Corporal Punishment Alternatives and Students' Academic Performance in Tanzanian Primary Schools: Evidence from Tabora Region

Michael Fedrick Mgongo[1]

Abstract

This study examined alternatives to corporal punishment in primary schools and their effects on pupils' academic performance in Tabora Municipal. Using a mixed-methods design grounded in Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, data were collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews from 200 teachers, pupils, and education stakeholders. Quantitative findings showed that 90% of respondents opposed corporal punishment and preferred rehabilitative approaches such as parental involvement, counselling, verbal reprimands, and restorative tasks. Qualitative evidence further indicated that physical punishment is ineffective in promoting lasting behavioural change and negatively affects pupils' emotional well-being and academic engagement. The study concludes that corporal punishment undermines psychological health, learning motivation, and trust between pupils and teachers. It recommends replacing physical discipline with restorative and developmentally appropriate strategies that foster moral development, emotional resilience, and a supportive learning environment.

Keywords: *Punishment, Corporal Punishment, Pupils, Alternative punishment, and performance*

1.0 Introduction

Punishment, broadly defined as any consequence that reduces the likelihood of a behaviour recurring, can take various forms, including physical pain, withdrawal of attention, loss of privileges, or verbal reprimands (UNICEF, 2023). In educational contexts, corporal punishment is a form of discipline that involves physical force intended to cause pain rather than injury, used to correct or control student behaviour (UNICEF, 2023; Mtasiga, 2022). Common examples include spanking, hitting, or striking students with hands or objects. Despite its widespread use, particularly in Tanzanian schools, corporal punishment is increasingly recognised as harmful to children's development and academic outcomes.

International human rights frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), categorically condemn corporal punishment in all settings, including schools. While Tanzania has made strides in child protection through legislation like the Law of the Child Act (2009), which prohibits cruel and degrading treatment, it

1 Tanzania Public Service College   michael.mgongo@tpsc.go.tz

still permits "justifiable correction," leaving room for corporal punishment in homes and schools. The Law of Marriage Act (1971) explicitly bans corporal punishment of adults, but similar protections for children remain ambiguous. Although the draft Constitution of 2014 and the National Plan of Action to End Violence Against Women and Children (2017–2022) emphasise child protection, they fall short of explicitly banning corporal punishment in schools (UNICEF, 2023).

Recent research has shown that hitting children as a form of discipline can have serious adverse effects on their mental health, behaviour, and school success. Physical punishment can lead to more aggressive behaviour, feelings of anxiety and depression, and even lower chances of doing well in school (The Lancet, 2019; Patel, 2021). In Tanzania, almost three out of four children say they have experienced physical violence, often justified as a way to teach them right from wrong (NIMR, 2024). These new findings have inspired a global push for non-harmful ways to guide children's behaviour, focusing instead on positive methods that encourage good behaviour.

Similarly, alternative approaches to addressing student behaviour, such as Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS), restorative justice practices, and child-centred methods, have emerged as effective strategies for enhancing educational outcomes. In Tanzania, for instance, innovative interventions such as responsive teaching have made significant strides in alleviating students' fear and anxiety. These programs have fostered more positive student-teacher relationships, leading to notable improvements in both attendance rates and academic performance, as highlighted by a recent study from the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR, 2024).

Despite the increasing global awareness and pressure to adopt alternative punishment methods, their implementation remains constrained. Most of the studies conducted on students' alternative punishment focused on their mental health, behaviour, and secondary school success. Little attention has been paid to alternative punishments for pupils in primary schools and to the effects of corporal punishment on pupils' academic performance. Therefore, this study sought to investigate alternative punishment for pupils in primary schools. In addition, the study sought to assess the effects of alternative punishment strategies on pupils' academic performance. The study is expected to provide insights that could guide policymakers in reforming educational practices. Ultimately, it sought to contribute to the creation of inclusive, rights-respecting educational environments that nurture children's holistic development.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Definition of key concepts

2.1.1 Punishment

Punishment in psychology refers to a process in which a specific behaviour leads to a consequence that reduces the likelihood of that behaviour occurring again. According to recent definitions, punishment works by creating a direct link between the behaviour and its outcome, thereby discouraging its repetition (Cherry, 2023). This can involve either

removing something pleasant (negative punishment) or introducing something unpleasant (positive punishment), such as an aversive stimulus. These outcomes are considered punishment only if they effectively reduce the behaviour, and they must be identified through procedures that confirm their reinforcing properties (Cherry, 2023).

