

Foucault's Discipline and Punishment: Analysis of People's Perception about Govt. of Punjab's Policy of "Mar Nahi Pyar" for School Education Department

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Corporal punishment is considered to be an effective form of disciplining technique for modifying student's behavior. This paper is an attempt to evaluate the policy of "mar nahi pyar" introduced by Govt. of Punjab to understand the myths about corporal punishments in schools and its psycho social impact on students.

Methodology: The study is qualitative in nature. In-depth interviews of twenty parents of school going children, twenty students and twenty teachers are conducted to find out their opinions about implementation and outcomes of this policy. Interview data is analyzed descriptively in the light of Foucault's concept of discipline and punishment.

Findings: Analysis of interview data suggests that teachers believe that they use corporal punishment as a disciplining technique on the docile bodies of children for bringing desired behavioral changes in them. They argue this policy will ultimately result in devaluation of teachers by disobedient students. Parents argue that teachers should punish their children but there must be a difference between physical violence and punishment. Children are highly against corporal punishment but they do accept that they are good in those subjects whose teachers are strict.

Conclusion: After analyzing their opinions, it is concluded this policy need to be revised keeping in mind the Foucault's idea of better punishment not lesser punishment depending upon the social context and changing power relations of classrooms.

Keywords: Corporal Punishment, Disciplining Techniques, Docile Bodies, Physical Violence, Social Context, Power Relation.

Introduction

Corporal punishment is one of the major reasons of children's fear of schools. Govt. of Punjab's policy of "Mar nahi Pyar" is an official ban on corporal punishment by school teachers on children. Many parents, teachers, and educationists still argue that physical punishment is important for educating the children. Pakistan is one of those 54 UN member countries which have shown a clear commitment towards

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prohibition of violence against children. These states have not been successful yet in prohibiting corporal punishment from all the settings but are committed towards eradication of it (Global initiative to end all corporal punishment of children, 2016).

Corporal punishment in schools means making an attempt to bring desired change in a child by using physical pain as a method (Straus & Mouradian, 1998). These painful methods may include spanking, hitting with wooden sticks, shaking or punching etc. Moreover, they may also include slapping, shoving or choking. Painful physical postures like raising the hands up, bending down, holding the ears or excessive exercise drills are also forms of corporal punishments. These are actually meant to induce pain not injury (Gershoff & Bitensky, 2001; McClure & May, 2008).

All of these corporal punishments have been used by teachers in schools of Punjab to correct student's behaviors since long. Government of Punjab has taken a serious notice of increasing incidents of corporal punishment in schools by teachers in 2005 and issued orders imposing ban on it. Notice boards were put up inside and outside all the government sector and private sector schools of the province on which slogan of that policy was written. The slogan was, "Mar Nahi Pyar" that means affection not violence. School Education Department was ordered to take immediate action for implementation of that policy and in case of any negligence; it was made sure that strict disciplinary action would be taken against concerned authorities (Malik, 2013).

According to the orders, there will be no tolerance against corporal punishment and for that awareness must be spread in society at the level of parents, teachers, guardians and students. Awareness about that policy was necessary because of socio-cultural set-up and values of Pakistani society especially of rural areas where people are on the point of view that beating is the only solution for training and education of children and that is the reason for increased incidents of corporal punishment in rural schools as compared to schools of urban areas. Ratio of these incidents is also higher in schools of lower class as compared to schools of upper class (Greydanus, et al., 2003). There is a need to convince the parents that they should speak against corporal punishment to ensure a secure environment free of fear for beating (Khan, 2020).

Being a signatory of UN's Child Right Convention, Pakistan is supposed to take a necessary action against corporal punishment not only in schools but also at homes and workplaces. Government of Punjab's ban on corporal punishment is a step towards becoming a country free of children's physical abuse in terms of violence by teachers on students. Chairman Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) stated that physical punishment induces aggressive behavior in children ultimately encouraging formation of violent society. He further added that ban on corporal punishment will ensure healthy environment for children at grassroots level. This policy of non-violence will promote softer image of Pakistan at international level and must be supported by parents, education department, legal fraternity and members of civil society. Child friendly schooling is a global demand because people want their children to be self-confident, balanced personalities and equipped with leadership qualities (PEF working to eliminate corporal punishment, 2014).

