

Corporal Punishment as a Strategic Reprimand used by Teachers to curb Students' Misbehaviours in Secondary Schools: Tanzanian Case

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Abstract

Corporal punishment is the most commonly used strategy to deal with students' misbehaviours across public schools in Tanzania. This study examined status of discipline and the use of corporal punishment to address students' repugnant behaviours. The study was conducted in Dodoma municipal involving a total of 50 teachers and 99 pupils selected from five government secondary schools. Data were collected through questionnaires and analysed using SPSS. The results revealed that 86% of the teachers preferred Corporal punishment and continue using it as the only alternative punishment strategy. The study found that the majority of students were of the view that corporal punishment should be eliminated due to its harm and cause for students skipping classes and absenteeism. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and other stakeholders continue capacitating teachers on the appropriate use of harmless strategies of executing corporal punishment approved by the government.

Keywords: *Corporal Punishment, Discipline, Secondary school, Students*

Introduction

It has not been uncommon and various stakeholders have reiterated on reinstatement of corporal punishment as only effective strategy to curb pupils misbehaviours in schools. At some point, different people have wondered why schools have stopped caning. Such remarks highlight to the accustomed strategy of handling disciplinary cases of pupils in schools in Tanzania. In schools, discipline is referred to as the rule and regulations that pupils have to follow to ensure order in schools, and as such it is an important element for effective teaching and learning (Ntuli, 2012; Lukman & Hamudi, 2014). In principle, school discipline is aimed at creating a conducive and serious learning environment and developing pupils self-control and self-direction (Lukman & Hamudi, 2014). Maintaining pupils' discipline in the 21th century is said to be the most difficult and unpleasant part of the teaching career due to globalization and the influence of social media. It is

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not surprising that discipline is categorically the major challenge facing school teachers in Tanzania (Yaghambe, 2013; Semali & Vumilia, 2016; Kambuga, 2017). Traditionally, teachers in schools are not only tasked to teach but also at same time are expected to manage students' behaviours to ensure that students engage in the broad activities related to teaching and learning. Evidently, in schools due to overwhelming students' disciplinary cases, teachers spend many hours in correcting the behaviour and less in teaching. A study by Yaghambe (2013) indicates that in Tanzania, common disciplinary problems which teachers address from morning as they arrive at schools include truancy, peddling drugs, bullying, smoking, sexual affairs, abusive language, physical fights and theft.

In order to correct indiscipline cases in schools, teachers have the authority to discipline misbehaving students and hence become *loco parentis*, that is, on behalf of the parents to those who break school laws. Notwithstanding, teachers have the right to punish students for the breach of school rules. However, in some cases, teachers catch feelings and react quite emotionally to misbehaving students to the extent of using a punishment irrationally and harm a student (Nakpodia, 2010). Hence, the underscored emphasis is that the administration of punishment needs to be done with caution to the extent that it does not cause injuries to pupils. Certainly, corporal punishment has become a highly debated issue in Africa, and Tanzania in particular where majority of teachers use corporal punishment as the best way to enforce discipline behaviours. The implicit argument on the issue is presupposition on the range of alternative approaches that teachers can deploy to handle pupils' disciplinary problems. The approaches include guidance and counselling, and rewarding as it has been proven that in schools where rewards exceeded the number of punishments, the students were disciplined and vice-versa (Duke & Canady, 1991; Yahaya, Ramli, Hashim, et al, 2009).

Corporal Punishment in the School Context in Tanzania

Corporal punishment refers to a deliberate act that inflicts pain or physical discomfort, taken by teachers against students as the management approach to certain behaviours. Corporal punishment appears in many ways including hitting, kicking, shaking, slapping, pinching, pulling their hair, forcing a student to stay in uncomfortable, undignified positions and taking excessive physical exercise (Western Cape Department of Education, 2014; Invocavity, 2014). In Tanzania, corporal punishment is the punishment that is supposed to be administered by teachers in schools as it aims to cause deliberate pain or discomfort in response to undesired behaviour shown by students. It is administered by striking the pupil either across the buttocks or on the palms.

