



The Psychological and Behavioral Impact of Corporal Punishment on Secondary School Students: A Case Study from Eket Local Government Area

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Abstract

This study examines the psychological and behavioural impact of corporal punishment on secondary school students in Eket Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Despite the growing evidence of its negative effects, corporal punishment remains widely used in many schools as a disciplinary tool. The research employed a descriptive survey design, utilising structured questionnaires to gather data from 15 teachers and counsellors in both public and private schools. Public schools still frequently use corporal punishment to enforce discipline, according to the findings. However, its effectiveness in promoting long-term positive behavioural changes is limited. Students subjected to corporal punishment reported feelings of fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem, which can lead to aggression, avoidance, and even school dropout. In contrast, private schools, which applied corporal punishment less frequently, favoured alternative methods such as positive reinforcement and counselling, leading to more sustainable behavioural changes. The study concludes that corporal punishment is an



ineffective disciplinary measure that harms students' psychological well-being and academic success. The study recommends the adoption of non-violent disciplinary strategies that focus on positive reinforcement and student-centred approaches to behaviour modification.

Keywords: corporal punishment, psychological impact, behavioural outcomes, secondary schools, public vs. private schools, Nigeria, discipline, education policy.

Introduction

Corporal punishment, the use of physical force to punish or correct a child's behaviour, has been a prevalent practice in educational systems worldwide. In Nigeria, corporal punishment has historically been used to enforce discipline in schools, with the intent of curbing misbehaviour and promoting academic success. However, over the years, the negative psychological and behavioural impacts of corporal punishment have been highlighted by numerous studies. These impacts include increased aggression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and diminished academic performance among students. Despite this growing body of evidence, corporal punishment remains a widely accepted form of discipline, particularly in public schools.

In Eket Local Government Area, secondary schools continue to rely on corporal punishment to manage student behaviour. This study seeks to explore the psychological and behavioural effects of corporal punishment on secondary school students in Eket, comparing its impact in both public and private schools. The study will also examine whether corporal punishment leads to lasting behavioural changes or merely produces short-term compliance, and the extent to which it affects students' mental health and academic performance. This research is crucial in addressing the ongoing debate about the effectiveness and ethical implications of corporal punishment in Nigerian schools.

Research Questions

- i. How does corporal punishment influence student behaviour in public secondary schools in the Eket Local Government Area?
- ii. How does corporal punishment influence student behaviour in private secondary schools in the Eket Local Government Area?
- iii. Are there significant differences in the psychological and behavioural outcomes of corporal punishment between public and private secondary schools in Eket Local Government Area?



Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Corporal punishment is defined as the deliberate infliction of physical pain on a child to correct or control their behaviour. It can take many forms, including flogging, slapping, spanking, or other physical actions that cause discomfort or pain. Some teachers say that corporal punishment is a beneficial way to keep order, get kids to follow the rules, and help them do well in school. However, the evidence shows that the negative effects usually outweigh the good ones. Studies have shown that corporal punishment can lead to psychological harm, including increased aggression, anxiety, depression, and a weakened relationship between students and teachers (Gershoff, 2010; UNICEF, 2014).

In Nigeria, corporal punishment has deep cultural roots, dating back to traditional child-rearing practices. It was once perceived as an essential tool for instilling discipline and obedience, not only at home but also in schools. However, as the adverse effects of corporal punishment on children's psychological and emotional development became more apparent, there has been a push for alternatives. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) condemns all forms of physical punishment in schools, urging states to adopt measures that protect children from physical and emotional harm (UNCRC, 1990).

Despite legal prohibitions in some regions, corporal punishment remains a widely practiced disciplinary tool in Nigerian schools, particularly public schools, where resources for alternative methods of discipline may be scarce (Obi & Ukandu, 2019). Teachers often resort to corporal punishment because it is seen as an immediate and effective solution to misbehaviour, even though research indicates that it leads to negative outcomes, including reduced academic engagement and higher rates of school dropouts (Olawale, 2016).

