

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON LEARNING IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Schools are meant to be the one of the safest places where students fulfill their educational practices. However many studies show that punishment is adopted worldwide in many schools. Corporal punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child pain, but not injury, for the purpose of learning and correction or control of the child's behavior. In Sri Lanka, According to Circular No. 12 of 2016 -Safeguarding Discipline in Schools, physical punishment in schools has been banned. However Corporal Punishment has been implemented in most of State schools. UNCRC reviewing the 5th and 6th periodic reports from Sri Lanka stated that it is deeply concerned that high numbers of children are subject to abuse and violence including corporal punishment” in this background this study was conducted in Tamil medium Schools of Colombo District in Sri Lanka. 100 Teachers and 200 Students were selected as Sample using Stratify Random Sampling Technique. Data and Information were gathered using Questionnaire, Focus Group interview, observation and Check list. Data were analyzed descriptively method. Findings of the study are; Most of school Teachers and Principals still have been applying corporal Punishment in the school system, Corporal punishment being a matter of concern has multidimensional and obnoxious impacts over the academic performance and socio-psychological well-being of the students, physical punishments do not improve students' academic performance, corporal punishment in schools is an ineffective, dangerous, and unacceptable method of discipline, Remote area Students who affected by corporal punishment frequently withdraw from school activities and disengage academically, no clear evidence that such punishment leads to improved control in the classroom. Corporal punishment constructs an environment of education that can be described as unproductive and punitive.

Keywords: Corporal punishment, Learning, Effects

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporal punishment is defined by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Corporal punishment refers to intentional application of physical pain as a method of behavior change. It includes a wide variety of methods such as hitting, slapping, spanking, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, shoving, choking, use of various objects (i.e., wooden paddles, belts, sticks, pins, or others), painful body postures (such

as placing in closed spaces), use of electric shock, use of excessive exercise drills, or prevention of urine or stool elimination. The majority of children have experienced physical punishment by the time they reach adolescence. Corporal punishment in schools does not refer to the occasional need of a school official to restrain a dangerous student or use physical force as a means of protecting members of the school community subject to imminent danger.

Schools are meant to be the one of the safest places where students fulfill their educational practices. However many studies show that punishment is adopted worldwide in many schools. Corporal punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behavior. Punishment especially corporal punishment has received attention by the international community as a violation of a child's right. Corporal Punishment has been banned also in Sri Lankan schools. However teachers are using corporal punishment still at schools in Sri Lanka. It has been mainly used as a mechanism for controlling disciplinary problems in schools. Most common students' behavior problems include coming to school late, not doing assigned work, disrespecting teachers, skipping classes, stealing, and vandalizing school property (Manguvo et al. 2011). Some of the school teachers and administrators use punishment as a way restoring discipline among the pupils and students.

Some researchers (Straus 2003; Hyman 1990) are against the use of corporal punishment as it is a maltreatment and psychological abuse of the child. They further condemned it pointing out its harmful effect such as somatic complaints, increase anxiety, changes in personality and depression. Gershoff (2002) stated that corporal punishment increases aggression, and lowers the level of moral internalization and mental health. Harsh physical punishments do not improve students' in-school behavior or academic performance. According to Hammarberg (2006) where corporal punishment is frequently used, schools have performed worse academically than those in states that prohibit corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment is one of the hazardous aspects in educational course of an individual/student that is persevering to vacate the roots of personality development and academic career of the subject students. This study describes The Impacts of Corporal Punishment on Students' Academic Achievements. The results show that corporal punishment has multidimensional impacts upon students' academic performance. Advocates of corporal punishment in schools generally contend that it is an effective form of correcting child misbehavior. However, a review of the science in this area notes that the vast majority of the evidence leads to the conclusion that corporal punishment is an ineffective method of discipline and has major deleterious effects on the physical and mental health of those on whom it is inflicted

Children are regarded as the milestone and future of a nation. Without giving proper attention to children; it remains impossible to get the desired and dreamt goals of development as intended development can be obtained through qualified people and quality education. School experience after family has remarkable effects on emotional, personal and social development of children.

