



INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC INSTITUTE

IAI ACADEMIC CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

International Academic Conferences

21 June 2024
University of Vienna, Austria

IAI Academic Conference Proceedings**Editor:**

Hristina Rucheva Tasev, Dr. Sci, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Republic of N. Macedonia

Editorial Board:

Milena Apostolovska-Stepanoska, Dr. Sci, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Republic of N. Macedonia

Vasko Naumovski, Dr. Sci, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Republic of N. Macedonia

Meic Pearse, Dr. Sci, Houghton College NY, USA

Elif Uckan Dagdemir, Dr. Sci, Anadoluy University, Turkey

Mary Mares-Awe, MA, Fulbright Association, Chicago, USA

Prof. Massimo Introzzi, Bococca University – Milan, Italy

Dr. Zahida Chebchoub, UAE University, Al-Ain

Dr. Benal Dikmen, Associate Professor, T.C. İstanbul Yeni Yüz Yıl University

Ass. Prof. Arthur Pantelides, American University, Bulgaria

Marija Boban, Dr. Sci, Faculty of Law, University of Split, Croatia

Gergana Radoykova, Dr. Sci Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Bulgaria

Anthon Mark Jay Alguno Rivas, MA, Taguig City University, Philippines

Snezana Knezevic, Dr. Sci Faculty of Organizational Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia

Eva Pocher, Ph.D., University of Glasgow

Ass. Prof. Mariam A. Abu Alim, Yarmouk University, Jordan

Ass. Prof Aleksandra Mitrović, University in Kragujevac, Serbia

Dr. Dorjana Klosi, University of “Ismail Qemali”, Vlore, Albania

Ass. Prof. Aneta Stojanovska-Stefanova, PhD, Goce Delchev University, Republic of N. Macedonia

Stefan Milojević, MSc, CFO, CFE, Belgrade, Serbia

Ionuț – Bogdan Berceanu, Senior lecturer, PhD, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Faculty of Public Administration, Romania

Secretary and editing:

Filip Stojkovski

International Academic Institute

Ul. Todor Aleksandrov br.85-4

Skopje, Republic of N. Macedonia

ISSN 2671-3179

The Experience of Corporal Punishment in Schools

Helena Zitková

*Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, University of Pardubice, the Czech Republic
E-mail: helena.zitkova@upce.cz*

Abstract

The use of corporal punishment in schools is a serious pedagogical issue. Many studies worldwide have highlighted the negative consequences of corporal punishment and its harmful effects on children. The present study aims to explore the experience with corporal punishment in schools within the context of the Czech Republic. Despite international obligations to protect children from physical and mental violence, some Czech teachers may still use corporal punishment due to legal ambiguities and wide societal acceptance especially in child rearing by parents. The study's findings indicated that over one-third of participants had personally experienced corporal punishment at school, and more than two-thirds had witnessed it occurring. The study also revealed the emotional responses to these experiences, which were predominantly negative, and provided insights into the respondents' contemporary opinions on the use of corporal punishment in educational settings. The findings underscore the need for clearer legal frameworks and increased awareness to protect children from corporal punishment in schools.

Keywords: corporal punishment; educational settings; the Czech Republic; personal experience; emotional responses

1. Introduction

In the 21st century, students globally experience physical punishment in schools even in countries where it is legally banned. According to the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2011), in some countries, over 80 percent of students face corporal punishment in school. In 20 states within the United States, children are regularly struck on the buttocks with a wooden paddle or rulers (Human Rights Watch, 2009). Other studies have also confirmed the presence of corporal punishment in schools worldwide (Covell and Becker, 2011; Heekes et al., 2020). Thus, the topic of corporal punishment in schools is a critical issue that necessitates attention and action from educators and policymakers.

Corporal punishment involves the intentional use of physical force to inflict pain or discomfort, regardless of its severity, to correct behavior deemed inappropriate or unacceptable (Epoch Worldwide, 1992; United Nations, 2007; Heekes et al., 2020). Research on corporal punishment describes various techniques employed by adults to discipline children, including smacking, spanking, slapping, shaking, or forcing them to stay in painful and uncomfortable body postures (Epoch Worldwide, 1992; Paolucci and Violato, 2004; United Nations, 2007). In some cases, pinching, throwing to the floor, or restraining in ways that are violent enough to cause bruising have been reported (Human Rights Watch, 2009). Additionally, research indicates that corporal punishment is not limited to direct physical contact but also involves the use of objects (Gershoff et al., 2015; Beazley et al., 2006). Students from elementary through high school are often struck on their hands, arms, head, back, thighs, and buttocks with rulers, sticks, belts, or canes. Moreover, they may face excessive exercise drills, washing their mouths out with soap, restrictions on using the restroom, or have objects like key bundles, chalk, or pens thrown at them by teachers (Gershoff et al., 2019; Heekes et al., 2020; Greydanus et al., 2023).

