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**Abstract:** *The paper critically analyses the concept of corporal punishment in religious seminaries in Pakistan, especially focusing on District Multan, a part of Pakistan that was traditionally known as the hub of madrasas. Though these institutions remain fundamental in offering free education, accommodation and religious training to the needy children, they also perpetuate the systems of power, founded on coercion and threat. The paper is based on a qualitative approach to grounded theory to interact with various stakeholders, such as students, teachers, parents, community leaders, and child rights organizations representatives, to understand the experience of corporal punishment, its justification, and its opposition. The results have identified four overarching themes, namely: first, obedience in seminaries is fear-driven and leads to compliance rather than respect; second, corporal punishment is unacceptable and significantly ineffective in enhancing the learning process, as it destroys concentration, memory, motivation and creativity; third, cultural and religious justifications prove that punishment is moral and spiritual, and has been perpetuating through generations; and fourth, emerging voices of resistance insist that dialogue, empathy, and mutual trust are acceptable and effective ways of replacing coercive discipline. The paper explains these results based on theoretical concepts of Weberian coercive power, Foucaultian disciplinary power, and Bourdieuan symbolic violence, which explain how punishment is naturalized as normal despite its harmful psychological, social and educational effects. The discussion also contextualises the practice in the larger child rights and Islamic morality debate where corporal punishment goes against the Quranic values of mercy (rahma) and justice (adl). Finally, the article proposes a paradigm shift in the existing discipline through punishment to authority through dialogue that makes it both a pedagogical and ethical imperative to reform religious seminaries in Pakistan.*

## Introduction

Today the madrassas have been accepted as an institution of education that has been in effect centuries offering the children, many millions of them, free religious and basic education as their parents cannot get them into school as many of these children are orphans and born in poor families. Madaaris of Pakistan are known as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) providing lessons, hostels and food to the students especially the poor ones. These schools have an organized curriculum that lays emphasis on the study of Islamic religion with the aim of making the student a religious clergy upon graduation. This way, religious education is legally recognized as part of the education system of Pakistan in general. This multicultural condition has its effect on the education system in Pakistan that has three parallel systems, the public schools, the private schools and the Islamic religious schools often known as the madrassas or madaaris. Pakistan is a Muslim Majority country; there is a good segment of population that lay great emphasis on the Islamic education which is the reason why most of the parents want their children to obtain both religious and worldly learning. It therefore follows that both the government schools and the privately run schools teach the Islamic Studies as part of the curricula among the more traditional academic subjects. On the other hand, madaaris usually confine the curriculum to religious studies only, targeted toward students who intend to major in Islamic studies. Even though some groups in society consider their services as problematic, these religious institutions still enjoy a wide support of many in the society because they are accessible and have conformed to the cultural and spiritual values. In Pakistan, Mudarsa system is simply the Islamic education. The systems of Mudarsa provide the general curriculum referred to as Dars-e-Nizami consisting of the study of Quran, Hadis, Fiqah (Islamic jurisprudence) and Sunnah. This system will be adapted to bring up religious scholars, leaders and the teachers through the various courses. Mudarsa education system in the present scenario is organized on the names of several Islamic education boards which belong to various groups and out of these the Deobandi madrasas contribute to over 70 per cent of the sector. These boards are semi-autonomous in that they may be involved in interaction with government and may be regulated. The major boards are the Deobandi representatives, the Barelwi ones, the Ahl-e-Hadith ones, the Shia and the Jamaat-e-Islami representatives. These boards take care of the affiliation of madrasas, the curriculum, examinations, and qualification of those madrasas (Zafar, 2022).

Pakistan has several challenges that affect the Madrasa system in the country, such as the problem of stop beating such students, registration, and accountability. Corporal punishment has also been noted as an aspect of disciplinary measures which are an indication of the overall issues of student welfare. Accountability and quality assurance is again hampered given the lack of distinct aims, objectives and governance framework that is clear to all. Reform attempts of the madrasa have been previously met by ideational pushbacks, political uncertainties, communication failures thus making the progress almost minor regardless of state-based missions. To conclude, one can understand that the issues within the madrasa system are manifold when it comes to sectors of governance (unregistered institutions, lack of accountability), social practices (corporal punishment), financial sustainability, sectarian divisions, and curriculum modernization, and thus, the direction towards comprehensive reform appears to be an uphill battle in Pakistan (Munir et al., 2021).

## Corporal Punishment

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child describes corporal punishment as any physical punishment intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, including but not limited to hitting with a hand or object, kicking, shaking, pinching, forcing uncomfortable positions, or other similar actions (WHO, 2021).