As it is in other countries, corporal punishment in Tanzanian schools is legal and lawful particularly in public schools. It has been lawfully practised since 1979, following corporal punishment regulation pursuant on article 60 of National Education Act 25 of 1978 and the amended Act number 294 of 2002 as the means to address the increase of discipline problems among school-going adolescents (Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment for Children, 2011; Hakielimu, 2011; URT, 2002b). The regulation states that corporal punishment means punishment by striking a pupil on his hand or on his buttocks normally covered with clothes that one is wearing, with a light, flexible stick but excludes striking a child with any other instrument or on any other part of the body. Furthermore, the regulation states that;

1. Corporal punishment may be administered for serious breaches of school discipline or for grave offences committed whether inside or outside the school which are deemed by the school authority to have brought or are capable of bringing the school into disrepute.
2. Corporal punishment shall be reasonable having regard to the gravity of offence, age, sex, and health of the pupils and shall not exceed four strokes on any occasion.
3. The head of the school in his discretion may administer corporal punishment or may delegate his authority in writing to a carefully selected member of his teaching staff, provided that the authorized member of staff may act only with the approval of the head of the school on each occasion when corporal punishment is administered.
4. A female student may only receive corporal punishment from a female teacher except where there is no female teacher at the school in which case the head of school may himself administer corporal punishment or authorize in writing a male teacher to administer corporal punishment.
5. In occasions on which corporal punishment is administered it shall be recorded in a book kept for the purpose and such record shall state in each instance the name of the student, the offense or breach of discipline, the number of strokes and the name of the teacher who administered the punishment. All entries in this book shall be signed by the Head of School (Hakielimu, 2011; URT, 2002b).

Despite the aforementioned stipulations, many teachers in public schools fail to adhere to these guidelines, and as a result, corporal punishment is used without prior approval of the school heads. Apart from misusing the corporal punishment, its use in our schools has had a number of damaging consequences to the students including physical, emotional and psychological, behavioural as well as developmental. In practice, corporal punishment in Tanzanian schools is administered by teachers on minor discipline problems such as late coming, classroom noise, not respecting teachers or prefects and not wearing school uniforms, which is also contrary to the government corporal punishment guideline of 2002 which requires school heads to execute punishment on offences committed by pupils.

The international Human Rights of the Child Article 28.2 of 1989 states that schools must be run in an orderly way that children are to benefit from them and state parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and conformity. However, experiences from schools in Tanzania seem to be doing precisely the opposite on what it agreed on the right of the child convention of 1989. Public officials including one of the former Deputy Ministers of Education once encouraged the use corporal punishment in public schools as a means of enhancing performance and keeping discipline among pupils (African child information Hub 2013; Daily News 9th April 2013; Odhiambo, 2017).

Evidently, there have been a number of cases on improper execution of punishment to students in schools which have instigated serious concerns among stakeholders on whether corporal punishment guidelines are understood by teachers. Studies by Odhiambo (2017) and Hakielimu (2011) revealed that corporal punishment has been a routine to many students as they are beaten for almost any mistake or behaviour which does not even require the teachers to use corporal punishment. In view of this, the current study assessed the state of corporal punishment as a

management approach of addressing students' discipline problems in secondary schools in Tanzania.

Research Objectives

1. Determine the prevalence of use of corporal punishment among teachers in secondary schools.
2. Determine the status of students' mis-behaviour in secondary schools.
3. Assess the effect of corporal punishment in mitigating students' disciplinary problems in secondary schools.
4. Investigate alternative solutions of managing students' disciplinary problems in secondary schools.

Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey design. The participants involved in this study were purposively and randomly selected from five government owned (public) secondary schools in Dodoma Municipality. A convenient purposive sampling was used to select class teachers, discipline/academic masters and head/deputy masters. The researchers were driven with this cohort because it is the one that is from time to time charged with daily school routine including administering punishment. The selection of students was done randomly in order to ensure representation across gender, grade and age. Questionnaires containing closed and open-ended questions were administered to both teachers and students in person by researchers to ensure a quick return. Data were analysed descriptively using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Chi-square tests were run to find the association between corporal punishment and the participants' characteristics such as age, teaching experiences, sex and grade or class.

