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Working Paper

Young Lives 
An International Study of Childhood Poverty

Corporal Punishment in Schools in Andhra Pradesh, India

Children's and Parents' Views

Virginia Morrow and Renu Singh



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Young Lives, Oxford Department of International Development (ODID), University of Oxford,
Queen Elizabeth House, 3 Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TB, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1865 281751 • E-mail: younglives@younglives.org.uk

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Summary

There is national and international concern about the effects of corporal punishment upon children, and its implications for their capacity to benefit from school, yet corporal punishment is still widely used in schools all over the world, despite being banned in national legislation in most countries. Nevertheless, the topic is under-researched in developing countries. This working paper discusses the experiences of children aged between 8 and 16 in Andhra Pradesh, India. It draws on analysis of Young Lives household survey and school survey data to produce descriptive statistics to give an indication of the extent of corporal and other forms of punishment in schools. The paper also draws on analysis of three rounds of qualitative data from interviews with children and with their parents or caregivers as well as in-depth interviews undertaken as part of the school survey. The paper explores children's accounts of forms of punishment, how poverty is linked to corporal punishment, the reasons children give for punishment, how the punishment makes them feel, and the consequences punishment has not only for the quality of their learning at school, but also for the decisions they make about staying on in school or leaving school to start working.

The Authors

Virginia Morrow is Senior Research Officer and Deputy Director at Young Lives.

Renu Singh is Country Director for Young Lives in India.

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About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in 4 countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. www.younglives.org.uk

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Introduction

Corporal punishment is used in schools all over the world, despite concern about its effects on children and about the implications for their capacity to benefit from school. At the same time, violence towards children has become a central concern and numerous initiatives are attempting to address it (Save the Children 2012, 2013). One of the success stories in developing countries in the past 15 years has been the increase in enrolment of children in primary schools. However, little attention has been paid to how children experience school, from their viewpoints, and the extent to which corporal punishment is used.¹ Even less attention has been paid to parents' views about their children's experiences at school. In India, the horrific gang rape of a female student that led to her death in Delhi in 2012 led to large-scale demonstrations demanding an end to sexual violence against girls and women. Perhaps surprisingly, none of the attention focused on how patriarchy leads to differences in the way boys and girls are treated at home, at school and in society at large, and the everyday violence that children experience. India is still riddled by huge divisions based on caste, class and socio-economic status, and violence against the powerless by those in power is rampant. This extends to schools, where teachers in a position of power do not hesitate to 'control' children through corporal punishment. As Jeffrey (2011: 792) has noted in a recent commentary, 'the extent and nature of corporal punishment and bullying in schools ... in the global South is a topic that urgently requires research'.

This paper presents systematic research evidence about the prevalence of school corporal punishment in Andhra Pradesh.² First, we review existing policy and research about corporal punishment in India, and look briefly at the school context in India. Then we describe the methods and approach to research ethics, and present analysis of survey findings, before presenting analysis of qualitative data exploring corporal punishment from the perspectives of children and their parents.

1 In *CRC General Comment No 8*, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006: 4) defines 'corporal' or 'physical' punishment as: 'any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting ("smacking", "slapping", "spanking") children, with the hand or with an implement – a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve ... kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair, or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion corporal punishment is invariably degrading. In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment that are also cruel and degrading, and thus incompatible with the Convention ... These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, scares or ridicules the child.'

2 We do not discuss corporal punishment by parents/caregivers and focus entirely on schools, but the two are clearly linked in children's minds (see Frankenberg et al. (2013) on Tanzania, and Twum-Danso (2013) for Ghana, who highlight connections made by parents and children that being physically disciplined is part of what is to be expected of good 'care' – not only by parents, but also by teachers).

Background

International and national policy context

Numerous international conventions and national laws attempt to protect children from violence. Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) requires member states to protect children from 'all forms of physical or mental violence' while in the care of parents or others. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently interpreted the Convention as requiring member states to protect children 'from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment' and has recommended that prohibition should be accompanied by public education to promote positive discipline (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *CRC General Comment No 8*, adopted in 2006). India has copious policies on corporal punishment and recent legislation that bans its use in schools. In 2000, a landmark judgment was made in the High Court of Delhi, challenging the legality of corporal punishment. The judgment directed the Government of India to ensure 'that children are not subjected to corporal punishment in schools and they receive education in an environment of freedom and dignity, free from fear'. The National Charter for Children 2003 and National Plan of Action for Children (2006) identified the prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment in schools as priorities, and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act also known as the Right to Education Act (2009), which guarantees school for children between the ages of 6 and 14, has banned the use of corporal punishment by teachers. Paragraph 1 of Article 17 of the Act provides that 'No child will be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment'. Prior to the ban on corporal punishment enshrined in the Right to Education Act, several states, including Andhra Pradesh (2002), Tamil Nadu (2003), Goa (2003) and West Bengal (2004), had banned corporal punishment in schools. In November 2012, a draft Bill entitled Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Schools Bill, which addresses corporal punishment *inter alia*, was cleared by the Central Advisory Board of Education Committee. Following this, a set of guidelines issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development banned the physical punishment of students. These stipulate that headteachers will be responsible for the prevention of corporal punishment. Teachers found guilty of infringement could be denied promotion and even increments. A 'Child Rights Cell', where children can lodge complaints, will be set up in all schools. The first violation of the ban will invite up to one year in jail, or a fine of Rs 50,000, or both. For subsequent violations, imprisonment could be extended to three years, with an additional fine of Rs 25,000. Finally, the National Policy for Children 2013 states that in schools, the State shall 'ensure no child is subjected to any physical punishment or mental harassment' and 'promote positive engagement to impart discipline so as to provide children with a good learning experience' (Para. 4.6(xv)).

Research: international and national

The UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children (Pinheiro 2006) raised awareness of the problem of school corporal punishment, though since then and in the past decade very high levels continue to be reported globally (see Covell and Becker 2011). Much existing research has either been from the standpoint of developmental psychology, or, more recently, focused around rights perspectives (Ennew and Pierre-Plateau 2004; Beazley et al. 2006), accompanied by NGO advocacy. Up to the 2000s, research on corporal punishment tended to be dominated by US research on child abuse, carried out from a developmental

psychology perspective, which focused on parental use of corporal punishment (not on school-based corporal punishment) and on later (undesirable) outcomes for children (Ember and Ember 2005). A large body of (mostly Western) research 'over the past 40 years has been remarkably consistent in showing that hitting children increases the chances of a child becoming physically aggressive, delinquent, or both' (Gulbenkian Foundation 1995: 52; see also Durrant and Smith 2011). The implications for children's well-being (in the here and now) have been less well researched, and these studies tend not to theorise power imbalances on the basis of gender, generation or socio-economic status, though they may disaggregate (descriptively) by socio-economic status, gender or ethnicity. Further, as Ripoll-Núñez and Rohner (2006: 231–2) note:

research is limited by the fact that the targets of punishment – children themselves – are only rarely asked to be the source of information. Thus little is known about children's perceptions of their own experiences with corporal punishment.