After the implementation of that policy, a substantial decrease in incidents of corporal punishment is observed but contradictory viewpoint is also there which claims that children are innocent and not wise enough to be treated in a polite manner. Scolding and light beating is important to train and educate them. This is not the societal perspective only but according to article 89 of Pakistan Penal Court, parents, guardians and teachers have an authority on the children under the age of twelve to discipline them and regulate their behavior. Condition for empowering them is that the punishment must not be brutal instead it must be mild and sensible (Scarre, 2003).

That means this authority is not absolute but there are limitations to it as adults are only allowed to physically punish their children for their good faith. But this good faith may be misused. So, there is a need to keep a check on adults too. Adults are answerable under the article 319 and 320 of Pakistan Penal Court. According to these articles, if an adult is found to cause serious physical serious injuries to

children he may be penalized under section 323. Moreover, under section 325, adult may be imprisoned for any violence against children (Ilyas, 2012).

These articles do exist but Pakistani society is value-oriented society and parents and teachers are considered to be sacred cows. This is why no practical example of imprisonment or booking of any parent or teacher is there who is penalized for hurting a child. After the Govt. of Punjab's initiative of banning corporal punishment in schools, debate started among teachers that it has practically disempowered the teachers. This point of view comes from the mindset that corporal punishment is mandatory for disciplining the children. They started thinking that children will neither respect them nor strive to learn unless they have a fear of physical punishment. This feeling is not of the teachers of Punjab only but this sort of policies usually generates the same feelings. Like in South Africa act against corporal punishment made teachers feel that they are deprived of their power and authority (Naong, 2007).

Broad Based Questions

There are certain broad based research questions that are expected to be answered by the end of this study.

RQ1: Whether there are any alternatives to corporal punishment for disciplining students or not? Has this initiative of government of Punjab become successful in generating desired results?

RQ2: What is perception of Pakistani society especially educationists, parents and children about banning of corporal punishment in schools?

RQ3: How Foucault's concept of discipline and punishment can be used as a guiding principle to analyze the views of people?

Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature. It is conducted in an abductive manner as themes have emerged from data and literature and also from the theoretical perspective used for analyzing data.

Population

As this policy is devised for the province of Punjab, the population for this research study is Punjab, Pakistan. However, here it is important to mention that qualitative approach is very different from quantitative approach as it neither demands a statistically representative sample nor a set sample size. Therefore, researcher has tried to conduct interviews from people of diverse backgrounds and experiences to deepen the understanding of the topic and to ensure the balance of data.

Sampling

Being cognizant of the significance of a solid sampling technique for gathering reliable and valid data to reach a conclusion, interviewees are selected through purposeful sampling method. The reason for using purposeful sampling is to conduct in-depth interviews of those people who are the actual stakeholders of this policy as the data gathered from the people who are likely to be influenced by this policy can give real insight into the effectiveness of the said policy on ground.

Sample Size

A sample size of sixty people (n=60) is selected comprising of twenty students up to grade V, twenty teachers and twenty parents in order to understand their viewpoint about this policy.

Analysis of In-Depth Interviews Data

Thematic analysis of interview data is conducted by coding the data into mutually exclusive and exhaustive themes that emerged from data in the light of Foucault's concept of discipline and punishment.

In order to avoid biases and prejudices during the analysis and increase validity of research, coders were trained to transcribe data and develop themes from that. Those themes are selected which were mutually agreed by three of the coders. After that, themes are descriptively analyzed in the light of previously existing literature and Foucauldian perspective of discipline and punishment.

Theoretical Framework

Foucault's concept of discipline and punishment is used as a theoretical foundation for this study.

Foucault's Discipline and Punishment

Foucault's work on discipline and punish traces the history of punishment from ancient times to modern times and argues for a better punishment as compared to brutal violence. His argument was that "not to punish less but to punish better (Foucault, 1977)." According to Foucault, disciplinary techniques have evolved over a period of time from torture to sophisticated, properly planned, hidden and well-organized systems of control. He believes that punishment should have a long lasting effect to discipline everyday behaviors of people rather than mere application of physical pain on body. Physical punishments induce rebellion behavior in the people and results in a threat to the power of authorities. So, there is a need to replace it by more sophisticated form of punishment by forming institutions to control and regulate the behaviors of people (Radford Jr., n.d.).

This, if applied on educational institutes especially schools, strengthens the argument of opponents of corporal punishment that by hitting or beating one may induce positive behavior in a child but that will be a short-term change. Whenever the child will be not under fear of punishment, he will behave in the way he wants to because he has not changed his behavior willfully but because of fear of punishment. Applying Foucault's framework over here means there is a need to revise corporal punishments to bring long term positive changes in children. That doesn't mean they should not be punished but punishment must have a human element. Physical punishment must be replaced by some other alternatives, to maintain an effective control over the children. Disciplinary practices must minimize the element of pain and should discipline the children by rewarding them for their good behavior or encouraging them for their positive contributions in class (Nelson, 2002).

