Measurement of violence against women and girls: key guidance, advances and challenges

Heidi Stöckl, Abigail Hatcher, Sarah Meyer and Lynnmarie Sardinha
• Key concepts (definitions, best-practice measures, data availability, other forms of VAW)

• Exercise 1

• NETWORKING BREAK

• Challenges in measuring VAW (sampling, partnership, age-groups, inclusion/exclusion criteria)

• Data quality and implementation issues (interviewer training, mode of interview, violence specific studies)

• Exercise 2

• NETWORKING BREAK

• Male studies (available tools, special considerations)

• Exercise 3
Aims and objectives

- to introduce participants to key challenges in measuring VAWG
- to enable participants to be critical consumers of data
- to provide guidance to participants planning to design and conduct their own studies on VAWG
Additional objectives

- Strengthen ethical thinking
- Integrate data equity awareness
- Promote querying and questioning
- Networking opportunity
Key concepts

‘Violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately’
CEDAW 1979

What constitutes violence against women and girls
‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life’
UN Declaration on VAW
Focus on harm →

• not only focused on physical or sexual acts of violence
• can includes psychological abuse, economic abuse, controlling behaviour in relationships
• also encompasses structural violence

Operationaliation of the terms →

• What is measurable
• Sustainable development goals put equal importance on psychological abuse, non-partner sexual violence, FGM and human trafficking
SDG Targets

5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age

5.2.2: Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18

5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
Why definitions play a role for measurement, e.g. example of femicide

‘Femicide is generally understood to involve intentional murder of women because they are women, but broader definitions include any killings of women or girls.’ (WHO Factsheet)

- Crime statistics measure the number of murdered women
- Some include information on the victim-perpetrator relationship
- Few crime statistics have data on motives

→ When we measure femicide we measure the number of murdered women or the number of women murdered by their partner in most cases
Widely used measures to capture violence against women and girls

- Developed with global experts in the field
- Extensively tested in multiple settings
- Generally agreed on items
World Health Organisation Multi-Country Study tool (WHO MCS)

Physical violence
- Slapped her threw something at her that could hurt her
- Pushed her or shoved her
- Hit her with a fist of something else that could hurt her
- Kicked, dragged or beat her up
- Choked or burnt her on purpose
- Threatened her with or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon against her

Sexual violence
- Physically forced to have intercourse when the person did not want to
- Forced to do something sexual that was found degrading or humiliating
- Had unwanted sexual intercourse because the person was afraid of something he might do?

Asking if experienced ever in the lifetime.
If yes, if experienced in the last 12 months
If yes: once, sometimes, often
Demographic and Health Survey Module on Domestic Violence

Very similar set up to the WHO Multi-country tool, although slightly more limited in respect to sexual intimate partner violence

j) force you with threats or in any other way to perform sexual acts you did not want to?
WHO MCS and DHS

- DHS and WHO MCS have also questions on controlling behaviour and emotional abuse
- Different time frames are normally not used
- Items have been added in the past
- Each type of IPV is often coded as yes (a woman experienced IPV) if she responds yes to any of the acts
- Often physical and/or sexual IPV are given as a result
- Different types of severity can be considered

Don’t:
- Change or remove items.
- Be careful when adding items
- Change the order of items and modules
Female genital mutilation and early marriage - DHS

Early/very early marriage:
- Check what age you want to investigate
- Be aware that women might not be married for the first time = know your sample

Female genital mutilation
- Know what you want to measure – Types or only circumcision
- Also inquire about their own children/siblings/parents
Non-partner sexual violence - DHS

ISSUES:

• NPSV questions often include and do not differentiate between childhood sexual abuse and adult NPSV

• NPSV questions beyond the DHS are less standardized than physical IPV questions

• Some focus on rape or attempted rape, while others include forms of sexual harassment
What to do when you want to measure forms of VAWG for which there are no widely used tools

Examine the measures that are out there
• Do they ask what you want to know?
• Where have they been tested and among whom?
• What theoretical construct underlies them?
• What does your team say?
Conduct a systematic review, e.g. sexual harassment

What did we find:
- Setting specific measurement tools, e.g. workplace
- Studies had unclear definitions of sexual harassment
- Did not deploy validated measurement tools
- Measurements included direct questions „Have you been sexually harassed?“ or a series of behavioural acts (e.g. Sexual Experiences questionnaire)

Example: Tanzania young men data (1002 young men, cross-sectional survey)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever made sexist jokes or offensive comments to a woman at work, school</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever given a woman at work, school or public place unwanted sexual attention</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever touched a woman at work, school or in public inappropriately against her will</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever pressured a woman at work, school or in public into unwanted sexual acts</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever sexually harassed a woman</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Look for systematic reviews and published papers, example technological IPV

Cyber violence: What do we know and where do we go from here?

