

Corporal Punishment of Children's in School: A Critical Literature Review

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Abstract

Corporal punishment in schools is one of the most common forms of violence experienced by children in different countries of the world. Even though the level of prevalence varies, violence against children in schools has practiced at both developed and developing countries. Corporal punishment is very sensitive nonetheless less reported problem threatening the survival and development of children in the entire world. Hence, this study employed web based evidence and published and unpublished research outputs to discover the experience of children at schools for corporal punishment. Moreover, the consequences of corporal punishment on the survival and development of the child, the opinion of teachers and school leaders towards corporal punishment was also well dealt. This paper began with making of critical literature review on psychological and physical punishment of children in schools in many countries of the world. Major findings, which are either essential for policy makers when designing educational policies or for researchers who have an interest to conduct further study for addressing the corporal punishment induced problems are also identified in this paper. Finding of the majority of the explored research reveals that corporal punishment has been applying up on students, though it is officially banned by the domestic law of the states and other international and regional conventions. This implies that the human rights of children in schools in many parts of the world are at risk due to the widespread practice of corporal punishment.

Key words: school, Corporal Punishment, Convention on the Rights of the child, cause of Corporal Punishment, consequence of Corporal Punishment

1. Introduction

1.1 Discourses of Corporal Punishment

The main purpose of the convention on the right of the child that was adopted in 1989 is to safeguard and guarantee the rights and benefits of the child. Therefore, the CRC consists of various provisions in relation to the protection of children from any type of corporal punishment. Article (19) sub-article (1) of the convention guarantees that the child should be saved from all types of physical or psychological maltreatment, damage, abuse, exploitations, forced labor and neglectful treatment of families, legal caretaker mother or father or any other person who takes the responsibility to protect the child (UNICEF 1989:5). Besides this, article (28) sub-article (2) of the convention presuppose that school disciplines or the rules and regulations of the school should be consonant with the children's human rights and state parties should have the primary responsibility to assure its implementation. Article 37 (a) deals with the protection of children from degrading, inhuman, and cruel punishment and maltreatment.

Besides, the CRC committee (2011:10) defines corporal punishment as a type of punishment in which physical force which can be either light or painful is applied deliberately using to cause some degree of discomfort on the child that violates rules and regulations. It mostly includes beating children with a hand, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, kicking, throwing children, scratch, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, making them to stay in unsuitable area and burning. From the point of view of the committee, corporal punishment is always degrading and threatens the realization of the fundamental human rights. But the definition is too narrow that excludes other types of cruel and humiliating punishment such as disgraces, neglects, scapegoats, intimidating, scare or mocks. However, other organization such as Save the children defined corporal punishment more comprehensively.

Corporal punishment is the use of physical force or degrading treatment that causes some degree of dissatisfaction or pain, for the purpose of molding, correcting, monitoring and changing the behavior or the manner of the child. This definition consists of both physical and psychological types of punishment. The physical punishment consists of beating child by the hand and other objects and the psychological punishment involves degradation, making to feel terror/ threatening, neglect and ridicule (save the children Sweden 2005: 9).

The aforesaid provisions of the convention on the rights of the child provides the comprehensive and wide ranging protection of the child from any type of vulnerability in general and humiliating and physical punishment in particular. Therefore, throughout the entire of this paper, the findings and studies of corporal punishment had analyzed in light the definition provided by the CRC. Our position in this paper is also in support of the CRC and theories which support the idea that corporal punishment is the grave violations of the human rights of children and aggravates the students 'misbehavior.

2. Theories of Corporal Punishment

Many theories have been used by psychology and educational pedagogy scholars to analyze corporal punishment and its effects on human behavior. Paolucci and Violato (2004:199) reported that the most prominent theories used by researchers in studying corporal punishment are " environmental model and the temperament model".

Environmental Model/Social Learning Theory: proponents of this theory argued that when children's are physically punished, they understand that punishment is an acceptable mechanism to solve unacceptable behaviors (Graziano1994 cited in Paolucci & Violato 2004:199). Furthermore, it is assumed that through practicing physical and psychological punishment, aggressive behaviors are reproduced (Paolucci & Violato 2004:199). According to Muller (cited in Paolucci & Violato 2004:199), various researches relate violent behavior with corporal punishment and they presume that if parents who uses corporal punishment have aggressive children, it is due to the children's had experienced the same pattern of lesson to the parents aggressive punishment. This model presumes that the disadvantages of corporal punishment outnumbers than its advantages. It is also added that corporal punishment leads to other multifaceted behaviors.

