

**PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN THE  
FAMILY: RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract:** *The problem of violence is topical in the modern world. Researchers study the issues of preventing violence and child abuse in Russia as well. The authors cite Russian experience of violence against children in the family, confirming the statistical data of surveys with facts. The article presents the main causes and consequences of family violence, leading to the emergence of various phobias, neuroses, destructive behavior. The consequence of the use of physical punishment by parents in the family is the method of projection, when children repeat the methods of parental upbringing and reproduce them in their families. Based on an analysis of Russian studies, the authors present data on the use of physical punishment in the family, the most common forms of physical punishment of children are the forms of spanking and slaps. Only 60% of parents realize that violence in the family causes severe psychological trauma to the child, but consider it quite acceptable in cases when they cannot cope with the child's caprices, stubbornness and disobedience. The article presents the main directions of scientific research and practical developments on the prevention of violence in the family, the use. The authors note that modern scientific research on this topic lacks a unified terminology. The broad thesaurus of definitions used in Russian studies suggests the concepts of "violence", "cruel attitude", "indifferent attitude" as semantically close. of various propaedeutic forms (conversations, counselling, family visits, psychotherapy, etc.) in work with parents. At the same time, the authors conclude that all of them are derivatives of the concept of "aggression", which is considered as purposeful destructive behaviour that contradicts the norms and rules of human behaviour in society, causing harm and physical damage and psychological discomfort.*

**Keywords:** *violence, abuse, ill-treatment, prevention, family, punishment, non-violence.*

**Introduction**

Child abuse has occurred in different countries around the world and at all times. [1]. Family violence against children and domestic abuse in the family create a threat not only to the health, intellectual and moral development of the child, but also to the security of society as a whole. The situation with child abuse in modern Russia can be characterised by the following indicators: every year about 2 million children under the age of 14 suffer from the arbitrary behaviour of their parents, every tenth child is killed, 2,000 commit suicide, for this reason 50,000 children run away from home every year. [3]. These figures allow us to conclude that child abuse and neglect of children's needs, as before, one of the most important and pressing social problems in Russia and the world.

Article 19 (1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that States parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, maltreatment or exploitation. However, the content of the concepts of

"violence", "aggression", "ill-treatment of children" and "exploitation" is not disclosed. Such uncertainty complicates the study of the problem of violence against children and significantly limits the possibilities of providing them with interdisciplinary assistance. This determined the choice of the research problem.

### Methods

Research on violence is focused in two main areas: identifying the fact of violence or abuse of a child and studying the effects of violence on the child's intellectual, personal and social development. Both areas are based on the methodological foundation of an interdisciplinary approach to dealing with violence. The interdisciplinary approach is based on the idea that professional interaction between specialists from different departments is mandatory: education, medicine, social work, law enforcement and human rights agencies in order to deal with the phenomenon of violence against children.

The most common research methods were theoretical methods: analysis and synthesis of literature on the research problem, comparison, abstraction, deduction and others. Among empirical methods the most effective were methods of pedagogical observation, survey, clinical interview. When using research methods, it was revealed that families where there are facts of violence are more isolated in society, use more firm patterns of interaction, authoritarian style of communication.

### Research

Causes of violence against children are social and developmental in nature. The social factors include alcoholism, financial problems, poor social standards and insecurity. They lead people into a state of stress and, in some cases, to family cruelty. Children whose parents have used threats, punishments, condemnation and ridicule are likely to develop a sense of guilt and shame. The effects of punishment on the child's emotional state can result in a sense of remorse and frustration.

Modern research shows that violence in one form or another is usually committed by people who are spiritually weak. By forcing others, suppressing them physically and morally, they seem to assert their superiority, their strength. It is not by chance that many psychologists write about the "power complex" (classical psychoanalysis, neo-Freudianism, etc.), careerism, aspiration for a dominant position.

To identify the causes of cruelty and violence against children, let us turn to history. Human history is replete with facts of deliberate killing of newborn children, or infanticide. The Bible cites numerous instances of child sacrifice and beatings. Brutal physical punishment (especially flogging) was considered a common method of upbringing. Their use was sanctioned, legalised by society and supported by religion. The Old Testament contains unequivocal evidence of this: "Chastise your son as long as there is hope, and do not resent his cry. [3].

Harsh treatment of the child in the historical past was necessitated by the need to atone for sins and to best realise divine truths. Beatings and whippings were used to "cure" children suffering from epilepsy because it was believed that the cause of the disease lay in their possession by the devil.

