

A Vignettes-Based Measure of Gender Equality in Relationships Among Young Adolescents



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Goal

To develop a measure that assesses young adolescents' (10 to 14 year olds) perceptions of gender equality in relationships that works globally at both the individual and population levels.

Webinar Structure

1. Overview and Rationale
2. Methodology for instrument development
3. Data analysis
4. Findings
5. Discussion

OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

Early Adolescence: a time of social, emotional and physical change

- Social, cognitive and physical change
- Increased exposure to peer and social influences
- Increased pressure to conform to gender norms and role expectations
- Gender norms become increasingly rigid and fixed

Measuring Gender Equality Is A Challenge

- Direct questions are subject to social desirability response bias
- Topics used to assess equality are often not applicable to young adolescents (e.g. romantic or sexual relationships)
- Assessing individual attitudes of gender equality requires perspective taking (e.g. putting oneself in another's shoes)
- *Gender* is an abstract concept; and young adolescents are not abstract thinkers
- Topics selected need to be age and developmental stage appropriate

Vignettes: a tool to assess attitudes, values, norms and perceptions

- Especially valuable when...
 - Topics are sensitive (e.g. sexual behaviours, gender discrimination)
 - Assessing contexts (since they can be altered and everything else held constant)
 - Assessing differential response by sex of protagonist
 - Assessing attitudes, beliefs and opinions

For young adolescents vignettes have added advantages

- They allow for responses without being self-revealing (e.g. does not require respondents to indicate what they themselves will do)
- They are concrete and yet allow for exploration of abstract concepts like gender
- When well constructed vignettes are interesting and engaging for respondents

Vignettes are useful to explore norms

- *Descriptive norms*: what do you think the protagonist would do in this situation?
- *Injunctive norms*: what do you think the protagonist should do in this situation?
- What is critical is that the story-lines are close to real life?

Challenges of using vignettes with young adolescents in LMIC

- Rarely used in LMIC
- Interpretation of responses can be challenging (e.g. respondents may shift answering for themselves or the protagonist)
- Assuring that the vignettes are culturally appropriate and that meanings are parallel in diverse global settings

VIGNETTES DEVELOPMENT FOR THE GEAS

Vignettes Development Process

- Three day focus groups with groups of 10-12 young adolescents in each of 15 sites
- Each group generated a list of common situations for young adolescents
- Groups then prioritized the topics/situations
- Groups began with general discussion followed by a role play of the situation, first with a girl (or boy) in the lead then with the other sex in the lead
- Researchers took notes on the storyline developed, the questions generated, and possible responses
- Stories were compared across sites and common stories were identified... initially 6 were identified

Initial Piloting

- Piloting was initially done with convenience samples of 120 young people equally divides by sex in each of 15 sites
- Two versions of each of 6 vignettes were generated each with a male and female protagonist; and respondents were asked to respond to a subset for both protagonists.
- Overall, little difference was seen for either boys or girls depending on the sex of the protagonist.
- Two vignettes performed especially poorly

Initial Prototype Themes Based On Global Focus Groups

1. Romantic interest: boy likes girl/ girl likes boy
2. *Freedom of movement: girl wants to go out with friends*
3. Gender off-diagonal: girls who act more like boys
4. Puberty: satisfaction and embarrassment
5. *Appropriate clothing for a young adolescent*
6. Pregnancy

Question And Response Option Coding

- Codes were developed to the response items often with a range of possible interpretations
- Codes revised based on partner feedback and recommendations
- Codes for individual questions structured wherever possible to range from low to high (or some comparable directionality)
- Domains of the measure have been identified conceptually

Scoring System for Vignettes

Core Domain	Score System
<i>Communication</i>	0: Avoidance 1: Indirect 2: Direct
<i>Assertiveness</i>	0: No 1: Low 2: Moderate 3: High
<i>Interaction Approach</i>	0: Avoidance 1: Antagonist initiates 2: Protagonist initiates
<i>Social Inclusion</i>	0: No 1: Some 2: Yes
<i>Proactiveness to Puberty</i>	0: Negative action 1: No action 2: Positive action

P is in 7th grade. He is attracted to A, who is in the same grade, but he doesn't know her and has never spoken with her in person. Most of his friends have girlfriends but he has never had one before. He wants to get her attention, but is not sure how.

What do you think P will do next?