Temperament Model: according to the supporters of this theory, children who are too hard to deal with should be corrected by using proportionate punishment. Therefore, corporal punishment is an intervention for improper behavior and it is not a cause of aggressive behavior as what the social learning theory said (Muller cited in Paolucci & Violato 2004:199). Moreover, Jenkins 1997(as discussed in Dupper and Dingus 2008:244) contends, corporal punishment is considered as normal and necessary form of punishment for the following three reasons. Firstly, it produces people who

can accept the established norms and values of the society. Secondly, it makes children very rational and reasonable for whatever actions they did. Thirdly, it guarantees that learning is going on in a desired manner. The impact of this theory on justifying the use of corporal punishment is not very minimal. Because, we think, the practice of corporal punishment made laws and policies against corporal punishment to remain silent and less effective in many countries.

3. Perception and Attitude of Students, Parents, and Teachers on Corporal Punishment in School

A research conducted by RSkiba and Knesting (2001:33-35) reveals, the attitude of students on the effectiveness and necessity of disciplinary actions in school are totally different with the perception of parents, teachers and school administrators. When school administrator and teachers see disciplinary measures at school to maintain a good classroom environment and teaching learning process, students tend to see it, as the main cause to increase students' misbehavior, especially if they think that rules and policies are unfairly practiced on them(Ibid).

Agbenyega 2006 (cited in kilimci 2009: 243) study proves, the majority of teachers use corporal punishment to implement school disciplines and they expressed their reluctance not stop physical and humiliating punishment in school for misbehaving students. Stating the relative decline of corporal punishment, a study conducted by Save the children Sweden (2005:18) reported, around 50.6% teachers replied that corporal punishment supported them to attain the proper behavior of the misbehaving students. They therefore argued, it is unacceptable to abolish corporal punishment altogether without suggesting another good alternative. In opposite to this, the finding obtained from the same organization in the same year also implies that around 74% children's involved in the study replied that they did not get anything important but terror, humiliation and fear because of the punishment. We believe that the reluctance of teachers to stop corporal punishment might be developed because of lack of awareness in the CRC in particular and human rights in general and unable to aware another good way of correcting students.

The save the children study report also indicates that

In most cases, teachers become tense when presented with the issue of school discipline related to child rights. The teachers also mentioned that parents contributed to the application of corporal punishment by teachers. That is, parents were persuaded teachers to

use corporal punishment on students for they thought that the measure could mold the children's behavior and help them develop into "gentle" citizens (Save the Children Norway 2004:18).

Teachers consider themselves as the direct representative of parents and they have the responsibility not only to teach lessons, but also to correct student's behavior using different means. They conceived that corporal punishment is one way of making students outstanding in their academic performance and making an ideal citizen of the country. This non proved presumption of teachers and parents on corporal punishment can bring a highly negative effect on the future life and development of the child.

Regarding the question of the fairness of using physical and psychological punishment for children's bad behavior, students said, it is acceptable if teachers used it to correct bad behaving students (Save the Children Norway 2004: 17 and Agbenyega 2006:115) and that punishment should be "reasonable and justifiable"(Agbenyega 2006:115). Save the children Sweden (2005:19) study report also states that students agreed on the minor type of punishment for students who are difficult to correct with counseling and discussion but they were opposed sever and extreme punishments that causes bodily damage. But what are the light or minor and reasonable and Justifiable type of punishment are not clearly discussed in the study report, though students prefer it as a last resort for improper behavior. The wide spread practicability of corporal punishment at home and school made students to consider it as normal and acceptable. The lack of awareness of their fundamental human rights might make them to confirm the harsh school discipline without question.

4. Reasons for Corporal Punishment of Children's in School

There are many factors that lead students to corporal punishment in the name of school disciplines. According to Save the Children Norway (2004: 8) and Ame et al. (2011:86) unable to do home assignment, fighting in class, Stepping at their teacher, delay for class, disagreement with teacher, bad mouthing a teacher, challenging teacher and breaching school regulations are among others which lead to a punishment of children at school. Moreover, Save the Children Norway (2004: 8) reported that weak academic achievement, not paying attention during the teaching learning process, bad dressing style of the teachers and poor resource in the school are some of the reasons of punishment for children in schools at various countries of the world.

Through making a critical look at the main factors that make students vulnerable to corporal punishment which are stated above, sometimes students are punished for an action that cannot be make them responsible. For instance, look when students are punished because of poor performance in their academics. Instead of studying and proposing an immediate action for factors which made them weak and identifying their special needs, they prefer punishment to catch up with the best performing students. Agbenyega (2006:112) study reports that around 94-98% teachers used corporal punishment for students who are very weak in their academic performance.

