New Forms of Discipline and Punishment and their Effectiveness in Schools of Kolkata: Voices from Classrooms

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Abstract: This article deals with the issue of discipline and punishment in schools of Kolkata since the ban on corporal punishment through the RTE Act in 2009, thereby ending an age-old tradition in the processes of education and socialization of children. The article begins with a brief evolutionary overview of the commonly practiced forms of punishment in India and elsewhere. Using a qualitative methodology, the aim of the study is to first describe the current scenario of discipline and punishment in schools since the ban has been implemented andthen uncover the perceptions of teachers and students regarding their effectiveness for classroom order/discipline and socialization/moral development of students, which have then been discussed and analysed from a sociological perspective.

Keywords: *RTE Act; discipline; corporal punishment; spanking; socialization; emotional harassment.*

Introduction

It would be interesting to know that the oldest forms of punishment prevalent among adult humans, as per the law codes of Sumer in Mesopotamia (2100-2050 BCE),were rarely corporal and were geared more towards compensation (Roth et. al 1995).While the punishment of adults took time to become corporal, the punishment of children was always corporal. Kramer (1949) writes in Schooldays that the children in ancient Mesopotamia feared going to school because teachers were prone to beating them for the slightest infractions. The birth of mass schooling since capitalism further intensified corporal punishments and beliefs regarding their necessity were strengthened by Christianity. As mass schooling grew, it meant having to manage numerous children at the same time and this led to the emergence of the conception that "children should be controlled before they were to be taught" (Harris 1928: 16), thus normalizing the use of brute force in attaining control over students inside the classrooms.

In the ancient Indian scenario too, corporal punishment of students was not uncommon. However, more than punishment, stress was laid on discipline of students and punishment had a causal link to discipline in the traditional Indian educational system. For example, the Dharmasutras (tr. Olivelle,

1999) prescribed numerous rules of discipline for students such as facing the guru always and speaking to him with utmost reverence, sitting down with his permission, etc. Manu writes in Manusmriti, "[L]et him, when angry, not raise a stick against another man, nor strike (anybody) except a son or pupil; those two he may beat in order to correct them" (tr. Buhler, 1886: 26).This punishment, however, was to be mild and measured. In fact, teachers themselves were liable to face punishments if they did not perform their duties towards students properly. The punishment of the guru was usually the imposition of fines or the confiscation of fees or to be "punished like a thief" (Chatterjee, 1999: 31) if he did not follow the prescribed measures when physically punishing his students. Other Indian religions too did not prescribe harsh punishments of children. Buddhism prescribed removal of rights and freedoms or banishment from monastery as punishments (ibid.).In Islam too, while corporal punishment was allowed, that was supposed to be in a measured form much like with Hinduism (Peters, 2005). Brute corporal punishment of students as the dominant method of disciplining possibly started with Christian monastic education during the colonial times. The traditional caring and fatherly teacher was replaced by the dictatorial British school master who was in actuality a lowly officer of the regime, described by Kumar (2014) as the "meek dictator", who used brute force to discipline students and had no intentions of being a father-figure to the native boys considered inferior and uncivilized. Sen (2015), using children's literature in British Bengal, described different forms of brutal, painful physical punishments that had become prevalent in the educational system by that time such as intense beatings, placing bricks in their hands or making them stand on one leg with a dunce-cap on their heads, etc. These descriptions were, however, related to boys since girls were not allowed in schools.

Since the 17th century, changes began to be seen in the Western conceptions of childhood and the appropriate punishment of children, especially in the writings of Locke and Rousseau and an empathetic attitude emerged especially among the wealthier sections of society (Donnelly 2005). The unquestioned acceptance of the authority of teachers over children began to falter with "legal and cultural challenges to disciplinary discretion by school personnel as well as the more general demands for expansion of student rights, including freedom of speech, due process, and privacy"(Way 2011: 349-350). These ideas first travelled to India through the forces of colonization and since then the traditional protective and caring attitude towards students became novel in the colonial education system. A Western outlook towards childhood thus struck deep roots in many parts of the Indian society, especially among the English-educated middle classes and the elite. Child rights now became an important legal matter in India, especially after India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989 (UNCRC), thereby promising to uphold the rights, freedoms and dignity of children and always protecting them. One of the most important ways in which the Indian government has upheld its commitment towards child protection is by banning corporal punishment and mental harassment in schools through the Right to Education Act, 2009 (Section 17) in line with the UNCRC. This has brought about some major changes in the way in which school discipline and punishment are now understood and dealt with.