It's school or classroom that is considered as a place of learning, socialization, self expression and development for children. At this point teachers seem to have utmost importance to play their role positively in the development of a nation or country by producing quality students and that of quality education. Corporal Punishment, given by the teachers to students in classrooms is one of these threatening factors, which affect students psychologically, socially and in long term their academic career and performance is affected as well. As a matter of concern; long term results of this kind of punishment are to react against or to surrender. Corporal punishment causes students' mental activities to reduce, play truant from school, increase in reacting against to existing social system, loss of self confidence and boldness, creates cramming qualities in students overturn to aggression. Furthermore, after punishment; the students feel humiliation and impinge in inferiority complex that causes less intelligence. Teachers who see corporal punishment as a mean of establishing discipline in classroom management, actually they ignore the destructive effects of corporal punishment, as for a loving, respectful, self-disciplined child, harsh and cruel punishment is not the only resolution. Corporal punishment is harming part of body and inflicting pain to a person because of the offence he has committed. Mostly teachers think that they do well by punishing students. Teachers and even children do not know the consequences of corporal punishment.

2.BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Many countries such as Norway, Denmark, Finland as well as Sri Lanka have banned corporal punishment in schools, considering it as a source of school violence. Most of the child welfare organizations have policies opposing the use of corporal punishment. Many educationists are against corporal punishment because of the affront to the child's dignity. Graziano (1990) stated that if we are legally prohibited from striking other adults, why is it okay to strike a child? Corporal punishment is being used as a means of disciplining action against children and students worldwide but as catalytic action of education, it needs to be planned meticulously and executed with great sensitivity (Pandey,2001). Previous researches pointed out those adults (parents and teachers), who were physically punished in their childhood, are more supportive of corporal punishment than those who were not subjected to physical punishment (Hyman, 1988). However, in contrast, a majority of family physicians and pediatricians argue that corporal punishment does not work to correct negative behavior permanently (Bauman, 1998). One explanation is that after living with violence that is considered legitimate people expand this to accept violence that is not considered legitimate

Corporal punishment can be defined as "The use of physical force intended to cause pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling a child's behavior" (Straus and Donnelly, 2005). The concept is further elaborated by Gershoff (2002) that corporal punishment are; behaviors, which do not result in significant physical injury are considered corporal punishment, whereas behaviors that risk injury are considered physical abuse (Gershoff, 2002). Frequency and severity of corporal punishment are inconsistently defined and measured and these vary from culture to culture, nation to nation and situation to situation. All these harsh disciplinary measures adopted by authoritarian/totalitarian parents and teachers to discipline children lead to

anti-social behavior, contribute to academic failure and social rejection. These conditions further reduce self-esteem and create depressed mood, which in turn add to the likelihood of delinquency in adolescents (Patterson, 1982).

