

**Ewa Jarosz**

University of Silesia in Katowice

ORCID:0000-0002-3207-0148

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## **Ideas and research “in the service” of solving social problems – the *casus* of corporal punishment in childrearing**

*Dedicated to Professor Tadeusz Pilch  
in gratitude for making me a scientist committed to social change,  
the Author*

**ABSTRACT:** Violence in child rearing was a common practice in social history, only in the last decades it has become a phenomenon that is increasingly criticized and there are calls for decisive steps to eliminate this problem. A huge role is played here by the development of democracy and the idea of children’s rights, but the crucial importance of scientific research is also evident. Its meaning in the process of elimination violence against children is of a varied nature. It is scientific research that “discovered” the violence against children in the present sense and in social history, revealing the nature of this phenomenon. It has shown the extent of violence and its individual and social significance. Research on conditions has become the basis for conceptualization of activities, and monitoring and evaluation studies allow to build and select effective actions, programs and measures. The paper uses the problem of corporal punishment in child rearing as an example of how ideas on the one hand and scientific research on the other can contribute to the elimination of a social problem.

**KEYWORDS:** Children’s rights, democracy, corporal punishment, research on violence in child rearing.

## **Introduction: the social construct of the problem of corporal punishment**

Violence in child rearing is currently a phenomenon that is quite common in various regions of the world. The presented reports and research reveal indicators reaching up to three quarters of the population of children experiencing corporal punishment (see e.g. UNICEF 2014; Know Violence in Childhood 2017; SRSV VAC 2017; Cuartas et al. 2019). Both the epidemiological picture and the importance of corporal punishment have led to the fact that nowadays they are considered to be a global social problem. It should, however, be noted that corporal punishment has been a natural way of dealing with children for centuries (Jarosz 2008). In fact, rooted in social life and traditions, for centuries they did not arouse much critical reflection, and the few opinions appearing against corporal punishment were mainly the voices of progressive thinkers and pedagogues, such as Rousseau, or later Montessori, Foerster, Claparede or Korczak (Jarosz 2008; Jarosz and Michalak 2018). More often, however, if the use of corporal punishment of children was contested at all, it was more the method of execution and the intensity of the physical force used that was criticized than the actual use of it. Common, however, were recommendations and advice on how to effectively apply it and widespread belief in their positive impact and educational effectiveness (see Jarosz 2008). Unfortunately, this attitude is still alive in many regions, communities and environments. It is particularly visible in the countries of Africa and the Far East, but it can also be found in developed democratic countries.

The criticism of violence in child rearing is now gaining ground. Violence is nowadays presented as a serious issue which has a negative impact not only in the perspective of an individual – a child – but also in collective life. It is stressed that corporal punishment, because of its consequences, negatively affects the quality of life of societies. The extent and devastating effect of violence against children has led the international community to include the elimination of this problem in the global program of *Sustainable Developmental Goals. Agenda 2030* as a goal to be achieved by humanity in the next 15 years (UNICEF 2017, *Ending violence...* 2017; Hillis et al. 2018). Thus, on an even political level, corporal punishment is considered as an unacceptable, both for ethical and legal reasons, way of dealing with children, and as a method that is actually harmful and destructive to the child's development and well-being, both present and future.

As can be seen, in a relatively short period of time there has been a clear change in the level of criticism of corporal punishment, from contesting its intensity and methods of its execution to its complete negation and placing it in the area of socially stigmatized phenomena that must be eliminated. There has also been a change in the scope of punishments understood as corporal punishment, from the original one, which narrowed it down only to the significant use of physical force towards the child, to the extended one, which includes such forms as ordering the child to stay in an uncomfortable position – e.g. standing with their hands up or kneeling for a long time, or behaviors such as forcing the child to eat, pulling their ears or hair, throwing objects at the child, shaking the child, pinching or smacking the child, and other behaviors that humiliates the child or depreciates the child's dignity (General Comment No. 8, see in: Jarosz and Michalak 2018).