The use of physical punishment in schools is considered a form of teacher misconduct, sometimes referred to as didactogeny, and in some states, it is illegal (Kearney et al., 1991; Goodboy and Bolkan, 2009; Lewis and Riley, 2009; Mareš, 2013; Li-I Hsu, 2014). However, in the Czech Republic, the law surrounding corporal punishment in schools is somewhat ambiguous. Although the existing School Act (2004) does not specify any type of punishment, which suggests an expectation against using corporal punishment by teachers, it lacks a clear, explicit prohibition, resulting in uncertainty. Contrastingly, international agreements and standards (United Nations, 1989; Council of Europe, 1996, 2004; Pinheiro, 2006) mandate that member states protect children from all forms of physical and mental violence and degrading punishment. The Czech government has added to this by stating that corporal punishment should not be part of the education of children in the country, claiming that "physical violence does not belong in any developed society" (Vláda ČR, 2013). Nevertheless, there are currently no current surveys or studies on the use of corporal punishment in schools in the Czech Republic. However, the ambiguity of Czech laws may suggest that some teachers in Czech schools may still use corporal punishment, even though scientific evidence points to its negative effects.

Various research studies have investigated the impacts of corporal punishment in schools and have identified numerous negative effects. Many researchers argue that physical disciplinary practices can harm children, leading to immediate and long-term

negative emotional, mental, moral, and social consequences (Turner and Finkelhor, 1996; Gershoff, 2002; Lovasová and Schmidová, 2006; Aucoin et al., 2006; Matějček, 2007; Kopřiva et al., 2007; Gordon, 2012; Mertin, 2013; Le and Nguyen, 2019; Cuartas, 2021). Furthermore, experiencing corporal punishment is associated with heightened depressive symptoms, student aggression and an increased probability of administering corporal punishment to one's own children in the future (Mayisela, 2020; Gershoff et al., 2019; Heekes et al., 2020). Although the impact of corporal punishment varies widely among individuals, growing research emphasizes the harmful effects of corporal punishment on children's healthy development.

Hence, corporal punishment in schools is a significant issue that necessitates investigating its occurrence and the possible impacts on those who have encountered it in educational settings.

2. Methods

The present study aimed to explore the experience of corporal punishment in schools within the context of the Czech Republic. The research sought to determine whether students in Czech primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary schools encounter corporal punishment administered by teachers. Accordingly, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Did the students entering primary school in the 21st century encounter corporal punishment in schools?
2. What types of physical punishment did the students experience firsthand in schools?
3. What types of corporal punishment did the students witness in schools?
4. What feelings did those who encountered corporal punishment in schools experience?
5. What is the current opinion of those who encountered corporal punishment in schools on its use?
6. What implications can the experience of corporal punishment from school have for current and future life?

To answer the research questions, a questionnaire was used as a methodological tool. It comprised a series of both closed and open-ended questions, allowing respondents to reflect on their experiences with corporal punishment in primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary schools. Closed questions aimed to determine the actual occurrence of corporal punishment in schools, while open-ended questions were designed to explore the types of corporal punishment the respondents encountered in schools as well as their feelings and opinions. This approach encourages respondents to freely express their ideas in their own words (Züll, 2016). The questionnaire did not include questions regarding the respondents' age, sex, or gender, as these factors were not considered relevant to the study.

Survey respondents were those who entered primary school in the new millennium, starting in 2001. Data collection took place in 2022 and 2023 using network sampling with a chain effect (Heckathorn and Cameron, 2017). Social media platforms were utilized to distribute the questionnaire, with an invitation to participate posted and shared across various Facebook groups and pages. Consequently, the questionnaire spread uncontrollably on social media as people shared it among themselves. Despite the subjective nature of questionnaire responses and the inability to ask follow-up questions, this research tool effectively addresses a large number of respondents and gathers substantial data in a short period of time (Chráska, 2016).

A mixed research design was employed to investigate the issue of corporal punishment in Czech schools. First, responses to closed-ended questions were quantitatively analyzed to address the first research question. Then, data regarding the types of corporal punishment the respondents experienced firsthand (on themselves) or witnessed at school were also quantified, as the nature of this data does not require detailed qualitative analysis. Finally, an in-depth qualitative analysis was conducted to gain insight into respondents' feelings when encountering corporal punishment in school, and their current opinions on its use in schools. Constant comparative analysis based on the principle of repeated comparison (Švaříček et al., 2007; Corbin and Strauss, 2014) was used to identify similarities and differences in the data obtained from the open-ended questions dealing with respondents' feelings and opinions. Through open coding, responses were systematically analyzed, revealing thematic similarities across respondents' answers, and then grouped into corresponding categories.

3. Findings and Discussion

In this section, the findings of the research will be presented and discussed. Firstly, the outcomes of quantitative analysis will be introduced. Subsequently, the findings of the qualitative analysis will be presented and interpreted, accompanied by selected authentic excerpts from the respondents' statements for individual categories. These will be quoted in italics. Since the essence of the qualitative analysis was primarily an inductive procedure, i.e., a method of inference, the conclusions drawn in the discussion may also extend beyond the explicit data provided in the respondents' texts. For brevity and clarity, the abbreviation 'CP' will be used to refer to corporal punishment.

3.1 Occurrence and types of corporal punishments encountered in schools

The findings indicate that students in primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary Czech schools experienced corporal punishment (CP) between the years 2001 and 2022/3. Out of the total number of all respondents (N=514), 148 (nearly 30%)

experienced CP on themselves in primary and lower-secondary school, 24 (5%) respondents in upper-secondary school, 276 (nearly 55%) reported witnessing CP in primary and lower-secondary school, and 77 (15%) witnessed CP in upper-secondary school. The data revealed that a substantial number of students either experienced or witnessed corporal punishment at school. Specifically, a higher incidence of both personal experience and witnessing CP was reported in primary and lower-secondary schools compared to upper-secondary schools. This suggests that corporal punishment may be more prevalent in the earlier stages of education.

