

KEY FINDINGS

- In the Dominican Republic, the prevalence of 3 of 6 physical punishments were significantly higher in 2019 compared to 2014 for both 1-4- and 5-14-year-olds, with spanking for the latter demonstrating the largest absolute increase (from 22.9% to 29.1%) (see Table 2).
- In contrast, prevalence of the 2 “psychological aggression” practices (yelling, name calling), significantly dropped for 5-14-year-olds.
- Additionally, there were significant increases in the prevalences of 2 of the 3 “non-violent” disciplinary practices for both age groups, with the largest increases for “taking away privileges”, particularly for 5-14-year-olds, increasing from 58.4% to 71.6%.

Background

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Indicator 16.2.1 provides a measure of children’s exposure to “violent discipline” in the home as part of SDG Target 16.2 which aims to eliminate all exposure of children to violence (1).
- Values for SDG Indicator 16.2.1 are based on a “yes” response from an adult in the child’s home as to the child’s exposure to any of 8 different punishments in the previous month (6 different physical punishments and 2 behaviours categorized as “psychological aggression” (2).
- Based on this indicator, there has been no reduction in child exposure to violent discipline in the Dominican Republic (DR) between 2014 (62.9%) and 2019 (63.5%) (3-4).
- However, this indicator has been criticized for combining disparate discipline types which may obscure identification of important changes in underpinning individual disciplinary practices (5- 7).

Research Objectives

- To determine, for the Dominican Republic, the change between 2014 and 2019 in the prevalence of the 8 disciplinary practices that make up SDG Indicator 16.2.1.
- To additionally determine whether there have been changes in the 3 disciplinary practices that are categorized as “non-violent” during this same time period.

Methods

Sample:

- Data was obtained from the 2014 and 2019 nationally representative household surveys (part of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey [MICS] program (8)) for the Dominican Republic.
- The sample used for this study was composed of households with 1-14-year-olds and which had complete information for all planned analysis. Given sample differences for children 1-4 and 5-14 years of age, results for these two age groups are analyzed and reported separately.

Key Measures:

The discipline module within the household survey asks an adult caregiver in the home whether any adult in the households used any of 11 disciplinary practices on a randomly select child in the household in the preceding month with “Yes/No” responses options for each. See Table 2 for list of the 11 disciplinary practices. Common composite measures used in UNICEF reports are included for completeness.

Analysis:

Complex Sampling program in SPSS 29.0 was used for all analyses. Weighting was used to generate nationally representative estimates for individual variables. Rao Scott chi-square was used to compare different prevalence values across the two time periods. Logistic regression models were used to generate odds ratios to compare values across time periods while adjusting for child age.

Unadjusted p values are reported, but only findings significant at a conservative p value of <0.0023 are discussed (based on Bonferroni Correction for Multiple Comparison, $0.05/22 = 0.0023$ [11 individual disciplinary practices X 2 age groups=22]).

Table 1. Sample characteristics by survey year within age groups

Categorical Variables	Children 1-4 years of age		Children 5-14 years of age	
	2014 N=8,814 ¹ % ²	2014 N=8,814 ¹ % ²	2014 N=9,913 ¹ % ²	2019 N=9,495 ¹ % ²
Child sex				
Male	+	50.7	+	50.2 (4824)
Female	+	49.3	+	49.8 (4671)
Residence				
Urban	75.6	75.9	74.9 (6376)	75.4 (6488)
Rural	24.4	24.1	25.1 (3537)	24.6 (3007)
Wealth index				
Poorest quintile	21.5	20.2	18.0 (2593)	16.0 (2234)
2nd quintile	20.5	23.0	21.9 (2304)	21.2 (2153)
3rd quintile	20.7	20.0	21.0 (1932)	21.3 (2026)
4th quintile	19.6	19.5	19.7 (1633)	21.5 (1689)
Richest quintile	17.7	17.2	19.4 (1451)	20.1 (1393)
Child age (months)		*		
12-23	25.0	26.8	NA	NA
24-35	26.2	24.0		
36-47	24.6	23.0		
48-59	24.1	26.2		
Continuous variables	Mean (SE)	Mean (SE)	Mean (SE)	Mean (SE)
Child age (years)	NA	NA	9.62 (0.045)	9.16 (0.043)***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (based on 2nd order Rao Scott adjusted chi-square for categorical variable and t-tests for continuous variables using a general linear program within SPSS Complex Sample Plan)

SE=standard error; NA=not applicable

+ =not available at time of analysis. Given random sampling procedure, should be very close to 50-50.

