Defining and operationalising partner violence
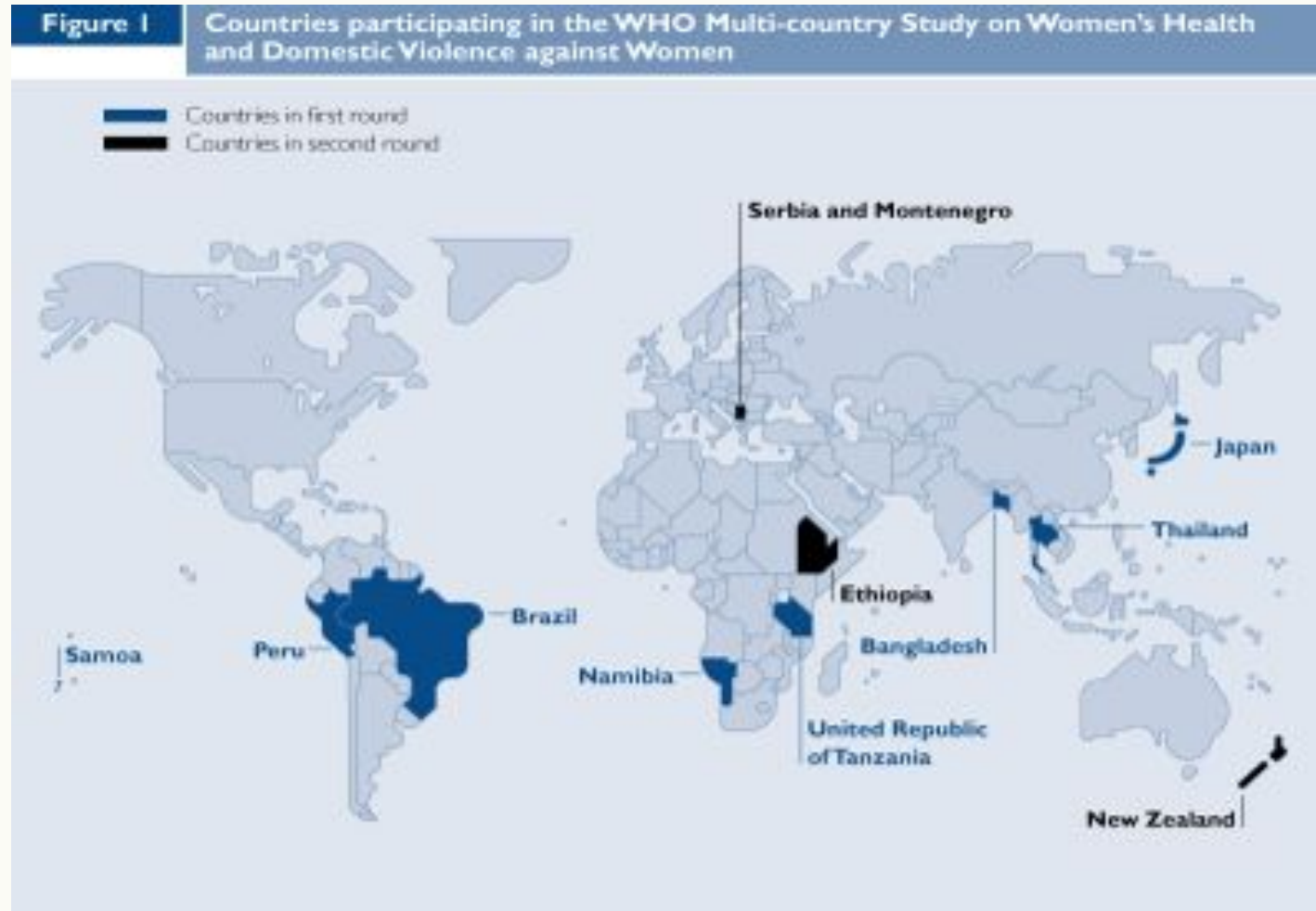
STRIVE Learning Lab

May 21, 2013

Researching violence against women
Global lessons learned

- It is possible to research violence against women in combining scientific rigor and attention to ethical issues