To what do we owe such a dynamic transformation of the societal approach to corporal punishment? There are certainly several factors, or rather processes, that have led to this, but undoubtedly a special role was played by two, which I would describe as dominant and at the same time inseparable. These are the development of the idea of human rights, children's rights and democracy, and research into violence against children and childhood itself.

### **Democracy, equality, justice and the protection of rights vs. corporal punishment**

The acknowledgment of what is violence against children has been and still is changing in the context of epochs and cultures. This is because it is based on shared values and social priorities. The notion of violence against children is in fact a social construct understood on the basis of given socio-cultural, organizational, but also political conditions. First of all, the understanding of what kind of behavior towards children is inappropriate is related to the understanding of childcare, parental responsibility and the relationship between children and adults in given socio-cultural conditions (Corsaro 2015). This means that the concept of violence against children is largely based on the understanding of what childhood is and how it should be protected and treated by adults, and based on this, the social recognition of what education should lead to, what it should consist of and what measures should be used for that purpose. While researchers point to the existence of a certain universe that is the physical survival of children, their health, gradual gaining of self-dependence up to their independence and the development of children in accordance with certain values, the specific approaches to the care

and child rearing relationship between children and adults are clearly “fluid” and time- and culturally related. Pointing to this feature, Leon Eisenberg (1981) noted that the differences in socio-cultural standards of treatment of children are based primarily on a number of criteria regarding the identification and definition of childhood, on conditions which are considered appropriate and necessary for the proper development of the child, on models of child rearing and on “civil” rigs that are or are not granted to children.

Commenting on the results of various historical analyses (see more e.g. Jarosz 2008) without going into details, it can be stated that the paradigm of treatment of children in given social conditions corresponds to the model of social philosophy which dominates in the society. With the extent to which it is characterized by ideas and aspirations to ensure the personal development of the individual and their potential, or the other way round, with the dominating interest of the community and the welfare of the group, the tribe and society, while at the same time not taking into account the welfare and happiness of the individual. The analysis of the occurrence and intensity of different phenomena of violence against children in different periods and cultures from this perspective shows that the more, in a given social philosophy, the individual and their right to development and the differences between members of the community are respected and observed, the more attention is paid to meeting the needs of children and respecting them as valuable members of the community and granting them rights. It is also all the more rare for children to experience violence against them in different contexts. The reverse situation, that is the occurrence and intensification of violence against children, is all the more visible the stronger the position of the common good, the interest and goals of the group and its survival in the culture and philosophy of society. This also makes the welfare of children and their individual needs secondary, and children are often sacrificed in the name of the “common good” and the interests of the community (cf. Eisenberg 1981; Sumner 1995; Badinter 1999).

Without going any further into the extensive historical analyses (Jarosz 2008), one can simply state that the stronger the democratic movements and ideas of dignity and respect for every citizen are in the community, the more actions are taken for the benefit of children and their protection, and the more pressure is exerted to see them as citizens with a defined scope of rights. As a result, the issues of children’s subjectivity and the need to respect them and protect their dignity are even more intensively addressed. This also leads to a situation where violence against children becomes unacceptable and is treated as unauthorized abuse of advantage over the child and use of imbalance of power by adults to achieve their own goals and interests. Under

such conditions, any violence and any acceptance of it, even in the form of the absence of an explicit law prohibiting its use against children, is seen as a form of discrimination against children and social injustice and as a sign of undemocratic society (Liebel 2014).

