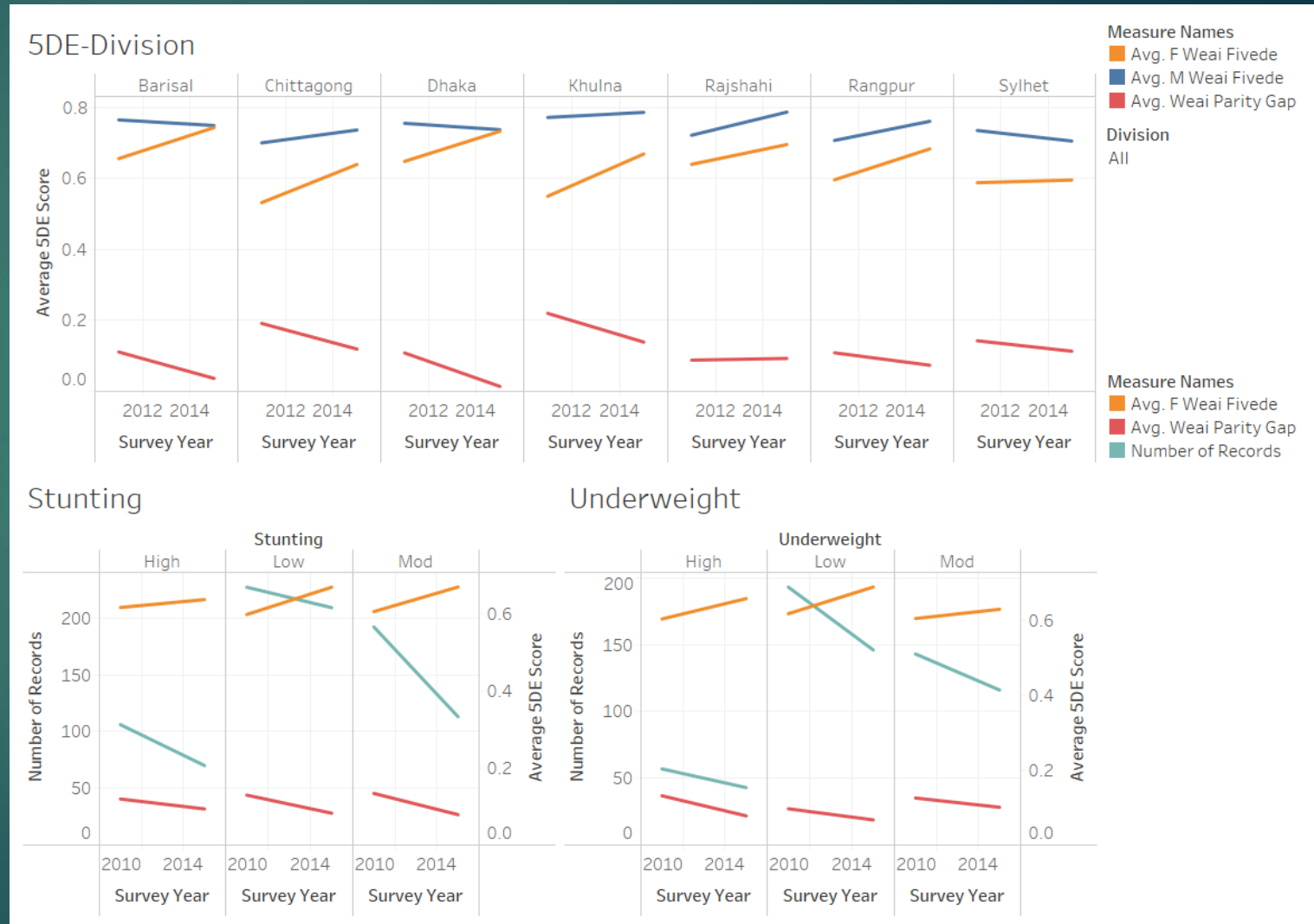


Figure 1: Female empowerment across all divisions and child nutrition indicators

Evidences Supporting the Hypothesis

In divisions like Dhaka and Chittagong, a positive relationship between female empowerment and child nutrition does seem to exist.



