Adlerian and Child Rights-Based Approaches: The Evolution of Positive Discipline and Its Development Grounded in the Traditional Child-Rearing Heritage of Mongolian Families

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Mongolia banned corporal punishment of children in all settings in 2016 and reaffirmed parents' duty to use non-violent positive discipline in its 2024 Law on Child Protection. Yet in 2023, 44.2% of children aged 1–14 experienced psychological aggression or physical punishment in the previous month, while 10.3% of mothers and caregivers considered physical punishment necessary. This review compares the Adlerian and Durrant's child rights-based approaches, analyses how positive discipline was introduced and implemented in Mongolia, and examines grounds for developing it on the traditional child-rearing heritage of Mongolian families.

Methods: A theoretical review was combined with qualitative document analysis of 10 core documents: programme manuals, an organisational history, evaluations, research reports and government activity summaries. Mongolian- and English-language sources, and one Russian theoretical work, were collected from December 2025 to June 2026; the search was last updated on 10 November 2026.

Results: The Adler–Dreikurs–Nelsen tradition and Durrant's approach share respect for the child and non-violent guidance but differ in theoretical grounding. Introduced by international organisations in 2005, positive discipline became a legal term and a state service within two decades. Programme evaluations measured different indicators—attitudes, intentions and reported practices—which changed unevenly; in one evaluation, adolescents reported an overall decline in physical violence but more yelling, name-calling and slapping.

The documents described adapting training language and delivery channels, a surface-level adaptation, but contained no information on adapting programme content to family values, parental roles or traditional child-rearing views.

Conclusion: Because the evaluations lacked comparison groups, programme effects cannot be established. Mongolian traditions—"making a person a human being", teaching by accompanying, age-appropriate guidance and encouragement—partly align with Durrant's core ideas and could be integrated with positive discipline through a child-rights lens; such integration should be piloted and evaluated in Mongolian families.

Keywords: positive discipline, children's rights, violence against children, cultural adaptation, ethnopedagogy

INTRODUCTION

Positive discipline is an approach to raising children through warm relationships and clear guidance, without hitting, frightening or humiliating them. In this context, the word "discipline" means teaching and guidance

rather than punishment (Durrant, 2016). Mongolia's Law on Child Protection uses the term "non-violent positive discipline", and this article follows that legal term.

Programmes that support parents and caregivers are one of the main ways of preventing violence against children. The World Health Organization therefore made parent and caregiver support one of the seven INSPIRE strategies (World Health Organization, 2016) and recommended that evidence-based programmes be made accessible to parents and caregivers of children aged 0–17 (World Health Organization, 2022). This recommendation rests on evidence: a meta-analysis, which synthesises findings across studies, showed that such programmes reduce child maltreatment (Chen & Chan, 2016), and a systematic review found that they also improve parenting in low- and middle-income countries, while noting that the quality of research in these countries needs to improve (Knerr et al., 2013). Nevertheless, a programme developed in one setting should not be copied directly; the core content that produces its effects should be preserved while the programme is adapted to the needs and culture of the people concerned (Castro et al., 2004).

Following this trend, in 2016 Mongolia prohibited corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the family, through the Law on the Rights of the Child and the Law on Child Protection, becoming the 49th country in the world to do so (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2016). As summarised by the Center for Development Initiatives and Policy Studies (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.4), Article 5.4 of the 2016 Law on Child Protection required parents and caregivers to use non-violent positive discipline in raising their children, and Article 22.1 of the law as revised in 2024 reaffirmed this duty, requiring that it be applied in accordance with the child's age and physical and psychological characteristics (Law on Child Protection, 2024). However, the legal requirement has not fully translated into everyday child-rearing. According to the 2023 Social Indicator Sample Survey, as reported by mothers and caregivers, 44.2% of children aged 1–14 had experienced psychological aggression or physical punishment in the previous month, and 10.3% of mothers and caregivers considered physical punishment necessary for raising children, which shows that violent discipline persists despite the legal ban (National Statistics Office of Mongolia [NSO], 2026, pp. 246–247). Physical punishment and psychological aggression also remain common among children under five (Enkhbat et al., 2024). These indicators measure different things: one reflects attitudes towards discipline and the other children's exposure to violence. Considering them side by side therefore does not allow direct conclusions about whether individuals' attitudes and actions diverge or how the indicators have changed over time.

To understand why this gap has arisen, it is necessary to examine where positive discipline originated and how it was introduced in Mongolia. International organisations began introducing the approach in Mongolia in 2005 (Save the Children, 2024), and in recent years state agencies have taken over its dissemination. Yet research that links, from a researcher's perspective, the theoretical development of the approach, the experience of its introduction in Mongolia and the traditional child-rearing of Mongolian families remains very rare. Mongolian scholars have studied traditional family pedagogy in depth (Battogtokh, 2019), but it has seldom been compared with child rights-based positive discipline. To address this gap, the study sought to answer three questions:

1. What do the Adlerian tradition and Durrant's child rights-based approach have in common, and how do they differ, in their rationale and principles?

2. When and how was positive discipline introduced and implemented in Mongolia, and what results and problems emerged from its implementation?

3. How can positive discipline be developed on the basis of the traditional child-rearing heritage of Mongolian families?

Theoretical Background

A. Adlerian and Child Rights-Based Approaches

The idea of respecting children and guiding them without punishment has been enriched over roughly a century (Table 1). A. Adler first argued that children's behaviour is purposeful and stems from a need to be useful and valued in their community, and he emphasised encouraging rather than punishing children (Adler, 1927). R. Dreikurs later applied this idea to the family, developing principles of mutual respect between parents and

children, family councils and learning from the consequences of one's actions (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964). From 1981, J. Nelsen turned these ideas into training for parents and teachers under the name "Positive Discipline", promoting an approach that is kind yet firm and solves problems together with the child (Nelsen, 2006).

