

Exploring beliefs, values and practices on disciplining of young children in the context of Right to Education Act

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Abstract

In 2009, the enactment of Right to Education (RtE) Act enforced a ban on corporal punishment and gave the children of the country a fundamental right to free and compulsory education without any fear and pain of physical punishment. This paper aims to explore the processes and challenges involved in implementation of RtE. The paper examines the views of different stakeholders such as management of schools, teachers, students and their parents on disciplining practices used in schools using empirical data from a two studies conducted by Centre for Early Childhood Education and Development (CECED), Ambedkar University Delhi— a rapid qualitative assessment in 2013 among private schools in East Delhi and India Early Childhood Education Impact Study where quantitative and qualitative data was collected on corporal punishment between 2013 to 2015 in rural Rajasthan. This paper looks at the classroom practices related to discipline in primary schools. The findings of the research show significant attitudinal differences across different stakeholders and variation in interpretation of RtE Act. The findings indicate that the experiences of children in the schools are dependent on policy formulated by the schools to enact the act, attitudes of the policy implementers and the traditional understanding of punishment.

Keywords: *Corporal punishment, Physical punishment, Right to Education (RtE) Act*

Introduction

“When a child hits a child, we call it aggression.

When a child hits an adult, we call it hostility.

When an adult hits an adult, we call it assault.

When an adult hits a child, we call it discipline.”

— Haim G. Ginott (Teacher, Child Psychologist and psychotherapist)

The term “corporal punishment” has been articulated in different ways in diverse settings. The above-mentioned quote reflects the traditional approach to corporal punishment which has been used interchangeably with an intention of disciplining a child for maintaining behaviour and instilling right values in the child for many years (Gershoff, 2010). The idea of disciplining children is derived from deep rooted notions about childhood. It is related to clichéd popular conceptions to children such as ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’, ‘children need to be moulded’, and so on, which still persists in the thinking of adults to a great extent.

In India, various research studies have been done to look at adult’s attitude towards use of corporal punishment as a means of discipline. In one of the studies, it was found that adults perceive corporal punishment as a form of discipline to put an end to inappropriate or undesirable behaviour and to promote positive and acceptable behaviour in the both short and long terms (Gershoff, 2010). Another study shows the high prevalence of corporal punishment by throwing light into the fact that it is frequently used in both homes and in schools (Ghosh & Pasupathi, 2016). Thus, it is a universal problem and a lot of people are unaware of serious consequences of corporal punishment which often leaves long lasting impact on the personality of the individual. Adults generally use various methods of disciplining a child which often employs harsh measures such as physical punishment, verbal punishment and other forms of punishment (Dehadray, 2019).

In India, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RtE) Act, 2009, which

came into force from 1st April 2010, prohibits 'physical punishment' and 'mental harassment' under Section 17(1) making it a punishable offence under Section 17(2). The Act explicitly enforced a ban on corporal punishment and provided the children of the country a fundamental right to free and compulsory education without any fear and pain of physical punishment in schools.

Despite this ban, evidence reveals that corporal punishment is still prevalent in schools as well as at home which has various short as well as long term impact on children's wellbeing. Numerous cases have been reported. Recently, a student's family complained against a teacher for forcibly cutting their child's hair (Hindustan Times, 2017). Another significant evidence highlighted in the report by Agrasar NGO which revealed that 80% of marginalised children report being punished by teachers, while an average of 43% said they were regularly beaten, up to three times a week (India Spend, 2018).

The harmful impact of corporal punishment on children is well researched with its association to developmental outcomes. The consequence of corporal punishment can be a post-traumatic stress syndrome that creates deep, lifelong psychological problems such as depression (Hyman, 1990). Furthermore, the effects can reach beyond school going years and well into adulthood with more severe psychiatric conditions (Pate & Gould, 2012; Evinç et al., 2018). It decreases a child's motivation and increases anxiety. As a consequence, the ability to concentrate is inhibited and learning is poor (UNICEF Asian Report, 2001).

These startling incidents and impact of corporal punishment on children reflect a large gap between the current RtE Act that bans corporal punishment and its actual implementation. Thus, this paper aims to explore views and practices on disciplining of young children in the context of the Act in the schools of Delhi and rural Rajasthan.

The specific objectives were:

1. To explore traditional ideas and current practices of disciplining young children in the context of RtE, both in home and school;
2. To understand the practical implications of translating the corporal punishment section of the RtE in classroom;

3. To investigate children's perception of punishment; and
4. To explore perceptions of different stakeholders on ban of corporal punishment.

