

Exploring the needs, attitudes, and barriers to supportive parenting practices among Ukrainian caregivers in Poland



This report was prepared by the UNICEF Refugee Response Office in Poland in collaboration with the Institute of Mother and Child Foundation, and SWPS University

THE COMPOSITION OF THE PROJECT (RESEARCH) TEAM:

UNICEF:	Anastasiya Atif (Nurzhynska), Agnieszka Sochoń-Latuszek, Katarzyna Kukuła, Kseniia Yoruk.
IMCF:	Dorota Kleszczewska, Anna Dzielska, Joanna Mazur, Katarzyna Lewtak, Tomasz Maciejewski.
SWPS University:	Wojciech Białaszek, Jakub Krawiec, Przemysław Marcowski.
Triangle:	Klaudia Jankowska-Maddison, Michal Misiak, Nizar Ghanem, Ljiljana Sinickovic, Ylva van den Berg, Shaya Laughlin.
LSE:	Sarah Balistreri.

Acknowledgements

Our deepest appreciation goes to the parents from Ukraine living in Poland who participated in this study, as well as to the Ukrainian-speaking psychologists in Poland who contributed with their insights. Their willingness to share experiences, opinions, and needs has been crucial to deepening our understanding of the challenges and strengths in the context of positive parenting practices among Ukrainian refugee families.

We are grateful to our partners at the Institute of Mother and Child Foundation for their unwavering support in this research. We extend our sincere thanks to SWPS University for their invaluable assistance in the analysis and methodology. We also thank the students at the London School of Economics (LSE) for their dedication and significant contributions to the study.

Acknowledgment is also due to the collaborative effort and shared commitment of all involved in this project. It is through this collective dedication that we can move towards meaningful action based on the evidence gathered through this study.

Table of Contents

Background	5
Key Findings	7
Methodology	8
Qualitative Research Findings	10
Quantitative Research Findings	16
Experiment: Testing different Behavioral Interventions	25
Recommendations	29

Acronyms

BDM	Behavioral Drivers Model
BeSD	The Behavioral and Social Drivers
CAWI	Computer Assisted Web Interviewing
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
PP	Positive Parenting
SBC	Social and Behavior Change
KII	Key Informant Interview

Background

Since the start of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, Poland has been on the frontline of the refugee crisis. Following the March 2022 approval of the EU Temporary Protection Directive¹, more than 1.7 million Ukrainian refugees have registered for temporary protection in Poland. Currently, around 950,000 Ukrainian refugees remain registered in the system. 55% of those registered are women, 7% are older persons, and 38 % are children.

UNICEF supports positive parenting programs for Ukrainians and host community in Poland to help families cope with the challenges of displacement and to enhance the resilience and well-being of both parents and children. For instance, “Growing up together” is a series of workshops for parents of young children, part of UNICEF’s broader parenting support program, «The first three are the most important!» The program aims to create a supportive community where parents can seek answers to common parenting questions using specialist literature. The workshops address topics such as improving parent-child relationships, setting boundaries, managing stubbornness and anger, understanding child needs, and boosting child confidence. The series includes 11 two-hour workshops combining theoretical lectures, practical exercises, and discussions. They are held weekly in Warsaw’s public nurseries, with participation that is free of charge and childcare provided during sessions.

The «Empowered (Dodać Się/ДОДАТИ СИЛ!) program supports Ukrainian parents and caregivers by enhancing their well-being and equipping them with skills to better support their children during adversity. The main objectives are to provide professional support and tools for effective communication, parenting, and fostering a positive family atmosphere. The program includes theoretical foundations and practical workshops on resilience, active listening, emotional expression, communication, self-esteem, conflict resolution, and goal setting. To date, 141 trainers (41 Ukrainian and 100 Polish) have been trained, and 60 parent groups with approximately 590 participants have been formed.

To gain a deeper understanding of the well-being and family dynamics of Ukrainian children and adolescents living in Poland, UNICEF Refugee Response Office in Poland conducted further consultations together with Save the Children, and Plan International, which were then summarized in the report «It is cool here, no doubt about it... but home is home.» These consultations provided valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by Ukrainian families in Poland, particularly regarding parenting dynamics.

Many children expressed that they did not always feel included in family decisions, and some felt that their opinions differed from those of their parents. Additionally, the displacement and new environment led to disrupted family ties and increased stress, contributing to tension and arguments between children and their mothers. Mothers often had to navigate the new reality and manage work, which left them with less time for their children, further impacting family dynamics.

Recognizing the unique needs of families in these circumstances, this research specifically focused on understanding their special requirements and behaviors. We employed UNICEF’s Behavioral Drivers Model to analyze the social, psychological, and environmental factors influencing family dynamics. This model provided a comprehensive understanding of the various influences on parenting practices and family interactions, helping to tailor behavioural interventions more effectively.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of our research. The scope primarily covers the perceptions and experiences of parents and children regarding family dynamics and parenting practices amidst displacement. It does not address the prevalence of specific parenting challenges or the broader psychosocial support needs within this population. Additionally, the study does not thoroughly explore systemic barriers that might impact the implementation and effectiveness of positive parenting programs. Further research is needed to understand these aspects comprehensively and to develop more targeted interventions.

¹ Ukraine Emergency - UNHCR Poland Factsheet (01 May 2023) - Poland | ReliefWeb

Key Findings

Highlighting critical insights into the needs, attitudes, and barriers to effective supportive parenting practices among Ukrainian caregivers residing in Poland.

PARENTING PRACTICES

Parenting practices of Ukrainian caregivers in Poland:

There is a clear difference between our qualitative and quantitative research results on positive parenting practices. The quantitative study shows that parents frequently engage in supportive behaviors and maintain good oversight of their children's activities. However, the qualitative results reveal that many parents in Ukraine continue the negative practices they grew up with, making it difficult to adopt new, supportive methods. During the interviews both psychologists and caregivers from Ukraine report that these practices are typically more severe than those observed among Polish families.

Impact of Children's Age on Parenting Practices:

Caregivers of children under 10 exhibit higher levels of positive parenting. It could become harder to maintain these practices as children grow older.

Influence of the Number of Children on Parenting Practices:

More children in a family are associated with higher levels of inconsistent discipline and poor supervision, and lower levels of positive parenting.

RELEVANCE OF THE PARENTING PROGRAMS BEING OFFERED

Sharing experiences:

The survey asked respondents about their belief in the benefits of parenting workshops. Majority of the respondents agree that these workshops could improve their methods. Parents especially value these workshops for sharing experiences and realizing they are not alone in their challenges.

Closed groups can be effective as positive parenting workshops. They can foster resilience and stress resistance by providing a supportive environment for parents.

"(...) (It) is important because they will share their experiences with each other, and we talk about it, and how do you do it, and how do you do it, and then they begin to realize that I am not alone. I would hear an example from someone else, and we do it like this. And then we have this discussion, and we talk about it, and they really do, and it helps them in raising their children." – Psychologist from Poland

"Closed groups work very well, either women's groups or mixed closed groups, I mean, psychological groups. Resilience and stress resistance work well, and what is relevant now, how to deal with stress, works." – Psychologist from Poland

Interest in Workshops but Lack of Action:

Despite high interest in parenting workshops, participation is low. While 70% of respondents indicated some likelihood of attending, 86% have not participated in any workshops.

