

Conceptual Article

Should Physical Punishment Be Abolished At Elementary Schools?

A Discussion

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Abstract

In recent years education has become widespread for mass. But in inverse association between educational level and agreement on physical punishment suggest that attitudes to this form of child disciplining are changing. Various issues regarding physical punishment in schools are coming out in Medias frequently. Physical punishment has a long history. For thousands of years the rod or its substitute was the emblem of the teacher. Yet today few educational leaders and parents support its use but reluctantly. Now a general acceptance is that physical punishment for failure or indiscipline is unacceptable due to psychological and ethical points. Its use in schools declining rapidly due to un- acceptance of public, increased litigation against school and teachers, more party politics in schools and legislative bans.

Keywords: *Physical Punishment, Child Discipline, Educational Attitudes, School Discipline, Corporal Punishment, Psychological Impact, Ethical Issues, Educational Policy, Student Rights, Classroom Management*

Punishment

The word 'punishment' literally means torture that a person undergo on account of doing a wrong, which may be analysed from religious, educational and social point of view. The religious point of view is that God, being the ruler of this world punishes those who break his laws.

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Social point of view is that those who are breaking the happiness of the society are being punished by the social court of law by which the tranquillity of the society is being preserved. It is believed that, a man always acts according to his best rational judgment. If he makes a wrong by default he is to correct it by undergoing a self-imposed punishment or some times by the jurist. Here, one beautiful example is; Goddess Sita who violates the rule by crossed the Laxmanrekha and punished by the Ravan as well as by her husband. It signifies that if Goddess can be punished for her wrong did, why not the human being? Some body can argue that it is mythology but it is a moral. From educational point of view is that, guilty should be punished who is not reached at their potential. It is suggested that, punishment should be in liberal way which can help to prevent the unaccepted activities, where punishment must be accepted by the wrong-doer and that must help him to realize his wrong did.

But in some instances it has been seen that, punishment may frighten the individual, may lead some permanent injury. When other children see punishment, they are inspired to follow narrow path of success and not dare to take any risk by which they are lacking in their real progress. Further it is true that, excessive punishments impair the child in many ways and create feeling of hatred and revenge against the teacher or on himself which has no value. It is clear that punishment is a temporary measure of preventing misconduct. But, in many cases it has been seen that, individual continuously misbehaves in spite of sympathetic advice, love and affection. In this case we can say, sometime punishment is required to prevent misbehaviour. Punishment can be only effective when teacher and students have positive relationship and can be given at the beginning of the misbehaviour in a sympathetic manner with full of understanding, because strong action against the misbehaviour at beginning is more effective, which may not allow them to repeat the same and get confidence over their misconduct. Punishment, which gives pain and suffering to the individual is because to shape the behaviour, or change the behaviour or to stop the unapproved behaviour. A man always tries to do his best for rational judgments. But it is saying that 'man is to err'. Therefore, they may do mistakes at different time and stages but some mistakes are doing knowingly or purposefully, for which he should get punishment.

In elementary schools of our country, where teaching and learning are the prime job both to the teacher and students, which depend on psychological state of both students and teachers, how could we think about punishment which is the negative re-enforcement, and is a

chance to develop negative behaviour at the child such as revengeful mood, fear, lack of courage etc. Hence, the question is coming why there is punishment in the elementary school? The answer to this question is that, teaching meant making the child to understand, memorize and reflect over the facts. To do so, he has to seat quietly on their seat until called upon by the teacher to perform. If any short comings are found out, immediate the teacher is reacting and without taking any alternative they are giving punishment. It is because of many causes, such as heavy work load. Besides the teaching duties, the teachers are expected to perform variety of duties both at outside and inside of the schools, such as prepare census report, organize health awareness programme, prepare mid-day meal, organize Parent Teacher Association, community work, total literacy programme and so and sci. Therefore, now a day teaching is not the primary job to the elementary school teacher. Besides these, they have family responsibility and other some personal works. In many cases it has seen that they have to do work for local political leaders and higher authorities, other wise there are chances to face different crisis. They have lack of patience during the time of tax (educational) collection; they do not want to follow more repetition, prompt, giving more chance to children. It is because to get less time to finish the course, lack of adequate physical facilities as children enjoying in the private schools and other problems which lead maladjustment, lack of mental health among elementary school teachers. So, they are punishing severely or slightly like, caning or showing red eyes, sometimes they are asking students to stand on his seat or a corner, forcing him to run around a field, pulling the ears, beating with a stick, slapping, pinching, punching or given severe thrashing in the presence of entire class or school, whipping against the wall, shaking, shoving, yanking, kicking, hitting objects, spanking so and so forth, because only to control the entire academic environment of the class room and the school. It is obvious that, behind the punishment there is nonsuch personal or negative aim of the teacher. With a mission, teacher develop their aspiration that to prepare good and brilliant children by which children will put them at proper places, parents will get satisfaction, teacher will get recognition and a name. Therefore, every teacher gives some form of punishment to the students for their misconduct or not to finish their educational task. But, further it has seen that many teachers are not using that instrument very judiciously for being effective which should be.