This study aims to find out what these changes are and how teachers and students feel about this change with respect to attaining discipline of students and socializing them.

Methodology

This study has been carried out using a thoroughly qualitative methodology guided by grounded theory as a sensitizing concept (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2006). Students and teachers, male and female and from primary as well as secondary sections, were chosen from low-cost schools catering to the poor and lower-middle class clientele and expensive schools for the affluent and elite. The sampling strategy used in this research was theoretical sampling which aims at data saturation to arrive at the sample size. The sample size arrived at using convenience and snowball sampling was as follows: 7 teachers (3 from low-cost schools and 4 from expensive schools) and 31 students (8 for in-depth interviews out of whom 2 were from low-cost schools and 6 from expensive schools; 23 for focus group discussions out of whom 13 were from expensive schools and 10 from low-cost schools).In-depth interviews were used to gather data from secondary school students and from teachers and focus group discussions were resorted to for gathering data from primary school students. Data were analysed using by transcribing interviews and coding the transcriptions, memo-writing and theoretically sorting conceptual categories that emerged.

New Forms of Discipline and Punishment: An Overview

With the ban on corporal punishment, punishments in schools have suddenly taken on new character. No longer is the usual slap on the cheek or the back commonly seen in classrooms. Instead, new methods of establishing and maintaining order and socialization of children are coming about, such as surveillance, counselling, giving rewards and incentives, etc. in line with the government's vision of protecting children and their rights. These methods, however, are most often seen in schools catering to the affluent sections of society. Simultaneously, adults and many older adolescents have lamented about the "loss of childhood" in contemporary times, corresponding to changes in the way discipline is understood or practiced. Due to the lack of strict punishments, students have gained power according to most teachers to the extent that they can even make false complaints against teachers, make fun of them on social media, use abusive language or even attack them in some cases. The expensive schools now aim to prevent the occurrence of indiscipline altogether by taking help of technology in the form of CCTV camera surveillance to monitor students and their conduct within school premises as well as through regular checks. If such monitoring fails to ensure disciplined conduct, non-threatening forms of punishment are used such as light scolding, excluding errant students from classroom discussions, giving them extra homework, making them sit on separate benches (many of these schools have designated benches for the punished students in the junior sections), or, rarely, sending the offenders outside the classroom or deducting minimum marks from tests. Parents are called to school only when situations are very serious such as, students found drinking alcohol inside the classroom or carrying pornography to school which are becoming more and more frequent according to students and

teachers. Suspension of such students was not too uncommon. In general, however, these schools encouraged teachers to ignore indiscipline as much as possible and instead give students rewards as encouragement to do better. Even so, interestingly, it was frequently reported by students that some teachers resort to using "emotional harassment", "verbal abuse" and "bullying" as forms of non-corporal punishment. It was reportedly the senior female teachers who most often resorted to such means indicating a gender bias in the practice of punishment. While respondents did not explicitly explain it, responses suggested a power struggle in the classroom vis-à-vis female teachers but not male teachers who were often viewed as friends, especially by male students. With female students, male teachers ensured limited interaction fearing disciplinary action against themselves for complaints of indecent behaviour, which is not too infrequent according to the teachers. In comparison, female teachers were considered as parental figures by students and they were open to accepting punishment from such teachers as long as it was "justified" and warranted. Female teachers, especially those nearing retirement age and therefore at times losing patience to deal with offensive conduct of students with softer methods that do not seem to work, want to show students that they still have power in the classroom and resort to such non-corporal punishments which are considered as "harsh" and "unjustified" by students due to their lasting negative psychological impacts which, according to many students, is harder to deal with than physical punishments. Victims of such punishments were mostly girls because they cannot be physically punished due to ethical reasons, as a teacher explained.

