

## A STUDY ON USE OF SPANKING AS A STRATEGY BY PARENTS AND TEACHERS IN GILGIT, PAKISTAN

**Sadrudin Bahadur Qutoshi**

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Development,  
Karakorum International University  
Email: [sadrudin.qutoshi@kiu.edu.pk](mailto:sadrudin.qutoshi@kiu.edu.pk)

**Zahra Jabeen**

Lecturer, Department of Educational Development,  
Karakorum International University  
Email: [zahra.jabeen@kiu.edu.pk](mailto:zahra.jabeen@kiu.edu.pk)

**Tajuddin Sharar**

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Chitral, Chitral  
Email: [tajuddin.sharar@gmail.com](mailto:tajuddin.sharar@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

*Spanking to discipline a child has been a matter of great debate and concern throughout history. However, there is no such literature available on the relationship between gender, age and spanking to discipline a child from Gilgit-Baltistan Province, Pakistan. Realizing the severity and importance of the current project was initiated to explain the views of parents and teachers on a Likert scale. A quantitative random survey research using a standardised instrument was carried out during 2019. Data was processed using descriptive and inferential statistical measures. Chi square test results revealed that there is a significant relationship between gender and spanking to discipline. However, Pearson's and Spearman's correlation do not show any significant relationship between the two variables. Both genders favour spanking to discipline children. However, females believe more in spanking to discipline.*

**Keywords:** Child discipline, correlation, punishment, spanking, personality, behaviour

### INTRODUCTION

Spanking is defined “as hitting a child on their buttocks or extremities using an open hand” (Geroff, & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016, p. 1). According to UNICEF’s report (2014), almost 80% of the children are spanked by their parents around the world. In certain cultures, spanking, physical punishment, and corporal punishment are broadly used synonymously. Therefore, spanking according to Geroff, and Grogan-Kaylor (2016) is a “non-injurious, open handed hitting with the intention of modifying child behavior” (p. 1). The ultimate reason for spanking children is to discipline them. Spanking to discipline a child means scolding, punishing or hitting, putting under stress or compel to do something in order to discipline him or her through physical or psychological means as a punishment in front of others or in isolation by schools or parent at home (Gunnore, 2013; Fuller, 2011).

Similarly, it is a particular kind of corporal punishment. Spanking is characterized as using physical strategies to control or address a kid's conduct, applying pain however not injury. According to Coley, Kull, and Carrano (2014) and Gershoff (2002), hitting is a particular kind of beating including the hitting of the backside with a hand, paddle, stick, or switch for the purpose of correction. Spanking is additionally identified with long lasting disguising and externalizing issues (Coley et al., 2014). According to Lee, Altschul and Gershoff (2015), at the point when youngsters are age 3, about 53% of moms and 44% of fathers hit their kids in any event once in a month.

Likewise, Smith (2012) was of the view that many research studies reported that all forms of physical discipline including spanking can have serious damages to children but many parents do not even believe that. Similarly, Morin (2020) claimed that some parents are certain about the use of spanking as an effective strategy to discipline their children. She further added that parents spank their children when they are over stressed or depressed. One of the reasons parents spank their children

because of the cultural factor. Morin stated that many in many cultures spanking is part of their upbringing. They do not even consider it as corporal punishment.

Over the last couple of years, research studies repeatedly reported the correlation between spanking and unwanted negative effects on children. Despite of the research findings, mostly parents even in developed countries like USA use corporal punishment including spanking (Lee *et al.* 2020). Similarly, Taylor *et al.* (2016) carried out a research study on corporal punishment. They analysed online comments of 581 individuals and found out that 70% people approved spanking children for discipline. They believed that spanking ended up with positive or neutral outcomes. There is a positive association between spanking and upon asking the reasons for their approval, they further added that parents believe that spanking improves a child's behaviour.

There is inconsistency in the research findings regarding gender and spanking practices. For example, studies reported varying results whether mother or father use spanking more for discipline. Wissow (2001) reported no difference between mother and father regarding use of spanking as a disciplining strategy to their children. On the other hand, Kim *et al.* (2014) reported that mothers spank their children more as compared to fathers. One of the reasons could be as mothers spend more time with children therefore they are exposed more to their children's misbehaviour.

Similarly, when it comes to use of spanking strategy by teachers at school, several studies reported the corporal punishment given at schools by teachers to discipline their students. For instance, Greydanus, Pratt, Spates, and Patel (2003) reported that even in developed countries corporal punishment is in practice despite of laws and policies against it. They further states that there many states in the US banned corporal punishment including spanking, hitting, slapping, pinching, kicking and shaking. Yet, 23 states authorized corporal punishment in their schools. Greydanus, *et al.* further added that corporal punishment is supported by the masses because its legal and religious interpretation.

