

What Filipino Mothers Say: Disciplinary Practices of Mothers in Rural Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies had pointed out that physical punishment accounted for the majority of child-rearing practices in the Philippines. This study explored the actual practices of Filipino mothers in two rural areas in southern Iloilo. The data were gathered from January to February 2006. It involved 80 mothers who had children aged 0-12 years old. A structured interview was used to gather data from these women. Results of the study had shown that 80% (n=80) of mothers had punished their children physically. The most common reason for mothers for punishing their children was naughtiness (41%). This was followed by disobedience (37%). When mothers were asked about what they felt after applying physical punishment on their children, they reported negative feelings such as guilt, regret, or feeling bad. With regards to appropriate physical punishment on young children, 71% (n=80) of mothers agreed to pinching while 65% to spanking. Hanging the child upside down or throwing hard objects on children even when they did something grave were seen by all mothers as a form of child abuse. This study supported the general contention that physical punishment is an important aspect of disciplinary strategies of Filipino mothers.

Keywords: Filipino mothers, physical punishment, discipline, child-rearing strategies

INTRODUCTION

Discipline and punishment often go hand in hand. It seemed difficult to discuss the concept of discipline without tackling punishment as well. Research done across cultures define discipline as an act done primarily to teach children positive values while punishment is often described as a strategy a person may choose to use when disciplining an individual (Carey, 1994, in Saunders and Goddard, 1999). Punishment, as described by Carey (1994), sounds neutral and almost synonymous to discipline. However, when one examines the two constructs closely, discipline evokes positive values or warm and loving parents while punishment calls to mind negative disposition or hostile and angry parents (Saunders and Goddard, 1999).

In the Philippines, the blurring of concepts between discipline and punishment (physical) is very noticeable. In fact, according to the Save the Children Report (2005) mentioned in Beasley, et al. (2006), the most important feature of literatures in the Philippines was the blurring of the two categories - discipline or physical punishment and child abuse. It could be noted that the said report used discipline and physical punishment as if they are interchangeable (discipline or

physical punishment). ‘Discipline’ in the Filipino context referred to physical punishment usually in the form of spanking or beating with the sole purpose of teaching the child to behave and internalize good values. However, in some cases, discipline is often used as a justification for the use of physical punishment on children and even for those physical punitive measures that could be already considered as child abuse. Research evidence revealed that the concept of a good Filipino parent was someone who knows how to ‘discipline’ his/her children (Beazley, et al., 2006). It is not surprising, therefore, to find secondary data revealing that Filipinos’ child-rearing strategies were largely dependent on physical punitive measures (Protacio-de Castro, 2005). Many Filipino parents believed that pain is necessary for learning to take place (Protacio-de Castro, 2005).

The Filipino parents’ use of physical punishment as a disciplinary measure arises from the cultural belief in their absolute control and authority over their children (Ong, 2001). This is imbedded in the Filipinos’ faith in the sanctity of the family (Ong, 2001). The Filipino belief in parents’ absolute control over their children has been shared by many adults in the world. A greater proportion of Americans (84%), for instance, believed that “a good spanking is sometimes necessary” (Straus, 1994). In fact, consistent with this belief, 90% of American parents used corporal punishment on toddlers and more than half continued this into the early teens (Straus, 1994).

Why children are punished

Children are punished for a variety of reasons. In a study about Swaziland children’s views and experiences of corporal punishment (Clacherty, et al., 2005), it was revealed that:

Boys aged 6-12 years old were punished for breaking things, stealing, not looking after livestock properly, and going out to play instead of working or playing out too late. Young children, mainly girls, were punished for issues related to household chores. The same children reported being physically punished in school for making noise or talking in class, coming late to school, not completing work, not doing work correctly, failing tests, wearing incorrect uniform items, dropping litter, losing books or leaving them at home (p. 3).

In a similar study in Colombia (Pineda, et al., 2005), reasons given for the punishment included disobedience, not doing homework or poor performance in school, and talking back or being rude. In Chile, defying attitudes, not studying, and running away from home were mentioned by adults who participated in the survey as reasons why they punished their children (Vargas, et al., 1993). In China, reasons for children being punished physically in schools were being late, speaking or eating in class, and not doing their homework (Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 1997). In Northern Ireland, children reported that adults punished the child for the following reasons: disobedience, forgot about something or done

something wrong, and because adults were angry or dislike the child (Horgan, 2002). In Cambodia, among the common reasons for children to be punished were:

being very naughty, fighting with each other, disobedience, making lots of mistakes, coming late to class, making a lot of noise, not doing school homework, having bad manners, or playing during study time, beating other students, disturbing the teacher, doing homework incorrectly, and the like (Miles & Varin, 2005).