The scenario of discipline and punishment was found to be quite different in low-cost schools. Indiscipline in these schools included truancy, dropping out, indulging in smoking apart from general naughtiness like interrupting lessons, not doing the assigned work, destroying school property, etc. To deal with these issues of indiscipline, it was found that physical punishments are still quite popular in spite of the ban and no disciplinary action is taken against teachers who use such methods. One of the teachers revealed that this is because most teachers usually have good political networks which they can use to prevent any action against them even if complaints are made against them, something which private school teachers are unable to do making them far more vulnerable to legal and media trials than these teachers.Beating students, making them run in the sun or not allowing them to go to the toilet were some of the most commonly used forms of punishment in these schools used equally by teachers of all ages and genders but mostly with primary school male students. Responses from students show that there are almost no teachers in these schools who do not resort to corporal punishments or verbal abuses. The scenario of discipline and punishment in these schools, therefore, is quite different from that in schools catering to the affluent pointing to a clear class divide in experiences of discipline and punishment although gender and age also play a role.

On the basis of this cursory overview of types of punishments being practiced, we move on to uncovering perceptions of their effectiveness.

Punishments and their Effectiveness: Voices from the Classroom

While the issues of discipline and ways to tackle them are quite different in different kinds of schools as outlined above, the perceptions of effectiveness regarding the methods of tackling, i.e., punishment, were rather linear for the most part. In what follows, teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the new forms of punishment are uncovered.

(a) Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness in Discipline Maintenance: Students of private and expensive/elite schools included in this study have felt that the changed laws regarding the permissible forms of punishment have changed the disciplinary culture of schools in general and reduced the effectiveness of punishments significantly. Surprisingly, many of the student respondents themselves said that they would rather have some degree of physical punishment because it would "create fear in the minds of the defaulters of school rules so that they think twice before repeating it", as a high school boy of an elite school put it. Involving parents is something that worked well before, no longer works for most students. Punishments like being removed from the classroom also do not work, especially with older male students, since they tend to "enjoy" such punishments. A couple of students even admitted to deliberately misbehaving so that they are sent out of the classroom and can play football. Positive disciplining techniques like making errant students monitors or leaders of study groups, also does not seem to teach them discipline. It was found that such methods, while alright when dealing with primary school children, may lead to antagonisms in higher classes between those who feel they deserved that position for being good in conduct and academics and those who were made monitors as punishment. Counselling, especially on its own, also was touted as an ineffective method of attaining discipline. As one student said, the only time counselling works is when teachers use it along with physical punishments. He said that students in his school have developed a "positive mentality" towards corporal punishment because they are always counselled and reasoned with while being corporally punished. It is interesting that this student was so badly hit by a teacher that he is now almost deaf in one ear and yet he speaks positively of physical punishments. He felt such a method is the most effective in attaining discipline because it creates fear. Most students believed that there was a need to re-instil fear in them so that they learn respect and decency even as laws and school boards are trying to create an enjoyable environment in schools so that students have nothing to fear. Using mental harassment to control and exert power over students and create fear in them, which is also common, has absolutely no effectiveness in either socializing or disciplining. Quite a few students in fact said that they would rather be spanked than be verbally humiliated and bullied by teachers which leave a lasting negative mental effect on them. Most of the student respondents have said that they feel ashamed and embarrassment from being "publicly humiliated" and that it creates a distance between the teacher and the student. This distance, most have said, is especially harmful academically as they cannot approach those teachers to seek guidance being too scared or ashamed or sometimes too angry. The punishments that do seem to work, at least temporarily and more with

younger and female students, were threats of being suspended or expelled from school or confiscating answer scripts of students caught cheating during exams. However, such methods are also gradually being eradicated. At the same time, some respondents, mostly female, felt that the removal of corporal and other extreme forms of punishment from school is a good move. They were also children who have never or rarely faced strict or corporal punishment at home. They recognized that students nowadays "take things to heart too easily" and therefore strict punishments, while having their benefits, can easily be much more harmful for the new generation of students compared to students ten years ago. They felt that counselling is a good alternative to punishment while recognizing that it is not used effectively in most schools. Responses revealed that most counsellors appointed by schools act as moral science teachers and career counsellors and students rarely visit them for their problems.