- Women are willing to talk about violence if asked in a private setting by a trained and empathetic interviewer

- Both dedicated research and efforts to integrate violence as a covariate in other studies can provide important evidence for policymakers

Source: Ellsberg and Heise, 2005; UN Secretary General's report on VAW; background paper on measurement;   Walby, 2007

Global study with interviews with 24 000 women in 10 countries

Figure 1 Countries participating in the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women

Countries in first round
Countries in second round

Serbia and Montenegro
Japan
Thailand
Brazil
Samoa
Peru
Namibia
Ethiopia
Bangladesh
United Republic of Tanzania
New Zealand

same
gender violence and health centre

WHO ethical guidelines for violence research

- Concern for respondent and interviewer safety should guide all project decisions

  - Special training and emotional follow-up for interviewers

  - Crisis intervention and referrals to specialized services for women being beaten

  - Interview only one woman per household

  - Dummy questionnaires; strategies to guarantee privacy

- Feed back of results to communities

Challenge 1: Disclosure

- Easier to get accurate reporting in face to face interviews for physical violence vs. sexual violence

- Shame makes sexual abuse in childhood especially difficult to measure

- Methodological innovations – ACASI, anonymous picture codes – have improved rates of disclosure

- Systematic review demonstrates ACASI far superior to FTF for encouraging disclosure of sexual behaviour in low income settings

(Langhaug, Sherr, Cowan Trop Med Int Health, 2010)

Additional factors shown to affect rates of disclosure

- Framing of question (crime victimization, family conflict, women's safety)

- Number of opportunities to disclose –some women only disclose late in the interview, once trust has been established

- Wording and ordering of questions

- Degree of privacy achieved

- Level of interviewer skill, empathy and comfort with topic

Source: Ellsberg and Heise, 2005; UN Secretary General's report on VAW;
background paper on measurement;   Jansen et al. 2004: Saltzman 2004.

same
gender violence and health centre

Challenge 2:
Conceptions of violence vary

- Child sexual abuse

    - All sexual contact before [what age]?

    - Coerced sexual contact with someone older [how much older?]

    - Narrow or expansive definition (penetrative? touching only? porn?)

- Partner violence

    - Respondent vs. violence focused

    Described from the perspective of the victim's experience versus the type of violence (e.g. physical, sexual, emotional)

    - Pattern versus incident focused

    Physical assault versus a pattern of multiple overlapping types and incidents of violence

Partner violence: key conceptual & definitional issues

- Should IPV be defined narrowly (to correspond more easily to crime-based definitions) or expansively to correspond to broader range of abusive practices (e.g. financial abuse, controlling behaviour, psychological abuse)?

- Should we capture all incidents or focus more on those patterns of behaviour that more closely resemble people's notions of "violence and abuse"

- Does the motivation of the behaviour matter? (instrumental violence, coercive control, anger/conflict?)

- Are we comfortable that our approaches and questions work equally well if applied to male as well as female victims?

Evolution in measuring partner violence

- 1980s: simple "gateway questions" – Have you ever been raped? Does your husband beat or otherwise abuse you?

- 1990s: Introduction of "act-based" survey instruments such as the CTS and WHO instrument

- On-going debates

  - How fundamental is "coercive control" to the phenomenon of partner violence?

  - is partner violence a unitary phenomenon or are there different "types" of abuse with different underlying risk profiles and trajectories?

Act-based approaches to measuring IPV

- Advantages:
  - Allows comparison across settings
  - Gives multiple opportunities to respond
  - Does not require respondents to self-label as "abused"
  - Facilitates estimation of the frequency and prevalence of different types of abuse (e.g. stalking, sexual assault, etc)
  - Parallels "act-based" structure of most laws against violence

same
gender violence and health centre

Attitudes and skills of interviewers has large effect on prevalence estimates

- Ellsberg (1998) achieved much higher rates of disclosure in Nicaragua, using WHO training and ethical precautions, compared to DHS.

- During WHO study in Serbia, president was killed and study hired cadre of extra professional interviewers to speed completion of the study prior to elections.

