

**Myths of Corporal punishment in schools and its psycho-social effects on students: A Study based on Teachers' perspective in Quetta, Balochistan.**

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**Abstract**

*Corporal punishment is associated with a variety of psycho-social and behavioral issues among school children. The use of corporal punishment is a common practice in schools particularly by teachers. A set of myths provide shelter to the actors of corporal punishment and let believe its ill propagated beliefs. This research study aims to determine the prevailing myths of corporal punishment in schools and its psycho-social effects on students. The study was carried out in government and private/NGO owned schools located in the urban and rural localities of district Quetta, Balochistan. By using multiple techniques of sampling, a total of 189 school teachers were interviewed via structured questionnaire. Mustered data was analyzed through SPSS by implying descriptive statistical analysis. The study finds out that corporal punishment has numerous negative effects on the psycho-social development of students. It affects the academic performance, trait based psychological development and behavior based personality development. The study also identifies alternative methods of CP to improve discipline and academic learning of students.*

**Key words:**

Myths, corporal punishment, psycho-social effects, students.

## Introduction

Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force towards a child for the purpose of controlling the child's behavior, and is often used as a punishment. It is inflicted on the child's body with the intention of causing some degree of pain or discomfort, however mild it may be (Cashmore et al, 1995). Different methods of physical punishments are commonly used as corporal punishment, for example, slapping, spanking, smacking, pinching, twisting arms or ears, kicking, pulling hairs, hitting with different objects such as stick, belt, whip, shoe etc., and forcing child to stand or sit in uncomfortable position (UNCRC, 2006). While psychological punishments most commonly practiced include verbal abuse, making ridicule, keeping the child in isolation and scaring etc.

Studies reflect that corporal punishment is not only practiced at homes and work places, but its use is also common in schools. It has significant association with the mental health problems among children (Zolotor et al, 2008). There is a well said quotation 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' having a philosophy of child rearing strongly held by both professionals and laymen. Teachers in schools practice corporal punishment with intention to discipline children (Kennedy, 1995). The use of corporal punishments is supported by specific attitude found in among teachers, parents and community.

There are several driving forces that create an enabling environment for the practice of corporal punishment in schools. Such forces include; the attitude about CP by teachers, school heads, officials and family members in particular and the overall society in general. Such attitude is supported by some common myths/beliefs regarding corporal punishment (Khuwaja et al, 2018). For example, it is believed that i) some children can only be managed by using physical punishment; ii) most children do not study if teachers do not punish them; iii) fear motivates children to study regularly and behave appropriately in school; iv) children who receive physical punishment generally perform better in exams than children who receive no punishment; v) punishment rapidly reduce/eliminate misbehavior; vi) it facilitates learning; vii) increase respect for rule and regulations and viii) use of corporal punishment is helpful in character building (Dubanoski, Inaba and Gerkewicz, 1983; Reinholz, 1979).

The prevailing myths and beliefs promote the perception that the use of CP is beneficial if given carefully (Akhtar, n.d). These beliefs are commonly accepted due to ignorance and ill propagation in the society, thus, increasingly affect the attitude of aforementioned actors to accept and practice CP in schools. At same time there are segments of society that are opponents of corporal punishment—claiming that the use of CP in schools has no considerable positive effects on learning achievement and discipline among students. Similarly, literature on effects of corporal punishment reveals that it has short and long term effects on the social and psychological development of children. It has negative effects on academic performance, trait based psychological development, and behavior based personality development and increases the risk of drop out from schools.

### **Review of Literature**

There is a plenty of research work available on the psycho-social effects of corporal punishment on children especially in schools. Corporal punishment has both direct and indirect effects on social and psychological aspects of students' life in short as well as long terms. Following literature reviews the said effects.