“There are many foundations offering psychological help but realizing your needs and going to a specialist is difficult.” – Parent from Ukraine living in Poland

Influence of Social Norms on Positive Parenting

Social norms significantly impact parents’ decisions on participating in parenting workshops. If caregivers believe that important people in their lives view participation in Positive Parenting activities positively, they are more likely to intend to participate themselves.

Unfortunately, parents do not frequently share information about parenting workshops, which could help reduce stigma and increase participation. The survey showed that 51% of respondents did not know if their friends had participated in such workshops.

“They come to me, I organize these group classes, meetings. It’s important because they share experiences and realize they are not alone.” – Psychologist from Poland²

² The quotes have been shortened for the purpose of the key insights..

Key Findings

Highlighting critical insights into the needs, attitudes, and barriers to effective supportive parenting practices among Ukrainian caregivers residing in Poland.

Influence of Social Norms on Positive Parenting:

Social norms significantly impact parenting practices. If caregivers believe that people who are important to them view participation in Positive Parenting activities positively, they are more likely to intend to participate themselves.

"They come to me, I organize these group classes, meetings. It's important because they share experiences and realize they are not alone." – Psychologist from Poland²

Lack of Information Exchange Among Parents

Social norms are important in this context however parents do not frequently share information about parenting workshops, which could help reduce stigma and increase participation. The survey showed that 51% of respondents did not know if their friends had participated in such workshops.

Interest in Workshops but Lack of Action

Despite high interest in parenting workshops, participation is low. While 70% of respondents indicated some likelihood of attending, 86% have not participated in any workshops.

"There are many foundations offering psychological help but realizing your needs and going to a specialist is difficult." – Parent from Ukraine living in Poland

Impact of Children's Age on Parenting Practices

Caregivers of children under 10 exhibit higher levels of positive parenting. It could become harder to maintain these practices as children grow older, especially for overwhelmed single mothers.

"Parents, especially those of children aged 10-12. Before the age of 13, 14, 15, they really want to have more information." – Psychologist from Poland

Influence of Number of Children

More children in a family are associated with higher levels of inconsistent discipline and poor supervision, and lower levels of positive parenting.

Methodology

This report summarizes the findings from a mixed-methods research approach designed to understand the factors influencing parenting behaviors towards their children from Ukraine in Poland. Below, we explain the research methodology in detail.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type	Target group	Gender	Location	Number of participants	Total
FGD	Ukrainian caregivers of children 3-16 y.o.	Mixed	Warszawa	6 x 8 per group	6 FGD (48 interviewees)
			Wrocław		
			Kraków		
KII	Ukrainian-speaking psychologists working with caregivers and/or adolescents	Mixed	Warszawa	3 per city	9 KII (9 interviewees)
			Wrocław		
			Kraków		

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with caregivers of children aged 3 to 16 to explore traditional and current disciplinary practices used in Ukraine, particularly in response to MHPSS distress and displacement. The discussions took place between July and September 2023 and aimed at assessing the awareness and attitudes of caregivers towards harsh and positive parenting methods and their openness to modifying these practices. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to the discussions. The facilitator ensured confidentiality and that sensitive topics were addressed with consideration for the safety and comfort of the respondents, providing an environment conducive to open sharing.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):

Interviews were conducted in July and August 2023 with Ukrainian-speaking psychologists in Warsaw, Wrocław, and Kraków. The objective was to gather expert insights on discipline methods used by Ukrainian caregivers, the impact of gender roles on parenting, and strategies to promote positive parenting. Participants, all practicing psychologists working with caregivers and children, provided informed consent. The interviews were structured to allow for detailed discussions, focusing on both the challenges and successes in fostering positive parenting within the Ukrainian community in Poland. Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to, ensuring confidentiality and privacy of all interviewees.

Online Survey

The survey was conducted using the CAWI method (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) and focused on the positive parenting practices among Ukrainian caregivers of children aged 3-16 years residing in Poland. The recruitment took place in March and April 2024 and was conducted by a research company, Rating Group. The survey invitation was disseminated to the target groups through various channels, including Big Data from Kyivstar and Vodafone, messengers, and social networks. Initially, a total of 1,893 respondents participated in the survey. However, responses from 220 participants were excluded from the analysis due to inconsistent or careless answering, resulting in a final sample of 1,673 complete questionnaires in Ukrainian and Russian languages.

In terms of demographics, the gender distribution of the respondents was 1,571 women, 89 men, 1 respondent identifying as other, and 12 preferring not to say. Respondents came from various types of settlements: 11% from villages, 18% from cities with a population up to 20 thousand, 23% from cities with a population between 20 - 100 thousand, 22% from cities with a population between 100 - 500 thousand, and 26% from cities with a population over 500 thousand. The educational background of the parents varied (with highest completed): 5% having primary education, 12% having completed secondary education, 18% having completed vocational/technical education, 11% having incomplete higher education, and 54% having higher education or a scientific degree).

Informed Consent and Language Accessibility

In accordance with the ethical research practices, informed consent was obtained from all respondents. To ensure comprehension and comfort, the survey and study information were available in both Ukrainian and Russian, with 96% choosing to complete the survey in Ukrainian and 4% in Russian. Ethical approval was obtained from the Bioethical Committee by the Institute of Mother and Child Foundation.

Randomized Controlled Trial

The study employed a randomized controlled trial to present different social media posts to parents, utilizing various behavioral science techniques such as norms and framing to promote positive parenting. RCT is a scientific method widely adopted by social scientists to verify the effectiveness of behavioral change interventions. Each participant had an equal chance of being assigned to one of the four different interventions, ensuring the integrity of the randomization process.

This approach allowed to systematically test whether different messaging had any impact on parenting practices among the respondents, providing robust data to inform future positive parenting programs and interventions. More information about the conducted experiment can be found in a separate section of the report below.

Qualitative Research Findings

To analyze the barriers and enablers affecting positive parenting practices among Ukrainian refugee caregivers in Poland, the research team employed the Behavioral Drivers Model³. This analytical framework was pivotal in guiding in-depth conversations in both Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with psychologists and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with caregivers. The KIIs offered insights into professional perspectives on the challenges and effective strategies for

promoting positive parenting within the refugee community. Simultaneously, the FGDs provided a detailed look at the personal experiences and perceptions of the caregivers, including their readiness to adopt new parenting techniques. By engaging these critical stakeholder groups, the research aimed to comprehensively understand the behavioral drivers influencing parenting decisions among refugee communities from Ukraine residing in Poland.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Our discussions were focused around identifying psychological factors that influence parenting behaviors. These factors are vital as they shape individual motivations and biases regarding parenting practices.

Psychology

COGNITIVE BIASES

The information my brain is willing to consider.

INTEREST

What I want; how appealing change is.

ATTITUDE

My opinion about a behaviour; how I feel about it.

SELF-EFFICACY

What I think I can do.

INTENT

What I plan on doing; what I am ready for.

LIMITED RATIONALITY

The reasons why I don't do what I should.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Who I am.

³ The Behavioral Drivers Model (BDM) covers various psychological factors influencing behavior. We include the BDM graphic to show the range of influences but focus on the most relevant factors for our study, such as attitudes, social norms, and self-efficacy.

12 Cognitive biases:

Cognitive biases play a crucial role in how refugees from Ukraine in Poland approach parenting. These biases are mental frameworks that help individuals interpret information and make decisions. Our research shows that many parents from Ukraine often continue the parenting practices they grew up with, which can include negative parenting practices and make it difficult to introduce new, positive (supportive) parenting methods.