In religious seminaries, particularly in the Islamic context of Pakistan, corporal punishment has often been viewed as an essential tool for instilling discipline and maintaining order. Teachers or religious leaders, who hold a position of authority, may use corporal punishment to correct behavior that deviates from expected norms, such as failure to learn prescribed texts, disrespect toward teachers, or perceived moral shortcomings. Some religious scholars argue that physical punishment helps instill discipline in students, which is essential for a strong moral and religious upbringing. In Islamic tradition, discipline and respect for authority are highly valued, and corporal punishment is sometimes seen as a method of ensuring that these values are instilled from a young age (Hassan, 2016).

In terms of social relevance, religious seminaries in Pakistan cater to a significant portion of the population, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas where access to mainstream schools may be limited. For many students, attending a *madrasah* is a pathway to education, and often, these seminaries provide free education, accommodation, and meals. As such, these institutions serve a social welfare role, addressing the educational needs of underprivileged communities. In fact, some of these seminaries not only teach religious subjects but also offer a basic curriculum in subjects like mathematics, science, and language, which helps integrate religious education with a broader framework of general knowledge. This holistic educational model, however, comes with its own set of challenges, particularly in balancing religious studies with subjects that are often seen as essential for progress in a modern world (Sajjad, 2018).

In the context of education, corporal punishment is defined as intervention employing such physical force with the aim of bringing discomfort in as a response to, or deterrent against, specific undesired student behaviors. This genre of punitive training practices includes methods such as striking the kid, spanking or any other way that will make him uncomfortable with certain behaviors. Some people think it is effective means of managing behavior and all educational and psychological experts should not recommend it since there are negative impacts on students' potential personal growth (Middleton, 2008).

#### **Types of Corporal Punishment**

- Spanking
- Paddling
- Flogging
- Stocks

#### **Negative Impacts of Corporal Punishment**

Corporal punishment has several negative impacts that can be

##### **Psychological**

Corporal punishment cause increased anxiety and depression: Corporal punishment has been found to increase anxiety and depression amongst; children in various research carried out prior. Some of the recognized outcomes evidenced by children under corporal punishment include but not limited to the following; desired; youth exposed to corporal punishment shows negative emotions such as; disappointment, hopelessness, and low self-esteem that may stretch to adulthood (Gershoff, 2010).

##### **Behavioral Disorders**

An investigation in the United States compared the incidence and outcomes of pro-legalization of corporal punishment, including spanking and slapping of children. They pointed out that fearing a mild spanking, considered by many parents as a form of punishment, can result in major social aggression. The studies show that these children are two to six times more likely to display aggressive behavior,

became involved in juvenile delinquency, and, as adults, use physical aggression against the partners, develop sadomasochist tendencies and experience depression. The work also focuses on the negative impact of spanking on the child, as well as other people around him or her (Stratus & Donnelly, 2017).

### **Long-Term Emotional Distress**

The emotional damages caused through corporal punishment cause chronic mental health problems such as, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Shame and the feeling of terror related to any such punishment investigated persistent psychological harm (Lonergan, 2014).

### **Sociological Impact**

#### **Normalization of Violence**

Different types of punishments are accepted by societies and especially the corporal type of punishment maintains a culture of violence. Studies have shown that, the societies that allow physical punishment are well inclined towards other types of violence resulting to other social problems of aggression and violation of other persons (Greshoff, 2015).

A recent study discussed the ways social norms contribute to corporal punishment and discipline in the low- and middle-income countries, A survey unveiled that social norms of CPD can be both risky and, occasionally, moderating, such as age, differently by gendered power relations, and changes, such as conflict, migration, and modernization (Lokot et al., 2020).

#### **Corporal Punishment and Paradigm Shift**

A paradigm shift refers to a fundamental change in the approach or perspective within a discipline. It involves a transformation in the underlying beliefs, methods, and applications that guide the field, leading to a new way of thinking or working.

It has been observed over the recent years that the educational trends are changing and the teachers that once believed that there is no other way to discipline a pupil other than punishment now believe that several methods are present as way of discipline students.