Punishment can take many forms, ranging from mild interventions, such as verbal reprimands or loss of privileges, to more severe actions, such as incarceration or fines. In social contexts, punishment serves not only to reduce unwanted behaviours but also to reinforce societal norms and maintain order (EBSCO, 2024). It is important to note that what is considered punishment varies between individuals and societies; for example, a consequence that one person finds unpleasant may not affect another in the same way. This variability highlights the need to tailor alternative disciplinary strategies to individual responses. Recent research emphasises the potential adverse outcomes of physical punishment, linking it to increased aggression and other behavioural issues later in life (Pan et al., 2024). Therefore, modern psychological approaches often advocate non-violent, constructive methods of behaviour correction.

2.1.2 Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force intended to cause pain or discomfort to a child, regardless of how mild the action may be. This includes behaviours such as hitting, slapping, spanking, or using objects like belts, sticks, or shoes to strike a child. It may also involve more severe actions such as kicking, shaking, or forced ingestion. The key element is that the force is used deliberately to correct or control the child's behaviour.

Corporal punishment violates children's rights and is considered a form of violence, even when it does not result in physical injury (Smarrelli et al., 2024). The World Health Organisation emphasises that corporal punishment has no positive outcomes and is linked to long-term harm, including increased behavioural problems and adverse effects on mental health (WHO, 2025). Recent literature also highlights that corporal punishment is still widely practised in homes and schools, despite growing evidence of its harmful effects. In educational settings, it can include actions in which school staff physically strike students with their hands or other objects, often under the guise of discipline (Akyina, 2024). These practices not only undermine children's well-being but also hinder their learning and development.

2.1.3 Alternative to Corporal Punishment

Alternative disciplinary strategies offer non-violent approaches to managing students' behaviour, emphasising community involvement and personal development rather than physical punishment. Instead of using corporal punishment, schools can adopt alternative methods that do not involve physical force. These approaches are often more constructive and beneficial to both students and the wider community. For example, students may be assigned tasks such as mowing the lawn or cleaning ditches during weekend work sessions. Other strategies include counselling and guidance, pastoral care, involving parents in disciplinary processes, referring students to approved institutions, or contacting law enforcement in cases of serious misconduct (Wambura, 2010).

Recent studies support these alternatives, highlighting their effectiveness in promoting long-term behavioural change and reducing violence in schools. According to Koalane and Letuma (2025), educational systems are increasingly shifting toward restorative practices that prioritise dialogue, empathy, and accountability over punishment. Similarly, Akyina and Appiah-Menka (2024) found that teachers in Ghana prefer counselling and parental involvement over corporal punishment, especially for serious offences.

Griffins (1996) argued that serious misbehaviour should be addressed through counselling rather than physical discipline. Suspension, while sometimes necessary, should be used sparingly and only in cases where a student poses a threat to others or sets a harmful example. Overall, alternatives to corporal punishment aim to guide students toward better behaviour through support and responsibility, rather than fear or pain.

2.2 Empirical Studies

Smarelli et al. (2024) conducted a longitudinal study across multiple countries to examine the long-term effects of corporal punishment on children. Their research revealed that corporal punishment is a strong predictor of increased aggression and mental health challenges in children over time. The study also highlighted how these behavioural and emotional issues can negatively affect students' academic performance. Lansford and colleagues advocated adopting non-violent disciplinary approaches, noting that positive reinforcement and consistent behavioural guidance are more effective in promoting both emotional well-being and academic success.

In addition, Anjali Patel's (2021) study examined the effects of physical punishment on student outcomes, with a particular focus on academic performance and emotional development. Her findings showed that physical punishment is closely linked to heightened levels of anxiety and aggression among students, as well as lower academic achievement. Patel's study aimed to assess alternative disciplinary methods in primary schools, including positive discipline strategies that encourage constructive behaviour without causing physical or emotional harm. She concluded that replacing punitive measures with supportive and educational approaches can significantly improve students' academic engagement and overall school experience.

