



## Impact of Parental Punishment on Students' Behavior in School

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**Abstract:** *Despite numerous studies on parental punishment, there is a deficiency of knowledge on how parental punishment can affect the students' behaviour in schools. The present study was conducted to explore the relationship between Parental Punishment on Students' Behavior in School. The sample of 400 students (200 male and 200 female) was conveniently selected from private and public secondary schools of tehsil Sargodha. A self-developed questionnaire consisting of demographic information and a subscale of emotional, psychological and physical punishment was used. Data were analysed by applying descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that the majority of secondary level students were receiving moderate and severe level parental punishment; male students received more parental punishment than female students. The majority of students receiving parental punishment showed bad and poor behaviour in school. It is recommended that parents should not punish their children, and this practice may be discouraged by guiding parents in parent's teacher meetings.*

**Key Words:** Parental Punishment, Physical Punishment, Emotional Punishment, Psychological Punishment, Students' Behavior in School

### Introduction

Parental punishment is a technique of disciplining children used for centuries. Why do parents use punishment? Is it the easy way to quiet the child and more than an excuse to not give them logically? Is it helpful for parents to rear the child properly? Have they any right to beat the child for their mistakes? Does the punishment contribute positively to helping the parents to teach discipline? Children have the same human rights of protection as adults. Due to all of these questions, parental punishment is taken as a very serious issue to be solved. Many researchers reported negative consequences of parental punishment ([National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information, 2006](#); [Barnow,](#)

[Lucht, & Freyberger, 2001](#)). But conversely, [Gershoff \(2002\)](#) stated that punishment helps in immediate compliance. It may be due to fear of being beaten again. But parental punishment doesn't show much strength in long-term compliance. The classification of corporal punishment is different in different cultures. Somewhere, it is called by many particular names, i.e. smacking, spanking, caning, cuffing, chaining, kneeling, thumping, paddling, licking etc. Mostly parental punishment may be categorised into three broader categories such as psychological punishment, emotional punishment and physical punishment (Pinheiro & Sérgio, 2006).

Punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain

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but not injury for the purposes of correction or control of the child's behaviour. It is the prevention of repeating the wrong behaviour of a child. It has effects on their minds psychologically, and sometimes punishment in public results in humiliation ([Gershoff; 2002](#)). Physical force implants fear and pressure in a child's mind and also conveys a clear message of physical force by an adult. It is not only physical aggression but a big source of psychological aggression ([O'Connor & Scott, 2007](#)). Moreover, some types of punishment destroy the children mentally by inducing fear, disgust or loss of dignity rather than external pain, i.e. public humiliation etc. ([Hart, Newell & Power, 2005](#)).

Another mode of punishment is emotional; adults or caregivers punish a child emotionally by isolation, shutting the child in a room for a long time; preventing them from meeting friends and family, controlling on eating food ([Erickson & Egeland, 2002](#)), terrorising the child, which is the extreme form of giving psychological damage to children. It could be in the form of teasing, verbal threats, starting laughing at a child for displaying normal emotions, scaring the child, extreme reactions, or threatening to reveal embarrassing and personal information in front of relatives or friends ([Straus, 2001](#)). Ignoring the child could be in the form of no response to the child's questions, failure to recognise the child's interests, school activities, peer group, don't care for health, don't protect the child from harm ([Brassard, 2001](#)). Children who face rejecting behaviour from their parents start to think that they are useless even if parents do it consciously or unconsciously. Parents started expecting to perform household duties without regard for the child's age and ability (Carrie, Todd & Cindy, 2010).

The punishment the most commonly used is of physical nature by the parents towards their children. UNICEF (2010) reported from a survey in 33 countries that half of the children were physically punished by their parents. In some studies, researchers indicated that physical punishment is the hurdle between parent-child relationships ([Gershoff, 2010](#); [Mulvaney & Mebert, 2010](#)). Children who are physically punished by their parents on whom they are dependent may feel more humiliation and embarrassment. The pain of punishment may result in weeping and disgraceful efforts not to do that again. But, as a result, children feel disgraced on their own ([Lenta, 2017](#)). Spanking is the other name for physical punishment. It has been applied since the beginning of writing the history of punishment ([Abbasi, 2017](#)).

