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# Risk factors for violent child discipline in São Tomé and Príncipe

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## Abstract

**Background, aims and objectives.** Violence against children is pervasive globally (1, 2) and has detrimental impacts on individuals, households and societies (3, 4). Research has underscored violent discipline specifically as a risk factor for societal violence; and the approval and prevalence of violent discipline has been linked to the use or endorsement of other forms of violence. A better understanding of prevalence and risk and protective factors, including social norms, related to violent discipline in São Tomé and Príncipe (STP) are needed to inform programming for violence prevention and response. This study aims to understand prevalence and risk and protective factors for violence against children and adolescents in STP.

**Methods.** Secondary data used in this analysis come from nationally representative data on households with children from the 2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). Data were analysed using multivariable logistic regression, where separate regressions were run for the following outcomes: any violent discipline, physical discipline, psychological discipline, and severe violent discipline. Risk and protective factors at the child (age, sex, residence with biological parents, inadequate supervision), caregiver (age, education, alcohol use, poverty, household size, attitudes towards violence), and community levels (region, urban/rural) were included as independent variables.

**Results.** More than 8 in 10 children aged 1 to 14 years experienced any violent discipline in the previous month, and 14.2 per cent of children experienced severe physical punishment. Risk factors for violent discipline in STP included poverty, young caregiver age, caregiver's use of alcohol, inadequate supervision, and social norms surrounding acceptance of violence (both belief in the need for physical punishment of children and acceptance of intimate partner violence).

**Recommendations.** In STP, UNICEF and government partners working in the areas of child protection, education and adolescent development have recently made strides in advancing policy and programmatic frameworks around violence including referral and response protocols. However, there are gaps in understanding social norms and risk factors for violent discipline. Findings from our study Findings will underscore the importance of addressing this issue and help priority setting and investment decisions by UNICEF and Government.

## **Violence Definitions (MICS 2019)**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Any violent discipline	Any psychological or physical
Psychological aggression	1. Shouted, yelled at or screamed at; or 2. Called dumb or lazy
Physical punishment	1. Shook them; or 2. Spanked, hit or slapped on the bottom with bare hand; or 3. Hit on the bottom or elsewhere on the body with something like a belt, hairbrush, stick or other hard object; or 4. Hit or slapped on the hand, arm, or leg; or 5. Hit or slapped on the face, head or ears; or 6. Beat up, that is, hit over and over as hard as one could
Severe physical punishment	1. Hit or slapped on the face, head or ears; or 2. Beat up, that is, hit over and over as hard as one could
Only non-violent discipline	1. Took away privileges, forbade something they liked or did not allow them to leave the house; or 2. Explained why behavior was wrong; or 3. Gave something else to do

\*Percentage of children who experienced each type by caregivers in the past one month.

## **References**

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