“I was raised this way; I will raise them this way. Very few people specifically go and seek knowledge, this is what we need to pay attention to, and this should be presented very simply [...]” Mother from Ukraine

Interest:

Although cognitive biases may limit active engagement, there is still a notable interest among parents from Ukraine in Poland regarding positive parenting methods. Interest characterizes the degree to which individuals are open to learning about and trying alternative practices. Findings indicate that while many parents are curious about positive parenting techniques, a significant portion hesitates to participate in workshops due to fears of judgment. This is especially true for fathers, who generally show less interest in these methods compared to mothers.

“When you say it’s normal, it calms them down a lot, when you call it that. And when you call it adequate upbringing, or normal upbringing, they are so excited, they like it so much. This is the moment when they say, «Let’s do it right, let’s do it normally, (this is) what we want.»
Psychologist from Poland



“We talk in a positive approach about absolutely normal, standard, good things that have been discussed for decades. But people think that this is something new and new to them, and they immediately think, well, why me?”
Psychologist from Poland

Interest in positive parenting methods also varies significantly with the age of the children. Caregivers of younger children tend to be more receptive and eager to learn about new parenting techniques to be better prepared for the future. This trend highlights the proactive nature of many parents who recognize the foundational impact of early adolescence on overall development.

“Yes, and often (parents come to parenting workshops), especially for responsible parents who want to prevent problems that may arise in the future. It is a very sensitive period for parents when their children are 10, 11, 12 years old. Before the age of 13, 14, 15, they really want to have more information.”
– Psychologist from Poland

Attitude:

Attitude combines cognitive and emotional elements to form an individual's predisposition towards responding positively or negatively to ideas, situations, or changes. It is a critical driver of behavior change, influenced by socio-economic backgrounds, religion, and other personal characteristics. Our findings indicate that emotional restraint is common among mothers from Ukraine in Poland. They often avoid showing emotions to their children, believing it could negatively impact the child's mental state.

Despite this emotional restraint, there is an acknowledgment among parents of the need for support in adapting their parenting methods.

"C1: [We are] Not stricter than Poles, definitely. Poles do not raise their children, we would like to raise them. Poles love them, but we raise them.

C2: We prepare them for adulthood. [...]

C3: Well, we are building character."

Discussion between 3 caregivers (C1, C2, C3)

**"Psychologist: Please tell me, do you think that parents need support to change their way of raising children?
Parent: Yes, we need support."**

Limited rationality (during MHPSS distress situation they are in)

Limited rationality reflects the idea that people do not always make decisions that are in their best interest, often influenced by habits, comfort or unique situation they are in. This phenomenon can explain why parents from Ukraine in Poland might continue negative parenting practices. Despite understanding the negative impacts on their children, the stress of adapting to a new environment and the challenge of emigration compels them to revert to some potentially harmful responses.

"Each of us (parents from Ukraine coming to Poland) faced such a situation when we arrived, that there was emotional exhaustion, and I also yelled at the children. I yelled: «Leave me alone! I'm tired!» and I couldn't hide the fact that I was sinning by doing so. I was emotionally exhausted, which was just annoying" Parent from Ukraine in Poland

"[...] But there are also a lot of people who cope on their own, although I would not call it coping, but rather somehow projecting their anger, resentment, their inner difficult state."

Psychologists from Poland

Sociological elements, especially social influence, and cultural biases, significantly impact the parenting behaviors.

Sociology

SOCIAL INFLUENCE

How others affect what I think, feel and do.

COMMUNITY DYNAMIC

The group's collective capacity to change.

META-NORMS

What defines and maintains the satisfaction, roles and power in a society.

CONTEXT

The context in which I live.



Social Influence

Social influence plays a critical role in shaping the parenting behaviors of Ukrainian parents in Poland. Parents often act in response to the norms and expectations of their social groups, which can significantly impact their openness to new parenting approaches. While some parents actively seek information and guidance within their social circles, others struggle with feelings of shame, helplessness, and fear of judgment, which can be significant barriers to seeking support.

“Well, shame, helplessness, feelings of helplessness, fear, judgement, all of this is common. [...] I had a case when a mother came to my office with her child, with a teenager, and she sat down and said, «Are you going to scold me now and tell me what a bad mother I am?» – Psychologist from Poland

Despite these barriers, social influence and norms play a crucial role in encouraging Ukrainian parents to participate in programs or training focused on positive parenting techniques. This interest is particularly strong when parents see the value in sharing experiences and learning from each other, realizing they are not alone in their challenges.

“Interviewer: From your experience, would the Ukrainian parents be interested in participating in a program or training that focuses on positive parenting techniques for parents?

Psychologist from Poland: Yeah, because they come to me, I organize these group classes, meetings. And it's very, you know, important because they will share their experiences with each other, and we talk about it, and how do you do it, and how do you do it, and then they begin to realize that I am not alone. Or I would hear an example from someone else, and we do it like this. And then we have this discussion, and we talk about it, and they really do, and it helps them in raising their children.”

Cultural Norms

Cultural norms are deeply embedded ideologies and unwritten rules that shape a wide range of behaviors and are integral to people's cultural identities. These norms not only directly influence individual behaviors, such as attitudes and self-efficacy, but also manifest indirectly through various social practices and structural elements. Our findings indicate that many parents from Ukraine tend to adhere to specific cultural norms that lead to more stringent behaviors in many aspects of life, including parenting. These parenting practices, which may include physical and emotional pressure, are often seen as normal within their cultural context. Additionally, in opinions of psychologists and caregivers from Ukraine these practices are typically more severe than those commonly observed among Polish families.

“Very little time is allocated to talking to children about their problems, about their live” – Psychologist from Ukraine

“[...] we would yell at him, hold his ear, or something like that, but in Poland it is impossible to see aggression and bad attitude towards a child at all. Well, I have never seen it in this year and a half.”
– Parent from Ukraine living in Poland

“[...] Here (in Poland), if you inadvertently shout or raise your voice to a child, they immediately look at you as if you've done something terrible. You're afraid that the police will be called on you.” – Parent from Ukraine living in Poland

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The information, opinions, arguments, and stories we are exposed to have a significant role in shaping our attitudes and interests, and down the line the parenting behaviors.

Environment

COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

The information and opinions I can be exposed to.

EMERGING ALTERNATIVES

Those who don't think or behave like the majority; new things out there.

COVERING ENTITIES

How institutions influence what I do.

STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Concrete things that prevent me from acting.

CONTEXT

The context in which I live.



Communication Environment

Closed groups, such as women's or mixed psychological groups, are highly effective as positive parenting workshops. They can foster resilience and stress resistance by providing a supportive environment for sharing experiences and strategies.

"Closed groups work very well, either women's groups or mixed closed groups, I mean, psychological groups. Resilience and stress resistance work well, and what is relevant now, how to deal with stress, works." – Psychologist from Poland

Psychologists and organizations they work at utilize a broad range of media to disseminate information about positive parenting, employing marketing-based initiatives to enhance awareness. They actively engage with parents through social media, group discussions, and direct interactions, offering psychoeducational programs such as courses, workshops, and training sessions. Furthermore, they use surveys and questionnaires to understand parents' communication styles, helping to tailor support effectively.