Method

The study was primarily a survey of adult's and children's experiences of corporal punishment in the home as well as in the school setting. The emphasis was on real practices, their magnitude and prevalence. Schools were contacted personally to request permission for their staffs' participation. As part of the IECEI study, a longitudinal study to estimate the impact of early childhood education on school readiness levels and subsequent learning levels in primary grades, the preschool and schools attended by the children were observed through the day. One of the indicators to assess the quality of classroom interaction was on disciplining technique used by the teacher. As part of the study, qualitative survey was done in selected villages to understand what different stakeholders, mainly teachers and parents understand of RtE where ban on corporal punishment was one the issues covered.

Sampling

In the study, purposive sampling was done. The sample of the study comprised of two low budget private schools and one public school. Within each institute their management, teachers, primary school students and their respective parents were selected and interviewed. The total sample of the study which included three schools were three headmistress of the primary school, 13 primary grade teachers, 17 primary grade students and their parents.

20 villages across two districts, Alwar and Ajmer were part of the IECEI Study and 81, 95 and 108 schools were observed in 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively. As part of the qualitative survey two villages were selected in Ajmer and two FGDs with teachers and parents were conducted in each of the two villages.

Tools

The study used closed ended interview schedule with adults. An interaction guide was used for the students.

For the classroom observation a tool developed by CECED, AUD, Early Childhood Education Quality Assessment Scale Plus (ECEQAS+) was used and for the FGD with teachers and the parents a FGD guide was developed.

Procedure

As stated above this paper is based on two research studies, a rapid assessment carried out in private schools in Delhi in 2013 and longitudinal study, IECEI study carried out in Rajasthan from 2012 to 2014. This mixed method approach was used in this paper where both qualitative and quantitative data from the two researches has been collected from different stakeholders.

Analysis of data

The data were coded and analysed in order to find emergent themes. Common themes were identified from various data sources and links between them were established.

Ethical considerations

To ensure the ethical standards of conducting a research study are upheld, following key points were considered:

- a) Sample briefed about the purpose of the study and are not placed at undue risk.
- b) Participation was kept voluntary and confidential.
- c) Sample are provided and agree to informed consent prior to their participation
- d) Data collection and analysis does not result in the violation of privacy or discrimination.

Results and discussion

Traditional notions of disciplining young children

This section focuses on the challenges faced by parents at the home as well as by teachers at the school setting to discipline their children.

Need for disciplining young children

Teacher's cited disobedience among children as one of the primary concerns which require disciplining. Disobedience involves episodes when children do not follow given instructions or complete homework. 85 percent of teachers reported that the need of disciplining occurs, when children do not follow their instructions

and 40 percent mentioned that conflict among children which could be physical or verbal fights amongst children also requires disciplining. Besides, other reasons include disrespectful behaviour, which often incorporates disrespect towards teachers, counter-replies and aggression mentioned by 15 percent of the teachers and about 10 percent reported, mischievous behaviour of children for instance, playing pranks on other children or on teachers, at times becomes very difficult to manage and need to be controlled and thus punishment being used for the same.

On the other hand, parents of the children were also interviewed to explore if they get complaint about their children from the school and if they do, what are the complaints for. The data showed that complaints received by 80 percent of the parents against their children by teachers are generally on the issues related to disobedience, which involves talking and disturbing the whole class and not completing class work or homework on time. Besides, about 20 percent of parents received complaints on mischievous acts of children and annoying other children and teachers with their mischief. Furthermore, to explore the occurrence of punishment at home, the parents were interviewed, to investigate about the activities where parents face difficulty to indulge in with their children and areas where children need disciplining. 65 percent of the parents reported to face difficulty in dealing with the routine activities of the children. About 35 percent face difficulty with their children in academic activities such as dealing with their homework, schoolwork, marks, and studies etc.

Overall, the responses cited by teachers and parents primarily highlighted disobedience among children as the most governing reason for disciplining children.

Strategies for maintaining discipline among children

67 percent of the teachers reported of using discussion method with children for maintaining discipline in the classroom. In the beginning, teachers preferred to talk to children and discuss with them the problem related to their behaviour. Teacher's also reported to use guilt inflicting strategies, where they made the child feel guilty for their behaviour. This was the most commonly used method to discipline children as reported by 28 percent of respondents. Besides, 15 percent of

the teachers mentioned leaving it up to the principal, counsellor or the parent to take care of the child behaviour. While, 10 percent of the teachers reported about using punishment which includes both verbal and physical punishment.

