



Impact of Corporal Punishment on Students' Discipline in Tanzania: The Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Bukombe District

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Abstract: This paper investigated the impact of corporal punishment administration on Students' discipline in secondary schools in Tanzania in particular Bukombe district in Geita region. The rationale for undertaking this study is based on the fact that students' discipline is pivotal to students' success in academic and their daily lives. In this regard, this study examined Teacher and learner responses with regard to corporal punishment and its effect on students' discipline. This study used a case study of Bukombe district with sampling units of six Ward secondary schools which included Runzewe, Msonga, Ushirombo, Katome, Igulwa and Busonzo ward secondary schools and Interview and documentary review were used as data collection methods. The sample size was 70 respondents selected using purposive sampling technique while data were analyzed using content analysis. It was revealed that corporal punishment was rewarded to students with poor academic performance and to students with disrespect to teachers and fellow students. It is concluded that corporal punishment is vital in secondary schools because it inculcated students' discipline. This study recommends that teachers and students should be made aware through seminars and training on the proper use and enforcement of corporal punishment in secondary schools in Tanzania as per National Education (Corporal Punishment) Regulations 1979 pursuant to article 60 of the National Education Act 1978.

Keywords: *Corporal punishment, secondary school, student, discipline*

1.0 Introduction

In many cases of human life, discipline is required for individual success or institutional performance (Lema and Gwando, 2018). Discipline is understood as training which corrects, molds, or perfects mental faculties or moral characters, obedience to authority, rules and use of punishment to correct socially unacceptable behavior (ibid). On the other hand, in secondary schools, discipline is defined as school policies and actions taken by personnel to prevent unwanted behaviors in particular focusing on school codes of conduct and security methods, suspension from schools, corporal punishment and teachers' methods of managing students' actions in class (ibid). The main goal of students' discipline is to ensure they are safety of staff and students and have an environment conducive for learning. Thus, school discipline is a mechanism for teachers, students and school officials to ensure smooth running of a school and maintain order in the classroom for effective teaching and learning.



The reinstatement of corporal punishment is one of the effective strategies to curb students' misbehaviors and is supported by the government leaders in secondary schools in Tanzania (Yusuph *et al.*, 2018; Rohner, *et al.* 1991). At some point, different people have wondered why schools have stopped caning (*ibid*). Such remarks highlight to the accustomed strategy of handling disciplinary cases of students in secondary schools in Tanzania. In schools, discipline is referred to as the rule and regulations that students have to follow to ensure order in schools, and as such it is an important element for effective teaching and learning (Lukman and Hamudi, 2014). School discipline is aimed at creating a conducive and serious learning environment and developing students' self-control and self-direction (Lukman and Hamudi, 2014). Maintaining students' discipline in the 21st century is said to be the most difficult and unpleasant part of the teaching career due to globalization and the influence of social media (Yusuph *et al.*, 2018). Corporal punishment is also administered in Middle East countries such as South East Asia and in some states in United States of America (Wong, 2011).

In Tanzania, 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 (Odhiambo, 2017). 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 (Yusuph *et al.*, 2018). 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 practiced 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 (Yusuph *et al.*, 2018). 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 (*ibid*). Corporal punishment is lawful as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions. In mainland Tanzania, the Law of the Child Act prohibits "torture, or other cruel, inhuman punishment or degrading treatment" (article 13) but does not explicitly prohibit corporal punishment.

Despite the establishment and enforcement of these regulations, there has been tremendous increase of the unbecoming behaviors of the students in secondary schools in Tanzania. This is noted in southern Tanzania, students put on fire their dormitories after their mobile phones were confiscated in August 2020 (Mananchi newspaper, 4 September, 2019). In this case, Mbeya Regional Commissioner provided corporal punishment to 14 students and 392 students were suspended. The president cemented on the same by congratulating Mbeya Regional Commissioner for punishing these students and the late fifth phase President ordered all form five and forms six students to be suspended from schools (*ibid*).