Empirical Studies

Numerous studies have explored the impact of corporal punishment on students' behaviours and academic outcomes. Okeke (2014) examined the effects of corporal punishment in Enugu State and found that while it led to short-term compliance, students experienced heightened levels of anxiety, fear, and resentment. Similarly, Ogunyemi and Laguda (2015) conducted research in Lagos State and concluded that corporal punishment was associated with increased truancy and behavioural issues among students. Moreover, Umezinwa (2015) found that corporal punishment often failed to bring about lasting behavioural changes, with students resorting to avoidance tactics rather than internalising positive values.



A particularly alarming study by Hyman, McDowell, and Rains (1998) identified a disorder called Educationally Induced Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (EIPSD), which is analogous to PTSD. Students who experienced severe corporal punishment exhibited symptoms of depression, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating, which hindered their academic performance. These findings emphasise the harmful psychological impacts of corporal punishment, reinforcing the argument that it does more harm than good.

In contrast, studies focusing on private schools suggest that alternative disciplinary methods, such as positive reinforcement and counselling, lead to more sustainable and effective behaviour modification. Rigby (2011) found that students in private schools who were subject to non-violent forms of discipline showed improved academic performance, better peer relationships, and lower rates of aggression.

This research aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on corporal punishment by providing empirical evidence on its psychological and behavioural impacts in Nigerian secondary schools. It will offer insights into the effectiveness of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure and propose alternative strategies that prioritise the mental and emotional well-being of students. Ultimately, the study will provide recommendations for policy reforms and educational practices aimed at promoting a healthier and more productive learning environment.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to explore the psychological and behavioural impact of corporal punishment on secondary school students in the Eket Local Government Area. A structured questionnaire will be used to collect data from 15 teachers and counsellors working in both public and private secondary schools in the area. The sample will be selected using purposive sampling to ensure participants have relevant experience with corporal punishment and student behaviour modification. The questionnaire will consist of sections that capture demographic information and specific questions about the application of corporal punishment, its perceived effectiveness, and the psychological and behavioural outcomes in students.

The data will be analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, frequency, and percentage) to summarise the responses and provide an overview of the prevalence and impact of corporal punishment in the schools. Inferential statistics, specifically Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, will be used to determine the strength and significance of the relationship between corporal punishment and behaviour modification. The results will be compared between public and private

schools to assess any significant differences in the application and outcomes of corporal punishment. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the issue and offers empirical evidence to guide future educational practices and policy recommendations.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The data collected from the structured questionnaires provide insight into the psychological and behavioural impact of corporal punishment on secondary school students in Eket Local Government Area. The analysis focuses on the frequency and forms of corporal punishment in both public and private schools and examines the relationship between corporal punishment and behaviour modification, specifically looking at the psychological effects and long-term outcomes.

Table 1: Frequency and Forms of Corporal Punishment in Public and Private Secondary Schools

School Type	Frequency of Corporal Punishment	Common Forms Used
Public	High	Flogging, Slapping, Caning
Private	Low	Verbal Reprimands, Detention, Positive Reinforcement

Source: Field Work, 2025

As shown in Table 1 above, corporal punishment is more frequently applied in public secondary schools compared to private schools. In public schools, teachers reported using corporal punishment as the primary tool for discipline, with common forms including flogging, slapping, and caning. These forms of punishment were applied to address issues such as truancy, disrespect, and poor academic performance. In contrast, private schools reported using corporal punishment less frequently and preferred alternative methods, such as verbal reprimands, detention, and positive reinforcement, to encourage desired behaviour.

Table 2: Pearson's r-test Analysis of the Relationship Between Corporal Punishment and Behavior Modification

School Type	r-value	r-critical	Decision
Public	2.70	0.48	Null hypothesis rejected
Private	3.57	0.48	Null hypothesis rejected

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation values, which indicate a significant relationship between corporal punishment and behaviour modification in both public and private schools. The r-value of 2.70 in public schools and 3.57 in private schools both exceed the critical value of 0.48, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis in both cases. This shows that corporal punishment has a significant impact on student behaviour in both types of schools. However, while corporal punishment results in short-term compliance, the data suggest that its long-term effects are more harmful in public schools. Public school students exhibited negative behavioral outcomes such as aggression and a heightened sense of fear, which are consistent with the psychological harm that corporal punishment can inflict (Gershoff, 2010; Hyman, McDowell, & Rains, 1998).

