

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ACROSS NATIONS: ITS NATURE AND EFFECTS

Dr. Abdul Sattar Almani

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Management & Supervision,
Faculty of Education, University of Sindh, Elsa Kazi Campus, Hyderabad

ABSTRACT

Uses of corporal punishment by parents and teachers since centuries have made it a social practice. There are many long and short-term effects of corporal punishment on the life and behavior of a child. The paper discusses current status of corporal punishment and presents its implications. The proponents of corporal punishment say, it is necessary for the treatment of inappropriate behavior and promotion of appropriate behavior; however the in-depth study revealed a different picture. Impact of corporal punishment was reflected through some studies conducted on students who had experienced corporal punishment themselves. It was found through the views of various students and educationalists that corporal punishment has a number of negative effects. It damages, physical and mental health destroys the learning and education of child and creates anxiety and antisocial behaviors. The paper asserts that corporal punishment may be eradicated or decreased by using scientific approaches. Thus the research proposes some relevant methods to eradicate or minimize the use of corporal punishment both at schools and homes.

INTRODUCTION

Corporal punishment is almost present in all the nations of the world. Some societies use severe methods of corporal punishment like, hitting, kicking, canning, and some use mild ways of corporal punishment like spanking. A large body of research confirms that corporal punishment is frequently used in Africa and other third world counties. Almost people from low income families use it harshly and frequently. But majority of the users of corporal punishment are those parents and teachers who suffer from state of depression, anxiety, aggression, overburden and poverty. There are contradicting opinions about the severity and effectiveness of corporal punishment. A large amount of research is being conducted to bring about the actual position of effects of

corporal punishment on body and mind of children, some research reveals that corporal punishment have many negative effects on the human body and mind. In some cases those effects disturb and upset the whole life and career of the child.

Among those effects, Injuries, angers, anxieties, depression, and antisocial behavior are some which reduce their self-esteem; confidence, and skills for social interaction (Harris 1998). A large amount of evidence also claim that Corporal punishment also lead to child abuse and those children who are regular victims of this kind of treatment commit social crimes in their future lives.

DEFINING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The word Corporal Punishment has been derived from Latin word 'corpus' which means body. Corporal punishment usually used for inflicting pain or anxiety on the body or mind of a child to correct his behavior. Different authors have defined corporal punishment in different ways. Encyclopedia Britannica has defined corporal punishment as, "the infliction of physical pain upon a person's body as punishment for a crime or infraction".

According to Cohen (1984), corporal punishment is the administration of physical penalty by a senior member of family or a person in charge to a child with an objective to create pain. (by striking) Hyman, (1997) defined corporal punishment as a purposeful indication of pain on the human body as penalty for an offence. In other words, it is the punishment in which physical force is used with an intention to create pain, anxiety or discomfort.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The society or individuals use corporal punishment as a legitimate means to achieve the desirable objectives from physically weaker members of the society i.e. females, pupils and children. The teachers and parents believe it as an easy and cheap weapon to correct the behavior of their children. It has its roots in the society and is used since centuries; therefore many proverbs came into practice. Some of them are:

"Do not hold discipline from a child if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. Beat him with a rod and you will save him from grave".

A Pushto saying goes; "che charta dab dey, halta adab dey", (It is only corporal punishment that brings order and respect)

In the same way parents used to say to teachers in Urdu language, "Ghosht Tumhara Hadi Hamari" (Flesh is your, bone is ours)

Justifying corporal punishment, one parent said, "I use to punish my children as my elders did with me. This happened to me and the same I did to my children. (Save the Children, 2001) The majority of the people are of the view that corporal punishment is inflicted on children at home and pupils at school for infusing some values in them. It is general concept that children at home and school should learn some good habits at early age and for the same reason corporal punishment is the final mean. The propagators of this notion say that positive values are essential to make a child useful for the society in which he lives. Justifying corporal Punishment in Pakistani schools a Head Master said that corporal punishment increases the morale of teachers. With a moderate amount of corporal punishment in class a teacher feels in command (UNICEF 1999)

In the same way a British teacher while talking about corporal punishment said that if you ban corporal punishment, you will send a boxer in the ring with only one hand (Chenoweth, T, Just, H. 200). It is generally accepted that corporal punishment is brought down to the students to punish unsatisfactory behavior in the class such as, rudeness, graffiti, fighting, stealing, drug use, cheating in the classroom, talking, making noise and so on.

