

Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Against Children in Schools: Teachers' Perceptions and Educational Implications in Tehsil Mandi Bahauddin, Pakistan

Muhammad Aqib Mehmood ^{1*} Anam Talib ² Muhammad Dawood Ashraf ³ Ch Chand Fatima Warraich ⁴ Zaid Ahmed ⁴

¹ BS Criminology, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: aqibbaloch1039@gmail.com

² MSc Criminology, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: anamtalib824@gmail.com

³ BS Criminology, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: awand3067@gmail.com

⁴ BS Criminology, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: chaandfatimaedu@gmail.com

⁵ BS Criminology, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: zaidahmedmandai00@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Despite the international condemnation of corporal punishment and the ban on the practice in schools in most countries, this type of punishment is still considered controversial and is still practiced in many schools in the country. In this study, teachers' perceptions of corporal punishment and its perceived educational implications in public schools of Tehsil Mandi Bahauddin, Pakistan, were studied. This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design, and a structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 120 respondents, elementary and secondary school teachers, who were sampled using a convenience sampling technique. The data were analyzed with SPSS for the purpose of obtaining descriptive statistics. The results show that teachers' knowledge of the ban on corporal punishment was high, but attitudes on its effectiveness were not unanimous. Many of the respondents disagreed with the idea that corporal punishment is necessary for school discipline and/or student academic success. The study also shows the increased awareness of teachers regarding the negative psychological, educational, and social effects of physical punishment. Results of this study are consistent with modern education policies that promote positive discipline, counselling, and child-centered teaching plans. The study suggests that teachers should undergo continuous professional development, child protection policies should be effectively implemented, and there should be improved collaboration between schools, parents, and policymakers so as to create safe, inclusive, and violence-free learning environments.

KEYWORDS: Corporal Punishment, Positive Discipline, Teachers' Perceptions, Children's Rights, School Discipline

Introduction

Education is one of the most influential social institutions that influences children's intellectual, emotional, and moral development. It is expected that schools will have safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for students to

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Corresponding Author

Muhammad Aqib Mehmood

✉ aqibbaloch1039@gmail.com

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learn in, with a focus on building confidence, social competence, and positive interpersonal relationships. Despite international pledges to safeguard the rights of children and to ensure the use of non-violent teaching methods, the use of corporal punishment in educational institutions is a big problem in many developing countries (UNICEF, 2001; UNESCO, 2005).

Corporal punishment is the deliberate use of physical force for the purpose of bringing about pain or discomfort in a child to correct or control his/her behaviour, but not necessarily in such a way as to inflict physical injury (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Corporal punishment occurs in education through practices like caning, hitting with objects, forcing students into uncomfortable physical positions, standing for long periods, pushups, frog jumps, pulling at the ears, etc., that teachers use to enforce discipline in the classroom. While these practices have traditionally been viewed as acceptable forms of discipline in many cultures, current educational research increasingly points to the negative effects of physical punishment on children's cognitive, emotional, psychological, and academic growth (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007).

Classroom management was historically viewed as an integral part of corporal punishment. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, physical discipline was common in many European, North American, and Asian educational systems as a means of achieving obedience and control (Garrison, 2001). The teachers were often seen as substitutes for parents with untrammelled power over their students to punish them physically. However, with the passage of time, changes in child psychology, educational philosophy, and human rights approaches led to changes in the understanding of children's developmental needs. It was a gradual change from punishment to learner-centered teaching that involved respect, encouragement, positive reinforcement, and emotional health (Bandura, 1977; Hyman, 1990).

The worldwide condemnation of corporal punishment has been significant since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which states that all children are entitled to protection from all forms of physical and mental violence (United Nations, 2005). Corporal punishment in school has long been a target of international agencies such as UNESCO and UNICEF, who have encouraged the adoption of alternative discipline methods that create respectful relationships between teachers and students and healthy learning environments (UNESCO, 2005; UNICEF, 2001).