"We discuss this in general, because even when parents come to us, we ask them what methods they use, how they communicate in the family, whether parents trust their children, or whether children trust their parents. And from the very first conversations, the very first surveys, the very first questionnaires, we can already see what level of consciousness parents have in terms of how to communicate with their children. And this is a very big indicator." – Psychologist from Poland

Additionally, parents have access to different online resources, enabling them to learn and adopt new parenting skills via the Internet. Despite the availability of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, not all parents actively seek it, with some preferring alternative methods for coping with stress. The decision to seek support is often influenced by peer recommendations and personal conviction, underscoring the importance of trust and belief in the effectiveness of these parenting programs.

"There are a lot of foundations offering psychological help of various kinds now. I think the bigger problem is to realize your needs and the even bigger problem is to go to a specialist and tell them. It seems very difficult to me." – Parent from Ukraine living in Poland



Quantitative Research Findings

The presented study utilized a mixed-method approach, beginning with qualitative research and followed by a quantitative analysis, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing Ukrainian caregivers in Poland regarding positive parenting. This approach helped to understand not only the influencing factors but also the styles, needs, and attitudes towards positive parenting techniques in the refugee community. For the quantitative phase, we used a standardized

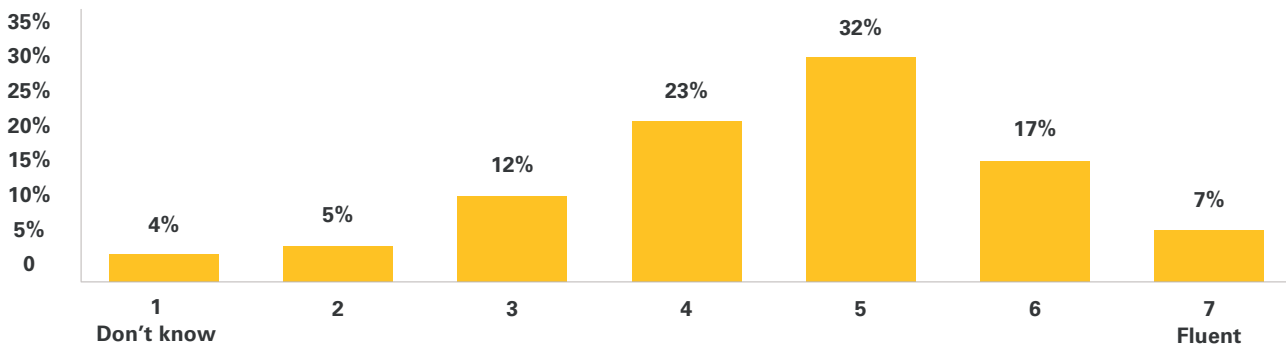
questionnaire; the shortened version of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire (APQ-9)⁴ was used to measure key dimensions of parenting such as Positive Parenting, Inconsistent Discipline and Poor Supervision.

The quantitative analysis includes histograms with general conclusions and correlation analyses to explore relationships between different variables, offering a detailed understanding of parenting practices among the respondents.

Language proficiency

The survey reveals that more than 50% of respondents rate their Polish language proficiency as relatively high and around 1 in 5 respondents assessed their language at lowest levels.

How would you assess your level of Polish language proficiency?



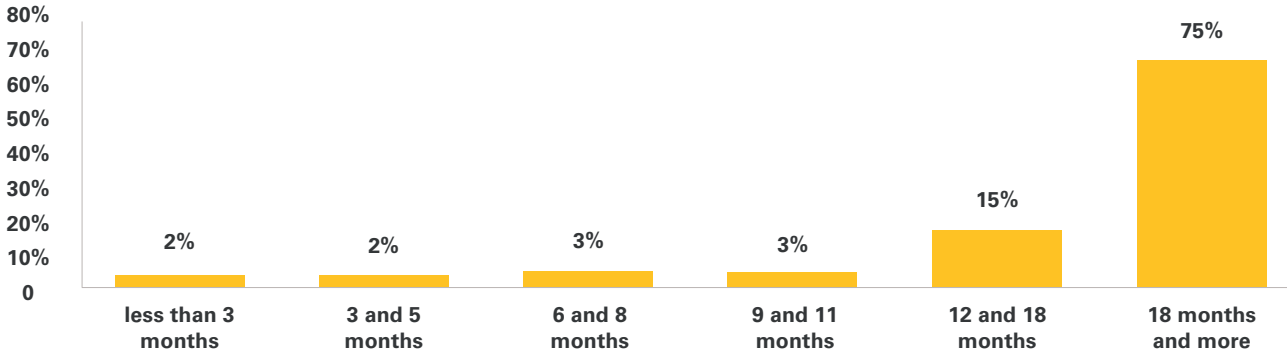
⁴ Development and Validation of a Short Form of the Alabama Parenting Questionnaire; Frank J. Elgar, Daniel A. Waschbusch, Mark R. Dadds & Nadine Sigvaldason; 2007

Duration of residence in Poland

The survey shows that most Ukrainian parents (75%) have been living in Poland for over 18 months. Only a small percentage have stayed for less than a year: 2% for less than 3 months,

2% between 3 to 5 months, 3% between 6 to 8 months, and 3% between 9 to 11 months. Additionally, 15% have been in Poland for 12 to 18 months.

How long have you been living in Poland?



Parenting questionnaire: assessing the parenting practices

The APQ-9 (Alabama Parenting Questionnaire - 9) is a brief, standardized tool used to assess key dimensions of parenting practices. It consists of nine items that measure three critical aspects of parenting behavior: Positive Parenting, Inconsistent Discipline, and Poor Supervision.

The insights gained from the APQ-9 can help navigate efforts to develop support programs that address the specific needs and challenges faced by refugee families. By promoting effective parenting practices, these programs can enhance child well-being and family dynamics, fostering resilience in displaced communities.

Dimensions and Questions

Positive Parenting:

- Letting the child know when they are doing a good job.
- Complimenting the child after they have done something well.
- Praising the child for good behavior.

Inconsistent Discipline:

- Threatening punishment but not following through.
- Allowing the child to talk their way out of punishment.
- Ending punishments earlier than originally stated.

Poor Supervision:

- Child failing to inform parents of their whereabouts.
- Child staying out past their curfew.
- Child associating with friends unknown to the parents.

The APQ-9 is crucial for understanding parenting practices among Ukrainian refugee families in Poland:

- **Impact of Displacement:** Refugee families often face significant stressors and disruptions in their lives, which can affect parenting practices. Understanding these practices helps identify areas where support and intervention may be needed.
- **Behavioral Insights:** Positive parenting practices, consistent discipline, and effective supervision are known to influence child outcomes significantly.⁵ Literature suggests that positive reinforcement and consistent discipline are associated with better emotional regulation, social competence, and academic performance in children. Conversely, poor supervision and inconsistent discipline can lead to increased behavioral problems and delinquency.

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4909593/>

Positive Parenting practices:

The APQ-9 assessed positive parenting practices among Ukrainian caregivers in Poland. The results show that parents frequently engage in behaviors that support and encourage their children.

