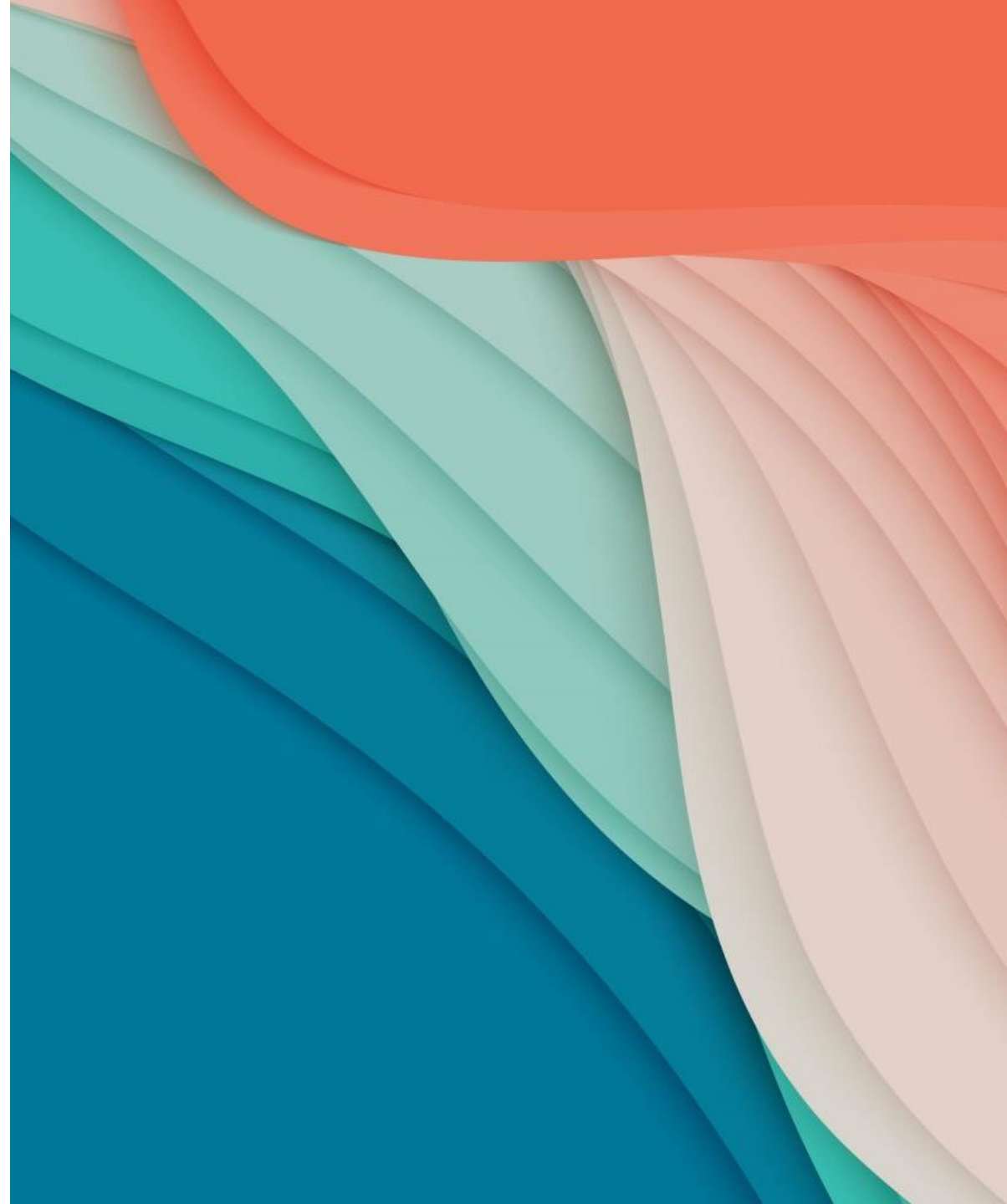

HITTING AS PART OF CHILD DISCIPLINE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: BELIEFS AND ATTITUDES

ISPCAN

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Population: 11 million (est.)

Economic classification:
Upper-middle income



PREVALENCE OF HITTING TYPES OF CHILD PUNISHMENTS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (2019)

Hitting type	1-4 year old N=5,277	5-14 year olds N=9,495
Spanked	40%	29%
Hit with object	15%	22%
Shook	13%	17%
Hit on limb	10%	9%
Hit on head	2%	3%
Beat up	1%	1%
Any	49%	44%

Higher prevalence than:

- Cuba
- Trinidad & Tobago

Lower prevalence than:

- Haiti
- Jamaica

SINGLE SURVEY BELIEF QUESTION

Do you believe that in order to bring up, raise, or educate a child properly, the child needs to be physically punished?

6.4% of respondents in the Dominican Republic (MICS 2014)

8.8% of respondents in the Dominican Republic (MICS 2019)

OUR QUALITATIVE STUDY/METHODS

- **A component of a larger study called:** “Improving the measurement of child exposure to parent disciplinary behaviour in low- and middle-income countries”
 - **Component Phase 1A:** explored the range and nature of child discipline from perspectives of parents and other caregivers (e.g., grandmothers) caring for children between 1-14 years of age in the household
 - **Location:** A single lower-income community in the western section of Greater Santo Domingo
 - **Principal data source:** Semi-structure interviews with “parents”
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MORE ON METHODS

- Most interviews completed by an experienced female Dominican researcher (Miki Perez)
 - Qualitative analytic approach jointly conducted by Miki Perez and first author (a Canadian methodologist with extensive background in the Dominican Republic)
 - Primarily employed a qualitative descriptive approach, as outlined by Sandelowski (2000, 2010), and included systematic coding within NVIVO
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PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS (N=32)