In general, in the expensive and private schools, the students seemed to dislike all those methods of punishment that displayed power of the teacher. According to most of them, they are willing to accept the imposition of authority as long as the teacher is justified in punishing them. It is apparently accepted especially easily if the teacher is liked by the students. In that case, it is as if the teacher is given parental authority and students are willing to accept punishments and displays of authority from them because they have that "right", which teachers who are unjust and humiliating in their methods of punishing do not have.

In low-cost schools, since most teachers still resort to harsh punishment, not much has changed in terms of implementation of new laws and perceptions of their effectiveness. Students in these schools have felt that corporal punishment is necessary for proper discipline and perhaps it is not surprising that they feel this way since, according to their responses, they are used to this form of disciplining at home as well as in school. It was a small minority of female students who said that teachers must first resort to reasoning and then escalate to corporal punishment if that does not work. The question of effectiveness of new, mild forms of punishment does not seem to arise in these schools since harsh punishments are still a reality and openly practiced with rare instances of protests by parents or students.

(b) Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness in Discipline Maintenance: Just like with students, the vast majority of teachers in schools catering to the wealthy and elite sections of Kolkata also negatively evaluated the currently practiced forms of discipline and punishment for students' discipline. Preventive measures or low-impact punishments have increased the frequency, intensity and offensiveness of indiscipline mainly because they do not instil fear in students according to most respondents. Teachers also felt, like students, that punishments that were very effective less than a decade ago are now practically useless to discipline students. For example, most teachers said that calls from schools regarding students' disciplinary conduct either never reach parents or, even if they do, most parents choose to ignore them by citing lack of time to visit the school or lack of knowledge about any such notes. This difference between the parents today and parents from

five or seven years ago, teachers said, adversely affected discipline in the classroom since students are "too pampered" at home by parents who do not invest much time in teaching appropriate behaviour to their children. When asked about counselling, teachers did say that it is a helpful tool but they also said that such a method is not useful if students do not fear teachers a little for which some form of strict verbal and light physical punishments are best. In low-cost schools, however, counselling and any other positive disciplining techniques were practically absent. Teacher respondents corroborated students' responses by accepting that many of them still do use corporal punishment to discipline students. These teachers were generally not convinced about the ban on corporal punishment to discipline students since they felt that physical punishments are the only "language" that poor and working class students understand and respond to, as one teacher put it. Most teachers in both categories of schools said that teachers "need" to punish students as an essential method of keeping the class in order and also to teach them proper moral behaviour. In fact, one said, by bringing an analogy with the ancient guru-shishya system, that it is their "right" to do so. He also said, in the same breath, however, that no teacher "likes" to be punitive with students but students, especially nowadays, do not leave a choice. Therefore, most teachers feel the need and the right to punish but only some are able to fulfil their need and right as explained next.

While punishment of students has been receiving more concern than before, the control over teachers' conduct that the new laws and policies are trying to achieve also means that punishment of teachers is now a reality. Possibilities of punishment for teachers including losing jobs in the elite, expensive schools are high since they are constantly monitored. For fear of disciplinary action, teachers said that they are generally wary of how they behave with the students and stay distanced from them, following rules mechanically. Low-cost schools, being run with minimal infrastructure, are unable to monitor teachers' behaviour leading to the continuation of corporal punishment. According to a teacher of one such school, laws are "selectively implemented" in these schools mainly because of political networks of teachers and a general lack of interest among teachers to change the experiences of students. In general then, the effectiveness of the new laws in case of teachers' conduct has been inconsistent. Schools for the poor are unable to ensure protection of children while the schools catering to the privileged sections have quite effectively moulded teacher behaviour to fit the laws. The change, however, has largely been superficial – teachers follow laws to be safe from punishment and no ideological shift seems to have come about regarding the ideal forms of punishment of children. An overwhelming majority of respondents including students believed that some amount of corporal punishment is necessary for proper disciplining and socialization. This is why almost every teacher felt that the laws do not have any practical validity since teachers are now expected to teach discipline to defiant children without having adequately strong tools.