- Despite having no prior experience with interviewing, the study-trained interviewers obtained a significantly higher response rate (93% vs. 86%; p <.0001) and a significantly higher disclosure rate for partner violence (26% vs. 21%; p<.05) than did the professional interviewers (Jansen, Watts et al. 2004).

Limitations of act-based approaches

- De-contextualizes event – fails to attend to meaning, motivation or consequence.

- Tends to treat all acts as "equal" (although some scales like CTS do rank acts by an implied severity)

- Tends to generate spurious gender symmetry that weakens when the impact of the act is brought into focus

- Pushes researchers toward a "violence focused" perspective versus a woman-focused perspective

  - i.e. we report prevalence by type of violence, even though women tend to experience multiple, overlapping types of violence

- Privileges physical assault because it is easiest to measure and de-emphasizes emotional abuse because it is most difficult to measure and interpret

- Role of coercive control is ambiguous – is it a risk factor or fundamental element of partner violence?

Prevalence measures

- Timing
  - Current (last 12 months)
  - Lifetime (since the age of 15)
- Frequency
  - Once, a few times, many times
    - **OR***
  - Every day or nearly every day, all the time
  - Once or twice a week
  - Once or twice a month
  - Less than once a month

  PROBE: We are interested in separate incidents, not each time each individual act occurred.

Example layout

V04	The next questions are about things that happen to many women and that your (current/most recent) husband/ partner may have done to you. Has your (current or most recent) husband/ partner ever…	A) **(If YES, continue with B. If NO, skip to next item.)**	B) Has this happened **in the past 12 months**? **(If YES, ask C and D. If NO, ask D only.)**	C) **In the past 12 months**, would you say that this has happened once, a few times or many times?	D) Did this happen **before the past 12 months**? IF YES: would you say that this has happened once, a few times or many times?
		YES NO	YES NO	One Few Many	NO One Few Many
	a) Insulted you or made you feel bad about yourself?	1 2	1 2	1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	b) Belittled or humiliated you in front of other people?	1 2	1 2	1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	c) Done things to scare or intimidate you on purpose (e.g. by the way he looked at you, by yelling and smashing things)?	1 2	1 2	1 2 3	0 1 2 3
	d) Verbally threatened to hurt you or someone you care about?	1 2	1 2	1 2 3	0 1 2 3

Measuring physical violence

- Slapped or threw something at that could hurt you?
- Pushed or shoved you or pulled your hair?

Moderate

- Hit with his fist or with anything else that could hurt you?
- Kicked, dragged or beat you up?
- Choked or burnt you on purpose?
- Threatened with or actually used a gun, knife or other weapon against you?

Severe

Emotionally aggressive acts

- Should one act = emotional abuse?
- Intensity of emotional aggression
  - Combination of number of types
  - Frequency (low, few, many)

Site	No emotionally abusive acts	1 to 2 types		3 or more types		Low intensity	High intensity	missing
		Infrequently	Frequently	Infrequently	Frequently			
Bangladesh city	55.6	23.1	4.1	6.0	11.2	23.1	21.3	0.0
Bangladesh province	69.1	15.7	3.6	6.9	4.7	15.7	15.2	0.0
Brazil city	58.2	21.3	3.8	5.0	11.7	21.3	20.5	0.1
Brazil province	51.2	21.3	6.0	6.3	15.2	21.3	27.5	0.1
japan city	64.8	28	3.0	1.7	1.6	28	6.3	1.0
namibia city	65.9	19.4	2.6	5.2	5.5	19.4	13.3	1.4
peru city	42.0	33.3	5.2	8.5	10.5	33.3	24.2	0.5
peru province	31.5	34.3	9.5	7.6	16.9	34.3	34.0	0.2
thailand city	63.2	19.5	3.0	7.0	7	19.5	17.0	0.4
thailand province	61.0	19.7	3.7	7.9	7.5	19.7	19.1	0.5
u.rep.tanzania city	54.5	25.9	5.1	5.1	7.3	25.9	17.5	2.1
u.rep.tanzania provin	41.2	33.5	4.7	9.6	10.5	33.5	24.8	0.6
serbia & montenegro c	66.6	21.3	5.1	1.7	4.5	21.3	11.3	0.8
samoa	80.3	11.3	2.2	2.7	3.3	11.3	8.2	0.2
Total	57.3	23.60	4.5	3.8	8.4	23.60	16.7	0.6

Second generation act-based approaches

- Have added questions regarding context and consequence

  - Degree of fear and upset

  - Long term consequence of the event – *did it have a major impact, moderate impact, minor impact, no real impact?*

  - Was the violence offensive or defensive – who initiated?