### **Literature Review**

Physical punishment is now understood as a kind of violence that is hazardous to the child's development. A meta-analytic review described seven significant themes regarding physical punishment. First, results revealed that physical punishment significantly predict more child behavior problems in subsequent time. Second, it is not a predictor of positive outcomes, long-term. Third, physical punishment increases the likelihood of children being reported to the center for abused and neglected children. Fourth, only behavior externalizing can lead children to provoke physical punishment. Fifth, quasi-experimental research demonstrates long term negative association between physical punishment and child behavior. Sixth, we did not find any moderating factors with regard to physical punishment being beneficial for the child or the parent its negative consequence is the same whether or not the child and the parent are male or female, or of a certain age. Last but not least, a dose-relationship is also affirmed to mean that more usage of physical punishment results to worse consequences. Thus, the persistency of these results provides a strong argument against physical punishment for children and urges to take policy measures against the practice (Heilmann et al., 2021).

Corporal punishment is still a hotly debated form of discipline, for now, its use seems to be decreasing in response to changes in child protection legislation and anti-hitting campaigns. Cross-sectional research has been conducted in Canada to examine the negative outcomes of corporal punishment used by parents. The study also provided an analysis of other socio demographic factors related to its application. The results revealed a decrease in the use of corporal punishment in regards to both overall occurrence and use. Child sex, parent age, employment status, family structure and size, immigration

status, ethnicity and religion were observed to make a difference between users and non-users of corporal punishment, but the effect was not constant across different age groups. However, there still remains the fact that about the quarter that is 25% of Canadian parents used corporal punishment as observed despite the downward trend. The research also implies that the important variables are demographics; there is a possibility that dynamic factors such as parental stress and attitudes on corporal punishment are vital (Fréchette & Romano, 2015).

Shah et al., (2022), In a qualitative study in madrasa in the region of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, students like to express themselves at some level in most of the institutions, majority of the students are reluctant to share their concerns or complaints regarding teachers. While the Madrasa's administration might be receptive to hearing the student concerns, there is little increase in the number of students reporting problem show the existing gap between administration that is willing to listen and student who do not feel comfortable addressing it. Almost all the methods of discipline include counseling and encouragement before a disciplinary action is taken this point to the idea that major aim is to guide the learners rather than punish them. It linked to a teacher's notions that fear of being punished can encourage students to perform well at school, which is a fertile ground for fear. Furthermore, students who face difficulties in speaking about their concerns are often in pre-courses, whereas others manage to do that with friends' help or teachers' instructions. In sum, the study establishes discipline, student freedom and the available resources as equally balanced in the process of education in madrasa.

Pakistan being a predominantly Islamic country corporal punishment practice is still considered okay in homes, schools, and religious institutions, even though it blatantly violates basic human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the wishes and aspirations of Islam. When added to the belief that it is acceptable for corporal punishment under some conditions and when matched with short-term obedience given to children, have led widespread acceptance and overuse of the practice in Muslim nations in different parts of the world. However, the effect of this practice on children's mental and emotional health has been always widely amplified (Shafiq et al., 2021).

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To critically scrutinize the conventional authority system in religious seminaries which are based on the application of corporal punishment as a tool of discipline and control.
2. To examine the effects of corporal punishment on learning effectiveness, self-esteem and general learning experience of students in seminaries.
3. To examine how dialogue, respect and positive discipline can transform teacher student relationships in religious seminaries.

### **Methodology**

The present research took a qualitative-grounded theory to gain insight into the ingrained practices of corporal punishment and its contribution to maintaining authority systems in religious seminaries of District Multan in Pakistan. The interpretivist paradigm influenced the selection of the methodology, as it presupposes that social realities are created in the way of meanings that people impose in a particular cultural and institutional environment (Collis and Hussey, 2014). As corporal punishment in the seminaries is not a form of discipline alone, but a culturally and religiously validated form of authority, it had to be an interpretive design that could reveal lived experiences, perceptions and contextual relations that define it and keep it alive. The units of the study population were varied and included various stakeholders who were directly or indirectly involved in the practices of corporal punishment in seminaries: teachers and religious scholars (moulvis) who are in charge of discipline, students in

seminaries, parents and guardians, child rights non-governmental organizations representatives, and community leaders related to religious education. The purposive sampling strategy was adopted to make sure that the participants had different perspectives and experiences.

Such a design was quite acceptable because very little empirical evidence exists on corporal punishment in the question of Pakistani seminaries. The work took place in several stages:

**Pilot Study:** First in-depth interviews and thematic analysis were carried out to narrow down research questions and find out emerging categories.

**Main Study:** Data were collected using case studies, narration life stories and in-depth interview with students, teachers and others involved. These approaches made possible the collection of insider views and contextual rich information.

