

Measuring Women's Agency in Family Planning Research: A Call to Transform Paradigms

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Objectives

- Outline principles for measuring abstract constructs, like women's agency
- Describe, critique research on women's general agency, contraceptive use
- Present adapted definition of women's **multidimensional agency**
- Share approach to develop, validate measures of women's agency
- Present validated measures of women's general, reproductive agency
- Offer an integrated taxonomy for women's general and SRH agency

Measuring Abstract Constructs

Define



Operationalize



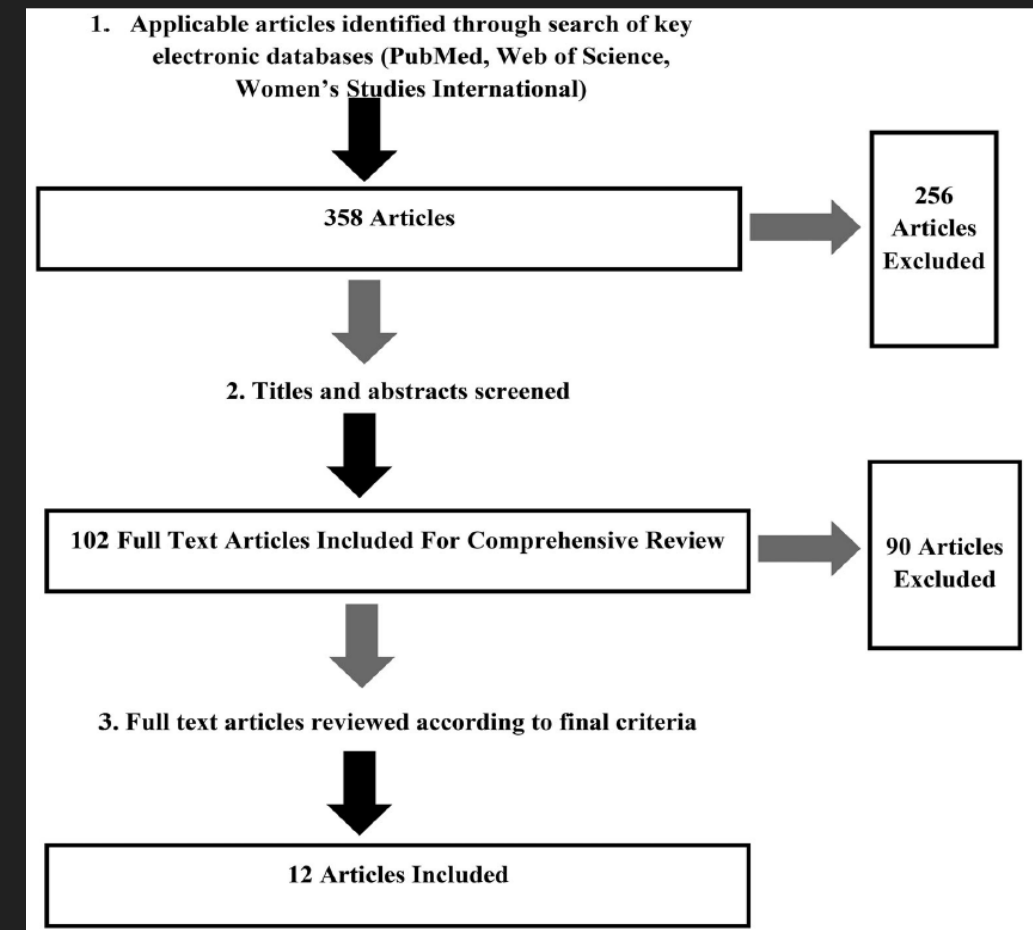
Validate

Women's agency and its relationship to current contraceptive use in lower- and middle-income countries: A systematic review of the literature

Laurie James-Hawkins^a, Courtney Peters^a, Kristin VanderEnde^a, Lauren Bardin^a and Kathryn M. Yount^b

