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METHODS OF PUNISHMENT USED BY TURKISH MOTHERS OF PRESCHOOLERS[1,2]

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Summary.—The goal of this study was to describe the punishments that Turkish mothers use with their preschool-aged children. 129 mothers with children between 3 and 6 years old were included in the study. Mothers completed a data collection form prepared by the researcher. Punishments mothers applied and mothers' age and education and children's age and sex were examined by chi-squared analysis. Mothers used various punishments with children. Some punishments were used with high frequency. Mothers' age and education and children's age and sex were not related to types of punishment used.

Socializing is a major process in the development of children, beginning in the family. Parents tend to apply various disciplinary methods in the process of socializing the child (Yörükoğlu, 1992a, 1992b; Yavuzer, 1993a, 1993b; Bozkurt, 1998; Paintal, 1999). The disciplinary methods that families use vary depending on characteristics such as socioeconomic status, beliefs, culture, educational status, and mental health (Yörükoğlu, 1992a, 1992b; Yavuzer, 1993b; Amuwo, Fabian, Tolley, Spence, & Hill, 2004; Durrant, Ensom, & Coalition on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth, 2004). In addition to children's age and sex, personality and individual differences also affect disciplinary methods the family uses (Yörükoğlu, 1992a).

Parents usually use disciplinary methods with the intention of punishing or correcting children's misbehaviour (Fontes, 2002; Durrant, *et al.*, 2004; Kircaali-Iftar, 2005). The methods used for the purpose of coping with undesired behaviour of children vary greatly. Parents tend to use both physical and nonphysical punishments. The literature lists such physical punishments as spanking, smacking, hitting with an object, pinching, pulling ears, and kicking (Payne, 1989; Kulaksızoğlu, 1998; Ilbars, 1999; Fontes, 2002; Durrant, *et al.*, 2004; Kircaali-Iftar, 2005). Nonphysical punishments may also be used, such as not doing the things the child wants, scolding, complaining about him to the father or someone else, taking away privileges (toys, food, TV, etc.), sending him to another room, not talking to the child, not sending him to school, telling the child that something bad will happen,

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and being scornful toward the child are nonphysical types of punishment causing fear, worry, and threat to the child (Yörükoğlu, 1992a; Yavuzer, 1993a; Kulaksızoğlu, 1998; Ilbars, 1999; Durrant, *et al.*, 2004; Kircaali-Iftar, 2005).

Punishment practices may lead to some mental and personality disorders in childhood and later on (Yörükoğlu, 1992a; Yavuzer, 1993a). Children who are punished inappropriately tend to become angry, aggressive, and stressed (Kazdin & Benjet, 2003). Punishment has also been found to tend or lead to withdrawal or aggression, and affect children's cognitive development (Paintal, 1999). A punished child, when he becomes an adult, is more likely to hit his or her children, spouse, or friends (Paintal, 1999). There have been a great number of studies in various countries of physical and nonphysical punishments applied to children and related child abuse and neglect. It is pointed out in these studies that children are likely to be punished (Showers & Bandman, 1986; Payne, 1989; DeYoung & Zigler, 1994; Durrant, *et al.*, 2004; Kircaali-Iftar, 2005).

There is legislation preventing children from being exposed to harsh treatment in Turkey. A law "concerning the protection of family" was enacted on 17 January, 1998 (Legislation, 1998). The law forbids harsh and fear-inducing behaviour against children and other individuals in the household and contains some measures to protect families and children. Sanctions are applied in case of violation. It is known that physical and nonphysical punishment practices are used in Turkey (Yörükoğlu, 1992a, 1992b; Yavuzer, 1993a, 1993b; Kulaksızoğlu, 1998; Ilbars, 1999; Kircaali-Iftar, 2005), although there is not enough evidence of the extent to which punishments are practiced. There is a need for a number of studies to be carried out in various groups on this issue.