Yet, despite these global changes, corporal punishment is still in use in many of the nations where it is still a part of cultural norms, traditions, and social norms, and is thus deemed to be justifiable. Physical punishment is highly entrenched in family and school cultures in many developing cultures, as it is believed to be a key tool in correcting negative behaviour and disciplining the classroom (Dupper & Dingus, 2008). Often, these beliefs remain despite the increasing empirical evidence showing that children who receive physical punishment are more likely to experience fear, anxiety, aggression, less academic engagement, school avoidance, and long-term psychological distress (Gershoff, 2002).

In Pakistan, for instance, even legislation has been enacted to replace prisoner beating with other forms of punishment, but the extent to which it is actually enforced remains muted. There are several provincial and national policies that ban physical punishment in schools and advocate for child protection, but the enforcement is relatively weak, and there are reports of physical punishment in many educational institutions (SPARC, 2004).

Many researchers in education are now saying that classroom discipline should not be based on fear or physical force, but should be built upon mutual respect, positive support of behaviour, and positive teacher–student interaction. Social Learning Theory states that children learn behaviour from significant adults in their environment. Schools that use aggression as a form of disciplining students may have children who think it's acceptable to be aggressive in order to solve conflicts, which would lead to a higher chance of aggressive behavior in and out of school

(Bandura et al., 1961). Likewise, behaviorist views also accept that punishment might temporarily stop undesirable behaviour but seldom triggers lasting behavioural change unless it is coupled with positive reinforcement and teaching conditions (Skinner, 1979).

The research evidence is increasingly clear that corporal punishment has an adverse impact on children's academic performance, involvement in school, emotional control, self-esteem, and confidence in schools (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007). Students who are subjected to repeated physical punishment are likely to suffer from heightened anxiety, higher rates of absenteeism from school, behavioural issues, loss of motivation, and poorer teacher-student relationships. Moreover, children exposed to harsh school settings could face the risk of dropping out of school, socially isolating themselves, and experiencing lifelong psychological challenges that persist into adulthood (Straus & Stewart, 1999).

In this context, the present study explores teachers' perceptions of the ban on CP in schools of Tehsil Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab, Pakistan. In particular, the study investigates teachers' knowledge of the legal ban on the use of corporal punishment, their perceptions of whether it is an effective means of maintaining classroom discipline, and how they perceive it affects students' learning. The study also aims to make a significant contribution to the increasing body of literature that provides evidence for educational reforms that promote children's rights, improve classroom management practices, and enhance the quality of the educational world in violence-free settings.

Literature Review

The Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools

Throughout history, corporal punishment has been a common form of punishment in schools around the globe. Teachers were traditionally given a lot of freedom to use physical punishment to correct students' undesirable behaviour and maintain classroom control. The use of practices like caning, slapping, ear pulling, forced standing, kneeling, and other painful methods of discipline was seen as an acceptable means of teaching and bringing about obedience and academic responsibility (Hyman, 1990). This was a practice that was accepted for centuries, but modern education philosophies have evolved to a point where proper discipline should help children grow into healthy, whole individuals rather than be an avenue to fear or physical abuse.

Corporal punishment is generally understood to be the intentional application of physical force to an individual with the aim of causing pain or discomfort without causing serious harm to correct the person's behaviour (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Corporal punishment is typically used in schools as a means to discipline students for misbehaving in the classroom, absenteeism, low academic performance, failure to do homework, or rule violations. Although legislation prohibits physical punishment in many countries, there are many instances in which physical punishment is still prevalent in the educational system, where authoritarian teaching methods continue to prevail in classroom management (Dupper & Dingus, 2008).

There have been significant changes in the global debate on corporal punishment over the past 30 years. While some early education systems still consider physical punishment as an effective tool for discipline, a growing body of developmental psychology, educational research, and child rights scholarship shows that while physical punishment may initially improve classroom order, it is also likely to have harmful educational, emotional, and behavioural effects for the child in the long run (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007). This has led to a call by many governments and international bodies to replace punitive disciplinary measures with positive behaviour support and restorative educational practices.