Similarly, in Tanzania, Harushybana (2019) explored the impact of school punishment on students' academic performance in selected primary schools. The study found that corporal punishment was widely used but often led to fear, emotional withdrawal, and reduced classroom participation. These effects negatively influenced academic outcomes, especially among younger pupils. Harushybana recommended adopting alternative strategies, such as peer mediation, counselling, and teacher-student dialogue, which have been shown to foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment conducive to academic success.

Mtasiga (2022) investigated the role of corporal punishment in shaping students' discipline in secondary schools within Bukombe District, Tanzania. The study revealed that while some educators perceived corporal punishment as a quick fix for misbehaviour, it often led to student resentment and disengagement. Mtasiga assessed alternative disciplinary

methods, including mentorship programmes, behavioural contracts, and parental involvement. These approaches were found to be more effective in promoting long-term discipline and improving students' academic focus and performance.

Moreover, Lisa (2022) investigated the impacts of zero-tolerance policies on student behaviour and academic achievement. Her study found that such policies, characterised by strict, non-negotiable punishments for infractions, often lead to higher suspension and expulsion rates. However, these measures do not significantly enhance school safety or improve student conduct. Importantly, Lisa emphasised the need to explore alternative disciplinary strategies, such as restorative practices and behavioural interventions, to foster a more supportive learning environment and improve academic outcomes.

Furthermore, Stein, Tangi, and Steenkamp (2019) conducted a study on the relationship between corporal punishment and academic achievement in Tanzanian secondary schools. Their research indicated a clear negative correlation between the use of physical punishment and students' academic results. Students who were frequently punished showed lower levels of classroom participation and academic confidence. The study emphasised the importance of child-friendly disciplinary practices such as positive reinforcement, structured feedback, and emotional support, which were linked to better academic outcomes and healthier student-teacher relationships

2.3 Theoretical Review

2.3.1 Cognitive Development Theory

This study was anchored in Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, introduced in the 1930s, which emphasises the progressive development of a child's ability to think, understand, and reason logically (Piaget, 1952). Piaget proposed that children construct knowledge through active engagement with their environment, relying on processes of assimilation and accommodation to integrate new experiences. He asserted that cognitive development unfolds in a fixed sequence of stages: the sensorimotor stage (birth–2 years), the preoperational stage (2–7 years), the concrete operational stage (7–11 years), and the formal operational stage (11 years and beyond).

In the context of this study, Piaget's theory provides a foundational lens for understanding how disciplinary strategies, particularly alternative forms of punishment, interact with a child's stage of cognitive development. For instance, during the concrete operational stage, which aligns with the primary school years, children begin to think logically about concrete events and understand cause-and-effect relationships. This suggests that punitive measures, if not developmentally appropriate, may hinder rather than support learning. Therefore, exploring alternative punishments that align with pupils' cognitive capacities could foster better academic outcomes by promoting internal motivation and constructive behaviour.

2.2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study is grounded in Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which emphasises the progressive stages through which children

acquire logical and scientific thinking. Specifically, the framework focuses on the concrete operational stage (ages 7–11), where primary school pupils begin to understand cause-and-effect relationships and develop the ability to think logically about concrete situations. This developmental lens examines how alternative forms of punishment, such as verbal reprimands, privilege withdrawal, or time-outs, align with pupils' cognitive capacities and influence their academic performance. The framework posits that when disciplinary strategies are developmentally appropriate and non-corporal, they are more likely to support internal motivation, reduce behavioural disruptions, and enhance learning outcomes. Thus, the study integrates cognitive development and educational discipline to explore the application of alternative forms of punishment in primary schools to foster academic success.

2.3.2 Research Gap

While numerous studies have examined the effects of alternative punishment on students' mental health, behaviour, and academic success, particularly at the secondary school level, limited research has focused on primary school pupils. Specifically, there is limited empirical evidence on alternative forms of punishment in primary education and on how alternative disciplinary strategies affect pupils' academic performance. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the relationship between alternative punishment and academic outcomes among primary school learners.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to explore alternative punishment strategies and their effects on pupils' academic performance in primary schools. Mixed methods are particularly suitable for educational research because they enable a comprehensive understanding of complex social phenomena by integrating numerical data with contextual insights (Sammons & Davis, 2017; Dawadi et al., 2020). The chosen research design was a descriptive survey, which is effective for gathering data from a large population to describe existing conditions, practices, and opinions without manipulating variables. Descriptive surveys are widely used in education to assess attitudes and behaviours across diverse groups (Zhou et al., 2024).