Cruel treatment of children in different historical epochs was conditioned mainly by the impact of social, external to the individual circumstances, such objective for that time reasons as inability to possess the conditions of their existence, lack of funds, the need to observe ritual rites, physical, mental and social inferiority of children and others [1, 3]. Until the end of the 19th century, the prevailing position was that the child was the property of the parents.

The study by D.A. Kruglikova notes that violence in one form or another is observed in modern Russia in almost every fourth family [6]. The causes and reasons for family conflicts are different: quarrels, scandals, unpleasant relations on the grounds of family troubles and domestic conflicts [8, 9]. According to the Analytical Centre of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, 30-40% of all serious violent crimes are committed in the family. Children are a special and most widespread object of family violence - every 4th child is subjected to violence in the family. In the study by A.G. Gritsai and V.I. Spirina [5], they cite statistics that the perpetrators of child abuse are most often parents (94.2%); at the same time, birth mothers are guilty of mistreatment and care almost twice as much as fathers (75% vs. 41%).

Physical punishment is not a valid method of discipline, as it can cause undesirable effects such as reactions of rage or fear. A child who is under threat of punishment often behaves badly. The family acts as a role model for the child, demonstrating certain patterns of social behavior. In assessing what is happening in society, the child relies primarily on the type of communication he has with close relatives, and he will base his interaction with other people on this. No other type of informal group has the same influence on the primary socialization of children as that of the family.

A. Badonov's research shows that people who witnessed physical violence between parents in childhood and were subjected to corporal punishment, in adulthood become inclined to use physical force in relations between spouses in the family, increase the likelihood that these parents use physical violence against their own children. Approximately 30 per cent of those who witnessed aggression between parents and the victim of physical punishment commit violence as adults [2]. The results of the research conducted by A.G. Gritsay and V.I. Spirina [5] proved that the following types of punishments are most often used in families:

- physical punishment - 25%;
- verbal abuse to the child's dignity - 15%;
- threats - 35%;
- deprivation of pleasure - 25%.

The study of the reasons forcing parents to use physical violence against a child has established a great variety of them:

- Disobedience (75 per cent);
- caprices and stubbornness (15 per cent);
- emotional discharge on the child (25 per cent);
- ineffectiveness of other methods of influence (15%);
- lack of patience (19%). [5] The causes of child abuse in the family are varied:
- Promotion of the cult of force as the only means of resolving disagreements;
- lack of skills in appropriate ways to manage children's behaviour; parental immaturity;
- projection of one's own childhood experience ("we were beaten and we will be beaten");
- lack of skills in self-regulation of parental behaviour;
- Adult personality traits: reduced self-control, helplessness in the face of the child's disobedience;
- personal characteristics of the child (hyperactivity, demonstrativeness, aggressiveness).

The meaning of punishment in pedagogy and psychology - the impact on the emotional sphere of the child, the desire to cause a sense of guilt, remorse, grief, shame. Punishment cannot be considered as a mandatory method of influence. A. S. Makarenko, a great Soviet educator, said that in a good family there is never punishment, and this is the most correct way of family upbringing. The use of violence by adults against a child has negative consequences. Children whose parents used threats, punishments, judgement and ridicule may feel guilt and shame. T.A. Markova [4] describes "Rough style" and "Threatening style" of upbringing. In the rude style parents are unbalanced, irascible people. They are characterized by such educational influences as punishments, shouts, rude and harsh expressions. Parents show complete disrespect for the child's personality. The child becomes withdrawn, more often begins to be rude to everyone, transfers all expressions heard from adults, in his vocabulary.

Parents show total disrespect for the child's personality. The relationship may manifest itself in the form of child battering, emotional hostility and coldness. The child, as a result of these influences, is often to parents, using in his vocabulary the type of expressions he has heard from adults. Thus, the "rough style" has very unfavorable long-term consequences for the development of the child's personality and the establishment of contacts with parents. T.A. Markova's study highlights the "threatening style", when parents are ready to resort to punishment for any child's offence. The child and parents are in constant tension. Children in such a situation begin to orientate only on punishment. They obey not because they understand the requirements and rules of behaviour or respect parents, but to avoid reproach and punishment. Subsequently, such children retain the established stereotype of behaviour. They usually easily go to compromise, easily give up their own point of view.

Lack of parental love leads to nervous and mental disorders in children, causes hostility and aggression towards each other. Depending on the behaviour of adults, feelings and attitudes on the part of close people the baby perceives the world attractive or repulsive, benevolent or threatening. Satisfaction of the child's need to be protected and loved in the family colours his associations with the family: pleasant or unpleasant, calm or anxious. The feeling of "what I am" is formed earlier than "who I am". A child's positive emotional state is the basis of his/her benevolent attitude to people and readiness to communicate.