Inclusion Criteria

- Jan. 1980 to Sept. 2014
- English, Spanish peer-reviewed
- Women 15-49 years
- Low, Middle Income Countries (WB)
- Quantitative or mixed-methods
- Population-based
- Agency defined as FM and/or DM
- 'Modern' (WHO) or specific methods
- Current contraceptive use



Key Findings from Review

Author	Year	Income	Region	Data	STROBE	Framework	Term	Agency	# Items	Measure	C Method	Findings
Ahmed	2010	MC	MC	DHS	L	GEN	EMP	C	5	1S	GM	+
Bogale	2011	L	SSA	P	M	CU	DMP	DM	3	2S	GM	N,M
Corroon	2014	LM	SSA	OS	H	--	EMP	DM,FM	4,4	2L	SM	+,+
Deb	2011	L	SA	DHS	L	--	EMP	C	7	1S	V	M
Do	2012	MC	MC	DHS	H	EMP/CU	EMP	DM,FM,C	1,1	2D	SM	M
Dwivedi	2008	LM	SA	DHS	M	--	AUT	DM,FM	4,2	2S	V	N,N
Govin.	1996	LM	ME	DHS	M	EMP/CU	HHP	DM,FM	1,2	1D,1S	GM	N,+
Gunth.	2008	LM	SA	DHS	L	--	AUT	C	6	1S	V	M
Hindin	2000	L	SSA	DHS	L	EMP/CU	AUT	DM	3	1D	GM	N
Hogan	1999	L	SSA	OS	M	CU	AUT	DM	5	1PCA	V	M
Jejeebhoy	2002	LM	SA	OS	H	EMP	AUT	DM,FM	3,5	2S	V	N,N
Mahmood	1996	LM	SA	DHS	M	EMP/CU	AUT	FM	1	1D	V	+

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Measures of Women's SRH Agency

Name	Focus on agency in:	# Factors	# Items	CI	ER	α	Load	CV	PV	TR	REP
Sexual Pressure Scale SPS (1)	sexual activity	5	19	X	X	.63-.82	$\geq .50$	X	X		
SPSW-R (2)	sexual activity	4	18			.76-.85 .76-.88	$\geq .55$ $\geq .38$	X X	X --		(X)
Sexual Assertiveness Scale (3)	sexual activity	3	18			.78-.82 .76-.85	$\geq .62$ $\geq .62$	X		X	(X)
Sexual Relationship Power Scale (4)	HIV-risk, condom use	2	23	X	X	.63-.85	$\geq .30$	X	X		X
SRPS-M (5)	HIV-risk	2	19	X	X	.57-.85	$\geq .30$	X	X		X
Repro Autonomy Scale (6)	preventing pregnancy	3	14	X	X	.65-.82	$\geq .63$		X		
Repro Empowerment Scale (7)	using contraception	5	20			.87	?		X		
SR Empowerment Scale (8)	adolescent SRH	7	23	X	X	.71-.84	$\geq .54$	X	X		
Pregnancy-Related Emp Scale (9)	pregnancy	4	16	X	X	.94	$\geq .42$				X
Emp. Scale for Pregnant Women (10)	pregnancy	5	27	X	X	.67-.80	$\geq .34$	X			

(1) Jones 2006; (2) Jones (2009); (3) Morokoff et al. 1997; (4) Pulerwitz et al. (2000); (5) Pulerwitz et al. (2002); (6) Upadhyay et al. (2014); (7) Mandal et al. 2020; (8) Upadhyay et al. (2020); (9) Klima (2015); (10) Kameda et al. (2008)

