

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT – PREVALENCE AND ATTITUDINAL RESEARCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



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 Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Western Sahara

ALGERIA

According to a statistical review by UNICEF, 72% of children aged 2-14 experienced minor physical punishment in the home in 2005-2006, although a smaller percentage of mothers/caretakers (15%) believed that children need to be physically punished. The same review reported that 68% of girls and women aged 15-49 believed that a husband or partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances.

(UNICEF, 2007, *Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children – Statistical Review, Number 6, December 2007*)

Research reported in January 2008 found that of 1,700 Algerian families, 70% whip their children and use violence for disciplinary reasons. The most commonly used implements in corporal punishment were found to be rocks and shoes; parents also reported using their hands to beat children's faces and heads. Punishments often resulted in injuries and bruising.

(Reported in *Echorouk Online*, 6 January 2008)

DJIBOUTI

According to a statistical review by UNICEF, 62% of children aged 2-14 experienced minor physical punishment in the home in 2005-2006, although a smaller percentage of mothers/caretakers (32%) believed that children need to be physically punished.

(UNICEF, 2007, *Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children – Statistical Review, Number 6, December 2007*)

EGYPT

As part of the World Studies of Abuse in the Family Environment (WorldSAFE) cross-national project, researchers looked at incidence rates for corporal punishment as self-reported by mothers covering the period of the previous 6 months. In Egypt, the most frequently reported forms of “severe physical punishment” were hitting the child with an object not on the buttocks (26%) and beating (25%); the most common forms of “moderate physical punishment” were shaking (59%), pinching (45%) and slapping the face or head (41%).

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

In the National Survey of Youth and Social Changes in 1999, 54% of youths at schools said teachers usually beat them. This was more common for boys than girls (61% and 46% respectively), for younger than older students (61% and 39%) and for students in rural areas than in urban areas (57% and 50%).

(Cited in Human Rights Center for the Assistance of Prisoners, *The Truth: Official Response to the Government of Egypt's Report to the UN Human Rights Committee*)

A study of 2,170 preparatory and secondary school students aged 10-20 years in 14 government schools in Alexandria in 1996-7, using a self-administered questionnaire, looked at corporal punishment in schools and in the home. Almost four out of five boys (79.96%) and 61.53% of girls reported corporal punishment by teachers during one year using hands, sticks, straps, shoes and kicks; more than a quarter of boys and 18% of girls reported that beatings caused injuries. Over 37% of children were beaten in the home by parents as a form of discipline and some were also burned (4.18%) or tied (0.37%). For over 25%, physical injuries resulted such as fractures, loss of consciousness and permanent disability; for 61% injuries included bumps and contusions as well as wounds (53%). For 23% the injuries required medical consultation. Corporal punishment was most commonly used against preparatory school aged children, and was increasingly likely the lower the educational attainment of the father and the larger the family size.

(Youssef, R. M. et al., 1998, "Children experiencing violence I: Parental use of corporal punishment", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol.22, no.10, pp.959-973; Youssef, M. S. A. & Kamel, M. I., 1998, "Children experiencing violence II: Prevalence and determinants of corporal punishment in schools", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol.22, no.10, pp.975-985)

IRAQ

According to a statistical review by UNICEF, 68% of children aged 2-14 experienced minor physical punishment in the home in 2005-2006, although a smaller percentage of mothers/caretakers (25%) believed that children need to be physically punished. The same review reported that 59% of girls and women aged 15-49 believed that a husband or partner is justified in hitting or beating his wife under certain circumstances.

(UNICEF, 2007, *Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children – Statistical Review, Number 6, December 2007*)

ISRAEL

Interviews with 273 parents of at least one child under the age of 18 (Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union) were carried out in 1999 using a semi-structured questionnaire and vignettes. Two of the vignettes showed two situations in which different methods of physical punishment were used on 8-year-old children, slapping the face of a girl and hitting a boy with a belt. When asked which methods parents could use to hit their children, 75% described specific acceptable methods, including hitting with the hand (85%) and hitting with an object, mainly a belt (15%); 63% felt it acceptable to physically punish boys, 41% girls.

(Shor, R., 1999, "Inappropriate child rearing practices as perceived by Jewish immigrant parents from the Former Soviet Union", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol. 23, no. 5, pp.487-499)

KUWAIT

A 1996 study of 321 Kuwaiti parents with at least one living child attending primary health care clinics in each of the five administrative areas of Kuwait, using a structured questionnaire interview, found 86% agreeing to corporal punishment as a method of child discipline. About 54% agreed or strongly agreed with severe physical beating in cases of gross misbehaviour; 2% agreed with throwing against

the wall; 9% agreed or strongly agreed with burning; and 15% agreed with locking a child in a room. Approval of physical punishment was higher the lower the level of education.

(Qasem, F.S. et al., 1998, "Attitudes of Kuwaiti parents toward physical punishment of children", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol.22, no.12, pp.1189-1202)

LEBANON

An assessment by the International Medical Corps (IMC) of 45 schools in the districts of Akkar, Hermel, Baalbek, and South Lebanon, conducted between November 2006 and March 2007, found that corporal punishment was used excessively.

(Reported by Reuters and AlertNet, 6 July 2007)

Interview research with more than 250 students in private and public schools in Beirut, Tripoli and Tyre found that the majority do not perceive "mild" corporal punishment as violence and even when "serious pain" is inflicted it is justified because the pupils "deserve it".

