

WOMAN'S EMPOWERMENT AND RMNCH INTERVENTIONS IN AFRICA

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EQUITY
in Health | Pelotas





Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

As Amartia Sen has argued, continuing discrimination against women can hinder development.

- In other words, women's empowerment can **accelerate development**.
- Essential to achieving the other SDGs.



Women's Empowerment?



Many definitions

- Complex concept for which many definitions exist

"the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them." (Kabeer, 1999)

- Requires self-efficacy – they **can envisage a different future**, and consider themselves not only able, but **entitled** to make decisions



WE & Child Health

- WE is a goal in itself and also a promoter of development
- High potential of generating changes in the familiar context and in health outcomes
- Empowered women are more likely to provide their children with appropriate care and nutrition
 - Improves their chances to survive and properly develop



The SWPER index for women's empowerment in Africa: development and validation of an index based on survey data

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Summary

Background The Sustainable Development Goals strongly focus on equity. Goal 5 explicitly aims to empower all women and girls, reinforcing the need to have a reliable indicator to track progress. Our objective was to develop a novel women's empowerment indicator from widely available data sources, broadening opportunities for monitoring and research on women's empowerment.

Methods We used Demographic and Health Survey data from 34 African countries, targeting currently partnered women. We identified items related to women's empowerment present in most surveys, and used principal component analysis

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Strategy

- DHS data from 34 African surveys
- Steps
 1. Select items considered to be related to empowerment
 - Not context specific
 - General items and sets on attitude to violence and participation in household decisions
 2. PCA analysis for each country
 - Highly consistent results!
 - 3 domains with mostly the same variables in
 3. PCA for combined data from all countries
 - Similar to international wealth index (IWI, Smits &
 - Derive a common score
 - Individual level estimates



Using a common score allows comparisons between countries and over time

Allows comparisons between subgroups within countries

The SWPER!

Survey-based **W**omen's em**P**ow**E**Rment index

- Individual level indicator
- Assesses 3 empowerment domains:
 - Attitude to violence
 - Social independence
 - Decision-making

Beating not justified if wife goes out without telling husband

Beating not justified if wife neglects the children

Beating not justified if wife argues with husband

Beating not justified if wife refuses to have sex with husband

Beating not justified if wife burns the food

Frequency of reading newspaper or magazine

Woman's education in completed years of schooling

Age of woman at first birth

Age at first cohabitation

Age difference: woman's age minus husband's age

Education difference: woman's minus husband's years of schooling

Who usually decides on respondent's health care

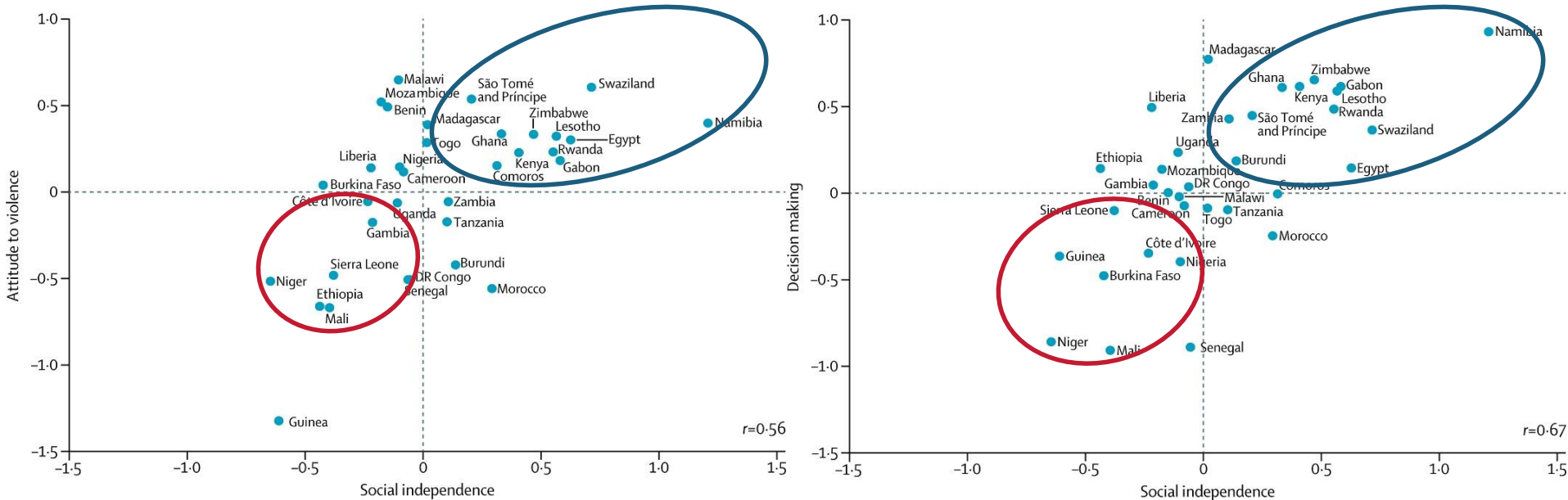
Who usually decides on large household purchases