Thus, it can be summed up in simple terms that the change of social attitude towards various behaviors directed to children, to the method of their disciplining and rearing, and the recognition of certain behaviors towards them as negative, inappropriate, violent, and as a consequence their exclusion from the area of socially acceptable behaviors, takes place on the basis of the development of the idea of human rights and children's rights and the processes of deepening the democratization of social life. The researchers of childhood and the development of the idea of children's rights definitely indicate that, both in the past and nowadays, it can be seen that the stronger the democratic ideas develop, the more is done to recognize the subjectivity of children and treat them as equal members of the community. The development of democracy and individual rights is therefore conducive to ensuring children at least equal protection, equal treatment under the law, and respect for their specific rights resulting from sensitivity, susceptibility to harm and their developmental needs (Jarosz 2008). Such a democratic and "children's rights" perspective that developed in many countries in the second half of the 20th century caused that certain behaviors and situations occurring in educational relations began to be treated in the categories of violation of children's rights and dignity. Many of the "traditional" child rearing practices started to be perceived as abuse of advantage and power over children as weaker and dependent individuals. As a result, the previously approved and often even recommended and legally regulated methods of child rearing, influencing and punishing children (see Krajewski 2010), were strongly criticized and then stigmatized and excluded from the area of socially and politically accepted child rearing practices. With time people began to call for their formal, legal exclusion from social life.

The forerunner of the subsequent development of legislative activities and the creation of legal instruments and reforms to provide children with equal protection against violence was Sweden, where as early as in 1957 the existing law exempting parents from criminal liability for causing injuries to children through physical punishment was abolished (Krajewski 2010). Then, in 1979, a total ban on corporal punishment and any humiliating treatment of children was introduced. This pioneering and world innovative regulation was made possible thanks to the enormous political support of all political parties and the fact that the welfare of children and their protection were

placed above party interests (Szymańczak 2009). Sweden was soon followed by other countries, initially Scandinavian, such as Finland (1983) and Norway (1987), and then by other European and non-European countries (see Jarosz and Michalak 2018; [www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)).

The understanding of violence in child rearing, including the use of any corporal punishment, in the categories of violation of children's rights, began to develop and deepen particularly dynamically after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989. In its numerous articles, the Convention refers to the protection of children from violence. The protection against violence is covered by a number of articles (9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 28). The subject of these regulations is the various situations of violence against children committed by various actors: parents, guardians, schools, social groups, institutions or communities, as well as the media. The need to protect children from violence is expressed in a specific way in Article 19, which obliges the states to take appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to this end. It also points to the obligation to organize social and support programs for people who rear children, as well as other forms of prevention, and to conduct studies and research and collect data on cases of child abuse. In another provision – Article 24, the Convention imposes an obligation on the states to take steps to eliminate traditional practices that are harmful to children's health, this Article is also understood in the context of the problem of violence in child rearing.

The evolution of reflection on children's rights after the adoption of the Convention and the monitoring of its implementation in individual countries by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child have resulted in a number of various sequential documents, i.e. comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and many thematic reports. Those which refer to violence against children, including violence in child rearing (see Jarosz and Michalak 2018), specify in detail the indications on the desirable actions aimed at providing children with effective protection against violence (Jarosz 2017). The essential measure that is recommended is the introduction of an explicit right to absolute protection of children against all forms of violence, including a legal ban on corporal punishment. This point was included, apart from documents related to the Convention, i.e. General Comment No. 8 and General Comment No. 13 (see Annexes in Jarosz and Michalak, 2018) also in European recommendations, such as Recommendation 1666 (2004) recommending the total ban on corporal punishment (see Annexes in Jarosz and Michalak 2018). The legislative reform processes relatively quickly resulted in the fact that the law codes contained provisions allowing for physical punishment of children

and no provisions guaranteeing absolute legal protection of children against all violence started to be perceived as a clear discrimination of children as citizens and an expression of their unequal treatment before the law (Zolotor, Puzia 2010; Krajewski 2010, Gershoff 2013, Jarosz 2017). This political pressure is certainly affecting a particularly dynamically growing in recent years number of countries introducing legal reforms aimed at ensuring children full protection against all forms of violence, including in child rearing, also within the family (see [www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)).

