Executive Summary

The broad objective of the study was three-fold. First, to study the nature and extent of violence experienced by the children. Second, to study the impact of violence on achievement motivation, social adjustment and feeling of security and insecurity. Finally, to study the perception of parents and teachers about corporal punishment and their knowledge and perception about child rights. A group of 320 adolescent children was covered in the study from eight randomly selected English and Bengali medium schools in Agartala, Tripura and the study subjects were selected from Class VIII and IX in equal number following systematic random sampling method. Care was taken to select an equal number of male and female children. For understanding the knowledge and perception of parents and teachers about the issue, 45 teachers and 35 parents were selected following incidental sampling technique. Two semi-structured questionnaires and three standardized psychological tests viz., achievement motivation inventory, Indian adaptation of Maslow’s Feeling of Security and Insecurity Inventory and Social Adjustment Inventory were used for data collection. Certain ethical issues were considered while collecting data from the study subjects.

Psychological Violence:

About one-fifth of the children (67/320 i.e., 20.9%) in Agartala, Tripura reported to be the victim of psychological violence. Out of 67, one-third experienced the same almost regularly, i.e. once or twice a week, while about 41.8% experienced the same occasionally i.e. once a month. The rest 20.9% experienced the same once in six months. Although boys were reported more to be psychologically abused, statistically gender-wise no significant difference was found. Parents and teachers were on the top of the list for abusing children psychologically followed by relatives and elder siblings. Teacher’s parents and relatives mostly abused male children, while mothers, teachers and elder siblings mostly abused girl children.

Physical Abuse:

More than one in four children (70/320 i.e., 21.9%) did experience physical violence. Here also male children were found to be more victim of physical violence (24.4%) as compared to female children (19.4%). About one-fourth (25.7%) of the children reported to have been abused almost regularly i.e., once or twice a week, while about half of them (47.1%) experienced physical violence occasionally i.e., once a month, the rest 27.1% experienced it rarely i.e., once in six month. Regarding the form of physical violence, male children were mostly beaten up by belt, stick or other object (38.5%) while female children were mostly pushed (46.2%), grabbed (41.9%), kicked (54.8%). The children who were physically abused by the teachers, followed by fathers, mothers and others.
Sexual Violence:

Both male and female children were the victims of sexual violence in Agartala, although female children were more victims of the same violence. About 20.0% of the female children experienced sexual violence regularly, mostly in the hands of relatives and teachers while 11.3% of the male children experienced the same in the hands of cousins and relatives.

Comparative analysis of data with regard to family type, monthly income, perceived family environment and academic performance of the children who experienced physical violence and who did not experience the same, disclosed some interesting features. Children mostly experienced physical and sexual violence in the single families (p<0.05). Although no such clear trend has been observed regarding the monthly income of the families, apparently data shows that the children from high-income group of families experienced more physical violence (p<0.01) while children from middle class families experienced mostly psychological violence (p<0.01). So far as perceived family environment is concerned, comparative picture clearly indicates that uncongenial and/or disturbed family environment has some positive correlation with violence against children, irrespective of nature of violence. The academic performance of the children who experienced any forms of violence was affected i.e., it was poor in case of abused children as compared to children who did not experience the same (p<0.01).

However, parent’s personality has a direct association with violence against children, irrespective of nature of violence. Children who experienced violence perceived their parents personality, both fathers and mothers, to be dominating (p<0.01), short tempered (p<0.01) and/or aggressive as compared to the children who did not experience the same.

In general, reporting of sexual abuse was very poor in Agartala since most of the police stations do not have confidential space to conduct interviews with the child and the lack of female police officials in interviewing and recording of the incidence.

Consequences of Violence against Children:

The impact of psychological, physical and sexual violence against children on three psychological domains viz., achievement motivation, feeling of security and insecurity and social adjustment have been studied.

The study clearly indicated that the children who experienced psychological violence differed significantly with their counterparts (p<0.01) i.e., the children who did not experience the same with respect to all four dimensions of achievement motivation viz., that is need for academic success, vocational achievement, social achievement and skill achievement. Further, gender-wise analysis of information, in this regard, revealed that both male and female children are equally affected with respect to need for academic success and skill achievement.
On the contrary, male and female children, who experienced psychological physical, and sexual violence, differed sufficiently with respect to, two dimensions of achievement motivation i.e., need for vocational achievement, and social achievement, i.e., abused female children were more affected than that of their male counterparts in the said two dimensions.

The children who experienced psychological, physical and sexual violence were found to be suffering from feeling of insecurity as compared to their non-abused counterparts (p<0.01). Psychologically and physically abused female children were suffering from more feeling of insecurity than that of male children. On the contrary, in case of sexual abuse the reverse picture has been observed i.e., male children were suffering from more feelings of insecurity than the abused female counterparts.

The children who experienced psychological, sexual and physical violence were found to be withdrawn as compared to normal children (p<0.01). Female children faced the same problem more as compared to male children, since their degree of freedom in terms of mobility and social exposure is less than that of their male counterpart.

Perception of Parents and Teachers about Corporal Punishment and Child Rights:

A good number of parents especially teachers stated that corporal punishment is necessary to discipline a child. In Agartala, about half of the parents and teachers still apply corporal punishment and they mostly use cane and bamboo stick. Other forms of corporal punishment include punching and/or slapping, pulling hairs, hitting the child/student and so on. The study indicates a clear picture of intergenerational transmission of corporal punishment. Although all of the parents and teachers were unanimous about some of the basic rights of the children like health care, education, recreation, and protection from work that threatens his/her health, education and development, a large of them had reservation about expression of views and opinions and joining and/or formation of an association. Surprisingly, about one-third of the parents and teachers stated that children from minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language. Parents were found to be more aware of legal measures for child protection as compared to teachers.

In fine, it may be stated that violence against children in Agartala, Tripura is found to be prevalent in case of one-fourth to one-fifth of the children in terms of three major forms of violence that’s is psychological physical and sexual. Gender-wise analysis of information disclosed that male children are vulnerable to more psychological and physical violence while female children are two times more vulnerable to sexual violence. In case of psychological violence against male children teachers are mostly responsible followed by parents and relatives while in case of females it was mostly mothers followed by father teachers and elder siblings.
In case of physical violence, again teachers were found to be abusive in cases of both male and female children followed by parents and elder siblings. The main perpetrators for sexual violence against girl children are relatives followed by teachers, friends and private tutors, whereas in cases of male children it is mostly elder siblings/cousins, relatives, teachers and others.

Finally, few evidence-based measures have been suggested for prevention of violence against children and for improving the situation and creating a child friendly environment in the family and in the educational institutions in Tripura.