The study's data were collected using two complementary tools: structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Structured questionnaires enabled efficient collection of standardised data from a broad sample, facilitating both statistical analysis and thematic interpretation. They are particularly valuable in educational settings for capturing perceptions from multiple stakeholders (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Moreover, to enrich the quantitative findings, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of respondents. This method allowed guided yet flexible conversations, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives while ensuring consistency across interviews. Semi-structured interviews are instrumental in educational research for exploring sensitive topics like discipline and student well-being, as they

provide depth and context that closed-ended questions may miss (Gill et al., 2008; Kallio et al., 2016).

The study's population comprised 200 respondents: 100 teachers, 50 students, and 50 educational officers and managers selected through random sampling to ensure representation across key educational roles. Random sampling enhances the validity of findings by ensuring that the population is adequately represented (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The study involved primary schools selected from Tabora Municipal, out of which ten (10) schools were selected purposively. In each of the selected primary schools, twenty (20) Respondents were selected, comprising ten (5) pupils, ten (10) teachers, and five (5) educational stakeholders and managers. The respondents selected involved both genders.

The study was conducted in the Tabora region, which has a diverse mix of urban and peri-urban primary schools, making it a suitable context for examining disciplinary practices and their impact on academic performance. Selecting Tabora aligns with the principle of contextual relevance, which emphasises choosing study areas that reflect the social and educational dynamics under investigation (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). A total of ten (10) primary schools were selected in the region using purposive sampling. This nonprobability sampling technique enables researchers to intentionally select information-rich cases relevant to the research objectives. This method is widely endorsed in educational research for its ability to yield profound insights into complex phenomena, particularly when investigating sensitive topics such as punishment and student well-being (Tajik et al., 2024; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Within each school, twenty (20) respondents were selected, comprising five (5) pupils, ten (10) teachers, and five (5) educational stakeholders and managers. This composition ensures a multi-perspective analysis, capturing views from those who experience, implement, and oversee disciplinary practices. Including both genders among respondents supports gender inclusivity, which is essential for producing balanced, generalisable findings in educational settings (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). A sample size of 200 respondents is considered adequate for descriptive survey designs, enabling meaningful statistical analysis while maintaining feasibility. According to research methodology standards, sample sizes in educational studies should be large enough to reflect population diversity but manageable enough to ensure data quality and depth (Zhou et al., 2024).

The data from the structured questionnaires were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as means, frequencies, and percentages, which are effective for summarising large datasets and identifying patterns across respondent groups (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). These statistical tools enabled the researchers to quantify perceptions and behaviours related to alternative punishment and academic performance. Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using descriptive thematic analysis, which enabled the identification of recurring themes and insights into respondents' lived experiences. The data were presented in narrative form, which is appropriate for capturing the depth and nuance of individual perspectives, especially in sensitive educational contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gill et al., 2008). This approach ensured that the voices of teachers, students, and educational officers were meaningfully represented in the interpretation of findings.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

4.1 Respondents Information

Table 4.1: Characteristics of Respondents (Sex, age, and educational level)

No	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	**Sex** Male Female	10 10	50 50
2.	**Age of respondents** Below 10 Above 10 but below 15 15 and above	5 6 9	25 30 45
3.	Education level Primary school Certificate(teachers) Diploma (Teachers) Degree (Teachers)	3 5 5 7	15 25 25 35

Source: Field Data, 2025

Table 4.1 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in the data collection process, categorised by sex, age, and educational level. Regarding sex, the researcher included 10 respondents, 10 male and 10 female, in equal proportions (50% each). Regarding age, the respondents were distributed across three groups: five (25%) were below 10 years of age, six (30%) were between 10 and 15 years of age, and nine (45%) were aged 15 years or older.

