

Assessing the Effects of Corporal Punishment on Primary School Pupils' Academic Performance and Discipline in Unguja, Zanzibar

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Abstract:

This study examined the effects of corporal punishment (CP) in Zanzibar primary schools. It identified, discussed and analyzed data on various effects of CP on disciplining and academic performance of primary school pupils obtained from 125 study participants. Using a comparative case study design, the study focused on four primary schools- two randomly selected and two purposely selected pilot schools under alternative means to discipline in Southern Region of Unguja. Data were collected using questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection, coupled with interviews, documentary review and observation. Data were analyzed using t- test (2- tailed) to compare the two pilot schools under alternative means to discipline and the other two schools that were not under the project. Overall results indicated that CP was poorly managed in schools not under alternative means to discipline project and that there is community including teachers and parents awareness on alternative means to discipline pupils. The study also recommended teacher training on alternative techniques to discipline pupils in primary schools in Zanzibar and Tanzania in general.

Keywords: corporal punishment, discipline, academic performance, 'cane free school'

Introduction

Corporal punishment (CP) in schools is widely used as an accepted disciplining tool in the social and cultural milieu of Zanzibar. Parents and teachers in schools have normalized CP, physical and verbal abuse of children in the community. Save the Children's (2007) baseline survey, revealed that corporal punishment is one of the main forms of child abuse experienced and reported by children in Zanzibar even though it has not been included as a penalty under the criminal code. CP is permitted under the Education Act, 1982 and the national education regulations, 1988, Section 60 (1). The legal administration of CP to government school students who violate school rules, commit indiscipline act, disobey or damage property within school premises is provided in Section 60 (1) of the national education regulations (MoEVT, 2010).

Jarida la Elimu Zanzibar (1997) credits the introduction of the 1994 alternative ways of disciplining pupils project to the adoption of the slogan, “*skuli bila bakora*” by Chaani primary school teachers under the guidance of school committee. To put the slogan into practice, a number of discussions and debates were organized on the necessity to promote positive forms of discipline in Zanzibar schools even as the community of Zanzibar to a larger extent still attributes the decline of performance, discipline and morals of their children to school teachers’ laziness in using CP (Hassan, 2012). Many parents feel that teachers have a responsibility to control children and need to cane them in order to discipline them. Some teachers feel that they need CP to mould disciplined children who can perform well academically (Naker & Sekitoleko, 2009).

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT) (2005) in its findings on Teacher Education, Condition, and Motivation in Zanzibar, observed that indiscipline (in schools) include showing anti-social behaviour, cheating, late coming, telling lies, inappropriate forms of dressing and reporting false information to the head teacher. Recently, MoEVT in Zanzibar introduced the unit for promoting the use of alternative forms of disciplining that would reduce the use of CP in schools and the community in general. The project had been operational from 2010 – 2012 in 10 pilot schools. This study sought answers to three research questions which aimed at assessing the effects of CP on pupils’ academic performance and discipline in Zanzibar: First, is there any relationship between CP and poor academic performance among primary school pupils? Secondly, do pupils really experience negative effects on their discipline and academic performance from CP? Lastly, what perceptions do stakeholders hold on alternative forms of discipline and their relationship with pupils’ discipline and academic performance?

Methodology

A comparative case study design compared the effects of CP between schools that engage in CP use and those that engage in alternative to discipline project. A combination of data collection techniques such as questionnaire, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, open-ended interviews, and participant observation were used to collect data. The total of 125 participants was selected among education officers, parents, head teachers, ordinary primary school teachers, and pupils.

Data were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source data were generated through questionnaires, interviews, and observations, while the secondary source data were obtained from official documents. The observation was done by visiting four sampled primary schools with the aim of observing pupils’ behavior and activities such as classroom attendance, late coming, truancy, fighting amongst them, etc. Specifically, information about pupils’ behaviour at school and written description of day to day activities of different stakeholders were obtained. Policy and administrative documents, newspapers, and annual reports were reviewed to obtain information on disciplinary processes, records and academic achievement of primary school pupils.

Data collecting instruments were validated and tested for reliability. Official permission for data collection was sought from the office of the Second Vice President of the Revolution Government of Zanzibar (SMZ). The invitation letters were then sent to participants to request for their participation. Parents of the pupils who participated were contacted for their children's consent and participants' names were kept anonymous.

Findings and Discussion

The major findings were presented and discussed according to the research objectives and issues based on data generated from schools with CP and those with alternative forms of disciplining pupils.

