

## Original Research Article

# Nature and extent of disciplinary practices used by school teachers

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The aim of the study is to analyze the nature, extent and associated factors of disciplinary practices used by school teachers.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional analytic study. Subjects: 165 school teachers. Methods: Teachers completed a structured questionnaire, which included nature and extent of disciplinary methods used and their views on the issue. Statistical analysis was done through Chi square test.

**Results:** 70.9% Teachers felt that physical punishment is needed to discipline school children. 58.2% of teachers indulged in the same though of these 84.2% opinioned that it may be harmful. Methods used were: counselling followed by physical punishment 41.67% , slapping (14.6%), angry shouting (11.5), shaking (9.4), swearing (6.2), and skin pinch (3.1). Common reasons for punishment included: telling a lie (31.3%), not good at studies (28.1%), disobeying (14.6%), tantrums (7.3%) and stealing (3.1%). Teachers disclosed that they learned it from personal experience (55.2%) and schools (29.2%). Stressful events were present in 47.3%. Physical punishment was significantly more in this category (Chi square 3.84, p 0.05). Almost 77% of teachers had received punishment during childhood. The modal age for getting last punishment was 14 years. Significantly greater number of teachers getting punishment during childhood opinioned in favor of punishing children (Chi square 5.769, p 0.016) and were also involved in this activity (Chi square 6.534, p 0.011).

**Conclusions:** Physical punishment of school children by teachers is common. Stress in the family and punishment during childhood were significant risk factors.

**Keywords:** Physical punishment, Schools, Teachers

### INTRODUCTION

Discipline in the schools is important in achieving the objectives of education and helping in global development of children to create a desirable behavior , respect , sincere and efficient discharge of duties to create responsible citizens.

Punishment by giving a painful stimulus to children in schools creates various adverse effects including negative impact on normal development of children , damaging the self-esteem and causing loss of interest in learning . It

also causes mental harassment , lack of self-confidence , school drop outs and personality problems in children.

The convention on rights of children clearly mentions against the use of corporal punishment but physical punishment of school children is widely practised in spite of evidence that it is neither effective, nor necessary and can be harmful.<sup>1</sup> Continuing use of corporal punishment may be related to following factors:

- Widely held belief regarding its effectiveness
- Unawareness about its harmful effects

- Lack of knowledge about effective disciplinary alternatives.<sup>2</sup>

Though most modern schools pretend to have discarded the rod, it is common knowledge that there is more stick than carrot in schools. A Perusal of cases reported in media reveal that schools for enforcing discipline often administer corporal punishment exists practically in all schools. There is lack of documentation of disciplinary practices of school teachers from the region. Therefore, the present study was carried out to analyze the nature , its extent and associated factors of physical punishment of school children.

**METHODS**

In this cross-sectional analytic study 165 school teachers were selected in a simple random manner. They were explained about the purpose and nature of the study and were not required to identify themselves. They were requested to complete a structured questionnaire purely on a voluntary basis. The questionnaire included socio-demographic profile, there views about corporal punishment i.e. need of physical punishment , is it harmful or not ,physical punishment experienced by teachers during their childhood , reasons for using physical punishment , disciplinary methods used by them and source of acquiring these practices. Stressful events in their families were also recorded. The data was tabulated, computed and statistically analyzed by percentage analysis and Chi square test of independence. The impact of stressful events in the family on punishment was assessed.

The impact of punishment experienced by the teachers on their views about use of physical punishment in children and its use was also analyzed.

**RESULTS**

117 (70.9% ) teachers felt that physical punishment is needed to discipline school children ;96 (58.2% ) of teachers used physical punishment. 139 ( 84.2% ) teachers opinioned that it may be harmful. Table 1 depicts the reasons cited for punishment.

Common reasons cited for punishment were: telling a lie 30 (31.3%), not good at studies 27 (28.1%), disobedience 14 (14.6%), tantrums 7 (7.3%), and stealing 3 (3.1%). 15 did not respond.

**Table 1: Reasons cited for punishment.**

Reason	Number	Percentage
Telling a lie	30	31.25
Bad at studies	27	28.12
Disobedience	14	14.58
Tantrums	7	7.29
Stealing	3	3.12
No response	15	15.63

Table 2 shows various disciplinary methods used. Disciplinary methods used were: counselling followed by physical punishment 40(41.67%), slapping (14.6%), angry shouting (11.5%), shaking (9.4%), swearing (6.2%) and skin pinch (3.1%). Teachers disclosed that they acquired these methods from personal experience (55.2%), schools (29.2%), friends 5 ( 5.2 %) and others 3 (3.12%).