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child marked a turning point in this development. The Convention and General Comment No. 8 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defined corporal punishment as a violation of children's rights and made non-violent, positive discipline an obligation of states (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006; United Nations, 1989). In this context, J. Durrant redefined positive discipline on a child rights foundation, drawing on research on the harms of physical punishment and on child development science (Durrant, 2008), and developed the Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP) programme with Save the Children. This article compares the two traditions at the level of shared ideas and does not regard Durrant's programme as a direct continuation of Adler's theory. The Adler–Dreikurs–Nelsen tradition is grounded in Adler's individual psychology, which explains children's behaviour by what they seek to achieve through their actions and by their need to feel part of their family and community. Durrant's approach, by contrast, rests on children's rights norms, child development science and research on the harms of physical punishment. The shared ideas of respecting the child, guiding without punishment and valuing long-term competencies provide the basis for comparing them. Durrant and Stewart-Tufescu likewise traced the history of the concept of "discipline" through periods of violence, the abolition of violence, behaviourism, constructivism, neuroscience and children's rights, concluding that discipline has shifted from control and punishment to guidance and scaffolding (Durrant & Stewart-Tufescu, 2017, pp. 360–368). From 2016 onwards, parenting support programmes became a policy instrument for preventing violence against children (World Health Organization, 2016, 2022).

Table 1. Theoretical development of positive discipline

Period	**Representative, document**	**Key idea**	**Contribution**
1920s	A. Adler (Adler, 1927)	Children's behaviour is purposeful; need to be useful to one's community	Encouragement instead of punishment
1960s	R. Dreikurs, V. Soltz (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964)	Mutual respect in the family	Family councils; guiding children through natural and logical consequences
From 1981	J. Nelsen (Nelsen, 2006, 2021)	"Positive Discipline": kind yet firm	Training and exercises for parents and teachers
1989–2006	Convention on the Rights of the Child; General Comment No. 8 (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006; United Nations, 1989)	Corporal punishment is a violation of children's rights	Made non-violent discipline an obligation of states
From 2007	J. Durrant (Durrant, 2007, 2016); Durrant and Stewart-Tufescu (2017)	Discipline based on children's rights and developmental science	Four-component PDEP programme; five principles
From 2016	World Health Organization (World Health Organization, 2016, 2022)	Parenting support as a violence-prevention strategy	Evidence-based policy instrument

B. Components and Principles of Durrant's Programme

Durrant's programme has four components (Durrant, 2007, 2016). First, identifying long-term goals: beyond the short-term goal of immediate obedience, parents identify what kind of person they hope their child will become (for example, kind, honest, responsible and respectful of others) and align their daily responses with this goal. Second, providing warmth and structure: warmth gives the child a sense of safety, unconditional love, respect and understanding, while structure means stating expectations and rules clearly, explaining the reasons for them, helping the child succeed and supporting independent thinking. Third, understanding how children think and feel: parents interpret their child's behaviour in light of age and developmental stage. Fourth, problem-solving: in difficult situations, parents consider the three preceding components in turn and choose an age-appropriate response instead of punishment. When the programme was implemented in 13 low-, middle- and high-income countries, 82% of parents reported that it helped them use less physical punishment, 92% that it helped them understand their child's development, and 96% that it improved their relationship with their child (Durrant & Stewart-Tufescu, 2017, p. 372).

To connect these components with children's rights, Durrant and Stewart-Tufescu formulated five principles for assessing any disciplinary method from a child rights perspective: non-violence, respect for the child's evolving capacities, respect for each child's individuality, support for the child's participation, and respect for the child's dignity (Durrant & Stewart-Tufescu, 2017). This article uses the four components as the core of positive discipline and the five principles as criteria for screening traditional practices.

C. Theories of Cultural Adaptation

Even the best programme does not automatically produce results in another culture. A programme developed in one setting must therefore be adapted to the language, way of life, values and communication patterns of the people in a new setting. Bernal et al. recommended considering eight dimensions when culturally adapting a programme: language, persons, metaphors, content, concepts, goals, methods and context (Bernal et al., 1995). Resnicow et al. distinguished two levels of adaptation, surface and deep (Resnicow et al., 1999). At the surface level, training language, images and examples are made familiar to the target population, whereas at the deep level, values and beliefs—such as what kind of person parents want their child to become and how they understand children's participation and family members' roles—are incorporated into programme content. In this process, the core principles that produce the programme's effects must be preserved (Barrera & Castro, 2006; Castro et al., 2004).

D. Ethnopedagogy and Learning by Observing and Pitching In

Deep-level adaptation requires knowledge of a people's child-rearing traditions. These are studied by ethnopedagogy, which explains how a people has raised children through everyday life, work and customs (Volkov, 1999). In many cultures, for example, children learn less from adult instruction than by observing and taking part in the activities of their family and community; B. Rogoff called this learning by observing and pitching in (Rogoff, 2014). Similarly, among Mongolian herders, traditional knowledge is passed from generation to generation through shared work, teachings, auspicious sayings, riddles, tales, legends, conversation and listening to elders (Yembuu, 2021). Such learning follows the same principle as scaffolding, in which adults gradually hand over tasks to children as their abilities grow (Wood et al., 1976).