Who usually decides on visits to family or relatives

Respondent worked in past 12 months



Country comparison



SWPER domains provide standardized continuous measures

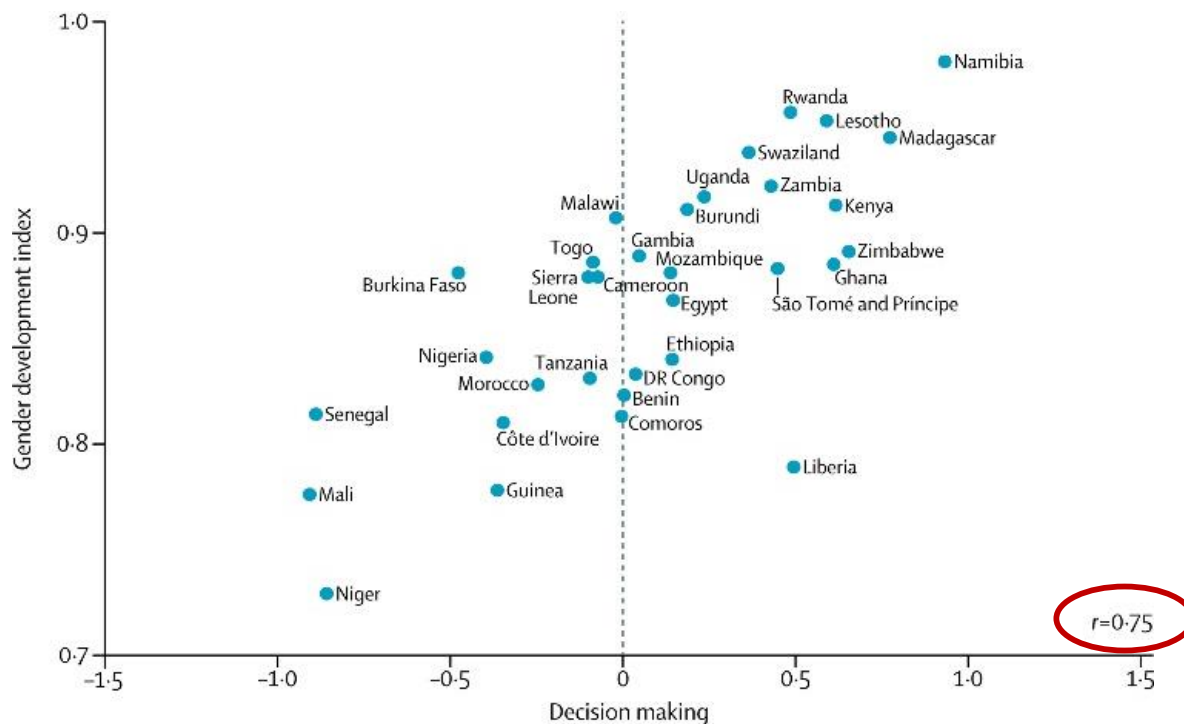
- Scores are measured in standard deviations and zero is the mean empowerment level for the African countries



