

Corporal Punishment in School: A Review of the Pros and Cons

Keon-sil, Kim
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1. Introduction

The history of corporal punishment has been as long as that of education in the world. Since ancient times, corporal punishment has been used as one of effective teaching techniques in Korea and even in western countries for instruction of children. Nowadays, however, the voice of prohibition about corporal punishment is increasing in the world. Following this development, Korea also has started to restrict corporal punishment by law since 1998 (The Fundamentals of Education Act). Nevertheless, there are still many teachers who believe in the benefits of corporal punishment, if used properly in school for maintaining discipline in the classroom. Therefore, after looking at various aspects of corporal punishment, this paper will explain why corporal punishment in school should be gradually substituted by more positive classroom management techniques.

2. Teachers' authority in corporal punishment

To begin, we need to define what corporal punishment means. Excessive corporal punishment like kicking on the shin, hitting on the head with a strong stick, or slapping on the cheek is not corporal punishment any more: it is a kind of violence. Corporal punishment dealt with in this article means absolutely limited educational punishment like spanking on the bottom or on the palm.

Based on this definition, we can start to look into teachers' authority in corporal punishment. First of all, scholars who agree with corporal punishment believe that teachers have the fair right to punish because there is a special relationship between teachers and students by law (김성기, 1994). In other words, teachers can use corporal punishment for realizing educational purposes in a proper range, and teachers, as the subject of educational authority, can restrict students' freedom for pedagogical reasons. Second, these scholars empathize that

to teachers the right from students' parents were transferred, therefore, teachers can instruct students with corporal punishment instead of their parents (김성기, 1994). Contrary to these ideas, scholars who disagree with corporal punishment say that teachers should distinguish between possibility and duty in transfer of parents' rights regarding corporal punishment (김성기, 1994). They think the transfer of parents' rights needs to be considered again according to the present situation and contrary to the past. In addition, based on organic law, they assert the constitutional right of freedom of body and substantive due process as well as procedural due process (김성기, 1994). In the case of pedagogists' opinion, they empathize corporal punishment should be dealt with pedagogical conformity (김성기, 1994). They insist that since corporal punishment is unavoidable in school, teachers should use it with educational purpose, contents, and process. For example, teachers need to keep the purpose of corporal punishment under the constraints of conveying or instructing valuable principles to students. Moreover, they should use corporal punishment for preserving students' spontaneity in moral standards and for developing students' knowledge, comprehension, and learning social manners without any private view or unfairness. Therefore, corporal punishment should be dealt with the idea of making an educational or moral contribution to students and the justice of process, as well as our traditional situation in Korea (김성기, 1994).

3. General status and opinions of corporal punishment

If we look at the general status of corporal punishment in other countries, we can find common ideas of corporal punishment in law. In general, western countries, such as the U.S.A and various advanced European nations, are gradually decreasing the teachers' right of corporal punishment, even by law. For example, since the 1780s, many countries in Europe have started to prohibit corporal punishment by law and nowadays, most of them such as Denmark, Germany, and England restrict corporal punishment in law. On the other hand, lots of undeveloped countries such as Philippines, Thailand, and Russia still allow corporal punishment even by law. Similarly, countries that have ancient traditions that are closely linked to education principles, such as Korea, Japan, and China, corporal punishment are also still used in schools. This is because many of these countries, including Korea, have

regarded teachers' authority equally or in some cases even higher than that of parents. However, as time passes and as more countries develop, lots of them are decreasing corporal punishment in school, often resorting to legal restrictions to do so.

To get a more realistic picture of and more accurate opinions about corporal punishment in Korean schools, this researcher surveyed her own students and coworkers regarding their opinions about corporal punishment. Surprisingly, more than 60% of the students surveyed and almost 81% of teachers agreed with corporal punishment even though they think that there are many negative effects of and alternatives to corporal punishment. They think that although there are many alternatives such as giving black marks, counseling with parents or sending bad students to a professional counselor, and writing regretful letters, among other things, corporal punishment is still a useful teaching technique in school. This is, they claim, because other techniques take much time and effort, and teachers need to give feedback against students' faults immediately to get higher pedagogical effects. Besides, although we can use the bad marks system in school, it will have an effect only on those scared of bad marks, not all students. Therefore, lots of them think that if used properly for educational purposes, corporal punishment can be a useful teaching technique in school. Conversely, some of them think that if alternatives like bad marks system are established well in law, corporal punishment will not be needed in school any more.

Table 1.

▪ *Results of the survey about corporal punishment (C.P.)*

Corporal Punishment	Students (30 persons)	Teachers (36 persons)
Agree & <Reasons>	18 persons (60%)	29 persons (81%)

Agree & <Reasons>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ C.P needs less time and effort than other disciplining methods. ▪ C.P can be teachers' immediate feedback against students' faults. ▪ Bad marks system is efficient only to those who are scared of bad marks. ▪ Without C.P, students can easily ignore teachers. ▪ Alternatives do not have enough force or control. 	
Disagree & <Reasons>	12 persons (40%)	7 persons (19%)
Disagree & <Reasons>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ C.P can hurt students' mind as well as body. ▪ There are many useful alternatives to C.P. ▪ Teacher's prejudice can have an effect on C.P. 	
Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Counseling with parents ▪ Writing regretful letters ▪ Giving detrimental black marks ▪ Sending bad students to a professional counselor ▪ Making them serve in class or school 	

