

## Students' Perception on Corporal Punishment and its Effect on Learning: A Case of Secondary Schools in Babati Rural District, Tanzania

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### ABSTRACT

This study sought to establish students' perception on corporal punishment and its effect on learning among Secondary Schools of Babati Rural District, Tanzania using Descriptive Design. A random sample of 370 students participated by filling the questionnaire. Experienced researchers from the University of Arusha validated the instrument before data was collected and Cronbach's Alpha of between .668 and .736 was yielded by reliability test. Study findings established that corporal punishment takes place in schools under investigation. Students believed that punishment can help to monitor their discipline. On the other hand, they perceived that punishment may cause them to escape from classrooms, may lead into dropouts and can instill fear to learn and therefore contribute to poor performance in their subjects. There is a significant negative correlation between corporal punishment and participation in learning, meaning the more corporal punishment, the less the students' involvement in learning. While students believed that punishment can help to monitor their discipline, it is recommended that teachers should avoid its use since it has other detrimental effects. Teachers should be adequately equipped with alternative discipline control measures in order to avoid the use of corporal punishment which reduces the rate of students' involvement in learning.

Keywords: Corporal, Punishment, Perception, Effect, Learning, Babati And Tanzania.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Punishment is an issue of great concern among school stakeholders. It is believed to be a means through which unwanted behaviors can be eradicated and acceptable ones be increased. While teachers use the cane in order to maintain discipline and control antisocial behaviour of learners, (Alhassan (2013), it is debatable whether corporal punishment should be acceptable or not. According to Muneja (2013), the debate whether to use caning as a form of disciplinary measures or not is still alive. Study findings of Ogbe (2015) in Nigeria indicated that both parents and teachers agreed that corporal punishment is an ideal practice for moulding children in primary schools. Similarly, School Heads, teachers, and pupils in Kenya perceived punishment as part of pupils learning (Kimani, Kara and Ogetange, 2012). On the contrary, perception of both teachers and students toward corporal punishment in Jordan were negative, while their positions toward substitute punishment was positive (Khateeb, 2015). This suggests that corporal punishment is a controversial issue that need to be thoroughly investigated in order to come up with necessary recommendations. In response to this problem, this paper investigates on the effect of corporal punishment on students' involvement in learning.

Punishment has existed in the history of mankind for a long time. Particularly, the use of the cane in behaviour modification has been rampant in traditional African society (Alhassan, 2013). A study conducted by Kimani, Kara and Ogetange (2012) in Kenya found that punishment was a regular school experience for pupils, and the most prevalent forms of punishment included canning, slapping, kneeling down, pinching, pulling hair/ears and forced manual work. Study findings show that students who are given physical punishment behave negatively and their academic progress shows a gradual regression, whereas those who are managed with psychological treatment

develop their interest in learning, reflect friendly behaviour and improve their long-term scholastic performance (Al-Taher, 2014). According to Boser (2001), learners who are physically punished develop negative attitudes towards learning and when they develop into adulthood, possess no empathy for others. According to Roussov (2003), students who receive punishment show symptoms of dejection in studies, poor performance in tests and do not participate in the teaching and learning process enthusiastically. In Australia, Sanderson (2002) found that corporal punishment decreases students' motivation to learn and increases poor attitudes toward learning. According to Jyoti and Neetu (2013), punishment inhibits learning, interferes with the accomplishment of each of the important developmental tasks of children and has potential for physical harm to the child. This suggests how sensitive punishment measure can be and how if need be, has to be administered with great care. It is out of this reality that this study was conducted to investigate on the effect of punishment on students' involvement in Learning.

### ***1.1 Theoretical Perspectives***

Arguments for punishment measures are centered on utilitarian theory which sees infliction of suffering not as intrinsically required but as a means to realizing good consequences. The goal of utilitarian theory is to prevent future crime by giving students ability to succeed within the confines of the rules and regulation in the school through punishment (Illingworth (2004). Under utilitarian theory, school rules and regulations are used to maximize the happiness of students because crime and punishment are inconsistent with happiness and should be kept to a minimum. Utilitarian theory further contends that a crime-free society cannot exist, but there should be an endeavor to inflict only as much punishment as is required to prevent further crimes (Davis, 2000).

