

# Examining the link between women's empowerment and demand for family planning satisfied among Christians and Muslims in multi-religious African countries

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# Religion, gender and family planning in Africa

- Complex relationship between religion and family planning in African countries
- Gender inequality negatively affects family planning
  - Especially in terms of decision-making capabilities and freedom of movement
- Do religion and gender dynamics interact to influence family planning?

## Our aim

To investigate the impact of the intersection between women's empowerment and religion on *demand for family planning satisfied*

# Data source and study design

DHS carried out since 2010

Focus on Africa

Countries with  $\geq 10\%$  of Christians and Muslims

Married/partnered women of reproductive age

Sample of 148,989 women from 14 countries

Religion-specific multilevel Poisson regressions

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# Outcome



## Demand for family planning satisfied

Proportion of women in need of contraception who were using (or whose partners were using) a contraceptive method.

Two separated analyses based on the type of method:

- **Modern:** medical procedures or technological products
- **Traditional:** lactational amenorrhea, withdrawal, calendar and fertility-awareness methods

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# Predictors



## Women's religious affiliation

Classified according to their report:

- Christian
- Muslim
- Other religion or unaffiliated



## Women's empowerment

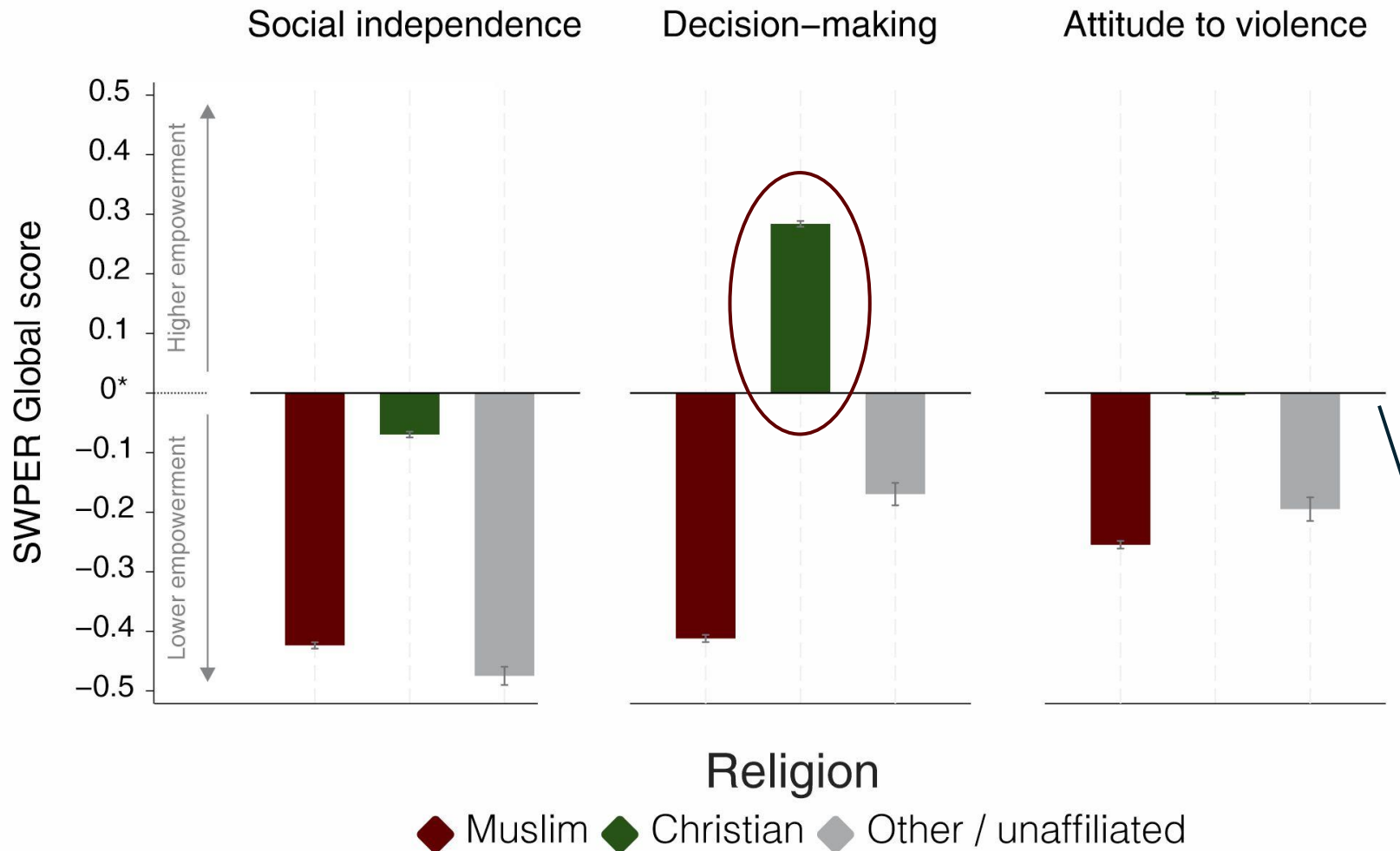
Measured using the three domains of the SWPER Global:

Social  
independence

Decision-  
making

Attitude to  
violence

# African Christians are much more empowered than Muslims!



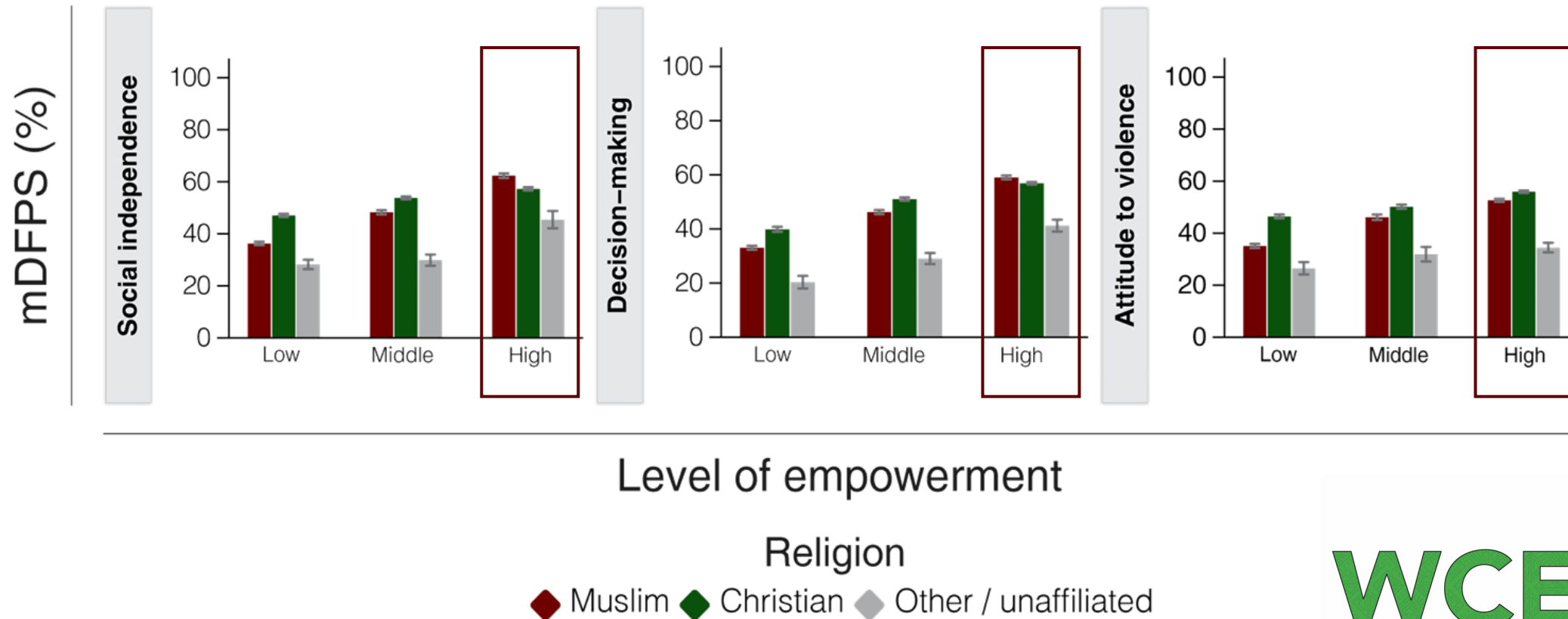
In terms of decision-making, even more than the average of women from all LMICs

