

# Enhancing supportive and healthy environment for adolescents by doing away with Corporal Punishment: A Reflection.

Dr. Amita Puri , Chhaya Tomar

Amity Univ, Gurgaon

Research Scholar

## Abstract:

*This paper will discuss the effects of enhancing supportive and healthy environment for adolescents by doing away with corporal punishment. Self-concept is an essential determinant of juvenile delinquency. Research evidences have suggested that many school characteristics may be linked to antisocial behaviour in children like: Low level of teacher satisfaction; little cooperation among teachers. Poor student-teacher relations, the prevalence of norms and values that support antisocial behaviour, poorly defined rules and expectations for conduct, Inadequate rule enforcement, etc. In every human culture, bringing up the child with love, care and affection is the basic duty of parents and the family. In traditional Indian culture, the child rearing practises were conducted so delightedly, gracefully and effortlessly by the whole joint family. In present era, the factors like breakdown of family structures, industrialization and urbanization, had put the concept of child rearing and upbringing far behind. Teachers too are stressed out in this competitive world and resort to corporal punishment when they are pushed beyond their limits, although it has an everlasting effect in shaping the personality of the young adolescent who then treads on the path of becoming a juvenile.*

**Key words:** Corporal punishment, anti corporal punishments interventions, juvenile delinquency.

**Dr. Amita Puri**, Counseling Clinical Psychologist with over 20 years of experience in the field.

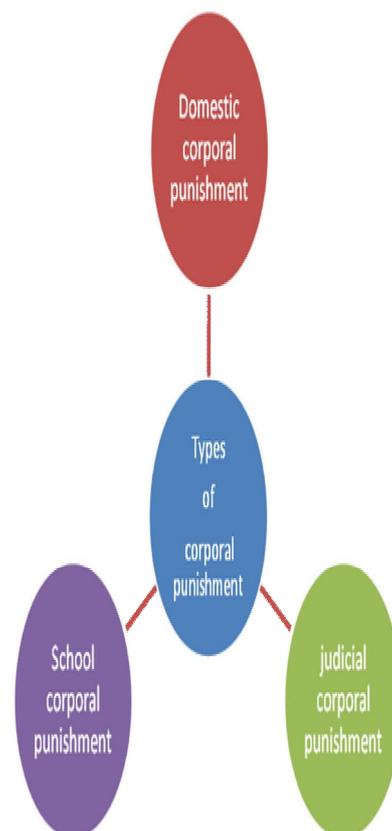
**Ms. Chhaya Tomar**, Research Associate, Ph.D Student, Mewar University, presently working as a clinical psychologist at Air Force Station, Chandinagar, Baghpat

## 1. Introduction

Corporal punishment is a serious, contentious and much debated issue within the present human society. Corporal punishment in simple terms can be defined as a form of physical punishment that involves the deliberate infliction of pain as retribution for the purpose of disciplining or reforming a wrongdoer or child, or to control attitudes or behavior seemed unacceptable whether in judicial, domestic, or educational settings. Corporal punishment is defined by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as: "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light." On the basis of the above said

statement we can say that corporal punishment is the use of any kind of physical force towards a child for the purpose of deter and/or correction, and as a disciplinary penalty inflicted on the body with the intention of causing some degree of pain or discomfort. Punishment of this nature is referred to in several ways, for example: hitting, smacking, spanking, and belting (Cashmore & de Haas, 1995). Although most forms of corporal punishment involve hitting children with a hand or an implement (such as a belt or wooden spoon), other forms of corporal punishment include: kicking, shaking, biting and forcing a child to stay in uncomfortable positions (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006). The desired outcome of physical punishment is child compliance with adult directives (Gawlik, Henning, & Warner, 2002)

Corporal punishment may be divided into three main types as shown in figure 1:



**Figure 1: Types of corporal punishment**

**A. Parental or domestic corporal punishment:** when children are punished by their parents guardians or care takers, such type of punishment is known as parental or domestic corporal punishment.

**B. School corporal punishment:** the term school corporal punishment refers to that type of punishment in which children are punished by teachers or school administrators.

**C. Judicial corporal punishment:** when children are punished as part of a criminal sentence ordered by a court of law than this comes under the category of judicial corporal punishment.

**2. Effects of corporal punishment on children; Research Reviews**

Research findings regarding the use of corporal punishment towards children has examined a number of different outcomes. Accumulated research supports the theory that corporal punishment is an ineffective discipline strategy with children of all ages and, furthermore, that it is often dangerous. Corporal punishment most often produces in its victims anger, resentment, and low self-esteem. It teaches violence and revenge as solutions to problems, and perpetuates itself, as children imitate what they see adults doing. Research substantiates the following consequences of corporal punishment:

**2.1: It teaches children that hurting others is okay.**

The message that the young offenders got through corporal punishment is that violence is a more reliable and effective option for solving problems (for eg. Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997). Linke (2002) also found that corporal punishment teaches a child that problems can be easily solved through physical aggression.

