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**THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE BAN ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON STUDENTS' DISCIPLINE IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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Abstract

This study examined the implications of the ban on corporal punishment on students' discipline in secondary schools. Corporal punishment as a measure of discipline has drawn a lot of criticism among the populace as being responsible for students' deviant behaviour; while this criticism should not be completely overlooked, total ban may not be justifiable. This study was prompted, by the rampant increase in students' unrest in secondary schools after the ban on corporal punishment. The study adopted the ex-post facto design. The administration of corporal punishment on students breaches their fundamental human rights to respect for human dignity and physical integrity. These became a matter of concern to educationists and parents' indeed, the net implications of the ban on corporal punishment in schools have been destruction of property and even death of students. This paper reviewed empirical findings of various disciplines e.g. legal, health and psychological on the effect of corporal punishment on students. The findings of this study, conclusively recommended that Teachers Service Commission should sensitize school management on effective leadership and encourage them to adopt dialogue to mitigate against students unrest, School administrators in public schools should enforce implementation of alternative disciplinary measures to make them effective in dealing with the common discipline problems in schools, Ministry of Education should organize sensitization programmes for teachers to enable them understand the physical and psychological implications of corporal punishment.

Introduction

Corporal punishment is one of the oldest methods used to instil discipline across the world. Its proponents have religiously embraced the biblical adage, "spare the rod and spoil the child". In the English speaking world, the use of corporal punishment in schools has historically been justified by the common law doctrine in loco parents, where by teachers are considered authority figures granted the same rights as parents to discipline and punish children in their care if they do not adhere to the set rules, A similar justification exists in Chinese speaking countries.

In Nigeria, corporal punishment is part of everyday schooling. When a child misbehaves, he/she will be beaten. Some of the common practices include flogging, slapping, spanking, punching and kicking. Others include hitting with objects, kneeling down (often in the sun for extended period of time), painful body posture and prevention of excretion (faeces and urine). This is not only from teachers but older students are often encouraged to give punishments to younger students.

In recent years, welfare and rights of the child have become a global issue. Several International and Regional Conventions and Declarations have been issued to protect the child from brutality, cruelty, in-human and degrading treatments (Legal Resources Foundation 2004 page, 15). The United Nations Convention on Rights of the child of 1989 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child of 1990 are key in addressing the welfare of the child.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) asserts that a child has a right against all forms of discrimination or punishment and further that in all actions concerning children; the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

According to Symonides and Vladmir, 2001, there are emphasises on the child's right to physical integrity and proposed revision of existing legislation and development of awareness and educational campaigns.

Statement of the Problem

Since the declaration of the ban on corporal punishment in secondary schools, there has been a rampant increase of indiscipline cases and unrests in secondary schools. These became a matter of concern to educationists and parents' indeed, the net implications of the ban on corporal punishment in schools have been destruction of property and even death of students.

According to Daily Nation, July 16th 2001, the secondary school head teachers during their annual general conference agonized over the trend of indiscipline in schools and blame the Ministry of Education for taking away the cane without through deliberations with the stakeholders. Therefore the researcher deemed it necessary to investigate the implications of the ban on corporal punishment on students' discipline in secondary schools.

Research Questions

1. Does the ban on corporal punishment increases unrest in secondary schools?
2. Does the ban on corporal punishment increases students' academic performance?
3. Does the ban on corporal punishment improve learning environment for teachers and students?
4. Does the ban on corporal punishment improve students/teachers relation?

Literature Review

Concept of Corporal Punishment

According to Cangelosi (1988) corporal punishment is infliction of pain by a teacher or educational official on a learner for purpose of making him/her sorry for doing something which is not in tandem with school rules and regulations.

The regulations books such as the Holy Bible in the book of proverbs 23:13-14 portrays corporal punishment as a method of instilling corrective behaviour to wrong doers. Do not withhold discipline from your child, if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.

Children perceive punishment as justification for violation of the moral code of behaviour such as dishonesty, damage of property or inflicting injuries to persons or animals among other (Durojaiye, 1976). Cotton (2000), shares the idea that punishment can be an effective means of remediating individual behaviour and therefore improving school order if they commensurate with the offense committed.

Baunard (1999), shared the opinion that punishment is a means of controlling disruptive behaviour. He further stated that if punishment is the logical result of misconduct, the students are likely to accept it without resentment.

To Dayton (2005), corporal punishment is a discipline method in which a supervising adult deliberately inflicts pain upon a child in response to a child's unacceptable behaviour of inappropriate language. While to Straus and Donnelly (2005), it is define as "the use of physical force intended to cause pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling a child's behaviour".