On a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), the average scores for the Positive Parenting questions are impressively high, close to the maximum score of 5.:

- Recognizing good job: 4.56
- Complimenting for doing well: 4.53
- Praising good behavior: 4.54

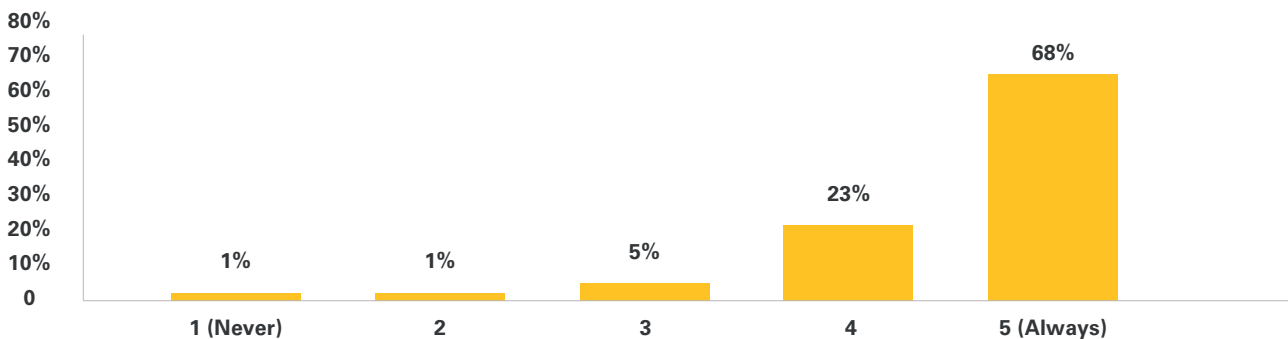
The bar graph below highlights the high mean scores for each aspect of Positive Parenting, showing that they are very close to the highest possible score of 5, which suggests that Ukrainian caregivers in Poland are highly engaged in positive reinforcement.

Positive Parenting mean



Actual responses to one of the questions from the Positive Parenting scale:

You let your child know when he/she is doing a good job with something



22 Poor Supervision

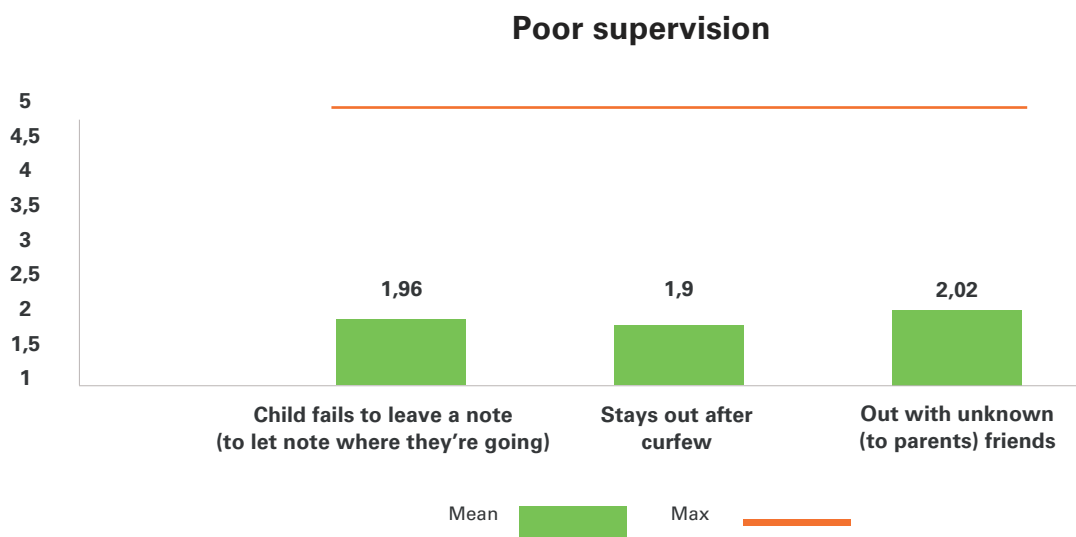
The APQ-9 assesses various parenting practices, including monitoring and supervision of children. The results show how often parents engage in behaviors that indicate poor supervision.

On a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), the average scores for the Poor Supervision questions are relatively low:

- Child fails to leave a note (to let note where they're going): 1.96
- Stays out after curfew: 1.90
- Out with unknown (to parents) friends: 2.02

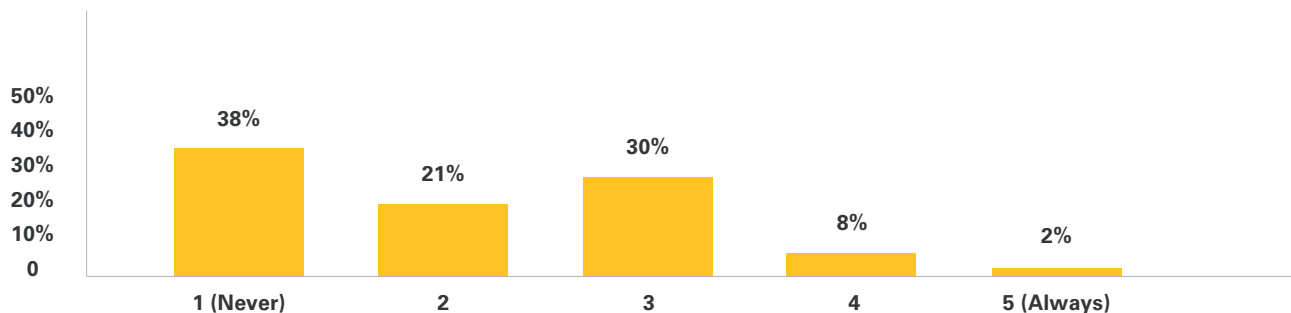
These low scores suggest that parents generally keep good track of their children's activities and whereabouts.

The bar graph below highlights the mean scores for each aspect of Poor Supervision, showing they are well below the highest possible score of 5, which indicates that Ukrainian caregivers in Poland generally maintain good oversight of their children's activities.



Actual responses to one of the questions from the Positive Parenting scale:

Your child is out with friends you don't know



⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4909593/>

Inconsistent discipline

The APQ-9 assesses various parenting practices, including monitoring and supervision of children. The results show how often parents engage in behaviors that indicate poor supervision.

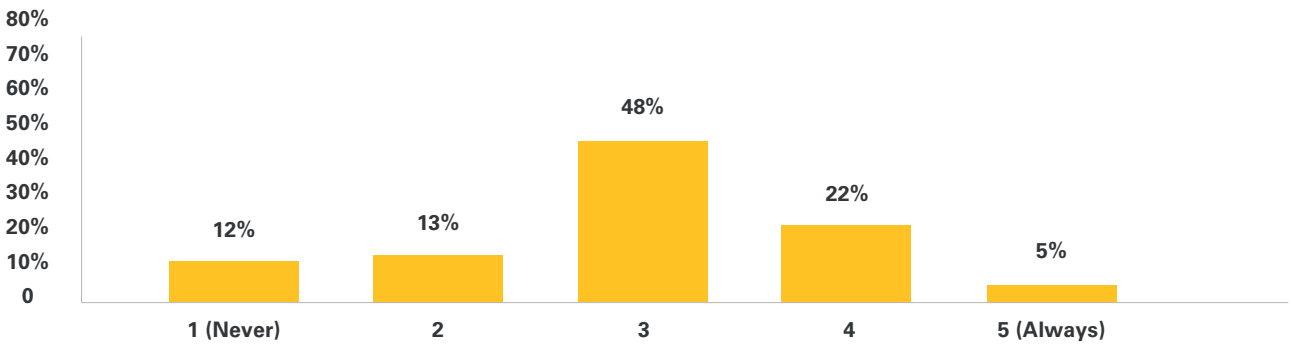
On a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), the average scores for the Poor Supervision questions are relatively low:

- Child fails to leave a note (to let note where they're going): 1.96
- Stays out after curfew: 1.90
- Out with unknown (to parents) friends: 2.02

These low scores suggest that parents generally keep good track of their children's activities and whereabouts.

