The role of care has been well elaborated at a conceptual level, but we still lack simple, valid, and reliable tools to measure many aspects of care.
have been the method of choice for measuring these interactions, and various measurement scales have been developed, though most of them have not yet been validated. There is very limited experience with survey approaches, and it is probable that many aspects of these interactions will never be amenable to survey approaches. Attempts to operationalize and measure child appetite have been successful, however, and it appears that maternal perceptions of infant and young child appetite are valid and useful. Experience with simple visual appetite analogue scales has been successful and seems promising.

Additional Considerations for Programming and Research

A recurrent theme in our review of the literature was that good (or bad) practices tend to cluster, both within dimensions of care such as hygiene or feeding, and across dimensions. Also, research suggests that there may be a threshold or a minimum number of good practices necessary for health benefits to be obtained. For these reasons, composite indices or summary measures that combine various practices in one index seem promising. Limited experience suggests that hygiene indices from spot-check observations, and feeding indices using feeding information measured through recall, can be constructed and are useful to study associations with child outcomes. Additional research is needed to validate these indices.

Program planning and design should be preceded by qualitative work in order to provide well-grounded and specific knowledge of practices, relevant norms, and potential constraints to adoption of optimal practices. In addition to guiding program design, this information should be used to inform the selection of indicators and methods for monitoring and evaluation.

The use of mixed methods (combining qualitative and quantitative approaches) is also recommended both at the planning stage, and in monitoring and evaluation stages, in order to maximize opportunities for triangulation of findings.

Keywords: childcare practices, hygiene, feeding practices, methods

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