### **Development troublesome and aggressive behavior on student**

Children will become knowledgeable and skill full and keen observer if they would not be punished because corporeal punishment may develop number of complexities in children like wise aggression, anger over sensitiveness hypertension rude behaviors, further disturbing their classmates, learning as well as possession of behaviorally (Naz et al, 2011). This is often because those students who have been subjected to corporeal punishment have learned through their experiences that physical violence is an appropriate way to handle clash. Corporeal punishment can also affect student's personality and school achievements and it also develops some mental disorders. (Scarre and Geoffrey, 2003). Harsh and regular corporal punishment received in childhood increases the risk of violent behavior in adulthood (Danish and Iqbal, 2016).

### **Effect of corporal punishment on learning process of the student.**

Corporeal punishment has great negative effects on student's lives whether that is on their personality development or that is on their learning level. Students who are corporeally punished by teachers, they became habitual of that punishment by that reason they learn violence and think wrath, that punishment is like installation of harsh behavior in their minds (Wielkrewiez, 1997). Consequently, they became unable to solve their problems by themselves. In those conditions they grow with low self-concept and show behavior depression. And in their daily routine they always looks quite confused and according to the saying of some teachers that due to corporeal punishment hate born in their minds from education and institutions, so those students become unable to give proper answer to any question and their interest in education decreases day by day and then some students do not go to school regularly and they left the school because of corporal punishment (Pandey, 2001).

### **Effects of corporal punishment on student's academic behavior and personality**

Corporeal punishment use by teachers at primary level has numerous negative effects on student's academic behavior, personality and psycho social developments. Students are too much sensitive at primary level so that they became very easily upset at pity things. As we know that corporeal punishment does not put good impacts on the student's behavior and psycho development, it causes Stress and depression on students, corporeal punishment also develops fair in student's behavior (Breen, 2015). Students who are effected by the physical pain means corporeal punishment is applied on them their behavior suddenly change towards extreme and behave become unlikable and harsh manner with in society and society will not accept them because of their harsh behavior which is the result of corporeal punishment. They are always frightened everywhere and lack of self-confidence is developed in them and they always fell doubtful in academic career and other social scenario because fear of corporeal punishment has fully surrounded their minds from every aspects (Fergusson and Lynskey, 1997).

### **Harsh corporal punishment effects on psycho social development.**

Harsh corporeal punishments is considered a very bad punishment which do not recover students' psycho social development. In fact, one current study start that there are many states where corporeal punishment is frequently used, so in those states academic performances are not that much appreciate able, but against it in number of states the educational institutions have accomplished corporeal punishment and they have declared it a negative punishment so the performances of those institutions where this punishment is useful if quite better in comparison with those where corporeal punishment exists. (Leary et al, 2008). Teacher are the spiritual father of students so because of corporal punishment The relationship between teacher and students become disturbed, when students are punished by their teachers while that punishment they are seen by their classmates or friends so by reason of that punishment they feel ashamed in their institution, then they take leave on regular bases or become less regular in schools. Corporeal punishment is ineffective method which is usually used for appropriate for disciplining students both boys and girls. It is broadly satisfactory in unindustrialized world or also in Pakistan (GIEACPC, 2015).

Corporal punishment exacted on a child by this woman or his teacher can harshly injury the parent-child association. In the meta-analysis, all educations on the subject originate a connotation between corporal punishment and a reduction in the superiority of the parent-child rapport. One of the lessons establish that two year olds who were tangibly chastised by their mothers were additional probable to aloofness themselves from their mothers than two year olds who were not tangibly reprovded. Far along studies have start that corporal punishment is accompanying with poor supplement by offspring to their mothers and with poor family relationships in adolescence and young adulthood? Corporal condemnation can teach children to fear and avoid their teacher: children report feeling hurt, angry and worried of their teacher after being physically punished (Leary et al, 2008).