In Eastern Africa, children were subjected to physical punishments because of “bad behavior”, of which six were related to lack of respect for elders and parents (Barnes, 1998). Similarly, children in South and Central Asia were punished for not agreeing to adults’ views, for challenging norms of tradition and culture, for not going to school or sometimes for no reason at all (Bhandari, 2005). Interestingly, some Tibetan children also expressed a parallel perception of why they were punished. According to a survey conducted by the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (1997) some respondents stated that they were punished for no reason, and two reported being beaten because the teacher was in a bad mood. Children respondents in a study carried out by Save the Children Northern Ireland (2002) also reinforced some Tibetan children’s opinion about why adults punish children. One in four children (especially those between 9 and 11 years old) thought that children are hit because of how the adult is feeling and not because of what the child does (Horgan, 2002).

Rationale for using physical punishment on children

Many children across cultures have in one way or another experienced physical punishment. Traditionally, it was accepted as a sound means of disciplining a child and adopted without question (Saunders and Goddard, 1999). However, with more and more reports of fatalities brought about by excessive physical punishment by some parents and educators, it has become the source of much heated debate in many societies.

Parents and educators have often justified physical punishment as being for the good of the children. They would reason that it was done to teach good values or good behavior among the youngsters and improve their learning. However, research evidence had shown that there was no connection between scholastic achievement of pupils and the use of physical punishment (“Study on Violence against Children, UN”, 2005). In the same manner, there was no proof that it was an effective deterrent of bad behavior (UN, 2005). Yet, despite these research findings parents and educators across the globe has continued on using physical punishment in the name of pedagogy.

Disciplining children has often been perceived as adults’ duty given the power bestowed upon them by society. Such belief often stems from cultural norms and religious sources. The popular biblical passage “spare the rod and spoil the child” for example is often used as a rationale for inflicting physical pain on

children (Saunders & Goddard, 1999). The main message behind this religious saying has often been lost in the literal interpretation given by many Christians. It has been frequently thought that the bible condones physical punishment in children to teach them a lesson. It should be noted that this passage was written on the premise that parents love their children and would do anything to protect and raise them into good Christians. Research showed that the exact same word for rod in Hebrew was referred to as “word of God” in the Old Testament (Hart, 2006).

The good shepherd’s rod, for instance, is never used for beating sheep. Instead, it is used to ward off intruders; to count sheep as they “pass under the rod” (Lev. 27:32; Ezek. 20”37); to part the wool to examine for defects, disease, or wounds; and to nudge sheep gently from going in the wrong direction. The rod is viewed as protection. In perhaps, the most memorable reference to a rod in the scriptures, David, who was once a shepherd himself, said: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Ps. 23:4; italics added), a passage we would never confuse with any kind of harsh punishment or beating (pp.4-4).

Indeed, the faith in the usefulness of physical punishment in teaching children to behave despite contrasting research evidence is still strong in many countries. In fact, there is also evidence on the use of extreme physical punishment methods. In the Caribbean, and Jamaica in particular, child-rearing and disciplinary practices that would warrant child abuse charges in the Western societies were rampant (Smith and Mosby, 2003). In Egypt, although physical punishment is prohibited in schools, a substantial proportion of boys (80.0%) and girls (61.5%) incurred physical punishment at the hand of their teachers (Youssef, Attia, & Kamel, 1998b). Moreover, 37.4% of children in the same study were disciplined physically at home in the form of beating and a few were even burned and tied (Youssef, et al., 1998a). Similarly, a study in Santiago de Chile also showed that violence on children was prevalent (Vargas, et al., 1995). In fact, 80.4% of children in a public school and 56.7% in a private school who participated in the study were found to have experienced physical punishment (Vargas, et al., 1995). Kuwaiti parents also agreed with physical punishment as a means of disciplining a child especially in severe misbehavior like sniffing glue and using drugs (77%) (Qasem, Mustafa, Kazem, & Shah, 1998). Similarly, approximately 40% of Canadian parents also believed that physical punishment is necessary as a means of discipline (Ateah & Parkin, 1982).