The most common types of CP (experienced firsthand or witnessed) in primary and lower-secondary schools were slapping on the head or a 'nape scrape'¹ (161 cases), pulling hair or ears (156 cases), throwing an object (keys, marker, chalk) at a student (146 cases), slapping in the face (92 cases), and body manipulation in the form of shaking, squeezing, or pulling body parts (54 cases). Moreover, hitting over the hand with a ruler or a wooden pointer occurred in 50 cases, and hitting over the head with a book occurred in 27 cases. Other less common types of CP reported by the respondents included hitting over the buttocks or back with a hand or an object such as a wooden pointer or ruler, kicking, hitting the head on the desk, grabbing by the neck, sticking chewing gum in hair, poking with a pencil, pinching, forcing the student to kneel, do squats and push-ups, and rewrite texts. Sometimes respondents reported being given the option to choose between corporal punishment and a note to their parents. All respondents chose corporal punishment, as illustrated in those authentic excerpts: (1) *I chose a spank on the ass over a note.* (2) *Most of the time we had a choice - a slap or a note. I opted for slapping, afraid of what would happen at home. My parents still do not know about it.* The option given to students to choose between CP and a note to their parents reflects a coercive environment where children are forced to accept physical punishment to avoid other consequences. This emphasizes the problematic nature of CP as a disciplinary method.

The most common types of CP (experienced firsthand or witnessed) in upper-secondary school included throwing an object (keys, marker, chalk) at a student (62 cases), slapping on the head (45 cases), body manipulation (21 cases), and slapping in the face (14 cases). Other types of punishments reported by respondents were pulling hair or ears, hitting over the fingers, buttocks or back with a ruler or a wooden pointer, hitting over the head with a textbook, and forcing students to stand, do push-ups and squats.

To conclude, the data from this study reveal that nearly 30% of respondents reported personal experiences with corporal punishment (CP), and over 50% witnessed such incidents in their early school years, i.e. in primary and lower-secondary school. While the incidence of CP decreases in upper-secondary schools, with 5% experienced and 15% witnessed, it remains present, albeit to a lesser extent. The types of CP reported by respondents, such as slapping, pulling hair or ears, body manipulation, throwing objects at students, are consistent with the global practices of corporal punishment, as documented in research (Epoch Worldwide, 1992; Paolucci and Violato, 2004; Beazley et al., 2006; United Nations, 2007; Gershoff et al., 2015). Also, other specific acts of CP identified in the data, such as hitting over the hand with a ruler or a wooden pointer, and hitting over the head with a book, parallel documented practices where students are struck with wooden paddles, rulers, or similar objects (Gershoff et al., 2019; Heels et al., 2020; Greydanus et al., 2023).

3.2 Emotional and psychological responses triggered by the use of corporal punishment in schools

Many respondents expressed anger towards teachers for their actions. Moreover, feelings of humiliation were common, often stemming from physical touch or embarrassment in front of peers, coupled with a sense of helplessness. Fear and anxiety pervaded the experiences, leading to reluctance in speaking out or participating in class. Respondents also felt punishments were undeserved and unfair, causing confusion and frustration. After initial reactions, some developed feelings of hatred and a desire for revenge against the teachers. Witnessing CP invoked compassion, especially when classmates were unjustly punished or harmed. In some cases, CP was perceived as deserved or even humorous, particularly where lighter disciplinary actions were viewed as playful. Some respondents also experienced conflicting emotions, such as embarrassment, defiance, compassion, annoyance, and anxiety.

Most of the reported feelings may be classified as negative (196 cases - anger, humiliation and helplessness, fear, injustice, hatred and revenge, compassion), some respondents described their feelings as normal and neutral with no special emotional charge (32 cases), some may be interpreted as positive (18 cases - consent and fun), and sometimes the respondents described their confusion in feelings (8 cases - conflicting feelings). All the emotional and psychological responses were categorized into four categories: Emotional impact, Normalization and justification, Impact on relationship to school and education, and Reduced self-esteem and self-confidence.

- Emotional impact

The respondents' statements revealed a variety of feelings and emotions they encountered both through their direct experience and when witnessing CP in schools. The emotions are listed according to the frequency with which they appeared in respondents' statements and are accompanied by relevant statements from the respondents:

¹ a sharp painful swipe of the thumbnail on the back of the neck from bottom to top

anger: (3) *It annoyed me so much, I was so angry at the teacher for doing such a thing.*

humiliation and helplessness: (4) *I felt humiliated by being touched by a teacher and knowing that he could do anything to me, but I couldn't do anything to him.* (5) *I felt ashamed for not knowing the subject matter and for my classmates seeing it. I felt humiliated in front of my classmates, who were subsequently slapped for laughing.*

fear: (6) *I was afraid to say anything. Even if I knew the answer to a question, I would rather keep quiet or say I didn't know than risk saying the wrong thing.* (7) *I felt fear and anxiety in that teacher's class. I was afraid that if he didn't like something or if I messed up, there would be punishment.* (8) *I didn't understand how someone could be capable of throwing such a sharp object like keys at someone, and I was really worried about my classmate. I was afraid he would do the same to me if I said or did something wrong.*

