

Choking Childhood

School Corporal Punishment
Everyday Violence Faced by
Disadvantaged Children in India

A research report by Agrasar



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Content

Foreword by Shantha Sinha, former NCPCR Chairperson	1
The Beginning	2
Introduction	3
Executive Summary	5
Chapter 1 - The Context Of Our Research	8
Methodology	9
School Corporal Punishment In India	11
Chapter 2 - School Corporal Punishment Of Disadvantaged Children In Gurugram	21
Corporal Punishment - A Daily Routine	22
Risk Factors That Make Disadvantaged Children Vulnerable	30
Low Income	31
"Migrant" Background	39
Government Schools	44
Social Norms	50
How Children Feel About Corporal Punishment	56
Chapter 3 - Agrasar's Response To School Corporal Punishment	62
About Agrasar	63
Our Initiative To Eliminate Corporal Punishment From Schools	64
Conclusion	68
Annex - Detailed Research Methodology	69

Foreword

It is my privilege to write a foreword to a well substantiated, sensitive and thought-provoking study conducted by Agrasar titled 'Choking Childhood - School Corporal Punishment: The Everyday Violence Faced by Disadvantaged Children in India'. It provides insights into how corporal punishment on poor children is exercised by the school teachers with impunity, day in and day out and even multiple times during the day. In focusing on children from marginalised communities, children of "migrant" parents and the first-generation learners, it shows how insensitive the schools are particularly to children from vulnerable socio-economic background. Further the study finds gender specific forms of punishment where 'girls experience sexist verbal abuse related to their age, weight, appearance and marriage prospects'. The study shows that, instead of being sensitive to the existential reality of the poor children and their family circumstances, school teachers further discriminate them. This results in insult and humiliation, instilling fear in children leaving a life-long scar.

Although there is a legal ban on corporal punishment, children are subject to violence without exception. The education system allows teachers to break the law and get away. Violence on children gets normalised. The study demonstrates that most parents approve of corporal punishment in schools and repeat the violence at home when they find out that their children were punished in school. Children remain silent and do not share their experience of corporal punishment. In the long run there is a risk of children who are victims of violence becoming perpetrators of violence. Such an act of violence is condoned because of an absence of social norm that respects children especially of the poor. Through this study Agrasar hopes to motivate parents, teachers and the community to respect children, in ending violence on children once and for all.

Schools must make every effort to see that the culture of violence on children is replaced with a culture of non-violence. Positive discipline that emphasises interaction with children, respecting them and not punishing them is seen as a way out. I consider that the word 'discipline' is still within the bounds of a structure of authority of the teacher of the child. There is an undercurrent of acceptance that children need to be disciplined. This again positions the teacher and the child in an unequal relationship. It is important that the vocabulary used in this context changes to express equality in relationship. Thus, a more apt concept is the use of 'positive engagement' of the teacher with the children in which from a position of power and authority the school teacher plays a role of a mentor and a guide. The liberty to treat children with authority by the adults comes from the understanding that children are less than adults and that the adults have a duty as well as a responsibility to control and discipline children. This happens even in a family situation. Punishing a child is seen as parental responsibility very much like in the context of the school. Thus, the act of violence and exercise of power of the adult over the child is viewed as being in the best interest of the child. Having no options children accept this as a reality and learn to live with it.

The challenge is really in protecting children and making them feel secure and at the same time enhancing the quality of relationship between the adult and the child. Indeed, a culture of empathy and non-violence should govern the relationship between adults and children in a cultured society. Practicing non-violence as a highest form of culture begins with seeing children as children. It is necessary for adults to behave with them in a manner that they are not subject to violence and hurt of any kind. In a way fostering such a culture will develop adults as responsible adults who would in turn be vigilant and question those that are breaking the norms of respecting childhood. In so doing inculcate the values of non-violence in children; adults cannot preach non-violence when perpetrating violence. What is required therefore is to build skills of school teachers, care givers and adults at large to engage with children as equals, listen to them and address their concerns in a manner that does not hurt or humiliate them. The world of adults must acquire the unique capabilities to pay special attention to have children's opinions heard and respect the dignity and rights of every child in every circumstance. This study stands for values of non-violence, equality and justice that is integral to childhood and protection of children's right.

Shantha Sinha

Former Chairperson, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

2 November 2018

The Beginning

I have a daughter aged eight. She has never been slapped; neither at school, nor at home. So what?

It was April 2017 and we, at Agrasar, were in celebration mode with admissions of our "out-of-school" children in a government school. It was the first batch of our children who were mainstreamed after being taught through a bridge course.

"Prerit, the children we had mainstreamed in the government school are beaten up daily. It's been a week now and they are being beaten up and abused every single day. All of them." – one fine day, a colleague yelled.

In my effort to "behave like a CEO" amidst that feeling of "failure", I asked with a straight face – "Why? What did they do?". I did not hear any response. I myself realized in that moment, "a why" does not matter. What matters is that the children are being beaten up daily. Every single day.

I was shattered. We get the children admitted into schools with so much hope, and, this is what they get in return. *"How will I face Nandini, a child who looks a lot like Unnati, my daughter"* – I pondered for a few weeks. It had become quite evident to us by then that corporal punishment is common in many of the government schools of Gurugram, and throughout India.

We straightaway started fighting this hazard for the future of our nation. Our children. We decided to conduct a research to educate ourselves to more effectively engage with this problem. And, then we decided to publish the report as well, so that all stakeholders can learn, and come together in solidarity to eliminate corporal punishment from schools of India and worldwide.

When we began, I got reminded of a childhood toy. That is 'paper boat'. As it would rain, we used to make paper boats and float them where ever we could find water. We hoped they would go far. Sailing forever! But at times, the delicate kayak could not tolerate pressure from a vehicle passing by or somebody's feet crushing it over. A school going child is like a paper boat. We have high hopes associated with her. As she enters the school, she takes its first step in the hope of taking a long joyful and successful journey. As a society, we aspire to provide her with an inspiring environment that is free of any sort of fear, especially from the teachers and the parents who owe to protect her.

And, that's why we thoughtfully titled this movement as– **"Kaagaz ki Kashti"** – a paper boat as translated in English

Many of us are now building up the 'kashti' (boat) piece by piece. Our journey has begun from National Capital Region of India, but our vision is to play a key role in universally eliminating the phenomenon of school corporal punishment. We work with students, who need to be made aware of their rights and how to build effective relationships with parents, peers and teachers; parents, who need to be sensitised to positively influence their children's performance at schools; teachers, who need to be trained in positively managing their classrooms; Policy-makers, who should be encouraged to support the implementation of relevant guidelines, as well as the wider public, who must debate our social norms and perceptions around violence against children.

Our success lies in building up strong partnerships, locally, nationally and globally, for synergistically and systematically dealing with this menace.

Sincerely,
Prerit Rana
Co-Founder & CEO, Agrasar
on Universal Children's Day (20 November 2018)

Do share your thoughts with me (prerit@agrasar.org) and/or with my colleague, Alexandra (alex@agrasar.org)

Introduction

Corporal punishment as a form of violence against children is currently a non-issue, given that the public debate for the past years has been gravitating around child sexual abuse or child trafficking. **Violence against children is on the rise**, both globally and in India, where accounts of unfathomable atrocities continue to be part of our daily news. With this report, Agrasar seeks to initiate debate on one of the most epidemic forms of violence against children that has kept away from the limelight: school corporal punishment.

Agrasar started its work in this area in November 2017, after some of the children whom we had mainstreamed into government schools, came back to our Education centres, insisting that they would never return to school because they were beaten by their teachers every day. This incident made Agrasar launch an **initiative to eliminate school corporal punishment**, part of which is to understand the drivers behind the practice from a systems perspective, and find appropriate leverage for change. There is a remarkable research gap in India as to why teachers and parents continue to use corporal punishment, despite its legal ban in schools.

There have been a **few larger studies** looking into the scale of the problem, but very little is understood about what factors put children at risk to be physically and mentally abused by teachers. This report presents insight into **how and why underprivileged children in Gurugram experience corporal punishment in school**. Our findings are derived from quantitative and qualitative research in local communities comprising of people who have migrated here, involving 29 children in a role play, personal interviews with 26 children, previously transcribed interviews with 14 children, three focus group discussion and one seasonal calendar exercise with 29 parents in total, and informal group interview with 12 teachers from two different government schools. To estimate the scale of the problem in Gurugram, we also surveyed 521 children and 100 parents sampled randomly.

The **first chapter** briefly explains our **research methodology**, with more details in the Annex, and provides **background information** on school corporal punishment in India, including a discussion of the terminology, the magnitude of the problem, the legal prohibition, why it prevails in our classrooms, and how it affects children and our society.

The **second chapter** looks into **how and why socio-economically disadvantaged children experience corporal punishment**. First, it presents our findings on how often and in what forms they are corporally punished at school, as well as the role of parents. We found that marginalised children are punished by teachers across all ages, with younger children more likely in the form of physical punishment and older children facing relatively more verbal abuse. They experience both “mild” and severe forms of physical abuse and mental harassment on a daily basis, which is significantly more frequent than the average. Most teachers mete out corporal punishment on their students in ritualised forms, but some use brutal and cruel forms of violence. While there are gender-specific forms of punishment, our research found little difference between girls and boys in lower primary school, whilst in upper primary school boys receive more physical punishment than girls. Almost all parents approve of school corporal punishment and use it at home. The large majority of parents beat their children when they find out that they were punished at school.

Chapter two then examines **four risk factors that make disadvantaged children vulnerable** to corporal punishment by teachers. Due to their **low-income** parents lack the financial and socio-emotional resources and knowledge to support their children’s education. Family situations are often vulnerable and children spend the day largely unsupervised. This contributes to their inability to complete homework, which is one of the main reasons why they are punished at school.

In addition, **“migrant” background** puts children at risk of corporal punishment at school. Frequent absence from school, prejudice and discrimination by teachers, and the inability of government school teachers and parents to maintain a constructive working relationship are the main contributing factors here.

Also, **government schools** are a risk factor. Challenging working conditions, lack of professional conduct among teachers, absent school governance and inadequate teacher training, make them an environment that fosters violence against children, which puts deprived children at risk to experience corporal punishment.

Our **social norms** are enablers for the practice of corporal punishment. Despite paying lip service that “children are our future”, our society shows an utter disregard for children as human beings whose inviolable rights must be respected by everyone. Our social conventions justify physical and mental abuse of minors, if carried out by family members or teachers under the pretext of punishment. We generally view children as “mischievous” creatures who “need to be broken for their betterment.” Especially children from lower classes are considered unworthy of humane treatment and as victims of violence they are ignored and stigmatised.

Chapter two also presents our findings on **how corporal punishment by teachers makes children feel**. Decades of academic and clinical research all over the world have produced a large body of evidence on the negative long-term consequences for children’s physical and mental health. Our aim is not to add to this, but to make our readers aware how children feel about corporal punishment. It makes them ashamed of themselves and scared of school. It undermines trusted relationships with teachers and parents, which makes children more vulnerable for other forms of abuse. Although children dislike corporal punishment, they are taught to accept it and internalise violence as an acceptable social behaviour, which leads to perpetuation of the vicious cycle of violence in India.

Our findings are as much saddening as they are unsurprising. Corporal punishment, like any other form of violence, is harmful for children and sustains the violence that is plaguing our country. The evidence for its negative effects lays right in front of us, but as a society we have chosen to ignore it. Agrasar seeks to change this and initiate debate on the topic, with the aim to make people recognise corporal punishment as a problem.

Therefore, the **third chapter** of this report outlines **Agrasar’s initiative "Kaagaz Ki Kashti" to eliminate corporal punishment from the schools of India**. Our work focuses on six areas: 1. We seek to empower teachers and students to move to alternative, non-violent classroom management techniques and improve their relationships, 2. through our community awareness program we educate parents about the negative effects of corporal punishment and how they can support their children's education without violent means, 3. our research and analysis contributes to a better understanding of the practice and its drivers, 4. raising awareness, 5. encouraging parents and teachers to improve the functioning of their schools through School Management Committees, and 6. facilitating the implementation of relevant policy guidelines in schools.

This report has been a **team effort over the past year**, during which we have received support from our entire team, numerous volunteers and interns. Most of all, we are eternally grateful to the **children and parents in "our" communities** for opening their houses and hearts for us and sharing their experience. They have earned our special thanks for being our constant source of inspiration and motivation.

Executive Summary

Corporal punishment is an **epidemic form of violence against children** that is widely not recognised as such in our society. Very little has been done to understand why it prevails in our homes and in our schools, despite the latter being illegal. A decade ago, the government conducted two larger studies to assess the magnitude of the problem, but there has been no systematic or large-scale research to identify the factors that put children at risk. Our report addresses this gap and provides detailed insight into the drivers behind school corporal punishment in Gurugram's disadvantaged communities, explaining how and why their children experience punishment at school. Our findings are derived from quantitative and qualitative research, including a survey among 521 children and 100 parents, a role play involving 29 children, three focus group discussions and one seasonal calendar exercise with 29 parents, and semi-structured interviews with 40 children and 12 teachers from two government schools. **While the report describes the situation in Gurugram, its conclusions can be applied to marginalised low-income communities elsewhere in India.**

School corporal punishment in India

Physical punishment and mental harassment of students by their teachers has been **outlawed in India by at least fifteen legal and regulatory policies**, notably the **UN Child Rights Convention**, of which India is a signatory since 1992, and the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009**. However, despite its legal ban the practice of school corporal punishment remains pervasive. According to government data, at least **65% of children are physically punished** by teachers. Counting also mental harassment, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights found that **99.9% of children experience corporal punishment at school.***

Almost all disadvantaged children experience school corporal punishment

Age - Older children are usually less likely to experience corporal punishment. However, disadvantaged children face it to **similar extent across all ages**, though in different forms.

Frequency - 80 to 100% of underprivileged children are corporally punished by teachers. For many of them it is a **daily routine in government schools**, even several times per day. In some schools, **88% of students are regularly beaten**, up to three times per week, while in others "only" around 30%.

Forms - Disadvantaged children experience both "mild" and severe forms of **physical punishment** as well as **verbal harassment** referring to their "**bad upbringing**."

Gender - There are **gender-specific forms** of punishment and girls experience sexist verbal abuse related to their age, weight, appearance and marriage prospects. While in **lower primary school boys and girls are beaten** with similar extent and frequency, **boys in upper primary school receive more physical punishment** than girls.

Teachers - Most teachers use corporal punishment out of routine and in **ritualised forms**, for example when they hit students on their knuckles for incomplete homework. But every school appears to have one or two notorious teachers who subject children to **brutal and cruel forms of violence**. There are also a **few teachers who do not use corporal punishment** at all.

Parents - **Almost all parents (91%) approve of school corporal punishment** and 74% admit that they use it at home. The large majority (70%) punish their children when they find out that their children were beaten by teachers at school.

* Ministry for Women and Child Development (2007): Study on Child Abuse. India 2007; National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (2009/10): Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools

Four risk factors make disadvantaged children likely to receive corporal punishment at school

Our research has identified **four major risk factors** that put marginalised children are at a higher risk to experience physical and mental abuse by their school teachers:

Low income - Parents on low income **are without the financial and emotional resources** to provide their children with good education. They work long hours in the informal sector, are **unavailable to their children** and **cannot afford better schools** for them. These parents are often not educated and **lack the knowledge, time and emotional resources** to support their children's education. This manifests in the **children's inability to complete homework** which is the number one reason to receive corporal punishment at school.

"Migrant" background - Children of rural labourers who have migrated to cities often struggle to articulate themselves through proper language and are **frequently absent from school**. They face **social stigma and prejudice** for being a "migrant" and are **discriminated against by teachers** and the local community. Often, teachers do not deem children from **weak socio-economic background or lower castes** worthy of education and humane treatment, and they are not able to maintain a constructive working relationship with the parents.

Government schools foster an environment that puts children at risk to experience violence - Insufficient infrastructure and challenging working conditions lead to enormous **frustration among teachers**. They rarely show awareness for **professional conduct** which could prevent them from taking out their anger on children. Behaviour towards students largely depends on individual attitudes of teachers, not on professional ethics. Teachers also **lack professional training** to use alternative discipline methods and to support children in their learning process. **Inadequate school governance**, in particular non-existent procedures to deal with teacher misconduct and to enforce the legal ban of school corporal punishment, allow teachers to "get away."

Our social norms and culture of disregard for children - Despite paying lip service that "children are our future", our society shows an **utter disregard for children as human beings with inviolable rights**. Popular myths, misperceptions about its effectiveness, and our social norms **justify the physical and mental abuse of children**, as long as it comes under the **pretext or intent to "punish."** Children are viewed as **property of their parents** and as **"mischievous"** creatures who "need to be broken for their betterment." Both parents and teachers have **unrealistic expectations** in children and punish them for **normal child-like behaviour**. Especially children from lower classes of society are considered unworthy of humane treatment, and are shamed and ignored as victims of violence.

How children feel about corporal punishment by teachers

A vast body of research has proven the **negative effects of corporal punishment on children's physical and mental health, their behaviour and education**, and society at large. The evidence for the negative long-term impacts is compelling and leaves no doubt that corporal punishment is bad for children. The objective of our research was not to add to this comprehensive body of research, but to highlight **how corporal punishment makes children feel** and how they view the matter. The findings are deeply unsettling.

Fear, humiliation and shame - Corporal punishment makes children feel **humiliated and ashamed of themselves**, to the point where they **would not admit** to it, but say that “the other kids” have received it. It instills fear in children and makes them **afraid of school** and develop negative associations with school and education.

Broken relationships with teachers and parents - Corporal punishment undermines healthy and trusted relationships of children with their parents and teachers. Out of fear to be punished, **only 12% always tell their parents** about beatings at school. When children **stop sharing negative experiences with their parents**, it adds to the “culture of silence” around violence and makes them **vulnerable to fall prey to other forms of abuse**.

Loss of natural instincts and moral compass - Children do not like corporal punishment and the majority (53%) wants it to stop completely. But they are told by adults that it was good for them, leading them to **distrust their natural instincts** and their own ideas about right and wrong. This makes young people **internalise violence as acceptable social behaviour** and thus more likely to become violent adolescents and adults, which feeds into the **vicious cycle of violence in India**.

We need to act to make schools safe for our children

Corporal punishment is **epidemic and socially acceptable violence against children**, perpetuating the brutality and cruelty against certain groups in our society, especially women and children. Given that school corporal punishment in India is illegal under numerous legal and regulatory frameworks, there is no need to lobby for policy or legal change. Instead, we need to **challenge the social norms that enable its continuation** and, in doing so, enforce our laws on the ground. To this end, Agrasar has launched **Kaagaz Ki Kashti in solidarity with efforts to eliminate school corporal punishment**. “Kaagaz Ki Kashti” means “paper boat,” like the ones we used to float during our own childhood. Paper boats illustrate how fragile and vulnerable children can be if they are mistreated and disrespected, but they are also a symbol for hope. The objectives of this initiative are to work with teachers, parents and children in their communities to **educate them about corporal punishment** and its negative effects, and enable them to **adopt non-violent positive discipline** methods. In addition, we seek to **raise awareness** for the problem among the wider public, **initiate debate** and create momentum for **sustainable long-term social change**.

ABOUT AGRASAR

Agrasar is a social impact organisation (NGO) working with disadvantaged communities in India to further equitable access to safe and enriching education opportunities for children

Our operations are centred in Gurugram spreading out to neighbouring regions directly or in partnership with community based organisations. We believe ourselves to be an integral part of the community we work with

Our team has grown phenomenally with experiences from the field, not just professionally but personally. We learn each time we interact with our primary stakeholders and varied people and institutions we come across. Hence, our tagline “Progressing with the community”



Chapter 1

The Context Of
Our Research

Chapter 1

Research Methodology

This report seeks to understand the drivers behind school corporal punishment in disadvantaged communities and to initiate debate in India

This report highlights the experiences of Gurugram's disadvantaged children with school corporal punishment, and the risk factors that make them vulnerable. In our survey among 521 children, **80% said they are punished at school** and the responses in our interview sample suggest that this number is **closer 100%**. A few larger studies* have thoroughly described the magnitude of school corporal punishment in India, and smaller research projects have assessed the patterns of school corporal punishment in certain geographies.** However there has been no systematic research on the drivers behind it, nor why and how different groups of children are affected. This report makes a first move towards filling this knowledge gap, by analysing the form and the drivers behind school corporal punishment of marginalised children in Gurugram. In addition, our insight wants to initiate debate on the practice of school corporal punishment in the wider context of violence in India. Corporal punishment, especially in communities that struggle for mere survival on a daily basis, is usually not perceived as "the biggest problem." We seek to point out that this perception is mistaken and **school corporal punishment as a form of violence against children** should be a matter of huge concern for every community, however deprived or affluent, and for our society at large.

