

**CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF PUNISHMENT:
A SOUTH AFRICAN QUALITATIVE SURVEY**



***“I want her to talk with me when
I make a mistake ...
I think it is important to sit down with me and
show me how I went wrong...”***

Glynis Clacherty, Alistair Clacherty and David Donald

December 2004

This survey was commissioned and funded by
Save the Children Sweden

Acknowledgements

This research was commissioned by Save the Children Sweden. Thanks to Lennart Renius, Ulrika Sonesson and Peter Newell for comments on the report.

Kgethi Matsai, Jessie Kgomongoe and Alistair Clacherty from Clacherty & Associates conducted the focus group discussions on which this work is based. They are acknowledged for the care with which they worked with children in the focus groups.

Save the Children Sweden
Regional Office for Southern Africa
Pretoria
e-mail: postmaster@za.rb.se
Tel: 012 341 1186
Fax: 012 341 1125

Clacherty & Associates (Pty) Ltd
PO Box 613
Auckland Park 2006
South Africa
glynis@clacherty.co.za

Contents	Page
Introduction	1
Children’s Participation	3
Method	4
Sample	4
Data Gathering Process	7
Child Participatory and Ethical Principles	8
Data Analysis	9
Results	10
1. Corporal Punishment at Home	10
2. Humiliating Punishment in the Home	21
3. Corporal Punishment at School	27
4. Humiliating Punishment at School	37
5. Acceptability of Corporal and Humiliating Punishment: Home	45
6. Acceptability of Corporal and Humiliating Punishment: School	63
7. Feelings Reported in Relation to Punishment (both corporal and humiliating) at Home and at School	78
8. Reported Behavioural Responses to Punishment (both corporal and humiliating) at Home and at School	86
9. Children’s Views on Alternatives	93
Conclusions	97
References	101
Appendices	102
Appendix 1: Focus group activities, questions and rationale	102

INTRODUCTION

Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) declares that “State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent (s), legal guardian (s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”

Apart from South Africa’s ratification of the CRC in 1995, the South African Constitution (South African Constitutional Assembly, 1996) explicitly states in section 12 (1) that

Everyone has the right to freedom and security of the person, which includes the right

- a. not to be deprived of freedom arbitrarily or without just cause;*
- b. not to be detained without trial;*
- c. to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources;*
- d. not to be tortured in any way; and*
- e. not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way.*

In addition the Bill of Rights, Section 28 (South African Constitutional Assembly, 1996) states that “every child has the right ... to be protected from maltreatment, neglect abuse or degradation.”

The definition of child punishment regarded as violating these rights - as provided by Save the Children Sweden in its brief for the present study - incorporates both *corporal punishment* as well as *humiliating or degrading punishment*.¹ this being in line with notions of ‘physical *and* mental violence’ (CRC) – as also ‘abuse *or* degradation’ (SA Bill of Rights).

This study is specifically focused on children’s experience of these forms of punishment by care-givers in two primary settings: *school* and *home*.

¹ International Save the Children Alliance position and definition of **corporal/physical punishment** and other forms of **humiliating or degrading punishment**: The International Save the Children Alliance work towards eliminating all forms of control and punishment that breach children’s fundamental human rights .We are committed to work towards eliminating, through education, legal reform and other measures, all forms of control and punishment of children, in the family, schools and all other settings, which breach children’s fundamental rights to respect for their physical integrity and human dignity. We identify two categories of punishments that can occur separately or together:
- Corporal or physical punishment and the threat of it includes hitting the child with the hand or with an object (such as a cane, belt, whip, shoe, etc); kicking, shaking, or throwing the child, pinching or pulling their hair; forcing a child to stay in uncomfortable or undignified positions, or to take excessive physical exercise; burning or scarring the child.
- Humiliating or degrading punishment takes various forms such as psychological punishment, verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation, or ignoring the child.

Since South Africa's ratification of the CRC, corporal punishment has been outlawed in schools in the 1996 South African Schools Act. Corporal punishment was an extremely common form of discipline in schools before the enactment of this law. Such practices, and the beliefs on which they are based, are not easily changed (Dawes & Donald, 2000). Although formal punishment in schools has undoubtedly altered because of the legal situation, the extent of this change – and particularly how far corporal punishment in less formal school situations has changed – is uncertain. Further, the degree to which humiliating or degrading punishment is occurring in schools has not been established.

Until the recent HSRC study by Dawes, Kafaar, de Sas Kropiwnicki, Pather & Richter, (2004), research information about the incidence of child corporal punishment in South African homes has, as pointed out by the above authors (*ibid*, p30) been minimal. Only in a relatively small, localised, and retrospective study on 300 adult students, had Rakitzis (1987) reported differences between English-speaking Whites (70%), Afrikaans-speaking Whites (92%) and Black students (59%) in their recall of being subjected to corporal punishment at home.

In the Dawes et al study (*op cit*), through a nationally representative household survey which addressed both partner violence and patterns of corporal punishment, 952 parents with children under 18yrs were directly questioned in relation to their use of corporal punishment. In brief, results included the finding that 57% of parents reported using corporal punishment (33% using 'beating': belt, stick, etc.); the most common age of children 'smacked' was 3yrs, and 4yrs for 'beating' with a stick or belt; women are more likely to be the ones who administer either form of punishment than men; somewhat fewer younger parents used corporal punishment than older parents; greater proportions of African and white parents use 'beating' as corporal punishment than other population groups; and those experiencing high levels of partner violence are more likely to agree with child corporal punishment.

Apart from its seminal value in providing much needed information on the prevalence of corporal punishment in South African homes, the Dawes et al study (*ibid*) is contextualised within a current and comprehensive theoretical and research framework. This framework not only deals with the interrelationship of partner violence and corporal punishment. It is also explicit about the complexity of cultural, socio-economic, interpersonal, developmental and individual risk factors that need to be understood in relation to interventions that might flow from prevalence studies of corporal punishment (*ibid*: pp 29-42).

The present study is not intended to duplicate the above study: it is intended to *complement* it theoretically, and to *supplement* it in terms of the nature and focus of its data gathering. Thus, within regional and socio-economic stratifications that are as closely comparable as possible (see Method below), the present study supplements the Dawes et al study (*ibid*) in that it:

- gathers data directly from *children*;
- gathers *qualitative*, experiential data; (Note: matching quantitative, prevalence data, to be integrated with the qualitative data of this report, is to be collected from a similarly stratified sample of children early in 2005)
- differentiates, *corporal punishment* and *humiliating or degrading punishment*;
- differentiates, children's experiences of punishment at *home* and at *school*.

The present study also explores the extent to which children from different environments experience the punishments to which they have been subjected as *legitimate* or not.

This relates to a particularly important theoretical point made, inter alia, by LeVine, et al, 1994; Straus & Stewart, 1999; Dawes & Donald, 2000; and Dawes et al (op cit), namely that “Child rearing attitudes have their roots in taken for granted cultural practices regarding discipline.” (Dawes et al, op cit: p30). Thus, whether particular forms of punishment are... “viewed as legitimate by the child, the parent and the wider community would also have an impact on the way (the punishment) impacts on the child.” (ibid: p 42).

CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION

This qualitative survey is directed at finding out what children actually say and think about their experiences of punishment. Both the principles and the practice of meaningful and ethical child participation in the present study have been based on Boyden & Ennew (1997) as well as recent information published by Save the Children (2003) and Ennew & Plateau (2004).



Apart from principles relating to the age-appropriateness and meaningfulness of child participatory activities, especially close attention has been given to ethical principles. This has been seen as important since child punishment is a particularly sensitive issue, whether experienced by children at home or at school. (More detail on how these principles were put into practice appears under Method below, as well as in Appendix 1).

METHOD

SAMPLE

The sample was drawn across four socio-economic levels (income bands), distributed across four South African provinces (viz: Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Limpopo). Provinces themselves were not taken as independent variables in the survey. Those included, however, were selected on the basis of representing relatively densely populated, as well as geographically separate, areas in the country as a whole. Rural and urban areas were recorded and though again, not taken as independent variables, the emergent pattern of difference between these areas is highlighted in the analysis below. The four income bands, as the primary stratification, were defined as indicated under Table 1 below.

While income bands could be more precisely determined in a household survey, such as that conducted by the HSRC (Dawes et al, op cit), this was not possible in the current survey where the child participants had to be located through schools. In this case, the principals of a selection of schools in each of the provinces were contacted and asked to indicate which of the four income bands was most typical of households from which their students came. Across the different provinces, focus groups were then drawn from those schools that ‘corresponded’ to the relevant income bands. Although this definition of the income bands of households from which child participants came can only be taken as approximate, it is possible, at least in broad terms, to equate them with the more precise categories used in the HSRC survey (ibid).



Child participants for focus groups across three age groups (6-8 years; 9-12 years; 13-18 years) were drawn from relevant grades in the schools concerned, while maintaining a gender balance throughout. Within these constraints, selection of individual children was random.

It was considered important to differentiate the three age groups as children's experience of both the forms and severity of punishment, their views of its legitimacy, their responses to it, and their suggested alternatives could vary considerably between younger and older children.

Gender differentiation was regarded as important for the same reasons.

The total sample involved 410 children, with 48 focus groups of about 8 children per group (See Table 1 below).

Table 1
Qualitative survey: Stratifications by income band, age group, and gender with respective cell sizes (number of focus groups x number of children)

Income bands	High 12 focus groups = 93 children						High-mid 12 focus groups = 100 children						Low-mid 12 focus groups = 114 children						Low 12 focus groups = 103 children											
	6-8 yrs 4 focus groups = 31 ch'n		9-12 yrs 4 focus groups = 31 ch'n		13-18 yrs 4 focus groups = 31 ch'n		6-8 yrs 4 focus groups = 33 ch'n		9-12 yrs 4 focus groups = 33 ch'n		13-18 yrs 4 focus groups = 34 ch'n		6-8 yrs 4 focus groups = 39 ch'n		9-12 yrs 4 focus groups = 38 ch'n		13-18 yrs 4 focus groups = 37 ch'n		6-8 yrs 4 focus groups = 33 ch'n		9-12 yrs 4 focus groups = 33 ch'n		13-18 yrs 4 focus groups = 37 ch'n							
Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F						
	1x 8	1x 8	1x 7	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 9	1x10	1x 8	1x 8	1x 10	1x 10	1x 10	1x 8	1x 11	1x 11	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 9	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 9	1x 10	1x 9
	1x 7	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 7	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 7	1x 8	1x 8	1x 8	1x 11	1x 8	1x 8	1x 11	1x 10	1x 8	1x 9	1x 8	1x 8	1x 9	1x 10	1x 9	1x 9	1x 8	1x 8	1x 9	1x 10	1x 9
	= 15	= 16	= 16	= 16	= 15	= 16	= 16	= 17	= 17	= 16	= 16	= 18	= 21	= 18	= 16	= 22	= 21	= 16	= 17	= 16	= 16	= 17	= 19	= 18	= 19	= 18	= 18	= 17	= 19	= 18

Income bands as applied in this survey:

- Low: R1,000 or less per month
- Low-mid: R1,001 per month – R3,000 per month
- High-mid: R3,001 per month - R10,000 per month
- High: R10,001 or more per month

DATA GATHERING PROCESS

Focus group activities and discussions, appropriate to the three age groups concerned, and in the home language of the participants, were run for approximately 60 minutes in each case. All discussion was tape recorded, translated into English where necessary, and transcribed. These transcriptions, together with children's drawings and researcher session notes and observations, constituted the data for qualitative analysis.



Details of the specific activities and questions put to the children, together with the rationale for each, are set out in Appendix 1. In summary:

- Child punishment was explored as experienced in the context of the *home*, and then separately, as it was experienced in the context of *school*.
- In both contexts, typical forms of *corporal punishment* and *humiliating or degrading punishment* that the children had experienced were explored. For both forms of punishment children were asked:
 - *Why did you get punished?*
 - *Do you think it was acceptable (ok) to punish you for this?*
 - *How did you feel at the time?*
 - *Did it make you do something?*
 - *Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?*
 - *If yes, what different way of punishing would have been better?*

Note that children were asked to talk about the 'last time' they were punished at home or school. So most incidents reported on here happened in the recent past. Frequency of punishment was not explored. This will be explored in the quantitative study. Children's knowledge of the legality of corporal punishment in school was not explored.

CHILD PARTICIPATORY AND ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Optimal child participation was ensured through the nature of the data gathering process (see Appendix 1). All activities and discussions were held in the children's home language and were adapted in terms of pace, language level, and the re-phrasing of questions and examples according to the relevant age group. Opening and closing activities were designed to set children at ease, to clarify purposes, and to encourage safe, affirming and non-threatening participation.

In particular, and in terms of ethical principles, matters of choice (i.e. the choice to respond or not) and of confidentiality were explicitly clarified at the opening of each focus group (see Appendix 1). In addition the following strategies were also applied. At no point were children asked to identify who punished them. Through the process of drawing followed by discussion, speaking in the third person about incidents of punishment was actively encouraged to create emotional distance and increase confidentiality. At no point were the responses of children who showed signs of distress forced or probed. Xxx Children were informed at the beginning of the research interaction that in cases of sexual abuse the researcher would need to tell someone, with the child's involvement.² The researcher was required to report any cases like this first to the research supervisor who would then report the case through the legally required channels. Other than in cases of sexual abuse, children were assured that researchers would keep everything they said confidential. If a child asked for help in cases other than sexual abuse researchers, with the child's permission and involvement referred him or her to a local service provider or to a sympathetic teacher.



² The law requires educators and researchers to report sexual abuse that is disclosed.

DATA ANALYSIS

Thematic analyses of the data for the whole group, and then differentiating the interactions between income band, age group and gender were undertaken in terms of the forms of punishment in home and school as well as children's responses to the questions stated above. The nature of the most commonly mentioned themes, their relative frequency in the relevant groups, as well as selected illustrative material, is recorded under Results below.

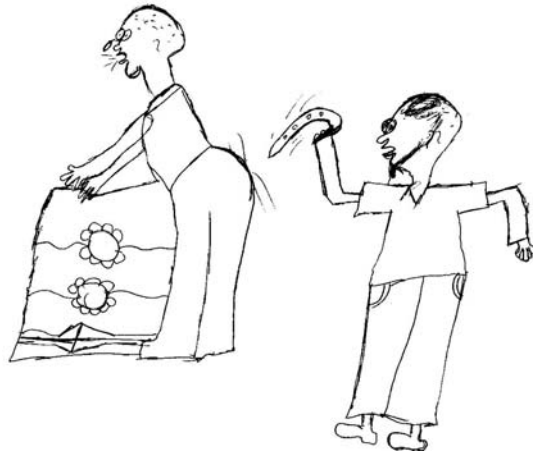
RESULTS

1. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AT HOME

Low income band

Boys 13-18

Almost all 13-18 year-old boys in this income band described having received corporal punishment at home. The examples given were mostly beatings with fists, belts, sticks, sjamboks and the like.



My father hit me with his bare hands. Fists. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

How did he punish you? With fists. Met sy hande. Vuisies. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

They locked me in the bedroom. They hit me so hard with a belt. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

They dragged me to the water and they hit me. I was told to sit for three hours in the bath with water. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).



These quotes are typical and suggest that the beatings were severe.

One boy described a sequence of beatings that increased in severity in order to make him cry.

Before all this I was hit by a belt, my mother saw that I am not crying, then she hit me with a wooden hanger. Still I did not cry then she took to hitting me with her bare hands. Then they gave me all these other punishments (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

The most severe of the physical beatings described in this category is described below:

He hit me with fists, kicked me with safety boots and hit me with a sjambok. They were angry. (Boy, 13-18, W.C.).

The misdemeanours described in relation to these beatings included smoking, sniffing glue, drunkenness, theft and assault. In those examples where corporal punishment was not applied and boys were grounded or scolded, it is clear that the misdemeanour was considered less serious.

Girls 13-18

Only one out of 18 girls in this income band was not beaten as the most common or only form of punishment. Beatings were administered with sticks, belts (most common forms) as well as bare hands, electrical cables, and shoes.

The misdemeanours could be seen as less serious than the boys in the above group as most were associated with girls not carrying out domestic duties.

At home they had cooked *Ujeqe* (steamed mealie bread) and my aunt had gone to the fields. She asked me to mind the bread and the bread burnt. My aunt was so

angry with me. My aunt asked me to get a stick from a tree and she hit me with it. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

There were two accounts of beatings that involved repeated beatings on different parts of the body.

We were all sitting with my sisters, brothers and cousins. He asked how am I talking to him and he hit me. He hit me with a pipe that has wires inside. He hit all over the body. (Girl, 13-18, KZN, rural).

My grandmother came and without asking anything she hit me with her shoe and she throttled my neck and I was screaming 'I can't breathe' ... (Girl 13-18, rural, KZN).

Boys 9-12

Boys in the 9-12 age category were, with 2 exceptions out of 6, beaten as their main form of punishment. They were beaten mostly with thin, green sticks, belts and occasionally a sjambok, but few were as extreme as those described for the older age group. The misdemeanours described were also generally not as serious as described by the older boys.

They locked me outside. I knocked and knocked and ended up kicking the door. They opened the door quickly, locked it and they hit me with a stick. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

Girls 9-12

In this category children experience a mixture of corporal punishment and other non-physical forms of punishment. Most beatings are with sticks, and are for relatively minor offences, some to do with domestic responsibilities, others to do with their interactions with their friends or neighbours. In the rural group there are more beatings than 'shoutings', while the urban group reported fewer beatings than 'shoutings'.

Boys and girls 6-8

The youngest children (both boys and girls) were also, with few exceptions, beaten as their main form of punishment. In almost all cases either a belt or a stick was used, sjamboks were used on occasion. The misdemeanours were minor and usually involved losing something, breaking something, taking food without permission or forgetting to do a chore. There was no evidence of corporal punishment of the severity described by older boys and girls.

The cases where children were not beaten but scolded were mostly from children in urban areas.

I do not get punished. When I am naughty they only shout at me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I was naughty. Then I was told to stay in the house the whole day. So I couldn't play. I had to sleep. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Summary: Home; Corporal; Low income

Boys and girls, of all age groups in this category experience extensive corporal punishment at home. Most are beaten with an object, a belt being most common. Some children, in particular 13-18 year old boys in rural areas, describe beatings that involve repeated blows to different parts of the body and kicking and punching. The misdemeanours they were beaten for were more serious than those described by the younger children. Girls in the 13-18 group also received serious beatings though usually for not doing household tasks. Children in the younger groups, though the beatings were not as severe as the older boys, were still beaten with an object usually for not doing household tasks or breaking or losing something at home. Where there are examples of no beatings, they are in urban rather than rural groups.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Boys in this category have similar stories of serious misdemeanours, but their experiences of severe punishments are not as widespread or frequent as those of their counterparts in the low income band. In one group only one boy reported being hit (with a belt). In the other group half of the punishments were not corporal, but consisted of shouting, grounding or withdrawal of privileges like TV or money. A relatively uncommon form of corporal punishment occurred three times in this group, namely being 'smacked' on the face. Although the word 'smacked' is used, the sense is that it is not a mere slap but rather a punch:

After that he smacked me in the face. My mother then wanted to find out why my dad was hitting me ... (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

He smacked me a few times but I understood because he told me. On my face. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 13-18

With teenage girls in this income band, 4 out of 16 reported incidents of home corporal punishment, with little differentiation between rural or urban settings. It seems that beatings are reduced as these young women have begun asserting themselves as adults. Now the punishment seems to be a matter of shouting or scolding and sometimes using humiliating treatment to gain control (See: Humiliating treatment in the home).