**2.2: It may damage children physically.**

Krug E. G. et al, (2002), stated that corporal punishment is the direct cause of many children's physical impairment, he further added that corporal punishment killed thousands of children and many more caused injuries due to corporal punishment. A study in **Canada** found that people who had been physically punished as a child (defined as having something thrown at them, being pushed, grabbed, shoved, slapped or spanked) but had not experienced more severe forms of assault were more likely to experience psychiatric disorders as adults than those who had not been physically punished as children, but less likely than those who had experienced more severe forms of assault as children (being kicked, bitten, hit with a fist

or object, beaten up, choked, burned, or scalded), (Afifi, T. O. et al, 2005).

**2.3: It opens the door to physical abuse.**

A consistent pattern of physical abuse exists that generally starts as corporal punishment, and then gets out of control (Kadushin & Martin, 1981).

**2.4: It is not effective in the long term**

Research has indicated that corporal punishment is effective in achieving immediate child compliance (Gershoff, 2002) and others have argued that corporal punishment fails to teach a child self-control and inductive reasoning.

**2.5: It damages children's development**

Some reviews of the literature suggest that corporal punishment may lead to adverse child outcomes (Gershoff, 2002; Linke, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). For example, in a review of the research, Smith et al. (2004) examined a number of negative developmental consequences for children who had experienced corporal punishment, including: disruptive and anti-social behaviour; poor academic achievement; poor attachment and lack of parent-child warmth; mental health problems (particularly internalising problems such as depression); and substance and alcohol abuse. Corporal punishment adversely affects children's cognitive development. Children who are spanked perform poorly on school tasks compared to other children (Straus et al., 1997). While there are no clear answers regarding the consequences of using corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy towards children, what is clear is that there is limited evidence to support any positive outcomes associated with corporal punishment (Ferguson, 2013; Lynch et al., 2006). There is still some debate about how well existing research distinguishes between severe physical abuse and physical discipline such as smacking, but current research efforts are looking to distinguish these behaviours more clearly (Ferguson, 2013; Lynch et al., 2006).

**D. Circumstances leading to children being the recipients of corporal punishment ; A Reflection**

Enormous numbers of children experience corporal punishment in their homes, schools, care settings and the penal system in all world regions. A major UNICEF study of child discipline more than 30 low- and middle-income countries found that on average 75% of children experienced violent discipline, with 17% experiencing severe physical punishment (being hit or slapped on the face, head or ears or being hit over and over with an implement); (UNICEF, 2010). Certain children are particularly likely to experience corporal punishment. For example, a 2012 meta-analysis of 17 studies found that children with disabilities were 3.6 times more likely to experience physical violence, including corporal punishment, than children without disabilities (Jones, L.

et al, 2012). Young children are especially vulnerable to corporal punishment. Children from minority groups, including linguistic, ethnic and sexual minorities, may be more likely to experience corporal punishment than others, and corporal punishment may have a gender dimension, with girls and boys experiencing different types or frequencies of violent punishment.

#### **E. Epidemic of corporal punishment:**

In recent years, corporal punishment killed thousands of children. Many children caused injuries due to corporal punishment. Krug E. G. et al, (2002), stated that corporal punishment is the direct cause of many children's physical impairment. Dobbs, T., 2007, also conducted a study in New Zealand on 80 children aged 7-14 and asked about their views on physical punishment, they described being hit with implements including belts and tennis on the face and head. They further added that they were being forced to ingest soap and mustard. The children who took part had no known or alleged history of child abuse or neglect (Dobbs, T., 2007). Additionally, a major **Canadian** study found that nearly three quarters (74%) of all cases of "substantiated physical abuse" were cases of physical punishment and 27% of "substantiated emotional maltreatment incidents" were initiated as a form of punishment. In the vast majority of cases of "substantiated physical abuse", physical violence was the primary form of maltreatment. Of these cases, most involved forms of violence typically used as punishments: just over half (54%) involved children being slapped or "spanked", 30% involved children being shaken, pushed, grabbed or thrown, 21% involved children being hit with objects and 8% involved children being punched, kicked or bitten (Trocmé, N. et al, 2010). In a **UK** study with children aged 5-7, children's comments about "smacking" included "*it feels like someone banged you with a hammer*" (five year old girl) and "*it hurts and it's painful inside – it's like breaking your bones*" (seven year old girl); (Willow, C. & Hyder, T., 1998).