(c) Students' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Punishment and School/Teachers in Socialization: Schools and teachers have the duty of citizen training and have been important secondary agents of child socialization. However, the current generation of students across different kinds of schools do

not think that the school, teachers or punishment have much of a role to play in their character development. The overwhelming majority of students felt that punishment tends to label students and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to be viewed beyond that label, thereby failing to create any positive impacts on students' minds. Most felt that the teacher and punishment have a role to play in socialization, if at all, only for the very small children who are still in their formative years. Adolescent boys and girls felt that their personalities take shape through influences from various sources outside the school rather than through what the school teaches either through rules and regulations or through punishments. Influences from the media and social networking sites are much more crucial in shaping their personalities, in inculcating habits, behaviours, mannerisms and tastes. One reason that came out quite often for teachers not being important in socialization of older students was that most students felt that teachers hardly give them time or interact with them to get to know them and students were not fond of such teachers. In fact, responses show that the ability of the teacher to socialize depends on whether students feel the teacher is "likeable", "caring", "attentive" and "respectful" towards them. Most students felt that teachers are too quick to judge or ignore them and students do not feel respect for those teachers to learn social values or habits from them or from punishments meted out by them. Rather, students felt that it is the punishment at home that is more effective in socialization and personality formation. Most students felt that parents have greater "right" to punish their own children compared to teachers. One boy gave three specific reasons for this – (i) teachers often punish based on a biased judgement of students but parents would never do that; (ii) teachers are often unnecessarily rude with students but parents can never do that with their own children; (iii) parents' entire attention is only on their own children and it is not spread over forty to fifty children, therefore ensuring greater care and concern for the individual child after punishment which teachers cannot afford. The students also said that the emotional impact of punishment at home is much less than in school since the visibility of being punished at school is often embarrassing and humiliating for them. Teachers either do not "care" about the harmful emotional impact of their behaviours or cannot care because of lack of time due to the pressures of finishing the syllabus, etc.As such, students felt that teachers and punishment in school do not have any significant role to play in socialization, especially in secondary school.

(d)Teachers' Perceptions of Effectiveness of Punishment and School/Teachers in Socialization: Teachers in the elite and expensive schools have felt that in the current times, their role in child socialization is important but, at the same time, reduced. It is important because these parents do not usually have sufficient time to give to their children due to pressures of the economy. These children are left either unattended or in the care of "ayahs" or babysitters for many hours in the day at home and "the quality of what they are learning in this situation is not at all up to the mark", according to one teacher. She and the other teachers interviewed from these schools felt that it is the teachers' job to step in and ensure that children are learning proper habits and behaviours in such a scenario. However, teachers' role in child socialization has evidently reduced because they have

developed a wary attitude towards students for fear of complaints and penalties in the post RTE Act scenario.

In contrast, teachers of low-cost schools do still seem to have a say in how students behave in class but they also said over and over again that the school alone cannot do much in character building and socialization and that parents must also play a part in it. The poor and working-class parents are often violent and abusive with their children which, teachers said, poses as a problem in their endeavours to create personalities that can surpass the atrocities of home. This is why a teacher said that they "have to be" violent with the students to socialize them because that is the only language they understand. Teachers use corporal punishment on students caught cheating, lying, smoking, etc. which are considered immoral and teachers believe it is their duty to ensure inculcation of good moral values in children. At the same time however, another teacher pointed out that character development of students is not something that is given serious attention to in these schools. To illustrate, he talked about a colleague who busies herself with her mobile phone in class, ignoring students who are being indiscipline, abusive and violent. "She doesn't even educate them, forget about socializing them", he said. Therefore, in low-cost schools, punishment does still play a significant role in socialization of students although it is not often that the aim of punishment is to socialize. It is important to note that many students agreed that physical punishments stop them from repeating such behaviours, which was corroborated by teachers.

It is clear that most respondents included in this study have felt that to effectively deal with the disciplinary problems that contemporary childhood has thrown up, the older forms of punishment would have been most suitable. Not only teachers but even students have harped on the fact that light corporal punishment or strict reprimanding are never meant to harm students and are effective ways of ensuring that children learn discipline. It is ironic that while the state tries to protect children from corporal punishments, the children themselves want to revive such punishments.

