



Dangers Associated with the Administration of Corporal Punishment in Secondary School in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This paper is on the dangers associated with the administration of corporal punishment in secondary schools. The paper discusses on the concept of corporal punishment highlighting the views of various scholars on the concept. Various forms of corporal punishment secondary school students are subjected to, are also highlighted. The paper further discusses the perception of teachers on the use of corporal punishment in secondary schools showing why teachers prefer the use of corporal punishment in student's discipline despite the dangers that are commonly associated with the administration of corporal punishment in secondary schools. Finally, the paper discusses the various alternatives to corporal punishment for better teaching and learning devoid of threats

Keywords: Alternatives, Associated, Corporal Punishment, Dangers, Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Corporal punishment has always been a controversial issue and often difficult to discuss rationally and objectively among parents, teachers, school administrators and other concerned stakeholders of the educational enterprise in Nigeria and most African countries. This is because of the divergent views of various stakeholders on the concept of corporal punishment. While some teachers, parents and school administrators and policy makers are in support of corporal punishment others are vehemently in opposition leading to the banning of corporal punishment in schools especially in the developed countries.

Proponents of corporal punishment perceived it as a component of the educative and disciplinary process for character building as well as for generating respect and responsibility among children. According to Marcus (2014) parents do not perceive corporal punishment as violation of child rights but as part of child rearing which improves performance and corrects disruptive behaviour. In support of corporal punishment in schools and homes Mina (2013) indicated that in homes and schools children are discipline through beating, denied food, shouted at, insulted, forced to perform hard work, chased out of home and not allowed to attend school. Ogbe (2015) affirmed that teachers use corporal punishment to mould children's behaviour in order to build a responsible society as long as the punishment is reasonable. Ndubisi and Uka cited in Inatimi Etigbamo and Egberibine (2024) averred that some lay critics argued that pupils master their subjects more effectively if teachers gave dose of corporal punishment and that education has fallen in standard because corporal punishment is no longer used on erring pupils to force them to be studious.

Furthermore Inocavity (2014) argued that corporal punishment is a viable idea and potential for ensuring performance of students and maintaining discipline. Hence schools tend to use corporal punishment as strategic approach to increase discipline as well as performance to the students. Shumba (2000) states that corporal punishment is viewed by teachers and parents as a positive and valuable tool for teaching and learning which helps in students obedience to authority as well as instilling appropriate social behaviour. Nakpodia (2012) support corporal punishment by saying that the immediate response to indiscipline is to administer corporal punishment to the student. Therefore, teaching must include the use of cane because the world of indiscipline has endangered the moral fabric of the society

However, contrary to these views, many educationists have argued that corporal punishment has shocking and dehumanizing value and capable of making the learning environment a punitive place. According to Murphy and Parker (2010) School's use of corporal punishment affects every student in that school including those who are not physically subjected to hitting or paddling. They averred that the prevalent use of physical violence against students creates an overall threatening school atmosphere that impacts student's ability to perform academically, does not necessarily change the underlying wish to misbehave, and damages teachers/students relationship which is of a great importance in learning.

Banda (2012) noted that corporal punishment is not an effective disciplinary strategy as it does not teach an alternative behaviour because children usually feel resentful, humiliated and helpless after being hit and nevertheless do misbehave but they learn to master not to get caught and that corporal punishment drastically alleviate guilt feelings, that is when a child is whipped he feels he has paid the price and later especially adolescent years, those child would need to be taught the inner control of conscience and guilt. Corporal punishment accordingly inflict on the child deeply. To Soneson (2005) there is a strong association between corporal punishment and various negative emotional and psychological outcomes. The examples of the negative emotional and psychological outcomes are; eroded trust between parent and child, aggression towards siblings, sadness and anger, crying, fear, embarrassment, withdrawal and compliance, bullying and disobedience, poor mental health, weaker internalization of moral values, anti-social behaviour, poor adult adjustment, depression, withdrawal, sleep disturbance, avoidance of school, learning problems, loss of self esteem and delinquency.

Despite the overwhelming importance of corporal punishment, there are lots of dangers associated with the administration of corporal punishment in our schools, thus the imperativeness of this work. This work therefore, is focused on the dangers associated with the administration of corporal punishment in secondary schools of Nigeria.