The concept is further elaborated by Gershoff (2002) that behaviours which do not cause significant physical injury (e.g. Spank and Slap) are considered corporal punishment, whereas behaviours that risk injury (e.g. punching, kicking, burning are considered physical abuse.

Punishment is a term used in operant conditioning to refer to any change that occurs after a behaviour that reduces the likelihood that behaviour will occur again in the future. While positive and negative reinforcement are used to increase behaviours, punishment is focused on reducing or eliminating unwanted behaviours (Leach & Humphreys, 2007).

Scarre (2003) also defines the word "corporal" to refer to any punishment applied on the body including assault or any means that are meant to cause physical pain or humiliation. The National Association of School Nurses, (2010): defines punishment as causing physical pain deliberately to change behaviour that could be in the form of hitting, slapping, spanking, punching and pinching using objects such as sticks, belts, and paddles. It also states that "the intentional infliction of physical pain as a method of changing behaviour, which may include methods such as hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, use of various objects (paddles, belts, sticks or other), or painful body postures Nakpodia (2012).

Every African community had rules and regulations that governed it people. Corporal punishment, execution and fines were some of the measures taken on those who violated the set standards (Thiongo, 1981). According to Human Rights Watch (1999), "During the colonial period, corporal punishment was administered as a sign of supremacy and authority. Corporal

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punishment to adult Africans for disobeying rules or failure to pay taxes. This was done in public as a deterrent measure”.

Nanog (2007) maintains that the abolition of punishment in schools has left a gap which cannot be filled and has led to all kinds of disciplinary problems in schools. He further states that learners bring dangerous weapons to schools, endangering the lives of everyone. In Africa, teachers who use corporal punishment argues that the power to control learners is taken away from parents and teachers and this has also contributed to student's high failure rate (Kilimci, 2009).

According to Benator (2009) from the perspective of public policy, prohibiting corporal punishment, constitute a serious interference with the liberty interests of those parents who judge the possibility of corporal punishment to benefit their children.

The United Nation Committee on Right of the Child (UNCRC) defines corporal punishment as “any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degrees of pain or discomfort however light”.

Corporal punishment is the application of force to produce pain without injury to correct or control behaviour (Straus and Stewart, 1999). Pondey (2001) said that corporal punishment is being used as a means of disciplining action against children world-wide.

Corporal punishment in Nigerian schools is as old as its education system. From the Traditional education system in the south to the Almajiri/Islamic education system in the north, corporal punishment as a means of correction and discipline has largely gone unchanged in schools. However, findings by family physicians, paediatricians, clinical psychologists, schools psychologist, counsellors, etc argue that corporal punishment does not work to correct negative behaviours permanently (Bauman, 1998).

Arab, Waseem, Umar, Mohammed and Qiasar (2011) opined that parents, guardians and teachers who use harsh and punitive practices to discipline their children, may succeed in making the child conform to their standards but resentment will be reflected by the child's behaviour sooner or later. A frequently punished child will be a problematic person later in life because the child being sensitive reacts to the behaviour and discipline of adults either at school or at home (Kaur, 2005).

The long-term use of corporal punishment of deviant anti-social behaviours, such as aggression, adolescent delinquency and violent acts inside and outside the school (Straus, 1991).

Research studies suggest that corporal punishment is an ineffective and unsuccessful method to maintain discipline and has major destructive and damaging effects on the physical and mental health of individuals on whom it is imposed (Straus & Mouradian, 1998). Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007, Lynette, 2001, Grey danus, et al, 2003).

According to Pearlin (1989) Frequent use of corporal punishment may become a continuous hardship for children and possess greater potential to produce adverse and negative effects. Similarly, according to Straus (1991), the frequent use of corporal punishment increases the possibility of abnormal, disruptive and disturbing behaviours, such as aggression or violence, adolescent criminal behaviour and aggressive acts inside and outside the school.

Impacts of Corporal Punishment on Students' Discipline

The use of corporal punishment has been fodder for heated debates between parents, teachers and the general populace. Statements like “it didn’t do me any harm” “spare the rod, spoil the child” or “else works” support and even promote the idea of corporal punishment (Dobson, 2007). In contrast, opponents argue that this type of consequence not only harms children physically, but psychology, scars are created that haunt them for a life time (Alvy 2007). Representatives from both sides bring emotionally charged baggage to the table as personnel experiences and religion discourse. This makes it particularly challenging to sift through the fervour and determine what is best for the learners.