When we arrived at home she carry on shouting at me telling me that I will fall pregnant and she hit me with a shoe again and I hit her back with a shoe and told her to understand I am a teenager now and I was very angry and I left the house and I went to take a walk with my boyfriend. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).



My mother no longer beats me. She only shouts. Sometimes she says things that hurt my feelings and that make me feel sad and I cry. She says I am a stupid. (Girl, 13-18, semi-rural, Limpopo).

Apart from minor misdemeanours, the major source of tension between these girls and their parents was the fear of pregnancy resulting from girls going out by themselves. Much of the scolding / shouting that took place was around this theme, which is described later (Humiliating treatment in the home).

Boys 9-12

In this category there is also a mix of corporal and non-corporal forms of punishment. Beatings are usually carried out with sticks and belts. It seems here too that the more rural the context, the more the corporal forms of punishment are used, but the misdemeanours of rural boys seem to be less serious and the beatings are accordingly less severe.

When I came back from school my mother asked me to go to the shop and that shop is far away from home. I said to her I am still tired, I won't go now. And she said, what are you saying and she took the belt and beat me (Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

My mother beat me because I didn't wash the dishes (Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

Girls 9-12

Of the 22 children in this category, 6 reported receiving corporal punishment. These consisted of hidings using hands, a stick on the legs and a slap on the face. The misdemeanours were also not very serious. The non-corporal forms of punishment consisted of shouting or just talking.

He talked tough with me (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C).

My mother saw this and called me into the house. She talked to me and told me what I had just done was wrong. They just talk and we do not get punished. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C).

Boys 6-8

In this category 17 out of 21 boys reported having received corporal punishment. The punishment was administered with a stick, a belt or a hand. Mostly on the legs or buttocks, but in 2 cases on the back and shoulders.

Girls 6-8

The girls groups in this category were from a rural and semi-rural area in KwaZulu-Natal. In both groups girls were hesitant to talk about their experiences. Every one of these girls reported corporal punishment, administered mainly with belts and sticks. Not one mentioned scolding as a form of punishment, except by wishing that they could be scolded instead of beaten. Some remained silent apart from providing the minimum of response, and one cried and had to be taken out for counselling by an experienced child and youth counsellor. With the child's permission this case was reported in confidence to a sympathetic senior teacher. Clearly these children experience high levels of corporal punishment at home and what is more find them too difficult to talk about.

Summary: Home; Corporal; Low-mid income

In the teenage groups it seems that there is a significant difference between groups (both boys and girls) in this category compared with the low income category. Corporal punishment appears to be less common in this income band and also less severe for older children.

In the younger age groups in this category there are some children who do not experience corporal punishment. Examples such as 'talking to me' are reported. There are, however, some groups of younger children (girls and boys) in rural contexts who experience corporal punishment in the form of beatings with sticks and belts, some report repeated blows to different parts of the body. In general it seems that boys receive more corporal punishment than girls, and there is more corporal punishment reported in rural than urban areas in this income category.

High-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Boys in the one group in this category did not report a single case of corporal punishment. This group came from the Indian community in KwaZulu-Natal. The only mention of corporal punishment was a particular story they told about another boy whose father became very angry and beat him in full view after school was out. Another boy mentioned that he used to be given a spanking, but not any more as he is now older.

When I was small, a couple of years back maybe a spanking, but not any more (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

By contrast, 4 of the 8 boys from the second – non Indian - group reported experiencing corporal punishment. Most were hit with a belt.

Girls 13–18

Girls in this category reported a mix of corporal punishment and scolding. There were no examples of multiple beatings on different parts of the body.

Boys 9-12

Almost all boys in this category experienced corporal punishment. Only 3 of 17 reported not receiving corporal punishment.

At his home they were told about this and they hit him with a belt. (Boy 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

When his father came back the mother told him. The father was angry and he slapped the boy on the face. (Boy 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

He does give me hidings but not too hard hidings that leave marks. (Boy 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Most of the boys were hit once or twice with a belt or hand and as the boy above says, they were ‘not too hard hidings’, but one boy reported the following.

My daddy hit me with a belt on my back and the mark was there for a long time. (Boy 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Girls 9-12

The different groups of girls in this category reported quite different experiences of punishment. The urban Limpopo group almost all had some experience of corporal punishment, some severe such as the one below.

My mother came and hit me with a fist hard and I didn’t cry. Sometimes she cries because she thinks she will kill me. One day she hit me with ladies heel shoes on my hips. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

However, the group from KwaZulu-Natal, also urban, was from an Indian context and reported almost no corporal punishment.

Boys 6-8

Most boys in this category report experiences of corporal punishment and these are very similar across two urban areas, one in KwaZulu-Natal, the other in Limpopo. Typically they are hit with belts, sticks and hands.

My dad was hitting me with the belt on my arms and shoulders. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

I weed in my pants. And she hit me 20 times with her hand. I was crying until I go to bed. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

They take big stick and beat you. Sometimes they take plank and beat you on the bums. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

My mother hit me with a stick on my back. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

This is accompanied with scolding, shouting and being sent to their rooms, often described as 'locked in my room'. Sometimes this was literally being locked in, other times it was just being sent to the room. Sometimes it is being locked outside of the house.

My mother locks us outside and then she locks us inside the house and our bedroom. I feel Ok because my mother locks the thing and I go in the windows and I come in my room because the window doesn't have the bars. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

I have to stay in my bed for 1 hour, I sleep then I come out of my bed and come eat. I feel sad. It's so boring to do nothing. It's fair. She never hits us. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

Stay outside until is night. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

These quotes reflect a range of punishments and levels of severity. Some boys, however, were given the right stuff!

My parents always make me eat veggies.
Is that a punishment?
No. When I get punished I go learn my work. It's fair.
What's this in your picture?
Dessert.

Girls 6-8

The girls in the one group run in the Western Cape quite commonly experience corporal punishment. There were only 2 girls in this group who did not report corporal punishment. Most were hit with a belt or with a hand. A couple had objects thrown at them and were also scolded or hit as a way of follow up, but in most cases, the corporal punishment was in the form described in the quote below.

Sometimes my mommy or my daddy hit me. Sometimes their hand or sometimes with a belt. They don't hit me with a stick and they don't hit me on the face, only my bum. Because my mommy says she doesn't want to touch my face or my head because just now they hit my head and my brain gets all mixed up. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

The second part of the quote reflects a wider culture of more violent corporal punishment – one should ask, why did this child feel the need to say it?

4 out of 10 of the girls in the other group did not report corporal punishment. One described a gentle verbal interaction in response to an offence that is often responded to fairly severely.

They did no punish me. They just told me I must not walk around at night. (Girl, 6-8, township, Gauteng).

The rest experienced corporal punishment by means of hands, sticks and belts.

Summary: Home; Corporal; High-mid income

Some children of all ages in this income category experience corporal punishment, most often with a belt or stick. There are some cases reported of repeated blows with objects and hands or fists. Some children described the beatings as 'not too hard'.

There are some children in this income category who do not receive corporal punishment at home. Apart from the two groups run with children of Indian heritage who did not receive corporal punishment at all, other children describe scolding and being sent to their room as typical punishments.

High income band

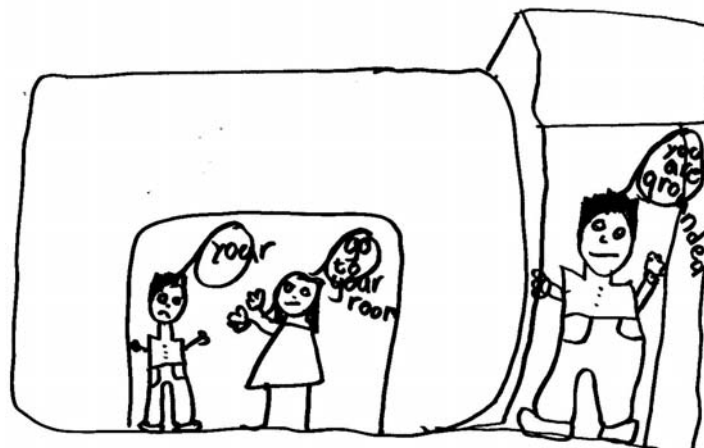
Boys and girls 13-18

Apart from one group which will be described separately, boys and girls in these groups made only 1 mention of corporal punishment (a boy).

I was going to move away to the kitchen but he came up and slapped me. Then I came out for dinner. It was very quiet, everyone heads down, no talking, quite tense. (Boy 13-18, urban, KZN).

The family response suggests that the slap was somehow unusual and caused tension.

The most common form of punishment for boys and girls in this category is grounding and the removal of privileges such as using the computer or watching TV.



A theme that reflects in this category is that these children did experience corporal punishment when younger.

I used to get hit, not across the face but I used to get bent over (i.e. a formal hiding), with a hand, but lately I've been grounded quite a lot ... So now whenever I get punished I get grounded. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

Lately he hasn't really been klapping me, because I've got a bit bigger, so now if he hits me I just turn around and laugh at him. I'm 15 now. Now it's a case of like if I've done something he'll just ground me or make me do chores. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

My mom used to hit me with the wooden spoon. My granny used to hit me with the duster (Two girls 13-18, urban, W.C.).

The exception was a group of boys in an elite context in rural Limpopo. Only 2 boys in this group reported non-corporal punishment (grounding or withdrawal of privileges). The boys in this group represented a complete cross-section of race groups in South Africa, but mostly from privileged homes. Despite this, the rural factor seems again to be operating as children from the rural environment experienced corporal punishment at home.

Boys 9-12

This category provides interesting comparison with other groups. These boys are in transition towards no longer having corporal punishment used against them, but about half of the boys reported corporal punishment and then also commented that it was used less these days.

Nowadays they talk to me. The belt was from time past. They use the belt less these days. Now that I am grown up they think I can understand better. (Boy 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

These days my parents just talk to me nicely and I understand. I also get some threats that they will smack me, but they never do it. (Boy 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

There were some stories of severe beatings.

My friend came but he was grounded and he knew he was grounded, and then his dad came and his belt was like with spikes and he took him and hit him and hit him and every one was watching him and he was crying so badly and when they went into the car they still hit him. And I felt the pain too. I think that was not fair. With a spiked belt! (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

But whenever I do something wrong I get a belting nearly every day of my life, every day from like the year before last year. And this one day I didn't do my homework because I was absent and my father belted me until the belt broke in half. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Both of these suggest a parent somewhat out of control, or behaving unreasonably.

Girls 9-12

The comparable girls groups reflected almost no corporal punishment. Only two reports of corporal punishment were given and these were mild.

Boys and girls 6-8

At this younger age it seems that children experience more corporal punishment than at older ages in this income category. The boys almost all reported the use of a belt but often in combination with scolding, grounding and the removal of privileges.

And I get some hidings. Mostly it is TV because I watch a lot of cartoons. (Boy 6-8, urban, KZN).

I got hiding with a belt and now I don't get to watch TV any more. And I got hit with a belt. After that I got scolded. Sometimes my mother pulls me by the ear and I get put in my bedroom. (Boy 6-8, urban, KZN).

There was only 1 case where corporal punishment was the dominant form of punishment, and this case also seemed a little more excessive than the others because it involved multiple beatings on different parts of the body.

The main kind of punishment in my home – hit – on my head, on my back, my fingers, with a belt. (Boy 6-8, urban, KZN).

More than half of the girls reported receiving corporal punishment. Children in this category describe this punishment as a 'smack' with a hand rather than a beating with an object such as a belt and though sore it is most often described as being administered in a lighter manner than children of a similar age in the other income categories as the quote below illustrates.

My dad smacked me on the bum and it was very sore and my mom came to smack him on the bum and he said ow (laughs) and when my mom came ... I said "Mommy to the rescue". (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Some girls, even at this age, reported that they were no longer receiving corporal punishment. It seems that the use of corporal punishment in this category diminishes sooner with girls than with boys.

In all other cases the usual punishments are either grounding or the removal of privileges such as watching TV.

Summary: Home; Corporal; High income

While there were some exceptions it seems that corporal punishment is less common at home in this income band. In the younger age group (6-8) it is most often in the form of 'smacking' and boys and girls receive it. In the 9-12 age group girls reported no corporal punishment, boys report that it has reduced from when they were younger. Apart from a group run in a rural area where 13-18 year old boys describe being beaten with a stick at home generally 13-18 year old boys and girls say they are not given corporal punishment but that they were when younger.

Summary: Corporal punishment at home

Corporal punishment is widely reported in the lower income bands in all age groups and for both genders. In these income bands corporal punishment does not reduce with age as it does in the higher income bands. In the higher income bands it seems to reduce more quickly for girls with more 9-12 year old boys being beaten than girls.

Examples of severe beatings with an object occur in all income bands but they are more common in the lower income bands. In many cases these beatings involve repeated blows with an object such as a shoe or boot or 'stick with wires' and blows administered to different parts of the body including the head and leave a mark afterwards. There are examples of beatings of this severity in all income categories though it is much more widely reported in the lower income categories.

Corporal punishment is commonly reported in both rural and urban areas, but somewhat less so in the latter. Children living in Indian communities experience almost no corporal punishment.

No clear pattern emerges about the link between the use of corporal punishment and the misdemeanour. Where it is used, corporal punishment is administered for what could be seen as severe misdemeanours such as drunkenness, but also for minor things like not doing household tasks and unintentional breaking of something in the home though the older boys who were beaten for drunkenness or theft were beaten more severely. It seems that corporal punishment is used in the low income band as a means of controlling (protecting) adolescent girls often with verbal abuse.

2. HUMILIATING PUNISHMENT IN THE HOME

It is important to note that many children in this study describe corporal punishment as humiliating. However, this section of the results reports on two types of punishments. Punishments that are humiliating in the sense in which the term is used in the Save the Children definition, "humiliating or degrading punishment takes various forms such as psychological punishment, verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation, or ignoring the child." And also punishment were corporal punishment in the form of beating was accompanied by verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation etc.

Low income band

Boys 13-18

Boys in this category, as was described earlier, experience high levels of corporal punishment, but few other forms of punishment. Of 19 boys in this category, only 2 instances of humiliating punishment were reported, in the case below it is an example of verbal abuse.

There were problems at home. My father accused me of causing the problem between him and my stepmother. And my father said if they could divorce or separate I would be the cause of it. That really hurt me. (Boy 13-18, W.C).

Girls 13-18

These girls experience high levels of corporal punishment and it is often accompanied by humiliation. The quote below illustrates how the humiliation is combined with corporal punishment. Girls explained that the fact that the punishment was administered in front of others makes it humiliating for the girls.

My grandmother came and without asking anything she hit me with her shoe and she throttled my neck and I was screaming 'I can't breath' and she continued until I urinated and she laughed and left me. My little sister laughed at me. (Girl, 13-18, KZN, rural).

Boys 9-12

Although most boys in this category experienced corporal punishment, none reported a humiliating experience. The experiences of these boys regarding humiliation are very similar to the 13-18 year-old boys in this income band. It seems they are beaten, sometimes severely, and the matter is taken as dealt with. There is little use of humiliating punishment.

Girls 9-12

The girls in this category experience almost no humiliating treatment. Of 17 girls, only 1 reported a humiliating experience, again verbal abuse.

Then she shouted at me, she said that I always go untidy to school. I must look at other children, and she always swears when she talks. She calls us names. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Boys and girls 6-8

In both of these categories there was reporting of humiliating treatment being meted out. These children are almost all beaten, as reported above, but this does not extend to humiliation.

Summary: Home; Humiliation; Low income

A pattern that emerges from these groups is that humiliation is more often combined with corporal punishment in the older age group. For girls, any punishment meted out in front

of others is humiliating. Verbal abuse of a nature that breaks down children's self esteem seems to be the most common form of humiliating punishment. Younger children in this category described few examples of humiliating punishment.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

In this category only 2 cases of humiliation were reported. Although in the second case the boy does not describe it as humiliating, the punishment clearly has an element of humiliation.

I just came now to live in Johannesburg. I came from QwaQwa in Free State. I started to stay in Thokoza this year and I didn't have a problem. No one was shouting me. In the beginning of March they started shouting saying I am not cleaning and I must wash my clothes. I am 15 year old. They said I am stubborn like my mother. I was feeling sad because my sibling think I am stupid because I came from QwaQwa. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

My father gave me a hiding and locked me in the toilet the whole day. (Boy, 13-18, rural W.C.).

In the first example the humiliation is linked to discrimination against children from a rural area and again involves verbal abuse.

Girls 13-18

In this category the humiliation was again combined with corporal punishment, but was seen as humiliating by girls because it took place in front of other people. There is a slightly higher reporting of humiliation than with the boys in this some category.

- Some parents embarrass their children in front of their parents by beating them or shouting at them so that others laugh at them.
- They pour you with water in front of your friends or klap you on the face.
- They chase you from home. (Girls, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

She asked me why are you standing there with a boy at night, and I said no my mammy he is my friend at school and she yell at me, right there and shout and hit me so bad, and I cry and cry and cry. She hit me with a belt, back and front, down to here (indicates shoulders to knees). (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C).



The last quote above raises the theme of parents (mainly mothers) reacting strongly to issues of teenage girls expressing greater autonomy, particularly in relation to boys and potential pregnancy. It is in this context that humiliation through verbal abuse seems to be a favoured strategy.

When we woke up she swore at me and told me that now I started to behave like 'Phaga' an animal that goes in the night. She said I am going to fall pregnant and there's lots of diseases outside there. She doesn't talk nicely with me and she speaks loud so that everybody who passes next to my house should hear that she is swearing at me and I didn't sleep at home. She will never sit-down and talk to me like her child. She will tell me that I am 'Kgeke', a bitch, and that I started behaving like Phaga. (Girl, 13-18, semi-rural, Limpopo).

She said I am a bitch and I am going to fall pregnant.. (Girl, 13-18, semi-rural, Limpopo).

Most of the time parents shout at girls especially when they know that you have a boyfriend. Tell will tell things like you are going fall pregnant. (Girl 13-18, semi-rural, Limpopo).

My mother saw me with my boyfriend and she was angry. When I arrived at home she started shouting telling me that I come home late and they have to open the gate and door for me. She said I am going to fall pregnant. She said I am a bitch and I am going to fall pregnant. She said if I fall pregnant she wouldn't buy clothes for the baby. I will have to cut my clothes and make clothes for the baby to wear. (Girl 13-18, semi-rural, Limpopo).

My mother comes back from work and she calls me home and says that it is too late to come home and she beats me telling me that I'm going to be raped in these streets because it is not safe playing in these streets at 5 o'clock. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

One of the incidents described, though not strictly humiliation is recorded here as it is not corporal punishment. It could be described as neglect and is clearly abusive.

Then I came back home, the food was like, nobody cooks, nobody cleans, and she locked the door and she put the key in her pocket and went back to work. She said nobody will sleep at home. If somebody wants something from home they must get things that they got with their own money. Oh, the whole week we did not eat or sleep at home. We were all outside the whole week from Monday to Friday. We had to sleep with the neighbours. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Boys and girls 9-12

None of 22 girls and only 1 of 16 boys reported humiliating punishment in this age group. This single example was from a father who was drunk at the time.

