

Policy Levers to Reduce Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault

Literature Review and
Research Agenda

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PREVENTION
COLLABORATIVE
feminist inspired | evidence driven



Motivation: Policy as Opportunity

- Increasing emphasis on “delivering impact at scale”
- Potential for population-level impact of government policies, laws, regulations
- Policymaking is within governments’ expertise and authority
- Mismatch between current evidence-informed prevention models—which tend to be community or group based—and the core competencies and structure of government
- Under-explored literature on the potential impact of policy reform on IPV and sexual assault

Methodology: Scoping review

- Ongoing work
- Attempting to be comprehensive, rather than systematic
 - Citation networks of “seed” articles
 - Journal search using key terms
 - Working paper database searches
 - Web of Science and PubMed
- Inclusion criteria emphasize studies assessing *causal* impact of policies
- Review also references relevant evidence that does not meet all inclusion criteria
(e.g. different outcomes, associational, program not policy)

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY POLICY LEVERS?



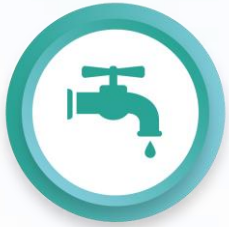
Education Policy



Alcohol Regulation



Social Protection



Infrastructure Investment



Justice Sector Reforms



Health Services



Family Law



Labor Market Policies



Leadership & Activism

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

PROXIMATE DETERMINANTS



**REDUCE WOMEN'S
EXPOSURE TO
