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**REAL**

**Review of Education,  
Administration and Law**

Journal homepage: <http://real.spcrd.org>

ISSN (Print): 2708-1788

ISSN (Online): 2708-3667

## Corporal Punishment in Schools: A Narrative Analysis of Contemporary Situation

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
<b>History:</b> Accepted 30 May 2022 Available Online June 2022	<p><i>The environment at home, school, social circles, and key life events all have an impact on students' wellbeing in the formative years. The tremendous familial and societal pressure placed on pupils to be high academic achievers is a prevalent factor in the Pakistan's context. Scoring marks is the primary goal, particularly in South Asian culture where students' performance has been reduced down to competitive testing formats. High grades on progress cards have been linked to a better likelihood of gaining admission to prestigious schools, resulting in a promising career and future. Security, family pride, and social position have all been connected to these factors. With this perspective, parents, often impose unrealistic expectations on the child and in schools, teachers deliberately or unintentionally use the corporal punishment to achieve and maintain the discipline and good grades of the students which negatively affect their behaviors and regress them academically (Nair, 2014). This narrative review-based paper explain why teachers are using corporal punishment as the terminal solution for most of the problems despite of legislation against corporal punishment in schools through "Prohibition of corporal punishment Bill, 2014"? This paper concluded that teachers are unable to abide this law effectively due to their personality traits tagged with their own aggressive childhood experiences. Therefore, it was suggested that in order to eradicate the corporal punishment from schools, teachers' psychological well-being assessments and their counseling may be way forward to achieve the students' well-being.</i></p>
<b>Keywords:</b> Corporal Punishment Act, Punishment Theories, Psychological Well Being, System Perspective, Narrative Analysis	
<b>JEL Classification:</b> P36, I21	
<b>DOI:</b> 10.47067/real.v5i2.227	

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### 1. Introduction

Corporal punishment is defined as bodily pain imposed on a kid's body as a punishment for unacceptable performance (NCACPS, 2006). Straus (1994) defined "Corporal punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury for the purposes of correction or control of the child's behavior" (p. 4; cited in Gershoff, 2002). Similarly, according to U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child (2007), corporal punishment is "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light" (p. 11). The term

"corporal punishment" is any punishment applied to the body, including assault or other methods intended to induce bodily pain or shame (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016; Visser et al. 2022). It is demarcated as intentionally inflicting bodily aching on a person in order to improve their conduct. This can include beating, stamping, remarkable, hitting, and thieving using implements such as rods, ties, and sweeps (NASN, 2010). Intentional corporal punishment includes beating, aggression, rattling, sailing, hurling, and the use of various items are all examples of corporal punishment as well as unpleasant body positions, rigorous exercise routines, and shock of electricity (Society for Adolescent Medicine, 2003). Corporal punishment, frequently used as a penalty, is the application of bodily force to a child in order to control the child's actions. It is done to a physique of an infant with the goal of inflicting pain or distress, no matter how minor. Such punishments often include slapping children with hands, wands, kitchen utensils, or belts, as well as hitting them, with knives and fuel pipelines but they can also include jerking, cutting, quaking, or imposing a child to stay in unpleasant situations (Rimal & Pokharel, 2013; Wasef, 2021). Paddles, leather straps, and switches are among the several "instruments" used to give corporal punishment at several schools. In result, blood clots, bleeding, severe bruising, skin discolorations, and ruptured attitudes of children are only some of the injuries that can result from physical punishment (Hyman, 1998).

In past, in every society, parents consider CP as a means of maintaining discipline for their children. In reality, outstanding and hitting children are widely regarded as not only normal, but also very beneficial and necessary (Owen, 2005; 2012). Since the turn of the century, there has been a global trend to ban corporal punishment in order to question the previous reliance on it as a technique for changing kids' attitudes (Global Report, 2008). Despite the fact that significant development in enforcing several standard provisions and laws to stop corporal punishment at schools, research shows that much more work needs to be done in the area of protecting children from violence (Addison, 2015; Dupper & Dingus, 2008; Hyman, 1995; UNICEF, 2009).