We can also see the negative side of not to give physical punishment that, if there is lack of physical punishment to the students those who are continuously doing wrong things or

misbehaving, thinking that the teacher is either fool or incapable of administering physical punishment. In such cases they become more unmanageable and develop confidence that nothing will happen to him even whatever he will do. Therefore, in that case adequate physical punishment is desirable. But the success of physical-punishment depends on teacher's intelligence and his psychological insight.

Research studies on physical punishment

Punishment is the pain and suffering caused to students with a view to improving administration and curing ills. It is two types - physical & mental. Physical punishment is given through the medium of causing pain to the body. This pain maybe mild or severe.

Now the research evidences are available and permitted us to move beyond the debate about whether physical punishment is harmful to children by which we are going for abolition or is even effective as discipline which we can practice. In present day it has been banned officially but not in practice, mainly at the elementary schools of rural areas. It is very much visible scenery that, if a student do not come to school, three or four boys are sent to bring him to school and they do so by dragging or beating him either mentally or physically. When he finally arrives he is then looked upon by the teacher who literally makes a pulp out of him. He is then forced to stand in the corner in a bent position or stand in single leg for a longer time. Further it has been seen that, some schools are teaching the students about punctuality with thick rod or cane. Usually headmaster takes a position at the gate & punishes those who arrive late. After this few students dare to be late again. These things are common in our rural country. Therefore, it can be said that how the teachers are using this instrument for suppressing the child's growth and development in the name of discipline.

Some other studies have found out that, few parents believe physical punishment is effective but most believe it is unnecessary and harmful and majority think the most common outcome is parental guilt or regret. There is strong evidence that physical punishment places children at risk for physical injury, poorer mental health, and impaired relationships with parents, and weaker internalization of moral values, antisocial behaviour, poorer adult adjustment, and tolerance of violence on children. Parents are more likely to use physical punishment if they approve of it, experienced it themselves as children, feel anger in response

to their children's behaviour. Research findings on the association between physical punishment and immediate positive results are unclear. But, it improves their problem-solving skills. On the other side there are clear and compelling evidence that the physical punishment of children plays no useful role in their upbringing and poses only risks to their development. Parents should be strongly encouraged to develop alternative and positive approaches for discipline. Many researches have proved that physical punishment might be more likely to have positive effects on children when there are parents-child relationships because it is so common that children do not reject parent's physical punishment. Another study conducted by Holden, Thompson, Zambarano & Marshall in 1997 and Found out that 2/3rds of the mothers interviewed, reported that physical punishment is not good because their child's, negative reaction to physical punishment. 1/ 3rd mothers who in favour of physical punishment also cited child-based reasons, typically their Child's oppositional behaviour which they want to change. Haffman and Lepper in 1983 told that punishments cannot alone constitute discipline, nor can be expected long time moral internalization.

Although physical punishment is not uncommon, several studies suggest that many parents do not think that it is constructive. Only small number of parents believed that physical punishment is the most effective way to change children's behaviour, while more parents believe that physical punishment is harmful to children and unnecessary. Several factors increase the risk of use of physical punishment whereas the more of these risk factors present in the parent's life. The more anger a parent feels in response to conflict with a child, the more likely it is that physical punishment will occur. Parents who were themselves physically punished in childhood or adolescence is more likely to respond to their own children's behaviour. Parental belief systems are that parents who interpret child misbehaviour as intentional and serious as defiance are more likely to use physical punishment. Childhood experience of physical punishment is related to negative outcomes long into adulthood. Since decreased levels of moral internalization and increased levies of aggression are among these outcomes. It is not surprising that physical punishment in childhood has been linked to the development of adult antisocial behaviour. Physical punishment was consistently associated with higher levels of adult aggression, criminal and antisocial behaviour but at the same time we can see that physical punishment is a reliable method of increasing obedience, learning, or respect for the parent. A typical situation resulting in physical punishment begins with parents

whose sense of control is threatened by a child's behaviour. For example, when a child exhibits a desire for independence a parent may think that the behaviour is unacceptable and is an intentional challenge to parental authority, then the parent becomes angry. If this parent experienced physical punishment as a child, or believes that it is an appropriate means of gaining control, or feels to maintain authority, then physical punishment is a likely to outcome. On the other hand, a parent with knowledge of child development who has appropriate expectations for a child's behaviour is likely to interpret a drive for independence. This parent is less likely to become angry in response to the child's behaviour and is, likely to use less physical punishment. Rather, this parent will guide the child to understand how to behave in different situations. Therefore, when physical punishment is most likely to be used must be decided properly. We can say physical punishment has its own merits & demerits but as a teacher or care giver we may use it as civilized way if required so.