Minimizing the pain means gentle way of punishment must be introduced by the authorities to control the children and induce desired behavior in them. Punishment may be adopted by teachers as a technique of disciplining docile bodies of children but it must be changed from brutality to humanism. Purpose of creating institutions is to create disciplined souls by giving them gentle punishments not by torturing them. They discipline people in a secretive manner by minimizing visible intensity of punishment. According to Foucault, this shift is not because people have become civilized but because of shift of socially operating powers with each having different social agendas (Shapiro, 2002).

Applying his thoughts to schools systems, powers were initially in hands of teachers but this policy will shift power from teachers to higher authorities of School Education Department who may monitor and inspect any class anytime and ask about teacher's behavior whether he physically punish the children or not and take necessary action against him. Now a single person is not responsible for punishing a child but a whole department is involved. Therefore, all the participants of the education system should have to make sense of moral codes of modern world to be a subject in new power relations to react to them even if they are not able to change them (Markula & Pringle, 2006). The power relations are transformed but not dissolved by introduction of this new policy (Maguire, 2002).

School Education Department is training teachers to opt for various other alternatives to physical punishment like learning with music, engaging in co-curricular activities to build self-confidence, encouraging healthy competition among children and offering material rewards etc. (Malik, 2013). These alternatives of disciplining people are "gratification punishment" in Foucault's language and may be used as all-encompassing means of educating and training children. In public sector schools of Pakistan, it is difficult for the government and teachers to offer material rewards to the children but this reward

discipline is getting popularity worldwide (Wise, 1979). Teachers here may encourage other healthy activities instead of punishing the children. There are many other positive incentives to offer to make students behave properly. This strategy is termed as “win the heart” by Foucault (Corriero, 2006).

However, this doesn’t mean Foucault was totally against painful punishments. He also talked about micro-penalties as one of the core disciplinary techniques. Minor punishments may be given by teachers to students if they are involved in unwanted actions. Moreover, set of rules and regulations may be developed and the students who don’t abide by the rules may receive punishments from the teacher. But important thing that has to be kept in mind is “normalizing judgment” which means punishment must be for the sake of improvement, reformation or correction. It must discipline those traits which are in contradiction with the defined system and reinforce those traits which are accepted as healthy and positive in the system. This punishment must be decided on the basis of standards devised by the system not by the social status of any individual (Davison & Harvey, n.d.).

Thematic Analysis of Interview Data

As mentioned earlier, this study is exploring public perception about Government of Punjab’s initiative of “mar nahi pyar” for School Education Department. For this purpose, twenty students up to grade five, twenty teachers of primary schools and twenty parents of primary school children are interviewed and their opinion is analyzed in the light of Foucault’s philosophy.

Societal Perspective

Pakistani society is different from western society in a manner that elders and adults are treated at high level of respect and they are considered to have absolute power over their young ones. If any young person speaks in front of an adult, no matter how justified and correct his point of view is, he is considered disobedient in its socio-cultural set-up. This is most probably because of Islamic culture which is prevalent in most parts of the country and Islam preaches not to say even “uff” in front of parents (Qadhi, 2011).

Concept of Fear-Free Learning in a Traditional Society

In this type of society, introduction of fear free learning is difficult to apply because people do believe that it is the right of adult to physically punish their children for their better upbringing. Many of the parents when interviewed are concerned with physical health of their children but least bothered about their mental and psychological health. Many of the psychologists believe that beating, paddling or scolding has negative health on children’s mental health and it induces aggressive behavior in them (Mastitsa, 2008). They do behave in desired manner but because of fear of corporal punishment not because they have an urge for improvement (Telep, 2009).

However, variant point of views does exist who believe if a child doesn’t behave accordingly by polite or humane manner, spanking may be used as a last tool for correcting his behavior. But spanking must not be brutal because how you spank may affect the results. Mild spanking may generate positive result for an ill-disciplined child but severe beating may be less effective. Mostly elders don’t beat their young at these two extremes, so it may work well for them as compared to other forms of punishment (Sanders, 2014).

