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**Abstract:** The paper is a research into the perception of teachers in Punjab on the use of corporal punishment in schools. Employing the qualitative method, it examines the definitions, justifications by teachers, and personal experiences in dealing with corporal punishment as well as the knowledge of legal frameworks about corporal punishment. Parents along with the teachers of the youth should therefore beware of some serious adverse effects linked to corporal punishment. Educators found out that this type of discipline may contribute to the rise of school dropouts and decline of interest to the school along with a serious threat to educational development of developing countries like Pakistan. The paper also looks at alternatives and wide sociocultural background supporting or undermining the practice. The findings will be used to assist in evidence-based policy change and promote the child friendly disciplinary measures in schools.

**Introduction**

There has been an on-going debate concerning corporal punishment as a school discipline strategy especially in the developing regions where there are slow measures to effect or carry out the discipline strategy. Corporal punishment is still applied in different educational establishments despite the ever-increasing knowledge about its noxious effects on the psyche (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). The practice still exists in Pakistan (especially, in rural and under-resourced regions, like Punjab), though it is prohibited by different laws providing child protection (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan [HRCP], 2021). The research study is based on the views of teachers, given that they are the main fixators and oppressors of such disciplinary actions. This study will add insight to the institutional and cultural contextualization of school discipline since this work will provide the context of how teachers define or justify or reject corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is a controversial and well-established practice in learning institutions especially in the developing world in a country like Pakistan where already formed social practices and discipline traditions prevail over legislation reforms. Although national and international laws, such as Article 89 of the Pakistani Penal Code, and one of the UN conventions on the rights of child (1989), have explicitly condemned corporal punishment, its reminder in schools implies a diverse combination of cultural, institutional, and individual factors (UNICEF, 2019). Substantial research study has been conducted on reasons that motivated teachers to continue employing physical and verbal discipline. In an un-resourced school in Africa, corporal punishment is

used frequently by the teachers, Mweru (2010) noted that this is because the teachers are overcrowded in classes, have little training on behaviour management, and they feel that they should enforce academic discipline. The same trends are observed in the South Asian context where the hierarchical school organization and teacher-centered instruction do not provide many opportunities towards positive disciplinary alternatives (Ali, Khan, & Bashir, 2014). The childhood attitude of teachers also contributes to disciplinary attitudes of teachers. Researchers suggest the existence of a vicious circle of normalization, by which educators who became a victim of punishment as students tend to repeat it, seeing such methods as methods of serviceability (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Nonetheless, there is an increasingly increasing evidence of a long-term negative effect that is mounting out against this belief. Corporal punishment also results in increased anxiety, aggression, and school disengagement among those children who then drop out or record poor performance in school lately (Lansford et al., 2010). The knowledge of the laws that prevent corporal punishment differs rapidly among the teachers. According to a study by Save the Children (2016), although several education professionals in Pakistan know about bans, hardly anyone is aware of the content or the implications behind bans, making it inconsistent to apply. Besides, there are poor enforcement channels and institutional support, which frequently places teachers in a grey area of ignorance as informal disciplinary punishments remain in place by another name (Human Rights Watch, 2020).

In more promising terms, current research points to a relative increase in the receptivity of pedagogues to new approaches to discipline. It has been revealed that positive reinforcement, peer mediation, and parental involvement are effective practices to sustain order in classes without causing physical and emotional injuries to students (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020). Nevertheless, it is not widely adopted without specific professional development and changes in the culture of school. Collectively, the body of literature indicates that corporal punishment should be handled in a comprehensive way- through a legislative approach, educational training and cultural transformation. It is important to see it through the elevated status of teachers in order to base informed and possible routes to humane and productive school discipline.

This paper aims at presenting and discussing the topic of corporal punishment used in schools in Punjab in the framework of perceptions held by teachers. It aims at determining what motivates the teachers and what drives their beliefs as well as what context drives disciplinary practices.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore and understand teachers' perceptions regarding the use of corporal punishment in schools.
2. To identify the underlying factors that compels teachers to resort to corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure.

