

Certain degrees of corporal punishment is acceptable among rural Filipinos, according to the results of a study sponsored by Plan Philippines and presented on December 6, 2006 at the Asian Institute of Management, Makati, Philippines.

“Among the various types of disciplinary acts, counseling, beating/spanking and withdrawing or reducing school allowance were considered most acceptable,” reported lead researcher Dr. Bernie Madrid. “A troubling observation was that shaking as a form of discipline is acceptable for children starting at 2.7 years old. While infants can sustain fatal or severe injuries from shaking, children up to 3 years old are also vulnerable to these injuries,” Dr. Madrid added.

In this study, 793 respondents composed of parents, children and adolescents, teachers, professionals and local leaders from rural Plan areas, namely Anda and San Fabian in Pangasinan; San Jose and Canlintaan in Occidental Mindoro; and Poro and San Francisco in Camotes Island, Cebu Province were interviewed to explore their notions, beliefs and behaviors toward child discipline, seeking to analyze the important links between parental discipline and abusive acts against children.

Children, adolescents and youth composed 37% of the respondents, parents 19% and teachers 17%. About 10% were professionals, 11% belonged to the vulnerable groups of gays, lesbians, differently-abled, abused children and children living with other families. The rest of the study groups were local leaders.

The different groups had the same notion that disciplining children aims to develop socially responsible and morally upright individuals.

The study also shows that the respondents considered child discipline as harmful or abusive if the act is not commensurate to the offense committed by the child or does not have a valid reason; the child sustains physical injuries and is in pain; when vulnerable body parts are involved such as the head; and when the disciplinary act humiliates or degrades the person of the child.

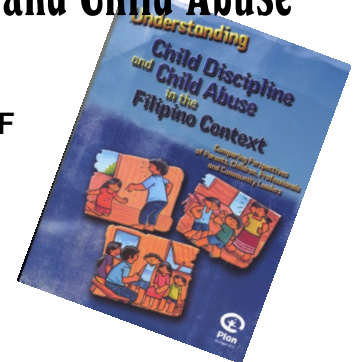
Hanging, burning/scalding were the most unacceptable and abusive disciplinary acts according to the study.

Among the perceived offenses, the study groups were most tolerant of children having boyfriend/girlfriend relationship behaviors and breaking a favorite home décor. Respondents also suggested sending the child to jail for the most serious offenses considered, namely stealing; coming home drunk; and using prohibited drugs.

The study is limited by self-reported notions regarding discipline behaviors and does not actually ask what the respondent does to children or what the children experience themselves. It is also limited to small rural pockets of the Philippines.

## Understanding Discipline and Child Abuse in the Filipino Context

### COMPARING PERSPECTIVES OF PARENTS, CHILDREN, PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS



The research recommends that a prevalence study with a wider population base be done. Dissemination of information on children's rights among community residents should also be done in the most effective and efficient manner. Local leaders should implement laws on child abuse and become familiar with their nuances. The researchers are also aware that an increase in child abuse reports will occur once a massive information campaign is done and the community should be able to handle these reports.

The feasibility of establishing a Child Protection Unit with a multidisciplinary team in each municipality, district or province should be tested. The study also recommends that workshops and seminars for parents, teachers and professionals as well as psychosocial counseling and family therapy including cognitive-behavioral interventions for children in difficult circumstances should be part of the intervention package.

Dr. Madrid reported, “that the recommendations given by the researchers are already being done by Plan Philippines even before the ink of this publication has dried. Under a Memorandum of Agreement with CPU-Net, Plan Philippines sponsors the training of a physician, social worker and police from their areas at the PGH Child Protection Unit.”

The publication is available from Plan Philippines.



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*Maligayang Pasko!*

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