The meaning of Corporal Punishment

Corporal Punishment in schools occurs when the teacher or the "adult-in-charge" purposely inflicts pain upon a child in order to stop that child's unacceptable behaviour and/or inappropriate language. The immediate aim of such punishment is usually to stop the offence, prevent its recurrence and set an example for others. The purported long-term goal is to change the child's behaviour and to make it more consistent with the adult's expectations (Straus and Donnelly, 1994). In corporal punishment, the adult usually hits various parts of the child's body with a hand, or with canes, paddles, yardsticks, belts, or other objects expected to cause pain and fear. According to Dayton cited in Andero and Stewart (2002) Corporal punishment covers official punishments of school students for misbehaviour that may involve striking the student a number of times in a generally methodical and pre-meditated ceremony. Less commonly, it could involve spanking the student in a deliberate manner on a specific part of the hand or body. According to them corporal punishment usually takes many forms, including spanking, shaking, choking, excessive exercise, and confinement in an uncomfortable space and it usually imposed for violent acts, like fighting with another student, and non-violent acts, like possessing cigarettes, talking in class, swearing, throwing food, not doing assignments amongst others. All this is done because of the offence committed by the student. Most teachers actually think they do well by punishing students, also believing that it is the best way to motivate students in order to behave more appropriately but they are mistaken by that way of thinking because the improper act or behaviour is just prevented for a while only. As a matter of fact, long term results of this kind of

punishment are either to react against it as most commonly done by the students or to surrender (Human Rights Watch, 2008).

In many parts of the world, corporal punishment in school has always raised very heated debate. In the United States of America and many parts of Europe, many organizations at different levels have fought to abolish its use. In African and Nigeria findings on Corporal Punishment by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention in 2008 in its report on the National Schools Violence Study, which provides a baseline from which to monitor school violence in the future with over 12,000 students took part in the survey, as well as nearly 800 principals and educators at 245 primary and secondary schools. The study found that, despite prohibition in South African schools, 71% of primary school children and 47.5% of secondary school children experienced corporal punishment (Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2013). Reasons cited for use of corporal punishment include, dropping litter, wearing incorrect uniform, losing books, failure to complete homework and making noise while in class.

Forms of Corporal Punishment

Hardy (2004) noted that caning is the popular form of corporal punishment consisting of numerous strikes on buttocks, hands, shoulders and on soles of the feet which have long lasting negative effects. Additionally, Oganda and Pells (2015) observed that teachers use canning, slapping, kicking, scratching, pulling hair or ears, pinching and whipping to maintain discipline and punish children for poor academic performance. Bruises and cuts are regular end products of school punishment with severe injuries including broken bones, knocked out teeth and internal bleeding which cause long term emotional distress. Further reports showed that children are forced to kneel down in front of the class for long hours as a form of discipline even though it disrupts learning. Many schools and teachers make children to engage in physical labour as a punishment which includes, digging trenches, slashing grass and uprooting tree stumps, cleaning toilets with no detergents and protective gloves.

Committee on the Rights of the Child Report (2006) showed that outburst of teachers who use violence as forms of punishment affects emotional behaviour and weakens academic achievement of learners. The report further revealed that beating with chains, kneeling down, slapping with hands, knocking the head and pulling ears are the methods of corporal punishments practiced in most developing countries. All these forms of punishment represent violation of human right, torture and cruel inhuman degradation of dignity and physical integrity. As a result, learners remain silent due to fear and escalate to violence as an outburst of personal frustration.

Fareo and Owolabi (2022) averred that students are subjected to various forms of corporal punishment in order to enforce discipline. They include beating and hitting the student(s) with object, kicking the student to inflict pains, shaking student violently, forcing students to stay in an uncomfortable position, slapping students, throwing objects on students, flogging of students, punching and pinching of students as well as starving students. Similarly, Kimani, Kara and Ogetane (2012) identifies canning, slapping, kneeling down, pinching, pulling of ears and hairs, forced manual labour, standing in the sun and kicking as forms of corporal punishment.

