

Measuring Gender Norms: Adapting the GEM Scale Developed in Brazil to India

J. Pulerwitz, Horizons/PATH; R.K. Verma and V. Mahendra, Horizons/Population Council;
S.S. Khandekar, CORO; G. Barker and M. Segundo, Instituto PROMUNDO

BACKGROUND

- There is increasing recognition of the influence of norms that support inequitable gender relations on HIV/STI risk.
- Yet, few empirical studies have used a validated measure for gender-equitable attitudes and norms, or have compared responses across cultures.
- The Gender-Equitable Men (GEM) Scale was developed and tested in Brazil to evaluate the impact of an intervention to promote gender equitable norms and HIV risk reduction among young men.
- To determine the scale's usefulness in another cultural context, namely India, research was conducted to examine whether the scale domains and items are relevant and sensitive for young men in India.

METHODS

- The GEM Scale was developed with a community-based sample of men aged 15-60 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and results from the subsample of 15-24 year old men (n = 224) are presented.
- To determine how relevant the norms addressed by the GEM scale are in the Indian cultural setting, three Focus Group Discussions were conducted with young men aged 18-29 from low-income communities in Mumbai, India, and the GEM Scale items were administered in a survey to another 65 young men with a similar profile (total n = 86).

RESULTS

- Focus group results indicate the gender norm "domains" the scale addresses are relevant in the Indian context—e.g., roles in sexual relationships, domestic roles, responsibility for reproductive health, partner violence. (See Box 1 and quote)

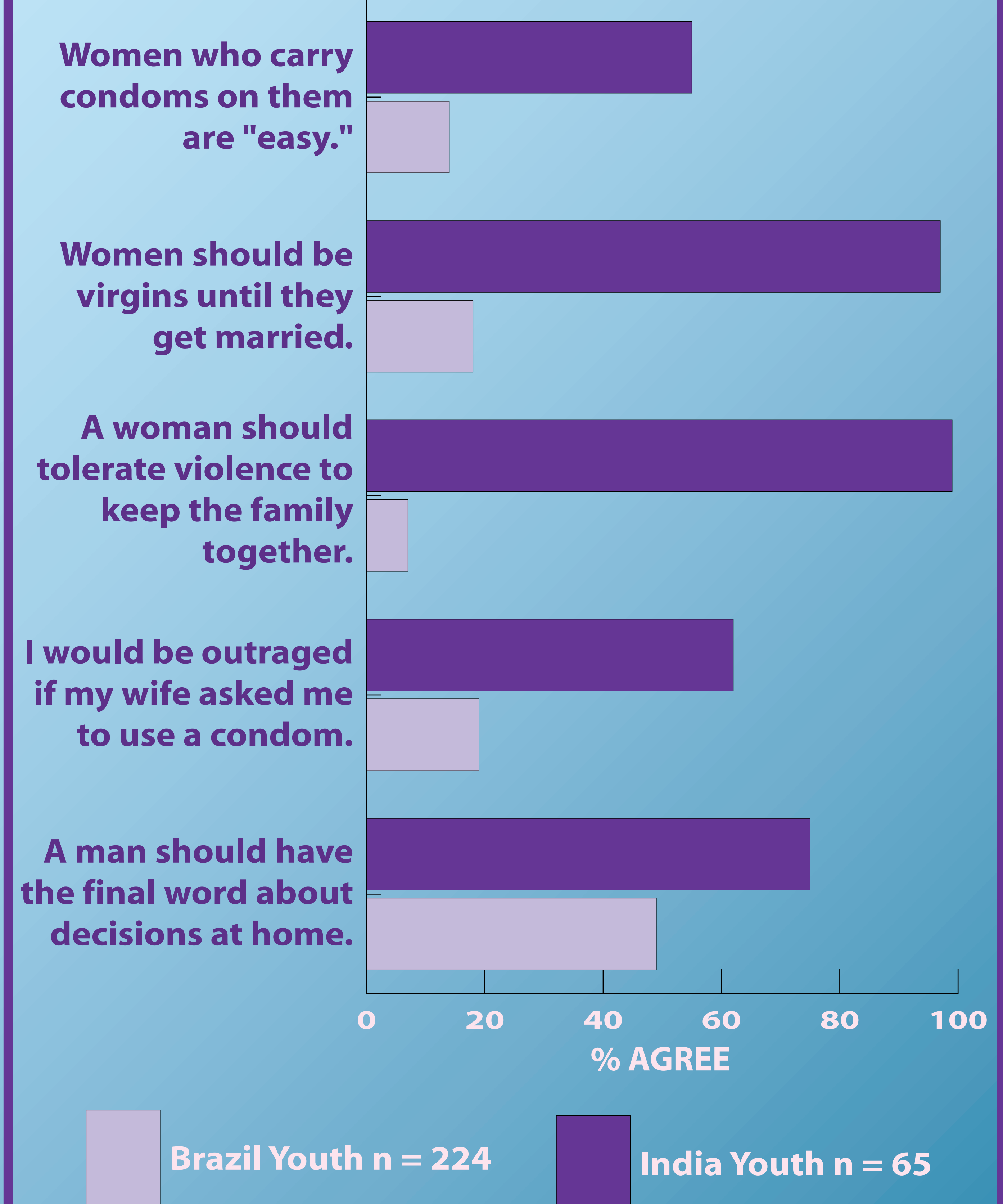
Box 1: GEM Scale Domains

- * Reproductive health and disease prevention
- * Sexual relationships
- * Home and child-rearing roles
- * Partner violence
- * Homophobia and relations with other men

- Responses to the GEM Scale items show substantial variability for both young Brazilian and Indian men, indicating that the items are sensitive to responses in both contexts.
- Young Indian men are consistently more "inequitable" in their responses than Brazilian men (See Figure 1).

Young men in a FGD described a 'real' man as:
"He should not be 'Gud' (homosexual)...
The man who can't bear children is not a 'He' man...
He should be able to (have sex) with women in any manner she wishes...
He must lead the physical fighting...
He...pulls down panties of girls...."

Figure 1
GEM Scale Items in India and Brazil



CONCLUSIONS

- Findings from the initial phase to apply the GEM Scale that was developed in Brazil, to young men in India, suggest that the scale is a sensitive and cross-culturally relevant assessment tool.
- Having a tool that measures men's attitudes and norms on issues related to gender, violence, and HIV/AIDS risk, that can be applied in multiple cultures, will permit both cross-cultural comparisons and facilitate evaluations of programs that address similar issues.
- Study participants in Brazil and India appear to hold quite different views towards norms that address gender roles, and any attempt to promote more equitable norms would need to take this into account.