

Asking women about their quality of life in the context of intimate partner violence: a service provider resource

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A resource developed from the
Defining QOL Indicators for Measuring Perpetrator Intervention Effectiveness Project

Quality of life (QOL)

An overarching subjective self-assessment of “the goodness of life”^[1] at a given point in time.^[2, 3]

Assessing QOL is an ideal measure for informing the development of women-centred interventions and for subsequently measuring program outcomes, from the point of view of clients.

This resource describes:

- The QOL of 100 women participants in the *Defining QOL indicators for measuring perpetrator intervention effectiveness project*^[4]
- A suite of eight QOL-IPV questions for assessing and monitoring the QOL of women, within an IPV context.

BACKGROUND

In 2017, in collaboration with research partners, we examined how victim-reported QOL outcomes have been incorporated into intimate partner violence (IPV) interventions; and to ascertain women’s priorities for a ‘good life’.^[4]

To Find Out More

<https://www.anrows.org.au/project/defining-quality-of-life-indicators-for-measuring-perpetrator-intervention-effectiveness/>

As part of the project, 100 women participated in face-to-face interviews. Women were self-identified as survivors of IPV, located in either Adelaide, Brisbane or Melbourne, and were recruited through research partners and via social media.

Participants were on average 41 years of age and living with children (61%), a spouse/partner/ boyfriend (31%) or alone (17%). Half (52%) were living in rental accommodation, 59% were in paid employment and 85% had completed the equivalent of year 12. Four in ten (44%) were in a relationship (not necessarily with an IPV perpetrator).

PARTICIPANTS QOL

Overall QOL assessments

Women’s QOL was assessed with the WHOQOL-BREF.^[5, 6] Overall a third of women (33%) assessed their QOL as “good” and 14% as “very good”. A further 27% judged their QOL as “neither good nor poor”, 22% as “poor” and 4% “very poor” (Figure 1).

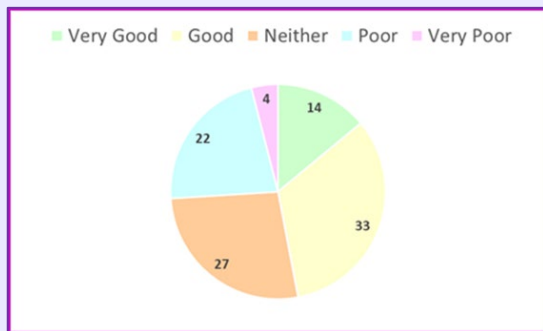


Figure 1: Participants (N=100) overall QOL

Source: McLaren et al. 2020

In comparison...

Women's QOL was below Australian population norms on all four WHOQOL-BREF domains (physical health, mental health, social relationships & environment), regardless of whether IPV was current or historical.

Priorities for a 'good life'

We asked women what was important to their QOL, that is what comprised a 'good life' for them? Women commonly expressed the following priorities:

- **Autonomy:** having agency, to be able to make their own decisions, the liberty to live how they chose, and being free to express their own belief and live according to their own identities
- **Informal supports:** having friends, and relationships of trust, quality contact and assistance in times of need from family, friends and intimate partners
- **Emotional health:** ability to enjoy life, being at peace with oneself, and the relinquishment of feelings of shame and stigma associated with the IPV
- **Safety:** physical, psychological, social and spiritual
- **Altruism:** worry about the impact of IPV on their children, other family members, friends and animals, and perpetrators.^[4]

ASSESSING QOL IN THE CONTEXT OF IPV

The WHOQOL-BREF was a reliable¹ instrument in assessing women's QOL generally. However, the WHOQOL-BREF did not seem to capture what was important to women within the context of their IPV experiences. Namely fear, autonomy, isolation, feelings of safety, and caring responsibilities towards others (i.e., altruism) (see Box 1).

Box 1: Definitions of IPV QOL experiences

- **Fear:** A feeling induced by a perceived or real threat
- **Autonomy:** The capacity to act in self-directed ways, free from adverse coercion of outside influences & has a relationship with freedom
- **Isolation:** A diminished contact or inclusion, e.g., limited contact with people or groups, or exclusion from groups, society or structures
- **Safety:** A condition in which danger, risk, or injury are minimised & manageable
- **Altruism (care for others):** When individuals have concern for the happiness and wellbeing of others, physically, psychologically, socially, materially, & spiritually.

¹ In our study, Cronbach α (a measure of reliability) for the WHOQOL-BREF was 0.96 with individual QOL domains ranging from 0.61 (psychological health) to 0.89 (environment), suggesting overall good internal reliability.

QOL-IPV QUESTIONS

We therefore recommend a suite of eight questions to assess women’s QOL within an IPV context (QOL-IPV Questions). These questions were drawn from 100 women’s voices and are consistent with the design of WHOQOL-BREF questions:

- Instructions for responding to each question are clearly provided
- Questions are clear and concise
- Double-barrel questions have been avoided.

Administration instructions

As women assess each item, responses options are on five-point scales. For the questions pertaining to the extent to which they have felt certain things, each response option ranges from “not at all” to “completely”; and for altruism (i.e., care for others) questions from “very satisfied” to “very dissatisfied”. For each question, one response is circled.

These QOL-IPV questions are designed to be used as a suite of standalone questions or as an addendum to the WHOQOL-BREF. The questions may be administered by a service provider or be self-administered. Scoring requires a simple summing of responses. The minimum possible overall score is 8 and the maximum possible overall score is 40. The higher the overall score, the more enhanced QOL.

QOL-IPV Questions

We now would like you to think about your IPV experiences in the past 2 weeks...

To what extent have you felt...	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Mostly	Completely
1. Fear?	5	4	3	2	1
2. Isolated?	5	4	3	2	1
3. Lonely?	5	4	3	2	1

To what extent have you felt...	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Mostly	Completely
4. Autonomous?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Safe?	1	2	3	4	5

How satisfied are you with...	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
6. The safety of your children, family and animals?	5	4	3	2	1
7. The wellbeing of your children, family and animals?	5	4	3	2	1
8. Your capacity to care for children, family and animals?	5	4	3	2	1

NEXT STEPS

As mentioned above, the QOL-IPV questions were drawn from the perspectives of 100 women on what constituted 'a good life' for them. These questions as they are provided above, have yet to be validated with women in similar circumstances or within the context of application as a victim-reported outcome measure. Nevertheless, they provide a good starting point for better understanding the QOL of women within an IPV context, and more broadly endeavours to promote the best interests and safety of women and children, and women's recovery from IPV.

References

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