injustice: (9) *It was for something I didn't do, but the teacher didn't believe me.* (10) *When the teacher slapped me in the face, I felt it wasn't fair and that I didn't deserve it.* (11) *I don't know exactly where the fault was or why it was happening. My classmate hadn't done anything so terrible.*

hatred and revenge: (12) *After recovering from my initial feelings, I felt hatred for the teacher.* (13) *I felt resentment and distrust towards the teacher. I just wanted to get back at him.* (14)

compassion (applies only to witnessing CP): (15) *I felt sorry for those punished unjustly.* (16) *When a teacher hit a classmate with a pointer, it wasn't nice. The girl cried, and I felt sorry for her.* (17) *It was not nice, especially when I saw the blood start to flow after the keys were thrown. I felt sorry for the classmate.*

consent and fun (applies only to witnessing CP): (18) *I thought it was right and deserved. The classmates really did not behave well.* (19) *We thought it was 'fun' in primary school. Mostly, we laughed because the principal would yell and tug on our ears, but he didn't use force; he did it just for fun.* (20) *At first, it seemed like a joke, but we didn't expect him to slap him so hard. Then came the initial shock and fear.*

conflicting feelings: (21) *Embarrassment, deepening feelings of defiance towards authority, compassion for classmates, at the same time compassion for the teacher and annoyance at the behavior of classmates, anxiety about conflicting feelings and powerlessness in the situation.*

To conclude, respondents often experienced a mix of emotions, highlighting the complexity of their reactions to corporal punishment (CP) in schools. This aligns with the concept of didactogeny, where teacher misconduct, including CP, creates a complex emotional landscape for students (Kearney et al., 1991; Goodboy and Bolkan, 2009; Lewis and Riley, 2009). The majority of respondents (196 cases) reported negative emotions such as anger, humiliation, helplessness, fear, injustice, hatred, and a desire for revenge. This indicates that CP in schools is largely experienced as a harmful and distressing practice by students. These findings are consistent with existing research that highlights the immediate and long-term negative emotional, mental, moral, and social consequences of CP (Turner and Finkelhor, 1996; Gershoff, 2002; Aucoin et al., 2006; Matějček, 2007; Cuartas, 2021). A small number of respondents (18 cases) even described positive feelings, such as consent and fun. This suggests the involvement of defense mechanisms where students either trivialize the punishment or align their attitudes with those of authority figures to cope with their experiences. Feelings of compassion, although categorized as negative, indicate empathy towards peers who suffered from CP, suggesting a shared sense of injustice and helplessness within the student community. Moreover, the conflicting feelings reported by some respondents highlight the nuanced and multifaceted impact of CP, reinforcing the idea that its effects are not uniform across all individuals.

- Normalization and justification

Some respondents viewed CP as a regular aspect of child-rearing, believing it to be justified and appropriate, possibly influenced by their own experiences of physical discipline from their parents at home. Although some felt a little embarrassment or the oddness of the situation, most accepted punishment as justified and did not see it as overstepping boundaries, but as a normal and necessary part of upbringing, as illustrated in the following quotes: (22) *Because I was only punished once and justly, I didn't feel wronged, though I was a bit embarrassed. Since I was also physically punished at home, it seemed like a perfectly normal way of education and a deserved punishment.* (23) *It was deserved. I should have paid attention and not interrupted the teacher.* (24) *Sometimes it was appropriate, and I wasn't surprised by how the teacher acted. Although I thought it was strange and probably shouldn't be done, ... but I had also been beaten at home, so I didn't dwell on it too much.* (25) *I think the classmate deserved it; even the mother herself came to thank the teacher for waking her son up.* Describing feelings as normal and neutral may be either

another example of the involvement of defense mechanisms to cope with the negative experience, or the result of societal or cultural acceptance of CP as a disciplinary method.

- Impact on a relationship to school and education

Respondents mentioned that encountering CP at school caused them to develop negative attitudes towards the teachers who used it, some also felt resentment towards the subjects these teachers taught: (26) It left me with very negative memories of the subject. (27) I was afraid of German and developed an aversion to it. For some, this distrust extended to the entire education system and compulsory education. Additionally, CP led to anxiety, nausea, and a reluctance to go to school. Due to fear of making mistakes and subsequent punishment, students were afraid to answer questions, which led to passivity during classes, reduced motivation and, consequently, poorer academic performance: (28) *I experienced anxiety, fear of going to school, and morning sickness. We were forbidden to make mistakes in class, but you can't learn without making mistakes. Now, our class looks like this: the teacher asks a question, and then there is grave silence. This is due to the humiliation from the teachers towards the students.* (29) *I also experienced an inability to concentrate out of fear of not completing tasks on time, leading to a deterioration in my academic performance.*

Overall, the reported feelings highlight how CP negatively affects students' relationships with their school and education. Negative emotions can lead to disengagement, distrust, and resentment towards the school system, which can hinder academic performance and overall school experience. These impacts are echoed in research findings that associate CP with long-term behavioral issues (Turner and Finkelhor, 1996; Gershoff et al., 2019; Heekes et al., 2020).

