

# Approaches to Discipline in Nepalese Education: Challenges and Cultivating Positive Reinforcement



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## I. Introduction

Nepal is the first country in South Asia and 54th globally to ban corporal punishment against children. However, children being brutally beaten up in schools by teachers and school personnel makes headlines occasionally. Many such cases have resulted in the death of the victims. Every day, students are subjected to various forms of corporal punishment in schools, despite corporal punishment of children being illegal. (1) Article 39 of Nepal's 2015 Constitution prohibits physical or mental torture of children, punishable by law. Despite legal prohibition, cases of severe physical abuse in schools persist, resulting in fatalities. Lack of awareness among students and parents regarding their rights contributes to the continued practice. Despite advancements in education, Nepalese teachers still rely on corporal punishment due to traditional beliefs. A 60% percentage of teachers believe discipline can only be instilled through punishment. (2)

However, a study conducted in the USA shows that in states where corporal punishment is frequently used, schools have performed worse academically than those in states that prohibit corporal punishment. The existence of corporal punishment and obvious supremacy over children by guardians or teachers reflects the low social status of children within society, the family, and in the classroom. (3) Thus, it is a challenge to the Nepalese society to provide a caring environment for the children to nurture their talent; and to provide a fertile ground for them to grow up as confident capable individuals that this country so desperately needs. A survey of Nepal Human Development Report in 1998 revealed that 63 percent of students dropped out of school before the completion of primary grade and another 27 percent dropped out from the lower secondary level. One of the contributing factors to this was the use of corporal punishment and verbal humiliation in the schools.

In Nepal, as much as 14% of children claim to have dropped out of school because they were afraid of their teachers. Research has shown that both reinforcement and punishment can be used to reduce undesired behavior in the classroom effectively; however, reinforcement is much more successful in teaching students alternative behaviors that are considered to be more appropriate and desirable. (4) Teachers can improve their overall classroom environment, in addition to increasing positive interactions with students by effectively implementing positive reinforcement, including praise.

1 Extracted from: <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/corporal-punishment-school-nepal.html>

2 Extracted From: <https://risingnepaldaily.com/news/21898>

3 Extracted From: <https://elibrary.tucl.edu.np/bitstream/123456789/10368/2/chapter%281%29.pdf>

4 Extracted From: <https://nepjol.info/index.php/jdl/article/download/57109/42715/169286>

## II. Problems

The field study and observation from various municipalities have often reflected serious complications with handling students without corporal punishments. On the one hand, prohibiting corporal punishment could reduce the dropout rates, lower absenteeism, higher social interaction in classroom and school and so on. On the other hand, it has become quite difficult for the teachers to handle the students without proper training and guidance for positive reinforcement and corporal punishment.

The government intended to come up with teachers training, rewarding teachers, awareness, curriculum modifications along with the amendments in constitution to ensure a better learning environment for children but in the lack of proper monitoring, desired result has not been achieved. A 2018 report by UNICEF found that over 80 percent of Nepali children between the ages of one and 14 experienced “violent discipline”, with 14 percent facing severe forms of physical punishment. Even government reports reveal that a significant number of children face punishment and bullying in both public and private schools. A report by the Education Review Office—which surveyed 46,266 grade eight students in 1,950 public and private schools from 26 districts—found that 16 percent of schools still employed corporal punishment and teachers from 18 percent of schools used inappropriate language in classrooms. (5)

On the contrary, some teachers complain during our field visits that the students are too hard to handle and don’t listen to the teacher unless they punish them. The cases of corporal punishment do exist in every part of Nepal and it is a dark reality after banning corporal punishment back in 2018, mostly in rural areas of Nepal. Furthermore, our observation and field visit also support the evidence that lack of monitoring, teachers training and proper regulation at community schools could result in arising different problems in the school.

On the basis of available studies, there is a significant gap in policy and its implementation attributing a detrimental impact to the education of the students among which is the high dropout.