Application of Corporal Punishment in Primary Schools

The results indicated that corporal punishment was indeed a common practice, particularly in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project. Eighty percent of the teachers reported using CP in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project, while only 8.3% of teachers in schools under the alternative means to discipline project applied CP to punish their pupils. Similarly, the results varied from two school categories as 100% of pupils in schools not under the alternative punishment project reported that they were punished through CP, while 57.6% of pupils in schools under the alternative to CP discipline project were also punished using CP. These data from pupils confirm the commonality of CP as a dominant form of discipline among teachers regardless of whether the school is or is not under the alternative means to discipline project.

All head teachers also corroborated the above findings. Generally, they reported that CP was used even though there is a call to minimize its use in schools. They admitted using CP in their schools after all alternative means of solving problems have failed. Only education officers were optimistic, claiming that generally, CP use in schools has decreased in Zanzibar; and that, nowadays, more priority is given to alternative discipline techniques even though the government did not ban CP in schools.

Peoples' Perception on the Importance of CP in Relation to Pupils' Discipline

The overall data revealed that teachers use CP more frequently to reform pupils' misbehavior rather than helping them to study well. Table 1 shows that 58.3 % of teachers in schools under alternative means to discipline project (TSUAMDP), and 93% of teachers in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project (TSNUAMDP) agreed that CP was important in maintaining pupils' discipline in primary schools. This means, CP use in primary schools is widely accepted in the education, and socially supported and even encouraged by teachers, parents and pupils. These findings are consistent with the existing literature (Muneja, 2013; Feinstein & Mwahombela, 2010) that, African cultures in the continent and the diaspora support the use of CP despite the global changes in favor of its eradication.

Table 1: Necessity of CP to Maintain Students' Discipline at School (n=27)

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
TSUAMDP	0	0.0	7	58.3	3	25	2	16.7	12	100.0
TSNUAMDP	3	20	11	73	1	6.7	0	0.0	15	100.0
TATAL	3	11.1	18	66.7	4	14.8	2	7.4	27	100.0

Source: Field data, 2011

Ideally, teachers' expressed a generally negative perception towards the use of CP to discipline pupils in primary schools as teachers from both school categories claim to be against it. Table 2 shows that, 50% of teachers in schools under the alternative means to discipline project and 86.6% of teachers whose schools were not under the alternative means to discipline project disagreed that, a good teacher was the one who discipline students without the use of CP.

Table 2: A Good Teacher Does not Use CP to Discipline Pupils (n=27)

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
TSUAMDP	2	16.7	4	33.3	5	41.7	1	8.3	12	100.0
TSNUAMDP	1	6.7	1	6.7	11	73.3	2	13.3	15	100.0
TOTAL	3	11.1	5	18.5	16	59.3	3	11.1	27	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

However, teachers from both school categories feel that pupils respect teachers who use CP as a form of discipline than those teachers who do not use CP— $t(67) = -1.904$, $p = .061$ or $p > 0.05$. Table 3 shows that, 41.3% of the teachers in schools under the alternative discipline and 93.3% of teachers in schools not under alternative means to discipline agreed that CP, teaches pupils to respect teachers. Pupils also admit that CP teaches learners to respect teachers. Table 3 also shows that, 69.7% of pupils in schools under the alternative discipline project (PSUAMDP) and 80% of pupils in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project (PSNUAMDP) agreed that, CP forces them to respect (which also means to fear) their teachers. Interestingly, when pupils' responses from these two school categories were compared using independent sample t-test, the difference was statistically significant— $t(25) = -3.381$, $p = .002$ or $p < 0.05$, indicating that pupils in schools under the alternative means to discipline project have less respect for teachers who use CP than those in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project.

Table 3: Responses on CP Teaches Learners to Respect

	Teachers (n=27)											
	Strongly agree		agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No answer		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
TSUAMDP	1	8.3	4	33.3	6	50.0	1	8.3			12	100.0
TSNUAMDP	6	40.0	8	53.3	1	6.7	0.0	0.0			15	100.0
TOTAL	7	25.9	12	44.4	7	25.9	1	3.7			27	100.0
	Students' answers (n=73)											
PSUAMDP	15	45.5	8	24.2	2	6.1	8	24.2			33	100.0
PSNUAMDP	20	50.0	12	30.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	4	10.0	40	100.0
TOTAL	35	47.9	20	27.4	4	5.5	10	13	4	5.5	73	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