METHODOLOGY

A. Study Design

This study reviewed theoretical works and examined the experience of implementing positive discipline in Mongolia through qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009; Dalglish et al., 2020). This method was chosen because most Mongolian sources were programme manuals, organisational reports and activity summaries. The theoretical development was traced through the core works of A. Adler (Adler, 1927), R. Dreikurs (Dreikurs & Soltz, 1964), J. Nelsen (Nelsen, 2006, 2021) and J. Durrant (Durrant, 2007, 2008, 2016; Durrant & Stewart-Tufescu, 2017). The manuscript was checked against the six criteria of the SANRA scale for assessing narrative

reviews (justification of the topic's importance, aims and questions, description of the literature search, referencing, scientific reasoning and presentation of data), and gaps were addressed (Baethge et al., 2019).

B. Search and Selection of Sources

Sources were collected between 10 December 2025 and June 2026, and the search was last updated on 10 November 2026. Sources in Mongolian and English were searched, and a Russian-language work by Volkov was also used for the theoretical background. Sources were assembled in three strands. First, theoretical works and international documents were searched on Google Scholar and on the websites of the World Health Organization, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Save the Children Resource Centre and Positive Discipline in Everyday Living (PDEL) using the keywords "positive discipline", "Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting", "parenting program", "cultural adaptation" and "Mongolia". The keywords child upbringing/child rearing, violence, family violence, parenting styles, parental involvement, discipline/parental discipline, family relationships, child welfare/child protection and social work were also used. Second, documents on implementation in Mongolia were searched on the websites of Save the Children, World Vision Mongolia, the National Statistics Office (1212.mn) and the Unified Legal Information System (legalinfo.mn) using the Mongolian terms for "positive discipline" and "physical punishment". Third, implementation data were taken unaltered from reports and research findings of Save the Children, World Vision Mongolia, the Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development (AFCYD) and the Center for Development Initiatives and Policy Studies (CDIPS). Documents were selected if they (1) addressed the theory of positive discipline or its implementation in Mongolia, (2) contained information on timing, implementers, content or results, and (3) had a verifiable origin. General promotional materials without information relevant to the study's aims and duplicate versions of the same document were excluded. Applying these criteria, 10 core documents were purposively selected according to their relevance to the research questions, covering the programme's foundational content, its introduction and implementation in Mongolia, training materials, coverage and reported results (Table 2). At least one of the included documents corresponds to each of the four implementation phases and to each of the three main implementing organisations (Save the Children, World Vision Mongolia and AFCYD). National statistics (NSO, 2026) and studies of traditional child-rearing (Battogtokh, 2019; Institute of Culture and Arts Studies [ICAS], 2017; Sarantuya, 2024) were used as supplementary sources to describe the context. Because foundational theoretical works, historical information and undated organisational documents had to be included, no publication-date limit was set, and having a DOI was not a selection criterion.

To clarify the baseline needs for the work of child protection multidisciplinary teams, professional capacity, and training and advocacy aimed at parents, the 2015 research report "Current Situation of Child Protection Multidisciplinary Teams" was included (Tumennast et al., 2015). Its recommendations were not treated as evidence of implemented activities or of the effects of subsequent programmes.

Table 2. Ten core documents included in the document analysis

No.	Source	Type	Year	Author, organisation	Access
1	Positive discipline in everyday parenting (4th ed.)	Programme manual	2016	J. Durrant, Save the Children	Open access
2	Implementation of positive discipline in schools and kindergartens	National forum report	2013	T. Shibata, Save the Children	Open access
3	Current situation of child protection multidisciplinary teams	Baseline research report	2015	G. Tumennast et al.; research team	Full text provided by the authors

4	Study to identify factors that may negatively affect children's development, maturation and upbringing	Research report	2019	G. Tumennast et al.; commissioned by AFCYD	Unpublished *
5	Final evaluation of the project "Strengthening the Child Protection System in Mongolia"	Evaluation report	2022	CDIPS; commissioned by Save the Children	Unpublished *
6	Module 1: Child rights, protection and child protection policy	Training module	2023	A. Batkhishig, Save the Children	Open access
7	For Mongolian children: 30 years–30 breakthroughs	Organisational history	2024	Save the Children	Open access
8	Child rights and protection situation in Mongolia 2025: Statistical compendium	Statistical compendium	2025	GACFDP	Official publication
9	Positive discipline: Summary of activities, 2019–2021	Activity summary	Undated	AFCYD	Unpublished *
10	Positive discipline approach (Mongolian and English versions)	Implementation and evaluation brief	Undated	World Vision Mongolia	Unpublished *

Note. AFCYD = Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development; in October 2023 the Government reorganised it as the General Authority for Child and Family Development and Protection (GACFDP), so both names refer to the same organisation. CDIPS = Center for Development Initiatives and Policy Studies. Undated documents mainly cover activities in 2017–2021. *Unpublished document; see Data Availability.

C. Data Extraction and Analysis

The theoretical development of positive discipline was synthesised according to each scholar's key ideas and contributions (Table 1). From the Mongolian implementation documents, phases, implementing, partner and funding organisations, target groups, content, coverage and evaluation results were recorded in a summary table. The documents were analysed using the READ approach, and activities were classified into three types: advocacy, development of training materials and programme implementation (Dalglish et al., 2020). For each evaluation, the study design, sample, measures and informant groups were recorded, and the conclusions that the results could support were determined.

Traditional Mongolian child-rearing practices described in the literature were compared at a theoretical level with the five child rights-based principles. On this basis, proposals were made to strengthen practices consistent with the principles, to reinterpret practices whose child-rearing aims can be retained but which may harm children's dignity or participation, and to replace practices involving violence or humiliation with positive methods (Castro et al., 2004; Durrant & Stewart-Tufescu, 2017). Drawing on Battogtokh's (2019) classification, Mongolian pedagogical traditions corresponding to each of the four components of Durrant's approach were identified. Coding and classification were carried out by the first author alone.