I went to play and my father was drunk and he told me to sleep outside.
Because I couldn't get in and sleep outside and I was scared.
My father told me to take off the jersey and go outside.
How long did you stay outside?
The police saw me.
Where were you when they saw you?
By the pavement
So you stayed outside. What time was it?
I think it was it about eleven o'clock
And then what happened?
The police took me and put me inside the house.
I felt very bad about it.
(Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

Boys and girls 6-8

No humiliation was reported across 21 boys and 18 girls.

Summary: Home; Humiliation; Low-mid income

In this category it seems that humiliation is not often used as a punishment strategy separate from corporal punishment - except in the case of older girls, when it is used as an attempt to control them in relation to sexual activity. A number of older girls report severe and humiliating verbal abuse from mothers.

High-mid income band

Boys and girls 13-18

No cases of humiliating punishment were reported.

Boys 9-12

No cases of humiliating punishment were reported.

Girls 9-12

In this category it was only the girls in urban Limpopo who reported humiliation in relation to corporal punishment. Again girls describe the punishment as humiliating because others see the results or the punishment itself.

She took out a belt in front of my brother and she started beating me up. She made me go to my friend's house. I was scared and I went there crying. When I got to her gate I wiped my tears and my eyes were still red and I was embarrassed that my friend see me that I was beaten at home. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

One day she hit me with ladies heel shoes on my hips and I didn't want to go to school. My dad took me to school and I was very late and I felt embarrassed. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

The transcript of this group and information gleaned from the school concerned suggest that this group has a high proportion of families under stress. This partially explains why this group is so different from the others in this category.

Boys and girls 6-8

No cases of humiliating punishment were reported.

Summary: Home; Humiliation; High-mid income

Apart from one group of girls from a community under stress no examples of humiliating punishment were recorded in this income category.

High income band

Boys and girls 13-18

No cases of humiliating punishment were reported.

Boys 9-12

In this category only 1 case of humiliation was reported, and this was more a case of excessive beating rather than humiliation - although the boy does report embarrassment.

They sent me to the spare room and then my dad brought the whip and then he hit me, hit me, hit me, hit me and after I had like, sort of like bruises, but not serious ones. Then I went to school the next day and my teacher asked me what happened so I told her and then she could see the scars on my legs and on my thighs and on my arms. I felt very embarrassed. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Otherwise, no cases of humiliation were reported.

Girls 9-12

No cases of humiliating punishment were reported.

Boys and girls 6-8

No cases of humiliating punishment were reported.

Summary: Home; Humiliation; High income

On its own, humiliating punishment in this income category was not reported.

Summary: Humiliating punishment at home

Across all income bands, genders and age groups in this study humiliating or degrading punishment is not as commonly reported as corporal punishment. Where it is reported it is most often linked to corporal punishment.

Where it does occur, it is most common in the lower income bands where it seems to be a favoured strategy for controlling the sexual activity of teenage girls. In these cases it takes the form of verbal abuse that breaks down children's sense of self. Girls and some boys report that corporal punishment and verbal abuse of this nature is humiliating when it is administered in front of others or when teachers or peers see the results of a beating.

It is reported by only one child in the high income band.

3. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AT SCHOOL

It is important to note that corporal punishment has been prohibited in schools in South Africa since 1996³.

Low income band

Boys 13-18

Most boys (16) in this category report experiencing corporal punishment, which consists usually of being beaten with a stick or cane. It is uncommon for an adult at school to hit a child of this age by hand. Corporal punishment is administered most often by teachers, and seldom by the principal.

The teacher hit me with a stick on the bum. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C).

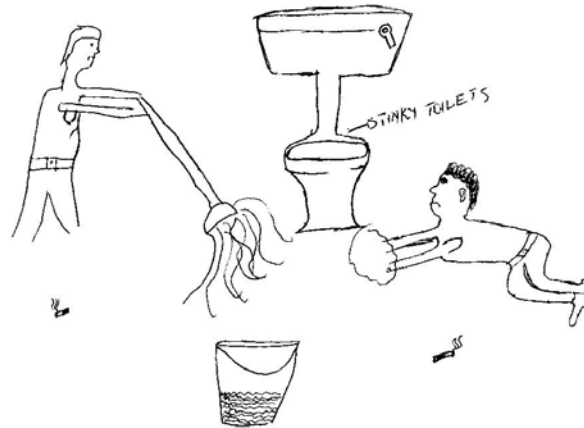
The teacher hit us with a pipe (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

We were sent to the principal to explain. The teacher told us to collect our fives on the buttocks. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

³ South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

Punishment quite often also includes being made to clean the class, work in the grounds or to clean the toilets alongside corporal punishment.

He said I must wash the toilets and I did. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).



One teacher gave us a punishment of cleaning the whole day without going to the classes. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

Girls 13-18

All 18 girls in this category reported having received corporal punishment at school. The usual punishment was to be hit on the hands or the buttocks with a stick or a pipe.

She gave me 5 strikes on the buttocks. My heart was so sore and my bums were painful. I couldn't sit down the whole weekend. Every time I looked at the teacher I resented her. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

He hit us with a stick on the hands and told us to go to class. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

Boys 9-12

In this category only 3 of 16 boys did not receive corporal punishment at school. Typical of these punishments is being beaten with a stick on the buttocks or the palms of the hands. Generally the beatings do not seem to be severe.

I was given one stroke on the hands. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

I was given two strikes on my bum. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

Punishments also include cleaning the classroom or the school yard, cutting the grass, or doing 'frog jumps'.

Girls 9-12

Almost all of these girls reported receiving corporal punishment. Typically they were hit with a pipe or a stick or a blackboard duster. They were hit mostly on their hands or their upturned fingers.

The teacher got there and wanted his homework. So when I took it out, he hit me on my finger tips with a board duster, and it was cold. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

We were making noise in the classroom and the teacher shouted us. She beats me with a pipe. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Both of the groups come from urban Gauteng. One area is an informal settlement and the other is a very poor 'coloured' area. In both cases the punishment had an undertone of abuse and humiliation.

The teacher said she wrote notes for us and she didn't and she beat the whole class for that. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

When children from other classes do something wrong she calls all of us and she hits us with a duster. She can hit you up to 20 times. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

I feel very angry because sometimes it is very sore. Sometimes you can get a cut from that board duster because he hits hard. He does not even want you to change hands. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Boys 6-8

12 of 17 boys in this age group reported having received corporal punishment. In most cases it was a beating with a pipe, or on the hands with a ruler or a stick.

I went to show her my work and she beats with a pipe and she said I told you to stop writing wrong stuff. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

We were making a noise and a teacher beat us with a pipe. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

The teacher hits me with a ruler in my hands. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).



She hit me with a duster here (finger tips). (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

And with a slight sense of irony,

She hit me with a duster today. She had lost her ruler. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Girls, 6-8

In one of the groups the researcher reported that the girls seemed frightened to speak about punishment in the school. The first few responses were about how nicely the teachers talk to the children, but once one child had broken the ice about punishment, the rest confirmed that most receive corporal punishment.

I was making a noise and the teacher was looking for a stick and she didn't find it and she clap me on the face. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

I was making a noise and the teacher and other children told her that I am crying and she called me and beat me again. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

Summary: School; Corporal; Low income

Most girls and boys across all age categories in this income category report receiving corporal punishment at school. Children report that this is most often administered with a stick or another object often a board duster. It is most often administered by the teacher but sometimes by the principal.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Only 5 of 21 boys in this category did not report corporal punishment at school. There was a wider range of corporal punishment types reported than in the lower income bands, including having a duster thrown, being hit on the fingers with a duster, being hit with a pipe or a stick, being kicked with boots, being throttled, being slapped and pulled and being pinched under the armpit.

I got seven cuts from this teacher. I do not know why.

Why did you get punished?

He just called me and did that.

He just called you?

Boy 2: It does happen. See what he did to me. I did not do anything. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

One group in this category described particularly severe beatings. The researcher described this school as 'a school at war with itself' (Boys, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

This teacher (he uses the name children have given him and they all laugh so much) came and hit me. He throttled me, choking me, pulling me before he hit me.

I was made to lie on the table and I was hit on the bums with a pipe. (All the children break into descriptions of this pipe). A rooi pyp. It has a name too.

He gave me a klap across the face. I tried to protest and he kicked me.

Girls 13-18

Two groups were included in this category, representing a rural and an urban context. There was a high level of consistency across both groups, consisting of 16 girls. Most were not given corporal punishment, and when it was administered it was not the norm.

Sometimes they beat us on the hands with sticks. Not on our bottom. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

There's a teacher who likes to hit us with a duster but others don't. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

They use a white pipe or a duster to hit us.

Do you think it is okay to punish you like this?

It is not okay but they hardly beat us. They do it when it is necessary.

How do you feel about it?

I feel good.

You like your school then?

I like my school and teachers. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

Most of the time the punishment reported did not involve beating. Often these took the form of cleaning classrooms or picking up papers but some children reported physically strenuous activity that could be interpreted as corporal punishment such as doing frog jumps and the like.

Of particular note was the extent to which girls in this category are thrown out of class and are excluded from lessons for a period of time. Sometimes they are required to spend time doing outside chores instead of attending class.

My teacher punished me by making me pick up papers outside because I was making a noise in classroom and I was disturbing the class. It wasn't fair because I was outside during teaching and I was missing the lesson. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

The teacher said to us we must never attend any lesson for the whole year and we didn't care we said okay. Went to stand outside and follow the heat of the sun because it was cold. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

Sometimes they make us do the garden in the morning and that time we are losing because they carry on with the lessons and when you go in to the classroom you find another teacher who will chase you out telling you that is late to attend at this time and that means that your mornings will be wasted because we can't do any school work until break. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

Boys 9-12

The majority of these boys did not experience corporal punishment. Both of the schools from which the boys came were aware that corporal punishment had been outlawed, and one of the deputy principals complained to the researcher about how it had weakened their authority and that there was nothing in its place to maintain discipline. However, this school used mainly non-corporal methods of punishment.

The teacher asked those who don't have calculators to go and stand by the door. She gave us forks to do the garden and we didn't finish when her period was over then later after school we were asked to finish it. I don't have a calculator even today. I missed lots of lessons that day and the next day I had lots of work to do and I didn't understand. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

Clearly, in spite of following the letter of the law regarding corporal punishment, the concept of positive discipline had not been absorbed. Other kinds of punishments used were keeping children in during break, sweeping the class, cleaning the school yard and so on.

Girls 9-12

Of 22 girls in this category only 3 of 16 girls (all in the same school) reported corporal punishment.

They gripped me here on the shoulders (a kind of pinching, rough grip that is painful on the shoulders). (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

The teacher gave me a hiding with a stick in my hands. My hands were burning. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

The caretaker hit me with the elastic band on the ears. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

The remainder of the punishments consisted of detention and scolding, in equal measure.

Boys 6-8

11 of 21 boys reported corporal punishment, which was almost entirely being hit on the hands with a stick or a ruler. Of those who reported corporal punishment, all came from the same school.

The teacher gave me a hiding with a stick on my hands. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

She hit me with a thick stick on my hand because he thought I am the one who was making noise. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

One boy reported having experienced a rough shoulder grip that is apparently quite common. It seems that this is not defined as corporal punishment by teachers, yet satisfies the need for inflicting physical discomfort.

Two of these boys reported never having been punished at school, while the remainder of the punishments were either detention, sitting in the corner, or running around the school a few times.

Girls, 6-8

All 18 girls reported receiving corporal punishment. It is mostly being hit on their hands with a stick or a ruler. What is significant is that although the punishments did not seem to be severe, most of the girls cried as a result, and felt upset.

Yesterday I was playing with an orange with my friends and my friend kicked it and it went to the classroom of another teacher and I got beaten for that.

How did she beat you?

With a stick.

How did you feel at that time?

I felt sad.

What did you do?

I was crying. (Girl, 6-8, rural, KZN).

The other time I didn't do my sums very well and the teacher told me to leave the classroom.

How did you feel at that time?

I was crying and she called me and gave tissue to wipe my tears. (Girl, 6-8, rural, KZN).

Crying was reported in many cases. At one of the schools the girls were very reluctant to talk and seemed scared. One got the sense of some kind of oppression, either imposed by the school or generally from their home context.

Summary: School; Corporal; Low-mid income

The incidence of corporal punishment varied widely in this category with some schools still practising it and others not. Administering it seems to be dependent on school policy. It is clearly still prevalent in some schools, where children are beaten on the hands with board dusters and sticks on the hands. Some schools in this income category have begun to implement alternative forms of discipline.

High-mid income band

Boys 13-18

No corporal punishment was reported in the group from the Indian community, where it seems that corporal punishment at home is also not practised. The boys in this group did mention that the principal has a stick, and that it gave him authority, but there was no mention of it ever being used.

In the second group 4 of the 8 boys were beaten with sticks ('cuts').

The teacher told me to bend. I do not want to bend. He took my head under the table, hits me with such big stick, on the bum. It was burning so much. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 13-18

One of the groups of girls from rural Limpopo reported experiencing some corporal punishment in the form of beatings on the hand. The second group from urban Gauteng reported punishments such as cleaning the school as most common.

Boys 9-12

The urban group in Gauteng reported many cases of corporal punishment, typically being hit on the hand with a stick.

We were heavily beat. They hit us on the hands. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

I was hit on the hand and I was hurt. I had to go to the clinic and they bandaged me. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

The urban group in the Western Cape, on the other hand, reported almost no corporal punishment. The main form of punishment for them was various levels of detention, from break detention, to Saturday detention to an entire term.

Girls 9-12

One of the groups was from urban Limpopo. They reported many cases of corporal punishment, mostly being hit on the hands with a stick. There was 1 extreme case.

With a thin stick on our hand. And she uses all her strength when she hits us.

If you have long hair she opens a line in your hair and hits you, or if you have just plaited your hair she will just hit you in the middle (where the scalp is). When her right hand is tired she uses her left hand and she smiles when she hits us. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

The other group was from urban KwaZulu-Natal. Use of a stick was referred to but not experienced by any of them. The main form of punishment they had experienced was scolding and detentions. Again, this is a group from the Indian community where very little corporal punishment was recorded at all.

Boys 6-8

For all 16 boys in this category, the usual form of punishment is detention, standing next to the teacher or in the corner or facing the board. Some boys reported corporal punishment, which was usually being hit on the hand with a ruler. One boy reported being hit on the head with a plank. It was not clear how big the plank was. There was less corporal punishment reported by the urban KwaZulu-Natal boys than by the urban Limpopo boys.

Girls 6-8

More than half of these girls reported receiving corporal punishment. Those that reported it came from one school. Usually it was being hit on the hand with a ruler or stick. They were also scolded, made to stand with their hands on their heads, or to stand outside.

Summary: School; Corporal; High-mid income

The reporting of corporal punishment varied widely in this category. Children from some schools reported it while those from others did not. Where it was reported it took the form of sticks and dusters on the hand again though there were other cases reported including a teacher who beat children on the head with a stick. Administering it seems to be dependent on school policy. It is clearly still prevalent in some schools, but other schools have begun to implement alternative forms of discipline.

As in the previous income category the only clear pattern emerging is that the use of corporal punishment differs from school to school and is dependant on the culture of the particular school.

High income group

Boys and girls 13-18

No corporal punishment was reported from any of the groups. In all cases the schools have a system of punishment including detentions, de-merits, various levels of writing out and so on. The system is well known to the children.

When she told me I had to do a 'page' (a form of punishment), then I kind of got a bit mad at that and I argued with her and she gave me another page for arguing. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

Then I went up to one of the teachers and he told us we had to write our reports and stuff and a couple of weeks later I was sitting in a tribunal with the little kid. He got expelled and I got a de-merit (which remains on the record). (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

I had to go to detention, it was a group of us, about 5 and we had to scrub desks. It was really just a waste of our time. It was hardly scrubbing, it was really just wiping desks with those green and yellow sponges and sunlight. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).



Boys and girls 9-12

No corporal punishment was reported from any of the children in these groups. All of their schools have system of punishments increasing in severity from lines, black marks, detentions, de-merits and so on that is well-known and systematically implemented. When pressed, some of the boys said that some minor corporal punishment still occurs.

Some teachers, they just hit you on the hand or on the back, but it's minor. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

She threw him with the keys of the class and hit him against the head, klapped him once and squeezed his cheek. It was inappropriate because he was doing practically nothing. Just playing around with other kids. Then he started crying and went to go phone his parents. In earlier grades they used to hit us with a wooden spoon. But the physical side of punishment doesn't happen very often any more. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

The girls confirmed that these days no corporal punishment takes place, but they did refer to days gone past (as if it is ancient history).

The children don't ever get smacked. It's not allowed. It only happened when our parents were small. They got smacked across the knuckles, sometimes until they were blue. And they had to bend over and they used to get smacked on their bottoms. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KwaZulu-Natal.)

Boys and girls 6-8

In all groups no corporal punishment was reported, apart from 3 mentions of the teacher pulling a child's ear. As above, these schools have a system of punishments increasing in severity, but at these younger ages scolding seems to be the dominant method of maintaining discipline.

Summary: School; Corporal; High income

Corporal punishment was not reported at schools in this income band. The schools in this income category all had quite sophisticated alternative forms of punishment that were graded and also well known to children.

Summary: Corporal punishment at school

The use of corporal punishment at school was common in **all** low income band schools. But in the low-mid and high-mid income bands some schools administer corporal punishment and others do not – it seems dependent on the policy of the particular school. A worrying trend is the extent to which children are taken out of classes and miss lessons as a form of punishment in these two income bands.

Children from schools in the high income band do not report any corporal punishment but report on systems of alternative forms of punishment that children are all familiar with.

4. HUMILIATING PUNISHMENT AT SCHOOL

It is important to note that many children in this study describe corporal punishment as humiliating. However, this section of the results reports on two types of punishments. Punishments that were humiliating in the sense in which the term is used in the Save the Children definition, “humiliating or degrading punishment takes various forms such as psychological punishment, verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation, or ignoring the child.” And also punishment were corporal punishment in the form of beating was accompanied by verbal abuse, ridicule, isolation etc.

There are also instances reported on here where children describe punishments such as ‘frog jumping’ or ‘*scuta*’ which they see as humiliating because they involve doing humiliating physical activity in front of the class. These kinds of physical punishment were not defined as corporal punishment in this study although they do involve a measure of physical punishment and they are reported on here.

Low income band

Boys 13-18

These boys reported little that they experienced as directly humiliating. However, there are a number of examples of verbal abuse from teachers, often accompanied by hitting:

I was punished for not doing homework. The teacher hit me and I went to call my mother. My mother came to school. The next day the teacher kept me out of class. I called my mother to come again. The following day the teacher swore at me saying I am a son of a sea-cow.
How did the teacher hit you?
She slapped me in my face and throttled me.
(Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

In the Western Cape school, described above as a ‘school at war with itself’, verbal abuse from teachers was particularly common.

This set of quotes came from a general conversation with these boys (13-18, semi-rural, W.C.) at the end of the focus group.

- We have a problem here. Some teachers are so rough when they talk (hulle praat te rof).
 - Sometimes you are sitting in class, minding your own business and a teacher comes, starts using abusive language for no apparent reason.
 - The teachers most of the time want to fight with us. The principal does nothing.
 - Say the bell rings and you do not respond or something happens behind the classes and one teacher sees you. He calls all the other teachers and they slaat/beat you.
 - When you do something wrong or try to say something, no one listens to you here at school. The teachers do all the talk, you are asked nothing, you can't talk for yourself even if you like. When you open your mouth you are told to shut up. They gang up against you even when you talk.
- What can you do about this?
- Silence
 - The principal does nothing about it.
- What can you do to solve the problems?
- There is nothing we can do.

