

Citation:

VanderEnde, K.E., Cheong, Y.F., Salem, R., & Yount, K.M. (2013, Dec 2). *Measurement of Women's Agency in Rural Egypt*. Paper presented at the Doha International Family Institute: Impact of Changing Population Dynamics of the Arab Family, Doha, Qatar.

Measurement of *Women's Agency* in Rural Egypt

Kristin VanderEnde¹, Yuk Fai Cheong¹, Rania Salem²,
Kathryn Yount¹

¹ Emory University; ² University of Toronto

A word cloud on a black background. The largest word is "women's" in blue. Other prominent words include "agency" in white, "gender" in blue, and "Egypt" in yellow. Smaller words include "movement", "children", "health", "freedom", "attitudes", "of", "decision", "empowerment", and "making".

women's movement children Egypt health
agency making
freedom attitudes of gender
decision empowerment

Conceptual Framework for ***Women's Empowerment***

(Kabeer 1999)

***Enabling
Resources***



Agency



Achievements

Conceptual Framework
for ***Women's
Empowerment***
(Kabeer 1999)

Enabling Resources

Human
Economic
Social

Conceptual Framework
for ***Women's
Empowerment***

(Kabeer 1999)

Agency

“[women's] ability to define their own life choices and to pursue their goals, even in the face of opposition from others”
(Kabeer 1999:438)

Conceptual Framework
for ***Women's
Empowerment***

(Kabeer 1999)

Achievements

Improved well-being for
women and their children

Women's Agency

Multidimensional

**Family
Decision
Making**

**Freedom of
Movement**

**Gender
Attitudes**

Women's Agency

Context Specific

Determinants of Women's Agency

Evidence primarily from studies in **South Asia** has shown varying associations with **household poverty, schooling, and women's work.**



Effects of Women's Agency

Evidence has focused mainly on outcomes related to **women's fertility** and **contraceptive use**.



Limitations of prior
measures of
Women's Agency

Unidimensional scale

Limitations of prior
measures of
Women's Agency

Unidimensional scale

Summary measures of
single domains

Limitations of prior
measures of
Women's Agency

Unidimensional scale

Summary measures of
single domains

Little use of advanced
measurement
techniques

Conceptualizing and Measuring ***Women's Agency*** in Egypt

Conceptualizing and Measuring ***Women's Agency*** in Egypt

Prevailing forms of classic patriarchy in Egypt may affect women's ***decision making*** within the family, ***freedom of movement***, and ***attitudes about gender***.

Conceptualizing and Measuring ***Women's Agency*** in Egypt

Prevailing forms of classic patriarchy in Egypt may affect women's *decision making* within the family, *freedom of movement*, and *attitudes about gender*.

Qualitative studies demonstrate ***agency matters*** to women in Egypt.

Conceptualizing and Measuring ***Women's Agency*** in Egypt

Prevailing forms of classic patriarchy in Egypt may affect women's *decision making* within the family, *freedom of movement*, and *attitudes about gender*.

Qualitative studies demonstrate *agency matters* to women in Egypt.

Some studies have ***quantitatively measured*** domains of women's agency, but evidence is limited.



**Determinants and
Effects of Women's
Agency in *Egypt***

EGYPT

LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA

KEY TO GOVERNORATES IN NILE DELTA

Governorate	Capital
1 AD DAQHLIYAH	Al Mansûrah
2 AL BUḤAYRAH	Damanhûr
3 AL GHARBĪYAH	Tanţâ
4 AL ISKANDARIYAH	Al Iskandariyyah (Alexandria)
5 AL ISMĀ'ĪLIYAH	Al Ismâ'iliyyah
6 AL MNŪFIYAH	Shibĭn Al Kawm
7 AL QĀHIRAH	Al Qāhirah (Cairo)
8 AL QALYŪBIYAH	Banhâ
9 ASH SHARQĪYAH	Az Zaqāziq
10 BŪR SA'ĪD	BŪr Sa'Īd (Port Said)
11 DUMYĀṬ	DumyĀṭ
12 KAḤR ASH SHAYKH	Kafr ash Shaykh

- ★ National capital
- ⊙ Governorate capital
- Town, village
- ✈ Major airport
- Cistern, spring, well
- International boundary
- - - Governorate boundary
- == Dual highway
- Main road
- Secondary road
- Track

Setting



Sample



Minya

Panel of **608**
ever-married
women
22-65 years

Data Collected



Measures of *Women's Agency*

Ten items representing *decision making within the family* included women's responses to questions asking who in her family (1=someone else, 2=you and someone else, 3=you) has the **final say in purchasing** a range of household goods, including **food, medicine,** and **large household purchases.**

Measures of *Women's Agency*

Four items representing *freedom of movement* asked whether the respondent was allowed to go (1=never, 2=not *alone*, 3=alone) to places such as the **local market** or the **homes of friends** in the neighborhood.