Results and Discussion

Over 97% of the students completed the questionnaire. The final sample consisted of 99 students and 50 teachers. The average age of students was 15-20 (98%) years, whereby males were 41% and females were 59%. The study took a representative sample of the general students body whereby 14% were in Form two, 25% were Form three while Form four take a great portion of the sample with 61%. Teachers sample included 18% females and 82% males. There is comparatively more male than female teachers, and hence gender disparity in government employment in public secondary schools. The average age of teachers was 25-40 (94%) years and the majority of them had 5-10 (74%) years of teaching experience. The positions for teachers were 30% class teachers, 16% discipline masters, 16% academic masters, 22% second masters and 16% heads of schools.

Teachers Views on the Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools

The respondents were asked to give their views regarding the use of corporal punishment as a strategy for enforcing discipline in schools. The results in Table 1 shows that the majority of teachers seem to agree that students' in-disciplinary behaviours can only be dealt with by the use of corporal punishment and many of them seem to adore its use. The study found that the use of corporal punishment was favoured by teachers as it was believed to improve discipline of the

students since it was quickly administered when a student committed a mistake. It was found that over 80% of teachers were found using corporal punishment many times in and outside the classrooms. The findings, hence, show that corporal punishment was the most common form of punishment in secondary schools. The findings are in consistent with the study by Feinstein and Mwahombela (2010) who found that corporal punishment in Tanzanian public secondary schools was the most common form of punishment.

It was again found that majority of teachers supported its continued use, but believed in moderation. Furthermore, Cheruvalath and Tripathi (2015) who conducted a study on secondary school teachers' perceptions of corporal punishment in India found that various types of corporal punishment are still used by teachers as a mechanism for controlling disciplinary problems in schools. However, teachers still perceive corporal punishment as an effective method of controlling indiscipline in class. In the same vein, Sogoni (1997) argued that corporal punishment should be retained as it is believed to instil good discipline which produces good results.

This was also reflected by the students' responses when they were asked on how many times they had been punished using corporal punishment in the past 12 months. It was revealed that 80% of the students had been punished more than thrice. Surprisingly, the majority of teachers and students acknowledged to be unaware of national laws that restrict the use of corporal punishment in schools. Further, there was agreement between students and teachers that corporal punishment was used for major and minor student offences such as noisemaking and tardiness. Students reported disliking the practice and believed it was ineffective and resulted in emotional, as well as physical distress (Feinstein & Mwahombela, 2010). Sogoni (1997) highlights that some teachers state that corporal punishment is ineffective in deterring students from misbehaving and that corporal punishment is not a good method to maintain discipline. Adopting harsh methods in disciplining students was found to be an indicator of lack of proper training in managing students in a classroom situation and a poor understanding by the teachers of students' mental states. Sogoni (1997) contend that an awareness program for secondary school teachers about the effects of corporal punishment on children is needed. The solution is proper training for teachers and student-teachers in the use of counseling to manage behavioral problem. Also full-time counselors can be appointed in schools.

The use of corporal punishment in schools in Tanzania, therefore, can be said to be a common practice, despite the fact that teachers are aware of the consequences of using it. Surprisingly, teachers mentioned some effects of administering corporal punishment to pupils. The effects mentioned are: turnover/absenteeism, anxiety and lack of confidence. Despite the frequent use of corporal punishment, the study results reveal that the status of discipline among pupils in school was average and it was found that the students' in-disciplinary issues that occurred in schools did not affect the academic activities to a great extent.