Kircaali-Iftar (2005) conducted a study of 50 mothers with children between the ages of 4 and 6 years attending 10 preschool education centres in the city of Eskişehir, Turkey in order to determine the methods mothers use to discipline their children. Mothers used verbal reinforcement (thanking, praising, etc.), tangible reinforcement (giving or buying books, toys, etc.), and social reinforcement (kissing, hugging, cuddling, etc.) for strengthening positive child behaviours. On the other hand, mothers reported that they used punishment (having the child tidy up his toys, sending him to another room, etc.), physical punishment (hitting, pulling ears, etc.), shouting and threatening (telling the child that she will punish him, telling that something bad will happen) for overcoming child behaviour problems. Kircaali-Iftar (2005) reported that 20% of mothers used physical punishment.

In a study by Yavuzer (1993b) of juvenile delinquents in Turkey, parents were reported to apply corporal punishment to children. Haktanır, Aral, Alisinanoğlu, Baran, Başar, Köksal, and Bulut (1999), in a retrospective study

of 75 studies of behaviours of parents, found that controlling and overprotective mothering patterns were common in Turkey. However, with the process of urbanisation, introduction of women into the business world, increase in mothers' educational status, and increased media consumption have led to some positive changes in the behaviours of parents (Kulaksızoğlu, 1998).

The type of punishment given to children in Turkey for such misbehaviours as disobedience and failure is spanking (Kulaksızoğlu, 1998). Mothers may be impatient, angry, and scolding (Ilbars, 1999). Threats, inattention, or neglect are other forms of punishment. Suppression and restriction are practiced toward girls in Turkey (Kulaksızoğlu, 1998). There are significant differences based on educational status of the mother, culture, and child-rearing attitudes in urban and rural areas throughout Turkey. There is a prevalent belief that "Mother both loves and spanks." The punishment harms used by mothers is not deliberate, yet will affect the development of the child.

This study was planned to assess whether a group of Turkish mothers applied physical and nonphysical punishment to their children and to what extent they applied these punishments. A classification of these punishments according to child's age and sex and mother's age and educational status was attempted.

Method

Participants

This study was planned as a descriptive one. One hundred and twenty-nine mothers with children between 3 and 6 years old attending one of five preschool education centres were included in the study. This study was carried out at preschool education centres where the students of Mersin University, Department of Preschool Teaching, trained in the city of Mersin in Turkey. The schools have no distinguishing features compared to others in the city except that they had more students between the ages of 3 and 6 years and there were more classes comprising these students.

There were 75 to 80 students of 3 to 6 years of age in each school. Five schools were chosen randomly in the city. The volunteer mothers of the children attending the chosen schools were included in the study. The characteristics of the children and their mothers were regarded as similar to the overall group of children and mothers at the schools. However, there were no formal comparisons of demographic variables.

Data Collection

To collect data about children and their families, a data collection questionnaire prepared by the researcher was used. Relevant literature was used in preparation of the data collection form (Payne, 1989; Yörükoğlu, 1992a,

1992b; Catron & Masters, 1993; Yavuzer, 1993a, 1993b; Durrant, 1999; Ilbars, 1999; Eamon, 2001; Durrant, *et al.*, 2004; Maiter, Alaggia, & Trocme, 2004; Kircaali-Iftar, 2005). The data collection form comprised two parts. In the first part there were such questions as mother's age and education and child's age and sex (see Table 1). The questions given in the second part of the data collection form were closed-ended, aiming at identifying physical and nonphysical punishments (see Table 6). In order to reveal the practices of the mothers clearly and obtain clear phrases, possible punishment behaviours were listed and "Yes–No" choices were possible.

TABLE 1
CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN ($N = 129$)

	f	%
Mother's Age, yr.		
20–25	9	7.0
26–35	89	69.0
36+	31	24.0
Mother's Education, yr.		
Primary	12	9.3
Secondary	47	36.4
College	70	54.3
Child's Age, yr.		
3–4	33	25.6
5–6	96	74.4
Child's Sex		
Girl	64	49.6
Boy	65	50.4
Mother's Working Status		
Working	84	65.0
Not working	45	35.0

Before starting the task of collecting data, mothers of 15 children at the kindergarten of Mersin University, Faculty of Education, were asked to fill in the form. The form was revised according to the results of the prestudy. The items of "I do not buy what he wants" and "I make him tidy his room" were added to the form as the mothers wrote them in the choice of "others." The mothers who participated in the prestudy were not included in the main study. No scoring was applied to the data collection form, since the goal was to consider the punishments mothers gave to their children.