REASONS FOR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

A group of students from Ethiopia alleged that... it is a common practice in our schools that when teachers found students in vulgarity, they (teachers) tie them and beat them; and if students are found in stealing, teachers burn their fingers. (Lao Youth Union1998) A large number of students are punished at schools for academic reasons. Teachers and school heads punish their students for coming late at school, having dirty or torn dresses, not having proper books or supplies, not answering questions in the classroom

or leaving school without permission. Additionally at many instances students are beaten and expelled from school for not depositing fees. Positions in examinations and ranks in the classrooms are also a reason of corporal punishment. Children at home and school are subjected to punishment to obtain good grades and higher ranks in the examinations also. According to Tamrakar and (Misra1995), the present system of education is obsessed with ranking and grading. This system invites the frequent use of mental and physical violence. When a child cannot acquire desired grades or ranks, he is beaten or threatens. Girls aged 10-14 from Bangladesh allege that their teachers always hit them on the hands and if they pull their hand they threat to cut it off. They feel very hurt when they are beaten by their teachers because of low performance in the examinations. Ruby Noble 1997 In addition to above mentioned reasons of corporal punishment many a time's corporal punishment is inflicted without any reason or there is lot of occasions corporal punishment is inflicted and children don't know why he is being beaten. Generally in these kinds of situations, children are battered by fault of their parents and teachers. Some reasons of this kind of corporal punishment are stress, frustration, drug addiction, mental illness, overburden and low salaries of teachers and parents who release their stress, frustration and inadequacy on children.

A large number of teachers engage themselves in part time jobs due to low salaries which minimize their role in the classrooms. They give less time to their students and expect more from their student which students cannot manage. This is also a reason of corporal punishment in schools. (Human Rights Watch, 1999)

In a Chinese study, 475 parents of Hong Kong, found that more stressed parents tended to perceive their children as more difficult.(Human Rights Watch, 1999) In another study it was found that mostly mothers, with depression use more physical violence on children, even with younger ones (Human Rights Watch, 1999)

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Large amount of evidence suggest that corporal punishment affect the children in a number of ways. Those children who are

the regular victims of corporal punishment do not possess sound body or mind and they develop many types of negative and anti social behaviors that cause damage to their physical, mental health, and education. The injuries and insults caused by corporal punishment are not removed easily, but they live with the victims for all their lives.

PHYSICAL INJURIES

Some of the immediate effects of corporal punishment are pains, cuts, burns, bruises and wounds. These are the common results of corporal punishment which many children face every day at home and school. More severe kind of punishments cause, bone damages, hearing losses, broken teethes and many kinds of internal injuries, which lead to a number of, body ailments Evidence from different cultures, show their own way and its severity of inflicting pain and anxiety on the body and mind of different children.

To find out the effects of corporal punishment 600 questionnaires were sent to the teacher of primary schools in Pakistan. In response 62 injuries were reported due to corporal punishment by Head teachers. These injuries include unconsciousness, stitches, broken limbs, damaged eyes and Bleeding (Unicef Pakistan, 1999). In a study of effects of corporal punishment in Pakistan, Fida and Ishtiaq narrated their view about the severity of corporal punishment in Pakistan as under:

A nine years old child Fida reported his experience, "one morning my father as came home he slapped on my head with full force. I suffered much pain in my ears. Everything in the room was moving. I failed down on the ground and bleeding started from my nose" (Save the Children, 2001)

Ishtiaq another boy of ten burst into tears and said that his father hanged him upside down for playing cricket. He further said that his father punished him with stick and warned him that he should not go near cricket in future. (Save the Children, 2001). One girl in Cameron said that her parents always tied her hands and feet before punishing her.(UNICEF Pakistan, 1999) In a study by Kira Jensen,(1998), One student gave his comments on the severity of corporal punishment, "One day I was playing with my friend at his home. My father reached there and started to beat me

because I had forgotten to fetch the water. He was continuously beating me until my nose bled”.

