

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT – PREVALENCE AND ATTITUDINAL RESEARCH IN SOUTH ASIA



Global Initiative to
**End All Corporal Punishment
of Children**

Summaries prepared by the Global Initiative to
End All Corporal Punishment of Children
(www.endcorporalpunishment.org), March 2008

Note: No prevalence research identified for Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka

AFGHANISTAN

Qualitative research into adults' perspectives on everyday physical violence against children within the family, published in 2008, involved interviews with more than 200 men and women from 61 families in urban and rural areas in four provinces, plus 56 focus group discussions and 46 interviews with key informants. The study found that violence against children is widely used and recognised, though to a significant degree is not regarded with approval. Physical violence existed to varying degrees within all 61 case study families, most commonly slapping, verbal abuse, punching, kicking, and hitting with thin sticks, electrical cables and shoes. More unusual types of violence included shooting at children, tying them up, washing them in cold water outside during winter and public humiliation. Corporal punishment was used on children as young as 2 or 3 years. No clear difference between punishment of boys and of girls was found, but men were perceived as having more "rights" to be violent towards children than women in the family.

(Smith, Deborah J., 2008, *Love, Fear and Discipline: Everyday violence toward children in Afghan families*, Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit)

In a survey by Save the Children reported in 2003, 82% of children interviewed reported that slapping, kicking and hitting with a stick are common forms of punishment. Hair and ear pulling were reported by nearly 6% of children. Over half reported being hit or severely beaten for being noisy or naughty, almost a quarter for not learning their school lessons, and nearly one in ten for disobeying adults.

(Save the Children Sweden Afghanistan, 2003, *Mini Survey Report on Corporal Punishment*, Kabul: Save the Children, cited in Jabeen, F., 2004, *Corporal/physical and psychological punishment of girls and boys in South and Central Asia Region*, Save the Children Sweden Denmark)

BANGLADESH

A study reported in 2005 of 153 children in 16 groups and 109 adults in 13 groups examined behaviours children liked and behaviour children disliked. The children identified a total of 1,043 behaviours that they disliked from people in the immediate family, educational settings and the workplace. Of these, 293 were categorised as physical discipline/punishment, 206 as verbal discipline/punishment, and 66 as other kinds of discipline/punishment, representing the top three disliked behaviours.

(Government of Bangladesh/UNICEF/Save the Children Alliance, 2005, *Child Abuse Study: Study Report*, Draft Version, 25 January 2005)

A survey by Save the Children of more than 2,500 child domestic workers in Dhaka found that almost two thirds of employers said they were prepared to beat their servants.

(Reported in Jabeen, F., 2004, *Corporal/physical and psychological punishment of girls and boys in South and Central Asia Region*, Save the Children Sweden Denmark)

Interviews with children living in slums conducted by UNICEF and the NGO Phulki revealed that physical and psychological punishment is widely practised in public schools.

(UNICEF ROSA, 2001, *Corporal Punishment in Schools in South Asia*, submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on Violence Against Children 28 September 2001, Kathmandu: UNICEF ROSA. Reported in Jabeen, F., 2004, *Corporal/physical and psychological punishment of girls and boys in South and Central Asia Region*, Save the Children Sweden Denmark)

INDIA

In 2007, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, published the first nationwide study on child abuse in India, based on the experiences of 12,447 children aged 5-18 years from across 13 states and also involving 2,324 young adults (aged 18-24) and 2,449 stakeholders (adults holding positions in government departments, private service and urban and rural local bodies, and individuals from the community). The study revealed a high prevalence of corporal punishment of children in all the settings – their family homes, schools, institutions and on the streets. Of the total number of children, 69% reported physical abuse, including corporal punishment, in one or more situations, more commonly (54.68%) boys and young children (48.29%). In the 5-12 age group, nearly three out of four (72.2%) reported physical abuse in one or more situations, in the 13-14 year age group 70.61%, and among 15-18 year olds 62.13%. Of children abused within the family, in the majority of cases the perpetrators were parents (reported by 88.6% of respondents – 50.9% mothers, 37.6% fathers). The second most commonly reported perpetrators were teachers (44.8%), followed by employers (12.39%), caregivers (9.45%), NGO workers (4.78%) and others. The difference between boys and girls was marginal, but age was significant, with young children aged 5-12 the most vulnerable and the risk declining for children aged 13-14 and again for adolescents aged 15-18. The most commonly reported punishment was being slapped and kicked (63.67%), followed by being beaten with a stave or stick (31.31%), and being pushed, shaken, etc (5.02%). For many (15.6%) the hurt resulted in serious physical injury, swelling or bleeding. When stakeholders were asked for their views on physical/corporal punishment, over 44.54% felt it was necessary in disciplining children; 25.45% disagreed with its necessity; 30.01% expressed no opinion. When asked about most suitable form of punishment for discipline, 35.24% said scolding or shouting, 11.31% slapping or beating with a stick, almost 11% felt locking a child in a room or denying food was suitable punishment.

