Child Disciplinary Practices at Home. Evidence from a Range of Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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Expert consultation on data and research on violence against children,
Sweden 19 - 21 June 2012
Objectives and data sources

• Findings based on data from UNICEF-supported Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)

• Data on discipline collected (thought representative samples) for more than 500,000 children using 25 different languages

• Describe levels of violent and non-violent practices

• Identify risk and protective factors
Methods
UNICEF’s support for data collection: MICS

- Household surveys designed to assist countries in collecting reliable and internationally comparable data on children and women and to provide evidence base for improved policy formulation, programme planning and advocacy

- Key data source for monitoring the WSC goals, the MDGs, the World Fit for Children goals, and other major international commitments

- More than 100 indicators (nutrition, child health, mortality, child protection, education, HIV, etc.)

- Data available by background characteristics (sex, ethnicity, wealth, education, etc.) and at the sub-national level
Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)
Since 1995, more than 100 countries and more than 230 surveys*

*Countries with at least one MICS survey, including sub-national as well as ongoing surveys as of January 2012
**MICS methodology**

**Survey tools**
Developed by UNICEF after consultations with relevant experts from various UN organizations as well as with interagency monitoring groups.

**Implementation and capacity building**
Surveys carried out by government organizations, with the support and assistance of UNICEF and other partners.

Technical assistance and training provided through regional workshops
Child Discipline Module

• Questions addressed to family relatives/mothers or primary caregivers of one randomly selected child aged 2 to 14 years old.

• The questionnaire asked whether any member of the household had used any of various disciplinary practices with that child during the past month.

• 8 violent disciplinary practices: 2 psychological (such as shouting and name calling); 6 physical (such as shaking, spanking and hitting with an implement).

• 3 non-violent disciplinary practices (such as taking away privileges and explaining why something is wrong).

• Assesses mother/primary caregivers’ attitude toward physical punishment.
Child Discipline Module in MICS and DHS surveys

- MICS3 (2005-2007) 33 countries
- MICS4 (2010-2012) 42 countries (47 surveys)
- By including a module on Child Discipline, MICS has become the largest sources of comparable data on child disciplinary practices for the developing world
- Same module used in some DHS surveys

MICS4 countries with data on child discipline

Number of MICS4 countries with data on child discipline, by UNICEF region

- Eastern and Southern Africa: 4
- Middle East and North Africa: 6
- CEE/CIS: 7
- Latin America and the Caribbean: 9
- South Asia: 3
- West and Central Africa: 9
- East Asia and the Pacific: 4
Results
Violent discipline is widespread in most countries

Percentage of children aged 2–14 who have experienced violent discipline in the past month, 2005–2010

Bosnia and Herzegovina
Kyrgyzstan
Kazakhstan
Montenegro
Georgia
Serbia
Dominican Republic
Armenia
Ukraine
Belize
Fiji
Solomon Islands
Djibouti
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Albania
Azerbaijan
Guyana
Trinidad and Tobago
Taijikistan
Trinidad and Tobago
Guyana
Azerbaijan
Albania
Lao People's Democratic Republic
The former Yugoslav Republic of...
Non-violent methods used with almost all children

Percentage of children aged 2–14 who have experienced any non-violent discipline in the past month, 2005–2010

[Bar chart showing the percentage of children aged 2–14 who have experienced any non-violent discipline in the past month for various countries, ranked from lowest to highest.]

Vietnam: 100%
Ukraine: 99%
Suriname: 98%
Iraq: 97%
Yemen: 96%
Belarus: 95%
Sierra Leone: 94%
Guinea-Bissau: 93%
Azerbaijan: 92%
Montenegro: 91%
Belize: 90%
Georgia: 89%
Jamaica: 88%
Macedonia: 87%
Syria: 86%
Gambia: 85%
Algeria: 84%
Central African Republic: 83%
Togo: 82%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 81%
Albania: 80%
Cote d'Ivoire: 79%
Serbia: 78%
Trinidad and Tobago: 77%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 76%
Cote d'Ivoire: 75%
Trinidad and Tobago: 74%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 73%
Cote d'Ivoire: 72%
Trinidad and Tobago: 71%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 70%
Cote d'Ivoire: 69%
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Trinidad and Tobago: 11%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 10%
Cote d'Ivoire: 9%
Trinidad and Tobago: 8%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 7%
Cote d'Ivoire: 6%
Trinidad and Tobago: 5%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 4%
Cote d'Ivoire: 3%
Trinidad and Tobago: 2%
Bosnia and Herzegovina: 1%
Cote d'Ivoire: 0%
Trinidad and Tobago: 0%

Any non-violent
Non-violent methods are the most common form of discipline.

