

Maintaining Discipline in Private Primary Schools in the Wake of Ban on Corporal Punishment: A Qualitative Case Study of Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Maintaining discipline in the classroom is one of the major priorities in any school. A hike in students' discipline issues is allegedly linked with teachers' incompetence to manage classrooms after corporal punishment has been banned by the Government of Pakistan. Teachers do not enjoy the powers which they traditionally used to enjoy on the basis of their knowledge or position anymore, which has not only lowered teachers' morale but also produced a lack of professional commitment and high retention rate among private school teachers in Lahore. This

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instrumental case study aimed at identifying teachers' preparedness for effective classroom management techniques in the current scenario and how no-corporal punishment has affected their satisfaction and commitment to their profession. The qualitative case study approach was adopted for the study, and four teachers of a private school in Lahore were purposively selected. The study used a self-constructed semi-structured interview guide. The analysis of data revealed that teachers felt disempowered in classrooms not because the no-corporal punishment has been imposed, but due to their own inability to use alternates effectively. The teachers are aware of and are in favor of the ban; they, however, thought that the school administration and government of Pakistan should hold training sessions not only for teachers and administrators but also for parents.

Keywords: *Classroom Management, Curriculum, Corporal Punishment, Instruction*

Introduction

Being a teacher does not always mean being an instructor only; it means being an inspiration, a motivator, and a mentor. It is about leaving a trail for the students to follow. The students generally replicate their teacher's behaviors. Therefore, teaching is a responsibility that casts lifelong impacts on individuals: A teacher is responsible for bringing quality in the students' lives and is responsible for

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students' learning and academic achievements. A teacher does not only deal with the formal education but also has the responsibility to build a student's character and groom his or her personality as well.

To ensure the maximum learning of the students, a teacher has to become an effective manager. Studies suggest that an effectively managed and organized classroom has positive effects on teaching-learning processes, ultimately resulting in better student's academic performances (Adeyemo, 2012; John R. Mc Garity & Butts, 1984; Marzano & Pickering, 2003). A teacher, however, is solely responsible for effective classroom management that determines both; students' engagement and students' behavior leading to a successful teaching-learning process (John R. Mc Garity & Butts, 1984).

Teachers use different strategies to rectify the disruptive behaviors of the students. The use of physical punishment was thought to be one of the most effective strategies. There was mounting distress regarding the negative impacts of physical punishment across the globe that lead to a worldwide campaign of abandoning the use of such practices in schools and all the educational institutes (GITECP, 2001). Following which, Pakistan also banned corporal punishment through legal proceedings in 2014 (GOP, 2014). Marvi Memon (A member of the National Assembly) presented a bill in the National Assembly that led to putting an absolute ban on corporal punishments in any educational setting leading to further legislations. The bill defines

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corporal punishment as it was defined by UNICEF in its charter. The definition is given as under: "Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light" (UNICEF, 2009).

This ban has somehow minimized the violence against students but has posed a serious challenge to teachers' authority in the classroom at the same time. All the three factors of an educational triangle, that is, parents, teachers, and school administrators have little or no understanding of corporal punishment in the Pakistani context, and they have, therefore, taken the seriousness of the concept to another level (Naz, Khan, Daraz, Hussnain, & Khan, 2011).

Private school teachers, especially females, are more prone to an undisciplined and disorganized classroom. Mostly, students from affluent families come to private schools where the teacher does not enjoy power on the basis of knowledge or their position. This has not only lowered a teacher's morale but also has resulted in high teacher burnout and attrition rate. Although the law "*mar nahi pyar*" declares the use of corporal punishment unlawful, it is nonetheless practiced by a great number of private school teachers (Naz et al., 2011).

Review of the Related Literature

Discipline in schools can be defined as obedience to classroom norms specifically and school rules in general. Maintaining discipline has

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always been a major concern for all the stakeholders of education (Elbla, 2012). For administration and parents, it is vital to bring discipline in students' lives as it is thought to be very closely linked to their academic achievement, which ultimately contributes to a mature personality (Busienei, 2012). Students resist discipline as it limits freedom and personal choice (Hambacher, 2018). It is also found in a study that students who have received harsh punishments from their parents at home tend to retaliate more to school rules and discipline (Henningham. & Francis., 2018). School management and teachers have come up with several ways to compel students to be disciplined in class.