### **Impact of corporeal punishment on students' motivational behavior**

The corporeal punishment of impacts on student's motivational behavior and academics behavior, according to researchers that behavior of teacher extremely effects on students'

learning and academic behavior. A study on the short and long term effects of corporal punishments concluded that children may be forced to follow the demands of adults in short term as a result of corporal punishments, however, the long term positive change in behavior may not be achieved (Rimal and Pokharel, 2013). It is also observed that teachers of government and private schools alternatively use the corporeal punishment to inspire students for classroom education and control the primary school discipline and also needs to recover their students by physically violence. Instead of Corporal Punishment there can be many other ways to develop discipline or behavior, corporal punishment is one of the unsafe aspects in educational way of an individual student that is persistent to quit the roots of personality development and academic career of the students. The corporeal punishment has proved multidimensional impacts leading students' academic presentation. The study suggests that good relations between teachers and students and education training and awareness as regards may help to decrease ways of corporeal punishment and adopting different positive ways to correct students' misbehavior is expected (Smith & Brooks-Gunn, (1997).

### **Research Objective**

This research study aims to explore the generally believed myths regarding practice of corporal punishment in schools and its psycho-social effects on students.

### **Research Methodology**

The research study is descriptive in nature. A total of 189 teachers were interviewed from 24 schools in the district Quetta of Balochistan. Out of 24 schools, 12 were located government and 12 were private/NGO owned. 14 schools were located in urban areas and 10 were located in rural

areas. Field survey was conducted in boys', girls' and mix-gender schools. Multiple methods of sampling were implied to select appropriate and true representation of schools and teachers. Data was collected through structure questionnaire, school information checklist and observation. The collected data was analyzed in SPSS and graphical illustrations were made in MS Excel.

## **Results and discussion**

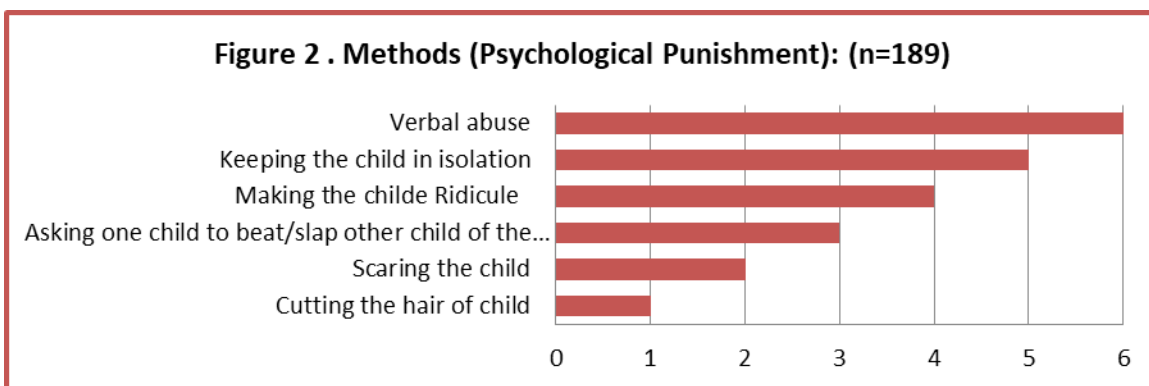
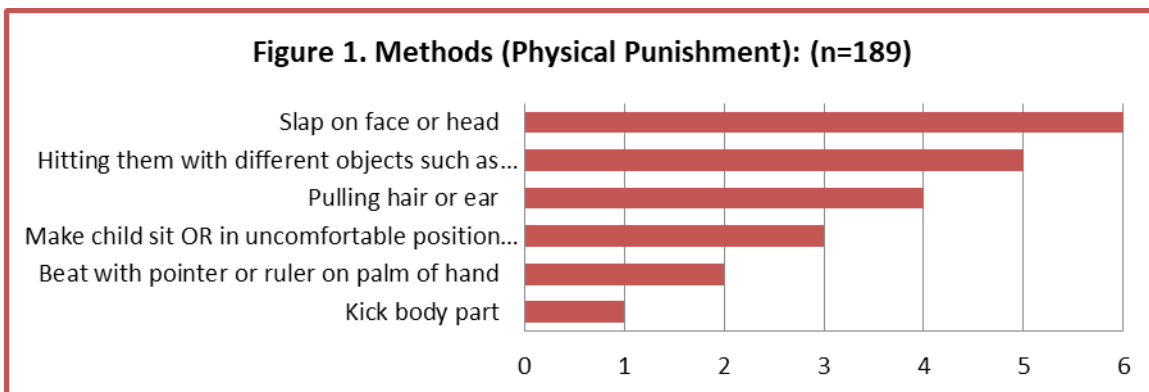
### **Teachers' perception of CP.**