Measures of *Women's Agency*

Eleven items representing *gender attitudes* included **five items** asking if, in her opinion, a **husband is justified in hitting his wife** (1=yes, 2=don't know, 3=no) in a range of situations such as if she **goes out without telling him** or if she **neglects the children**

Measures of *Women's Agency*

Six items asking the respondent's **agreement** (or disagreement) with statements about gender roles and attitudes. **Three** of these statements represented *more equitable gender attitudes*.

Measures of *Women's Agency*

Three other statements represented *patriarchal gender attitudes* and were coded so that disagreement represented higher levels of women's agency (1=*agree*, 2=*don't know*, 3=*disagree*).

Analysis



Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

EFA with all 25 items

Removed items with ***negative loadings*** or ***cross-loadings***.

Explored ***construct validity***

Results



Characteristics of the Sample

(N=608 ever-married women)

	Mean
Age, in years	38.4
Highest grade completed (respondent)	2.85
Highest grade completed (husband)	5.92
Age at first marriage	17.1
Husband is paternal cousin	31%
Husband is head of household	83%
Engaged in market work in past month	15%
Number of children <6 years	61%
Lives in close proximity to natal family	84%
First quartile of household wealth	68%
Experienced physical violence before age 16	37%

Characteristics of the Sample

(N=608 ever-married women)

	Mean
Age, in years	38.4
Highest grade completed (respondent)	2.85
Highest grade completed (husband)	5.92
Age at first marriage	17.1
Husband is paternal cousin	31%
Husband is head of household	83%
Engaged in market work in past month	15%
Number of children <6 years	61%
Lives in close proximity to natal family	84%
First quartile of household wealth	68%
Experienced physical violence before age 16	37%

Indicators of *Women's Agency*, Minya, Egypt

(N=608 ever-married women)

DECISION-MAKING

SOE

You &
SOE

You

Who in your family has the final say in purchasing the following things?

Vegetables and fruit	12%	13%	75%
Clothes for yourself	20%	22%	57%
Any kind of medicine for yourself	24%	28%	48%
Toiletries for yourself (like hair oil, cream, or henna)	21%	19%	60%
Large household purchases (like a TV or any other electronic appliances)	42%	45%	13%
... and 5 more decision-making items			-

Indicators of *Women's Agency*, Minya, Egypt

(N=608 ever-married women)

FREEDOM of MOVEMENT

Never

Not
Alone

Alone

Are you allowed to go to the following places?

To the local market to buy things

2%

23%

75%

To a local health center or doctor

1%

25%

74%

To the homes of your friends in the
neighborhood

1%

22%

77%

To a nearby mosque or church

6%

25%

69%

Indicators of *Women's Agency*, Minya, Egypt

(N=608 ever-married women)

GENDER ATTITUDES

Yes

Don't
Know

No

In your opinion is a husband justified in hitting his wife in the following situations:

If she goes out without telling him	57%	0%	43%
If she neglects the children	46%	0%	53%
If she argues/debates with him	34%	0%	66%
If she refuses to have sex with him	54%	4%	42%
If she burns the food	24%	1%	75%

... and 6 more gender attitudes items

-

Factor Correlation Matrix for Three Dimensions of *Women's Agency*, Minya, Egypt

(N=608 ever-married women)

FACTOR	Decision Making	Freedom of Movement	Gender Attitudes
Decision Making	1		
Freedom of Movement	0.410*	1	
Gender Attitudes	0.211*	0.307*	1

* Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Associations Between Women's Age and Three Dimensions of *Women's Agency*

(N=608 ever-married women)

Women's Age (ref <30 years)	Decision Making	Freedom of Movement	Gender Attitudes
30-39 years	0.165	0.170	-0.017
40-49 years	0.257[†]	0.095	-0.076
50+ years	0.406[*]	-0.166	-0.093

[†] Significant at $p \leq 0.10$, * Significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Discussion



Measure of women's
agency is
Multidimensional

Measure of women's
agency is
Context Specific

Measurement of
women's agency in
rural Egypt may be
improved

Creation of factor
scores for *domains* of
agency

Use of *structural
equation modeling*

**Future
Directions**

Acknowledgements

We thank *Dr. Ray Langsten* and *Dr. Rania Roushdy* for their outstanding management of the field activities; *Dr. Sarah Zureick-Brown* for contributions to the analysis; *Ms. Tahra Hassan*, *Ms. Eman Shady*, and *Ms. Sally Dijkerman* for their research assistance; *Mr. Ali Rashed* for his assistance with data entry and management; *Ms. Amal Refaat*, for her supervision of the fieldwork; *Dr. Ragui Assaad* for his advice on study design; *Ms. Carol McMurtray* for her assistance with research administration; and *Mohammad Nizamuddin Khan* for helpful comments on this manuscript. Finally, we express our heartfelt gratitude for the time and dedication of the office and field staff in Egypt and of the women who participated in this study, without whom this project would not have been possible.

Funding

This work was supported by research grants from the World Bank's Gender and Economic Research and Policy Action Program and the United Nations Development Program (PI K. M. Yount) as well as a post-doctoral fellowship to Dr. Kristin VanderEnde from the Hubert Department of Global Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University.