Corporal punishment is, however, the oldest way and is thought to be the most effective of the discipline maintenance strategies (K. Evans & Lester, 2010). Corporal punishment has been supported by many of the religious and social doctrines and has been the center of debate for its adverse effects. It is most widely used in primary schools and generally cause long term effects on a child's personality (Gershoff, 2017). A study explored that physical punishment is useful in extreme cases, but before inflicting punishment, students must have a realization that the punishment is for the correction of behavior and not for damaging their ego or insulting them (Mweru, 2010). Moreover, the punishment should not be too harsh, and it must be used as the last resort (E. Evans &

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Richardson, 1995; Gershoff, 2002; Paolucci & Violato, 2004).

Adverse effects may include the development of aggressive behavior and stubbornness and withdrawal from social activity. It is asserted that frequent corporal punishments may cause a permanent impairment in a child's psychology later in life (Ferguson, 2013). Several studies have revealed that students are not only slapped but are being hit with almost anything, from a stick to the wooden boards on every part of the body. Face, backs, and buttocks are the most targeted areas (Gershoff, 2017). Another study that was conducted in America with an aim to investigate the effects of corporal punishments in promoting anti-social behaviors among students found that corporal punishment promotes anti-social behaviors among children of all ages regardless of the racial and ethnic groups they belonged to (Kaylor, 2004). Mental harassment that has been declared the nonphysical form of corporal punishment has even more damaging effects on students' mental health (Onyango, Simatwa, & Gogo, 2016). A study suggested that strict policies on the state level should be framed to ban corporal punishments of all types (Morrell, 2001).

The only justification the advocates of corporal punishments have is "compliance" that may be attained as a resultant. Compliance, however, emerged is a short term behavior (Gershoff, 2002). Another study further explains that the punitive style

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has an inverse relation to students' motivation and learning outcomes (Misbah, Dahar, & Tahira, 2016).

Banning a long-practiced ritual requires great efforts and a careful analysis of the possible challenges. So is the case with banning corporal punishments in Pakistan. Young and inexperienced teachers are more prone to undisciplined classrooms as compared to experienced teachers. Usually, schools hold one-day workshops to better alternatives. The goal is only attainable if carefully planned and if teachers are provided resources to work with. In other words, the ban is not effective where teachers are not provided with alternative ways and are not trained to address the problem otherwise (Han, 2011).

There is a high chance that if teachers are not provided with alternate solutions, they will keep on using corporal punishment. It is vital that teachers should at least have the basic training regarding the procedures and classroom management rules. Although fieldwork and time are required for the development of required competencies, teacher training programs, and mentoring are proved to be successful for novice teachers. A pilot study conducted in Tanzania supports the notion that if teachers are made aware of the hazards and are trained to use suggested alternates effectively in their classrooms, there is a high probability that teachers will avoid corporal punishments in their classrooms (Kaltenbacha, Hermenau, Nkuba, Goessmann, & Hecker, 2017).

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Teachers who are efficacious tend to support positive behaviors and have a better class outcome and are less likely to encounter undisciplined classrooms (Kaufman, 2004). He narrates a teacher as a leader and as a follower at the same time in the same organization. Both the two factors are dependent upon the teachers' own perception of self-efficacy. Bandura has defined self-efficacy as the beliefs of an individual on his own worth of producing the desired performance outcomes (Bandura, 1994). Teacher's self-efficacy is, therefore, very closely linked to the achievement of organizational as well as classroom goals (Moses, 2003). Friedman defines a teacher's self-efficacy as the ability to create coherence among organizational goals and class activities. It is about delivering the knowledge and moral values to the students, being responsive to the unforeseen conditions, and the ability to act logically and effortlessly to discipline infractions (Friedman, 2002).

Literature suggests various alternate solutions to classroom management in the wake of abolishing corporal punishment in a school. For instance, rules and norms must be communicated in loud and clear terms. The consequences that students and their families may have to face in case of violation should be well talked about through seminars, notices, and meetings. In addition, positive reinforcements, including rewards and benefits on displaying discipline in the classroom, may be used (Busienei, 2012). Likewise, another study emphasizes the

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importance of rewards for good behaviors so much so that he declared it the first step to a disciplined and happy classroom (Lewis, 2001). He elaborated that teachers provide students what they deserve are more likely to face the undisciplined classroom than those who provide students what they need. Another study sheds light upon using several other forms of positive reinforcements, maximizing students' engagement while keeping their interests in view to ensure a more disciplined classroom (Sadurdin, 2012). Furthermore, another study encourages the use of the Responsive Classroom Approach as it is helpful in attaining an environment that is conducive to academic achievement. This approach deals with discipline issues by fostering responsibility and by engaging them in activities that nurture their feelings of belongings and social skills (Kaufman, 2004). In addition, counseling and guidance are also very important in shaping students' behavior that ultimately results in a disciplined classroom (Ondima, Mokogi, Ombaba, & Osoro, 2013).