However, as formal schooling has expanded globally, there has been growing awareness of the problematic nature of the quality of schooling in many developing countries. There is now a small body of research on (school) physical punishment that incorporates children's accounts of their experiences and recognises children's agency within a structural/institutional framing of the question (see, for example, Payet and Franchi 2008, on long-term research conducted in South Africa; Parkes and Heslop 2011; Twum-Danso 2013; and Rojas 2011, for Peru).

Most research on school corporal punishment in India is undertaken by NGOs, and very little of it addresses the history and context of school disciplinary practices, nor the pressures on teachers in a highly bureaucratized and rapidly expanding system (see Balagopalan and Subrahmanian 2003). No official statistics of incidences of corporal punishment are kept, but recent NGO and government reports on 'child abuse' broadly suggest that about two-thirds of children experience corporal punishment in school, slightly more boys than girls. The Government of India commissioned research that included a sub-study with 3,163 children aged 5 to 18 in 13 states, who were asked about physical abuse by teachers (Kacker et al. 2007). In all age groups, 65 per cent reported being beaten at school. Corporal punishment is widely used in both government and private schools as a tool to discipline children. But most children do not report the matter or confide about it to anyone, and suffer silently (see also Bartholdson 2001; Chakraborty 2003; Devi Prasad 2006). Being hit on the palms of the hands with a cane by a teacher is common, but research has also found that teachers use a range of other punishments (NCPCR 2010), including forcing children to kneel in uncomfortable positions, slapping or spanking, and beating on the knuckles. Most of the research is based on survey data, with few examples of children describing their experiences. Further, research tends not to explore the degree or severity of punishment – whether children are continually beaten to instil fear may differ from the occasional whack, and we will show below that parents and children seem to make this distinction. From a human rights perspective, both severe and 'mild' physical punishment are unacceptable, of course. We emphasise the importance of eliciting and analysing children's views about their experiences of punishment, because their accounts shed light on children's everyday realities.

Schools in India

The use of corporal punishment in schools needs to be understood in the context of teaching practices that are affected by structural and economic constraints, as well as by entrenched hierarchies (such as caste) (Balagopalan and Subrahmanian 2003; Subrahmanian 2003). Despite the recent legislation and policies, the practice of corporal punishment in schools remains widespread and unfortunate incidents of severe and sometimes fatal injury are reported from across India (Covell and Becker 2011). Kumar (2010) has drawn attention to the low social status of primary school teachers and the poor quality, cursory training that they receive, and blames a combination of a lack of state intervention or political will to address the use of corporal punishment in schools.

School classrooms are also overcrowded. Around half the government schools have fewer than 60 students enrolled at primary level, with an average of two teachers, and only 5.5 per cent of government schools have more than 250 students at primary level (Grades 1–5). This phenomenon is reversed in the case of private schools, where fewer than 1 per cent, i.e. a single private school, had fewer than 60 students and more than half had more than 250 students (Singh and Sarkar 2013). Fewer teachers in government schools has resulted in 32 per cent of lessons in those schools being held by grouping classes together, adding to the challenge of classrooms that are increasingly diverse classrooms in terms of learning stage and capability.

Methods

In order to explore children's experiences of corporal punishment in Andhra Pradesh, we draw on survey and qualitative data from Young Lives, a longitudinal study following the lives of 12,000 children over 15 years. These children live in 20 communities in each country which were selected in 2001 using a sentinel site methodology. The sites include urban and rural areas and represent a range of regions and contexts that reflect ethnic, geographic and political diversity, with oversampling of sites in poor areas. Within each sentinel site, 100 households with a child aged between 6 and 18 months (Younger Cohort) and 50 households with a child between 7 and 8 years (Older Cohort) were randomly selected.

A household and child survey is carried out around every three years (2002, 2006, 2009, 2013 and 2016) with the full sample of children and their caregivers, complemented by qualitative research (2007, 2008, 2010) in four communities with a nested sample of 25 children from each cohort, their caregivers, and other key figures in the community.

An additional school survey was carried out with Younger Cohort children in 2010-11. The school survey includes child, teacher and head-teacher questionnaires, and assessments of children's learning. In India the school survey covered 877 children aged 9–10, as well as an in-depth interviews with 30 children and families in three sites to explore why children move between private and government schooling so frequently (see Singh 2013; Singh and Sarkar 2013; Woodhead et al. 2013).

Survey research is conducted by local research teams, fluent in local languages. Qualitative interviews are voice-recorded, transcribed, and translated. Methods are piloted, and research teams work closely to check data quality and translation and to reflect on interpretation.

Young Lives surveys are not dedicated child-protection prevalence surveys, but rather a set of general questions related to children's general well-being, experiences of poverty, and

progress over time. While the household survey asked a direct question about being beaten by teachers, the qualitative research is more loosely framed, and research teams are encouraged to follow what children want to or are willing to talk about, within a broad set of topics, including children's well-being, their experiences of transitions (for example, moving school), and their time use and daily experiences. A range of qualitative research methods are used, including one-to-one interviews, group discussions and creative activities (such as drawings of a child 'doing well' or 'doing badly', and body-mapping). Corporal punishment was mentioned on numerous occasions, including during group discussions about what constitutes a child 'doing well', in children's descriptions of school and what they liked and disliked about it (during interviews), and so on. Interviews are conducted in homes, fields, or in village community premises, occasionally schools, so we must be mindful that the contexts of data gathering are likely to affect how corporal punishment is reported, because children may feel inhibited in talking about it if adults can overhear.

In this paper we use descriptive statistics from the Round 3 household survey conducted in 2009 when the Younger Cohort children were aged 7–8 years and the Older Cohort, 14–15 years, as well as from the school survey, which was carried out a year later. We report the proportion of children in each cohort who experienced and witnessed physical punishment in schools, and explore differences by gender, geographical location, and household wealth. Significance tests were carried out using Pearson's chi-squared tests and unpaired two-sample *t*-tests as appropriate. We do not discuss differences by caste in our quantitative data analysis, as no clear patterns emerged. Qualitative data are coded by themes, using Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. For this paper, a thematic approach has been used, by extracting all mentions of corporal punishment by children and caregivers across all three rounds of data collection, then further sorting these by topics (see Crivello et al. 2013).

