

Relationship between Corporal Punishment on Academic Performance and Wellbeing of School Students: A study of Gojal, Hunza, Pakistan

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Abstract

The current study was designed to assess the association between corporal punishment, students' academic performance and wellbeing. A cross sectional survey was completed by 110 consecutive students from grade 9th and 10th who agreed to participate in the current study. The students were selected from one private and two public schools located in Gojal village in Hunza valley located in Gilgit Baltistan region of Pakistan using responsive driven sampling technique. The findings of the study showed a significant positive association between corporal punishment and academic performance. However, the association was significantly negative between corporal punishment and psychological wellbeing. Further analysis indicated a significant gender differences in corporal punishment where males perceived to have faced more punishment as compared to females. On the basis of these findings, it may be concluded that students who are given corporal punishment are at risk of developing mental health issues. These findings may be relevant to mental health practitioners and school counselors to modify existing impractical policies related to corporal punishment.

Key words: Corporal Punishment, Student, Academic performance

I. INTRODUCTION:

Corporal punishment generally defined as "the infliction of pain", refers to intentionally causing physical pain to someone as a result of any undesirable behavior. It is mostly used by parents or by teachers in schools intended to control or appropriate a child's behavior. In educational settings, it is the teacher or other staff members who use it upon the body of a student as a penalty for doing something which has been disapproved by the punisher" (Dlamini, Dlamini, & Bhebhe, 2017). Mostly it is imposed through slapping, spanking, kicking and canning. Corporal punishment effects students in their personal development, infusing low self-esteem, lack of confidence, stubbornness, depression etc. A study showed that there is a link between corporal punishments, lack of interest in studies and low self-esteem along with fear and anxiety (Naz, Khan, Daraz, Hussain, & Khan, 2011).

Many nations have imposed ban on the utilization of corporal punishment but there are still many countries who have legalized or partially legalized the use of physical punishment against children which leads a huge number of children to be subjected to some form of punishment every day (Gershoff E. T.,

2017). In Pakistan one of the most common ways of disciplining children is corporal punishment. Recently, Islamabad high court (IHC) has imposed ban on corporal punishment used as means for discipline by teachers, parents and guardians. Despite IHC ruling, the issue is still prevalent in the country. Possibly, in this case, the utilization of corporal punishment is widely accepted as a practice by parents and society in general for instilling proper manners in children (Bartman, 2002). People are generally unaware of the dreadful consequences it leaves on a child. There have been efforts to end violence against women but violence against children has not received the same priority as it is accepted as a cultural norm to use physical force for discipline in this part of the world. The available literature revealed that the use of physical force effects the academic progress of the schoolchildren and results in students' dropout and behavioral problems. (Dlamini, Dlamini, & Bhebhe, 2017). A significant, negative correlation was found between school corporal punishment and students' willingness towards learning; and strong, adverse correlation was found between corporal punishment and students' motivation towards education (Ahmad, Said, & Khan, 2013). It is considered a threat to healthy personality development of students in their academic life. It affects student academic achievement, making them lose interest in their work (Adesope, Olusegun, Ogunwuiy, Olorode, & Adelayo, 2017). Corporal punishment occurs when different elements such as social, cultural, and educational factors come together (Khuwaja, et al., 2018). It was revealed that school dropouts are mostly due to corporal punishment. Similar, an adverse relationship between corporal punishment and students' self-confidence was found. It was also revealed that boys are at a higher risk of being punished in comparison to girls (Rafique & Ahmed, 2019).

Corporal punishment hampers children "emotional strength, increases aggressive behavior, poor cognitive development, mental illnesses specifically anxiety and depression, lack of ambition, hampers creativity and attentiveness, and cripples the person's ability to socialize or interact", leading to "impoverished academics" that results in school "dropouts (Munir & Hussain, 2019) (Addison, 2015). When a child is exposed to any kind of physical punishment, it generates many serious problems which may have long term effects such as emotional and behavioral adjustment. It may result in savagery, aggressive behavior, and poor mental health (Aucoin, Frick, & Bodin, 2006). Many educational institutions use corporal punishment to curb indiscipline and maintain students' behavior (Danish & Iqbal, 2016). Middle school students are mostly subjected to punishment compared to primary and secondary level students. Most instructors use physical force to punish the child but some teachers also use verbal abuse and emotionally torment the child which has a more unpredictable consequence (Misbah, Dahar, & Tahira, 2016). Various studies are evident that by punishing a child we can't control their deviant behavior, rather it makes them worse than before (Chikwature, Oyedele, & I, 2016). Dropout rates in schools increased, as student left school to save themselves from punishment and would miss the lectures which leads to failure in studies. A study by Uzair and his colleagues (Uzair-ul-Hassan, Farooq, & Akhtar, 2017) showed that teacher-student relationship plays an important part in influencing the students learning and their behavior. The government has taken steps to prohibit the utilization of corporal punishment in schools and to create a beneficial and friendly learning environment in schools. Teachers are encouraged to deal with students kindly and by adapting slogans "*Maar Nahi Pyaar*" ("Love Not hit") rather than using cruelty to scare them. Nature of relationship between teacher and the child does impact the children's educational performance and behavioral issues in every phase of initial school years (Maldonado-Carreno & Votruba-Drzal, 2011).

