

## **Corporeal Punishment and its Effects on Students Learning: A Study of Selected Schools in Rawalpindi & Rawat**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study was to explore the causes of corporal punishment in schools and its effects on students' motivational level, their class participation and attendance in schools. The research also unveiled the perspectives of teachers about corporeal punishment as an instrument to discipline students. The data for this paper was collected through a mix method approach. A survey was conducted among students selected from six schools in District Rawalpindi and Rawat in Pakistan. Qualitative interviews were conducted with selected teachers from the same schools. The findings of the paper highlight that the majority of the students reported to have experienced corporal punishment at schools. From the teachers perspective large class size, non academic activities, poor school infrastructure, low availability of teaching tools, high teaching workloads were reported to be some of the reasons that led to corporeal punishment. The value of Chi-Square shows significant association between corporal punishment and school attendance as well as class participation at 5% level of significance. This paper concludes that corporal punishment has serious implications on students' behavior. In the light of the findings it is recommended that the issue needs serious attention from all stakeholders including school administration and teachers. Importantly, to reduce corporeal punishment we need to work on teachers so that their perceptions about corporeal punishment and its effects on students can be changed.

**Keywords:** Corporal punishment; schools; teachers; students' learning

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## **Introduction**

Physical punishment has been continuously used and authorized as a mean to correct children's behavior in schools, homes and at workplaces. Punishment is based on the principle to make a child understand not to repeat irregular behavior. Corporeal punishment is widely used to normalize the behavior of students in education institutions across the world (Bitensky, 2008). There are myriad ways of defining and understanding the term corporeal punishment. Broadly speaking it is the exercise of physical punishment to inculcate pain but not harm with the purpose to organize and control the child's behavior (Rollins, 2012; UN Committee, 2006). Seen in this way it is a technique of behavioral change (Straus & Mouradian, 1998).

Some of the major sources of physical punishment include techniques such as slapping, spanking, choking, punching, hitting, kicking, pinching, shaking, shoving (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007), uneasy body postures, use of electric shocks, excessive exercise drills and prevention of urine or stool (McClure, 2008). Despite the wide use of corporeal punishment in schools there is little evidence to support the fact that this kind of punishment actually works to reform the behavior of students. Instead it is likely that physical punishment leads to increase in dropout rates in schools (Little & Akin-Little, 2008; Zotolor & Puzia, 2010).

The current research paper intends to explore various causes that lead to corporal punishment of students in public and private schools in two Districts in Pakistan including Rawalpindi and Rawat. It also intends to investigate the effects of punishment on their school attendance, class participation and motivational level. Finally the paper also aims to explore the reasons that motivate teachers to carry out corporeal punishment in schools. This study is significant since corporeal punishment remains a serious concern in Pakistani schools. Therefore, it is important to have understanding of the causes of corporeal punishment and its outcomes for students. The findings will help to devise strategies to reduce corporeal punishment to make the schools a safer place and enjoyable experiences for young minds.

### **Hypothesis**

1. Corporal Punishment is likely to affect Student's attendance in Schools.
2. Corporal Punishment is likely to affect student's participation in classrooms.
3. Corporal Punishment is likely to affect student's motivational level.

### **Literature Review**

Corporeal punishment has been prevalent in educational institutions across the world for decades. More than 80% students in educational institutions have been reported to have faced corporal punishment in different parts of the world which is believed to have adversely affected their learning (Pineda, 2005). A UNICEF (2009) review report on the data collected from 37 countries found that 86% children belonging to age group 3-12 faced violent behavior and psychological anger in their schools. A study conducted in African schools indicated that only one percent students were never punished (African Child Policy Forum on Violence against Children & Save the Children Sweden, 2005). A research carried out by Red Cross Committee in Georgia found that 32% students were victims of physical punishment in schools (Red Cross Committee of Georgia, 2000).

In the United States too, the frequency of occurrence of corporal punishment of children in educational institutions is believed to be quite high (Center for Effective Discipline US, 2005; Lynnette, 2001). In the US one of the frequently used forms of corporal punishment is hitting children back with wooden scull intentionally by school administration (Zotolor & Puzia, 2010). In Jamaica almost eighty six percent students faced verbal aggression and hostility from teachers (Samms-Vaughan, et al., 2004). A study in the schools of capital in Nepal depicted similar picture regarding corporal punishment that adversely affected child educational learning (Ferguson, 2013).