It is important to know the understanding level of teachers regarding corporal punishment. Participants of the field survey were asked to briefly explain what corporal punishment is. A variety of responses were collected;

Most of the teachers know corporal punishment as physical punishment. A very high majority of the teachers did not think the psychological punishments as CP. Male teachers mostly explained their understanding of CP by giving examples of merely physical punishments such as beating students with different objects (stick, pipe, etc.), slapping on face or head, forcing the child sit or stand in uncomfortable positions (cock, standing on one leg, raising both hands up for a long time). Female teachers mostly thought the lighter physical punishments such as pulling the ear, beating with pen, etc. Only few teachers (13 percent) know that psychological punishments are also CP as used in a variety of ways in schools. The information implies that physical punishments are more common to the teachers in schools, while ignorantly teachers also use a variety of psychological punishments.

### **Methods of CP used by school teachers.**

The field survey sought to find out methods of corporal punishments used by school teachers. Methods were classified into two groups i.e. physical and psychological. Teachers give a variety of physical punishments to children in schools ranging from very harsh to light punishments. The intensity of punishment depends on different factors including type and location of school; type of teacher; past experience of teacher; act of student and reaction of parents and community towards punishments given by teachers.



During field survey, it was found that slapping on face or head of the students was very much common punishment for students followed by hitting the students with different objects such as stick, cane, belt, whip, shoe, broom, pipe, electric wire, etc. Such punishment is more often used by male teachers in government schools. The third most common type of punishment in schools was pulling hair or ear of students. This type of punishment was more common in girls' schools and private schools usually given by female teachers. Making students sit OR stand in uncomfortable position for example cock or one leg was the fourth mostly used method of giving punishments to schools, making cook is more common among boys while standing on one leg for a long time period was observed in both gender schools. It was found that female teachers used lighter methods of punishments for example beating students with pointer of rural on palm



of hand. Few teachers also reported that students are sometimes kicked on different parts of the body.

On the other hand, as elaborate in figure 2, it was also found during field survey that psychological punishments were also commonly used by teachers. Verbal abuse was most common type of punishment used by school teachers particularly by male teachers in government schools, followed by keeping the child in isolation for a long period of time as a punishment. The third common type of punishment as reported by teachers was making the child ridicule, teasing, or making other children make laughter on the very particular student. Asking one student of the class to beat or slap other student of the class was the fourth method of giving psychological punishment. Scaring the child and cutting the hair of student as punishment were ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Psychological punishments are more deteriorating for psycho-social development of the students in a long run.

### **Positive results of CP on students**

The field survey intended to find out the perception of teachers regarding positive results of corporal punishments on students. Teachers were asked to express their opinion on four likert scale options against the given statements. The scales included fully agree, partly agree, partly disagree and fully disagree. The collected information was analyzed and is presented in table 1.

Data shows that almost two-third teachers expressed disagreement with the statement that most children don't study if teachers don't punish them, while a total of 35 percent teachers believed that children need to be given punishment for proper involvement in studies. Checking the relationship of corporal punishment with exam results, still 23 percent teacher thought that children who receive physical punishment generally perform better in exams than other children who don't receive punishments. Students who feel fear of being punished by teacher bring about positive change in their attitude – 39 percent teachers agreed with the statement and 61% disagreed. One of the indicators of positive attitude is taking responsibility – a total of 32 percent teachers believed that punishment makes learner responsible while 68 percent disagreed. Additionally, results of field survey shows that there is a positive relationship between CP and

discipline. Teachers use CP as a tool to ensure discipline among students in the schools. A total of 53 percent teachers thought that learners become more disciplined due to punishments. Teachers are encouraged to give punishments to students if parents don't show any reaction and if parents don't approve punishments given to their children, teachers will ensure maximum avoidance. A total of 29 percent respondents expressed their view that most parents approve of physical punishment of their children in schools.