73 percent of parents reported scolding and refraining the child from his/her favourite activity as the most commonly used ways to maintain discipline among children. Besides, 27 percent of the parents reported to use shaming and not talking to the child as a strategy. On the other hand, 5 percent of the parents reported spanking as well. Parents reported to be using a mix of the disciplining techniques, depending on the children's behaviour.

As there was data on classroom observation on use of corporal punishment by teacher on young children in different schools in rural Rajasthan, we see that corporal punishment is very common across government and private schools. The figures below represent the use of corporal punishment by teachers with children in presence of a researcher who the teachers knew was recording the proceedings of the class.

The data from the IECEI study shows that being punished, hit, slapped by the teachers was a part of the normal routine for the children and higher proportion of teachers were observed to be using abusive language with children. But the data also shows difference between different type of schools. Private schools had more incidences of corporal punishment as compared to government school, but difference is smaller for use of abusive language. Even though in comparison, the government schools seem better than how children are disciplined in private, quite a significant proportion of teachers in government school use banned strategies to discipline children.

Disciplining in classroom setting

Many teachers reported to seek help or advice on disciplining related issues from school counsellors, principals and parents as well. Around 45 percent of the teachers mentioned of talking to parents and school counsellors about disciplining children and 40 percent reported to consult school principal on disciplining related issues.

On the other hand, parents reported that they themselves can be better advisors to the teachers as they know their children well. 75 percent of the parents mentioned that teachers should seek

help from parents. Only about 1/4th of the parents thought counsellors can be a good advisors and even fewer regarded principal as a help for the teacher.

Overall, parents and teachers emphasized on the need to take help of a counsellor to deal with disciplining related issues among children. Teachers prefer to take advice from their colleagues in the school, counsellor or the principal but according to parents they can guide the teacher's best. Better communication and interaction among teachers and parents can give a better and more non-violent environment to the children.

In the rural setup, the things were a little different. In the FGDs conducted, the government schoolteachers indicated that they felt bound by the 'new' law which doesn't allow the children to be punished. They said that they do not know what to do with the children when they show behavioural problems in the classroom. The teachers talked about not being trained on how to manage the situation with the children when faced with behavioural issues. The teachers of the government schools stated that without the fear of punishment, it is hard to teach the children. The teachers said they only know of punishment as a solution which has been taken away from themselves by the law.

Parents also agreed to the perspective shared by the teachers, parents of the children didn't mind their children to be beaten in order to discipline to make them learn but only in case it was done by the private school teachers. Parents were of the opinion that Government school teachers do not want to invest in their children so they shouldn't use any harsh disciplining methods whereas private schools were allowed to punish the children, hold exams and fail the children as they were more inclined to a more strict system which was viewed as for the betterment of their children.

Corporal Punishment as a disciplining technique and its impact

This section of the paper explores the perspective of different stakeholders about the implication and impact of the punishment on children.

Influence of punishment

Around 85 percent of parents and teachers believed that children do comply with the rule

after getting punished for some time but, later they get back to their usual behaviour. Though, highest proportion of parents and teachers felt that punishment lead to compliance for some time still, a percentage difference between parents and teachers could be observed. 55 percent of the teachers and 35 percent of parents reported that it is just one-time compliance. Additionally, 40 percent of the parents and 10 percent of the teachers stated that children do commit the same mistakes again after getting punished but if so, then it happens unconsciously. Rest of the 15 percent of the parents and 20 percent of the teachers reported that children commit the mistake consciously.

The difference in the perspective of both parents and teachers reflect that parents see punishment which helps in disciplining children and comply with the rule after getting punished and even if, the child repeats the problematic behaviour, it is done unconsciously. Whereas, teachers believe that punishment makes the child comply for that time period and after being punished, children tend to consciously make the same mistakes.

Emotion felt after punishing a child

The feelings of parents and teachers were explored, after punishing the child. It was important to understand emotions of the adults who use punishments for young children to rectify their inappropriate behaviour and to understand the prevalence of corporal punishment at school and at home. 10 percent of the parents and almost 1/4th of the teachers did not respond to the question and further analysis for this item was done by keeping these respondents out.