Combining a longitudinal design, detailed information gathered in the household and child surveys, and supplementary detail gathered in the qualitative research, Young Lives provides a unique dataset with which to study children's experiences over time. There are important limitations to flag. Children were asked questions differently in the Young Lives household survey and in the school survey. In the main survey in 2009, they were asked about being beaten or physically hurt. Children were asked to think about the last typical week at school, and were asked 'In that week did you see a teacher use physical punishment on other students?'³ and 'Have you ever been physically beaten or physically hurt by a teacher?' In the school survey, they were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with two statements: 'My class teacher never uses physical punishment', and 'My teacher has physically hurt somebody else in my class this year'. Analysis of qualitative data provides insight into children's experiences of being beaten, from interviews with Older and Younger Cohort children and their parents/caregivers. We have not analysed teachers' accounts.

3 Physical punishment as defined by Young Lives includes spanking, beating, punching, twisting a child's ears or any other hitting, by using the hand or an implement.

Research ethics

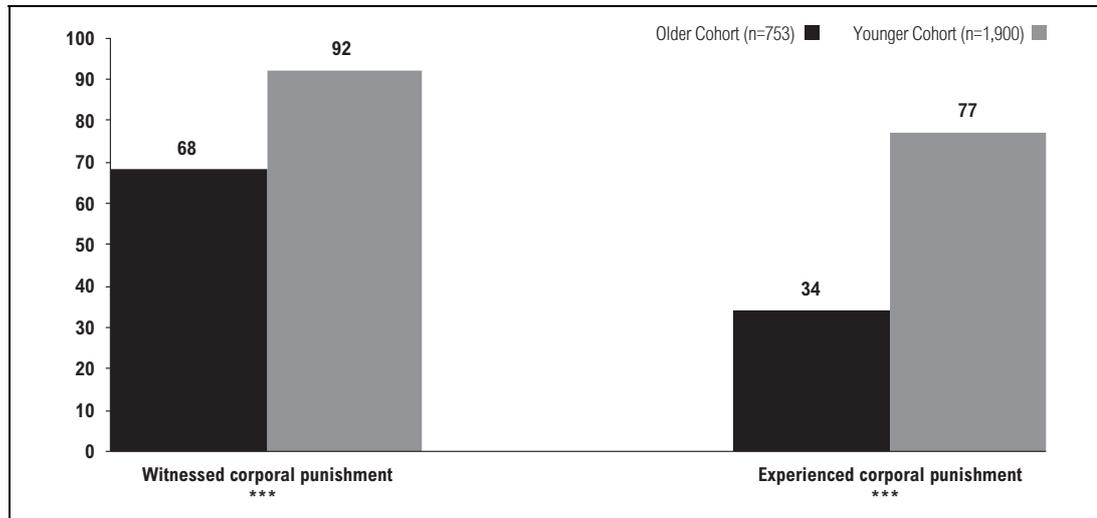
Asking children about their experiences of corporal punishment at school raises profound questions about research ethics and the responsibilities of researchers to report instances of violence to children. Arguably 'it is unnecessary to collect data about such experiences in order to promote what is a fundamental human right' (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2012: 19). The dilemma lies in the fact that children are not only reporting an illegal activity, they are also being asked to describe episodes that are clearly harmful. However, as we show below, the use of corporal punishment is normalised and widespread in India, and questions will be raised in the readers' minds about why action was not taken by the research teams to challenge the use of corporal punishment by teachers, and why children were or are not removed from situations where they risk harm. On balance, we feel that it is more helpful to raise awareness about the use of corporal punishment and its effects on children at the broader, social policy level. Here, a balance has to be struck between intervening in children's lives and raising awareness (see also CP MERG 2012). Myers and Bourdillon (2012) suggest that interventions that upset children's relationships with their communities are at best questionable. The corporal punishment described below, while being in our opinion harmful to children, was not so abusive as to warrant intervention that would disrupt community relations. Further, as the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2012: 19) suggests, the findings of research can be used 'to raise awareness about the reality of children's experiences of corporal punishment, to counter myths, and to add weight to arguments' that might be used in campaigns to improve practice, especially where legislation may have been passed but is clearly not effective.

Survey findings: prevalence of corporal punishment

Overall, our findings regarding the prevalence of corporal punishment echo the findings of NGO research cited above (Bartholdson 2001; Chakraborty 2003; Devi Prasad 2006) - about 65 per cent of children reported being beaten at school. We cannot say much about trends, because the questions children were asked differed between survey rounds conducted in 2002, 2006, 2009 and 2013⁴ (Rounds 1, 2, 3 and 4), but with a future round of the survey planned for 2016, we hope to be able to explore trends over time. Our findings (see Figure 1) indicate clearly that physical punishment was prevalent in the schools attended by Young Lives children, particularly among the Younger Cohort.

⁴ Round 4 data is not yet available for analysis.

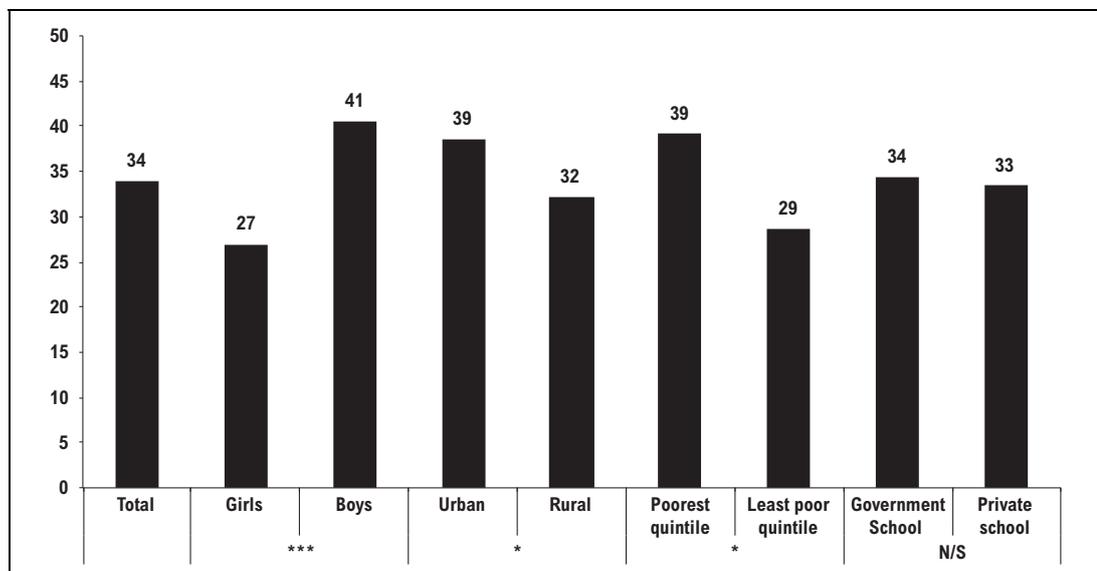
Figure 1. *Children's experiences of witnessing and experiencing physical punishment in the last typical week at school, by cohort (2009) (%)*



* p<0.1, ** P<0.05, ***p<0.01
Source: Young Lives Round 3 data.