Children's corporal punishment is still a serious issue around the world, especially in developing nations like Pakistan even though the legislative steps have been taken. Several studies conducted across the world have conclusively shown that the use of physical punishment in the household and schools is linked to externalizing behavior in children, as well as substance misuse, stress, delinquent behavior, low school performance, and adult marital issues are all factors that contribute to substance abuse (Ali et al. 2014; Arif & Rafi, 2007; Hyman, 1995; Lawrent, 2012).

Moreover, Physical punishment is viewed in society in a variety of ways. Adults hitting each other, teachers and other educators hitting pupils, people in the illegal impartiality organization being knocked out, and animals being hit are all considered unacceptable. Numerous individuals, however, still believe that hitting children as a plan of correction is acceptable. The sad reality in our culture is that the only people who can still be hit are the most defenseless children (Rimal & Pokharel, 2013).

To address this ubiquitous social problem, the government of Pakistan took social and administrative measures to secure the right of children against corporal punishment in schools by raising the slogan "Maar Nahi Piyar" and then through Corporal Punishment Act, 2010. Later a bill was presented the National assembly of Pakistan to make the provisions for the prohibition of the Corporal punishment against children entitled "Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Bill, 2014". On the provincial level, bill was promulgated as an Act No. VII of 2017 "Sindh Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Act, 2016", in KPK, "The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act No. XIII, 2010" was enforced to ban on the corporal punishment (Abbas et al., 2020).

In 2021, the President of Pakistan signed Act No. XLIX of 2021 "to make provisions for prohibition of corporal punishment against children" under section 3(2) as

“Corporal punishment of every type is outlawed in all educational institutes either formal or informal, public or private schools, in Religious institutions, and in child care institutions as well as in the juvenile justice system”.

Further, to ensure the students’ psychological well-being, the section 3(3) states;

“Under no circumstances corporal punishments, or punishments which related to the child’s physical and mental development or which may affect the child’s emotional status are allowed”.

However, merely passing the bills and enforcing the Acts were not sufficient. A study conducted by Abbas et al. (2020) investigated the practices and perceptions of teacher as the policy practitioners of CP Act. The results demonstrated that most of the teachers were not found completely agreed with this act and its implementation procedure rather they were of the view that in the complete absence of corporal punishment, teachers became vulnerable and no authority to maintain the discipline in the schools. However, they were against the severe mental and physically torture yet mild punishment still prevails in the schools for the purpose of surveillance.

It demonstrates a significant disconnect between present policy and its actual practice. On the one hand, the parents’ acceptance of corporal punishment and deficiency of awareness of existing law to safeguard their children, and family believe that their input will have little impact on school procedures. On the other hand, failure of school administration to implement the CP law effectively, an absence of connection with parents, and the inability to train the teachers for positive alternatives of CP (Ali et al., 2014; Tomazin & Farrah, 2004; Viesser et al., 2022).

Therefore, the current study was focused on exploring the reasons behind the fact that some teachers still punish students while the corporal punishment law has been implemented.

## **2. Emergence of Research Question**

Throughout the world, the physical penalty or corporal punishment for children is still a serious issue, though the law against corporal punishment has been implemented in Pakistan like other developing and developed countries around the world (ibid). However, despite the potentially harmful consequences, parents and teachers use corporal punishment, even on a rare occasion, which is linked to increased externalizing behavior, substance use, crime, and sadness in children. Regardless of the fact that it causes sometimes irreversible and disastrous consequences, and legislation against corporal punishment in schools through “Prohibition of corporal punishment Bill, 2014”, question arises here that why teachers are using CP as the terminal solution for most of the problems?

This study was based on narrative review to investigate the empirical causes of corporal punishment by the teachers which effect students’ well-being in Pakistan public schools.