Importance of Replication

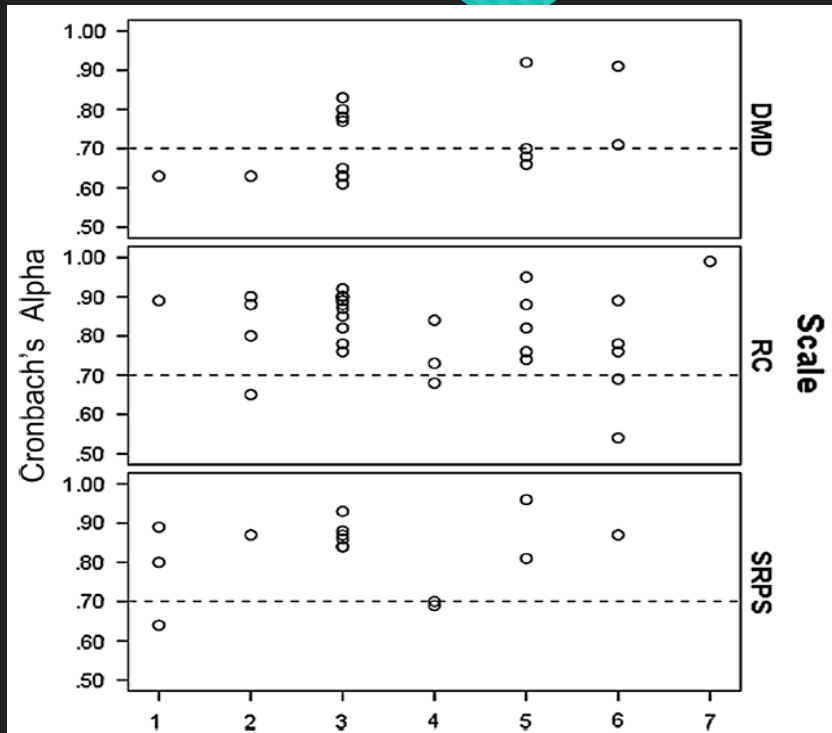


Fig. 1 Distribution of reported Cronbach's alpha by population and scale. 1=US African American females; 2 = US Latina females; 3=US multiple-race/ethnicity females; 4=South African females; 5=International female samples/other; 6=males; 7=heterosexual couples

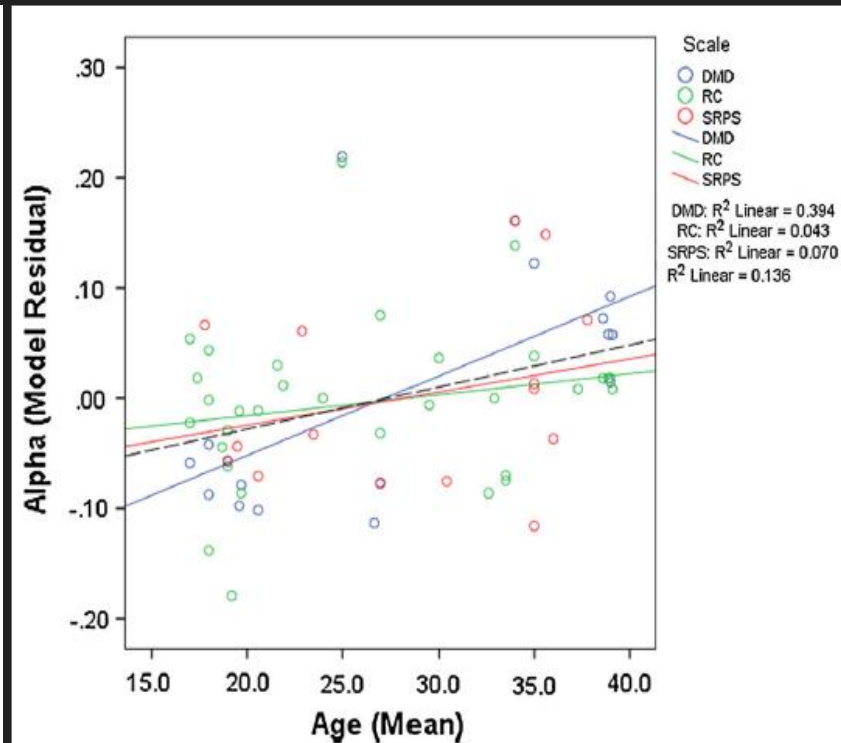


Fig. 2 Scatter plot of relationship between mean sample age and alpha, after adjusting for population type, number of items per scale, and scale modifications