- Reduced self-esteem and self-confidence

Negative experiences of corporal punishment (CP) at school can have serious and long-lasting effects on a person's self-confidence, self-esteem, and mental health, also influencing their behavior. In some cases, the experience of CP has led to feelings of inferiority and fear of making mistakes. Respondents described how the experience made them afraid to speak up or participate in school activities, leading to passivity and isolation. Some also suffered from physical symptoms such as nausea and vomiting and were under the care of psychologists. As respondents' statements suggest, persistent fear and distrust of authority may continue to manifest in adulthood, both in academic and work settings. The following quotes illustrate all the impacts mentioned: (30) *I underestimated myself; I thought I was stupid, completely useless, and couldn't do anything.* (31) *I was very quiet and hesitant; I was afraid to say anything that might displease the teacher. For a while, I refused to go to school on Mondays, I threw up from fear, and eventually ended up seeing a child psychologist. I didn't start to gain confidence until high school, long after this one teacher taught me.* (32) *I was afraid to speak up, afraid of doing anything wrong, giving the wrong answer, forgetting my textbook, etc., and being physically punished for it, even though it never happened to me. So, I kept quiet a lot, was passive, and preferred not to get involved. Even in college, I'm afraid to speak up in case I say something wrong.* (33) *I feel like I'm afraid at work that something similar will happen if I express my disagreement with my boss.* To conclude, exposure to CP can make students feel powerless and devalued, leading to lasting effects on their personal development, such as fear of making mistakes or difficulty in expressing and asserting themselves. This reduction in self-esteem is corroborated by studies linking CP to various negative developmental outcomes (Turner and Finkelhor, 1996; Gershoff, 2002; Lovasová and Schmidová, 2006; Goodboy and Bolkan, 2009; Cuartas, 2021).

3.3 Retrospective view

In retrospect, many respondents have acknowledged a shift in their views on CP. Initially, they viewed CP as normal and necessary, often reflecting the upbringing they had at home. Some even considered physical punishment justified and natural, likely influenced by its use by authority figures. However, over time, they have come to see CP as inappropriate, recognizing that causing pain to children is unacceptable and viewing it as an improper method of enforcing authority. Presently, respondents recognize the negative impacts of CP on various aspects of their lives, particularly in relationships where they may fear conflict and prioritize pleasing others over their own needs. Despite these reflections, some respondents maintain their belief that light physical punishment, conducted in a humorous manner, can be an effective educational tool. Three subcategories were identified from the statements of respondents regarding the retrospective view of CP:

Change of attitude: (34) *It seemed normal and necessary at the time. In retrospect, I think how perverse it is for a teacher to inflict pain on children and assert authority.* (35) *I suppose it was the upbringing. It was natural to be hit for misbehaving, so we didn't find it strange, even when it came from teachers, unfortunately.* (36) *At the time, I probably took it as: 'they did something wrong, so they deserved it.' It wasn't until the memory resurfaced recently, many years later, that it deeply affected me.* (37) *Because punishments were enforced by authority figures, one could get the impression that it was acceptable. Over time, I have come to realize that it is not and never has been acceptable, and now I am adjusting my perspective.*

Influence on relationships: (38) *I struggle with concerns about what others think and feel the urge to do things that please them, regardless of whether it pleases me. (39) I'm afraid to argue with others to avoid starting a fight. (40) I probably don't understand the whole concept of authority. I am afraid of those in authority, and I can't establish friendly relationships with superiors.*

Same attitude now and then: (41) *In hindsight, I can say that corporal punishment was appropriate in the context of my and my classmates' behavior. It had exactly the effect it should have had, in my opinion. Light physical punishment (a slap) was always carried out in a 'humorous' spirit. The teacher was our class teacher; he knew what he could do and also aimed to instill the best values in us, in short to make something out of us and educate us.*

The retrospective views of respondents on CP vary. Firstly, some reflect a significant shift from acceptance to recognition of its harm. Initially, many respondents viewed CP as normal and necessary, reflecting their upbringing and societal norms. This initial acceptance of CP can align with how the use of CP by authority figures, such as parents and teachers, have been historically justified. This change in attitude aligns with the opinion of experts and researchers that highlight the long-term detrimental effects of CP on children's emotional, mental, moral, and social development (Turner and Finkelhor, 1996; Gershoff, 2002; Kopřiva et al., 2007; Gordon, 2012; Mertin, 2013). Then, some respondents acknowledge that CP has negatively affected their relationships, making them more likely to fear conflict and prioritize pleasing others over their own needs. This suggests that CP can instill a lasting sense of fear and submissiveness, hindering healthy relationship dynamics. These reflections are consistent with the research documenting the adverse effects of CP, including long-term emotional and psychological damage, reduced self-esteem, and impaired social interactions (Gershoff, 2002; Heekes et al., 2020; Cuartas, 2021). Finally, some respondents still normalize and justify the use of CP. This suggests that deeply ingrained beliefs and cultural norms can be resistant to change. The persistence of normalization is reflected in studies showing how societal and cultural acceptance of CP can perpetuate its use across generations, despite its harmful effects (Heekes et al., 2020). The continuity of such attitudes highlights the challenge of eradicating CP and underscores the importance of educational campaigns and policy reforms to shift public perceptions and practices.

3.4 Current attitude on the use of corporal punishment in schools

The majority of respondents clearly oppose CP, disapprove of violence against children, and reject any form of physical violence. However, some respondents believe that 'light' CP, such as slapping, hair pulling, or hand pulling, can be beneficial and consider it an appropriate educational tool in schools. They add that it is important for the use of physical reprimands to be appropriate and well-controlled, and for the teacher to know how much force is acceptable to use. Three categories were elicited out of the respondents' statements: For corporal punishment under certain conditions, Against corporal punishment but with understanding for its use in some situations, and Strongly against corporal punishment.