Corporal punishment, if very frequent, may become an on going hardship for children and it has greater potential for producing negative effects (Pearlin 1989). The long-term use of corporal punishment tends to increase the probability of deviant and antisocial behaviors, such as aggression; adolescent delinquency and violent acts inside and outside the school. Inconsistent or overuse of punishment in harsh and unskilled ways can have very undesirable, dangerous and long lasting effects on the children who may develop negative personality traits such as disliking the punishing person, developing strong fears and anxieties, obstacles with learning, learning to escape and avoid people, places and things associated with harsh punishment which stimulates aggression and they imitate the methods of punishment used by their parents and teachers (Mawhinney and Peterson 1986). Punishment is only a method of disciplining and corporal punishment is only one aspect of punishment (Sanderson 2003). Teachers, who use harsh and punitive practices to discipline their children, may succeed in making the child conform to their standards but resentment will be reflected by the child's behavior sooner or later. A frequently punished child will be a problematic person tomorrow because the child being sensitive reacts to the behavior and disciplinary practices of adults either at school or at home (Kaur, 2005). Corporal punishment is physiologically as well as psychologically damaging children's lives. Since it affects child by not only inflicting physical pain but also mental harassment, feeling of helplessness, worthlessness, depression, inhibition, aggression, shame and self-doubt, guilt, social withdrawal, feeling of inferiority, rigidity, lowered self-esteem, stress and heightened anxiety which may reduce his/her self confidence (Pandey 2001). Corporal punishment has been associated with a variety of psychological and behavioral disorders in children and adults, including anxiety, depression, withdrawal, low self-esteem, impulsiveness, delinquency and substance abuse (McCord, 1991). It has been concluded from several literature reviews that corporal punishment is associated with increased aggression in children (Radke-Yarrow, Campbell & Burton, 1968) Adolescents who have experienced corporal punishment show higher levels of depression and feelings of hopelessness as well as an increased propensity to use violence (Durant et al., 1994). Harsh punishment, including corporal punishment, has been associated significantly with adolescent depression and distress (McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994). Children with behavior, anxiety, or disruptive disorders are more likely to report previous harsh physical punishment (Goodman et al., 1998).

Corporal punishment has been discussed and implicated in a variety of studies as a factor, contributing in delinquent behaviors such as theft, truancy, running away and school behavior problems and as a factor in antisocial behaviors such as lying, cheating and bullying. When teachers and parents use corporal punishment as an attempt to reduce antisocial behaviors in their child, the long-term effect tends to be a further increase in antisocial behaviors (Straus & Sugarman, 1997). The best predictor of adult aggression is childhood aggression as longitudinal studies show that, by the time a child is six years old, if patterns of aggressive behavior have been established, they usually persist into adulthood (Huesmann Kaur, 2005) Another longitudinal study found physical punishment during childhood to be significantly more

prevalent among drug addicts. There is a lack of theoretical works to help identify the processes by which corporal punishment may affect mental health, but coercive discipline techniques have been associated with decreased confidence and assertiveness in children and increased feelings of humiliation and helplessness.

Effect of Corporal Punishment on Academic Achievement

Corporal punishment adversely affects academic performance of students. Hyman et. al. persistently assert that approximately one-half of students who are subjected to severe punishment develop an illness called Educationally Induced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (EIPSD). In this disorder, there is symptomatology analogous to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As with PTSD, EIPSD can be identified by a varying combination of symptoms characteristic of depression and anxiety. Lowered school achievement, antisocial behavior, intense dislike of authority, somatic complaints, tendency for school avoidance, school drop-out, and other evidence of negative high-risk adolescent behavior. This does not predict nor encourage academic success in our school milieu. This mental health imbalance is induced by significant stress; with EIPSD the stress is the inflicted punishment. Such victimized students can have difficulty sleeping, fatigue, feelings of sadness and worthlessness, suicidal thoughts, anxiety. Episodes, increased anger with feelings of resentment and outbursts of aggression, deteriorating peer relationships, difficulty with concentration. This work is consistent with other research concluding that punished children become more rebellious and are more likely to demonstrate vindictive behavior, seeking retribution against school officials and others in society. Punishment is based on aversive techniques and produces very limited results. A student may cease acting out in one class only to continue in others. Such a child or adolescent learns the wrong message, one of avoidance or escape from getting caught or negative ways of eluding detection for wrong doing. This student very likely will learn techniques that actually lead to reduced self-control, with negative behavior characterized by more acting out, school absence, malingering, recidivism, and overt academic revocation. Some research notes that the more corporal punishment is used in schools, the higher is the rate of student violence and homicide.