## **3. Discussion**

It is established fact that a loving and engaging atmosphere at home and at school as well, has a significant positive effect on physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral development. In schools, teachers are the agents to promote such conducive learning environment where healthy and balanced development of the student can be ensured. As the students make up a large portion of the population of Pakistan. About 45% of the population is consisted of less than 16 years of youth, out of 210 million of the total population (PES, 2021) that means, approximately half of the Pakistan population are school going youth. Hence it is critical to guarantee that students’ overall balanced development and well-being are properly addressed. However, it is observed that “state’s vision to promote child welfare is hardly seen through its policies as at the end the welfare of the target group must be assured not doubted” (Abbas et al.,

2020<sup>b</sup>, p. 1424 ), so that teachers may not use the corporal punishment even after the enactment of CP law behind the curtain(ibid).

In order to understand more deeply this phenomenon of using CP and why it hasn't been controlled yet, answer of this question may be excavated through various theoretical perspectives.

#### 4. Theoretical Perspective

As per Skinner's theory about operant punishment, extinction and punishment are the two techniques of mitigating an attitude regarding response and out of the two, extinction is the more potent one. Thorndike, on the contrary, opined that this reward and reinforcement system is more powerful and effective.

According to Vygotsky's, children's cognitive development is integrated with social interactions. Social relationships such as early caregiver attachment, peer participative learning, teacher-children relationship, affect an indirect or direct impact on child learning and inclination to learn (Southwick et al., 2016; Sultan, 2020). Therefore, unfavorable outcomes of the cognitive level are to be expected if teachers persist in punishing their students physically.

Moving forward, Bandura (1973) infers that corporal punishment allows students to absorb aggression through modeling. If the teachers endeavor to alter their students' behavior via infliction of pain, then these students become more susceptible to doing the same to others in case they have to affect the actions of others.

Literature documented various theories of punishment; deterrent theory, retributive theory, preventive theory, and reformatory theory (India Penal Code). Similarly, UNODC<sup>1</sup>(2019) mentioned five main criminal punishments as; retribution; incapacitation; deterrence; rehabilitation and reparation. In the school context, three common theories of corporal punishment may be the suitable presentation of the corporal punishment the Retributive theory, Deterrent theory and Rehabilitation/Reformatory theory.

Deterrent theory is based on Jeremy Bentham's philosophy of utilitarianism, captured in the maxim, "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (Shackleton, 1972; Baujard, 2009 cited in UNODC). The Deterrence Theory of Punishment is based on the principle that if people see others being punished for their crimes and offenses, then this will deter people from committing crimes and consequently a sense of security and safety prevails in the society (Hudson, 2003). This means if the students will punish in front of other students, on the one hand, offenders will refrain from doing so again in future (individual deterrence) and on the other hand, deter the others, potential offenders, from committing the wrong doings.

Similarly, the Retribution theory has its roots in the theories offered by Kant and Hegel (Brooks, 2001). It states that "individuals are rational beings, capable of making informed decisions, and therefore rule breaking is a rational, conscious decision". Therefore, all the wrongdoings/crimes must be punished while severity of the punishment should be as per the gravity of the crime.

However, the Reformatory theory or Rehabilitation theory is considered to be the positive theory which hypothesizes that the criminal behavior or committing a wrongdoing is not the rational choice rather it is due to social pressures, situational and psychological problems. Therefore, the objective of the punishment should be the reformation and positive thinking thus the offender may become the constructive part of the society. In schools, such kind of punishment may involve guidance and counselling, intervention strategies or skills training.

General system theory is yet another theory to understand this perspective. A system is a collection of interconnected, symbiotic, and interacting pieces that form a unified whole. Systems are complex qualities of wholes that can't be broken down into smaller pieces. According to Gladwell (1999), the numerous aspects of the school could include senior employees, instructors, students, and support personnel. Within families, similar groupings might arise. The children might be viewed as a single part, or subsystem, and the mother and father as the other. Within a system, there are several preparations that represent the type of organization, which is also characterized by various kinds of restrictions. Examples of such obstacles include generational, hierarchical, and subsystem obstacles (Simons et al., 1991). General systems theory, on the other hand, emphasizes that a system cannot be dissected into parts in order to understand it, because decontextualized elements do not always behave in the same manner when they are not in interaction with one another. As a result, analyzing a system entail looking at interactions rather than isolated elements, and doing so in context. Schools and families can be thought of as mutually linked social systems. As a result, the behavior of one system component is regarded as influencing and being influenced by the behavior of others.