We have conducted our **quantitative and qualitative research** in semi-urban communities in Gurugram, with whom we have existing trusted relationships through our community-based centres. Our data was collected from 29 children participating in a role play, a survey among 521 children and 100 parents, personal interviews with 26 children, previously transcribed interviews with 14 children, three focus group discussion and one seasonal calendar exercise with 29 parents in total, and informal group interview with 12 teachers from two different government schools.

We collected our data through different quantitative and qualitative methods of social research involving children, their parents and government school teachers in Gurugram

Social research involving victimised children is difficult and sensitive

Our research is investigating school corporal punishment which is a form of violence against children, inflicted upon them by people who are in a position of authority, respect and trust. **Working with children who have been subjected to violence is difficult**, and our researchers were cautious to collect data in line with best practice standards for such sensitive settings. This included that our field team was open and transparent with the children and their parents about the purpose of our research, i.e. to gather their experiences and views on corporal punishment, and obtained their informed consent to be interviewed. We assured all our interviewees that their personal data will be treated confidentially. Our choices from the variety of qualitative research formats were restricted to face-to-face activities with both the children and their parents. Due to the low quality of education that they have received, their ability to understand questionnaires, and to read and write are limited. Therefore we chose role play, personal and group interviews and focus group discussions that enabled us to collect "verbal data."

Reflecting on the **teacher-student role play activity followed by a debrief with the children**, we have concluded that this format entails difficulty. Involving children in an exercise that depicts a violent situation in a "fun" way may re-traumatise victimised children or normalise violence. We have concluded that, if we continue to use role plays for qualitative research purposes, we will use a scenario that is not directly linked to classroom situations.

* Plan India 2006, Ministry for Women and Child Development 2007, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights 2009/10, Young Lives 2015, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2017

** Including Jyoti Shukla & Neetu Singh 2013, R. Kavailani 2016, Reena Cheruvalath & Medha Tripathi 2015, Ashwini Tiwari 2014, Mamta Rani Garg 2017, Virginia Morrow & Renu Singh 2014

From a **data quality and data purity** perspective it has proven difficult for our research staff to collect data from children, without providing them with any advice on how to deal with stress and emotions in relation to corporal punishment, especially when the child's need was obvious and easy to satisfy. For example, a child was reporting that homework would be easier to complete with a guide book which he could not afford. Our interviewer suggested that he could make a less expensive photocopy of the guide book*, for which the boy was very grateful. In cases like this, where a simple suggestion can ease a child's struggle, but may compromise the quality of data, we will always decide against data purity and in favour of making a difference in a child's life, however small, because **our main interest is to empower and support children.**

Our research offers valuable insight into the plight of disadvantaged children, but systematic and large-scale research on corporal punishment is necessary

This report cannot fill the research gap that exists with regard to school corporal punishment, nor can it provide a systematic and comprehensive view of all groups of disadvantaged children in India that face higher risk to experience this type of violence. However, it does provide **insight into disadvantaged children in the geography of Gurugram.** Here we now have a more differentiated view on the practice and drivers behind corporal punishment, the attitudes of the children affected, their parents and of teachers. This gives us indication as to what mechanisms may drive the continued use of corporal punishment more generally or at least in similar settings, and particularly, what are the risk factors that make certain groups of children more vulnerable than others.

Given that the same mechanisms of economic deprivation and social exclusion are at work, the findings of our report apply to disadvantaged children elsewhere in India.

With an in-depth understanding of the practice and drivers of corporal punishment in disadvantaged communities in Gurugram we are better equipped to identify similar correlations in other settings, provided that caution is applied when generalising from specific findings. We are also able to determine **more effective and targeted responses**, provide relief to affected communities and to design incentives for teachers to use alternative methods.

* In doing so, our researcher did not suggest an infringement of copyright, given that the Delhi High Court determined in 2016 that reproduction of copyrighted print materials for the sake of instruction does not constitute an infringement of Section 52 of the Copyright Act 1957.

Chapter 1

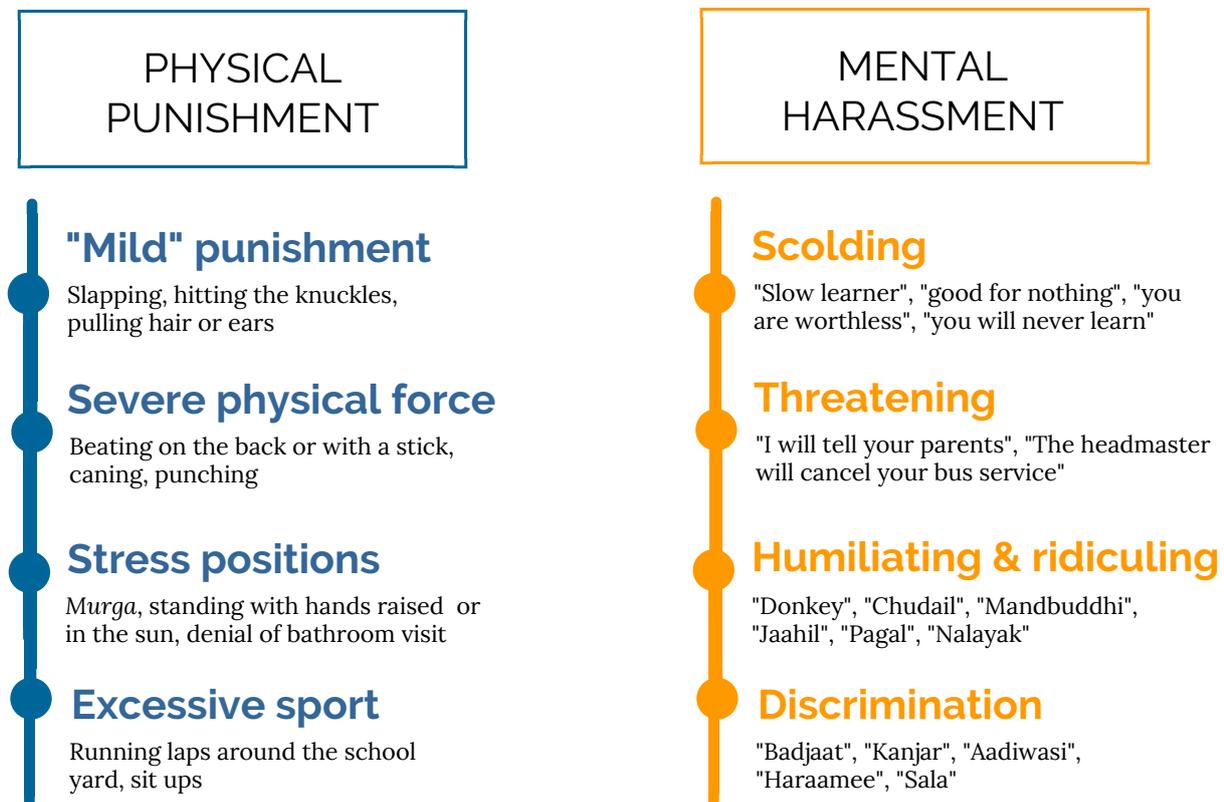
School Corporal Punishment in India

Corporal punishment is a form of violence against children

Indian law does not set out a statutory definition of corporal punishment, but several legal acts and policy documents provide an indicative view on what actions towards children count as corporal punishment. According to The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009** and the **Guidelines by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights 2012**, it can occur either as **physical punishment** that “causes pain, hurt/injury and discomfort to a child, however light”, or as **mental harassment**, understood as “non-physical treatment that is detrimental to the academic and psychological well-being of a child.” Mental harassment includes discrimination in form of teachers’ “prejudiced views and behaviour towards any child” based on caste, gender, occupation or region, payment of fines, or status of a disadvantaged group. India’s child rights watchdog, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) also includes “all forms of sexual abuse as per the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act 2012”, but has failed to specify more details.

Physical punishment of children, whether brutal beating or “harmless little smacks”, is always an act of violence since there is **no threshold condition** for violence. Even the “lightest” and “mildest” forms of physical coercion inflicted upon children are violence, regardless of the degree of pain. Given that mental harassment has equally intense and devastating impacts on a child’s health and wellbeing, it is correctly described as **emotional or verbal violence**. Consequently, corporal punishment by school teachers, in form of mental harassment or physical punishment, constitutes an **act of violence against children**, that is disguised by the pretext of punishment and committed by people entrusted not only with our children's education but also with their safety and wellbeing.

Forms of school corporal punishment



School corporal punishment is prohibited in India

India is among 128 countries worldwide that legally prohibit school teachers from corporally punishing their students. In 1992, India acceded to the **United Nations (UN) Convention of Rights of the Child** 1989 that bans school corporal punishment and requires the government under article 28(2) to ensure that “school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the **child's human dignity**.” In 2001, the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child emphasised that “children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates. (...) the use of corporal punishment does not respect the inherent dignity of the child nor the strict limits on school discipline.” The Committee added that both physical punishment and non-physical forms of punishment are cruel and degrading and therefore violate children’s human rights as protected by the UN Convention. In addition, **Sustainable Development Goal** 16.2 demands to end “all forms of violence against and torture of children.”

In 2000, the **Delhi High Court** concurred when it decided that under **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution**, which guarantees a life of dignity free from cruelty and physical violence, “corporal punishment is not keeping with **child's dignity**. Besides, it is cruel to subject the child to physical violence in school in the name of discipline or education. (...) Subjecting the child to corporal punishment for reforming him cannot be part of education.”

The ban of corporal punishment from schools has not only been established by constitutional law, but also **at least fifteen statutory legal instruments or regulatory policies**, notably the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009, which determines that “(n)o child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment.” In 2012, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) issued specific **Guidelines for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools** that provide not only comprehensive information on corporal punishment and its negative impact on children, but also guidance for teachers to use alternative, non-violent methods for maintaining classroom discipline.

While corporal punishment is banned from India’s educational sector, it is **not fully prohibited** or remains legal in a number of other settings, such as in the **alternative care or justice system and in the family home**. It is also not necessarily a criminal offence as the Indian Penal Code can grant immunity to a person causing “hurt” to a child, if the act is “done in good faith, not intending to cause harm, and by consent whether expressed or implied,” although the Gujarat High Court in 2008 rejected this view with regard to school corporal punishment.

News headlines suggest that if teachers are booked for corporal punishment of their students, they are usually charged for “voluntarily causing hurt” under **section 323 of the Indian Penal Code**. However, this does not mean that teachers are consistently prosecuted. Quite the opposite is true, given that cases featured in the news indicate that the enforcement of laws and guidelines is highly dependent on school managements, parents' persistence and police officers' goodwill. It can be safely assumed that the overwhelming majority of incidents is not taken to the police at all.

The legal ban of school corporal punishment

1989 Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act

Some offences, for example putting “any inedible or obnoxious substance into the mouth” can be used to prosecute school corporal punishment inflicted upon a scheduled caste/ tribal child

2000 Delhi High Court Judgement

“Corporal punishment is not keeping with child's dignity. Besides, it is cruel to subject the child to physical violence in school in the name of discipline or education. (...) Subjecting the child to corporal punishment for reforming him cannot be part of education”

2005 National Plan of Action for Children

Establishes the objective “to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment in all schools and learning facilities”

2012 National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)

Issues “Guidelines for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools”

2015 Juvenile Justice and Care Act

“Any person in charge of or employed in a child care institution who subjects a child to corporal punishment with the aim of disciplining the child shall be liable, on the first conviction, to a fine of ten thousand rupees, and for every subsequent offence, shall be liable for imprisonment”

2017 School Safety Guidelines

The Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) and Haryana government reinforce the right of children to study in an environment “free from any form of physical or emotional abuse or harassment”

1992 National Policy on Education

“Corporal punishment will be firmly excluded from the educational system”

1992 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

The government must ensure “that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity” and “no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”

2003 National Charter for Children

Sets out that “All children have a right to be protected against neglect, maltreatment, injury, trafficking, sexual and physical abuse of all kinds, corporal punishment, torture, exploitation, violence and degrading treatment”

2009 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act

“No child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment”

2013 National Policy for Children

Requires the government to “ensure no child is subjected to any physical punishment or mental harassment”

2016 NCPCR Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools

“Corporal punishment amounts to abuse and militates against the freedom and dignity of a child”

2018 National Plan of Action for Children

“No child is subjected to physical or mental harassment or any form of corporal punishment”

2018 Council for Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE)

States in its Safety Manual that “corporal or any form of physical punishment is banned in schools and attracts penal action”

The **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** is inconsistent with regard to school corporal punishment. On the one hand corporal punishment constitutes an offence such as “Section 323: Voluntarily causing hurt”, while on the other hand the IPC grants immunity to a person causing hurt to a child if the act is “done in good faith, not intending to cause harm, and by consent whether expressed or implied.” However, in **2008, the Gujarat High Court** ruled that the exemption in IPC cannot be used to justify school corporal punishment

Corporal punishment remains epidemic in India's schools

Although our laws and policies clearly establish a legal ban of corporal punishment in classrooms, enforcement on the ground is poor, with the result that the **large majority of school children are subjected to physical or verbal violence by their teachers** on a regular basis. There are recurring reports on physical punishment in newspapers as well as highly disturbing video footage in social media. They only show us the proverbial tip of the iceberg, with the most extreme and severe cases of violence visible, but they do not account for the full picture.

According to government data, 99.9% of children experience corporal punishment at school, and 65% are beaten by their teachers. Children are punished for "failures" rooted in their weak economic background and for normal child-like behaviour

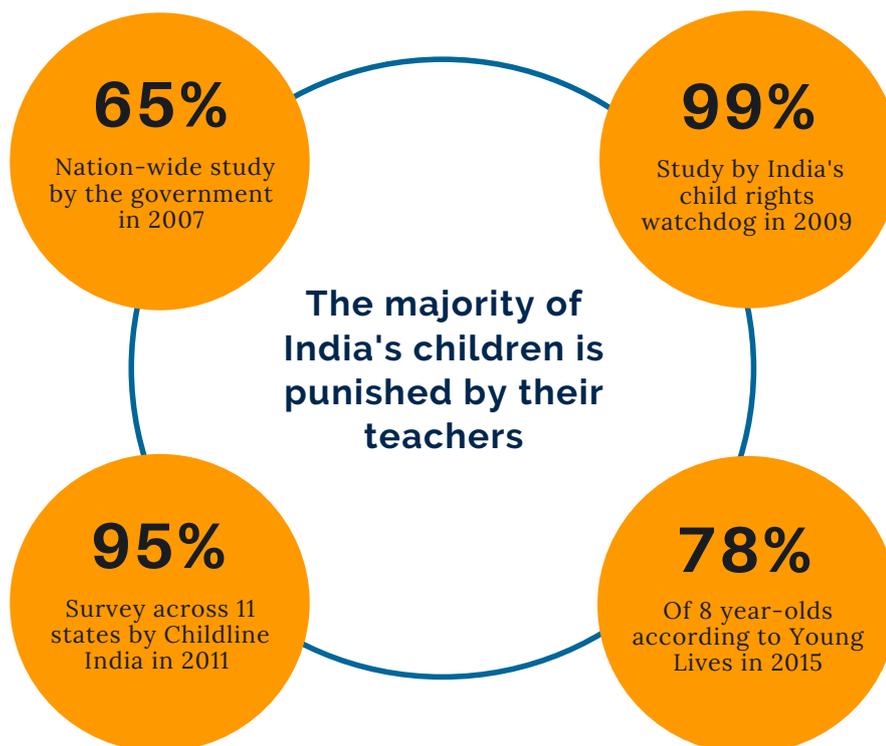
To shed light on the underwater part of the iceberg, ten years ago, in the **first nationwide study on child abuse** in the history of India, Dr Loveleen Kacker and her team at the Ministry for Women and Child Development (MWCD) found that **65% of children are physically punished** by school teachers. It should be noted that this number captures only physical punishment but not the extent of mental harassment in schools. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) found that **99.9%, of students experience corporal punishment** of both forms, and the Young Lives Study 2015 that more than half of our children see or experience it on a daily basis.

Government data suggests that there is **little difference between boys and girls, and between public and private schools**. This data, however, is a decade old and anecdotal evidence and some smaller regional studies suggest that nowadays corporal punishment in private schools manifests predominantly in the form of verbal harassment. A reason could be that, due to the commercialisation of the education sector, parents are entitled to make demands on teachers' conduct and the management of the school.

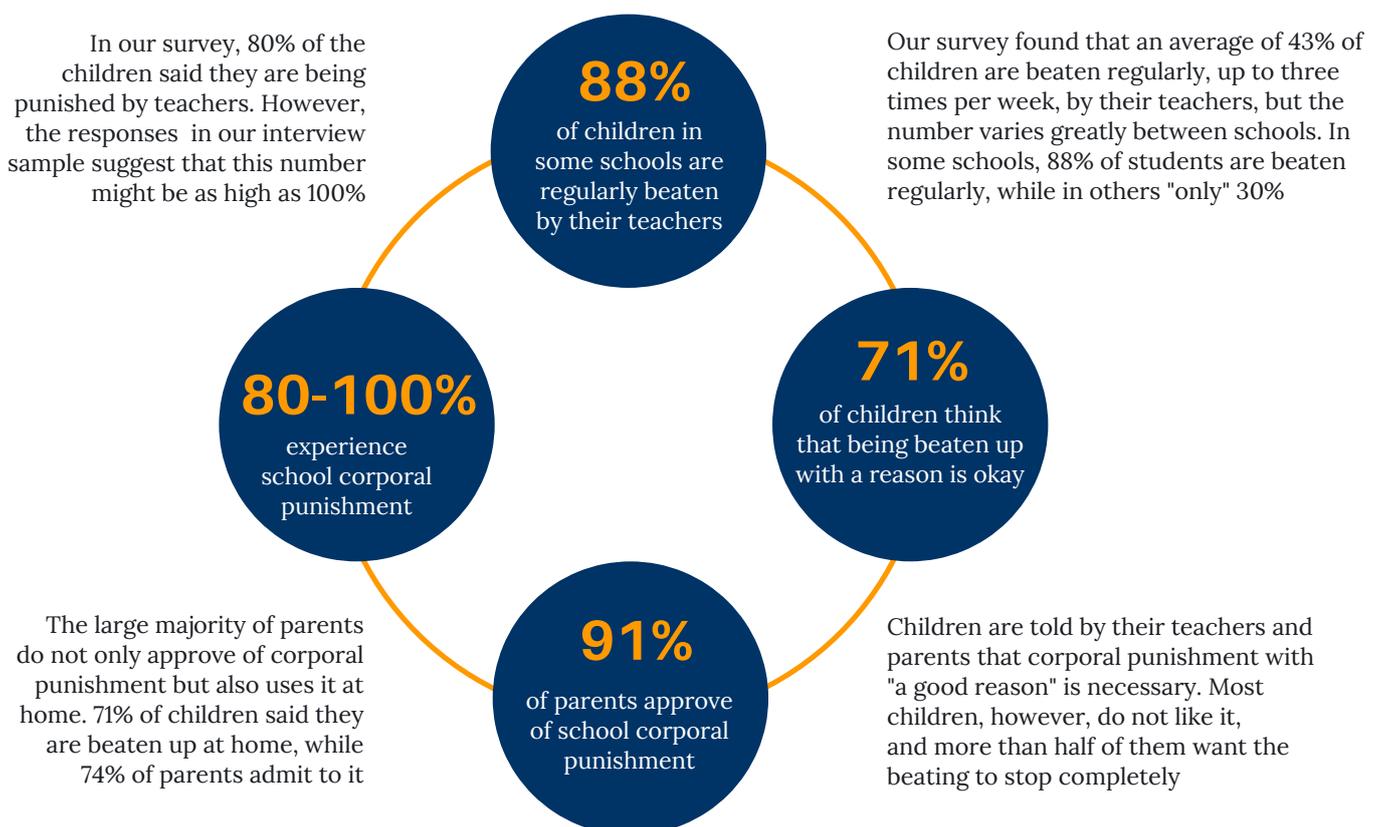
The available data on how children experience school corporal punishment **across different ages** does not show a uniform picture. The Young Lives Study 2015 indicated that younger children between the age of 8 and 9 are significantly more affected (78%) than children aged 15 years (34%), while NCPCR data from 2009/10 found almost no difference between 3-year old and 17-year old children.

The same NCPCR study has shown that **teachers punish children for two things: their weak socio-economic background**, or in other words: the poverty of their parents, **and for behaving like children**. For example, children are punished when their parents fail to pay school fees - a scenario that has recently urged the NCPCR to direct private schools to refrain from this practice. Students also receive punishment if they are absent from school or wearing dirty uniforms. Such "offences" are in fact not academic failures of the child but resulting from the socio-economic condition of the family. In addition, teachers punish students for displaying age-appropriate child-like behaviours, such as laughing, talking, having fun, playing and asking questions.