**Table 1. Positive results of CP on students (n=189)**

S#	Results of CP	Fully Agree	Partly Agree	Partly Disagree	Fully Disagree
1.1	Most children do not study if teachers do not punish them	12	13	36	39
1.2	Children who receive physical punishment generally perform better in exams than children who receive no punishment	8	15	32	45
1.3	Fear bring about a positive attitude in the learners	15	24	22	39
1.4	Most parents approve of physical punishment of their children in schools	12	17	13	58
1.5	Corporal punishment make learners responsible	14	18	30	38
1.6	Corporal punishment helps learners to do their work with more attention	14	12	40	34
1.7	Learners become more disciplined because of corporal punishment	28	25	19	28
1.8	The cause of young antisocial attitude is lack of corporal punishment	10	8	31	51
1.9	Some children can only be managed using physical punishment	34	25	26	15

Values of table are in percentage

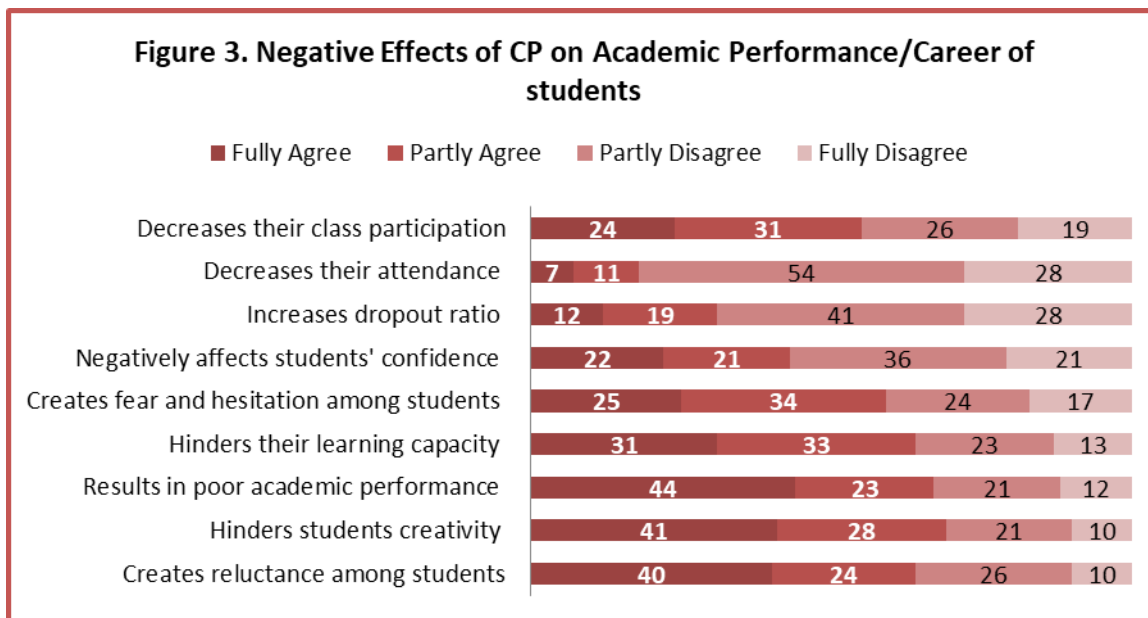
Field survey showed that there is partial relationship of CP and home work done by students. A cumulative of 26 percent (one fourth) respondents thought that CP helps learners do their work

with more attention. The relationship between CP and young anti-social attitude is not significant as per field survey. A total of 82 percent teachers disagreed with the opinion that the cause of young antisocial attitude is lack of corporal punishment. Lastly, almost half respondents (52% in total) still believed that some children can only be managed using physical punishment. However, this statement refers to some specific children – not generally for all children. It refers to those children who have mostly discipline issues in schools.