Teacher's Perceptions towards the Use of Corporal Punishment

Fareo and Owolabi (2022) in their study averred the following as perception of teachers about the use of corporal punishment in schools. They include hitting student(s) with object at hand regardless of the harm it might caused would curb his/her wildness, withdrawal of certain privileges from the student(s) is a good way of reprimanding them, cleaning of toilet and sweeping of classroom as a way of breaking student's stubbornness, flogging on the hand and buttock is a way of showing disapproval of unacceptable behaviour, subjecting the student to take up painful body posture for a period of time is another way of instilling discipline, subjecting students to manual labour during break or after school hours is a good way of correcting unwanted behaviour, denying student(s) their lunch is also another way of instilling discipline in school, student tend to obey and respect their elders more when they know that corporal punishment would be administered them if they go against the rule, any act that inflict pains on students would make them learn their lesson and behave more wisely in the future, embarrassing students in front of his peer would make him think twice before doing that same act again, without corporal punishment, students tend to be more wayward, disrespectful and

uncontrollable and finally teachers believed that corporal punishment is the best way of correcting indiscipline and waywardness of students.

According to Ogbe (2015) in his study on the 'Analysis of Parents/Teachers Perception of the use of Corporal Punishment in Primary Schools,' both parents and teachers agreed that corporal punishment is an ideal practice for molding children in primary schools. Parents and teachers, males and females, urban and rural parents/teachers did not show any significant difference on their perception of the use of corporal punishment in schools. The study further recommended that corporal punishment should be restored where it is dysfunctional and there is the need to legislate law to protect teachers on their practice of molding children through corporal punishment.

Vinothini (2016) states that there is a significant difference in the teacher's attitude towards corporal punishment as a way to raise performances. In her study the researchers claim that male teachers have high preference towards the use of corporal punishment than female teachers.

According to UNESCO (2015), many teachers argued that without corporal punishment schools would be in chaos. Learners would become unruly when they reach high school. Teachers contend that corporal punishment is a disciplinary tool available to control large class size.

Shumba (2000) states that corporal punishment is viewed by teachers and parents as a positive and valuable tool for teaching and learning which helps in students' obedience to authority as well as instilling appropriate social behaviour.

Nakpodia (2012) Support by saying that the immediate response to indiscipline is to administer corporal punishment to the students rather than suspending them from school. Therefore, teaching must include the use of cane because the world of indiscipline has endangered the moral fabric of the society. However, it is unacceptable when punishing gets into the extreme when a teacher become too harsh over a little provocation causing even severe injuries to students leaving them with scars. Punishment like these when occurs should be condemned in school and at home.

Dangers Associated with Corporal Punishment

Nakpodia (2012) argues that corporal punishment has harmful effects. The use of corporal punishment by spanking is linked to aggression, anti-social behaviour, mental health problems, cognitive difficulties, low self-esteem and other negative effects. The evidence against corporal punishment of ineffective deterrence mechanism suggests that deterrent corporal punishment leads to aggression and hostility. On top of that corporal punishment brings about violent behaviours in the society since it does not encourage learners to behave appropriately. Besides, it weakens the relationship between the learners and educators.

Corporal punishment causes psychological harm including emotional damages, negative self-esteem, negative feelings about going to school and negative outcomes for academic performance. Those arguing against corporal punishment insist that the advancement of technology bring ingenious ways of correcting students when they misbehave instead of resorting to corporal punishment (Nakpodia, 2012).

According to Fareo and Owolabi (2022) the dangers associated with the use of corporal punishment are numerous and detrimental to safe teaching and learning. They outlined the following as dangers associated with the use of corporal punishment in schools.

1. Corporal punishment leads to mental retardation which includes memory loss and absenteeism in class.
2. Corporal punishment cause emotional trauma which includes low self-esteem, depression and suicidal acts.
3. Corporal punishment causes physical scars as a result of broken and swollen skin where the pain was inflicted.
4. Corporal punishment causes maiming or disability of students.
5. Corporal punishment causes psychological trauma in which the student see violence as a normal way of life and
6. The fear of corporal punishment leads students to drop out of school.

Alternatives to Corporal Punishment

Asmal (2000) outline the following as various ways and alternatives to corporal punishment and discipline.