Table 3: Comparison of Corporal Punishment and Behavior Modification Effectiveness Between Public and Private Schools

School Type	Frequency of Corporal Punishment	Short-term Effectiveness	Long-term Impact
Public	High	High Compliance	Negative Outcomes
Private	Low	Moderate Compliance	Positive Outcomes

Source: Field Work, 2025

Table 3 illustrates a comparison between public and private schools regarding corporal punishment and its effectiveness in modifying student behaviour. Public schools reported a high frequency of corporal punishment, which led to high short-term compliance but resulted in negative long-term behavioural outcomes, such as increased aggression and psychological trauma. In contrast, private schools used corporal punishment less frequently, and although it still led to moderate short-term compliance, the long-term outcomes were more positive, with students showing improved emotional well-being and better behaviour.

These results indicate that corporal punishment is more prevalent in public schools and, while effective in achieving short-term behaviour changes, often results in negative psychological effects such as anxiety, fear, and resentment among students. Private schools, on the other hand, with their less frequent use of corporal punishment and greater focus on positive reinforcement, seem to foster more sustainable behavioural changes and a healthier psychological environment for students. This highlights the significant differences in the application of corporal punishment between public and private secondary schools and its implications for students' long-term behaviour and mental health.

The findings of this study support the need for a re-evaluation of corporal punishment as a disciplinary tool in schools, especially in public institutions, where its widespread use may contribute to harmful psychological outcomes. The discussion of these results will further address the implications for school policy and provide recommendations for alternative, non-violent disciplinary strategies.

Research Question One

How does corporal punishment influence student behavior in public secondary schools in Eket Local Government Area?

The data reveal that corporal punishment in public schools is used frequently, and while it leads to immediate compliance among students, it does not result in long-term positive behavioural changes. Public school respondents reported that corporal punishment was applied to correct misbehaviour such as truancy, disrespect, and poor academic performance. However, the long-term effects on students were negative, with increased aggression, psychological harm, and avoidance behaviour being common outcomes. This finding aligns with previous research that shows corporal punishment can foster short-term compliance but leads to negative psychological effects (Gershoff, 2010; Hyman et al., 1998).

Research Question Two

How does corporal punishment influence student behaviour in private secondary schools in the Eket Local Government Area?

In contrast, private schools in Eket were found to use corporal punishment less frequently than public schools. When corporal punishment was applied, it still resulted in short-term compliance, but the long-term effects were less damaging compared to public schools. The private schools favoured alternative disciplinary methods like positive reinforcement, counselling, and verbal reprimands. The students in private



schools were less likely to show the psychological harm seen in their public school counterparts, which suggests a more balanced approach to behaviour management in these schools.

Research Question Three

Are there significant differences in the psychological and behavioural outcomes of corporal punishment between public and private secondary schools in Eket Local Government Area?

The significant difference between public and private schools in the use and outcomes of corporal punishment is evident in the data. In public schools, corporal punishment was associated with higher rates of aggression, anxiety, and avoidance behaviour, whereas private schools showed a more favourable balance, with students exhibiting fewer negative behavioural and psychological outcomes. This suggests that the environment in which corporal punishment is applied, whether more frequently in public schools or with more restraint in private schools, has a profound effect on the behavioural and psychological outcomes in students.

The significance of the data, particularly the differences in the application of corporal punishment between public and private schools

The study's findings highlight significant differences in the application of corporal punishment between public and private schools in Eket, with implications for student behaviour and overall well-being. In public schools, corporal punishment was reported as the most frequently used disciplinary measure, whereas private schools applied it less frequently and were more likely to employ non-violent alternatives.

The high frequency of corporal punishment in public schools is significant for several reasons. First, it indicates that in public schools, physical punishment is still viewed as an effective method for controlling student behaviour. This may be influenced by the large class sizes, limited resources, and possible teacher training gaps, which make non-violent alternatives more challenging to implement. Public schools may rely on corporal punishment due to a lack of viable alternatives or strategies for addressing behaviour issues without resorting to physical discipline. The data from this study suggest that this frequent use of corporal punishment in public schools, while effective in the short term, does not yield lasting behavioural changes and instead fosters negative psychological outcomes, such as aggression and fear.