The origin, purpose and reported methodology of each document were appraised, and the use of each document was matched to its purpose (Bowen, 2009). Published or official documents (Nos. 1, 2, 6, 7 and 8) were used to establish dates and events; commissioned studies and evaluations (Nos. 3, 4 and 5) only within the scope of the indicators they measured; and organisations' internal summaries and briefs (Nos. 9 and 10) as the coverage and figures reported by the respective organisation. Because organisations' own reviews and reports may tend to highlight achievements, figures were cross-checked against other sources wherever possible, and discrepancies (for example, the sample size in No. 10) were reported explicitly. Evaluation indicators were distinguished as

attitudes (viewing a disciplinary method as right or necessary), intentions (plans to use it in future) and reported practices (methods that parents or children reported actually using), and the informant was recorded. Adaptation of language, images, everyday examples and delivery channels was classified as surface-level adaptation, and incorporation of values, family members' roles and children's participation into programme content, exercises and guidance methods as deep-level adaptation (Resnicow et al., 1999). The absence of information in a document was not taken as evidence that something did not occur in implementation.

As coding examples, information from three documents was classified as follows. First, the recommendation on page 124 of the 2015 report to hold training and meetings to change attitudes approving of hitting children was coded as "need to raise awareness of non-violent discipline" (Tumennast et al., 2015); this is a recommendation expressing a need for advocacy, not an implemented activity. Second, the teachers' proposal reported by Tumennast et al. (2019, p. 17) to "develop a programme and module for training parents on child development and upbringing" was coded as "need to develop parent training materials". Third, information in Batkhishig's (2023, p. 35) module on training and counselling in positive discipline for professionals and multidisciplinary team members was coded as "capacity-building training for professionals" and assigned to the "programme implementation" category. Because the module cites a 2018 evaluation, this information was treated as a secondary source on implementation and not as stand-alone evidence of effects.

D. Trustworthiness and Researcher Positionality

Dates and events were cross-checked against two or more sources wherever possible. However, information on Phases 1 and 2 relies mainly on Save the Children's historical review (Save the Children, 2024). Where sources disagreed (for example, World Vision Mongolia's adolescent samples of 1,882 and 2,431), the primary document closest to the events was used and the discrepancy was noted explicitly. The first author conducted two articles on positive discipline and this theoretical study as part of doctoral research and was not involved in implementing the projects or programmes of Save the Children or the other organisations analysed. The second author was a member of the research team that conducted the final evaluation of the project "Strengthening the Child Protection System in Mongolia", which gave the authors access to the evaluation report and to the programme documents prepared for the evaluation. Throughout the study, the authors sought to balance child rights-based principles and the traditional values of Mongolian families from a researcher's rather than an organisational perspective.

E. Ethics and Use of Artificial Intelligence

The study did not collect new data through interviews or surveys and relied on publicly available and organisational documents; ethics committee approval was therefore not required. Because the second author was a member of the evaluation team, the authors had access to unpublished documents (see Data Availability); no personally identifiable information was used, and figures were cited unaltered from the source documents. Quotations from Mongolian-language sources were translated into English by the authors with the assistance of artificial intelligence and checked against the original texts. An AI-based language model was used as an assistive tool for synthesising sources, improving language and translating the manuscript into English. The analysis, conclusions and recommendations are the authors' own, and the authors checked every figure and citation against the source documents and take full responsibility for the content.

RESULTS

A. Introduction in Mongolia: From Concept to Law

The concept of positive discipline entered Mongolia at two levels. First, through the training and manuals of international organisations, the concept of "positive discipline" became established in Mongolian under a term meaning literally "positive method of upbringing" (Batkhishig, 2023; Save the Children, 2024). Second, positive discipline was incorporated into the 2016 Law on Child Protection. As summarised in the CDIPS report, Article 5.4 of the law required parents and caregivers to use non-violent positive discipline in raising their children, and Article 6.3.1 required teachers and staff of educational institutions to master positive discipline (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.4). Article 22.1 of the law as revised in 2024 reaffirmed this duty and required that it be applied in

accordance with the child's age and physical and psychological characteristics (Law on Child Protection, 2024). Thus, a concept introduced through the projects of international organisations became a legal term within little more than a decade.

B. Four Phases of Implementation

The document analysis identified four phases in the implementation of positive discipline in Mongolia (Figure 1).

Phase 1: Raising public awareness (2005–2007). Save the Children began promoting positive discipline in 2005 and, from 2006, ran campaigns against physical punishment, calling on parents and caregivers to use non-violent methods (Save the Children, 2024, p. 106). Because the documents do not state the dates of the first trainings or trainer preparation (Save the Children, 2024, pp. 155–157), this period was regarded as one mainly of promotion rather than training.

Phase 2: Teacher training modules (2008–2013). With support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Save the Children developed positive discipline modules for preschool and primary school teachers and a parent education module in 2008–2011, and adapted the teacher's manual to the Mongolian context. In 2013 the approach was incorporated into in-service training for preschool teachers, and the experience of schools and kindergartens was discussed at a national forum (Save the Children, 2024, pp. 155–156; Shibata, 2013).