Comparing the SWPER and GDI

The Gender Development Index (GDI) measures gender gaps in human development achievements - UNDP

- Calculated as the ratio of the human development index (HDI) for females and males



Other SWPER domains

Attitude to violence: $r=0.58$

Social Independence: $r=0.66$



Key points

- SWPER is a powerful tool for gender analysis, especially in LMICs, where most of the available data comes from national surveys
- Warrants within and between-country comparison, time trend analyses, and identification of groups with higher or lower empowerment scores
- Possible to analyze women's empowerment as an outcome or as a determinant of health
- **Coming up: SWPER global**



Does women's empowerment increase coverage of RMNCH interventions in Africa?



Methods

- Demographic and Health Survey data from 36 African countries
 - Latest survey available
- Ecological analyses were performed using countries and wealth quintiles as the units of analyses
- At country level, analyses were adjusted by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita adjusted by the purchase power parity in international dollars



Composite Coverage Index (CCI)

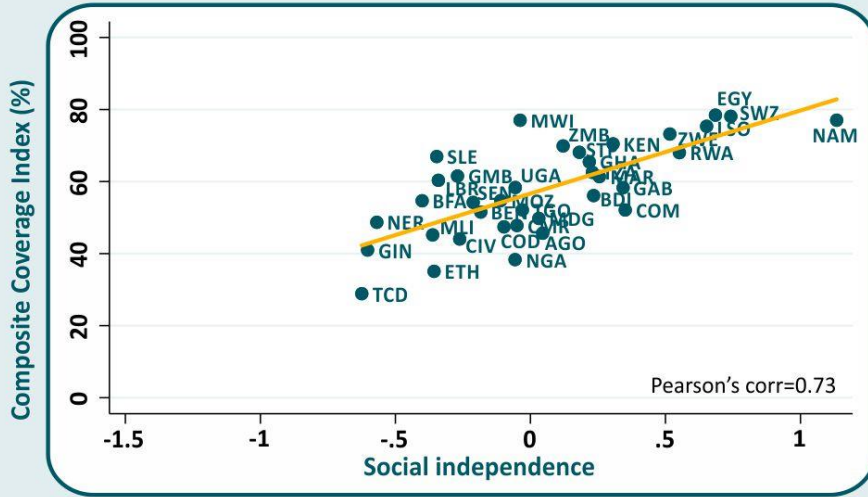
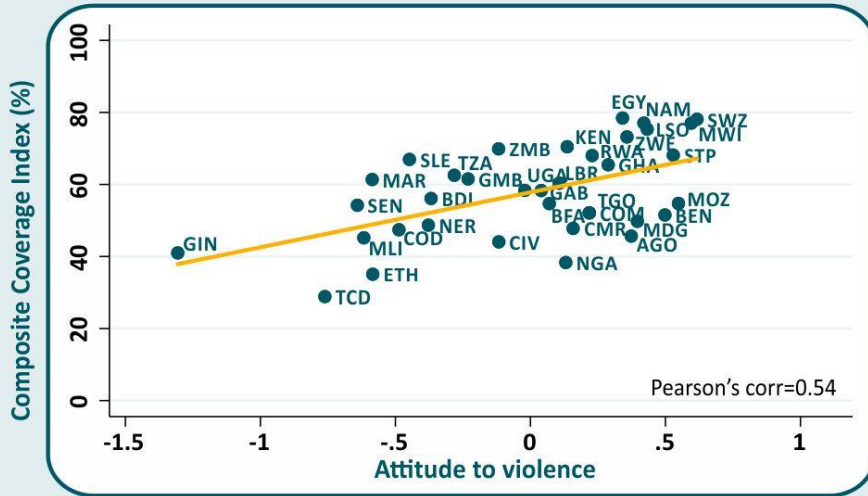
- A proxy for universal health coverage in the RMNCH context
- CCI = weighted average of 8 interventions
 - Family planning
 - Maternal and newborn care
 - Immunization
 - Case management of sick children

$$CCI = 1/4 \left(DFPSm + \frac{ANC4 + SBA}{2} + \frac{BCG + 2DPT3 + MSL}{4} + \frac{ORS + CPNM}{2} \right)$$