VIOLENCE**



**REDUCE MEN'S
PROPENSITY
TO ABUSE**



**IMPROVE
RELATIONSHIP
DYNAMICS**

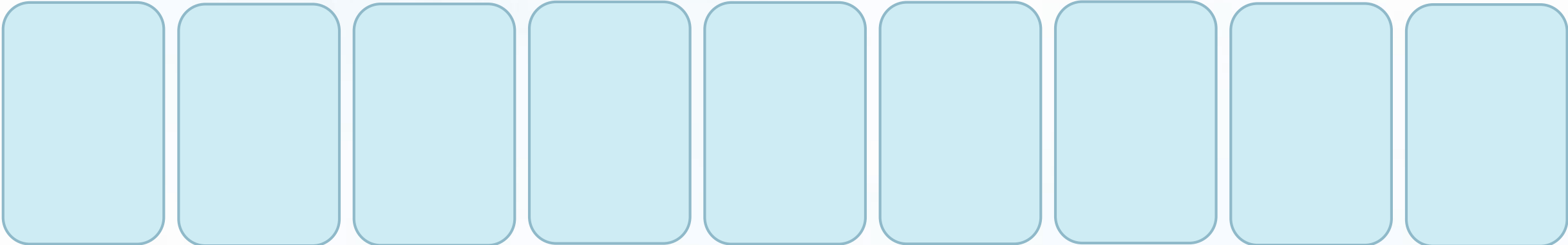


Reduce rates of intimate partner violence or sexual assault

Policies, Laws and Regulations



INTERMEDIARY PATHWAYS



REDUCE WOMEN'S EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE



REDUCE MEN'S PROPENSITY TO ABUSE



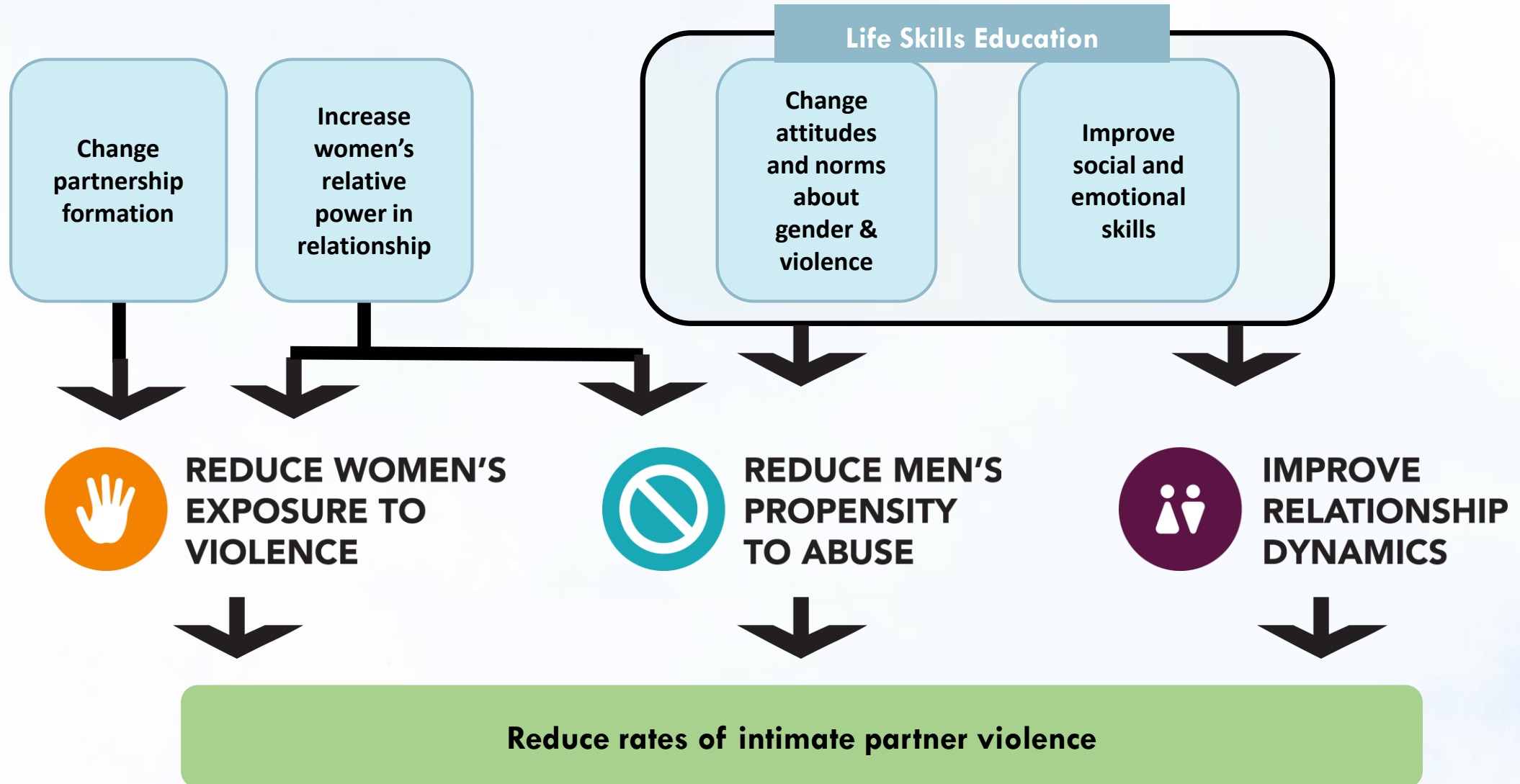
IMPROVE RELATIONSHIP DYNAMICS



Reduce rates of intimate partner violence or sexual assault



Example 1: Education policy





Example: Education policy

- Expansion of public primary school
- Increase # of years of compulsory education
- Stipends to retain girls in school
- Not yet explored:
 - Other ways of expanding access to schooling
 - Curriculum improvements or inclusion of specific skills, such as life skills and comprehensive sexual education

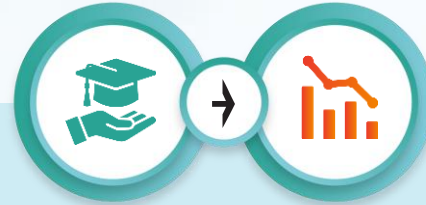
**9 studies
estimate causal
impact of
education policy**

Education policy impacts on IPV



Little to no impact of the expansion of primary school

Nigeria, Uganda, Malawi: No impact in Nigeria and Malawi. Decrease in lifetime sexual IPV in Uganda¹



Increasing years of compulsory school led to lower rates of IPV

Türkiye: Reductions in physical IPV, at least among rural population²

Peru: Reductions in all forms of IPV³



Stipend to support girls' retention in secondary school led to lower rates of IPV

Bangladesh: Reductions in physical IPV⁴

Mechanisms: most consistent support for better partner choice, some support for improved economic outcomes, no evidence of attitudinal change.