Statistical Analysis

As the number of the mothers included in the study voluntarily was low, the mothers were combined into a single group for summary data. A chi-squared analysis was carried out to test for relationships between the punishments mothers applied and mothers' age and education and children's

age and sex. The findings are shown as cross tables with frequencies and percentages.

Results

The majority of the mothers ($n = 89$) were in the age group 26 to 35 years. A great majority of the mothers included in the study were college graduates ($n = 70$) and working ($n = 84$). Sixty-four of the mothers said that they had a daughter between the ages of 3 and 6 years, whereas 65 of them said that they had a son in that age group. Thirty-three of these children were aged 3 to 4 years, 96 of them were 5 to 6 years.

The ratings of physical punishments by mothers' age and education and children's age and sex are found in Table 2. The most commonly applied punishment was hitting on the buttocks. It was followed by hitting on the hand and hitting (in the general sense). No relation was found between the mothers' age and physical punishment statistically. Mothers who were graduates of primary school, secondary school, and university reported that they hit their children ($\chi^2 = 17.202$, $p < .05$), but reports were less frequent the higher the mother's education. Mothers who had only primary school education reported that they pinched their children more than those more highly educated. Fewer mothers with children between 3 or 4 years of age than those with children between the ages of 5 or 6 reported that they hit their children.

Table 3 shows the frequencies of punishments reported that contained threats, as related to mothers' age and education and children's age and sex. Most of the mothers reported that they said to their children "I will hit you" for disapproved behaviour. Somewhat less frequent were "I will get ill if you go on behaving like that" and "I will not be your mother anymore." No relation was found between mothers' age and threats. Mothers who were graduates of primary school reported that they used the expression of "I will have a doctor give you a shot" more than mothers who were university graduates. Chi square indicated a significant relation between the expression of "I will have a doctor give you a shot" and mothers' education ($\chi^2 = 12.307$, $p < .05$). Mothers with children between 3 or 4 years of age reported that they used the expression "I will be another child's mother" more compared to those with children between 5 or 6 ($\chi^2 = 5.502$, $p < .05$).

Table 4 shows frequencies of some nonphysical punishments by mothers' age and education and children's age and sex. Most of the mothers reported that they scolded their children, complained about their children to the fathers, or told their children that they were bad.

The ratings of punishments consisting of taking away of privileges by mothers' age and education and children's age and sex are shown in Table 5. Mothers reported that they prevented their children from watching televi-

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY (%) OF PHYSICAL PUNISHMENTS BY MOTHER'S AGE AND EDUCATION AND CHILD'S AGE AND SEX

	n	Hitting								Pinching		Pulling Ears		Pushing	
		General		On Hand		On Buttocks		On Face							
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mother's Age, yr.															
20–25	9	33.3	66.7	33.3	66.7	66.7	33.3	0.0	100.0	11.1	88.9	11.1	88.9	0.0	100.0
26–35	89	25.8	74.2	46.1	53.9	62.9	37.1	15.7	84.3	10.1	89.9	21.3	78.7	7.9	92.1
36+	31	19.4	80.6	29.8	74.2	61.3	38.7	16.1	83.9	6.5	93.5	16.1	83.9	3.2	96.8
Mother's Education, yr.															
Primary	12	58.3	41.7	41.7	58.3	75.0	25.0	25.0	75.0	25.0	75.0	16.7	83.3	0.0	100.0
Secondary	47	36.2	63.8	48.9	51.1	66.0	34.0	12.8	87.2	2.1	97.9	12.8	87.2	4.3	95.7
College	70	11.4	88.6	34.3	65.7	58.6	41.4	14.3	85.7	11.4	88.6	24.3	75.7	8.6	91.4
Child's Age, yr.															
3–4	33	9.1	90.9	45.5	54.5	66.7	33.3	9.1	90.9	9.1	90.9	27.3	72.7	9.1	90.9
5–6	96	30.2	69.8	38.5	61.5	61.5	38.5	16.7	83.3	9.4	90.6	16.7	83.3	5.2	94.8
Child's Sex															
Girl	64	20.3	79.7	32.8	67.2	57.8	42.2	10.9	89.1	7.8	92.9	17.2	82.8	4.7	95.3
Boy	65	29.2	70.8	47.7	52.3	67.7	32.3	18.5	81.5	10.8	89.2	21.5	78.5	7.7	92.3
Total	129	32	97	52	77	81	48	19	110	12	117	25	104	8	121
%	100.0	24.8	75.2	40.3	59.7	62.8	37.2	14.7	85.3	9.3	90.7	19.4	80.6	6.2	93.8

