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Corporal Punishment and its Effect on Class-Room Performance of Secondary School Students in the District of Kolkata

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Abstract:

The Study was conducted to examine the effect of three categories of corporal punishment-physical punishment , mental harassment and discrimination on student's classroom performance . The sample consisted of Two hundred sixty one students of class V to class VII taken randomly from six(6) Bengali medium schools (Govt. Sponsored) under West Bengal board of Higher Secondary Education. All the students belong to the same age group ten(10) to twelve(12) years. The results of the study revealed that physical punishment, mental harassment and discrimination were not significantly associated with student's classroom performance .

Keywords: Corporal Punishment, Class-room Performance, Discrimination, Mental-Harassment, Physical punishment

1. Introduction

Children have the right to protection from all forms of violence, abuse and maltreatment. Corporal punishment in any setting is a violation of that right. Corporal punishment of children is a worldwide phenomenon. Children are physically punished in almost all societies. In India, large scale interview studies have found corporal punishment to be commonly used both in the homes and in schools (Plan India, 2006). The United Nations committee on the Rights of the Child (2006) has defined "Corporal" or "Physical" punishment as: "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involve hitting children with the hand or with an implement - a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon etc. But it can also involve kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scolding or forced ingestion(for example washing children's mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices).In the view of the committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading. In addition, there are other non physical forms of punishment that are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the convention. This includes, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child."

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the first international human rights binding instrument to expressly address the protection of children from violence. Article 19 of the convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to take: " all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

All forms of corporal punishment including sexual abuse are harmful to the child .A study "Child Abuse in India -2007 " , by the Ministry of Women and Child Development ,Government of India, ,found that 69% of children reported having been physically abused ,of these 54.68% were boys. Incidents of having been abused in their family environment have been reported by 52.91% of boys and 47.09% of girls. Every two out of three school children reported facing corporal punishment.

According to the Guidelines for Eliminating Corporal punishment in School (2008), corporal punishment could be classified as physical punishment, Mental harassment and Discrimination. Physical punishment is understood as any action that causes pain, hurt/injury and discomfort to a child, however light. Mental harassment is understood as any non physical treatment that is detrimental to the academic and psychological well-being of a child. It includes sarcasm that hurts or lowers the child's dignity, calling names and scolding using humiliating adjectives, ridiculing the child with regard to his/her background or status or parental occupation or caste, shaming the child to motivate the child to improve his performance etc. Discrimination is understood as prejudiced views and behavior towards any child because of his or her caste/gender, occupation or region, for non-payment of fees, for being a student admitted under the 25% reservation to disadvantaged groups or weaker sections of society; assigning different duties and sitting in schools based on caste, community or gender prejudices; denying midday meal or library books or uniforms or sports facilities to a child or group of children based on caste, community, religion or gender.

Corporal punishment in this study is conceptualized according to the Guidelines for Eliminating Corporal punishment in School (2008).

2. Review of Literature

Research studies indicate that corporal punishment constructs an environment of education that can be described as unproductive, nullifying and punitive (Lynnette,2001).

Durrant and Enson(2012), made an analysis of research on physical punishment of children at Ottawa over the past 20 years. The findings indicate that children who have experienced physical punishment, tend to be more aggressive towards parents, siblings, peers and later spouse and are more likely to develop anti social behavior.

Corporal punishment and other humiliating behavior towards children in Sweden—A National Study 2011. The study revealed that corporal punishment affects children life negatively in many ways. Being beaten at home affects the child negatively in ways other than the humiliation and risk of injury . Beaten children have a much greater tendency to be involved in bullying than other children. They perform less well at school, have substantially more physical and psychological symptoms and have been involved in accidents more often. The majority of Swedish parents ,independent of sex, age, education ,native country and the age of the child, states that the most important task for upbringing is to teach their children not to fight ,tease or threaten but to be concerned and honest .

According to Hickmon (2008), harsh physical punishment does not improve students in-school behavior or academic performance. In States where corporal punishment is frequently used, schools have performed worse academically than those in states that prohibit corporal punishment.

In 2007, the Ministry of Women and Child Development published the first nationwide study on child abuse in India, based on the experiences of 12,447 children aged 5-18 years from across 13 states and also involving 2,324 young adults aged 8-24 years. The study revealed a high prevalence of corporal punishment of children in all the settings-their family homes, schools, institutions and on the streets. Of the total number of Children, 69% of children reported physical abuse including corporal punishment.

Saath Charitable Trust supported by Plan international India (2006) conducted a large scale research study regarding children's experiences of corporal punishment in schools and in homes, in one district in each of four states- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra- Pradesh. The research involved 1591 children mostly from 41 schools as well as members of various children's organizations. Parents, teachers (215), community members, government officials and other adults were also consulted. The study found corporal punishment to be an accepted way of life in all the schools and communities visited. The most common forms of punishment were hitting with hands and stick, pulling hair and ears and telling children to stand for long periods in various positions.

A 2006 study compared the attitudes and intentions of children between the ages of 10 and 15 to use violence to resolve conflicts and their parents' expectations and use of corporal punishment. The study found that children whose parents used physical discipline, were more likely to use violence (fighting, bullying and victimization of others) to resolve conflict.

