



## EFFECT OF EMPATHIC INTERVENTION ON CHILDREN'S NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCHOOLING

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**ABSTRACT** In the present investigation it is aimed to study the effect of empathy in bringing about positive change in children's attitudes toward schooling. An experimental design with two matched group of 60 school children (control and experimental groups of 30 children each) with negative attitudes towards schooling was used. After an 8 Week period of empathic intervention, the experimental group showed significant positive attitudes toward schooling, where as no such change was seen in the control group.

**KEYWORDS :** Attitude towards schooling, Corporal punishment, Empathy

### INTRODUCTION:

Physical punishment by and large was the most accepted and means of correcting behavior in most of the schools all over the world. It is a common practice of teachers to resort to corporal punishment either for academic short-comings or behavioural lapses of school children. Though a number of research findings indicated that corporal punishment was widely practiced by teachers (Duke 1978 and Hyman, 1978), the absence of empirical evidence regarding the effect of punishment on education and schooling is alarming.

There is very little work aiming to probe into the feeling of child towards punishment and the effect of the child's perception of punishment on the expected academic progress. The increasing criticism and dissatisfaction over the present day educational system is making the government to emphasize new educational policies and models. But for implementation and progress of those policies, lack of empirical feedback is a significant obstacle. Hence there is need for intervention strategies with facilitative learning conditions in educational set up.

Most of the research work in the area of education emphasized the importance of cognitive aspect of student development, almost neglecting the affective component. Humanistic education, the integration of cognitive and affective components of learning is a natural outgrowth of humanistic psychology. The principle of humanistic education stresses the role of feelings in learning. Though the effectiveness of understanding, accepting, trusting and praising in the facilitation of child's learning were emphasized by the humanists, lack of sufficient empirical evidence is a significant lacuna in this Area.

The Humanistic education stresses that to create the conditions necessary for students to learn basic skills; teaching should facilitate interpersonal situations that will encourage learning. The Human Resource Development Model (HRD Model) (Carkhuff, 1967) Emphasizes the importance of the core conditions of Rogers humanistic approach (Rogers, 1967), namely unconditional positive regard, non-possessive warmth and empathic understanding in learning and interpersonal relations.

### Problem:

Enhancement of learning with an ability to understand the student's reactions from inside and with a sensitive awareness of the way the process of education and learning seems to the student is the main consequence of empathic understanding. (Rogers, 1967; Juan, Julian, Soledad et al., 2013). Empathic understanding of a teacher means the ability of the teachers to put herself/himself in the place of the student and understanding from the student's point of view, with non-evaluative, non-judgmental and acceptant endeavor. But we do not have sufficient empirical evidence to emphasize the effect of empathic intervention in academic set up. Hence in the present investigation it is aimed to study the effect of empathy, which is emphasized by HRD model as a facilitator of learning, in bringing about positive change in children's attitudes toward schooling. In other words, the problem in the present study is, what is the effect of empathic intervention on children's negative attitudes toward schooling?

### Hypothesis:

To answer the above question an experimental design was used with

two groups of empathic intervention (Teacher offering empathic intervention to experimental group but not to the control group) and their attitudes toward schooling were studied. The following hypothesis was derived for investigation.

There is a significant difference between the means of two conditions of empathic interventions with regard to children's negative attitudes toward schooling, empathic intervention bringing about a significant positive change in children's negative attitudes toward schooling.

### Methodology:

#### Testing of the hypothesis involved three steps:

1. Identification of children with negative attitudes toward schooling.
2. Using an experimental design with two levels of empathic intervention (teacher offering empathy to experimental group and not to the control group).
3. Finding the difference between the two groups of children (experimental and control groups) with regard to their attitudes toward schooling.

#### 1. Identification of children with negative attitudes toward Schooling:

To identify the children with negative attitudes towards schooling 4 municipal schools of Tirupati town were randomly selected. All the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade children from these 4 Schools (N-300) constituted the sample. They include 125 girls and 175 boys and their mean age was Nine years. The respondents were in 6 sections each consisting of approximately 50 pupils. Students of each section were tested separately. After establishing report with the pupils the attitudes towards schooling scale was administered to all the students. Attitudes toward schooling scale consists of 46 items with three sub scales namely attitudes toward school curriculum, attitudes toward school climate and attitudes toward teachers in the school. The reliability coefficient of the scale as corrected by spearman-Brown formula is 0.92. Based on their scores of attitudes toward schooling, children with negative attitudes toward schooling were screened. They comprised of 60, 4<sup>th</sup> grade school children belonging to two schools, 30 each.

#### 2. Experimental design

The identified children with negative attitudes toward's schooling were divided into two groups of 30 each. Each group belonged to a single section of a school. The two schools were similar in aspects like locality, school climate, physical facilities, and nature and number of the student population. The two groups were matched in dimensions like attitudes towards schooling, age, sex, socio-economic status, intelligence, and family background. They were similar with regard to the level of punishment they were facing in schools. It was measured by Intensity of Punishment Scale developed for this purpose. The distribution of respondents was shown in Table 1. By a flip of a coin the treatment condition (experimental and control) that were to be assigned to the two groups were decided.

The scale has 25 items and measures the level of different types of verbal, physical and psychological punishment a child faces by the teacher in school. The reliability co-efficient as corrected by spearman-Brown prophesy formula for the scale is 0.93.

**DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**

Variables	Control Group	Experimental Group
N	30	30
Sex-Boys: Girls	17:13	17:13
Age(in years)	9	9
Socio-Economic status	Lower Middle Class	Lower Middle Class
Mean score on intensity of punishment scale	27.07	27.1
Mean score on attitudes towards schooling scale	139.07	139.23
No. of teachers dealing the class	One	One

**3. Empathic intervention:**

In order to introduce intervention to the experimental group with the programme of empathic strategy, permission was taken from the authority of the concerned school. Rapport was established with the teacher who was dealing with pupils of the experimental group. Discussing the concept empathy and its role in facilitation of learning, the teacher was made to understand and appreciate the importance of empathic relationship between the teacher and student and its role in facilitating. Besides taking permission from the D.E.O., it took 4 sessions of approximately 2 hours each to convince the teacher to implement the conditions of empathy in his class room.

First certain changes were made in the furniture and seating arrangements of the class-room so as to make the class room more spacious and comfortable to the pupils. Use of different kinds of punishment to discipline the child who was present in the class room was changed and the teacher actively interacted with the students as

		Pre-test			Post-test		
		Mean	S.D	t-Values	Mean	S.D	t-Values
Attitude towards teacher	Control group	44.5	5.5	0.44	45.4	5.5	5.39**
	Experimental group	45.0	5.7		57.07	5.0	
Attitude towards School curriculum	Control group	46.85	6.2	0.86	46.43	5.6	15.54**
	Experimental group	48.0	5.7		67.53	5.1	
Attitude towards School climate	Control group	47.93	5.2	0.59	48.33	6.0	13.36**
	Experimental group	47.1	6.8		67.83	4.6	
Attitude towards schooling	Control group	139.07	10.6	0.26	139.87	12.0	13.59**
	Experimental group	139.23	10.1		186.47	11.8	

\*\*significant at 0.01 level.

The differences between the mean scores of control and experimental groups on total score and three areas of attitudes towards schooling scale in pre-test condition were not significant, indicating that the two groups were similar in their attitudes towards schooling before the empathic intervention. The significant mean differences between the control and experimental groups with regard to the attitudes towards teacher (t- value 5.39\*\*), school curriculum (t- value 15.54\*\*) school climate (t-value 13.36\*\*) and the overall attitude towards schooling (t-value 13.59) indicate the effect of empathic intervention programme.

Thus the results provide sufficient information to accept the hypothesis regarding the significant effect of empathic intervention in bringing about positive change in children's negative attitudes toward schooling.

In order to induce academic progress in children, teachers adopt different techniques, among which corporal punishment and Psychological abuses are very common (Hyman et al., 1987; Duke, 1978, Hyman, 1978 and Clark, 1980). But the end product of the system of discipline based on punishment is to produce fear, guilt and shame in the child and child with these feelings will always be trying to avoid things rather than striving for them. He will be doing things not because he likes doing but only to avoid punishment (Berg, 1959). This may have severe chronic consequences leading to personality damage and lower self-esteem (APA, 1975). These undesirable traits lower the child's receptivity, further lowering his academic performance. It leads to dislike toward school and education in the child (Duke & Michel, 1980).

The teacher with an ability to grasp the point of view of the child in any situation will be ready to clarify the child's misconceptions, regarding his academic and non-academic life situations (Angelica Moè et al., 2009). Students very quickly sense their teachers attitudes toward

one among them. The rigid rules and regulations of the class room were relaxed and the students were made to manage and structure the class room activities. Close physical proximity and emotional warmth were maintained by the teacher with all the pupils of the group. Effective communication, reflecting the feelings of being warmly understood and paying special attention to the feelings, belief values of each and every child of the group is maintained by the teacher.

Apart from the above changes, the teacher changed usual teaching pattern and each and every child is encouraged to ask doubts, narrate stories and express his opinions about different aspects freely. If and student of the group was failing to follow the norms of the class, the reasons behind it were examined and with empathic understanding the child was made to appreciate and follow that particular norm.

Every day the classroom activities of the experimental group were observed at least for three hours, with or without the knowledge of the pupils and teacher of the group for eight weeks. The control group was given no intervention programme. After eight weeks, both control and experimental groups were administered attitudes towards schooling scale on the same day with approximately one hour interval and the results were analyzed.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:**

The means, standard deviations and t-values for the scores on attitudes toward schooling of the control and experimental groups in pre and post test conditions were given in Table-2.

Table II. Means, Standard deviations and t-values on the three areas of attitude towards schooling scale and the total scale for the control and experimental groups in Pre and post-test situations.

them and their interest or lack of interest in them ( Zainab Musheer et al., 2016 ; Marcela Verešová, & Dana Maláa 2016). Studies reveal that students ratings of teachers as good or poor are based more on teachers interest in and treatment of students than on teaching technique (Taylor, 1962), ASPY(1969), Hansel (1974), Morgan (1985), Sherriff (1956) and Jason et al(2016), reported that the teachers who were trained in interpersonal relations emphasizing empathy could bring about positive changes in the student's academic achievement.

In the present study also, children who used to grumble over their class room in the initial stages of empathic intervention gradually developed interest toward their classroom activities. By the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the intervention programme, whenever the teacher asked the students to read a particular lesson aloud, students who used to sit silently in the lost rows started raising their hands to read first. By the end of the intervention programme these so called dumb, unresponsive group of students who disliked their schooling very much, transformed into active, respective and enthusiastic group of students who readily participated in their class room activities. Thus the results of the present investigation give substantial evidence to emphasize the role of empathy as a facilitator of learning in contemporary schooling and indicate that in order to enhance academic progress in children the teacher should forget the 'rod' and practice empathy.

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