  - Did the violence cause injury

- Some researchers use these questions to further contextualize findings regarding prevalence and frequency of certain types of acts

- Others, such as Irish Domestic Abuse Survey, incorporate them in their definition of partner violence – only acts or patterns that causes significant negative consequences

Severity questions

- Taking everything into account, how serious was this incident for you at the time? Was it

  - very serious, somewhat serious or not very serious?

- Were you physically injured?

- Were you injured so badly that you needed medical care (even if you didn't get it)?

- Are you ever afraid of your husband or partner? Would you say never, sometimes, many times, most/ all of the time?
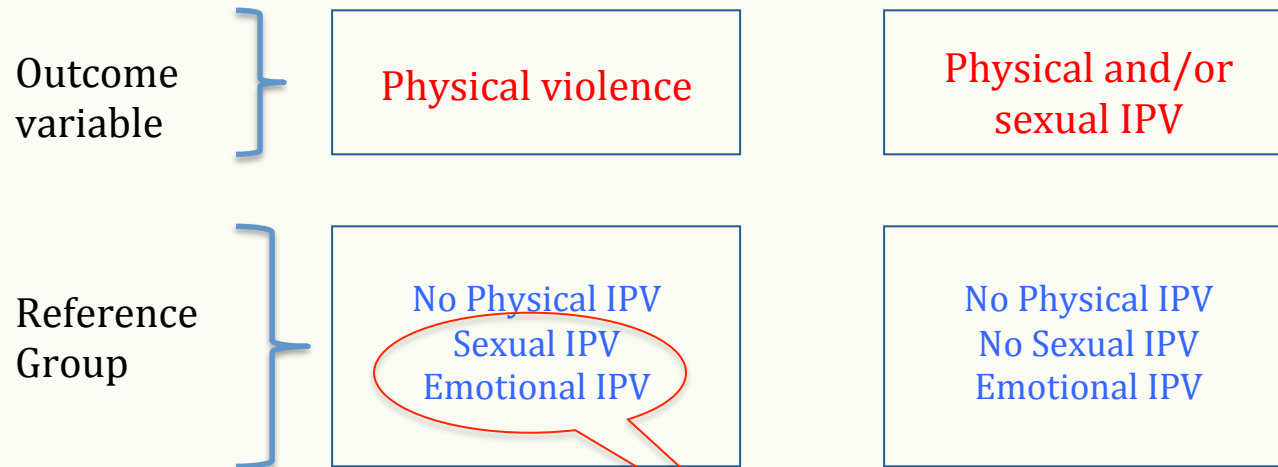
ISSUES OF INTERPRETATION

Insights from the WHO Multi-country Study

Isolated events in WHO study

- Percent of all physical violence that is one act of moderate violence experienced only once varies from 10.9% in Peru province, 33.9% of cases in Japan city to 45% in Serbia city

- Percent of sexual violence that is one act once varies from 1.8 percent in Japan city to 7.9 percent in Peru province

- Reported prevalence of IPV would decline between 2.3 to 8.7 percentage points, depending on the site, if single incidents of moderate physical aggression were excluded from reported rates of abuse

- Decline would be slightly less if you only excluded cases among women who also had never experienced sexual violence by her partner

same
gender violence and health centre

Importance of the reference group

Outcome variable

| Physical violence | Physical and/or sexual IPV |

Reference Group

| No Physical IPV
Sexual IPV
Emotional IPV | No Physical IPV
No Sexual IPV
Emotional IPV |

There should be no women experiencing IPV in your reference group

Options for creating true "no IPV" reference group

- Outcome = sexual and/or physical IPV

- Remove all women with emotional only abuse from reference category (i.e. code as missing)

- Inclusion of emotional abuse in reference category modestly depresses effect size

