International Variations in Child Discipline: Harsh Discipline Around the World and What it Tells Us About Abuse

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Culture and child abuse

- society’s shared fund of ideas, beliefs & behaviors about social conduct

- “Culture is the negotiable template for daily life … that directs parents in their parenting tasks & helps define unacceptable acts”

- Culture includes the shared understandings among a group of people about how parents should raise their children.
**Measurement issues**

- Child abuse definitions & recognition vary by culture/country
- Few countries collect official child abuse data
- US has reputation for high homicide rate
- Largest literature on child abuse is in North America and Europe
- Widespread perception that child abuse is US problem!
Child discipline by parent report in the US

- Taking privileges: 85%
- Time-out: 79%
- Yelling: 75%
- Spanking: 45%
- Spanking (object): 25%
- Slapping face: 6%
- Pinching: 6%
Harsh discipline in past year

Overall 4.3%
- Hitting with object (not on buttocks) 3.4%
- Shaking <2 2.6%
- Kicking 0.3%
- Beating 0.3%
- Burning 0.2%
# US Harsh discipline rates by selected demographics (2003)

- **Age:**
  - 0-4 yrs: 2.8%
  - 5-8 yrs: 5.3%
  - 9-12 yrs: 5.9%
  - >12 yrs: 3.8%

- **Gender:**
  - Male: 3.4%
  - Female: 5.3%

- **Perpetrator**
  - Mother: 3.6%
  - Father: 2.2%
International data on physical abuse

- **Egypt**: a cross-sectional survey of children in 4th grade
  - 37% were beaten or tied-up & 26% reported physical injuries

- **South Korea**:
  - 69/1000 4th & 5th grade children report severe violence: (defined as kicking, beating, biting, throwing, or threatening with a knife or a gun *more than 2 times a month*)
  - Parent: 67% whipped & 45% hit, kicked or beat children
International data on physical abuse

 Romansia:

- 4.6% of children report severe & frequent abuse such as hit with object, burning, or being deprived of food.
- 47% of parents admit to beating their children “regularly” & 16% report beating with objects.
What other studies tell us about International Discipline:

- Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
- WorldSAFE
- ICAST
UNICEF’s efforts in data collection: MICS

- Household surveys to collect data on children & women
- Evidence base for policy, monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, World Fit for Children, & other international commitments
- >100 indicators (nutrition, mortality, child protection, HIV, etc.)
- Data by sex, ethnicity, wealth, education, etc. & at the sub-national level
Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS)
15 anos, 100 paises y 200 encuestas

Monitoring the situation of children and women
MICS countries since 1995
MICS methodology

- Survey tools developed by UNICEF after consultations with relevant experts.

- Implementation and capacity building:
  - Surveys carried out by government organizations, with UNICEF
  - Technical assistance & training provided to each country
  - Questionnaire content, sampling & survey implementation,
  - Data processing, data quality & data analysis, and
  - Report writing and dissemination)
MICS questionnaires/methods

- Three modular questionnaires for the data needs of a country.
  - Household questionnaire
  - Questionnaire for women aged 15-49
  - Questionnaire for children under the age of five (administered to the mother or caretaker)
- Data are collected during face-to-face interviews in nationally representative samples
- Complex cluster sampling design
Child Discipline Module in MICS

• Aims at measuring prevalence of violent and non-violent discipline methods used at home

• Uses as framework the CRC (1989):

  Article 19 of CRC: States Parties shall take all [...] measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.
Background

- Based on a Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale
- Measures how parents (or adults in general) use different tactics to teach children the right behavior or address a behavioral problem
- A set of questions (CD10-CD21) to calculate the indicator for children aged 2 to 14 years old
- The last question assesses attitude toward corporal punishment
Definition of violent discipline

- Psychological aggression: shouting, yelling & screaming, or addressing her or him with offensive names.