¹ Deschenes and Hotte 2023; Behrman, Peterman, and Palermo 2017

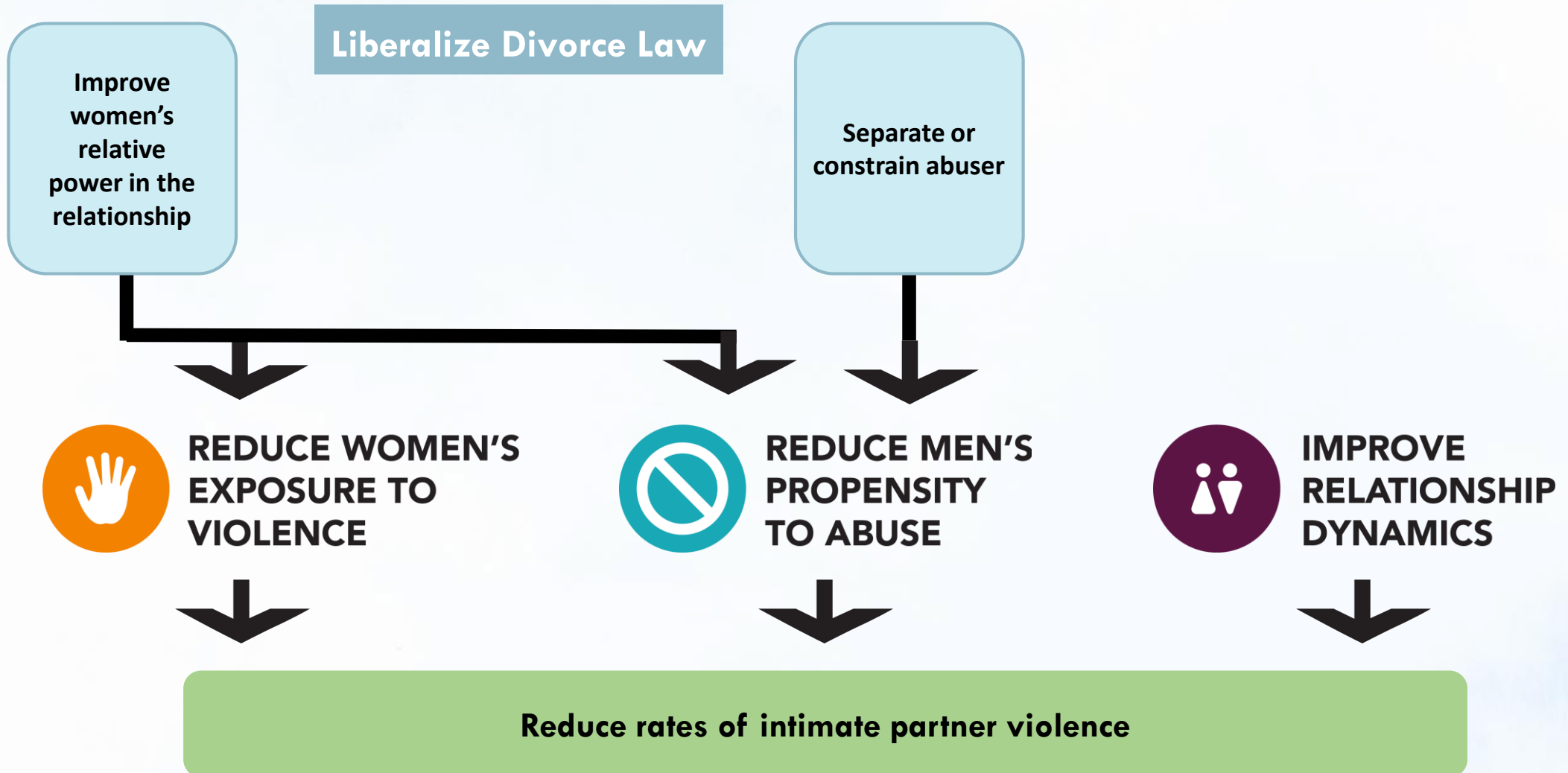
² Akyol and Kırdar 2022; Erten and Keskin 2022; Abdurahimov and Akyol 2020; Özer and Fidrmuc 2017

³ Weitzman 2018

⁴ Sara and Priyanka 2023



Example 2: Family Law





Example: Family Law (Divorce)

- Introduction of unilateral no-fault divorce
- IPV as legitimate cause for fault-based unilateral divorce
- Child custody laws – abusive partner not given equal say in custody decisions
- Not yet explored:
 - Support for implementation of law
 - Effects of legal reform in places where divorce is rare and not socially acceptable
 - Encouragement for civil marriage

**7 studies
estimate causal
impact of
divorce law
reform**

Divorce law impacts on IPV



Reforms to permit unilateral no-fault divorce most often led to lower rates of physical IPV.

- **United States, Egypt, Spain:** Reductions in physical IPV ¹
- **Mexico:** No short-term impact on IPV ²



IPV as a legitimate cause for fault-based divorce led to lower rates of IPV in some cases

- **Rwanda:** Reductions in physical and/or sexual IPV ³
- **Mexico:** No change on average, but decrease in IPV among social safety net households in reform states ⁴



Child custody regulations that penalize abusive partners led to lower rates of IPV.