Hence, keeping in view the various theoretical perspective, the reasons behind this phenomenon can be well understood. Since a teacher once was also a child and then as a student too, may reciprocate the same behavior as a teacher or parent whatever he/she had faced during his childhood at family or in schools. Empirical evidences showed that children exposed to the violence and physical punishments have adverse lifelong impact on their social, emotional development and psychological well-being. Teachers with such personality traits and gruesome attitude when come in the classrooms try to tackle every odd situation with negative reinforcement like corporal punishment. Thus, the vicious cycle of violence and corporal punishment continue to the next generation. Therefore, keeping this paradox in view, globally, an increasing number of nations are enacting legislation that gives legal protection against parental violence to children as a form of correction, and in schools in the form of corporal punishment ban in parallel.

It is an established fact that Corporal punishment profoundly affect students' ability to learn as well as teachers' ability to teach. Evidence suggests that students exposed to corporal punishment are more likely to exhibit negative behaviors and academic deterioration in terms of learning as compared to peers who were not exposed to those practices (Saavedra et al. 2021). Therefore, it is critical to educate school teachers the alternative methods of surveillance and maintain the discipline in the classrooms as narrated by Howbeit, it is debated whether or not punishment is an efficient way to discipline a youngster. Corporal punishment is becoming increasingly clear as an ineffective means of guiding a child's behavior. Children, without a doubt, require discipline in order to acquire healthy and informally satisfactory actions as they produce and grow. They require guidance from caring people in order to comprehend the distinctions between suitable and unsuitable behavior as well as skills for self-control. Adults in charge of children's care, particularly paternities, essential to be able to mold their children's conduct as they grow. Physical punishment, on the other hand, is becoming increasingly obvious as an ineffective long-term technique for influencing children's conduct (Knight et al. 1994; Mason et al. 1996; Steinberg et al. 2006).

The Authoritative parent focuses on disciplinary methods and non-punitive measures, on contrary to the Authoritarian parents who prefer corporal punishment (Abbas et al., 2014; Abbas et al., 2020a; Li, 2022). Discipline uses positive support and relationship while corporal punishment utilizes emotional and physical punishment. The children and adolescents that experience such punishment are more likely to have lower social competence and get lower grades (Lloyd, 2018; Simons & Conger, 2007). Thus, as a matter of ethical concern, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child declared that states must protect all children from all forms of violence, including Corporal punishment at homes as well as in schools.

Learning difficulties and developmental disorders are other difficulties that were almost always misunderstood until recently. To mention a few, a youngster with a learning disability will struggle with comprehension, numeracy, paying attention, and staying organized. Students who showed a lack of attention or cooperation were frequently reprimanded and punished in the past due to a lack of information

on developmental problems and disorders, which had a negative impact on their psychological well-being. Despite the fact that awareness of developmental difficulties is growing, it is still limited to discrete urban enclaves. Many of these unidentified students are nonetheless expected to function at the same level as their usually developing peers. Despite their best efforts, their results and the criticism they receive can lead them to believe they are a failure in life, which can lead to sadness, withdrawal, and suicide, among other bad repercussions (Singh et al., 2015).

## **5. Conclusion**

There are varying opinions regarding the usage of Corporal Punishment by teachers in schools. Some frown upon it while others believe that it is an irrefutable and inexorable component of the whole experience. The ones who support this notion of punitive measures are of the opinion that children will develop unsavory and undesirable traits if they aren't punished. They also believe that this will lead to them growing into citizens that are uncontrollable and unmanageable. Most of the teachers are of the belief that without punishment in the classroom, the children simply won't practice obeisance. They will revolt and violate discipline frequently and that is why such teachers consider corporal punishment necessary (Gershoff, 2002). Many believe that this tendency to engage in corporal punishment by certain teachers can be traced back to their own school days. They are simply reenacting what was done to them in those days. As they were subjected to corporal punishment in their younger days, so too do they practice it on their students. The question of its effectiveness is forgotten in the throes of tradition and conventional pedagogy whereby the cycle of corporal punishment continues.