Kaur(2005) stated that parents, guardians and 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 in 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.

Grogan (2004) used data from the most recent (1998) wave of data collection of the United States National Longitudinal Survey of Youth .There were 1,118 children in the sample and their average age was slightly over 10 years .The study examined the relationship between parental use of corporal punishment and children's antisocial behavior . The study concluded that even low and common levels of spanking were associated with increases in antisocial behavior.

The Society of Adolescent Medicine (2003) has found that victims of corporal punishment often develop deteriorating peer relationships, difficulty with concentration, lowered school achievements, anti social behavior, intense dislike of authority, somatic complaints, a tendency for school avoidance and school dropout and other evidence of negative high risk adolescent behavior.

Elizabeth (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of all studies from 1938 to 2001 examined the association between parental corporal punishment and child behaviors and experience .She found that spanking by parents was related to 10 negative behaviors. The negative behaviors include physical aggression, verbal aggression, physical fighting ,bullying ,anti-social behavior and mental health problems .

A meta analysis completed by Gershoff (2002) indicate that corporal punishment is associated with the development of the following undesirable behavior patterns and actions : decreased moral internalization; increased child aggression; increased child delinquency and antisocial behaviour; decreased quality of relationship between parents and child; decreased moral internalization ; increased risk of being a victim; of physical abuse; increased adult aggression; increased adult criminal and antisocial behavior; decreased adult mental health and increased risk of abusing own children or spouse.

Straus (1992) indicates that the long term use of corporal punishment tends to increase the probability of deviant and anti social behaviors such as aggression, adolescent delinquency and violent acts inside and outside the school.

From literature review it has been found that corporal punishment is significantly associated with a decrease in children's mental health including behavior disorders, anxiety disorders depression and hopelessness. It does not teach children how to behave or help them understand how their behavior affects other; rather it impairs moral internalization, increases antisocial behavior and damage family relationships.

3. Objectives of the Study

To find out the effect of three categories of corporal punishment (Physical punishment, Mental Harassment and Discrimination) on secondary school students' class-room performance.

4. Hypothesis

- H0 = There is no significant association between physical punishment and students class-room performance.
- H1 = There is significant association between physical punishment and students class-room performance.
- H0 = There is no significant association between Mental Harassment and students class-room performance.
- H2= There is significant association between Mental Harassment and students class-room performance.
- HO= There is no significant association between Discrimination and students class-room performance
- H3= There is significant association between Discrimination and students class-room performance.

5. Materials And Methods

5.1 Sample for the Study

The sample for the present study consists of 261 students of class 5 to 7 taken randomly from six (6) Bengali medium schools (Government sponsored) under West Bengal Board of Secondary Education located at Dumdum area (north), Kolkata. Almost all the students belong to the same age group that is 10-12 years.

5.2 Design

Survey method was used for data collection .Responses of the students have been enumerated in the form of frequencies and percentage of the frequencies were calculated.

5.3. Tools Used In The Study

Questionnaire related to corporal punishment was prepared by the investigator with the help of subject experts and was applied on students.

Unstructured interview was also used. The students were interviewed on their way to school and in the afternoon on their way home.

5.4. Variables Considered

The Independent variables in this study are three categories of corporal punishment - physical punishment, mental harassment and discrimination. The dependant variables are poor attendance, difficulty with concentration, fear and hesitation regarding study, poor classroom participation and interaction, poor academic progress unhealthy relation with classmates, and indiscipline in class-room.

5.5 Duration Of The Study

The Study was carried out for a period of five months.

5.6 Delimitations Of The Study

The study was delimited to only certain inside class-room factors such as poor attendance, difficulty with concentration, fear and hesitation regarding study, poor participation in classroom activities, poor academic progress and unhealthy relation with classmates. Student's socio-economic status, parent's educational level, peer factors, family income were not taken into consideration.

6. Results

The data were analyzed in terms of frequencies, percentages and chi-square and the results were presented in Table 6.1to 6.4 below.

6.1. Three categories of Corporal punishment and Inside class-room factors (Frequencies and percentages of the responses)

Class-room factors (Dependent Variables)	Corporal punishment (Independent Variables) (Categories)			
	Physical punishment	Mental harassment	Discrimination	TOTAL
Poor Attendance	7 (10.14%)	8 (7.69)	9 (10.23)	24 (9.20)
Difficulty with Concentration	9 (13.04)	15 (14.42)	19 (21.59)	43 (16.48)
Fear and Hesitation regarding Study	10 (14.49)	8 (7.96)	8 (9.09)	26 (9.96)
Poor Participation In Class-room activities	8 (11.59)	20 (19.23)	21 (23.86)	49 (18.77)
Poor Academic Progress	8 (11.59)	20 (19.23)	17 (19.32)	45 (17.24)

Indiscipline inside class-room	13 (18.84)	9 (8.65)	7 (7.95)	29 (11.11)
Unhealthy relation with classmates	14 (20.29)	24 (23.07)	7 (7.95)	45 (17.24)
Total	69 (26.43)	104 (40.00)	88 (34.00)	261 (100.00)

Source : Primary data

From Table 6.1, it can be observed that -

- Physical punishment makes students indiscipline inside the classroom (18.84%) and it also creates unhealthy relation with class-mates (20.29%).
- Mental harassment has negative effects on students’ academic progress (19.23%), poor participation in the classroom activities (19.23%) and unhealthy relation with classmates (23.07%).
- Discrimination among students creates negative impacts on active participation in classroom (23.86%), difficulty with concentration (21.59%) and poor academic progress (19.32%) .
- Corporal punishment has a very mild impact on students’ classroom performance.

