

Is physical action a desire of teachers in school education?

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Abstract

Physical action, the traditional method for disciplining school children is still being practiced as a main technique in school education system of Nepal. Different types of inappropriate actions taken by the teachers and its impact on the students frequently can be read and seen in the media. This study inquires about if all teachers like to take harsh physical actions; if so, to analyze associated factors that lead teachers toward such action. The information was collected from three purposively selected districts: Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. A stratified- random sampling method was used to select seventy five schools and one hundred and forty-nine teachers from seventy five schools were randomly selected at the time of school visit. Teacher student ratio, classroom settings was recorded through classroom observation of the teachers who were considered as respondents. The study reveals majority of the teachers prefer to discipline the child verbally. Parental pressure, lack of teacher's trainings regarding child psychology and how to handle school children positively are some of the factors associated with implication of physical action in school education. Teachers' training about positive way of guiding children and parental awareness programs about negative impact of physical action would be helpful to lessen the problem.

Introduction

Nepal follows the traditional method of education where a teacher is considered as a person having a stick in his/her hand. Children at school are disciplined with strict undefined rules and regulations which makes teacher and student relationship bloodcurdling. Several incidents of students being injured due to harsh punishment meted out by the teachers have appeared in the media as well. Forty percent cases are related to harsh punishment by schoolteachers out of 999 cases registered in connection with misbehavior and violence against children from 1999 to 2004 (The Kathmandu Post, 2004; 2005). Many researchers have reported different types of

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punishment used by the teacher and the consequences experienced by the students (Rajdhani 2008; Naya Patrika 2009; Kantipur 2003). Some scholars (Panda1993) agree that punishment restricts child to repeat the same mistake, it is only for the time being instead it affects children psychologically. Child might repeat same mistake intentionally in the absence of individual, who punished him for specific mistake (Pokharel 2005; Bhatta 2005; Bhattarai 2005). Acknowledging the fact, the children act 2048 that allow parents, guardian or teacher for spanking, and scolding for the sake of children was cancelled in the request of parents and some organizations working for the children (Gorkhapatra, 2005). Few cases of displacement of concerned teachers also are being published (Rajdhani, 2009). The displacement of them teacher from particular school is not the solution (pokharel et al, 2010). After displacement, the teacher might join another school and repeat the same mistake due to lack of knowledge or to maintain the examination results (Poudyal 2007). Counselor for children might play an important role to lessen the punishment in schools by guiding children positively. Absence of counseling cells in schools and lack of training among teachers are the root causes behind incidences of corporal punishment (Kantipur Daily, 2005).

The question "do all teachers take harsh physical action" or "what are reason that force teacher to take action" need to be addressed properly. It is important to understand whether the disciplinary actions/techniques being practiced at the school level in the name of school discipline are helping the children to play a positive role in the personality development. Clearly stated rules and regulation along with knowledge about positive disciplinary action and alternatives of punishments will help both teacher and students. The objective of this study is to understand whether majority of the teacher prefer physical action or other alternatives to discipline the child and factors associated with use of punishment.

Research Methodology

Three districts Bhaktapur, Lalitpur and Kathmandu of Kathmandu valley were chosen purposively. Schools were categorized as organization and community type as defined by Ministry of education. These two categories were further divided as preprimary, primary and Lower-Secondary. Seventy five schools including both community and organization type were selected from the list of the schools provided by Ministry of education. One hundred and forty-nine teachers were randomly chosen as respondents at the time of school visit. Data were collected during May to August 2010 through qualitative and quantitative approaches. A set of open and close ended questionnaire associated with physical actions was developed to achieve the research objectives. Direct observation of the teacher interviewed with the permission of principal was also undertaken inside the classroom.