Data were also analysed for effects of CP use on teacher-learners interaction, learner-learner relationship, and on learners' self-esteem. The results showed statistically significant difference between schools under the alternative means to discipline project and schools not under the alternative to discipline project for positive effect on learner behaviour- $t(68) = -4.005, p = .000$ or $p < 0.05$, and negative effects on learner vulnerability to victimization- $t(23) = 2.500, p = .020$ or $p < 0.05$. Table 4 shows that, 42.4% of pupils in schools under the alternative means to discipline (PSUAMDP) and 85% of pupils in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project (PSNUAMDP) agreed that CP corrected their children's behaviour. However, Table 5 shows that, 58.3% of teachers in TSUAMDP and 6.7% of teachers in TSNUAMDP also agreed that CP makes learners vulnerable to forms of abuses. On the other hand, Table 6 concurs with the findings expressed in Table 4 above when 80% of teachers from TSNUAMDP and 66.7% of teachers from TSUAMDP reported disagreement with the statement that, CP increases aggression among learners— $t(25) = 1.925, p = 0.66$. or $p > 0.05$.

Table 4: CP Corrects Children's Behaviour in the Classroom

	Strongly agree		agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No answer		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	PSUAMDP	10	30.3	4	12.1	6	18.2	12	36.4	1	3.0	33
PSNUAMDP	21	52.5	13	32.5	2	5.0	2	5.0	2	5.0	40	100.0
TOTAL	31	42.5	17	23.3	8	11.0	14	19.2	3	4.1	73	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

Table 5: CP Prepares Learners to Become Victims of Abuse

	Strongly agree		agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No answer		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	TSUAMDP	1	8.3	6	50.0	4	33.3	1	8.3	0	0.0	12
TSNUAMDP	1	6.7	0	0.0	7	46.7	5	33.3	2	13.2	15	100.0
TOTAL	2	7.4	6	22.2	11	40.7	6	22.2	2	7.4	27	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

Table 6: Teacher's Responses on CP Increases Aggression in Learners (n=27)

	Strongly agree		agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No answer		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
	TSUAMDP	2	16.7	2	16.7	6	50.0	2	16.7	0	0.0	12
TSNUAMDP	0	0.0	2	13.3	7	46.7	5	33.3	1	6.7	15	100.0
TOTAL	2	7.4	4	14.8	13	48.1	7	25	1	3.7	27	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

Effects of CP on Academic Performance of Primary School Pupils

Four year performance of different categories of pupils were obtained from the national STD VII examination results for entrance into Form I and special schools for talented pupils (Table 7). Candidates' grades/scores in different years were compared between pilot schools under alternative means to discipline project (C and D) and schools not under alternative means to discipline project (A and B). The results showed that pupils in schools under the alternative means to discipline project had higher scores (better results) for all four years than those pupils from schools not under the alternative means to discipline project. During two years of application of alternative means to discipline project, the results (scores) of schools under the alternative means to discipline project continued to be better compared to those of pupils in schools using CP as discipline instrument.

Table 7: 2008 – 2011 STD V11 National Examination Results

S N	SCHOOL'S NAME	TOTAL CANDIDATES			PASSED CANDIDATE			PASS %
		Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	
		Results			2008			
1	A	63	79	142	58	53	111	78.2
2	C	12	16	28	12	15	27	96.4
3	B	17	27	44	13	12	25	56.8
4	D	16	9	25	16	9	25	100.0
		Results			2009			
1	A	42	56	98	36	45	85	82.7
2	C	14	16	30	11	14	25	83.3
3	B	17	22	39	17	13	30	76.9
4	D	9	15	24	8	11	19	79.2
		Results			2010			
1	A	75	58	133	71	39	110	82.7
2	C	10	11	21	9	10	19	90.5
3	B	11	24	35	10	11	21	60.0
4	D	12	14	26	11	13	24	92.3
		Results			2011			
1	A	58	56	114	49	43	92	80.7
2	C	15	14	29	14	12	26	89.7
3	B	14	18	32	14	9	23	71.9
4	D	13	18	31	12	16	28	90.3

Source: Field 2011

Key: A and B = Schools using CP (PSNUAMDP)
C and D = School not using CP (PSUAMDP)

Peoples' Perception on the Relationship between CP and Academic Achievement

Eighty six point seven percent of teachers in primary schools not using CP and 66.6% of teachers in primary schools using CP agreed that there was a relationship between CP and academic performance in primary school pupils (Table 8). However, the difference between responses of the two categories of teachers was not statistically significant— $t(24) = -1.527$, $p = .140$ or $p > 0.05$.