**Data Collection Tools:** The interviews were recorded on audio with their consent and subsequently transcribed to be analyzed. Field notes in seminaries had also been recorded so as to put verbal descriptions in context with practices observed.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were synthesized by thematic coding and constant comparative analysis which are in line with the grounded theory processes (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). New categories were repeatedly cross-participatory compared and narrowed into larger themes, which helped clarify the inherent authority processes, cultural rationalizations and psychosocial impacts of corporal punishment. In the process of analysis, literature was incorporated to contextualize results in the larger academic discourse.

### **Results**

The results revealed that;

#### **Theme 1: The Old Authority Paradigm of Fear-based Obedience**

It has been discovered that obedience based on corporal punishment is founded on fear and not respect. Teachers view punishment as a necessary method of ensuring there is order whereas; students complain that the main reason behind their obedience is the wish to get out of pain. The power here is the coercive domination of Weber and disciplinary control of Foucault. Respect is also shallow because they do not arise out of trust and admiration but out of being afraid of punishment.

#### **Theme 2: Learning Efficiency Decrease**

Corporal punishment reduces efficiency of students by reducing concentration, retention and intrinsic motivation. A lot of students explained that they withdraw emotionally after getting punished, not participating in classes, and were thinking about short-term compliance. This is in line with the findings of Paolucci and Violato (2004) relating to cognitive impairment of punitive environment. Also students noted that they were reluctant to ask questions because they feared to be mocked or given additional punishment and thus the critical engagement and creativity was eroded.

#### **Theme 3: Cultural, Religious Justifications**

The reason for corporal punishment by teachers and parents often took the religious and cultural angle. It was said to be a way of imparting discipline, eliminating laziness or guarding children against the influence of Satan. This normalization suggests Bourdieu (1991) idea of symbolic violence when the practice of domination is considered to be tradition. These excuses continue corporal punishment down the generations and reforming it is even harder. However, such interpretations tend to ignore Islamic values of mercy and compassion, which are the most important in prophetic pedagogy.

#### **Theme 4: Development of Resistance and Dialogue**

Regardless of the normalization of corporal punishment, opposition is being created. Students silently vented their anger and some of the reform-oriented teachers supported the dialogical practices.



Dialogue was characterized as building trust, respect and motivation. This alternative was legitimate by the reformist interpretation of Islamic ethics, in the spirit of rahma (mercy) and adl (justice). The dialogue invitation is a nascent paradigm shift among seminaries, in keeping with the idea of scientific revolutions, as described by Kuhn (1962), where previous paradigms are undermined by new models of thought.

### Discussion

The results point to the fact that corporal punishment is not merely a single means of discipline, but a paradigm of authority in religious seminaries. Corporal punishment is a disciplinary technology through Foucault and creates a docile body and muted opposition. The weakness of such structures can be attributed to the coercive authority conceived by Weber, since such structures are founded on fear instead of legitimacy. The theory of symbolic violence developed by Bourdieu helps to understand why corporal punishment becomes a tradition and is accepted as such, even though it has destructive effects. Nevertheless, the development of resistance and the request to dialogue indicate that seminaries are on the threshold of the paradigm shift. This change is reminiscent of the theory by Kuhn, in which the established structures of thought are confronted with an anomaly--in this case, the inefficiency, resentment and psychological harm of corporal punishment--that renders the old paradigm unsustainable. Dialogue turns into the premise of a new paradigm of authority: that of respect, empathy and mutual recognition. This is in line with the child rights systems and the teaching of Islam, which leaves a gap between the world education systems and the local religious beliefs.

### Conclusion

As it is illustrated in this article, corporal punishment in Pakistani religious seminaries is representative of an old-fashioned paradigm of power based on coercive, fearful, and symbolic domination. Its continued existence is not only sabotage to the effectiveness and self-respect of students, but also negation of Islamic ethics. The paper proposes a paradigm shift: the discipline based on punishment to authority based on dialogue. This kind of a transformation is required to develop critical thinkers, empathetic leaders and responsible citizens. Both the pedagogy and the religion require the seminaries to adopt the dialogical authority as the foundation of education.

### Recommendations

**Enforcement of policies:** enforce legal prohibitions on corporal punishment and make it explicit to religious seminaries as well.

**Education of teachers:** systematic workshops of dialogical pedagogy, positive discipline.

**Islamic framing:** apply religious sources to the new concept of mercy (rahma) and compassion in order to de-legitimize corporal punishment.

**Community involvement:** engage parents, religious leaders and policymakers in changing the cultural attitudes toward discipline.

**Curriculum change:** Critical thinking, dialogue, and student participation are important

**Pedagogical objectives:** include them in the curriculum. Student support: counseling and safe reporting facilities should be made available to students that receive corporal punishment.

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