Result and Discussion

General information of the teachers

Teacher's knowledge about child psychology, and training

Acknowledging the fact that teacher's knowledge about child behaviors influence the disciplinary action chosen, teachers were appealed to describe the training they have. The training includes short term training like Montessori training, junior teacher's training, grade teaching, provided by different book publications, training centers, and school committee. Trainings are provided by District of education, 1 yr Bed, short term training provided by Seto-Guras, world vision, CWISS etc. Majority of the teacher including both male and female have some type of training related to child psychology or teacher's training. Being more specific to the type of school, 75% of community teachers and 54.8 % of the organizational teachers have training in one or other way they are: one year teachers training, two and half month primary teacher's training, training for

principal (administrator's training) provided by. Rest of the teachers that is 25 % of community and 45.2% of organization type school teacher do not possess any type of trainings related to school education (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of teachers having training

Types of school	Teachers with training		
	Yes	No	Total
Community	57 (75.0)	19 (25.0)	76 (100)
Organization	40 (54.8)	33 (45.2)	73 (100)
Grand Total	97	52	149 (100)

Teachers and their preferred actions

Almost all 93.3% (Fig 1) of the teacher selected as respondents claimed that they preferred verbal action to correct unwanted behaviors. Insignificant number of teacher interviewed expressed shaming (0.7%), sending to the office (0.7%), and talk to parents, sit-ups (0.7) and other (2.7%) type of action not mentioned in questionnaire as their first choice. A few number of teachers expressed not using any type of action rather than convincing students verbally in different way; they are 1. The number of student in the school is already low so if they punished the students they won't show up the next day or drop out from school, 2.if they use physical action the children will talk to the parents and it will be an issue for the school 3. The school follows the Montessori teaching process so won't use physical actions etc. However, the teachers have a tendency of using other actions like make students stand in-front (24.2%) of other students which might be during assembly, in junior classes, or own class; shaming (17.4%) complaining to the parents 16.1 % as second choice. Though the fourth largest number of respondents (16.1%) mentioned their second choice as talking to parents, the parents of the students coming into community type do not come to the school and learn about their children because of their economy and daily wage base income. Other say they talk to the parents during pickup and drop off time and during parent teacher conference. Sit-ups (5.3%) Threatening

(4.0%) and other types of actions not mentioned in questionnaire (3.4%) were recorded as the teacher's second choice. Other type of actions mentioned by the respondents includes making students push the wall with full force, running laps on the ground, cleaning the school compound or class room, extra home work, making the students stay late after school and finish home works, expulsion etc.

1st three actions preferred by teachers affiliated with community and organization type school

Teachers affiliated to both community and organization type schools were requested to mention the action they prefer to use as Ist three options. Majority of the teachers categorized under community and organization like to correct school children's unwanted behavior verbally. But once children do not follow verbal instruction they apply other techniques that work to individual children.