A Global Overview of the Ban On Corporal Punishment

The campaign against corporal punishment has become a global issue since the inclusion of the rights of children to be free from all forms of violence in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which also includes the right to dignity and protection (United Nations, 2005). Safe learning schools that foster respect, responsibility, and emotional development through respectful forms of discipline, but not fear or humiliation, have been consistently recognized by international organizations like UNESCO and UNICEF as critical in schools (UNESCO, 2005; UNICEF, 2001).

In many European, Latin American, Asian, and other African countries, the use of physical punishment in schools has been banned by law. These reforms are based on the realization that violence, whether intentional or not, against children is a violation of key human rights and can impact a child's educational outcomes and mental health. Nations that have adopted a more holistic approach to banning have also invested in teacher training programs focused on the principles of restorative discipline, counselling, and positive reinforcement in the classroom.

However, implementation is still uneven in various developing countries. There are ongoing issues with cultural traditions, teacher training, overcrowding, and institutional support that allow for the use of physical punishment. It is noted that although there is legislation to end corporal punishment in school, this is not enough to eradicate the practice, as this calls for a deeper insight into the teachers' beliefs and attitudes on discipline.

Corporal Punishment in Pakistan

There is a small step-by-step improvement in the protection of children's rights through the following legislation on corporal punishment in schools in Pakistan. Children's rights to learn in a violence-free environment are increasingly being acknowledged in provincial child protection laws, education reform, and national child protection policies. However, implementation has been inconsistent as educational institutions often face challenges related to limited institutional resources, lack of teachers' capacity building, and entrenched cultural attitudes toward discipline (SPARC, 2004).

Corporal punishment has been accepted as a form of discipline in Pakistani schools in the past. Often, trainers use physical punishment as a way to keep student discipline, to make students do their homework, and to stop bad behavior. These beliefs are reinforced by wider society norms that equate good behaviour with good grades, and equate failure with poor behaviour. But children's rights are now becoming more recognized, and there has been more public concern about violence in schools, which has challenged these traditional views.

Physical punishment is found to hurt Pakistani children's school attendance, academic motivation, school dropout, fear of teachers, and emotional distress (UNICEF, 1998). Child protection reports also show that most children who are punished in educational institutions experience humiliation, anxiety, and a loss of self-confidence because of repeated physical punishment in education (SPARC, 2004). These results have motivated policymakers to toughen child protection laws and to encourage positive discipline options in schools.

The Teachers' Perception of Corporal Punishment

Teachers are in the middle of the situation and hold a crucial position in the implementation of education reforms in relation to the issue of corporal punishment. Their values about discipline have impacts on classroom management, teacher-student relationships, and school climate. It is important, then, to take into account the teachers' perceptions because they can offer valuable information on the challenges that come with the practicality of ending physical punishment in schools.

Previous research shows that attitudes of teachers to CP are still divided. Other teachers still feel that physical punishment helps to deter bad behavior, make children obey, and help to uphold discipline in the classroom. These are often linked with teachers' personal history of schooling, their cultural background, and inadequate awareness of other approaches to discipline (Baumrind, 1996).

In contrast, there is growing recognition by educators of the short-term compliance and long-term negative educational and psychological effects of corporal punishment. Opponents to physical punishment often find that a more lasting way to improve student conduct is through positive reinforcement, constructive communication, behavioral counselling, classroom engagement, and parental engagement (Gershoff, 2002).

Corporal punishment is known to have a negative psychological impact, including anxiety, depression, emotional insecurity, low self-esteem, aggression, and behavioural problems (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007). Frequent use of physical punishment can lead to children's negative self-concept and their lack of confidence in authority figures, which leads to the deterioration of interpersonal relations and the lack of trust in teachers.

Social impacts are also very important. Students who are subjected to corporal punishment tend to be introverted, or they may start to act aggressively in social situations. These findings help to fuel fears that physical punishment could have a negative effect on violence as a legitimate way to settle differences between people.

