
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN BY PARENTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: ATTITUDES, PREVALENCE RATES, AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF VIOLENCE¹

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ABSTRACT

This article describes and analyzes the use of corporal punishment (CP) of children by parents in Czech society, while making use of several quantitative surveys conducted both among adolescents and in the adult population. The focus is mainly placed on the following issues: attitudes to CP, prevalence rates and severity of CP among adolescents, the association between the use of CP and the nature of the family environment, and the intergenerational transmission of violence. The results show that the use of CP in Czech families is widespread, as the previous year prevalence rate for 15-year-old adolescents reached a high of 43% and experience with severe types of CP was reported by 9% of adolescents. In addition, the approval of CP is very high both among adolescents and adults; nevertheless, adults do seem to be rather critical of non-minor CP. Finally, the findings also lend some support to the hypothesis of the intergenerational transmission of violence, but it is suggested that different forms of exposure to violence in the family (i.e. experience with CP and witnessing intimate partner violence among parents) are associated with different types of behavior and attitudes.

Key words: corporal punishment; transmission of violence; adolescents; Czech Republic

Introduction

Physical violence among family members was, for a long time, considered a private matter in which, with the exception of extreme cases, external authorities should not intervene. Minor forms of physical violence were often accepted as suitable or tolerable educational practices to correct the improper behavior of members with a lower position in the hierarchy of power in the family, i.e. parents punished the children and husbands their wives. The issue of wife battering or more generally intimate partner violence (IPV) has been widely discussed in Western countries since the 1970s (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Sherman & Berk, 1984; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Walker, 1979) and different measures have been taken to prevent this phenomenon and offer help to its victims. In the Czech Republic (CZ), this problem was entirely overlooked during the Communist era and it took another decade to introduce this issue into public discourse. Con-

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sequently, the first law specifically targeting IPV was not introduced until 2004 (Section 215a, Act No. 140/1961).

With respect to the corporal punishment (CP) of children by parents, the first country which passed a total ban on CP was Sweden in 1979 (see, Olson, 1984) and a later evaluation showed that it was highly successful (Durrant, 1999). Soon, other countries followed their lead and by November 2015, 29 out of 47 Council of Europe member states had prohibited CP by parents (Council of Europe, 2015). A total ban on the CP of children is a requirement stated in the European Social Charter, in which Article 17 declares that children should be protected against violence. Another international treaty which demands CP to be outlawed is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically Article 19 (United Nations, 1989). Moreover, the aim to end all forms of violence against children is explicitly included in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015–2030 (United Nations, 2015). According to a report prepared by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children from March 2016, 48 states have already achieved the prohibition of CP in all settings, including the family, and another 53 states have made clear commitments to do so (Global Initiative, 2016b).

Although the Czech Republic has ratified both above-mentioned treaties, the Czech government has never been truly committed to passing a law banning CP. There was only one brief attempt to initiate such a piece of legislation by the Minister for Minorities and Human Rights, Džamila Stehlíková, in 2008, however, she dropped the idea early on due to an extremely negative reaction from a large portion of the public, politicians, and even many professionals (see e.g., Kubálková & Drchal, 2008; Němcová, 2008; Šťastný, 2008). Since then, the Czech government has been avoiding re-opening this issue and when urged by international organizations to act, they argue that the current state of Czech legislation, especially considering the introduction of the new Civil Code, guarantees children sufficient protection against improper punishment in the family. Nevertheless, the European Committee of Social Rights, which assessed whether or not the Czech Republic breaches the European Social Charter, came to the conclusion that Czech children are not adequately protected against CP in the family setting (Global Initiative, 2016a).

Scientific research on corporal punishment and the abuse of children by parents is plentiful and has focused on both short-term and long-term consequences in terms of the different types of both externalizing and internalizing behavior and the influence on cognitive performance. Whereas there is clear evidence of the negative impact of severe CP and child abuse (see, e.g., Widom & Wilson, 2015), the effects of less severe physical punishments, e.g. spanking or slapping, are passionately debated as research brings forth contradictory findings (e.g., Gershoff, 2002, 2010; Larzelere & Cox, 2013). The meta-analytical study which was likely the first attempt to shed light on this issue was conducted by Gershoff (2002). She analyzed data from 88 studies and concluded that although CP has a positive effect on the child's immediate compliance, there are also many undesirable effects, primarily increased delinquent and antisocial behavior and increased aggression both in childhood and in adulthood, but also the deteriorating quality of the parent-child relationship, and a higher risk of child abuse.

Nevertheless, her results are not universally accepted and some researchers emphasize that there are certain methodological shortcomings inherent to the majority of stud-

ies on CP (e.g., Larzelere & Cox, 2013). Ferguson (2013) attempted to overcome some of these problems and conducted a meta-analytical study of longitudinal research on CP and spanking, in which he reported partial correlation coefficients controlling for the time-1 negative child outcomes (i.e. earlier problem behaviour and cognitive performance). His results showed only a very small negative impact of physical punishments on the child's behavior and cognitive performance; however, there was some evidence that moderate CP might affect externalizing behavior more among adolescents than among younger children. Although it is still questionable whether mild CP can cause any serious harm, Gershoff (2010) strongly argues against the use of CP, stressing that virtually no study has shown any positive effects of CP whereas negative consequences have been suggested by many authors. Furthermore, CP is unacceptable since it violates the fundamental human rights of children – to be protected against all forms of violence – as is declared in several international treaties.