Despite the widespread advocacy against physical punishment, parents and teachers alike in many countries have held on to the antiquated belief in their moral obligation to ‘discipline’ their children. They have often rationalized their practice by pointing out their experience in physical punishment as a child and how it has not harmed them.

Many researches claimed that people who experienced physical punishment as children are more likely to use similar punishment on their own children. Gofin, Levav, & Kohn (2004) for example, pointed out that experience in

physical punishment was associated with parents' favoring its use as a means of discipline. Similarly, Buntain-Ricklefs, et al. (1994) showed that having experienced a certain type of physical punishment was a highly significant risk factor for currently approving of that type of punishment. Moreover, even adolescents who were spanked by their own mothers were more approving of this kind of discipline method (Deater-Deckard, 2003). These only confirmed the common impression that experience in physical punishment influence the likelihood of whether or not an individual will endorse or practice such punitive measure in their children.

However, not all adults who experienced physical punishment as a child agree or practice such child-rearing strategy on their youngsters. Although research evidence had shown that there is a great likelihood for someone who had experienced physical punishment to perpetuate the act when he/she becomes a parent, it is not inevitable for them to do otherwise (Saunders & Goddard, 1999). Researches demonstrated that an individual's perception of the physical punishment experienced greatly affect the likelihood of him/her using the same parenting style. Saunders & Goddard, (1999) suggested that those victims of physical punishment perhaps most likely to perpetuate its use are those who experienced sub-abusive discipline. Such punishments are potentially harmful to children's health but not serious enough to be rejected by them as unacceptable (Bower and Knutson, 1996 in Saunders & Goddard, 1999). Bower and Knutson (1996) clearly illustrated that those who did not consider themselves as abused were less likely to classify events as physically abusive as those who labeled themselves abused. The former are in more danger to perpetuate the act of physically punishing their children.

For as long as society accepts and sanctions the use of physical punishment in children both legally and socially, such disciplinary practice will continuously encourage intergenerational perpetuation of the act. The young people will grow up thinking that violence is acceptable to solve conflict and that it is an appropriate form of discipline (Saunders & Goddard, 1999).

Parents state of mind and their use of physical punishment on children

There are research evidences suggesting that parental use of physical punishment was correlated with parents' cognition, particularly attitude towards physical punishment, perception of the seriousness and intent of the child's misbehavior and maternal anger towards their child's misbehavior (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). This implied that parents could have different reactions or disciplinary measures for similar transgression depending on their current state of mind at the time the child committed a violation. This simply showed that parents use physical punishment not because they want to instill good values in their children or make their offspring learn from the experience. In many cases, it's more due to appeasing their own emotional state partly brought about by the child's misdemeanor. This research finding can be useful in establishing parenting educational programming that is directed at decreasing the rates of physical punishment and subsequently child physical abuse (Ateah & Durrant, 2005). In the

same manner, there is a relationship between parental attitudes on the use of physical punishment and opinions of the positive effects of physical punishment on children's behavior (Kelly, Weir, & Fearnow, (1985). Kelly, et al., (1985) demonstrated that the more positive parents' attitudes are on the use of physical punishment the more likely that they would believe that it would improve their children's behavior and academic performance.

In many studies that discussed parental beliefs on physical punishments, attitudes and actual practice were not always consistent. In fact, one study in Chile showed that although parents declared that child battering should never be used and it was useless as an educational tool, the majority of them admitted to battering their children (Vargas, et al., 1995).

In other literatures, attitude predicted behavior. A study of 132 mothers in America, for instance, revealed that attitude towards spanking were significantly correlated with subsequent spanking behavior and mothers' attitude showed stability over time as well (Vittrup, Holden, & Buck, 2006). In a similar study in Canada, parental attitude toward physical punishment was found to be an important predictor in its use with children (Ateah, & Parkin, 2002). Similarly, another study in America revealed that belief and practice of spanking were highly correlated (Socolar & Stein, 1995). Additionally, mothers believed more strongly in spanking for dangerous misbehaviors than for annoying ones and this belief in spanking and negative approach was stronger for older toddlers (Socolar & Stein, 1995). Moreover, a study in Southeastern Brazil reported that parents/caretakers that believed in corporal punishment as a child-rearing method used physical aggression towards their children more frequently (Vitolo, Fleitlich-Bilyk, Grodman, & Bordin, 2005). This is supported by researches conducted in Costa Rica and Santiago de Chile (Lopez, et al., 2000) and Mexico (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998). In the former, research findings revealed a positive relationship between frequency of physical punishment used and parents' belief in its effectiveness (Lopez, et al., 2000) and in the latter it showed that authoritarian parenting style (mothers' beliefs concerning the effective use of physical punishment and mothers' lack of disciplinary skills) was the most important factor influencing mothers' use of physical punishment (Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998).