Another child from Nepal reported, “My mother asked my teacher to punish me for disobeying and quarrelling with my brother. The teacher hit me seriously with stick and then hung me upside down. He also forcibly inhaled me red peepee and I started vomiting. When my condition became worse, they sent me to hospital. (Kira Jensen 1998)

The situation in Kenya is worse where pupils are beaten by canes more than a meter long and more than an inch thick. In some cases canes with thorns is also used. Sometimes students are whipped with ropes. These punishments are inflicted anywhere on the body of the children in spite of their weak physical health (Human Rights Watch, 1999) Talking on severity of corporal punishment one boy from Cameroon reported,

“In my class some girls failed. Teacher became very angry and he gave failure girls choice that either they accept three slaps or ten strokes with cane. One girl accepted first choice and the teacher slapped three times on her face with full force. As a result of hard slap the mouth of girl was filled with blood and two of her teeth came out (Human rights watch 2000) Boy, aged six described corporal punishment in these words," it is just to fall from sky to the ground and hurt yourself”

Another seven year boy said, “My mother beats me daily. When I watch Television she hit me with shoes and sticks. My father also ties my hands and feet for 10 to 15 minutes” (Carolyn Willow and Tina Hyder 1998). Other girl conveyed her grief by saying that her father makes her half dead by beating when she doesn't fetch water or sweep the house (Ruby Noble 1997)

“I cannot forget the punishment when some girls wrote bad things in the washroom. I don't know who wrote this on the wall of washroom but teachers decided to beat all the class. I received twenty strokes with full force on my hands, toes, legs and head and all that were very painful” (Elizabeth B)

An Egyptian survey revealed that more than one third children between the age of 10 and 20 years (included in survey) had been severely disciplined by harsh punishments. Some members of the group were victim of physical injuries including

loss of consciousness, broken bones and permanent disability (Youssef et al 1998)

The mildest forms of corporal punishment are also harmful for children and are unacceptable for them, "little taps" and "gentle slaps" are not little or gentle when you are the victim" (save the children 2001).

A survey was conducted in England to know the views of children in England. In this survey children were asked about the light and mildest form of corporal punishment. When they were asked, what does a slap or smack feel like? The answer was that it feels humiliating and shocking. A light blow by an adult feels like someone banged you with a hammer. Child aged five, "a smack starts to break bones-it is painful and hurts inside. One girl aged seven, "its like someone kicked out and punched you forcefully" (Carolyne Willow and Tina Hyder 1998).

PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS

Cuts, bruises and wounds are not the final effects of corporal punishment on human body. In addition to those discomforts, corporal punishment affects child's mental health, his thoughts, feelings and emotions. Many a times he look helplessly towards his parents and teachers that why he is beaten so severely? This state of distress starts the feelings of fear, anxiety, humiliation and depression. He began to hate his parents and teachers. Feelings of anger and revenge start in his mind and he learns anti social behavior. M. A. Straus (2000) concluded from five studies on the relationship between the corporal punishment and psychological problems of American children that corporal punishment increases the risk of major psychological and social problems such as depression, anxiety and physical violence.

Physical abuse may reduce a child's sense of worth and increased vulnerability to depression. Physical punishment can produce feelings of abasement, low confidence and lowered self-esteem. Continuous physical abuse may reduce a child's sense of worth. P. Graven has very effectively expressed the relationship between stress and corporal punishment in following words, "depression often is a delayed response to the suppression of childhood anger...from being physically hit and hurt..." (by parents) . Melancholy and depression have been persistent themes

in the family history, religious experience, and emotional lives of Puritans, evangelicals, fundamentalists and Pentecostals for centuries", P. Greven, (1991)

The serious situations are those when children learn that punishment is the only mean to change the behavior of an individual. It is known from social learning theory that violence is a learned behavior (Bandura, 1977). This supports the main argument of almost every claim against use of corporal punishment. Those children who are victims of this kind of punishment apply it to the weaker children of home and school and become habitual of violence. The child learns that it is sometimes acceptable, even necessary, to give pain to control others (McCord, 1996).