Issues	Description
Untrained Staff and Teachers	Teacher were not trained to handle the children without punishment and positive reinforcement techniques
Lack of monitoring and reporting	Though policies has been made but in the absence of proper monitoring and reporting, corporal punishment still exists
Teachers’ and Parents’ attitude	Teachers’ and Parents’ attitude towards corporal punishment has not changed, which needs to addressed

5 Extracted from:<https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/07/06/physically-punishing-students-is-ineffective-harmful-and-illegal-but-teachers-continue-to-do-it>

### III. Policy Options and Opportunities

Chapter II has meticulously outlined the issues by conducting an extensive review of diverse studies and available literature. Drawing from the problems identified in this section, several intervention strategies have been formulated to address these challenges effectively. The ensuing descriptions delineate these intervention strategies aimed at mitigating the identified problems.

Intervention	Description
Teacher Training Programs	Implement comprehensive training programs for teachers that focus on alternative disciplinary techniques and positive behavior management. Educating teachers about child psychology, conflict resolution, and non-violent communication methods equip them with effective tools to manage discipline without resorting to physical punishment.
Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms	Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting incidents of corporal punishment. Encourage students, parents, and teachers to report such incidents without fear of reprisal. This could involve hotlines, online platforms, or designated officers within educational institutions.
Parental and Community Involvement	Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting incidents of corporal punishment. Encourage students, parents, and teachers to report such incidents without fear of reprisal. This could involve hotlines, online platforms, or designated officers within educational institutions.
Promoting Positive Discipline Approaches	Raise awareness about positive discipline methodologies that focus on reinforcing positive behavior, setting clear expectations, and nurturing a supportive learning environment.
Financial Simulation Model	Implementing FSM model in school which promotes self disciplinary and positive reinforcement mechanism for children to improve their behavior through various components like Behavior Chart, School Store, Token bank etc to motivate children to through positive reinforcement.

## IV. Discussion

The issue of corporal punishment in Nepalese schools persists despite legal prohibition, impacting children's physical and psychological well-being. The prevalent use of physical punishment contradicts Nepal's constitutional provisions and international commitments to safeguard children's rights. Despite efforts to introduce reforms and training programs, the problem persists due to various reasons.

Teachers' reliance on corporal punishment stems from traditional beliefs, a lack of awareness among students and parents regarding children's rights, and a perceived necessity for discipline through punishment. This reliance reflects a broader societal view that places children in a subordinate position, hindering their development and educational progress.

Research has demonstrated the counterproductive effects of corporal punishment on children, leading to learning difficulties, behavioral issues, psychological trauma, and increased dropout rates. Despite this, some teachers continue to resort to punitive measures due to inadequate training, inefficient implementation of behavioral modification techniques, and difficulties in handling student behavior without resorting to punishment.

Moreover, the lack of proper monitoring and enforcement of regulations contributes to the persistence of corporal punishment, especially in rural areas. Reports indicate that a significant number of children face violent discipline, hindering their educational experience and resulting in a high dropout rate.

### ***Recommendations:***

- **Comprehensive Teacher Training Programs:** Implement extensive training programs focusing on alternative disciplinary techniques, conflict resolution, child psychology, and non-violent communication. This equips teachers with effective tools for managing discipline without resorting to physical punishment.
- **Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms:** Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting incidents of corporal punishment. Encourage a reporting culture among students, parents, and teachers through hotlines, online platforms, or designated officers within educational institutions.
- **Parental and Community Involvement:** Engage parents, community leaders, and local stakeholders in discussions to raise awareness about the adverse effects of corporal punishment. Encourage their active participation in advocating for child-friendly disciplinary approaches within schools.
- **Promoting Positive Discipline Approaches:** Raise awareness about positive discipline methodologies focusing on reinforcing positive behavior, setting clear expectations, and fostering a supportive learning environment.
- **Financial Simulation Model Implementation:** Introduce the FSM (Financial Literacy, Self-discipline, and Positive Reinforcement) model in schools. This model emphasizes self-disciplinary practices and positive reinforcement mechanisms through components like Behavior Charts, School Stores, Token Banks, etc., motivating children to exhibit positive behavior.

Implementing these recommendations demands concerted efforts from governmental bodies, educational institutions, teachers, parents, and communities. Collaborative action, along with strict enforcement of laws and policies, is crucial to create a nurturing and supportive educational environment where children can thrive without the fear of physical punishment. Additionally, continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure the effective implementation of these measures and track their impact on reducing corporal punishment in Nepalese schools.