Another argument is that this corporal punishment is a manifestation of some psychological trauma or domestic duress that influences the teacher. The latter is definitely flustered and stressed and the only means of catharsis available to him is corporal punishment. A teacher who utilizes corporal punishment may view this as a means of venting as well as maintaining discipline amongst students. That is why it is imperative that such teachers be subjected to psychological conditioning and treatment. This will go a long way towards assuaging and controlling such wayward behavior.

In addition, parents must recognize that their child, at this age, requires the greatest amount of freedom and responsibilities, as well as a nice and understanding companion to stay with them without any excessive expectations. Excessive control and obligations, as well as unsupervised freedom particularly parents' authoritative behavior, may jeopardize a child's psychological well-being. Therefore, schools can also serve as one of the most effective forums for raising parental awareness of student concerns and conducting workshops aimed at addressing and equipping parents to better deal with such concerns. It can also help parents and children form positive and loving relationships. Students from problematic backgrounds or abusive relationships can confide in a teacher or counselor after trust is established. Similarly, schools play a crucial role in a person's growth. A good learning environment helps a person's intellectual, personal, and social development. Previously, educational institutions mainly concentrated on increasing a student's academic performance, however, to accelerate overall performance, student's mental health and well-being is crucial. Moreover, the reasonable class size, that is, the students-teacher ratio must be as per prescribed standard (20 to 25 students in a classroom) for conducive learning environment. Stress and aggression become obvious among teachers, when they have to control 50 students in a class. Therefore, the immediate need is to reduce the class size in the schools in order to secure psychological assessment and wellbeing of students. This allows earlier detection of psychological problems. In doing so, students will be able to get immediate guidance and assistance at school and hence the severe situation of corporal punishment can be avoided.

Every person must be engaged in society and community services on a regular basis which will empower society as a whole to promote student well-being is a critical step in addressing the issue of students' declining well-being. The public has to be made aware of the frequency of mental health concerns so that they can keep an eye out for friends and neighbors who may be struggling. People must be trained not to stigmatize young people who are suffering from depression or other forms of mental illness. Instead,

individuals (both teachers and students) can be taught how to cultivate a positive mindset that encourages the use of mental health services. If we truly desire to abolish all kind of corporal punishment in schools, It is pertinent to raise awareness about the importance of student well-being as well as the teachers well being and how to promote it.

In addition, teachers' training institutes should incorporate Moral Education (based on morality, values, peace and other topics) as a component of teachers' training programs' curriculum, in which prospective teachers actively participate in the interaction focused on practicing to identify any maladaptive thoughts that require attention and assistance. Relevant seminars may be included in the curricula to prepare them for the quick and easy identification of individuals who may require assistance.

Last but not least, as previously said, merely formulating a policy is insufficient because the policy is only put into action by executing it. Policy execution is strongly linked to policymakers' seriousness about fixing a certain issue. To maintain social security, a total ban on corporal punishment in schools and households was imposed by legislation in early 80's in various developed countries in response to the perceived link between corporal punishment and domestic violence (UNICEF, 2009). In Pakistan, such step has been taken hardly a decade before, which means teachers are still in the phase of accepting the prohibition of corporal punishment therefore, much efforts are yet to be required to control *behind the curtain* situation based on rehabilitation or Retributive theory.

In nutshell, corporal punishment has been in implementation for ages. However, it needs to be stopped no matter what are the behaviors that students show or act. Research has shown that it has indeed short-term as well as long-term effects on students' mental, physical, and emotional health (Visser et al, 2022). Teachers, heads, and policymakers should focus on the implementation of positive and evidence-based practices such as; antecedent-based techniques, and consequences-based techniques which use reinforcement strategies. Presumably, punishment shows the immediate result on students, hence it has been practiced more, however, teachers should learn to use positive reinforcement instead so that its result may fade quickly and leave irremovable consequences. For this purpose, government and legislative authorities in the education department should make strict compliance of the laws against corporal punishment by making teachers more sensitive towards the gravity of corporal punishment later in the students' lives. Teachers should be trained on regular basis to deal with the odd situations and the students with individual differences by using interventional classroom coping strategies.

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