Phase 3: Parenting programme (from 2015). A study conducted in 2015 identified needs for strengthening the capacity of child protection multidisciplinary teams and for parent-oriented training and advocacy, and recommended training and meetings to change attitudes approving of hitting children (Tumennast et al., 2015, p. 124). In 2015–2018, with JICA funding, Save the Children implemented the first phase of the project "Strengthening the Child Protection System in Mongolia" in three districts of Ulaanbaatar and three soums of Arkhangai province, training child protection professionals and multidisciplinary team members in positive discipline (Batkhishig, 2023, p. 35). The project also delivered Durrant's PDEP programme to parents and caregivers in the project areas (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.1; Save the Children, 2024, pp. 156–157). In parallel, World Vision Mongolia launched a campaign to End Violence Against Children (EVAC) in 2017 and implemented positive discipline in its area programmes from 2018. Its documents do not mention PDEP but state that the ASEAN guidelines and Plan International materials were adapted to the Mongolian context with the help of national consultants (World Vision Mongolia, n.d.). World Vision's work was therefore regarded as an independent initiative running in parallel rather than a continuation of Save the Children's programme.

Phase 4: Transfer to state structures (2018–2027). Save the Children implemented the second phase of the project (2018–2022) in 16 sites in three districts of Ulaanbaatar and in Arkhangai and Dornod provinces, together with AFCYD (reorganised as GACFDP in October 2023) and the Secretariat of the Crime Prevention Coordination Council (CDIPS, 2022, Sections 1.1, 1.5). The eight-week programme was delivered to 196 parents and caregivers in two rounds in 2019 (93 and 103) and to 105 in 2021, and in 2021 AFCYD, together with Save the Children and the Canadian organisation PDEL, trained 16 PDEP facilitators (Authority for Family, Child and Youth Development [AFCYD], n.d.); in total, 55 facilitators were trained in 2018–2022 (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.4). Certification of the national trainers selected in 2018 was delayed by the pandemic and by financial and human resource constraints, and four people were certified as national trainers in May 2022 (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.4). At the same time, through official letter No. 01/263 of 2019, AFCYD sent a unified plan for disseminating positive discipline to the capital and all 21 provinces and trained 2,745 trainers through cascade training. It reported that 10,575 general education teachers (34.7%) and 430 boarding-school teachers had been trained and that training or information had reached 433,325 parents (75.6%) (AFCYD, n.d.). For 2022–2027, Save the Children signed a memorandum of understanding with the agency and trained 32 specialists from eight provinces as facilitators (Save the Children, 2024, p. 157).

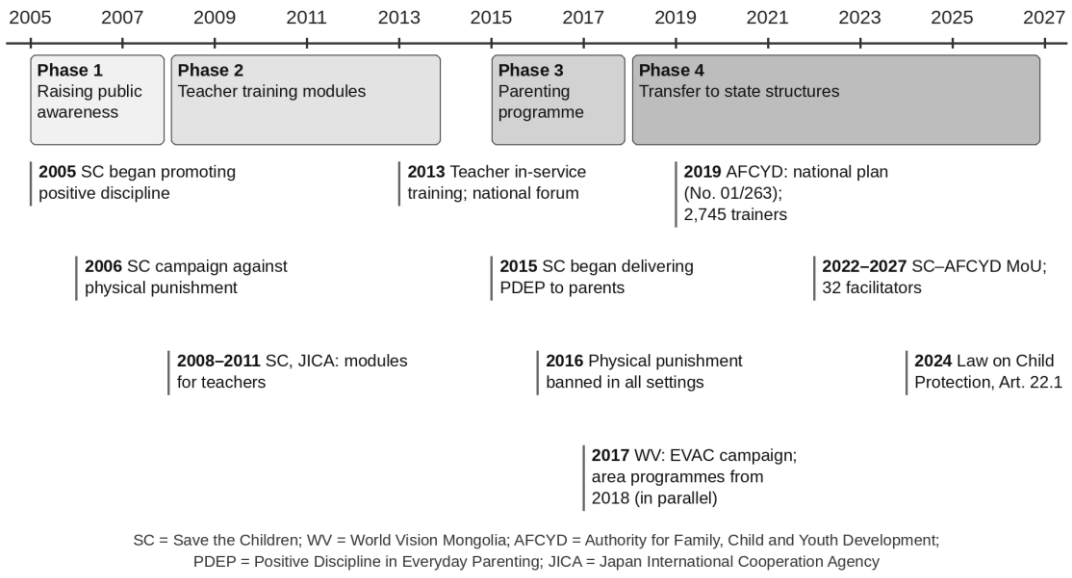


Figure 1. Timeline of the introduction of positive discipline in Mongolia, 2005–2027

C. Results of Implementation Evaluations

Quantitative information on project results is available from three sources (Table 3). Save the Children's final evaluation compared measurements from 2018 and 2022: the proportion of parents who preferred and used listening to children's views to reach solutions together and explaining why a behaviour was wrong increased (the report measured preference and use together), and harsh treatment (yelling, slapping, hitting) decreased according to both parents and children (reported practice). However, prohibiting children from doing what they like or from leaving home increased from 9.5% to 11.9%, which the report attributed to pandemic lockdowns. Parents' and children's assessments also diverged on some indicators: 48.1% of parents considered making children help with household chores an effective disciplinary method, compared with only 18.9% of children (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.1).

AFCYD's 2019 questionnaire measured current use of positive methods before the training (45.7%) and intention to use them in future after the training (80.6%); the difference between the two therefore cannot be regarded as real change (AFCYD, n.d.). According to World Vision Mongolia's evaluation, support for physical punishment (beliefs of parents and caregivers) fell from 48.5% to 31.8% between 2018 and 2021, the use of non-violent methods such as explaining reasons increased (as reported by adolescents), and the proportion of adolescents reporting any physical violence in the previous 12 months fell from 35.7% to 27.7% (the report gives a p-value of 0.198 for this comparison). However, according to adolescents, yelling and loud scolding increased from 11.4% to 18.3%, being called "stupid" or "lazy" from 5.1% to 8.0%, and slapping or hitting from 3.1% to 5.0%; the report noted the need for further research on the causes of these increases and mentioned the possible influence of the pandemic (World Vision Mongolia, n.d.). Because these evaluations lacked comparison (control) groups, they show trends but cannot separate them from other factors, such as legal reform or the pandemic, and attribute them to the training. Moreover, all indicators relied on participants' self-reports and may be affected by social desirability bias.