Table 8: Relationship between CP and Academic Performance (n=27)

	Strongly agree		agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No answer		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
TSUAMDP	1	8.3	7	58.3	2	16.7	2	16.7	0	0.0	12	100.0
TSNUAMDP	3	20.0	10	66.7	0	0.0	1	6.7	1	6.7	15	100.0
TOTAL	4	14.8	17	63.0	2	7.4	3	11.1	1	3.7	27	100.0

Source: Field 2011

Teachers and pupils from both groups of schools were asked to assess the belief that pupils disciplined by CP tend to do well academically than those disciplined without CP. Table 9 shows that 8.3% of teachers under alternative discipline project and 80% of teachers in schools not under the project agreed that, CP helped their children to perform well. Similarly, 39.4% of pupils in schools under the alternative means to discipline project and 70% of pupils in schools not under alternative means to discipline project agreed that, CP helped pupils to perform better. The difference between responses of the two categories of teachers and pupils was statistically significant- $t(25) = -3.244$, $p = .003$ or $p < 0.05$ and $t(70) = -2.894$, $p = .005$ or $p < 0.05$, respectively. Indeed, most teachers in schools under alternative means to discipline project disapproved that, CP helped pupils to get good results in primary schools- $t(25) = -2.933$, $p = .007$. or $p < 0.05$ (Table 10). These findings cast doubts if CP really had positive effects on academic performance of pupils in schools.

Table 9: Responses on the Belief that CP Disciplined Pupils Perform Well in School
Teachers' Responses (n=27)

	Strongly agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No answer		Total			
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
TSUAMDP			1	8.3	8	66.0	3	25.0			12	100.0
TSNUAMDP			12	80.0	1	6.7	2	13.3			15	100.0
TOTAL			13	48.1	9	33.3	5	18.5			27	100.0
Students' answers (n=73)												
PSUAMDP	5	15.2	8	24.2	5	15.2	15	45.5	0	0.0	33	100.0
PSNUAMDP	14	35.0	14	35.0	3	7.5	8	20.0	1	2.5	40	100.0
TOTAL	19	26.0	22	30.1	8	11.0	23	31.5	1	1.4	73	100.0

Source: Fied data 2011**Table 10: CP Use in Schools Assists in Getting Good Results (n=27)**

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
TSUAMDP	0	0.0	3	25.0	6	50.0	3	25.0	12	100.0
TSNUAMDP	1	6.7	11	73.3	2	13.3	1	6.7	15	100.0
TOTAL	1	3.7	14	51.9	8	29.6	4	14.8	27	100.0

Source: Field data 2011**Effects of CP on Education in General**

CP is notably practiced more in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project than those under the alternative means to discipline project. The findings have shown that, there is a great difference in the opinions between teachers and students for the two school categories. Table 11 shows that 66.7% of teachers from schools under the alternative means to discipline project and 13.3% of teachers from schools not under the alternative means to discipline project disagreed that CP has positive affects on educational programs. Further, four head teachers who were interviewed added that CP had very little contribution to the learning environment. With an alpha level of 0.05, the difference was statistically significant between two categories of teachers on the statement that CP generally has positive effect on education program- $t(25) = -2.520$, $p = .019$ or $p < .05$, casting doubts on positive contributions of CP use toward learners' academic success.

Table 11: General Positive CP Effects on Education (n=27)

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
TSUAMDP	1	8.3	3	25.0	6	50.0	2	16.7	12	100.0
TSNUAMDP	0	0.0	13	86.7	2	13.3	0	0.0	15	100.0
TOTAL	1	3.7	16	63.0	8	29.6	2	7.4	27	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

Regarding the data analysed on the question, ‘Does CP really have negative effects on academic performance of pupils?’ Table 12 shows that 50% of teachers in schools under the alternative discipline project and 80% of teachers in schools that were not under the alternative discipline project disagreed that CP had negative effects on academic performance of pupils. With an alpha level of 0.05, the difference was statistically significant for two categories of teachers on the statement that, CP had negative effects on academic performance of pupils- $t(24) = - 2.060, p = .050$ or $p \leq 0.05$. These findings are consistent with Baumrind (1996) who states that although there is a strong correlation between corporal punishment and psychological consequences, it is difficult to determine the exact causal relationship and the effects that may result.