Zero is the global average of the empowerment scores

\*Average of empowerment across low- and middle-income countries

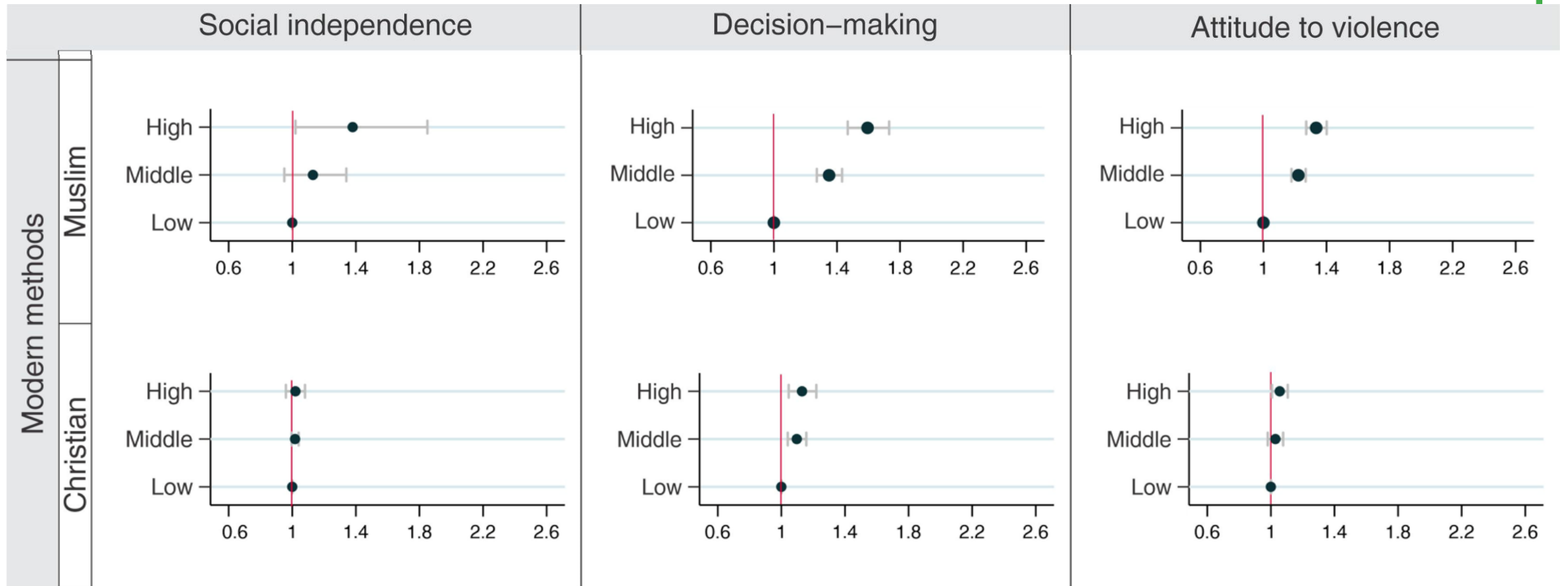
# Christians also have higher levels of demand for family planning satisfied

But the gap closes among the high empowered!



# Pooled prevalence ratios of mDFPS

Stronger effects among Muslim women, especially for the decision-making domain





# Essential takeaways

1

## **Double burden of social factors:**

Religion and women's empowerment interact in influencing family planning coverage

2

## **Empowerment reduces religion-based inequalities:**

More empowered women use contraceptives more and smaller gaps between Muslims and Christians

3

## **Cultural sensitivity matters:**

Policies need to ensure that reproductive health services are provided with respect and understanding

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Original research

BMJ Global Health

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**To cite:** Hellwig F, Wado Y, Barros AJD. Association between women's empowerment and demand for family planning satisfied among Christians and Muslims in multireligious African countries. *BMJ Glob Health* 2024;9:e013651. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2023-013651

**Handling editor:** Seema Biswas

► Additional supplemental material is published online only. To view, please visit the journal online (<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2023-013651>).

Received 7 August 2023  
Accepted 21 February 2024

Check for updates

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BMJ Hellwig F, et al. *BMJ Glob Health* 2024;9:e013651. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2023-013651

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# Thank you!

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