Many parents (63%) and teachers (80%) mentioned the feeling of guilt after punishing children. On the other hand, 1/4th parents reported feeling contented after punishing children as they stated that punishment would have a positive impact on the children, and they would not get involved in the similar improper behaviours again. None of the teachers mentioned that one feels contented after punishing children. However, 15 percent of the parents and 30 percent of the teachers reported that they feel neutral after punishing as it is something required for disciplining children behaviour.

Impact of corporal punishment as disciplining strategy

It was interesting to see the awareness of parents and teachers on negative impacts of corporal punishment. Around 70 percent of the teachers and 60 percent of the parents accepted that the exposure to corporal punishment can lead to psycho-social effects in the later life whereas a small proportion disagreed with same. In addition, 3/4th of the teachers and 45 percent of the parents revealed that exposure to corporal punishment can lead to developing psychosomatic effects which involve irregular school attendance and withdrawal behaviour among children. While, few of the teachers and 35 percent of the parents, disagreed with any kind of psycho-somatic impact of corporal punishment on children. Besides, 85 percent of the teachers and 70 percent of the parents reported that punishment leads to high level of anxiety and depression among children. Punishment can also impact mental abilities of children was reported by 60 percent of parents and teachers.

Teachers expressed differing views on the relationship between academics and punishment. The views reported by teachers included the negative impact of punishment on academic performance of the children, punishment help children to be more attentive towards studies, light punishment is needed for average or below average students and punishment and academics are related with average or below average students. On the other hand, few teachers reported that punishment can work for children with behavioural problems but, it can also adversely impact the performance of children with low or average academic background and increases their disinterest in studies.

Children's perception on mischief and punishment

Children were asked about the situations when teacher gets aggravated in the classroom. They mentioned that when they do not follow the rules of the classroom such as, playing and running inside the class, making noise during prayer session and inside the classroom, often lead to punishment of some kind. One of the most commonly mentioned response by students was '*shetani karte hai toh dadi hai, pareshan karte hai ya marte hai toh gussa karti hai teacher*' (when we do mischief teacher scolds, when we trouble her or we fight then she gets angry).

Largely, the data reveals that the situations mentioned by children are relatively coinciding with the responses given by teachers. For instance, children also cited similar reasons of teacher's annoyance which included children not completing their homework, asking silly questions, forgetting to bring notebook in the class, paying less attention while teachers were teaching etc. In addition, children mentioned another very interesting yet significant reason of getting punished by the teachers, was speaking in Hindi in the class. Probably, the English medium schools do not allow their children to talk in Hindi with the intention of promoting English among the children. Besides, children reported that sometimes even bad handwriting could lead to punishment by the teacher.

Furthermore, the teacher's views on inappropriate behaviour seemed to have an impact on children's perception on punishment in classroom. For instance, the data reveals that children consider that behaviours such as talking in the classroom, not paying attention to the teacher while studying and playing pranks are mischievous acts which annoy teachers in the class. Children considered the above-mentioned acts as mischievous because, they are not allowed to do such things in the class and they generally get punished for the same. Interestingly, one of the students mentioned, '*shaitani karta hun jab games period hota hai tab khelta hun*' (I misbehave during games period), for him playing during games session is equivalent to getting involved in misbehaviour. All children revealed the incidence of getting scolded by teachers while talking to their peers in the class or play in the class.

Scolding is found very common as reported by children. Scolding of children include events such as 'made to sit on a different bench with a child who is not a friend', 'stand outside the classroom', 'stand facing the wall', 'sit on the floor', 'stand on the bench', and 'stand with hands raised up in the air'. Interestingly, children perceived the above-mentioned acts as warning to not repeat the behaviour again while punishment meant getting physically hurting through slaps or ear pulled. However, children seem to be habitual to scolding used by teachers. One of the students, who was made to change his seat everyday by every subject teacher as he talked a lot, mentioned that '*aab toh aadat si ho gayi hai. Teacher seat change karti hai toh kisi*

aur ke saath bethati hai. Toh main use bhi dosti kar leta hun. Aab sab mere dost hai class mein. Sab se baat karta hun' (I am used to it now. Teacher changes my seat and makes me sit with someone else. I become friend that person as well. Now everyone is my friend. I talk with every one).