- For physical abuse, remove sexual and emotional only from denominator

- For sexual, remove physical and emotional only from denominator

gender violence and health centre

Options for creating improved no IPV reference group (but still leave emotional)

- Create 5 part variable:
  - Sex only = 1
  - Phys only = 2
  - Both sex & phys =3
  - None = 0

  Outcome = 1+2+3
  Reference = None (0)

Third generation approaches: Latent Class Analysis

- Data driven approach that seeks natural groupings of cases – "person centered approach" that identifies people with similar experiences

- User inputs a series of indicator variables hypothesized to describe the underlying phenomena

  - e.g. which acts experienced; frequency of different types of violence; presence of controlling behaviors; consequences of abuse

- Method identifies smallest number of classes that adequately explains the associations among variables

- Method moves us toward definitions of a "case" of IPV that includes multiple, overlapping types of abuse

Example of LCA output

Probability Matrix	Cluster1	Cluster2	Cluster3	Cluster4	Cluster5
Percent of cases in cluster	0.31	0.25	0.19	0.17	0.08
Emotional abuse					
no emotional violence	0.66	0.01	0.04	0.15	0.14
1 to 2 forms, infrequently	0.31	0.01	0.30	0.25	0.13
3+ forms, infrequently	0.07	0.11	0.56	0.19	0.08
1 to 2 forms, frequently	0.11	0.62	0.01	0.25	0.01
3+ forms, frequently	0.02	0.91	0.01	0.05	0.01
Physical violence					
no physical violence	0.79	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.20
moderate only (one act)	0.00	0.00	0.07	0.66	0.27
moderate only (few, many)	0.00	0.08	0.45	0.47	0.01
severe violence	0.00	0.46	0.33	0.21	0.00
Sexual violence					
No sexual violence	0.58	0.09	0.05	0.28	0.00
Once	0.00	0.14	0.22	0.24	0.40
A few times	0.00	0.30	0.49	0.01	0.21
Many times	0.00	0.76	0.14	0.00	0.09

Latent class outcomes

Category of Violence	Description of Modal Cases		
	Emotional abuse	Physical violence	Sexual violence
No Violence			
n=282	None	None	None
n=162	2 or less forms, infrequently	None	None
Systematic (Severe)			
n= 110	3 or more forms, frequently	Severe physical violence	Sexual violence many times
n=84	3 or more forms, frequently	Severe physical violence	Sexual violence a few times
Mixed (Less severe)			
N=166	Infrequent emotional abuse	Severe physical	Sexual violence a few times
n=29	Infrequent emotional abuse	Moderate physical only	Sexual violence a few times
Physical violence			
n=185	Moderate or no emotional	Severe physical	No sexual
n=75	Moderate or no emotional	Moderate physical only	No sexual
Sexual dominant			
n=25	No emotional	No physical or moderate once	Once to many times
n=98	Moderate to severe emotional	No physical or moderate once	Once to many times

same
gender violence and health centre

Comparison of LCA and WHO-IPV

- LCA categorizes cases differently than WHO-IPV

  - Intensity of emotional abuse appears to drive distinctions among categories;

  - In Peru, fully 87% of women experiencing systematic abuse had high intensity emotional abuse compared to 1% of "mixed" category even though half experienced all three types of abuse

- Severity of health consequences for systematic abuse is higher than for those identified as severe by WHO-IPV

Measurement of sexual violence by perpetrators other than an intimate partner – Rape

- <u>Since the age of 15</u>, has anyone ever **forced you into sexual intercourse** when you did not want to for example by threatening you, holding you down or putting you in a situation where you could not say no.

- Remember to include people you have known as well as strangers. Please at this point exclude attempts to force you.

- Who did this to you? *(followed by probes and a pre-coded list of perpetrators: at work? at school? in your home? In the home of a friend or acquaintance? Outside or on the street?*

Conclusions

- Ethical precautions and specialized training are essential for ensuring quality data

- Pay special attention to establishing a "no-violence" reference group

- Include measures on severity and meaning (e.g. fear)

- Continue to explore LCA; move toward standardizing a set of indicator variables to permit comparisons across settings.