Corporal punishment is epidemic in our classrooms



Disadvantaged children suffer more



A complex mix of social and structural factors perpetuates corporal punishment in our classrooms

The small number of reported events is in stark contrast to the magnitude of school corporal punishment. Only 195 cases in Delhi and 583 in Hyderabad were reported in 2014, indicating that **most incidents of school corporal punishment are not reported at all**. This lack of enforcement is due to the prevailing social norms and individual attitudes towards corporal punishment in our society, catalysed by insufficient school infrastructure, absent governance, and significant knowledge and training gaps among teachers. Our social norms account for the fact that despite enormous improvements in the socio-economic conditions in India, our classrooms still resemble bygone centuries in which the use of corporal punishment prevails. It is still sanctioned by social conventions and the misperception that punishment is effective to control children's behaviour. In addition, distorted views on cultural traditions, and religious and moral beliefs are used to justify corporal punishment.

Our society places strong focus on **punishing unwanted instead of rewarding desired behaviour** in children. This is also reflected in our authoritarian school culture, in which teachers enjoy almost god-like status and students are in no position to question their actions, and find themselves only on the receiving end of a one-way communication. In India's patriarchal society children are largely seen as property of their parents who can do as they please, not as subjects of inviolable human rights that are to be respected by everyone, including their parents and teachers.

In India's patriarchal society children are largely seen as "property" of their parents who can do as they please, not as subjects of inviolable human rights that are to be respected by everyone, including their parents and teachers

Children's behaviour is often not seen as an age-appropriate response to their environment, but compared against the same expectations as in adults, assuming that children are "small adults" with similar cognitive abilities to assess the consequences of their actions. When they fail to meet such expectations, children are **often seen as "mischievous" or "mistakers"** who intentionally upset their parents or teachers. On top of that, teachers who are from higher social background or caste than their students are often **prejudiced against children from disadvantaged communities** and do not deem them worthy of education.

Low-income families face many overwhelming struggles that deplete parents' financial, time and emotional resources to support their children, which undermines their ability to succeed at school. In the absence of support services, the problems of such families turn into a vicious cycle with little chance of escape, leading teachers to see their negative assumptions and prejudices confirmed.

The social norms and individual attitudes that prevail in India's society are complemented by a number of **structural factors in the education sector** that enable the use of corporal punishment by school teachers. Especially government teachers have weak incentives to do a "good job" as their promotion is based on number of years instead of performance, and principals may face repercussions in their career if they provide negative feedback for teachers' performance. The frustrating working conditions in government schools, such as insufficient and under-resourced infrastructure and overcrowded noisy classrooms add to the problem. In many cases schools lack appropriate governance to respond to disruptive student behaviour, teacher misconduct, violent incidents or holding the school management accountable for violations of school safety standards.

When incidents of corporal punishment require escalation to law enforcement, the social norms that justify such violence against children are at work. **Violence against children is often not recognised as such and regarded as a “private matter” to be dealt with by the family.** As a result, there are no standardised protocols that ensure an effective and consistent response to school corporal punishment. Instead, official responses, if any, are irregular and mainly driven by officials’ personal attitudes and willingness to file a complaint, often ignoring the legal and regulatory provisions that mandate prosecution.

Discipline is often understood as a military-like exercise of sitting still, being quiet and obeying the teacher’s each and every command, not as teaching children the skills for self-discipline and responsibility for managing their own behaviour

There are significant **knowledge, education and training gaps** among teachers, parents, students and the society at large with regard to the negative effects of corporal punishment and alternative, non-violent methods to enforce discipline. India’s classrooms lack modern child development-appropriate pedagogy and child-centred teaching methods. Teaching is mainly based on chanting, repetition and memorising, instead of conceptual understanding or creative imagination.

Negative reinforcement and punishment are perceived by teachers as effective methods to encourage their students to study and maintain discipline, and are often applied with the best intentions and “for the betterment” of students. **Discipline is understood as a military-like exercise** of sitting still, being quiet and obeying the teacher’s each and every command, not as teaching children the skills for self-discipline and the responsibility for managing their own behaviour. Public schools face a **shortage of qualified teachers and reduced budgets.** Teachers are not provided with training on positive discipline methods, leaving them in a position where they resort to “the old ways.” This is aggravated by the serious lack of human and child rights education in our society, as a result of which violence against children and violations of their human rights are not acknowledged as such, let alone addressed. There is also a broader lack of awareness for the severe consequences of violence against children, including allegedly “mild” forms such as corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment is detrimental to children's wellbeing and their education

Academic and clinical research, conducted by medical practitioners, child development experts, public health professionals and social scientists all over the world during the past five decades, has proven that any form of corporal punishment, including scolding and “mild” forms of physical force, is harmful to children. The **overwhelming evidence** leaves no room for doubt that **corporal punishment by teachers undermines the wellbeing and education of children, and their ability to become functional and successful adults in later life.** Corporal punishment can cause toxic stress in children which can lead to an alteration of their brain structure during early childhood that negatively affects their cognitive and language abilities, socio-emotional development, and mental health. It can result in severe **physical injuries** with severe long-term effects on children, such as head trauma, visual, motor, hearing and cognitive impairments. Maltreatment during childhood also correlates with adverse health outcomes and chronic diseases in adult life, e.g. heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, obesity or high blood pressure. In addition, corporal punishment lowers the self-esteem of children and makes them more likely to experience **psychological disorders** as young adults, such as depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicide attempts. They are also at increased risk to endeavour other **mental health problems** including post-traumatic stress disorder, learning and attention deficits, and memory difficulties.

Effects on health and development of children

Corporal punishment has no proven positive outcomes. A large body of academic and clinical research* has demonstrated that corporal punishment makes children more likely to experience negative impacts during their childhood and in later life



* A summary of the evidence and additional references for the negative effects of violence against children, including corporal punishment, is provided on the website of the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention

Corporal punishment correlates with **behavioural problems and delinquency** during childhood and adolescence. Children subjected to it are more likely to face problems such as alcoholism and drug abuse, display **criminal behaviour** and commit **violent crimes** as adults. **Bullying behaviour** is associated with corporal punishment at home and at school. Physical and emotional abuse by school teachers does not teach children how to manage conflicts and frustration peacefully, which often makes them **unable to maintain healthy intimate or parenting relationships** in adulthood.

Corporal punishment not only violates children's human rights, but also puts their physical and mental wellbeing at risk. It also **undermines their education** by lowering the quality of teaching, students' motivations and aspirations, and the quality of educational outcomes. Punishment discourages children's intellectual curiosity, their creativity and explorative spirit to try new things. Instead, it leads to conformist behaviour that has the only objective to avoid pain and stay under the teacher's radar, which is the opposite of active involvement and participation in the classroom. Reflexive aggression or withdrawal, which are frequent immediate response of children to corporal punishment, reduces their capacity to absorb teaching content and makes it more difficult for the teacher to manage the classroom.

The fear and stress caused by corporal punishment are among the main reasons why children do not like going to school or suffer from **school-phobia**, in many cases leading to school **dropout and low retention rates**, especially of secondary schools. Children who receive or witness corporal punishment also have significantly **lower academic scores**, as was found by the Young Lives 2015. It is therefore ineffective as both a teaching and disciplining method and leads to a spiral of violence that necessarily escalates. The time that teachers waste on scolding and beating children could in fact be spent on teaching children something useful.

Corporal punishment does not only violate children's human rights and puts their physical and mental wellbeing at risk. It also undermines their education by lowering the quality of teaching, their motivations and aspirations, and the quality of educational outcomes

By hampering the education of children on a large scale, corporal punishment **undermines the ability of India's educational sector to deliver the educational outcomes** that are required by an aspiring and developing 21st century economy. The extent of India's current learning crisis has been recently described by the World Bank*: 80% of grade 2 students cannot read a single word of a short text. In rural areas, half of grade 5 students are not able to solve "46 minus 17" nor fluently read "There were black clouds in the sky" in their local language. According to the report, the picture is not much different in urban areas, for example in Delhi, students' learning levels lag behind by three to four grades, while the gap widens even more over time for low-performing children. While this sad state of affairs is not caused by corporal punishment alone, it makes clear that India's schools need to change their approaches and methodologies. Eliminating the practice of corporal punishment must be part of that change process.

* World Bank (2018), *Learning to Realise Education's Promise*

Corporal punishment makes our society more violent and comes at a great cost

Corporal punishment is a destructive force in our society because it **perpetuates the high level of violence in India, especially against disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, notably women, children and members of lower castes**. Violence against children is not linked to income and can be found in rich and poor communities alike - therefore we cannot assume that it will go away “naturally” with increasing economic prosperity. When they use corporal punishment in their classrooms, teachers not only send children the message that it is okay to manage frustration and conflicts in a violent way, but also make them **accustomed to violence as a social norm**.

Scolding or thrashing children does not provide students with any guidance on how to do better next time. It does not communicate why an adult is not happy with a certain result or situation, what they expect instead and how the child should act in order to meet their expectations. The only outcomes that children take away from corporal punishment are disrespect, violence and the feeling of helplessness. They internalise these takeaways and replicate them in their own behaviour towards others, adding not only to the growing extent of bullying among students, but also to the spiralling violence in India and the **increasing number of violent acts committed by children**. If we want to break that cycle, we need to teach our children how to navigate conflicts peacefully. The first step necessary to this end is to lead by example and stop beating them.

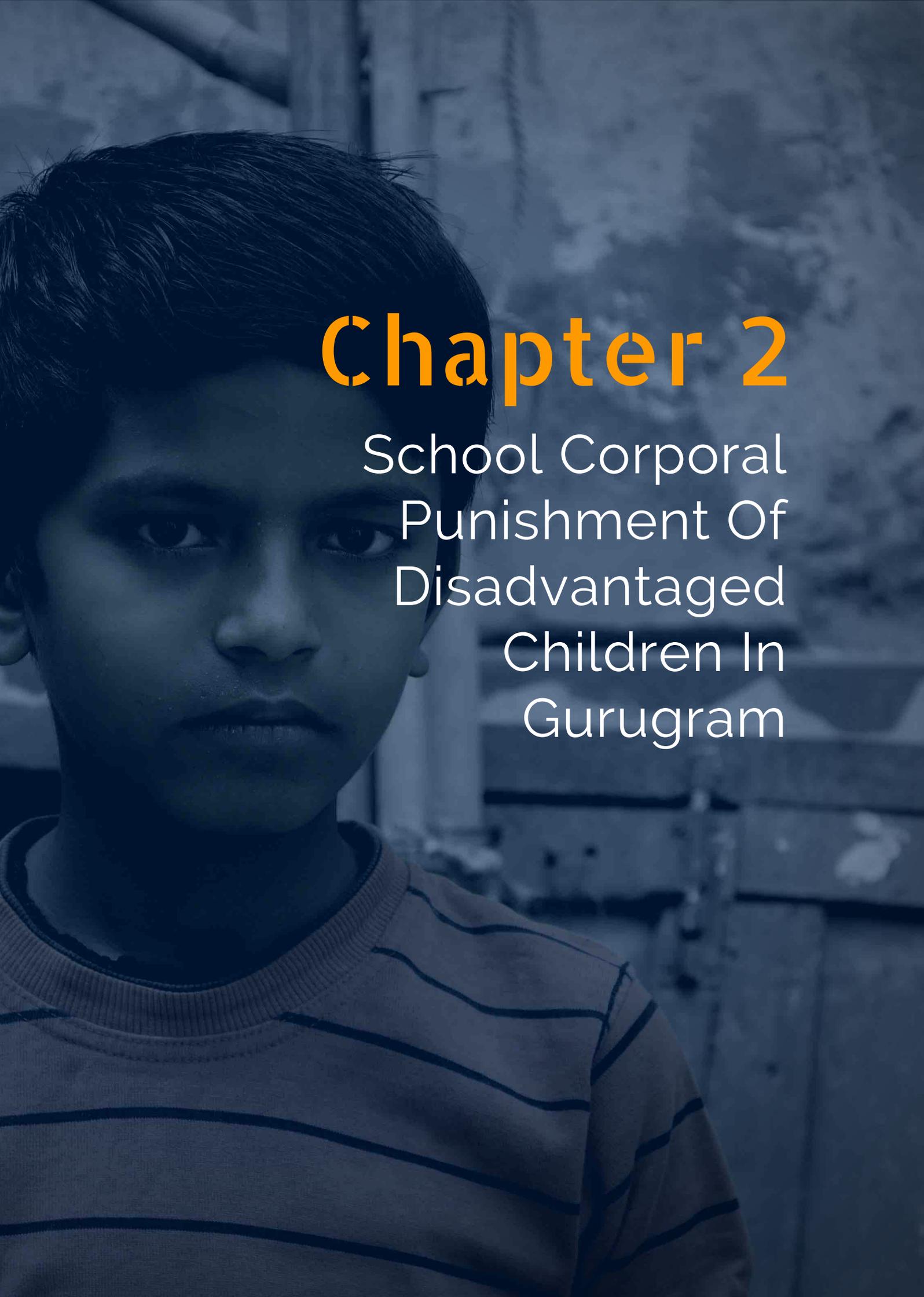
Corporal punishment as a pervasive form of violence against children is not only detrimental to the well-being and education of our children, but also generates a **great cost for our society**. Children who have been injured or traumatised by corporal punishment, require medical treatment. Severe or long-term damages to the child's health, such as loss of vision and hearing or depression, will translate into **costs for medical care, child welfare services, and special needs education**. While the monetary expense has to be borne by individual families, absent public health care provision in India, there is still a cost for society. The financial resources spent on treatment and welfare cannot be used for consuming other goods and services, therefore creating a loss for the economy.

In addition, the negative behavioural effects related to corporal punishment can increase **criminal justice cost**, by requiring more resources for arresting juvenile delinquents, court proceedings and detention facilities. Children who have suffered from violent teachers and low-quality education are less equipped to move up on the **social mobility** ladder, provide for their families, break the cycle of poverty and deprivation and make a productive contribution to society, which leads to significant productivity losses for the Indian economy. The **lost benefits** that corporal punishment causes Indian society each year have been estimated by Plan International in 2010 to rank somewhere between **1.5 and 7.4 billion US dollars**.

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While it is difficult to quantify and estimate such impacts, the numbers, however vague, clearly indicate that the cost of corporal punishment is high - too high. Not only is corporal punishment wrong from a human rights perspective, that commands respect for children's rights to be free from violence and harm. From an economic perspective, India simply cannot afford it. To keep up with its economic aspirations, **India needs to invest, instead of burn its “human capital.”**

Above all, it is always wrong to beat or mentally abuse a child, regardless of the economic cost.



Chapter 2

School Corporal
Punishment Of
Disadvantaged
Children In
Gurugram

Chapter 2

Corporal Punishment - A Daily Routine

In this chapter we present our findings as to how disadvantaged children whose parents have migrated to Gurugram experience corporal punishment at school, in particular **how often and in what forms they are punished**, whether there are any differences between ages or genders, and how teachers and parents practice corporal punishment. Our research has found highly alarming facts. Between 80 and 100% of marginalised children in Gurugram face school **corporal punishment, many on a daily basis**, and are subjected to **cruel forms of violence** at the hand of some teachers. The physical and mental abuse continues in their homes, as **most parents (91%) approve of corporal punishment** and use it themselves (74%). As a result, these children find themselves trapped in an abusive environment with little chance of escape.

OVERVIEW

How disadvantaged children in Gurugram experience school corporal punishment

AGE

Some evidence suggests that older children are less likely to experience school corporal punishment, compared to younger children. However, when looking at disadvantaged children we find **little difference between ages**. The **frequency and severity of punishment are similar**, only the forms are different

FREQUENCY

80 to 100% of disadvantaged children in government schools are punished by teachers, and for many it is a **daily routine**. They see or receive it every day, even several times, compared to a nationwide average of "only" around 50%. In some schools, **88% of students are beaten regularly**, up to three times a week, while in others "only" around 30%

FORMS

Disadvantaged children experience both **"mild" and severe forms of physical punishment** as well as **verbal harassment** referring to their "bad upbringing." **Younger children and boys are more prone to physical abuse**, while older students and girls tend to receive more verbal harassment by their teachers

GENDER

Gender does not seem to be a major risk factor to experience corporal punishment. There are gender-specific forms of punishment and girls experience sexist verbal abuse and humiliating forms of punishment. Boys in upper primary schools receive more physical punishment than girls

TEACHERS

Many teachers mete out corporal punishment on their students in **ritualised forms**, but some teachers subject children to **brutal and cruel forms of violence**. There are also **teachers who never use corporal punishment**

PARENTS

Almost all parents (91%) approve of school corporal punishment and **74% admitted that they also use it at home**. The large majority of parents (70%) punish their children when they find out that their children got punished at school

Children of low-income and "migrant" background experience school corporal punishment across all ages

Our research found that **disadvantaged children experience school corporal punishment to the same extent across all ages**. The children in our interview sample are between 7 and 14 years old, and all of them experience corporal punishment on a daily basis. The forms, however, can vary across ages. Some children indicated that younger students are more subjected to physical punishment, while older students tend to be more verbally harassed. Regardless of the form, all students are subjected to corporal punishment to similar extent, **almost on a daily basis**.

"Physical punishments were given to us when we were young. Now we get mostly verbal punishments, for example we are being ridiculed for our mistakes in front of the class" (girl, 8th standard)

Previous nationwide studies do not present a uniform picture of how different age groups of children experience school corporal punishment. A study by **Young Lives in 2015** suggested that older children receive fewer corporal punishment than younger ones. According to their data 78% of 8 year-olds are corporally punished, compared to 34% of 15 year-olds, while 93% of 8 year-olds and 68% of 15 year-olds had witnessed corporal punishment. According to data from the **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) in 2007**, 39% of children aged 5 to 12 years experience corporal punishment at school, compared to 33% of children aged 13 and 14 years, and 28% of children aged 15 to 18 years. Both studies present evidence that older children are less likely to experience school corporal punishment. However, the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) found in 2009/10** that there are only marginal differences between 3-year-olds and 17-year-olds in how they are subjected to school corporal punishment.

For disadvantaged children corporal punishment at school is a daily routine

Marginalised children, in particular from low-income and "migrant" background, suffer more from school corporal punishment than others. According to our survey, **80% of students** experience mental harassment and physical punishment. However, the responses in our interview sample suggest that this number **is closer to 100%**. Due to the shame associated with punishment, many children said that they are never punished by their teachers, but "the other kids" were. After cross-referencing with other respondents, we concluded that these children were not speaking truthfully, and that teachers punish all students in their class. It was suggested during our survey that local students receive very little or no punishment by teachers.

Our survey among 521 children, whose parents have migrated to Gurugram, found that **in some schools 88% are regularly beaten at school, up to three times a week**, which is significantly higher than the average and does not even include verbal abuse. A previous study by the **NCPCR found that more than half** of the students in government schools receive or witness corporal punishment on the same day or the day before, and almost two-thirds within the same week. Although the intensity of punishment varies considerably between schools, our data points to the fact that **disadvantaged children experience significantly more school corporal punishment**. For many, physical punishment, accompanied by mental harassment, are a **daily routine**. One child even described the frequency of physical punishment as "**at least two times a day minimum**." The students indicated that a typical day at school would be a mix of fun and fear, while they are sure to receive individual or collective beatings during particular periods. Though all the children said that they do not enjoy corporal punishment, they have all become accepting of it as their school routine. Thus, children from marginalised communities do not only experience corporal punishment across all ages, but also in extremely higher frequency.

Disadvantaged children experience both "mild" and severe forms of physical punishment as well as verbal harassment referring to their background

The children we interviewed experience **physical punishment** in different ways. The forms that are described by the children as "least painful" and "not so serious" include making the students stand in class for the whole period, sometimes with their hands raised, pulling their ears or hair, doing sit-ups, making them stand outside and also slapping them in the face. While slapping is typically perceived as an act of utter disrespect and therefore as a very serious act of violence, the children experience it so often that many of them said they like certain teachers because they "only slap." Other forms of punishment include not allowing the children to use the bathroom, even if the student asks multiple times, or pinching them in the abdomen.

From here it goes on to **more painful forms** such as hitting the knuckles with a duster or scale, and caning the children on their calves, both of which are very hurtful to children as those body parts are sensitive. Teachers also punish children by threatening to expel them from school or embarrassing them in front of the class, which, according to the children, has a strong and lasting impact on them. For not completing homework or any sort of "disobedience" they are beaten with the hand on their heads or backs or caned on their palms and buttocks. Hereby the severity of the punishment depends on how strongly they are hit by the hand or the cane.