According to Bentham 'all punishment is mischief; all punishment in itself is an evil. Some other philosopher said, 'Physical punishment is quantitatively equal to the crime. Although many educationists and parents are expressed anguish about such kind of practice, but some are in favour of it because they may think that, with the lack of physical punishment the family and social values at their children are decreasing day by day. But, in other side physical punishment is creating anxiety and fear in the child's mind which negatively impact on child's creativity, thinking, social fitness etc.

Now days some parents even they went to court against the teacher those who give the physical punishment to their students, which may not be a good practice. With certain personal inspiration and aspiration, the teacher might have given physical punishment, but if that will go to the court then what will happen to the teachers self-inspiration and mental health towards his teaching activity which is very much required to the child's' academic growth? Therefore, relating to this question the paper writer organized one group discussion where participants were all from Post Graduate classes as well as their teachers. At their majority of the participants were agreed that the court should not interfere in the school's teaching-learning matter and its discipline, teacher may use physical punishment if required but with a positive understanding and in a civilized way. All so it has been asked to all the participants that, would you think that school should seek parents' permission for physical punishment. Many

participants with many views, which were not helped to draw out any suitable conclusion and all those are discussed below.

Participants Attitude and Views towards physical punishment

Physical punishment is primarily used by teachers out of frustration and despair as opposed to educational values. During discussion maximum teachers and students strongly suggested that physical punishment should be in school and if it is not in the school it should be reintroduced but in an understanding way. They responded that without punishment classes are less manageable, teachers stress increasing, teachers feel helpless and they are not getting any effective alternative by which they can reduce all those problems. This physical punishment is giving them a sense of authority with which they are managing to reduce poor behaviour of pupils, poor academic results and maintain discipline. They also suggested that if any alternative/sis/are there it must be introduced and must include in in-service and pre-service teacher training course which is not now in the syllabus. Only a few teachers suggested that teachers should be more sympathetic, be creative in their problem solving and must do hard work to reduce the use of physical punishment. If required they may use verbal punishment rather than physical punishment. Participants also suggested that positive discipline strategies may be adopted which is more constructive and help the students not to be demoralized, helps to built self-esteem, develop insight and social skills but to maintain that one is very difficult. Majority participants were against of the above views and suggested that to control the huge/over-crowded classroom teacher has to use physical punishment. They viewed that it is not possible to adopt positive discipline strategies in our country schools where every things are shortfall. They argued that it is not possible to formulate positive discipline policy for each school. Hence, they believe that physical punishment may help to improve in productivity and pupil behaviour. They also believe that it is difficult to ignore the fact that issues of discipline are associated with power and control and are directly linked to tensions within the classroom. Always the authority of the teacher is put to test in the classroom situation. Teacher who supports physical punishment is dominant over the classroom discipline. They argued that it develops character and morality within the pupils. Without that teaching is more stressful in the classroom, because of feelings of anger and powerlessness and develops conflicts in teachers mind. Teacher may stay absent from school or present with a variety of stress related illness which may result in de-motivation and dissatisfaction within the working environment.

Hence, with research analysis and group discussion It may be conclude that, teacher working in school systems could use admirable corporal punishment without excessive force, whereas majority views were that, always teacher should try to avoid that if possible. Teacher should not behave in cruelty like charged the students, throwing chalk or duster, pulling him upright by his hair or ears which are the criminal assaults. Creating safe and secure learning environments in schools teacher should decide a suitable way which must be accepted by all (parents, pupils and community). For creating safe learning environment physical punishment should not be considered as the only way and mean. It may be very difficult to change teachers' attitude with their old practice. But all must join together to establish standards and limits within the schools for appropriate behaviour of pupils. Public awareness strategies must be developed to inform all parents about the risks associated with involvement of court on physical punishment in schools. National and state government should share responsibility for shaping of policy and provision for universal teacher education on physical education. Professionals should help teachers, parents and caregivers to understand the risks and benefit of physical punishment for socializing children. Hence, it is expected that, with the shift in thinking and practice a healthy and fertile environment may be developed to build educational components to meet the academic, emotional and behavioural needs of pupils by implementing comprehensive interventions, which may provide all pupils with opportunities to grow and learn.

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