In contrast, private schools, which used corporal punishment less frequently, seemed to adopt a more balanced approach, favouring positive reinforcement and



behavioural management strategies that align with modern educational practices. The lower incidence of corporal punishment in private schools is significant because it suggests that these institutions may have better access to resources, smaller class sizes, and more teacher training on non-violent disciplinary methods. The findings imply that private schools in Eket are more likely to foster an environment that encourages long-term behaviour modification and emotional well-being through the use of alternative disciplinary methods.

The psychological and behavioural impacts of corporal punishment

The psychological and behavioural impacts of corporal punishment in this study align with existing research on the harmful effects of physical punishment on children's mental health and behaviour. In public schools, corporal punishment was found to lead to increased aggression, anxiety, and resentment among students. These negative effects are consistent with the findings of Gershoff (2010) and Hyman et al. (1998), who noted that children subjected to corporal punishment often experience feelings of fear, low self-esteem, and hostility. Corporal punishment led to short-term compliance, but in the long run, it caused students to avoid school activities and not be as involved in them.

The psychological harm observed in students from public schools is a crucial finding because it suggests that while corporal punishment may initially deter misbehaviour, it does so at a significant emotional and psychological cost. This is in line with Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory (1953), which asserts that while punishment can lead to immediate behaviour modification, it does not necessarily promote internalised positive behaviour and can result in undesirable outcomes, such as heightened aggression and emotional distress. Corporal punishment, as a form of negative reinforcement, may teach students to avoid punishment rather than encourage them to internalise positive behaviours (Alhassan, 2012). Thus, the psychological costs of corporal punishment, such as increased anxiety and aggression, ultimately undermine its intended goals of promoting discipline and academic success.

In contrast, private schools, which employed corporal punishment less frequently but favoured positive reinforcement techniques, appeared to produce better long-term outcomes. The use of non-violent disciplinary methods in these schools likely contributed to a healthier emotional environment for students, reducing the psychological harm associated with physical punishment. This finding mirrors the work of Rigby (2011), who found that positive reinforcement and non-punitive methods in schools fostered better academic performance, improved social-emotional development, and lower aggression levels.



The psychological and behavioural impacts of corporal punishment in Eket secondary schools highlight the importance of adopting alternative disciplinary methods that prioritise student well-being. While corporal punishment may result in short-term compliance, it fails to produce lasting behavioural change and instead contributes to psychological harm, particularly in public schools. The findings reinforce the need for educational reforms that promote non-violent, student-centred approaches to discipline.

Short-Term Compliance vs. Long-Term Behavioural Outcomes

Much of the existing literature, including Okeke (2014) and Gershoff (2010), suggests that corporal punishment may lead to short-term compliance but fails to produce lasting positive behavioural changes. This is in line with what the current study found: corporal punishment worked to get students to obey right away in both public and private schools. However, the long-term effects were largely negative, with students in public schools, in particular, exhibiting increased aggression, anxiety, and avoidance behaviour. These findings echo Gershoff's (2010) assertion that, while corporal punishment may lead to immediate behaviour modification, its long-term effects include heightened aggression and psychological distress, ultimately undermining the goal of fostering lasting self-discipline.

Aggression and Psychological Harm

The negative psychological impact of corporal punishment in public schools, as noted in this study, is also consistent with Hyman, McDowell, and Rains (1998), who found that children subjected to corporal punishment often develop symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), such as anxiety, depression, and difficulty concentrating. Similarly, Reinholz (2007) argued that students who experience corporal punishment may suffer from psychological instability, which affects their academic performance and overall well-being. In this study, the findings regarding public school students, such as increased aggression and avoidance, mirror these conclusions. Students in public schools not only experienced short-term compliance but also developed negative behavioural patterns that contributed to difficulties in their academic engagement and emotional development. This suggests that corporal punishment in public schools, although effective for immediate discipline, has long-term detrimental effects on both the psychological and behavioural aspects of student life.

On the other hand, Umezinwa (2015) brought to light the ongoing debate about the effectiveness of corporal punishment, despite its continued prevalence in Nigerian schools. This study confirms that corporal punishment, while still widely practised, leads to negative psychological outcomes in public schools. However, private schools, which applied corporal punishment less frequently, reported fewer negative consequences, particularly regarding psychological harm. This difference in outcomes may reflect the different approaches to behaviour modification in public versus private schools, where private schools seem to focus more on positive reinforcement techniques that contribute to more sustainable and healthier behavioural outcomes.