Note that it is these boys who, elsewhere in this report, are shown to experience little verbal abuse or humiliation at home but do experience severe and widespread corporal punishment at home.

Girls 13-18

The most common punishment received was corporal punishment in class which many girls explicitly describe as humiliating. The only example of humiliating treatment without corporal punishment was;

We were then told a lot of stuff about how we are teaching other children like one of our friends to date boys. We are bad children who are disrespectful and we do not do anything in class. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

This example is similar to the reasons why these same girls receive humiliating punishment at home – it is to do with boys, socialising and the labelling of these girls as ‘loose’. Whether in this case it also links with these girls' growing autonomy as almost-adults, and the threat this might represent to adult authority is not possible to say.

Boys 9-12

Almost all of these boys experience corporal punishment at school but only a few reported humiliating treatment, most often linked to corporal punishment.

The girls were then told (by the teacher) to hit us because we are young, and they did. The teacher too called us and hit us. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

I didn't do my homework and the teacher beat me. He asked me to climb on the chair and hit my legs with “*sebepi*” (plastic handle). I thought that they abuse us and I thought of leaving the school. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

Girls 9-12

These girls also report widespread experience of corporal punishment, but unlike the boys in this age group, they also experience significant levels of humiliation.

However, most of it is directly intended to cause humiliation, sometimes through physical methods.

When children do not do their work they must half sit next to the wall (i.e. squats) until they start shaking and falling. Now the other girl had a short gym on and when she stood there we could see her panties. The boys laughed. The boys who laughed had to do the same but I felt sorry for the child. I think it is a cruel thing to do to anybody. I do not like the teacher. Now I see why the children do not like her. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

There was this boy who was punished. He had not gone out for break. He was restless when we got to the class. He was making funny uncomfortable movements and he finally wet himself. Then the teacher shouted at him and said he was stupid, and said why didn't he ask. But he did not send him to the toilet and the boy was afraid to ask. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

In the one school (quotes above) it seems that teachers are aware that they should not use corporal punishment, and the use of other methods is common. In addition to making children run around the school, pick up litter, clean classrooms and so on, the following methods of discipline were reported. (Girls, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

What are other things that teachers do to keep discipline?

- They make us do frog jumps for ten minutes
- They make us do push-ups until school is out.

You do push-ups at school?

- Yes

Boys and girls do push ups?

- Yes we do them next to the chalkboard.
- They also make us do motorbike (*Skuta*). You bend your knees, stretch arms straight as if you are riding a motorbike and it is painful when you do it for a long time.
- Sometimes they make us pretend to pick peaches from a tree.
- How do you do that?
- You jump as if you are jumping up when you normally pick peaches on a tree. The teacher will keep saying to you no not that one but the other one and you jump more when he keeps pointing and you are not allowed to stop until he says stop. You must pick the first one, second, third, etc. until the teacher says stop. Sometimes he will tell that you didn't jump high enough and it means you have to start counting again.

Boys 6-8

In this group no direct humiliation was reported.

However, in response to a serious misdemeanour, the following punishment was handed out.

They took him to the principal. He made the boy clean the steps and pick up paper around the school. He worked the whole day without going to break. When you do not go to break you do not eat. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 6-8

Most of these girls received corporal punishment. In itself some of this punishment was humiliating.

I was making a noise and the teacher made me lie on top of the desk and hit my back with a stick. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

I was making a noise and the teacher and other children told her that I am crying and she called me and beat me again. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

However, a non-corporal form of punishment that was humiliating was also reported.

I was making a noise and they made me stand with one leg and I was tired and I cried. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

This was the only such case reported, unlike the multiple examples provided by the girls in the older age category.

Summary: School; Humiliation; Low income

It seems for low income band schools that where corporal punishment is common, humiliating or degrading punishment is not commonly used though 13-18 boys from one school experienced high levels of verbal abuse and 9-12 year old girls form another

school experienced high levels of humiliating physical punishment. Though not commonly reported most groups did have some stories of humiliating punishment.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

There is a significant amount of humiliating treatment of these boys. Much of it is because corporal punishment takes place in view of classmates, but there are also examples of verbal abuse or punishment that is specifically designed to be humiliating.

He said 'You stupid, I'll moer you'. He always talks like that. He swears a lot. He is insulting all the time. (Boy, semi-rural, W.C.).

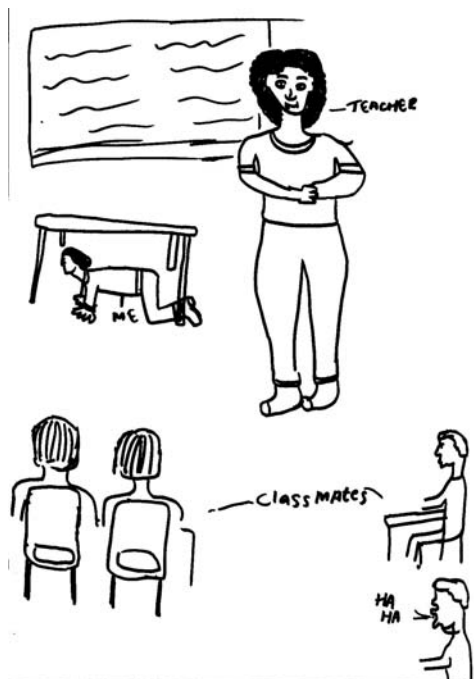
Why did you get punished?

One day I was walking in the school I was pleased with myself and singing nicely. He said why was I singing and I said I was not singing. Then he said now you are lying in my face. (Boy, semi-rural, W.C.).

Girls 13-18

Some humiliating punishment was reported from these groups. Some of the punishment was corporal punishment which children saw as humiliating because it was carried out in view of classmates or even the whole school. There were also examples of direct humiliation. Such as doing 'frog jumping' which causes fatigue, or 'motor bike riding or skuta' (holding the squatting position as if one were riding a motor bike or scooter).

There was also one very explicit humiliating treatment reported.



So the teacher started taking us one by one to the front of the class. She started taking out tables and putting them at the front. Then she made us crawl under the tables and it was very embarrassing. It was embarrassing because the whole class was laughing and other people from next door came in and saw us and also laughed at us. It was very embarrassing. (Girl, 13-18, urban, C.T.).

Boys 9-12

Very little humiliation was reported in this category. There were two instances reported. One is seen as humiliating by the boy because it was corporal punishment administered in front of the class.

A female teacher asked us to look after her bag in the classroom. Then sir asked us what are we doing in the classroom at that time and we told him we are looking after the bag and he beat us with a belt and told us to leave and he send us in his office and made us kneel on the floor for the whole day. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

How do you feel when your teacher hit you with a stick like that?

I feel embarrassed because other children are laughing at me. (Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

Girls 9-12

None of these girls reported any humiliating treatment.

Boys 6-8

None of these boys reported any humiliating treatment, except where corporal punishment was in itself humiliating.

Girls 6-8

No explicitly humiliating experiences were reported. However, as was reported earlier, many of these girls cried in relation to being punished, so it is inferred that most felt humiliated by the mere fact of being punished, especially as it mostly took place in front of their classmates.

Summary: School; Humiliation; Low-mid income

It seems that punishments that are designed to be humiliating are reported more often by older learners than younger ones in this income category. This punishment takes the form of verbal abuse or making children hold humiliating physical positions for a long period. If punishment takes place in front of other learners both older and younger children report it as being humiliating.

High-mid income band

Boys 13-18

No humiliating treatment was reported.

Girls 13-18

No humiliating treatment was reported in these groups although girls did say that corporal punishment administered in front of other learners was humiliating.

Boys 9-12

There was only 1 example of humiliating treatment, provided by a boy in the urban Gauteng group. This relates to a boy who is over-age for his grade.

I hate it when they (teachers) call us names, they say we are ‘clever’, fool-empty tins. They say we do not know anything. We do not even know why we have come to school. They say our age-mates are no longer here. They are at secondary and we have taken younger children’s seats. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 9-12

Apart from the humiliation of receiving corporal punishment in front of the class, there was only 1 case of explicitly humiliating treatment.

Some teachers they don’t speak to you properly. They embarrass you in front of the class. And sometimes they don’t even speak to you nicely and they make funny jokes and insult you in front of class. They call you names and everyone should start calling you names. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Boys 6-8

No humiliating treatment was reported.

Girls 6-8

Only 1 case of humiliation was reported, and this was more in the course of receiving corporal punishment than it being explicitly humiliating.

My teacher scolded me and hit me and everybody was laughing. She hit me with a stick on my hand. I cried, and the other children were laughing. I felt bad. Embarrassed because the children were laughing. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Summary: School; Humiliation; High-mid income

Few cases of humiliating punishment alone were reported and those that were related to verbal abuse designed to break children down emotionally.

High income band

Boys 13-18

No humiliating treatment was reported in the one group but in the other the boys reported cases of teachers at the school making fun of them in front of other children

When he gives mops and basket we realise that we are going to clean the stinking toilets. He gave us the J’fluid. We became a joke of the other children. When they saw us they said “You are stinking like those toilets that you were cleaning.” (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 13-18

Only 1 case of humiliating treatment was reported.

I had already finished my work and I was busy writing down in my diary. And then my teacher asked me what are you doing? So I said Oh nothing, so she said no what are you doing, so I said I'm just writing something down, and she made me stand in front of the class and I had to read it out loudly and then stand in the corner and read it out just loud enough for her to hear, but not loud enough to distract the class for like 15 minutes until the end of the lesson. I felt it was like an invasion of privacy. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Boys and girls 9-12

No humiliating treatment was reported.

Boys and girls 6-8

Apart from one of the girl's groups, no cases of humiliation were reported. In all cases the children describe them more as uncomfortable rather than humiliating.

I had to go and stand on my chair. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I had to stand at the back of my chair for 50 hours (!!) (Girl, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

We have to stand behind our chairs for a lot of minutes and we have to sit and not do nothing (sic). (Girl, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

Summary: School; Humiliation; High income

Punishment designed to humiliate was not commonly experienced in this income category.

Summary: Humiliating punishment at school

If punishment of any form takes place in front of other learners then children in all income and age categories report it as being humiliating.

Humiliating punishment on its own is not reported as often as corporal punishment.

It seems that where corporal punishment is common, humiliating or degrading punishment is not common on its own though it often accompanies corporal punishment. In the case of 13–18 year old girls and boys in the low income band, humiliating verbal abuse often accompanies corporal punishment.

It seems that punishments that are only humiliating as opposed to accompanying corporal punishment are reported more often by older learners than younger ones. This punishment most often takes the form of verbal abuse for older children. This

verbal abuse is often a direct attack on the child's parents or character. One commonly mentioned form of humiliating punishment is to make children hold humiliating positions for a long period. This is both physically punishing as well as humiliating.

One school seemed to have adopted humiliating punishment as a replacement for corporal punishment.

5. ACCEPTABILITY OF CORPORAL AND HUMILIATING PUNISHMENT: HOME

This section attempts to record what children themselves think is acceptable or unacceptable about corporal punishment and humiliating treatment. The fact that many children may find corporal punishment acceptable should not be used to justify it. Rather it was thought to be important to ask this question in order to establish the norms within which children function. It is important to understand these if one is to intervene to change the situation as it provides a context in which to work. For example understanding children's level of acceptance of corporal punishment would inform the development of education programmes around punishment and rights.

It is also important to note that where corporal punishment is the norm children may not be able to imagine any other form of punishment and therefore, agree that corporal punishment is acceptable. When looking at what children say below this is partly the case but it is important to note how many of the children below express the idea that they would like adults to talk to them rather than to punish, so even in a situation where it is the norm as it so clearly is for many of these children they can still imagine and articulate an alternative.

Low income band

Boys 13-18

These are boys who all experience corporal punishment, some of a severe nature. Just over half of these boys (9) felt their punishment was acceptable. The case of one boy is typical of those who saw the punishment as acceptable.

I think it was right because I had done a wrong thing by taking the camera without my mother's permission. I felt ok because I knew what I had done. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

This is the same boy who received the following extreme series of punishments.

I was told not to come to school as a punishment, was not given food at home. The following day we went to my granny's house and I was punished more. I was told to do the garden, cut the grass and the next day I was allowed to come to

school with a lot of chores thereafter. I used to go straight home after school so that I could finish my chores.

Before all this I was hit by a belt, my mother saw that I am not crying, then she hit me with a wooden hanger, still I did not cry then she took to hitting me with her bare hands. Then they gave me all these other punishments. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

He concludes by saying:

Who knows, if they didn't ask about the camera maybe it wouldn't have come back and we would not trust each other in the house. I have learnt not to do it again.

This boy presents a logical argument for finding his severe punishment acceptable. This response was typical of about half the boys in the groups.

There are other cases, however, where boys of this age give a qualified acceptance of the punishment. In these cases (7) this response is typical.

How did he punish you?

With fists. Met sy hande. Vuisies.

Was it acceptable?

Yes, but he could have just made me clean the yard without hitting me.

I felt so bad.

Many of these boys implicitly distinguished between what was acceptable from a justice perspective and what was acceptable from a 'scale' perspective; whether the severity of the punishment matched the misdemeanour. This is behind many of the qualified acceptances of severe punishment. They acknowledge guilt (and as mentioned before, the boys had done fairly serious things) but they feel a less severe punishment would have been more appropriate.

Finally, there are those cases (3) where the boys said that the punishment was entirely unacceptable because they did not feel they had committed any kind of offence and should not have been punished.

I do not think it was right to hit me for this. The only wrong thing I did was not to take note of time because I was happy. (He had been on his first date, and talked until it was very late.) (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

Girls 13-18

Only 1 of 18 girls felt the punishment they had received was acceptable. The punishments referred to are almost entirely corporal. The main reasons given for the punishments being unacceptable were equally split between issues of excessive severity of punishment and the injustice of the punishment.

Examples of excessive punishment:

He could have used iswazi (a thin soft stick from a tree) not a pipe. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

She could have sat down with me and asked what had happened before punishing me. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

It was enough for her to shout at me but a bit much to hit me. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

Examples of injustice:

I had broken a cup while washing the dishes.

Do you think it was acceptable (ok) to punish you for this?

No. I did not do it on purpose. She could have shown her frustration but not hit me. Of course I did not expect her to say well done. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

One day I was washing the dishes and a plate slipped. I was shouted at and hit. It was an accident. It is better for a person to talk to me nicely than to shout at me. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

What these girls are telling us is that when they are punished it is often an immediate response in anger, where the punishment is either excessive, or where the need for it was not considered properly. In these situations girls see the punishment as unacceptable.

Boys 9-12

All 8 of the Limpopo boys said that the punishment they received was unacceptable, while all 8 of the KwaZulu-Natal boys reported exactly the opposite (with a few qualified – ‘yes, but’). It is not clear why this seeming anomaly should have arisen.

All of the boys who said the punishment was unacceptable, or who gave qualified yes responses did so because they felt the punishment was excessive. The majority of those said that it would have been acceptable to have spoken decently to them, and that it was unnecessary to use force.

- I want her to talk to me nicely
- She was supposed to tell me to stop swearing instead of beating me.
- I want them to talk to us nicely
- It is OK when he only shouts at me (i.e. scolding, rather than beating) (Boys, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

These responses all make sense when the general context of widespread corporal punishment is taken into account.

There was only 1 boy who made a clear statement that his punishment was unacceptable from a 'justice' perspective.

She must tell me what I did wrong instead of beating me without telling me what did I do. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

However, this boy did not deny that he had done something wrong, as many others who adopt the justice perspective do. He was merely questioning the fact that he was punished first before questions were asked.

Finally, there were those boys who said the punishment was acceptable. Many of these had been given fairly severe punishment.

He hit me with a stick (iswazi) and I went to sleep.
I had gone to watch TV at my friend's place. We watched films until ten at night and my father asked why was I so late. I said I was watching films.
It was ok otherwise where would I sleep if I had arrived late?
Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?
No. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

They hit me with a sjambok.
I was sent to the shops to buy sugar. I met my friends and they were going to town and I went with them. I went home late and of course I had forgotten to buy the sugar. The money was still there in my pocket though.
Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?
No. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

Girls 9-12

These girls are from two urban areas in Gauteng. 10 of 17 said it was unacceptable, mostly because their punishment was excessive. Most of these girls wish their parents would just talk nicely to them.

I think it will be good if she just talks without swearing. I hate it when she calls us names. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Talk to me nicely instead of shouting. She has to say please don't play with water again. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Yes, I think she must sit down and talk to me. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Yes she was supposed to talk with me nicely say don't buy salt instead of sugar next time. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

5 gave a qualified yes, because, while they accept they had done wrong and deserved to be punished, the punishment was excessive. Interestingly, 2 of these said the punishment

was acceptable because at least they did not get hit, which seems to suggest that the justice in the case is less important than whether they get beaten or not.

At least she did not hit me she just grounded me. So it was ok. She sometimes hit me with the shoe. She could have done that. Today it was better. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Only 2 said their punishment was acceptable without (major) qualification.

She called me to the bedroom and hit me so hard with a belt.
Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?
Maybe. But it was my fault. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

3 girls rejected their punishment because they felt it was wrong. In all three cases it was where the child was accused and punished without being given a chance to explain or without investigating further. Each of these seems to be an immediate reaction out of frustration or anger.

I think mom was supposed to ask me and believe when I say I didn't break it and I think she was suppose to asked my elder sisters about broken the bathing dish.
(Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

She was supposed to believe when I say the money is missing and I didn't take it. I didn't like the idea of beating me for something I didn't do. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Boys 6-8

At this age some of the boys seem unable to articulate a clear position about why a punishment might be acceptable or unacceptable. Some gave contradictory or confusing answers.

It wasn't OK. I felt angry.
Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?
No.
What did you want them to do?
To let me just play with my brother. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

My granny hits us with a sjambok.
Do you think it was acceptable (ok) to punish you for this?
Yes.
How did you feel at the time?
Nice. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I was played soccer on the street until late and I went home and my mom beat me.
Do you think it was okay to punish you for this?
Yes

So you want her to beat?
Yes
Do you think there's any other thing that she can do without beating?
Nothing.
Okay
How did you feel at that time?
I was feeling sad.
What did you do?
I went to sit outside next to the door.
Did you cry?
Yes I did.
Do you think she could have punished you in different way?
There is no other way. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

This quote is a glimpse into the perspective of a young boy who sees no way other than the use of violence to deal with problems. This may cast light on some of the other apparently contradictory answers, in that, instead of not being able to articulate a position, these young boys see no way out, even though they feel somehow that the punishment is unacceptable.

Nevertheless, the majority of these boys were able to articulate clearly that they felt the punishments they received were unacceptable, and most said that it would be better if their parents talked nicely to them.

She could have talked nicely. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I want her to talk to me but nicely not shouting. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

If I am sleeping she must wake me and not beat me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I think talking with me nicely and not beating me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Interestingly, not one of these boys raised the issue of justice or fairness as a reason why a punishment might be unacceptable. Of those who were able to articulate a clear position it was only the issue of excess that made the punishment unacceptable.

Girls 6-8

All 16 of these girls are from rural Limpopo. 15 of them experienced corporal punishment and all of these said that their punishment was not acceptable. All of them said that their parents should rather talk to them nicely instead of beating them.