Participant type ¹	%
Mother	59.4
Grandmother	23.5
Father	12.5
Aunt	6.3
Sister	3.1

1. Some had more than one role

Participant Age	%
18-29 years	31.2
30-44 years	40.6
45-59 years	15.6
60+ years	12.5

Participant Education	%
8 th grade or less	25.0
9 th – 11 th completed grade	15.6
12 th grade completed	28.1
At least some university	31.3

Note: at time of submission of conference abstract, N=27

COMMON, BUT NOT IN MY HOME

- *“Oh, I see some people hitting their children, but on the contrary, I don't hit my child ...”*
(Interview 17)
 - *“Oh, yo veo algunas personas que le dan sus golpes a los niños, pero lo contrario, yo no le doy golpes a mi niño...”* (I17)
 - *“Well, at least I don't use hitting as punishment... [but], I always see them hitting... with hitting, many use a belt, flip-flops, that's the most common”* **(Interview 13)**
 - *“Bueno, por lo menos yo no uso el castigo de golpes....[pero], yo siempre veo que le dan pela...con la pela muchos usan la correa, las chancletas eso es lo más común”* (I13)
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OUGHT NOT TO BE USED; CAN BE HARMFUL

- In response to an open-ended question on what punishments ought not to be used
 - 75% (n=24) identified hitting
- Several negative outcomes were spontaneously described, particularly that it could make the child more violent/aggressive, could traumatize the child, or cause physical injury



INEFFECTIVE

- In response to open-ended questions on what punishments thought to be most effective, only 1 respondent indicated hitting.
 - ***“Well, hitting with flip-flops, hitting with the belt” (Interview #7)***
 - *“Bueno, los chancletazos, las pelas con la correa” (I7)*
 - Several respondents spontaneously questioned its effectiveness
 - ***“There are many people who say that hitting doesn’t straighten them out” (Interview # 2)***
 - *“Hay muchas personas que dice que los golpes no los remedian” (I2)*
 - ***“Hitting doesn’t sort them out” (Interview #17)***
 - *“Los golpes no arreglan” (I17)*
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BUT THERE MIGHT BE EXCEPTIONS...

- ***“If the child is 6 or 7 years old and is very stubborn (disobedient), you can give him a little hit on his legs.” (Interview 1)***
 - *“Si el niño tiene 6 o 7 años y es muy cabeza dura(desobediente) se le puede dar una pelita por las piernitas.” (I1)*
 - ***“Yes, sometimes in life, sometimes - a spanking (to be hit) prevents many things, for example: a child of 10 to 11 years old, if the mother sees that he is going down the wrong path, that child needs a spanking (to be hit).” (Interview #32)***
 - *“Si, a veces en la vida, a veces- una pela evita muchas cosas, por ejemplo: un niño de 10 a 11 años, si la madre lo ve que va por un mal camino, a ese niño le hace falta una pela.” (I32)*
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...BUT WITH LIMITS

- [Punishments that should not use]: *“Beating children with a stick, rod, or belt. Except with a flip-flop, a mother may grab a flip-flop and slap the child on the feet a couple of times.” (Interview #8)*
 - [Castigos que no deben utilizarse]: *“Darles golpes a los niños con palo, vara, correa. Excepto con chancleta, una madre puede agarrar una chancleta y darle dos chancletazos por los pies.” (I8)*
 - [Punishments that should not use]: *At least the hitting with a stick, with a belt that hurts / damages the child. (Interview #11)*
 - [Castigos que no deben utilizarse]: *“Por lo menos darle golpe con palo, con un cinturón eso a un niño le hace daño.” (I11)*
 - [Punishments that should not use]: *“Hit him with a strap / belt.” (Interview #2)*
 - *“Pegarle con correa.” (I2)*
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IDEAS STEMMING FROM STUDY

- Common ...but not in our household...
 - Study in Kenya in which use of physical punishment seemed to decrease over time, but respondents' perception was that it was increasing (Alampay et al, 2022). This paper raised the question about “pluralistic ignorance” –entailing a misalignment between about perception of self and other's behaviours (Pronin, 2008)

IDEAS STEMMING FROM STUDY

- When do people perceived physical punishment is abusive? Similar ideas explored in a study in Zimbabwe (Patel et al., 2021):
 - *“There are times when a [child] can be beaten in a way that [parents/caregivers] think is reasonable. That child will be beaten using hands not a whipping stick because it is [not] reasonable to be beaten with stick so will [be] slapped [instead]...”* (p.5)
 - Could some of these perspectives align with a harm reduction orientation?
 - A concept and approach most developed regarding substance use/misuse (Marlatt, 1996).
 - Potentially there is more extensive popular support for targeting the reduction or elimination of more extreme physical punishment (e.g., hitting with a hard object)
 - Harm reduction is not anti-abstinence (Marlatt, 1996)...so not anti-corporal punishment ban
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LIMITATIONS

- Sample limited in geography (e.g., rural) and diversity (e.g., relative wealth)
 - This particular study is primarily aimed at exploring the nature and measurement of disciplinary practices, not primarily a study of attitudes and beliefs – so not as in-depth exploration of attitudes and beliefs
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NEXT STEPS, FUTURE PURSUITS

- Within the qualitative data, we are also working on exploring perceptions of respondents as to child protection law, and attitudes about a spanking ban, in the Dominican Republic
 - Some ideas will be further pursued in the quantitative study phase, although again its primarily focused on testing the reliability and validity of MICS discipline items used in SDG16.2.1 and new and modified items
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