Figure 2: Female empowerment in Dhaka division and child nutrition indicators

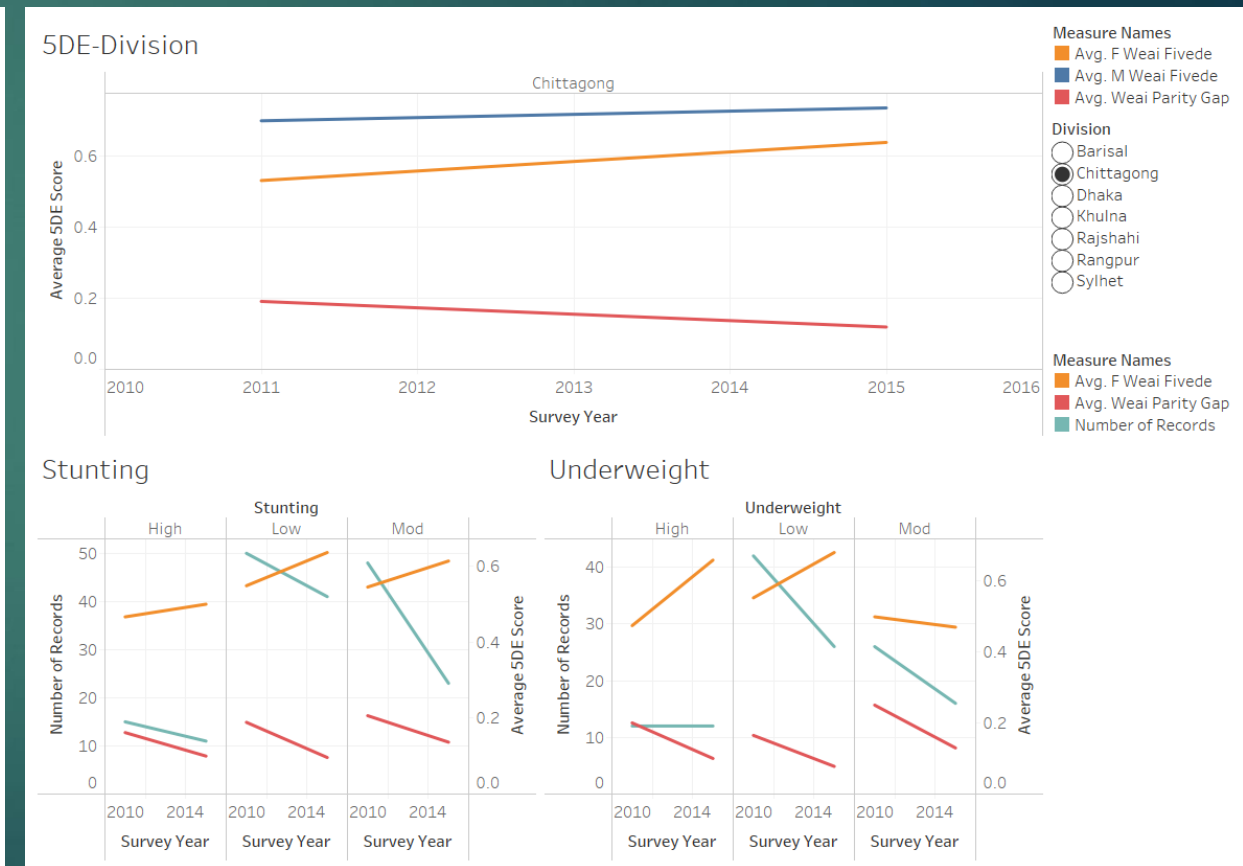


Figure 3: Female empowerment in Chittagong division and child nutrition indicators

Evidences Contradicting the Hypothesis

However, in divisions like Barisal and Rangpur, a positive relationship between female empowerment and child nutrition does not seem to exist as cases of stunting and being underweight generally increased despite more female empowerment. External factors might be responsible for these observations.



Figure 4: Female empowerment in Barisal division and child nutrition indicators



Figure 5: Female empowerment in Rangpur division and child nutrition indicators

Final Thoughts

Since no rigorous statistical analysis was performed in this work, and the relationship between female empowerment and indicators of child nutrition was only studied visually, no definitive conclusion could be made regarding the hypothesis.

However, there seems to be a correlation between female empowerment and improvement in child nutrition in general which I wish to study further later this year.

Reference:

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2016, "Bangladesh Integrated Household Survey (BIHS) 2015", [doi:10.7910/DVN/BXSYEL](https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/BXSYEL), Harvard Dataverse, V1, UNF:6:qJrDU4aGDdueHVTK56HrQ==