There is a controversy in academia and the world regarding the use of spanking to discipline children. For example, Zolotor (2011) described spanking as a simple and non-severe kind of punishment to give some physical pain by usually hitting at the buttocks of the children. On the other hand, several studies strongly rejected the concept and reported some side effects. For example, a meta-analysis done by Geroff and Grogan-Kaylor (2016) found no evidence that spanking is associated with improved discipline and rather found spanking to be associated with increased risk of some damaging outcomes. Such kind of physical punishment especially hitting at buttocks or slapping on the face etc. are the kinds of punishment that not only cause physically pain but also may create some feelings of sexual pleasure that can lead to someone to feel sexually treated or humiliated (Caselles & Milner, 2000; Hyman, 1997; Greven, 1991; Giles-Sims, Straus, & Sugarman, 1995). Unfortunately, parents, teachers and other adults who think of such kinds of punishments to discipline a child have multiple adverse implications in the life of a child at later stages (Ferguson, 2013).

Therefore, the researchers thoroughly investigated the ratio of parents and teachers who use spanking to discipline children at home and school. Moreover, it also explored the nature, strength and limitations of gender and its relationship with spanking to discipline a child with a burning issue in the context of Gilgit-Baltistan province of Pakistan. The study examined the extent to which gender and spanking are independent to each other in the context of Pakistani schools. The researchers identified some gaps in the literature regarding the concept of 'no spanking to discipline a child at any cost but in practice it did not happen. Thus, the aim of this study was to identify uses of spanking as a strategy by parents and teachers in Gilgit city in Pakistan. In the given context, the study becomes very significant because the findings of the study may help school, parents, teachers, and administrators to avoid spanking children to discipline them. The findings may also help in developing a spanking free culture at homes and in Pakistani schools in general and school of Gilgit-Baltistan in particular which in turn may contribute in the transformation of the society manifesting nation of high self-esteem, confident, respectful as well as physically and psychologically healthy nation.

### **Research Questions**

1. What percentage of parents use spanking to discipline their children?
2. How often fathers spank their children to discipline?
3. How often mothers spank their children to discipline?

4. What percentage of teachers use spanking to discipline children at school?

**METHODOLOGY**

The researchers employed descriptive survey research design to find answers to research questions and research hypotheses. Survey research was used as it allowed the researchers to use questionnaires to examine the opinions, preferences, and perceptions of persons of interest to the researcher" (Borg & Gall, 1979). So, the data was collected by a structured survey questionnaire from a sampled population and transferred into various statistical forms such as tables and charts, including the use of statistical tools for correlation.

Sample size was determined following Krejcie and Morgan (1970), as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2002, p.94). A total of 150 questionnaires were divided among parents who were also teachers and 136 questionnaires were returned. There were 136 research participants (95% confidence level and 5% sampling error) among them 56 were males and 80 were female parents. They were also teachers by profession. The researchers used a simple random sampling method while collecting samples to increase higher probability in selecting respondents from diverse groups. For the purpose of random sampling, the name of total individuals was assigned numbers and numbers were written on self-made flash cards and the researchers collected each randomly from the box where flash cards were placed until they arrived at the sampled size which was 150.

The researchers developed a survey questionnaire by reviewing the literature. They self-administered the survey by themselves. The self-administration of the survey questionnaire was helpful for clarifying any confusion and their queries about the objectives of the study.

The researchers tried to satisfy three principles and types of reliability. These principles are stability, equivalence and internal consistency. After narrowing down the contents of the study, subject specialists were consulted, and their feedback was obtained to make the study coverage more complete by the improvement of the contents of the data collection instrument. To conduct the survey smoothly and to ensure its validity, the survey was also pilot tested on two teachers and parents. Moreover, to establish criterion-related validity, the researchers compared and analysed the findings of this research with the findings of previous researches. Similarly, the researchers tried to minimize the threats to the validity of his research throughout the different stages of the study (Kumar, 2011).

To analyse the data, simple descriptive statistical tools were employed. Taking ethical considerations into account, the researchers did not reveal the real name of the research participants and place and did not give participants fictitious names because those names may belong to other people somewhere (McNeff, 1992). Similarly, the researchers cited, and referenced materials taken from books, journals, internet, and any other sources, communicated the purpose of the research clearly, and full rights were given to the participants to know and change their data.

**RESULTS**

Table 1.1 below shows the division of the research participants in terms of gender. There were 41.2 percent (56) male and 58.8 percent (80) female parents as research participants.

	<b>Gender</b>			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	56	41.2	41.2	41.2
Female	80	58.8	58.8	100.0
Total	136	100.0	100.0	

Table 1.2 showed that among 136, 42.6 percent parents never used spanking to discipline their children. However, 30.1 percent used spanking rarely and 19.9 percent used it sometimes and only 7.4 percent parents used spanked their children almost always.

To see how often fathers and mothers use spanking to discipline their children descriptive statistics were employed.

**Table 1.2 What percentage of parents use spanking to discipline their children?**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	58	42.6	42.6
Rarely	41	30.1	72.7
Sometimes	27	19.9	92.6
Almost always	10	7.4	100.0
Total	56	100.0	

Table 1.3 showed that only 5.3 percent fathers spanked their children to discipline them. On the other hand, 21.4 percent and 38.1 percent fathers used spanking strategy for sometimes and rarely simultaneously. Moreover, 36.2 percent fathers never spanked their children.