In addition, it has been suggested that repeated physical punishment is associated with absenteeism and dropout from school. Students who are afraid of embarrassment and physical pain may not attend school at all, and subsequently, the opportunities available for them in the future in terms of their socio-economic status will be curtailed (UNICEF, 1998). The results are the exact opposite of the learning outcomes sought: improving academic achievement, emotional growth, developmental progress, and lifelong learning.

The Use of Positive Discipline as An Alternative

Positive discipline has become a more popular approach to discipline in contemporary education research, and it is regarded as a viable alternative to corporal punishment. Positive discipline is a classroom management technique that fosters responsible behaviour through mutual respect, encouragement, guidance, counselling, and constructive communication. It is a non-violent approach (UNESCO, 2005).

Positive discipline focuses on teaching students the importance of the consequences of their behaviour and how to keep them emotionally and socially well-balanced. Positive discipline with teachers sets clear rules and regulations in the classroom; praise and rewards are used to encourage positive behaviour; opportunities are provided for reflection; and conflict resolution techniques are used to encourage students' self-regulation.

There are indications that schools that have adopted a positive discipline approach have had positive outcomes in improving the climate of the school, the teacher–student relationship, academic engagement, and behavioural issues (Dupper & Dingus, 2008). The results suggest that discipline is more likely to occur in an educationally supportive relationship, rather than in punitive ways.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on the theory of Social Learning (Bandura, 1977) that children learn behaviour by observing, imitating, and interacting with others in society. Learning is not limited to direct experience of events, but also to watching people in one's environment who are significant role models, which is known as modelling, Bandura said. The teacher is one social model that is very influential during childhood, and students often imitate the behaviour that the teacher demonstrates.

This attitude leads to believing that aggression is an acceptable way of dealing with interpersonal conflict situations and of governing others, as seen in the use of corporal punishment. Students' behaviour may be internalized as acceptable behaviour if teachers use physical punishment to deal with behaviour in the classroom. Bandura et al. (1961) found that children who were presented with an aggressive adult model were much more likely to enact similar behaviors. As such, the use of corporal punishment can have the opposite effect of what is intended – reinforcing violence instead of decreasing the inappropriate behavior.

Another theory is that behavioral changes can be facilitated by reinforcing positive behaviors and encouraging, demonstrating, and modeling them, as well as interpersonal relationships that are supportive rather than punitive. Self-regulation, responsibility, and prosocial behaviour are more likely to be developed when teachers demonstrate consistent respect, empathy, fairness, and positive conflict resolution.

In the context of the present study, Social Learning Theory can be used to provide a suitable theoretical framework to look into teachers' perceptions of the use of CP and the impact on students' educational experiences. The use of supportive discipline strategies leads teachers to positive examples of behaviour, which contribute to positive classroom environments and promote respect for others, academic involvement, emotional security, and social responsibility. On the other hand, a physical approach can seriously inhibit these learning goals, with the development of fear, resentment, and aggressive behaviour.

Thus, the present study focuses on teachers' attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment in the context of the prevailing educational policies, which emphasize child-centered education, in which respect, dignity and positive discipline are emphasized. The theoretical framework is therefore used to underpin the ways in which teachers' disciplinary practices are related to students' behavioural development, educational outcomes, and psychological wellbeing, in a coherent manner, so as to interpret the empirical results from the study.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, quantitative research with a descriptive-correlational survey design was used, and teachers' perceptions about the prohibition of corporal punishment and perceived educational implications in schools of Tehsil Mandi Bahauddin (Pakistan) were studied. The respondents were male and female teachers at primary, elementary, and secondary schools in both private and public schools. The total number of teachers who participated in the study was 120, who were selected using the convenience sampling method. Data were gathered with a structured self-administered questionnaire with questions to the teachers about their perceptions of the use of CP, its effectiveness in discipline problems, and its consequences on education, with items on a Likert scale. The questionnaire was sent out electronically via Google Forms, which would allow it to be more accessible and would enable this to be done voluntarily. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and provided informed consent. Data collected were analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 25). Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were employed to summarize the respondents' demographic information and answers to the questions of the questionnaire. The results were analyzed and compared with the study aims and previous literature to gain insight into teachers' views on the ban on corporal punishment in schools.