- **Spain:** Decrease in IPV ⁵

Mechanisms: Most impact stems from lower rates of violence within relationships; not increases in divorce.

¹ Stevenson and Wolfers 2006; Corradini and Buccione 2022; Brassiolo 2016

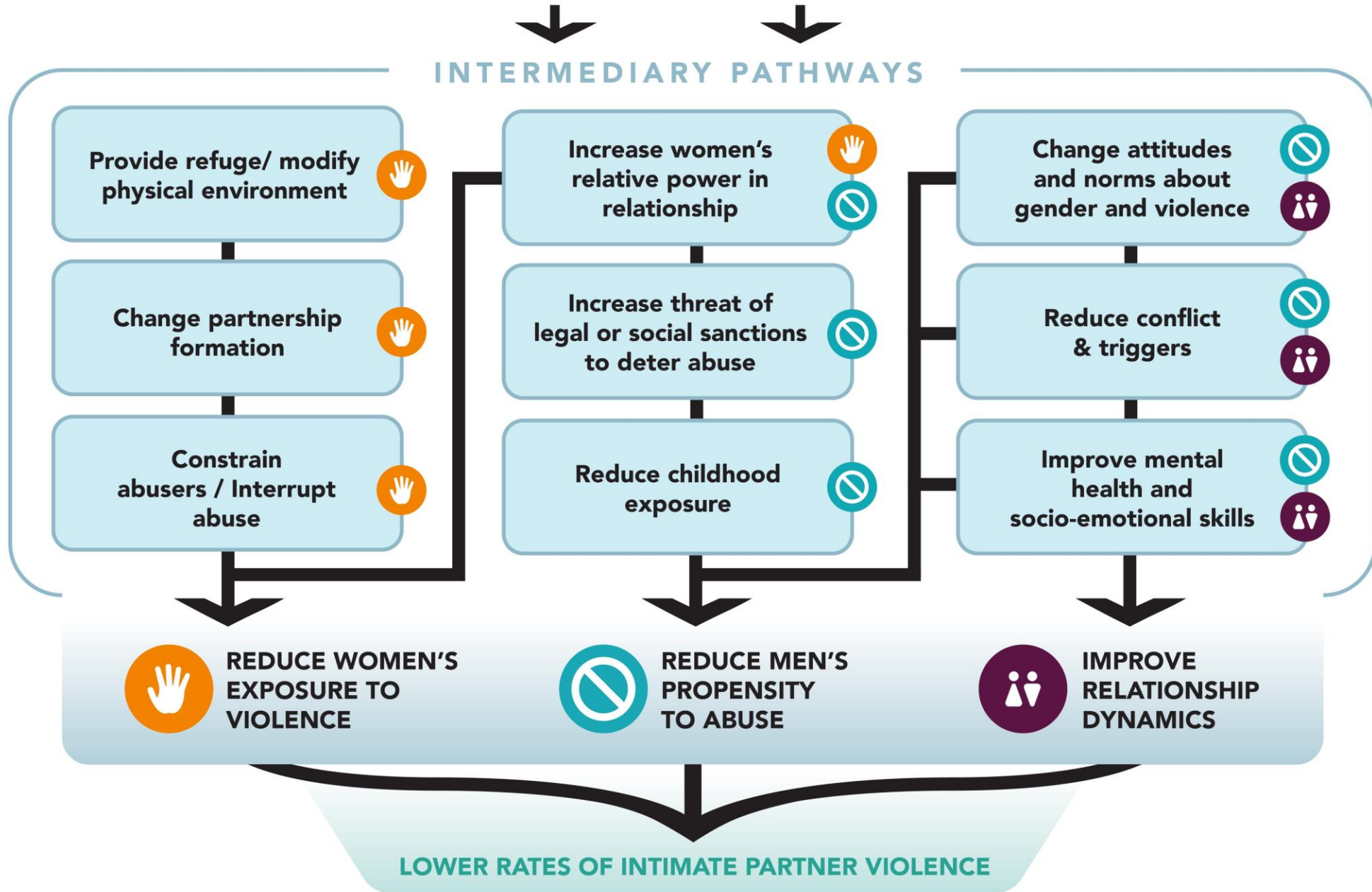
² Garcia-Ramos 2021

³ Sanin 2021

⁴ Bobonis et al 2020

⁵ Fernandez-Kranz et al. 2021

POLICIES LEVARS



A Research Agenda

Why?

- Policy reforms can have population-level effects.
- Policy reforms are within the mandate of government policy makers. This evidence can be used as a tool for advocacy and a framework for policy makers.

How?

- This type of research is possible.
- More research is needed!