TABLE 3

FREQUENCY OF REPORTS (%) CONTAINING THREATS BY MOTHER'S AGE AND EDUCATION AND CHILD'S AGE AND SEX

	n	I Will													
		Hit You		Burn You		Not Be Your Mother		Become Ill		Give You a Shot		Rub Hot Pepper on Your Tongue		Become the Mother of Other Children	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mother's Age, yr.															
20–25	9	44.4	55.6	11.1	88.9	44.4	55.6	55.6	44.4	33.3	66.7	22.2	77.8	11.1	88.9
26–35	89	55.1	44.9	11.2	88.8	37.1	62.9	47.2	52.8	21.3	78.7	20.2	79.8	19.1	80.9
36+	31	45.2	54.8	12.9	87.1	22.6	77.4	45.2	54.8	9.7	90.3	6.5	93.5	12.9	87.1
Mother's Education, yr.															
Primary	12	75.0	22.0	16.7	83.3	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	41.7	58.3	8.3	91.7	8.3	91.7
Secondary	47	53.2	46.8	19.1	80.9	38.3	61.7	51.1	48.9	29.8	70.2	23.4	76.6	17.0	83.0
College	70	47.1	52.9	5.7	94.3	28.6	71.4	44.3	55.7	8.6	91.4	14.3	85.7	18.6	81.4
Child's Age, yr.															
3–4	33	54.5	45.5	9.1	90.9	42.4	57.6	39.4	60.6	18.2	81.8	18.2	81.8	30.3	69.7
5–6	96	51.0	49.0	12.5	87.5	31.3	68.8	50.0	50.0	19.8	80.2	16.7	83.3	12.5	87.5
Child's Sex															
Girl	64	46.9	53.1	9.4	90.6	35.9	64.1	42.2	57.8	17.2	82.8	15.6	84.4	12.5	87.5
Boy	65	56.9	43.1	13.8	86.2	32.3	67.7	52.3	47.7	21.5	78.9	18.5	81.5	21.5	78.5
Total	129	67	62	15	114	44	85	61	68	25	104	22	107	22	107
%	100.0	51.9	48.1	11.6	88.4	34.1	65.9	47.3	52.7	19.4	80.6	17.1	82.9	17.1	82.9

TABLE 4
FREQUENCY (%) OF REPORTED NONPHYSICAL PUNISHMENTS BY MOTHER'S AGE AND EDUCATION AND CHILD'S AGE AND SEX

	n	Scolding		Calling Him Bad Name		Telling Child He Is Bad		Complaining		Making Him Tidy Up	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mother's Age, yr.											
20–25	9	100.0	0.0	11.1	88.9	33.3	66.7	44.4	55.6	100.0	0.0
26–35	89	95.5	4.5	21.3	78.7	44.9	55.1	75.3	24.7	94.4	5.6
36+	31	100.0	0.0	29.0	71.0	54.8	45.2	58.1	41.9	93.5	6.9
Mother's Education, yr.											
Primary	12	100.0	0.0	8.3	91.7	41.7	58.3	83.3	16.7	100.0	0.0
Secondary	47	95.7	4.3	23.4	76.6	51.1	48.9	74.5	25.5	97.9	2.1
College	70	97.1	2.9	24.3	75.7	44.3	55.7	62.9	37.1	91.4	8.6
Child's Age, yr.											
3–4	33	97.0	3.0	27.3	72.7	48.5	51.5	69.7	30.3	90.9	9.1
5–6	96	96.9	3.1	20.8	79.2	45.8	54.2	68.8	31.3	95.8	4.2
Child's Sex											
Girl	64	98.4	1.6	21.9	78.1	35.9	64.1	71.9	28.1	93.8	6.3
Boy	65	95.4	4.6	23.1	76.9	56.9	43.1	66.2	33.8	95.4	4.6
Total	129	125	4	29	100	60	69	89	40	122	7
%	100.0	96.9	3.1	22.5	77.5	46.5	53.5	69.0	31.0	94.6	5.4