Most of the research findings aforementioned confirmed the common impression that attitude and practice are related. They seemed to suggest that the more favorable parents are towards the use of physical punishment on children, the more likely that they would utilize such punitive measure in response to their children's misdemeanor.

METHODOLOGY

This paper reports major findings of a research which was conducted in January to February 2006. Participants of the study came from selected rural barangays in southern Iloilo. This research was approved by the barangay chairman of selected barangays.

The Process

The participants of the study were all mothers from two rural barangays in the southern part of Iloilo. They were recruited through their barangay captains and kagawad members who facilitated the survey. Mothers' assent was solicited before they were interviewed. The purpose and nature of the research were explained to them as well as how the data will be analyzed. They were all assured that their responses to the questions will be treated anonymously and it will only be used for academic purposes. They were also informed that should they feel like they didn't want to continue with the interview, they were free to leave at any time and without any condition. None of the selected mothers declined to participate in the study and all of them stayed until the completion of the interview process.

A research assistant was hired to help in the documentation of the interview. She also helped in the filling out of the information sheet that contained questions regarding the participant's socio-demographic data. After each interview, the main researcher and the assistant discussed and filled out the data sheet assigned to each participant. The data sheet contained questions that were used in the interview. Answers written in the data sheet were conferred with the concerned participant at the end of the interview session to ensure that notes taken were consistent with what he/she had mentioned during the interview.

The Instrument

An information sheet that contained questions asking basic information such as age, course, occupation, number of family members living together in the same household, number of children, religion, and monthly income was prepared before the interview. Participants were asked to fill out this form. The research assistant helped those who did not feel like writing the data sheet themselves. An open-ended questionnaire was also prepared to guide the interview process. This questionnaire included questions such as: (1) Have you ever punished your child physically in the last six months? If yes, what are these punishments? (2) What did your child do that made you punish them? (3) How did you feel after punishing your child?

The Sample

The sample was selected from mothers living in two rural barangays in southern Iloilo. The locale of the study was chosen because of their accessibility to the researchers and presence of many mothers with children below 12 years old.

The average age of participants was 37.8. The youngest mother was 21 years old and the oldest was 59. The average number of children each mother had was four (4) and the average number of people living in the same household including the participant was six (6). When it comes to educational background, the majority (64%) had at least some college education. Only 1.2% or 13 mothers did not finish elementary (see Table 1). As to their occupation, more than half (59.3%)

were plain housewives while 8.7% worked as public school teachers, engineers, and government employees. Most mothers came from a single-earner family with the husband as the primary breadwinner. Only one of them was an overseas Filipino worker (OFW). She was only home for a few weeks' vacation. The rest of the group were either full-time barangay officials or worked as vendors, laundrywoman, and dressmakers. Based on the average monthly income which was only about 4,279 pesos, these mothers belonged to poor families given that the average number of family members including them was six (6).

RESULTS

Results had shown that as the child grows older, the likelihood of physically hurting children decreases. In fact, mothers who reported to have punished their children physically were those with young children that ranged from 0-10 years old.

What mothers do

When mothers were asked whether they use physical punishment on their children, 80% (64) of them admitted that they had done it. The most common physical punishment handed to children was pinching. In fact, all of the 64 mothers had pinched their children while 43% (34) had spanked them. Hitting children's hands with a stick and slightly hitting children's heads were not common with only 5% (4) and 3% (4) prevalence, respectively. When mothers were asked what compelled them to punish their children physically, the most common reason they reported was naughtiness(41%), followed by disobedience (37%). Naughtiness in this context referred to doing silly things when adults were having a serious talk, making younger siblings cry, fighting with siblings for no reason, and nonstop running inside the house even when told to stop. Disobedience, on the other hand, referred to not obeying requests of older members of the family such as grandparent, parents, ate and kuya; not listening to parents' or adults' advice and disobeying rules and regulations of the family.

The results also showed that mothers who had children aged 0-6 were more likely to use physical punishment than those mothers with older children. In fact, all of the 64 mothers who had resorted to physical punishment as a disciplinary measure had children whose age fall between 0-6 years old. In addition, those (20%, n=80) who reported that they have not used physical punishment on their children in the last six months had children who were much older (10-12 years old).