- For corporal punishment under certain conditions

The following statements show that some respondents approve of the use of CP in schools under certain conditions. They consider it an acceptable and beneficial educational method as long as it is reasonable, does not cause pain or is approved by a parent. Specifically, slapping on the head or pulling hair is perceived as harmless and justified when used in response to a student's behavior that exceeds certain limits. However, respondents oppose the use of harsher corporal punishment, such as the use of the cane:

(42) *Use them, but reasonably and appropriately. I think it's good to slap someone sometimes; it can be a lesson for life. However, it should not be done with the intent to hurt, and the teacher must know the appropriate amount of force to use. Of course, I don't approve of violence against children or hitting someone with a cane.*

(43) *I don't think an educationally appropriate slap would hurt someone. If a student's behavior is really out of line, that's fine.*

(44) *Sometimes it is needed. I would use it. If a student deserves it for their behavior, I have no problem with it. I don't support using canes in classrooms, but a little slapping probably doesn't hurt sometimes.*

(45) *I don't see anything wrong with it as long as the parent agrees, and the teacher isn't outright hurting the kids or causing them any trauma.*

- Against corporal punishment but with understanding for its use in some situations

Some respondents are opposed to CP in principle, however, they acknowledge that in extreme situations, teacher failure and impulsive actions in the form of CP can occur. They understand the frustration of teachers and believe that the use of CP can be understandable in the case of demanding and troublesome situations:

(46) I'm definitely against it. But we're only humans, and I believe that in a very tense situation, it can happen to someone. In such cases, it's important for the teacher to acknowledge their failure and apologize. All of us who have gone through that kind of upbringing at school or at home still have it in us, and it can be hard to control ourselves sometimes. The important thing is to acknowledge it and work on it.

(47) I don't think corporal punishment is a good idea. But I think some kids are unmanageable even at home, let alone at school. How else is the teacher supposed to intervene after that? So, I'm not surprised that sometimes the nerves get the better of them.

- Strongly against corporal punishment

The majority of respondents opposed CP and disapproved of its use. Based on the reasons for rejecting CP in schools, the following subcategories were identified:

Negative impact on child development and teacher-student relationship: Some respondents considered CP inappropriate because it can be harmful to children as well as teacher-student relationships. They believed that CP could lead to negative emotional reactions in children and could have long-term detrimental effects, such as reduced trust in the teacher and negative impacts on children's mental health. Respondents were also concerned that children who experience corporal punishment might internalize this form of discipline and perceive it as normal and acceptable in adulthood: *(48) I think that physical punishment definitely does not belong in school. No one can imagine the feelings a child must experience and then carry with them throughout their lives. It is possible that in adulthood they will then think corporal punishment is acceptable. (49) They only lead to negative feelings towards school. Children learn nothing from corporal punishment; at most, they are afraid to try to answer next time. (50) I think corporal punishment should not be used in schools. It reduces the mutual trust between teacher and students and has a negative impact on the child's psyche.*

Professional failure of the teacher: It was clear from the statements of some respondents that they considered the use of CP a professional failure on the part of the teacher. They perceived CP as a sign of the teacher's inability to communicate effectively with children and earn their respect without the use of CP. At the same time, they emphasized that teachers, as professionals, should be capable of managing their emotions and have sufficient skills and tools to resolve conflicts and handle problem situations with students without resorting to CP: *(51) It is an unforgivable failure of a teacher. I am totally against it. The corporal punishment I saw was only because the teacher ran out of patience. (52) I am absolutely against it. I see it as a failure of the teacher not to know how to approach the children and how to be heard and respected without using physical punishment. A teacher is a professional who has gone through years of study and should not take the shortest route by resorting to physical punishment. (53) It's terribly unprofessional and pathetic. If a teacher has to earn authority through physical punishment, they shouldn't be teaching. Teachers need to be able to control their anger and resolve situations without resorting to violence.*

Against modern society values: Some respondents justified the unacceptability of CP on the grounds of violations of children's human rights. They stressed that nowadays schools should provide a safe environment conducive to education, inspiration, and the overall development of children, rather than infringing upon their rights and causing harm. Additionally, concerns were raised that CP and violence against children in schools may be perceived as normal and acceptable behavior, which in their view is not good for the development of individuals or society as a whole: *(54) I absolutely do not understand how something like this can still occur and be tolerated in the 21st century. Many of us have experienced or witnessed corporal punishment and have felt fear, humiliation, and similar emotions. A teacher simply has no right to do this; it is unacceptable. The school is there to teach the child, not to induce fear or hurt them. Teachers are role models for children, and a role model should not use violence. (55) I do not wish for children to be physically punished in any way in schools. Showing a child that physical assault is acceptable undermines what we as parents, educators, and members of society strive for. (56) I hate corporal punishment anywhere and in any form! I don't understand how 'spanking' can be tolerated in our society as something normal and educational. I feel terribly sorry that children experience this and that when it happens in school, the teacher's own parents sometimes even support it. I think people should really go to jail for this. (57) I totally reject them. I find it ridiculous that anyone these days thinks they have the right to do something like this, to stoop to a level where they would hurt a defenseless child who should see them as an authority figure and look to them for inspiration and understanding. After all, it is a violation of human rights.*