Children learn by asking and exploring. Their mind continuously remains in process of thinking and doing something new. Due to this habit a child becomes intelligent, quick witted, creative and explorer. Those children who are continuous victim of beatings don't ask many questions and loose their habit of exploration and become silent, shy, introvert and idle. This silence and introvert ness become their habit and those students don't like talk or engage in discussions in schools and even in public. McMillan at al studied the relationship between corporal punishment and psychiatric disorders in 1999. A sample of 9,953 participants of the Ontario Health Supplement were asked questions of about being "hit" or "slapped" during childhood. A subgroup of 4,888 of these participants reported never been hit and were used to compare the relationship of corporal punishment and four kinds of psychiatric disorders. Psychiatric evolutions were given to everyone in the study and found that those who experienced the most corporal punishment had the highest rates of anxiety and addictive disorders that those who were never spanked Corporal punishment. Chenoweth, T Just, H. (200)

In a report of American Academy of Pediatrics, it is reported that corporal punishment has negative impact on the school performance and self-image of students. It is also reported that corporal punishment may produce students with violent and disruptive behavior (American Academy of Pediatrics 2000).

DAMAGE TO EDUCATION

Since centuries it is a belief that corporal punishment is necessary to the children for learning. The educational psychology long ago has proved that learning does not take place forcefully. The social scientists are of the view that learning can take place when learner is motivated for the learning. Light punishment cannot help children in learning. Teachers think and also tell their students that beating will help them in learning. But with me, I did not learn with fear in the classroom. I just waited and could not communicate. I could not learn because of the fear of classroom.” (UNICEF/EMIDA 2000)

Light or mild type of punishment damages children's self image and education. Children have an inborn instinct to observe, inquire and ask questions. They need full freedom and liberty for looking at the things, feeling them with their hands and they learn through this process. But when discipline is maintained with fear, the way of enjoyable learning is lost and anxiety, fear, depression and low self esteem is developed in the children.

Corporal Punishment not only creates negative behavior but destroys the education of children also. Those children who are continuous victims of repeated punishment at schools hate their teachers and books and quit to go schools “The way by which my teacher continuously hit me, I torn into tears and all classmates laughed on me. I left school for not only for the pain but, humiliation which I underwent” (Radda Barnen, 1998)

Large amount of evidence suggest that teachers are not loved and books are not understood in those schools, which use corporal punishment frequently, such schools does not produce competent students with positive behavior. There is more drop-out ratio of students from these schools which use strict standards of discipline. “Those schools which use corporal punishment for strict discipline frequently expel the students (UK Department of Education, 1989).

A large number of children engaged in different professions in Bangladesh were asked to comment about school. They said that they were lucky and were safe because in schools, teachers beat the students and they were safe. Some students said that, we are scared of the punishments which are inflicted in the schools”(Ruby Noble 1997) A study conducted in Pakistan revealed that corporal

punishment was the major problem of society. A large number of students flee from schools due to harsh behaviors and severe punishments by teachers.

A study covered teacher and parents in the schools of Frontier Province in 1998, Reported 70 cases of serious injury caused by corporal punishment. (UNICEF 1999) The use of corporal punishment in some of its most serious forms is practiced in many religious educational institutions, the Madarssas, where mostly children from poor families are housed and educated. Government schools, which are characterized by low quality education and untrained teachers, are also known for this practice, which in most cases puts an effective stop to the learning process of many children (SPARC,2003).

SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO CONTROL CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

1. Provide parents and teachers with information on child's drives, attitudes, habits, traits and needs through booklets-seminars, workshops and radio recordings.
2. Behave gently and kindly with students at school and children at home to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence.
3. Motivate students at home and school before assigning some task and/or activity.
4. Provide with children at home with necessary help and guidance. At least some time should be given to children for discussion about their problems at schools, their assignments and homework etc.
5. Ignore and overlook little negligence or slip of tongue if these lapses are of less harm.
6. Respect and appreciate them when they fulfill some tasks or when they try to accomplish the tasks earlier.
7. Keep the size of classroom at minimum and provide individual attention to each child.
8. Use methods of teaching according to the mental level and mental capabilities of the children.
9. Furnish schools with flags and paintings and decorate classrooms and walls with graphs, charts and pictures; bare classroom and unfinished schools give awful and strange look.