1. Adopt a whole school approach and make sure that your classroom discipline reflects the school's policies. Discipline is not only a classroom issue; it impacts on the whole school. Classroom and school strategies should be congruent. Create a climate in which these issues are discussed, evaluated and new strategies put in place.
2. Co-operation and consistency among the staff would strengthen whatever individual teachers try to implement in their classes and give learners a sense of security, as they would know what to expect as well as what is expected of them.
3. Establish ground rules - set class rules with your classes at the beginning of the year; you may choose to re-evaluate them at the beginning of each new term. Make sure that everybody understands the logic behind each rule. Put the rules where they can be seen or give each learner a copy: they could even sign it as an agreement with everybody in the class. Be serious and consistent about the implementation of the rules - the rules should apply equally to everybody in the class.
4. Be fair - it is critical to a relationship of trust between yourself and the learners. Make sure that any disciplinary action is carried out firmly but fairly.
5. Know your learners and focus on relationship building- build a relationship of trust in which learners feel respected, understood and recognized for who they are. Do things like: remember their names, get to know them, notice who seeks attention and who does not, be sincere, ask how they are if they have been ill, find out about their lives, talk to them, make it clear that you care about them, make time for them. Reach out to everybody, including those who may be part of a clique or a social group, including gangs. Send a message of inclusion and lay the foundation for open communication channels.
6. Manage the learning process and the learning environment enthusiastically and professionally- your motto should be prepared. Work for the day should always be well prepared, anticipate that some learners would finish before others and have something for them to do. Make sure that the work is relevant to the learners. Set up a learning environment that is conducive to learning, display learners work or involve them in setting up classroom displays.
7. Be self-critical: if something does not work, consider all the reasons why this may be so, including that perhaps you could have done something differently. Learning materials and methodology include things like conflict management, problem solving, tolerance, anti-racism, gender sensitivity, and so on in your learning materials as well as in the way in which the classroom is managed. The methodology should provide the opportunity for learners to practice their skills in these particular areas as well as to build a cooperative learning environment in which learners understand the dynamics of working together and are able to give and take in a group situation.
8. Be inclusive - leaving learners out, not reflecting an understanding of their needs, and could alienate them. Use materials, pictures, language, music, posters, magazines and so on that reflects the diversity of the class so that no learner feels left out or that his or her identity is not valued.
9. Give learners the opportunity to succeed - we have all heard it said that success breeds success. Learners who feel positive about themselves and their ability to succeed would make better learners. Some traditions that have been around for a long time may contribute to some students feeling superior and others frustrated or inadequate. For example, only acknowledging those learners who obtain A aggregates as opposed to those learners who have worked to their best ability and achieved what is for them the equivalent of an A symbol may be frustrating to a learner who worked hard. Take steps to avoid favouritism and celebrate a broad range of student achievement.

According to Ending Corporal Punishment in Alternative Care (2012) the following are various alternatives to corporal punishment that teachers can utilized.

1. Punish immediately and consistently, but not frequently. For punishment to work, it must immediately follow the misbehavior. Do not change your mind about what should be punished from day to day, but make sure that you do not have a long list of behaviours that require punishment. A student who is punished frequently each day would learn to feel that he or she is a bad person. The student would continue to misbehave because punishment would seem unavoidable. To avoid this, make sure you do not start with too many rules or rules that are too hard.
2. Choose appropriate, effective punishments. If possible choose a punishment that is a natural consequence of the misbehavior (e.g., "You didn't pick up the toys, you can't play with them for the rest of the day.") If you find that a particular "punishment" does not seem to work even when applied consistently, it is not "punishing" for your student, and you should try another.
3. Ignore misbehavior that is not harmful. If you are having difficulty with a student's behaviour, try ignoring as many types of misbehaviour as you can without allowing the student to hurt himself or others. Make sure to praise him/her when behaviour is good. When you have all harmful behaviour under control, you can gradually start to work on other annoying behaviours -one behaviour at a time.
4. If you know what the student wants, try giving it to him/her at a better time. If you know that your student misbehaves for attention, give her/him extra attention when the student is behaving well. If your student seems to "want" to be spanked, avoid physical punishment for wrong-doing, but give the him/her extra physical contact (hugs, holding, rocking, horse-play) at other times during the day.
5. "Time-Out" works best when used to prevent the student from getting rewarded for misbehaviour. Use this technique to remove the student from the room where other children are likely to provide "praise," laughter, etc. Make sure to use it immediately and as unemotionally as possible.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion has revealed the dangers associated with the administration of corporal punishment in schools as well as the various alternatives to corporal punishment. Its worthy of note that despite the high level of acceptability and usage of corporal punishment in schools especially in developing societies, the dangers and damages that comes along is in most cases unimaginable and terrifying. This is why teachers should as a matter of priority administers varying alternatives to corporal punishment for avoidance dangers and damages that comes with the administration of corporal punishment.

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