1	Ask if any of the girls are going to the party	<i>Indirect = 1</i>
2	Ask A directly if she is going to the party	<i>Direct = 2</i>
3	Get a friend to ask A if she is going to the party	<i>Indirect = 1</i>
4	Say nothing and hope that someone else will ask A if she is going	<i>Avoidance = 0</i>
5	Ask A's friend if she knows if A is going to the party	<i>Indirect = 0</i>

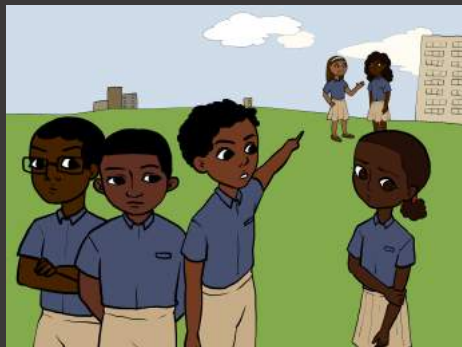
Repilot: Four (4) vignettes with one “flip”

1. Romantic interests: boy likes girl
2. Gender off-diagonal: girls who act more like boys
Forced response of taking the other sex perspective
3. Puberty: satisfaction and embarrassment
4. Pregnancy

Repiloting

- Six sites: Ghent; Assiut; Cuenca; Blantyre; Hanoi; Kinshasa.
- 75 young adolescents 10-14 years of age equally divided by age and sex
- Respondents predominantly answered for same sex protagonists
- Questions were added to explore differential response for descriptive norms for self and protagonist
- Respondent questions required
- When translating vignettes core meaning was retained but situations modified for country context.

Youth generated culturally appropriate graphics



Baseline Data Analysis With Three Sites

- Kinshasa, DRC: $n = 2586$
- Cuenca, Ecuador: $n = 484$
- Shanghai, China: $n = 1674$

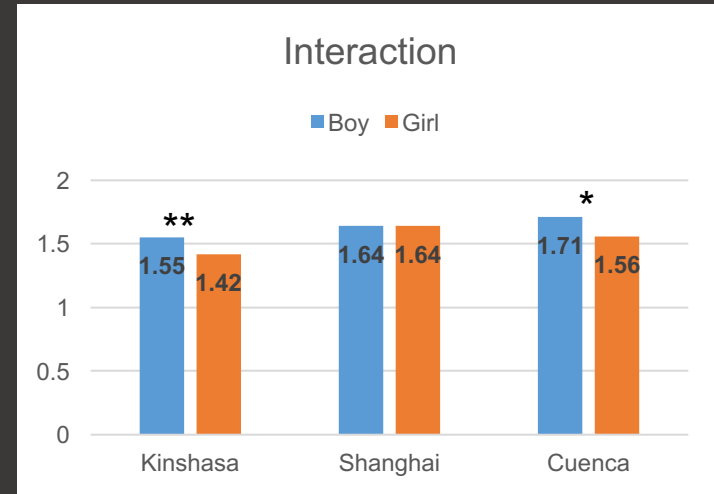
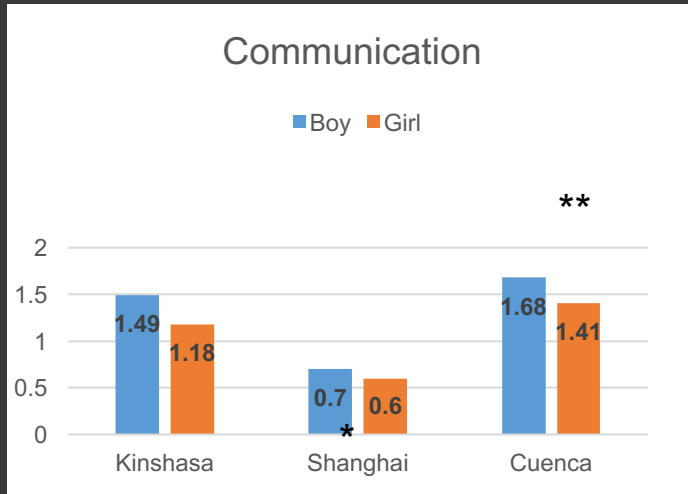
Unpaired test (at group level): Student t-test *OR* Wilcoxon rank-sum test

Paired test (at individual level):

Paired Student t-test *OR* Wilcoxon matched pairs signed-ranks test

- Protagonist vs. Respondent
- Flipped gender perspectives

Boys are more direct and generally more likely to initiate conversations with girls than vice versa