(Kacker, L., Varadan, S. & Kumar, P., 2007, *Study on Child Abuse: India 2007*, New Dehli: Ministry of Women and Child Development)

A large scale research study conducted in May 2006 by Saath Charitable Trust and supported by Plan International (India) looked at children's experiences of corporal punishment in schools and in the home in one district in each of four states – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The research involved 1,591 children mostly from 41 schools as well as members of various children's organisations. Parents, teachers (215) community members, government officials and other adults were also consulted. The main methods used were interviews, focus group discussions, and role play and classroom observation. The study found corporal punishment to be an accepted way of life in all the schools and communities visited. The most common forms of punishments were hitting with hands and stick, pulling hair and ears, and telling children to stand for long period in various positions. Threats of physical violence were also common. Severe forms of corporal punishment were also encountered, including being severely kicked, starvation, tying with rope to chairs/poles followed by beatings, and being assigned physically strenuous labour (e.g. in the fields). In all schools, there would

be at least five beatings every day, in addition to other more moderate forms of punishment, though the punishments were less severe than those experienced in the home. Punishment in the home was inflicted by mothers and fathers on both girls and boys with equal severity, more frequently for boys.

(Saath Charitable Trust/Plan International, India, 2006, *Impact of Corporal Punishment on School Children: A Research Study – Final Report*)

A survey in 2004 of 1,500 adolescents in ten government schools of Chandigarh, carried out by the Advanced Pediatric Center, PGI found that the prevalence rate of corporal punishment was 22%.

(Reported in *Chandigarh Newslines*, 21 June 2007)

A 2004 study by the NGO Aapanach found that, of 350 children surveyed from public, private, and municipal schools, over 75% said that they received punishment at school, and nearly 60% said the most frequent form of punishment was caning or hitting with a ruler. It was common for the whole class to be punished (66%). A third (33%) reported cases of severe injury due to punishment.

(Reported in *cities.expressindia.com*, 7 April 2007)

As part of the World Studies of Abuse in the Family Environment (WorldSAFE) cross-national project, researchers looked at incidence rates for corporal punishment using the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale, as self-reported by mothers covering the period of the previous 6 months. In rural areas of India, “severe physical punishment” was reported as follows: hitting the child with an object not on the buttocks 36%, kicking 10%, choking 2%, burning 1%, threatening with a knife or gun 1%. “Moderate physical punishment” was reported as follows: spanked buttocks with hand 58%, slapped face or head 58%, pulled hair 29%, hit with knuckles 28%, hit with object on buttocks 23%, pinched child 17%, twisted ear 16%, shook child 12%, put hot pepper in mouth 3%, forced to kneel/stand in uncomfortable position 2%.

(Reported in Krug, E. G. et al., eds, 2002, *World report on violence and health*, Geneva: World Health Organization)

A survey of university students revealed that 91% of males and 86% of females reported having been physically punished as children.

(Save the Children, 2001, *Ending corporal punishment of children: Making it happen*. Cited in Regional Study on Violence Against Children in South Asia: Working document for South Asia Regional Consultation, 19-21 May 2005, Islamabad, Pakistan)

A 1996 study supported by UNICEF found that 66% of children in the state of Maharashtra reported being regularly punished by their teachers in class. In Tamil Nadu state the corresponding figure was 87%, with similar prevalence figures in urban and rural schools.

(Mode, 1996, “Attitudes Study on Elementary Education in India: A Consolidated Report”, A Study Sponsored by UNICEF India, cited in UNICEF, *Corporal punishment in schools in South Asia: Submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion on Violence against Children, 28 September 2001*)

In a study carried out in Chandigarh in 1986-87, it was found that 98.3% of parents were in favour of physical punishment, and out of 187 school-going children aged 6-10 years, 160 received beatings at home.

(Butterflies, 2003, *My Name is Today: A Dossier on Children and Children's Rights. Vol.II: Children and Protection Issues*, New Delhi, India: Butterflies Advocacy and Research Centre. Cited in Jabeen, F., 2004, *Corporal/physical and psychological punishment of girls and boys in South and Central Asia Region*, Save the Children Sweden Denmark))

NEPAL

In a study in the schools of Kathmandu, 82% of students were found to suffer physical punishment in schools; 80% of students said that alternative methods can be used to discipline children.

(Reported in *The Rising Nepal*, 24 December 2006)

In December 2003, the Centre for Victims of Torture (CVICT), in collaboration with UNICEF, conducted a focus group study on “Existing Systems of Discipline in Schools” among students, teachers and parents in four regions. The study revealed that corporal punishment was being used in most schools, more commonly in the private than the public schools. Physical punishment was most commonly used against primary school students, while psychological punishment was more common against secondary level students. Both were commonly used against lower secondary students. Many teachers and parents reported that they give severe punishment to children because they were unaware of alternatives to corporal punishment and knew little about the physical and psychological impacts of harsh punishments.