In this regard, School discipline and punishment have been a bone of contention in the education profession for a long time now, yet it would seem there is no end to this issue. There are two contentious debates with regard to Corporal punishment. The first debate is in support of corporal punishment founded on religious, social and cultural values which suggest that it is essential to punish children physically, because it helps to bring about the values of society, good conduct and discipline in them (Yusuph *et al.*, 2018). Abolition of corporal punishment is tantamount to loosening the teachers' grip on the learners. The inference here is that, if used judiciously, this type punishment could be an effective way of preventing and curbing misconducts in secondary schools. The second debate is opposing the use of corporal punishment. It is stated on the other hand, that corporal punishment does not result in long-term behavioral change; it rather teaches the child to avoid the punishable behaviour when the person who does the caning is at hand (Cicognani, 2016). With this in mind, this paper purports to shed light on examining the corporal punishment administration in secondary schools and Teacher and students responses with regard to corporal punishment and its effect on students' discipline. This study examines whether the circumstances under which corporal punishment is provided comply with legal milieu guiding corporal punishment in secondary schools. The rationale for this study is that Corporal punishment administration in Tanzania has so far attracted few studies. The scant literature on corporal punishment administration in secondary schools needs to be enriched by other studies to stimulate new scholarly work.

2.0 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This sub-section focuses on literature review to establish research gap and theory that was used to guide this study. In Tanzania, Corporal punishment is lawful in schools, for boys and girls, under the National Education (Corporal Punishment) Regulations 1979 pursuant to article 60 of the National Education Act 1978, which authorizes the minister to make regulations "to provide for and control the administration of corporal punishment in schools". Corporal punishment according to these Regulations and this study means "punishment by striking a pupil on his hand or on his normally clothed buttocks with a light, flexible stick but excludes striking a child with any other instrument or on any other part of the body".

The Law of the Child Act 2009 does not prohibit corporal punishment in schools nor repeal the provisions for it in the Education Act and Regulations. On the contrary, in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2013, the Government confirmed that the provision in the Law of the Child Act 2009 for "justifiable correction" (art. 13) justifies the use of caning in schools. In 2019, the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the President's Office on Regional Administration and Local Government issued a directive banning the use of corporal punishment in classrooms from pre-primary to third grade. However, this policy was not confirmed by the Ministry of Education and does not apply to all children in all schools.

Commenting on corporal punishment in schools in 1994, the Law Reform Commission of Tanzania defended its use and legality, stating that "the punishment under the Education Act No. 25 of 1978 was intended to match that which a parent would administer and more importantly to



nip the evil in the bud” (URT,1978). In rejecting the recommendations to prohibit corporal punishment made in 2011, the Government asserted that “corporal punishment does not apply in the education system” but that caning is administered in schools and is “a legitimate and acceptable form of punishment [not intended to] be violent, abusive or degrading”. The Government reportedly confirmed that corporal punishment would continue to be used in public schools. A survey involving 254 teachers and 194 students from government or private secondary schools in the Iringa Region of Tanzania found that corporal punishment is the most common form of punishment in secondary schools (Human Rights Watch Report, 2017). The majority of students and teachers were unaware of national laws to restrict corporal punishment; the majorities of teachers support its continued use, but believe in moderation; students and teachers said corporal punishment is used for major and minor student offences such as misbehaviour and tardiness. This study has explicated the significance of corporal punishment but it did not further state the effects of corporal punishment on students’ discipline.

Furthermore, Research done in Swaziland examined the impact of corporal punishment on the students. Eighty-one percent (81%) of participants between the ages of 6 and 18 years old reported feeling humiliated and shamed (Western Cape Education Department, 2014). The majority of students were opposed to the use of corporal punishment in the schools (Yusuph *et al.* 2018). Also, a study by Cicognani, (2016) 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.