The other problem is when students are punished because of the school induced problems which is lack of resource. It is obvious that in large and crowded classroom environment, identifying and managing the interest of children can be very difficult. Save the children Norway (2006:19) study report implies, most school discipline problems emanated because of suffocated classroom environment and crowded seating arrangements. Teacher participants in another study also revealed that they faced problems of evaluating and assessing each student's condition and caring him/her in accordance to his/her interest because of too many students in a small class and lack of adequate counseling and trained counselors to investigate the behavior of students with disciplinary problems (save the children Sweden 2005: 19). In case of the dressing style of the teacher for instance, the students can make a laugh if the teacher is improperly dressed. Hence, the main reason for that discipline problem is not the students, but the teacher him/herself. Teachers should not be dressed in the way that diverts the attention of children's in the teaching and learning process. This refers that in a number of cases, teachers punish their students without discovering the main reason of the misbehavior. Without a clear understanding of the driving factors of the student's behavior, it could be problematic to seek solutions for the school disciplinary problems (Save the Children Norway 2004:22). This can be also happened due to the poor student- teacher relationship in the school that can be caused due to the hierarchy of power.

Table 1: Research findings on corporal punishment in school of various countries

Africa	
Botswana	92% beaten
Djibouti	27.6% hit with objects, 19.5% forced to kneel, 14.1% pinched /ears pulled
Egypt	80% of boys physically punished, 67% girls
Ethiopia	34% physically punished
Malawi	48% whipped /caned
Mozambique	40% hit with object
Swaziland	28 % hit with hand, 59% beaten with object
Togo	88% girls subject to physical violence, 87% boys
Zambia	32% hit with hand, 38% with object
East Asia and Pacific	
Cambodia	24.1% girls beaten, 34.7% boys
Philippines	18% pinched, 16% spanked with hands or objects
Taiwan	65.1% physically punished
Thailand	38% physically punished
Viet Nam	93 % physically/ emotionally punished
Europe and Central Asia	
Albania	38.5% ears pulled, 36.9 % pinched, 51.8 % hit with object , 34.3 % smacked on body and 34.3 % smacked on head
Georgia	32 % physically punished
Serbia	32 % subjected to violence
Latin America and the Caribbean	
Guyana	56.1% whipped, 18 % forced to kneel, 20.2% shaken, 26.3 % slapped
Jamaica	74 % subject to minor violence, 75.4 % subject to severe violence
Peru	59.3% punished with belts, sticks, cords, 40 % punched, pinched, pushed
Middle East	
Jordan	57 % hit with objects/ bitten/ burned, 50 % slapped, pinched, hair pulled
Lebanon	40 % physically punished
Palestein	50 % BEATEN
North America	
US	More than 223,000 children paddled in 2006/7
South Asia	
Bangladesh	91 % physically punished
India	59 % caned in Andhra Pradesh
Nepal	82 % physically punished

Source: Adopted from Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2011:7)

This table 1 above indicates the different types of punishment applied to children's in school to correct the behavior of the student. The table also indicates that physical punishment, hitting with objects, canning and beating are the most common forms of punishment used in schools of various countries. In countries like Egypt, Togo and Cambodia, a comparison of corporal punishment is made between girls and boys in school. Except in Togo, boys in Cambodia and Egypt are punished more than girls. Furthermore, according the study made by Dunne (2006:83), most of the time, the

boys faced regular and difficult types of corporal punishment in school than girls. What can be the main reason for such type of action to happen can be very debatable to us. Has it because of the girls are well behaved than boys? Is it because of women's right is so sensitive and privileged in schools to increase the enrollment of girls' education? Is it because of girls academic performance is better than boys? Because we discussed above that weak academic performance results in punishment.

If we look again to the table, we cited above, there is no result that indicates the prevalence of psychological punishment. This may be caused because of either psychological punishment is not a problem in these countries or researchers did not aware and include it in their study variables.

5. Effect of Corporal Punishment of Children's in School

Even though substantial controversies developed on the value of corporal punishment, many countries, especially most industrialized countries had banned corporal punishment for students at school understanding its negative effect on the growth and future life of children. The UN convention on the right of children that was signed and ratified by more than 190 countries with the exception of Somalia, South Sudan and USA had also banned corporal punishment that can be taken place at home, school and community.

Consequently; hereunder, we tried to discuss the negative effects of corporal punishment that we found through extracting ideas from various literatures of corporal punishment.

Different studies indicated that corporal punishment aggravates anti-social behavior. For instance, Arcus (2002:174) found a causal relationship between school corporal punishment and child abuse. He made a comparison between countries who abolished corporal punishment at all like Sweden and countries who practice it rarely like Finland, China, and Japan and countries who are implementing corporal punishment wholly or partially like America. His finding therefore indicates a high level of maltreatment or child abuse occurs in states that allow corporal punishment.