"Teachers' punishments depend on their mood. At times they scold us and at other times they punish us physically" (boy, 2nd standard)

Other forms of punishment are **stress positions** like *murga* (chicken), caning female students on their thighs, and make children bend like a four-footed animal and cane them on the body. Caning, beating and slapping appear to be the most common forms of physical punishment and many schools keep in each classroom a **dedicated stick to beat children**.

The children we interviewed also described **brutal and cruel forms of corporal punishment**, which they witness or experience not every day, but with some regularity. Some teachers violently beat their students with plywood, bang their heads against the wall, and punch them in the face resulting in head or ear injury and bleeding. Another teacher locks up a children in an insulated room to beat them, while he turns on loud music on his phone so that nobody can hear the children screaming.

Not only are children subjected to severe forms of violence, it is also accompanied by **psychological torture**. For example, several children gave account of a teacher who does not just **bang his students' heads against the wall**, but turns it into a "**game**" where he pretends three or four times before he eventually strikes the child's head against the classroom wall. In another instance a girl child who had a fractured leg was chased through the classroom by her teacher, who then grabbed the girl's hair and hit her. The children also told us about a teacher who **tears apart their books and throws the pieces into the dirt** outside the classroom. While this does not seem a harsh punishment at first sight, we should keep in mind that the loss of a textbook or notebook puts children from low-income background into immense distress. Not only do they face **humiliation in front of their classmates**, but also fear **punishment by their parents for incurring additional expenses for new books**.

Mental abuse is even more frequent. The children, however, are unaware that abusive and derogatory comments, insults and racist slurs constitute a form of corporal punishment. Like most people they equate punishment only with beating. Disadvantaged children experience mental abuse mainly in **reference to their low socio-economic status**. Teachers use "**Bihari**" or "**Bengali**" as a disparaging term for all students who are not locals, and call them "**donkey**", "**good for nothing**", "**uneducated**", "**illiterate**" and that they had "**a bad upbringing**." Some children indicated that such verbal abuse particularly affects older students.

There are gender-specific forms of punishment and girls experience sexist verbal abuse

Our field research found **no significant difference between how boys and girls are punished** by school teachers, although **boys in upper primary school experience slightly more physical punishment than girls who are subjected to more verbal harassment**. This is consistent with the findings of previous studies by the government which found that gender is not the main factor that puts children at risk. Our data also found **marginal differences between male and female teachers**. Both corporally punish children to equal extent and with similar severity. We found no evidence that would suggest that female teachers are "softer" in handling their students. One child even gave report of a female teacher who severely beats all the girls in her class in order to make all of them cry. However, there are **specific forms of punishment depending on gender**. For example, boys are pinched in their abdomen and rib cage and girls are caned on their thighs.

There is often **prejudice among both male and female school teachers against the education of girl children**. For example, teachers make sexist comments to girl students about marriage, adolescence, their looks, age and weight etc., and often "recommend" marriage instead of education. Also, female children are often not considered of equal capabilities and skills compared to their male peers, especially in technical subjects such as math or science. Many teachers do not interfere when boys bully girls or put down a girl's work in front of the class, which instills toxic gender stereotypes in children and teaches boys how to "shut up" girls and "put them in their place."

"I get pinched by my Math teacher on the sides of the abdomen just above the rib cage which really hurts. Almost all boys are punished like this" (boy, 6th standard)

The sexism and patriarchal attitudes shown by teachers, who are in a position of trust and respect, lead to **girls internalising the belief that their role is only of a caregiver and homemaker**, and their ultimate goal is to get married and take care of their family. Gender-related prejudice makes children vulnerable to specific forms of corporal punishment - painful **physical abuse for boys and sexist comments for girls**.

Most teachers mete out corporal punishment on their students in ritualised forms, but some teachers subject children to brutal and cruel forms of violence

Children in primary school are **mainly punished by their classroom teacher**, but many times the **head teacher or principal** were also mentioned. In some schools the head teachers or principals appear to be notorious. Many students told us they were terrified of their head teachers, without even remembering the name. Several children described to us a **head teacher who punches students in their faces until they bleed**, and others said they were scared of their head teacher because he punishes and humiliates children in front of the whole school during morning assembly.

Our data indicates an interesting difference between subject teachers. Although most teachers use corporal punishment, **science and math teachers appear to use severe forms of punishment** more often than English or social science teachers. A reason for that could be that conceptual understanding is taught poorly in our schools, as a result of which children have great difficulty to understand these subjects and thus "fail" more often and face punishment as a result.

"The teacher holds the student by his necks and pretends to bang his head against the wall. Sometimes he would not only pretend but really do it. Once a child was bleeding. This would frighten the students and they started crying" (girl, 5th standard)

Teachers have **unrealistic expectations in students' developmental and learning abilities**, given the children's age and often irregular school attendance. Another explanation for the differences between subject teachers could be that in some disciplines it is easier for students to hide academic weakness and hence escape corporal punishment. For example, a student can chant vocabulary during an English class without understanding the words, but cannot hide away when asked to resolve a mathematical equation.

Most teachers mete out corporal punishment in ritualised and uniform fashion, meaning that punishments are administered by teachers in similar and routine ways, without much consideration or deliberate intent. For example, all teachers slap or hit their students in almost the same way. In contrast to these ritualised forms of corporal punishment, some teachers punish their students with **brutal and cruel violence that requires creativity and premeditation**.

When asked whether there is a teacher they are scared of, all children mentioned the ones who beat them a lot. Every child is terrified of those teachers. It appears that **in government schools teachers and principals use particularly harsh physical violence**. Instead of routine punishments, these teachers make a **conscious and deliberate choice to assault children**, and become very creative in inventing their own "signature" punishments.

Several children described **extremely violent and cruel forms of physical punishment** by teachers. Such cases illustrate that corporal punishment cannot be administered in a measured or controlled way. It necessarily escalates since it provides inclined teachers with an **opportunity to brutalise and hurt children**. Brutal violence against children is not an aberration, but a **logical consequence of the practice of corporal punishment**. It cannot be used in a "safe" and "moderate" way but always acts as an **accelerator for the spiral of violence**.

In some schools every teacher uses corporal punishment, but **there are also teachers who never punish any students**. These teachers tend to be the favourite of their students. All children in our interview sample said that they like best those teachers "who never beat but explain and teach well." Teachers are therefore **allowed to make an individual choice** of what methods they use in their classroom and are not inevitably forced into the culture of violence by other colleagues. Peer pressure and seniority likely play a role, but do not appear to be determinants. This suggests that the teaching profession does not attract pathologically violent individuals, but that **violence against children is enabled by structural and societal factors** influencing both individual teachers and school faculty collectively.

"Sir locks up the child in an isolated room to beat him up. He turns up the music on his phone really loud so that nobody can hear the boy scream, and he can beat the kid as much as he wants" (girl, 6th standard)

"Head sir punches the kids on their faces so hard that they would start bleeding. This happens because the child was slightly mischievous, for example playing, running around, or fighting among each other" (girl, 4th standard)

Parents mostly approve of school corporal punishment and beat their children when they tell them about incidents at school

Almost all (91%) parents in our sample approve of school corporal punishment and 74% freely admitted that they beat their children at home, without discriminating between sons and daughters. After cross-referencing with the information from children, we believe that the number of parents who physically and mentally abuse their children could be even higher. This is because **most parents equate corporal punishment only with beating or caning**, but do not include in their consideration "mild" forms of physical punishment nor mental harassment. According to the children, however, "little smacks" and verbal abuse are default responses by their parents, in particular for "mischievous" behaviour.

While all mothers in our focus group discussions admitted that they scold their children, **only a few disclosed that they beat or otherwise physically punish** their children. We believe that they were not honest with us, given that their children described a very different picture. Mothers frequently said things like "our children are way too good and never create any situation which would make us raise our hands" and contradicted their own statements throughout the entire discussion. This strongly suggest that they were sweet-talking and felt compelled to tell us what they thought we wanted to hear.

"I used to tell my parents about punishment at school but not anymore. They are not home most of the time and always blame me for not being obedient and sincere" (girl, 3rd standard)

70% of the children in our survey said their parents punish them when being told about corporal punishment at school, and almost all children in our interview sample confirmed that they are beaten by their parents in such cases. However, only 38% of parents admitted that they would scold their children back, and 70% of the parents replied that they would not take any action at all. We expect that this discrepancy is due to the fact that parents know that we are working against corporal punishment and may have been reluctant to tell us the truth in order to avoid discussion.

"If schools don't use corporal punishment, the children get spoilt" (mother of a boy in 5th standard)

Parents tend to believe that teachers punish students only when they "have a good reason." If a child gets punished, parents assume that s/he must have done something wrong or "mischievous" and hence deserved the punishment.

Parents are of the opinion that corporal punishment in schools is beneficial for children, for "their own good" and "betterment," and that it teaches them respect and discipline, and helps them to study better. Many parents are convinced that the best way for children to learn from mistakes is to be punished with physical force, otherwise they will be spoilt.

It is not unusual that parents **specifically ask teachers to beat their children**. Most parents are not aware that corporal punishment is an act of violence and can harm their children. Some responses also show **blind faith in authorities** and teachers. The latter are typically seen as **parents-in-school** who have every right to punish and do as they please, instead as teaching professionals whose role is to educate children using modern pedagogy and teaching methods and conducting themselves in a law-abiding and professional way. The few parents who are opposed to school corporal punishment said that they are **helpless, and due to their lack of sufficient financial resources** unable to send their children to a different school.

Mothers tend to be the “first responders” beating their children when they find out that their child was punished by a teacher at school. We understand that this is because mothers are responsible for all matters concerning their children’s education, unlike the fathers who are out working and largely absent. We often see the pattern that mothers involve the fathers as “second in line”, by **threatening their children to tell fathers** about their “mischief”, implying the consequence of physical punishment, or by reporting misbehaviours to the fathers who then respond with beating the child.

Many fathers too beat their children, but not only in response to incidents at school but in the larger context of domestic abuse. One mother told us that she tries to protect her children as well as herself from being beaten by her husband, which suggests that **domestic violence** plays a role in the use of corporal punishment at home. At the same time, **there are also fathers who never hit their children and who are very outspoken against any kind of violence**, especially against children and women.

CASE STUDIES

The girl likes going to school. She seemed to be very shy but at the same time as if she really wanted to talk to us about something. She is afraid of Sanskrit Ma'am because she scolds a lot and slaps when someone does not complete homework. The girl said she doesn't like to get punished at school as it is very shameful and humiliating and very hard to forget sometimes. According to her, teachers should not beat students and should make them understand their mistakes instead of just scolding or beating them.

Girl, 4th standard

The girl said her teacher hits her very hard with wooden scale or duster on her palm and it leaves marks and bruises. On asking her if she shares all this with her parents, she said she doesn't because she fears to get beaten up by her parents. She also told us that one teacher Sir takes the children to a separate room, locks the room from within, plays music very loudly, and then beats them very hard. The music was there to drown the noise of the caning. When children cry the teacher would calm them down by talking sweetly to them, but she recalled one case where a boy stopped coming to school after receiving punishment. When we asked her how she feels when her classmates are being punished, she remained silent.

Girl, 4th standard

The girl said she doesn't like going to school. Seeing her friends get beaten up regularly makes her repulsive and afraid of going to school. She said that there is a headmaster who beats the students without any reason. She told us about an incident where the class teacher left the class for going to the washroom and suddenly the headmaster came inside and started beating the students. Since she is the monitor of her class, it is her responsibility to carry from classroom to classroom the stick that teachers use to beat students. Almost all the time the students get beaten up either for not doing their homework or for bunking classes. The child told us that she gets mostly verbal punishment. She mentioned that once she was scolded by her teacher because she asked permission to go to the toilet. In this time the rest of the students started shouting in class which created a chaos in the classroom. Hence the teacher punished everyone including her though she was not involved in this. About this incident she said that she felt very bad and sad as it was not her fault but still she was punished. The girl usually talks to her mother when she got punished in school either verbally or physically. Her mother gets upset about the behaviour of her teacher and condemns their method of disciplining the children.

Girl, 4th standard

The girl is very scared of her Maths teacher. She said he generally beats up students with a wooden stick on their palms if they don't finish their homework or discuss a math problem among themselves. She described the different punishments he uses in great detail. He usually slaps the students on the cheeks, hits their palms with a wooden stick, makes them stand on their benches with their hands up in the air for the entire period. If a boy is unable to answer a question by the Maths teachers or talks in class, then the boy has to do murga (chicken) position. If the teacher finds dirt on any student's clothes during assembly, then the child has to pick up all the garbage from the school premises. The girl never tells her mother about punishments because she would blame her that she did something wrong and starts scolding and beating her. She abhors being punished by the teacher in front of the students as she feels insulted and humiliated. She also said that the teachers should make them understand their mistakes instead of beating and scolding them.

Girl, 5th standard

Chapter 2

Risk Factors

In this chapter we present the **factors that put disadvantaged children in Gurugram at risk to experience corporal punishment by teachers**. The Young Lives Study in 2015 already pointed out that marginalised children are at higher risk than their peers from more affluent backgrounds. Since “**disadvantaged**” can mean a great many things, it is crucial to have a precise understanding what it means in the given context. Individual persons, groups of individuals, and communities can face disadvantage in various ways, including financially, economically, or socially, or by gender inequity, racial discrimination, and disability. In India, **communities of people who have migrated from other states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh or West Bengal are disadvantaged in more than one way**: (1) they are **economically deprived** due to low income, (2) due to parents’ lack of resources and education **children struggle to get the support** they need to succeed in school, and (3) they are facing the **social stigma** of being an “uneducated migrant” and having a “bad upbringing.” Our research found that all three ways of being disadvantaged translate directly into risk factors for school corporal punishment.

OVERVIEW

Risk factors of disadvantaged children to experience school corporal punishment

LOW-INCOME

Parents’ **lack of financial, socio-emotional and knowledge resources**, spending most of the day **unsupervised**, living in **vulnerable family situations**, and the **inability to complete their homework** leaves disadvantaged children at risk to experience corporal punishment by their teachers

"MIGRANT" BACKGROUND

Having a "migrant" background, with **frequent moves and absence from school**, means facing **prejudice and discrimination** by teachers. In addition, government school teachers and parents are unable to maintain a constructive **working relationship**, all of which puts disadvantaged children at risk to experience corporal punishment at school

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Challenging working conditions, lack of professional conduct and ethics among teachers, **absent school governance** and **inadequate teacher training**, make government schools an environment that fosters violence against children, which puts marginalised children at risk to experience corporal punishment

SOCIAL NORMS

Our society shows an **utter disregard for children as human beings with rights**. Our social norms **justify physical and mental abuse under the pretext of punishment**, and we tend to view children as “mischievous” creatures who “need to be broken for their betterment.” Especially **children from lower classes** of society are considered **unworthy of humane treatment** and as victims of violence they are **stigmatised and shamed**

Chapter 2

Risk Factors - Low Income

KEY FINDINGS

Parents' lack of financial, socio-emotional and knowledge resources, spending most of the day unsupervised and often living in vulnerable family situations, leaves children at risk of corporal punishment by teachers. Children's inability to complete homework is the top reason for being punished at school.

- Parents with low income are **unable to choose alternative schools** for their children and hence **lack the bargaining power** to press teachers into changing their behaviour. Thus teachers in government schools can (mis-) treat their students without the risk of losing their "customers."
- Children of low-income labourers spend their days largely **unsupervised, with little incentives to study** or do homework.
- Illiterate parents working in low-income jobs are **unable to support their children in their education**. They do not have the knowledge how to be supportive parents or help with homework, and, due to exhaustion from long working hours and their many other struggles, they have few socio-emotional resources left to deal with their children. As a result, children carry the responsibility for their education alone.
- Lacking financial means and parental support leaves marginalised children **unable to complete homework**. Teachers' homework policies further disincentivise students to make an effort. All this leaves them at higher risk of incomplete homework - the number one reason for corporal punishment by teachers.
- Families in low-income communities face **existential distress due to poverty** which makes them vulnerable and their children more prone to maltreatment and neglect out of their parents' despair and frustration. The children are often deprived of the environment in which they can live a carefree childhood and focus on their studies.

Low-income families face existential struggle every day

According to Census 2011 data, the metropolitan area of Delhi, including Gurugram, has received the maximum influx of low-income “migrants” between 2001 and 2011. During this period Gurugram’s population of people who have migrated here jumped by 29%. The people migrating to the National Capital Region hail from states such as **West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand.**

The new inhabitants settle in **Gurugram's semi-urban villages, such as Sikanderpur, Islampur, Kadipur, and Nathupur.** The structure of these communities varies. For example Islampur is a largely residential community where most women are homemakers, whilst Sikanderpur has its own ecosystem of service providers and shops, enabling women to work within their communities. Migration for jobs in the low-income sector often involves **longer working hours, poor living and working conditions, social isolation and poor access to basic amenities or government programs.** Most rural labourers in Gurugram are employed in the informal sector, where unstable employment patterns, exploitation and the lack of regulation and enforcement adds to their vulnerability.

“I cannot afford my child's education from a private school and so we are stuck here. The obstacle of being economically poor and deprived of opportunities is a reality that we are born and live with” (mother of a boy in 3rd standard)

Families with low-income and “migrant” background are facing existential struggle and **fight for mere survival on a daily basis.** They usually work in **jobs that are widely perceived to have “no dignity”**, such as domestic helpers or cleaners, and have to accept any terms of employment and any working conditions, usually without holiday or taking rest. The fathers work very long hours, usually from **7 am to 11 pm**, as auto or rickshaw drivers, security guards, construction labourers, sweepers and janitors, and come home very exhausted every day.

The **fathers are largely unavailable to their children**, leaving typically the mothers in charge of all matters related to children and their education. There are often many siblings in one household, which puts their parents’ financial and emotional resources under strain. Like in the rest of our society, **girls tend to be less appreciated than boys**, leaving them at disadvantage when competing for their parents’ limited resources. They often have to take the burden of **household duties and looking after siblings**, taking away valuable time from studying or doing homework. Many of them are not allowed to leave home other than for school, because “they are girls and it is not appropriate for them to roam around”, which significantly limits the girls’ social radius and is one of the main reasons why **girls like school, because “only there I can meet my friends.”**

Parents with low income are unable to choose better schools for their children

Given their dire economic situation and lack of financial resources, the parents we interviewed were only able to send their children to nearby **government schools as they are free of charge.** If they are unhappy with the quality or methods of teaching, or if they do not approve of corporal punishment, they cannot afford to send their children to another school. They also **lack the financial and social bargaining power to press teachers towards changing their behaviour.** As a result, children of low-income parents are more vulnerable to school corporal punishment.

Children in low-income communities spend their days mostly unsupervised

Children from low-income communities living in "urban villages" in Gurugram **spend most of their time after school unsupervised**. Many mothers are working as maids or cooks, typically from 7 am in the morning until the early afternoon, and leave home before their children wake up and go to school around 7.30 am.

After eight to nine hours of work they **come home around 2 or 3 pm** and spend the rest of the day with **household chores**, leaving the children on their own. Like most working mothers, regardless of their socio-economic status, they told us that they find it difficult to balance family and household duties and feel guilty for not spending enough time with their family and would like to be more involved in their children's everyday activities.

"If I would have been earning well I would've never sent my children to government schools. We all know the conditions there and how bad the quality of the education is, but I am helpless and therefore have to send them to government school" (father of a girl in 4th standard)

Even the **mothers who are homemakers interact very little with their children**. They told us that they have plenty of time for their children, listen to their problems or whatever else they want to share, but said that their children were too busy to do so. After returning from school their children usually have a short nap and then leave for tuition, usually two, after which they spend time in the community library or playing with friends, and then return home to do homework, have food and go to sleep. Although they have time, the mothers do not see the necessity to interact with their children. **Both working and stay-at-home mothers are unavailable to their children** and leave them unsupervised for most of the day. Thus for the children it does not make a difference whether their mothers are at home or not, they are left on their own either way.

Instead, they **rely on their children's own motivation to pursue their studies and education** and do not take an active interest or act as a driving force behind it. Only one mother we interviewed sits down with her son to supervise his homework. Most of them told us that **they do not ask their children about their day at school nor about homework** or anything else. They assume that their children resolve "smaller issues" among themselves and would approach their mothers if there were "serious issues," such as being punished by teachers at school. **Parents are convinced that their children come to them to share experiences**, and if that does not happen, they assume everything is fine.

People who have left their native places to move to Gurugram for employment mostly live in **nuclear family structures** with their extended family left behind in their hometown, so there is no other family member at home who could supervise or help the children after school. Since their parents are unavailable and no other family members are at home to look after them, **many of the children spend their time after school with friends, watching TV, playing outside or with the phone, and doing chores**. In such an environment, children have **no encouragement to sit down and study** nor do they have anyone to supervise or help them doing their homework.