### **Negative effects of CP on Academic Performance/Career of students.**

Studies have witnessed that corporal punishment has numerous negative effects on the academic performance and career of students in short as well as long term. The study tried to find how CP directly and indirectly has negative effects on the academics of students.

Respondents of the field survey showed a variety of responses to different indicators of negative effects of corporal punishments. A high majority of teacher (44% fully agree & 23% partly agree) were of opinion that corporal punishment results in poor academic performance. Learning achievements in different subjects and exam results of those students who are regularly punished—are not satisfactory. Use of CP by teachers highly hinders students creativity (41 % fully agree and 28% partly agree), and it creates reluctance among students (40% fully agree & 24% partly agree). The learning capacity of students is also decreased to a high level if punishment is used as tool for capacity building. A cumulative of 64 percent teachers thought that CP hinders the learning capacity of students. at the same time CP punishment decreases the class participation of students as a cumulative of 55 percent teachers agree with the notion.



Values in figure are in percentage

Similarly, it was found that use of CP in schools creates fear and hesitation among students – as 25% fully agreed and 34% partly agreed to the given statement. On the other hand, the data of figure 13 shows that the negative of CP on attendance and dropout ratio are not rational. Most teachers showed disagreement with the statements that CP decreases students' attendance OR increases the ratio of dropout. Most teachers believed that CP increases the attendance rate of students and it has nothing to do with dropout of students. Mostly students drop out of schools due to other external factors – a teacher said.

### Traits Based Psychological Effects of CP

Traits basically cannot be taught to person, they can develop over period of time. A person has to learn traits on his/her own and let them develop. Use of corporal punishment in school has several trait based negative psychological effects on children.

Finding of field survey as presented in table 2 shows that corporal punishment has a variety of trait based psychological effects on students in school. Teachers have recorded different responses both having significant and insignificant relationships with CP. a total of 29 percent

teachers agree that CP causes depression, a cumulative of 45 percent respondents believed that CP lowers self-esteem / decreases self-respect of students. Due to corporal punishment students become pessimistic/see the negative aspects of things – a total of 42 percent teachers expressed agreement to the statement. Being the regular recipient of CP, students feel uneasiness and involves in inferiority complex – a cumulative of 78 % and 76% teachers agreed respectively. Additionally, a majority of respondents (64% in cumulative) considered corporal punishment as mental harassment for students. While gauging its effects a total of one third (33%) teachers think it increases aggression among students.