What mothers feel

When mothers were asked about what they felt after punishing their children physically, all 80 of them reported negative feelings afterwards. In fact, 43% (n=80) said that they regretted hurting their child and 33% (n=80) felt sorry for the child, however they felt that it was needed to make the latter learn a lesson. All of the 64 mothers who physically punished their children believed that sometimes it is necessary to hurt these young ones in order to instill some values in them. As

what most of them said: *“Tig-a sila ulo. Hindi sila mamati sa imo kung hindi mo sila pag hanuton o kusim.”* (They are stubborn. They will not listen to you unless you spank or pinch them). But they also agreed that physical punishment on children must have some limitations. They all said that parents or adult members of the family must never hit the child on his head or nape because these are vulnerable parts of the body. According to them, hitting the child on vulnerable parts of the body is tantamount to child abuse. *“Okay lang hanuton o hampasun mo ang bata sa kamot o sa batiis niya pero nungka ka gid magpatupa sa ila ulo ukun tangkugu kay child abuse na ina sya. Dayun basi mamung-an mo sila kag mapatay mo pa...”* (It’s okay to spank or hit the child’s hands or legs but never hit their head or nape because that is already child abuse. You might kill them in the process.) Mothers also mentioned that when they punished their children physically it was always with the intention of molding these youngsters into good citizens of the future. They even quoted a bible verse that says, “sparing the rod, spoiling the child”. They all thought that this verse only showed that God allowed parents to beat their children in order to teach them a lesson. Therefore, although it pained them to see their child cry when they pinch or hit the latter, they felt that they have no choice since non-physical punishment such as reprimand, advice, withdrawal of what the child likes, and the like were not effective.

What mothers think

When asked about whether using physical punishment on children was justifiable, all 64 mothers who practiced such disciplinary measure reported that it was only justifiable when non-physical disciplinary measures such as reprimand, withdrawal of something the child likes, warning or advises did not work. Although all of the mothers agreed that non-physical disciplinary measures must be exhausted first before resorting to physical punishment, they also admitted that there were times when they just couldn’t help themselves because some children were just too naughty. This was especially true for children aged three to six years old.

With regard to what is an appropriate physical punishment on young children, 71% (n=80) of mothers agreed to pinching while 65% (n=80) to spanking. Hanging the child upside down or throwing hard objects on children even when they did something grave were seen by all mothers as a form of child abuse. This study supported the general contention that physical punishment is an important aspect of disciplinary strategies of Filipino mothers.

DISCUSSION

The result of the study revealed that 80% (n=80) of mothers who participated in the study used physical punishment to discipline their children. This is consistent with findings of previous researches which also showed physical punitive measure as the most common strategy used by parents to correct children’s bad behavior (Ateah & Parkin, 1982; Beazley, et al., 2006; Dela Cruz, in Protacio-de Castro, 2005; Qasem, Mustafa, Kazem & Shah, 1998; Smith & Mosby, 2003; Straus, 1994; and Vitolo, Fleitlich-Bilyk, Grodman, & Bordin, 2005). Almost all of

the studies mentioned above were conducted in other countries. This only implies that the use of physical punishment like spanking is common across cultures. However, unlike the other countries like USA (Straus, 1994) and Canada (Ateah & Parkin, 1982), spanking only came out as the second most common disciplinary strategy, next to pinching. Pinching was seldom used by parents in other culture. Most of the time, non-Filipino parents would use either hitting or spanking. Perhaps, pinching is a Filipino ‘thing’.

When mothers in the study were asked what made them punish their children with the use of physical punitive measure, their reasons were also similar to that given by parents in other countries. Like their Cambodian (Miles & Varin, 2005), Colombian (Pineda, et al., 2005) and Irish (Horgan, 2002) counterparts, they also punished their children for being naughty (41%) and disobedient (37%). None of the parents in the study punished their children for school-related problems such as not doing home works, not studying, cutting classes, or getting low grades. However, in the abovementioned studies as well as in China (Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 1997), Chile (Vargas, et al., 1993), Swaziland (Clacherty, et al., 2005), and South and Central Asian countries (Bhandari, 2005), school-related misdemeanor (such as not attending classes, not studying, not doing home works, poor performance or low grades) were cited as one of the major reasons why children were physically punished.