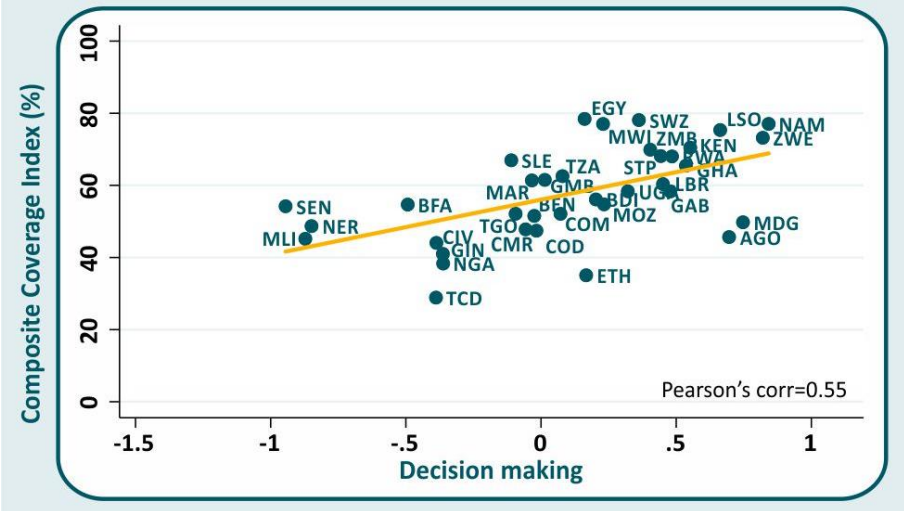
- Equal weights to 4 stages in the continuum of care



SWPER and CCI correlation



Positive relationship between SWPER and CCI at country level



Effect of each empowerment domain on the CCI (n=36 countries)

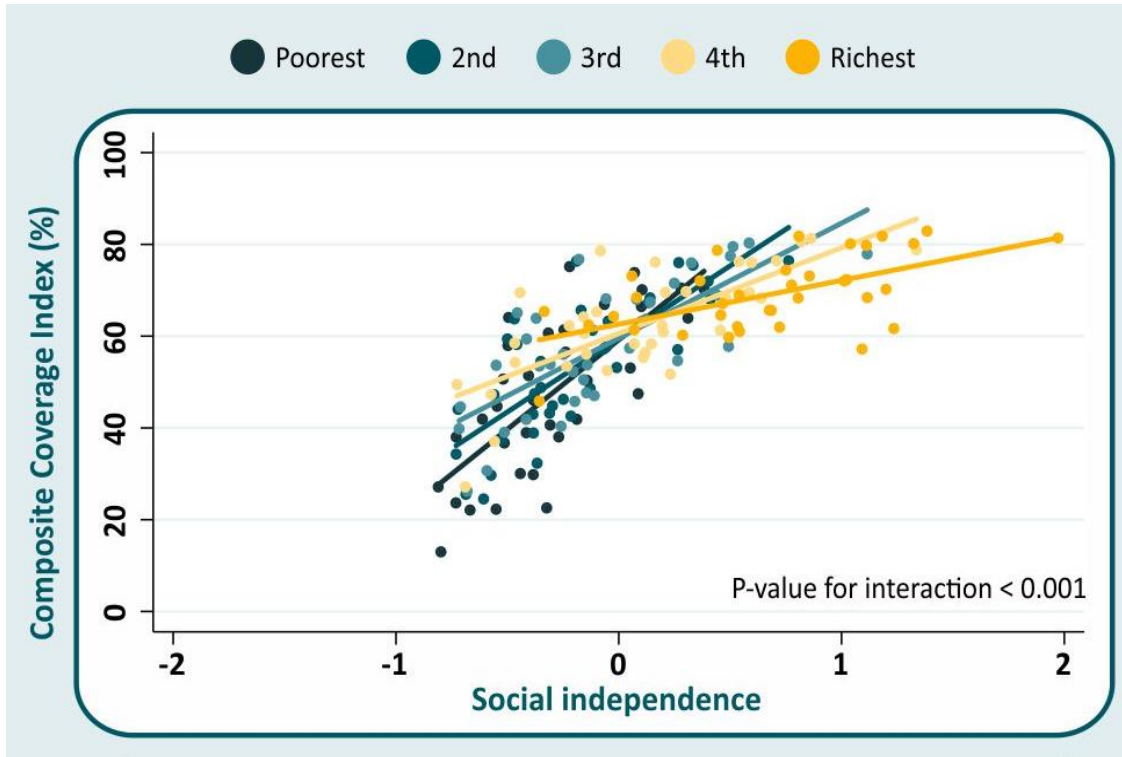
	Crude		Adjusted ¹	
	Coefficient	95% CI	Coefficient	95% CI
Women's empowerment				
Attitude to violence	15.3	7.1 – 23.5	13.9	5.4 – 22.4
Social independence	23.0	15.5 – 30.6	25.4	16.3 – 34.5
Decision making	15.3	7.3 – 23.3	14.0	5.7 – 22.3