In fact, one recent study found that in schools where corporal punishment is frequently used, students perform worse academically than those in schools that prohibit corporal punishment. Many students who have been subjected to hitting, paddling or other harsh disciplinary practices have reported subsequent problems with depression, fear and anger. The students who frequently are punished by using corporal punishments withdraw from school activities and disengage academically. The study by the Society for Adolescent Medicine (HRW/ACLU, 2010) found that

victims of corporal punishment often develop deteriorating peer relationships, difficulty with concentration, lowered school achievement, antisocial behavior, and intense dislike of authority, somatic complaints, a tendency for school avoidance and school drop-out, and other evidence of negative high-risk adolescent behaviour. According to Mpangi (2014), punishments to students were found to be unfairly administered and consequently caused dissatisfaction, anger and thus inducing acts of indiscipline such as strikes, vandalism of school property as well as violence among students.

Table 1: Relationship of Age, Sex and Experience and Teachers' Use of Corporal Punishment

Variables	B	S. E	Wald	df	Sig	Exp (B)
Age	-.010	.147	.005	1	.946	.990
Sex (1)	.152	.910	.028	1	.867	1.165
Experience	-.005	.162	.001	1	.977	.995
Constant	-1.038	3.847	.073	1	.787	.354

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Age, Sex, and Experience.

To establish whether there is a relationship between age, sex and working experience with the use of corporal punishment, a Chi square test was performed. The results from Table 2 indicate that age, sex and experience have effects on corporal punishment even though not significantly. It was observed that, as age of the teacher increased there was a slight decrease in the use of corporal punishment, that is; an increase in age results in decrease in the use of corporal punishment by 0.01. Likewise, increased working experience reduced the use of corporal punishment by a small ratio of 0.005. However, female teachers are 1.165 times more likely to use corporal punishment as compared to male teachers (O.R = 1.165). The findings are in line with (Lazarus, 2016) who found that there was no significant difference between teachers' perception on the ban of corporal punishment in schools in Kosirai Division secondary schools when categorized by gender, age, education and experience.

Students' Views on the Use of Corporal Punishment

The respondents were asked to give their views concerning the use of corporal punishment as a strategy for enforcement of discipline in schools. Results show that the majority of the students proposed that corporal punishment should not be used, rather, teachers should use the nurturing strategies such as guidance and counselling and un-hating manual works should be used instead, to enforce discipline. These views were contrary to that of teachers who commend the continuation of corporal punishment as the quickly administered and have a positive impact in managing students' repugnant behaviours. The study by Gwando (2017) found that corporal punishment was common in secondary schools aiming at controlling the students. It was further found that most students accepted that corporal punishment helped them to reach their goals academically. Again, corporal punishments was perceived as essential to safeguard innocent students against cruel ones. Furthermore, it was found that corporal punishment could control students' behaviour although there was no significant evidence that corporal punishment build confidence among students.

The results show in Table 3 that students reported the physical pain, hatred towards the teachers who punish them, skipping classes or absenteeism are some of the outcome of corporal punishment. Students were of the view that due to the negative impact of corporal punishment, the alternative punishments such as doing manual work, parent call and reprimand could be adapted by teachers. Although researchers are challenging the use of corporal punishment in schools, teachers propose that there is no alternative punishment to corporal punishment as it is quickly administered and a widely known punishment to improve students' discipline in schools and at home.

Conclusion

This paper assessed the state of corporal punishment as a means of curbing disciplinary problems in schools in Tanzania. It was found that despite the negative consequences that corporal punishment has on the students, it is commonly used in secondary schools in Tanzania. This study explicitly concludes that corporal punishment has impacts in several ways and those which are worth mentioning are: fear, physical harm, psychological impact, dropout/absenteeism and hatred towards teachers who use corporal punishment in schools. In addition to that, the study concludes that some students in the studied area quit schools because of rampant use of corporal punishment.

Furthermore, the study found that the status of discipline in secondary schools was moderate. The use of corporal punishment was seen to be effective in mitigating students' disciplinary problems. It was revealed that sex, age and working experience made no significant difference in the use of corporal punishment among the teachers. It was further revealed that counselling and punishments that do not harm students physically could be used as alternatives to corporal punishments. However, teachers felt that the use of alternative punishments was not effective and hence no alternative punishments should be administered. Briefly, the overall conclusion of the study is that although corporal punishment superficially seems to correct students' misbehaviour in schools, it has negative consequences which hinder smooth schooling among the pupils.