sion, playing games on the computer, going outside, and meeting their friends. Mothers who were graduates of primary school, secondary school, and university reported that they prevented their children from going outside ($\chi^2 = 12.866$, $p < .05$). A significant difference was found between the children's age and mothers preventing them from playing games on the computer ($\chi^2 = 4.384$, $p < .05$). Younger children were prevented more from playing games on the computer. Sex of the child and punishment by taking privileges away was not statistically significant.

DISCUSSION

Mothers punished their children in various ways. Mothers used both physical and nonphysical punishment no matter what age they were or how much education they had. It has been indicated in the literature that the older the mothers become, the less punishments they apply (Durrant, *et al.*, 2004); however, another study showed that older mothers (75.2%) approved punishment more than younger ones (67.6%) but that difference was not significant (Payne, 1989). In the current study, no relation between mothers' age and punishments was found. The result implies that some other factors might be effective in mothers' application of punishment to their children.

No relation between different physical punishments and mothers' education was found. The literature reports a decrease in physical punishment with mothers' increased education (Durrant, *et al.*, 2004). In the current

TABLE 5

FREQUENCY (%) OF REPORTED LIMITATIONS ON CHILD BY MOTHER'S AGE AND EDUCATION AND CHILD'S AGE AND SEX

	n	I Lock Him In		I Prevent Him From Eating		I Prevent Him From Going Out		I Prevent Him From Talking to Friends		I Prevent Him From Talking	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mother's Age, yr.											
20–25	9	11.1	88.9	0.0	100.0	55.6	44.4	22.2	77.8	22.2	77.8
26–35	89	3.4	96.6	7.9	92.1	50.6	49.4	48.3	51.7	23.6	76.4
36+	31	3.2	96.8	6.5	93.5	54.8	45.2	48.4	51.6	35.5	64.5
Mother's Education, yr.											
Primary	12	16.7	83.3	8.3	91.7	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	33.3	66.7
Secondary	47	0.0	100.0	12.8	87.2	72.3	27.7	51.1	49.9	21.3	78.7
College	70	4.3	95.7	2.9	97.1	38.6	61.4	42.9	57.1	28.6	71.4
Child's Age, yr.											
3–4	33	9.1	90.9	9.1	90.9	42.4	57.6	48.5	51.5	27.3	72.7
5–6	96	2.1	97.9	6.3	93.8	55.2	44.8	45.8	54.2	26.0	74.0
Child's Sex											
Girl	64	3.1	96.9	4.7	95.3	50.0	50.0	43.8	56.3	25.0	75.0
Boy	65	4.6	95.4	9.2	90.8	53.8	46.2	49.2	40.8	27.7	72.3
Total	129	5	124	9	120	62	67	60	69	34	95
%	100.0	3.9	96.1	7.0	93.0	51.9	48.1	46.5	53.5	26.4	73.6

(continued on next page)

TABLE 5 (CONT'D)
FREQUENCY (%) OF REPORTED LIMITATIONS ON CHILD BY MOTHER'S AGE AND EDUCATION AND CHILD'S AGE AND SEX

	n	I Do Not Buy What He Wants		I Prevent Him Playing Computer Games		I Prevent Him From Watching Television		I Do Not Play With Him	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Mother's Age, yr.									
20–25	9	77.8	22.2	55.6	44.4	66.7	33.3	44.4	55.6
26–35	89	83.1	15.7	46.1	53.9	57.3	42.7	67.4	32.6
36+	31	80.6	19.4	38.7	61.3	51.6	48.4	58.1	41.9
Mother's Education, yr.									
Primary	12	75.0	25.0	25.0	75.0	41.7	58.3	41.7	58.3
Secondary	47	85.1	14.9	42.6	57.4	63.8	36.2	57.4	42.6
College	70	81.4	17.1	50.0	50.0	54.3	45.7	71.4	28.6
Child's Age, yr.									
3–4	33	93.9	6.1	60.6	39.4	57.6	42.4	72.7	27.3
5–6	96	78.1	20.8	39.6	60.4	56.3	43.8	60.4	39.6
Child's Sex									
Girl	64	81.3	18.8	37.5	62.5	54.7	45.3	64.1	35.9
Boy	65	83.1	15.4	52.3	47.7	58.5	41.5	63.1	36.9
Total	129	106	22	68	71	73	56	82	47
%	100.0	82.2	17.1	45.0	55.0	56.6	43.4	63.6	36.4

