

A Study of Present Situation of Corporal Punishment in Schools and Consequences of its Elimination

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Abstract

The corporal punishment in schools; institutions meant for care and protection of children. Every two out of three school children reported facing corporal punishment. Being poor, poorly dressed, frequent absenteeism, sitting at the back and coming from deprived social groups are elements that converge to some children from activities in the schools. Gender and caste play significant role in assigning cleaning duties, fetching water, making tea etc. in the schools. Teachers scolding/punishing children and use of derogatory words for children tended to follow caste, occupation and gender stereotypes. The persistence of discrimination based on social, economic, linguistics and religious identities inside the school. Discrimination based on disability and illness/disease has also been seen. It is seen that psychological aggression is more pervasive than physical punishment.

KEYWORDS- Corporal punishment, Physical punishment, Mental harassment

Introduction

All round development of the child is the dynamic trend in new education system. The parliament of India enacted the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) on August 2009. RTE Act got enforced on 1 April 2010. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act prohibits physical punishment and mental harassment under Section 17(1) and makes it a punishable offence under Section 17(2). These provisions read as follows:

Section 17, Prohibition of physical punishment and mental harassment to child - (1) No child shall be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment.

(2) Whoever contravenes the provisions of sub-section (1) shall be liable to disciplinary action under the service rules applicable to such person.

Objectives

1. To study the present situation of physical punishment of students in schools.
2. To study the present situation of mental harassment of students in schools.
3. To study the consequences of elimination of corporal punishment.

Definition of key words:

Corporal punishment: As there is no statutory definition of corporal punishment of children in the Indian law in keeping with the provisions of the RTE Act, 2009, corporal punishment could be classified as (a) physical punishment, (b) mental harassment and (c) discrimination.

Corporal punishment will also include all forms of sexual offences as per the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012.

Physical punishment: Physical punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort. Examples of physical punishment are:

- a. Causing physical harm to children by hitting, kicking, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling the hair, boxing ears, smacking, slapping, spanking with or without any implement (cane, stick, shoe, chalk, dusters, belt, whip, giving electric shock etc.);
- b. Making children assume an uncomfortable position (standing on bench, standing against the wall in a chair-like position, standing with schoolbag on head, holding ears through legs, kneeling etc.);
- c. Forced ingestion of anything (for example: washing soap, mud, chalk, hot spices etc.);
- d. Detention in the classroom, library, toilet or any closed space in the school.

Mental harassment is understood as any non-physical treatment that is detrimental to the academic and psychological well-being of a child. It includes:

- a) Sarcasm that hurts or lowers the child's dignity.
- b) Calling names and scolding using humiliating adjectives, intimidation.
- c) Using derogatory remarks for the child including pinning of slogans.
- d) Ridiculing the child with regard to her background, status, parental occupation, caste or with regard to her health status or that of the family – especially HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis;
- e) Belittling a child in the classroom due to his/her inability to meet the teacher's expectations of academic achievement.
- f) Using punitive measures to correct a child and even labeling him/her as difficult.
- g) Shaming the child to motivate the child to improve his/her performance.
- h) Ridiculing a child with developmental problems such as learning difficulty or a speech disorder like stammering or speech articulation disorder.

Method

Descriptive survey method was used in the study. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used.

Sample

A sample of five schools and ten teachers from each school in Kolhapur city was selected by purposive sampling technique.

Tools and Techniques for Data Collection

To collect primary data from teachers a questionnaire was administered. They responded to the items of the questionnaire instantaneously. A focused group discussion was also held to discuss various issues about corporal punishment. Observations are also done for collection of data.

Analysis of Data

Data collected through interview, field note, observations and document were analysed. For qualitative data, simple statistical procedure were used.

Findings

1. Punishing children is regarded as normal and acceptable in many schools.
2. It is considered necessary to help children grow up to be competent and responsible persons.

- 3.It is widely used by teachers regardless of its evident lack of effectiveness and potentially damaging side-effects.
- 4.The justification for corporal punishment is that a child may not think her/his rights have been infringed when subjected to corporal punishment.
- 5.Students has become rude as they know the limitations of teachers for punishing them.
- 6.Teachers do not pay much attention to students for their discipline.
- 7.It affects negatively the overall academic performance of students.
- 8.Students have less fear of teachers as well as school.
9. Teachers as well as students are well aware about legal basis for physical punishment of students.
- 10.Teachers as well as students are well aware about legal basis for mental harassment of students.

Conclusion:

It is recognized that punishment in any form or kind in school comes in the way of the development of the children. When adults use corporal punishment it teaches their children that hitting is an acceptable means of dealing with conflict and may lead to adverse physical, psychological and educational outcomes - including increased aggressive and destructive behavior, increased disruptive behavior in the classroom, vandalism, poor school achievement, poor attention span, increased drop out of school avoidance/ phobia, low self-esteem, anxiety, somatic complaints, depression, and retaliation against teachers - that emotionally scar the children for life. A chronic pattern of psychological maltreatment destroys a child's sense of self-esteem and personal safety. Subtle and overt forms of discrimination are also known to have a negative effect on the emotional and intellectual health of children.

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