Children were also asked, regarding a typical week at school: 'In that week did the teacher use physical punishment on you?' Figures 2 and 3 present the results, for the Older and Younger Cohorts respectively, disaggregated by gender, location, household wealth⁵ and type of school (government or private). We observe significant differences between cohorts with regard to children who witnessed and experienced corporal punishment.

Figure 2. *Percentage of children aged 14–15 years experiencing physical punishment in the last typical week of school (2009)*

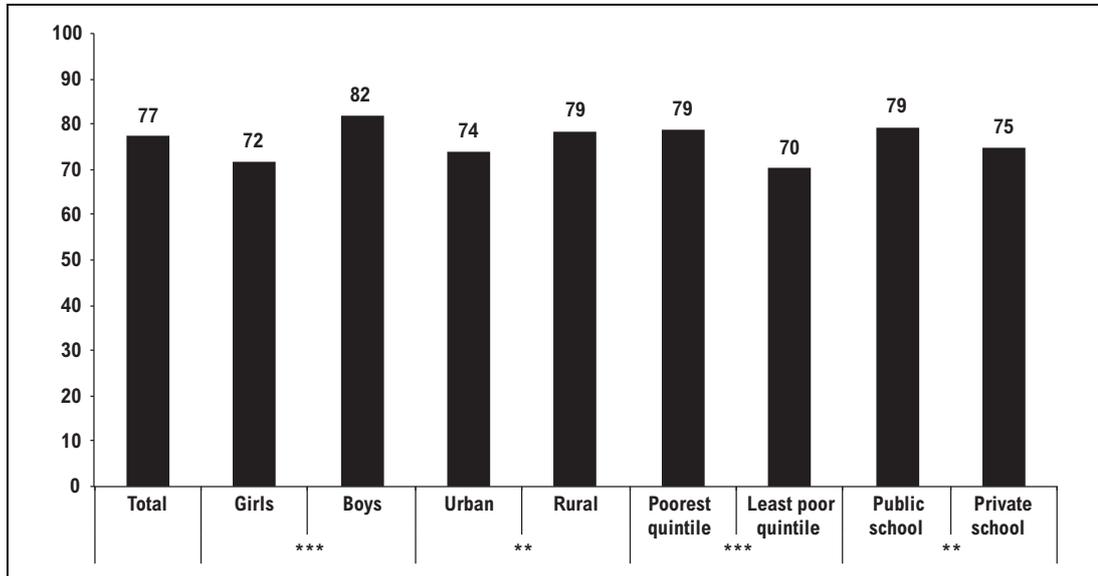


* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01
Source: Young Lives Round 3 data.

⁵ The sample was divided into quintiles according to their household's per capita household expenditure. The lowest quintile (bottom 20 per cent) of families are deemed the 'poorest' and those in the highest quintile (top 20 per cent) the 'least poor'.

Among children aged 14–15 years of age (Figure 2), we note differences by gender, with boys more likely to report punishment than girls. Children from urban locations (compared to rural) and children from the poorest quintile (compared to the least poor) also report higher levels of punishment.

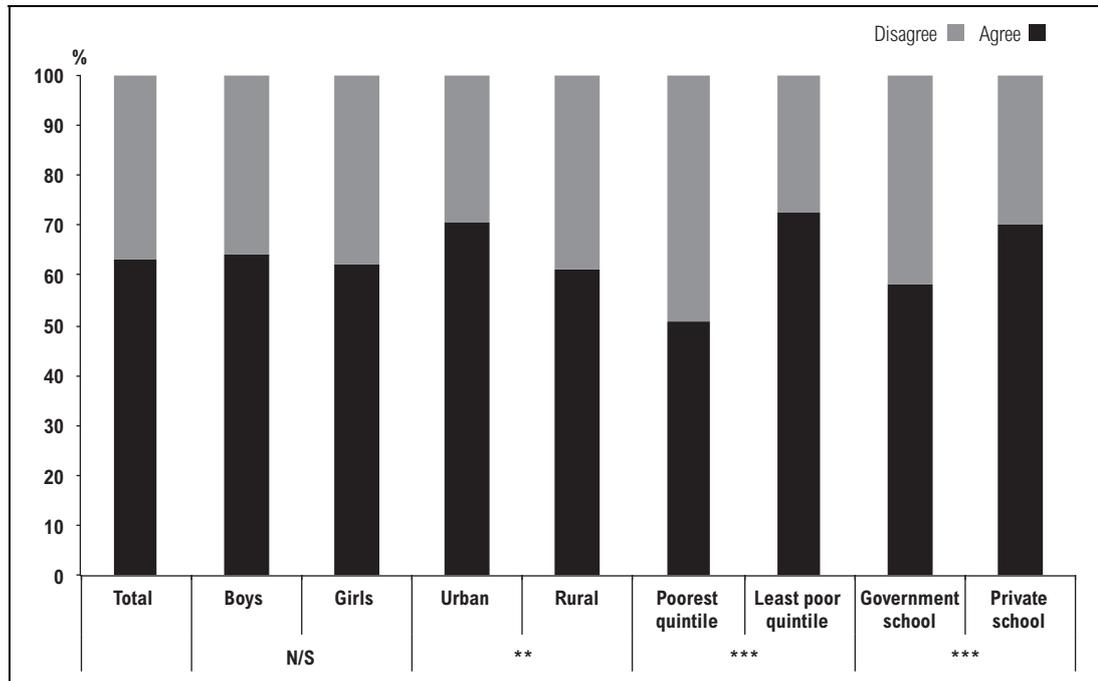
Figure 3. *Percentage of children aged 7–8 years experiencing physical punishment in the last typical week at school (2009)*



* $p < 0.1$, ** $P < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
Source: Young Lives Round 3 data.