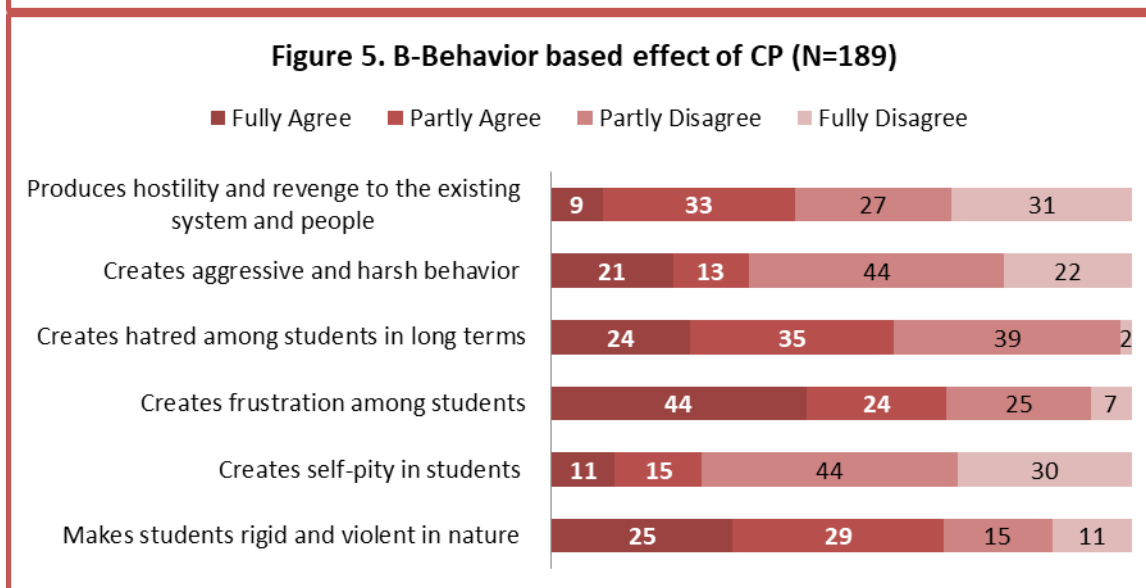
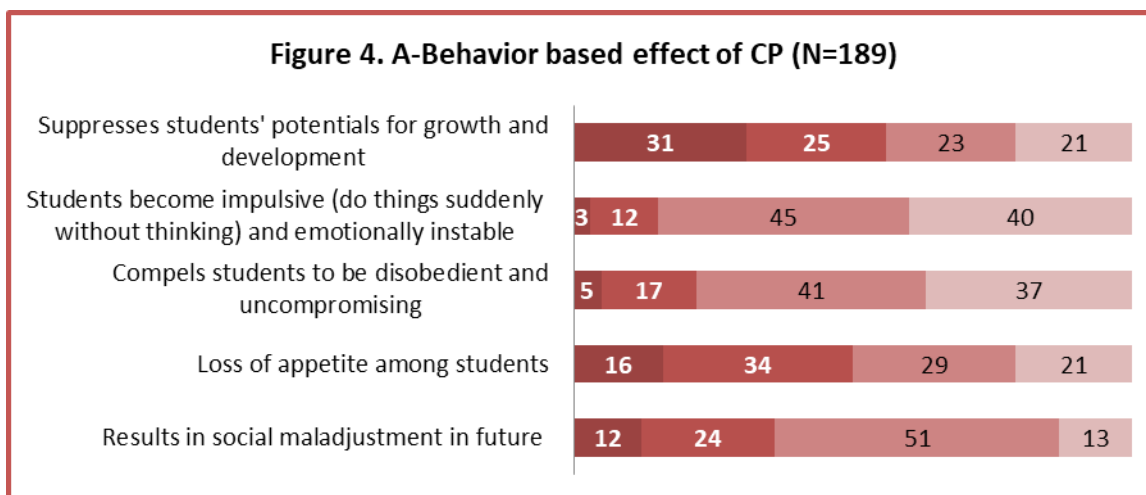
**Table 2. Traits Based Psychological Effects of CP (n=189)**

S#	Factors	Fully Agree	Partly Agree	Partly Disagree	Fully Disagree
2.1	Causes depression	13	16	56	15
2.2	Lowers self-esteem / self-respect of students	16	29	34	21
2.3	Causes pessimism (seeing worst aspects)	15	27	31	27
2.4	Causes apprehension (Uneasiness)	36	42	16	6
2.5	Creates inferiority complex among students	36	39	17	8
2.6	Punishment is mental harassment	29	35	21	15
2.7	Increases aggression	11	21	17	51

Values of table are in percentage

The data in table 2 also reveals that corporal punishment has a variety of trait based psychological effects on students. Most common effects include uneasiness, inferiority complex, pessimism and lower self-esteem.

**Behavior based effects of CP on personality development.** Contrary to trait, behavior is something that can be learned. The field survey also sought to study behavior based effects of corporal punishments on students. Teachers' responses were collected on four likers scales against given indicators.



Values in figures are in percentage

Teachers selected for field survey recorded that few factors of personality are influenced by corporal punishments such as it makes the students rigid and violent in nature, creates hatred among students in long terms, flourishes frustration among learners and promotes aggressive and harsh behavior. Similarly, respondents of the field survey were of perception that CP suppresses the potentials of students for further growth and development and consequently face the challenges of maladjustment in future. Loss of appetite among students has also been observed due to harsh corporal punishments. This all situations lead to providing poor human resources to the society and society faces a number of social evils in the development arena.