The use of corporal punishment is also found to be correlated with murder and capital punishment. Students are very likely to die from murder in schools where corporal punishment is practiced and States that experienced the highest rate of corporal punishment in schools also shown high number of youths anticipating capital punishment in the state court system (Arcus 2002:174 and Hyman 1995:124.) Unless the application of harsh punishment is cautiously controlled and accompanied by

positive response, it appears to be as likely to lead to counter aggression (RSkiba and Knesting 2001:34). They can also develop the feeling of resentment and this may gradually lead to antagonism, opposition, might and violence against school property, peers and teachers (Hyman & Perone cited in David and Dingus 2008: 245). Brown (cited in Ame et al 2013: 86-88) argued that children may use telling lies and dishonest to be free from any type of corporal punishment and it can also develop fear and psychological disturbance on innocent students.

Moreover, frequent use of corporal punishment has been resulted with psychological disorder in children. Children's can feel humiliation that experienced it from corporal punishment in schools and this can be negatively affecting the child capability in developing rational problem solving wisdom and make the child less tolerant, rebellious and antagonistic (Hyman 1995:116). it is very damaging that brings mental impairment, conduct instability, nervousness, hopelessness, self-destruction attempts, drug and alcohol addiction, low self-respect, aggression and psychological unrest (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2011:8). A study conducted in UK, USA, Hungary, New Zealand, Mongolia, Norway and Jamaica shows that the more regularly and harshly children's are beaten, the more probably they are to have indications of hopelessness or anxiety, during the time they are physically punished and adolescence stage (Gershoff 2010:44).

It also results a direct physical harm. Around 10,000 up to 20,000 students in America attained, treatment in hospitals after corporally punished in their school within one year, which is from 1986-1987 (Society for Adolescent Medicine cited in OWEN 2005:88). Children may face damage caused from corporal punishment that needs medical treatment such as permanent scar, bleeding, eye damage and broken down of limbs and even injuries that cause them to death (save the children Norway 2004:7). Physical punishment kills thousands of children each year, damages many and causes many children's physical impairments (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2013:8).

The effect of corporal punishment at educational achievement of students is also too high. It escalates students drop out, suspension, and expulsion (RSkiba and Knesting 2001:33-35). Save the children also added that the children's inspiration and desire to learn and grow is very minimal and many children's who are victims of corporal punishment become prostitution and street children by leaving schooling (save the children Sweden 2005:36). It also widely believed that corporal punishment reduces the level of understanding of the students. Children's frequently suffer from corporal punishment have a lower standard of intelligence quotient (IQ) than others that do not get

severe punishment (Aucoin et al cited in Gershoff 2010:45). Relationships have been found between physical and humiliating punishment and lower level of IQ achievements, smaller language skills, weak cognitive aptitude and weak performance at school (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2011:8). The harmful impact of physical and humiliating punishment on mental health can also affect on bodily health. Children's who frequently faced corporal punishment can be develop feeling of that "their health is poor, experiencing physical illnesses such as asthma, suffering, injuries and accidents, being hospitalized and developing habits which put their health at risk, such as smoking, fighting and alcohol consumption" (ibid).

6. Argumentative Research Findings on Corporal Punishment

While analyzing the various literatures in relation to corporal punishment in school in many countries, we found disagreement in some research findings that requires either further research or critical analysis for devising a good strategy to avoid corporal punishment in schools. Some of these findings are:

Parents with a lower socio-economic level and educational status have a higher level probability of using harsh and frequent corporal punishment. Moreover, teachers who were passed through a system that allows physical punishment will be very likely to opt corporal punishment as a best option of molding the behavior of students (Dietz 2000:1532, Agbenyega 2006:115 and Straus 1979:659). This therefore makes to say that teachers who was born from poor family background with low educational level and raised up getting corporal punishment at both home and school can apply corporal punishment more than others. This also leads to say, developing countries with low socio economic level can have high record of corporal punishment than developed ones. As far as our knowledge is concerned, there is no a comparative research analysis about corporal punishment between developing and developed countries. Thus, this is very important for further research to do comparative analysis pertaining corporal punishment between developed and developing countries.