Corporal punishment is common in South Asian countries in places including home, schools, places of work and neighborhoods (UNICEF, 2001). A research conducted in India at national level highlighted that more than sixty percent children belonging to 15-18 years of age group faced punishment at schools resulting in low

academic learning (Kacker, Varadan & Kumar, 2007). In Pakistan a Study carried out by UNICEF (2000) in the Khyber Pakhtunkwa Province reflected that corporal punishment is a clear indicator of increasing fear among students. The government of Pakistan has banned corporal punishment with an act called the Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Act, 2010 in care institutions, homes, public and private schools. However, it is still practiced in schools (Society for Adolescent Medicine, 2003).

### **Research Methodology**

The current research was conducted by using a mixed method approach by blending both quantitative and qualitative approaches (McLeod, 2008). The target population included teachers and students as a critical stakeholder in schools. The quantitative data was collected through a survey among students of age group 9 – 13 (grades 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>). For the collection of data 11 schools (7 schools from Rawalpindi & 4 schools from Rawat) were contacted by the researchers. Out of these 2 public and 4 private schools refused to provide data when consulted. The remaining 5 schools (3 public & 2 private) have been included in this research process. Out of these selected schools 2 public sector schools were selected from Rawat and 1 public sector school from Rawalpindi while 2 private schools were selected from Rawalpindi. In addition to the survey fifteen face to face interviews were conducted with teachers out of the total numbers of 75 teachers working in selected schools. Among these 7 teachers were selected from Rawalpindi and 5 from Rawat.

### **Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

The nature of current research demanded non-probability sampling. The sample size was determined by using the formula i.e.  $\frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$  ( $e = 0.05$ ); the calculated sample size was 68 equally divided 34 boys and girls students. Since the respondents were children belonging to age group 9 – 13 the questionnaire was first translated into Urdu. The questionnaire and interview guide were pretested from experts (2 academicians & 1 psychologist). Fifteen questionnaires were pretested from students. The consent of students and teachers was secured in order to collect the data. Measures have been taken to ensure confidentiality of the respondents in order to protect their privacy. Accordingly, their personal information has not been used throughout the study.

Table 1: Sample Size and Selection of Respondents

Name of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Students corporally punished	Stratified Sampling $\frac{Groupsize \times n}{N}$
Government Girls Community Model School Rawat	72	8	$\frac{8 \times 68}{82} = 6.6$
Government Boys Elementary School Rawat	150	12	$\frac{12 \times 68}{82} = 9.9$
New Town Girls Elementary School Satellite Town Rawalpindi	450	17	$\frac{17 \times 68}{82} = 14$
Madrassat-ul-Binat Sadqabad Rawalpindi	400	20	$\frac{20 \times 68}{82} = 16.5$
Government Abbasi High School for Boys Afandi Colony Rawalpindi	1145	26	$\frac{26 \times 68}{82} = 21.5$

Source: Survey

## Results & Discussions

Univariate and Bivariate statistical techniques were applied to examine the effects of various interacting variables in this study. The background information of the respondents is given in table 1 below.

Table 1: Socio-Economic and Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
Up to 9 Years	6	8.8
10 to 12 Years	24	35.3
13 and Above	38	55.9
Gender		
Male	34	50
Female	34	50
Education		
Up to 4 <sup>th</sup> Class	12	17.6
5 <sup>th</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> Class	32	47.1
8 <sup>th</sup> and Above	24	35.3

Source: Survey

### Types of Corporal Punishments

The quantitative data from this study highlights the different types of techniques used by teachers to punish students in schools to reform the behavior of students. The figures inside the brackets show the percentages while the figures outside the brackets indicate the frequencies in all the tables.