(Reported in CVICT, Monthly Update, June 2004)

Research by UNICEF ROSA in 2001 found that 33% of respondents reported being physically punished in the home.

(UNICEF ROSA, 2001, *Corporal Punishment in Schools in South Asia*, submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Day of General Discussion on Violence Against Children 28 September 2001, Kathmandu: UNICEF ROSA, cited in Jabeen, F., 2004, *Corporal/physical and psychological punishment of girls and boys in South and Central Asia Region*, Save the Children Sweden Denmark)

PAKISTAN

A participatory study by Save the Children, UNICEF and Government of the North West Frontier Province in three districts of NWFP – Peshawar, Hangu and D.I.Khan – revealed that corporal punishment is widely used to discipline children in homes and educational institutions. A total of 155 consultations were undertaken, using participatory research techniques, with 3,582 children aged 6-14 years from government and religious schools, 86 consultations with 1,231 parents, and 86 consultations with 486 teachers. Not one child reported never having received corporal punishment. Cumulatively, the children identified 28 types of punishment used in homes and 43 in schools. The most common punishments at home were hitting with an object (shoe, brick, iron rod, knife, etc), smacking, kicking, punching, hair-pulling and ear-twisting. The most common in schools were smacking, hitting with an object, hair-pulling, ear-twisting, and awkward and humiliating physical positions. About 43% of all punishments identified were reported by children in government primary schools, about 30% in government middle schools, 10% in government high schools, and 16% in private schools. Corporal punishment at home and in schools was more frequent the younger the child. There were no significant gender differences – boys and girls were subjected to similar frequencies of punishment. Corporal punishment in homes was reported as being inflicted most frequently by immediate family members such as parents (20.22%), grandparents (24.04%) and older siblings (18.91%) and uncles and aunts (27.31%), followed by close relatives such as cousins and in-laws. Neighbours, village elders, tutors, housemaids and other relations were reported as less frequently beating children. Corporal punishment in schools was most commonly inflicted by the teacher and students assigned discipline duties in the school (49.6%), including class monitor, commander, and assembly commander. Senior students were also frequently reported to be hitting younger children (14.7%).

(April 2005, *Disciplining the Child: Practices and Impacts*, Save the Children/UNICEF/Schools and Literacy Dept, Government of NWFP)

A survey by the Pakistan Paediatrics Association and UNICEF, the results of which were published in March 2003, showed that more than four out of five children were vulnerable to physical abuse from parents, elders and teachers, with boys more likely than girls to suffer physical abuse.

(Cited in Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2004, *State of Human Rights 2003*)

In research involving 4,200 school going children aged 5-16 in 18 districts and 3 agencies (tribal areas) of North West Frontier Province found a high prevalence of corporal punishment in the home (NCCR 2001), using a structured questionnaire, all respondents said that they were physically punished at home. The types of punishment experienced included slapping on the face (54%), slapping on the back (29%), hitting with a stick (16.6%), kicking (12.3%), pulling hair (11%), hitting with another object (2%), and shaking (1.1%). For boys, punishment was most commonly inflicted by fathers (78%), followed by mothers (42%) and elder brothers (47%). For girls, mothers most commonly inflicted the punishment (74%), following by fathers (60%), elder brothers (44%) and elder sisters (21%). Reasons given included being naughty (47% boys, 41% girls), playing (18% boys, 25% girls), disobeying adults (37%, 16%), making noise (12%, 12%), forgetting an important task (8%, 4%), and weakness in studies (22%, 25%). The punishment was rated as “very severe” in 17% of cases, “severe” in 52% and “mild” in 31%.

(NCCR, 2001, *Violence against children in the family and in schools: Submission by NGOs Coalition on Child Rights - Pakistan (1) to the CRC Day of General Discussion, 28 September 2001*, NGOs Coalition on Child Rights/UNICEF)

Interviews and questionnaires in 1998 involving 600 heads of government and private primary schools in 14 districts in the North West Frontier Province found that 57.3% felt corporal punishment was “necessary” at school, for reasons including maintaining discipline (68.7%), facilitating learning (55.1%) and building character (50.7%). The most common types of corporal punishment were slapping and beating with a stick, both reported by 41.1% of respondents. 630 mothers and fathers of children in the schools surveyed were also interviewed. 78.1% reported that corporal punishment was practised in the schools, with 64% reporting that their own children had received corporal punishment, most commonly by beating with a stick (44.6%) and in 74 cases the punishment resulted in serious injury. Corporal punishment in schools was felt to be “right” or “wrong but unavoidable” by 67.4% of the parents surveyed.

(NGO Coalition on Child Rights with UNICEF, 1998, *Corporal Punishment in Primary Schools of North West Frontier Province Pakistan*)

An interview study of 300 parents in Lahore found 83% of parents reporting that they used corporal punishment, mostly slaps or kicks. About 3% reported using sticks, belts and other implements.

(Ahmad, F. & Najam, N., n.d., “Physical punishment: parental use, attitude and its intergenerational transmission”)