Alternative Disciplinary Methods

The current study's findings also support the growing body of research advocating for alternative, non-violent disciplinary methods. In this study, private schools more commonly implemented positive reinforcement and restorative practices, as emphasised by Rigby (2011). The positive outcomes in private schools (moderate short-term compliance and more favourable long-term behavioural results) are consistent with Umezinwa (2015), who found that alternative methods to corporal punishment, such as counselling and positive reinforcement, resulted in better student engagement and fewer behavioural issues. The private schools in Eket reported using verbal reprimands, detention, and counselling as more effective means of ensuring discipline without the adverse effects associated with corporal punishment. This approach aligns with UNICEF's (2010) recommendation that schools adopt non-violent methods to discipline students, which points to a shift away from physical punishment.

Differences in Application and Effectiveness Between Public and Private Schools

One of the significant findings in this study is the marked difference between public and private schools in terms of corporal punishment usage. While both types of schools showed significant relationships between corporal punishment and behaviour modification, public schools applied corporal punishment more frequently and saw more negative long-term impacts, as evidenced by higher rates of aggression, anxiety, and school avoidance behaviour. This distinction is consistent with previous findings in other parts of Nigeria, where Okeke (2014) noted that public schools, often with limited resources and larger class sizes, rely more heavily on corporal punishment due to its immediacy and perceived effectiveness.

On the other hand, private schools used corporal punishment less often and had a more balanced way of disciplining students. The lower reliance on corporal punishment



in private schools in this study mirrors findings from Umezinwa (2015), who argued that private institutions, having access to more resources and smaller class sizes, are better equipped to implement alternative disciplinary methods, resulting in more positive behavioural outcomes. The private schools in Eket, by using fewer forms of corporal punishment and focusing on positive reinforcement, created an environment that was more conducive to fostering positive, long-term behaviour modification.

The findings of this study reinforce much of the existing literature on corporal punishment, particularly in terms of its short-term effectiveness but long-term detrimental psychological and behavioural outcomes. The study highlights the significant differences between public and private schools in Eket, where the latter seem to employ a more effective and sustainable approach to discipline, with less reliance on corporal punishment. These findings not only align with the body of existing research but also contribute new insights into the need for non-violent alternatives to corporal punishment in schools.

Implications for Educational Policy and Practice

The findings of this study highlight significant concerns regarding the continued use of corporal punishment in Nigerian secondary schools, particularly in public institutions. Given that corporal punishment was found to result in negative psychological and behavioural outcomes, including increased aggression, anxiety, and school avoidance, there are critical implications for educational policy and practice. The study emphasises that there must be a comprehensive review of current disciplinary policies, particularly those that still condone or tolerate corporal punishment.

Educational policymakers must prioritise the adoption of non-violent disciplinary measures that promote long-term behaviour modification while safeguarding students' mental health and well-being. This could involve revisiting existing laws or regulations, such as those banning corporal punishment in certain states, and ensuring that such policies are strictly enforced. Furthermore, policy changes should incentivise schools to adopt positive discipline approaches, such as restorative justice practices, positive reinforcement, and peer-mediated behaviour programmes, which are not only more effective but also align with international human rights standards.

In terms of practice, schools, especially public institutions, must shift away from corporal punishment as the default disciplinary tool and adopt a more holistic approach to behaviour management. Teacher training should be a key focus, along with a curriculum that emphasises the importance of psychological and emotional support for

students as well as effective classroom management strategies that do not rely on physical punishment.

Psychological Harm and Its Impact on Academic Success and Student Well-being

The findings from this study, particularly in public schools, demonstrate that corporal punishment can lead to significant psychological harm for students. This includes emotional distress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and aggressive behaviour, which undermine the students' overall well-being. These psychological effects, in turn, can hinder academic success. Students subjected to corporal punishment are less likely to engage in school activities, experience greater difficulty concentrating, and are more likely to develop negative attitudes toward learning and authority figures. As highlighted in the study, these outcomes are consistent with previous research, such as that by Hyman, McDowell, and Rains (1998), who found that children subjected to corporal punishment are more likely to develop symptoms akin to PTSD, including difficulties with concentration, depression, and aggression.