- Physical (or corporal) punishment: actions intended to cause the child physical pain or discomfort with no injuries: shaking the child; slapping or hitting him or her on the hand, arm, leg or bottom; hitting the child on the face, head or ears; or hitting the child hard or repeatedly.
MICS -3 Discipline Questions

- All Adult use certain ways to teach children... tell me if you or anyone else in your household has used... in the past month:
  - Took away privileges, forbade something (name) liked.
  - Explained why something was wrong
  - Shook him or her
  - Shouted, yelled or screamed
  - Gave him or her something else to do
  - Spanked, hit, or slapped on the bottom
  - Hit him/ her with something like a belt, stick, or object
  - Called him/ her dumb, lazy or another name
  - Hit or slapped on face or head
  - Hit or slapped on hand, arm or leg
  - Beat him / her up (hit over and over as hard as one could)
**UNICEF MICS3: Countries Analyzed (N = 162,127)**

- **Central & Eastern Europe**
  - Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Tajikistan, & Ukraine

- **Latin America & The Caribbean**
  - Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname, & Trinidad and Tobago

- **East Asia & The Pacific**
  - Lao & Vietnam

- **Middle East & North Africa**
  - Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq, Syria, & Yemen

- **West & Central Africa**
  - Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, & Togo
## Defining child discipline: Violent discipline subscales & Item prevalences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>MICS Items</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>3Q</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Violent Discipline Subscales</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological discipline</td>
<td>Shouted, yelled at, or screamed at him/her</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Called him/her dumb, lazy, or another name like that</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical discipline</td>
<td>Shook him/her</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spanked, hit or slapped him/her on the bottom with a bare hand</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<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>.22</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hit or slapped him/her on the hand, arm, or leg</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe physical discipline</td>
<td>Hit or slapped him/her on the face, head or ears</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beat him/her up with an implement (Hit over and over as hard as one could)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Percentage of Children Receiving Severe Violent (Physical) Discipline

Yemen: 0%
Central African Republic: 0%
Iraq: 0%
Guinea-Bissau: 0%
Cameroon: 0%
Togo: 0%
Algeria: 0%
Sierra Leone: 0%
Syria: 0%
Gambia: 0%
Cote d'Ivoire: 0%
Djibouti: 0%
Georgia: 0%
Kyrgyzstan: 0%
Ukraine: 0%
Belarus: 0%
Bosnia & Herzegovina: 0%
Trinidad & Tobago: 0%
Montenegro: 0%
Serbia: 0%
Lao: 0%
Jamaica: 0%
Albania: 0%
Suriname: 0%
Vietnam: 0%
Ghana: 0%
Macedonia: 0%
Guyana: 0%
Azerbaijan: 0%
Tajikistan: 0%
Burkina Faso: 0%
Georgia: 0%
Djibouti: 0%
Cote d'Ivoire: 0%
Gambia: 0%
Syria: 0%
Sierra Leone: 0%
Algeria: 0%
Togo: 0%
Cameroon: 0%
Guinea-Bissau: 0%
Iraq: 0%
Central African Republic: 0%
Yemen: 0%
CD13: Do you believe need to physically punish in order to raise child properly?

- **No**
- **Yes**

Country percentages:
- Montenegro: 100%
- Albania: 100%
- Bosnia & Herzegovina: 100%
- Serbia: 100%
- Kyrgyzstan: 100%
- Kazakhstan: 100%
- Macedonia: 100%
- Georgia: 100%
- Belarus: 100%
- Algeria: 100%
- Ukraine: 100%
- Suriname: 100%
- Tajikistan: 100%
- Lao: 100%
- Azerbaijan: 100%
- Lao: 100%
- Central African Republic: 100%
- Guyana: 100%
- Iraq: 100%
- Trinidad & Tobago: 100%
- Guinea-Bissau: 100%
- Belize: 100%
- Togo: 100%
- Gambia: 100%
- Djibouti: 100%
- Jamaica: 100%
- Burkina Faso: 100%
- Cote d'Ivoire: 100%
- Ghana: 100%
- Cameroon: 100%
- Yemen: 100%
- Vietnam: 100%
- Sierra Leone: 100%
- Syria: 100%
Family wealth (N=30): More violent discipline in poorest 60%

- Wealthiest 40%
- Poorest 60%

Bosnia &... Albania***
Lao***
Azerbaijan*
Macedonia***
Serbia***
Trinidad &...
Guyana***
Belarus*
Gambia**
Suriname**
Vietnam* Togo**
Family Education: Average (N = 26): Least violent discipline in households with “higher” education
Child gender (N = 33):
More violent discipline against boys

Albania**
Kazakhstan***
Kyrgyzstan***
Georgia***
Lao*
Ukraine***
Macedonia*
Azerbaijan***
Tajikistan**
Guyana**
Iraq***
Belarus***
Algeria***
Syria**
Central...
Vietnam**