Research notes that corporal punishment constructs an environment of education that can be described as unproductive, nullifying, and punitive. Children become victims, and trepidation is introduced to all in such a classroom. There is a limited sense of confidence and security; even those children who witness this type of abuse are robbed of their full learning potential. Students who are witnesses or victims of such abuse can develop low self-esteem, magnified guilt feelings, and various anxiety symptoms; such results can have baneful results in the psychosocial and educational development of these students. However, the use of corporal punishment is associated with increased mental health problems in children including increased psychological distress, which may lead to anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug use, and general psychological maladjustment in those to whom it is applied. Also, in addition to personal distress, it may lead to vicarious learning of maladaptive methods of problem resolution by those students who witness it. The use of corporal punishment sanctions the notion that it is meritorious to be violent toward children, thereby devaluing them in society's eyes. It encourages children to resort to violence because they see their authority figures using it. Such practices harm children in

teaching them that violence is acceptable, especially against the weak, the defenseless, and the subordinate; this is a message that can be reasonably assumed will negatively affect generations yet unborn.

Sri Lanka's Experience

Based on the negative impacts on children and their future from child cruelty globally, 131 countries including Sri Lanka have taken measures against corporal punishment in schools. According to Circular No. 12 of 2016 -Safeguarding Discipline in Schools, physical punishment in schools has been banned. Also National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) takes tough action on corporal punishment in all schools. UNCRC reviewing the 5th and 6th periodic reports from Sri Lanka stated that it is deeply concerned that high numbers of children are subject to abuse and violence including corporal punishment” and issued a red alert urging the country to take action against it. Sri Lanka has many mechanisms to stop corporal punishment. While there the law makes it a punishable offence, the Education Ministry had issued circulars prohibiting corporal punishment in schools. It was nearly three decades ago, in 1991 that Sri Lanka ratified the UNCRC, which shelters children against all forms of harm. However, in Sri Lanka the problem still goes on unabated. Last year the National Child Protection Authority recorded 2144 cases of physical and psychological cruelty towards children.

A National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights 2011-2016 (NAPHR), has been approved by the Cabinet and its implementation strategy was approved in 2011. NAPHR 2011-2016 Goal No. 7.5 is the elimination of corporal punishment in schools. The activities envisaged are as follows:

- Implement effectively existing legislation/policy /circulars prohibiting corporal punishment and establish a reporting procedure so that instances of corporal punishment can be reported effectively.
- Enact and enforce legislation to prohibit corporal punishment in schools and educational institutions.
- Create awareness among parents, teachers and principals on the law and on alternate forms of discipline consistent with the dignity of the child.
- Establish a grievance mechanism to report corporal punishment.

Sri Lanka has many mechanisms to stop corporal punishment. However, in Sri Lanka the problem still goes on unabated. Most of school Teachers and Principals still have been applying corporal Punishment in the school system. In 2017 National Child Protection Authority recorded 2144 cases of physical and psychological cruelty towards children. Corporal punishment being a matter of concern has multidimensional and obnoxious impacts over the academic performance and socio-psychological well-being of the students. Harsh physical punishments do not improve students' academic performance. Corporal punishment in schools is an ineffective, dangerous, and unacceptable method of discipline. It is based on aversive techniques and produces very limited and temporally outcomes. Most of the students who are subjected to severe punishment develop an illness called Educationally Induced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (EIPSD). Children who have been subjected to hitting, paddling or other harsh disciplinary practices have reported subsequent problems with depression, fear and anger. Remote area Students who

affected by corporal punishment frequently withdraw from school activities and disengage academically. Most of victimized students can have difficulty sleeping, fatigue, feelings of sadness and worthlessness, anti social behaviors suicidal thoughts, anxiety episodes, increased anger with feelings of resentment and outbursts of aggression, deteriorating peer relationships, difficulty with concentration, lowered school achievement. Students who affected very likely will learn techniques that actually lead to reduced self-control, with negative behavior characterized by more acting out, school absence, malingering, recidivism, and overt academic revocation. The use of corporal punishment is associated with increased mental health problems in children including increased psychological distress, which may lead to anxiety, depression, alcohol and drug use. In Sri Lanka's Experience, no clear evidence that such punishment leads to improved control in the classroom. Corporal punishment constructs an environment of education that can be described as unproductive and punitive. Children become victims, and trepidation is introduced to all in such a classroom. There is a limited sense of confidence and security.

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