Another view was noted by Graziano (1992), a frequent punishment has more to do with a teacher’s frustration level than with the child’s misbehavior. Many cases of child abuse result from an escalation of what starts off as low level hitting or spanking. Most child welfare organizations have policies opposing the use of corporal punishment. Many educationists are against corporal punishment because of the affront to the child’s dignity. Graziano (1992) stated, “If we are legally prohibited from striking other adults, why is it okay to strike a child?” In the long run, spanking does not work; it carries with it many negative effects. The long-term use of corporal punishment tends to increase the probability of deviant and antisocial behaviors, such as aggression; adolescent delinquency and violent acts inside and outside the schools

One explanation is that after living with violence that is considered ‘legitimate’, people expand this to accept violence that is not considered legitimate. For example, violent acts that are considered legitimate include maintaining order in schools by punishing children, deterring criminals and defending one’s country against foreign enemies. The “Cultural Spillover” theory presented by Yusuph *et al.* (2018) proposes that the more a society uses force for socially legitimate ends, the greater the tendency for those who are involved in illegitimate behaviors to use force to attain their own ends. Corporal punishment has been associated with a variety of psychological and behavioral disorders in children and adults, including anxiety, depression,



withdrawal, low self-esteem, impulsiveness, delinquency and substance abuse (Kambuga, 2017). In Pakistan, steps have been initiated to discourage the teacher against the use of corporal punishment. The Punjab education department announced that incidents of corporal punishment in schools would not be tolerated and stern action would be taken against teachers who indulge in it under the Punjab Removal from Service Ordinance 2000 (ibid).

A 2017 Human Rights Watch report indicates routine, widespread and sometimes brutal use of corporal punishment in Tanzanian schools. Almost all adolescents and students interviewed were subjected to corporal punishment at some point of their school experience. Senior school officials or teachers reported caning students and not following government regulations one senior official reported. Female and male teachers reportedly hit students irrespective of their gender or disability. Students reported being hit on the buttocks in front of the class, while female students reported being hit on the buttocks and breasts, and reported further humiliation during menstruation (Kambuga, 2017; Human Rights Watch Report, 2017). This report has indicated the gravity of the use of corporal punishment in secondary schools in Tanzania but it is silent on the extent to which corporal punishment promotes discipline to students in secondary schools in Tanzania.

2.1 Theories of Corporal Punishment and Contribution of this study to the existing body knowledge

There are three theories which describes punishment in regard to learning; the reformation, the retribution and deterrence theories (Nichols and Newman, 1986; Odhiambo, 2017). The reformation theory views punishment as the only possible way to reform or recreate an individual. It assumes that, punishment have corrective effects to learning (Tarimo, 2006, Yusuph *et al.*, 2018; Wong, 2011). Likewise, the theory assumes that, there will be a suppression of a bad behavior following the administration of punishment, as punished person will not pretend to repeat misbehaving.

On the contrary, retribution theory is based on the law of retaliation that is vengeance (ibid). It is a desire to see other persons suffer or being punished for their wrong action. The retribution theory insists that, severe punishment may cause negative relationships between a student and the teacher as the student could try to find different ways to retaliate. The deterrence theory of punishment is based on the assumption that, if other people see or hear severe punishment given to offenders, they will refrain from doing that offence in future. It also assumes that, punishing a student violently in front of others will be the lesson to other students (Kiprop, and Chepkilot, 2011). This study used reformation theory which considered corporal punishment as a corrective effects to leaning and deterrence theory which view corporal punishment as a lesson to others and others will refrain from doing that offence in future due to corporal punishment.



Therefore, this study makes a profound contribution to the empirical literature on corporal punishment administration in secondary school in Tanzania as it reveals circumstances such as complying to Corporal punishment laws and its enforcement to students if are properly implemented. Additionally, the study findings also contribute to theoretical debates on reformation theory which considered corporal punishment as a corrective effect to leaning and deterrence theory which view corporal punishment as a lesson to others who will refrain from doing that offence.