The method of physical punishment is inadmissible, not only from the point of view of pedagogy, but also from the point of view of psychophysiology. A child under the fear of punishment is more likely to make a mistake. Fear of pain, although it strengthens the desire to avoid it, but hinders activity. Painful influence causes reactions of rage or fear. Relying here on sharp methods of influence - not only inhumane and untimely, but from the point of view of psychophysiology senseless. The child is more difficult to teach domestic and labour skills, punishing for mistakes, rather than gently correct. A child under the fear of punishment is more likely to make a mistake.

The identification in recent years of the problem of violence against children in the family as an independent social problem indicates its relevance and the need to develop a system of preventive and corrective measures aimed at its resolution.

V.G. Maralov, A.A. Sitarov [7] - leading Russian experts in the field of pedagogy and psychology of non-violence as a counterbalance to violence outlined the main directions of scientific research and practical developments in this area:

- formation of peacefulness and the ability for optimal co-operation;
- development of a non-violent attitude towards nature;
- ability to resolve conflicts by non-violent means, etc.

The methodological basis of this direction is the principle of non-violence, which is the leading principle in many philosophical and ethical concepts, where humanism and non-violence are considered as universal values (L.N. Tolstoy, N. Roerich, V.A. Sukhomlinsky, K.N. Wentzel, Sh. A. Amonashvili, etc.). In Russia, under the aegis of the Association "Pedagogy of Nonviolence", scientific and practical conferences, seminars, and research and practice centres have been held annually since 1990, where theoretical and practical aspects of the pedagogy of nonviolence are developed (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vologda, etc.).

Russia has ratified a number of international agreements providing for combating family violence in its various forms and manifestations. These include the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, and other international legal acts. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 by the UN, children have the right to special care and assistance; a child for the full and harmonious development of his personality must grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

### **Results**

We research extensively into the problem of socialization in the family and family/kindergarten interaction. We help the parents by different ways in the kindergartens. There are workshop, different consultations, conversations, webinars, lectures, trainings.

The analysis of research on this problem allowed us to come to the following interim results and conclusions:

1. Interviews with parents showed that even in an ordinary, outwardly prosperous family, the use of physical violence is a common phenomenon: 25% of parents use physical punishment as a method of educational influence. The most common forms of physical punishment in the modern family are slaps and spankings, which are considered by parents as quite normal, forcing the child to fulfil the adult's requirements. Parents use the most sophisticated means of physical punishment: palm, belt, rod, broom, jump rope, nettle. Analysis of parents' attitudes towards physical punishment allows us to conclude that there is a contradictory attitude towards this method: 60% of parents realise that it

causes mental trauma, but consider them acceptable in individual cases when they cannot cope with the child's caprices, stubbornness, disobedience. Only 15% of parents consider corporal punishment that humiliates the child unacceptable in child upbringing.

2. It should be noted that there is no uniform terminology in scientific research on this topic. Violence and ill-treatment of children in the family are understood to be varieties of physical violence - torture in the form of beating, hitting, slapping, burning with hot objects (liquids, lit cigarettes). They also include involving children in the use of drugs, alcohol, and giving them intoxicating substances or "medical preparations" that cause intoxication. Many authors also consider separately attempts to kill a child (by strangulation or drowning). The notions of "cruel (bad) treatment of children" or "violence against children in the family" in the Russian language are correlated with specific actions "to beat", "to punish", "not to feed", "not to care", "not to love". In English-speaking terminology, such a concept is considered to be well-established as child abuse and neglect (CAN).

The study of the etymology of the concepts of "cruelty" and "violence" led us to the understanding that they are derivatives of the concept of "aggression", which is regarded as purposeful destructive behaviour that contradicts the norms and rules of human behaviour in society, harming the objects of attack and causing them physical damage or psychological discomfort.

Child abuse is often distinguished from "neglect of parental responsibilities". Neglect of a child's interests and needs is the failure to properly provide for a child's basic needs and requirements (food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care). A typical example of neglect of children is leaving them unattended, which often leads to accidents, poisoning and other dangerous consequences for the child's life and health. At the same time, the concept of "indifferent attitude" is also distinguished, which is identical in terms of the consequences and damage caused to the child's psyche. It is not uncommon for neglect and indifference towards children to co-exist.

As a rule, the terms "violence" and "child abuse" are associated with a dysfunctional, destructive family with a burdened alcohol addiction. However, facts of physical violence against a child are not uncommon in ordinary, relatively "favourable" families.