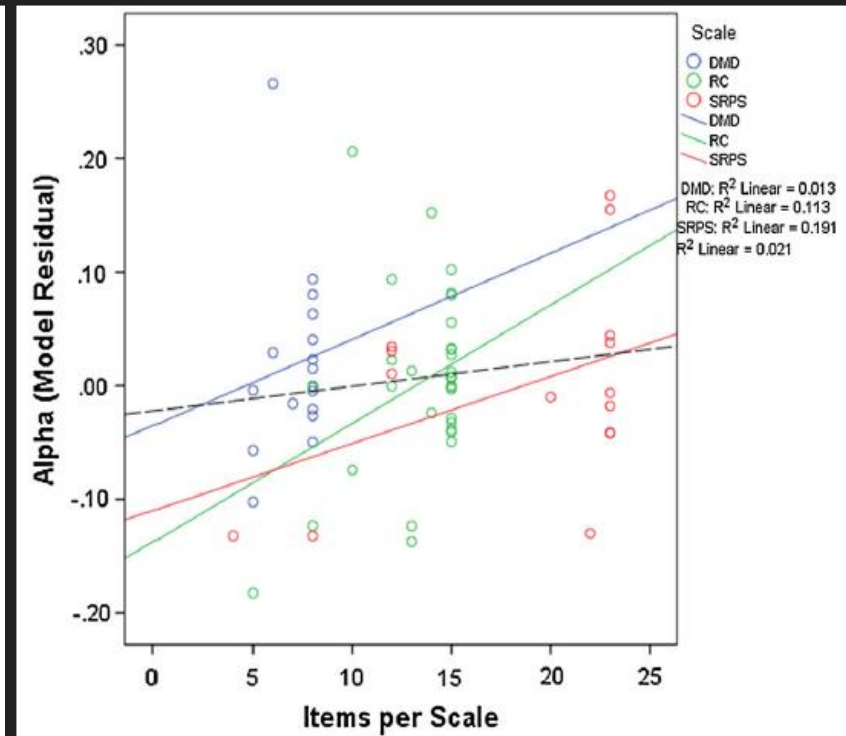


Fig. 3 Scatter plot of relationship between number of items per scale and alpha, after adjusting for population type, mean age of sample, and scale modifications

