

Psychological Trauma and Corporal Punishment

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Abstract

The study analyzes Psychological Trauma as a result of Corporal Punishment at Secondary Level. The population was all the students of 10th class which made a population of 30200 students in Tehsils of District Malakand of KPK. Sixteen secondary schools and twenty-six students from each school were taken as a sample by using a simple random method. The research instrument DASS 42 about corporal punishment used four options, i.e. at home, at school, both at home and school and neither at home nor at school. The questionnaire was administered to 416 students and 400 were received. The findings of the study were that a significant association of corporal punishment with psychological trauma i.e. depression, anxiety and stress was found. The students were corporally punished both at homes and schools had moderate or severe level of stress, anxiety and depression..

Key Words:

Students' Corporal Punishment, Psychological Trauma, Depression, Anxiety and Stress

Introduction

Stress, anxiety and depression are worldwide phenomenon (Johansson et al. 2013). Depression is a psychological disorder. The depressed individual becomes regressive. The term regressive is used for the individual that is withdrawn and spend less amount of energy for a task. He/she remains reluctant from the adult role and chooses child role. When given a choice, the individual avoids responsibility and escapes from his/her problems rather than trying to solve them; he/she seeks immediate gratification rather than long term gratifying results (Beck, 1967). According to APA (2000) the depressed persons show depressed mood. They lose their interest in life happenings, social work, or other important areas of functioning for two weeks or more. In such persons five or more of the following warning signs can be seen.

1. The whole day long depressed mood.
2. Lack of interest in all or maximum activities.
3. Losing or gaining weight unintentionally.
4. Sleeplessness or too much sleep.
5. Visible nervousness or retardation in motor activities.
6. Feeling exhaustion or feeling low energy.
7. Feeling much guilt or insignificance.
8. Losing thinking ability or concentration.
9. Frequent thought of passing away.

Three natural response of the body to a fearful situation is called anxiety. Overwhelming anxiety gives birth to anxiety disorder and in this case a majority of clinically diagnosed symptoms in the individual appear and these symptoms affect the normal life activities (Gardner & Bell, 2000). According to APA (2000) anxiety is often related to the anticipation of unsatisfactory or disrupting interpersonal relationships, such as having speech impediments when speaking. This state of *anxiety* may be an integral element in the individuals' fear.

According to APA (2000) from the perspective of the child, the corporal punishment itself can represent a stressor with the potential for creating a variety of negative outcome. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) published 4th edition in 2000 by the American Psychiatric Association described revised diagnostic measures for post-traumatic stress disorder. The diagnostic criteria are specified below. A person faces traumatic condition when:

1. He has to experience, observe, or meet with an event(s) involving risk of his own or others' death or severe physical harm.
2. He has to give reaction involving extreme fear or horror. Especially in children, it may be due to disordered or ill behavior.

Trauma of corporal punishment

Trauma is the emotional result of a natural disaster or accident. Corporal punishment produces depression, anxiety (Rodrenguiz,2003; Smith,2006; Simon,2012; Knox, Sarwar, Mangewala & Klag, 2015; Robleinsville, 2017; Gabbatiss, 2017; Schwartz, 2018; The IRISH NEWS, 2018; SAARC, 2018).