Jillian K. Peterson
Hamline University, jpeterson68@hamline.edu

James Denisky
Metropolitan State University

Not so useful
Only descriptions without details

Examine the measures: Are they useful?

- Do they ask what you want to know?
- Where have they been tested and among whom?
- What theoretical construct underlies them?
- What does your team say?
Pre-testing not widely used tools
- The purpose of a pre-test

The comprehensibility of the questions
Difficulties that respondents have with their task
Respondents interest in, and attention to, individual questions
Respondent well-being
Frequency distributions of the responses

Context effects
Interviewer problems
Technical problems with the questionnaire and with the interview aids
The duration of the interview/questionnaire completion
Example for tool adaptation based on quantitative pre-post studies and participants debriefing

Adaptation and psychometric properties of the ISPCAN Child Abuse Screening Tool for use in trials (ICAST-Trial) among South African adolescents and their primary caregivers

Franziska Meinck\textsuperscript{a,b,e}, Mark E. Boyes\textsuperscript{c}, Lucie Cluver\textsuperscript{a,d}, Catherine L. Ward\textsuperscript{e}, Peter Schmidt\textsuperscript{f}, Sachin DeStone\textsuperscript{g}, Michael P. Dunne\textsuperscript{h}

\textbf{Item-response.} Questions about severe child abuse such as choking, burning, chaining or smothering had very low item-response rates in this study (\(<\ 2\)). They constitute types of abuse which are rare and very severe and it might not be necessary to include them in tools to measure common types of parental and peer-related maltreatment. One item focused on pulling hair elicited no response. Pulling hair is uncommon in South Africa as most African children have very short hair. These items were therefore removed from further versions of the questionnaire. Item-response rates for all other questions were non-normally distributed and zero inflated.

\rightarrow Local adaptations are needed

\rightarrow In case of low response rates for certain items, once can consider dropping them in case of insufficient space
What we want to avoid

THE RESULTS MAKE NO SENSE. WE WILL HAVE TO RESORT TO STATISTICAL ANALYSIS.
Quantitative types of data on VAWG

• National representative data/population based survey data
• Police/criminal justice data
• Social service / hotline data
• Health service / hospital data
Same issue- different data, example of COVID-19

Health service data

Police data

Think about who is and is not captured in this type of data collection. What does this mean for data interpretation?
Not all forms of VAWG are the same – differences between domestic abuse versus sexual assault crime calls

**Fig. 4. Police-recorded domestic abuse calls in Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), weekly trends 2019 and 2020**

**Fig. 9. Police-recorded sexual assault crimes in England and Wales (United Kingdom), monthly trends 2019 and 2020**

Source: Police Service of Northern Ireland, 2021 (34).

Source: Office for National Statistics (37).
Caution of generalizations

Rates of VAWG vary widely between regions and within countries

Regional variations in prevalence rates in the 2015 Tanzanian and 2015 Afghanistan Final Report of the DHS
Data availability

WHO Database

https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en
Exercise 1

Compare the two prevalence estimates provided from two representative prevalence surveys conducted in the same year in the same country (Cambodia and Bhutan)

• How could the differences in prevalence rates be explained?

• What information about the surveys would you like to know?
Challenges in measuring and reporting of violence against women
Implementation issues - training

• Interviewer recruitment

• Training
  • overcoming biases and fears
  • perceptions of violence against women

• Ongoing debriefing and support
Mode of interview administration

- Face to face vs. anonymised forms of data collection
- Protecting anonymity in context of sensitive issues vs. building rapport and supporting disclosure
- Evidence does not definitively indicate which modes result in more valid estimates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EU Member State</th>
<th>Method of first contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BE</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CY</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CZ</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FI</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FR</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HU</td>
<td>Visit</td>
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<td>Visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>LT</td>
<td>Visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>LU</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LV</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL unweighted</td>
<td>42,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>77,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FRA, Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, 2012
Walby et al 2017 show that there is a significant association between mode of contact and prevalence rates.
### Different survey modes

**2003 German Violence against women survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gewaltformen</th>
<th>Betroffenheit durch Gewalt – verschiedene Täter-Opfer-Kontexte</th>
<th>Betroffenheit durch Gewalt in Paarbeziehungen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% aller Befragten</td>
<td>% aller Frauen, die aktuell oder früher von Partnern mit Gewalt belegt hatten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nach Angaben im mündlichen und/oder schriftlichen Fragebogen</td>
<td>Nur nach Angaben im mündlichen Fragebogen 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nur nach Angaben im schriftlichen Fragebogen 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Körperliche Gewalt</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuelle Gewalt</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Körperliche oder sexuelle</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Oral questionnaire**

**Written questionnaire**
Dedicated surveys vs. violence module

- Differing objectives
- Focus of training and skills of interviewers
- Scope for in-depth investigation of risk and protective factors, health impacts
Types of data

Please read the brief description of your data and answer the following questions:

• How does this data compare to national prevalence data?
• What are the strengths and limitations of these data?
• Who and for what purposes would these data be useful for?
• What further information would you want to know about the data?
WHY DO SOME MEN USE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND HOW CAN WE PREVENT IT?