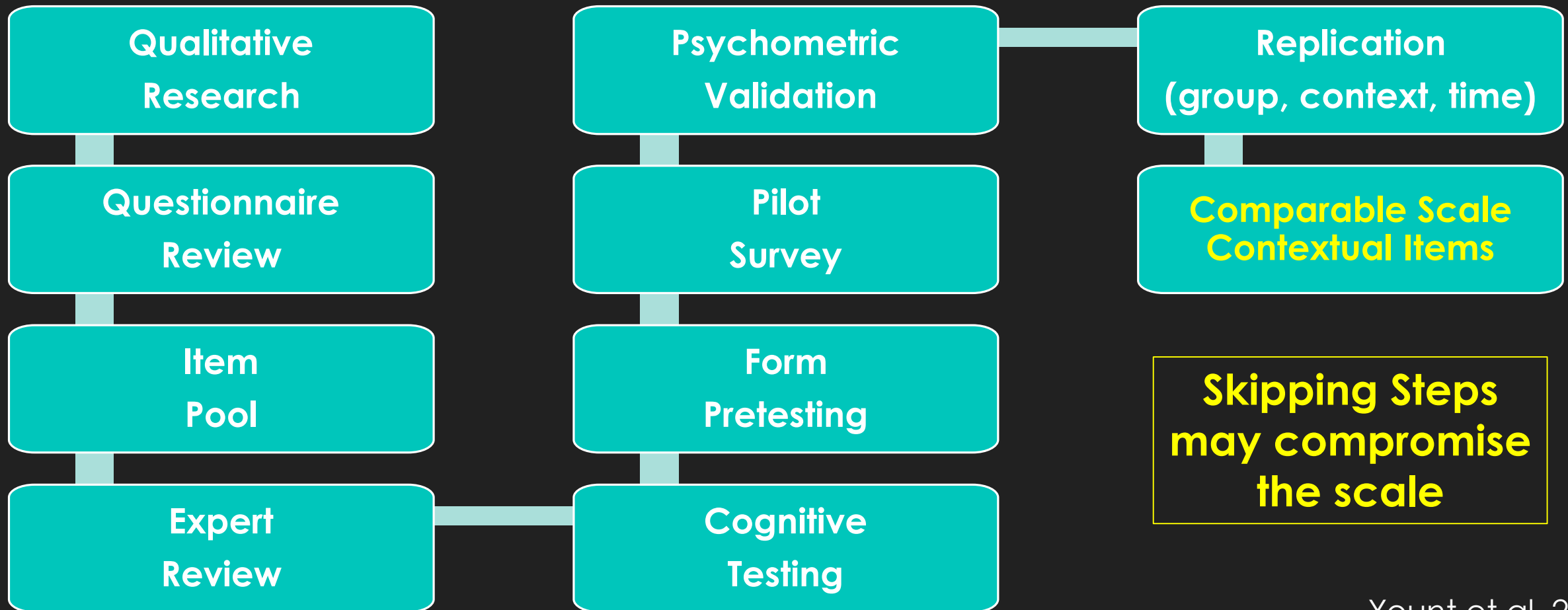
Implications

We lack a comprehensive measure of women's sexual and reproductive health agency that is consistently defined, operationalized, and validated across groups, contexts, and time