Analysing the Perceptions of Effectiveness

To analyse the perceptions of respondents related to the effectiveness of current forms of punishment in discipline and socialization, Diana Baumrind's works are important. For Baumrind (1997), spanking, unlike other forms of corporal punishment, is effective and non-violent since it is administered with an open palm and not aimed to inflict injury. She cited experimental studies by Rosen, O'Leary, Joyce, Conway, & Pfinner (1984) to reiterate that light forms of punishments or reprimands are excellent in controlling student behaviour, provided the teacher-student relationship is positive. She termed such forms of punishment as *prudent negative consequences* and characterized them as "consistent, immediate, calm, private, and specific" (Baumrind, 1997: 179). Students' responses from this study show that they prefer prudent negative consequences, including light corporal punishment, from teachers they are fond of, proving Baumrind's theory right. Students felt that if teachers are caring and have friendly, close relations with the students, then they do not feel humiliated or threatened by the punishments. As one of them said, their

"mentalities" are moulded in such a manner that they are not adversely affected when their teachers use harsher forms of punishment which, they felt, are necessary and effective in disciplining students.

The lighter punishments that are used in place of corporal punishments are usually not effective because they are often not administered with the intent to correct. Teachers nowadays keep a distance from students to keep themselves safe and disciplining children to correct their mistakes is not a priority for most teachers, as responses show. Moreover, the tendency of many teachers to bully students emotionally because they cannot use punishments is perceived negatively by students who felt it was a deliberate attempt to display power over students. These forms of punishment may fall under Baumrind's (1997) category of *imprudent negative consequences* which are "reprimands delivered late, inconsistently, explosively, publicly, and non specifically" (ibid.). The bullying of students in public, often by bringing up topics that are non-specific, i.e., not related to the issue at hand, often using abusive or explosive language has been reported by students, especially girls. Such teachers have been described as power-mongers. Larzelere and Baumrind (2010) opined that "the most detrimental forms of power assertion were verbal hostility and psychological control" (85). This is in line with the responses of students who have said that they would rather be spanked than be psychologically punished. Moreover, while light corporal punishment has been designated as the most effective means of disciplining and socializing students, the students have also said that such measures must be accompanied by the use of reasoning to be truly effective. As Baumrind (1996) explains,

> The use of a reason in a disciplinary confrontation broadens the context in which compliance is expected by generalizing from a specific act to a rule governing a larger class of behaviour … inductive reasoning accompanied by the exercise of explicit control induces internalization of the norm underlying the directive more than the use of inductive reasoning alone … The use of reason accompanied by a display of power conveys to the child that, to satisfy the parent, adherence to a rule of appropriate conduct is required, even in her absence … By being paired with punishment, reasoning becomes a discriminative stimulus that noncompliance will be punished. Once this connection has been established, reasoning alone may suffice to obtain compliance. (410-411)

Even though Baumrind wrote this in the context of parent-child discipline and punishment, the same can be said for the teacher-student context as well. Data from this study prove Baumrind's thesis right once again.

Quite a few of the respondents, however, were happy with the changed laws that prohibit physical punishment and mental harassment. This is because these respondents felt that it is difficult to

determine at what point spanking or scolding might be conceived as abusive by a student. Kazdin and Benjet (2003) say that,

> Child abuse … can exert bio-chemical, functional, and structural changes in the brain (eg., changes in cerebral volume and increased or decreased reactivity to various neurotransmitters; Glaser, 2000). Some of these changes have psychological concomitants (eg., changes in reactivity to stress and in working memory) … it is not clear whether, how, or at what threshold the brain makes the distinction between child abuse and spanking. As a result, the circumstances under which spanking might also have deleterious effects is uncertain. (102)

Teachers and some students, especially female, have said time and again that today's children have a low threshold of tolerance of pain compared to what children had before. This could be a result of the various changes in childhood that have made instant gratification and near complete protection from adult authority the new normal. When childhoods have become more fragile due to such influences, there is no saying, as many respondents recognized, which child will take even the slightest punishments and displays of authority as abuse. Thus, these few respondents have felt that the new forms of disciplining like counselling, giving errant children greater responsibilities or rewarding students for good behaviour are safer options even though the effectiveness of these methods is not satisfactory.

