

# **The Impact of Positive and Negative Attitude of Teachers towards Corporal Punishment on Students' Achievement in Mathematics**

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## **Abstract**

*The study aimed at exploring the impact of attitude of teachers about corporal punishment on students' achievement in Mathematics. In the first phase, a survey was conducted to collect data about attitude of teachers towards students' corporal punishment. A Five Point Likert Scale was used to measure teachers' attitude towards corporal punishment. The achievements of students taught by teachers having positive attitude and those having negative attitude were compared on the basis of scores obtained in their annual Board examination. All the Mathematics teachers of Boys Government Secondary / Higher Secondary schools in District Nowshera and District Swabi, teaching 9th grade were included in the population-I and were taken as sample of the study. All 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in those schools were included in population-II. Ninety four (94) teachers constituting, 65% of the sample returned the questionnaires, out of them 63 showed positive attitude. The achievement scores of the students of teachers who did not favour corporal punishment were higher as compared with those who favoured corporal punishment.*

**Keywords:** Corporal punishment; Academic achievement; Teachers' Attitude.

## **Introduction**

There is a controversy about the use of corporal punishment for learning. Some educationists claim that corporal punishment is essential for the motivation of children for learning. While those

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against its use claim that it is an ineffective method for motivating students because it soon loses its effects whatever it originally had. There is now a general consensus that spanking for failure to learn is not acceptable. It is based on psychological point of view (that is, it is an ineffective motivational device), but on deeper examination, the arguments used are a mixture of psychological and of morals.<sup>1</sup> Although corporal punishment motivates students temporarily for learning but it causes loss of concentration in studies as UNICEF<sup>2</sup> has mentioned that when driven by fear of punishment, children learn simply to please the teacher and they do not acquire skills or knowledge for their own development. Corporal punishment thus changes the shape of a student's motivation, and learning is influenced and retarded by fear. Physically and emotionally abused children develop anxiety that causes loss of concentration and poor learning. Such students do not take risks even being creative.

Save the Children & UNICEF<sup>3</sup> has claimed that the more a child is punished, the more his performance will become worse, resulting in the child obstinacy, developing complexes and losing confidence. A child who regularly receives corporal punishment loses his/her concentration and interest in the studies, hereby further weakening his/her performance and resulting in more corporal punishment.

Podell, Kaminsky & Crowl<sup>4</sup> have pointed out that punishment can lower student's self-esteem, cause them to think about school and classroom negatively, and associate learning with punishment.

Severe corporal punishment deteriorates students in school behaviour and learning. One recent study revealed that in states, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, Georgia, Missouri, Florida, Kentucky, North Carolina, Indiana, Idaho, Kansas, Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming where physical punishment is used frequently, schools have performed worse academically.<sup>5</sup>

According to Roussow<sup>6</sup> students who receive corporal punishment show symptoms of dejection in studies, poor performance in the tests and also do not participate in the teaching and learning process enthusiastically. Morrel<sup>7</sup> has found that use of corporal punishment also influences attendance of school children. Students get absent from school and this situation of longer absenteeism leads to withdrawal from schools. According to Vally<sup>8</sup> the effects of physical punishment of students develop more severe psychiatric and traumatic conditions in children. Students in such

an environment consider schools to be an unsafe place and thus they avoid coming to schools. This type of attitude of students is the direct result from harsh corporal punishment and unsupportive learning environment where punishment is the norm. In another study it has been found by the Government of Pakistan<sup>9</sup> students who never got punished by their teachers performed significantly better.

#### *Objectives of the Study*

The main objective of the research was to study the difference in the academic achievement of students taught by teachers having positive attitude towards corporal punishment and those having negative attitude.

#### *Hypothesis*

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught by the teachers having positive and negative attitude towards corporal punishment.

#### *Methodology*

Instruments of the study included a Five Point Likert Scale, developed by the researchers, for measuring teachers' attitude towards corporal punishment. This scale was used as a test for screening teachers with negative and positive attitude towards corporal punishment. Mathematics achievement scores of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were taken from the result of their final examination held by The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Mardan.

#### *Population and sample*

All the Mathematics teachers teaching 9<sup>th</sup> grade of Boys' Government Secondary and Higher Secondary schools in Districts Nowshera and Swabi constituted the population I. District wise numbers of schools, teachers, and students are given in Table-1.

Lists of schools were obtained from Executive District Officers (Education) of Districts Nowshera and Swabi. The list of teachers who were teaching Mathematics in secondary and higher secondary government schools of both districts was prepared with the help of Principal or Head-teacher of each school. Teachers of each district are given in the table.