Female
Male
Child age (N = 33): More violent discipline against 5-9 year olds

Kazakhstan***
Albania**
Georgia***
Lao***
Ukraine***
Guyana*
Tajikistan***
Guinea-
Belarus*
Iraq***
Gambia**
Algeria***
Central African...
Burkina Faso***
Syria***
Togo***
Jamaica**
Yemen**
Trinidad &...
Djibouti**
Sierra Leone***
WorldSAFE: World Studies of Abuse & the Family Environment

- An international project investigating violence toward women & children.
- WorldSAFE seeks to examine factors related to violent behavior, & see how these factors vary across cultures.
- Every WorldSAFE site has ties to community agencies or NGOs involved in violence against women or children.
Fielded *core survey questionnaires* for women, aged 15-49 with $\geq$ one dependent child

*Sampling* conducted in similar ways
- A defined population is selected.
- Random sample of households
- Within homes, a woman is randomly selected
- An Index Child is randomly chosen

*Interviews* of 1/2 hour in the home
19 samples in 6 countries (14 in India)

- Chennai non-slum
- NC & SC in USA
- Delhi Non-slum
- Manila, Philippines
- Trivandrum, India
- Temuco, Chile
- Ismailia, Egypt
- Trivandrum-rural
- Lucknow Non-slum
- Chennai slum
- Brazil slum
- Nagpur slum
- Vellore Non-slum
- Vellore Rural
- Nagpur rural
- Bhopal slum
- Lucknow rural
- Bhopal rural
- Delhi slum
Average years of maternal education

[Graph showing the average years of maternal education across different locations, with Chennai having the highest and slum Nagpur having the lowest.]
Parent-child conflict tactics scale

All adults use certain methods to teach children the right behavior or to address a problem.

I will read various methods that might be used & I want you to tell me how often you have used this with (child’s name) in the last year.

Tell me if you have done this to (child’s name): never, once or twice, or three or more times in the last year.
36 items about discipline

- Explained why something was wrong
- Told child to start or stop doing something
- Slapped face or head
- Made him/her stay in one place (time-out)
- Shook him/her
- Hit on buttocks with an object
Physical discipline in 5 countries

![Bar chart showing physical discipline in 5 countries: USA, Chile, Brazil, Egypt, Philippines. The chart uses different colors for Spank, Slap, Hit(object), and Beat-up.]
Physical discipline in India

![Bar chart showing physical discipline methods in various locations in India.](chart.png)
Notes on physical discipline

- In 11 of 14 Indian communities slapping face more common than spanking
- In Chile, Brazil & Philippines, spanking more common
- Beating-up reported in Egypt & in less educated communities of India
Non-physical discipline in 5 countries

- USA
- Chile
- Brazil
- Egypt
- Philippines

Legend:
- Yell
- Time Out
- take Privil.
Notes on non-physical discipline

- Yelling is frequent
- Time-out less common in developing countries
- Taking privileges away frequent in US, Chile and one Indian slum
Percent parental self-report of shaking children under 2 years of age
Percent parental self-report of harsh punishment (abuse?)
Percent parental self-report of harsh punishment (abuse?)

Correlation (years of maternal education & % harsh punishment) = -0.734
Notes on harsh punishment & shaking

- More than 10% of infants are shaken in every community but the US & Chennai
- Median rate of harsh punishment in low & middle income communities is 4 times the US
- In Bhopal the rate of harsh punishment is >30%
- India alone contains the lowest & highest rates
- Strong relationship to years of maternal education
World Report on Violence Against Children

- Paucity of population-based data in most countries.
- Most instruments developed in Western countries and translated (JVQ, PC CTS)
- Recommended scientists and policymakers develop a shared set of definitions and research tools
Summary and discussion

- World perception that US has biggest problem of child abuse
- Evolution of less violent approaches to discipline
- Survey data reveal that nearly all parents yell
- Spanking is common in the countries we studied
- 33 countries have outlawed corporal punishment
- 4.3% of US children are harshly physically punished
Summary II

- Low & middle income countries have a higher rate of harsh punishment, psychological punishment, & shaking
- 15% of children in low & middle income countries are physically abused each year
- Adding neglect & sexual abuse: many of world’s children are in harms way
- Following Dr. Kempe, it may be that generating knowledge and concern among physicians will lead to societal change.