Table 3: Types of Corporal Punishment in Schools

Types/Techniques	Almost Daily	Twice a week	Thrice a week	Once a week	Sometimes	Mean
Dismissal from class room	-	11.8 (8)	22.1 (15)	20.6 (14)	45.6 (31)	2.00
Make you stand for long time in class	-	44.1 (30)	41.2 (28)	14.7 (10)	-	3.29
Make you stand and raise your hands for long time	-	19.1 (13)	25.0 (17)	22.1 (15)	33.8 (23)	2.29
Beat with ruler/ cane on hand	-	-	22.1 (15)	10.3 (7)	67.6 (46)	1.54
Slapped on the face	-	14.7 (10)	26.5 (18)	22.1 (15)	36.8 (25)	2.19
Hit you with book on head	-	-	25.0 (17)	44.1 (30)	30.9 (21)	1.94
Ear twisted	-	13.2 (9)	20.6 (14)	22.1 (15)	44.1 (30)	2.03
Told you to hold your tongue	14.7 (10)	13.2(9)	19.1 (13)	29.4 (20)	23.5 (16)	2.66
Beat you up with a cane	-	-	16.2 (11)	-	83.8 (57)	1.32
Made you sit in cock position	-	-	-	19.1 (13)	80.9 (55)	1.19

Source: Survey

The students were asked about the types of corporal punishment used by their teacher for controlling their behavior. About 12% responded that they were often dismissed from class, while 45% mentioned they were forced to stand up in classroom. About 22% of the respondents were sometimes beaten with cane or ruler, almost 15% were slapped as a punishment. Nearly 25% were sometimes hit on their head by using a book, while 13% respondents explained that their ears were often twisted by teachers. 15% reported that they were forced to hold their tongue as a form of punishment.

A survey conducted by an organization working for the rights of children SPARC (2010) in Pakistan found similar findings about the corporal punishment in schools. Students were reported to have been beaten up by stick or ruler often leading to serious consequences.

During in-depth interview with teachers the majority admitted to have practiced corporal punishment for reforming the behavior of students. One of the male teachers explained:

“Some of the common types of corporal punishment we use include hitting the students, slapping on their faces, twisting their ears, throwing books on them, pushing, use of various objects (i.e., belts, sticks, pins, or others), making them sit in uncomfortable body positions, or out in the sun for long durations especially during hot summers, excessive sit stand exercise or in extreme cases prevention of urine for longer hours.

Likewise a female teacher explained the kinds of punishment used in the female schools.

The different ways in which we punish students include cleaning of classrooms, managing solid waste from play grounds, making them stand in sun for long hours, making the students stand outside the classroom so that everybody can watch and humiliate them.

This shows that teachers acknowledged the use of corporal punishment to punish however they had their own justification for this which will be discussed later in the paper.

### **Causes of Corporal Punishment**

According to the data from the survey students reported to have been punished on very ordinary matters such as fighting with fellows, refusing to obey orders, asking too many questions, incomplete homework, not preparing for tests, and talking and laughing in class among others. The responses of the respondents are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4: Causes of Corporal Punishment

Variables	Very Often	Often	Some Times	Rarely	Never	Mean
Fighting with other fellows	10.3 (7)	13.2 (9)	19.1 (13)	19.1 (13)	38.2 (26)	2.38
Scratching on the walls, boards & desks	-	7.4 (5)	8.8 (6)	20.6 (14)	63.2 (43)	1.60
Escaping from school before day ends	-	-	16.2 (11)	13.2 (9)	70.6 (48)	1.46
Refusing to obey orders	-	-	11.8 (8)	17.6 (12)	70.6 (48)	1.41
Incomplete homework	7.4 (5)	27.9 (19)	44.1 (30)	20.6 (14)	-	3.22
Not preparing for tests	8.8 (6)	27.9 (19)	45.6 (31)	17.6 (12)	-	3.28
Asking too many questions	-	13.2 (9)	23.5 (16)	22.1 (15)	41.2 (28)	2.09
Talking and laughing in class	13.2 (9)	26.5 (18)	32.4 (22)	16.2 (11)	11.8 (8)	3.13

Source: Survey

The qualitative data illustrates that the teachers seemed to have myriad reasons to justify corporal punishment in schools. Some of these were large classroom sizes, shortage of teachers, inadequate training of teachers, frustration due to family pressure and low wages. Others included heavy workload non academic activities, poor school infrastructure, low availability of teaching tools, among others. The teachers believed that corporal punishment tends to be effective when other methods of discipline have failed.

A young female teacher who had recently joined the profession of teaching stated;

Prior to joining this profession I was very humble and kind with students. However with the passage of time I realized that students do not take me seriously and I found it hard to maintain discipline in class. With this realization I have started to punish students.

A male teacher explained his experience as follows:

Corporal punishment is a necessary part of childhood development and educational learning. Children learn from punishment to value their parents and teachers, to differentiate between right and wrong, to conform rules and regulations. Without physical pain children will be out of control. This is in their greater benefit.