6.2. Physical punishment and students ’class-room performance.(Chi-square test)

f_0	f_e	$f_0 - f_e$	$(f_0 - f_e)^2$	$(f_0 - f_e)^2 / f_e$
7	9.8	-2.86	8.18	0.12
9	9.8	-0.8	0.74	0.01
10	9.8	0.1	0.02	0.00
8	9.8	-1.8	3.46	0.05
8	9.86	-1.86	3.46	0.05
13	9.86	3.14	9.86	0.14
14	9.86	4.14	17.14	0.25
Total			$\chi^2=0.62$	

Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level

Table. 6.2 shows that calculated value of chi-square for 6 degree of freedom is 0.62, which is much less than the critical values of chi-square at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. The critical value of chi-square for 6 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is 12.592 and at 1% level of significance is 16.812. Therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected as it states that there is no significant association between physical punishment and student’s classroom performance.

6.3. Mental harassment and student’s classroom performance (Chi-square test)

f_0	f_e	$f_0 - f_e$	$(f_0 - f_e)^2$	$(f_0 - f_e)^2 / f_e$
8	14.86	-6.86	47.05	0.45
15	14.86	0.14	0.02	0.00
8	14.86	-6.86	47.05	0.45
20	14.86	5.14	26.42	0.25
20	14.86	5.14	26.42	0.25
9	14.86	-5.86	34.33	0.33
24	14.86	9.14	83.54	0.81
Total			$\chi^2= 2.54$	

Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level

Table. 6.3 shows that calculated value of chi-square for 6 degree of freedom is 2.54, which is much less than the critical values of chi-square at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. The critical value of chi-square for 6 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is 12.592 and at 1% level of significance is 16.812. Therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected as it states that there is no significant association between mental harassment and student’s classroom performance.

6.4. Discrimination and student's classroom performance (Chi-square test)

f_0	f_e	$f_0 - f_e$	$(f_0 - f_e)^2$	$(f_0 - f_e)^2 / f_e$
9	12.57	-3.57	12.74	0.14
19	12.57	6.43	41.34	0.47
8	12.57	-4.57	20.88	0.24
21	12.57	8.43	71.06	0.81
17	12.57	4.43	19.62	0.22
7	12.57	-5.57	31.02	0.35
7	12.57	-5.57	31.02	0.35
Total			$\chi^2 = 2.58$	

Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 level

Table 6.4 shows that calculated value of chi-square for 6 degree of freedom is 2.58 which is much less than the critical values of chi-square at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance. The critical value of chi-square for 6 degree of freedom at 5% level of significance is 12.592 and at 1% level of significance is 16.812. Therefore the null hypothesis cannot be rejected as it states that there is no significant association between discrimination and student's classroom performance.

7. Conclusion

There are various factors inside and outside school that influence classroom performance of the students. This study only focused on some of the inside factors of the classroom. The analysis of data shows that the three categories of corporal punishment – physical punishment, mental harassment and discrimination do not significantly affect the classroom performance of the students. So it can be concluded from the results that corporal punishment has not affected the classroom performance of the students in this particular situation.

Disciplining children is very important and schools have a strong role in teaching children to be self-disciplined. When students are self-disciplined, they understand a situation, make proper decisions about their behavior and behave appropriately when unsupervised by adults.

One of the frequently used everyday arguments in favor of corporal punishment is from people who say "I was spanked and I am okay". Straus (1999) points out that people who say this, maybe among the lucky ones who were not adversely affected by corporal punishment. Corporal punishment does not guarantee a harmful effect, but the more children experience corporal punishment and more frequent and severe it is, the more they are at risk for problems like aggression and depression regardless of their cultural background.

8. Recommendation

- Help students achieve academic success through identification of academic and behavioral deficiencies and strengths and helping students in receiving appropriate instructions.
- The conduct of the teacher and administrator should be such that it fosters a spirit of inclusion, care and nurturing.
- All school management and educational administration authorities should run regular training programs to help teachers and educational administrators to understand and appreciate the rights of the child and the spirit of the Right to Education.
- Encourage programs that emphasize values, school pride, and personal responsibility that support the mental health needs of children.
- All children should be informed through campaigns and publicity drives that they have a right to speak against physical punishments, mental harassment and discriminations and bring it to the notice of the authorities. They should be given confidence to make complaints and not accept punishment as "normal" activity of the school.

9. References

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10. Declaration

It is declared that this research paper is written by Dr Aditi Sarkar. The material in this paper is original and has not been published elsewhere in part or full and the same has not been submitted for publication in any other books or journals