(Save the Children Sweden, 2005, "Corporal punishment in Lebanon: The role of the public administration in implementing a ban on corporal punishment in schools in Lebanon")

A field study of children aged between 8 and 12 years carried out by the Faculty of Public Health at the Lebanese University found that physical domestic violence exists in all social groups, is widespread throughout society as a method of discipline, and is generally used in educating and bringing up children because families believe it is effective. Punishments ranged from verbal admonishments and denying favourite pastimes, to beating hands which in the most serious cases caused injuries requiring medical attention. Girls and boys received the same punishments. The study found that children who experienced physical punishment regarded beating as a healthy part of discipline, accepted without protest.

(Oamar Al-Din, S. & Al-Hayak, N., "Physical domestic violence against children", research for an award in social health management, 1995-95 [sic.], cited in second state party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2000, CRC/C/70/Add.8, para. 466)

OMAN

In 2003, research conducted by UNICEF in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Development found that some teachers used corporal punishment, despite its prohibition in schools. Other studies have shown that it is also prevalent in the home, particularly among families with the lowest levels of educational attainment.

(Reported in the second state party report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child CRC/C/OMN/2, 2006, para. 175)

SAUDI ARABIA

A news item in 2003 reported a recently published survey on corporal punishment in schools which found 59.5% of respondents in favour of reintroducing corporal punishment into schools, with 38.5% against.

(Reported in "Yes to corporal punishment", *Arab News*, 30 June 2003)

SUDAN

Research by Save the Children Sweden in Sudan looked at children's experiences of physical punishment at home and in school. Two reformatories and custody centres were also visited. In schools, reasons for being beaten by teachers included late arrival (41.1%) and failure to complete homework or recite Koranic verses (45.1%); of children at Koranic schools, 89% gave the main reason for corporal punishment as imperfect recitation of Koranic verses. In the home, reasons included disobedience (35.6%), persistent demands (28.4%) and making loud noises (24%); 89% of interviewed parents believed corporal punishment to be the best technique for achieving desirable behaviour in their children. The most common form of corporal punishment by teachers and parents was reported by the children as whipping (87%). Almost half (48.1%) the children stated that they would not use corporal punishment on children when they were older, but 37.9% intended to use it. The children reported experiencing corporal punishment as very painful (35.6%) and embarrassing (5.8%). The punishment also invoked fear of teachers or parents (16.3%), weakness (9.8%), lack of respect for the person inflicting the punishment (8.6%) and hatred of the people and the setting where the punishment was carried out (12.3%). In the reformatories and custody centres visited, 65% of juvenile offenders said they had received corporal punishment at some stage of the juvenile justice process; 87% of those interviewed while in custody said they had been beaten by police to obtain a confession.

(Save the Children Sweden, 2005, *Ending Physical and Psychological Punishment against Children: Sudan*, Ethiopia: Save the Children Sweden)

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

According to a statistical review by UNICEF, 74% of children aged 2-14 experienced minor physical punishment in the home in 2005-2006, although a smaller percentage of mothers/caretakers (13%) believed that children need to be physically punished.

(UNICEF, 2007, *Progress for Children: A World Fit for Children – Statistical Review, Number 6, December 2007*)

TUNISIA

A study published in 1987 reported that only 20% of interrogated families reported that they never beat their children, that it is considered normal in the traditional culture to inflict corporal punishment on children and wives when they disobey, and that 64% of parents consider that beating their child is good for his/her education. Young boys under 12 years are more exposed to corporal punishment than girls, and fathers are generally responsible for inflicting punishment, though mothers and teachers also beat children.

(Moncef, M., 1987, "L'enfant battu et les attitudes culturelles: l'exemple de la Tunisie", *Child Abuse & Neglect*, vol.II, pp.137-141, cited in OMCT, *Rights of the Child in Tunisia*)

YEMEN

A synthesis in 2005 of research on physical and humiliating punishment of children in Yemen found that almost 90% of children reported that physical and humiliating punishment is the main method of disciplining them in the family. The most common form of punishment in the home was beating, especially for girls in rural areas. Severe physical punishment, including hitting with a stick, was more commonly used against boys in urban areas. Punishments were usually inflicted by mothers and fathers, but also by elder brothers. Corporal punishment in schools was found to be even more common and more severe, with over 90% of children reporting that it is the most commonly used form of punishment. A third of children in social care institutions reported experiencing severe treatment and a further third reported moderate treatment, including being beaten with a stick. Parents report that

punishment usually begins to be inflicted on children between the ages of 5 and 7 years, though children as young as 1 are punished, and ceases at the age of 15 years.

(Habasch, R., 2005, *Physical and Humiliating Punishment of Children in Yemen*, Save the Children Sweden)

A sample of 1,325 city schoolchildren and 274 rural schoolchildren in Yemen, together with their parents and teachers, participated in questionnaire based research into the prevalence of corporal punishment, reported in 2004. It was found that 80% of mothers in the rural area and 59% of mothers in the city use corporal punishment to discipline their children. Boys were significantly more likely than girls to be spanked, and the lower the level of the mothers' education, the more likely they were to use corporal punishment. Experience of severe corporal punishment was linked with poor educational achievement for the child, and corporal punishment was found to contribute to a child's mental health difficulties. The most common forms of punishment were hitting with the hand, a belt, stick or other implement. Other measures included locking, tying, biting and pinching.

(Alyahri, A., 2004, "Mental health, education and corporal punishment in Yemeni school-aged children", Institute of Psychiatry, King's College London)