### **Research Problem**

What are teachers' perceptions regarding the use of corporal punishment in schools?

### **Research Questions**

1. How do teachers define corporal punishment?
2. What factors do teachers believe lead to the use of corporal punishment?
3. What outcomes do teachers associate with corporal punishment?
4. Is corporal punishment officially permitted in their schools?
5. Have teachers personally used corporal punishment in their current schools?
6. Are teachers aware of legal frameworks concerning corporal punishment?
7. How do they manage problematic behaviour without physical punishment?

8. Have they themselves experienced corporal punishment as students?
9. Do they perceive teacher authority as linked to corporal punishment?
10. What alternatives do they suggest for maintaining discipline?

### **Methodology**

This study constitutes an in-depth qualitative investigation into teachers' perceptions regarding the continued use of corporal punishment in schools. It is classified as pure research, aiming to understand and interpret this social phenomenon through the lived experiences and viewpoints of educators. The study was designed to explore how teachers perceive corporal punishment in the context of their professional roles, despite being aware of its legal prohibition. The qualitative nature of this research allows for rich, contextual insights, making it particularly suited for exploring complex social attitudes and behaviours.

### **Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of participants who could provide relevant and diverse perspectives. Initially, three teachers from a private school in Lahore were selected to conduct preliminary in-depth interviews. Based on the richness of the data and to enhance the validity of the study, the research sample was later expanded to include 15 teachers from both public and private schools across various districts in Punjab. The sample ensured representation across gender, school type, and the urban–rural divide.

### **Data Collection**

The main methods of data collection were in-depth interviews that are semi-structured in nature. This format contributed to flexibility and usage of probing questions to go deeper into the meaning and clarifying responses. Audio recording was obtained by the consent of all the participants and interviews took an average of 35 minutes. The research ethics were cleared before information gathering took place and the approval of the school principals was also required as well as the participants. All participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity.

### **Data Analysis**

The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and reviewed multiple times for familiarization with the content. The data were then systematically coded and organized into categories. These categories were further refined into themes and sub-themes using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach, which includes:

1. Familiarization with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

The interpretive process was guided by the constructivist paradigm, where meaning is co-constructed between the researcher and participants. As the researcher, I acknowledged my positionality and aimed to understand and represent the participants' truths while interpreting the data through my analytical lens.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This section explores the thematic categories emerging from in-depth interviews with teachers regarding their perceptions and practices related to corporal punishment in schools.

### **Understanding of Corporal Punishment**

Most participants described corporal punishment as a disciplinary method that includes hitting, slapping, verbal abuse, or forcing students into humiliating physical positions. Teachers recognized its psychological impacts, yet many maintained that it is “sometimes necessary” to maintain order in overcrowded classrooms. ☞ *"Corporal punishment means any physical punishment which is inhuman and causes pain. It should not be too harsh, but sometimes it's needed."* Participant A. Some respondents highlighted its degrading nature, suggesting a moral conflict between their beliefs and practices.