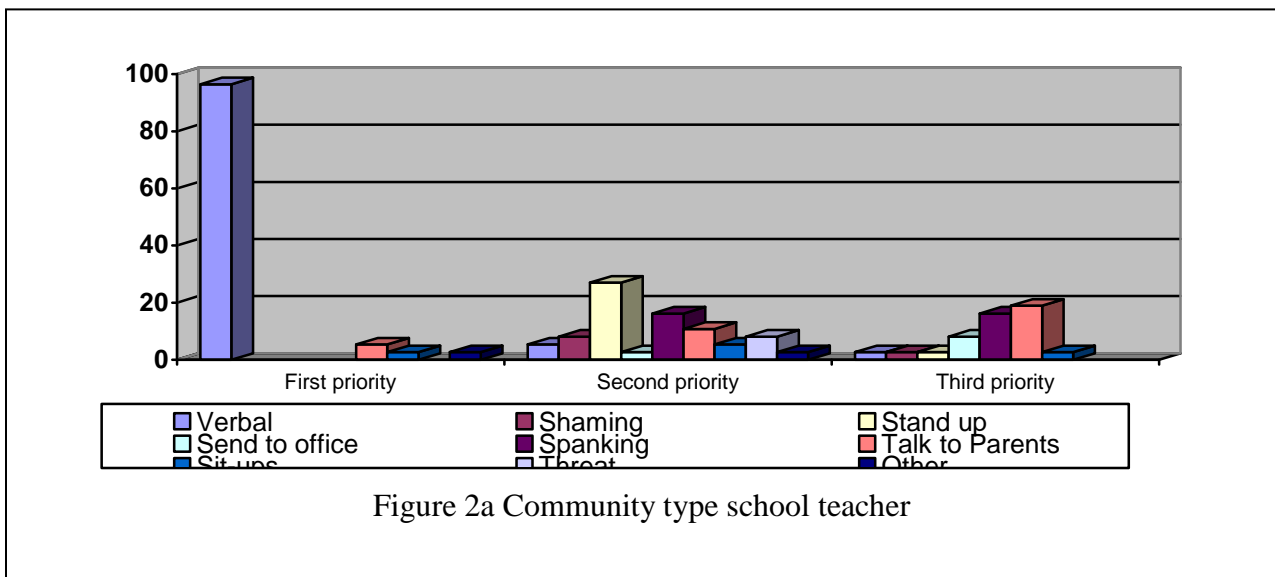
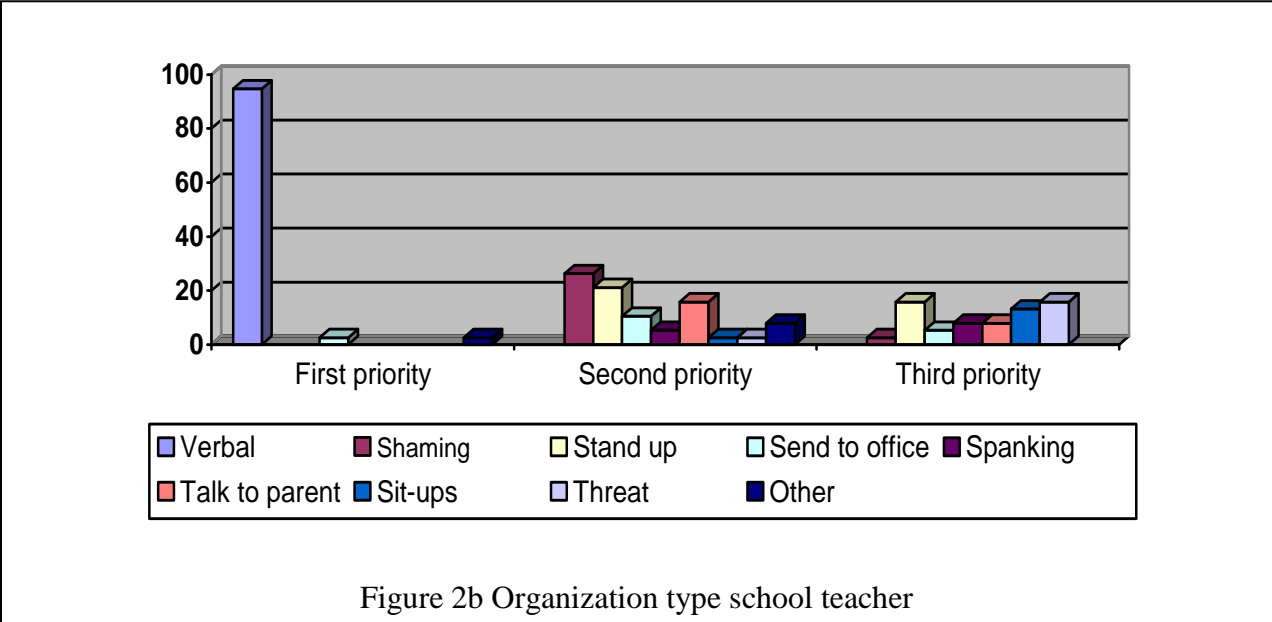


Figure 2a Community type school teacher

Figure 2 a. and b. shows that making students standing up in front of the class or in regular place, spanking and then talk to parents are the action preferred as second option by the community teacher. Similarly shaming, making students stand up and talk to parents is second choice to make students acumen in organization type school.