Parents Perspective

Parents shared mixed opinions about policy of “Mar nahi pyar.” Analysis of their interview data reveals many of their concerns. Which are as follows:

Uncertainty about the Success of this Policy

Many parents, when interviewed, encouraged the initiative Govt. of Punjab but not optimistic that it is going to work well for their children. They believe that teachers must not be banned to physically beat their children but there must be a check on corporal punishments given by them to the children. Intensity of punishment must be bearable by the children and element of pain must also be according to the age of

child. Their opinion is same as that of Foucault, “Not to punish less but to punish better (Foucault, 1977).”

Teacher trainings: A Determining Factor

Many parents said that Govt. has taken this initiative before training the teachers about handling of children by using alternative methods rather than corporal punishment. Many teachers believe in corporal punishment's being the most effective method of training and educating children and in need of training to learn about other disciplining techniques. Teacher must not try to inculcate knowledge in the children but should make them capable of transforming knowledge actively for the sake of learning. In recent pedagogical techniques, teacher doesn't have absolute power on knowledge but the power of students is also emphasized by encouraging an interactive environment where there is a noticeable relationship between knowledge, power and participants in the process (Giroux, 2010).

Understand the Importance of Healthy Teacher-Children Relationship

Parents argue for proper teacher trainings and a change in mindset of teachers that they are ultimate authority on knowledge instead they must encourage children to get knowledge from extra readings and engage them in question answers instead of beating them. This is so because many parents have observed damage to self-esteem of their children because of corporal punishments in schools. They said that discipline may be maintained by creating awareness of its importance among children not by spanking. Teachers are supposed to be role models for children and are expected to behave in a manner which is followed by them. There is a need to develop positive and constructive relationship between students and teachers by creating a respectful environment (Mokhele, 2006).

Therefore, for the sake of developing that relationship, formal teacher trainings must be conducted by government in which teachers should learn alternatives to corporal punishment for disciplining the students. Moreover, many of the parents were not completely against corporal punishment as they think that fear is also important for molding the kids into desired personalities. Teachers may beat the children lightly and should keep in mind that punishment must not make them afraid of education. There must be a boundary line between punishment and abuse to ensure the intensity of punishment should not force the children to run away from schools (Gershoff & Larzelere, 2002).

Teacher's Perspective

When teachers were interviewed, only few of them appreciated this initiative of Govt. of Punjab. Majority of them were on the point of view that it will result in a fear-free generation having no respect or regard for the teachers. They say after the orders of ban on corporal punishment; it has become very difficult for them to handle the children.

Draw a Line between Abuse and Punishment

There is a difference between brutality and physical correction of students. There are very few incidents of violence by the teachers on children but most of the times children are punished for the sake of their own benefit. We can never equate corporal punishment with violence because teachers usually don't beat children for their own satisfaction. This viewpoint of teachers interviewed gets support from proponents of anti-corporal punishment who also believe that no punishment means absolute freedom that will destroy the children. There must be some check and balance on the children and for that corporal punishment may be used (Global initiative to end all corporal punishment of children, 2009).

Child Rights Misrepresented

Teachers said that they are the products of the same system and are molded into disciplined individuals by their teachers. They have never complained about corporal punishment and have high regards for all of their teachers who used to punish them physically because they believe that punishment has made them successful individuals of the society. Had their teachers not punished them, they would have never been

able to become functional members of their society in a positive manner. So this policy of “Mar nahi Pyar” is based on wrong concept of child rights. It is also right of children to be appreciated for good and forbidden from bad and if we won’t do it timely, they will complain after spoiling their lives that our elders are responsible for our condition who did not punish us when we were doing wrong.

Evaluation Mechanism of Teachers by School Education Department

Teachers also complained about new system of monitoring their performance. They can’t punish the children but are expected to deliver their hundred percent. In case of below board result, they are transferred and their promotion is at stake. Government don’t understand that children in public schools usually come from humble background and don’t have educated upper middle or elite class families at their back. One teacher very bluntly said that children of this socio-economic status are not used to of humane manners of treatment instead there must be a constant pressure on them to educate them.

Student’s Perspective

Along with teachers and parents, school going children up to grade five are also interviewed for this paper because they are the direct target of corporal punishment in schools. Interestingly, not a single child found who favored physical punishment. All of them said that beating cannot change their behavior. They must be treated politely and gently to behave properly. When asked about their performance in various subjects, they were found good in those subjects whose teachers are strict as compared to those whose teachers use humane manners for disciplining them.