4. The effects of corporal punishment

There are both general affirmative and negative effects of corporal punishment. For instance, corporal punishment can help students develop their responsibility as well as sociality if it is done with students' enough comprehension of their faults (김정휘, 1998). Because students who have received corporal punishment will try to avoid corporal punishment, they will learn the benefits of good behavior and will ultimately develop responsibility. (이성진, 1983). Second, corporal punishment is good for keeping discipline in the classroom. In Korea, there are still many students in one classroom and most schools do not have effective bad marks system or professional counselors in school. Therefore, teachers need an efficient method for keeping rules in the classroom. As lots of students say, if teachers do not use strong methods to control a problem, they will easily ignore the teacher and his/her directions. For this reason, immediate and strong corporal punishment is

useful to keep discipline effectively in the classroom. Third, corporal punishment is the most effective technique regarding time and effort (김은경, 1999). Following the same principle in economics of society seeking the maximum results for a minimum of labor, education also needs to be done with economy of time and effort in mind. Time constraints and the number of students that a teacher is responsible for seem to make corporal punishment the most efficient method of disciplining. Therefore, teachers always try to teach effectively within the fixed class time, hoping that they would be able to provide appropriate instruction to both good and ill-behaved students. Accordingly, teachers sometimes use corporal punishment because, unfortunately, most techniques take too much time and effort. Even the quick system of dispensing bad marks has smaller effects on correcting detrimental attitudes. All the positive effects of corporal punishment can be realized under proper conditions such as immediate, strong, and consistent performance with students' admission of their faults (문용린, 김계현, 1999).

On the contrary, there are also a lot of negative effects of corporal punishment. First of all, corporal punishment is inefficient in keeping an ill-behaved student from repeating the same offense. If a situation is not dealt with enough self-admission and reflection, students will focus only on avoiding corporal punishment not on the revision of their behavior. As a result, they will not know what was wrong and what errors they committed, thus, they will easily repeat their faults again and again as soon as they forget the physical pain from corporal punishment (권균, 1999). Second, corporal punishment has negative effects not only on studying but also on daily life because students can harbor ill feelings against teachers due to corporal punishment (김은경, 1999). More concretely, lots of students feel hate, fear, and shame after a corporal punishment. Accordingly they come to have negative feelings against the teacher as well as the classes that the teacher handles. A domino effect ensues and the student ends up getting low grades. Third, corporal punishment can increase students' violence and aggression. As Bandura (1973) argues, aggression can be learned by following the model's aggressive action, and the more students are exposed to corporal punishment, the more they become aggressive. Therefore, corporal punishment can teach students violence and aggression. Finally, corporal punishment can cause troubles on students' mind as well as body (권균, 1999). Corporal punishment can give students physical pain

and psychological problems such as fear, anxiety, and even long-range mental problems connected to losing self-confidence and concentration. According to Smith (as cited in Kim, 1999), children who receive corporal punishments usually have lower intellectual power than those who do not receive corporal punishment. Moreover, Kim (1999) asserts that corporal punishment is the main cause of a child's hurt dignity, which may later lead to a negative ego in adulthood.

5. Alternatives and ways to minimize the usage of corporal punishment

There is a need to think about alternatives to minimize the use of corporal punishment in classrooms. As an alternative, we can use various techniques for running a class, such as a sticker system where the collected stickers can be exchanged for rewards. Methods like this help teachers avoid giving corporal punishment. Second, developing ways to coach ill-behaved students also good way. For example, reinforcing the problem students' positive attitudes with praise and recognition will have positive effects on those students (권균, 1999). In addition, having bad students serve for 'Green Classroom' during temporary period will also help them (김은경, 1999). Third, using programs for improving self-control will be useful for disruptive students. If teachers or peers recommend well-behaved students and give them some prize, more students will try to become a model person in school. Lastly, establishing a grading policy for students' behavior in class will make students more conscious of their faults and more willing to change them. A reasonable and realistic bad marks system can be run with specific rules such as receiving punishment after incurring the agreed maximum number of bad marks.

Adding to the above alternatives, we can consider other ways to minimize the usage of corporal punishment. For instance, making and following the exact rules of situations that deserve corporal punishment such as the kind of offense and where and when it was committed will contribute to the diminishment of applying corporal punishment (조동섭, 2001). Working out the details of applying corporal punishment and spending time to explain to students the terms of the punishments can decrease the need to resort to corporal punishment. In addition, limitation of materials and time as well as place for corporal

punishment is needed to reduce corporal punishment. Because if teachers should follow the limitation when they use corporal punishment, it will make them think about their punishment one more time, and finally it will help reduce teachers' excessive or emotional abuse of corporal punishment (문용린, 김계현, 1999). When teachers use corporal punishment, they should use it in the most effective time as soon as the student does the offense, using a proper stick like a bamboo twig. Moreover, they need to use it in a desirable place that does not hurt the student's feelings too deeply. This will differ depending on the student's personality and the type of classroom available.

6. Conclusion

Until now, the various aspects of corporal punishment such as teachers' authority, general status and opinions, affirmative and negative effects, and alternatives as well as ways to minimize usage have been explained. The reality stands, however, that in the larger global setting, the teacher's right to employ corporal punishment has been under fire for some time now. More and more people think corporal punishment yields more negative effects than positive, especially as time passes. On the other hand, sudden prohibition of corporal punishment without effective alternatives will lead to lots of confusion such as absence of teachers' control in the classroom or students' disorder caused from a lack of discipline. Therefore, corporal punishment in school should be gradually substituted by more positive classroom management techniques.

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