Regarding educational level, respondents were selected to ensure diversity and minimise bias in the data collection process. Specifically, three respondents (15%) had attained primary education, five respondents (25%) held certificate-level qualifications, five respondents (25%) possessed diploma-level credentials, and seven respondents (35%) had completed a bachelor's degree.

4.2 Alternative Methods to Corporal Punishment for Pupils in Primary Schools

This study was guided by two objectives: the first objective was to investigate alternative methods of corporal punishment for pupils in Primary schools. Table 4.2 presents the findings from respondents.

Table 4.2: Alternative methods of Corporal punishment for Pupils in Primary schools.

No	Item	Response							
		Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
i.	To involve parents	115	57.5	80	40	1	0.5	4	2
ii.	To write an apology letter and to sign in the black book	95	47.5	84	41.5	7	3.5	15	7.5
iii.	Reprimand the student forcefully	15	7.5	25	12.5	140	70	20	10
iv.	Corporal Punishment	5	2.5	15	7.5	160	80	40	20
v.	Conducting guidance and counselling	120	60	80	40	0	0	0	0
vi.	Suspension	20	10	15	7.75	80	40	85	42.5
vii.	To dismiss a pupil to continue with studies.	7	3.5	13	6.5	165	82.5	25	12.5
viii.	To do t h e weeding and watering o f t h e school garden.	118	59	54	27	12	6	16	8

Source: Field Data, 2025

The study's first objective was to investigate alternative disciplinary methods to corporal punishment in the primary school environment using a structured quantitative questionnaire. Analysis of responses revealed strong consensus against corporal punishment: 180 of 200 participants (90%) disapproved, while only 20 (10%) supported its continued use. This overwhelming opposition highlights a significant shift in attitudes toward non-violent disciplinary practices. Respondents proposed a range of alternative strategies that they deemed more constructive and ethically appropriate. These included involving parents in the disciplinary process to foster accountability, requiring students to write formal letters of apology and sign official disciplinary records (commonly referred to as the "black book"), issuing firm verbal reprimands, conducting guidance and counseling sessions to address behavioural issues, temporarily dismissing students from class to allow time for reflection, implementing short-term suspensions, and assigning restorative tasks such as weeding and watering the school garden. Collectively, these alternatives reflect a preference for rehabilitative and corrective measures that emphasise personal growth, behavioural reform, and emotional support over punitive physical interventions.

Moreover, these findings were reinforced by qualitative data gathered through interviews with teachers, pupils, education officers, and school managers. For example, one pupil from school A said:

> *"I do not like corporal punishment because it makes us fear teachers instead of correcting ourselves. I prefer to talk with the teacher or my parents about my mistakes..."* (25 August, 2025)

This indicates that pupils hate corporal punishment and prefer alternative means to make them behave appropriately. Additionally, teachers and education officers emphasised the

ineffectiveness of corporal punishment in fostering long-term behavioural change and advocated for counselling and parental involvement as more constructive approaches. Generally, pupils expressed that physical punishment often led to fear and resentment rather than improved behaviour. At the same time, school managers highlighted the importance of maintaining a safe and supportive learning environment through rehabilitative measures. The convergence of these perspectives underscores a shared belief in the value of corrective, non-violent disciplinary practices.

The findings align with Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which posits that children progress through distinct stages of cognitive growth, each characterised by increasing capacity for logical reasoning, moral understanding, and self-regulation. According to Piaget, effective discipline should be developmentally appropriate and support the child's ability to internalise rules through reasoning rather than intimidation. Corporal punishment, by contrast, may hinder cognitive and moral development by promoting obedience through fear rather than understanding. Empirical studies further support this view; for instance, research by numerous scholars links corporal punishment to adverse effects, while restorative practices have been shown to improve student behaviour and school climate (Lansford et al., 2010; Anjali Patel, 2021; Harushybana, 2019; Mtasiga, 2022; Stein, Tangi, & Steenkamp, 2019).