3.0 Methodology

This sub-section presents case study design, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and of methods data analysis.

3.1 Case study design

The study was conducted in Tanzania Mainland using the case study of Bukombe District particularly Runzewe and Msonga, Ushirombo, Katome, Igulwa and Busonzo ward secondary schools because a great deal can be learned from a few examples of the phenomenon through the case study. The selection of the case study was based on the performance outcome which includes case studies with both positive and negative outcomes of corporal punishment to facilitate comparison. This study was conducted in Bukombe district. In this study, sampling units in Bukombe District were six ward secondary schools which included Runzewe and Msonga, Ushirombo, Katome, Igulwa and Busonzo ward secondary schools. These secondary schools were to represent government owned schools

In this study, the target population comprised of all students and teachers in secondary schools. The choice was based on the fact that each category of respondent had different experience with regard to corporal punishment administration in Secondary schools in Tanzania.

3.2 Sampling procedures

The sampling frame of this study was that Tanzania is divided into 30 regions: 25 on Tanzania Mainland and five in Zanzibar. The councils operating in 99 districts are referred to as LGAs and in Tanzania Mainland, where this study was conducted, there were 168 councils composed of 23 municipal councils, 6 City councils (Tanga, Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Mwanza, Mbeya and Dodoma), 11 town councils and 129 district councils (URT, 2012). The sample size of this study was 70 respondents selected through purposive sampling. The reason for using purposive sampling was based on the fact that it facilitated getting respondents who had information with regard to corporal punishment administration and students' discipline in secondary schools in Tanzania.



Table 1: Sample size and its Composition (N=70)

S/No	Category of respondents	Total Number of Respondents
1	Secondary School Teachers	16
2	District Education officers	4
3	Head Teachers	20
4	Students	30
5	Total No. of respondents	70

The sampling of the areas for the study was done using purposive sampling to select Bukombe district based on the administration of corporal punishment in six Ward secondary schools which included Runzewe, Msonga, Ushirombo, Katome, Igulwa and Busonzo ward secondary schools in Bukombe District, Geita Region.

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

An in-depth interview was employed to collect data from 70 respondents who were picked purposively selected departments in order to obtain detailed information for the study. An in-depth interview was adapted to all 70 respondents for the purpose of collecting adequate information from them as they are responsible for ensuring that corporal punishment is effectively used in their respective secondary schools. Open ended interviews were used to collect reliable data about the study. Open ended interview enabled participants to give their opinions on corporal punishment administration in secondary schools in Tanzania. From these respondents, the researcher got information on the corporal punishment and its implication on student's discipline. The researcher administered interviews through telephone and some respondents were visited for prior notice. All interviews were conducted in confidential so as to avoid victimization of respondents.

The documentary review involves scrutinizing potential documents such as books, records and reports from government. The documents reviewed included but not from 2000 to 2021. The study employed the documentary review in data because the data collected concerning administration of corporal punishment could not be obtained through telephone interview such as the specific incidences of corporal punishment which were expressed in numbers and percentages.

3.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected from the documents and interviews were analysed using thematic data analysis techniques. This is a method used for analysing data which were qualitative in nature, specifically data obtained about corporal punishment administration in secondary schools. Thematic data analysis consisted of reading and categorising the data and transcribing them in a way that allowed identification of similarities and differences in order to develop themes and sub-themes relating to the research objective. In particular, such data on the trend of corporal



punishment to the students was analysed by using frequencies and percentages which provided a summary of the findings, making it easier to understand and provided coherence for discussion.

4.0 Presentation of the findings

This study presents the findings on administration of corporal punishment in secondary schools, in particular circumstances of Corporal punishment in secondary schools. Also, this study presents teachers and students' responses with regard to corporal punishment and its effect on students' discipline in secondary schools.