There were also significant differences in the younger group, as shown in Figure 3. As with the older children, more boys experienced violence than girls, though for both girls and boys it was commonplace. Poorer children were more likely than less poor children to report punishment and a slightly higher proportion of children in government schools reported punishment compared to children in private schools. However, in contrast to the Older Cohort, punishment was more common in rural settings. It also appears that there is a less sharp difference in the experience of corporal punishment between boys and girls in the Younger Cohort than among the older children. (We speculate that this may be because corporal punishment is part of the socialisation of younger children, but it is not seen as an appropriate way to discipline young women, while 'toughening up' young men seems normative; however, further research is needed to establish whether this is the case.)

Figure 4. *Percentage of children aged 9-10 reporting that their teacher uses physical punishment*



* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, ***p<0.01
Source: Young Lives school survey (2010).

Findings from the Young Lives school survey 2010 (see Figure 4) showed that 63 per cent of children disagreed when asked to respond to the statement 'My class teacher never uses physical punishment'. Children who were less poor, children in private schools and children who resided in urban areas were more likely to disagree with this statement. When asked to respond to the statement 'My teacher has physically hurt somebody else in my class this year', 68 per cent of children agreed, and again, these were more likely to be the better-off children (76 per cent compared to 61 per cent of the poorest children) and urban children (74 per cent compared to 66 per cent of rural children). We noted no significant differences by gender for either statement.

It is unclear why the better-off children and children in private schools reported more punishment in the school survey, whereas we observed the opposite in the main survey. One possible explanation is that children in private schools reported higher levels of corporal punishment because teachers were meeting parents' expectations of maintaining discipline. As one of the district education officers interviewed for the school study said, '[P]rivate schools are like pressure cookers.' Teachers want children to 'behave', and due to larger size classes and a lack of classroom management skills, they may end up using corporal punishment (see Singh and Sarkar 2013).

In order to understand these patterns we turn now to our qualitative findings.

Children's descriptions of punishment in school

Children spoke of a range of reasons for punishment by teachers. Some referred to corporal punishment as a way of controlling unruly behaviour or behaviour that flouted school rules. They were unhappy about both physical and verbal forms of punishment. Many of these punishments were linked to the poor conditions for teaching and learning in schools.

At the first round of qualitative data gathering in 2007, corporal punishment was observed by qualitative research teams to be a sensitive topic, but one that was widely mentioned. Research teams noted that children were being taught in very overcrowded classrooms, with a minimum of 40 students per class, and sometimes as many as 125:

Children sitting in the back rows of the class were often engaged in other activities during lessons. Large class sizes were also noted by younger children as a reason for children to be beaten. In a group discussion, children explained that their teacher was very frequently absent, and they were taught by other teachers trying to compensate by managing more than one class at a time. As the number becomes unmanageable, teachers use a stick to control the children, hitting them if they can't say the words. That is why all the children were scared of them. Other forms of punishment were also described – Tejaswini⁶ (a Younger Cohort girl) explained that she was also physically punished by her teacher, who had asked her to do a *goda kurchi* (sitting on the edge of the wall by balancing on the legs, a form of punishment widely used in India) and her leg was swollen. One child explained that in Grade 1,⁷ the teacher used to beat very little, but in Grade 2, they are beaten hard – “They beat so that we learn and we are becoming big, but it hurts”.

Goda kurchi and verbal abuse were also described by boys aged 9–10 at a government school, in 2010:

The teachers beat with sticks and rulers and make us sit on our haunches – our legs swell up. They also abuse us, and use foul language: ‘You look like bullocks and donkeys – the herdsman is better than you.’ This makes us very sad.

Dominant assumptions might be that corporal punishment is used as a last resort when children are behaving badly. However, children described being beaten for a myriad of reasons, including absence (through work, illness, or attending family celebrations), missing classes, not doing homework, not reading well, making mistakes, getting poor marks in exams, not wearing uniform, not having the right equipment and not paying the teacher for extra lessons. One girl told researchers, “My teacher beats me if I don't go to the private class.”

The following extract is from a report of a group discussion with 7–8-year-old girls and boys (conducted in 2008):

6 All names of children and research sites are pseudonyms.

7 Grade 1 is the first year of school. Children are usually aged around 7.

Teachers beat the students if they make noise, fight each other, making noise by knocking the bench, grabbing pens or money from each other; if they are not neat, and if they make the classroom untidy. They all claimed that they were never beaten by the teachers, and it is others who were beaten. When explored further, however, Rahul was beaten by the teachers more (ten times), all were beaten for making a noise, for knocking the plates when taking midday meal, for not writing properly, for not working on maths properly. ... the teacher beat them with a stick, and that will be brought by the students from the nearby bushes. Teachers use only thin sticks which are not dry. The dry ones will break easily, and if they are wet will not break and will be sharper. Hence teachers always keep only the wet, thin stick with them.

Other reasons mentioned by children included leaving the classroom without permission or not returning from breaks punctually. A 10-year-old girl, interviewed in 2011, explained:

If we don't study, they beat us. If we ask other children for help, they beat [us]. I went to drink water without asking Sir, so he beat me that time. They said all children should come back to class by the time they count ten after the interval. But I went home [to use the toilet]. After coming back to school, he beat me. Once he beat me when I did not study.

This girl's mother described how her daughter was frightened of going to school. Boys and girls mentioned going home at lunchtime to use the toilet; toilets in schools are often inadequate and unsanitary.

The links between corporal punishment and poverty

Families' economic circumstances have an impact on children's experiences at school. The costs of schooling, the need for children to do paid or unpaid work to support their families, and prejudice related to social positioning/caste/class all affect children's ability to attend school regularly and/or meet the school's expectations. Furthermore, schools attended by poor children often have inadequate infrastructure and a poor environment.

The direct consequences of poverty and implications for children are clear where children describe being punished for not having a uniform or the right equipment, or money to pay fees (in the case of private schools; see Singh 2013; Singh and Sarkar 2013). Yaswanth, aged 15, described how he sometimes missed school if his uniform was not ready:

If uniform is not there, I don't go because the PT master will beat me. ... if it is not washed, I will not wear it, so I don't go. ... I have two pairs [sets of uniform], sometimes mother may not [have] washed clothes due to lack of time.

(Interviewed in 2010)

Another boy, aged 7, said, "If we don't get [buy and bring] notebooks, then teachers will beat us." One mother mentioned that the only thing her 7-year-old daughter said about school was that teachers beat her. Sometimes, the fear of being beaten stopped her daughter going to school:

Mother: She studies well, she goes regularly and returns, but when there is no dress [uniform] and when we delay the fee payment then she will not go, she refuses to go. ... she says she will not go and she hides behind that wall ... and says that "Sir will beat me, they will beat me".