With respect to the exposure of children to violence in the family, the validity and/or the extent of the intergenerational transmission of violence, or the so-called cycle of violence, is often discussed (e.g., Fagan, 2005; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Widom & Wilson, 2015). This hypothesis suggests that children who are exposed to violence in the family – be it serious CP, child abuse, or violence between parents – have a higher likelihood of using violence in the future, i.e. committing violent crimes, acting aggressively, abusing their spouses or mistreating their children. Widom and Wilson (2015) summarize that the most popular explanation for the mechanism of this transmission stems from social learning theory, however recent findings also lend some support to theories influenced by behavioral genetics approaches, which claim that the transmission is conditioned on genetic susceptibility factors. They conclude that even though the mechanisms of the transmission are yet to be properly examined, there is strong evidence that the exposure to violence in the family does increase the likelihood of later involvement in delinquency and violent behavior.

The main objective of this article is to describe and analyze the situation in the Czech Republic regarding the CP of children by parents while using different surveys which examine these issues. First, attention will be drawn to attitudes to CP. Czech society is believed to be strongly against banning CP in the family setting, which is reflected in the reluctance of politicians to draft any piece of legislation which would regulate this area. Thus, we will present the results of surveys both among adults and adolescents which examine attitudes towards CP to determine whether the perception of CZ as a country favoring CP is well-founded or not. Second, the extent of CP use by parents towards adolescents will be described. Furthermore, we will analyze if a different degree of CP use is associated with different parenting styles, the quality of the child-parent bond and the extent of abusive interactions between parents. Third, attention will be paid to the intergenerational transmission of violence. In this respect, our possibilities are limited, since there has been no longitudinal research focusing on these issues in CZ; therefore, we will have to rely on partial results from cross-sectional surveys and cautiously interpret the findings with respect to causality.

Data

The data analyzed in this article come from three Czech surveys conducted by the Faculty of Arts of Charles University (FF UK) in the last decade. First, information on experience with corporal punishment by parents among adolescents and their attitude to CP is gathered from the “Urban Youth Survey” (UYS; see, Forejtová & Podaná, 2016). It is a school-based self-report criminological survey which was held in the four largest cities in CZ in 2015 and targeted children in the 9th grade. The final sample includes responses from 1546 adolescents. Second, information on the attitude to CP and personal experience with CP during childhood among the Czech adult population was obtained from the survey “Aktér 12-2011”, conducted in 2011. This omnibus survey used quota sampling and collected data from 1109 respondents. Third, the hypothesis of the intergenerational transmission of IPV was tested using data from the “Intimate Partner Violence (2012/2013)” survey (see, Buriánek, Pikálková, & Podaná, 2015). This research project consisted of two victimological surveys, the first of which targeted male victims of IPV (held in 2012/2013) while the second focused on female victims (held in 2013). The final sample consists of 1001 males and 1502 females.

Attitudes to corporal punishment

Czech society is believed to be highly tolerant to the CP of children in the family. Thus, the objective of this introductory section is to examine the real extent of this approval of CP both among Czech adults and juveniles and to analyze which segments of the population are most in favor of CP. One of the first research studies in CZ which was aimed at domestic violence, including CP in the family, was a survey conducted by the Department of Sociology FF UK “Rizika 1999” (see, Vymětalová, 2001) in which respondents were asked which types of punishment of children they considered to be forms of violence. The results showed a very high tolerance towards minor types of CP, namely a smack in the back of the head² and spanking, which are typically used towards little children. Less than one tenth of the respondents (8% and 5% respectively) considered these to be forms of violence, whereas more than half (54% and 67%) would not label these as violence; the rest considered these practices to be forms of violence only if used frequently. However, a very different outcome was revealed with respect to more serious CP – a slap and beating with an object – which were viewed less tolerantly. Almost one half of the respondents labelled them as violence (41% and 46%) whereas only about one tenth considered them to be nonviolent forms of punishment (12% and 9%). An obvious issue of this study is the very formulation of the question on the evaluation of the “violentness” of these types of punishments, which does not necessarily correspond to the attitude towards the use of CP in child rearing. A person might, for instance, consider beating a child with a belt as a type of violence, although they still might approve of it as a legitimate parenting practice.

² The Czech language distinguishes between a “smack in the back of the head” (“pohlavek”) which is a light smack by an open hand, usually used towards little children, and a “slap” (“facka”) which is a blow by an open hand on the face.

Therefore, a different approach was used when a section on CP was included in the later survey “Aktér 12-2011”. Instead of evaluating “violentness”, the question asked about the acceptability of such punishments. Figure 1 shows that minor punishments (a smack in the back of the head and spanking) are considered as acceptable by the vast majority of Czech society (84% and 92% respectively) where about a half of the respondents even chose the answer “fully acceptable”. Even though these results are not directly comparable to the previous survey from 1999, it is obvious that no dramatic shift in the public perception of these punishments had taken place between these two surveys.

A slap in the face and giving a beating were considered as acceptable forms of punishment only by a minority of the respondents in 2011 (20% and 29%) and more than one third of them even labelled these practices to be fully unacceptable (37% and 36%). This trend is in line with that of the 1999 survey and the tolerance to the more serious types of punishments is substantially lower than to minor types. A slap in the face was found to be the least acceptable among respondents; although it is “milder” with respect to the degree of violence than giving a beating (Vymětalová, 2001), it is still perceived as a less acceptable child rearing practice. A likely explanation may lie in the fact that a slap is often a parent’s spontaneous response to a conflict with their child and not a well-justified “educational” punishment of a serious misdemeanor of the child.