4.1 Circumstances of Administration of Corporal Punishment in Secondary Schools

This question was asked to Teachers, Students and Education to explore circumstances for corporal punishment administered in secondary schools in Tanzania. Based on responses from respondents, corporal punishment was administered as per Corporal Punishment Act of 1978 and the Ministry of Education and Training guidelines on how to go about in administration of corporal punishment in secondary schools in Tanzania. This study investigated the circumstances which led to corporal punishment in secondary schools in some of the secondary schools in Bukombe district in Geita Region. The findings are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Responses on circumstances of corporal punishment in secondary schools (N=70)

S/No	Category of respondents	Poor academic performance	Percentage	Disrespect to teachers and students fighting with others	Percentages
1	Secondary School Teachers N=16	16	100	00	00
2	District Education officers N=04	04	100	00	00
3	Head Teachers N =20	15	75	5	25
4	Students N=30	25	83.3	5	16.7
5	Total No. of responses N=70	60	85.7	10	14.3

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that 85.7% of all respondents stated that corporal punishment was rewarded to students with poor academic performance, while 14.3% respondents said that corporal punishment was applied to students with disrespect to teachers and students fighting with others students.

Specifically, 16 (100%) Ordinary teachers stated that corporal punishment was administered to students due to poor academic performance. This view was further shared by 25 (85.7%) of students who stated the same. On the other hand, 15 (75%) head teachers noted that corporal punishment was provided to students with poor academic performance.



The findings give the impression that the use of corporal punishment was based on the need to maintain students' discipline in secondary schools for academic performance. One of the female head teachers with 47 years old said this during an interview:

“ in case students commit a major offence in school compound so long as it tarnishes school image such as fighting, use of abusive language, coming late to school, corporal punishment is applied to them”(Interview, April, 2021).

Students had different opinions; some students 83.3% as presented in Table 2 said that corporal punishment should be administered in schools to facilitate change in behaviours of students to acceptable behaviours. On other hand, other students 5(16.7%) and 5 (25%) head teachers said that corporal punishment should be applied in secondary schools because of students disrespect to teachers and students fighting with others.

4.2 Corporal punishment and its effect on students' discipline in secondary schools

This question examined whether corporal punishment instituted in secondary schools reduced students' misconducts. The responses were obtained from Teachers, students, education officers. The findings in table 3 indicate that the majority 20 (67%) of the students, 10 (60%) teachers, and 15(75%) head teachers stated that misconducts were reduced by corporal punishment because they were ready to comply with school regulations such as writing class tests on a regular basis, while 10 (33%) students, 5(25%) head teachers, 6 (40%) ordinary teachers stated that misconducts of students were not reduced by corporal punishment because Students had less respect to secondary school teachers and regulations. In general a large percentage of respondents 70% (head teachers, ordinary teachers and students) asserted that misconducts were reduced by corporal punishment. For example, students did not stole more property since physical punishment was not outlawed and only 30% believed that misconducts were not reduced by corporal punishment. The findings in Bukombe district were further supported by the incidences of Secondary school students' indiscipline occurred in other regions in Tanzania such as Mbeya region. For instance, in some of the secondary schools such as Mbeya Secondary school, students put on fire on the dormitories after the school management has confiscated their mobile phones (Mananchi newspaper, 4 September, 2019). The findings are summarized in Table 3.0 for further details.

Table 3 indicates that the majority of respondents' i.e 70% accepted that students' misconducts were reduced by Corporal Punishment. For example students fought among themselves due to the laxity n implementing corporal punishment. A large number of respondents maintained that learners do not obey the prefects once they realized that there was no punishment associated with their misconducts.