### **"Tough" arguments for eliminating violence in childrearing – research on the impact of corporal punishment**

The decades-long research into the impact of violence on the development of children has provided particularly strong arguments for eliminating violence against children. In recent years, researchers have begun to address especially the impact of violence in childrearing and the effects of corporal punishment. Various direct studies and meta-analyses not only revealed the lack of educational and standard-setting function of corporal punishment, but also the devastating impact of such practices on the individual development of children (see e.g. Gershoff 2013).

In particular, their negative impact on children's development – their social, emotional and cognitive competences – was identified (Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor 2016; Afifi et al. 2017, Pace et al. 2019). Spectacular in this regard turned out to be the research showing the destructive impact of corporal punishment on the structure and functioning of the brain (Tomoda et al. 2009; Strauss et al. 2009; Teicher et al. 2009; Teicher et al. 2016), which are most likely related to such consequences of violence in childrearing as cognitive disorders, concentration problems and decline in cognitive abilities, which often develop in children.

The harmful effects of violence in childrearing include a number of consequences. Numerous studies show a high probability of the developing various negative psychological states, as well as mental and behavioral problems in children experiencing childrearing violence (Paolucci and Violato 2004; Larzelere and Kuhn 2005; Ferguson 2013; Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor 2016; Pace et al. 2019). The most frequently mentioned damages include the development of low self-esteem, but also high probability of developing anxiety, a tendency to depression and even auto-aggression and suicidal thoughts. Research shows that experiencing corporal punishment is strongly correlated with problems such as abuse of psychoactive substances (alcohol,

drugs) or a tendency to drug use. Other frequent consequences of experiencing corporal punishment include the development of externalization disorders and aggression against others, as well as the normalization of violence and its incorporation into one's own approaches to dealing with people, including violence in later parental roles (Riedl et al. 2019; Afifi et al. 2017). The extent and force of the devastating effects of violence in childrearing led to the proposal that corporal punishment, including smacking, should be included in the so-called *Adverse Childhood Experiences* (Afifi et al. 2017; Riedl et al. 2019), which is a nosological unit covering developmental situations that have extremely serious consequences for the physical and psychosocial health of individuals.

To summarize the effects of long-term research on the effects of corporal punishment, their findings can be briefly outlined as follows. Firstly, it was proved that these methods are ineffective as childrearing "methods" and do not lead to improvement of children's behavior, i.e. they do not bring beneficial childrearing effects. Secondly, research revealed that corporal punishment is actually destructive to childrearing because it prevents the achievement of positive goals such as self-discipline and self-education, and influences the development of so-called external control personalities (Lee et al. 2018; Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor 2016). Thirdly, it was shown that corporal punishment carries a great risk of developmental damages. They cause the development of behavioral disorders, emotional problems and cognitive competence disorders, as well as a whole range of other negative consequences for mental health and social functioning, including post-traumatic disorders (Ali et al. 2019).

The devastating impact of experiencing violence in childrearing, in addition to individual, is also of social importance (Pinheiro 2006), as it has economic and public health implications. It is now recognized that the negative impact of violence in childrearing on the quality of social life is evident in all countries. It is stressed that corporal punishment affects not only children themselves but entire families, communities, nations and generations (Hillis et al. 2018).

The research findings on the high harmfulness of corporal punishment constitute an excellent area of argumentation for intensifying the efforts to eliminate this social problem, complementing the arguments formulated on the grounds of the idea of respecting children's rights, civic equality and the development of democracy.



## **Research influencing the conceptualization of the directions of actions for the elimination of violence in childrearing**

The studies on violence against children, including violence in childrearing, which in fact translated into the development of guidelines as to the nature of actions to be taken against the problem, were very diverse in nature. On the one hand, these were the anthropological, cultural and historical studies on the occurrence of violence against children in different conditions and their socio-cultural context, which were already mentioned in this study (see Eisenberger 1981). It is in their light, among others, that the efforts to develop democracy, promote the idea of human rights and children's rights, ensure equality of rights for children, as well as efforts to reduce any social inequalities, are rational directions for eliminating the problem of violence in childrearing.