### Methods that can be used as alternatives of CP to discipline students

The study sought to assess the recommendations of teachers as actions that can be taken as alternatives of corporal punishments to discipline students and improve their studies.

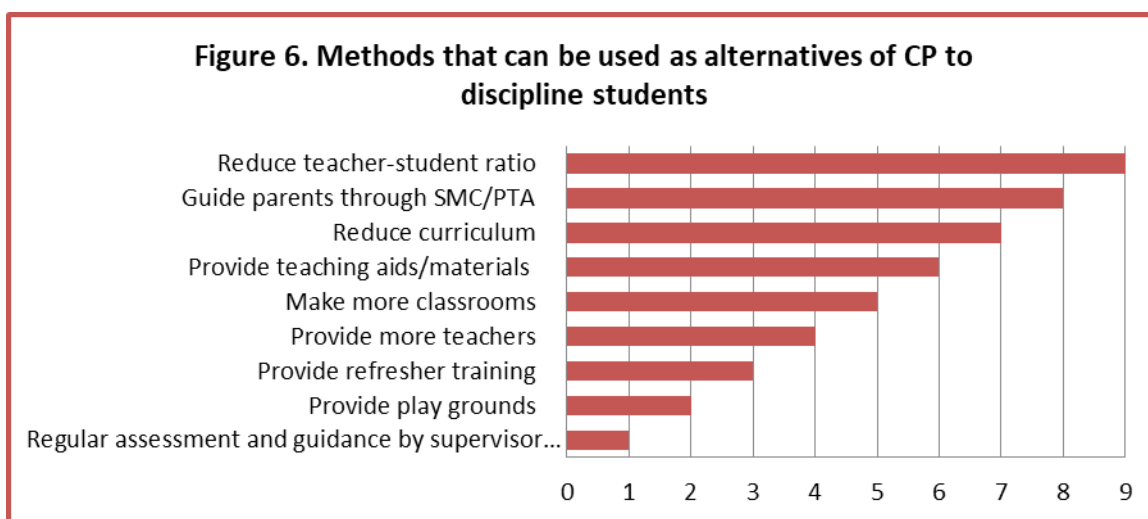


Figure 6 illustrates suggestion from teachers as what methods need to be used alternatives of CP to discipline students and improve teaching learning environment in the schools. The recommended methods are presented in order of most important to least important. The suggestions included, reduction of teacher-students ration in the classes, providing effective guidance to parents through school management committees (SMCs) and parent teacher association (PTA), reducing the contents of curriculum, providing teaching aids and material to the school teachers, making more classes so that over-crowded classes can be divided into sections and providing more teachers for the classes. Teachers also suggested that refresher trainings on regular intervals, provision of play grounds for students and regular assessment and guidance by official can help reduce the use of corporal punishments in terms of alternative steps.

### Conclusion

Several driving forces create an enabling environment for the practice of corporal punishment in schools. Such forces include; the attitude about CP by teachers, school heads, officials and family members in particular and the overall society in general. Such attitude is supported by some common myths/beliefs regarding corporal punishment. These beliefs are commonly accepted due to ignorance and ill propagation in the society, thus, increasingly affecting the attitude of aforementioned actors to accept and practice CP in schools.

Corporal punishment affects educational and psycho-social development of students. It decreases the attendance of students; creates reluctance, fear and hesitation among students; results in poor academic performance; hinders students' creativity and decreases class participation. Use of CP on students has trait based effects on the psychological development of students. It results in hooliganism; depression; creates apprehension and inferiority complex among students. Corporal punishment also has mild to moderate behavior based effects on the personality development of students. For example, it suppresses the potential for growth and development among students. It results in maladjustment, produces hostility and revenge factors among students. It may create hatred among students in long terms. The study finds that a good number of teachers are against the use of corporal punishment in schools. They believe and are well aware of the negative impacts of CP on students. The study finds out a variety of alternative methods that can be used to replace CP for improved discipline and learning achievements.

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