

Parental discipline of children: results of a national family health survey in the occupied Palestinian territory

Samia Halileh, Mahasin F Saleh

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Institute of Community and
Public Health, Birzeit
University, Ramallah,
West Bank, occupied
Palestinian territory
(S Halileh FRCPCH); and School
of Social Work, University
of Nevada, Reno, NV, USA
(M F Saleh PhD)

Correspondence to:
Dr Samia Halileh, Institute of
Community and Public Health,
Birzeit University, PO Box 14,
Ramallah, West Bank, occupied
Palestinian territory
samia@birzeit.edu

For the Pan Arab Project for
Family Health survey see [www.
pcbcs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbcs/
PressRelease/English_Report.pdf](http://www.pcbcs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbcs/PressRelease/English_Report.pdf)

Background Families are the main protectors of their children. However, the prevalence of violence against children by parents and other family members is well documented. Forms of child discipline are determined by a wide range of factors. The aims of this study were to assess the use and determinants of different disciplinary practices used by parents of children aged 2–14 years in the occupied Palestinian territory, and to identify parents and children at high risk of violence for service provision that includes effective counselling and prevention.

Methods The Pan Arab Project for Family Health survey, 2006, included seven questions about the use of some disciplinary methods to teach children aged 2–14 years proper behaviour. The Kish table method was used to select one child per family. The interviewee was asked whether he or she or any members of the household had used these disciplinary methods with the child during the past month. 8643 families with a child in this age group answered these questions. Questions about discipline were classified as two new variables: nurturing discipline (2489 [29%] of 8643) and aggressive discipline (3529 [41%]). Bivariate analysis was used with nurturing and aggressive discipline as dependent variables, and 18 sociodemographic variables that included child, parent, and household characteristics. Of the new sociodemographic variables that were computed, the most important were two that were defined by amenities that were indicative of wealth (ie, car, central heating, DVD or video cassette recorder, and dishwasher) and the family's intellect (ie, use of computer, internet, and library). Those significant in the bivariate analysis were then analysed with logistic regression.

Findings Girls were less likely to be disciplined than were boys, and a rise in the number of children at home increased the likelihood of children being aggressively disciplined. Increase in the mother's education and working outside the home increased the practice of nurturing discipline and reduced the practice of aggressive discipline. Aggressive discipline was practised much more often in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank, occupied Palestinian territory. Nurturing discipline was more likely to be used by families living in rural areas and less likely by families living in the camps. Non-refugee families, irrespective of their residence, were less likely to practise nurturing discipline. The presence of amenities at home that indicated intellect greatly increased the likelihood of the use of nurturing discipline and reduced the likelihood of the use of aggressive discipline. Families having amenities at home indicating wealth were less likely to practise nurturing discipline.

Interpretation The newly computed variable defined by household amenities indicating intellect describes a new category of families, with low and high incomes, that nurture their children.

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Contributors

SH did the statistical analysis and most of the writing. MFS contributed intellectually to the writing and preparation of the Abstract.

Conflicts of interest

We declare that we have no conflicts of interest.

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