Interviewer: Will they punish her if she won't go in uniform?

Mother: Yes, but if we explain to them, then they will give two days time.

(Interviewed in 2008)

Indirect consequences of poverty can be traced in the intersections of children's time spent in school and work. Economic constraints and family circumstances mean that boys and girls in rural areas frequently engage in seasonal agricultural work on family land, and miss school for days, weeks, or months at a time. Tasks are gendered, and boys, for example, describe having to get up in the middle of the night to switch on irrigation pumps when the electricity supply is available, which makes them tired the next day. In some parts of Andhra Pradesh, girls and boys spend long hours engaged in cotton pollination work (see Morrow and Vennam 2010). When they do return to school, they face punishment. Ramya, from Poompuhar, when interviewed in 2007, aged 12, explained the difficulties that she faced in having to manage work in the fields as well as regular school attendance. "I feel very bad when teacher scolds me. I like to be regular to school, do homework, but I cannot do it all. It is difficult, but I have no choice but to do it." She described how she felt if she was in trouble and how and why the teachers disciplined the students:

I get hurt if teachers scold me. Sometimes they also beat us. Madam beats us more. She sometimes beats with stick. Everybody, all teachers, hold a stick whether they beat or not to discipline the students. ... If we do not complete our homework, she beats. She scolds if homework is not done. She beats if homework is not done. She beats if [we are] not regular to school.'

Ranadeep, from the same community, interviewed at the age of 13 in 2008, was also involved in cotton pollination work (see Morrow 2013). He described how he had missed school to work, and when he returned to school, "They [the school management] beat us, madam. They hit us because I didn't go to school for one month, and they have taught the lessons and I missed [them]." Ranadeep's mother described this in more detail:

Mother: My boy scolds me for this. He liked going to school, but we stop him, he makes a lot of argument. Otherwise, we cannot run the family, we don't get labourers in time and there is no other way for us, so we had to do it like that. When he is absent without intimation to teachers, they shout at him and he is terrified. ... His father goes there and informs them. ... they scold us, they say, how will he get on if he is absent for such a long time? ... we try to pacify them by telling them about our problems at home.

Interviewer: Do they agree when you go and inform them, or do they still beat the children?

Mother: Yes ... they don't say anything if we give them prior notice, else they are harassed when they join back, and after getting the thrashings he asks us to come and request them once again, when myself and his father ask him to go to school, he doesn't like to go.

Ranadeep also described the poor physical condition of the school, which then impacts on children's capacity to respond to teachers. He said, "School is very untidy, urination everywhere, near gates, compound wall and everywhere. School should be maintained cleanly." He complained about the road by the school, which caused noise and disturbance:

and in these circumstances we are taught lessons and we cannot hear anything. ... Then in these situations teachers ask us questions in between, and we cannot understand at all. When I tell that I did not understand, teacher will scold us. again they beat us, and we just sit. ... they do scold and call us donkeys ... we do feel bad.

Fear of corporal punishment and feelings of sadness were consistent themes in accounts from the younger boys and girls. One boy (aged 10, interviewed in 2011) talked about how he felt about changing school:

I was very afraid as the school was bigger, and my earlier one was small. We have PT sir [physical training teacher], they said he beats the children a lot. I was very frightened.

One girl, aged 7 in 2008, described how she was demoted from Grade 2 to Grade 1: “[Grade 1] is good, why, because masters don’t beat.” When asked, she said in Grade 2, “they beat ... I know because ... I found [Grade 2] children getting beaten”. There are also examples of children moving schools because of being beaten, described by Younger Cohort boys and girls in a group discussion:

in [name of school], which is a private school, there Sir beats hard; children are afraid. He used to beat with a stick on the fingers. Two other children in the group were also beaten by Sir. Because of this, they discontinued that school and joined [government] school.

Vinay, a Scheduled Tribe boy aged 15,⁸ talked about favouritism and complained about the unfairness meted out to boys, whom he perceived as being more likely to be punished than girls:

They [teachers] will give a preference to teachers’ children, but for other children they won’t motivate, but discourage them ... If we ask why they are doing ... that, they will give a severe punishment for a small mistake ... and beat us ... He [a teacher] beat one student very badly because he did not get good marks in [an] exam. ... other girls also got less marks but [he] left them without any punishment, but this boy got punishment. This boy got 33 out of 100 but another girl got 8 marks but she did not get any punishment.

Vinay seems very aware of the differences apparent in the household survey data; that is, that poorer boys are more likely to receive corporal punishment. He is also conscious of class/caste status.

Some children mentioned that they and their parents did not question or complain about the use of corporal punishment for fear that the child may not receive ‘care’ and attention from teachers in the future (cf. Parkes and Heslop 2011, who found in Ghana that children were afraid that if they reported the teacher, the teacher would leave the school and they would have no teacher at all).

When Santhi, aged 15, also from Patna, a village inhabited predominantly by families from the Scheduled Tribes, was asked whether such incidents were reported to the headteacher, she replied, “We do not tell, if we tell, this sir will not care for us. He will not teach well.” Her friend added, “He will not take care of us, he will avoid us” (Vennam and Komandurai 2009: 18). In this case ‘care’ seems to imply attention from the teacher.

8 ‘Scheduled Tribes’ are indigenous people recognised by India’s constitution as historically disadvantaged.

Fear of further punishment meant that children did not want to tell their parents about physical punishment they experienced at school. For example, a 9-year-old boy explained:

Boy: I do not like my school, since the teachers beat me badly. They beat with a stick on my back, even if we are sitting and talking.

Researcher: Do you not complain to your parents?

Boy: No, because they only beat because we must study well. My mother will thrash me very hard, if she knows I am not answering in class.

This seems to support a discourse of learning through strictness, which seems to be a widespread view in schools and in homes.

“It is for their own good”: parents’ views

Parents, like their children, are ambivalent about corporal punishment. Sometimes parents expect it and demand it of teachers. This following extracts are from an interview with the mother of a 9-year old boy (school survey):

Mother: Nowadays, the teachers don't beat the students. ... but it should be necessary sometimes to keep them in control. So we ourselves ask them to be strict with the students

...

Interviewer: Why did the teachers stop beating?

Mother: Once in [name of place] one student was beaten severely for not attending ... he went to [get] a samosa ... The boy was dead on the spot. Since then, they put in a system of not beating the students.

...

Interviewer: Do you discuss these matters in parents' meetings?

Mother: Yes. The teachers said they don't beat the students as strict rules are passed. But we ourselves ask them to beat on their backs or on the hands, otherwise the students will become stubborn, without any fear.