**Table 1.3 How often fathers spank their children to discipline?**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	20	36.2	36.2
Rarely	21	38.1	74.2
Sometimes	12	21.4	95.6
Almost always	3	5.3	100.0
Total	56	100.0	

Similarly, table 1.4 The research revealed that 8.8 percent mothers spank their children to discipline, 18.7 percent used spanking strategy sometimes and 25 percent use it rarely. On the other hand, 47.5 percent mothers never spanked their children.

**Table 1.4 How often mothers spank their children to discipline?**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	38	47.5	47.5
Rarely	20	25.0	72.5
Sometimes	15	18.7	91.2
Almost always	7	8.8	100.0
Total	80	100.0	

Table 1.5 reflected that among 136 teachers, 11.8 percent spanked their students to discipline them. On the other hand, 44.9 percent of teachers never used spanking strategy to discipline their students. However, 39.7 percent teachers rarely and 3.7 percent sometimes used a spanking strategy to discipline their students.

**Table 1.5 How often teachers spank their students to discipline?**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	61	44.9	44.9
Rarely	54	39.7	84.6
Sometimes	5	3.7	88.2
Almost always	16	11.8	100.0
Total	136	100.0	

## DISCUSSION

The study revealed that only 7.4 percent of parents almost always used spanking strategy to discipline their children. On the other hand, 42.5 percent never spanked, however, 50 percent of parents sometimes and rarely use spanking strategy. This finding was in accordance with the previous research which shows that parents do use spanking strategy at times to discipline their children despite of knowing about the adverse effects of spanking (Lee *et al.* 2020; Morin, 2020; Smith, 2012; Taylor *et al.* 2016; UNICEF, 2014).

The study also revealed that 5.3 percent fathers and 8.8 percent mothers spank their children almost always. Interestingly, 59.5 percent fathers and 43.7 percent mothers sometimes/ rarely use spanking strategy to discipline their children. However, 36.2 percent fathers and 47.5 percent mothers never spanked their children. Overall, 64.8 percent fathers and 52.5 percent mothers used a spanking strategy to discipline their children. This finding was interestingly not in accordance with the previous studies. For instance, Kim *et al.* (2014) reported that mothers spank their children more as compared to fathers. One of the reasons could be as mothers spend more time with children therefore they are exposed more to their children's misbehaviour. Contrary to that Wissow (2001) reported no difference between mother and father regarding use of spanking as a disciplining strategy to their children.

The study further revealed that 11.8 percent of teachers used spanking strategy almost always to discipline their students at school. Moreover, 43.7 percent (39.7 and 3.7) sometimes and rarely spanked their students to discipline at school. Interestingly, 44.9 percent of teachers never used spanking strategy. This study doesn't support the previous research for example, Greydanus, Pratt, Spates, and Patel (2003) reported that even in developed countries corporal punishment is in practice despite of laws and policies against it. They further states that there many states in the US banned corporal punishment including spanking, hitting, slapping, pinching, kicking and shaking. Yet, 23 states authorized corporal punishment in their schools.

This study revealed that 63.2 % of the respondents believe that spanking to discipline a child is an effective method and parents can better discipline their children at home and teachers at school. However, both parents and teachers appear to be unaware of the side effects of this kind of approach to discipline a child. On the other hand, research studies strongly discourage parents and teachers to use spanking for disciplining a child (Gunnore, 2013; Millon *et al.* 2012). Studies further revealed that using spanking to discipline a child may lead to feel some sexual pleasure instead of pain that can lead to unhealthy behaviour in the life of the child (Caselles & Milner, 2000; Hyman, 1997; Greven, 1991; Giles-Sims, Straus, & Sugarman, 1995; Naz *et al.*, 2012; Naz *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, it strongly discourages teachers who use spanking to discipline children in schools and the parents at home.

Looking at the perceptions of people from a gender perspective lens, it is revealed that females as compared to male are in favour of spanking to discipline the child. Females believe in spanking to discipline a child is more than males but both genders were in favour of spanking to the discipline children. Contrary to that, the literature was absolutely against this notion of disciplining a child through spanking because of its negative implications. For instance, Gershof (2002) and Gunnore and Mariner (1997) reported that effects of spanking by parents and teachers at school create long-term negative effects on a child at later age in term of negative behavior, misconduct, antisocial and rebellious behavior, delinquent and aggression. Therefore, it is recommended for teachers, principals, administrators, and parents not to use spanking as a method of disciplining children.

## CONCLUSION

This study revealed that parents and teachers use spanking to discipline their children and students. It is suggested that parents and teachers need to be aware of the implications of spanking. Awareness sessions on alternative discipline strategies can be arranged by the school administration for teachers and parents to eliminate spanking from homes and school cultures. It is also suggested that further studies can be conducted on the situations when parents and teachers use spanking as a disciplining strategy. Moreover, studies can also be done on perceptions of the same parents and teachers about the effects of spanking on children/ students.

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