- I want her to stop beat me and talk to me nicely.
- I want them to talk to me and stop beating.
- I want her to talk to me nicely.
- I want her to shout at me and stop to beat me. (Girls, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

The 16th girl was scolded, and she also found this unacceptable. She would rather have been beaten.

I want her to beat me rather than swearing. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

Was it that she felt she had to give some kind of answer, or was it that the swearing was intolerable? Many of the older boys felt that a short, sharp hiding was preferable to the more tedious non-corporal punishments they receive, and maybe this is saying the same thing.

Summary: Home; Acceptability; Low income

Most of the children in this income category find corporal and humiliating punishment at home unacceptable. Their main reasons for finding it unacceptable are (i) when it is too severe in relation to the misdemeanour and (ii) when it is unjust (i.e. not deserved because they do not believe they did anything wrong). Some 13-18 boys find it acceptable (if they did the 'bad thing' and if it is not too severe) but no girls of this age did. Note that girls were punished for not doing household tasks or breaking something in the home.

Children aged 9 to 12 also find corporal punishment unacceptable when it is unjust. Significant numbers wish their parents had spoken to them before beating them to find out if the beating was justified, or had spoken to them as the only necessary response to the misdemeanour.

Younger children were more accepting and understandably, given their age, could not easily give an argument for or against corporal punishment in relation to justice but many said they wished that parents would talk rather than beat.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Most of these boys experience corporal punishment, some of it severe. 10 of 21 boys said that their punishment was unacceptable because it was too harsh. Most of them wanted parents to first talk to them before hitting them.

It was harsh but acceptable. I also do not listen. But they could have talked. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

It was acceptable and not acceptable. He can't hit me with a kettle cord. He could have used anything but the kettle cord. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Only 1 boy in the entire group felt a punishment was unacceptable for reasons of fairness.

I felt bad because it was not my mistake. I think she should have shouted us both not me alone. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

5 boys felt that their punishment was acceptable.

I was angry but deep inside me I understood. I showed disrespect for my father. I felt sorry and bad. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

She hit me with a hand. A quick warm klap.

I felt good (the whole group laughs).

Why?

It helped me because I stopped smoking glue. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

Finally, one boy felt that he would have preferred to be given corporal punishment because he felt the burden of detention at home was too much.

She could have given me a hiding and I would know that it is done. Now I had to stay in the house for three days. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

Girls 13-18

These girls were mostly consistent in their rejection of the punishment they receive. 14 of 16 reported that their punishment was unacceptable or gave a qualified yes. Only 3 accepted the punishment. One girl did not respond. While few of them receive corporal punishment any more, most of them don't like the harsh way they are spoken to. They are almost unanimous about wanting their parents (mostly their mothers) to speak nicely to them.

I think it is important to sit down with me and show me how I went wrong. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

I want her to talk to me when I make a mistake. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

She must talk to me nicely and stop hurting my feelings. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

In addition to these pleas for parents to talk nicely to their children, there is also a plea for understanding.

She must stop shouting and talk nicely with me. I want her to understand that I am a teenager and I am ready to have a boyfriend. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

Only 1 girl rejected her punishments specifically because she felt she didn't deserve it.

I think it was unfair because I did nothing wrong. She did it. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Many felt that their punishment was excessive, even while they accepted that they had done something wrong.

I did something wrong, but the punishment was too much for that. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

The punishment was not balancing to me, it was too much. I just felt angry and I went to my bed.
(Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Boys 9-12

These boys, all from rural KwaZulu-Natal, felt that their punishments were unacceptable. None felt they should not have been punished; just that it was excessive in some way. What is interesting is that around half of these boys did not receive corporal punishment, or if they did, it was generally not severe. Yet they still felt it was excessive.

Do you think that treatment was fair?

It was not fair.

How do you want to be punished?

It was the right punishment but I didn't agree with the idea of sweeping twice on the same day. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

I felt sad because he punished me with lots of stuff at the same time [a mix of corporal and other punishments].

What do you think he was supposed to do?

He was supposed to beat me only not to carry on treating me like that. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

In one of the groups 3 of 8 boys felt that their punishment was unacceptable because they had done nothing wrong. This is an unusually high number in one group for this response.

It is because granny was shouting me for nothing because I was going to school [i.e. doing the right thing] (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

I told her it was a mistake and she told me that I am grounded and no more watching TV.

How did you feel about that?

Being punished for something it was a mistake? I felt angry. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

Only 1 boy in 16 felt his punishment was acceptable.

I broke the window and I was asked not to go anyway for the whole weekend and I didn't get a chance to go to a soccer practice. I was feeling sad but I also understood that what I did was wrong and I deserved to be punished. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

Girls 9-12

Perhaps a new theme is emerging here. Few of these girls received corporal punishment. Most of them said that the punishment they received was acceptable.

I would say yes because it is also my fault that I forgot because the dog is my responsibility and it is mine and I have to take care of it. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

However, what is interesting is that most of the responses that the punishment was acceptable suggest that it was because they did *not* receive corporal punishment that made it acceptable, rather than any sort of justice issue.

She did not punish me. She just talked to me. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

It was an accident even though I got blamed. She didn't hit me, so it was fine. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

In the first case the scolding (which is what actually happened) is not classified as punishment, and this was deemed acceptable. The second example would normally have been called very unfair by the child, because she was punished for something that happened accidentally, but as she was not hit, she accepted it.

So far in this section we have been looking at cases where corporal punishment is dominant. However, in this category, for the first time, punishment is found to be acceptable - even when it is not really deserved - as long as it is not a beating. This is saying pretty much the same thing as those who say "Don't hit us, please talk nicely".

Boys 6-8

Most of these boys (all urban Western Cape children) experience corporal punishment. Across both groups just under half said that their punishment was acceptable, and just over half said it was unacceptable, or was acceptable but with qualifications.

Those who said their punishment was acceptable all felt that they had done wrong and deserved it. Most of them received corporal punishment, but not severely.

I got a hiding because I threw a stone at a child passing nearby and the child was bleeding on his head.

How did they punish you?

I was told I can't go out and play with my friends ... They used a hand to slap me on my bum.

Do you think it was acceptable?

Yes. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Do you think it was acceptable to punish you like this?

Yes.

Why was it acceptable?

Because I was fighting.
Do you think they could have punished you in any other way?
No. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Reasons given by those who said their punishment was unacceptable were mainly because they felt a non-corporal form of punishment would have been better.

Do you think they could have punished him in any other way?
- They could have made him stay the whole day at home.
- They could have made me stay at home.
- They could have told me to stay indoors.
- They could have made me not to play with my friends.
(Boys, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

There were 3 children who felt their punishment was unacceptable because they had not done anything wrong (in their judgement) or 'had not started it'.

In this category, only 1 child directly articulated the problem as being that the punishment was excessive, and this was one who was grounded for a month. A hiding or scolding would have been preferable.

My mother grounded me for a month for back-chatting my aunty.
Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?
Yes. I wanted her to hit me or skel/scold me out. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Girls 6-8

Most of these girls experience corporal punishment. These girls also almost all felt that their punishment was not acceptable. This was not because they felt they hadn't done wrong, but that being beaten was unnecessary. There is, as with other groups, a plea for less beating and more talking.

Shout at me but not hurt my feelings. (Girl, 6-8, rural, KZN).

I want her to talk to me nicely. (Girl, 6-8, rural, KZN).

Shout at me (scold) but not hurt my feelings. (Girl, 6-8, rural, KZN).

Summary: Home; Acceptability; Low-mid income

About half of the older boys saw their corporal punishment as unacceptable because it was too severe and the other half felt it was justified because it matched the misdemeanour in their opinion. Older girls saw the verbal abuse they often received as unacceptable and made a strong plea for adults to talk nicely to them rather than to shout. 9 to 12 year old boys accepted corporal punishment if they had done something wrong but felt it was unacceptable when it was unjust or too severe. Girls in this category were not commonly beaten and therefore saw their punishment as acceptable because it did not involve beating.

Younger children also expressed strongly the idea that talking about a misdemeanour was far preferred over beating.

High-mid income band

Boys 13-18

None of the boys in the one group experience corporal punishment. Most of them felt that their punishment was not acceptable, mainly because they felt they hadn't done anything wrong or that the punishment was too severe.

The aunty she should have asked me to explain the situation. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

Irritating, we didn't do anything wrong. I wasn't really frightened because I knew I didn't have anything on me. I was just standing there. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

I just felt it was unfair because they knew I didn't do it, but they always have this feeling of you know, because he's the younger brother. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

From these quotes one can sense that the boys are not particularly upset by these punishments. Those who agreed that they had done wrong were also quite accepting of the situation, even if they felt the punishment was a bit excessive. One gets the sense that this community is not under stress and children live relatively gentle lives.

I think it was OK. It was quite serious what we did. I think it was fair. But I could have just paid the fees for the doctor and had one week of being grounded. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

Before I left I had the whole time to do the chores but I was just lazing around and prior to leaving I told her I would do it when I got back. So it was my fault. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

By contrast in the other group run in urban Gauteng boys did receive corporal punishment. They expressed the idea that parents should talk before punishing.

Yes, if I made the mistake they must talk to me and hear my side of story. I don't like the idea of not getting pocket money because it hard to spend six hours without eating at school. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

3 of the boys felt the punishment was acceptable because it made them think.

Do you think it was acceptable to punish you for this?
Definitely. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

How did you feel at the time?

As time went on I felt bad because while I thought I was just having fun with my friends my father told me that he was disappointed in me. It really hurt. He said I shouldn't do this again. So I felt bad afterwards. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 13-18

Again the theme of 'unacceptable if it is not deserved' or 'too severe in relation to the misdemeanour' emerges.

Boys 9-12

Most of these boys received corporal punishment, though not of a severe nature. Most of them (12 of 17) felt that their punishment was acceptable, and all 12 said this was because they felt they had done wrong and deserved to be punished.

Do you think it was acceptable to punish you for this?

Yes if you do something wrong you should be hit. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Do you think it was acceptable to punish you for this?

Yes because they had talked to me nicely about this so many times. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

We shouldn't have played there by the house. It was fair. (Boy, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Of the 5 who felt the punishment was unacceptable, 4 said so either because they felt they had done nothing wrong, or because they, and not their partners-in-crime, had been punished.

He only hit me, not my sister. I felt disappointed because my daddy didn't hit my sister. (Boy, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Girls 9-12

Those girls from the urban KwaZulu-Natal group (Indian community), with only 1 exception, did not receive corporal punishment. Half of them said that their punishment was acceptable – it was fair for what they had done and was not in excess.

It was OK how he handled it. I felt sad because I did bad and I got scolding. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

But it was fair – it depends on what I do. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

The other half felt their punishment was unacceptable, mainly because they felt it wasn't fair, with one girl feeling it was excessive.

My sister wanted to use the computer so I she said I mustn't off it so I left it and I still got a scolding. I felt sad. It wasn't fair because my sister wanted to use it. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

It was my fault, but she like said some bad words to me. It was a little bit unfair, too strong. She should have done it more calmly. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

The one girl who received corporal punishment reported experiences well outside the norm for this group. She reported that her punishment was not acceptable because it was excessive.

I get a lot of punishments from my father. He hits me on my hands and back, mostly, with his hand. It's not fair because sometimes he hits me really hard and I don't like it. I feel sad. I really feel sad. I start to cry because it pains, because his hands are hard too. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

Girls in the urban Limpopo group reported quite different experiences and responses. Most of them receive corporal punishment. Most of them feel their punishment was unacceptable, some because it was excessive and some for reasons of fairness.

I said to her it was a mistake. They forced me and I ran to fetch the belt. And they hit me just for a banana peel on a bed. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

The feeling of punishment being unfair relates a lot to inter-sibling dynamics. In many cases the issue is between siblings, with one child being punished while the other is left alone.

And he (her brother) came to my room and start shouting me saying that why did you do your homework late. So that my mother could hear me and come hit me. I said to him why did you make a noise. Do you want mom to hear. And he kept making noise until my mom hears. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

It seems that sibling resentment is experienced mostly by girls. Brothers, mostly older brothers, but even younger ones, seem to expect their sisters to do chores for them, or behave as if they have authority over their sisters, and this causes resentment. Often, girls get punished by parents who do not question this attitude in the boys.

My brother thinks he knows everything. He is in grade 10 this year. We have to watch him do things because he is older that you and there is nothing you can do. You just have to live with it. So telling him is like fighting with him. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Like my brother when they buy chips, he is the first one to choose what he wants. If they say we are going to buy clothes he is the first one to choose. Is this because he is a boy or because he is older than you?
Is because he is a boy and is older.

If you had a younger brother, would he still behave like a man of the house?
Yes, boys will never change. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Boys 6-8

In these two groups, one urban Limpopo and the other urban KwaZulu-Natal, both received a mix of punishment types, and the corporal punishment was not severe. In the Limpopo group most felt their punishment was unacceptable, generally because it was unfair in some way - either their sibling had also been involved but had not been punished, or they felt they had not done wrong.

What did you do wrong?
Nothing. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

Because my elder brother didn't help me wash the dishes (i.e. only he was punished). (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

I felt bad because it wasn't me who lost it. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

I felt angry, because my brother sometimes shouts at me and they don't punish him. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

In the KwaZulu-Natal group 4 of 8 felt the punishment was acceptable, because if you have done wrong you must be punished.

I feel OK because if you do something wrong you shouldn't be sorry about it. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

When I get punished I go learn my work. It's fair. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

Girls 6-8

These girls received a mix of corporal and non-corporal punishments. Most felt their punishment was unacceptable, mainly because they felt it was unfair.

The radio was playing loud and my mom told me to turn off the radio but it was too loud and I didn't hear her. So she threw me with a spoon. I was in the dining room. It hit me on my head. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

I feel sad because I didn't do anything – it's my brother who goes on with me. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

I did nothing to her, but she tripped mistakenly (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

They also felt that adults could have handled it differently.

She should learn to talk to me when I have done something wrong not to shout all the time. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I wanted her to talk to me nicely. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

One of these girls felt the punishment was unacceptable because it was excessive or because they two punishments for one misdemeanour.

Once at home I was doing something wrong and my aunty skilled me out (scolded). I felt sad because she did also hit me on my hand. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Only 2 of 17 girls felt their punishment was acceptable.

I think it was ok for them to hit me. Some children are naughty because they do not hit them at their homes. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Do you think it was acceptable (ok) to punish you for this?

Yes, because we were being naughty and irritating.

Do you think they could have punished you in a different way (i.e. not hit with a belt)?

No. She had long been talking to us. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Summary: Home; Acceptability; High-mid income

Many of these children did not experience corporal punishment but, in relation both to corporal punishment and in relation to other punishments, it is seen as acceptable if it is fair. Children say that everyone involved in the misdemeanour (especially siblings) should be punished equally, and parents should take the time to find out what happened. Again there is a strong plea for adults to talk to children.

High income band

Boys 13-18

The majority of these boys felt their punishments were acceptable. Most of these did not receive corporal punishment. They felt their punishments were fair and balanced, or reasonable. They said that they knew they had done something wrong and they deserved to be punished, so it was fine.

I understood what they did and why they did it and I don't really blame them for what they did. I think it was appropriate, but, hey, it was kind of tough. I definitely deserved it. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

I felt it was fair because I was disrespectful to my mom – she is smaller than me and she is a woman, so ja ... I felt it was perfect, it was fine. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

Some boys even felt their punishment was a bit lenient.

It was my fault, so, ja, they grounded me for 2 weeks. I guess I knew it was my fault because I was the one that kept them kind of anxious and all that. I actually thought it was a bit lenient – I was expecting worse! (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

This may be because administering non-corporal punishment makes demands on parents as well, so once the moment has passed, many parents allow the issue to subside. This theme characterises a number of reports by children in the high income group.

Girls 13-18

None of these girls receives corporal punishment, and most of them felt the punishment they received was fair, based on a sense of justice – I did wrong, so it was fine. The punishments all had a sense of balance, which reinforced their acceptability.

So I was grounded for a month and I had to stay at home. Well, I'm not the one who pays for my bills so it is pretty unfair to them. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Appropriate? Yes, it could have been worse. We could have burned down a few houses. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

In this group, as with the boys, there were children who felt they could have been given more serious punishments.

If I was a mother I would have made it a lot worse. Also the story has happened quite a few times and then they didn't do much about it. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

And others who have a keen sense of justice!

That's OK as long as I don't have to do anything extreme, like washing the dog. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Boys 9-12

More than half of these boys (9 of 15) felt their punishment was unacceptable. There was a complete spread of reasons for this, from it being unfair because they felt they did no wrong, to it being unfair because their sister caused it or should also have been punished, to it being too extreme.

Then I got punished for what my sister did. Because they said why didn't I tell her that what she was doing was wrong and why didn't I send those people away. My sister is older. She is 16 and I am 12. We both got grounded. I got for a month, but she didn't because she is in boarding school. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

I thought it was unfair because it was an accident. I felt a little bit angry, but just forgot about it because it will go past faster if you forget about it. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

He started getting really angry and then he tried to throttle me and if I remember correctly he tapped me in the face and I got really, really angry (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

The other boys accepted their punishments mainly because they felt they deserved it.

It was fair because I hit her. I deserved it. How did you feel? I was disappointed in myself because I hit my sister. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

I felt angry at the time but afterwards I felt that I deserved it. I think she handled it OK. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 9-12

Two thirds of these girls felt their punishment was unacceptable, mostly because they felt they hadn't done anything wrong.

I felt angry because it wasn't fair. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

I felt it was very unfair because she started it. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

I didn't do anything. If I had done something it would have been OK (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

Other girls felt it was unfair because they were not listened to or given a chance to explain what had happened.

They sent me to my room and they didn't let me explain (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

Those who felt the punishment was acceptable said so because they knew they had done wrong and deserved it.

Boys 6-8

Most boys in this group felt their punishment was acceptable, all of them because they felt they did wrong and deserved to be punished.

It was OK that I got punished because I pushed my sister. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

I don't feel bad because I deserve it. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

It was fair to be punished like that because I did the wrong. It was my fault I said we must go and play on the thing. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

It was fair the way my mom punished me because I was fighting with my brother. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

Girls 6-8

Most of these girls did not give clear answers or seemed unable to articulate an opinion. Inferring from poor information it seems that about half felt their punishments were acceptable (and half didn't). The punishments were deemed acceptable mainly because they felt they had done wrong and the punishment matched the wrongdoing; it was fair. Those who felt it was unfair said so mainly because they felt they had done nothing wrong.

Summary: Home; Acceptability; High income

Children in this category mostly saw their punishments as fair and some even saw them as too lenient. When punishments were seen as unfair it was in relation to the principle of justice rather than severity. Children in this category also articulate the desire for adults to talk more. Younger children in this category struggled with the concept of acceptability of punishment.

Summary: Acceptability of corporal and humiliating punishment at home

Younger children seemed to have struggled with the concept of acceptability, which is understandable given the abstract nature of the idea.

The majority of children over 9 years old from all income bands and both genders find corporal punishment unacceptable. They apply two criteria to judge acceptability, (i) the severity of the punishment and (ii) whether they feel they deserved it by having done something they saw as 'wrong'.

Older girls (13-18) were particularly clear that corporal punishment was unacceptable, boys seemed more accepting.

There were some children who felt the punishment was acceptable usually this was because it was deserved and not excessive.

A strong theme that emerges through this is that children wish adults would talk before punishing and talk nicely instead of beating and shouting.

6. ACCEPTABILITY OF CORPORAL AND HUMILIATING PUNISHMENT: SCHOOL

Low income band

Boys 13-18

Just over half of these 19 boys felt their punishments were acceptable. Mostly this was because they felt they had done wrong and deserved it.