When interviewed in 2007, Sahiti, aged 7, simply said of her teachers: “They don't teach well. I don't like. They beat us.” Her mother on the other hand said, “If Sir beats [the children], we do not say anything. We tell the child that ‘it is for your own good’.” Another mother describes how her 8-year-old son is sometimes beaten by the teacher, though “we don't ask him [about it], because we feel he should have some fear towards someone”.

Corporal punishment equates to fear, which in turn is linked to care by the mother of a Younger Cohort boy. She says her child's schooling is "fine":

in the sense that children are afraid of the sir [teacher]. If children complain against the teacher, they don't care, because they are determined to educate the children. A few days ago, Sir has called for a parents' meeting, explained one of the children had taken the parents to the school, as the child was beaten as a punishment. Parents also questioned the teacher for beating the child, he must have thought somebody else would come ... hence he decided to call a meeting with all the parents to discuss this, and said that 'everybody knows about me, whatever I do is for your children's education, if children don't care [about] me here in school and you at home, then how are they controlled, how can I teach if they are not controlled?' And [he] also requested not to misunderstand. 'Children are banged [hit] once or twice to control and teach them, and you should not make it an issue, madam.' He explained this to all, as one of the parents questioned him, because that is done for the benefit of the children, he said he punished only troublemaking children and not all children, he doesn't wish to punish good children.

This example suggests that corporal punishment is a topic that this teacher feels can be discussed openly with parents. It is also clear that parents have differing views. The teacher seemed to think he could reach consensus by explaining the reason (to control and teach), and the extent (only one or two blows). So he is setting his own boundaries, and expecting parents to agree, despite flouting the law. As studies elsewhere have found, punishment that is not excessive but sufficient to induce fear is viewed as signifying 'care' (Morrell 2001; Parkes and Heslop 2011 – both South Africa). Morrell (2001: 151) also notes that 'discipline exercised from a position of trust is accepted. ... parents were readily consulted, and punishment was "lovingly" given'. Morrell also found that parents made a distinction between 'assault' and corporal punishment.

On the other hand, there are examples in Young Lives data where parents say they have removed children from school because of corporal punishment. The mother of a 10-year-old boy (interviewed in 2011) described how her child no longer wanted to continue at school at all following a beating, but she seemed to have a choice and at least the economic capital or financial resources to move him:

My son discontinued going to a private school, when he fell sick after being beaten by the teacher. He does not wish to continue schooling any more. I am not allowed to enter the school to even meet the headmaster and am too scared to complain against the teacher. After spending so much money, my son is not studying. I tried to explain that teacher beats you for your betterment – they are not your enemies – but he does not wish to continue his studies.

Another mother explained how "my daughter was small, she was frightened, and said she will not go to school. She was crying, so I went and told ... [the teacher] not to hit." So it seems that the parents, as well as the children, have rules for the kinds of corporal punishment that are acceptable – bounded by how severe, the reason, and so on.

It is important to balance this with examples of parents talking about very positive relationships between children and teachers, though we did not systematically research whether there were any schools using 'positive discipline', or rights-based approaches. The mother of Santhi, an Older Cohort girl, interviewed in 2010, was asked about her child's school:

Mother: It is good. They [teachers] mingle closely with the students. ... they try to remove the fear from the students by constantly talking to them, moving freely and helping them to read. Teaching them how to behave. But when they are not able to do well it is definite that they get a scolding.

Interviewer: Do they beat the children of this age [14–15-year-olds] too?

Mother: Not exactly beating. They say some harsh words. These children will not wait till they get beatings. Usually they don't beat girls. She never complained that she was beaten in school. ... they are all grown-up children. They will not tolerate scoldings, leave alone thrashings. If there is any bigger problem the parents are summoned. However, it has never taken place. Most of the parents are job holders, and they have self-esteem and ego.

It is clear that corporal punishment is very widely used, though not all teachers adopt it as a tool to discipline children. It is also noteworthy that in previous rounds of qualitative research, Santhi had complained about teachers beating her – but her mother said that older children would not tolerate corporal punishment. Santhi is in many respects an exceptional case, because her family is 'middle class' and different from other families in the same tribal group.⁹ These examples seem to confirm the findings of the household survey and suggest that use of corporal punishment is related to gender and age. Younger children and particularly boys and poorer children are more vulnerable.

Discussion

Our analysis of data shows that corporal punishment is widely used in schools in Andhra Pradesh (which mirrors the findings of other recent studies, as noted above), with children experiencing routine violence, and boys experiencing particularly high levels. This needs to be understood in the context of social norms related to how children should be brought up, and what schooling should be like. Further, corporal punishment is often (but not always) condoned by parents, as shown in our qualitative data. Further research is needed to generate insights into how gender and age shape children's experiences of corporal punishment, to examine whether there are some schools that stand out as different from the norm in relation to corporal punishment, and to explore school management practices, teacher training and so on, in schools where the practice of corporal punishment may be less prevalent. There is some indication of shifting attitudes, because although corporal punishment is experienced by all social groups, some older children in better-off communities, and some parents, mentioned challenges to corporal punishment by teachers.¹⁰ Learning from the ways in which parents and children challenge teachers' practices could usefully be channelled into community-led strategies to influence social norms and attitudes regarding corporal punishment.

9 The family had moved in 2005 to a town about 15km away from their original home, in order to access what they perceive to be high-quality schooling for their children. Santhi's father was a government school teacher, posted to a tribal area about 30 km away.

10 Challenges are also being made by other parents. In June 2013, a Public Interest Litigation was filed in Hyderabad by a parent to challenge the inaction of the State of Andhra Pradesh in preventing corporal punishment:
<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/130616/news-current-affairs/article/petition-filed-high-court-against-corporal-punishments>

The accepted norm of violence towards children by teachers described here is a far cry from the child-centred pedagogy envisaged in both the National Curriculum Framework (2005) and the Right to Education Act (2009), as well as from the Government of India's commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. As noted earlier, a brutal incident of sexual violence shook India at the end of 2012, but little subsequent discussion appears to have linked patterns of violence amongst young adults to the extent of violence that children experience on an everyday basis.