Results

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 120)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	60	50.0
	Female	60	50.0
Marital Status	Married	84	70.0
	Single	36	30.0
Qualification	BA/BSc	17	14.2
	MA/MSc	83	69.2
	MS/MPhil	20	16.7
Teaching Experience	0–1 year	4	3.3
	1–3 years	32	26.7
	4–5 years	27	22.5
	5–10 years	29	24.2
	More than 10 years	28	23.3
Designation	ESE/PST	60	50.0
	Private School Teacher	9	7.5
	SESE/EST	34	28.3
	SST/SSE	17	14.2

Demographic aspects of the respondents are shown in Table 1. The male (M) and female (F) teachers were equally represented, with 50% of each group. The majority of the subjects (70%) were married, while 30% were single. As far as educational qualification is concerned, most (69.2%) had a Master's degree (MA/MSc), 16.7% had an MS/MPhil degree, and 14.2% had a Bachelor's degree. The teaching experience was found to be well distributed, with the highest proportion (26.7%) having 1-3 years of experience as teachers. As far as professional designation is concerned, half of the respondents (50%) were serving as Elementary School Educators (ESE/PST), and the other respondents (28.3%, 14.2%, and 7.5%) were serving as SESE/EST, SST/SSE, and private school teachers, respectively. The above demographic factors suggest that the study participants came with a wide range of educational levels and work experience, which allowed for a holistic view of teachers' perspectives on the use of corporal punishment.

Table 2

Teachers' Perceptions Regarding the Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools (N = 120)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
Corporal punishment is widely practiced in schools.	11 (9.2)	30 (25.0)	25 (20.8)	44 (36.7)	10 (8.3)
Corporal punishment is necessary to maintain discipline.	17 (14.2)	36 (30.0)	17 (14.2)	37 (30.8)	13 (10.8)
Corporal punishment improves students' learning.	5 (4.2)	31 (25.8)	22 (18.3)	48 (40.0)	14 (11.7)
Corporal punishment improves my teaching performance.	3 (2.5)	24 (20.0)	23 (19.2)	49 (40.8)	21 (17.5)

The results suggest that teachers, in general, were more negative in their attitudes towards the further implementation of the use of corporal punishment in the discipline of pupils.

As far as the extent of its use in schools, the highest percentage (36.7%) disagreed, and 25% agreed. Some children continue with the use of physical punishment in their schools; however, about one-fifth (20.8%) say that it is not used at all, indicating that while physical punishment is still in use in some schools, many teachers feel that its use has reduced in the past because of legal restrictions.

Likewise, there were varying views among teachers on the need for corporal punishment to ensure discipline. 30% said that physical punishment is needed, while 14.2% weren't sure, and 30.8% disagreed. These results indicate a gradual change in teachers' perspectives on whether or not to use alternative classroom management techniques instead of physical punishment.

The greatest opposition was to the educational value of corporal punishment. Nearly half (40%) of the respondents disagreed that corporal punishment helps students learn, while just a quarter (25.8%) agreed. The result indicates that teachers almost no longer view physical punishment as an effective teaching tool to enhance students' academic performance.

Similarly, 40.8% of the teachers disagreed that corporal punishment helps them to improve their teaching performance, while 20% agreed. This means that the majority of teachers have come to understand that good teaching is more about their professional competency, level of engagement in the classroom, and teacher-pupil relations than it is about physical punishment.

As a whole, the findings show that some teachers still believe that corporal punishment is a valid form of punishment, while others recognize that it is not the most effective means of education, and that non-violent means of classroom management are gaining popularity.