Types of action practiced in different level

Regardless of the level and the types of school, different types of physical and mental actions still exist in schools as disciplinary techniques (Table2). Teachers practice different types of action from pre-primary level. Some teachers and administrators mentioned that making students ashamed by undressing them is common in junior classes. As the teacher pretends to undress the child s/he become scared and stops unwanted behavior. Not only do the students stop the unwanted behavior but they also do not mention the undressing to their parents. But incase of seniors, students are made ashamed by comparing to others, class demotion, taking students to the junior class and making them stand in-front of the juniors etc. It was also found that most of the disciplinary actions are more frequently used in organization type of school than community type. The reason of avoiding disciplinary actions as mentioned by teachers during informal discussions was the less number of students, economic status of the students. Teachers fear that if they take disciplinary actions, next day the students will not show up and there will be no more students in the school teach. Consequently the school will not get any fund from the government.

Table 2. Type of action Practiced

Type of actions	Levels (Number in parenthesis denotes %)		
	Pre-primary	Primary	Lower-Secondary
Verbal	28 (96.6)	59 (100)	56 (93.3)
Shaming ⁴	7 (24.1)	17 (28.8)	14 (23.3)
Stand in front ⁵	6 (70.7)	19 (32.2)	28 (46.7)
Taken to office	3 (10.3)	11 (18.6)	25 (41.7)
Spanking	7 (24.1)	22 (37.3)	18 (30.0)
Talk to parents	17 (58.6)	30 (5.8)	37 (61.7)
Sit-ups	7 (24.1)	14 (24.1)	16 (27.1)
Threat ⁶	12 (41.4)	20 (33.9)	22 (37.3)
Other ⁷	6 (20.7)	8 (3.3)	8 (13.3)

The table also reveal teachers use of different disciplinary actions from very early age of the children in both community and organization type school. However few teachers mentioned as they send students to the principal if they (students) did not listen to the teacher because of prohibition of disciplinary actions rather than verbal warnings. Except verbal action, spanking, shaming, and threat, is significant mostly in primary classes. Similarly students from lower-secondary classes are sent to the office, made to stand in front of the office and do sit-ups. Other type of action used for the betterment of the students by community schools are encouragement for good conduct, push the wall with both hands with full efforts (especially for girls), scolding, threats, thrashing (especially for boys), spanking. Similarly other type of action taken in organization type schools are teachers act like being angry with children and do not speak for a while, bring in-front of the class and ask question, show expression like I am emotionally hurt with your behavior, staring, ask to hold ear, shaming, sit change etcetera..

⁴ Compare with good students, undress, taking students to the lower grades and make them stand in front of the junior students, class demotion, saying "shame" "shame".

⁵ Stand in front of friends in the classroom, stand in-front of the juniors in junior classes, or in assembly.

⁶ Saying will send to Discipline in charge or principal, complain to parents, say will undress and act as starting off the button of upper garments, will beat you.

⁷ Ask students: to push the wall with full force, taking lap on the ground, cleaning the school compound or class room, extra home work, stay late at the school and complete homework, restriction

Alternative techniques, other than physical, used by the teachers

Teacher –parent Communication

Almost all of the teacher discuss about problematic behavior of the child with the school administration and parents. Majority of the teacher discuss with parents about the child during regular parent teacher conference unless the issue is very serious. It was also learnt during interview that most of the topics discussed by the teacher with parents about the child were related with studious for instances home work, handwriting etc. some incidents are also related with stealing, lying, and fighting with classmates. However, as mentioned by the teachers, there are some parents belonging to worker group who do not show up to the schools even though teacher or the principal like to talk about their children, since they have hand to mouth problem, they do not like to loose one day wages. Those who come to the school complain about their children to the teacher. According to one of the principal,

Though the teacher or head of the school explained the details about some unusual thing that happened with child and beg pardon of that particular situation, some parents do not say anything at school but come to the school next day with husband or mother-in- laws and complain about the situation. Ninety percent of the parents harass teachers and administrators even in simple cases by saying "we pay a lot and you could not take care of our children properly". In some cases, parents cross their limits and say many things which are unexpected and unaccepted.