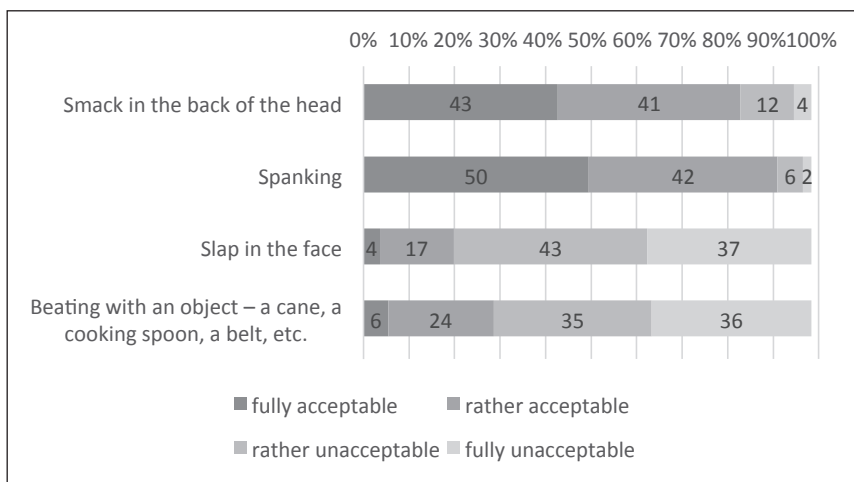


Figure 1: “When raising their children, parents often use a variety of disciplinary measures. To what extent do you personally view the following to be acceptable forms of punishment?”
Source: “Aktér 12-2011”

A widespread tolerance to CP across Czech society is also obvious from the fact that the attitudes towards the analyzed types of CP are not substantially varied across the different socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, ethnicity, education, social status, and size of town. When a regression model which incorporated these indicators was estimated, only a 3.9% variance in the indicator showing

acceptability of CP was explained.³ It is likely that a more pronounced effect might be associated with the respondents' personal experience with CP in childhood and their personal experience with raising their own children. These relationships will be examined later in the section on intergenerational transmission of CP.

An interesting comparison of these results can be gained by analyzing data from the UYS which targeted 9th grade adolescents (i.e. 15-years-old on average). A different methodological approach was applied in this case and adolescents were presented with two short scenarios in which a parent uses a certain type of CP (a slap and giving a beating) towards someone of their age.⁴ We were then interested to see if adolescents found these punishments appropriate and whether they would act the same if they were in the position of the parent. About one half of the adolescents (59% and 49% respectively) evaluated the punishments as appropriate and about four out of ten adolescents (43% and 39%) agreed that they would act the same way if they were in the position of the parent (see, Figure 2). The attitude to CP⁵ was somewhat more positive among boys than among girls and there was also a weak correlation to the parents' education.

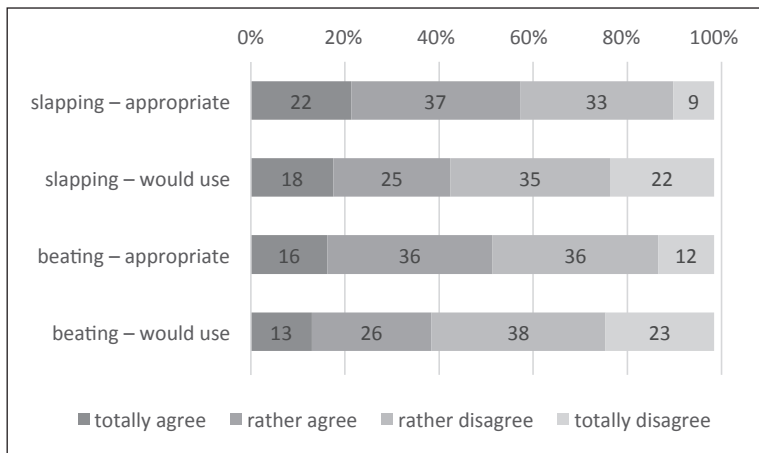


Figure 2: Adolescent evaluation of selected types of corporal punishment.
Source: UYV (2015)

³ The indicator of acceptability of CP was constructed as a mean of the four questions on CP (see, Figure 1). Higher values indicate a higher acceptance of CP. The reliability of the scale is good (Cronbach's alpha = .70).

⁴ Scenario 1: "The mother asks 15-year-old Matthew to finally clean his room like he promised yesterday. He retorts that he doesn't have time and goes back to looking at something in his mobile phone. The mother slaps Matthew in the face."

Scenario 2: "Ninth graders Jacob and Peter get into a fight on their way home from school. An agitated Jacob shoves Peter, who ends up falling and ripping his new jeans. Peter's parents later call up Jacob's parents, asking for 2000 CZK in reparations. Jacob gets a beating from his parents."

⁵ The indicator "attitude to CP" was constructed as a mean of the four questions on CP (see, Figure 2). Higher values indicate a higher approval of CP. The reliability of the scale is good (Cronbach's alpha = .70).

Hence, it is clear that the acceptance of CP is substantially greater among adolescents than among adults. The reasons for this discrepancy might be manifold. First of all, the method based on scenarios might yield a higher approval rate since it depicts specific situations which are easy to imagine, unlike unspecific questions on the acceptability of CP. In addition, adults are usually more inclined to give socially desirable answers than children. Furthermore, research results by Straus and Donnelly (2006) suggested that it is quite usual that parents disapprove of CP but use it anyway. In the following section, we draw our attention to the actual experience of adolescents with CP and later we also attempt to assess the level of correspondence between this experience and their attitude to CP.

Corporal punishment of adolescents by parents in CZ

Information on the extent and seriousness of the corporal punishment of adolescents by their parents can be obtained from the “Urban Youth Survey” (2015) in which we asked about the frequency of the occurrence of selected types of violence by parents in the previous 12 months. The survey included adolescents who were, on average, 15 years old. Studies from the United States – which are very similar to CZ in terms of the extent of use and approval rate of CP – show that although the parental use of violence against children declines with the age of their offspring, it is far from infrequent among adolescents. For instance, a study by Straus and Stewart (1999) showed that whereas almost all young children (94%) at the ages of 4 and 5 had been hit by their parents during the previous year, among 15-year-old adolescents, the proportion was “only” 30%. Similarly, we can expect that the prevalence rates of CP reported by Czech adolescents would be considerably higher if we focused on younger children.

In this section, we will, first, report prevalence rates of different types of CP in the population of Czech adolescents and outline a CP typology which will be used in later analyses. Then, the categories of the CP typology will be described with respect to differences in socio-demographic variables and, most importantly, the association with indicators on parenting and conflicts/violence between parents will be examined.