On the other hand, the trend of research on the causes and determinants of violence against children, which has been developing strongly since the 1970s, has been identifying factors and providing increasingly complex models explaining the problem of violence against children. As a result of this research, a wealth of knowledge has developed in this area, which has become the theoretical basis for calling for and organizing action to eliminate violence in childrearing (cf. Daro, Cohn-Donnelly 2002; Butchart et al. 2018). In the light of the research, the proposed theories and models of the determinants of violence against children have been (and still are) a direct matrix for the conceptualization of the directions of action for the elimination of the problem (cf. Daro and Cohn-Donnelly 2002; Coulton et al. 1995). Psychodynamic theories, for example, indicate that parents would be less likely to use violence in rearing their children if they had a better understanding of themselves and the role of their parents in their lives. Learning theories, in turn, suggest that parents would use less violence against their children if they knew more about proper care and constructive influence on children and if they were properly educated and trained. Environmental theories suggest that parents would use less violence against children if they had better living conditions and if the environment was satisfactory for the family – perceived by them as friendly and supportive. The significance of cultural norms concerning children and families for the use of violence in childrearing relations is indicated by cultural theories. In their light, the change of cultural norms and the development of social disapproval of violence is a rational direction in the elimination of the problem. Theories of social control indicate, in turn, that parents are less

likely to use violence if they do not feel impunity regarding the care of their children and if they are aware of external control over the quality of family care and childrearing. On the other hand, in the light of the theory of social resources, the more institutions, facilities and places that satisfy the different needs of parents and children operate in the family environment, the lower the likelihood of violence against children. The importance of a system of services and support for parents in fulfilling their parental role, which is suited to their needs, as well as a system of forms of assistance in balancing the parental role with other duties and activities of parents, is however emphasized by the theories of social support. In their view, appropriate parental support facilities can compensate for personal and situational deficits and shortcomings and thus minimize the risk of violence against children.

In the report published in 2006 (Pinheiro 2006), which is an iconic publication on violence against children, an *ecological model of determinants* of violence against children created as a result of numerous studies and transformations was presented, as the one that is particularly useful for the conceptualization of actions aimed at eliminating violence against children. It shows the importance of many factors occurring at different social levels, i.e. general, local, family and individual, for the occurrence of violence against children and the importance of the links between these factors (Pinheiro 2006; Butchart et al. 2018). At the individual level, the importance of factors such as sex, age, wealth, educational level, disability, being a victim of violence in childhood, past history of violence, addictions and psychological problems is indicated. The factors that are relevant in the context of the parent-child relationship are: low parental competences, marriage problems, violence between parents, early marriage and forced marriage, low socio-economic status, the social environment of parents involved in violence. The level of the local community, in turn, is characterized by the factors contributing to violence in education, such as concentration of poverty, high crime rate, high social mobility, high unemployment, easy access to drugs in the environment, but also poor functioning of local institutions and insufficient assistance for victims of violence. Also in society understood as a socio-cultural collective and organizational system, certain phenomena and characteristics can contribute to the development of violence in childrearing. In this respect, attention is drawn, for example, to sudden social changes, the occurrence of large social inequalities, gender inequalities and state policies that exacerbate social inequalities and family poverty. Important facilitators of violence in education at the general social level are also weak mechanisms of socio-economic protection, cultural norms supporting the use of violence against

children, legal loopholes allowing for the occurrence of such violence, low social position of the child and negation of its subjectivity, as well as social norms that limit external control over the family. Such social phenomena as social conflicts or sudden transformations and natural disasters, which generally undermine the mental resilience of societies and constitute a context of risk for the intensification of violence against children are also highlighted (Butchart et al. 2018). On the basis of the ecological model, it is postulated that action should be taken at all levels of society (Gershoff et al. 2017). Recommendations on the direction and type of actions are formulated for each social level. Particular hopes are associated with preventive and precautionary measures, which are differentiated depending on their "addressees" and the "accumulation" of risk factors (Hillis et al. 2018; Gershoff et al. 2017).