¹ Adjusted by log GDP per capita (PPP, I\$).

Coefficients are the percentage points increased in the CCI for a standard deviation increase in the SWPER score.



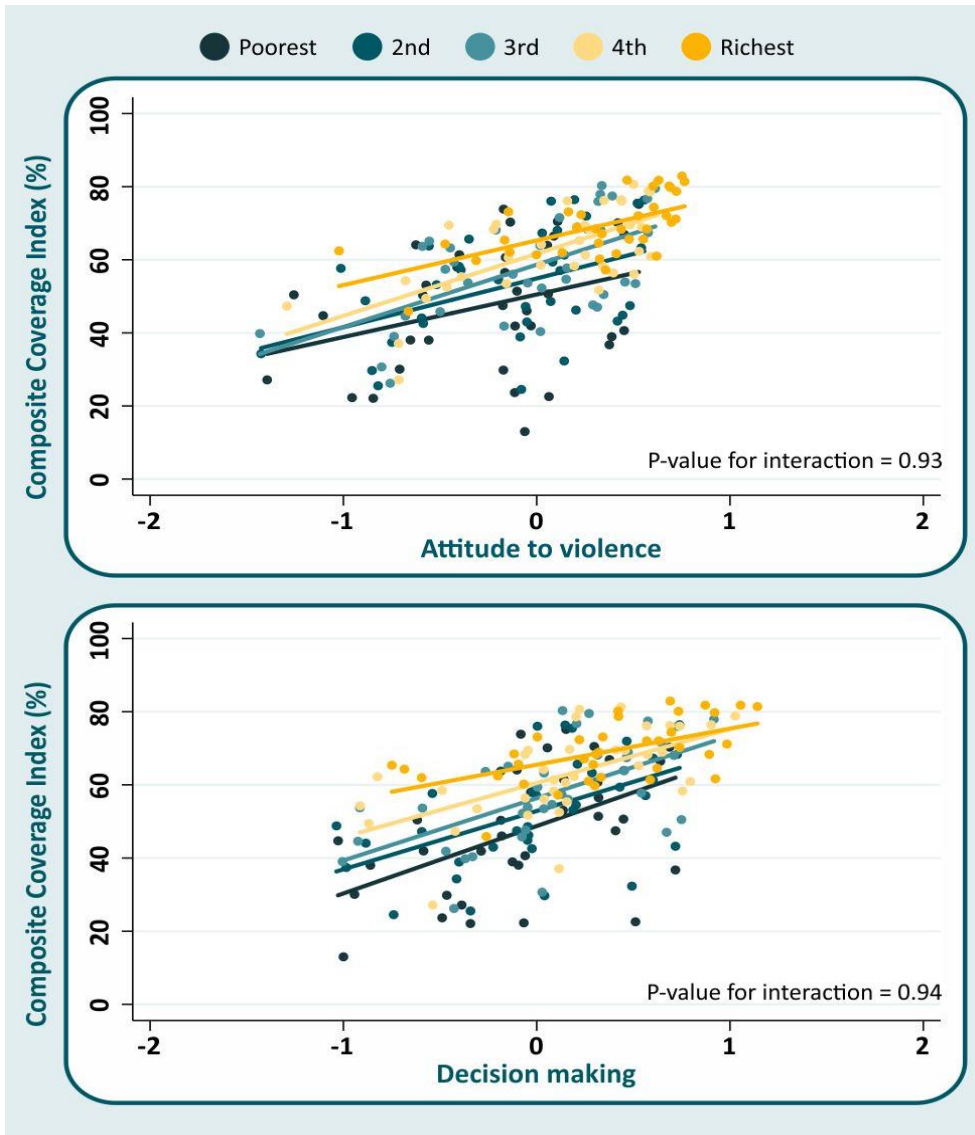
SWPER and CCI



- Expressive modification of the effects of social independence
- **Effect tended to be higher among the poorer quintiles**



SWPER and CCI



There was no clear effect modification for attitude to violence and decision-making



Effect of each empowerment domain on the CCI by wealth quintile. (n=36 countries)

Wealth quintiles	Women's empowerment					
	Attitude to violence		Social independence		Decision making	
	Coeff	95% CI	Coeff	95% CI	Coeff	95% CI
Q1 (poorest)	11.6	0.2 – 23.1	39.0	26.2 – 51.9	18.4	7.9 – 29.0