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS MULTI-COUNTRY STUDY ON MEN AND VIOLENCE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV (2013)
How many times have you ever slapped a partner or thrown something at her that could hurt her?

**NEVER, ONCE, FEW, MANY**

UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV (2013)

Has your current husband/partner, or any other partner ever slapped you or thrown something at you that could hurt you?

**YES, NO**

WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women, 20 September 2003
Perpetration studies

- How to handle IPV perpetration disclosure
- Ethical challenges
- Referrals
Exercise 3

Pulling this guidance together

Consider options for your project and setting
Make strategic decisions
Gain input from workshop facilitators
GOAL of project

- To document violence levels for a program
- To study violence in an observational study, or a longitudinal cohort, or a trial
- To determine prevalence rates in a country, for community-level needs assessment

Non-representative is ok       Non-representative might be ok       Population-level household data best
WHO will you be asking these questions of:

age range

geographic region

gender, sexual identity

random vs convenience

perpetration?
Ethical plans
- Train staff to collect data
- Full ethical protocol review
- Data Safety & Monitoring Board

Data quality
- Logic checks
- Quality Assurance / Quality Control
- Test-retest or similar method
Measure selection

- Previously tested
- Validated in peer review
- Psychometrics published

Measures are known  Measures are replicable  Measures are gold-standard
Translation/Adaptation

- Local languages
- Validated translation
- Cognitive interviews

Measures are understood  Measures are validated  Measures are gold-standard
Time-frame

- Consistent time-frame
  - (e.g. past year)

Timing is clear

- Timing can be compared to similar studies elsewhere

Test-retest in full pilot

- Responses at distinct time-points are consistent
Well-established measures
GUIDANCE: Return to original source and use their protocols and wording

Physical IPV
How many times has your partner ever:
1. slapped or thrown something
2. pushed or shoved
3. hit with a fist
4. kicked, dragged, beaten, choked, burned
5. threatened to use or actually used a gun, knife, or other weapon
NEVER, ONCE, FEW, MANY
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/924159358X

Sexual IPV
How many times has your partner ever forced you to:
1. have sex when you did not want to
2. have sex because you were afraid of what might happen if you said no
3. do something else sexual
NEVER, ONCE, FEW, MANY
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/924159358X

Psychological IPV
How many times has your partner ever:
1. insulted you
2. belittled or humiliated in front of others
3. scared or intimidated you on purpose
4. threatened to hurt someone you care about
NEVER, ONCE, FEW, MANY TIMES
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/924159358X
Often-utilized measures
GUIDANCE: Return to original source and consider alongside other tools

Controlling behaviors

How many times has your partner ever:
1. tried to keep you from seeing friends
2. restricted contact with family of birth
3. insisted on knowing where you are
4. ignored or treated indifferently
5. got angry if you spoke to another man
6. suspicious you were unfaithful
NEVER, ONCE, FEW, MANY TIMES

https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/924159358X

Childhood violence

When you were growing up, before 18, did any parent, guardian, or caregiver ever:
1. spank, slap, kick, punch or beat you
2. abandon you or throw you out of the house
3. hit or cut you with an object
4. touch or fondle you in a sexual way
5. have sex when you did not want to
NEVER, ONCE, FEW, MANY TIMES

https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/adverse-childhood-experiences-international-questionnaire-ace-iq
Emerging / shifting measures
GUIDANCE: Return to original source and consider - perhaps use cautiously

Financial IPV

1. prohibited you from earning money
2. took earnings or savings against your will
3. refused to give money for household when he had money for other things
4. threw you out of home

NEVER, ONCE, FEW, MANY

www.svri.org/documents/unmc-study-men-and-violence-questionnaires

Tech IPV

1. Left threatening posts
2. Uploaded illicit photos without permission
3. Hacked your social media accounts
4. Posted to embarass, shame, or harass
5. Pressured you to share sexual images
6. Used technology to control your movement
7. Impersonated you online

Glass et al. (2022) Journal of Interpersonal Violence
Thank you all for coming