Table 3. Summary of evaluations of implemented projects

Evaluation	Measurement	Sample	Informants	Key results	Limitations
Save the Children (2018–2022)	Repeated in 2022 using the same method as the 2018 baseline	135 parents and 162 children in 16 sites	Parents, children	Discussion 42.1%→74.1%; explaining reasons 50.8%→74.8% (percentage reporting use of the method);	No comparison group; pandemic period

				harsh treatment 10.3%→2.9% (parents), 7.2%→3.6% (children) [parents' and children's reports]	
AFCYD (2019)	Before and after training	Number not reported	Parents	Use positive methods 45.7% (before) (percentage using); intend to use in future 80.6% (after) (intention)	Different indicators compared; sample unclear
World Vision Mongolia (2018–2021)	2018 baseline and 2021 evaluation surveys	Adolescents: 1,882 and 2,431 (inconsistently reported)	Parents, adolescents	Support for punishment 48.5%→31.8% (attitude; parents); explaining reasons 67.5%→90.2%; yelling, scolding 11.4%→18.3%; slapping, hitting 3.1%→5.0% (adolescents' reports); any physical violence 35.7%→27.7% [p = 0.198]	No comparison group; inconsistent sample sizes; significance not established (p = 0.198)

Note. Arrows indicate change from the first to the subsequent measurement. Brackets indicate the type of indicator and the informant; all indicators are based on self-reports.

The document and evaluation analysis thus yielded three main findings. First, the evaluations measured different constructs—World Vision Mongolia measured attitudes, AFCYD reported practices and intentions, and Save the Children preference for and use of methods—so changes in attitudes cannot be generalised across all programmes. Some reported-practice indicators changed in different directions. In settings where the eight-session, practice-based PDEP programme was implemented, harsh treatment was reported to have decreased according to both parents and children. In World Vision Mongolia's programme, by contrast, adolescents reported an overall decline in physical violence (not statistically confirmed) but increases in yelling, name-calling and slapping. However, these results come from different contexts, participants and measures and are therefore insufficient for directly comparing the effects of the two programmes. Second, Save the Children consistently introduced Durrant's programme, whereas World Vision Mongolia adapted ASEAN and Plan International recommendations to the Mongolian context, developed a positive parenting manual and, together with AFCYD, took part in developing a positive discipline manual for parents and kindergarten and school teachers (World Vision Mongolia, n.d.). Third, although the state cascade training covered all 21 provinces and the capital, training and information dissemination were reported together, the coverage of expenditure (MNT 11.5 million in 2019 and MNT 5.3 million in 2021) was unclear, certification of national trainers was delayed, and the departure or transfer of civil servants trained as facilitators led to staff shortages in local areas (AFCYD, n.d.; CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.4).

D. Documentation of Cultural Adaptation

Save the Children's adaptation of its manual to the Mongolian context using clear, simple language is an example of linguistic, surface-level adaptation, and parents also rated the materials as easy to understand (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.2; Save the Children, 2024, pp. 155–156). World Vision Mongolia's adaptation of ASEAN and Plan International recommendations to the Mongolian context with national consultants, and its delivery through

schools, kindergartens, volunteers and local faith communities, constitute adaptation of delivery channels and persons, but the documents do not specify what content was adapted (World Vision Mongolia, n.d.). Deep-level adaptation—incorporating parents' child-rearing goals, values and traditional practices into programme content and exercises—was not documented in the analysed documents. The adaptation information in the analysed reports does not represent the full content of the manuals actually used by the two programmes. Whether elements of traditional child-rearing were present in those manuals, and how they were reflected in training exercises and guidance methods, was therefore not established through full-text comparison.

DISCUSSION

A. Divergent Findings on Attitudes and Reported Practices

When interpreting evaluation results, attitudes towards disciplinary methods, intentions to use them and reported use need to be considered separately. National statistics show how common violent discipline is, whereas assessing programme effects requires dedicated evaluation data. Of mothers and caregivers, 10.3% considered physical punishment necessary for raising children. According to their reports, 44.2% of children aged 1–14 had experienced violent discipline: 38.4% of all children in this age group experienced psychological aggression and 22.4% physical punishment. These rates were highest among children aged 5–9 (48.1%) and children with functional difficulties (60.8%) (NSO, 2026, pp. 246–247). In 2025, 60.6% of the 16,055 recorded cases of violence against children occurred within the family, and 62.7% of perpetrators were biological parents; a 2023 survey found that 25.9% of pupils, and 31.8% in rural areas, considered physical punishment "necessary" (General Authority for Child and Family Development and Protection [GACFDP], 2025, pp. 19–22). According to behaviour change theory, knowledge and intention alone are insufficient; people also need the capability and opportunity to act differently in everyday situations (Michie et al., 2011). Cultural adaptation, the sustainability of human resources and post-training support are implementation issues that require further examination; this review did not establish them as causes of behaviour change.

