

**МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ**  
**Національний авіаційний університет**  
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**НАЦІОНАЛЬНА ІДЕНТИЧНІСТЬ  
В МОВІ І КУЛЬТУРІ**

**Збірник наукових праць**

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#### **Рецензенти:**

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## **IS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT CULTURAL BARRIER BETWEEN CHILDREN AND PARENTS?**

Is corporal punishment really the metre or measure of discipline? Are children's lives affected when it is absent or neglected? Does it constitute a fundamental, developmental function in the lives of children? Without it are we blindsiding the growth and potential of our children and in retrospect are we retarding the future of our nation? In the following analysis of corporal punishment, we will seek to objectively examine and discuss corporal punishment, its advantages and disadvantages and give clarity to its role and function in our society.

We first need to define what corporal punishment is. Corporal punishment as defined by Webster's dictionary is the deliberate infliction of pain as retribution for an offence, or for the purpose of disciplining or reforming a wrongdoer, or to deter attitudes or behaviour deemed unacceptable. The term usually refers to methodically striking the offender with an implement, whether in judicial, domestic, or educational settings.

Supporters of corporal punishment argue that the bible admonishes you use corporal punishment in parenting your children and that without it you have stepped outside of the mandates of Christ and God. Some parents firmly believe that in his master plan God desires parents to use physical discipline to correct their children and that without it you run the risk of the children becoming morally and spiritually bankrupt.

Another strong point in favour of corporal punishment is that it sets boundaries and reduces lawless behaviour. Children have the tendency to 'test' adults, always pushing to see how far they can go. In some countries there are even laws and legislature put in place that prohibits corporal punishment and in some of these cases parents are being held 'hostages' by their children because any disciplinary action that remotely resembles anything physical can be misconstrued as a violation of these laws and as such these children run rampant and out-of-control because they know legally their parents are unable to enforce the corrective measures required. Corporal punishment lets them know unequivocally, that there are very real and serious consequences for inappropriate behaviour and in turn defines in the mind of the child what can and cannot be done; as well as what is acceptable and what is improper.

Yet another argument in favour of corporal punishment is that it can be used to set an example. In today's society where everyone's 'freedom'

and 'rights' are being campaigned, today's parents are fighting a critical battle to maintain discipline in their home. Children's rights have been promoted to the extent where parents and teachers alike show reluctance and hesitance to discipline their children. Arguments here are that if parents and teacher set a noteworthy example, others would take pattern and correct the undesirable behaviour. It's like the old adage we say here in Tobago, "Yuh ent have to feel fire to know it hot!" meaning that when others who are misbehaving see the example set by a sound spanking, they would be compelled to do the right thing lest that same punishment be meted out to them.

Others argue that corporal punishment can ethically help save a child's future. Children, who are unable to make sound judgments, need visionaries who would make decisions and act on their behalf. Statistics show that 57% of all prison inmates in America have never been hit or spanked. Some behaviourists argue that had these parents taken the initiative and physically disciplined these children, that the likely hood that they would have ended up in prison would have been greatly reduced because these children's behaviour would have been modified at an early manageable stage and they would have become morally responsible citizens and not ended up in prison.

On the other hand, some people argue that corporal punishment is ineffective and does not change the mind of the child. Children though precocious, can be very determined, and if they have made up their mind to do something all the 'licks' in the world would not change their behaviour. Some go so far as to say that corporal punishment can actually make it worse because the children build up a resentment and deliberately 'push' and defy the rules becoming more rebellious the more they are spanked.

Others argue that it creates fear and limits creativity. It is said that physical punishment instils fear and that instead of being beneficial to the growth and development of the child it destroys the child's self esteem and self confidence making the child withdrawn and introverted. They argue that 'violence breeds violence' and only 'perpetuates the cycle,' so that these children in turn grow up to be physically abusive and we create a chain and a domino effect that produces criminals and hinders the growth of the society.

Still some say that corporal punishment is not discipline but abuse. "It can escalate to abuse: Because a spanking works for a while, the parent often repeats the spanking whenever the child misbehaves. Corporal punishment may then become a standard response to any misbehaviour. This can lead to increasingly frequent and harsher spanking which can exceed the "reasonable force" threshold and become abuse."

Psychologists state that there is a fine line between discipline and abuse and when the punishments are frequent and physical it is quite easy for that line to be breached and what may have initially started out as a well meaning punishment when mixed with factors such as time, mood, environment, provocation and choice of weapon could end up to be an uncontrolled catastrophe. They argue that parents should never hit their children when they are angry because it is very easy for that anger to escalate and get out of control.

Essentially, there is no one way to analyse corporal punishment. When and how corporal punishment is dispensed is based on a number of factors. When and how it is dispensed is entirely in the eyes of the people involved. Whether it is acceptable or not depends on who is doing it, what caused it, how it is done and the after effects sustained so both parents and teachers need to consider all the arguments carefully before engaging in it.