The teachers acknowledged that corporal punishment is violent but believed that often teachers too are frustrated. It was reported that the number of students in each class was far too large to be

controlled so teachers used punishment as a mean for control. They also reported that they discussed the different ways in which the children were punished while they gathered during free time in the staff room. Punishment they believed was essential in order to control the behavior of students. They reported that they punished students with the intention that this will prevent them from repeating the episode again.

### **Effects of Corporal Punishment on Students**

Corporal punishment is recognized by social scientists as a considerable factor in the development of violent behaviours in the childhood as well as during later stages of life (Oosthuizen, 2010). The qualitative part of this paper highlighted some of the effects of corporal punishment from the teachers' perspective. The teachers explained that after getting punishment most of students tend to show temporary compliance yet they continued with their habits in the long run. A female teacher reported: *"Some cry, some become silent. Others show aggression and continue the behavior shortly."* Another teacher reported;

Some of the students get scars on their hands and faces (male & female students) and painful body postures (male students). Students get bodily pain and in some cases avoid school for the next day.

Surprisingly, it was believed by the teachers that corporal punishment leads to achievement of goals. One female teacher explained this like this;

Corporal punishment is much quicker to achieve desirable end in short time. It produces speedy results and maintains order immediately.

Contrary to this, previous research findings support that violence triggers more violence among students, creates a grudge against teachers and the school, and causes students to challenge teachers (Chiang, 2009). Children who have faced corporal punishment are more probable to be violent towards others (Rammala, 2009) and also to use violent methods to resolve conflict (Hart. et al., 1990), and to be aggressive towards their parents (Douglas & Straus, 2007).

In the quantitative part of the research the effect of corporal punishment on two important aspects of students lives were explored. These included participation of students in classroom after punishment and their motivational level.

Table 5: Class Participation of Students after Punishment

Variable	Very Often	Often	Some Times	Rarely	Never	Mean
Answer to questions that are been asked in class.	10.3 (7)	19.1 (13)	29.4 (20)	41.2 (28)	-	2.99
Question teacher regarding concept that's been taught	-	16.2 (11)	26.5 (18)	25.0 (17)	32.4 (22)	2.26
Make comments regarding the concept taught in class	-	13.2 (9)	8.8 (6)	7.4 (5)	70.6 (48)	1.65
Reading for class	11.8 (8)	13.2 (9)	22.1 (15)	32.4 (22)	20.6 (14)	2.63
Attentively listening to lecture	-	16.2 (11)	23.5 (16)	33.8 (23)	26.5 (18)	2.29

Source: Survey

The table clearly depicts that participation of students in routine class room discussions tend to reduce after experiencing corporal punishment. Students rarely responded to questions being asked in class. Few students seem to be able to question the teachers regarding the concepts being discussed in the class. The majority did not comment on any discussion in class. This data shows the serious implications of corporal punishment on classroom participation which further leads to serious consequences.

Table 4: Student's Motivational Level after Corporal Punishment

Effects	Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Lower self-esteem	58.8 (40)	30.9 (21)	10.3 (7)	-	-	4.49
Anxiety	41.2 (28)	30.9 (21)	19.1 (13)	8.8 (6)	-	4.04
Feeling depressed	60.3 (41)	30.9 (21)	8.8 (6)	-	-	4.43
Development of fear to approach teacher	73.5 (50)	10.3 (7)	8.8 (6)	7.4 (5)	-	4.43
Retaliation against teachers	11.8 (8)	-	19.1 (13)	38.2 (26)	30.9 (21)	2.24
Feeling insecure	7.4 (5)	8.8 (6)	22.1 (15)	51.5 (35)	10.3 (7)	2.51

Source: Survey

The table indicates the effects of corporal punishment on student's motivation level. The responses show that students seemed to have low self-esteem; they had feelings of anxiety and depression, fear for teachers and feelings of insecurity in general. Similar findings have been reported in previous researchers.

**Testing of Hypothesis- Bivariate Analysis**

Bi-variate analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis and to explore the association of interacting variables by applying Chi-square. Broadly three conceptual hypotheses have been tested for analysis of the results of study.