## **Parental Punishment and Students' Behavior in School**

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Students do not learn what parents say but they learn what parents do ([Spellings, 2005](#)). Usually parents keep directing and instructing the children for what to do and what not to do while their actions remains different than their words. Then children do as they see their parents and get scolded or punished from their parents. There have been various studies on punishment having common outcomes. Researchers found negative effects like emotional disturbance, developmental issues, and behavior problems in adolescence and adulthood. Parents who started to apply punishment on their children while they are quite young as 12 months; they tended to grow up with behavioral issues ([Grogan-kaylor, 2005](#)). Many studies concluded that punishment has negative impact on children behavior. Most of the researchers concluded antisocial behavior in children ([Gershoff, 2010](#); [Straus & Donnelly, 2001](#)). When every single time punishment was applied on children by their parents, there was increase in production of bad behavior in children ([Baker-Henningham, & Francis, 2018](#)).

Parents do not focus on result of good and bad behavior while they are hurting children. In fact, they use force as a method to revile the child which could scratch child's sense of self. Parents punish their child to make their child correct and obligatory. The moral logic behind this punishment is decided by parents what they perceive right or wrong ([Benatar, 2001](#)). The exact question lift by him was what type of punishment could instill positive behavior in the child ([Gershoff, 2002](#)). Researchers argued that parental punishment's harshness affects the child psychologically more than the actual punishment itself. Child perceives punishment as the rejection of parents and it has negative effects on the psychological adjustment and behavior. It was concluded that if there is love and affection between parents and child, negative consequences removed or become less ([Choate & Engstrom, 2014](#)) has defined that if the children awarded for good behavior and punished on selective mistakes the results will be change, Childs anxiety will reduce, and he will come to know the difference what he should do and what shouldn't be done.

In our society, especially in middle and lower middle class parents punish their children physically, emotionally and psychologically. Punishment surely affects the children in many aspects especially in terms of behaviour in schools. This study was opted to know the

influence of parental punishment on students' behaviour at secondary schools.

### Objectives

The objectives of the study were to (i) explore the nature of parental punishment i.e. emotional, psychological and physical punishment and (ii) find out students behaviour in school. (iii) determine relationship between parental punishment and students behaviour in school.

The study would help the school principals to understand the adverse effects of parental punishment and guide the teachers in dealing with students and also guide the parents through parent teachers meetings for the avoidance of punishment for better students' behaviour.

### Research Methodology

This study was exploratory and survey techniques were used to find out the nature of parental punishment of students and their behaviour in schools. Due to financial constraint the study was delimited to the students of secondary schools (grade 10th) of tehsil Sargodha. Twenty male and twenty female students were conveniently selected from twenty randomly selected secondary schools including 10 male and 10 female, making a sample of 400 students. Two questionnaire were developed; one for parents to inquire about parental punishment

at home second was self-developed questionnaire for parents consisted of 24 items in the factors of parental punishment i.e., Physical Punishment, psychological punishment, emotional punishment and other questionnaire for teachers pertaining factors i.e. classroom behavior, school activities, relationship with peers, relationship with teachers, violation of school discipline and harm to school property, to explore the behaviour of students in schools were used to collect data. Both the instruments were discussed with five experts and pilot tested on 10 respondents of each students and teachers. Cronbach Alpha Reliability of the tool was 0.843 and 0.884. Data were collected through self-approach in two phases; first the students receiving punishment were identified by asked in separation; then they were asked to get the questionnaire get filled from parents. So questionnaire was given to 231 students and all were received back. Then their class teachers were contacted to get the data about the identified students receiving parental punishment for their behaviour in school. The data were analysed through frequencies, mean score, standard deviation, and t-test.

### Results and findings

Results and findings were drawn on the basis of data analysis.

**Table 1.** Students' Level of punishment by parents

Level of punishment	Frequency	Percent
Mild punishment	9	3.9%
Moderate punishment	117	50.6%
Severe punishment	84	36.4%
highly severe punishment	21	9.1%
Total	231	100.0

Table 1 shows that majority of the students (87%) face moderate (50.6%) or Sever (36.4%) punishment from parents. A considerable number

of students face highly severe punishment which is alarming number. Overall trend is of moderate and sever level parental punishment.