A similar meta-analysis by Elizabeth Thompson, Gershoff, Ph.D. (2002), of the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University shed significant light on the issue. She found that (eleven) 11 behaviours and experiences were associated with corporal punishment. Interestingly, ten (10) of them impacted students negatively while only one (1) had a positive effects, it came as no surprise that the one clear advantage of corporal punishment was immediate compliance, something that is valued by teachers, administrators and parents alike. The student that is taking during class immediately refrains when hit with a stick and the student that comes with a torn uniform will have it sewn by the next class day after standing in the sun for hours.

Ironically, the ten negative behaviours and experiences that Gershoff identified were behaviours that educators are constantly trying to curb in students. She found there was an increase in aggression, as students learned physical abuse was legitimate way to cope and to control others. In addition, anxiety, bed wetting, tension, depression, sleep problems and mental health issues were by-products of corporal punishment.

Additionally, students exhibited lower level of self-control, as they learned to depend on others for control. They also had more problems with compliance and poorer relationships with their parents. Understanding, the more often or more harshly a child was hit the more likely they were to be aggressive or to have mental health problems.

Effect of Corporal Punishment on the Socio-Psychological Well-Being of Students

Research done by Murray Straus (1994), of the family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire Paralleled Gershoff’s findings; Straus found more delinquency, aggression, academic problems, lower IQm inappropriate sexual behaviour and abuse of others in those that had experienced corporal punishment. Most disturbing was an increase in suicides when corporal punishment was frequently administered.

Straus reported that the effects of corporal punishment during the formative years lingered into adulthood. Adults who reported being slapped or spanked by their parents in childhood were found to experience elevated rates of anxiety disorder, alcohol abuse and feel a lack of control over their lives. In response to research findings many professional organisation have spoken out against the American Academy of child and Adolescent psychiatry and the British Medical Association. The Concern over the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment was highlighted by the American Academy of Paediatrics (1998) when they reported, “The only way

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to maintain the initial effect of spanking is to systematically increase the intensity with which it is delivered, which can quickly escalate into abuse”.

However, the single most significant action was by the United Nations with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). This document internationally recognised children as deserving rights and needed mental and physical protection. Tanzania was one of the many countries that ratified the documents the other country being Somalia. After careful deliberation many countries in Africa have banned corpora; punishment South Africa and Swaziland (Clacherty et al ... 2005).

A study by Kuleana (1999) investigated reasons why educators used corporal punishment. Not surprisingly, corporal punishment was found to be the easiest form of disciplining students. It was also considered the norm in many African countries; and as such was a method of discipline expected by educators and parents. Parents and teachers believed that good performance at school required a stick and beating. In addition, some educators felt that the use of a stick increased their status and respect in the eye of the learner. It was also viewed as a means to ensure advancement, some principals and educators who were aspiring for promotion in the education system believed they had to maintain discipline through corporal punishment.

Kuhun in Mckendrick and Hoffman (1990) added to the argument that corporal punishment was essential for maintaining discipline in schools. They found that students were not regarded as having the potential for self-discipline and so looked to the teacher for control. Additionally, educators lacked skills in guidance and counselling, very few used a positive approach to discipline, and instead they resorted to corporal punishment.

Vally and Ruth (2006) argued that many educators believed that corporal punishment was the only strategy to affectively maintain discipline in the classroom.

Methodology

The study adopted an ex-post facto design. According to Best (1999), this design involves studying events or situations long after they have occurred thus presenting no possibility of variables manipulation. This design is appropriate for the study as it involved investigation of the implications of the ban of corporal punishment on students' discipline in secondary schools.

Table 3.1: Sample Size

Category of schools	Number of Schools in each Category	Number of Schools Sampled	Number of Sample Students
Senior	11	7	50
Junior	3	2	20
Mixed	1	1	10
Total	15	10	80

Instrumentation

To collect data, two different sets of questionnaires were used. Students' questionnaire elicited data on age, sex, choice of school, perception and attitude towards issues of discipline,

corporal punishment, causes of student's unrest, and perception of the ban of corporal punishment and suggestions on how to maintain and improve discipline in schools.

Head teachers and class teachers shared the same questionnaire which sought information on personal characteristics such as age, sex, professional status, teaching experience, causes of unrests, their perception on students' discipline, punishment, attitude towards the ban of corporal punishment and suggestions on how to enhanced discipline in secondary schools.

Analysis of Results

Qualitative data was collected and presented in tables; percentage, mean and standard deviation were used for this study.

A total of 80 students, 35 boys and 45 girls participated in the study. Six males and four female head teachers and 8 males and 2 females' class teachers from the 10 public secondary schools participated in the study.

