

## Abstract:

While studies have examined the effect of women's empowerment on contraceptive use, lower fertility, and birth spacing, no specific measures are available to measure reproductive empowerment. We developed a theory-based, validated instrument to measure reproductive autonomy. A pool of 26 items was developed and included in a self-administered iPad survey among 1,892 women at 13 US family planning clinics and 6 abortion clinics. Factor analysis revealed 14 items grouped into 3 factors under the construct of reproductive autonomy: coercion ( $\alpha=0.82$ ), communication ( $\alpha=0.74$ ), and decision-making ( $\alpha=0.65$ ). Construct validity was demonstrated by a random effects model where the coercion subscale (AOR=1.33,  $p=0.02$ ) was positively associated with unprotected sex and the communication subscale (AOR=0.68,  $p=0.005$ ) was inversely associated with unprotected sex. The Reproductive Autonomy Scale offers researchers a reliable instrument to assess a woman's ability to carry out her reproductive choices and to evaluate interventions that aim to increase women's empowerment.