

Spanking related to other forms of discipline, intimate partner violence

October 7 2022



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Spanking is more common among parents who report using many types of discipline with children and in families where there is intimate partner violence, according to a new research abstract presented during the 2022 American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference &

Exhibition.

Authors of the abstract, "Predictors of Corporal Punishment During the COVID-19 Pandemic: National Survey Findings," found that 64.5% of caregivers who reported spanking their child or children also reported intimate partner violence. The study found that caregivers who used an increased number of non-violent discipline strategies like timeouts had increased odds of using corporal punishment.

"Caregivers want what is best for their children. Our data suggest that caregivers are utilizing many forms of non-aggressive discipline; however, those strategies might not be working for them," said Dr. J. Bart Klika, Chief Research Officer, Prevent Child Abuse America. "For those working directly with families, we cannot simply give caregivers a list of discipline strategies. Instead, we must talk with caregivers about how to use those non-aggressive strategies in developmentally appropriate ways. During follow-up visits, our question should be about the effectiveness of those strategies, not only asking what strategies were used."

The AAP, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Prevent Child Abuse America, and Tufts Medical Center, surveyed 9,000 caregivers to understand the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on [family](#) life and parenting practices. Three rounds of surveys (with 3,000 different caregivers in each survey) were conducted by YouGov between November 2020 and July 2021. The survey asked caregivers about financial stress, employment changes, [family violence](#), positive and negative coping strategies for stress and discipline methods.

Participants were asked about the use of corporal punishment in the past week and other forms of violence in the home. Most caregivers (83.5%) reported not spanking their child or children in the past seven days. However, one in six reported spanking during this timeframe.

"It's vital to consider everyone's safety in the home if a parent reports that they hit or spank a child, as intimate partner violence may also be present," Dr. Klika said. "Understanding the co-occurrence of corporal punishment and [intimate partner violence](#) is especially important for health care workers and doctors. This knowledge can help providers assess for violence in the home and provide appropriate supports and resources for families."

Study authors found that this information can be helpful in assisting providers to talk with families about discipline and violence in the home, but that additional research is needed to understand why caregivers using multiple discipline strategies turned to spanking.

More information: Predictors of corporal punishment during the COVID-19 pandemic: National survey findings, 2022 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

Citation: Spanking related to other forms of discipline, intimate partner violence (2022, October 7) retrieved 29 April 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2022-10-spanking-discipline-intimate-partner-violence.html>

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