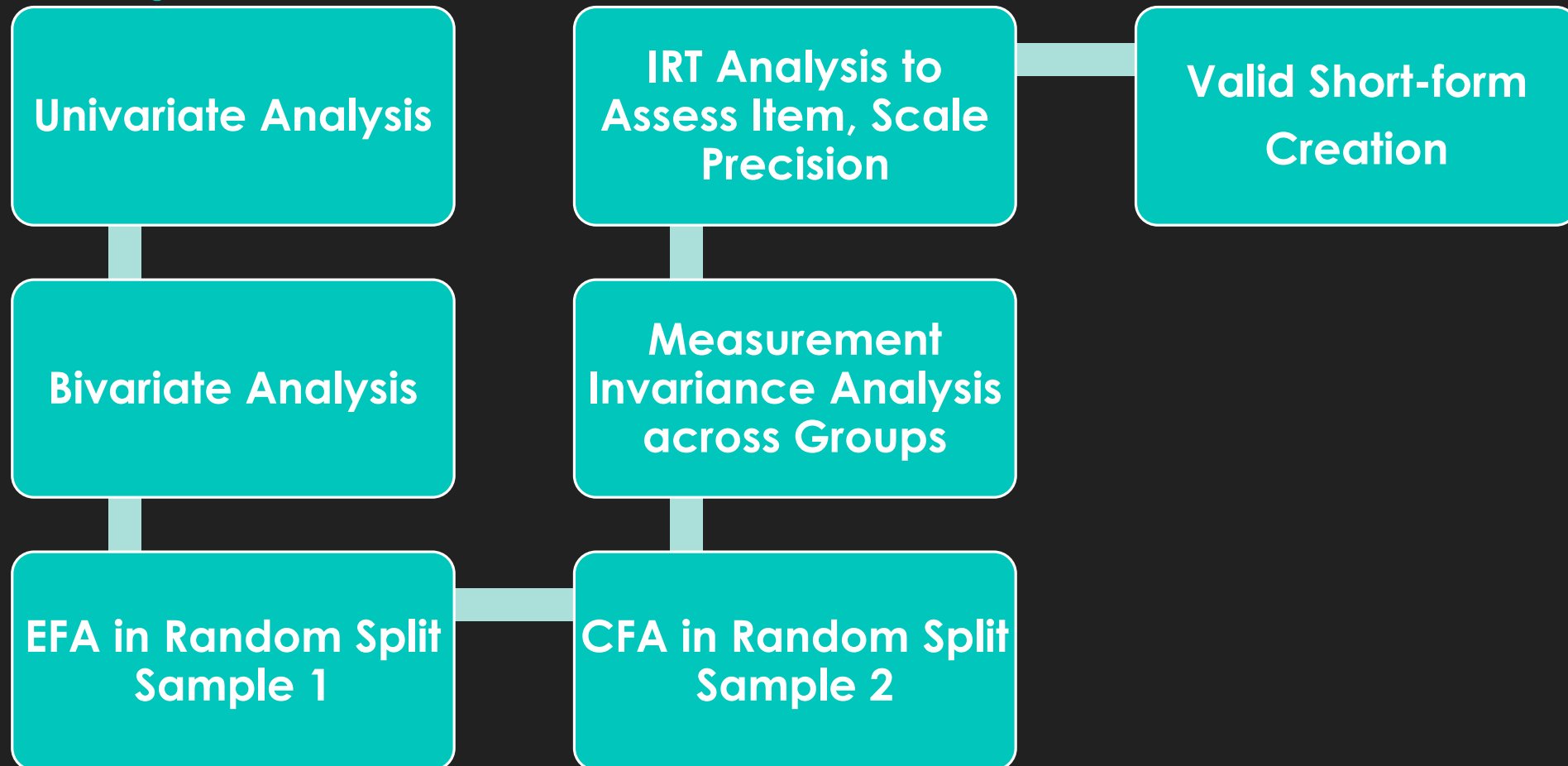
Women's Empowerment: Agency

- Process of conscientization whereby women—individually and collectively—**become aware of** and **act to overcome** their disempowerment. Three dimensions:
- **Intrinsic agency** (state of mind): awareness of rights and aspirations, confidence in capabilities, internal motivation to act
- **Instrumental agency** (strategic action): exercising voice, influencing decisions, moving freely in historically restricted spaces
- **Collective agency** (connection, joint efficacy, joint action): engaging in, leading groups, networks with shared goals; confidence in group's, network's ability to act jointly; joint action in pursuit of shared goals to affect change

Sequential, Mixed-Methods Process to Develop Women's Agency Scales



Steps in Psychometric Validation



Women's Agency Scale 61 (WAS-61)

Dimension	# factors	# items per factor	CFA Loadings	RMSEA (95%CI)	CFI	TLI
Intrinsic: <i>awareness of gender rights, confidence in voice, confidence in movement outside home</i>	3	29 (9, 14, 6)	F1: .54-.81 F2: .35-.82 F3: .87-.93	.04 (.04, .05)	.94	.93
Instrumental: <i>use of financial services, frequency of voice w/husband, frequency of voice/mvmt outside home</i>	3	17 (5, 3, 9)	F1: .57-.95 F2: .48-.99 F3: .43-.79	.05 (.04, .06)	.94	.93
Collective: <i>Leadership of others, influence in community</i>	2	14 (7, 7)	.52-.84 .54-.83	.10 (.08, .12) .10 (.08, .12)	.97 .96	.96 .95

Reproductive Agency Scale 17 (RAS-17)

Dimension	# items	EFA loadings (n ₁ =342)	CFA loadings (n ₂ =342)
Intrinsic: awareness of economic rights	5	.40-.81	.44-.84
Instrumental: influence in personal, family decisions	5	.32-.88	.47-.96
Instrumental: freedom of movement	7	.47-.84	.50-.83
RMSEA		.06	.06
CFI		.95	.95
TLI		.93	.95