Punishment vs. Positive Disciplining Techniques

One of the students said that teachers do encourage healthy competition but it only affect those who themselves have an urge to improve. There are certain children who are not interested in study and there is no solution except beating to make them study. Rewards like performance based class representative selection, making the exemplary children in charge of children of their wing and representation at various forums like inter-school competitions may attract them but mischievous actions and naughty plays are more attractive.

Strictness vs. Corporal Punishment

Another student said that he only behaves properly in class of strict teachers but strictness doesn’t mean corporal punishment only. There are certain teachers who have graceful personalities and students are scared of their gaze even. Most of the children are against corporal punishment and think now they are comfortable while going to school because they have sleepless nights having nightmares of teachers spanking them. It is difficult for them to memorize their lessons because they don’t have any fear of their teacher. If parents are strict and keep an eye on them, they take interest in study; otherwise poor performance is the result of this fearless environment.

Discussion

Analysis of interview data suggests that by the introduction of this policy power structure of classrooms has changed. Teacher used to possess absolute power in relation to his students and in that power relations, students were powerless. But now students do have a power. They may complain, if they are beaten by any teacher and concerned authorities may take action against the teacher. Now there is a need to think about new power structure, understand it and transform oneself accordingly.

There is a resistance by teachers and parents in the way of reconfiguration of power structures of classrooms but this resistance is important for bringing an institutional change. Parents and teachers have shown their reservations on this policy and there is a need to address them or to revise the policy from complete ban on corporal punishment to partial ban. Teachers are wise enough and know how to handle a child effectively for his betterment.

This is also in line with the Foucault's philosophy of moving towards a better punishment than lesser punishment. It is better to teach the kids by using humane manners like asking them to write home work thrice as punishment or pay the fine from their pocket money in case of violation of any rule etc. However, if this sort of punishment doesn't work, it is better to scold, paddle or spank a child lightly but that beating must not be harsh to damage the physical, emotional or psychological health of any child. Use of corporal punishment is neither encouraged nor endorsed rather advocated only as a last option to avail if no other disciplining method works on the child.

Conclusion

Finally concluding, human body have ever been into a disciplinary system operated by various social institutions like family, schools, hospitals and other societal set ups where power relationship works in the form of controlling systems. Especially in educational institutes, they are a permanent subject of discipline that shape their behavior and modify their attitude to become socially acceptable individuals. Schools are a place where students are continually assessed under the defined rules and regulations. According to Foucault, this discipline is very important because it guides the individuals to determine their aptitude and utilize their potential for getting certain benefits. The discipline which students learn in their schools is instilled in their behaviors lifelong and is depicted by their acts in various real life situations.

With the passage of time, certain reforms are introduced in the disciplining mechanisms adopted by teachers to modify student's behaviors. Although according to Foucault, reforms are not meant to be for the betterment of subjects instead they strengthen the existing power dynamics. However, in this study it is found that the reforms in punishment system have facilitated the students as teacher cannot beat them after the introduction of policy of "mar nahi pyar." The punishments have become gentle and are usually replaced by certain other disciplining techniques that cause less damage to self-esteem of students. Therefore, it may be concluded that the purpose of punishment is to make individuals better part of the society not to publicly humiliate them. This policy may be helpful for the students' psycho-social development as long as it does not challenge the traditional power dynamics of the classroom.

Recommendations

On the basis of above discussion, it is found that there is worldwide acceptance of complete ban on corporal punishment in schools, homes and workplaces of children but there is anti-corporal punishment group too which believes mild punishment is important to correct the behavior of children. This group's followers are in stronger position in Pakistan and keeping in mind viewpoint of parents, teachers and children, following recommendations are forwarded at the end of this study:

Government need to revise this policy considering the reservations of parents, children and teachers. The purpose of education is not to produce a disobedient lot having no fear of their elders instead it means to produce respectful and knowledgeable individuals. Teachers must be allowed to use mild corporal punishment when they feel it necessary but this must be monitored by higher authorities. Their performance must also be evaluated by students at the end of the course and if any teacher found responsible of any violent act, strict disciplinary action must be taken against him.

Government should arrange formal training programs for teachers to equip them with certain techniques to be used as an alternative to corporal punishment. Teachers don't have any grievances for children and beat them for their good. If they will know how to manage a classroom without use of corporal punishment, they will surely love to use those alternatives. They can't offer incentives to children from their own pocket, govt. should arrange incentives like pencils, rubbers, sharpeners, story books etc. for the teachers to not to burden them.

By taking above mentioned steps, a better academic environment for school going children may be ensured.

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