Summing up, the results of various studies and analyses on the determinants of violence against children emphasize that the modern approach to the elimination of corporal punishment should take into account the multifactorial background of the problem. It is pointed out that in intervention and prevention actions the strategies of multidirectional, multi-level actions (referring to many factors operating at different social levels) should be applied. It is also indicated that this approach should be interactive, based on the dependencies between different factors and different social levels that were established in the research.

### **Monitoring and evaluation research – the path to evidence-based practice**

In addition to the research on determinants, the development of actions to eliminate violence in childrearing is strongly based on research on the very actions and programs to eliminate violence in childrearing that have been or are being implemented in practice. The main objective of such research is to identify the so-called good practices, that is programs, solutions or measures that have somehow proven to be effective in reducing or eliminating corporal punishment. Such analyses are carried out at various levels – local, regional, national, but also international (see e.g. SRSV VAC 2013; Know Violence in Childhood 2017; *A step by step* 2018). On their basis, by identifying the effective actions, recommendations are prepared both in the context of state or local actions, as well as for individual institutions and services, and even recommendations concerning the use of specific programs.

In the light of monitoring or evaluating research, it is indicated, for example, that the basic type of actions eliminating violence in childrearing

should be legal reforms, including in particular the introduction of a total ban on corporal punishment. This is because the analyses conducted show that the introduction of a legal ban on all violence, and in particular a clear ban on corporal punishment in all environments, including the family, contributes to a progressive change in attitudes towards corporal punishment and its use in childrearing by the elimination of socio-cultural approval for it and thus eliminating its use in practice (*A step by Step* 2018). The studies showing the effectiveness of introducing a ban on corporal punishment in changing social attitudes and practice of using corporal punishment have been and continue to be conducted, among others, in Sweden. They demonstrate that the use of corporal punishment has dropped from 35% to 2% since the ban was introduced. Although the progress on this issue was also visible earlier, it is attributed mainly to a long debate on the need for a ban that preceded the legal reform (Janson 2018; Janson et al. 2017). Similar progress was observed in Finland, where in 2017 as many as 95% of citizens were aware of the existence of the ban on corporal punishment, while prior to its introduction in 1983, as many as 50% of the population considered corporal punishment to be a legally approved way of child-rearing. What is more, the present studies show an almost zero percentage of Finnish parents who smack their children. They also demonstrate that the use of other types of corporal punishment is drastically declining in this society. For example, the percentage of children who experienced having their hair pulled by their parents fell from 65% in 1988 to 16% in 2017 (Janson 2018).

Also, comparative studies conducted in several countries where some of them introduced a ban on corporal punishment and some did not, demonstrated the effectiveness of this instrument in changing attitudes, significantly reducing the level of approval for such behavior (Bussmann et al. 2009; *Working towards universal prohibition* 2018; *Ending legalized violence against children* 2018). In Poland, which introduced a total ban on corporal punishment in 2010, there also is a decrease in social acceptance of violence in childrearing (Jarosz 2015; Jarosz 2017; Jarosz, Michalak 2018). The research carried out systematically since the introduction of the ban on corporal punishment in 2010 indicates, to a certain extent, that this is the right and effective solution, as there has been a systematic decrease in the acceptance of violence in childrearing (Jarosz and Michalak 2018). Data from 2018 showed that the social acceptance of violence in childrearing fell in the case of smacking from 78% before the ban to 43%, and in the case of beating – from 41% to 24% (Jarosz and Michalak 2018). The effectiveness of the ban, as evidenced by scientific research, means that the countries strongly oriented towards the elimination of violence against

children are dynamically reforming the law. To date, 54 countries have already introduced such a provision, and 56 more have already agreed to introduce it in their legislative system (see <https://endcorporalpunishment.org>).