According to Ross and Hannay (2002), utilitarian theory considers the most direct and immediate effect of punishment and, from this perspective, punishment is a bad thing because it causes unhappiness to the offender. It is only justified because of the wider contingent benefits it produces, which it is felt to outweigh the bad consequences. According to this theory, therefore, learners should be punished when, and only when punishment maximizes happiness in the future (Ali (2001). This theory further contends that punishment is part of learning since it promotes the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of people, and the least amount of pain to the least number of people (Peters, 1966). The theory further insists that an action is considered to be right or wrong based on the consequences of it and its effects on majority of the people (West, 2004). This means that an action or practice is ethically correct when it produces more positive consequences in comparison to negative ones to those who are involved in it (Goldman, 1982).

### ***1.2 Punishment Measures and Learning***

A number of studies have been conducted in relation to punishment and learning. Arif and Rafi (2007), for instance, conducted a study and found that students who went through corporal punishment showed negative behavior whereas students who are managed with psychological treatment developed their interest in learning, reflected friendly behavior and improved their long-term scholastic performance. In South Asia, punishment is

often considered necessary to children's upbringing, to facilitate learning and to instill discipline. As in many countries, corporal punishment reflects hierarchical and unequal power relations, which emphasize children's lack of power and low socio-economic status.

It is believed that if children are not punished they will develop into unruly and uncontrollable citizens. Although some governments have made provisions concerning corporal punishment, the laws are viewed by teachers, parents and professionals as being too broad and therefore open to a variety of interpretations (Unicef Asian Report, 2001). Elbla (2012) investigated on the issue of corporal and verbal punishment as means of disciplining students' behavior in schools of Sudan. Findings revealed that teachers were aware of the fact that punishment has negative impact on students' behavior and learning but still they used punitive strategies as a result of stress and frustration they themselves experienced at school due to the fact that school environments are poor and lack facilities.

A study conducted in Tanzania by Feinstein and Mwachombela (2010) found that corporal punishment was common in secondary schools. The majority of teachers supported its continued use, but believed in its moderation. Students, however, reported disliking the practice and believed it was ineffective and resulted in emotional as well as physical distress. Save the Children project (2008) made a study with an aim to establish the prevalence of corporal and humiliating punishment on children in both schools and homes and findings revealed that corporal and other forms of humiliating punishment were existing and the practice of corporal and humiliating punishment was found to be very high among teachers.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology is a roadmap that explains how a study is conducted. This section discusses research methodology utilized in this study. It addresses such issues as research design, data collection instrument, population and sampling as well as validity and reliability of research instrument.

### ***2.1 Research Design***

Research design can be defined as the arrangement of condition for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims at arriving at a research outcome. In this study, descriptive survey design was employed. Descriptive survey is a branch of social scientific investigation designs which studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the population. It is used to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret data before concluding and coming up with recommendations (Kothari, 2011).

### ***2.2 Data Collection Instrument***

Questionnaire was the main instrument which was used to collect data. According to Kothari (2011), questionnaire is the most widely used instruments for obtaining information from individuals. The researchers administered it in person, going to various schools under investigation and giving the students the questionnaires to respond to.

### 2.3 Population and Sampling

According to Orodho (2013), population refers to as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. In this study, the population was secondary school students in Babati District. According to the Education officer in Babati District Council, there were 27 secondary schools with 13,126 students by the time of data collection. From these, the study sample of 370 was obtained by using probability simple random sampling technique.

### 2.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity is the ability of a measuring instrument to measure what it claims to measure (Kothari 2011). Validity is concerned with whether the instrument covers the domain or items that it supports (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Validity further means items in the questionnaire measure what they are intended to measure (Kombo, 2006). In order to ensure acceptable validity of the instrument, expert judgment was used whereby experienced researchers at the University of Arusha went through the questionnaire and gave necessary comments for improvement before the actual data collection took place.