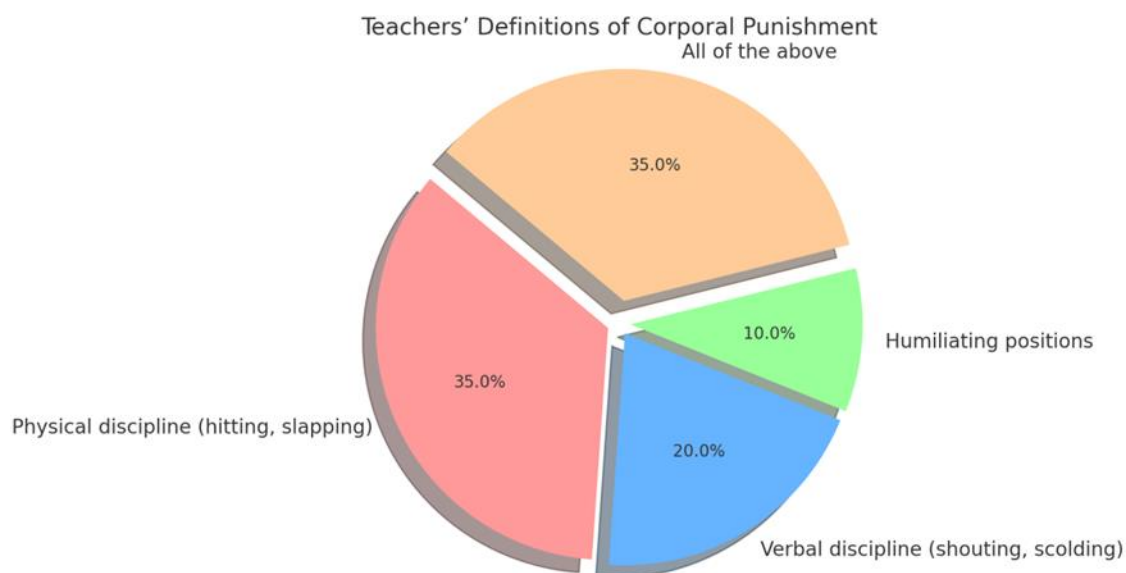


Figure 1. Pie Chart – Teachers’ Definitions of Corporal Punishment

#### Contributing Factors to the Use of Corporal Punishment

Teachers identified several systemic and personal factors contributing to the use of corporal punishment:

- Violation of class rules
- Incomplete homework or academic negligence
- Lack of teacher training in classroom management
- Large class sizes and overcrowding
- Pressure for academic performance
- Teachers’ own experiences of being punished as children

These findings align with prior research (Mweru, 2010; Ali et al., 2014) highlighting how under-resourced systems perpetuate harsh disciplinary practices.

☞ *"I was punished as a student, so I think it made me disciplined. I do the same sometimes."* Participant C

#### Perceived Outcomes of Corporal Punishment

Mixed perceptions were observed regarding the outcomes of corporal punishment:

Positive Perceptions	Negative Perceptions
Maintains classroom control	Increases dropout rates
Builds fear-based respect	Lowers self-esteem
Ensures timely completion of work	Fosters hatred toward learning
Enhances performance temporarily	Leads to emotional withdrawal

Although many teachers viewed corporal punishment as effective in the short term, they also

recognized its long-term harm.

✓ *“Some students stop responding. They become distant and disinterested.” Participant B*

### **Awareness of Legal Frameworks**

While most teachers acknowledged that corporal punishment is officially banned, there was confusion regarding the exact legal frameworks or consequences. A recurring theme was the lack of enforcement.

✓ *“It’s technically banned, but no one checks. There’s no punishment for the teachers.” Participant D*

Some respondents believed that fear is still necessary for discipline, while others emphasized empathy and connection.

✓ *“Sympathy is the key that can open the lock of any heart.” Participant E*

### **Current Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools**

All participants confirmed that corporal punishment is not officially permitted in their schools. However, most admitted to occasional use, especially in forms like slapping or using a scale. Interestingly, one respondent proudly claimed never having used corporal punishment throughout her career.

✓ *“We know it’s not allowed, but sometimes you lose control. One slap feels like the only option.” Participant F*

### **Teachers’ Personal Experiences of Being Punished**

A significant theme was the intergenerational cycle of punishment. Respondents who had experienced corporal punishment in childhood were more likely to continue the practice as teachers. One participant who had never been punished also claimed she never used punishment on her students.