*$\chi_2^2 = 12.87$, $p < .01$. †$\chi^2 = 4.39$, $p < .05$.

study this was confirmed only for hitting. Kircaali-Iftar (2005) in a study carried out in Turkey found that 20% of mothers applied such punishments as spanking, pulling ears, etc. Prevalence of these punishments were found higher in the current study compared to those found by Kircaali-Iftar (2005). However, mothers in Kircaali-Iftar (2005) had higher education. Fewer applications of physical punishments might indicate that more highly educated mothers were more informed about child care.

TABLE 6
PUNISHMENTS INCLUDED ON FORM FOR DATA COLLECTION

I hit (in general sense)
I hit his hand
I hit his buttocks
I hit his face
I pinch him
I pull his ears
I push him
I burn him
I say "I will hit you"
I say "I will burn you"
I say "I will not be your mother anymore"
I say "I will become ill"
I say "I will have a doctor give you a shot"
I say "I will rub hot pepper on your tongue"
I say "I will become the mother of other children"
I scold him
I call him a bad name
I tell him he is a bad child
I complain about him to his father
I make him tidy his room
I lock him in
I prevent him from eating
I prevent him from going out
I prevent him from talking to his friends
I prevent him from talking
I do not buy what he asks
I prevent him from playing computer games
I prevent him from watching television
I do not play with him

It is reported that children are less often punished after they are 4 years old (Eamon, 2001). However, there was no decrease in the application of physical punishment after 4 years of age in the current study. On the contrary, it was found that older children were hit more. It might be due to the fact that mothers are more protective of younger children, as well as the possibility of parent-child conflict when children are older. But older children are expected to obey in Turkish society (Yörükoğlu, 1992a). Disobedi-

ent children are punished by their mothers. The fact that the expectations of the mother increase as the child grows older and that they apply punishment when they cannot get the desired response may reflect the mothers' approach to rearing children in general.

Payne (1989) found that the sex of the child was not the only factor in Caribbean families eliciting punishment. DeYoung and Zigler (1994) reported that Guyanese mothers punished their sons more than their daughters. In the current study it is of importance that no relation was found between physical punishments and the child's sex. Girls are under more pressure compared to boys in Turkish society. A Turkish saying is "Hit your girl in time, rather than regret later" and girls are expected to show more respect (Yörükoğlu, 1992a; Yavuzer, 1993b). Even so, the fact that children's sex was not significantly associated with physical punishments may indicate similar expectations from both sexes.

Relatives, traditions, and customs also have a considerable effect on the selection of disciplinary methods applied to children, besides personal qualifications and experiences (Yörükoğlu, 1992a, 1992b; Yavuzer, 1993b). There is a common saying that "Mother both loves and hits" in Turkish society. However, there has been no study revealing whether mothers adopt such an approach. It was not gauged in this study what mothers think about this approach and whether they behave according to this idea.

Abuse and negligence occur in every culture, as do appropriate parenting practices (Maiter, *et al.*, 2004). It was not discovered whether mothers included in the study abused their children, though such physical punishments as spanking, hitting on the face, pinching, pulling of ears, or pushing might injure the child. True dimensions of child abuse are not known in Turkey. However, use of corporal punishment implies the likelihood of some abuse (Yörükoğlu, 1992b). Hitting on the face could cause bleeding in the nose and mouth, which would frighten smaller children (Yörükoğlu, 1992a). Mothers feel concerned about extreme disciplinary applications (Yörükoğlu, 1992a; Maiter, *et al.*, 2004). Mothers know they can harm their children and are anxious not to harm them. However, Maiter, *et al.* (2004) found that Southern Asian parents applied to their children such physical punishments as spanking or hitting on the face, even though they were aware that they could harm their children.