In adolescence corporal punishment may result in anxiety problems, downheartedness, and tendency to suicide (Hyman, 1997; Chenoweth & Just, 2000). Corporally punished children as compared to children who were not punished showed the highest depression and anxiety (Runyon and Haber, 1986, Chenoweth & Just, 2000). Both stress and depression are produced due to corporal punishment (Kagan & Segel, 1988; Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). Children who were given severe corporal punishment suffered from major depression and even mild level of corporal punishment produced stress and mild depression. Similarly, a study concluded that corporal punishment has direct relationship with depression or anxiety and the individual shows less self-esteem or powerlessness (Straus, 2003). In meta-analysis of 12 studies on mental health Gershoff (2002) found that corporal punishment has direct relationship with depression or anxiety on children. Eight studies on mental health in adulthood also found that corporal punishment has association with depression. On the other hand in the USA, Gromoske and Maguire-Jack (2012) studied 2,000 boys of ages 10-16 year and concluded that those adolescents who are punished corporally once in the past year show anxiety or depression and they felt bad about themselves and maladjusted whereas this relationship was also significant among the children punished one or two time in the past or punished once in the previous month. It was also found that parental corporal punishment to children also has positive association with anxiety and stress. Bordin, et. al. (2009) suggested that use of corporal punishment is not beneficial either parent are supportive or not. Gershoff et. al. (2010) conducted a study including 292 mothers and their children of ages 8- to 12 years, in six countries i.e. India, Thailand, China, Italy, Kenya and Philippines. He found that inflicting corporal punishment to children has association with anxiety. Water (2017) stated that corporal punishment can lead to severe depression and anxiety. From the perspective of the parent the use of corporal punishment represents a potential outcome of stressful experience (Michael Donnelly & Straus, 2005). Stress is also a result of corporal punishment (Kagan & Segel, 1988; Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). In all over the world, very large number of children has to face corporal punishment not only in their homes or schools but also in the places of care settings. A study about discipline of children in home was conducted by UNICEF (2010) in more than 30 countries having middle and low income level. It was found that 75% children face violent discipline, while 17% children experience tough physical punishment e.g. hitting or slaps on the face, head or ears repeatedly. Pakistan has signed on the Rights of the Child (CRC) during the Convention held on November 12th, 1990. Therefore Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) government has put ban on corporal punishment in schools in December, 2003. But UNICEF and Save the Children (2005) found that teachers are still inflicting corporal punishment to students in the province of KPK. A report by the Society for the Protection of Rights of the Child (SPARC, 2012) expresses that not only the practice of corporal punishment is continued but also it has given birth to more severe form of maladjustment such as to commit suicide. In another study by Ali (2014) also reveals that corporal punishment to students is a common phenomenon in schools. Therefore, the study of psychological trauma like depression, anxiety and stress due to corporal punishment in schools, homes and both at school and home was deemed necessary.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To find out the prevalence of corporal punishment at schools.
2. To explore the prevalence of corporal punishment at homes.
3. To investigate the prevalence of psychological trauma like stress, anxiety and depression in students due to corporal punishment.

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the questions stated as under:

1. Are students corporally punished at schools?
2. Are students corporally punished at home?
3. Are students corporally punished both at home and schools?

4. Is there prevalence of psychological trauma like depression in students due to corporal punishment?
5. Is there prevalence of anxiety in students due to corporal punishment?
6. Is there prevalence of stress in students due to corporal punishment?

Methodology of the Study

The study was of descriptive nature and data was collected through a survey.

Population and Sample

District Malakand was selected conveniently, where three thousand and two hundred students of secondary classes were studying in the secondary schools at Tehsil Adenzai, and Dir Lower. Tehsil Adenzai was selected as it had more schools; sixteen secondary schools from Tehsil were selected randomly and twenty six students from each school were selected randomly to make a sample of 416 students. In this sample 400 students returned the questionnaire.

Research Instrument

There were two research instruments used for this study; one was a structured interview pertaining simple questions about corporal punishment. It was used for measurement of corporal punishment at home, at school and both at home and school. The interview was validated by two subject matter experts, and the second was a scale named 'depression anxiety and stress scale' (DASS 42) for measurement of psychological trauma about level of stress, anxiety and depression was adapted for this study with author's permission. The researcher translated DASS 42 in Urdu and made it bilingual for better comprehension of students.

The DASS has 42-item which includes three self-report scales designed to measure the negative emotions like stress, anxiety and depression consisting 14 items in each scale. In the depression scale items were about devaluation of life, hopelessness, self-deprecation, anhedonia, lack of interest/involvement and inertia. In the anxiety scale items were about situational anxiety, skeletal muscle effects, autonomic arousal, and subjective experience of anxious affect. In the stress scale items were about levels of chronic non-specific arousal. This sub scale assesses nervous arousal, difficulty in relaxing, irritable/over-reactive impatient and being easily upset/agitated.

Data Collection and Analysis

The instrument DASS 42 (depression anxiety and stress scale) was administered to 416 students. But 400 students give completely filled instruments back while 16 were incomplete and were discarded. The response rate remained 96% which was very good. The same students were also interviewed about the infliction of physical punishment, at home, in school and both at home and school. According to recommendation of Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) the severity-rating index was used to analyze the score for each of the respondents over each of the sub-scales and presented below.