Percentage of children aged 2-14 who have experienced any violent and any non-violent discipline in the past month, 2005-2006.
Most households use both non-violent and violent disciplinary practices

Percentage of children aged 2–14 who have experienced only non-violent discipline and both non-violent and violent discipline in the past month, 2005–2006

- Non-violent discipline only
- Non-violent discipline combined with violent discipline
Shouting/yelling is the most common form of violent discipline

Table 7. Percentage of children aged 2–14 who experienced specific forms of violent discipline in the past month, 2005–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violent disciplinary practice</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shook him/her</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shouted, yelled at or screamed at him/her</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanked, hit or slapped him/her with bare hand</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit him/her on the bottom or elsewhere on the body with something like a belt, hairbrush, stick or other hard object</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called him/her dumb, lazy or another name like that</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit or slapped him/her on the face, head or ears</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hit or slapped him/her on the hand, arm or legs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat him/her up with an implement (hit over and over as hard as one could)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychological aggression and physical punishment go hand in hand

Only non-violent discipline
Psychological aggression without physical punishment
Physical punishment without psychological aggression
Both psychological aggression and physical punishment
No form of discipline listed in Child Discipline Module
Risk and Protective Factors
All children, regardless of their personal characteristics and family background, are at risk of violent discipline.

**FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS**
- Family wealth
- Family & primary caregiver’s education
- Number of household members
- Place of residence (urban/rural)
- Living arrangement (child living with mother only, father only, both, neither)
- Caregiver age (under 30/30-39/40+)
- Marital status

**CHILD CHARACTERISTICS**
- Child sex
- Child age
- Engagement in child labour

**CAREGIVER BEHAVIORS**
- Non-adult care
- Children’s & non-children’s books
- Educational & play activities
Risk and Protective Factors: Child characteristics
Child sex

- In about half of the countries surveyed (17 out of 33), there is no difference in the prevalence of violent discipline between boys and girls.

- In the remaining 16 countries, boys are more likely to be subject to violent disciplinary practices, but differences remain small.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weighted average</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Risk and Protective Factors: Family characteristics
## Family Wealth

- **Definition:**
  - Wealthiest 40 percent and poorest 60 percent
  - Relative not absolute wealth is measured

- In more than half of the countries with available data (17 out of 30), there is **no difference** in the prevalence of violent discipline between poorest and wealthiest children.

- In the rest of countries (12 out of the 30), children from the poorest 60 percent of households are more likely to receive a violent discipline, but overall differences remain small.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N = 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weighted average</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorest 60%</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthiest 40%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attitudes toward physical punishment
The large majority of mothers/primary caregivers do not think that physical punishment is necessary.

Percentage of mothers or primary caregivers who do not think that physical punishment is necessary, by country, 2005-2006.
When a mother thinks that physical punishment is necessary, her children are significantly more at risk of violent discipline.

Percentage of children aged 2–14 who experienced physical punishment in the past month according to the mother’s or primary caregiver’s belief in the need for physical punishment, by country, 2005–2006.
Implications

• Violent disciplinary practices are widespread

• When the mother thinks that physical punishment is necessary, her children are significantly more at risk of violent discipline

• This means that changing attitudes is important

• However, the findings also suggest that among children whose mothers do not think physical punishment is necessary, a large proportion are still experiencing it

• This suggests that changing attitudes may not always be sufficient to prevent physical punishment, as many children of mothers/caregivers who do not think it is necessary are still subject to it
Thank you

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