**Table 2.** Students' Level and Forms of punishment by parents

Modes of Punishment	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	SD
Emotional Punishment ( Harsh Criticism etc)	188 11.6%	663 41%	267 16.5%	169 10.4%	330 20.4%	2.06	1.29
Psychological Punishment (using abusive language, calling offensive names, shouting, depriving privileges etc )	196 10.88%	155 9.6%	138 8.5%	269 16.6%	879 54.4%	2.07	1.2
Physical Punishment (Slapping, Spanking, hitting etc)	74 3.2%	142 6.13%	412 12.8%	341 14.76%	1341 58%	3.12	1.08

Table reflects 52.6% students expressed that they always and often receive emotional punishment

from parents whereas 16.5% students sometime receive emotional punishment from parents.

Regarding psychological punishment majority (71%) students expressed that their parents did not give them psychological punishment. While majority (72.76%) of students expressed that they did not receive physical punishment from their

parents but a handsome number of students said that they sometime receive physical punishment and a considerable number of students also told that they always or often receive physical punishment from their parents.

**Table 3.** Severity of Parental Punishment

Statements	A	O	ST	R	N	Mean	SD
Your parents punish you as severe as it left bruises and welt	8 3.5%	7 3%	23 10%	20 8.7%	173 74.9%	1.52	1.02
Your parents punish you as it caused pain but no bruises.	17 7.4%	25 10.8%	47 20.3%	48 20.8%	94 40.7%	2.23	1.28
Your parents give you mild punishment	41 17.7%	30 13%	72 31.2%	48 20.8%	40 17.3%	2.93	1.32
Your parents give severe punishment to make you obedient	43 18.6%	24 10.4%	41 17.7%	34 14.7%	89 38.5%	2.56	1.53
You give your child both forms of punishment (mild and harsh)	57 24.7%	29 12.6%	41 17.7%	43 18.6%	90 39%	2.56	1.53
Total	166 14%	115 9.7%	224 18.9%	193 16.3%	486 41%	2.4	1.3

Table 3 shows that majority (83.6%) students (with M = 1.52, SD = 1.02) responded that their parents never or rarely punish them as severe as it left bruises. Majority (61.5%) students (with M = 2.23, SD = 1.28) responded that their parents never or rarely punish them as severe as it caused pain. Many (38.1%) of students (with M = 2.93, SD = 1.32) responded that their parents never or rarely give them mild punishment whereas 31.2% students said that their parents sometimes give them mild punishment. While 30.7% students reported that their parents always or often give them mild punishment. Majority (53.2%) of students (with M = 2.56, SD = 1.53) responded that their parents never or rarely give them severe punishment to make them obedient whereas 29% students said that their parents always or often

give severe punishment to make them obedient. While 17.7% students reported that their parents sometimes give severe punishment to make them obedient. Majority (57.6%) of students (with M = 2.41, SD = 1.42) responded that their parents never or rarely give them both forms of mild and harsh punishment while 24.7% students said that their parents always or often give them both forms of punishment (mild and harsh).Whereas 17.7% students reported that their parents sometimes give them both forms of punishment (mild and harsh).

Overall 57.3% of students expressed that they never or rarely received severe parental punishment whereas a handsome number 19% students told that they sometime receive severe parental punishment.

**Table 4.** Frequency of Parental Punishment

Statements	A	O	ST	R	N	Mean	SD
Your parents punished you in the previous year.	22 9.5%	26 11.3%	38 16.5%	56 24.2%	89 38.5%	2.29	1.33
Your parents punished you in previous month.	15 6.5%	17 7.4%	35 15.2%	35 15.2%	129 55.8%	1.94	1.26
Your parents punished you in previous week.	16 6.9%	13 5.6%	17 7.4%	25 10.8%	160 69.3%	1.7	1.24
Your parents punish you daily	10 4.30%	17 7.40%	13 5.60%	14 6.10%	177 76.60%	1.57	1.15
Punishment every time, when you commit mistakes.	44 19%	27 11.70%	52 22.50%	54 23.40%	54 23.40%	2.8	1.41
Total	107 9.26%	100 8.65%	155 13.4%	184 15.9%	609 52.7%	2.05	1.27

Table 4 shows that majority (62.7%) students (with  $M = 2.29$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) responded that their parents never or rarely punished them in the previous year while 20.8% students said that their parents always or often punished them in the previous year. Majority (71%) of students (with  $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) responded that their parents never or rarely punished them in the previous month while 15.2% students said that their parents sometimes punished them in the previous month. Majority (80.1%) of students (with  $M = 1.70$ ,  $SD = 1.238$ ) responded that their parents never or rarely punished them in the

previous week. Majority (82.7%) students (with  $M = 1.57$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) responded that their parents never or rarely punished them daily. Many (46.8%) of students (with  $M = 2.80$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) responded that their parents never or rarely punished them every time, when they commit mistakes while 22.5% students said that their parents sometimes punished them every time, when they commit mistakes. Overall majority (68%) of students expressed that they did not frequently receive parental punishment while a handsome number of students (17.8%) told that they frequently receive parental punishment.