Table 12: General Negative CP Effects on Academic Performance (n=27)

	Strongly agree		agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		No answer		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
TSUAMDP	1	8.3	5	41.7	5	41.7	1	8.3	0	0.0	12	100.0
TSNUAMDP	0	0.0	2	13.3	9	60.0	3	20.0	1	6.7	15	100.0
TOTAL	1	3.7	5	25.9	14	51.9	4	14.8	1	3.7	27	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

Alternative Discipline Strategies and Pupils’ Discipline and Academic Achievement

Teachers’ knowledge on how to administer alternative means of discipline

Table 13 shows that 91.7% of teachers in schools under the alternative means to discipline project and 100% teachers in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project supported the need for in-service training on methods of classroom discipline. Most of them admitted lacking knowledge of positive discipline methods, of the fact that CP violates children’s rights, and of how children learn; thus believed that corporal punishment was necessary and effective in managing school discipline. These findings are consistent with Muneja (2013) who pointed out that, the majority of students and teachers were unaware of the national laws restricting corporal punishment in schools.

Table 13: The Need for In-service Training on Alternative Classroom Discipline.

	TSUAMDP		TSNUAMDP		TOTAL	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
YES	11	91.7	15	100.0	26	96.3
NO	1	8.3	0	0.0	1	3.7
TOTAL	12	12	15	100.0	27	100.0

Source: Field data 2011

Stakeholders' Perceptions on Substituting CP with Alternative Means to Discipline

Although alternative means to discipline seemed important in disciplinary measures and students' achievement, many teachers doubted if it would be wise to ban CP completely. They justified their hesistance to complete banning of CP use in disciplining primary school pupils, arguing that CP should remain a major discipline instrument to fall back when other alternatives means fail. They pointed out that stopping CP legally would amount to abandoning our African cultures and succumbing to western influence that de-imphasize children's deference to elders. Pupils somehow supported this view as Table 14 shows, 54.5% of pupils in schools under the alternative discipline project and 35% of pupils in schools not under the alternative means to discipline project disagreed on complete banning of CP. All the same, the difference between responses of both teachers and pupils from the two school categories was not statistically significant— $t(25) = 1.814, p = .082$ or $p > 0.05$ and $t(69) = 1.962, p = .054$ or $p > 0.05$ respectively.

Table 14: Responses on the Ban on CP as a Discipline Tool in Schools

Teachers' answers (n=27)							
	S1		S2		TOTAL		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	
YES	4	33.3	1	6.7	5	18.5	
NO	8	66.6	14	93.3	22	81.5	
TOTAL	12	100.0	15	100.0	27	100.0	
Pupils' answers (n=73)							
YES	18	54.5	14	35.0	32	43.8	
NO	13	39.4	26	65.0	39	53.4	
MISSING	2	6.1	0	0.0	2	2.7	
TOTAL	33	100.0	15	100.0	73	100.0	

Source: Field data 2011

Conclusion and Recommendations

Generally, the study findings did not support the assumption that CP has effects on pupils' academic performance and discipline in primary schools. Perhaps because in both school categories, teachers were using a combination of CP and alternative to CP albeit differing perceptions on their

effectiveness in enhancing pupils' academic performance and discipline. On the whole, teachers expressed that, the use of CP had decreased in Zanzibar schools even as they acknowledged that, its application was still higher in schools not under the alternative discipline project than in those under the alternative means to discipline project.

The findings revealed that teachers' training provided in universities or teacher training colleges did not meet the teachers' classroom management skills needs. Perhaps the teaching of alternative discipline techniques needs to be re-examined in order to provide teachers with adequate support. Even so, teachers were able to use a variety of alternatives to control pupils' misbehaviour although they felt that they were not always suitable.

The study findings also revealed that, the society was not yet ready for legal abolition of CP. It supported using both CP and alternative means to discipline, which was indicative of CP not seen by many stakeholders or teachers as the only effective means to discipline. The government should strive to create more awareness among parents and communities in general about alternative means to discipline children in both schools and homes so as to minimize negative effects on children's self-esteem this study indicated. Open dialogue between the government, private sectors, civil society and local communities should be encouraged to ensure more awareness on alternative means to discipline than maintaining the preference for CP as the major disciplinary instrument in primary schools.

On the whole, it suffices to say that, the study findings have shown an indication of respondents' feelings on the effects of CP and alternatives adopted on pupils' academic performance and discipline. Given the small size and unbalanced samples from the two schools categories, these findings were inconclusive and cannot be generalized to the whole of Zanzibar. Further research on the effects of CP on pupils' academic performance and discipline should be carried out with a large sample.

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