Summary of Findings

The descriptive analysis yielded some very important findings

1. The study had a gender balance of teachers, with each gender having equal representation, so as to have a balanced view of corporal punishment.
2. The majority of the respondents held high qualifications, as almost 70% had postgraduate qualifications (MA/MSc).
3. Teachers showed very high levels of knowledge on the ban on corporal punishment.
4. Most respondents were not convinced that the legal reforms had led to an increase in the use of corporal punishment in schools.
5. There was some division among teachers about how well it worked to keep children in order in the classroom, but a larger percentage of teachers objected to its continued use than supported it.
6. The majority of the respondents did not agree that corporal punishment improves students' learning or teaching effectiveness.

In conclusion, the results suggest a gradual shift in the direction of disciplinary practices, from punitive to positive and child-centered, in line with current educational policies advocating the rights of children and safe learning environments.

Discussion

This study explores teachers' perceptions about the prohibition of corporal punishment and its implications for education in schools of Tehsil Mandi Bahauddin, Pakistan. Corporal punishment was a strategy that has been used in many educational environments and has been considered to be highly effective in discipline, but in the present study, it was found that teachers' attitudes are gradually changing toward non-violent discipline methods. The

findings show that although a small group of teachers still feel that corporal punishment is an essential tool for achieving discipline, the majority of teachers who were asked raised questions about the effectiveness of this punishment in terms of learning and recognized its negative effects. These results are in line with the international trends that promote positive discipline and education of child-centered approaches.

A major conclusion of this study was that the teachers' perception of the prevalence of CP was that it was less common than in the previous decade. With more than one-third of respondents disagreeing that corporal punishment is generally observed in schools, there may be greater adherence to government regulations against corporal punishment. This finding could also be a result of increasing awareness among educators about children's rights and legal responsibilities. The government has launched several legislative measures to ensure the safety and security of children from violence in schools, but it has also not been consistent in implementation at the school and regional level (SPARC, 2004). The present results thus indicate that the aim of educational reform and public awareness campaigns appears to be having a slow impact on classroom practices, but that the use of corporal punishment remains far from being eradicated.

The study also found that teachers' attitudes toward the importance of using corporal punishment as a way of maintaining discipline in the classroom are mixed. About a third of respondents still believe it is needed, and a slightly higher percentage said it is not needed. The polar views depict the bridging phase of the Pakistani school settings where both the traditional authoritarian education and progressive education, based on positive behaviour management, are simultaneously in practice. Dupper and Dingus (2008) found that cultural traditions, experiences of previous teachers, institutional expectations, and teacher training all have a strong impact on teachers' attitudes about corporal punishment. Thus, for prohibition policies to be effective, not only does there need to be legislative reform, but there also needs to be continuous teacher education that emphasizes good classroom management practices, without physical punishment.

The most significant finding is that of teacher perceptions regarding students' learning outcomes. Most respondents were averse to the view that corporal punishment helped students in their academic performance. The present finding is congruent with a wealth of empirical evidence indicating that physical punishment can act as a short-term reprimand to an undesirable behavior, but is not effective at promoting meaningful learning or lasting academic achievement (Gershoff, 2002). Rather, when students are repeatedly punished, they become fearful, anxious, and even negative about school; their motivation to be actively involved in classroom activities is decreased. Fear-based discipline might make students hesitate to ask questions, to give an answer if they do not know the answer, or to confidently approach the learning task, thereby reducing intellectual growth and educational achievement.

Likewise, respondents were against the notion that corporal punishment enhances teachers' performance. The majority of the participants agreed that pedagogical skills, interaction between teacher and student, positive teacher–student relationships, and good behaviour management from the teacher are essential for success in teaching, while physical punishment is not. This is in keeping with the current theory in education that the role of the teacher is not just to teach but also to facilitate learning, act as a mentor, and provide students with models to emulate in their emotional, social, and cognitive growth. Positive classroom environments, which are established on the basis of mutual respect and trust, have always been linked to increased levels of student engagement, better academic performance, and improved behavioural outcomes (UNESCO, 2005).