Prevalence and typology of CP

The UYS study inquired about adolescent experience with five types of physical violence used by their parents against them in the previous year (see, Table 1). The results show that almost half of the adolescents (43%) reported some type of moderate CP (beating, slap, etc.) and 15% admitted that it was not an isolated incident. The most frequent type of violence was a slap in the face which about one third of adolescents (36%) reported, and out of those each third received it repeatedly. These findings clearly demonstrate that Czech parents do not hesitate to use CP even against their teenage offspring. More severe types of CP (e.g. a punch and beating up) which might be classified as child abuse, were reported by each eleventh adolescent (9%) and, again, one third of them admitted more than just one or two incidents.

Table 1: Physical violence by parents during the previous year.

	prevalence		frequency (%)		
	n	%	once or twice	3–5 times	more often
gave you a beating	341	22.5	14.1	4.2	4.2
slapped you in the face	539	35.6	24.1	6.3	5.2
grabbed you, shoved you, or threw something at you	217	14.3	9.2	2.4	2.6
moderate CP – total	653	42.9	27.8	8.0	7.1
kicked or punched you or hit you with an object	105	6.9	4.1	1.2	1.6
beat you up	86	5.7	3.4	.6	1.6
serious CP – total	141	9.3	5.8	1.4	2.0

Source: UYV (2015)

Note: Valid percentages are reported.

Based on the above-outlined occurrence of CP by parents, we classify adolescents into four categories (CP typology):

- *no CP* – no type of violence by parents during the previous year is reported (57% of adolescents),
- *minor CP* – only one type of moderate CP is reported and it occurred only once or twice (17%),
- *moderate CP* – only moderate types of CP are reported – either at least two types of them occurred or the frequency was more often than once or twice (17%),
- *serious CP* – at least one type of serious CP is reported (9%).

Further analysis has shown that almost all adolescents from the serious CP category reported an occurrence of moderate CP as well, precisely 89% would meet the conditions to fall into the moderate CP category. The CP typology can thus be well-considered as an ordinal scale. The typology will be utilized to examine if there are any differences among adolescents with different degrees of CP by parents in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, family relations and parenting practices; in the last section, the CP typology will be used in an analysis of the transmission of violence.

The advantage of the CP typology lies in the fact that it attempts to differentiate between different levels of CP severity and enables us to analyze the (dis)similarities between these categories. First, the serious CP category is, of course, of utmost interest because such a severity of violence might already be classified as child abuse. Hence, we will focus on the comparison of this category with the less severe ones. Second, the minor CP category deserves particular attention as well. Even though the use of CP is rare in this category, given the fact that the prevalence and frequency of CP tend to decrease with the age of the child (Straus & Donnelly, 2006; Straus & Stewart, 1999), it is highly likely that these adolescents used to be subjected to CP more often when they were younger. Therefore, we will examine to what extent this category is (dis)similar to the no CP category.

Table 2 shows the association between the CP typology and socio-demographic indicators, namely gender, ethnicity, family structure, relative family income, and parental education. The only insignificant association is found for gender; however, the other

relationships are all merely weak ones (Cramer's $V < .10$). Significant differences are often identified in the serious CP category – it is more prevalent among non-Czech adolescents compared to Czechs (16% vs. 8%), among adolescents living in incomplete families compared to complete ones (12% vs. 8%) and the prevalence decreases as the parents' education level increases. A different pattern is observable in the case of relative family income, where adolescents from families with a lower income than others are more often found in the moderate CP category and less often in the no CP category compared to adolescents from families with a higher income.

Table 2: The association between the CP typology and selected individual characteristics (row %).

	no CP	minor CP	moderate CP	serious CP	Cramer's V^a
Count	856	262	253	139	
%	56.7	17.4	16.8	9.2	
Gender					
male	57.5	15.6	17.9	9.0	.05
female	55.7	19.1	15.7	9.4	
Ethnicity					
Czech	57.0	18.0	16.6	8.4	.09**
other	55.2	11.2	17.5	16.1	
Family structure					
both biological parents	57.6	18.7	16.1	7.7	.08*
other	55.4	15.3	17.8	11.5	
Relative family income					
lower than others	48.2	16.3	22.9	12.7	.08*
same or higher than others	57.4	17.6	16.1	8.8	
Parental education ^b					
lower than high school	52.5	14.9	18.6	14.0	.07*
high school	58.4	16.8	15.9	8.9	
university	56.4	18.9	17.9	6.8	

Source: UYV (2015)

^a reported is the significance of the chi-square test

^b the highest educational level obtained by either of the parents

Note: Significant standardized adjusted residuals are highlighted in bold.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Family situation – parenting style and parental conflicts

As demonstrated above, adolescents from different categories of the CP typology are not too dissimilar in terms of family background. In this section, we will examine if the same applies to the nature of the interactions within the family, specifically focusing on the association of the use of CP by parents and other aspects of the parenting style, relationships between the children and parents and between the parental couple themselves.

First, we analyze the co-occurrence of the use of CP and other selected adverse types of punishments, namely ignoring the child, verbal abuse, and denial of meals. Figure 3 clearly demonstrates that there are considerable differences among the four categories of the CP typology and apart from the prevalence rate, it is also the frequency which increases. The strongest relationship is identified for verbal abuse ($\rho = .49$) which is rather sporadic among adolescents who had not experienced CP (14%) and sharply increases with each category of the CP typology – up to 76% in the serious CP category; moreover, these adolescents usually reported a more frequent occurrence of verbal abuse compared to the other categories of the CP typology. A similar pattern is observable in the case of ignoring the child, though this relationship is somewhat weaker ($\rho = .31$). Denial of meals as a form of punishment is classified as child abuse and is almost non-existent among adolescents from the no CP and minor CP categories; however, it was reported by 6% of adolescents from the moderate CP category and even by 22% from the serious CP category.