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this instrumental case study was to identify teachers' preparedness for effective classroom management techniques in the current scenario and how no-corporal punishment has affected their satisfaction and commitment to their profession.

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Methods

The instrumental case study approach to qualitative research (Creswell, 2007, 2013) was selected to address the objectives of the study since an instrumental case study focuses on the specific group or occupation to develop a deeper understanding of a specific problem (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2009; Yin, 2018). A semi-structured thematic interview guide was prepared to engage the participants in an in-depth discussion. Initially, the guide was comprised of 45 questions. While conducting a pilot interview, interviewers excluded several repetitive and ambiguous questions. The final interview guide was comprised of 32 questions divided in five themes: *Professional commitment, teacher's competence to manage classrooms, understanding of no-corporal punishment law, discipline issues in school and challenges faced by teachers after the implementation of the ban.*

Four female primary school teachers were selected as the participants of the study. The participants were selected through purposive sampling (Stake, 2013; Stark & Torrance, 2005), a technique that focuses on certain characteristics of a population that are helpful in providing the answers to the research questions (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). To recruit the participants from a private primary school in Lahore, the selection of this particular school was guided by the assumption that

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schools that lack resources are more inclined to corporal punishments (Han, 2011).

One of the researchers visited the private primary school and met with the principal in her office, explained the context of the study, and requested her to provide four teachers who must have experienced the research phenomenon in the classroom. Having received the principal's permission, the researcher fixed an appointment with the teachers' mutual agreement. The researcher then met with the four teachers individually in the principal's office in her absence and enquired of their willingness for participation in the study. Three female teachers agreed, and the fourth one refused to be a part of the study due to some personal reasons which she did not disclose. The principal then provided another teacher who was asked for her willingness in the same manner and was finalized for the interview on the scheduled date.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2007), for it is the most frequently used data collection technique in qualitative research. The interview guide was prepared in which four general themes, along with basic questions, was proposed, and additional questions were asked to probe the interviewee upon their responses during the interview.

In the interview, the participants were asked to describe their perceptions of no-corporal punishment law. The teachers were asked to discuss their class management competencies and the challenges they faced after the promulgation of the

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no-corporal punishment law in order to get a better understanding of how their perceptions are shaped. Interviews lasted between 15 to 45 minutes. All interviews were conducted by female researchers. All interviews were conducted in Urdu and were recorded completely with the permission of the interviewees and their principal. During data collection, the interviewers tried to build a liaison to develop a trustworthy relationship. The interviewers tried not to intrude on their personal lives and experiences. Prior to the interview sessions, the principal and the participants were ensured that the name of the school and teachers as well would be anonymized in the written report and would not be disclosed to the public (Kvale, 1996). All recordings and transcripts were given pseudo names (Miller, Birch, Mauthner, & Jessop, 2012; Wiles, 2012) in order to ensure teachers' anonymity. All interviews were transcribed and printed on A4 sheets and were tallied again with audio recordings in order to avoid misinterpretation of the acquired data.

The handwritten analysis of interview data was carried out by reading the data, marking it by hand, and dividing it into parts (Creswell, 2012). This type of analysis was preferred because the data comprised of four interview transcripts, and it was easy to keep track of files and locate text passages within the transcripts. The process of analyzing the interview text began with the coding of the interview data. Coding not only helped in identifying potential themes in the transcripts but also assisted in

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highlighting quotes for use as evidentiary warrants to support claims from the data to be used in the final research report (Creswell, 2012; Saldaña, 2011, 2013).

Results

Detailed interviews with the participants and the diverse opinions obtained have led to the emergent of five themes. Themes explain the teachers' understating of discipline management, corporal punishments, and the challenges the non-corporal punishment law has brought to the teachers into the classroom.

Theme 1: Professional Qualification and Experience build the very fabric essential for an effective and disciplined classroom. Teachers either holding any professional degree or having an experience of 5 or more years were found to be efficient in handling the class without using corporal punishments. Aasma, a mature teacher, having an experience of 10 years in school teaching shared: "Since students have vocal cords, they will use them. They are healthy, so they will be active in class. They are mentally stable, so they will respond to their environment. A teacher should not feel threatened. Rather, she should learn to use their physical and mental energies in a positive way. If she fails to engage the students, she will most likely face the discipline issues into the classroom, and the use of corporal punishment in addressing all these problems is an absolute disaster."

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On the contrary to Aasma, Nowairah, a young teacher holding a BA degree and no professional qualification, shared her concerns by saying, "Some students don't listen unless they are beaten. My brother is very stubborn, and he only listens to my father, who often uses a cane if he disobeys. So, there should not be a ban on corporal punishments but in defined limits." This also explains that teachers having a violent/aggressive background have a prerequisite to corporal punishment and are most likely to use it as the only effective available solution.