In Baumrind's (1996) opinion, character "consists of positive and cultivated habits of social responsibility, moral commitment, and self-discipline that provide the internal structure of conscience, regulating inner thoughts and volitions" (406). School rules, teachers and punishment have traditionally been important agents in developing characters of students, often using punishment, until the laws changed and teachers can no longer punish as needed. This has meant that character formation in school is not as strong as before because teachers lack freedom to take matters of socialization into their own hands. It is only the odd teacher who has been able to establish positive relations with the students who is given some role to play in socializing because students accept the authority of these teachers. Such exceptional and rare teachers fall under the category of what may be called *authoritative teachers*. In contrast, the *authoritarian teacher*, who is demanding of students and is not permissive of any leeway and freedoms, is not given power by the students to have any significant impact on them. According to students' responses, it is the authoritarian teacher who is most commonly found in schools who punish students on the basis of prejudices and in ways that are humiliating. Students tend to resist authoritarian practices of disciplining or socialization and, by their own acknowledgement, have no respect for such teachers. Arum and Way (2003) have written in this regard that,

> If the teacher's moral authority is doubted, then respect for social values and obligation to obey may fail to develop within the child, an

> outcome which is important not only for school order but ultimately for the general social order as well. Hence, while the internalization of moral authority may be the ultimate goal and the most efficient mechanism of social order, the legitimization of teacher authority is the necessary first step. Without teacher authority, socialization is less than effective. (168)

Such undermining has come at a time when the role of parents in socialization has reduced to a large extent due to the demands of the job market. Teachers are acutely aware of this but they cannot step in since they are not given the freedom to discipline and socialize anymore by law. Arum and Way (2003) say, "the school is the primary nonfamilial social institution (other than perhaps organized religion) that embodies the principals, structures, and rules of a larger society" (171). To them,

> The moral authority of school discipline is critical in fostering students" ability to learn socially appropriate behaviours and values so they can become healthy individuals and productive citizens. (186)

Teachers included in this study have said, in line with Arum and Way's findings, that schools and teachers need to be freed from external control to restore the legitimacy of teachers. Instead, the state is invading more and more aspects of education through new laws implemented by school boards and monitored by school managements.

Responses have also suggested that the perception of ineffectiveness is not uniformly felt by all stakeholders. A discernible variation in perceptions of effectiveness was seen by gender. Female students, for the most part, were more receptive of the changes than male students were. As Hurwitz & Smithey (1998) said, an individual's perceptions related to "crime and punishment are often thought to flow from feelings of vulnerability" (90). The female gender is much more vulnerable in our society than the male gender is. This is why they are more conforming with the rules of society and the laws of the state. Not only that, it is also seen that more women are generally negatively oriented towards violence than men are. The authors say,

> Men's responses to moral quandaries tend to conform to an "ethic of justice", which emphasizes individual rights and relies on "absolute rules of truth and fairness" (Gilligan, 1982: 166). Conversely, women's responses tend to suggest an "ethic of care", in which the focus is on "society as an interdependent and interconnected web of personal relationships; from this perspective the moral or just behaviour entails actively attempting to nurture and protect others and relationships among them" (Worden 1993: 206). At the base of the ethic of care is concern for protecting the vulnerable. (Hurwitz & Smithey, 1998: 93)

The ethic of care, the intolerance of violence and the need to protect the vulnerable are typically results of socialization. Girls are generally taught to not only be submissive but also nurture and care for others. The fact that women experience motherhood which essentially entails caring for another individual has made women primarily caregivers, nurturers and protectors. That might explain why girls are mostly negatively oriented to the use of violence in discipline, punishment and socialization of children. Women are socialized to "see strength in connection and nurturance" while men are socialized to be more separated, independent and autonomous (ibid.). Boys are socialized using "power-oriented techniques" (Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, 1977 in Hurwitz & Smithey 1998) which explains why more boys than girls included in this study wanted the revival of corporal punishment which includes a more direct display of power. Women are much more accepting of "compassion policies" as Hurwitz & Smithey call it, that are based on the ethic of care which might explain why they are more receptive of counselling as a method of dealing with indiscipline. However, while this is the general trend, it is also important to note that girls have often also said that they would prefer an escalation technique of disciplining that may begin with reasoning and counselling but can be notched up to the use of physical punishments if needed. Female teachers have also been labelled as more prone to punishment by students. This shows that it is important to look at the issue of gendered perceptions of punishment in terms of "emphasis and degree" (ibid.: 96) rather than as universal, absolute givens. This point is explained even better when the factor of class is combined with gender. While girls being educated in the expensive schools of Kolkata have been strongly against the use of corporal or other harsh punishments, most girls from schools catering to the poor and lower-middle class population are open to the idea of physical punishments even if as a last resort. This can again be explained by the fact that socializations are obviously different for girls coming from different socio-economic backgrounds. In privileged families, girls are usually disciplined verbally or through the removal of amenities while in poorer families they are often harshly reprimanded or even corporally punished even at home, just like boys. Thus, perceptions of effectiveness of corporal punishments vary by degree and emphasis not only between genders but also within genders depending upon the intersection of a variety of factors like age or class.