**Table 5.** Reasons of Parental Punishment

Statements	A	O	ST	R	N	Mean	SD
In condition of anger, your parents think before punishing you.	52 22.5%	20 8.6%	20 8.6%	67 29%	72 31.2%	2.62	1.5
You think parental punishment make you more obedient.	107 46.3%	44 19%	21 9%	19 8.20%	40 17.3%	3.68	1.5
Your parents punish you by considering physical punishment as a part of culture and tradition.	51 22%	27 11.6%	12 5.2%	30 12.9%	111 48%	2.46	1.68
After parental punishment, you learn what is right or wrong.	128 55.4%	39 16.8%	20 9%	13 5.6%	31 13.42%	3.95	1.55
Total	338 36.6%	130 14%	73 7.9%	129 13.9%	254 27.5%	3.18	1.55

Table 5 shows that majority (60%) of students (with  $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) responded that their parents never or rarely think before punishing them while 32% students said that their parents always or often think before punishing them. Majority (65.3%) students (with  $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) responded that always or often punishment makes them obedient while 25.5% students said that punishment never or rarely makes them obedient. Majority (61%) students (with  $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.68$ ) responded that parents never or rarely punish them by considering physical punishment as a part of culture and tradition while 33.6% students said that their parents always or often punish them by considering

physical punishment as a part of culture and tradition. Majority (72.2%) students (with  $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) responded that after parental punishment they always or often learn what is right or wrong while 18.8% students said that after parental punishment they never or rarely learn what is right or wrong. Overall 50% students express that their parents think physical punishment is necessary while 40% students told that their parents never or rarely think physical punishment is necessary. The analysis also indicates that majority (92.2%) of students' shows bad and poor behavior in school, whereas 6.9% shows good behavior in school, while only 0.9% shows very good behavior in school.

**Table 6.** Disruptive Classroom Behaviors of students

Themes	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Mean	SD
Low participation in Academic affairs in class	1,581 62.41%	355 14.01%	264 10.42%	176 6.94%	157 6.2%	4.18	1.17
Low involvement in Sports, social and co-curricular activities	206 28.37%	316 43.52%	32 4.4%	92 12.67%	80 11.02%	3.5	1.3
Aggression, bullying, isolation	526 56.92%	164 17.74%	69 5.3%	71 7.68%	114 12.33%	3.76	1.23
Disrespecting, disobeying , telling lies to the teachers	561 48.5%	53 4.58%	54 4.6%	411 35.5%	76 6.5%	4.48	1.13

Violating Rules, truancy, coming late, cheating littering etc	891 55%	229 14.1%	165 10.2%	211 13%	121 7.5%	3.96	1.15
Damaging school property plants, walls, furniture etc.	760 82.2%	30 3.2%	55 6%	46 5%	33 3.6%	4.5	1.04

Table 6 shows various types of disruptive behaviors displayed by the students. Majority (76.4%) of the students receiving parental punishments (with  $M = 4.18$  &  $SD = 1.17$ ) did not show good behaviour in classroom.

Majority (71.8%) of the teachers (with  $M = 3.5$ ,  $SD = 1.3$ ) responded that students receiving parental punishments, always or often do not behave well in school activities.

Overall it is reflected by majority (53%) of

teachers, students' receiving parental punishments have no good relationship with teachers. Overall majority (69%) of the teachers responded that students often or always (with  $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) violate school discipline.

Majority (85.4%) of the teachers (with  $M = 4.5$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) responded that students receiving parental punishment often or always damage school property.

**Table 7.** Comparison of male and female student views about parental punishment

Statement	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P-value
Views of male and female students about punishment	Male	121	82.53	16.89	0.196	229	0.023
	Female	110	82.05	20.56			

Table 7 indicates that there exists a statistically significant difference between male and female students views regarding punishment as indicated by  $t = 0.196$ ,  $df = 229$  and  $p = 0.023 < \alpha = 0.05$ .