Without proper supervision and encouragement, **homework is not the first priority of children**. The decision to prioritise play or household chores over studying is entirely on them. Given their age and lack of support by parents, those children can hardly be blamed for not owning, let alone mastering the responsibility for their education and academic success.

Children of low-income workers lack parental support for their education

Most parents in our sample **appreciate the value of education** and want their children to do well at school and get a better life. However, they do not only **lack financial resources but also the knowledge to put those values into practice**. For example, parents never inquire about the children's day at school nor do they switch off the TV when the children are trying to study. **For girls, household duties often take priority over education**, leaving them with little to study only in the evening, without sufficient light or using kerosine lamps which are damaging their respiratory tracts.

"I don't tell my parents anything about school" (girl, 6th standard)

Many children drop out after primary school because high schools are usually farther away from their homes and this is often considered impractical or too much effort by their families, given the poor quality of education. Another common phenomenon is that children run away from school after lunch, either because they have not done homework for subjects after recess, or their only motivation to come to school is the free mid-day meal.

Even without money, parents can be supportive encourage their children in their studies. But too often **parents do not know how to do this**. Neither do they know how to take an active interest in their children's everyday life nor do they understand the importance of it. They are convinced that "everything is fine" assuming that otherwise their children would tell them. These parents are not ill-meaning or indifferent to their children, but they **lack awareness and knowledge how to be a supportive parent**, even with limited capacities, and often just replicate the ways in which they have been brought up.

These **knowledge and awareness gaps also manifest in how parents discipline their children**. For example, several mothers told us that they explain to their children when they made a mistake and how to do better. When asked to describe the "explanation" in detail, it turned out they were not adequate to make children understand. Asking a child to "be good" carries very little explanatory value to a child. "Good" is an abstract concept that needs to be brought to life with specific expectations and examples of "good" behaviour, which are not provided by the mothers. As a result, **children know that they are expected to behave in a "good" way, but do not understand what that means**.

Similarly, when mothers said that they use "verbal warnings" they are in fact **threatening their children**, such as "I will tell your father about your mistake and he will beat you." Lastly, we also got the impression that mothers were not always speaking truthfully. From our observations and interviews with children we know that **many mothers go straight into scolding or beating their children**, skipping any "explanation" or "verbal warning." Interestingly, only one mother admitted openly that she beats her children, and all of them agreed that the effect of beating only lasts for a short time to stop the child's behaviour.

Nevertheless, **all mothers were convinced that they are good parents** and doing everything they can to support their children. They are unaware of how to be a more supportive parent and that there is room for improvement in their parenting approach.

Lastly, the parents in Gurugram's semi-urban villages are **often less educated, with many of them being illiterate**. During the discussions, the mothers told us neither they nor their husbands look after their children's homework because they are "not literate enough."

"I love my mother more. She beats me too, but she is a bit more polite and understanding than my father" (boy, age unknown)

They also **do not provide any "moral support"** by taking an interest in their children's education or supervise them during studies and homework. Instead, they either **outsource this responsibility to older siblings**, who have to carry undue burden of responsibility and lose time for their own education, or **rely on teachers** to deal with it. The mothers are aware that their children are caned by teachers for incomplete homework, but not of any other punishments. They said they do not know which methods teachers use, but they assume "everything is fine" unless being told otherwise, and **they believe that teachers are supportive and responsible** in their behaviour towards students.

With their parents ignorant of how to support their education, **children are left alone and carry the entire responsibility for their education on their own**. It should come as no surprise that they are unable to live up to such unrealistic expectations, and given that the workload of their education is often too high, they can hardly be blamed for escaping it. Leaving children without support and encouragement makes them **vulnerable for not doing homework and study**, which not only increases the risk of falling behind in school but also to be punished for missing homework or being unable to answer subject-related questions.

Children often live in family situations characterised by maltreatment and neglect

Many children in low-income communities live in **family situations that are characterised by maltreatment and neglect**, which not only negatively affects their development, their self-esteem, their physical and mental health, and their education, including a higher risk to receive corporal punishment by teachers.

Parents' **emotional resources are entirely consumed by their struggle for survival**. Temporary and short-term employment contracts in the informal sector leave families with uncertain and unstable livelihood sources, and no ability to increase their income by working longer hours. They often live in poor housing structures without access to basic resources or sanitation and thus hygiene and health are problematic.

"I am scared of talking to my parents about the punishments my sister receives at school, because I might get beaten up by them as well" (girl, 4th standard)

The effects of poverty lead to a lot of **distress and frustration among parents** which they often vent out on their children. Short of time and full of anger, they tend to have little patience and a "short fuse" and thus scold or beat their children when they do not respond to their demands.

"Once I was beaten by my class teacher when I was very sick. When I told my mother, she said if I had told my teacher in a consoling way about my sickness I would not have got beaten up" (girl, 7th standard)

For example, a mother in our focus group told us that the **father beats her and the children when he drinks** and finds out about any "mistakes" they made. Trying to avoid physical abuse, she desperately tries to hide such "mistakes." Children growing up in such environment need help. Sadly, they are not getting such support from their teachers but are instead **punished for their vulnerability and their parents' poverty**.

For example, **parents are often unable to look after their children's cleanliness and wardrobe**. This leads to children wearing **dirty clothes or uniforms** to school, which is another **major reason to receive corporal punishment**, especially during morning assembly. Obviously, it is not the children's fault that their clothes are dirty or that they are not appropriately groomed. While private schools avoid this scenario by keeping a spare uniform at school, this option is not available in government schools due to the lack of resources. Instead, children are being punished for their parents' inability to supply them with clean clothes every day. The vulnerability of their families and their communities contributes to the risk of disadvantaged children to receive corporal punishment at school.

Lacking financial means and parental support leaves marginalised children unable to complete homework

Incomplete homework is one of the **main reasons why children are corporally punished** by school teachers. When they are unable to produce homework, the children told us, they are not only physically punished by their teachers but also verbally abused for their family and home situation, their lack of time management and "stupidity." This was particularly evident in the way children engaged in the role play. Children acting as teachers frequently asked their "students" in an aggressive and condescending way what they were doing at home instead of homework and what their parents were doing with them and why they cannot discipline their children. The "teachers" kept reminding the "students" of all the other times when they had forgotten to do homework and compared them with other children who were able to finish it. It came across though that this was merely a prologue to punishment. During the group conversation most children said that **teachers go straight into corporal punishment, without inquiring** as to why they were not able to complete their tasks. Instead, punishment and verbal harassment, such as "How stupid are you that you are not able to complete this simple homework?" would be the norm.

Underprivileged children are of course not "stupid" or otherwise intellectually inept. They lack access to good quality education and the resources and sufficient time to complete large pieces of homework. Children can get **up to two chapters of homework for each subject per day**, which means they have to complete up to sixteen chapters every day. They often feel overstrained by the amount of homework, especially girls who are tasked with additional household duties or looking after younger siblings.

Absent support and academic and financial resources make it **almost impossible for disadvantaged children to catch up with knowledge gaps**, such as low writing or reading speed or understanding English. They cannot afford guide books, additional tuition or technology that would help them understand the subjects and do homework. They often fall behind even further, to the point where they are unable to follow at all and drop out of school.

A number of children in our sample said that **they want more time to complete homework** because they cannot finish everything in one day, given that they also need to play and exercise. Completing homework on their own requires time commitment, self-discipline, motivation and encouragement which the children do not have due to lacking supervision and support.

“When someone hasn't done their homework, the teacher would punish them by making them stand on benches and ask them to dance” (girl, 2nd standard)

Teachers' **homework policy** adds to the struggle. Typically, they ask students to re-submit incomplete homework the following day, which leads to piling up of homework and makes it difficult to complete all the homework for one day. If the child does not bring the homework the next day, it has to be finished during class, as a result of which the student misses out and falls behind.

Corporal punishment for incomplete homework is counterproductive. It can lead to injury or bruises, particularly on children's hands, leaving the child unable to take notes and do written homework and turning into a vicious cycle. If students do not do any homework at all, they get punished by the teacher. If they try to complete their homework but make mistakes or do not finish, they get punished too. **It does not make any difference whether children make an effort or not, the result is the same.** It is thus a perfectly rational choice not to do any homework at all. The lack of all kinds of resources and the environment in which they grow up, combined with such flawed incentives make disadvantaged children more vulnerable to receive corporal punishment.

CASE STUDIES

The girl's father said that it is all about privilege. If someone has money they will surely send their children to private school, but those who don't, send their children to government schools. He added "If I would have been earning well I would've never sent my children to government schools, we all know the conditions there and what quality the education is, but I am helpless and therefore have to send them to government schools." When we asked about corporal punishment and its impact on children, the girl's mother started sharing her views, saying that "The major difference apart from the quality of education in both the schools is corporal punishment.

In private schools the children are not beaten up as badly as they are in government schools, as if the children in government schools are beggars for receiving free education and therefore they are meant to be beaten up." When we asked the child if she likes going to school she was a little hesitant while replying "Yes, because I like studying". She likes her class teacher and said that she teaches very well but also punishes when they do not complete homework. The teacher uses a big wooden stick to punish the children and all have accepted it as their daily routine. The students are also convinced that it is good for their well-being, but also feel that they should not been beaten up without any reason.

Girl, 4th standard

The boy is a shy and quiet child, and his mother said that he is weak in studies and cannot learn as fast as other children in his school. She had informed the school about his learning difficulties and asked the teachers not to punish him, but "One day my elder son came running to me informing that his brother was badly beaten up by the school kids and his head is injured. I quickly ran to the school and saw that my son is badly injured and none of his teachers are with him and so I rushed to the hospital without getting any help from the teachers. Even after experiencing such irresponsible and unhelpful attitude from the teachers, I went and spoke to them again so that this does not happen again in the future. But nothing ever changed for good and incidents of teachers themselves slapping and scolding happened again and again which is demeaning and derogatory for the child and against human rights. I cannot afford my child's education from a private school and so we are stuck here. The obstacle of being economically poor and deprived of opportunities is a reality that we are born and live with."

Boy, 3rd standard

The girl is from Nepal and looks very young for her age. She is a very bubbly girl and loves going to school. Her favourite teacher is her class teacher who teaches Sanskrit. When we asked her if the teacher practices corporal punishment, she immediately replied, "Yes, when children do not listen to her or do not complete their work then they get beaten up." She added that it is not only this teacher but all teachers in her school use corporal punishment. The type of punishments that they have to face include getting beaten with a scale, canning, and excessive exercise, among others. While the discussion was going on, the girl's mother took over the conversation and said, "Punishments are necessary for children otherwise they don't listen to elders." When we asked her daughter whether she likes getting punished, she answered, "No, how can we study if we keep on getting punishments?" She also faced discrimination because she hails from Nepal. She said that she had not been easily accepted by her fellow students but now they have accepted her and treat her as equal. Adults, on the other hand, have not.

Girl, 7th standard

Chapter 2

Risk Factors - "Migrant" Background

KEY FINDINGS

Having a "migrant" background puts disadvantaged children at risk to experience corporal punishment at school.

- Children from deprived background and whose families have moved to Gurugram from other states often **struggle to articulate themselves in the way expected by their teachers**, and are labelled as outsiders.
- Their families **often move to new places**, which requires children to settle into a new environment and find friends every few years. When travelling back to their home towns, **children are often not attending school for a long time**, sometimes for several months, and when they come back to school they are punished by teachers for being absent and falling behind.
- Instead of empathy and support, "migrant" children face **disdain and contempt from their teachers**. Due to social stigma and prejudice, teachers deem these children less worthy and **discriminate against them**, such as when they mete out corporal punishment.
- Government school teachers and parents who have migrated to Gurugram are **unable to maintain a constructive working relationship**. Parents have little time and often no knowledge how to engage in their children's school life. Teachers, despite saying that they would welcome more involvement of parents, discourage them from taking an active role in schools.

Children of "migrant" workers struggle with proper language and are frequently absent from school

Children whose parents have little education and moved from other states to find better opportunities in Gurugram, are often **unable to articulate themselves as per the teachers' expectations**. A teacher told us that some children address them with "tu" (informal) instead of "aap" (formal), which is considered rude and results in punishment. However, it is not the children's fault that they do not have context-appropriate language skills and they are perfectly capable of acquiring those if taught adequately.

The same teacher repeatedly complained how the "Biharis" were unable to communicate properly. The **term "Bihari" is not used as a geographical reference but in a derogatory sense** for people who are not locals, which indicates that the teacher is not primarily concerned about his students' language skills, but consumed by prejudice against people who have migrated from less affluent states.

Sadly, many of the children live in troubled homes where they pick up **foul and abusive language** from their parents. The fact that they use this language in school means that they have normalised this way of speaking to each other. Teachers either do not recognise that these children need help and support to articulate themselves in a proper way, or they do not care and prefer to **use corporal punishment as a "quick fix"** for the situation.

Children whose families hail from other states are **often absent from school**, not only because of frequent illness due to poor housing and sanitary conditions, but also for longer periods of several months when their parents decide to travel back to their home villages beyond school holidays. Teachers, however, told us that the children were absent because they accompany their parents to work. Schools are required to remove from the roll any student who is absent without excuse for more than seven days, but they usually wait for at least ten days and at times significantly longer.

"My son faces discrimination from other students and the teachers and was harassed mentally, emotionally and physically which will have repercussions throughout his life." (mother of a boy in 5th standard)

Adding or removing students from the school's Management Information System (MIS) is a tedious and lengthy process. Since many parents come back after their holidays and request that their children are registered again, teachers rather avoid re-entering large amounts of student information in the MIS, including name, parents' names, aadhar card number, address, parents' occupation and yearly salary, distance from home, bank details and photographs, along with filling an eight-page document. As a result, they **do not follow the policy but generally wait longer**, sometimes up to two months, before they strike off a student from the system.

Being absent is one of the reasons why children are corporally punished by teachers. If parents do not notify teachers prior to their children's leave or do not provide a valid explanation, **children are punished upon their return** to school. They are being **made responsible for their parents decision to travel**, and as a result find themselves on the receiving end of both their parents' negligence and their teachers physical and mental abuse.

Children with "migrant" background face social stigma and prejudice and are discriminated against by teachers

The label “**migrant**” is only applied to less educated labourers moving from rural to urban areas to find jobs in the informal low-income sector. We hardly say "migrant" to degree-educated people, although they too are relocating to find better opportunities. For example, the employee of global bank ICICI who shifts places to become the Chief Risk Officer of the holding company is not called "migrant," unlike the rural labourer from Bihar who moves to Gurugram to work as an auto driver.

The **perception of migration in India is filtered by socio-economic status and less by geography**, given that anyone from the less prosperous North Eastern states and West Bengal is called "Bihari" or "migrant." The label "migrant" comes in combination with **prejudice against less educated people of the “labour class”** and the reproach that they would take away jobs from the local population. During the interviews with teachers, it became obvious that they look down upon people engaged in “undignified” manual labour.

“Teachers only beat those children who are not good and those who they don't like” (girl, upper kindergarten)

Many teachers seem to believe that **lack of formal education** is not a symptom of ineffective policies and absence of opportunities, but **equate it with the inability to think rationally and make informed, logical decisions**. Some appear to think that it is futile to teach children of poor parents. Given their lack of financial means and access to basic facilities, teachers feel that the children will never be able to reach up to what is expected of them, and therefore **do not deem them worthy of good education** because “they will only be cleaning someone’s house later anyways.”

In semi-urban communities, families not only struggle with financial distress due to low income, but also with the **social stigma and discrimination for being a “migrant,”** which “rubs off” on their children at school. During discussions, mothers told us that they are concerned about their children fighting with the “local kids.” One mother said her child was injured by a local student and when she complained to the teachers at school, they tried to ignore her. We observed that **parents feel that their children are dominated by local children** and bullied as “fair game.” Even in a class full of children who are not locals, the “latest arrival” among them would be picked upon by the others for being an outsider to the local community.

In government schools, there is a **social divide between the faculty and students**, with the latter often from the weakest social background. The teachers we interviewed gave us the impression that they think "migrant" children are from an inferior culture and upbringing. They rarely perceive their students as needing help and support, given their socio-economically deprived situation, but mainly as members of **lower caste with low status**, which results in a **sense of superiority, condescending attitude**, and the tendency to **treat these children in a despising manner**. During our visits to government schools we saw students taking turns to fan their class teacher when there was a power cut. Other teachers ordered students to do petty work for them, such as serving them water, bringing them chairs or cleaning the facilities. We also observed **teachers roaming around the school yard with sticks as if they were looking for “prey.”**

Teachers **rarely empathise with the struggles and issues of their students' families**. Instead, they have little or no respect and do not make any effort to hide this. They assume that less educated parents with meager financial resources are not responsible enough to teach their children good behaviour, and **blame the children** for such shortcomings. Due to parents' low level of education, teachers believe that they are not competent to understand what happens at school and therefore would often not make the smallest attempt to engage them, keep them informed, nor schedule any parent-teacher meetings.

Parents and even some children were certain that they are being discriminated by teachers because of their "migrant" background. A few mothers said that their different origin, culture and socio-economic background are among the **main reasons why their children are corporally punished** at school. Due to the social divide and prejudice, parents have little bargaining power to make teachers change their behaviour. The discriminatory behaviour of teachers results in higher risk of disadvantaged children receiving **corporal punishment, instead of humane treatment and good education**.

Government school teachers and parents with "migrant" background are unable to maintain a constructive working relationship

Due to the social divide and the frequent shifting patterns of families, government school teachers and parents are unable to maintain a good working relationship. A significant number of teachers in our sample thought that there is a **disconnect between parents and teaching staff**, which negatively impacts their work environment and the learning progress of the students. They said they are aware that the parents belong to low socio-economic background and struggle to support their children's education. They complained that they are expected to be "parents at school" saddled with all the responsibility. They added that parents would take no interest in how their children perform or whether they attend class, and it was therefore impossible to compensate for such lack of interest and support. The teachers said parents would not understand the importance of parent-teacher meetings, and are often illiterate and shy away from coming to school, or would not want to "waste" a day without earning a wage on attending the meeting. Teachers said they would prefer parents to be responsive and participatory in the process of their child's education and development.

While teachers say that they appreciate the struggles of parents and some of their concerns about parents disengagement are legitimate. However, their **actions do not suggest that they seek to encourage parents' involvement**. Many of them do not hold parent-teacher-meetings at all. Another example is that of a mother, who is a member of the School Management Committee,* was not informed about her responsibilities and only asked by the teachers to sign in at the beginning of the meeting and then was sent back home. Also, **teachers threaten students if they share with their parents that they received punishment at school**. None of this supports the claim that teachers welcome parents' engagement, quite the opposite, they are strongly discouraging it.

Workers who are seeking better opportunities move places and have to put their children in new schools frequently, which leaves them unable to establish long-term ties with the school faculty. They also lack the authority to demand good quality education or claim their rights. Since **teachers and parents are from different communities, there is little "social control"** and accountability in both directions. When parents and teachers belong to the same community, however, teachers have to answer parents regarding their child's progress and also face negative feedback or social repercussions if they do not deliver good education. Similarly, teachers can utilise social pressure to force parents to be more engaged in their children's education.

* School Management Committees (SMCs) are invested with significant powers under the RTE Act 2009, including monitoring the working of the school, preparing and recommend school development plan, and monitoring the utilisation of grants. Three-quarter of the members of the SMC should be parents or guardians, and 50% should be women.

CASE STUDIES

The boy said he is most scared of his Math teacher because he is the strictest and makes students bend down “like a horse” and canes them on their buttocks. He said that this teacher also asks the reason why he could not complete homework but he does not dare to answer out of fear of further beatings and "harsh comments." When asked if there are any other instances when students get beaten or punished, he said that it happens when students run away from school because they might not have done the homework for the subjects after recess. When asked about the kinds of punishment, he readily started describing them. He said that the lightest ones are making them stand in class, making them stand with hands raised or hands pulling ears for the entire period and doing sit-ups. He then mentioned caning on the hand (both palm and knuckles), slapping in the face, hitting on the buttocks and lifting skirts of girls and hitting them with a stick. He said that his parents know that he gets beaten like this but do not complain since they believe that it is for his own good. His parents don't use the stick to hit him but only beat with their hands. He does not like getting beaten up at all and that it would be great if they stopped beating them. But he also said that it is impossible.

Boy, 5th standard

The girl feels “good” about school, although she is not allowed to sit together with her friends and there are no benches so the children have to sit on the floor. She told us that she is scared of the teacher who scolds “my friends because they are naughty.” She said that if kids go out from class, then sir beats. If kids get out from class without telling, the sir beats the children. If they don't do the homework they also get beaten. If the child is crying then instead of calming them he tells them to stop crying otherwise he will beat them more. He doesn't explain again if the kids ask questions or do not understand. Sir beats boys more than girls. Her classmate got hit so hard from Sir that it left an imprint on the face. He didn't come again to the school. All the students never tell at home because they are afraid that they might get hit again because of the mistake they did at school.