Implications of the Ban on Corporal Punishment

The first research question sought to establish the implications of the ban of corporal punishment on students' discipline in secondary schools in Iguben Local Government Area. The study established that 50% of the sampled schools experienced students' unrests after the ban of corporal punishment in schools.

Discipline Problems in Secondary School

The second research question aimed at describing discipline problems in the public secondary schools in Igubeben Local Government Area as depicted on the table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Discipline Problems Experienced in Schools. Head Teachers Perception

	X	N	%	SD
Lateness	8	10	80.00	1.87
Noise making	9	10	90.00	2.20
Absenteeism	7	10	70.00	1.53

Table 4.2 (b) Disciplinary Problems Experienced in Schools. Class Teachers Perception

	X	N	%	SD
Noise making	5	10	50.00	1.03
Absenteeism	8	10	80.00	2.03
Lateness	6	10	60.00	1.37

Table 4.1: (C) Disciplinary Problems Experienced in Schools. Students Perception

	X	N	%	SD
Lateness	65	80	81.30	7.07
Absenteeism	70	80	87.50	7.63
Noise making	40	80	62.50	4.25

The respondents cited lateness, noise making and absenteeism as the most common discipline problems experienced in schools. These findings are in agreement with Ayieko (1988) who cited common discipline problems as truancy, destruction of property, defiance to authority, late coming to school and fighting. The findings are also in line with Sagani report

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(Republic of Kenya, 1991) which reported challenges in schools as lateness, chronic absenteeism, truancy, rudeness and disrespect.

Teachers' Attitude towards the Ban of Corporal Punishment

The third research question endeavoured to established teachers' attitude towards the ban of corporal punishment. To determine the attitude of teachers a 5 point Likert scale (strongly agree – 5, agree – 4, undecided -3, disagree – 2 and strongly disagree – 1) was used. The sum of ten statements from all respondents was coded into three ordinal categories to differentiate between the level of attitude among the respondents. Table 4.2 depicts the level of attitude of the teachers towards the ban of corporal punishment.

Table 4.2: Teachers Attitude towards the Ban of Corporal Punishment

Level of Attitude	X	N	%	SD
Negative	30	10	75.00	8.67
Neutral	9	10	22.50	1.67
Positive	1	10	2.50	1.00

Majority of the teachers (75.00%) reported a negative level of attitude towards the ban of corporal punishment in secondary schools.

Students Attitude towards the Ban of Corporal Punishment

The four questions aimed at establishing students attitude towards the ban of corporal punishment.

To determine their perception a 5 point Likert scale (strongly agree – 5, agree – 4, undecided -3, disagree – 2 and strongly disagree – 1) was used. The sum of the ten statements from all the respondents was summed up.

The overall score was later coded into three ordinal categories to differentiate between the levels of perception among the respondents as depicted in table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Level of Students Perception towards the Ban of Corporal Punishment

Level of Attitude	X	N	%	SD
Positive	70	80	87.50	7.76
Neutral	8	80	10.00	0.79
Negative	2	80	2.50	0.13

Majority of the students (87.50%) reported a positive level of attitude towards the ban of corporal punishment.

Conclusion

This research study was prompted, by the rampant increase in students unrest in secondary schools after the ban of corporal punishment.

To gather data, two sets of questionnaires were developed and administered to students, head teachers and class teachers in public secondary schools in Igueben Local Government Area. The following are the major conclusions drawn from the study:

1. Student's unrest in schools were experienced before and after the ban of corporal punishment. The implications of the ban on corporal punishment are increase in indiscipline cases and poor academic performance.
2. Discipline problems cited in schools are lateness, absenteeism and noise making.
3. Majority of head teachers adopted suspension and expulsion as disciplinary mechanisms as outlined in the Education Act.
4. Most teachers had a negative attitude towards the ban of corporal punishment in schools because they believed it was the only effective method of maintaining discipline.
5. Students reported a positive level of attitude that they were happy with the ban of corporal punishment as it caused them physical and psychological harm.

Recommendations

In the light of the above findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. Education sector, stakeholders should work together to address students unrest in schools while school managements, parents and teachers should adopt open communication policy with students.
2. Teachers Service Commission should sensitize school management on effective leadership and encourage them to adopt dialogue to mitigate against students unrest.
3. School administrators in public schools should enforce implementation of alternative disciplinary measures to make them effective in dealing with the common discipline problems in schools.
4. Ministry of Education should organize sensitization programmes for teachers to enable them understand the physical and psychological implications of corporal punishment.

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