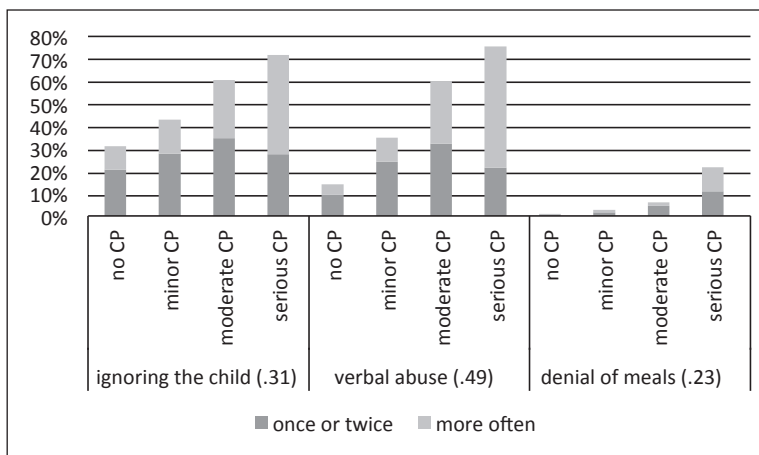


Figure 3: Co-occurrence of corporal punishment and other selected types of punishment.

Source: UYV (2015)

Note: Spearman's rho is reported in brackets.

This first analysis has already indicated that CP by parents frequently co-occurs with other adverse parenting practices, which is not specific to the serious CP category alone, but is observable in the continual increase throughout the whole CP typology. Thus, we were interested to see if the use of CP by parents is associated with other aspects of family life as well, namely a worse child-parent relationship, negative parenting style and conflicts – or even violence – between parents. Overall, four aspects related to the parenting style were examined in this study – the quality of the child-parent bond, parental support of the child's autonomy, the extent of parental monitoring, and consistency of parenting.⁶

⁶ The indicators of the quality of the child-parent bond, parental support of the child's autonomy, the extent of parental monitoring, and consistency of parenting were constructed as means of the relevant set of questions. The first three scales consisted of at least 4 items and their reliability was good, with all Cronbach's alphas > .70. The scale measuring inconsistent parenting consisted of only 2 items and,

With respect to the relationship between the parents, we inquired about the frequency of loud arguments, verbal abuse, and physical violence between parents.⁷

Analysis of variance has confirmed that there are differences in these family-related variables among the groups of adolescents based on the CP typology (based on F-test, $p < .001$). The results are visualized in Figure 4. Again, the increase in the severity of CP is related with a worse child-parent bond, a more inappropriate parenting style, and more frequent conflicts and violence between parents. Among parenting-related indicators, the strongest association with the use of CP is inconsistent parenting ($\eta = .41$) and a lack of autonomy support from the parents ($\eta = .33$). In both cases, the differences are considerable among all levels of the CP typology. On the other hand, in the case of family bonding and parental monitoring, a large difference is found primarily between the serious CP category and the other ones.

Whereas conflicts in the form of loud arguments between parents are present in the majority of families (74%), verbal abuse between parents was reported by about one third of adolescents (39%) and physical violence only by one seventh (14%). The association of these factors and the CP typology is, again, moderately strong, with the values of the eta coefficient between .25 and .31. In the case of loud arguments, the relationship with the CP typology is relatively linear; on the other hand, regarding both verbal and physical violence, it is particularly the serious CP category which is distinctly different from the others.

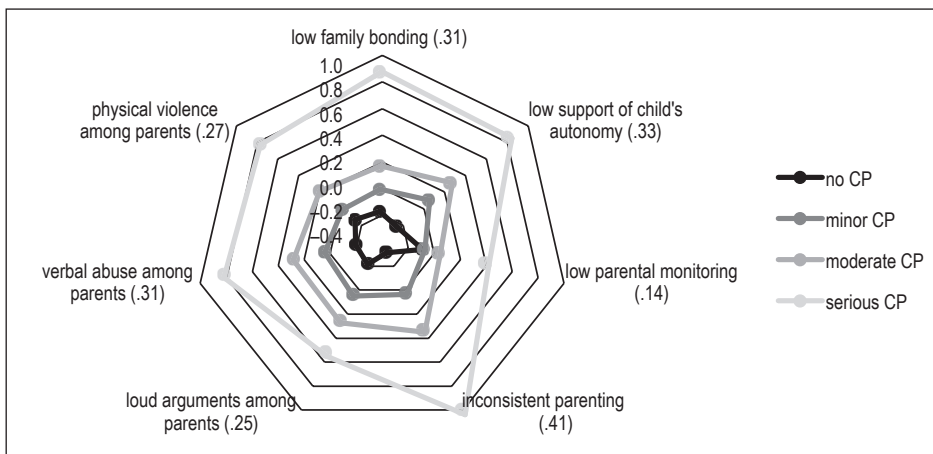


Figure 4: The association between family-related factors and the CP typology.

Source: UYV (2015)

Note: Eta coefficients are reported in brackets.

correspondingly, its reliability was somewhat lower ($\alpha = .68$). All scales were standardized for the purpose of visual representation in Figure 4.

⁷ The indicators of the frequency of loud arguments and verbal abuse among parents were measured by single questions with 5-point scales. The indicator of the frequency of physical violence among parents was constructed as a mean of 2 questions inquiring about slapping and kicking/punching/hitting with an object. The reliability of this scale was good ($\alpha = .74$). All three indicators were standardized for the purpose of visual representation in Figure 4.