Girl, 2nd standard

The boy has a sharp mind and a good memory and used to love going to school, but an incident in the school changed his view. He and his friends had indulged in a fight, but the teacher was partial and punished only him severely and also threatened to expel him from the school. The boy went home crying and explained the incident to his mother. Next day they went to meet the principal of the school but they were shocked to receive no help from him, instead the principal also threatened them and sent them back home. His mother tried to console him, but she knew that this was not the first time that her son had such an experience. She said he faces discrimination from other students as well as teachers and was collectively harassed mentally, emotionally and physically which will have repercussions throughout his life. According to her, the boy is no longer interested in studying and neglects it, which makes his mother very concerned about his future.

Boy, 5th standard

Chapter 2

Risk Factors - Government Schools

KEY FINDINGS

Challenging working conditions, lack of professional conduct among teachers, absence of governance and inadequate teacher training make government schools an environment that puts disadvantaged children at risk of experiencing violence and abuse.

- Insufficient infrastructure in government schools and challenging working conditions lead to enormous **frustration among teachers**, which makes them resort to "the old ways" and often vent out their frustration on children.
- Some school faculty **rarely show awareness for professional conduct** and ethics, which could act as "checks and balances" to dis-incentivise teachers from taking out their anger on children.
- Teachers also **lack the professional training and resources to use alternative discipline methods** and support disadvantaged children in their learning process.
- **Insufficient school governance**, in particular the lack of procedures to deal with teacher misconduct and enforcement mechanisms for the legal ban of school corporal punishment, exacerbates the risk for children to be subjected to punishment
- As a result, government schools are an environment that put marginalised **children at risk to become victims of violence**, especially but not limited to corporal punishment.

Government school teachers work in challenging conditions that lead to immense frustration

The teachers in our sample said to us they have to engage in a number of **activities that are unrelated to teaching**, such as elections and other government duties, office admin and secretarial work, cleaning, maintenance work or constructions etc. They feel they are given **insufficient financial support** from the government and do not have enough time for teaching, which results in enormous frustration. They complained that professional trainings or workshops are conducted during school hours and **colliding with their teaching workload**.

The building structures of many government schools are in **dilapidated and unsafe conditions**, not seldom to the point that they are at the risk of collapsing. There are frequent power cuts and during summers the **temperature in the classrooms becomes unbearable**. Sandy areas turning into **dust pollution** hazards force teachers to wear protective clothes or masks. During rain season school compounds often become **muddy and inaccessible**. Many schools do not have gates or fences, which allows anybody to enter the premises.

"Headmaster Sir beats the students whenever he finds them talking to each other. Once, Sir punched the ear of a boy and his head hit the wall resulting in bleeding" (boy, 6th standard)

The teachers told us that their schools **are not provided by the government with enough materials, stationary and other resources**, so they often pay out of their own pockets for materials, photocopies, question paper, books and cleaning services. They also mentioned that their classroom sizes are unmanageable, often up to 60 pupils per teacher, which is twice the maximum allowed under RTE law. The teachers also pointed out that they have to **use their mobile phones to access the school's management information system (MIS)**, because government schools **do not have computers**. If computers can be found, they usually have been donated by NGOs. The same goes for **bathrooms** - if it was not for NGOs, many government schools would not even have toilets.

Teachers in government schools are dealing with **students from vulnerable backgrounds** who are not taught by their parents many of the skills they need to succeed in school. These **children require lots of support and resourceful teachers** to achieve good educational outcomes. Government school teachers are unable to deliver this given their working environment, nor do they have any incentive. Since the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act made it compulsory to promote each child until class 8 regardless of academic performance, and the philosophy and the objective of this provision is not well discussed with teachers, children who have fallen behind are passed on to be "somebody else's problem." This **undermines the motivation of both teachers and students** to aim for appropriate learning outcomes.

Transfer systems for government school teachers do not consider the residence of teachers. Many are assigned to schools far away from their homes, forcing them to travel several hours every day which leads to an incredible amount of frustration and exhaustion. One of the teachers in our sample told us that he was assigned to a school 100 km away from his home, as a result of which he has to travel six hours every day.

Recruitment policies appear to be inefficient. Teachers are hired by the state boards and assigned to schools. If they were appointed directly by a school, there would be stronger incentives and accountability to deliver high-quality teaching to the school and its students. Teachers are also not satisfied with their compensation, especially when compared to their workload, classroom sizes and working conditions. Salaries are often paid late.

While the concerns of teachers are legitimate, many problems in government schools are less a result of unavailable resources but of **ineffective leadership** by the principal. Planning and organisation are often missing, there are no clear timings or syllabuses for lessons, and **teachers are frequently absent or disconnected** from teaching children, often sitting outside the classroom or in their air-conditioned cars playing with their phones. If the school leadership does not set incentives and demands good performance from the teacher faculty, then the **quality of teaching and job satisfaction deteriorate**. There are examples of government schools with strong leadership that are delivering excellent education, despite challenging conditions and resource gaps.

Government schools are **unable to attract and retain good teachers** with the skill set, attitude and motivation to do their best. The working conditions lead to a great deal of frustration among teachers, as a result of which they often have become disengaged, do the bare minimum required, and resort to “the old ways”, such as corporal punishment. This makes disadvantaged children, who are the main clientele of government schools, more vulnerable to corporal punishment.

Lack of professionalism and ethical conduct among some government school teachers make them vent out their frustration on children

Frustration among teachers, combined with a **lack of professional and ethical conduct that are fuelled by prejudice, create a toxic mix of ingredients** in government schools, leading teachers to vent out their anger and act aggressively towards students. Many children told us that teachers punish them if they are in a bad mood and sometimes without any apparent reason. They also said that in some instances teachers do not do anything when children misbehave. Instead of responding to student misbehaviour in a measured and consistent way, teachers act arbitrarily and violently. Their actions are **not following the conduct rules for government employees** or any other code of conduct that determines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours towards children.

“One day I lost my pencil and went to my teacher to ask how I can complete my homework without a pencil. Instead of helping me, the teacher beat me with a stick” (boy, 7th standard)

Instead, many teachers are rather unable or unwilling to control their emotions and aggression, and tend to vent them out on their students. Teachers, both in public and private schools, rarely demonstrate professional pride or ethics, **nor do they understand their role as teachers to respect children, help and support them**, and lead by example. They often follow their personal likes and dislikes and act hostile and judgemental towards their students.

There is a lot of **prejudice among teachers against “migrant” children** and their parents. They think of poverty as a genetic predisposition and believe that children of less educated parents are bound to replicate their parents’ “lifestyle” and therefore not worthy of education. This inclines many teachers to **act in a rude and dismissive way, often transgressing into scolding and verbal harassment**.

Insufficient school governance further exacerbates the problem, in particular the **lack of effective procedures to deal with teacher misconduct** and the **absence of Corporal Punishment Monitoring Cells** that are devised by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights to enforce the legal ban. Teachers who act in an unprofessional, negligent or violent way know that there are no consequences. Nonexistent professional conduct and ethics, together with absent school governance, create an environment in which **corporal punishment can become an acceptable behaviour among teachers**, and therefore often is the rule rather than the exception.

Teachers lack the training and resources to use alternative discipline methods and support disadvantaged children in their learning process

Combined with challenging work conditions, the **lack of quality teacher training in government schools**, especially in methods of positive classroom discipline, makes disadvantaged children vulnerable to school corporal punishment. Teachers are well **aware of the fact that corporal punishment is illegal**, but feel that they do not have any other way to discipline children and therefore have to overstep the law. Even though the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 and a number of other legal and regulatory frameworks prohibit corporal punishment in schools, the majority of the teachers believe in the old saying “spare the rod and spoil the child.”

Lack of training and awareness count towards the fact that teachers do not adapt to modern teaching practices and continue to use corporal punishment. Teacher colleges have not adopted modern pedagogy in their education programs and do not focus on quality. **Budgets for teacher training continue to shrink**, and state governments increasingly tend towards **hiring contractors without filling permanent posts**. Unlike regular teachers, contractors do not receive professional training, after which they have to pass the Central Teacher Eligibility Test conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education. Their only requirement is a BSc. & BEd. degree to teach in primary school and MSc. & BEd. in secondary school. Salaries are lower and they do not receive the same training like permanent teachers.

“If a child is crying after punishment then instead of calming them Sir tells them to stop crying, otherwise he will beat them more” (girl, 2nd standard)

“All the children are scared of Head Sir because he is famous for beating children until their cheeks turn red. He uses a big stick to beat and discipline them” (girl, 3rd standard)

State governments offer training programs for regular teachers, like Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.) but they are a **one-time effort instead of continuing professional education**. In addition, there are **not enough teachers** in both government and private schools. The Right to Education (RTE) Forum estimated that in India there is a shortage of around 9 lakh teachers, while 11 lakh teachers have no adequate training.*

Government school teachers are not provided the knowledge and resources to address the learning needs of marginalised children, nor how to use non-violent discipline methods that reflect the principles of modern, child development-appropriate pedagogy. Even if teachers are not intent to use corporal punishment, their **inadequate training, lack of professionalism and their frustrating working conditions** make them resort to the same harsh methods which they have experienced as school children. This induces the vicious circle of violence in Indian schools, putting disadvantaged children at risk to experience physical and verbal abuse by their teachers.

* RTE Forum (2018), RTE implementation status report 2017; National Convener of RTE Forum in a CatchNews online newspaper article on 12 Dec 2017

Disadvantaged children get abused by teachers without any reason

All of the conditions discussed above create an **environment that enables and fosters teacher misconduct and violence against children**. Many children in our sample reported that teachers punish students because “they do not like them” or without any obvious reason at all. One child reported that he got beaten up by the teacher when informing him that he lost his pencil and thus cannot do his homework, or when asking another child to return his study book. We cannot assess whether the teacher had any other “reason” to punish the children. However, if children do not understand what they are being punished for, then **punishment becomes pointless**, if not a barely disguised **excuse for physically and mentally abusing children**.

“Sometimes both our parents and teachers hit us without any reason” (boy, 6th standard)

Instead, the actual reason might be personal dislike, frustration, anger, or discrimination. Such an **environment of arbitrary violence against children is characterised by three things**: first, there is **no way how children can stay safe** from corporal punishment. They may complete their homework, be quiet in class, and study hard. Regardless of how well they manage their behaviour, teachers will always find a “reason” to physically or verbally harass them.

Second, children do not “only” get punished for academic or behavioural failures, as their parents often expect. There is **no clear set of rules with logical consequences**, instead teachers follow their own inclinations which may vary from day to day and manifest in unpredictable and inconsistent ways. Third, corporal punishment cannot be administered in a “fair”, “measured” or “appropriate” fashion, but **necessarily provides an avenue into escalating violence**. Disadvantaged children who find themselves in such surroundings in government schools are thus at risk to experience violence, especially in form of but not limited to corporal punishment.

CASE STUDIES

The girl likes school and studying very much. Staying at home is “too boring” for her. She also enjoys teaching her classmates if they didn’t understand something in class. She is afraid of Head Sir, because she saw him beat up her friends “mercilessly” or punch them in the face so hard that they would start bleeding. She said that he beats any child who is running around or talking to other kids inside or outside the classroom. She also told us about the teacher who (pretends to) bang the students’ heads against the wall, and the teacher who locks up children in a room to beat them up. She added that the same teacher also beats the students with a scale that has a pointy needle on its end. The girl said the reasons for these punishments were “very silly”, like talking in class or asking permission to go to the toilet. The girl mentioned that verbal punishment is also quite common and the teachers would call them “ass”, “donkey”, “good for nothing”, “uneducated”, “illiterate” and that they had “a bad upbringing.”

Girl, 4th standard

The girl is very scared of her previous class teacher Ma’am. She used to grab the students by their hair and strike their heads against the wall. Once she did this to a boy in her class who started bleeding on his forehead. The child said the reasons why students get punished are incomplete homework, talking in class, fighting with other students, running around and dancing in class, or when students bunk class. When students run away from school, they get beaten with a wooden stick the next day during assembly. According to the girl, the most common punishments include scolding, beating their palms with a wooden stick, and slapping in the face or on the neck. Sometimes the teachers would hit their palms so hard that they are bruised and swollen. Due to this the students would miss out during class for two or three days. She said that punishment makes her feel bad for some time. When we asked how other children feel when they get harsh punishments, she said that they cry. The girl confided in us that she is scared of telling her parents about punishments at school because they might beat her up as well. Her mother always puts the blame on her daughter for getting punished, saying that if she does homework she would not get beaten. When she was beaten by her class teacher when she was very sick, her mother said that she should have told the teacher about her sickness in a “consoling” way. Getting punished in front of the whole class makes the girl feel bad, “really sad” and de-motivated.

Girl, 4th standard

The boy said every day he tries very hard to learn whatever is taught in the class but when the teacher asks something, he forgets and gets beaten up as a result, which makes him feel very angry. He is very scared of his headmaster who beats students for talking to each other. The boy described several incidents involving the headmaster, for example that once he punched the ear of a boy and his head hit the wall resulting in bleeding. He also grabbed a girl’s head by the ponytail and hit her head against the wall. Another time a boy was dancing inside the class and suddenly head Sir came inside and started slapping the boy’s face very hard. Also, if teachers find out that students told their parents about punishment, then they beat them up again, shouting “why did you tell your parents, it’s for your own benefit.” That is why the boy is afraid to tell his parents anything about school. Also, his mother tells him that punishments are for his own good and he should not make any mistakes, which is why he stopped sharing anything with his mother.

Boy, 6th standard

Chapter 2

Risk Factors – Social Norms

KEY FINDINGS

Despite paying lip service that “children are our future,” our society shows an utter disregard for children as human beings with inviolable rights. Our social norms, myths and misperceptions justify the physical and mental abuse of children under the pretext of punishment. We tend to view children as “mischievous” creatures who “need to be broken for their betterment.” Especially children from lower classes of society are considered unworthy of humane treatment and are widely ignored and shamed as victims of violence.

- Teachers and parents have misperceptions about the effectiveness of corporal punishment and continue to use it because our **social norms prescribe justified reasons to punish children**. They have knowledge gaps about child development and non-violent disciplining techniques. All this sustains the practice of school corporal punishment, despite being illegal.
- We **assume that children are “mischievous”** and “liars” or “too young to understand their mistakes,” instead of seeing their behaviour as age-appropriate responses to their environment. Teachers and parents alike have **unrealistic expectations** in children’s behaviour and punish them for normal child-like behaviour.
- Many among us, including teachers, show **little respect for children with “bad upbringing,”** which is equated with poverty, lack of education, lower caste and “migrant” background, and do not consider them worthy of humane treatment. There is a prevailing attitude in our society and among teachers to **judge children’s cognitive ability based on their socio-economic background and personality** traits. In the absence of social control or enforcement of child protection laws, this results in a situation where adults, such as teachers or parents, harass or abuse children just because they can.
- Our society shames and ignores victims of violence, especially when they are children. Parents **blame their children** for being corporally punished. They do not believe them if they report incidents at school that do not match the parents’ own expectations about teachers’ behaviour. Instead of reconsidering their assumptions, parents **dismiss their children’s concerns and do not take them seriously**.

Our social norms and individual beliefs justify physical and mental abuse of children

In India, the notion of “spare the rod and spoil the child” is widely accepted, which is the reason why we can find the practice of corporal punishment in most of our homes and schools, regardless of socio-economic background. There are several reasons why parents and teachers corporally punish children, and one of them is that our **social norms justify the physical and mental abuse of children under the pretext of punishment**. There is no difference between corporal punishment and of physical or mental abuse, except the intent or pretext to punish. The large majority of Indian parents and teachers subscribe to the **misperception that corporal punishment is an effective discipline tool**, that it is good for children and helps them improve their academic performance and their behaviour, and that children will turn out spoiled if they are not punished.

Many parents believe that punishing children is the only way to make them understand their mistakes and discipline them. To make sure children excel in their studies and get good marks, any means is justified. They also believe that it teaches children values such as respect, obeying the elders, punctuality and learning from mistakes. In our society, **"discipline" equals "physical punishment."** That is why most parents approve of school corporal punishment and often add more punishment when their children tell them about it.

"I don't like being punished by the teacher in front of the students as it makes me feel insulted and humiliated. Teachers should make us understand our mistakes instead of beating and scolding us" (girl, 5th standard)

There is a huge **awareness gap regarding the forms of violence and its effects on children**. “Mild” forms of physical punishment, such as hitting on the knuckles or slapping, as well as mental harassment are not recognised as violence against children. Parents and teachers are also not aware that even “mild” forms of corporal punishment are **harmful to children's health** and can permanently damage their self-respect and behavioural abilities. This gap, which is biggest among less educated and socially conservative sections of our society, makes children more vulnerable to experience corporal punishment both at home and in school.

When parents and teachers subscribe to the idea that corporal punishment can be justified by certain alleged benefits, they **unsubscribe from the idea of child rights**. Even if corporal punishment was an effective way to instil discipline in children, the notion of human rights forbids the use of it. Our ignorance towards child rights is grounded in social norms that **regard children as "property" of their parents** who can do with them as they wish. This also explains the large number of “bystanders” and the low level of social disapproval when children are physically abused in front of others. **Violence against children is considered a “family matter”** that outsiders have no business interfering with.

We as a society **believe that there are “good reasons” to punish children**, for example when they misbehave towards elders, use name-calling for siblings, ignore instructions by their mothers, or when they have not completed their homework. Most people agree that it is wrong that a husband beats his wife if she argues back, but firmly believe that if children talk back to their parents they deserve to get beaten. We do not extend the notion of inviolable rights, such as to be free from violence and abuse, to **children who are the most vulnerable among us and therefore need more protection**, not less. We have not fully absorbed the idea of child rights as human rights that must be respected by everyone, including parents and teachers.

There is also a **knowledge gap among parents and teachers about child development and non-violent discipline techniques**. Especially parents who only enjoyed rudimentary or no education have little understanding of child development and child behaviour, and thus are unable to find age-appropriate, non-violent responses to unwanted behaviours in their children. Many parents told us that they get frustrated if their children make mistakes or misbehave over and over again, which often exhausts their patience and results in beating. This shows that parents have little knowledge about child development and how children's ability to process information from their environment is entirely different from adults' and varies across the development process. Instead of responding to children in age-appropriate ways that they are able to understand, **parents and teachers punish children for being children**.

"Punishments are necessary for children otherwise they don't listen to elders" (mother of a girl in 7th standard)

We view children as "mischievous creatures" who need to be "broken for their betterment," and we have unrealistic expectations in their behaviour

Parents assume that their children are "mischievous" and "liars" or "too young to understand their mistakes." They often regard them as disobedient or insincere, as "mistakers" who intentionally upset their parents and who must be "cured" from doing so by means of punishment and beating. When told about punishment at school, **most parents think that their children must have done something wrong which justified the teacher's punishment**. They rarely entertain the possibility that their children might tell the truth and that teachers are doing something wrong. Parents are convinced that teachers always have a "good reason" to punish students. If they hear from their children anything that is not consistent with this assumption, for example that the teacher beat a student without any apparent reason, parents assume that their children are lying and do not make the effort to listen to their children's concern or investigate the details.

"I am mischievous and that is why I get scolded at home. My mother beats me and scolds me sometimes when I am being difficult" (girl, age unknown)

For example, during our discussions, parents told us that their children do not tell them about parent-teacher-meetings (PTMs), either because they would forget or because they would not want their parents to find out about what is going on in school. However, many teachers simply do not hold PTMs, thus there is nothing the children could inform their parents about. Again, parents have a certain idea about what happens in school. If their expectations are not met, **they do not reconsider their assumptions** and whether they match with reality, but follow the reflex to put the blame on their children.

This reflects that **parents do not take their children and their concerns seriously**, assuming that they lie or exaggerate. They believe their children to be immature and automatically dismiss their concerns. When we investigated which behaviours are punishable, it seemed that children get punishment for almost everything they do. Not even sitting still and quietly would keep them safe, given that collective punishment of the entire class is quite common. **Teachers punish their students for normal child-like behaviour**, like **going to the bathroom, talking in class and during breaks, asking their friends questions about the subject, running around the school yard, fighting with other children, changing seats to sit next to friends, dancing, playing and crying**. Teachers do not consider these behaviours as age-appropriate, but as an act of indiscipline or as an attempt to upset them.