**Table 2: Various disciplinary methods used.**

Methods	Number	Percentage
Counselling followed by physical punishment	40	41.67
Angry Shouting	11	6.67
Slapping	14	8.48
Shaking	9	5.45
Swearing	6	3.64
Skin pinch	3	1.81
No response	13	7.88

Stressful events in the family were present in 78 (47.3%). These are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3: Stressful events in the family.**

Stressful Event	Number	Percentage
Financial	36	21.82
Quarrels	16	9.7
Illness	9	5.45
Alcoholism	8	4.85
Frequent shifting	6	3.64
Death	3	1.81

The stressful events reported were: financial (21.82%), quarrels (9.7%), chronic illness (5.45%), alcoholism (4.85%), frequent shifting (3.64%), and death in the family(1.81%) .The impact of stressful events in the family on punishment is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4: Impact of stressful events in the family on punishment.**

Stressful events	Punishment	
	Yes	No
Present	78 (47.3%)	59(75.67%) 19(24.33%)
Absent	87(52.7%)	48 (55.93) 39(44.07)

Chi square 3.84,p=0.05, Significant

It was found that the practice of Physical punishment was significantly more in the category having stressful events.(chi square 3.84,p=0.05).

Almost 77% teachers had received punishment during childhood. The modal age for experiencing last punishment was 14 years. Table 5 shows the impact of punishment experienced by the teachers on their views about use of physical punishment in children. A significantly greater number of teachers who had experienced punishment during childhood opinioned in

favour of physical punishment of children (chi square 5.769,p=0.016 ), and were also indulged in it as shown in Table 6 (chi square 6.534,p=0.011 ).

**Table 5. Impact of punishment experienced by teachers on their views.**

Punishment experienced	In favour of punishment	
	Yes	No
Yes	127(77%)	95 (74.80%)
No	32(23%)	17(53.12%)
		32 (25.19)
		15 (46.88)

Chi square =5.769, p=0.016, Significant

**Table 6. Impact of punishment experienced by teachers on use of physical punishment.**

Punishment experienced	Indulged in physical punishment	
	Yes	No
Yes	127 (77%)	83 (65.35%)
No	32 (23%)	13 (40.63%)
		44 (34.64)
		19 (59.37)

**DISCUSSION**

The present study has demonstrated that physical punishment of school children is very common. Corporal punishment exists practically in all schools. The only way to control it is by creating awareness among teachers, parents and students. Workshops should be organized for teachers, parents and students. Workshops should be organized for teachers to reinforce sensitivity and awareness in handling children. Corporal punishment only instils fear in the child and is not conducive to his growth or education.

According to Realph waldo Emerson punishment is the result of the desire on the part of the teacher to control the child, who will fulfil the teachers or society's expectations of him. The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil. Wait and see the new product of nature. Nature loves analogies but not repetitions. The reasons for punishment lies not within the child but within the adult who tries to mould the child to a restrictive morality, or who suffers from his own personal problems.

Frebel advocated the replacement of physical punishment with more subtle measures. The belief that motivation should be achieved through a loving relationship between teacher and child grew, and that the pupil should be inspired to success through interest in, and love for, learning placed greater emphasis on the need for a more attractive school environment and the need for educational methods to be more sophisticated and effective.

Schools are important settings for child abuse preventive efforts given the amount of time children spend in schools. Teachers can also play a crucial role in the early identification of children at risk for maltreatment.<sup>2</sup> School based programmes are also one of the most widely used

preventive strategies.<sup>4</sup> Educational interventions can be effective. The teachers should be provided training about nonviolent discipline techniques, use of positive reinforcement, anger control and changing life style risk factors.<sup>5</sup>

The physical punishment of children was reported as early as 3 years of age. There is need for an early intervention programme beginning in preschool with a particular emphasis on increasing parental involvement with their children in schools and home.<sup>6</sup> Punishment experienced during childhood was a significant risk factor for physical punishment of children. The modal age for receiving punishment was 14 years. Therefore, another important role of schools can be providing education to adolescents before they leave school as meaning of parenthood.<sup>7</sup> Training in child abuse and neglect needs to be developed further within various disciplines like health, education, social work and legal professions. The most effective approach will address the root causes of maltreatment by addressing issues of poverty, housing, employment, schools, health care and other community systems.<sup>8</sup>

Research on alternatives, naturalistic evidence from schools that eliminated corporal punishment became any worse. A combination of reward positive motivational techniques and appropriate non-physical punishment would prevent most misbehaviour.<sup>9</sup> Grossman DC et al reported that school characteristics associated with the use of corporal punishment included rural location and kindergarten to 8th grade or kindergarten to 12th grade enrolment.<sup>10</sup> Findings of Anderson indicated that in almost 75% of schools considerable amount of flogging or lashing by regular classroom teachers occurred.<sup>11</sup> Another study confirmed that punishment was associated with pupils reports of academic impairment, psychological damage and physical injury.<sup>12</sup> Some undesirable and harmful disciplinary practices including beating, pinching, hitting on head and pricking ears have also been reported.<sup>13</sup>

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