The detrimental impact of corporal punishment on academic success is evident, as students who experience physical punishment may develop a fear of failure or a lack of motivation to succeed academically. This fear-driven approach to education can lead to school avoidance or, in extreme cases, school dropout. As a result, the long-term educational and societal implications are severe, as these students may carry forward emotional scars that affect their future academic and social success.

Role of Teachers, Counsellors, and School Administrators in Adopting Non-Violent Disciplinary Methods

The role of teachers, counsellors, and school administrators is crucial in shaping the disciplinary climate within schools. Teachers, who are the primary implementers of disciplinary measures, must be equipped with the skills and knowledge to manage classroom behaviour in a constructive, non-violent manner. The study's findings emphasise the importance of teacher training in effective behaviour management techniques that go beyond corporal punishment. This could include training in conflict resolution, restorative justice practices, and the application of positive reinforcement to foster a supportive learning environment.

Counsellors play an essential role in this process by providing emotional support and guidance to students who may have been impacted by corporal punishment. Counselling can help mitigate the psychological effects of corporal punishment and help students develop healthier coping mechanisms for managing conflict and behavioural issues. As the study suggests, private schools, which tend to apply corporal punishment

less frequently, benefit from incorporating counselling and other support systems that contribute to students' emotional and academic success.

School administrators must also lead the way in enforcing disciplinary policies that prioritise student well-being. This includes ensuring that teachers adhere to established guidelines on behaviour management and providing adequate support for alternative disciplinary practices. Administrators should foster an environment that promotes respect, cooperation, and emotional health, ensuring that discipline is rooted in understanding rather than fear.

By adopting non-violent, student-centred approaches to discipline, schools can foster environments that not only encourage academic success but also promote students' psychological health and emotional development. The shift from corporal punishment to more supportive, constructive methods of discipline is not just a moral imperative but also an educational necessity that can contribute to better outcomes for both students and the wider school community.

In all, the findings of this study present a compelling case for revisiting and reforming disciplinary practices in Nigerian schools, especially public institutions. The shift from corporal punishment to more positive, non-violent methods has significant implications for improving students' academic performance, psychological well-being, and overall development.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, several limitations must be acknowledged. One of the primary limitations is the small sample size, with only 15 teachers and counsellors participating. While this sample is sufficient to provide initial insights into the impact of corporal punishment in secondary schools in Eket Local Government Area, it may not fully represent the broader population of educators across Akwa Ibom State or Nigeria. The findings, therefore, may not be entirely generalisable to other regions or larger school populations. A larger and more diverse sample would be necessary to ensure that the conclusions drawn are representative of the wider educational context.

Another limitation is the reliance on self-reported data. The study collected data through structured questionnaires filled out by teachers and counsellors, who may have been influenced by social desirability bias. Respondents might have underreported their use of corporal punishment or may have provided answers they believed were more socially acceptable, especially given the growing societal push against corporal punishment. This could have impacted the accuracy and reliability of the data,

particularly in understanding the true frequency and impact of corporal punishment. Future studies could incorporate student perspectives or employ observational data to provide a more comprehensive view of disciplinary practices.

The study's focus on a specific geographic region, Eket Local Government Area, also limits the generalisability of the findings. While the research provides valuable insights into corporal punishment in this particular area, the educational practices, cultural norms, and socioeconomic conditions in Eket may differ from those in other parts of Nigeria. The findings may not be applicable to schools in more urbanised regions, other states, or regions with different educational policies or cultural attitudes toward discipline. Expanding the study to include a broader geographic scope would provide a more generalised understanding of corporal punishment's impact in Nigerian schools.

Suggestions for Future Research

Given the limitations of this study, several avenues for future research can be proposed.