As for the current attitude of the respondents on the use of corporal punishment in schools, several conclusions were drawn. Firstly, some respondents approve of CP under specific conditions, considering it an acceptable educational method if it is reasonable, painless, or approved by a parent. This conditional acceptance contrasts with extensive research showing that even

minor forms of CP can have negative impacts on children's emotional and psychological well-being (Lovasová and Schmidová, 2006; Aucoin et al., 2006). Moreover, it is impossible for the person administering CP to accurately determine the appropriate level of force and ensure that the punishment does not cause pain. The Czech government's stance, stating that physical violence does not belong in any developed society, further opposes any form of CP in education (Vláda ČR, 2013). Secondly, while some respondents disagree in principle with CP, they also express sympathy for teachers' impulsive actions in challenging circumstances. This understanding highlights the need for better support and training for teachers in effective communication and conflict resolution skills, which are essential for maintaining discipline without physical punishment, as suggested by some authors (Kopřiva et al., 2007; Gordon, 2012; Mertin, 2013). Finally, some respondents viewed CP as a professional failure. This perception aligns with the concept of didactogeny, where CP is considered a form of teacher misconduct (Kearney et al., 1991; Goodboy and Bolkan, 2009; Lewis and Riley, 2009; Li-I Hsu, 2014). In addition, some respondents justified the unacceptability of CP based on the violation of children's human rights. They stressed that schools should provide a safe environment conducive to education and overall development, rather than infringing on rights and causing harm. This view aligns with international agreements and standards that mandate the protection of children from all forms of violence (United Nations, 1989; Council of Europe, 1996, 2004; Pinheiro, 2006).

3.5 Implications for current and future life

Based on their negative experience, some respondents emphasize their opposing stance against CP, and advocate for respectful approaches to education. They stress the role of empathy and supportive and respectful educational practices that prioritize children's well-being and healthy development, both academically and emotionally:

(58) *As a future teacher, I know that I will not use corporal punishment and will be prepared to take action against those who do.*

(59) *As a kindergarten teacher, I've sometimes heard from parents of children: 'So spank him or slap him, you have my permission.' But I refuse to do it that way.*

(60) *I will teach my son that it is not okay for someone to do something he does not like. Just as I will teach him to respect others.*

(61) *I had to take antidepressants from eighth grade on, and I ended up hospitalized in high school after a suicide attempt. I have distrust of teachers and the school system. As a parent, I started a community school, and will never put my children in a public school.*

Respondents' emphasis on the need for respectful educational practices for children's well-being is supported by extensive research. Studies suggest that physical discipline can have both immediate and long-term negative effects on children, harming their emotional and psychological well-being and contributing to issues such as increased depressive symptoms (Lovas & Schmid, 2006; Aucoin et al., 2006; Gershoff et al., 2019; Heekes et al., 2020).

4. Conclusion

The findings from this study reveal that at least one-third of the respondents – Czech students entering primary school in the 21st century – encountered corporal punishment in school. The punishment mainly took the form of slapping on the head or a 'nape scrape,' throwing objects (keys, markers, chalk) at students, pulling hair or ears, slapping in the face, hitting over the hand with a ruler or a wooden pointer, and body manipulation such as shaking, squeezing, or pulling body parts. The range of emotions reported underscores the complexity of students' experiences with corporal punishment, suggesting that individual differences can play an important role in how students process and respond to it.

The prevalence of negative emotional responses and the associated psychological impacts mentioned by the respondents highlight the need to eliminate corporal punishment from schools. This can be achieved by enforcing strict regulations against its use and implementing potential policy interventions. Moreover, the outcomes may have implications for teacher training, specifically in terms of increasing awareness about the harms of corporal punishment, creating a safe and supportive school environment, and adopting more respectful approaches to classroom management.

Naturally, when interpreting the findings and drawing conclusions, certain limitations must be acknowledged. For example, there is always a risk of inaccurate information provided by respondents, who may give false information or exaggerate their views and experiences. Since corporal punishment is a sensitive topic, it is important to recognize that for some individuals it may be associated with negative emotions, which increases the likelihood of biased responses. Thus, although the findings cannot be generalized, they provide valuable insights into the nature and prevalence of corporal punishment in Czech schools, reinforcing the call for further investigation and eradicating this harmful practice from educational settings.