Naughtiness in this study also referred to disrespecting adults. Since it came out as one of the major reasons for mothers to use punitive measures on their children, it only implies that Filipino parents give importance to respect for elders. This attitude is also shared by Eastern African parents. According to Barnen (1998), East African children were often given physical punishment due to bad behavior and six of which were related to lack of respect for elders and parents.

When mothers in the study were asked what they felt after punishing their children physically, all of them reported that they felt bad about it but that they have to do it to teach their children a lesson. This belief reflects the Filipino culture which assumed that ‘discipline’ is an absolute right of parents (Ong, 2001). In fact, according to the literature review of Beazley, et al. (2006), Filipino parents would feel guilty of child abuse if they did not ‘discipline’ their children. According to the study of De La Cruz (as cited in Protacio-de Castro, 2005), physical punishment accounted for the majority of these ‘disciplinary’ strategies. This was also supported by Protacio-de Castro (2005) in her study wherein she stated that parents in the Philippines believed that children must feel the pain for learning to take place. Perhaps, this may have something to do with the popular biblical passage “spare the rod and spoil the child” which is often used as a rationale for inflicting physical pain on children (Saunders & Goddard, 1999). Given that the Philippine society is predominantly Christians, this biblical passage may have influenced parents to use physical punishment to correct their erring children. It should be noted that the exact same word for ‘rod’ in Hebrew was ‘word of God’ in the old Testament (Hart, 2006). The rod is viewed as a protection and never used for beating sheep (Hart, 2006).

Although many mothers in the study regretted using physical punitive measures on their children afterwards, they couldn't help resorting to it because they said that if they don't use it then their young ones wouldn't learn a lesson. In fact, most of them reported that their children were stubborn – they didn't listen unless they were spanked or pinched. This only showed how these mothers were confident in the effectiveness of physical punishment as a child-rearing strategy. They rationalized it by saying that they never intended to harm their children. All they ever wanted was to mold these youngsters into a better citizen of the future. For these mothers, the use of physical punishment is a justifiable, disciplinary strategy. This conceptualization could fall within Papalia, et. al.'s (2006) definition of discipline and that is the method of modeling character and teaching self-control and acceptable behavior. This may also be consistent with that of Straus (2006) which states that 'discipline' seemed to be anything a parent does that affects the child's moral and psychological development.

When mothers were asked on their opinion on the soundness of physical punishment as a disciplinary strategy, only those who used it on their children believed that it is okay. The other 16 mothers who reported using non-physical punishment did not believe that it is justifiable no matter what the reason is. Although 80% (n=80) who used physical punishment to correct children's bad behavior agreed that it is okay to hit children, they also agreed that before resorting to physical punishment, non-physical punitive measures should be exhausted first. However, for some of these mothers, although they said they believed that non-physical punitive measures should be exhausted first, they did not follow it. Some of them admitted that they easily get irritated that they immediately apply physical punishment. This contradiction between personal belief and actions was shared by Chilean parents (Vargas, et al., 1995). Generally, research had shown that those mothers who believed in the effectiveness of physical punishment as a disciplinary strategy were the ones who used it frequently in correcting their children's bad behavior. In other words, attitude predicted behavior (Ateah & Parkin, 2002; Frias-Armenta & McCloskey, 1998; Lopez, et al., 2000; Secolar & Stein, 1995; Vitolo, Fleitlich-Bilyk, Grodman, & Bordin, 2005; and Vittrup, Holden, & Buck, 2006).

With regard to what is appropriate physical punishment on young children, 71% (n=80) believed that pinching was okay. Even some of those mothers who reported not using any physical punishment on their children agreed with pinching. The second most approved physical punishment on children was spanking (65%). This is slightly higher than the actual number of mothers who used physical punitive measure to discipline their children. This implies that some mothers who did not use it had no problem with spanking as a disciplinary measure.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Although the mothers who participated in this study came from rural areas in the province, their responses had many similarities with parents in other cultures. This simply showed that physical punishment as a disciplinary strategy is universal although some countries completely ruled it out at home and in school.

Results of the study also supported previous contention that there is a blurring of concepts between discipline and physical punishment in the Philippines. In fact, parents in the study used it interchangeably.

It would be interesting to replicate this study in other areas or regions in the Philippines and find out patterns of parental behavior towards children who did something bad or violated the rules at home. Will there be any difference in the child-rearing strategies between parents from poor urban communities and that of upscale villages? Will parents' educational attainment also matter in the choice of disciplinary practices?

The findings of this research were not surprising given that the use of physical punishment at home is still acceptable legally in the Philippines.

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