Table 1. Scoring Criteria for Stress, Anxiety and Depression

Level	Stress	Anxiety	Depression
Normal	0-14	0-7	0-9
Mild	15-18	8-9	10-13
Moderate	19-25	10-14	14-20
Severe	26-33	15-19	21-27
Extremely Severe	34 ⁺	20 ⁺	28 ⁺

Responses of the students were analyzed on the basis of the criteria given in the table 1. The results are presented in the tables below.

Table 2. Distribution of Students w.r.t Punishment at Home, School and Both at Home and School

Punished at home	Punished at school	Punished at home & school both	Not punished	Total
86 21.5%	55 13.75%	126 31.5%	133 33.25%	400

Table 2 shows that 21.5% students were punished at home, 13.75% students were punished at school and 13.5% were those who were punished both the places at home and at school. There were 33.3% students who were not punished.

Table 3. Overall Distribution of Students w.r.t Depression

Very severe depression	Severe depression	Moderate depression	Mild Depression	Normal	Total
Nil	12	168	136	84	400
Nil	3%	42%	34%	21%	

Table 3 shows that overall 42% students were in moderate depression, 34% students were of mild depression, 21% students were normal while only 3% were in severe depression while no student was in very severe level depression.

Table 4. Overall Distribution of Students w.r.t. Anxiety level

Very severe anxiety	Severe Anxiety	Moderate anxiety	Mild Anxiety	Normal	Total
Nil	8	120	160	112	400
Nil	(2%)	(30%)	(40%)	(28%)	

Table 4 shows overall distribution of students with respect to anxiety, 40% students were in mild level anxiety, 30% were in moderate level anxiety, 28% students were normal but only 2% were in severe level anxiety while no student was in very severe level anxiety.

Table 5. Overall Distribution of Students w.r.t. Stress Level

Very severe stress	Severe Stress	Moderate stress	Mild Stress	Normal	Total
Nil	20	148	168	64	400
Nil	(5%)	(37%)	(42%)	(16%)	

Table 5 shows the overall distribution of students with respect to stress, among them 42% students were in mild stress, 37% students were in moderate level stress, 16% students were normal, and only 5% were in severe stress while no student was in very severe level stress.

Table 6 . Corporal Punishment and Student Depression Level

Student CP	Depression Level				
	Normal	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Very severs
At home 21.5%	6.4%	8.2%	7.3%	2.1%	0%
At school 13.6%	6.1%	7.3%	5.2%	1.3%	0%
Both at home and school 31.6%	2.3%	10.2%	20.5%	5.3%	0%
Not punished 33.3%	10.3%	2.5%	3%	2%	0%

Table 6 shows that among the students receiving punishment at home; 8.2% have mild level depression, 7.3% have moderate level depression, 6.4% were normal, and 2.1% students have severe level depression. Among the students who receive punishment at school; 7.3% students have mild level depression, 6.1% students have normal level depression, 5.2% students have moderate level depression and only 1.3% students have severe level depression.

Among the students who receive punishment at home and also at school, 20.5% students have moderate level depression, 10.2% students have mild level depression, 5.3% students have severe level depression and only 2.3% students have normal level depression.

Among the students who do not receive punishment; 10.3% students have normal level depression, 2.5% students have mild level depression, 3% have moderate level depression and only 2% students have severe level depression.

Table 7 . Corporal Punishment & Student Anxiety Level

Student CP	Anxiety Level				
	Normal %	Mild %	Moderate %	Severe %	Very severe %
At home 21.5%	4.4	5.3	8.6	2.2	0
At school 13.3%	6.3	7.2	5.3	1.5	0
Both at home and school 31.6	3.3	8.1	21.4	8	0
Not punished 33.3%	12	5.1	2.2	0.6	0

Table 7 explains that among 400 students, 21.5% students were punished at home, out of those 4.4% students have normal level anxiety, 5.3% students have mild level anxiety, 8.3% students have moderate level anxiety, and 2.2% students have severe level anxiety. 13.3% students were punished at school, out of those 6.3% students have normal level anxiety, 7.2% students have mild level anxiety, 5.3% students have moderate level anxiety, and 1.5% students have severe level anxiety. Similarly, 31.6% students were punished both at school and home, out of those 3.3% students have normal level anxiety, 8.1% students have mild level anxiety, 21.4% students have moderate level anxiety, and 8% students have severe level anxiety. On the other hand 33.3% students were not punished, out of these 12% students have normal level anxiety, 5.1% students have mild level anxiety, 2.2% students have moderate level anxiety, and only 0.6% students have severe level anxiety.