The results obtained from the present study will be well understood in the light of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which was used as the theoretical basis of the study. Social Learning Theory suggests that children

learn behaviour by watching, imitating, and engaging in interactions with adults whom they look up to. Childhood teachers are one of the most important influences during childhood, and their behavior sends messages about acceptable ways in which to handle interpersonal conflict. The use of physical punishment to control classroom conduct can help students to develop an understanding that aggression is an unacceptable way of responding to behaviour problems. Bandura et al. (1961) showed that children who observed aggressive adult models would be more likely to imitate aggressive behaviour than children who did not observe aggressive models. Based on the findings of the present study, it may thus be concluded that non-violent classroom management has a greater chance of fostering prosocial behaviour, emotional management, and interpersonal respect than punitive disciplinary practices, in line with the theoretical underpinning.

Findings also add to the body of knowledge on the psychological impacts of corporal punishment. Past research has found that physical punishment is correlated with higher anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, emotional insecurity, behavioural problems, and school avoidance (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007; Hyman, 1990). The present study did not investigate student outcomes directly, although the teachers' perceptions of this are generally negative in terms of the education that is provided. The growing awareness among teachers is an encouraging development, as teachers' beliefs have a great impact on classroom practices and classroom policy implementation.

Another key finding that has implications for students' rights is the link between the use of CP and students' rights. Children have the right to education in an atmosphere free of violence, humiliation, and degrading treatment, as stated in international human rights documents, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2005). The present findings uphold those principles and show that the importance of ensuring the dignity of children is becoming more evident in the eyes of teachers, while at the same time ensuring that classroom discipline is maintained. Respecting children's rights is not a call for parents to be lax in disciplining their children or to forego discipline entirely. Instead, it is a call for parents to practice appropriate discipline that fosters their children's responsibility and self-regulation, and that does not cause physical or emotional harm.

The results also bring attention to the need for professional development for teachers. While some respondents disagreed with corporal punishment, many others still believe that physical punishment is effective for establishing discipline. This may be due to insufficient training or development in positive approaches to classroom management. Numerous studies in education have found that structured professional development on classroom management, counselling, restorative practices, and positive reinforcement for behaviour consistently leads to teachers' greater confidence in managing classroom behaviour without physical punishment (UNESCO, 2005). Improving the quality of teacher training programs, therefore, is a key approach to support the effective implementation of prohibition policies.

The results of the present study also have policy implications for the education system in Pakistan. Corporal punishment can only be eradicated if it is backed by broad institutional changes, in addition to legislative bans. School leaders need to have specific child protection policies, enhance surveillance, promote reporting processes, and offer ongoing mentoring to teachers implementing positive discipline practices. The cooperation of teachers, parents, school administrators, psychologists, and policymakers is also crucial to establishing learning spaces where children's emotional needs are covered alongside their learning.

Although the study was found to be useful, there are some limitations of the study, which should be taken into consideration while interpreting the study findings. First, the study was conducted in one tehsil (Mandi Bahauddin) only, and hence, the results are not generalizable to other tehsils or provinces in Pakistan, where the education system and cultural attitudes might be different. Second, it could have been selection bias because of convenience sampling, which may have restricted the participants' representation. Thirdly, the study depended on the teachers' self-reported perceptions, and this may be subject to social desirability bias, especially with the increasing laws against corporal

punishment. To gain a holistic view of the disciplinary practices in Pakistani schools, future research could include the students' perspectives, parents' views, classroom observations, and qualitative interviews. Further evidence on the impact of positive discipline programs could be gathered through a longitudinal study of the changes in teachers' attitudes after professional learning programs.