Preprimary principal, Kathmandu

Some administrators were found to be very open so that few parents come to school and discuss with the principal about their child's very personal matters for solving the problems.

A mother who is facing misunderstanding between father and son wants the principal to convince her son not to go to his *mamaghar* (mother's Parent's home) located at Lalitpur. According to the mother, it is hard for her son to get up early in the morning as he stays up late in order to study. The parents want their son to go to bed early and get up early to be ready for school. The family seems to be having argument regarding this matter for a long time. Now the son wants to go to Lalitpur. But the mother thinks it will be hard for her son to attend the school located at Bhaktapur from Lalitpur daily. Even though the parents tried their best to convince their son, they were not able to do so. Thus, the mother asked the principal to convince her son "not to go".

Secondary level school, Bhaktapur

Counseling:

Few schools have prohibition on punishing students. Such schools have developed the system of Discipline in-charge, academic in-charge and so on. Regular teachers send students to the authorized person to handle such students. In some cases teachers discuss with each other about problematic behavior of the students and find the most appropriate teacher or administrators, so that student could count on and tell personal matter.

Sending students to the office:

In each and every class the regular teacher is responsible to control the students. In some schools, teachers are totally prohibited to take any physical actions. So, whenever students become uncontrollable, teachers send them to the office.

Factors Provoking teacher to take actions

Parental complain

It was surprising to know that along with others, even the parent of pre-primary level are so concerned with children's study that they complain about their children. The complain are

associated mostly with not studying at home, playing a lot, hyperactive, watching television, going out side and other misbehaviors. In some cases parents make a call to the teacher any time or come to the office and request to say something they (parent) want the child to do. They not only complain but also request teacher to control their children at any cost. Some teacher mentioned that they have beaten some student at school in-front of the parents to control the child. There are some parents who don't like the teachers beating their children

Physical facilities of the school

Direct observation was also undertaken during the teaching hours to get some idea about the classroom environment. Student teacher ratio, setting of the class room especially of junior class and student teacher interaction was also considered. In comparison to junior classes the numbers of the students in English boarding schools were low and controllable by one teacher. Small children of nursery classes in English boarding were supposed to sit on the bench for whole day and demanded to put their head down on the table for rest. Close bench were restricting students easy movement and students were seen (tattle tell) complaining about each other to the teacher. On the other hand, the number of children in some community schools was so high that it was impossible to control the whole class by only one teacher. Similarly, even though the number of students in senior classes of community school was low students seems to be stubborn. Students were found to be laughing and smiling at teacher as they (teacher) were concerned with student's misbehavior.

Economic condition of the parents

Most of the disciplinary actions are related to uniform, punctuality, uniforms, incomplete home work etc. During observation, it was noticed that some children were with their younger siblings in the class room so that they can take care of the younger one. Parents with low income and

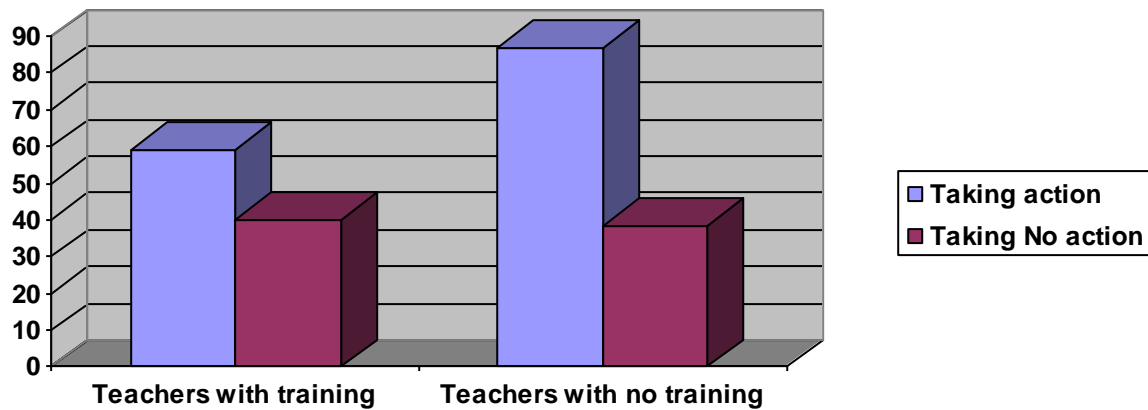
educational status neither could guide their children nor afford school expenses easily. In some community type school teachers pointed few children who had come to school with empty stomach. In such condition it could be easily guess "how hard it would be to a child with empty stomach concentrate on the study?"