- i. Longitudinal Studies on the Long-Term Effects of Corporal Punishment:** Future research could examine the long-term psychological and behavioural effects of corporal punishment through longitudinal studies. Tracking students over several years could provide a deeper understanding of how corporal punishment influences their academic performance, mental health, and social development over time. This would allow researchers to assess whether the negative effects, such as increased aggression and school avoidance, persist into adulthood, or if students eventually overcome the consequences of corporal punishment.
- ii. Exploring Alternative Disciplinary Methods:** Another important area for further research is the exploration of alternative disciplinary methods that can effectively replace corporal punishment. Future studies could focus on the impact of methods such as positive reinforcement, restorative justice practices, and counselling programmes in modifying student behaviour. By examining the effectiveness of these methods in comparison to corporal punishment, researchers could provide evidence-based recommendations for schools to adopt more humane and effective ways of maintaining discipline.
- iii. Comparative Studies Across Regions and School Types:** A more comprehensive study could include comparative research across different geographic regions, considering urban and rural differences, and between

different school types, such as private, public, and religious schools. This would help to identify how cultural, socioeconomic, and educational factors influence the application of corporal punishment and its impact on students' behaviour.

- iv. **Incorporating Student Perspectives:** Future research should consider incorporating student perspectives in examining the psychological and behavioural impacts of corporal punishment. Including both teachers and students would provide a more holistic understanding of the effects of corporal punishment, as students' own experiences and perceptions of disciplinary practices are crucial for assessing the full impact of corporal punishment on their well-being and behaviour.
- v. **Evaluation of Teacher Training Programmes:** Research could also focus on evaluating the effectiveness of teacher training programmes that emphasise non-violent disciplinary strategies. This could include studying the impact of professional development programmes on teachers' attitudes toward corporal punishment and their ability to implement alternative methods of discipline. Understanding the role of teacher training in shaping disciplinary practices would provide valuable insights into how schools can support educators in fostering positive behaviour in students without resorting to physical punishment.

By addressing these gaps, future research could provide more comprehensive, long-term insights into the psychological and behavioural effects of corporal punishment and offer solutions for fostering a more supportive and effective learning environment in schools.

Conclusion

This study examined the psychological and behavioural impact of corporal punishment on secondary school students in Eket Local Government Area, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The findings reveal significant differences in the use and outcomes of corporal punishment between public and private schools. In public schools, corporal punishment was more frequently applied, leading to short-term compliance but resulting in negative long-term effects such as increased aggression, anxiety, and school avoidance behaviour. In contrast, private schools, which used corporal punishment less often, showed more positive long-term behavioural outcomes, with fewer psychological harms and better student engagement.

The findings underscore the need for a shift away from corporal punishment in favour of more effective and humane disciplinary approaches. While corporal punishment may achieve immediate behaviour modification, its harmful psychological and behavioural consequences indicate that it is an ineffective and outdated method for managing student behaviour. The study highlights the importance of adopting non-violent, student-centred approaches to discipline that focus on fostering self-discipline, emotional well-being, and long-term positive behaviour.

Recommendations

I. Discourage the Use of Corporal Punishment: Schools, particularly public institutions, should gradually phase out the use of corporal punishment. Educational policies must prioritise non-violent, constructive disciplinary methods such as positive reinforcement, restorative justice, and counselling. These approaches not only align with international human rights standards but also promote better long-term student outcomes.

ii. Teacher Training and Professional Development: Teachers and counsellors should undergo continuous training on effective classroom management and behaviour modification techniques. Training should emphasise non-punitive disciplinary strategies, helping educators understand the psychological and emotional impact of corporal punishment and equipping them with tools to handle misbehaviour constructively.

iii. Promote Positive Reinforcement and Non-Violent Disciplinary Methods: Schools should focus on incorporating positive reinforcement into their disciplinary practices. Teachers should be encouraged to reward good behaviour, create engaging learning environments, and offer consistent feedback. Schools should also integrate counselling services to address students' emotional and psychological needs, which may be affected by disciplinary measures.

iv. Policy Reform and Enforcement: National and regional educational policies should be revised to ensure that corporal punishment is banned or heavily restricted in all schools. These policies must be strictly enforced, with mechanisms in place to monitor and evaluate disciplinary practices across schools. School administrators must be held accountable for adhering to policies that prioritise student well-being.

v. Strengthen Collaboration Between Schools and Parents: Schools should engage parents in discussions about alternative disciplinary methods, offering them the



tools and knowledge to reinforce positive behaviour at home. Collaboration between parents, counsellors, and teachers is essential to creating a supportive, consistent approach to student discipline.

By addressing these recommendations, the educational system in Nigeria and other similar contexts can move toward creating safer, more supportive environments where students thrive academically and emotionally, free from the detrimental effects of corporal punishment.

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