Recommendations

This study extends and suggests that the teachers should be persuaded to minimize using corporal punishment in curbing the students' misbehaviour and use alternative punishments instead. This can be attained by conducting training and workshops amongst the teachers; probably teachers might not have been trained on the use of alternative punishments while in teachers' colleges. Also, teachers should be made aware of the negative consequences of using corporal punishment on the students, hence a need to adhere to the existing corporal punishment regulation. Moreover, it is recommended that parents, teachers and other stakeholders guide students to fulfil their responsibilities and the decisions about their own behaviours while in schools, to avoid being punished.

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APPENDICES

Table 2: Teacher's Views on the Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
What is the status of pupils' discipline in your school?		
Very good	4	8.0
Average	43	86.0
Poor	3	6.0
Pupils' disciplinary matters affect teaching and learning activities		
To a great extent	14	28.0
To a small extent	29	58.0
It does not	7	14.0
How many times do you use corporal punishment in your school?		
Many times	40	80
Few times	10	20
When do you use corporal punishment in your school?		
In classroom	2	4.0
In the staffroom	6	12.0
Outside the classroom	21	42.0
Anywhere in the school environment	21	42.0
Mistakes that lead teachers punish pupils using corporal punishment (multiple responses)		
Being late	30	60
Absenteeism	36	72
Laziness/neglecting duties	23	46
Poor performance	43	86
Making noise	4	8
Substance use, e.g., drunkenness (the use of viroba)	4	8
The use of corporal punishment brings discipline to your pupils?		
A great extent	33	66.0
A small extent	16	32.0
Not at all	1	2.0
The impact of the use of corporal punishment to the pupils (multiple responses)		
Physical harm	25	50
Turnover/absenteeism	28	56
Hatred among teachers	23	46
Fear, anxiety and lack of confidence	30	60
Is it proper to continue using corporal punishment?		
Yes	43	86.0
No	7	14.0
Should teachers should continue using corporal punishments in school (multiple responses)		
It improves pupils' discipline	30	60
It improves pupils' academic performances	15	30
It is a quickly administered punishment	17	34
What are the other alternative punishments apart from corporal punishment?		
No alternative punishment	9	18
Peer groups	1	2
Rewarding good performers	2	4

Table 3: Pupils Views on the Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
The status of students' discipline in your school		
Very good	13	13.1
Average	76	76.8
Poor	10	10.1
Have you ever been punished by using corporal punishments		
Yes	98	99
No	1	1
How many time have you been corporally punished in the past year		
Once	6	6.1
Twice	5	5.1
Thrice	8	8.1
More than thrice	80	80.1
Mistakes that lead the pupils 'being punished by using corporal punishment (multiple responses)		
Lateness	95	96
Laziness/ neglecting duties	73	73.7
Absenteeism	37	37.7
Poor academic performance	19	19.2
Making noise	40	40.2
Fighting	4	4
Theft	1	1
Does the use of corporal punishment affect pupils?		
Yes	79	79.8
No	20	20.2
The impact of using corporal punishment to pupils		
Fear	55	55.6
Physical harm	36	36.4
Psychological impact	15	15.2
Dropout/absenteeism	33	33.3
Hatred towards teachers	19	19.2
What should be the alternative punishment apart from corporal punishment		
Alternative punishments (manual work, e.g., mopping teacher's office or classroom, watering school garden, slashing school lawn, etc.)	81	81.8
Guidance and counselling	14	14.1
Warning	19	19.2
Do the disciplinary cases affect teaching and learning activities in your school		
To a great extent	14	28.0
To a little extent	29	58.0
Not at all	7	14.0
Should teachers continue using corporal punishment in schools?		
No	82	82.8
Yes	17	17.2