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Women's Autonomy on Healthcare Decision Making in Sub-Saharan African Countries: A Synthesis

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ABSTRACT Over the last few decades, despite progress made in improving female's decision-making autonomy, the challenges posed by female's low status in Sub-Saharan African countries (SSA) are still influential research agenda. The aim of this scooping review is to assess the effects of women's autonomy on healthcare decision-making. The researchers did the study based on 15 articles selected from PubMed and Google Scholar. The selection deliberated only those published in the last 15 years, primarily based on nationally representative findings from Sub-Saharan African countries. The selected studies focused on decision-making autonomy on healthcare parameters. All studies reported significant positive impacts of female's decision-making autonomy on children's health, and women's well-being, such as improved children's nutrition, maternal and children's well-being, reduced mortality rate, and health service utilization. However, the impacts were more substantial or visible at the community level than at individual or household levels. The study recommended strengthening womens' involvement in education, promoting peer education, improving husband-wife communication, promoting rural women's participation in economic activities, and owning assets. More importantly, any intervention should focus more on community norms than only individual decision-making per se.