The higher mean score ( $M = 82.53$ ,  $SD = 16.89$ ) shows that male students are punished more than females students ( $M = 82.05$ ,  $SD = 20.56$ ).

**Table 8.** Comparison between government and private schools students' behavior in schools

Sector	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P-value
Students in Public Schools	145	86.31	19.35	4.660	229	0.000
Students in private schools	86	75.54	15.40			

Table 8 indicates that there exists a statistically significant difference between behavior of government schools' students and private schools' students as indicated by  $t = 4.66$ ,  $df = 229$  and  $p = 0.000 < \alpha = 0.05$ . The higher mean score ( $M = 86.31$ ,  $SD = 19.35$ ) shows that students of government schools have more ill behavior than students of private schools ( $M = 75.54$ ,  $SD = 15.40$ ).

An important objective was to explore relationship between students' parental punishment and their behavior in school. It is reflected from analysis that there was significant and strong positive relationship between parental punishment reported by students and students' behavior in school reported by teacher as indicated by  $r$ -value = 0.634 and  $p$ -value = 0.000  $< \alpha = 0.05$

**Table 9.** Relationship between various forms of punishment and behavior in school

forms of punishment	N	Pearson Correlation (r)	p-value
Emotional	231	0.048	0.470
Psychological	231	-0.003	0.961
Physical	231	0.148	0.025

Table 9 shows that there is no significant relationship between parental emotional punishment and students' behavior in school as indicated by  $r$ -value = 0.048 and  $p$ -value = 0.470  $> \alpha = 0.05$ . It is also reflected that there was no

significant relationship between psychological punishment and students' behavior in school as indicated by  $r$ -value = -0.003 and  $p$ -value = 0.961  $> \alpha = 0.05$ . There was positive but weak relationship between parental physical

punishment and students' behavior in school as indicated by  $r$ -value = 0.148 and  $p$ -value = 0.025  $< \alpha = 0.05$ .

### Discussion

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Impact of parental punishment at home is studied by many researchers. They found somewhat similar results as found in this study. [Lansford, Tapanya, & Oburu, \(2010\)](#) that a large proportion of parents use corporal punishment to try to manage their children's behavior and similarly the result is also in line with [Twum-Danso, \(2010\)](#) who found that parents consider physical punishment the most appropriate means of instilling these values in them. [Mori, \(2007\)](#) also found that parents think it is sometimes necessary to smack a naughty child. [Lenta \(2017\)](#) found that parental punishment is the part of culture and was considered as normal act. It was also found by [Nashmi \(2008\)](#) that boys experience more physical punishment than girls.

In a meta-analysis study, [Gershoff, E. T. \(2002\)](#) deduced that parental corporal punishment was associated with children's aggressive behaviors more for children in middle school than for older or younger children. According to [Hussain \(2006\)](#) corporal punishment remained a hurdle in developing good teacher - student relationship and created hatred for teachers. Moreover corporal punishment became the major cause for creating aggressive attitudes and quarrelsome behaviors among the students.

### Conclusions

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1. Majority of secondary level students were receiving moderate and sever level parental punishment such that they are always or often receive emotional punishment from parents, some time they receive physical punishment and most

common physical punishment is grabbing or shaking by parents, some time they receive severe parental punishment. But they did not receive psychological punishment and other types of punishments are not frequent.

2. Whereas male students received more parental punishment than female students but students of government and private schools were receiving equivalent parental punishment.
3. Overall students' expression was 50, fifty that their parents think physical punishment is necessary and not necessary.
4. Majority of students receiving parental punishment showed bad and poor behavior in school such that they showed poor behaviour in classroom and in school activities, violate school discipline, damage school property, showed bad relationship with peers and also their relationship with teachers were not good. On the other side, students of government schools reported more ill behavior than students of private schools.
5. The strong positive relationship between parental punishment reported by students and students' behavior in school was reported by teacher such that a positive relationship between parental physical punishment and students' behavior in school was found but there was no relationship between parental emotional punishment, psychological punishment and students' behavior in school.

### Recommendations

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On the basis of findings it is recommended that teachers should persuade the parents in parent's teacher meetings that they should not punish their children even mild as punishment results in bad and poor behaviour in school.

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