Parents carry on with punishments even though they know the drawbacks might be due to problems in the family or the children themselves. Depression and conflict in the marriage might be higher for the mothers hitting their children (Eamon, 2001; Durrant, *et al.*, 2004). The risk of child abuse may also be increased in the families applying physical punishment (Eamon, 2001). Social and emotional problems tend to be encountered most in children who are beaten. These problems might include antisocial behav-

iours, low respect for others, anxiety, introversion, and depression. Additionally, these children may exhibit externalizing behaviours such as aggression and disobedience (Yavuzer, 1993a; Eamon, 2001).

Payne observed the attitude that a child's provocative or antisocial behaviour or putting himself in danger should not be punished is more prevalent in developed countries. DeYoung and Zigler (1994) reported that respect is an important factor in Guyanese culture, and any behaviour regarded as disrespectful is punished severely. Physical abuse would be inevitable and passed to other generations in such a case.

Larzelere, *et al.* (Larzelere, Klein, Schumm, & Alibrando, 1989; Larzelere, 2000) pointed out that spanking is beneficial if not abusive. He maintained that some physical punishments such as hitting on the buttocks could be used by loving parents for mild discipline, especially for children between the ages of 2 and 6 years. Mosby, Rawls, Meehan, Mays, and Pettinari (1999) also suggested that using mild physical punishments in child rearing is not unusual behaviour.

In spite of the fact that some mothers have high education in Turkey, it is obvious that they still practice physical punishment. Being aware of best approaches to child care and rearing does not require being a graduate of a university. Inadequacy of mothers in this respect reveals the fact that they have difficulty in coping with the disapproved behaviour of the child and that they are applying traditional methods that may cause harm to the child. Thus, whatever education they have, mothers should learn better approaches to discipline their children. Within this perspective, it is of great importance that educational programs to educate mothers about child rearing be initiated in Turkey and made available throughout the country. It must be considered carefully, however, whether mothers approve the punishments they use with their children, as this was not assessed in this study.

In the current study, the effect of such threats as "I will hit you," "I won't be your mother," "I will get ill," "I will rub hot pepper on your tongue," and "I will become the mother of another child" cannot be overestimated. Mothers' age and education and children's age and sex were not related to reports of many of the threats as they were to physical punishments. In traditional societies, naughty children are spanked and threatened with injections, dragons, and with rubbing hot pepper on their tongues; mothers also threaten to complain to the fathers (Yörükoğlu, 1992b). Mothers threatening their children with beating, i.e., "I will hit you," outnumbered those reporting that they actually hit their children. This may mean that mothers underreported hitting their children. The threat recalls what children know about the pain of being hit, causing fear. In a study carried out in Turkey, it was determined that 18% of mothers punished their children by threatening (Kircaali-Iftar, 2005). Some threats reported by mothers in the current study

were more frequent compared to those found in the study by Kircaali-Iftar (2005). Such threats by mothers as "I will not be your mother anymore" or "I will become ill if you carry on behaving like this" might cause social and emotional problems. In fact, children between the ages of 3 and 6 years tend to generalise. Hearing threats, they might think that they have committed a crime, that they will actually lose their mothers, that their mothers will never love them, and that they will cause their mothers to become ill. Consequently, these feelings might cause guilt, separation anxiety, the idea of being a bad child, and might also lead to low self-confidence (San-Bayhan & Artan, 2004). Helping children attain responsibility is not best done by means of threats or punishment, whatever age they are (Polat-Unutkan, 2005). Having respect for children's personalities during early childhood, parents should display warm, loving, and tactful behaviour (Uyanık-Balat, 2003). The most significant factor ensuring mental health is the years when childhood is experienced in a warm family environment (Yörükoğlu, 1992b; Yavuzer, 1993a). Children of preschool age need positive family support so as to develop adequate social ability (Çavuşoğlu, 1994).