### **Strategies for Dealing with Problematic Behavior**

When addressing behavioral issues, teachers reported using the following non-violent methods:

- Active listening
- Understanding students’ personal problems
- Collaborating with parents
- Polite communication and patience

✓ *“Every child has a reason. If you listen, you’ll understand their problem.” Participant G*

### **Suggested Alternatives to Corporal Punishment**

Teachers showed openness to non-violent strategies, recommending:

- Teacher training workshops
- Activity-based learning
- Daily moral education sessions
- Problem-solving approaches
- Involvement of parents and school administration

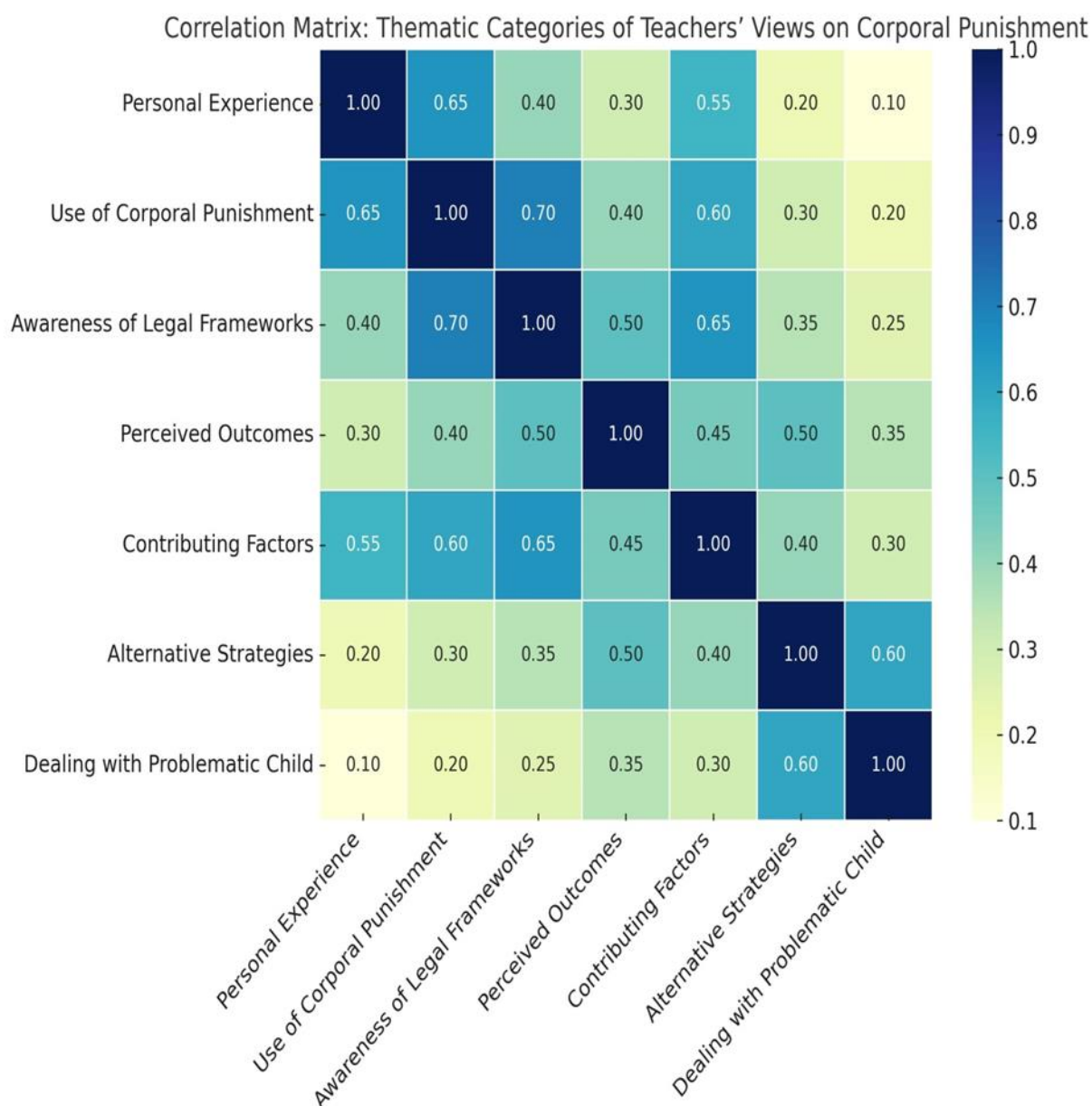
These solutions match the international best practice (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

The results demonstrate an underlying conflict between the historical disciplinary approaches and a proliferation in educational ideology. The dilemma in which teachers find themselves is the conflict between the system, individual beliefs and complying with the laws. In lieu of many points where people recognize the evils of corporal punishment, training, inertia and individual background contributes to ongoing usage of it. It is evident, though, that teacher is willing to accept alternative approaches, though they require support and adequate training.