On the other hand, however, research in countries that prohibit all corporal punishment, including Poland (see Jarosz, Michalak 2018) prove that the introduction of a ban alone is not enough to eliminate corporal punishment completely. The percentage of people who approve corporal punishment is still high in many of them. Sweden, the most successful of them, shows that various other measures that were taken "alongside" the ban were also important, including social campaigns, social support for families, parent education, a network of family support centers, increasing the competences of professionals (Janson et al. 2017).

In establishing the most rational measures to eliminate corporal punishment, systematic implementation of epidemiological-monitoring and evaluation scientific research is postulated. What is more, they are considered an essential element of modern strategies for the elimination of corporal punishment (see, for example, Rec. (2009) no. 10 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – text in Jarosz and Michalak 2018). They provide not only epidemiological images of the problem itself, or present current conditions of its occurrence, but also give evidence of the existence or lack of progress on the way to the elimination of corporal punishment. What is more, reliable monitoring and evaluation studies make it possible to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented measures or programs.

Taking into account the enormous significance of scientific research for the elimination of the problem of violence in childrearing, it should also be stressed that a very important role in this respect is played by good functional data collection systems and methodologically reliable procedures for monitoring changes in social attitudes and behaviors towards children. Reliable survey research is indicated here as fundamental (Janson 2018). It is stressed that indicators and sources of data on the issue of violence and the measures taken against it should be disaggregated, i.e. collected from the perspective of different groups of children, including children who are excluded, as well as from the perspective of different characteristics (e.g. sex, disability, ethnic minorities, children from socially disadvantaged areas) and should be differentiated in terms of sources. At the same time, both the data on reported cases and the data on social attitudes towards corporal punishment and their dynamics are important. It is also important for data to come from both parents and children themselves. An important type of data in research on the effectiveness of the implemented programs is also information about

the experiences of the parents themselves with various family support services and their participation in the programs aimed at eliminating violence in childrearing (Janson 2018).

## Conclusions

Nowadays, the understanding of the problem of violence in childrearing is much deeper. We are aware not only of the enormous scale of the occurrence of violence in childrearing but also of its negative and sometimes even devastating impact on individual and social development. Nowadays there is almost universal agreement that violence in childrearing and the use of corporal punishment must be eliminated. In order for progress to be made in this matter, we need awareness, goodwill and the efforts of many communities and social groups, from professionals, through parents and families themselves, to politicians. To stimulate this activity, we also need methodologically reliable information drawn from relevant research and sources. We need research that allows us not only to monitor the occurrence of the problem and its conditions, but also to select those strategies, programs, solutions and measures that are at least promising in the light of their evaluation, and preferably the ones that have been proven to be effective by scientific research.

Therefore, in the majority of developed, European countries, but not only, such research is carried out. They are funded and their results are used. Researchers are highly interested in making appropriate efforts, so studies on violence in childrearing are relatively frequent. They also exchange their experience, which allows them to identify, also in the scope of scientific research, the so-called good practices (see Janson 2018).

Meanwhile, in Poland... The author of this study, while organizing the national consultation on violence in childrearing, which took place from 29.11 to 1.12.2017 in the Office of the Ombudsman for Children in Warsaw<sup>1</sup>, which included a panel devoted to research problems, had a serious problem in identifying and attracting researchers dealing with violence against children in various aspects. It is possible to count the researchers exploring the epidemiological aspects on the fingers of one hand, monitoring research was conducted only by the Author, and evaluation research is generally not

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<sup>1</sup> National consultation – report and materials available at <http://www.childrenatrisk.eu/nonviolence/2018/03/14/expert-meeting-communication-and-campaigns-related-to-the-legal-prohibition-of-corporal-punishment/> (access date: 27.05.2019).

conducted in Poland. Is there a need for a final comment? Or maybe this situation itself is a problem worth investigating.

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