Corporal punishment still exists in many forms in schools and as well as homes. When a child is punished it serves to educate the children that violence is acceptable and they are encouraged to do the same when they grow up. It leads to serious physical injuries and poor mental health (Rowland, Gerry, & Stanton, 2017). Due to societal acceptance of corporal punishment children suffer from violence on a daily basis in the hands of adult. Studies have shown that childhood punishment can lead to adult violent behavior, those who experience higher physical punishment are more likely to become cruel later in life. Those who are subjected to physical punishment also have been found to suffer from behavioral problems, relationship problems, anti-social behavior, mental health problems, and social adjustment issues (Owen, 2005).

A recent study on private schools revealed that boys face more corporal punishment than girls. Youth reported anxiety and depression when confronted with corporal punishment in school and the relationship was more significant for those who reported family tension. The sample also reported lower level of resilience than others (Deb, Kumar, Holden, & Rowe, 2017).

In schools corporal punishment is often used to enforce discipline and for maintaining good behavior. In Pakistan the practice of corporal punishment is very usual, although laws for preventing violence against children are in place but our educational institutions don't follow them accordingly which leads to punishing students to maintain discipline and good behavior. In 2019, a case surfaced in Lahore, Pakistan in which a teenage student was brutally beaten to death by a teacher for not memorizing his lesson (Riaz, 2019). This study intends to highlight the consequences of corporal punishment on students. It is believed that corporal punishment causes students' school dropout, low confidence and poor mental health.

Research Objective

- To measure the relationship between corporal punishment and academic performance of school students
- To assess the relationship between corporal punishment on students' academic performance and well-being
- To explore gender difference in corporal punishment and academic performance and Psychological well-being

II. METHOD & PROCEDURES:

The study employed a cross sectional survey as a method for data collection. A self-structured questionnaire was developed to explore types of corporal punishment practiced in the schools in District Gojal, Hunza. Moreover, General Health Questionnaire (GHQ 12) was used to measure wellbeing of the participants. Academic performance was measured by the self-reported overall score obtained in the most recent exams. The GHQ 12 (English Version) consisted of 3 subscales including anxiety and depression, loss of confidence and social dysfunction. The 12 item general health questionnaire was preferred due to its high reliability and validity in Pakistani setting of clinical population.

The sample of 110 9th and 10th grades students age ranged between 15 – 18 years was approached from two public and one private schools in Gojal, Hunza located in Gilgit-Baltistan. Gojal borders with China and Afghanistan and geographically it is the largest subdivision of Gilgit-Baltistan. Informed consent was taken from all the participants, and it took 15-20 minutes to fill the protocol. This study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Fatima Jinnah Women University. It adhered to all ethical standards of American Psychological Association.

III. RESULTS

Table 1. Frequency of demographics in terms of age, gender, class and school of the respondents (N=110)

Characteristics	Category	<i>f</i>	%
Age	15 –16 Years	64	58.2
	17 – 18 years	46	41.8
Gender	Male	53	48.2
	Female	57	51.8
Class	9 th	68	62.0
	10 th	42	38.2
School	Private	59	53.6
	Public	51	46.4

The above table shows the demographic profile of the participants. Majority of the participants belong to the age range of 15 – 16 years i.e. 58.2% while 41.8% of the participants belonged to the age group 17 -18 years. In the data of 110 participants 48.2% of the participants were female whereas 51.8% were males. The data also shows that 62.0% of the respondents were in class 9th, whereas 38.2% were in class 8th.

Data showed that majority of the respondents were from a private school i.e. 53.6% and 46.4% were from public school.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of score obtained in the final term exam of the respondents (N = 110)

Score	<i>f</i>	%
Below 40%	11	10.0
41% - 59%	42	38.2
60% - 79%	45	40.9
80% - 100%	12	10.9
Total	110	100.0

The above table shows the score obtained by the respondents in their final term exam. It is shown that 10.0% of the respondents score below 40%, 38.2% score between 41% - 59%, while majority of the respondents i.e. 40.9% scored between 60% - 79% and 10.9% scored between 80% - 100%.

Table 3. Relationship between types of corporal punishment, academic performance and wellbeing (N = 110)

Variable	n	M	SD	1	2	3
Corporal punishment	110	7.93	2.22	-		
Psychological well-being	110	10.92	2.46	-.20*	-	
Academic performance	110	2.53	0.82	-.07	-.07	-

Note: r= correlation; **Correlation is significant at $p < 0.01$; *Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$.

Co-relational analysis for the given sample was carried out to assess the association between corporal punishment, psychological well-being, and academic performance. Pearson correlation was employed for all variables, since the data was normally distributed. Correlation of +1 signifies perfect positive correlation and -1 signifies perfect negative correlation.

