

Positive and Negative Parenting, and Child Development Outcomes

Variation, Commonality and Possible Universals Across Multiple Countries

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1 The Scope of the Issue

- UNICEF considers children globally to be in crisis: political violence, climate change, and poverty affect many children,
- In this time of crisis, parenting is one crucial area of focus.
- According to UNICEF data, $\frac{1}{3}$ of children are subject to physical punishment; $\frac{2}{3}$ to some form of violent punishment.
- In a review of 50 years of literature on physical punishment, Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor (2016) connect physical punishment to poor mental health outcomes, and other poor outcomes over the life course. Ward et al. (2023) examines the relationship of multiple forms of parental discipline to child outcomes.

2 Both Universals and Variation Are Important

“Despite the incredible diversity existing among and within human cultures, there are many phenomena that occur regularly in all known societies. These commonalities, or universals, while deriving in part from human nature, may also have specific social, cultural, and systemic sources. We need to develop a working understanding of these universals so that we might advance legitimate, empirically based human science set on creating knowledge that is politically relevant to fostering real solutions to the problems that complicate human co-existence in the Age of the Anthropocene.” (Antweiler 2016)

3 Universals and Variation (2)

“Hanel, Maio, and Manstead (2019) cite research suggesting that ‘highlighting similarities between groups improves interpersonal and intergroup attitudes.’ Others have argued that ‘build[ing] bonds of commonality across our differences’ might be an impetus for social transformation (Hunt-Hendrix and Taylor 2024).”

4 Data

MICS data collected by UNICEF from Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) around the world. $N = 224,647$ families; $N_{countries} = 60$

5 Parenting Behaviors Vary *Somewhat*

Verbal reasoning (78%) and shouting (64%) are the most common parental discipline behaviors toward young children.

References

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