Theme 2: Dedicated & Ambitious Teachers:

Two out of four participants opted for teaching by choice and hence showed a high level of commitment. They were ambitious and wanted to excel in their fields. They didn't use the unavailability of resources as an excuse; rather, they had devised ways that equally support their organizational goals and their students' well-being in their own capacity using only the available resources

Aasma declared herself a self-taught teacher and was not at all dependent on her management to help her deal with her class problems. "Internet is teeming with ideas and experiences. If we are not ignorant of our needs, we will find a solution to almost every problem on the Internet."

Theme 3: Understanding of No-Corporal Punishment Law: Most of the teachers had a clear understanding of no-corporal punishment law. Three

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out of four teachers supported the law. They believed that corporal punishment was found to be ineffective in discipline maintenance; rather, it develops a hostile attitude in students. For example, a teacher underscored: “Controlling behavior by inducing aggression only brings more aggression in children.”-Aasma. She stressed that a teacher must have a deep understanding of a child’s psychology and be able to identify the underlying reasons for which children misbehave. She further emphasized: “No child is born on a rebellious nature; there are always some underlying circumstances behind undesired behaviors. If they are misbehaving, they need help, and who else can help them better than their teachers.”-Aasma.

Theme 4: Alternates to Corporal Punishment: If the teacher is trained to use the alternate strategies, she is less likely to use corporal punishment in her classroom. Shehla, a qualified teacher with an experience of ten years, shared: “Corporal punishment is not as helpful in maintaining a class as building the self-respect of the students. A strong teacher-student relationship helps in achieving the aim. A student with strong self-respect will never violate the rules. Also, planning and implementing an engaging lesson plan is equally important.” 2 out of 4 teachers seemed to be using the alternatives quite successfully in their classes. Alternatives such as setting classroom-rules, assigning responsibilities to students, practicing silent-cues, guiding and counseling students, displaying behavior boards, and showing displeasure

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are found to be more effective. Taking away breaks as a punishment was also found to be equally helpful.

Theme 5: Challenges to teachers' authority:

All of the teachers opposed the idea that the law was limiting the teachers' authority; however, they all agreed that its management, their incompetency to create a balance between students' well-being and teachers' authority was actually posing challenges to the teachers' authority into the classrooms. For example, teachers stated: "It is not the law, parents and school management are limiting the teachers' authority"-Shehla. And "students must not be preached about the law. If a student complains about the mistreatment, the matter must be thoroughly investigated by the concerned authority, and if the teacher is found guilty even, then the student should not be informed about the consequences the teacher has to face afterward."-Nowairah

Though the study was thematically structured and focused on commonalities, yet there were some differed but significant statements. A participant, for example, highlighted the need for awareness campaigns about the non-corporal punishment law both for the teachers and parents. The same participants stressed that the successful use of alternates to corporal punishments requires in campus teachers' training since every school differs in its environment, rules, and resources. Another participant stressed that the consequences for violating the class discipline should be clearly drawn

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and known to students, parents, and the teachers. Also, the teacher stated that the managements are usually inconsistent with alternate practices. As soon as the complaint is received about negative reinforcement, it is dropped that instant.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study identifies the need for working to be done in the area of classroom competencies of teachers, classroom management, and its effectiveness in the Pakistani context. The study was focused on finding the ways teachers are using in maintaining discipline in their classrooms while the law of no-corporal punishment law is intact. Though the use of case study research with a sample limits generalizations to the other contexts, the findings of the study provide insight for school management and teachers in understanding the issues teachers face in the presence of no-corporal punishment law—and in devising ways and strategies to a well-disciplined organization, where all the three stakeholders, that is, management, teachers and parents together ensure a happy and safe learning environment for their children.

This study suggests that steps should be taken in order to ensure the teacher's authority while observing the no-corporal punishment law. Professional training programs should be obligatory for all those who wish to join teaching as a profession, followed by the internship/apprenticeship in natural school settings. Measures should be taken to discourage time pass teaching practices. Age and

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qualification restrictions must be introduced. In addition, any new methodology/legislation/law must not be enforced without training and sessions prior to implementation. These sessions should provide a very detailed overview of every aspect of the newly introduced concept. Management should be trained to create a balance and harmony among customer needs, demands, and teachers' satisfaction. School management should provide proper facilities for training and material, financial and ethical support (incentives and quality awards) and a proper platform for conducting curriculum mapping including in the institutional curriculum and pedagogical books to improve instruction.

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