Scale partially measurement invariant across Qatari and non-Qatari Arab women

Women's General & SRH-Specific Agency

	Women's General Agency	Women's SRH* Agency
Intrinsic (state of mind)	• awareness of rights, aspirations • confidence in capabilities • internal motivation to pursue rts, aspirations	• awareness of SRH rights, aspirations • confidence in SRH capabilities • internal motivation to pursue SRH rts, aspirations
Instrumental (strategic action)	• exercise voice w/others • influence decisions • move freely in historically restricted spaces	• exercise voice w/others on SRH • influence decisions on SRH • move freely in historically restricted spaces to access SRH services
Collective (connection, joint efficacy / action)	• engage in, lead groups, networks with shared goals • confidence in group's, network's ability to act on shared goals • joint action in pursuit of shared goals to affect change	• engage, lead groups, networks with shared SRH goals • confidence in group's, network's ability to act on shared SRH goals • joint action in pursuit of shared goals to affect SRH change

*Sexual activity, STI/HIV prevention, pregnancy prevention, contraceptive use, pregnancy (adolescent SRH)

Citations and URLs for the WAS-61 and RAS-17

- **WAS-61:** Yount, Kathryn M. and Khan, Zara and Miedema, Stephanie and Cheong, Yuk Fai and Naved, Ruchira T., The Women's Agency Scale 61 (Was-61): A Comprehensive Measure of Women's Intrinsic, Instrumental, and Collective Agency (August 9, 2020). Available at SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3670180
- **RAS-17:** Yount, K. M., James-Hawkins, L., & Rahim, H. F. A. (2020). The Reproductive Agency Scale (RAS-17): development and validation in a cross-sectional study of pregnant Qatari and non-Qatari Arab Women. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 20(1), 1-15.
<https://bmcpregnancychildbirth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12884-020-03205-2>

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EXTRA SLIDES

Women's Empowerment: *Claims on Resources*

- Preconditions for women's agency include **claims on enabling resources**
 - **Human resources**: schooling or skills-based training
 - **Economic resources**: work, income, property, other assets
 - **Social resources**: non-familial networks of solidarity and support
- **Claims on resources** differs from **access to resources**

Critique of Women's Agency, FP Use Research

- Some evidence of association between women's agency and FP use **BUT:**
 - Definitions of women's agency are **vague and variable**
 - Studies include **selective** dimensions of women's agency
 - Measures of women's agency are **varied and not validated**
 - Research has **geographic gaps**, limiting generalization
 - **A valid, general measure of women's multidimensional agency is needed**

Measuring Women's General and SRC Agency

- Generate clear definitions of women's intrinsic, instrumental agency
- Develop item pool (questionnaire review, qualitative research)
- Test item pool with expert reviews and cognitive interviews
- Conduct pilot surveys in 3–4 countries (two waves)
- Validate WSRC Agency Scale across groups, contexts, and time

Other Scales Developed and Validated

- Attitudes about IPV Scale (ATT-IPV) Yount et al. 2016
- Attitudes about Recourse Scale (ATT-RECOURSE) Yount et al. 2016
- Women's Agency Scale LFPS [WAS-LFPS] Yount et al. 2016
Cheong et al. 2017
- Women's Empowerment DHS [WE-DHS] Miedema et al. 2018
- Reproductive Agency Scale 17 (RAS-17) Yount et al. 2020
- Economic Coercion Scales (ECS-36; ECS-20) Yount et al. 2020
Miedema et al. 2020
- Sexual Harassment Scale 22 (SHS-22) Spencer et al. 2020
- Grp/Network Collective Agency 23 (GCA-23/NCA-23) Yount et al. nd
- Time Agency (TA) Sinharoy et al. nd