Reliability, on the other hand, is a measure of the degree to which a research instrument supplies consistent results after repeated trials (Cooper and Schindler, 2006; Fraenkel and Wallen (2000). In this study, reliability of the questionnaire was established through a pilot study whereby 39 students in one school in Arusha city participated to fill the questionnaire.

Responses were coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences program, and Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure acceptable reliability of items in the questionnaire. The cut off point for acceptable reliability coefficient was 0.6 and results, as it can be seen in Table 1 ranged between .668 and .736 which means the questionnaire was reliable.

Table 1: Reliability

SN	VARIABLE	ITEMS	CRONBACH'S ALPHA	INTERPRETATION
1	Students' Attitude toward Punishment	8	.733	Reliable
2	The Rate of Corporal Punishment	7	.668	Reliable
3	Attitude toward Learning.	6	.736	Reliable

### 1. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The present study was guided by three research questions as follows: (1) what is students' attitude toward punishment in Secondary Schools of Babati Rural District? (2) To what extent does Corporal Punishment Take Place in Secondary Schools of Babati Rural District? (3) Is there significant correlation between Corporal Punishment and students' involvement in learning? The first two research questions were analyzed through descriptive statistics while the third one was done through inferential statistics and therefore called for hypothesis testing.

**a. What is Students' Attitude toward Punishment in Secondary Schools of Babati Rural District?**

The first research question sought to establish the attitude of learners towards punishment. The attitude was determined by mean scores to eight questionnaire items under the following scales of interpretation: 3.50-4.00 = Strongly Agree, 2.50-3.49 = Agree, 1.50-2.49 = Disagree and 1.00-1.49 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 2: Students' Attitude toward Punishment

SN	ITEM	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
1.	Punishment helps to monitor students' discipline.	3.2725	Agree
2.	Punishment has positive influence toward learning.	3.2107	Agree
3.	Punishment motivates students to learn.	3.0944	Agree
4.	Punishment makes students understand quickly.	2.8195	Agree
5.	Punishment causes some students to escape from classroom.	3.1966	Agree
6.	Punishment instills fear into students for them to learn.	3.1348	Agree
7.	Punishment leads to drop outs	3.1231	Agree
8.	Punishment contributes to poor performance in my subjects	2.9463	Agree

As Table 2 indicates, students agreed that punishment helps to monitor their discipline ( $M=3.2725$ ). This is in harmony with findings of Ogbe (2015) in Nigeria which indicated that both parents and teachers believed that punishment is an ideal practice for moulding children in schools. Similarly, School Heads, teachers, and pupils in Kenya perceived punishment as part of pupils learning (Kimani, Kara and Ogetange, 2012).

Therefore, since students perceived punishment to be an ideal practice, teachers can easily employ punishment measures, when necessary, to control students' behaviors. Findings in Table 2 further indicate that students agreed that punishment has positive influence toward learning ( $M=3.2107$ ), motivates them to learn ( $M=3.0944$ ) and makes them understand quickly ( $M=2.8195$ ). This implies that students perceived that punishment can be used to boost their academic performance.

On the other hand, students agreed that punishment causes them to escape from the classrooms ( $M=3.1966$ ) and instills fear to learn ( $M=3.1348$ ). They also agreed that punishment leads to dropout ( $M=3.1231$ ) and contributes to poor performance in their subjects ( $M=2.9463$ ).

This is in harmony with the findings of Arif and Rafi (2007) that, those students who go through corporal punishment develop negative behavior. With this fact, we can therefore argue that while punishment has benefits on the one hand, it can also bring about negative effect on the learners especially when not administered appropriately.

***b. To what extent does Corporal Punishment Take Place in Secondary Schools of Babati Rural District?***

This research question sought to establish the extent to which different aspects of corporal punishment take place in schools under investigation. Analysis of this research question was guided by seven items in the questionnaire whereby respondents gave their opinions which were interpreted in terms of mean scores under the following range of interpretation: 3.50-4.00 = Very Frequently, 2.50-3.49 = Frequently, 1.50-2.49 = Rarely and 1.00-1.49 = Not at All.