1. N is unweighted; 2. % is weighted

Table 2. Comparison of prevalence of discipline types by survey year within age groups

Categorical Variables	Children 1-4 years of age		Children 5-14 years of age	
	2014 N=8,814 ¹ %[95%CI] ²	2019 N=8,814 ¹ %[95%CI] ²	2014 N=9,913 ¹ %[95%CI] ²	2019 N=9,495 ¹ %[95%CI] ²
Physical				
Spanked	35.0 [33.4, 36.7]	39.9 [38.0, 41.8]***	22.9 [21.6, 24.3]	29.1 [27.8, 30.4]***
Hit with object	10.5 [9.6, 11.4]	15.2 [13.8, 16.7]***	16.1 [14.9, 17.4]	21.5 [20.2, 22.8]***
Shook	15.2 [13.8, 16.6]	13.2 [11.9, 14.6]*	17.8 [16.6, 19.1]	16.6 [15.5, 17.7]
Hit on limb	8.6 [7.7, 9.6]	9.7 [8.5, 11.1]	6.3 [5.6, 7.2]	8.7 [7.8, 9.8]***
Hit on head	1.4 [1.1, 1.8]	1.7 [1.2, 2.3]	3.1 [2.6, 3.7]	3.1 [2.6, 3.7]
Beat up	0.3 [0.2, 0.5]	1.0 [0.7, 1.6]***	0.7 [0.5, 1.1]	1.1 [0.8, 1.4]
Psychological aggression				
Yelled	48.3 [46.6, 50.0]	45.6 [43.6, 47.6]*	51.6 [50.0, 53.3]	48.0 [46.5, 49.5]***
Name called	3.4 [2.9, 3.9]	2.9 [2.2, 3.6]	16.8 [15.7, 18.0]	14.3 [13.3, 15.4]*** ³
Composites ⁴				
Any physical	45.9 [44.1, 47.6]	49.3 [47.3, 51.3]*	38.6 [37.0, 40.1]	44.1 [42.7, 45.5]***
Any psychological	48.9 [47.2, 50.6]	46.2 [44.3, 48.3]	55.2 [53.5, 56.8]	51.9 [50.4, 53.4]**
SDG 16.2.1	61.2 [59.6, 62.9]	61.9 [60.0, 63.7]	62.8 [61.3, 64.6]	63.6 [62.1, 65.0]
Non-violent		*		
Explained	60.1 [58.3, 61.9]	63.8 [61.5, 65.9]*	74.1 [72.6, 75.6]	83.7 [82.5, 84.8]***
Privileges	35.8 [34.2, 37.4]	46.4 [44.2, 48.5]***	58.4 [56.9, 60.0]	71.6 [70.3, 72.9]***
Gave something	16.9 [15.5, 18.3]	20.9 [19.2, 22.7]***	24.3 [22.9, 25.7]	26.3 [24.7, 27.9]

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (based on 2nd order Rao Scott adjusted chi-square for categorical variable);

C.I.=Confidence Intervals

1. N is unweighted; 2. % is weighted; 3. p=0.0016

4. Composite measures are included for completeness: “Any physical” is a yes response to any of the 6 relevant questions; “Any psychological” is a yes response to any of the 2 relevant questions. SDG 16.2.1 is a yes response to any of the 8 questions

Table 3. Odds ratios (O.R.) from adjusted binomial logistic regression of discipline type across time with 2014 as reference and adjusting for child age

Discipline type	1-4 year olds N=14,091 O.R. [95% CI]	5-14 year olds N=19,408 O.R. [95% CI]
Physical		
Spanked	1.24 [1.11, 1.38]***	1.30 [1.18, 1.44]***
Hit with object	1.56 [1.34, 1.81]***	1.38 [1.23, 1.56]***
Shook	0.85 [0.72, 0.99]*	0.91 [0.81, 1.02]
Hit on limb	1.16 [0.96, 1.40]	1.37 [1.14, 1.65]***
Hit on head	1.18 [0.78, 1.77]	1.01 [0.79, 1.30]
Beat up	3.24 [1.81, 5.81]***	1.39 [0.84, 2.31]
Psychological aggression		
Yelled	0.90 [0.81, 1.00]	0.85 [0.79, 0.93]***
Name called	0.84 [0.63, 1.13]	0.87 [0.78, 0.98]*
Composite		
Any physical	1.16 [1.04, 1.29]**	1.20 [1.10, 1.31]***
Any psychological	0.90 [0.81, 1.01]	0.87 [0.80, 0.96]***
SDG 16.2.1	1.04 [0.93, 1.15]	1.01 [0.92, 1.11]
Non-violent		
Explained	1.20 [1.05, 1.36]** 1	1.77 [1.57, 1.98]***
Privileges	1.62 [1.44, 1.82]***	1.77 [1.61, 1.94]***
Gave something	1.32 [1.13, 1.53]***	1.11 [0.99, 1.24]

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (based on adjusted binary logistic regression model); C.I.=Confidence Intervals

1. p=0.006

Discussion

- Concerns have been raised as to the potential lack of sensitivity of SDG indicator 16.2.1 to detect meaningful change over time (9). Findings from this study support this concern, given the lack of difference in the prevalence of the SDG indicator between 2014-2019, obscuring significant changes in several individual disciplinary behaviours.
- A reconsideration of the adequacy of SDG Indicator 16.2.1 is needed. In the interim, analyzing the individual disciplinary items could provide more nuanced information to inform tailored and targeted service and policy initiatives at the country level.
- Further inquiry is needed to identify the drivers of the pattern of change in individual disciplinary practices over time in the Dominican Republic. In particular, the lack of drop in physical punishment over time in contrast to other Caribbean countries (e.g., Jamaica (10)).