Students have also understood that since laws are on their side, the authority of teachers and the school can be disregarded with minimum harm to the self, eroding teachers' legitimacy beyond the realm of test-based knowledge disbursement. Legitimacy of a teacher's power is based on perceptions of justice and fairness especially in adolescent students who have developed a definitive world view. This corresponds with Kohlberg's (1958) fifth stage of moral development where a contract between parties in a social interaction situation is rooted in feelings of fairness, a sense of equality and a reciprocal relationship. When teachers do not base their disciplinary tactics on fairness and equality, students develop feelings of anger and vengeance towards them. Even though most students end up accepting the punishment, their feelings of negativity towards such teachers makes them behave disrespectfully with them or avoid them altogether. The situation is

different with younger students who have much greater respect for teachers' authority and are obedient to teachers' instructions and fearful of teachers' anger and punishments. This corresponds to the first stage of Kohlberg's model – it is a punishment and obedience-oriented stage. The main aim of students at a young age is to avoid punishments by obeying orders and living up to the expectations of teachers as best as possible. This is why, in case of younger students who are not yet as completely aware of the laws and their rights, punishment or the threat of it can effectively discipline and aid in socialization or at least habit formation. As students grow older, their belief in the effectiveness of punishment is largely determined by their perception of the legitimacy of the punisher which, in turn, seems to be determined mostly by students' perceptions of fairness, justice and equality and fondness for the concerned teacher.

Overall, whether or not students feel the need for corporal punishment, what is certain is that the changing laws have instilled a belief among children that school rules are no longer sacred and can be violated since they are rarely punished seriously for breaking rules.

Conclusion

Ground realities show that there seems to be a lacuna in the implementation of laws and their internalization at an ideological level among the stakeholders which is why perceptions of effectiveness of these laws are mostly negative and the respondents want a revival of the old system of discipline and punishment. The lag has resulted in lowered involvement and investment of teachers in students' discipline and socialization simply because they want to protect themselves from serious consequences in this new environment where they are constantly controlled and watched. It is a matter of survival of the fittest and it seems from teachers' responses that the fittest teachers are the ones who keep the greatest distance from the students. This distance is felt by students and, ironically, is cited as the reason behind their belief that teachers do not have a role to play in their socialization or disciplining.

A sociological study aiming to uncover the realities of discipline and punishment in Indian schools and explaining them with the help of stakeholders' own evaluations of these realities is hard to find in Indian academic circles. As such, this study hopes to fill that gap in literature by studying this issue at a time when children's safety and their rights are matters of serious concern the world over in academic circles and beyond. This study is also throwing light on the problems in the implementation of laws which directly affects the core stakeholders of the education system, viz. teachers, students, parents and school management, who would be able to benefit from studies like this and better implement the rules and laws.Being a thoroughly theoretical study, it is beyond the scope of this paper to make suggestions regarding a model disciplinary culture that would be able to deal with the challenges of discipline that modern childhood has been throwing up while being in line with the larger goals of the Indian government regarding the ideal education system as well as keeping intact the traditional relations of respect between teachers and students as well as the larger community. However, by using this study and others like this to get an idea about the ground

realities and their theoretical explanations, such models may be attempted by applied sociologists and policy makers. This study is only a starting point regarding the matter of discipline and punishment of children and much more in-depth and extensive studies need to be conducted to get a better idea of the condition of discipline and punishment in different schools of India, at rural and urban levels, so that policies can be strengthened and be made actually useful without too many serious negative consequences.

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