Corporal punishment is still deeply imbedded in most educational establishments in the Punjab not only

because of the personal attitudes of the individual teachers but also because of institutional failures on the parts of lack of training, lack of institutional support and lack of awareness. Without viable alternatives, teachers end up living in agony trying to cope with classroom management, a situation that underpins the use of punitive methods.



In this research, a majority of the teachers view corporal punishment as a means which is good and necessary to create discipline, encourage classwork and homework by the students and eventually, a better academic performance. A great number of participants showed the belief that the application of corporal punishment is beneficial concerning the best interest of students when one wants to have better grades and be on deadline.

Interestingly, it is indicated in the study, that there is also the correlation between own experience and the practice: those teachers who corporally were punished at their schools during studies are inclined to penalize with corporal punishment in their classes today. This implies that there is some kind of cycle of



normalized violence which is transferred to educational culture. Though majority of the teachers indicated that they did know of the existence of formal laws that outlaw corporeal punishment in schools, most teachers revealed that they did not fully condemn the legal ban of the practice in schools. They did not deny the law but tended to defend themselves by saying that they are applying the punishment in education. Some of the participants observed that highly punished children would end up hating school and eventually become demotivated in education in general. In general, although not all teachers perceive corporal punishment as an evil, the data obtained make it clear that there is the necessity of conducting teacher training on the one hand and implement policies against the use of corporal punishment on the other hand, along with the need to educate the general population regarding alternative and non-aggressive disciplinary methods. Teachers are open to improvement- but they require organized systems and help of the institution to make their transformation successful.

### Recommendations

According to the opinion of teachers and based on the obtained conclusions of this study, the following recommendations can be made that will help to minimize and then eradicate the implementation of corporal punishment at schools:

**Intensive Teacher Preparation:** The School Administration, as well as the Ministry of Education, should conduct regular training programs to improve teachers in the knowledge of child psychology, classroom management, and alternative disciplinary methods.

**Child Rights and Psychological Impact:** It must be made a hand full knowledge to the teachers that practice of corporal punishment amounts to infringement of children basic human rights and also to their own psychological and mental wellbeing. Moreover, they have to be informed about the adverse and long-term consequences of corporal punishment on the mental and emotional development of students.

**Enhancement of Positive Discipline Strategies School:** schools are supposed to formulate and institute strict policies to encourage positive disciplinary measures. It is recommended that teachers are supplied with realistic tools and options to control the behavior in classrooms.

**Sensitization of laws:** There should be an awareness campaign to make the educationists and the school community aware of the legal implications of corporal punishment. This will guarantee effective adherence to the existing child protection laws.

**Amendment and Replacement of Laws:** The Ministry of Education is to review and amend and any vague or conflicting policy existing on regard to corporal punishment, to introduce clarity and harmony and adherence to international protection of children practices.

**Enhanced Teacher Student Ratios:** Low teacher-student ratios can help to achieve reduced stress and a sense of control in the classrooms, which tends to result in adoption of physical punishments. There has to be an endeavor to sanitize the classroom sizes so that teaching and discipline can be facilitated.

**Continuous Accountability:** The progress of the policies against corporal punishment should be systematically monitored and accounted by the educational authorities and child protection units on how much the policy is successfully being put into practice in the schools and how it is getting remedied in the case of its violation.

**Daily Moral Lectures:** Introducing daily lectures on character and moral into the school programs can train the students to internalize the concepts of discipline, respect, and responsibility so that the students do not need to be chastised in such a manner.

**Incorporation of Alternate Measures:** Institutions should initiate and inculcate alternate means of behavioral control which include positive reinforcement, peer mediation, mentoring schemes,

restorative practices in to replace corporal punishment.

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