References

- Aucoin, K.J., Frick, P. J., and Bodin, D.S., 2006. Corporal punishment and child adjustment. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 27, No. 6, pp. 527-541. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2006.08.001>
- Corbin, J., and Strauss, A., 2014. *Basics of qualitative research: techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Council of Europe, 1996. *European Social Charter (Revised)*. Strasbourg.
- Council of Europe, 2004. *Europe-wide ban on corporal punishment of children*. Recommendation 1666. Parliamentary Assembly.
- Covell, K., and Becker, J., 2011. *Five Years on: A global update on violence against children, report for the NGO advisory council for follow-up to the UN Secretary-General's Study on violence against Children*. New York: United Nations.
- Cuartas, J., 2021. Corporal punishment and early childhood development in 49 low- and middle-income countries. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, Vol. 120, No. 105205. DOI: [10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105205](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2021.105205)
- Gershoff, E.T., Purtell, K. M., and Holas, I., 2015. *Corporal punishment in U.S. public schools: Legal precedents, current practices, and future policy*. Springer.
- Gershoff, E.T., 2002. Corporal Punishment by Parents and Associated Child Behaviors and Experiences: A Meta-Analytic and Theoretical Review. *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 128, No. 4, pp. 539-579.
- Gershoff, E.T., Sattler, K.M.P., and Holden, G.W. 2019. School corporal punishment and its associations with achievement and adjustment. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 63, No. 7, pp. 1-8.
- Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2011. *Prohibiting All Corporal Punishment in Schools: Global Report 2011*. London.
- Goodboy, A.K., and Bolkan, S. 2009. College Teacher Misbehaviors: Direct and Indirect Effects on Student Communication Behavior and Traditional Learning Outcomes. *Western Journal of Communication*. Routledge, Vol. 73, No. 2, pp. 204-219.
- Greydanus, D.E., Pratt, H.D., Spates, R.C., Blake-Dreher, A.E.; Greydanus-Gearhart, M.A., and Patel, D.R., 2003. Corporal punishment in schools: Position paper of the Society for Adolescent Medicine. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, Vol. 32, No. 5, pp. 385-393. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1054-139X\(03\)00042-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1054-139X(03)00042-9).
- Heckathorn, D.D., and Christopher C.J., 2017. Network Sampling: From Snowball and Multiplicity to Respondent-Driven Sampling. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 43, pp. 101-119.
- Heekes, S.L., Kruger, Ch.B., Lester, S.N., and Ward. C.L., 2020. A systematic Review of Corporal Punishment in Schools: Global Prevalence and Correlates. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 52-72.
- Human Rights Watch, 2009. *Impairing education: Corporal punishment of students with disabilities in US public schools*. New York.
- Chráska, M., 2016. *Metody pedagogického výzkumu*. Grada Publishing.
- Kearney, P., Plax, T.G., Hays, L.R., and Ivey, M.J., 1991. College teacher misbehaviors: What students don't like about what teachers say or do. *Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 39, pp. 309-324.
- Kopřiva, P., Nováčková, J. Nevolová, D., and Kopřivová, T., 2007. *Respektovat a být respektován*. Kroměříž: Spirála.
- Le, K., Nguyen, M., 2019. 'Bad Apple' peer effects in elementary classrooms: the case of corporal punishment in the home. *Education Economics*, Vol. 27, No. 6, pp. 557-572. DOI: [10.1080/09645292.2019.1667306](https://doi.org/10.1080/09645292.2019.1667306)
- Lewis, R., and Riley, P. 2009. Teacher Misbehaviour. In: Saha, L.J., Dworkin, A.G. (eds) *International Handbook of Research on Teachers and Teaching*, Vol. 21, pp. 417-431. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-73317-3_27
- Li-I Hsu, L. 2014. The Relationship between English Teacher Misbehaviors in the Classroom and Students' Perception of Teacher Credibility. *International Journal of English Language Education*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 11-27. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijele.v2i2.5548>
- Lovasová, L., and Schmidová, K., 2006. *Tělesné tresty*. Praha: Vzdělávací institut ochrany dětí.
- Mareš, J., 2013. Teachers' Misbehaviour towards Pupils and Students. *Studia Paedagogica*, Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 7-36. DOI: [10.5817/SP2013-1-2](https://doi.org/10.5817/SP2013-1-2)
- Matějček, Z., 2007. *Po dobrém, nebo po zlém?* Praha: Portál.
- Mayisela, S., 2020. "How can you say that the very thing that made you should be abolished?: A teacher's repetition of childhood trauma of corporal punishment." *Psycho-analytic Psychotherapy in South Africa*, Vol. 28, pp. 1.
- Mertin, V., 2013. *Výchova bez trestů*. Praha: Wolters Kluwer Česká republika.
- Paolucci, E.O., and Violato, C., 2004. "A Meta-Analysis of the Published Research on the Affective, Cognitive, and Behavioral Effects of Corporal Punishment." *The Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 138, No. 3, pp. 197-221. DOI: [10.3200/JRLP.138.3.197-222](https://doi.org/10.3200/JRLP.138.3.197-222)
- Pinheiro, P.S., 2006, *World Report on Violence against Children*. United Nations.
- School Act: Zákon č. 561/2004 Sb., o předškolním, základním, středním, vyšším odborném a jiném vzdělávání (školský zákon). In: *Sbírka zákonů*, částka 190/2004.
- Švaříček, R., and Šedřová, K., 2007. *Kvalitativní výzkum v pedagogických vědách*. Praha: Portál.
- Turner, H.A., and Finkelhor, D. 1996. Corporal Punishment as a Stressor among Youth. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 58, No. 1, pp. 155-166.
- United Nations, 1989. *Convention on the Rights of the Child. General Assembly resolution 44/25*.

Vláda ČR, 2013. *Vyjádření vlády České republiky ke kolektivní stížnosti podané na ČR pro porušování Evropské sociální charty z důvodu absence právní úpravy výslovného zákazu tělesných trestů dětí v rodině, ve škole a dalších institucích a místech.*

Züll, C., 2016. *Open-Ended Questions. GESIS Survey Guidelines.* Mannheim, Germany: GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences. doi: 10.15465/gesis-sg_en_002 Online: <https://d-nb.info/1191070131/34>