Table 1: District wise Number of Schools, Teachers

| District | Number of Schools | Number of Mathematics Teachers |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Nowshera | 65                | 69                             |
| Swabi    | 72                | 76                             |
| Total    | 137               | 145                            |

To find out the change in the attitude of teachers towards corporal punishment, the scale for teachers' attitude was administered on 145 teachers, among these 76 were from District Swabi and 69 from District Nowshera. 94 of these questionnaires were received back, 55 from District Swabi and 39 from District Nowshera making a response rate of 65%. Out of these respondents, 61 teachers were identified as having positive attitude towards corporal punishment, 36 such teachers were from District Swabi and 25 were from District Nowshera; whose score on scale of attitude towards corporal punishment was above the median of the scale 171. Two more teachers who had negative attitude but were close to positive attitude (score=168 each) were also included in it.

Table 2: Distribution and the Return of Questionnaires-Total and by Districts

| S.No | District | Total no. of Mathematics Teachers | Respondent Teachers | Teachers with Positive Attitude |
|------|----------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1    | Swabi    | 76                                | 55                  | 37                              |
| 2    | Nowshera | 69                                | 39                  | 26                              |
|      | Total    | 145                               | 94                  | 63                              |

Table 2 shows that 63 teachers were considered as having positive attitude towards corporal punishment.

## Results

*Achievement scores of students of teachers having positive and those having negative attitude towards corporal punishment*

$H_{01}$ : There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught by the teachers having positive and those having negative attitude towards corporal punishment.

Table 3: Comparison of Mean Achievement Score of Students of Teachers Having Positive and Negative Attitude towards Corporal Punishment

| Attitude towards corporal punishment | N  | Mean achievement score | SD    | df | t     | Mean difference | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|--------------------------------------|----|------------------------|-------|----|-------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Positive attitude                    | 63 | 30.47                  | 9.37  | 92 | 1.14* | -2.47           | .26             |
| Negative attitude                    | 31 | 32.94                  | 10.79 |    |       |                 |                 |

\*Not significant at  $\alpha=.01$

As stated earlier 63 teachers were identified as having positive attitude towards corporal punishment while 31 teachers scoring below the mean on attitude scale were labelled as having negative attitude. By applying independent sample 't' test to the mean achievement scores of students of teachers having positive and negative attitudes towards corporal punishment, on Mathematics, it was found that the value of 't' = -1.14 with 92 degree of freedom was not significant at  $\alpha=.01$ . Hence the null hypothesis "There is no significant difference between the mean achievement scores of students taught by the teachers having positive and negative attitude towards corporal punishment" was accepted. Although the difference was not statistically significant but the mean achievement score, 32.94, of students taught by teachers with negative attitude towards corporal punishment was considerably higher than the mean achievement score, 30.47, of the students taught by positive attitude towards corporal punishment. It shows that change in the attitude of teachers from positive to negative towards corporal punishment had positive effect on students' achievement.

Comparison of mean achievement scores of students taught by upper and lower attitude group teachers towards corporal punishment was made. For this purpose the teachers were sorted in ascending order on the basis of their scores on attitude scale towards corporal punishment.

The first group comprised of 25% (24) teachers with the lowest scores on the attitude scale towards corporal punishment. This group was termed as Teachers with Lower Attitude towards Corporal Punishment. Similarly, the other group comprised of those 25% (24) teachers who were having the highest scores on attitude scale towards corporal punishment. This group was termed as teachers with Upper Attitude towards Corporal Punishment. The achievement scores of the students taught by these two categories of teachers were compared.

Table No 4: Comparison of Mean Achievement Scores of Students Taught by Upper and Lower Attitude Group Teachers towards Corporal Punishment

| Group of Teachers                             | N  | Mean  | S.D   | T     | Df | Sig   |
|---|----|-------|-------|-------|----|-------|
| Teachers with Lower Attitude Group towards CP | 24 | 32.18 | 10.76 | 0.975 | 46 | 0.335 |
| Teachers with Upper Attitude Group towards CP | 24 | 29.17 | 10.60 |       |    |       |

\*Not significant at  $\alpha=.01$

Table shows that by applying independent sample t-test the difference was not found significant between the mean achievement scores of students taught by upper attitude group and lower attitude group of teachers towards corporal punishment, mean (29.17) and (32.18), and t value = 0.975 not significant at  $\alpha=.01$

### Discussions and Conclusion

Although there was non-significant difference in mean achievement scores of students taught by teachers having positive and those having negative attitudes towards students' corporal punishment but the mean achievement score of students who were taught by teachers with negative attitudes towards corporal punishment was considerably higher than the counterparts taught by those having positive attitude. It supports the claim that corporal punishment is not an effective method for motivating students because it soon loses its effect whatever it may have originally. It strengthens the assertion of Save the Children & UNICEF<sup>10</sup> that a child who regularly receives corporal punishment loses his / her concentration and interest in the studies, hereby further weakening his / her performance. This study also supports another study by the Government of Pakistan (2006) that students who never got punishment by their teachers performed significantly better.

## Notes & References

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