#### **4. Alternatives to Corporal Punishment**

✚ Educators and psychologists who oppose the use of corporal punishment state that teachers should impose non physical disciplinary measures as an alternative to beatings. Advocates propose that teachers require students to write a statement describing the negative effects of their behavior or to apologize for the mistakes in front of their classmates. Instructors can require the misbehaving child to sit on a chair or a mat at the back of the room and to think about his/her mistakes and of ways to improve his/her behavior (Human Rights Watch, 1999). On the basis of different research some alternatives of corporal punishment may be:

- ✚ Teachers may provide appropriate confidence to the child;
- ✚ Teachers can make rules (appropriate to the child's age and stage of development);

- ✚ Teachers can set and enforce boundaries;
- ✚ Teachers may help the child to generate positive self-concept;
- ✚ Teachers can explain to the child why certain behaviour is inappropriate;
- ✚ Teachers can positively reinforce a child by rewarding the desired behaviour;
- ✚ Teachers should also encourage children to realise and accept their mistake;
- ✚ Teachers should have cooperative attitude towards children;
- ✚ Teachers should provide them the privilege of feeling comfortable with a wide range of emotions.
- ✚ Teachers should provide appropriate supervision.
- ✚ Teachers should encourage desired behaviours;
- ✚ Teachers should help the child to form the ability to trust others.
- ✚ Teachers can also provide proper guidance and counselling;
- ✚ Teachers can use "time out", "praising", "encouraging" and "rewarding" strategy.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Most of the research indicates that school corporal punishment by teachers is frequent in mostly countries including India. It has considerable consequences not only on victims but it is also traumatic to witnesses. This issue should be a national health and social concern as it is not only traumatic for victims, but also provides a negative role model to witnesses and can give rise to serious mental problems and socialising difficulties such as difficulties socialising with peers; peer rejection and other mental pathologies. School corporal punishment issue is poorly documented as it is still a taboo in some developed countries like India where these concerns have given birth to deeper investigation at school level is required because many schools have implemented prevention programs throughout the world but corporal punishment by teachers is frequently in use in mostly countries including India. These concerns also have given birth to a whole spate of measures at the policy making level because this can lead them becoming offenders including delinquency and criminal behaviour.

#### **References**

- [1] Afifi, T. O. et al (2005), "Physical punishment, childhood abuse and psychiatric disorders", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 30: 1093–1103
- [2] Cashmore, J., & de Haas, N. (1995). *Legal and social*

- aspects of the physical punishment of children. Canberra: Department of Human Services and Health.
- [3] Dobbs, T. (2007), "What Do Children Tell Us About Physical Punishment As A Risk Factor For Child Abuse?", *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 30:145-162
- [4] Ferguson, C.J. (2013). Spanking, corporal punishment and negative long-term outcomes: A meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 33, 196-208.
- [5] Gawlik, J., Henning, T., & Warner, K. (2002). Physical punishment of children (PDF 445 KB). Hobart, Tas.: Tasmania Law Reform Institute. Retrieved from [www.utas.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/283784/PhysPunFinalReport.pdf](http://www.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/283784/PhysPunFinalReport.pdf)
- [6] Gershoff, E. T. (2002). Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviors and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(4), 539-579.
- [7] Human Rights Watch (1999). Spare the Rod: Corporal Punishment in Kenyan Schools. September Vol. 11.No.6(A).
- [8] Jones, L., Bellis, M.A., Wood, S., Hughes, K., McCoy, E., Eckley, L., Bates, G. et al. (2012). Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *The Lancet*, 380, 899-907.
- [9] Krug E. G. et al. (eds) (2002), *World Report on Violence and Health*, Geneva: World Health Organization
- [10] Kadushin A & Martin J A (1981), *Child abuse: An interactional event*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.249
- [11] Linke, P. (2002). Physical punishment: What does the research say? *Every Child*, 8(3), 2829.
- [12] Lynch, S.K., Turheimer, E., D'Onofrio, B.M., Mendle, J., Emery, R.E., Slutske, W.S., & Martin, M.G. (2006). A genetically informed study of the association between harsh punishment and offspring behavioural problems. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(2), 190-198.
- [13] Smith, A. B., Gollop, M. M., Taylor, N. J., & Marshall, K. A. (2004). The discipline and guidance of children: A summary of research. Dunedin, NZ: Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago and the Office of the Children's Commissioner.
- [14] Straus MA, Sugarman DB, Giles-Sims J. In reply. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 1997; 152:306-8.
- [15] Trocmé, N. et al (2010), *Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect – 2008: Executive Summary & Chapters 1-5*, Public Health Agency of Canada: Ottawa, 2010; see also A. & Trocmé, N. (2013), *Physical Abuse and Physical Punishment in Canada*, Child Canadian Welfare Research Portal Information Sheet # 122
- [16] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (md2001), "General Comment No. 1:" par 11.
- [17] United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of the Child. General comment no. 8* (PDF 61.3 KB). Geneva: General Assembly of the United Nations. Retrieved from [tinyurl.com/yaqch69](http://tinyurl.com/yaqch69).
- [18] UNICEF (2010), *Child Disciplinary Practices at Home: Evidence from a Range of Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, NY: UNICEF Willow, C. & Hyder, T. (1998), *It Hurts You Inside: young children talk about smacking*, Save the Children & National Children's Bureau [www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org).