I felt a bit bad, but not so bad. I knew I was wrong and the punishment made me realize that I should stop what I am doing and work a bit harder. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

Yes it was. Because I had messed everything up. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

I did not feel bad because it was my fault. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

Yes they were ok in hitting us. We know the rules of the school. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

One boy remarked that his punishment was acceptable because at least having to clean the class was better than being beaten, so this made it acceptable.

Of those who felt the punishment was unacceptable, all but 2 said so because it was excessive or abusive in some way.

Yes they were ok in hitting us. We know the rules of the school. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

We were afraid to get into class. The teacher asked us how many times have they told us not to fetch water during school time. On the other hand they had told us that they are going to give us a hiding if we do not bring water to school. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

I felt angry and bad. My father cut my hair like that and the teacher had no right to remove it. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

No. I think there was something they could have done instead of hitting us. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

Girls 13-18

Of the 18 girls in this category (all rural KwaZulu-Natal) 15 felt their punishment was unacceptable. In one of the groups this was all of the girls. These girls mostly complained that teachers hit first and do not ask or understand the situation properly.

She could have asked where I have been and could have understood that I had been sent by another teacher. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

They could have listened to me or asked other children. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

He could have find out why we were outside. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

Another strong reason given was that teachers punish a whole group instead of taking the trouble to find out who the actual culprits are.

No, especially because boys were not included in the punishment. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

She could have shouted the whole class and hit only the ones who were supposed to have swept. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

The teacher can just find out who leaves their dishes unattended because this is done by same people. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

Those girls who felt their punishment was acceptable said it was fine mainly because they knew they had done wrong. In most of these cases the punishment was not severe.

Boys 9-12

Taken as a whole these boys' responses seem contradictory even though they come from similar home environments – traditional rural. However, it is around the theme of corporal punishment that a unifying pattern merges. As stated before, all but 2 of these boys receive corporal punishment. In the rural Limpopo group, 7 of 8 boys said their punishment was unacceptable with the suggestion that it was the corporal nature of the punishment they didn't like. Many of these boys said they would rather do physical activity as punishment.

I prefer to run ten times around the school. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

Yes, they can us do frog jumps instead of beating us. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

Yes, they can make me do push ups. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

However, the above is in the context of what seems to be an abusive environment.

I thought that they abuse us and I thought of leaving the school. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

I cried and I went to sit down and I thought that here in our school they abuse us. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

In the same school, the only boy who felt his punishment was acceptable said this:

I felt good because he didn't hit us. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

This boy's punishment was acceptable only because he wasn't beaten.

It seems that in this school corporal punishment dominates and whatever kind of assessment their punishment is given by the boys, they also strongly feel that the corporal nature of it is unacceptable.

In the rural KwaZulu-Natal group, 6 of 10 boys felt their punishment was acceptable because they knew they had done wrong. 4 boys felt it was unacceptable, but of these, only 2 felt that the teacher should rather have spoken to them. When comparing these contexts, it seems that rural Limpopo boys in this age group are much less accepting of corporal punishment. In rural KwaZulu-Natal the corporal punishment is more acceptable. It seems that the severity of the punishment is similar, so it may be that rural KwaZulu-Natal boys are more accepting of this form of punishment (i.e. it is more consistent with accepted norms).

However, and contrary to the above trend, 2 of the Limpopo boys felt they would rather be beaten than have to endure other forms of punishment.

Do you think it was okay to punish you for this?

Yes

How did you feel at that time?

I was happy. I do feel the pain but I get happy afterwards. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

I think they have to beat you in order to listen. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

Girls 9-12

In this category the responses were very similar. 14 of 17 girls felt their punishment was unacceptable, 6 because it was excessive, cruel or humiliating and only 1 because they said they had not done anything wrong. 5 said that the teacher should have asked first what happened or who did wrong before hitting all of them.

I thinking of finding out what made us fight before she beat us. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

I think she was supposed to ask me what made me not to write instead of beating me. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

I felt sorry for the boy and I hated the teacher for doing that to the boy. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

No I do not like that. I think it is a cruel thing to do to any body. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

5 of these girls said the principle of punishment for what was done was fine, but that the punishment was excessive, or the teacher should not have hit them for it.

Sometimes we are wrong but they do not need to use the stick all the time. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Amongst these children the notion of justice, that the punishment must fit the misdemeanour, is a strong theme, as is common in many groups and that it is not acceptable to use harsh or excessive levels of punishment whatever its nature.

Boys 6-8

These boys come from the same two urban communities in Gauteng as the 9-12 year-old girls above. Their responses are similar in that most felt their punishments were unacceptable, mainly because they were excessive. Some of these boys said that the punishment was acceptable in principle, but the excess was not. 8 of 17 boys said that teachers should first talk to them or not hit them at all.

She said to me I must go and stand in front because I was making noise and I said no I was borrowing an eraser. I went to stand in front and teacher came and she hit me with a pipe. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

He was supposed to stop me from hitting other children than beating me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

She was supposed to ask me to get off the table and sit down (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I wanted her not to hit me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

6 of the 17 boys said their punishment was acceptable because they knew they had done wrong. This was in spite of some of them obviously being hit more excessively than was necessary. These show an acceptance of corporal punishment. The next two quotes reinforce this. They are lengthy quotes so that a full context is provided.

I was feeling okay.

It is ok to be beaten?

Yes

Why is that?

It is because being beaten is nothing to me.

Do you feel a pain when they beat you?

Yes I do feel a pain

So what is ok?

Silence

Do you cry when they beat you?

No

Do you think they could use a different way of punishing?

They must tell me not make a noise. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

It is because I made a mistake.

So you think when you make a mistake you deserve to be punished?

Yes

Okay

How did you feel at that time?

I was feeling sad.

What did you do?

I went to sit down to rewrite and I was crying.
Do you think she could have punished you in a different way?
No
So you think it okay to beat you?
Yes
What makes you think it is okay for your teacher to punish (beat) you?
It is because I wrote wrong stuff.
So you do you think by being beaten you will be able to learn?
Yes
Do you think there's no other way your teacher can correct your mistake?
No.
Why is that?
So that I don't repeat the same mistake again. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Both of these quotes suggest that at this young age boys have accepted that being beaten is necessary and acceptable, even though their reactions show they are not happy about being beaten. There is a contradiction between their accepted norms about corporal punishment and their actual experience of it.

Girls 6-8

12 of 16 girls said their punishment was unacceptable and all said the teacher must talk to them, not beat them.

I want her to tell me not to make noise and stop hit my face. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

I want them to talk to me. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

I want him to tell me to keep quiet than hitting my back with a stick. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

The other 4 girls said their punishment was acceptable, but only because they were not beaten.

I feel good because they don't beat me. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

I feel good because she doesn't hit me. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

Summary: School; Acceptability; Low income

In this income band older boys generally see corporal and humiliating punishment as acceptable as long as it fits the misdemeanour and is not severe. Girls, however, generally see it as unacceptable and say strongly they want teachers to talk instead of beating them. Boys aged 9 to 12 differed in their acceptance of it with the group run in a KwaZulu-Natal rural area more accepting than a group run in a Limpopo rural area. Girls in this age category saw corporal punishment as completely unacceptable and wanted talking instead.

In the younger group girls and boys also differed, with girls clearly wanting talk instead and the boys being more ambivalent. Boys could articulate the fact that corporal punishment made them sad but could not imagine any other alternative.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Of 16 boys in 2 groups, only 2 felt their punishment was acceptable, because they said they knew they had done wrong. Of the remainder, half felt they had been punished unfairly.

I got seven cuts from this teacher. I do not know why.

Why did you get punished?

He just called me and did that.

Are you sure?

Boy 2: It does happen. See what he did to me. I did not do anything. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

There's a teacher who took the whole classroom to clean the toilets and we didn't do anything. When he called us we thought we are going to help him to the textbooks in the library. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

You know sometimes you do not understand the work and they should take time to explain to you. But no, they just say "Come, bend over". (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

The teacher would just walk in slap you behind the head and pull you by your clothes. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

The other half of these boys felt their punishment was excessive.

This teacher came and hit me. He throttled me, choking me, pulling me before he hit me.

Why did you get punished?

One afternoon we were sitting in the class and we were making jokes. I was laughing hard. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

I was klapped by a teacher. He hit me, kicked me. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

Girls 13-18

Of these 16 girls from 2 different areas, all but one felt their punishment was unacceptable. Half of these felt their punishment was excessive and said that teachers should talk first before deciding what to do or before just hitting them.

He must ask me why I didn't do my homework then I will explain to him. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

I think she has to ask why I didn't do the job and I will tell her than beating or makes me fetch water with a 20 litre five times. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

The other half felt that they had been unfairly treated.

I felt very bad, I felt embarrassed because the rest of my class laughed at me. I don't think it was fair because everybody was talking in the class, not just me. I think talking to me was enough. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

It wasn't fair because I was outside during teaching and I was missing the lesson. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Boys 9-12

All except 1 of 16 boys felt their punishment was unacceptable. 11 felt that their punishment was excessive. Most of these experienced non-corporal forms of punishment that they found onerous, and some felt that a quick beating would be better.

She gave us the forks to do the garden and we didn't finish when her period was over then later after school we were asked to do and finish it. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

I don't think it is right because you be alone in the classroom while other children are playing. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

I think the better way to beat us we stick on our hands not the bottom.

You think it is okay when they beat?

Yes mem because it heals quickly when they hit the hands.

What is the difference between staying in the classroom and getting beaten?

It very painful mem to stay in the classroom during lunch time because other children will be calling us and tell us to go outside and we cannot go because we be punished more and more. (Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

You write a hundred times that you were not making the noise and you not allowed to have break during break time.

Should the teacher punish you other way?

By hitting us sir.

How should the teacher have hit you?

Hit me in the head.

What do they use?

They use the sick.

So you think that would be a better way?

Yes sir. (Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

Girls 9-12

14 of 22 girls felt their punishments were unacceptable. The reasons were equal between it being unfair in some way, or it being excessive. In most cases the excessive aspect of the punishment was not because it was severe, but just that it seemed more than the misdemeanour warranted.

They reported me and the principal called me and scolded me and did not hit me. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

They gripped me here on the shoulders (a pinching, rough grip that is painful on the shoulders.) (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Those that felt their punishments were acceptable mostly said so because they felt they had done something wrong and deserved it. Their punishments were not excessive.

I felt normal because I knew I did wrong. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

I was late this morning and the other children said I must also go to the office because I was late. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Boys 6-8

9 of 21 boys felt their punishment was acceptable, but of these 3 said that the punishment, while justified, was excessive.

I was playing karate with the younger children during break. The teacher saw it like I was hurting them but I was playing. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Yes (it was acceptable) but I wanted her to shout me not hit me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

The others all felt that their punishment was unacceptable, mainly because it was excessive in some way.

Because I was in detention during breaks and I couldn't play. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

My teacher hit me on the knuckles because I was running around in class. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

The theme of preferring to be beaten appears here too.

I would have preferred being given a hiding because running around the school was tough. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Because I ran around the school 3 times and I was very tired.
Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?

Yes.

How?

He could have hit me with a duster. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

It seems that severe corporal punishment is not acceptable to any children, but 'balanced' corporal punishment seems quite acceptable. And when children are given non-corporal forms of punishment, even though they don't seem severe they are experienced as onerous, particularly by younger children, who then say they would prefer to be hit.

Girls 6-8

Some of these girls found it difficult to articulate clear answers to the questions posed in the focus groups. This is mostly a function of their young age, but also in some cases because they are severely beaten relative to their age and seemed traumatised. However, of the 18 girls who participated in this category, 2 said their punishment was unacceptable because it was unfair while 10 said it was because the punishment was excessive in some way.

I am not allowed to touch the chalk so the teacher beat me. But I want her to talk to me nicely. (Girl, 6-8, rural, KZN).

What do you want her to do if you made a mistake?

I want her to shout at me.

What must she say?

Tell me not to do that again. (Girl, 6-8, rural, KZN).

Summary: School; Acceptability; Low-mid income

All children in this category articulate the idea that severe corporal punishment is unacceptable. Most said this because they saw it as excessive and because they would prefer not to be beaten. However, some preferred 'short and sharp' corporal punishment to what they found to be more onerous non-corporal forms of punishment.

High-mid income band

Boys 13-18

The boys in the one group all felt that their punishment was unacceptable, and all but one said it was because it was unfair in some way.

I had a detention. He made me write some lines and even though I didn't do anything wrong he made me do it. It was the entire class talking but he only picked on me and 4 or 5 others. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

It was unfair. You could pick out those that were misbehaving. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

In the group run in Gauteng 5 of the 8 felt their punishment was unacceptable because it was unfair.

There's one teacher who like to beat us without a good reason. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 13-18

Girls in this group who experienced corporal punishment saw it as unfair as they felt it was an excessive response to what they had done wrong.

Boys 9-12

10 of 17 boys felt their punishment was not acceptable. Of these 7 said so because it was excessive in some way.

It is ok to beat children when they have made a mistake but that time it was a bit too much. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

They should first talk to you. They are not supposed to hit you. If you report them to the police they can be arrested. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

3 of these boys felt it was unfair.

I felt very frustrated because my friend didn't go, only me. (Boy, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

I felt angry because this one boy he don't do his homework every time and we get punished for him. (Boy, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

It was my friends who did it and they said it is me. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 9-12

In one of the groups (Indian community in KwaZulu-Natal) none of the girls experiences corporal punishment. 5 of these girls say the punishment they received was acceptable because they knew they did wrong. 3 felt it was not acceptable, 1 because it was unfair and 2 because it was excessive.

I felt a little angry with her because it wasn't that bad, it was just a little mark. I was angry because she scolded me real bad and it wasn't nice. It was unfair. It was just a little mark. She screamed and shouted. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

The other group of girls, from urban Limpopo, had 6 of 8 that felt their punishment was unacceptable, which is more similar to other groups in this study. 4 felt it was unfair.

And also not blaming me alone because the whole class was laughing. She thought I am the one who cracked up the joke and I wasn't. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

So if you had to advise the teachers?

Firstly they must be fair and choose the one who was talking.
Secondly they should not use corporal punishment
It is OK if she hits us on our hand but not on our head. Corporal punishment must only be on your hand. Sometimes they ask you to bend down and touch your toes. It is acceptable to touch your toes. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

The second girl gives advice not only about being fair, but also about what is acceptable in terms of corporal punishment. These girls were consistent in their views that corporal punishment was acceptable and that it was only the matter of fairness that had to be addressed.

Boys 6-8

Every boy in the Indian group from KwaZulu-Natal felt that his punishment was acceptable, all because they knew they had done something wrong. In this group corporal punishment is almost entirely absent, and what punishments they do receive are not at all severe. In the urban Limpopo group 4 boys felt their punishment was acceptable, 3 felt it was not because it was not them that did wrong, and only 1 felt the punishment was excessive.

I was fighting with my friend for my pencil. The teacher had to punish me with a plank. She hit me on my head. She should have given me a warning. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

Girls 6-8

One group in this category came from an urban area in the Western Cape. 6 of 9 of them said that the punishment they received was acceptable because they knew they had done something wrong. The punishments they received were mostly minor corporal punishment. 2 of the other 3 felt their punishments were unfair in some way, and one felt that although the punishment was justified, that it was excessive.

When I didn't fill in one of the sounds on the paper so my teacher hit me on my hand with a ruler. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

The other group came from a Gauteng urban area. Half of the group felt that punishments they received at school were acceptable the other half felt that they were unfair because they were excessive.

Summary: School; Acceptability; High-mid income

In general, children who experienced non-corporal punishment felt that it was acceptable when they knew they had done something wrong. Where children experienced corporal punishment they saw it as unacceptable as they believed it was an excessive response.

High income band

Boys 13-18

Of 15 boys in two urban groups, only 1 felt his punishment was acceptable. All the others felt it was unacceptable, most because it was unfair in some way.

We had to go stand outside and it was four of us because we were four in the room and it was freezing. He left us there and he only came back when he was satisfied. And I was angry. The head boy was involved and the whole thing came to us. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Limpopo).

I should have not been punished because he was the one who started fighting. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Limpopo).

She was punishing me for not doing my homework, but it wasn't fair because I tried to do as much as I could and it was the first time this term that I didn't do it. She could at least try and understand that. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

In much of the discussion with these boys, the issue of justice or fairness came up.

If a teacher is marking your paper and there is a voice coming from the left hand side they hit your table and say your table is making a noise. Where as it is the table next to you. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Limpopo).

Before they punish they must firstly find out. And there is no need to punish one person for what other person did. And the other person is going to walk out free and he will repeat the same thing again. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Limpopo).

In both schools corporal punishment is not used. In its place there is a complex system of punishments grading from lines to detentions to de-merits and upwards in severity. The sense of injustice expressed by these boys seems to be linked to this system, where there is a clear delineation of what punishment should be meted out for different types of misdemeanours. This system has given them a clear sense of their rights. However, when these boundaries are breached (which seems to happen often) the boys take offence.

Girls 13-18

All these girls felt that their punishments were unacceptable, mainly because they were petty or that teachers picked unfairly on individuals.

I went to a teacher and then she said that my skirt was too short, but I was wearing a rain jacket from the school shop and it was quite long because it didn't fit my arms so I had to get a bigger one, so it covered most of my skirt. She said that I just either take off my jacket or go get a new skirt. But that irritated me because my skirt was the right length and there are lots of other people with shorter skirts, but she told me that mine was too short. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

The teacher gave me a detention, meanwhile I like look at other people walk past me and with much worse things (relating to dress codes). (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

I thought it was a real waste because we didn't learn anything and I didn't even really know what I had done. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

These comments echo the theme that emerged from the boys above - a sense of rights being infringed by a system of punishments that seems to be administered inconsistently.

Boys 9-12

Just under half of these boys felt their punishments were acceptable because they knew they had done something wrong and they acknowledge that the punishment was administered fairly. Almost none of these boys experience corporal punishment, and both schools have a complex system of non-corporal punishments as also mentioned in the older boys' and girls' groups above.

Of those who felt their punishments were unacceptable, 4 of 8 said it was because it was unfair in some way.

I think it was very unfair because it was only half the class talking, but she couldn't see because she was outside, she could only hear the noise. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

He shouted at both of us but I did nothing wrong. It was not fair because I did nothing wrong. It was fair for him because he swore at my mother. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

The other 4 felt their punishment was unacceptable because it was excessive in some way.

She wasn't saying it nicely and shouting the whole time and acting like it was just my fault and all of this, and she kept n saying it was your fault, it was your fault. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

She threw him with the keys of the class and hit him against the head, klapped him once and squeezed his cheek. It was inappropriate because he was doing practically nothing. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Girls 9-12

In the one group all the girls felt the punishment they received was unacceptable, and all of them said it was because it was unfair in some way.

I felt angry because it wasn't, she didn't ask us exactly who was making the noise. For those who were making the noise it was appropriate punishment. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

I didn't think it was fair to some of us because if you didn't do something it isn't fair to get the punishment. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

I felt angry because it wasn't my fault. If I was doing it then I would have deserved it. I would have felt OK. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

Boys 6-8

Of the 15 boys, 8 felt that the punishment was acceptable because they knew they had done something wrong, and the other 7 felt it was unacceptable because they had not done something wrong. There was no sense of excess, or harshness in the punishment, and also no corporal punishment.

