Cross-national comparison of caseworkers’ attitudes towards child welfare issues and their impact in assessments and decisions to place a child out-of-home

Mónica López, A. Carien Koopmans and Erik J. Knorth (University of Groningen, The Netherlands); Cilia Witteman (Radboud University, The Netherlands), Rami Benbenishty (Bar Ilan University, Israel), Bilhah Davidson-Arad (Tel Aviv University, Israel); Jorge F. del Valle (University of Oviedo, Spain); Trevor Spratt, David Hayes and John Devaney (Queen’s University Belfast, Northern Ireland)
Decision making

in child welfare
decisions to place children in out-of-home care are currently arbitrary and the consequences of these decisions are largely unknown

empirically grounded standardized criteria for placement decisions are still lacking

McDonald et al. (1996)

Bates (1997)
Judgment and Decision Processes in Context (JuDPiC)

Worker and Agency

Family and Child

JUDGEMENTS

Policies
Values & Attitudes

Resources & Constraints
Knowledge & Evidence

DECISIONS

Benbenishty & Arad-Davidson (2012)
Child protection

Family welfare

The Netherlands

Child safety

Spain

France

Portugal

Italy

Sweden

Denmark

Norway

International study on decision-making in child care

- Germany, Israel, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland and Spain
- 1034 child care workers
- Focus: role of context and influence of attitudes
- Vignette + Child Welfare Attitudes Questionnaire

1. Against removal from home of children
2. Favor reunification and optimal duration of care
3. Positive assessment of foster care
4. Positive assessment of residential care
5. Favors children's participation in the decisions
6. Favors parents participation in the decisions

Funding provided by Haruv Institute, Israel
Decision making regarding suspected child maltreatment in Spain and The Netherlands
Decision making regarding suspected child maltreatment in Spain and The Netherlands

**WELFARE ORIENTATION**

- **The Netherlands**: More preventive work, family support at an early stage, principle: abuse is result of family conflict.
- **Spain**: Delayed intervention, less optimistic about family recuperation and more adoption, principle: protect children from family harm.

**Differences in decision making**

- **Risk assessment**: Spanish subjects will make higher risk assessments than the Dutch.
- **Removal decision**: Spanish professionals will make more “intrusive” recommendations.
- **Attitudes**: Dutch will show stronger attitudes against removal, foster care, and residential care.

**Implementation of evidence based programs**

- Lack of family interventions
International study on decision-making regarding suspected child maltreatment

India

North America

Europe

Northern Ireland

Spain

The Netherlands

Germany

Israel
## Differences in attitudes between countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Israel</th>
<th>N. Ireland</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Against removal from home of children at risk</td>
<td>3.11 (0.51)</td>
<td>3.19 (0.57)</td>
<td>3.02 (0.54)</td>
<td>2.77 (0.49)</td>
<td>3.16 (0.53)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Favor Reunification and short-optimal duration of alternative care</td>
<td>3.02 (0.65)</td>
<td>3.28 (0.64)</td>
<td>3.05 (0.56)</td>
<td>2.90 (0.56)</td>
<td>2.98 (0.56)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Favor children's participation in the decisions</td>
<td>3.47 (0.54)</td>
<td>3.78 (0.48)</td>
<td>3.44 (0.58)</td>
<td>3.42 (0.51)</td>
<td>3.02 (0.45)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Favor parent's participation in the decisions</td>
<td>3.43 (0.43)</td>
<td>3.43 (0.47)</td>
<td>3.04 (0.49)</td>
<td>3.13 (0.45)</td>
<td>3.02 (0.38)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative view of foster care</td>
<td>2.55 (0.44)</td>
<td>2.48 (0.52)</td>
<td>2.33 (0.50)</td>
<td>2.43 (0.39)</td>
<td>2.48 (0.36)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative view of residential care</td>
<td>2.41 (0.45)</td>
<td>3.12 (0.56)</td>
<td>2.65 (0.48)</td>
<td>2.41 (0.40)</td>
<td>2.81 (0.50)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(\(F(24, 3964)=30.79, p < .001\))

Significantly different from: a. Israel   b. N. Ireland   c. Spain   d. Germany
Substantiation by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Spain</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.67(^a)</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>3.90(^{abc})</td>
<td>4.02(^{abc})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.73)</td>
<td>(.49)</td>
<td>(.58)</td>
<td>(.89)</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.71(^a)</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.41(^{abcd})</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.85)</td>
<td>(.93)</td>
<td>(.86)</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td>(.79)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional Neglect</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>4.51(^{ab})</td>
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<td>4.47(^{ab})</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(.59)</td>
<td>(.53)</td>
<td>(.60)</td>
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<td>(.59)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Neglect</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.10(^{abc})</td>
<td>4.14(^{abc})</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(.70)</td>
<td>(.80)</td>
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<td>(.76)</td>
<td>(.68)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>2.71(^a)</td>
<td>1.90(^{ab})</td>
<td>1.73(^b)</td>
<td>2.19(^{ab})</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.75)</td>
<td>(1.60)</td>
<td>(.78)</td>
<td>(.57)</td>
<td>(.67)</td>
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(F(20, 3696)=16.49, p < .001)  Significantly different from: a. Israel  b. N. Ireland  c. Spain  d. Germany
# Intervention Recommendation by Country

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<th>Spain</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Netherland</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct social work without additional services</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct social work with additional services</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>122</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
<td>57.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal from home</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[(X_2^{12} = 143.82, \ p < .001)\]
Conclusions
Thank you for your attention

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University of Groningen
References