10. Assign responsibility for decision making to children by giving them various roles to play. Give them responsibility to manage schools or classroom for some hours or for a complete day.
11. Avoid testing and grading systems in schools particularly in primary grades that they create stress, anxiety and decrease self esteem at early stage.
12. Arrange for them co-curricular activities, including dramas, quizzes, field trips, puppet shows that students learn better values and good lessons.
13. Arrange for them drams and movies related to religion and cultural values of the society in which they live.
14. Provide parents with information on child habits, child drives and on various child needs through teacher workshops, and radio programs.
15. Organize sports and games regularly to encourage acceptable behavior and sportsmanship spirit.
16. Arrange for proper guidance and counseling personnel to guide pupils at school properly.
17. Ensure parent's participation in school activities and education of their.

REFERENCES

- American academy of pediatrics (2000), Corporal Punishment in Schools, Committee on School Health Vol. 106.
- Bandura (1977).Social Learning Theory Journal of International Differential Treatments.
- Carolyn Willow and Tina Hyder (2001).It hurts you inside, SC UK and National Children's Bureau, December 1998 in Save the Children, 2001.
- Chenoweth, T. Just, H.(2000). Corporal Punishment: Does it Hinder the Development of Children? ERIC opinion paper.
- Cohen, C. P.(1984). Freedom from corporal punishment: One of the human rights of children. New York Law School Human Rights Annual, Volume II, Part 1.
- Discipline in schools: Report of the Committee of Enquiry chaired by Lord Elton, UK Department of Education, 1989.
- Gershoff, E.T. (2002). Parental corporal punishment and associated child behaviors and experiences. A meta-analytic and theoretical review, Psychological Bulletin, 128, 539-579.

- Greven.(1991). Spare the Child. The religious roots of physical punishment and the Psychological impact of physical abuse, New York Knopf.
- Human Rights Watch, (1999) spare the child: Corporal punishment in Kenyan schools.
- Human rights watch (2000) children's rights, New York, New York 10118 USA 2000.
- Kira Jensen,(1998) 'Gender-based violence', in Learning from experience: girls' rights, SC UK.
- Lao Youth Union (1998) Listening to the voice of young people by, Women's Union and Education Department, Vientiane Municipality and SC UK.
- M. A. Straus 2000, 'Corporal punishment and primary prevention of physical abuse', cited in Child Abuse and Neglect, Vol 24, No 9, pp.1109-1114.
- Radda Barnen, 1998 Spare the rod and spoil the child: a survey on attitudes towards physical punishment among Ethiopian students, parents and teachers.
- Ruby Noble 1997, 'Research on the perception of children on their working lives, 1996-1997', conducted in Bangladesh for Save the Children Sweden.
- Save the Children, September 2001, Corporal Punishment of Children produced as a submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child for its General Discussion Day on Violence against Children.
- SPARC,(2003).Alternative Report on State of Child Rights in Pakistan Prepared by SPARC, Pakistan (Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child).
- Straus, M. A., Gelles, R. J., & Steinmetz, S. K. (1980) behind closed doors: Violence in the American family. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Tamrakar and Misra.(1995), 'Social construction of violence in schools, Notes from Kathmandu', quoted in a Unicef Regional Office South Asia discussion document.
- UNICEF (1999).Corporal punishment in primary schools of North West Frontier Province, Pakistan and Children's perception of physical abuse at home in North West Frontier Province, Pakistan, NGOs Coalition on Child Rights.
- UNICEF/EMIDA (2000) Enquete sur les violences educatives faites aux enfants dans les familles et a l'ecole primaire au Cameroun, Yaoundé Cameroun, December.
- Youssef et al, (2001) 'Children experiencing violence I: Parental use of corporal punishment; Children experiencing violence II: Prevalence and determinants of corporal punishment in schools', in Child Abuse and Neglect, Vol.22, No 10, pp.959-985, 1998 in Save the Children.