There is thus an urgent need to address the problem of corporal punishment and violence against boys and girls in schools as well as other settings. The power dynamics that allow adults to use humiliating forms of punishment, in some cases leading to the injury or even death of young children, need to be challenged. Existing research into the harmful physical and psychological effects of corporal punishment and other forms of violence in childhood and later life adds further compelling arguments for condemning the practice (see Durrant and Smith 2011). Changes in policy and legislation do not appear to be matched by changes at the school level, and this suggests that other factors, particularly parents' views about corporal punishment, and larger questions related to how boys and girls are treated by adults in society at large at different ages, also need to be taken into account. School practices, systems and structures need to be addressed, for example, through smaller class sizes and better-resourced classrooms as well as by providing support for teachers to develop a repertoire of classroom management skills related to alternative approaches to discipline, such as non-violent discipline, effective communication skills and conflict resolution strategies. As Subrahmanian (2003: 3) notes, much greater attention needs to be paid to how broad education policies are implemented, received and experienced – by children, families, and (not considered here) teachers.

The use of corporal punishment by teachers and parents is a widespread cultural norm, and norms and values are notoriously difficult to shift. There are examples where norms are reported to be changing in other non-Western countries, for example, in Uruguay, and Yemen (see Durrant and Smith 2011). Simple ideas, such as adapting slogans or proverbs, as in Romania (Alexandrescu 2011), may be one approach – for example, in India, the slogan 'spare the rod, spoil the child' has been modified to 'spare the rod, save the child' (however, there is a risk that slogans quickly become meaningless mantras). Changing social policies send clear messages about practices that are no longer acceptable, but the eradication of corporal punishment in schools globally is proving difficult, and India is no exception. In India, as in many countries, laws in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child may be out of kilter with everyday realities. Approaches need to develop not only from the top down, but from communities, families and teachers who need to find ways of collaborating to change practices (Morrow and Pells 2012). Blaming specific groups (teachers and/or parents) will not enable progress to be made, and risks alienating both teachers, who are already under pressure because of low wages, lack of respect in communities, and families living in poverty.

In global policy debates, much emphasis has been placed on the role of formal schooling as the solution not only to reducing cycles of poverty in developing countries, but also to addressing gender violence. However, the evidence presented here suggests that we must question this. If children discontinue school because of their experience, or fear, of corporal punishment, and if children learn that violence is the solution to behaviour that is out of line, then formal schooling may inadvertently be reinforcing both cycles of poverty and the use of violence. Schools must reinvent themselves and provide all stakeholders (teachers, parents

and students) with the necessary knowledge and communication skills to implement laws and policies to ensure all children are given the chance to learn without fear. It is critical that schools no longer accept corporal punishment as normative and that they reject it as unacceptable. Violence as an integral part of schooling may have consequences for boys' and girls' development that go beyond the here-and-now of childhood to social and economic outcomes in adulthood, as children experience disrupted schooling, fear and risk of injury while they are at school. In India, this needs to be understood in the context of the very high expectations that parents and children have of schools, despite the very low levels of learning that children achieve (ASER 2012). Children want to study and do well, but practices within schools may inhibit their learning. As we have seen, there are links in parents' and children's minds about the use of corporal punishment at home, and this may make its use in schools seem legitimate and vice versa (cf. Morrell 2001).

Conclusion

Ongoing debates are setting new goals for the post-2015 era. It is likely that violence towards children will remain high on the international agenda. There is interest in linking violence with other areas of children's everyday lives, such as poverty and schooling (Bourdillon and Myers 2012), and it is increasingly recognised that understandings of child protection need to be expanded to encompass broader definitions of violence, and more holistic responses. However, caution is also needed at the international level. In March 2013, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (57th session) met to discuss the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. The Agreed Conclusions place a welcome emphasis on 'addressing structural and underlying causes' of violence, including links to poverty. They also pay some (minimal) attention to education/schooling: 'prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women and girls that are perpetrated by people in positions of authority, such as teachers, religious leaders, etc.' (UN Commission on the Status of Women 2013: 9); 'Improve the safety of girls at ... school ...; adopting national policies to prohibit, prevent and address violence against children, especially girls ...' (ibid.: 13). However, the focus on girls here demonstrates the way thinking related to violence against girls is influenced by women's rights activism rather than by attention to children's human rights – boys (and men) are simply understood as perpetrators of violence, not potential victims. Similarly, the UN High-Level Panel have proposed Goal 2 on girls' (and women's) empowerment to 'Prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against girls and women'. Goal 3 sets minimum learning standards, emphasises the importance of 'quality education', and recognises that globally, 'there is an education, learning and skills crisis', because 'vast numbers of children cannot read or do basic maths after multiple years of schooling' (UN 2013: 36). However, Goal 3 makes no mention of corporal punishment in schools. This means that a substantial dimension of violence in girls' as well as boys' lives is overlooked, reinforcing gender stereotypes of girls (and women) as the inevitable victims of male aggression and violence. This is a missed opportunity. As the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children notes, 'Schools are uniquely placed to break the patterns of violence by giving children, their parents and communities the knowledge and skills to communicate, negotiate and resolve conflicts in more constructive ways' (Pinheiro 2006: 112).

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Corporal Punishment in Schools in Andhra Pradesh, India: Children's and Parents' Views

There is national and international concern about the effects of corporal punishment upon children, and its implications for their capacity to benefit from school, yet corporal punishment is still widely used in schools all over the world, despite being banned in national legislation in most countries. Nevertheless, the topic is under-researched in developing countries. This working paper discusses the experiences of children aged between 8 and 16 in Andhra Pradesh, India. It draws on analysis of Young Lives household survey and school survey data to produce descriptive statistics to give an indication of the extent of corporal and other forms of punishment in schools. The paper also draws on analysis of three rounds of qualitative data from interviews with children and with their parents or caregivers as well as in-depth interviews undertaken as part of the school survey. The paper explores children's accounts of forms of punishment, how poverty is linked to corporal punishment, the reasons children give for punishment, how the punishment makes them feel, and the consequences punishment has not only for the quality of their learning at school, but also for the decisions they make about staying on in school or leaving school to start working.

About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, involving 12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years. It is led by a team in the Department of International Development at the University of Oxford in association with research and policy partners in the 4 study countries: Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam.

Through researching different aspects of children's lives, we seek to improve policies and programmes for children.

Young Lives Partners

Young Lives is coordinated by a small team based at the University of Oxford, led by Professor Jo Boyden.

- *Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Ethiopia*
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- *Save the Children (Ethiopia programme)*
- *Centre for Economic and Social Sciences, Andhra Pradesh, India*
- *Save the Children India*
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- *Instituto de Investigación Nutricional, Peru*
- *Centre for Analysis and Forecasting, Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam*
- *General Statistics Office, Vietnam*
- *University of Oxford, UK*

Contact:

Young Lives
Oxford Department of
International Development,
University of Oxford,
3 Mansfield Road,
Oxford OX1 3TB, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1865 281751
Email: younglives@younglives.org.uk
Website: www.younglives.org.uk