Table 3: Extent to which Corporal Punishment Takes Place

SN	ITEM	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
1.	I am told to kneel down when I do a mistake.	3.0786	Frequently
2.	Teachers use canning as punishment measure.	3.1892	Frequently
3.	I am slapped as punishment for a mistake.	3.0902	Frequently
4.	Pinching in my school is used as punishment measure.	2.8856	Frequently
5.	I am pulled my hair or ears for a mistake.	2.7459	Frequently
6.	Teachers are not faire when administering punishment.	2.9511	Frequently
7.	Some teachers are fault finders in order to punish.	3.0197	Frequently

As Table 3 indicates, students are frequently told to kneel down when they do mistakes (M= 3.0786) and teachers frequently use canning as punishment measure (M=3.1892). The students are slapped as punishment for mistakes (M=3.0902) and pinching is used as punishment measure (M=2.8856). Students also indicated that they are pulled their hairs or ears for a mistake (M=2.7459), teachers are not fair when administering punishment (M=2.9511) and some teachers are fault finders in order to punish (M=3.0197). This implies that corporal punishment frequently take place in schools under investigation. The findings are in harmony with that of Save the Children project (2008), which was done with an aim to establish the prevalence of corporal and humiliating punishment on children in both schools and homes. Findings of the study revealed that the practice of corporal and humiliating punishment was very high. Furthermore, Feinstein and Mwahombela (2010)'s findings in Tanzanian Secondary Schools indicated that corporal punishment was the most common form of punishment. The majority of teachers supported its continued use but believed in moderation. The majority of students and teachers were, however, unaware of national laws to restrict corporal punishment. There was also agreement between students and teachers that corporal punishment was used for both major and minor offences such as misbehavior and tardiness. Students, though, reported disliking the practice and believed it was ineffective and resulted in emotional, as well as physical distress. Therefore, while it is true that corporal punishment can prevent unwanted behaviors, it can also bring about detrimental effects to the learners.

***c. Is there significant correlation between Corporal Punishment and students' involvement in learning?***

This research question sought to establish the effect of corporal punishment on students' involvement in learning. The question called for testing of a null hypothesis which states: there is no significant relationship between corporal punishment and students' involvement in learning.



Table 4: Correlations between Corporal punishment and students' Learning

		LEARNING	CORPORAL
Involvement in Learning	Pearson Correlation	1	-.206**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	370	370
Corporal Punishment	Pearson Correlation	-.206**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	370	370

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This hypothesis was tested by Pearson Product moment correlational coefficient. As it can be seen in Table 4, there is a negative correlation (Pearson Correlation -.206) between corporal punishment and students' involvement in learning. The Table also indicates the Sig. of .000 which is lesser than the critical value (0.01) thus, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and therefore maintaining that there is a significant negative correlation between corporal punishment and students' involvement in learning.

This implies that the more corporal punishment takes place, the less the students are involved in the learning process. Therefore, corporal punishment affects negatively the rate of students' involvement in learning. These findings are in harmony with that of Jyoti and Neetu (2013) that, students who experienced corporal punishment show higher levels of depression and feelings of hopelessness as well as an increased propensity to use violence.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

This section gives the following conclusions and recommendations based on analysis and interpretation of three research questions that guided this study:

First, students believed that punishment can help to monitor their discipline and agreed that punishment has positive influence toward learning, motivates them to learn effectively and makes them understand quickly. Second, on the other hand, students perceived that punishment may cause them to escape from the classrooms, may lead into dropouts and can instill fear to learn and therefore contribute to poor performance in their subjects. Third, corporal punishment frequently takes place in schools under investigation. Particularly, students are told to kneel down when they do mistakes and teachers use canning slapping and pinching as punishment measures. Lastly, there is a significant negative correlation between corporal punishment and participation in learning. This implies that the more corporal punishment takes place, the less the students are involved in the learning process. Therefore, corporal punishment hinders students' involvement in learning.

### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions regarding prevalence of punishment measures in schools under investigation, the researchers give the following recommendations: First, while students believed that punishment can help to monitor their discipline and agreed that punishment has positive influence toward learning, teachers should avoid

its use since it has other detrimental effects. Second, teachers should be adequately equipped with alternative discipline control measures in order to avoid the use of corporal punishment which reduces the rate of students' involvement in learning.

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