The relationship between punishment during childhood and attained behavior during adolescence is also another surprising finding. A person he/she was punished while he/she was a child has a high probability of making a crime during the adult stage (Widom and Maxfield 2001 cited in Owen 2005:87). In line with this argument, in America, states that allow corporal punishment in their schools experienced high level of murder in school and Capital punishment record in the court

system (Arcus 2002:8 and Hyman 1995:10). Except in studies conducted in America, we did not get any research that associates corporal punishment with murder and capital punishment. Since capital punishment and murder are a common problem in almost all countries of the world, researching the correlation between corporal punishment, capital punishment and murder in another part of the world is also seems important.

There is no blind peer reviewed scientific research on the effect of corporal punishment at school for children (Adelson cited in Gershoff 2010:48). Furthermore, many studies of corporal punishment are "cross-sectional" (corporal punishment and its impact on students behavior are calculated in a single point in time) or the lack of longitudinal studies(repeated investigation of similar variables for over a long period of time) restricts to draw a sound conclusion about what impacts are produced by corporal punishment in any related study (Gershoff 2010:14).This is to mean that there are no reliable and valid research findings that clearly conveys the importance or the disadvantage of corporal punishment.

A higher level of research analysis that carried out through the analysis of existing data and findings made an analysis of five studies and found a positive effect on an average in children's immediate conformity with corporal punishment (Roberts cited Gershoff 2010:14). This lack of statically significant empirical research has not limited school administrators and policy practitioners from saying that corporal punishment at school changes and improves students' character and academic achievement and millions of students corporally punished as a result (Adelson cited in Gershoff 2010:48). The above arguments presume corporal punishment produces a short term solution and no valid research is published that disproves the significance of corporal punishment.

In contrary to the above argument, corporal punishment corrects students misbehavior and makes students outstanding in their academic performance is not supported by evidence (Dupper and Dingus 2008:244, RSkiba and Knesting 2001:33-35 and Gershoff2008:7) and there is very small empirical findings that suggests that corporal punishment improves students compliance, academic achievement, moral efficacy and behavior in the long run (Gershoff 2008:27 and Canter cited in Agbenyega 2006:116).Most of recent study results carried out using "meta- analysis" indicates corporal punishment does not improve long lasting compliance and proper moral character (Lopez et al Gershoff 2008:15). Here, though it did not say anything about the short term benefit of corporal punishment, it tries to convey the long term negative impact of it.

The other problem that we found is many researches are conducted taking into account the physical type of punishment and perhaps ignoring the psychological type of punishment which both of them are included in the save the children definition of corporal punishment. Dealing with both of them, therefore helps to design a comprehensive policy.

Researches that analyze and assess the awareness and understanding of students, teachers and parents in human rights in general and convention on the right of the child in particular are also quite essential to reduce corporal punishment in school.

In short, in this section six arguments are addressed that seems like controversial and deems critical understanding and research. First, the link of corporal punishment with poverty, murder and capital punishment. Second, the argument that reflects neutrality that says there is no valid evidence that indicates the cost-benefit analysis of corporal punishment. When this happens parents and school teachers are practicing it by the wrong logic that says since something is not proved as well, it is bad or since no one proves something is bad, therefore doing it is good. Third, there are studies that indicate the importance of corporal punishment for short term compliance. Fourth, there are various studies that states that the cost of corporal punishment outnumbers than its benefits in the long run. Fifth, psychological punishment which is the other type of punishment is not covered in many literatures. Sixth, Awareness of students, teachers and parents on human rights and convention on the right of children's requires further research.

7. Conclusion

Corporal punishment is a serious problem in schools of both developing and developed countries of the world. School teachers and administrators have been applying it, presuming for shaping students' behavior and creating suitable teaching- learning environment. It contradicts with the fundamental human rights of children's and thus, it is the serious violation of human rights. Understanding the negative impact of corporal punishment, international bodies like UN established a convention that safeguards the right of children within their state, community, school and family. Consequently; the convention on the right of the child becomes the most ratified and domesticated convention in history. When this happens, we can expect that it cannot be faced a significant challenge to its implementation. Though many of research findings indicates that corporal punishment is too severe in countries who are not part of the convention and member countries

who did not include in their educational system, the problem going on even in countries who adopted it in their school system.

Even though the major goal of school discipline is to make students ethically and morally bounded, to stop inappropriate and unacceptable behavior and to improve students' academic performance, corporal punishment is associated with unattractive consequence in many studies. It damages the psychological, moral, physical and emotional development of a child. Children's that are victims of frequent corporal punishment can also feel hopeless, low self-confidence and anxiety. They can also develop hate in schooling and stop to go school, because they know what they can face if they go to school. Their level of understanding and problem solving skill is very low and that is the way they develop an aggressive and deviant behavior. Thus, scaling up the principles and values of the human rights is essential to address the problem of corporal punishment in the school environment.

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