Mistakenly I hit one girl then my teacher said I must keep quiet. She shouted at me. I felt bad because I am normally good at school, and it was an accident. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

I kicked the ball mistakenly and it hit him in his face and his eye went red. The teacher saw the boy fall and she took me to the office and she showed the principal what I did. She thought I did it on purpose but I didn't. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

Girls 6-8

Of these 16 girls, 1 declined to tell her story and that was respected.

5 of the girls felt their punishment was acceptable because it was fair.

Bored actually! But I was supposed to sit there. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

The punishment was fair for what I did. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

5 felt their punishment was unacceptable because it was excessive in some way.

Because we were in the sun and we could get sunburned and our teacher doesn't know if you sit in the sun for like an hour or two you will fall asleep and you won't wake up for an hour or two. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

She shouted at me in such a way that I did something really big, for example I broke a window. It would have been better to tell me that tomorrow this better not happen again instead of yelling at me that loud. She wasn't having a bad day. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

The other 5 girls felt their punishment was unacceptable because it was unfair in some way.

There wasn't just me, there was three girls. I felt sad because I thought N. should have been there, it was her fault because she started the game. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

She was meant to get in trouble because I was the last one talking and I had to sit on the carpet by myself. (Girl, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Summary: School; Acceptability; High income

Children in this income category did not experience corporal punishment at school. They saw punishment as unfair when it was not just or teachers did not have the correct facts or did not bother to establish the correct facts in making decisions about punishments. Otherwise they mostly accepted it as a way of correcting something they had done wrong.

Summary: Acceptability of corporal and humiliating punishment at school

Most children feel corporal punishment is not acceptable, particularly if it is excessive. Generally children would like teachers to talk to them instead of beating them. Many younger children could not articulate acceptability as they appeared to have no other alternative within their experience but they agreed it made them feel bad.

Generally children accept the principle of punishment to help them learn what is right and wrong. They feel punishment is unacceptable when it is excessive, or is seen to be unfair or is administered without teachers finding out the facts.

Talking seems to be more important to girls than boys.

7. FEELINGS REPORTED IN RELATION TO PUNISHMENT (BOTH CORPORAL AND HUMILIATING) AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL

This section deals with children's reported feelings about humiliating experiences and punishment at home and at school. The responses are very similar across all categories, with some variations that are noted.



Low income band

Boys and girls 13-18

In the low income band where corporal punishment was dominant, although there was some anger at the injustice and excesses of what was happening, the main response by boys was that they felt ‘fine’.

I was slightly angry but it didn’t matter that much because I was not that hungry and I got food in the evening. I would be angry if I was hungry. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

I felt ok because I knew what I had done. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

When boys felt bad it was when the punishment had included humiliation.

I felt bad about it. It was bad because the whole class made fun of me after that. It became embarrassing afterwards. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

This reinforces the interpretation that these children are accustomed to high levels of corporal punishment and have accepted it – at least where it does not involve humiliation.

Most girls said they felt bad in some way.

I cried all the time. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

Others referred to the physical pain when asked how they felt.

My heart was so sore and my bums were painful. I couldn't sit down the whole weekend. Every time I looked at the teacher I resented her. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

However, simply feeling 'bad' is the most common response amongst these girls.

Boys and girls 9-12

The most common response amongst these boys and girls was feeling 'bad' or 'sad'. Many of the girls also cried. Some also said they felt OK, mainly because they knew they had done wrong and accepted the punishment (when it was not excessive or unjust.)

In groups where corporal punishment was more prevalent, they referred to feeling pain and also anger.

I was angry because it is painful to be beaten but I felt bad and I apologised. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

I cried and I was angry with her. (Girl 9-12, urban, Gauteng)

I was playing with my pen and the teacher called me and she beat me.

Do you think it was okay to punish you for this?

Yes

Why

It is because I don't listen.

How did you feel at that time?

I was very angry

What did you do?

I went to sit and cover my face with my hands and she said I must look at the chalkboards and I didn't do it. I continued to do what I was doing. I was crying.

(Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

The anger, as in the above case, is usually directed against excessive or unfair treatment.

Some feel grateful that they are not hit.

I was grateful they didn't do anything. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

An interesting distinction emerged in these groups that was not present in the older children, where they felt bad about being punished in the home situation, but felt angry at school.

Very angry because sometimes it is very sore. Sometimes you can get a cut from that board duster because he hits hard. He does not even want you to change hands. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Boys and girls 6-8

In this age group most children (throughout the study) simply said that they felt 'bad' or 'sad' when asked how they felt about being punished. Many of the boys also said they cried, but all of the girls said they cried (home and school).

Summary: Feelings; Low income

Sadness and anger are the two most common feelings reported by children in the low income category in response to corporal and humiliating punishment, with anger being more common at school and sadness at home. Children also refer to physical pain as a common feeling. Older boys in this category did not feel strongly in response to corporal punishment but did in response to humiliating punishment. A common response of younger children, both boys and girls was to cry.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Contrary to what might be expected, most boys in these groups did not say they felt angry about the punishments they received. Most said they felt 'bad', or felt 'sad'. The sadness was most often related to disappointing someone at home.

I took the money they left me with my friend and we bought glue and smoked.
How did you feel at the time?
Very, very bad. (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

As time went on I felt bad because while I thought I was just having fun with my friends my father told me that he was disappointed in me. It really hurt. He said I shouldn't do this again. So I felt bad afterwards. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Some also felt anger because the punishment was unfair. Others referred to the pain they experienced rather than their emotional response.

I feel very bad because it burns (being hit on the buttocks). (Boy, 13-18, semi-rural, W.C.).

Girls 13-18

This group raises another new theme, namely being embarrassed. It seems that more girls than boys refer to feeling embarrassed, and usually in the classroom context.

I felt very bad, I felt embarrassed because the rest of my class laughed at me.
(Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

Another theme that does not appear anywhere else in the study is that of feeling unloved or rejected by the family.

I felt like she doesn't like me. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

This theme reflects more strongly in the mid-high income group (9-12 girls) – see below.

Boys 9-12

It is not only girls who feel embarrassment in the classroom.

I felt embarrassed in front of class.

I felt angry

Why did you feel angry?

I felt angry because other children were laughing at me. (Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

However, most boys in this age group reported feeling sad. Some referred to the physical pain.

I was feeling sad.

Why?

Because she hit me with the belt and it was painful. (Boy, 9-12, semi-urban, KZN).

Girls 9-12

Most of these girls reported feeling sad as a result of being punished, both at home and at school. However, feeling angry was more common at school.

How did you feel?

It was worth it. I thought it was worth it because my friend laughed at the teacher. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Another new theme is that of feeling scared, or apprehensive. This emerges mainly when the child expects a severe punishment, but doesn't quite know what is going to happen.

I am scared because my mother is going to shout me or hit me. I do not know. (Girl, 9-12, urban, W.C.).

Boys and girls 6-8

Most of these children reported feeling sad. One of the boys reported feeling scared, as in the above example. Others also referred to the pain of a hiding. In these cases it seemed as if they weren't easily able to distinguish between emotional and physical feelings.

Unlike the boys, most girls also reported crying, in addition to feeling sad. They also felt embarrassed in the classroom, which is something the boys of this age group did not report.

Summary: Feelings; Low-mid income

A range of feelings is described by children in this income band. Older children feel sad, especially when they feel they have disappointed someone at home. Children also report feeling embarrassed, especially at school in front of peers. Fear of severe punishment is also reported and feeling rejected by family was a common feeling amongst 9 to 12 year old girls. Younger children seem to have struggled with distinguishing between physical pain and other more abstract feelings. Again, anger was more common at school than at home, where sadness dominates.

High-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Many of these boys reported feeling angry or upset. They felt their punishment was unfair both at home and at school. They also reported feeling embarrassed in the classroom because they were punished in front of their classmates. In addition boys reported feeling sad that they had disappointed people at home.

Girls 13-18

Many of these girls reported feeling angry or upset because they felt their punishment was unfair both at home and at school. They also reported feeling embarrassed in the classroom because they were punished in front of their classmates.

Boys 9-12

Most of these boys reported feeling either bad or angry. They tended to feel bad more at home and angry more at school.

I was hit on the hands by the teacher. She hit me so painfully I never forgot to do homeworks again from that day. I was so angry with her ... (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 9-12

These girls reported feeling mostly sad, but also embarrassed at school, and scared.

She was scared. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

How do you feel inside?

Scared.

(Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

The theme of feeling unloved at home also emerged here.

It feels like they don't love me. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

So when my mom hit me it feels like she doesn't love me. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Boys and girls 6-8

Almost all of these boys and girls reported feeling sad when punished. Some of the boys also reported feeling fine at home, not sad. However, at times they also feel bad and angry, particularly when they think the punishment is unfair. Some of the boys cry, and most of the girls cry when they are punished.

Summary: Feelings; High-mid income

Anger at unfair punishment is a common feeling amongst older children. Otherwise patterns similar to the previous group emerge.

High income band

Boys 13-18

Many of these boys feel angry about their punishments for the reason that they think it is unfair in some way. Some also feel fine about them as they are seen as fair. Anger is felt mainly at school. At home they feel sad or bad when they are punished.

An interesting theme that emerges here is the sense of feeling disappointed in themselves. This applies mainly at home.

I felt bad for disappointing them. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

It was terrible wanted to make it up to them somehow to show them that I regret what happened. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

Girls 13-18

The main emotion experienced by these girls was one of irritation or being offended. This was experienced mainly at school, where it seemed to the girls, petty rules were applied sometimes unfairly.

At home these girls tend more to feel upset or sad.

Boys 9-12

These boys reported a range of emotions, from feeling disappointed in themselves, to being scared, to feeling nothing (fine), to feeling sad.

I was kind of scared because I might go to detention. I was expecting worse. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

As with the older boys, the feeling of disappointment exists here as well.

I was disappointed in myself because I hit my sister. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

I felt disappointed in myself because I was supposed to be the senior person in the team and I should set an example. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Many felt angry about punishments received at school. At home most of them felt bad or sad.

Girls 9-12

At home most of these girls felt fine or okay. Some also felt bad or angry.

At school, however, all of these girls felt angry about punishments received. However, this is almost entirely due to perceived unfairness in the way the punishment was administered.

I felt angry because it wasn't my fault. If I was doing it then I would have deserved it. I would have felt OK. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

I felt very angry because I was the only one who was punished. It would have been better if they also got punished. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

Boys 6-8

All of these boys reported feeling bad about punishments received. Some also said they felt ashamed.

I didn't feel nice. I felt ashamed. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

As with the older boys, this applies at home, and seems to be the same emotion experienced by boys who said they felt disappointed with themselves.

Girls 6-8

Most of these girls felt sad. Some also said they felt embarrassed at school.

I was so embarrassed that I pretended I was blowing my nose. (Girl, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Summary: Feelings; High income

Some children in this category describe feeling nothing as the punishments were not seen as harsh (none experienced corporal punishment at school and few at home). They felt angry when punishments were seen as unfair. Again the pattern of anger at school and sadness at home emerges as well as the feeling of letting people at home down. Embarrassment is also a common feeling at school.

Summary: Feelings in relation to corporal and humiliating punishment at home and school

Sadness and anger are the two most common feelings reported by children in response to corporal and humiliating punishment. Anger is more common at school and

sadness at home. Children also refer to physical pain as a common feeling. Older boys in the low income bands did not feel strongly in response to corporal punishment but did in response to humiliating punishment. Young children, both boys and girls, reported crying.

Older children feel sad, especially when they feel they have disappointed someone at home. This is most evident in the higher income bands. Children also report feeling embarrassed especially at school in front of peers. Fear of severe punishment is also reported and feeling rejected by family was a common feeling amongst 9 to 12 year old girls. Younger children seem to have struggled with distinguishing between physical pain and other more abstract feelings.

8. REPORTED BEHAVIOURAL RESPONSES TO PUNISHMENT (BOTH CORPORAL AND HUMILIATING) AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL

Low income band

Boys 13-18

Most boys in rural KwaZulu-Natal did not react overtly to their punishments.

I went out and sat in the bushes alone, thinking. I realised I was wrong. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

By contrast, the boys in the Western Cape group reflected a high level of aggression or violence in their reactions.

I beat the children because I was angry. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

I was mean to the children. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

I felt like killing someone (he was very embarrassed in front of the class). (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

I brought the spade to school. I wanted to hit the boy with it. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

I had a fight with a boy who is our neighbour. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

Another type of response was to run away or otherwise get away from the situation.

I went out of school gate (i.e. left school) and called my mother. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

I wanted to run away, but didn't. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

I was very upset and I wanted to leave home and go to stay with my grandmother. They talked me out of it. (This after he was viciously beaten). (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

Girls 13-18

Girls in this age group, as in most, did not report aggressive responses. Most withdrew in a variety of ways, e.g. by not talking, not eating, or sleeping.

I just did not want to eat after that. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

I felt like going to sleep. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

I felt like going away from home. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

I ran and sat outside. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

The above are all in the home context. By contrast, there were no reported reactions to punishment at school.

Boys 9-12

While few older children reported crying, most of the younger groups, and in this case, even the boys, reported crying, usually in combination with withdrawing somewhere.

I cried and went to sit at the back of the house. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

I went to the bushes and sat and cried. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

I ran to my grandfather's place. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

Ran under sofa and slept.

Some also reported not wanting to eat, and sleeping.

At school these boys did not report reactions, except this one boy.

I went to sit and cover my face with my hands and she said I must look at the chalkboard and I didn't do it. I continued to do what I was doing. I was crying. (He was beaten without discussion) (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

Girls 9-12

Almost without exception, the reactions reported by these girls was to withdraw and to cry.

I cry. And then I sit outside until it is dark. I do not talk to anyone. I just keep quiet. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

At school these girls generally sit down and cry. The closest to any form of proactive reaction was this one.

Sometimes you want to bring your mom. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Boys and girls 6-8

At home these children usually go outside or to their rooms and most of them report crying.

I went outside and my mother said I must come back so I hid away. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I ran away and came home late. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Interestingly, many of these younger children also simply go out and play with their friends.

The major response amongst girls was to cry.

There were few responses related to school, except to cry. Only one boy reported not wanting to work.

I just feel like I don't want to do my work (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

Summary: Consequences; Low income

The responses of older boys in this category seem to be dependant on the cultural environment. The Western Cape group who live in a violent community responded with violence and anger whereas the KwaZulu-Natal group reported few overt reactions to punishment.

Girls of ages 9 to 18 tend to withdraw at home. Young children did not report much response but seemed to just move on with their lives.

Low-mid income band

Boys 13-18

Although few responses were reported, there was some of the aggression as reflected in the low income band above.

I wanted to take him to the police station. I wanted to hit him back. I did not do it only due to respect. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Others moved out of home.

At school few responses were reported, but those that did emerge also show signs of aggression and anger.

I talk back and I give him my work when I want to. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

I wanted to go and tell the teacher how I feel. I didn't. I then wanted to report to the police but I didn't. He took my head under the table, hits me with such big stick, on the bum. It was burning so much. (Boy, 13-18, urban, Gauteng).

Girls 13-18

As before, most girls do not show aggressive responses, apart from this one.

I hit her back and I left the house. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

Most cry and withdraw, lose their appetites, or go outside.

I left home and came back when I was calm. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

One girl told a lengthy story about how she ran to the toilet and pretended to take an overdose of pills, intending to shock her family.

At school there were contrasting reactions to punishment. About half of the girls reported committing themselves to doing the right thing in the future.

I must never be late to school again. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

On the other hand, others became rebellious and ignored a teacher's orders.

We went outside class and stood in sun. (Girl, 13-18, rural, Limpopo).

Boys 9-12

Most boys withdrew in some way, and some cried. One felt the need to behave like a man (which is reflected in the older age group, but generally not in this one).

I felt like crying but I didn't. There is a saying in Zulu that says a man cries within. (Boy, 9-12, rural, KZN).

Girls 9-12

Most of the reactions reported by these girls relate to withdrawing or becoming quiet.

One girl reported moving out and staying with someone else. She does not indicate for how long.

No reactions were reported at school.

Boys 6-8

Few reactions were reported by these boys, and these were mostly about running away, or staying away.

I did not go to school. I stood by the corner near the school. When the children went home after school I joined them. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

I went to my friend. (Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

At school one boy said he wanted to go home, and another hid his sore hand.

It was sore and I kept my hand under the table. Boy, 6-8, urban, W.C.).

Girls 6-8

The only reaction reported by these girls at school was to sit down and cry. At home they generally went to their rooms and cried and then slept.

Summary: Consequences; Low-mid income

Generally, older boys responded with anger and in some cases aggression to others. Girls tended to withdraw especially in response to punishment at home. Responses to punishment at school varied between rebellion and deciding to change their behaviour. Children in the 9 to 12 year old category reported more response at home suggesting they felt more strongly about punishment at home. Young children report few responses possibly because the question was too abstract for them.

High-mid income band

Boys 13-18

In the group run in the Indian community no aggressive response was recorded. These children became quiet, or withdrew in some way. One boy at home reported apologising and not fighting back.

In the urban Gauteng group boys did report feeling angry and some reported an aggressive response.

Girls 13-18

Girls reported withdrawing at home and many also cried.

Boys and girls 9-12

Boys and girls had similar reactions to punishment. Most withdrew in some way or became quiet, for example going to their rooms, sitting outside or watching TV. Some apologised to their parents.

I kept away from my friends for a bit. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

I did not come to school the day after I was hit. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Interestingly, compliance or obedience becomes evident in these groups.

I was so angry with her such that I did not want to talk to her but after that I never forgot any homework. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

I never made noise in class again. I talk, but not the way I used to. (After requiring medical care for an injury to his hand). (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

I never talked again. I was quiet. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

Not all of the reactions reflected ideal social behaviour, however.

I went ahead and stole two more handles because mine were stolen and I could use my school case again. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Boys and girls 6-8

Again these groups reflect similar reactions. Most of these children cried and withdrew either to their desks, where they worked quietly, or to their rooms.

1 example of compliance was reported.

I told my mother I got punished. I was behaving good after. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

An unusual example for this age and income group was also reported.

I don't feel nice so I swear my mommy. Sometimes I feel angry. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

Summary: Consequences; High-mid income

Withdrawal was the most common response. In some cases compliance and obedience were also mentioned as a response.

High income band

Boys 13-18

Most of these boys reported becoming quiet and withdrawing, or apologising and showing socially responsible behaviour.

I went to my room in response. Then I came out for dinner. It was very quiet, everyone heads down, no talking, quite tense. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

I said I was sorry (to the neighbours) and offered to pay for it. Then later when I got the money I paid for it and I bought them a bunch of flowers and they were very pleased. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

At school they reacted by not reacting.

I did nothing in response, I just took it, I just felt angry inside. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

I was angry because it was totally unfair, but I just accepted it. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

Girls 13-18

These are the girls who seemed to be fighting a war against pettiness in their school. This reaction seems to fit into that context.

I was angry with the teacher. I kind of went into lessons and made a point of annoying her. (Girl, 13-18, urban, W.C.).

At home these girls mostly withdraw, some in petulance, and some cry.

Boys 9-12

These boys generally accept their punishment at school and move on. Others keep quiet or withdraw.

I was in a bad mood and I didn't feel like talking to anybody. I was really mad. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

As in the older age group, some apologised about what they had done.

I just said to him can I stay, but he said I must go. Then after practice I came back and apologised. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

Very few reactions were reported at home. One boy reported swearing at his cousin.