B. Building on the Mongolian Pedagogical Heritage

Cultural adaptation theory provides a rationale for aligning programme content with parents' values and child-rearing traditions, but whether such adaptation increases behaviour change in Mongolia needs further testing (Castro et al., 2004; Resnicow et al., 1999). As cited by Battogtokh, N. Begz criticised Mongolian education for copying foreign experience for more than a century without grounding it in the national pedagogical heritage (Battogtokh, 2019, p. 6), and teachers who took part in a 2019 study likewise proposed developing "a model child-rearing programme that reflects the characteristics of Mongolian children without directly copying foreign experience" (Tumennast et al., 2019, p. 17).

From this perspective, the traditional pedagogical heritage of Mongolian families overlaps in many respects with Durrant's four components (Table 4). The goal of "making a person a human being" corresponds to long-term goals; the tradition of teaching by accompanying, in which adults take children along and teach them through shared tasks, to clear guidance; the custom of considering age-specific characteristics to understanding how children think and feel; and "teaching through approval" to problem-solving. Furthermore, "restoring encouragement", as classified by Battogtokh, corresponds to Adler's idea of encouragement, while teaching by accompanying follows the same principle as learning by observing and pitching in (Rogoff, 2014) and scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976). Durrant and Stewart-Tufescu also ground their view of discipline in constructivist theory, in which adults assess the child's current understanding and skills and create conditions for advancing them through graduated support (Durrant & Stewart-Tufescu, 2017, p. 366); in some respects, this is close in meaning to the Mongolian tradition of teaching by accompanying. This theoretical comparison therefore suggests that positive discipline need not be introduced in Mongolia as something entirely new from abroad but could be developed by clarifying and reviving ideas already present in the Mongolian heritage, although this needs to be tested through empirical research.

Table 4. Researchers' proposal for aligning the components of Durrant's programme with the pedagogical heritage of Mongolian families

Durrant's component	**Mongolian pedagogical heritage**	**Proposed alignment**
Identifying long-term goals	"Making a person a human being"; a person who "governs one's own body, speech and mind" (Battogtokh, 2019, p. 25); helping others and valuing communal life (Sarantuya & Khulan, 2022)	Strengthen: begin training with the question "What kind of person do we want our child to become?"
Warmth and structure	Teaching by accompanying, role modelling (Battogtokh, 2019, p. 52; ICAS, 2017, p. 95); "Strictness on the outside, love on the inside"	Strengthen teaching by accompanying as an example of structure; reinterpret the saying as expressing love openly
Understanding how children think and feel	Considering age-specific characteristics, teaching step by step (Battogtokh, 2019, p. 39); "No two people are alike, just as not every steed is an ambler"	Strengthen: link the age-staged approach with stages of child development
Problem-solving	"Teaching through approval": explaining to build understanding, advising, restoring encouragement. "Teaching through prohibition and restraint": reproaching, frightening, shaming, teasing, slapping (Battogtokh, 2019, p. 51).	Strengthen explaining, advising and encouraging. Instead of reproaching, discuss the child's behaviour respectfully and explain the reasons. Replace frightening, shaming, teasing and slapping with methods that listen to the child's views and find solutions together.

Note. This table presents the researchers' theoretical comparison and proposed alignment based on sources on Durrant's components and on traditional child-rearing. It does not confirm that these elements were included in the two programmes' training manuals; the feasibility and effects of the proposal require further testing.

Some domestic studies show how traditional child-rearing practices are used in Mongolian families today. Because their samples and questions differ, differences in their results alone are insufficient for concluding how the use of these practices has changed over time. For example, in a 2016 study, 48.6% of participants reported teaching their children through the traditional method of teaching by accompanying (ICAS, 2017, p. 97). In Sarantuya's (2024) study of 100 residents of three soums in Dornod province, this figure was also 48%, with 32% reporting that they did not teach in this way and 20% that they did so sometimes. In the 2016 study, however, the proportion not teaching by accompanying was 6.5% among those aged 51 and over, compared with 27.3% among those aged 20 and under and 33.3% among those with little education, which the researchers linked to the shift from nomadic to settled life and parents' lack of time (ICAS, 2017, pp. 98–100). Sarantuya's (2024) study likewise found that older people and residents of rural soums preserved this tradition more, whereas parents, owing to workload and lack of time, tended to do things for their children instead of teaching them by accompanying and to give young children mobile phones and other media devices to gain time for themselves. In other words, parents know the value of traditional methods but cannot apply them in daily life, which may be a problem similar to the finding in positive discipline evaluations that positive changes in attitudes were reported while reported practices changed unevenly. Moreover, the finding that 48.1% of parents but only 18.9% of children considered making children help with household chores an effective disciplinary method (CDIPS, 2022, Section 3.1) indicates that parents and children perceive work assigned for disciplinary purposes differently, although it does not directly show that children perceived it as punishment. The heritage should therefore be revived not wholesale but filtered through the five child-rights principles: teaching by accompanying should respect the child's safety and dignity and give opportunities to ask questions and express views (Durrant &

Stewart-Tufescu, 2017), while methods that violate a child's dignity and safety, such as teasing, shaming and slapping, should not be justified as disciplinary methods. Neighbours also take part in raising Mongolian children: 38.4% of participants reported constantly, and 45.1% sometimes, caring about the upbringing of their neighbours' children (ICAS, 2017, p. 100), which indicates that the communal child-rearing tradition expressed in the saying "Neighbours share one mind" persists. In Sarantuya's (2024) study, however, only 40% reported caring about advising and teaching their neighbours' children, which the researcher interpreted as a sign that this tradition is weakening. This tradition therefore provides a rationale for involving grandparents, relatives and neighbours in training.

