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Corporal Punishment Study: A Case in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the occurrence of childhood corporal punishment at home on a sample of participants who resided in the northeast of Malaysia, Kelantan. The Discipline Questionnaire (DQ) - a 32-item self-report instrument was completed by 196 medical students studying in fourth and fifth year at School of Medical Sciences Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The participants were asked about the type, frequency, and severity of parental corporal punishment they remembered to receive at home during childhood, in addition to their attitudes toward corporal punishment on children. Sixty three percent of participants remembered being corporally punished at home, as children. Only 3% of them reported that the punishment reaches an abusive level – which was defined as physical punishment that results in welts, bruises, bone fractures or breaks, or large/deep cuts. Pinching was the most commonly reported types of punishment used at home (35%), followed by slapping on the hand, arm or leg (31%), whipping using flexible material such as leather or rope (23%), and spanking/slapping on the buttocks with open hand (20%). The study indicates that on average the participants had a fairly favorable attitude towards corporal punishment. The findings suggest that majority of parents in Malaysia have been using corporal punishment on their children – primarily of mild types. Generally, the participants have had a fairly favorable attitude towards corporal punishment. Corporal punishment in this context is not perceived as an action of abusing a child, but rather one of many ways to teach the child a lesson in life.

KEYWORDS

Corporal Punishment, Childhood, Home, Malaysian Medical Students

Cite this paper

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