Hypothesis No. 1: Corporal Punishment is likely to affect Student's attendance in Schools

Table 5: Higher the Corporal Punishment lower will be School attendance

Variable Physical Effects of Punishment	Absence from School after Punishment				
	Next One Day	Next Two Days	Next Three Days	Never Missed	Total
	Percentage (Number)				
Low	20.0% (1)	80.0% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	100% (5)
Medium	42.0% (21)	18.0% (9)	14.0% (7)	26.0% (13)	100% (50)
High	15.4% (2)	15.4% (2)	46.2% (16)	23.1% (3)	100% (13)
Total	35.3% (24)	22.1% (15)	19.1% (13)	23.5% (16)	100% (68)
Chi-Square:	18.593	DF: 6	Significance level	(SL): .005	

The value of Chi-Square shows significant association between corporal punishment and school attendance at 5% level of significance.

Hypothesis No. 2: Corporal Punishment is likely to affect student's participation in classrooms

Table 6: Feeling of student after punishment is associated with their Class Participation

Variable	Class Participation of Children				
	Answer to Questions been asked in Class	Asking question about concepts being taught	Attentively Listen to Lecture	Reading for Class	Total
	Percentage (Number)				
Ashamed	0.0% (0)	50.0% (12)	41.7% (10)	8.3% (2)	100% (24)
Develop Fear	16.1% (5)	32.3% (10)	41.9% (13)	9.7% (3)	100% (31)
	14.3% (1)	14.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	71.4% (5)	100% (7)
Frustration	0.0% (0)	50.0% (3)	33.3% (2)	16.7% (1)	100% (6)
	8.8% (6)	38.2% (26)	36.8% (25)	16.2% (11)	100% (68)
Chi-Square: 25.093		DF: 9	Significance level	(SL): .003	

The value of Chi-Square shows significant association between corporal punishment and class participation at 5% level of significance.

Hypothesis No. 3: Corporal Punishment is likely to affect student's motivational level

Table 7: Techniques used by Teacher to Discipline student and their Motivational level

Variable	Punished Children Feeling				
	Low self esteem	Anxiety	Depression	Insecurity	Total
	Percentage (Number)				
Dismissal from Class	30.0% (3)	30.0% (3)	10.0% (1)	30.0% (3)	100% (10)
Make you stand for long time	34.6% (9)	57.7% (15)	7.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	100% (26)
Slapped you	54.5% (12)	36.4% (8)	4.5% (1)	4.5% (1)	100% (22)
Hit with book	0.0% (0)	50.0% (5)	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)	100% (10)
Total	35.3% (24)	45.6% (31)	10.3% (7)	8.8% (6)	100% (68)
Chi-Square: 21.643		DF: 9	Significance level	(SL): .010	

The value of the Chi-square is significant at 0.010 level of significance showing that techniques used by teachers to discipline students in class have deep psychological implications.

## **Conclusions**

The paper highlighted the prevalence of corporal punishment in schools from students and teachers perspective. Findings of the paper show that the concept of and use of corporal punishment is still prevalent and viewed as a viable option for teachers. Teachers believed corporal punishment is particularly effective when other methods of discipline have failed. Additionally, they also preferred corporal punishment as quick and easy to administer classroom discipline as compared to other techniques which require time, patience and skills. Multiple reasons were highlighted by teachers such as large class size, non academic activities, poor school infrastructure, low availability of teaching tools, high teaching workloads etc. Students strongly opposed physical punishment as a mean to control their behavior because it develops a sense of fear, insecurity low motivational level, less speaking power during class room discussions, degrading self esteem and felling disrespect. The paper has argued that corporal punishment has serious implications on students' behavior their participation in class, their motivational level and their school attendance.

In the light of the findings it is suggested that the issue needs serious combined efforts on the parts of teachers, students and administrative authorities of schools. From the teacher's perspective some of the causes of corporeal punishment include large class sizes, the attitude of students in class and teacher's attitude towards teaching as a one way process where the teacher is the one in authority. These attitudes of teachers need to be changed. For this purpose teachers need to be trained to use new methodologies. Also, school administrations should provide support to teachers. The number of students in one class should be reduced to make it more manageable for teachers. This will also allow one to one interaction between teachers and students thus reducing the consequences that lead to corporeal punishment. Teachers can play a leading role in promoting positive learning environment by inculcating quality of education and socialization and they need support during this process. Importantly, the students who have already experiences corporeal punishment need counseling services. This will help their participation in class discussions and their will increase their attendance in schools.

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