Our results have clearly shown that the use of CP by Czech parents is commonplace. The prevalence rate in the previous year reached 43% among 9th grade adolescents (15 years old on average) and it is highly likely that the proportion is considerably larger among younger children (c.f., Straus & Stewart, 1999). The most frequent types of violence were slaps, but more severe types of punishment were also not entirely rare – their prevalence rate reached 9%. These adolescents differ noticeably from their peers, particularly with respect to a family environment that is more often affected by conflicts and violence between parents, more frequent negative parenting practices, and a weaker child-parent bond. These findings are not surprising as the link between child abuse and negative aspects of the family environment have been well-documented. Our findings, however, also suggest that less severe and even sporadic CP is associated with a somewhat more negative nature of the family environment compared to families in which parents do not use violence against their adolescent offspring at all. Even though this study does not allow us to draw conclusions on the causality of these relationships, it seems that CP often co-occurs with other adverse parenting practices and is likely to contribute to worsened relations in the family (see also, Gershoff, 2010; Straus & Donnelly, 2006).

Intergenerational transmission of violence

The hypothesis of the intergenerational transmission of violence suggests that children exposed to violence in the family are more prone to using violence themselves, i.e. are more often involved in violent delinquency and crime, abuse their own children, commit IPV, etc. The most common explanation of the mechanism of this transmission stems from social learning theory, according to which these children learn to perceive violence as a legitimate means of conflict resolution in their relationships with others. The ideal research design for an examination of such a transmission is a prospective longitudinal study, which is, however, very rare in social sciences, particularly due to its high financial and organizational costs and long duration before it can yield results. There are no such studies focusing on violence in CZ and, therefore, we have to rely on standard cross-sectional surveys. Consequently, evidence in support of the transmission of violence will only be indirect, based on statistical relationships between the exposure to violence in the family – specifically being subjected to CP by parents and witnessing IPV between parents – and the declared attitude to CP/violence, violent behavior, and violent victimization. The presented analyses are divided into three sections: first, we focus on attitudes towards CP/violence; second, we examine the relationship between adolescent exposure to violence in the family and delinquency and victimization; third, we analyze the link between IPV in adulthood and the exposure to violence in the family of origin in childhood.

Attitudes towards corporal punishment and violence

We begin the examination of the intergenerational transmission of violence with an analysis of the association between the exposure to violence in the family in childhood and attitudes towards CP and, in the case of adolescents, also towards violence in general.

Analyzed data come from both the UYS survey and the “Aktér 12-2011” study; results for adolescents and adults can thus be compared. With respect to adolescents, it is assumed that experience with CP should considerably affect the attitude to CP. Adolescents who had not been physically punished by their parents in the previous year are expected to show lower levels of CP approval, whereas among the others, their attitude to CP might be contingent on their perception of CP by their parents as either well-deserved or unfair. We suggest that the acceptance of CP is related to the quality of the child-parent bond. If the bond is strong, adolescents are more likely to accept CP as a legitimate educational practice from loving parents; in contrast, if the bond is worse, CP is more likely to be perceived as undeserved and the acceptance of CP in general would then be lower. In terms of the adult population, we expect that the formation of the attitude to CP is directly affected by experience with CP from childhood and that it might also be somewhat impacted by personal experience with raising their own children.

First, we analyze the situation among adolescents by testing regression models including the CP typology while controlling for individual background variables as well (see Table 3).⁸ In addition, the adolescent witnessing of IPV between parents is also incorporated in the models to reflect another type of violence in the family. The first Model 1 for adolescent attitudes to CP confirms that the extent of CP impacts the adolescent’s approval of the use of CP by their parents. Adolescents who had experienced minor CP by their parents during the previous year expressed a somewhat more positive attitude to CP ($b = .48$) than their peers whose parents did not use CP; among adolescents from the moderate CP and serious CP categories, the difference was even higher ($b = .83$ and $.78$). On the other hand, the effect of IPV between parents was not significant. The inclusion of the CP typology in the model increases the explained variance in the attitude to CP by $.028$, hence the transmission effect is rather weak.

The following Model 2 tests the hypothesis outlined above and extends Model 1 by incorporating the family bonding indicator⁹ and its interaction with the CP typology. The results are in agreement with the hypothesis. Family bonding does not show any impact on the attitude to CP among children who had not experienced CP by parents during the previous year; however, among children who had experienced CP, stronger family bonding is associated with a more positive attitude to CP. This outcome supports the hypothesis that children with a good relationship to their parents might accept CP from them as a legitimate means of child rearing, whereas children with poor family relations might feel they are being mistreated by their parents and hence are more inclined to disapprove of CP in general. Furthermore, Model 2 reveals a significant effect of IPV between parents which is related to a more positive attitude to CP, though its impact is rather weak.

The last Model 3 in Table 3 focuses on the attitude to violence and examines whether the exposure to CP and witnessing IPV between parents are associated with a greater

⁸ The computation of the attitude to CP scale is described in Footnote 4. The attitude to violence indicator was constructed as a mean of 6 questions. The reliability of this scale was very good ($\alpha = .82$). Both indicators were linearly transformed to reach values from 0 to 10, where higher values indicate a more positive attitude towards CP/violence.

⁹ The construction of the family bonding variable is described in Footnote 5. A standardized variable is used in which higher values indicate stronger family bonding.

approval of violence. Both variables have a significant impact on the attitude to violence; the largest contribution to the increase of violence approval was found in the serious CP category in comparison to the no CP category. The overall contribution of both experience with CP and witnessing IPV between parents is – similarly as in the attitude to CP – relatively weak, since the change in adjusted R^2 is only .035. Nevertheless, the weak association between the experience with CP and both attitude to CP and attitude to violence may be partly caused by the fact that we measure the extent of CP in the previous year only and do not take earlier experiences with CP into account.

Table 3: OLS regression models for attitude to CP and attitude to violence among adolescents.