The bar graph below highlights the mean scores for each aspect of Poor Supervision, showing they are well below the highest possible score of 5, which indicates that Ukrainian caregivers in Poland generally maintain good oversight of their children's activities.

You threaten to punish your child and then do not actually punish him/her



PARTICIPATION IN PARENTING WORKSHOPS

After assessing the parenting practices, the team investigated the intentions, beliefs, attitudes, and participation in parenting workshops. This part of the questionnaire was based on the Theory of Planned Behavior.⁶ This is one of the most influential psychological frameworks to study planned actions. It states that the behavior is best predicted by intention to engage in a given behavior, and the intention can be predicted by three general factors: attitudes toward the behavior (is this good for me?), subjective norm associated with the behavior (do people around me perceive this behavior positively?) and control beliefs (am I able to perform this behavior?).

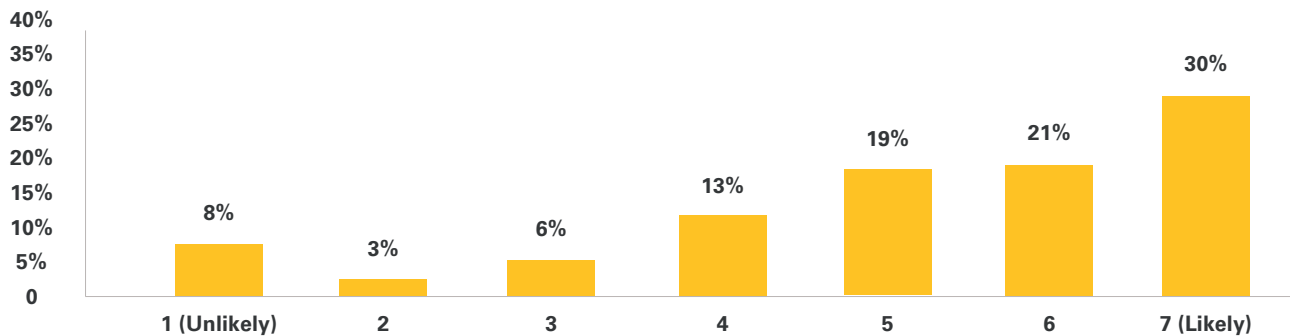
Intention

The research examined respondents' intentions to participate in workshops on parenting methods. The results show a varied range of intentions, with a notable proportion expressing a strong likelihood of participation. Specifically, 30% of respondents indicated that they are very likely (7) to attend such workshops, while 21% rated their likelihood

as 6. Additionally, 19% rated their intention as 5, indicating a moderate likelihood.

Conversely, 8% of respondents rated their intention as very unlikely (1), with smaller percentages indicating ratings of 2 (3%) and 3 (6%). This distribution suggests a significant interest among many respondents in participating in parenting workshops.

I intend to participate in workshops on parenting methods

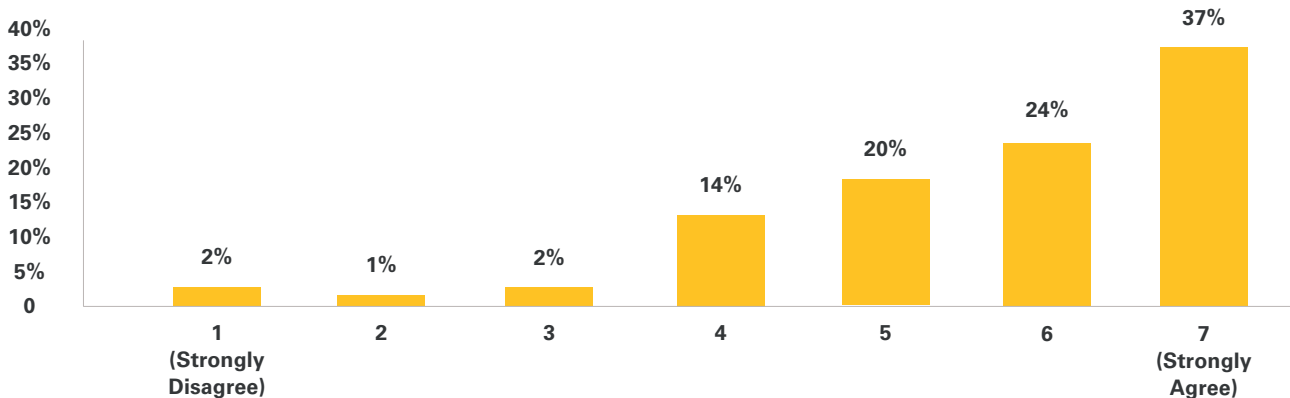


⁶ Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179–211.

The survey asked respondents to what extent they agree with the statement: «Participating in parenting workshops could improve my parenting methods.» The results indicate a strong belief in the potential benefits of these workshops. A significant proportion of respondents (37%)

strongly agree that participating in parenting workshops could improve their parenting methods. Additionally, 24% rated their agreement as 6, and 20% rated it as 5. This suggests that a majority of the respondents are confident that such workshops would positively impact their parenting.

How much you agree with the following sentence: «Participating in parenting workshops could improve my parenting methods»?

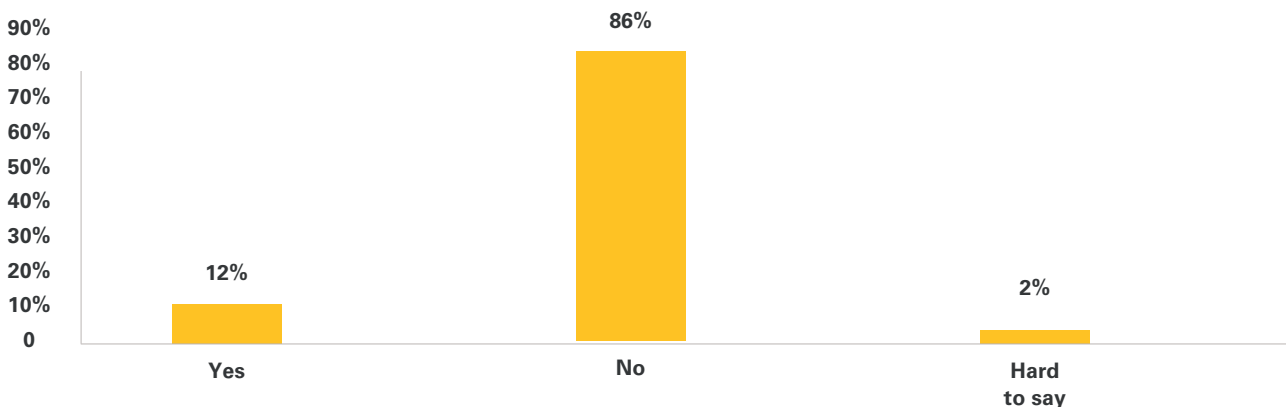


Actual Participation in Parenting Workshops in the Past:

The survey explored whether respondents had ever participated in workshops regarding parenting methods. A significant majority of respondents (86%) reported that they have not participated in any such workshops, indicating a potential gap in access to or awareness of these resources. Only 12% of respondents indicated that they have participated in parenting workshops, while 2% were unsure.

Given that many respondents believe participating in parenting workshops could improve their parenting methods and a significant number expressed an intention to participate, the low actual participation rate indicates a clear gap. This discrepancy highlights the need to understand the barriers preventing participation in parenting workshops.

Have you ever participated in any workshops regarding parenting methods?