Q2 (poorer)	13.4	4.1 – 22.7	31.8	22.6 – 41.1	15.9	6.9 – 25.0
Q3 (middle)	17.1	9.0 – 25.2	25.1	17.4 – 32.7	17.1	9.1 – 25.1
Q4 (richer)	17.0	10.4 – 23.6	18.7	12.8 – 24.6	14.9	8.0 – 21.8
Q5 (richest)	12.3	7.0 – 17.6	9.7	5.1 – 14.3	10.0	4.9 – 15.0

Coefficients are the percentage points increased in the CCI for a standard deviation increase in the SWPER score.



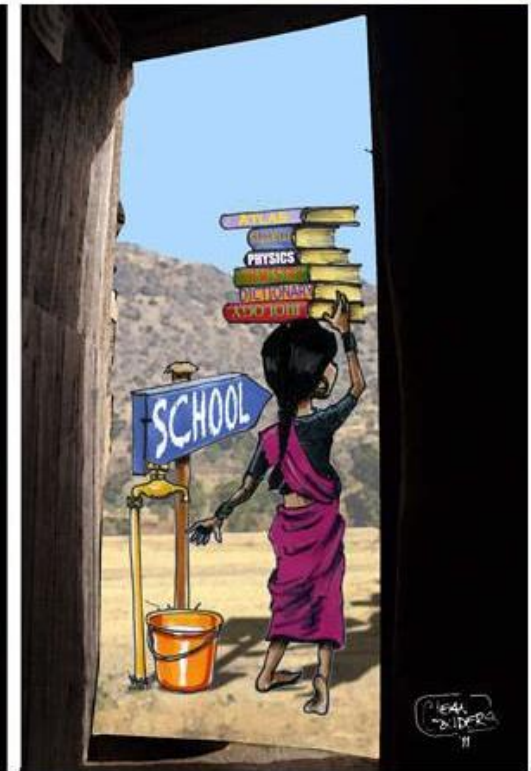
Conclusions

- Strong associations between women's empowerment and the CCI at country level
- Social independence benefit was, on average, over four times greater among the poorest than the richest
- Improving women's empowerment may have an important impact on health and health care utilization in Africa



Thank you!

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