In summary, the results show a great change in teachers' attitudes toward corporal punishment. Whilst traditional views of the importance of physical punishment have not gone away entirely, there has been growing awareness that good classroom management requires respectful relationships between teachers and students, good behaviour support and child-centered approaches to learning and teaching, rather than fear and physical coercion. This study is consistent with global educational research, which supports the use of evidence-based practices to replace punitive disciplinary practices that foster children's psychological well-being, engagement, and overall growth. The study further underscores the importance of continued policy implementation, professional development of teachers, and institutional engagement to create a safe, inclusive, and violence-free school environment across Pakistan.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to explore teachers' perceptions about the prohibition of CP and implications for education in the schools of Tehsil Mandi Bahauddin, Pakistan. The results show that corporal punishment has been an accepted form of discipline in the past, but that teachers' attitudes are slowly changing to adopting a more non-violent and child-centered approach to classroom management. Most of the respondents were aware of the prohibition on corporal punishment in law, and doubted its effectiveness in helping students learn and enhancing teachers' teaching. Overall, the results of this study indicated that a minority of teachers still believe that physical punishment is required for discipline, but there is a growing awareness of the negative educational, psychological, and social effects of physical punishment.

The study also showed that corporal punishment has little effect on improving the behaviour of children. Rather, it may lead to feelings of fear, anxiety, loss of motivation to learn, poor self-esteem, and poor teacher–student relationships. The results align with recent educational studies that have focused on the role of positive discipline, counselling, good classroom management, and supportive classroom environments in bringing better, lasting changes to student behaviour and engagement in learning as compared to punitive disciplinary practices (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007; UNESCO, 2005).

The results also support the important role of Bandura's social learning theory that states that children learn from significant role models. Aggression used by teachers to manage behaviour may send unconscious messages that aggression is a legitimate way to resolve interpersonal conflict. On the other hand, teachers who display prosocial behaviour, emotional self-regulation, and responsible decision-making (Bandura, 1977) can foster empathetic, fair, respectful, and helpful interactions with students. Thus, the substitution of corporal punishment with positive disciplinary measures has not only been shown to enhance classroom management but also to help children's psychological and social growth.

The study has significant implications for educational policy and practices in Pakistan. Corporal punishment can only be eliminated through legislation if it is effectively implemented, if teachers are held accountable, and if there is a sustained professional development program. Teachers, therefore, need to be trained in practical classroom management techniques that would help them to maintain discipline in classrooms without using physical

punishments so that they can play their part in educational reforms. In the same way, the culture of the school needs to be developed to demonstrate an emphasis on children's dignity, emotional needs, and rights to education.

While this study is a valuable contribution to the research literature on teachers' perceptions, there are a number of limitations to be noted. The study was conducted in one geographical area, and the sample was convenience-based and hence cannot be generalized to the teachers in the whole of Pakistan. In addition, the findings were based on the teachers' self-reported perceptions and not on classroom observations or students' experiences. Research using mixed methods and/or longitudinal studies in various provinces would help to create a broader picture of disciplinary practices and the effectiveness of positive discipline strategies.

Finally, the study shows that meaningful change in education will demand a change from a culture of punishment and discipline to a culture of evidence-based, child-friendly education. Ensuring safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environments is crucial to safeguarding children's rights, improving achievement, emotional health and wellbeing, and the quality of learning. Corporal punishment should thus not only be seen as a matter of law, but also as an integral part of a high-quality and sustainable education for children.

Recommendations

On the basis of the study, it is suggested that the following steps be taken to enhance the implementation of the ban on corporal punishment in Pakistani schools: In-service training programs should be conducted on a regular basis to provide teachers with classroom management skills based on evidence, positive discipline skills, conflict resolution skills, and child psychology. Professional development needs to highlight and focus on viable alternative forms of discipline that foster positive and nurturing learning contexts. Schools must have positive discipline policies in place and practice, which support behaviour management through counselling, reinforcement, classroom engagement, restorative practices, and positive communication rather than physical discipline. All teachers and administrators should have clear institutional guidelines.

Future studies should use bigger representative samples from various provinces of Pakistan with respect to the perceptions of students, parents, school administrators, and policymakers. The use of mixed-method studies and longitudinal studies would provide the much-needed evidence for the long-term effectiveness of positive disciplinary interventions.

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