It is disturbing that **children are punished even more when they cry as a result of punishment**. Crying is a normal way for children to deal with emotions, thus teachers are punishing children for expressing those. They also **punish children when they tell their parents** about punishment at school. This undermines a healthy and trusted relationship with their parents, which is incredibly important for children to feel safe and secure. **If children are deterred from sharing unpleasant or distressing events with their parents, they are being made more vulnerable, also for other forms of abuse**. Punishing children for sharing their experiences is thus counterproductive to protecting children from harm, be that in form of a teacher, a stranger, or a sexual predator.

Our society considers children from lower classes unworthy of humane treatment

Teachers, like many others among us, show **little empathy or respect for children with “bad upbringing”**, which is a reflection of our social norms that equate “bad” with poverty, being less educated, being a “migrant” and lower caste. Many teachers do not feel that, because of all their disadvantages, these children need more support and more help to develop their full potential. Instead, they **treat them as inferior objects and in a dehumanising way**. In this regard, they are no different from the rest of us who tend to show solidarity only towards the upward but not the downward strata of society. This attitude manifests in such that **teachers behave in rude, dismissive and despising ways towards their students, often in combination with caste-based or social prejudice**. Given that there is little professional conduct to counter-balance such attitudes, this encourages corporal punishment in the form of **verbal harassment or scolding, often relating to the students’ background or family**.

Teachers do not only disrespect students for their social background, but also use it as a reference point for negatively judging their cognitive abilities. They tend to **determine children's abilities and performance based on their “bad upbringing”** and attribute academic and behavioural struggles to their character, not to the student's environment and background.

"Children in government schools are beggars for receiving free education and therefore meant to be beaten up" (father of a girl in 4th standard)

In addition to "bad upbringing," **teachers also use personality traits to assess children's cognitive and mental abilities**. For example, introvert children are labelled “slow” learners since teachers think that a “good student” is necessarily active, participating and outgoing in class. Quiet children or “slow learners”, on the other hand, need improvement, and hence are at risk of being punished by their teachers.

Our society considers “bad” children unworthy of humane or equal treatment, which puts them at higher risk to receive corporal punishment because “they deserve it.” In the absence of social control or enforcement of child protection laws, **adults harass and abuse children because they can**. Professional conduct and functioning school governance, as a balancing force against discriminating actions and inappropriate teacher behaviour, are almost entirely absent from most government schools. As a result, the environment of government schools reinforces **social and caste-based prejudices** that our education policies have been trying to get rid of for decades, and **exposes children to the risk of experiencing violence at the hand of their teachers**.

We as a society stigmatise and ignore the victims of violence

Our society's tendency to **blame victims instead of perpetrators of violence is replicated by parents who blame their children for experiencing corporal punishment** by teachers. They assume that their children must have misbehaved or done something wrong if they get corporally punished at school, therefore putting the blame on the victim - the child. Instead of consoling their children or addressing the teachers, parents tell them they could have avoided it if they had behaved well and studied hard.

"I would not take any step against the teachers since they are gurus and I want my child to study, and he can only do it efficiently if he is beaten up" (mother of a boy in 5th standard)

Parents believe that teachers are "noble," mature and wise and would never punish a child unnecessarily - a notion that is blindsiding the sad reality in our schools. Parents **refuse to acknowledge the facts**, despite their children's accounts, and are ignorant of the reasons why children are punished by teachers. For example, most parents believe that their children are punished by teachers only for academic and behavioural failures, but are not aware or deny that there are other reasons to get punished, such as collective punishment or no reason at all. **Parents who put the blame on their children and ignore corporal punishment in schools contribute to children's vulnerability.** They should be expected to do everything to protect their children from harm, instead they do nothing or even add to it, leaving their children even more prone to school corporal punishment.

CONCLUSION Risk Factors

Disadvantaged children from low-income background neither have the financial and academic resources nor any support from their parents in their education, and particularly no incentive that would encourage them to do their homework, which puts them at risk to experience corporal punishment by their teachers. The absence of a constructive working relationship between parents and teachers creates another obstacle for disadvantaged children to receive a good education free from fear and violence. Combined with prejudice and lack of "checks and balances" to prevent teacher misconduct, it enables a climate where teachers can "run wild", making children from underprivileged communities more vulnerable to school corporal punishment. Government schools are not only unable to cater to the particular needs of disadvantaged children and deliver quality education, but are also fostering an environment that puts children at risk to experience aggressive and violent behaviour by teachers. Therefore, government schools are a risk factor for disadvantaged children to receive corporal punishment. Lastly, we as a society disregard children as human beings with inviolable rights. Our social norms justify physical and mental abuse of children if it comes under the pretext of punishment, and we tend to view them as "mischievous" creatures who "need to be broken for their betterment." Especially children from lower classes of society are considered unworthy of humane treatment, and victims of violence are shamed and ignored. All these are the risk factors that put disadvantaged children at risk to experience physical and mental abuse at the hand of their teachers.

CASE STUDIES

The boy told us straight away that he was thrown out of class earlier that day and that he doesn't like school because his teachers and the headmaster punish him and the other children very frequently. Seeing his friends getting punished makes him feel very sad. Punishment is the only reason why he doesn't like school. Teachers punish or scold children right away if they show up with incomplete homework, but never ask about the reasons behind not doing the homework. He said that their punishments depend on their mood - sometimes children get caned, slapped or have to stand with their hands raised, while sometimes they only get scolded for the same thing. When asked what teachers do in case a child cries after being punished, he said the headmaster threatens the child to shut up or else he would punish more, but the class teacher gives them toffees to calm them down. He never tells his parents that he got punished at school because both his mother and his father would beat him if they find out. His brother revealed to us later that once his father grabbed the boy by his neck and threw him across the bed. He fell and broke his arm.

Boy, 2nd standard

The boy said that he is often beaten up by a male teacher. He asks him questions in English which he is mostly unable to answer and therefore gets beaten up. He added that the teacher does not correct him after beating him up. He also told us that he was once beaten up during lunch break, in addition to the regular punishment in class. He is convinced that young children must be beaten up to help them learn lessons. The child said he told his mother many times about senseless beatings in school, but she scolded him saying that no one would beat them unless they did something wrong. Sometimes his mother has also been to the school to talk to the teachers. She says that the teachers will naturally never admit beating her son. That is why she always tells him that the key to avoid beatings is to study hard. There was no substitute to studies. When asked whether she was aware that corporal punishment is illegal and if she would like to take a step against it, his mother had to say that she would not take a step against the teachers since the teachers are their gurus and she wants her child to study and that they can only do it efficiently if they are beaten up. She further adds that whichever school does not indulge in corporal punishment, the children are usually spoilt.

Boy, 5th standard

The boy said that he is regularly beaten by his teacher. One day he lost his pencil and went to his teacher asking how he can complete his work without a pencil, and instead of helping him with an alternative, the teacher beat him with a stick. Once a friend took his notebook and the boy asked him every day to return it. One day his teacher heard him asking his friend and, without listening to what was the reason of their conversation, started beating the boy. The child doesn't tell his parents about the violence he faces in school, because one day he told his mother and she replied that if he makes a mistake he cannot escape a beating. She believes that if children don't get beaten they won't study. The boy is now trying to console himself when he feels bad. His mother is a member of the school management committee and often visits school where teachers admitted to her that he gets beaten for making "a mistake."

Boy, 7th standard

Chapter 2

How Children Feel

Corporal punishment by teachers makes students feel **ashamed of themselves and scared of school**. It **undermines trusted relationships with teachers and parents**, which makes children **more vulnerable for other forms of abuse**. Although children dislike corporal punishment, they are taught to **internalise violence as an acceptable social behaviour**, which perpetuates the high level of violence in India.

OVERVIEW

How corporal punishment by teachers makes children feel

FEAR, HUMILIATION & SHAME

Corporal punishment makes children feel humiliated and ashamed of themselves, to the point where they **would not admit to it, but only tell that “the other kids” have received it**. It instills fear in children and makes them afraid of school and develop **negative associations with school and education**

BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Corporal punishment **undermines healthy and trusted relationships of children with their parents and teachers**. Out of fear to be punished, the majority of them does not share negative experiences with parents, which adds to the **“culture of silence”** around violence and makes them **vulnerable for other forms of abuse**

LOSS OF INSTINCT & MORAL COMPASS

Students do not like corporal punishment and 53% want beating to stop completely. But are told by adults that it was good for them, which leads children to **distrust their natural instincts and their own ideas about right and wrong**, and makes them internalise **violence as acceptable social behaviour**. This makes them more likely to become violent adolescents and adults, feeding into the vicious cycle of violence

Corporal punishment makes children feel humiliated and ashamed, and instills fear in them

The interviewed children reported that corporal punishments often leaves them **feel humiliated and ashamed in front of other classmates**, an experience which is very hard for them to forget. In many cases they would be made fun of by other children and be labelled as "the ones who got beaten," which adds insult to injury and to their suffering. Some children below the age of ten developed such an amount of **fear** that they chose to withdraw and **not speak about it at all**, neither with their parents nor anyone else.

Many children are frightened to go to school because of teachers who punish, and some of them said they are **afraid of being upgraded to secondary school** because they heard of severe punishments. It is also common that **children run away from school** or not show up at all because they are scared of being punished for not having done their homework. That corporal punishment leads to fear and children not attending school is consistent with the findings of international research which has shown that corporal punishment is linked to school phobia and increasing dropout rates and makes children associate education with something negative.

Children feel so humiliated and ashamed of corporal punishment that they **would not even admit it**. During our interviews many children would insist that they never get beaten by their teacher but "the other children." When cross-referencing this information, we found out that this was not true. Teachers who punish students do it to all of them without exception. It is saddening that children who fall victim to violence are not only ashamed of talking about it, but also have to lie and "outsource" this experience to "the other kids" in order to make sense of it.

"I don't like getting punished at school because it is very shameful and humiliating and sometimes very hard to forget" (girl, 4th standard)

"I don't enjoy school that much, I like it better at home" (girl, 4th standard)

Children having to escape to a parallel reality to rationalise certain experiences can be expected to have serious consequences not only for their self-esteem but also their mental health, not to speak of the relationship with their parents.

Corporal punishment undermines trusted relationships

When parents blame their children for receiving corporal punishment at school, it **undermines a trusted and loving relationship between children and parents**, leaving children feel helpless and devastated when they have no one to talk to or comfort them. The fear of being punished by their parents is the reason why the **majority of children have stopped sharing violent experiences at school with their family**. **53% of children in our survey never tell** their parents about corporal punishment at school, and 27% inform them only occasionally. **A meager 12% of children always share** incidents with their parents.

This **undermines a trusted and loving parent-child relationships**. The consequences of broken down communication between children and parents is not only problematic with regard to corporal punishment but also **other forms of child abuse**. Children who no longer trust that their parents are willing to listen to and protect them from violent perpetrators cannot be expected to report to their parents any other form of abuse that may be happening to them. This should be taken into consideration in the debate on corporal punishment.

The children in our sample consistently said that they **do not like corporal punishment** but teachers who explain well and listen to them. They prefer teachers who clarify mistakes and how to do better next time, instead of just scolding or beating them. They do not necessarily mind if teachers give lots of homework, but they all dislike teachers who punish them.

Many children told us that they **like teachers who inquire why they were not able to complete their homework**. This gives us plenty of indication of how teachers could better respond to students behaviour, provided that they are given the time and resources to do so, and find ways to which their students respond. For example, teachers could use positive discipline to manage their students' behaviour in the classroom.

"When I get punished in school or face any problem I have nowhere to go or no one to share it who can understand me" (girl, age unknown)

"I like the teachers who teach well and who understand us instead of just punishing, scolding or humiliating us" (girl, 4th standard)

Loss of natural instinct and moral compass, and perpetuation of violence in society

None of the children in our sample likes corporal punishment. Quite the opposite, when asked what they do not like about school, the answer would always be "punishment." But since they are constantly being told by adults that corporal punishment is good for them, the **children do not only feel ambivalent about corporal punishment but also about their own feelings**. On the one hand, 53% of the children want beating to stop completely, while on the other hand **71% said that being beaten up "for a reason" is okay**. Children instinctively feel that there is something wrong about physical punishment and mental abuse. However, **they are taught that corporal punishment is "necessary" and "for their own good,"** and hence do not trust their instincts and moral compass about what is right and wrong. **They learn not to question adults but to blindly believe and do what adults tell them.**

"You should not complain if teachers punish you because they are the parents-at-school and have the right to do whatever they want" (boy, 5th standard)

Although most of the children have **rationalised violence** and approve of school corporal punishment, they do not like receiving it. Despite their dislike, all of the children have normalised and internalised the violence of corporal punishment as a daily routine. They often insisted that if children do not respond to love and gentleness, then they need corporal punishment to be disciplined, otherwise they would not learn how to obey or learn from their mistakes.

The children have become so accustomed with being beaten up or mentally harassed that **they feel learning and corporal punishment go hand in hand**. One child is convinced that it is impossible to abolish corporal punishment because it has been existing since their parents' time and has not stopped until now. The children we interviewed are not only unable to separate school and education from the experience of violence, but **no longer recognise violence as such**.

One child would insist that she was “**not beaten but only hit lightly on her head**” by the teacher, not understanding that hitting on the head is a form of violence. It seems rather obvious that the inability to recognise violence will likely continue into adolescence and adulthood, and probably make those children vulnerable to become victims of violence again or commit violent acts themselves. Experiencing corporal punishment on a regular basis also **makes children “resistant”** to it, and teachers to increase the severity of punishment, leading to an **escalation of violence over time**.

The ambiguity of not liking violence but accepting it as inevitable that we saw among our interviewed children is an indication for what the large body of research on violence against children has established: that children who experience violence against them rationalise it, internalise it and as a result are **more likely become violent perpetrators themselves**. Given the rising concerns about violence both against children and perpetrated by children, we should take into consideration that socially acceptable forms of violence, such as corporal punishment, **teach our children on a large scale that violence is okay**. Such normalised "offline" violence has a much stronger negative impact on children's minds than any violent content on the internet, video games or TV shows.

CASE STUDIES

The boy is from Rajasthan and is threatened to be expelled from school by his teacher on a regular basis. He also faces different types of punishment at home. He and his siblings are often victims of their parents' anger and the frustrations are vented out on the children as they are easy targets. Sometimes both parents and teachers hit the children without them having done anything wrong. In such cases, the siblings did not get any support from their family and are left alone to deal with their problems without any support.

Boy, 6th standard

The girl loves going to school and said she likes all the teachers. But the reason is not because that they teach the children exceptionally well or make learning fun, but because they "do nothing to the children," for example they do household work, knit sweaters, make phone calls, or take selfies during class. The child said that in those instances the children are clueless as to why have they come to school. But some teachers also punish the children with big sticks and slapping the children until they are black and blue. Scolding and humiliation are a common phenomenon. Home is no different. She said "I am mischievous and that is why I get scolded at home. My mother beats me and scolds me sometimes when I am being difficult". Her father has no time for her because he is out working most of the time. She adds further, "When I get punished in school or face any problem I have nowhere to go or no one to share it who can understand me."

Girl, age unknown

The first thing the girl told us about her school is that she doesn't like the food because it has insects in it. She would rather stay hungry than eat anything at school. She likes going to school more than being at home because it's the only way how she can meet her best friend. Her mother does not allow her and her sister to leave the house except for school, because "they are girls and it is not advisable for them to go out and roam everywhere." The girl likes drawing very much and showed us pictures she had made of her friend. Her mother said that she never sees her daughter doing homework, she only sees her drawing in her notebook. The child told us that her teacher Sir beats the boys who didn't do their homework with a stick, but children also get punished when they talk during class and have to stand with their hands raised for the whole class. She doesn't tell her parents anything about school. She would not tell us why and she becomes withdrawn and uncomfortable. Earlier she mentioned that she only confides in her friend who is also her classmate. She revealed that she is scared of her father the most, and her body language told us that she was frightened by this topic.

Girl, 6th standard

When asked about his favourite teacher the boy quickly gave the name of the teacher and the reason given by him was that Ma'am never punishes them and always makes them understand when they are wrong. He told that some of the teachers punish the children severely and he is scared of them. But the boy believes that only children who are "bad" are punished, but those who are "good" are not. He said he has been punished quite a lot of times but he has stopped telling his parents because they don't believe him. He is spanked and slapped by his parents often and even with a stick or rolling pin. He doesn't think it is right to beat children because "even elders can be wrong in their actions." But what he has been taught by his parents is that he should not complain if teachers punish him because they are the parents-at-school and have the right to do whatever they want.

Boy, 5th standard

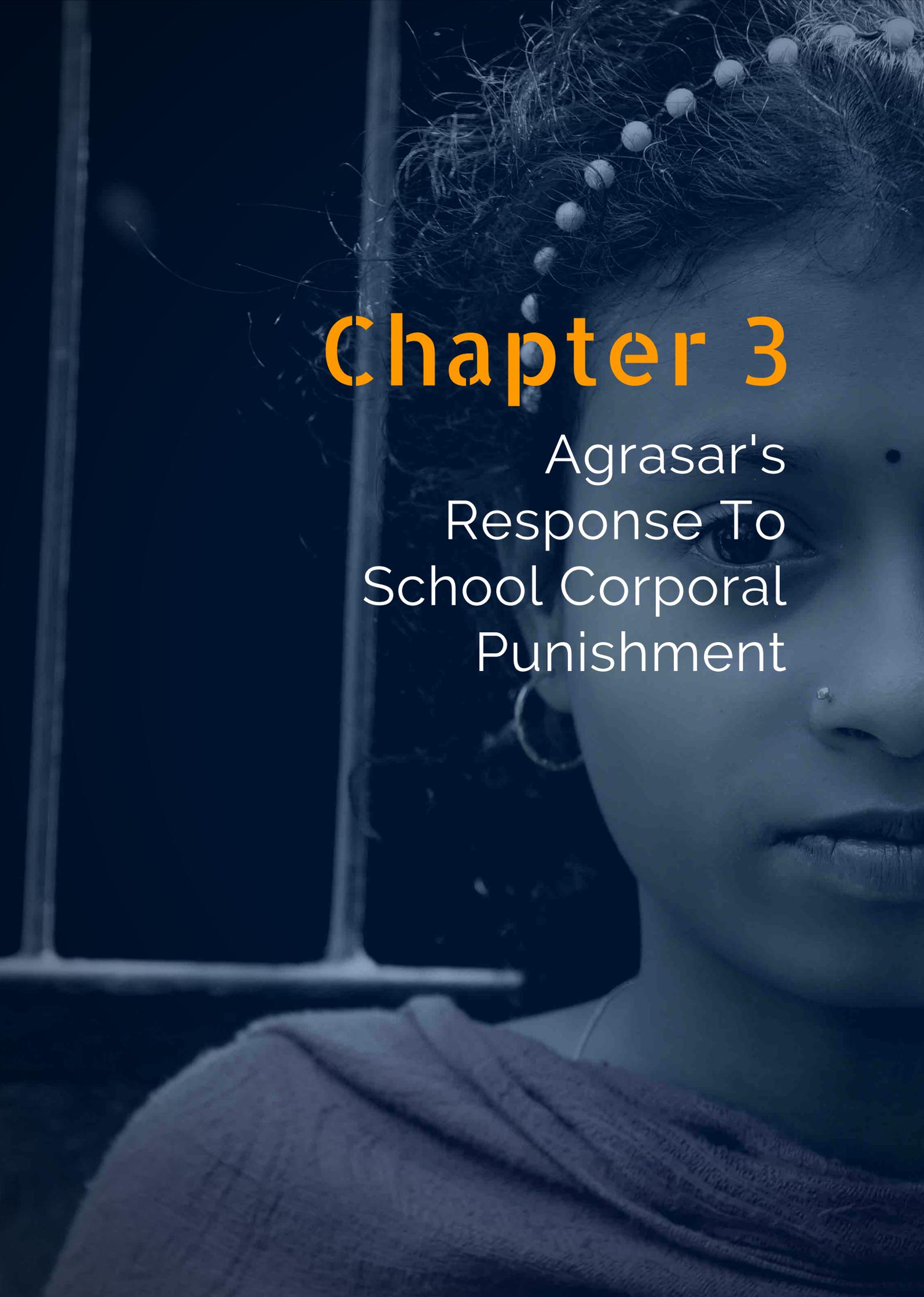
CASE STUDIES

The boy said that he likes school with all the friends, the learning and the playing, but he fears some teachers very much. He said that his class gets two chapters per subject which means 16 chapters a day and Maths has the most work. He slowly admitted that he is also one of those students who run away from school during lunch or even skips the entire day because he would not have completed his homework. However, he said that there is a lady teacher whom they like because she “only slaps gently” and gives less work and also listens to their problems and reasons for not having done homework. He slowly recalled another lady teacher whom he says has never hit any of the children ever since she came to the school. When asked why he finds it very difficult to do his homework, he said that he does not have the guide book. He says that it costs ₹350 and that he cannot afford it. In addition to that, he said that no one is able or willing to lend him the guide book because they are all using it for their own homework. He struggles in Maths and English and was confident that he would be able to finish all his homework if he had the guide book. Our interviewer recommended to take photocopies of the guide book with four pages per sheet which would cost him much less than ₹350. He was very thankful for the idea. When asked about the types of punishment he and his peers get, he said that caning and slapping are the most common and they get it at least two times a day. He started narrating a story of how his friend was beaten on his palm with a long plank of plywood and bled. He added that his English teacher often beats up students for doing homework of other subjects in his class. When asked why they do homework of other subjects in his class, he told us that this teacher would come to class on time only once or twice a week, and the rest of the week, he would come to class just 10-15 minutes before it ends. Since the students know the teacher’s routine, they would do homework of other subjects before he enters. If he catches them, he would beat them up with a stick and spend the remaining time just beating them without taking any class. To make up for such days, he would run through three or four lessons in just one period and give a lot of homework. He said that his parents must not know about these beatings because they would hit them even more. They even ask the school teachers to hit their children and discipline them. He really does not like such punishments at all and wants more time to do work. He said he wants everything to be fair and not blame the students in the end like it happens very often at school and at home.