Table 8. Corporal Punishment & Student Stress Level

Student CP	Stress Level				
	Normal %	Mild %	Moderate %	Severe %	Very severe%
At home 21.5%	5.2	6.3	8.3	6.2	0
At school 13.3%	6	7.2	9.3	2.1	0
Both at home and school 31.6%	5	8.3	12.3	5.1	0
Not punished 33.6%	6.1	5.3	1.3	0.4	0

Table 8 explains that among 400 students, 21.5% students were punished at home, out of those 5.2% students have normal level stress, 6.3% students have mild level stress, 8.3% students have moderate level stress, and 6.2% students have severe level stress. 13.3% students were punished at school, out of those 6% students have normal level stress, 7.2% students have mild level stress, 9.3% students have moderate level stress, and 2.1% students have severe level stress. 13.6% students were punished both at school and home, out of these 5% students have normal level stress, 8.3% students have mild level stress, 12.3% students have moderate level stress, and 5.1% students have severe level stress. On the other hand, 33.3% students were not punished, out of these 6.1% students have normal level stress, 5.3% students have mild level stress, 1.3% students (have moderate, and 0.4% students have severe level stress.

Conclusion

Majority of students received corporal punishment either at home or at school or both places. Those students who were punished both at home and school were suffering comparatively high level of depression, anxiety and stress level as compared to those students who were not corporally punished neither at home nor at school.

Discussion

In adolescence corporal punishment may result in a suicidal tendency, anxiety problems and depression (Hyman, 1997; Chenoweth & Just, 2000). The result of this study is in accordance with the present study as those students who were corporally punished both at homes and schools had moderate or severe level of stress, anxiety and

depression. It is also according to the results of the study of Runyon and Haber, (1986) and Chenoweth & Just, (2000) which showed that the children who were punished corporally had highest level anxiety and depression than the children who were not punished. Most of the psychologists are of the view that corporal punishment produces anxiety and depression (Smith, 2006; Simon, 2012; Knox, Sarwar, Mangewala and Klag, 2015; Robleinsiville, 2017; Gabbatiss, 2017; Schwartz, 2018; The Irish News, 2018; SAARC, 2018)., Similarly this result is in clear conformity of the study of other psychologists who assert that both stress and depression are produced due to corporal punishment (Kagan & Segel, 1988 & Turner & Finkelhor, 1996). The study is in also in accordance with the study of Straus (2003) which asserted that children who were given severe corporal punishment suffered from major depression and even mild level of corporal punishment produced stress and mild depression. This result is also in accordance with Gershoff (2002) meta-analysis of 12 studies on mental health; results were that that corporal punishment has direct relationship with depression or anxiety. Eight studies on mental health in adulthood also found that corporal punishment has association with depression. Other researchers also found similar result. In USA Gromoske & Maguire-Jack (2012) studied 2,000 boys of ages 10-16 years and found that those who received physical punishment one time in the past years showed anxiety or depression. The individuals received punishment one time or two times in past years also showed significant relationship while one-time punished individuals in the previous month also felt depressed. The study also found that parental corporal punishment has association with anxiety and stress in children. It was suggested by Bordin, et. al., (2009) that use of corporal punishment is not beneficial whether parents are supportive or not. Gershoff (2010) conducted a study including 292 mothers and their children of ages 8 to 12 years in different countries like India, China, Thailand, Italy, Philippines and Kenya; he found that corporal punishment to children has associated with their anxiety. Water (2017) described that corporal punishment can lead to severe anxiety and depression, this result is also in accordance with this study. With the same result of this study some other psychologists are also of the view that stress is also a result of corporal punishment (Kagan & Segel, 1988; Turner & Finkelhor, 1996).

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