

Cognitive caregiving for parents in the occupied Palestinian territory: a cross-sectional survey

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Background Children younger than 5 years represent 14·7% of the Palestinian society. Parenting is important for child development, so various organisations have focused on identifying protective and risk factors related to parenting and child development. The cognitive caregiving behaviour of Palestinian parents with children younger than 5 years in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) was assessed.

Methods The Palestinian Family Health Survey 2006, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Ramallah, West Bank, oPt, included three questions about whether family members had read books or stories to or helped children with drawing during the 3 days preceding the survey. A cognitive caregiving scale was constructed from questions used to identify whether either of the parents had engaged in such activities with good internal consistency (α 0·76). The scale was recoded as no activity and at least one activity. χ^2 testing was used to check for significant associations of cognitive caregiving with each variable—region, locality, mother's age, parent's education and relation to labour forces, child's sex, and family's wealth status. Binary logistic regression was done to identify confounders. Data were analysed with SPSS (version 17.0).

Findings 5352 households were visited for the survey: 3051 (57%) from the West Bank and 2301 (43%) from the Gaza Strip, oPt. Mothers in 1869 (35%) households had greater than high-school education. 2298 (43%) households were classified as poor, 2224 (42%) middle class, and 830 (16%) better off financially. 2962 (55%) parents did not practice cognitive caregiving. Logistic regression analysis showed that children in better-off (odds ratio 1·29, 95% CI 1·08–1·52) and middle-class families (1·20, 1·06–1·35) were more likely to receive cognitive caregiving from their parents than were children from other families. Children with educated mothers (>12 years of education) were more likely to receive cognitive caregiving than were those whose mothers had less education (1·45, 1·28–1·64). Parents in the Gaza Strip were less likely to engage in cognitive caregiving than were those from the West Bank (0·85, 0·76–0·95).

Interpretation The findings suggest that children from the Gaza strip, from poor families, or with less educated mothers need more cognitive caregiving. Training, support, and awareness programmes are needed for parents of these children to improve cognitive caregiving for them in the oPt.

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Contributors

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Conflicts of interest

We declare that we have no conflicts of interest.

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