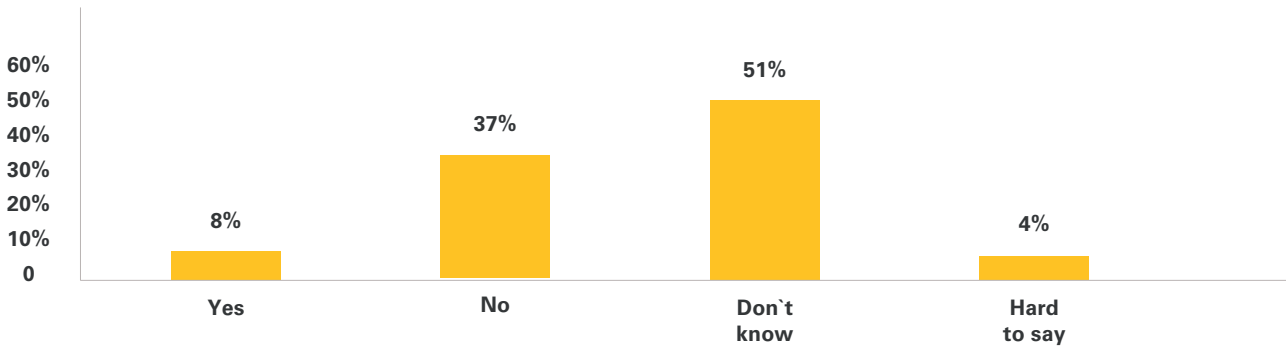


26 Friends' Participation in Parenting Workshops

The survey explored whether respondents' friends had participated in parenting workshops before. The results show that a majority of respondents (51%) did not know if their friends had participated in such workshops, indicating a lack of communication or awareness about this topic among peers.

Additionally, 37% of respondents reported that their friends had not participated in parenting workshops, while only 8% indicated that their friends had participated. Another 4% were unsure. This data highlights a potential gap in the visibility and discussion of parenting resources within social circles.

Have any of your friends participated in parenting workshops before?



Social Norms Around Positive Parenting

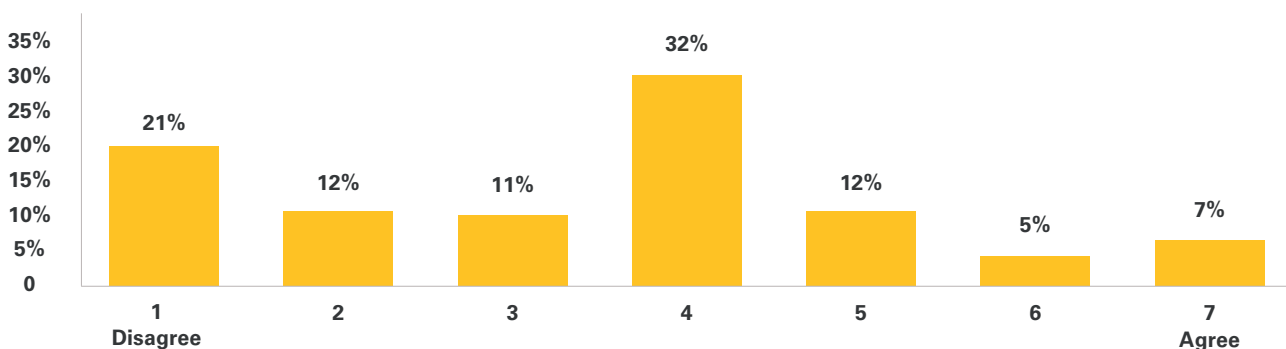
The survey examined whether respondents believe that most people in their close circle view workshops on parenting methods negatively or not.

One in five respondents (21%) disagreed with this statement, indicating they do not feel that their close circle views these workshops negatively. However, there were more respondents (32%) that remained neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Smaller groups showed varying levels of agreement and disagreement, with 12% slightly disagreeing, 11% somewhat disagreeing, and others agreeing to different extents.

These results suggest that while some respondents feel supported by their close circle regarding parenting workshops, there is still a significant portion with uncertainty or perceiving negative views, indicating mixed social norms around the topic.

Most people who are important to me view workshops on parenting methods very negatively.



Correlation and regression analysis:

In our study, we aimed to understand various factors influencing positive parenting practices among Ukrainian caregivers living in Poland. Specifically, we sought to analyze their attitudes towards positive parenting, their participation in

parenting workshops, perceived social norms, and other related factors. To achieve this, we employed statistical methods such as regression models and correlation analyses.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Correlation Analysis:

Correlation analysis was used to explore the relationships between different variables in our study. This method helps us understand how closely related two variables are, indicating whether changes in one variable are associated with changes in another.

Regression Models:

We used regression models to analyze how different factors influence outcomes such as attitudes towards positive parenting, participation in parenting workshops, and perceived social norms. In this type of analysis, we treat these outcomes as dependent variables and various influencing factors as independent variables. Regression models help us identify significant predictors and quantify the strength of their impact.

Purpose of the Analysis

By using these statistical methods, we aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing positive parenting practices among Ukrainian caregivers in Poland. Regression models allowed us to pinpoint significant predictors for various outcomes, such as attitudes and participation in workshops. Correlation analyses helped us explore the relationships between these factors, providing a detailed picture of the dynamics at play. This approach enables us to develop targeted interventions that address the specific needs and barriers identified through our analysis.

FACTORS RELATED TO THE INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE IN PARENTING WORKSHOPS

Our analysis reveals that several factors are related to the intention of Ukrainian caregivers in Poland to participate in workshops on positive parenting. These include attitudes towards positive parenting, perceived social norms, perceived effectiveness of parenting workshops, and the number of children.

1. **Perceived Social Norms**

Perceived social norms around attending parenting workshops play a crucial role. If caregivers believe that people who are important to them view participation in these workshops positively, they are more likely to intend to participate themselves. This highlights the influence of social approval on their intentions.
2. **Perceived Effectiveness of Parenting Workshops**

Caregivers who believe that participating in parenting workshops will improve their parenting skills show a higher intention to participate. This indicates that the perceived benefits of these workshops are a strong motivator.
3. **Number of Children**

Caregivers of children under 10 years old exhibited higher levels of positive parenting practices. Given the challenging situation where children are often in Poland with only their mothers, who may be overwhelmed with their circumstances and other responsibilities, it probably becomes more difficult to maintain positive parenting practices for older children.

FACTORS THAT ARE RELATED TO INCONSISTENT DISCIPLINE

1. **Number of Children**

Caregivers with more children tend to show higher levels of inconsistent discipline. This might be due to the increased challenges and complexities of managing a larger family, leading to more frequent lapses in consistent disciplinary actions.
2. **Children's Age**

Caregivers of children under 6 years old tend to exhibit lower levels of inconsistent discipline. This might be due to the greater need for consistent routines and boundaries with younger children, which caregivers might find easier to maintain.
3. **Peer Influence:**

Caregivers of children under 6 years old tend to exhibit lower levels of inconsistent discipline. This might be due to the greater need for consistent routines and boundaries with younger children, which caregivers might find easier to maintain.

FACTORS THAT ARE RELATED TO POOR SUPERVISION

1. **Age**

Older caregivers tended to exhibit higher levels of poor supervision. This could be attributed to different generational attitudes towards supervision or physical limitations.

2. Number of Children

Caregivers with more children were more likely to report poor supervision practices, possibly due to the difficulties in monitoring multiple children effectively.