On the contrary, the response of children about other children getting punished in the class and the type of their punishment shows noteworthy findings. A significant number of children mentioned the use of physical punishment by the teacher on other children in their classroom. Around 50 percent of the children reported events of physical punishment which includes hitting/slapping by the teachers in their classroom. The other forms of punishment reported by children were, '*murga banana*' (a way of physical punishment where a child is made to squat and pinch their ears), 'stand and holding the ears and walk in the classroom', 'stand outside the classroom', 'walk through the class with raised hands', 'ears pulled by the teacher', 'made to sit on the floor', and 'made to do sit ups'. Additionally, children cited to get scolded, at first and then, if they repeat the behaviour, which teacher considers inappropriate, then they would get these punishments. To know more intensely about their feelings while getting punishment, the presence of other classmates while punishment was explored. About 80 percent of children were reported to be punished by their teachers in front of the whole class. Many children expressed the feeling of embarrassment in front of the whole class while getting punishment by the teacher.

Though, punishment is always seen as an effective way of disciplining children and to modify the behaviour of children for years yet, it does not seem to fulfil the objective of disciplining children, which has been reflected in the data of children's interview. 60 percent of the children reported to repeat the same mistake repeatedly, even after getting punished for the same behaviour.

Furthermore, children were also given a hypothetical situation in which they had to act like a teacher and discipline children who are making noise in the class. This question lead to very interesting responses, as the children who did not like being punished and who felt upset for being punished, were reported to perform precisely similar as their teachers, when given

the power. They reported to scold the children and try to stop them from being noisy. 44 percent of children mentioned that they would make them stand outside in case of making noise. On the other hand, 37 percent reported that they would scold first and if, they continue to repeat then, they would hit them, and 13 percent and 6 percent reported that they would hit and scold the children. One of the students said, 'I would ask the children to keep quiet, otherwise hit them with scale' and so on. The data shows that children perceived punishment as the only way to control the misbehaviour among the others. Probably, this attitude is very much influenced by the teacher's attitude towards children when they make noise. Despite the fact that, children don't like being punished by their teachers yet, they had chosen to act similar the way their teachers behave as, children tend to imitate their teachers and also, they have seen punishment ranges from mild to severe as an only way to deal with children.

Finally, to know about their parent's reaction towards their children getting punished in schools, children were asked whether they share about getting punished by their teachers with parents or not. The data shows that 80 percent of children reported to share the events of punishment with their parents whereas, 20 percent of children do not share it. Out of these 80 percent children, 67 percent shared the reaction of their parents whereas rest of them did not say anything. Out of these 67 percent, 50 percent reported that their parents told them to not repeat it again, 38 percent of parents did not say anything after hearing it and 12 percent of parents scolded their children for their misbehaviour. On the other hand, out of 20 percent of children who did not share about their punishment, only one child mentioned the reason that, "*Apne papa se daant padegi iss darr se mein nahi batata hun apne ghar pe jab bhi punishment milta hai*" (I did not share about punishment at home from the fear of being persecuted by the father).

Perceptions of different stakeholders on ban on corporal punishment

Awareness about the ban on corporal punishment under Right to Education Act

In 2009, the enactment of the RtE Act had put a ban on the corporal punishment in schools. Under this section, different stakeholders were

interviewed to explore their awareness and views about the ban on corporal punishment under the Act.

The data shows that school management and teachers were well informed about the act and its ban on corporal punishment. Across the urban and the rural sample, most of the management personnel and teachers were reported to support the government's decision to ban corporal punishments in schools. Teachers and school management believed that corporal punishment have negative impact on children but some also felt that they are at loss because they do not want other strategy to use to discipline so they have to let the children be.

On the other hand, parents of the sampled children were interviewed to investigate their awareness about the ban. The data shows that two third of the parents were aware of the ban under the act. However, out of these two third parents, one third showed disagreement towards the government's decision of banning punishment in schools. As parents are of opinion that punishment is at times required for inculcating good habits among children. The interaction with the rural parents showed that there was good advocacy for the RtE Act, but the parents had mixed feelings about ban and no detention. They felt that punishment is required for disciplining and it is for the child's good.

Impact of ban on corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is the most commonly used traditional strategy to maintain discipline among children. This strategy has been used to control children from engaging in mischief and disobedience for ages. The RtE has brought a ban on the age-old strategy and also given voice to the children of the country where they can say no to punishment and demand for a punishment free school environment. Due to the ban, the teachers are unable to use corporal punishment in the classroom setting to discipline children and may be led to difficulty for the teacher to manage the situation. In order to understand the impact of the ban, the school management, teacher and the parents of the children were interviewed about whether the ban has made the disciplining difficult for the teacher and parents and whether they think that the ban has given voice to the children or not.