Boy, 5th standard

The boy lives with his parents and sister in a very small space with poor water facility. They use public washrooms but the condition of the area is not very healthy as there were flies and mosquitos everywhere. Nearby their house was stagnant water and an open landfill, which is the reason why he and his siblings often fall ill and cannot go to school regularly. His favourite teacher is his Math teacher because she teaches very well and he loves doing math. He added that she gives them lots of homework but never punishes them. When asked if there was any teacher he didn’t like he promptly said that he doesn’t like one teacher Ma’am because she beats all the girls in his class until they cry, and that this teacher does not scold or makes them understand but only beats. We asked him what has been done till now about the teacher and he said that “students have complained about her several times to the Head ma’am and now finally she is going to get transferred to somewhere else”.

Boy, 8th standard



Chapter 3

Agrasar's
Response To
School Corporal
Punishment

Chapter 3

About Agrasar

Progressing with the community

Agrasar is a **social impact organisation** (NGO) working with **disadvantaged communities in India** to further equitable access to **safe and enriching education opportunities** for children. Our journey has begun from National Capital Region of India, but our vision is to play a key role in universally eliminating the phenomenon of school corporal punishment.

EDUCATION

Agrasar Bachpan reaches out to **out-of-school children** and helps them attain age-appropriate learning levels, with a larger goal of mainstreaming them into formal schools. Agrasar also builds the capacities of government schools and anganwadi centres to impart quality education

SAFE SCHOOLS

Our initiative Kaagaz Ki Kashti seeks to motivate and empower children, their parents and teachers, and other stakeholders to show **solidarity to eliminate corporal punishment** from the schools of India, and enable them to apply effective, non-violent means to achieve their educational objectives

RESOURCE CENTRE

We believe in sharing and **make available our assets** to those who require them to make a meaningful impact on the lives of children. For example, our school education curriculum that is aligned with National Curriculum Framework, our community awareness program, life-skill education curriculum for children, soft skill coaching, and our teacher training and positive discipline handbook



Chapter 3

Our initiative to eliminate school corporal punishment

How it all began

Kaagaz Ki Kashti is Agrasar's newest initiative, addressing the issue of corporal punishment in the schools of India. Earlier in 2017, our team was celebrating success after we mainstreamed several of our Agrasar Bachpan students into government schools. Our sense of achievement quickly soured when we found out that the **children were beaten up by their teachers on a daily basis**. That is when we decided to launch our solidarity "**Kaagaz Ki Kashti**" to **eliminate corporal punishment in the schools of India**.

Why it is necessary

Unlike other forms of violence against children, corporal punishment is **socially acceptable and remains epidemic** in our classrooms. Parents and teachers consider it an effective method to teach and discipline students, ignoring the **negative effects on children's health**. While most of us agree that India has a problem with violence, we find little awareness that **corporal punishment is in fact violence that comes with the pretext of punishment**. If we want to break the **vicious cycle of violence**, we need to eliminate it from our schools and treat children as human beings and with respect.

Our strategy and objectives

Through our strategic approach we target **all stakeholders that are relevant to eliminate corporal punishment: students**, who need to be aware of their rights and how to build effective relationships with parents, peers and teachers. **Parents**, who need to be sensitised to positively influence their children's education as well as the performance of schools. **Teachers**, who need to be trained in positive discipline methods for managing their classrooms. **Policy-makers**, who should be encouraged to support the implementation of relevant guidelines, as well as the **wider public**, who must debate our social norms and perceptions around violence against children.



Our strategy is guided by three objectives:

- We want to **educate** teachers and parents on negative impact of corporal punishment and the benefits of non-violent methods
- We seek to provide teachers and parents with **resources** to stop abusing children and use positive discipline methods
- We plan to **raise awareness** and create momentum for immediate policy enforcement and long-term social change

Chapter 3

Our work

Our actions

Our vision is that **India's schools are a safe place where children can learn without fear of physical and mental abuse** at the hand of their teachers. Through our work we seek to make this vision a reality.

TEACHER WORKSHOPS

We educate teachers about negative effects of corporal punishment and enable them to adopt **positive discipline** methods. Our prototype training is evolving from being tested in the field



Weekly **life skill education activities** with government school students improve their ability to build relationships with teachers, peers and parents

STUDENT WORKSHOPS

HOMEWORK PROGRAM

Our volunteers help government school students completing their homework, in order to **avoid punishment for incomplete homework**



Through **street plays and group activities** parents learn about resources to support their children's education without violent means

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

STRENGTHEN SMC

We encourage **parents and teachers to work together** in school management committees (SMC) to improve the functioning of their school

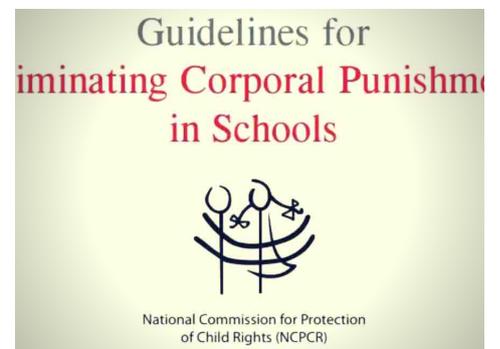


We conduct **social research** in order to understand the drivers and risk factors that lead to school corporal punishment of disadvantaged children

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

POLICY GUIDELINES

We facilitate the implementation of relevant policy guidelines in schools, in particular the **Corporal Punishment Monitoring Cell**



We want school corporal punishment to be **recognised as violence** against children and initiate debate on the issue through **social media**

RAISE AWARENESS

Chapter 3

Collaborations and resources



Agrasar Resource Centre

Our aim is not only to eliminate corporal punishment from government schools in Gurugram, but from all schools in India. To this end, we **develop, test, and make publicly available** a number of resources and assets that can be deployed in other communities across our country, in order to make a lasting positive change in children's lives.

"Good Student" Curriculum

A manual for conducting life-skill-education activities with children to improve relationship building

Community Awareness Program

A manual for educating parents about corporal punishment, child rights and positive discipline methods

Teacher Workshops

A package of materials to train teachers on positive discipline techniques for their classroom

Case Handling Protocol

An indicative protocol for parents and teachers to document and respond to incidents of school corporal punishment

Conclusion

This report has provided our readers with insight into the problem of school corporal punishment in India - how it continues to plague our classrooms despite its legal ban, how in particular **marginalised children** experience it, what risk factors make them vulnerable, and how it makes them feel. The findings are alarming. Children from low socio-economic background start their life and their education from a position of grave disadvantage and thus would **need more support and more help from their teachers than the average child**. But what happens is quite the opposite. Instead of being nurtured by their teachers, children in government schools are **mentally and physically abused on a daily basis** and throughout their entire school career. Both “mild” and brutal physical abuse as well as verbal violence are part of their daily school routine. The maltreatment continues in the children’s homes, given that **most parents approve of corporal punishment** and use it themselves.

The reasons why underprivileged children are subjected to corporal punishment by teachers have nothing to do with academic performance or their behaviour. Instead, it is their **low-income background combined with little formal education of their parents, and being part of the "migrant" community** that makes them vulnerable to violence by teachers. **Government schools act as a breeding ground for physical and mental abuse** at the hand of teachers, instead of protecting children against it. And lastly, our **social norms and culture of disregard** for children create an environment in which especially children from lower classes are considered unworthy of humane treatment and easily become victims of corporal punishment and other forms of abuse. The fact that corporal punishment by teachers destroys children’s self esteem and makes them internalise violence as an acceptable behaviour, feeds into the **vicious cycle of violence** in our country.

Nothing good comes out of corporal punishment and it is about time that we start acting to eliminate this practice from our schools and from our homes. We at Agrasar would like to **cordially invite you to be part of this effort and raise awareness for this issue**. If we are serious about our children being our future, we must protect them from violence now.

Eliminating corporal punishment from schools is our responsibility as a society.

Annex

Detailed Research Methodology

This report seeks to understand the drivers behind school corporal punishment in disadvantaged communities and to initiate debate in India

This report highlights the experiences of Gurugram's disadvantaged children with school corporal punishment and the risk factors that make them vulnerable. The objective is to understand the practice and the drivers behind school corporal punishment affecting this particular group of children. In addition, our insight wants to initiate debate on the practice of school corporal punishment in the wider context of violence in India. Low-income communities in India struggle with many things and fight for mere survival on a daily basis. In light of this, corporal punishment is usually not perceived to be their "biggest problem." We seek to highlight that this perception is misleading and that school corporal punishment as a pervasive form of violence against children should be a matter of huge concern for every community, however deprived or affluent, and hence for our society at large.

A few studies looked into the magnitude of school corporal punishment, but there has been no systematic research on the drivers behind it, nor why and how different groups of children are affected

School corporal punishment is a subset of violence against children. Scholars and researchers, advocacy organisations, and government agencies all over the world have conducted numerous and insightful research and studies over the past decades. The evidence for the negative effects of violence against children on their physical and mental wellbeing as well as for their behaviour is overwhelming, and the implications for families and communities and society at large are well-documented. Most of the studies, however, focus on corporal punishment by caregivers or family members at home, while there is relatively fewer research on corporal punishment by school teachers. Especially in India, where the practice is epidemic, school corporal punishment is an under-researched topic. There have been only a few larger studies which have thoroughly looked into school corporal punishment and have provided valuable insight especially into the magnitude of the problem. Also, there have been a handful of studies with a focus on certain regions, such as Andhra Pradesh or Delhi. However, systematic research with a more differentiated view on certain communities or groups of children who are particularly vulnerable to school corporal punishment is currently lacking. Although the flagship study by MWCD ten years ago had already indicated that besides geographies there is also significant variation between certain communities, it appears that until today the research agenda has hardly picked up on this. This report makes a first move towards addressing this knowledge gap by providing insight into how disadvantaged children in Gurugram are affected by the practice of corporal punishment in government schools.

We collected our data through different qualitative methods of social research involving children, their parents and government school teachers

We have conducted our qualitative research in communities whose inhabitants have migrated to Gurugram from other states and with whom we have existing trusted relationships through our community learning centres. We have worked with children attending government schools, their parents and government school teachers to investigate their experiences with and attitudes towards corporal punishment.

Ice-breaker, role play and personal interviews with children

We have investigated children's experiences with school corporal punishment through a survey with 521 children and 100 parents, a role play group exercise and subsequent debrief with 29 children, personal interviews with 26 children, and transcribed interviews with 14 children. Getting access to children and families and obtaining permission from their parents was relatively easy due to our ongoing work within those communities. We invited 29 children aged between 8 and 15 who attend government schools in the area to participate in a 1.5 hours role play session which took place in the premises of Agrasar's Islampur community centre and was facilitated by two volunteers, one of which led the activity and the other observed and took notes. The role play was initiated by an ice-breaking activity with the objective to welcome and "warm up" our conversation with the children and give them the opportunity to familiarise with our staff and get comfortable around them. Since not all the children knew each other we began the first part of the ice-breaker with an enjoyable "get to know you" game that is very common in India: the "Rain Clap Game." Children were asked to introduce themselves by name, class and where they live and study, by denoting the sound of rain using their fingers to clap. The facilitator first demonstrated how to use their fingers clap according to different instructions - drizzling (one or two fingers), normal rain (three or four fingers slowly) and strong rain (strong clapping of the hands). Through this fun exercise our researchers gained the full attention of the children and made them listen to our instructions carefully. In the second part of the icebreaker, the facilitators then gave an open stage to all the children to showcase their talent or share any poem, story, etc. with the group, with the aim to further get to know each other and our researchers.

After the ice-breaker, the same group of children was engaged in the main activity of the teacher-student role play where both parts were played by children. Our conductor began by explaining the activity and how it should be performed. The students were given their scenarios through a random selection based on chits drawn from a series with several scenarios written, and the role play session began with the scenario where students came to school not having done their homework. Our field researchers ensured that the role play was conducted in a gender-sensitive way, including both girls and boys evenly in the authoritative role of the teacher. After completing each scenario our researchers asked the children whether the scenes had happened to them in reality at school and if so, whether other students shared similar experiences. The exercise was repeated five times, whereas the discussion of the children's personal experiences was carefully guided by our staff, cautiously encouraging shy children but mindful that not all of them were ready to come forward. Throughout the role play, when children shared their experiences with corporal punishment, our volunteers debriefed the children on corporal punishment, asking them about their views and particularly if they are okay with it, how they feel about it, whether they want it to continue or not, and what reactions and emotions corporal punishment triggered in them. Despite the risk of compromising the purity of the "raw data" gained from the children, we used this opportunity to consolidate the information provided by the children and educate them about corporal punishment in a child-appropriate way. This was a conscious decision, given that Agrasar's primary interest is to empower children through our effort against school corporal punishment, not to excel in data purity.

Through personal interviews with 26 children aged between 7 and 14 years we have further investigated what is unique about each child with regard to corporal punishment at school. To this end, the interviewers first did a "general screening" covering the child's demographic profile, circumstances and feelings towards school and homework in particular, whether the child is scared of a particular teacher or if s/he has a favourite teacher and why, types and reasons for corporal punishment, if they get any form of encouragement by teachers, any support or actions taken by parents, and how the child spends the day after school ends. From the child's responses during this broader screening, our researchers then went on to "dig deeper" into certain issues. For example, this brought about that a child is corporally punished for reasons of racial discrimination, or due to disability. In addition to personal interviews, we have also used 14 transcribed interviews with children that were obtained through an earlier survey in Gurugram.

Focus group discussions and seasonal calendar session with parents

We have conducted focus group discussions and a seasonal calendar exercise with 29 parents of children who attend government schools in Gurugram. The objective of the focus group discussion was to understand the perspective of parents and their role in corporal punishment through various questions on their type of occupation, job satisfaction, challenges that they face, what ways they adopt to discipline their children and challenges it involves and what are their perspective on corporal punishment. Through this session we have not only gained insight into parents' individual views but also into how the community thinks about the issue, the range of opinions and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variations that exist in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices. During the focus group discussion, our field researchers investigated in particular what circumstances make parents discipline their children and in what form, and whether they see any effects of such disciplining. Following the focus group discussions our volunteers conducted a seasonal calendar exercise with parents, with the objective to understand the socio-economic background of the family, their migration pattern, occupation, challenges they face in their job, what resources they have available, their income etc. This has been particularly useful to understand the income and expenditure patterns in families, vulnerabilities and assets, and their health and educational situation, all of which provide essential information for locating stress and vulnerabilities that can point us at attitudes towards violence against children.

Informal interviews and group discussions with teachers

We conducted three group interviews with in total 12 government school teachers in Gurugram, with the objective to get their views on the issues and challenges they face as government school teachers, the use of corporal punishment and their job satisfaction. For our first interview we started with one teacher in the principal's office, to ensure that other teachers would notice our activity and casually enter the conversation. After a while, 6 teachers had joined us and were more than happy to discuss. For the other two group interviews we made appointments. Since teachers in government schools are dealing with a lot of admin work and are often subject to criticism, the informal setting of the conversation and the focus on their problems and challenges has proven an effective way to initiate discussion. While teachers were very friendly and welcoming to our interviewers, we have remaining doubts as to how truthful they were, given that they know we are the "NGO people" and may feel that we were intruding in their business.

Research involving victimised children is difficult and sensitive

Our research is investigating school corporal punishment which is a form of violence against children inflicted upon them by people who are in a position of authority, respect and trust. Working with children who have been subjected to violence is an inherently difficult matter, and our researchers were cautious to collect data in line with best practice standards for such sensitive settings. This included that our volunteers were open and transparent with the children and their parents about the purpose of our research, i.e. to gather their experiences and views on corporal punishment, and obtained their informed consent to be interviewed.

We assured all our interviewees that the personal details will be treated confidentially. We provided assurance that none of the interviewed teachers and children will know about each other, to ensure that neither children nor teachers may face consequences. Our choices from the variety of qualitative research formats were restricted to face-to-face activities with both the children and their parents. Due to the poor quality of education that they have received, their ability to understand questionnaires, to read and to write are limited. Therefore we chose to conduct a role play, personal interviews and focus group discussions to collect our data.

At the beginning of each activity with children our researchers requested their assurance only to tell the truth, a practice that has proven to be effective for obtaining truthful answers from children. The interview questions were open-ended and based on our structured interview guide, while our field researchers were constantly monitoring if the children were feeling any distress and if they were willing to disclose their experiences. Never was any child asked to disclose anything or continue the conversation if s/he felt uncomfortable.

Reflecting on the role play activity, we have come to the conclusion that the teacher-student scenario entails some difficulty. Involving children in a fun exercise that depicts a violent situation could re-traumatise victimised children or normalise violence in a way that children enjoy acting violently or mean. We have concluded that we will use role plays for qualitative research purposes only with scenarios that do not directly relate to the classroom or school experience.

Lastly, from a data quality and data purity perspective it has proven difficult for our research staff to only collect data from children, without providing them with any advice on how to deal with stress, emotions and challenging situations, especially when the child's need was obvious and easy to satisfy. For example, a boy was reporting that homework would be easier to complete with a guide book which he could not afford. Our researcher suggested that he could make a less expensive photocopy, for which the child was very grateful. In cases like this, where a simple suggestion could ease a child's struggle, we will always decide against data purity and in favour of making a difference in a child's life, however small, because Agrasar's main interest is to empower and support children.

Our research offers valuable insight into the plight of disadvantaged children but systematic and large-scale research on corporal punishment is necessary

This report cannot fill the existing research gap, nor can it provide a systematic and comprehensive view of all groups of disadvantaged children that face higher risk to experience this type of violence. However, it does provide insight into one particular group of disadvantaged children in the geography of Gurugram. This enables us to get a more differentiated view on the practice and drivers behind corporal punishment, the attitudes of the affected children, their parents and of teachers. This gives us indication as to what mechanisms are driving the continued use of corporal punishment in particular settings and especially, what are the risk factors that make certain groups of children more vulnerable than others. If we have an in-depth understanding of the practice and drivers of corporal punishment in one setting we are better equipped to identify similar correlations in other settings, provided that caution is applied when generalising from our findings. This will enable us to determine more effective and more targeted responses, provide relief to affected communities and to design incentives for teachers to use alternative methods.

This report makes a first step into this direction, by looking into a particular group of disadvantaged children. We need more large-scale as well as targeted research into certain communities in order to understand how the legal ban of corporal punishment can be effectively implemented on the ground. We have a broad understanding of the risk factors that make children in India and elsewhere vulnerable to violence, including gender, disability, ethnic and social background, religion, poverty, disability, authoritarian culture and others. However, we need to understand which of those factors are decisive and how they interact with each other. With regard to corporal punishment, for example, we know that in African countries the practice is often driven by gender and sexual violence against girl children. The data in India indicates, however, that gender is not the main influencing factor. In Jamaica, the United States and South Africa, corporal punishment is largely driven by "conservative" or literal interpretations of the Bible text, while in China and Hong Kong insufficient qualification and training of kindergarten staff appears to be a dominating issue.

For the context of India, we know that all these factors can play a role, but we do not know to what extent and how exactly. We have indicative views as to what forces might drive corporal punishment and what incentives may motivate teachers and parents to abandon it, but we are far from certainty. We are also light years away from having in place effective policy and law enforcement responses, teacher training and promotion systems, school governance, child and family support services and quality public education, all of which are important for eliminating corporal punishment both in homes and schools. By initiating the debate and raising awareness, we are hopeful that the research agenda will reignite and provide more insight in how to deliver the above mentioned understanding of drivers and responses to corporal punishment. We also hope that more people will understand the relevance of corporal punishment for perpetuating the vicious cycle of violence in our society, and that they will get involved in this long and strenuous journey to eliminate it.

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