	Model 1 – attitude to CP		Model 2 – attitude to CP		Model 3 – attitude to violence	
	b	beta	b	beta	b	beta
Constant	5.244		5.471		2.835	
Gender (female)	.680	.148***	.607	.132***	1.145	.267***
Ethnicity (non-Czech)	.202	.024	.179	.021	-.115	-.015
Family structure (incomplete)	.235	.050	.202	.043	.019	.004
Family income	.099	.049	.055	.027	.112	.060*
Parents' education	-.539	-.175***	-.522	-.170***	-.252	-.089***
CP: minor (none)	.478	.080**	.434	.073***	.420	.075**
CP: medium (none)	.834	.137***	.903	.148***	.688	.120***
CP: serious (none)	.779	.095***	1.140	.139***	1.025	.136***
Witnessing IPV (no)	.346	.053	.478	.073*	.518	.084**
Family bonding			-.046	-.019		
CP: minor * family bonding			.403	.073*		
CP: moderate * family bonding			.590	.103**		
CP: serious * family bonding			.511	.099**		
<i>adj. R²</i>		.077		.091		.118
<i>N</i>		1277		1277		1401
<i>F change</i>				6.06***		

Source: UYV (2015)

Note: Reference category is stated in brackets. Adjusted R^2 for models including only control variables: .049 for attitude to CP and .083 for attitude to violence.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Second, we test a similar model for attitude to CP among adults (Table 4).¹⁰ Model 4 reveals that the exposure to CP in childhood¹¹ has a considerable impact on the current attitude to CP, however, the relationship is not entirely linear. Specifically, the

¹⁰ The construction of the attitude to the CP variable is described in Footnote 2. The higher values indicate a more positive attitude towards CP (the scale ranges from 1 to 4).

¹¹ The question inquired about the frequency of receiving moderate or severe CP by parents (a slap, getting a beating, etc.) during the respondent's childhood.

largest increase in CP approval is between respondents without any experience with CP and those who experienced it only seldom ($b = .33$); in the other cases, each rise in frequency increases the approval rate more or less linearly. The increase in adjusted R^2 associated with the experience with CP in childhood (.098) is substantially greater compared to in adolescence. Although it is plausible that the transmission of violence might be more pronounced among adults, it should be emphasized that retrospective measures are generally less reliable and adults' answers on the frequency of CP by their parents in their childhood might be affected by their current attitudes and experiences.

Furthermore, we have also tested an interaction term between CP in childhood and an indicator whether the respondent has children themselves, since their own experience with child rearing might alter their perception of appropriate parenting practices (results not presented here). However, no such effect was revealed in our data.

Table 4: OLS regression model for attitude to CP among adults.

	Model 4 – attitude to CP	
	b	Beta
Constant	2.245	
Gender (female)	.088	.075**
Age	.002	.062
Ethnicity (non-Czech)	-.003	-.001
Education	-.032	-.049
Subjective social class	-.043	-.054
Town size	.031	.078**
Children (no)	.006	.005
CP: very often (never)	.695	.263***
CP: often (never)	.501	.290***
CP: sometimes (never)	.457	.344***
CP: seldom (never)	.325	.267***
<i>adj. R²</i>	.136	
<i>N</i>	1085	

Source: "Aktér 12-2011"

Note: Reference category is in brackets. Adjusted R^2 for a model including only control variables: .038.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Adolescent violent behavior and victimization

Next, we draw attention to the association between adolescent exposure to violence in the family and their delinquent behavior and victimization by peers. A series of logistic regression models were estimated to evaluate the impact of the CP typology and the witnessing of IPV between parents on four indicators of violent delinquency – involvement in a group fight, vandalism, bullying, and animal cruelty – and one violent victimization

variable, namely bullying.¹² The results are visualized in Figure 5. First, with respect to common violent delinquency, i.e. group fighting, vandalism, and bullying, a similar pattern is discernible. An experience with CP increases the odds of delinquency only for the moderate and serious categories (compared to the no CP category) and the largest effects are found for group fighting (both AORs > 3). On the other hand, witnessing IPV between parents has only a modest effect.

Second, a specific situation is revealed for animal cruelty in which case it is only the witnessing of IPV which has an effect and, moreover, its size is substantial (AOR = 3.3). The association between cruelty to animals and the exposure to violence in the family has been well-documented by previous research (e.g., Baldry, 2003; Currie, 2006), though with respect to corporal punishment, a study by Flynn (1999) suggested that this effect might depend on the gender of both the child and the parent. Our study enables us to analyze gender differences only among adolescents and a test of such an interactional effect (not presented here) does not show significantly different outcomes for boys and girls.

Third, in the case of bullying victimization, it is, primarily, experience with serious CP which increases the odds of being victimized (AOR = 4.3). This is congruent with the results of a meta-analytical study by Lereya, Samara, and Wolke (2013) which shows that abuse, neglect, and maladaptive parenting is moderately associated with bullying victimization.

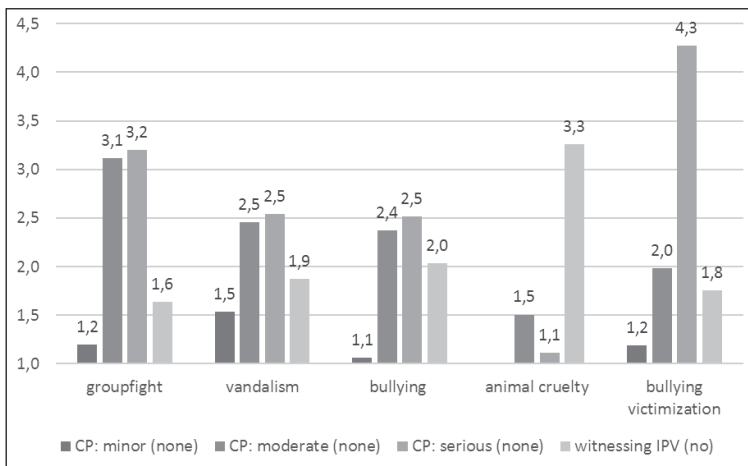


Figure 5: Associations between violence in the family and violent delinquency/victimization (adjusted odds ratios – AORs).