C. Contribution to International Research

This review contributes an idea to the international discussion on the cultural adaptation of parenting programmes. In low- and middle-income countries, evidence-based programmes can be localised not only by translating them and replacing examples but also by identifying practices in a people's traditional family pedagogical heritage and history that overlap with the programme's core, and by delivering the programme through them. In doing so, the aim should be to preserve the programme's core, and the implementation and outcomes of the adapted version need to be evaluated separately (Barrera & Castro, 2006). Parents may be more likely to accept such a version as part of their own tradition rather than as a foreign method (Bernal et al., 1995). This idea should be tested in future trials.

D. Limitations

This review has several limitations. First, because it relies on purposively selected documents, some of them unpublished, its conclusions are valid within the scope of the analysed sources and do not constitute a full evaluation of the organisations' activities. Because the second author had worked on the evaluation team, the authors were able to obtain some unpublished documents; documents accessible to the authors may therefore be overrepresented in the analysis. Phases 1 and 2 were described mainly on the basis of a single source (Save the Children, 2024). Second, coding and classification were carried out by the first author alone, without independent double coding, so the reliability of the interpretation was not independently verified and it may reflect the researcher's position. Third, the evaluations lacked comparison groups, and the results of World Vision Mongolia and AFCYD were taken from organisational summaries, so they cannot be generalised nationally. All indicators relied on self-reports, and each evaluation measured attitudes, intentions and reported practices differently. Fourth, current use of traditional child-rearing was represented by a 2016 study (ICAS, 2017), Sarantuya's (2024) study of 100 residents of one province and a historical work (Battogtokh, 2019), and needs confirmation through new national research. Fifth, the full texts of the two programmes' training manuals were not compared, so conclusions about cultural adaptation are limited to the information documented in the analysed manuals, reports and briefs. Missing information cannot be interpreted as evidence that adaptation did not occur in practice, and theoretical correspondence does not demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed version. Sixth, the total numbers of materials found, duplicate versions and excluded documents were not fully recorded during the search. Thus, although the selection criteria and the 10 core documents are specified, not all stages of searching and screening can be reconstructed quantitatively, which limits other researchers' ability to replicate the search and selection fully.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This review compared the Adlerian tradition with Durrant's child rights-based approach and synthesised evidence on the introduction and implementation of positive discipline in Mongolia. The evaluations measured different indicators, and changes in reported practices were uneven. Because there were no comparison groups and the range of sources was limited, causal programme effects cannot be established. The review proposes that some ideas of traditional child-rearing could be filtered through child-rights criteria and aligned with the programme; the feasibility and outcomes of this proposal require further testing.

Policy. The General Authority for Child and Family Development and Protection (GACFDP) should make Durrant's four components and non-violence an unalterable core of the service standard implementing Article 22.1 of the Law on Child Protection, and incorporate compatible elements of the Mongolian pedagogical heritage

within a unified framework. Positive discipline training for parents and caregivers should become a regular part of the family-based child protection services delivered by soum and khoroo social workers and multidisciplinary teams. The costs of trainers' and facilitators' work should be included in the state budget. Monitoring records should distinguish people who attended training from those who only received information. The number and percentage of parents and caregivers completing the training, and the percentage of trained facilitators who continue to run training in their workplaces, should be used as key indicators.

Practice. Training should begin with the question "What kind of person do we want our child to become?", use folk sayings and the age-staged approach as conversation starters, and analyse each traditional method together with parents using the categories strengthen, reinterpret and replace. Exercises in teaching by accompanying should follow the sequence demonstrate, do together and let the child act independently; they should involve grandparents, neighbours and boarding-school teachers and be delivered as a priority to families with children aged 5–9, who are most exposed to violent discipline, and to families of children with difficulties in daily functioning.

Research. Future research should, first, examine the conceptual frameworks of the many scholars who have systematically studied ethnopedagogy at a theoretical level, such as T. Namjil, D. Battogtokh and N. Begz (Namjil, 2018, as cited in Battogtokh, 2019, pp. 8–9). Second, it should study the current use of traditional child-rearing methods at the family level, collecting information from parents, children and grandparents. Third, it should test a version of PDEP adapted on the basis of the Mongolian heritage against the standard PDEP programme in randomly assigned groups, evaluating outcomes through the reports of both parents and children and implementation through indicators of acceptability, cultural fit and sustainability (Proctor et al., 2011).

Such trials should be planned jointly by implementing organisations, local child protection services, trainers and research teams. The numbers of participants who enrolled in and who completed the training should be recorded separately. Performance in exercises should be monitored, and attitudes towards disciplinary methods and reported use of those methods should be assessed before and after the training and at follow-up. Training materials should be reviewed for whether they respect children's dignity and participation, suit their evolving capacities and support non-violent discipline. Materials should prevent slapping, frightening and humiliation from being justified as tradition and should include positive alternatives to them. The implementation plan should provide opportunities for children to express their views safely, protect confidentiality and refer children to relevant services when risks are identified.

Declarations

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Conflict of interest. The first author was not involved in implementing the projects or programmes analysed. The second author was a member of the research team that conducted the final evaluation of the project "Strengthening the Child Protection System in Mongolia", one of the documents analysed in this review; the results of that report are presented as reported, and coding and classification were carried out by the first author. The authors have no other conflicts of interest. The organisations that produced the documents had no role in the study design, conclusions or the decision to publish.

Data availability. No new data were generated. Openly available sources are listed in the References. Because the second author was a member of the evaluation team, the authors had access to the 2022 CDIPS final evaluation report and to programme documents provided by AFCYD and World Vision Mongolia for that evaluation, which were analysed as secondary documentary data for the purpose of doctoral research. The other unpublished documents listed in Table 2 were obtained in the course of doctoral research. The full texts of these documents are not publicly attached; access by others is subject to the permission and terms of use of the organisations that hold them.

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