29

3. Children's Age

Caregivers of children under 10 years old tend to exhibit lower levels of poor supervision. This suggests that caregivers may be more vigilant and attentive with younger children, while given the current situation where many children are living with only their mothers, they might be required to take on more responsibilities and become independent faster, affecting the level of supervision provided by the caregiver.

COMMON FACTORS THAT ARE RELATED TO ALL PARENTING PRACTICES

1. Number of Children

The number of children consistently influenced all three parenting practices. More children in the family were associated with higher levels of inconsistent discipline and poor supervision, and lower levels of positive parenting. This suggests that the demands of managing larger families can impact the consistency and quality of parenting practices.

2. Children's Age

The age of the children also influenced all three parenting practices. Caregivers of younger children (under 6 for inconsistent discipline and under 10 for poor supervision and positive parenting) showed better parenting practices. As children grow older, positive parenting methods may decrease, and inconsistent discipline and poor supervision may increase. This could be because older children need to become more independent quickly, given that they often live with only one caregiver, typically their mother, while their fathers remain in Ukraine due to the war. This highlights the need for continuous support for parents as their children age.



Experiment: Testing Different Behavioral Interventions

Our study included a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to assess the effectiveness of different behavioral science principles in encouraging Ukrainian caregivers in Poland to participate in positive parenting workshops. The trial aimed to test the impact of social norms and framing of positive parenting (positive parenting vs. conscious parenting) in delivering the message. We chose these interventions based on initial qualitative research and consultations with experts, suggesting that these approaches might be effective in this context.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted the RCT using a single questionnaire among 1,673. The first block with the intervention was randomly selected for each respondent on the online platform, ensuring that each intervention had an equal chance of being received by any respondent. Different social media mockups were tested (presented in Ukrainian or Russian, depending on the chosen language of the participants). The interventions tested two different behavioral techniques: social norm and framing of positive parenting. It is important to note that

these factors stem from our qualitative study. We found that parents and caregivers from Ukraine often have social norms that may prevent them from seeking help. Additionally, they sometimes view positive parenting as overly permissive and worry that it could negatively impact their children, making them less resilient. This cultural context is crucial for understanding the reactions to the interventions tested in this study.

This resulted in four different messages, with each participant viewing only one:

Graphic with Positive Parenting in title + text with social norm message

Graphic with Conscious Parenting in title + text with social norm message

Graphic with Positive Parenting in title + text without social norm message

Graphic with Conscious Parenting in title + text without social norm message

INTERVENTIONS

Each social media mockup aimed to influence the respondents' intention to participate in positive parenting workshops by using different combinations of behavioral techniques. The key differences between the interventions were:

Framing:

- Positive Parenting
- Conscious Parenting

Social Norm Message:

- With Social Norm: Including a message emphasizing that many parents are adopting positive parenting practices.
- Without Social Norm



By ensuring that each participant had an equal chance of being assigned to any of the four interventions, we maintained the integrity of the randomization process. This method allowed us

to isolate the effects of framing and the social norm message on the participants' intentions and behaviors regarding positive parenting workshops.

FINDINGS

Conducted study revealed that the intention to participate in positive parenting workshops did not differ across the interventions used. Relying on the adherence to social norms or framing the messages might be not effective in changing intentions to engage in positive parenting. This lack of significant result might be due to generally very positive attitudes towards positive parenting practices.

Recommendations

FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS DESIGNING POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAMS FOR REFUGEE COMMUNITIES:

Encourage Participation in Parenting Workshops:

Despite caregivers recognizing the benefits of parenting workshops and expressing intention to participate, high awareness of positive parenting methods among caregivers, many of them still did not have a chance to participate in a parenting workshop. Institutions should investigate and address barriers to participation, such as conflicting schedules, lack of awareness, or accessibility issues.

Support for Caregivers with Older Children:

Caregivers with adolescent children often exhibit lower levels of positive parenting practices and higher levels of poor supervision. Programs should provide targeted support and resources to these caregivers to help them maintain effective parenting practices as their children grow older.

Enhanced Support for Families with Multiple Children:

Caregivers with more children tend to show higher levels of inconsistent discipline and poor supervision. Tailored support programs should be developed to help these families manage the increased demands and maintain consistent parenting practices.

Utilize Effective Group Formats:

Closed psychological groups, such as women's groups or mixed groups focusing on resilience and stress resistance, have been reported to work well. These formats should be considered for broader implementation to support caregivers' mental health and parenting skills.

Respect and Integrate Cultural Norms:

Cultural norms play a significant role in shaping parenting behaviors. Programs should be designed to respect these norms while gently introducing more positive parenting techniques. Training and workshops should consider these cultural differences and work to bridge gaps in understanding.

Promote the Benefits of Parenting Workshops:

Campaigns should focus on raising awareness about the availability and benefits of parenting workshops, addressing common barriers, and encouraging attendance through testimonials and success stories.

Leverage Social Norms:

Communicators should utilize social norm messaging to reinforce the acceptance and benefits of positive parenting practices and workshop participation within the community.

Encourage Information Sharing Among Parents:

Efforts should be made to encourage parents to share their experiences and information about parenting workshops with each other. This can help reduce stigma and motivate more parents to participate, leveraging peer support and social proof.

RESEARCHERS AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENTISTS:

Explore Further Research on Behavioral Tactics:

The lack of significant findings from the RCT suggests that the tested behavioral techniques may need to be adjusted or presented differently. Future research should explore various framing, social norms, and other behavioral tactics in different contexts to identify effective strategies. Understanding what works best in different situations can help refine and improve the effectiveness of interventions aimed at promoting positive parenting practices.

Address Discrepancies in Positive Parenting Practices:

There is a clear difference between what our qualitative and quantitative studies show about positive parenting practices. While the qualitative study indicates a lack of PP, the quantitative study suggests its prevalence. Future research should investigate this difference to see if it is due to negativity bias, self-presentation bias, or different understandings of what positive parenting means. Understanding these discrepancies will help improve the accuracy of our findings and the effectiveness of support programs.

LIMITATIONS:

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. Firstly, the initial sample size was 1,893 respondents (1,571 women, 89 men, 1 identifying as other, and 12 preferring not to say). However, responses from 220 participants were excluded from the analysis due to inconsistent or careless answering, resulting in a final sample of 1,673 complete questionnaires. The recruitment process took almost five weeks, faced challenges as it relied on online channels and SMS. This method may have introduced a selection bias, as only individuals with access to these technologies could participate.

The experiment's interventions may have been too similar, potentially diluting their effectiveness. This suggests that under different conditions, framing or social norms might have had a stronger impact. Further testing and additional analysis are needed to explore these variables more effectively.

Additionally, we do not have a similar study among Polish parents, which limits our ability to compare the results and draw broader conclusions. This lack of comparative data means that the findings should be interpreted within the specific context of this study, without assuming they necessarily apply to different populations or settings.



To learn more about our work in Poland:
www.unicef.org/eca/poland

All images in this publication are intended for informational and illustrative purposes and must be used only for this report and its content. UNICEF photographs are copyrighted and may not be used for an individual's or organization's promotional activities or in any commercial context.

Cover Photo

© UNICEF/U.S. CDC/Unique Identifier/Kasia Strek

© UNICEF/UN0788980/Holerga

© UNICEF/UNI487286/Amamdjan

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Refugee Response Office in Poland, June 2024

www.unicef.org/eca/poland

© 2024 UNICEF. All rights reserved