Source: UYV (2015)

Note: Reported are adjusted odds ratios (controlled for gender, ethnicity, family structure, family income, and parents' education).

¹² Bullying was limited to incidents involving physical assault. All indicators on delinquency and victimization capture previous year prevalence.

Intimate partner violence

Lastly, we also take the opportunity to analyze data on intimate partner violence which include information about both the victim's and offender's backgrounds with respect to serious CP from their parents and the occurrence of IPV between their parents during their childhood.¹³ However, a certain disadvantage of the dataset is that it is based on reports from victims only and, therefore, information on offenders is indirect and might be partly inaccurate. A logistic regression model for victimization by IPV was estimated separately for males and females (see, Table 5). Results show that neither the respondent's nor the partner's experience with CP in childhood is associated with an increased risk of victimization by IPV in adulthood. However, witnessing IPV between parents in childhood is significantly related to perpetrating IPV in adulthood, with the AOR being 4.6 for partners of male respondents and even 6.4 for partners of female respondents. In addition, the respondent's witnessing of IPV between parents is associated with an increased risk of victimization among males, the AOR being 2.9.

In summary, our results have confirmed that witnessing IPV between parents during childhood makes people more prone to using violence against their partners in adulthood whereas exposure to CP has shown no additional influence on violent behavior against intimate partners. Interestingly, a female's exposure to violence in the family in childhood has no effect on her risk of becoming a victim of IPV in adulthood.

Table 5: Logistic regression models for victimization by IPV by gender.

	Male respondents AOR	Female respondents AOR
RESPONDENT'S FEATURES		
Education	1.17	1.30
Low subjective household income	.87	1.67***
Alcohol use	.75*	.69***
IPV in family of origin (no)	2.85**	1.51
Serious CP in family of origin (no)	.67	1.61
PARTNER'S FEATURES		
Education	.46***	.54***
Alcohol use	1.84***	2.58***
IPV in family of origin (no)	4.56***	6.36***
Serious CP in family of origin (no)	1.18	1.07
<i>Nagelkerke R²</i>	.19	.38
<i>N</i>	824	943

Source: Intimate Partner Violence (2012/2013)

Note: Included are respondents who have had a violent partner and respondents who have a partner (violent or not) at present; Reference category is in brackets.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

¹³ All four indicators used in the analysis measure the occurrence of IPV or CP in childhood (1 = yes, 0 = no/don't know).

Assessment of the intergenerational transmission of violence hypothesis

Overall, our findings lend further support to the intergenerational transmission of violence hypothesis, though the mechanism does not seem to be universal, i.e. it is not true that any exposure to violence in the family is associated with more positive attitudes to CP and violence, greater involvement in delinquency, greater risk of IPV in relationships, etc. First, the outcomes suggest that experience with CP affects, to a certain degree, the personal attitude to CP both in adolescence and adulthood and if CP is moderate or serious, it is also associated with larger adolescent involvement in violent delinquency compared to other peers. Second, the witnessing of IPV in the family of origin, unlike experience with CP, is particularly associated with an increased risk of perpetrating IPV in adulthood. In accordance with previous research, it also poses as a significant risk factor for the cruel treatment of animals in adolescence.

Conclusion

The Czech Republic belongs to the minority of European countries that not only have not banned CP in the family yet but show no commitment to do so in the near future (Global Initiative, 2016b). This constitutes a clear violation of two international treaties – the European Social Charter and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – both of which the Czech government has ratified. The results of the analyses presented in this article imply that the concern of politicians that a total ban on CP would not be well-received by the public is likely to be substantiated.

The use of CP in Czech families is widespread, as the previous year prevalence rate for 15-year-old adolescents reached a staggering 43% and experience with severe types of CP was reported by 9%. Not surprisingly, the level of adolescent approval of CP is high and many adolescents perceive CP as a legitimate means of child rearing. On the other hand, the findings on attitudes towards CP among adults suggest that they are largely aware that slapping or giving their child a beating are not ideal parenting practices, although it is clear that many of them use (or have used) CP regardless. This paradox has already been discussed by Straus and Donnelly (2006), whose primary explanation for the phenomenon lies in the social pressure to physically punish disobedient children. Nevertheless, a disapproving attitude does not apply to minor types of CP, such as a smack in the back of the head or spanking, which are almost universally perceived as acceptable punishments in the eyes of Czech adults.

As the use of CP is widespread within Czech families and minor types of CP are considered standard child rearing practices, it is widely believed that CP does not have a harmful impact. Although our results cannot prove causal relationships, they clearly show that: parents of 15-year-old adolescents who use CP are more likely to employ other negative parental practices as well, there are more conflicts and even violence between these parents and, consequently, the child-parent bond is weaker compared to parents who do not physically punish their children. In addition, 15-year-old adolescents who have experienced parental CP during the past year are more likely to be involved in vio-

lent delinquency compared to their peers who have not. These relationships are especially pronounced for adolescents who report serious CP; however, even sporadic, moderate CP is associated with a somewhat increased risk as well.

Our results thus contribute to a large body of research (see, e.g. Gershoff, 2002) which suggests that the use of CP by parents is likely to negatively affect various aspects of the child's life, including the tendency of the child to replicate this parenting practice in adulthood when raising their own children. Furthermore, proponents of the total ban of CP in all settings argue that children, like adults, should be legally protected against all forms of violence and that includes violence in the home as well (e.g. Gershoff, 2010); however, pushing such a piece of legislation in the absence of popular support for a ban on CP – which is the case in Czech society – is not advisable (Zolotor & Puzia, 2010). It is thus a task for Czech professionals from various fields to first initiate public debate on this issue and, above all, to offer appropriate alternatives to CP.

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