Table 3: Corporal punishment has reduced students' misconducts in secondary schools (N=70)

S/No	Category of respondents	Misconducts were reduced by Corporal Punishment	Percentage	Misconducts were not reduced by Corporal Punishment	Percentage
1	Secondary School Teachers N=16	10	60	06	40
2	District Education officers N=04	04	100	00	00
3	Head Teachers N =20	15	75	5	25
4	Students N=30	20	67	10	33
5	Total No. of responses	49	70	21	30

These findings were corroborated by the study conducted in South Africa by Western Cape Education Department (2014) which noted that a large number of participants 63% believed that students do drugs more often since the abolition of Corporal punishment, while 48% thought that students commit sexual offences regularly. A large portion of the respondents 71% suggested that female learners fall pregnant more regularly since the abolition of corporal punishment. Based on the findings of the study, it is evident that corporal punishment played a significant role in reducing of learner misdemeanors such as drinking, smoking, cheating and truancy at schools.

4.3 Discussion of the findings

The key study findings indicated that corporal punishment was administered to students with poor academic performance in secondary schools and those students who disrespected teachers and their fellow students. The findings were corroborated with reformation theory which considered corporal punishment as a corrective effects to leaning and deterrence theory which view corporal punishment as a lesson to others and others students will refrain from doing that offence in future due to corporal punishment.

The respondents who gave opinion concerning corporal punishment said that it was applied to facilitate change in behaviors to students. Opponents of corporal punishment said that it created fear and tensions to students which resulted to hatred and school dropout to the students.

This paper indicate that students' misconducts were reduced by corporal punishment. The findings of this study confirm to reformation theory which considered corporal punishment as a corrective effects to leaning and deterrence theory which view corporal punishment as a lesson to others and others will refrain from doing that offence in future due to enforcement of corporal punishment.



Furthermore, it was observed that students fought among themselves due to the laxity of teachers in implementing corporal punishment. These findings corroborate with Odhiambo (2017), who noted that,

“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 students”.

Also the major findings indicate that a large number of respondents maintained that students did not obey the prefects once they realized that there was no punishment associated with their misconducts. These findings were corroborated by the study conducted in South Africa by Western Cape Education Department (2014) which noted that a large number of participants 63% believed that students do drugs more often since the abolition of Corporal punishment, while 48% thought that students commit sexual offences regularly. The findings of this study indicate that students’ discipline can hardly be maintained without corporal punishment to students. The findings are contrary with the study conducted by Semali and Vumilia, (2016) who noted that some parents did not support corporal punishment enforcement students in secondary schools instead they supported “soft” procedures of handling students’ indiscipline cases in secondary schools in Tanzania such as giving them many homework assignments and cleaning toilets.

Basing on the findings of the study, the central purpose of applying corporal punishment in secondary schools was to maintain students’ discipline. The supporters of corporal punishment said that it was applied to facilitate change in behavior of students in secondary schools. For example, in some of the secondary schools such as Katome, Runzewe and Msonga secondary schools, students were fearful in doing mistakes because of the corporal punishments such as canning instituted against them. The findings corroborate with 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. Therefore, teachers and students still perceive corporal punishment as an effective method of controlling indiscipline in schools which in long run promoted academic performance.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study findings discussed above, it is concluded that the administration of corporal punishment is important and secondary school teachers should continue using it due to disciplinary motives such as change in behavior and compliance on rules and regulations in secondary schools. Not only that but also the use of corporal punishment raised the academic performance of the students and only applicable to lazy students in academics. In this regards, Corporal punishment is regarded as important for inculcating discipline to secondary schools students. This study further concludes that the mistakes which could lead to corporal



punishments were such as poor academic performance and students fighting with their fellow students and disrespect of students to teachers. In general, it is concluded that the findings support the theoretical assumptions used in this study which noted that the reformation theory which considered corporal punishment as a corrective effect to leaning and deterrence theory which view corporal punishment as a lesson to other students who will refrain from doing misconducts.

Therefore, it is recommended that more effort needs to be made to educate teachers and education officers on proper administration of corporal punishment as per National Education (Corporal Punishment) Regulations 1979 pursuant to article 60 of the National Education Act 1978 as well as the alternative soft corrective measures that are available to them such as giving students more assignments.

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