The punishment most of the mothers reported using against undesired behaviour is scolding, as has been pointed out in the literature (Catron & Masters, 1993). In some families practicing strict discipline, children must obey their parents no matter what the situation. Punishment is used predominantly in such families, sometimes disproportionately to the behavioural infraction; dominance over the child is obtained through spanking, scolding, complaining, and frightening. If these punishments are frequently practiced, there is likely a defect in family relations (Yörükoğlu, 1992a). Kircaali-Iftar (2005) observed that 30% of mothers shouted at their children for wrong attitudes. Kircaali-Iftar (2005) maintained that mothers tend to respond too impulsively when a problem emerges. She urged mothers to pay attention to the problem instead of ignoring the child's disapproved behaviour, but to regard shouting and corporal punishment as the least effective discipline. Yörükoğlu (1992a) pointed out that it is not effective to tell the child about undesired behaviour and its consequences by lecturing and scolding. Preventing undesired behaviours and talking in a decisive tone of voice is more beneficial.

Chao (1994) reported that there was a period of transition to tolerance and permissive parenthood after World War II. Some Turkish parents are overtolerant (Yörükoğlu, 1992a; Yavuzer, 1993a). Scolding and criticizing the child for misbehaviour and mistakes are common now, since parents experienced this from their own parents and may be attempting to control their own feelings of distress (Yavuzer, 1993a). Misbehaviours of children should be criticized, not their personalities, since children may internalize those personalities with recurrent accusations (Yörükoğlu, 1992a). Coupled

with complaints to the fathers, reported by many mothers, scolding may lead to children becoming timid, introverted, and having decreased self-confidence in later years (San-Bayhan & Artan, 2004).

Every child will at times discharge energy through naughtiness and find a way to test limits. Mothers should temper their behaviour with knowledge of the stages of child development (Yavuzer, 1993a). It is essential to draw the limits for children in a balanced way to teach responsibility and socialization. Teaching about interpersonal relations should be given to the children not obeying these limits. Children 3 or 4 years of age cannot comprehend shouting as well as the mother thinks and probably will not correct wrong attitudes in response (Yavuzer, 1993a; Aydoğmuş, Baltaş, Baltaş, Davasligil, Güngörmüş, Konuk, *et al.*, 2003). Reading stories to help children distinguish between right and wrong, doing paper-and-pencil exercises, allowing them to draw pictures, listening to them intimately, and being a behavioural model are much more useful than scolding (Kircaali-Iftar, 2005).

It was found in the current study that a great many reported punishments concerned withdrawing everyday privileges and limiting the child. Most mothers prevented their children from watching television and playing games on the computer. Such punishments can be used in disciplining children (Yörükoğlu, 1992a); however, it is not known for how long the mothers limited their children and for what behaviours. Lengthy limitation may lead to stubbornness and not correct behaviour (Yörükoğlu, 1992a). Kircaali-Iftar (2005) also found that a majority of mothers applied such punishment as sending the child to another room, not doing the things the child wants, taking away privileges (toys, food, watching television), or having the child tidy his/her toys. Kircaali-Iftar (2005) pointed out that such punishments can be useful when combined with positive child discipline, but preventing the child from talking, eating, or locking him in the bathroom are not useful. What is suggested is that the child be listened to (Yörükoğlu, 1992a; Kircaali-Iftar, 2005). If the child is able to express himself, there may be decrease in anger and stubbornness. Allowing the child to explain the mistake he made reduces the risk of misunderstanding and promotes the child's awareness of the outcome of the behaviour. The mother's anger is decreased as well (Yörükoğlu, 1992a).

Limitations

Mothers included in this study volunteered. Their children attended the schools where the study was conducted. The results are not representative of the population of the city where the study was conducted or of Turkey. The mothers were not asked about ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or whether they were immigrants, so comparative interpretations are limited. The severity and frequency of punishments were not assessed, nor whether the punish-

ments affected the children's behaviour positively or negatively. The data were collected with a single questionnaire, and its validity is not known. In future research, sampling to reflect the whole country would be beneficial, as would collection of data on severity of the punishments, child abuse and negligence, punishments used by fathers (Hart & Robinson, 1994) and other family members, and the ages at which various punishments are applied. Validity and reliability studies of the questionnaire, as well as further item development, should be carried out.

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