Administrator's disinclination to share the knowledge about guiding children

It was found during interview with administrators do not want to share the knowledge about disciplining children, and keep the technique secret. They think if they share the knowledge, it will spread out. One of the school administrators from Kathmandu district denied replying the question "what you do differently than regular teacher to control your pre school children? by simply stating "it is very personal matter and can not be flashed". Another coordinator of very renowned primary school located at Lalitpur district proudly said that all of the teaching staffs do not know how to guide children without any physical action, but we know all the steps and techniques. So we (those who are responsible to maintain discipline in the school) request regular teacher to send the uncontrolled child to the administrators or coordinators.

Lack of teacher's training related to child handling

The study have shown that higher the training the lower the use of disciplinary actions (Figure). Among those who have training, 69 teachers (59.5%) agreed that they use disciplinary action and remaining 47 (40.5%) said they do not use any actions. On the contrary those who do not have any training 29 (87.9%) use disciplinary actions and only 4 (12.1%) do not use any disciplinary actions.



Some of the teacher and child interaction recorded during observation in the class room will make it very clear, and the knowledgeable professional with experience about how to guiding child could think about other better alternatives that could be applied.

- One child is rocking his/her chair. The teacher asks the child to be quiet by saying '*hera kasto badmas ramrari basa*' The child is still rocking the chair and falls down. The teacher says '*um khuchching*' and smiles.
- One child is teasing another child by complaining about his writing with the teacher. The teacher says "Hmm you write well" (Hmm *hajur ta ramrari lekhnu hunchhani*).

Conclusions

Teachers are aware and concerned of the negative impact of physical action. That is why teachers prefer to avoid physical punishments as far as possible, and handle the children verbally. However, in comparison to un-trained teachers trained teachers are more aware and concerned with physical actions, in the very beginning almost all teachers make school children aware of their mistakes verbally. If the first steps did not work teachers become little bit harsh and repeat

verbal warnings. Along with repeated mistakes and children's stubbornness, parental pressure, limited knowledge about other effective technique irritate teachers and lead to other actions like spanking, comparing, threatening, shaming etc. Due to lack of specific training regarding guiding children positively, the school children develop the mistrust toward the regular teacher and not listen to them. In such condition teachers send students to the office where administrators, the most powerful personality, or the discipline in-charge handle the situation. Students start trusting the administrators more than their regular teacher and look for them (administrators) to solve every problem, which is not possible. Sending students frequently to the office is considered as the weakness of the teacher. A teacher with limited knowledge about handling aggressive and mischievous student use harsh punishment to control by themselves.

Providing safe and secure environment to the children is one of the major responsibilities of school administrator. The more teachers get knowledge about how to handle children's misbehavior positively, the more school environment will be better place for children to learn. Sharing knowledge and information for the sake of school children is very essential rather than making it secret.

School teachers are free to choose the action type and take different action for same type of behavior for same child at different interval or different action for different children for same type of misbehavior at the same time that makes children more confused. Consistency and similarity in action type used by each individual teacher to all children will help them (children) to think about the consequences of their mistakes and improve their behavior.

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