Results of co-relational analysis revealed that corporal punishment was significantly negatively associated with psychological well-being ($r(110) = -.20, p < 0.05$). Moreover, corporal punishment ($r(110) = -.07, p > 0.05$) and psychological well-being ($r(110) = -.07, p > 0.05$) were not significantly correlated with academic performance.

Table 4. Mean, standard deviation and t test on gender difference (N = 110)

Variables	Female n =53		Male n =57		t	p	95% C.I		Cohen's D
	M	SD	M	SD			L.L	U.L	
Corporal Punishment	6.38	2.48	7.72	1.73	-3.27	.002	-2.16	-0.53	0.63
Psychological well-being	10.94	2.76	10.89	2.18	0.10	.918	-0.87	0.98	0.02
Academic performance	2.62	0.95	2.44	0.68	1.16	0.25	-0.13	0.50	0.22

Independent sample t-test was employed to assess the gender differences among corporal punishment, psychological well-being and academic performance. The results of the analysis revealed significant

differences in corporal punishment between female ($M=6.38$, $SD=2.48$) and male students ($M=7.72$, $SD=1.73$). The t-value, $t(92.1) = -3.27$, $p < 0.05$ demonstrated that on average male students received more corporal punishments as compared to female students. It also represented a large-sized effect of $r=0.63$.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study was designed to investigate the relationship of corporal punishment, academic performance and wellbeing of school children. Findings of the study show that there is a significant positive correlation between corporal punishment and academic performance ($r = .187$, $p < .05$). Different studies have discussed the impact that corporal punishment has on a student's performance, and each of these studies have come up with different findings some have suggested that corporal punishment has negative impacts on students' academic performance while others are of the view that corporal punishment has a positive or no effect on students' academic performance. Any means of effective discipline is needed in schools in order to make students follow the rules and regulation of a school and to remove troublesome behavior of students' school needs to implement effective discipline which also leads to improving students' academic performance (Stanley, 2014). Previous studies have also shown that punishing a child is a contributing factor in worsening the child's mental health and self-esteem. Different studies have proved that when a person is subjected to punishment during their childhood there is an increased risk of developing different mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety which can also lead to emotional and behavioral problems (Temple, et al., 2018).

Results also revealed that there is significant, negative correlation between the corporal punishment and psychosocial wellbeing. Whereas there was insignificant negative correlation between academic performance, social dysfunction and loss of confidence ($p > .05$). The type and severity of punishment can also affect a child's performance and their mental health. When a person is subjected to punishment it causes physical as well as mental or psychological harm. Sometimes the children may feel a sense of worthlessness and embarrassment which eventually leads to depression and other related disorders. Corporal punishment causes concentration problems and fear in the students that what happened to their fellows might happen to them as well and because of that fear they bunk their class or skip school.

Independent sample t test findings revealed a significant difference between boys and girls. It showed that girls are more subjected to corporal punishment than boys. Either male or female, they do experience some kind punishment in schools. The fact that girls receive more punishment than boys can be because of high expectations from females to be good at everything. Different studies have discussed that there can be gender differences between male and female in receiving punishment. Some studies have suggested that boys receive more punishment in schools than girls and there are studies as well which have found vice versa. Girls are more likely to receive more verbal punishment and boys are more likely to receive more physical punishment (Abdul, 2012). However, a study conducted in Ghana revealed that girls were highly subjected to corporal punishment than boys (Addison, 2015). It is evident that children at any age can experience punishment or violence at the hands of school authority. A study conducted by Misbah et al (2016) supports the finding of current study. They found that middle school students suffer more corporal punishment than primary and secondary school students.

Over all findings of the study indicate that there is a strong, positive association of corporal punishment and academic performance. Whereas it has a negative impact on the wellbeing of the students. Those students who are subjected to corporal punishment may suffer from symptoms of depression, anxiety, social dysfunction and loss of confidence. Many studies have shown similar patterns and found that corporal punishment leads to poor mental health, aggression, behavioral and emotional problems (Lenta, 2020).

V. CONCLUSION

It is concluded that use of corporal punishment, either physical or verbal, does affect the academic performance and wellbeing of children. The exercise of corporal punishment improves the academic performance of the students, resulting in good grades. However the study revealed that punishing a child can have a negative impact on the child's wellbeing. Punishing a child leads to decreased mental health, increasing the risk of anxiety and depression, social dysfunction. This is an important issue because if not

intervened in time, it leads to behavioral problems, antisocial trends, loss of confidence, low self-esteem. It is evident that corporal punishment can do more damage than benefit, it worsens the child's mental health.

Limitations:

Due to Covid-19 pandemic the study was not conducted the way it was planned. It was planned that data will be collected by visiting schools in person but due to the pandemic, the educational institutions were closed and data was collected by visiting homes. The data collection took much time than intended. The sample size had to be reduced due to time and situational limitations.

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