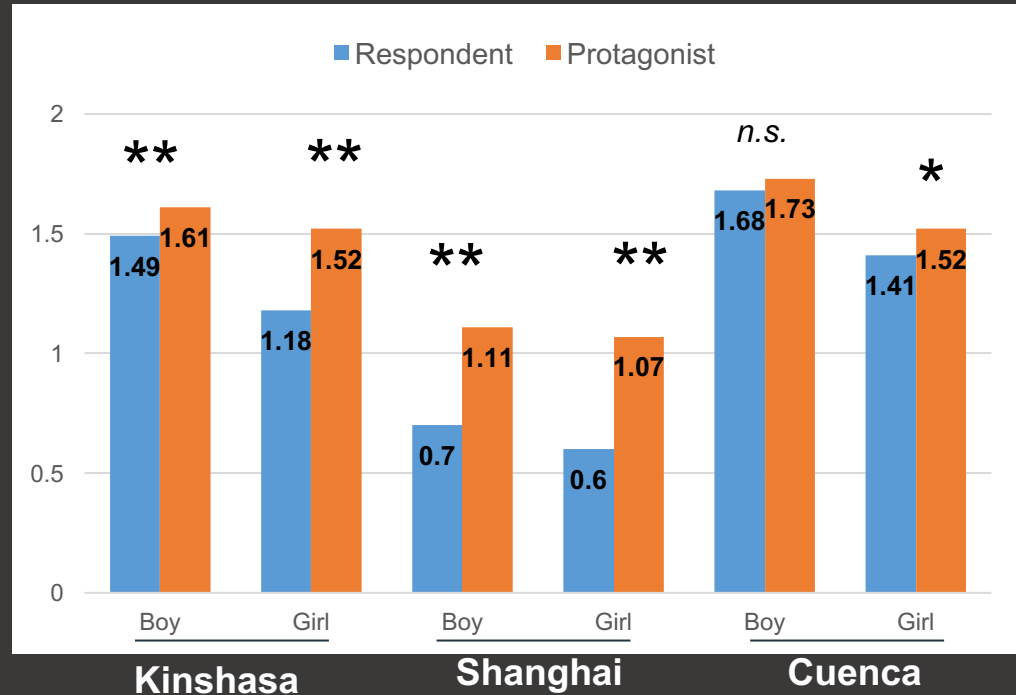


*

** <0.001

* <0.05

Boys And Girls Less Direct In Communication Than Same Sex Protagonists



** <0.001
* <0.05

Boys and girls report communicating differently when taking the perspective of the opposite vs. same sex protagonist

Site (Mean, SD)	Boys				Girls			
	N	Male Protagonist	Female Protagonist	P-value	N	Male Protagonist	Female Protagonist	P-value
Kinshasa (n=2586)	1274	1.61 (0.65)	1.53 (0.65)	<0.001*	1312	1.63 (0.64)	1.52 (0.73)	<0.001*
Shanghai (n=1674)	849	1.11 (0.90)	1.14 (0.87)	0.323^	825	1.51 (0.76)	1.07 (0.90)	<0.001*
Cuenca (n=484)	258	1.73 (0.57)	1.57 (0.70)	0.007*	226	1.68 (0.61)	1.52 (0.77)	0.049*

* = Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test

^ = Paired student t-test

Both boys and girls see male protagonists to be more assertive than their female counterparts

Site (Mean, SD)	Boys				Girls			
	N	Male Protagonist	Female Protagonist	P-value	N	Male Protagonist	Female Protagonist	P-value
Kinshasa (n=2586)	1274	2.34 (1.03)	2.19 (1.11)	<0.001*	1312	2.42 (0.99)	1.84 (1.21)	<0.001*
Shanghai (n=1674)	849	1.73 (1.27)	1.46 (1.20)	<0.001*	825	2.06 (1.23)	1.50 (1.28)	<0.001*
Cuenca (n=484)	258	2.54 (0.95)	2.38 (1.04)	0.032*	226	2.38 (1.06)	2.15 (1.19)	0.004*

* = Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test

** = Paired student t-test

Responses To Pubertal Development

- Vignette explored how parents, siblings and peers might react to new of pubertal onset.
- Generally, respondents thought both parents and peers would react equally positively; and only in Kinshasa did boys think that parents would react more positively for male pubertal development
- In Kinshasa and Shanghai male protagonists had more pride than females ($p < .05$)– in Cuenca no difference was seen.
- In all sites female protagonists were seen to be more proactive in seeking information than males ($p < .001$)

Field Coordinator Observations: Vignettes Development Workshop

Overall, very high enthusiasm for process (7/9)

- *Mixed group sessions (boys and girls together) is the best option for capturing gender biases or debates for generating more options for a stem [New Delhi, Field Coordinator].*
- *Critique and validity by adolescents of each vignette was important, including the role play. The plot proceeding and other choices were revised and clarified during the critique by adolescents [Shanghai, Field Coordinator]*

Field Coordinator Observations: Vignettes Development Workshop

- Declining engagement in the afternoon (3/9)
- Security concerns (2/9)
- Engaging girls at times in role plays was challenging (2/9)

Key Lessons Learned From Early Analyses

- Use of focus groups increased the likelihood that vignettes developed were realistic
- Young adolescents are able to respond to vignettes
- They can differentiate self from protagonist (this may depend on the vignette)
- When asked directly they can respond from the perspective of the opposite sex protagonist
- Vignettes were useful for quantifying differences between boys and girls in:
 - communication approaches, social inclusion, interpersonal styles and acceptance of gender atypical peers.

Q&A and Discussion