3. Research into the prevention of violence and child abuse in the family should be expanded to include medical organisations, psychological centres, social protection agencies and law enforcement organisations. Such interdepartmental co-operation will make it possible to address problems in a comprehensive manner and to expand the scope of practical activities in the area of preventive measures. It's necessary to develop an additional toolkit for diagnosing violence and child abuse in the family that integrates the main line of interagency co-operation.

Currently in Russia for diagnostics of child-parent relationships are used:

- E.I. Zakharova's questionnaire of emotional relations in the family;
- The "Attitude to Children (Parental Attitude Test)" technique Ya. A. Varga, V.V. Stolin;

In order to study and assess potential problems and consequences of violence, projective techniques are more often used: the "Incomplete sentences" technique; the "Letter to a friend" technique. To diagnose the cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of children's perceptions of violence, a series of drawing tests are used: "House, Tree, Person"; "Nonexistent Animal"; "Family Drawing"; "Family in the Images of Fairy Tale Characters". Для диагностики посттравматических симптомов широко используются:

- "Trauma Symptom Checklist" by D. Briere;
- W. Friedrich's "Description of Child Sexual Behaviour" questionnaire;
- R. Goodman Success and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ, R. Goodman);
- A. Angold's feelings and moods questionnaire (for children aged 7-18) (A. Angold, E.J. Costello, S.C. Messer, A. Pickles, F. Winder & D. Silver);
- group questionnaires ICAST (ISPCAN Child Abuse Screening Tools) - international questionnaires to study the prevalence of violence against children, etc.

4. As a preventive measure to prevent violence and child abuse in the family, it is necessary to carry out targeted and systematic educational work with parents. It is advisable in work with dysfunctional families to visit the family, to conduct explanatory work in the form of counselling, conversations about the harm of physical punishment and its consequences; to search for humane methods of upbringing in the family. The use of projective techniques will help to monitor the mental



state of the child, to conduct various types of psychotherapy (sand therapy, fairy tale therapy, isotherapy, music therapy, play therapy, etc.) in a timely manner.

### **Conclusion**

Addressing the problems of domestic violence requires a set of social, legal, psychological and educational measures aimed at developing practical means of preventing violence and rehabilitating victims. Public education in this regard should include such aspects as:

- The rejection of culturally justified forms of abuse, first of all in the sphere of upbringing and re-education of children;
- complete abolition of the use of physical punishments on occasion and without reason;
- inculcation of a valuable attitude towards children and childhood, etc. [1].

An important role here could be played by more radical measures to eliminate inequality between people, psychological and pedagogical support of different categories of families (especially dysfunctional families) in order to create equal starting opportunities for children in the family; mitigation of all kinds of stresses caused by natural, political and military cataclysms. According to the requirements of the UN Convention and legal documents of the Russian Federation, a child has the right to protection from physical, psychological violence, insult or abuse. Through an adequate system of social values and culture, we are ready to respond to the manifestation of violence and strive to stop it in the modern Russian family.

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**ПРЕВЕНЦИЈА НАСИЉА И ЗЛОСТАВЉАЊА ДЈЕЦЕ У ПОРОДИЦИ – РУСКО ИСКУСТВО**

**Сажетак:** Проблем насиља је релевантан у данашњем свету. Истраживачи проучавају питања превенције насиља и злостављања деце и у Русији. Аутори наводе руско искуство насиља над децом у породици, потврђујући чињеницама статистичке податке истраживања. У чланку су представљени главни узроци и последице породичног насиља, што доводи до појаве различитих фобија, неуроза, деструктивног понашања. Последица родитељског физичког кажњавања у породици је метода пројекције, где деца понављају методе родитељства и репродукују их у својим породицама. На основу анализе руских истраживања, аутори наводе податке о употреби физичких казни у породици, а најчешћи облици физичког кажњавања деце су облици удара и подзатилника. Само 60% родитеља схвата да насиље у породици наноси детету тешку психолошку трауму, али сматра да је то сасвим прихватљиво у случајевима када не могу да се носе са хировима, тврдоглавошћу и непослушношћу детета. У чланку су представљени основни правци научних истраживања и практичних радова о превенцији насиља у породици. Аутори примећују да у савременим научним истраживањима на ову тему нема јединствене терминологије. Широк тезаурус дефиниција које се користе у руским истраживањима претпоставља семантички блиске појмове насиље, Жестоки став, равнодушан став. о различитим пропедеутским облицима (разговори, саветовање, породичне посете, психотерапија итд.) у раду са родитељима. У исто време, аутори закључују да су сви изведени из концепта "агресије", који се сматра сврсисходним деструктивним понашањем које је у супротности са нормама и правилима људског понашања у друштву, узрокујући штету и физичку штету.

**Кључне речи:** насиље, злостављање, злостављање, превенција, породица, казна, ненасиље.