Girls 9-12

These girls all withdrew and cried, or went to their rooms and read for a bit.

At school no reactions were reported.

Boys and girls 6-8

In almost all cases these children withdraw, for example to their beds or to their desks, and read or play quietly. In many cases they also cry.

I carried on and did my work. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

One boy reported an angry response.

I always get angry when she hits me. I took my brother's shoe and I was banging it on the wardrobe. (Boy, 6-8, urban, KZN).

Summary: Consequences; High income

Again the most common response was withdrawal, although where children see punishment at school as unfair they respond with anger.

Summary: Reported behavioural responses to punishment (home and school)

Withdrawal is the most common response at home, although some older boys who are part of a particularly violent community report responding with violence. These two responses are particularly clear in response to corporal and humiliating punishment.

Some children report changing their behaviour. Children respond angrily more often at school where they perceive punishment as unfair.

Young children's responses included withdrawal, although most did not report a response partly because this is an abstract idea for young children.

9. CHILDREN'S VIEWS ON ALTERNATIVES

There are 5 main responses across the entire group.

1. Where corporal punishment is received, most children would prefer non-corporal forms of punishment.
2. There is a general call for less severe punishments of whatever kind.
3. Adults should talk more to children, either to provide guidance, or as a more appropriate form of discipline, or to hear the child's perspective instead of hitting first and talking afterwards.
4. There are children who, having received fairly severe punishment, respond by saying that it was acceptable and cannot give any alternative. The sense here is that they are unable to think of an alternative because that is all they have experienced.
5. Some children, mainly boys, would prefer to be given a hiding (as long as it is not excessive or unjust) instead of enduring non-corporal forms of punishment which are time consuming or boring. This is different from not being able to think of an alternative (see 1. above) as they are rather choosing corporal punishment to the alternative.

1. Use non-corporal forms of punishment

I don't mind when they shout at me or say voetsek. It's better than being beaten. (Boy, 9-12, rural, Limpopo).

At least she did not hit me she just grounded me. So it was ok. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

I wanted her not to hit me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

I want him (teacher) to tell me to keep quiet than hitting my back with a stick. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).

What was she supposed to do?

May she should let us write out something. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

She should have given me a warning (and not have beaten me with a plank on the head)

How could she have punished you?

Stay in at break

Put your hands on your head

Put your fingers on your toes. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Limpopo).

2. Give less severe punishment

This theme is fairly general across the entire study, but with more emphasis amongst children in lower income bands. It applies whether the punishment was corporal or not. It also relates closely to the next theme, which is a strong plea to talk nicely before or instead of punishing.

They could have grounded me. My punishment was to clean the yard. (Boy, 13-18, rural, W.C.).

He hit me with a pipe that has wires inside it. He hit me all over my body. He could have used *iswazi* (thin green stick), not a pipe. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

The time could have been less (she was grounded for 3 weeks). (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

The teacher should have talked to me outside, or something else. I was a bit sad, but more than sad, I was embarrassed. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

It is ok to beat children when they have made a mistake but that time it was a bit too much. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

The punishment was OK because it was wrong of us to miss the class. Maybe she could have just scolded us and let us come back, but it was OK. (Girl, 9-12, urban, KZN).

3. Talk more, talk nicely

This plea comes more from girls than it does from boys, and it is more evident where corporal punishment, or more severe forms of non-corporal punishment, are experienced.

She could at least ask my friend if she knows where I had been. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

She could have talked to me decently. (Girl, 13-18, rural, KZN).

If it is the first time I just want her to tell me not to do something again. Then next time when I do that again she can hit me in any other way. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

She should not have hit me. She should talk nicely with me. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

The teacher should have told me what I did, if I didn't know, what's the use? (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

I think she should have maybe explained to us. (Girl, 9-12, urban, Limpopo).

They (teachers) should first talk to you. They are not supposed to hit you. If you report them to the police they can be arrested. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

3. The punishment is fine

This theme was prevalent amongst boys, particularly those who experience corporal punishment as a social norm. These boys generally see no other viable alternatives.

[After being hit with a belt and other items and doing chores] I think they were right, because I had done a wrong thing. I have learned not to do it again. (Boy, 13-18, rural, KZN).

They hit him with a belt.

Do you think it was acceptable to punish you for this?

Yes.

Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?

There was nothing else they could do. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

4. Corporal punishment is easier than other forms

This theme is not widespread, but it is nevertheless expressed by some children.

If they could have beaten me up right there and get it over with. More appropriate form? I think it was appropriate, but, hey, it was kind of tough. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

I like having the choice – either lines or one klap. I prefer a klap, I don't care how hard it is, it's easier than a page. It's pretty sore for a few moments and then it's done. Writing is just a waste of time. (Boy, 13-18, urban, KZN).

This sequence refers to the home context.

I was playing soccer on the street until late and I went home my mom beat me.
Do you think it was okay to punish you for this?
Yes
So it was ok to beat?
Yes
Do you think there's other thing that she can do without beating?
Nothing
Okay
How did you feel at that time?
I was feeling sad.
What did you do?
I went to sit outside next to the door.
Did you cry?
Yes I did.
Do you think she could have punished you in different way?
There is no other way.
Okay. (Boy, 6-8, urban, Gauteng).

The next sequence is from the school context.

I went to show her my work and she beats with a pipe and she said I told you to stop writing wrong stuff.

Do you think it was okay to punish you for this?
Yes
For real?
Yes
Why?
It is because I made a mistake.
So you think when you make a mistake you deserve to be punished?
Yes
Okay.
How did you feel at that time?
I was feeling sad.
What did you?
I went to sit down to rewrite and I was crying.
Do you think she could have punished you in a different way?
No
So you think it okay to beat you?
Yes
What makes you think it is okay for your teacher to punish you?
It is because I wrote wrong stuff.
So do you think by being beaten you will be able to learn?
Yes
Do you think there's no other way your teacher can correct your mistake?
No

Why is that?

So that I don't repeat the same mistake again. (Boy, 9-12, urban, Gauteng).

Both of these boys are from an urban informal settlement area in Gauteng.

The next is a girl in a rural Limpopo setting.

I want her to beat me rather than swearing me. (Girl, 6-8, rural, Limpopo).



CONCLUSIONS

Children's experience of punishment as described in this study includes many examples of severe beatings and humiliation both at home and at school. Apart from the fact that these punishments infringe on children's constitutional and human rights they also have an affect on children. They make children feel sad and angry and result in their withdrawal and even in some cases aggression too.

The findings in this survey are complex. Not only are there variations in how children experience, perceive and respond to corporal and/or humiliating punishment across the major stratifications of the survey – socio-economic level (income bands); developmental level (age bands); and gender – but, within this, there are pointed indications that variation occurs in relation to cultural frames, including a rural/urban divide. This complexity is not unexpected. As Dawes et al (2004) point out, cultural, socio-economic, interpersonal, developmental and individual factors all inevitably interact in this situation.

Nevertheless, within the complexity, a range of relatively clear patterns emerge.

In relation to **corporal punishment**, a clear and consistent pattern emerges with children of all ages and both genders being exposed to the most severe – and often most brutal - forms of corporal punishment *in the lower income bands*. This pattern reduces progressively as a gradient from the low through to the high income bands. Clearly there are many other factors which may overlap with income such as levels of stress and relationship problems for example (Dawes et al 2004). These are factors that need to be looked at in more detail if the phenomenon is to be understood.

Important observations within this primary pattern are that:

- The gradient holds for corporal punishment in the *home* as well as the *school* (although there are individual schools that are exceptions throughout).
- Children report corporal punishment as generally reducing in frequency – although not in severity – for the *older age-groups*, especially as the adolescent years are reached (This reduction is relatively less noticeable in the low income band).
- Severe corporal punishment does not always relate to the severity of the misdemeanour. For girls, in particular, it may be meted out for minor misdemeanours such as failing to do household tasks or unintentional breakages.
- Although culture was not explicitly defined as an independent variable, observations in the survey clearly indicate that children from *Indian communities* experience almost no corporal punishment. There was also a general, although not definitive, pattern for corporal punishment to be somewhat more commonly experienced by children, both at home and at school, in *rural* as opposed to *urban* communities.

A relatively clear pattern with **humiliating and degrading punishment** was its close association with corporal punishment. Children find corporal punishment humiliating. This occurred at *home* and at *school*, and was frequently associated with humiliation in front of peers. Like corporal punishment, it reduced from low to high income bands.

Important variations on this were:

- The use of more humiliation at home with *adolescent girls* as a means of controlling social relationships having a potentially sexual nature. This often involved hurtful and demeaning verbal abuse.
- Generally, in all age groups and both genders, humiliating punishment is used more commonly at *school* than at home, and is again more widely reported in lower income bands. Although it is generally associated with corporal punishment, in some schools it is being used as an alternative to corporal punishment – at times forcing children to hold humiliating body positions for long periods of time.

In relation to how children felt about the **acceptability** of punishment, the clearest pattern is that punishment, *of any sort*, is unacceptable to children when it is either too severe in relation to the misdemeanour, or when it is not administered fairly.

Important sub-patterns were:

- Particularly amongst boys, and more so in the lower than the higher income bands, corporal punishment was found to be acceptable if it met the above criteria, that is, if it was perceived to be appropriate for the wrong-doing.
- In general, girls found corporal punishment less acceptable and made a stronger plea for ‘talk before punishment’.
- Many younger children could not articulate acceptability as they appeared to have no other alternative to corporal punishment within their experience.
- The somewhat wider acceptability of corporal punishment amongst rural children, especially those in the low income band, may indicate the operation of a cultural variable.

In terms of reported **feelings** in relation to punishment, a range of feelings was expressed, including embarrassment, fear, and rejection. The clearest pattern, however, was a differentiation between *home* and *school*. In general, punishments at home (corporal or not) made children feel ‘sad’ or ‘bad’ – regretful or guilty. At school the predominant feeling expressed was ‘angry’. This anger was often related to perceived unfairness, or teachers not taking the trouble to ‘talk’ and find out before punishing.

In terms of reported **behavioural responses** to punishment, withdrawal was the most common response at *home* – crying alone, not talking, not eating, or sleeping. Behavioural responses at *school* quite often elicited aggression, mostly directed at other children. However, a number also reported compliance.

In terms of children’s views of **alternatives** to the punishments they have experienced, the clearest pattern was a plea from children for adults to *talk* more to them, either to provide guidance, or to hear the child’s perspective instead of hitting first and talking afterwards - or not at all. Where corporal punishment was experienced, most children would prefer non-corporal forms of punishment. However, a surprising number responded by saying that corporal punishment was acceptable for their wrong-doing, and that they could see no alternative.

Finally, although a qualitative survey such as this does not provide primary evidence on prevalence, *indications* of prevalence are present in the frequency with which themes are mentioned by focus group participants as well as in the nature of their comments. A particularly pertinent indication of prevalence in this qualitative survey, which is in common with the earlier findings of the Dawes et al (op cit) quantitative survey, is that corporal punishment, often severe, is more common in lower income than in higher income homes. This survey uncovers some of the characteristic interpersonal dynamics that underlie this phenomenon. However, more work needs to be undertaken to understand the complex interaction of socio-economic, cultural and possibly other factors

that act to maintain this palpably steep gradient of changing punishment patterns from low through to high income bands.

REFERENCES

- Boyden, J. and Ennew, J. (Eds.) (1997). *Children in focus: A manual for participatory research with children*. Stockholm: Rädda Barnen.
- Dawes, A., Kafaar, Z., & de Sas Kropiwnicki, Z.O., Pather, R. & Richter, L. (2004). *Partner violence, attitudes to child discipline & the use of corporal punishment: A South African national survey*. Cape Town: Child Youth & Family Development, Human Sciences Research Council
- Dawes, A. & Donald, D. (2000). Improving Children's Chances. In D. Donald, A. Dawes & J. Louw (Eds.), *Addressing Childhood Adversity* (pp. 1-25). Cape Town: David Phillip.
- Ennew, J. & Plateau, D.P. (2004) *How to research the physical and emotional punishment of children*. Bangkok: Save the Children, Southeast, East Asia and Pacific Region.
- LeVine, R., Dixon, S., LeVine, S., Richman, A., Liederman, H., Keefer, C. & Brazelton, T. (1994). *Child care and culture. Lessons from Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rakitzis. (1987). *A cross-cultural study of the educative use of corporal punishment*. Unpublished BA (Hons) Dissertation, University of Witwatersrand.
- Save the Children (2003). *So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice*. London: International Save the Children Alliance.
- Save the Children (2004). *So you want to involve children in research? Supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation*. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden
- South African Constitutional Assembly (1996). *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Bill: 34A*. Cape Town: S.A. Constitutional Assembly.
- Straus, M. A., & Stewart, J. H. (1999). Corporal Punishment by American Parents: National Data on Prevalence, Chronicity, Severity and Duration in Relation to Child and Family Characteristics. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 2 (2), 55-70.
- United Nations General Assembly (1989). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Focus group activities, questions and rationale

Activity and key questions	Rationale
<p><u>Discussion and explanation: Consent and withdrawal</u> The first activity should be a discussion with the children about the fact that they do not have to tell stories in the group if they choose not to. At any stage they can withdraw or just say <i>'No, I can't answer that or talk about that.'</i> Let them practice saying this.</p>	<p>To make sure we have the children's ongoing consent to participate.</p>
<p><u>Discussion and explanation: Confidentiality</u> Discuss the fact that everything that is said in the group will stay in the group. You will not identify anyone who tells a story in the research report.</p> <p>Also emphasise that children must not identify any adults they tell stories about, adults at home and adults and school. Everyone is anonymous in this group! Help them explore ways of describing adults without giving names e.g. <i>'this person at home'</i> or <i>'this adult'</i> <i>'this teacher at school'</i>. Let them practice this.</p>	<p>To protect children from identifying adults.</p>
<p><u>Storytelling with pictures: What are we going to talk about</u></p> <p>Using the appropriate drawing for the group, tell this story using names that are appropriate for the group.</p> <p><i>In this group today we are going to talk first about life at home. Now, all families are different aren't they? In some houses children get punished if they do something wrong. In other houses they don't, that's right hey?</i></p> <p><i>This is Themba. In his family when children do something wrong they are punished by being shouted at. In some houses when children do something wrong nothing happens but Themba's dad can get very cross and sometimes he even calls him "stupid" and says things like "you will never be clever like your brother, you are just a stupid, stupid and worth nothing!"</i></p> <p><i>This makes Themba feel very bad. When his Dad begins to shout he feels afraid and then when he has finished shouting and left him alone he often feels angry – and sometimes just very sad. Maybe he was just stupid, as his Dad said.</i></p> <p><i>After his Dad has shouted at him, Themba does not want to go to school. He feels he is too stupid for school. So he hides away from school all day. (Show pic of him hiding in some bushes).</i></p>	<p>This sets the context for the discussion.</p> <p>It also explains the purpose of the research.</p> <p>It gives children and young people an example of punishment and also emotional humiliation.</p> <p>It also sets up the idea of feelings and consequences (what it makes children do) of punishment on children.</p> <p>This is done in a way that emphasises that all families are different and that children are punished in different ways. It makes the context of the discussion as matter of fact as possible so it is easier to then ask, 'so</p>

<p>All families are different aren't they? In some houses children are not punished at all. And in other houses grown ups punish children in different ways don't they?</p> <p>This project is about finding out what happens in different families when children do something wrong.</p>	<p>how does it work in your family?'</p>
<p>HOME <u>Their experiences of discipline in the home</u></p> <p><i>Draw a picture of the last time(focus on recent events) you were punished at home. If you don't get punished at home draw how adults keep discipline at home. (note to researcher – allow children to choose not to draw)</i></p> <p>Once drawing is done use these questions with each child in turn (if they are reluctant to talk ask them to talk about the person in the third person – you can also put all the drawings in the middle and say 'let's talk about this one' so there is some anonymity. Be careful that the younger ones do not talk about Themba):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did you get punished?</i> (describe picture they have drawn) • <i>Why did you get punished?</i> • <i>Do you think it was acceptable (ok) to punish you for this?</i> • <i>How did you feel at the time?</i> • <i>Did you do anything (show picture of Themba hiding) like Themba hid away from school – did it make you do something?</i> • <i>Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?</i> • <i>If yes, what different way of punishing would have been better?</i> <p>NB Allow children to choose not to speak about their drawings. Ongoing consent is important.</p>	<p>Places the discussion in their own personal context so they don't talk about Themba but their own experiences.</p> <p>The drawing is something concrete to discuss.</p>
<p><u>Probing forms of punishment not yet mentioned</u></p> <p>At this point after talking about each child's drawing you need to probe other forms of punishment. Make sure you ask each child about other examples of punishment.</p> <p>If a child has told you about a humiliating or degrading punishment ask them if they are ever punished in any other way.</p> <p>For these other punishments, ask:</p> <p><i>How?</i> <i>Why?</i></p>	<p>This allows a comprehensive picture of the two different forms of punishment at home.</p>

<p><i>Acceptable?</i> <i>Feelings?</i> <i>Do?</i> <i>Alternative?</i></p> <p>Use the checklist as they talk to make sure you have an example from everyone in the group of both kinds of punishment - if this is appropriate.</p> <p>NB focus is still on HOME don't get into a discussion about SCHOOL yet.</p>	
<p>SCHOOL</p> <p><i>Now we are going to look at what happens in school when children do something wrong. In some schools children have to work in the garden or clean the school. Or sometimes just like Themba's father, teachers can shout at children and tell them they are stupid or even make them stand in front of the class or school while they shout at them. But all schools are different aren't they? Teachers and principals punish children in different ways, right?</i></p>	
<p><i>Draw a picture of the last time (focus on recent events) you were punished at school. If they don't punish at your school draw how they keep discipline.</i></p> <p>Once drawing is done use these questions with each child in turn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How did you get punished? (describe picture they have drawn)</i> • <i>Why did you get punished?</i> • <i>Do you think it was acceptable (ok) to punish you for this?</i> • <i>How did you feel at the time?</i> • <i>Did you do anything, like Themba who hid away from school– did it make you do something?</i> • <i>Do you think they could have punished you in a different way?</i> • <i>If yes, what different way of punishing would have been better?</i> 	<p>Places the discussion in their own personal context so they don't talk about Themba but their own experiences.</p> <p>The drawing is something concrete to discuss.</p>
<p><u>Probing forms of punishment at school not yet mentioned</u></p> <p>At this point you need to probe other forms of punishment. Make sure you probe with each child.</p> <p>If a child has told you about a humiliating or degrading punishment ask them if they are ever punished in any other way.</p>	<p>This allows a comprehensive picture of the two different forms of punishment at home.</p>

<p>For these other punishments, ask:</p> <p><i>How?</i> <i>Why?</i> <i>Acceptable?</i> <i>Feelings?</i> <i>Do?</i> <i>Alternative?</i></p> <p>Use the checklist as they talk to make sure you have an example from everyone in the group of both kinds of punishment - if this is appropriate.</p> <p>NB focus is SCHOOL</p>	
<p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>The discussion has helped us to understand how different punishments make children feel and what children think the alternatives should be.</p> <p>Thank you – you have helped us understand ...</p> <p>Bean bag activity: Throw bean bag around the circle and every time a child catches it they say “I can ...” and name an achievement “I am ...” and name a positive quality “I have ...” and name a thing or person that helps them</p>	<p>Purpose of research explained again.</p> <p>Ending on a positive note so children don't feel powerless.</p>