Around 8 percent of the teachers expressed their dissatisfaction over the ban as it has become

difficult to control children without punishment. Whereas, around the same number of teachers did not give any opinion on the issue. On the other hand, a large proportion of teachers did not believe that ban on corporal punishment has changed anything in their classroom processes.

A different opinion was shared by parents about the ban of corporal punishment. For many parents i.e. 60 percent, the ban on corporal punishment has made difficult for the teachers to discipline children whereas, 40 percent of the parents, the ban has changed nothing for the teachers.

Teachers, headmistress and parents, who do not think that ban has led to any change in the disciplining of children but agreed that punishment shouldn't be used as a strategy to maintain discipline. On the other hand, parents who accepted the change due to the ban believed that managing a classroom has become difficult without punishment. The data shows that both parents and teachers are aware about the ban of corporal punishment which has given voice to the children as well. All the headmistresses, about 2/3rd of parents and more than half of the teachers mentioned that the ban has given voice to the children.

Implementation of the ban on corporal punishment in the schools

To know about the school policies or guidelines on dealing with issues related to disciplining of children, school managements were asked about their school guidelines.

Out of 13 teachers, 12 reported to have a policy in school for managing discipline, whereas one of the teachers reported to have no such policy to deal with disciplining issues among children. Out of these 12 teachers, 8 teachers explained about their policy. The explanation about the school policy revealed various strategies to deal with issues related to disciplining such as, discussion with psychiatrist, parents, teachers, a polite talk with children, a systematic analysis of situation and arrangement of workshop for teachers on issues related to children. One of the teachers said, "Our management believes in love and affection. With this policy of love and affection, we can do wonders in any field i.e. academics, discipline etc." Another one said "our policy is strict vigilance and monitoring along with good interaction with child's parents on periodic basis". Furthermore, the teachers were

asked on getting any training for implementing these policies, 46 percent of the teachers agreed upon it whereas 54 percent denied of getting any training.

Moreover, the teachers were asked about the challenges faced by them while implementing the ban on corporal punishment. 31 percent of the teachers reported about lack of training to implement new policies, 23 percent claimed to faulty policies and guidelines are developed as one of the teacher believed punishment is important and said, "children don't understand without punishment". Besides, rest 38 percent stated various other reasons, which includes use of policy is a daunting task, children are quite young to understand these policies, and experiences teaches a lot on these issues.

Largely, the teachers reported to have some kind of policy in their school to deal with disciplining related issues among children. Though, many teachers talked about various challenges while implementing these policies yet, a few of them mentioned about the significance of having these policies and importance of dealing with children with love and affection.

Conclusion

The main objective of this study was to explore the beliefs, values and practices regarding disciplining of young children. With regard to managing the disobedient behaviour among children, parents and teachers showed varied techniques. Especially parents who mentioned scolding and refraining the children from their favourite activity as the most commonly used ways to maintain discipline among children. This shows the need to support parents and teachers to understand children's needs and behaviour and introduce new techniques to manage their behaviour at home as well as at school without using verbal and physical punishment.

Although the majority of teachers reported to not administering corporal punishment, it seems that the concept and use of corporal punishment is still prevalent and viewed as a viable option for teachers when children asked about the use of corporal punishment on other classmates. A significant number of children mentioned the use of verbal as well as physical punishment by the teacher on other children in their classroom. On probing further, children cited to get scolded, at first and then, if they repeat the behaviour, which teacher considers inappropriate, then they would

get physical punishments. On the other hand, many teachers completely denied of using any punishment in the classroom. Nevertheless, teachers have been able to use a variety of alternatives to maintain order although they feel that these are not always suitable. Regarding the school, it is recommended that policies must be enforced. The counsellor should be more involved in dealing with disciplining related issues and teachers need more training on disciplinary techniques. Schools should involve parents more in reforming their children's behaviour.

With regard to awareness and understanding of the legislative context, lack of clarity in terms of the current status of physical punishment in the law was evident among parents, with well over one-third showed disagreement towards the government's decision of banning punishment in schools.

In conclusion, there is a need to support parents and school personnel so that the guidelines at the school level can be properly developed and implemented to support children's behaviour without using punishment.

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