4.2.2 The Effects of Corporal Punishment on Pupils' Academic Performance

Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions on the effects of Corporal Punishment in schools, and the findings are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Effects of Corporal Punishment

No	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
01	It creates fear in students	29	14.5
02	Body illnesses	24	12
03	Students hate the teacher	20	10
03	Students drop out of school	50	25
04	Students shifting to other schools	10	10
05	Psychological problems	37	18.5
06	Pupils are Being Silent and Orderly during and after the class session.	30	15

Source: Field Data, 2025

The study's second objective was to assess the effects of corporal punishment on Pupils. The quantitative findings presented in the table reveal a range of adverse effects associated with the use of corporal punishment on primary school pupils, highlighting its impact on both physical and psychological well-being. A significant portion of respondents (25%) indicated that corporal punishment contributes to student dropout, while 18.5% reported that it leads to psychological problems, suggesting long-term emotional consequences. Additionally, 14.5% of respondents noted that it instils fear in students, and 12% associated it with physical illnesses, underscoring the dual harm it causes. Hostility between students and teachers was also evident, with 10% stating that students begin to hate their

teachers, and another 5% observing that some pupils transfer to other schools to escape such treatment. Interestingly, 15% of respondents believed that corporal punishment leads pupils to be silent and orderly during and after class, which may reflect superficial compliance rather than genuine behavioural improvement. Overall, the data illustrate that while corporal punishment may appear to enforce discipline, its broader consequences are overwhelmingly detrimental to students' academic engagement, caused by unhealthy teacher-student relationships.

These results were further reinforced by qualitative insights gathered through interviews with teachers, pupils, education officers, and school managers. Interviewees consistently emphasised the damaging consequences of corporal punishment, with teachers reporting that it often leads to emotional withdrawal and reduced classroom participation among pupils. For example, pupil 4 from school D said that:

> *"Many students start to hate teachers because of the beatings. We live in fear every day, and some even drop out of school because they cannot take it anymore..."* (26 August, 2025)

This underscores that corporal punishment negatively affects pupils, with effects extending to their academic performance. Generally, pupils expressed feelings of anxiety, humiliation, and resentment, noting that physical punishment made them fear school rather than feel motivated to learn. As a result, they failed their exams. Education officers highlighted that repeated use of corporal punishment contributes to long-term psychological distress and undermines the development of trust between students and educators. School managers observed that some pupils transferred to other institutions or dropped out entirely due to persistent physical discipline, which they viewed as counterproductive to educational goals. Collectively, these interview findings cement the conclusion that corporal punishment fails to produce meaningful behavioural change, as it inflicts long-lasting harm on students' emotional, physical, and academic well-being.

The findings from the quantitative questionnaire and qualitative interviews reveal a consistent, compelling narrative about the adverse effects of corporal punishment on primary school pupils. These effects were further substantiated by interviews with teachers, pupils, education officers, and school managers. Teachers and education officers emphasised that corporal punishment undermines emotional security and academic engagement, while pupils described feelings of anxiety, humiliation, and resentment. Education officers linked corporal punishment to long-term psychological distress and deteriorating teacher-student relationships, and school managers reported cases of pupils transferring schools or dropping out due to repeated physical discipline.

These findings align with Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which posits that children progress through distinct stages of cognitive growth: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational, each characterised by increasing capacity for logical reasoning, moral understanding, and autonomy. Piaget emphasised that children in the concrete operational stage (typically ages 7–11) begin to develop internalised rules and moral reasoning based on fairness and reciprocity. Corporal punishment, which relies on external control and fear, disrupts this developmental process by discouraging reflective

thinking and promoting obedience through coercion rather than understanding. Instead of fostering cognitive and moral growth, physical punishment may cause regression in reasoning and hinder the development of empathy and self-regulation. Similarly, some scholars have found that punitive disciplinary practices negatively affect children's psychological and academic outcomes. Similarly, some scholars demonstrated that corporal punishment is associated with increased aggression, antisocial behaviour, and mental health challenges. Meanwhile, restorative approaches such as counselling, parental involvement, and constructive tasks have been shown to enhance behavioural outcomes and improve school climate (Lansford et al., 2010; Anjali Patel, 2021; Harushybana, 2019; Mtasiga, 2022; Stein, Tangi, & Steenkamp, 2019).

5.0 Conclusion

The study revealed a strong and unified rejection of corporal punishment among primary school stakeholders, with 90% of respondents opposing its continued use. This consensus reflects a significant shift toward non-violent, rehabilitative disciplinary practices that prioritise emotional support and behavioural reform. Participants proposed a variety of constructive alternatives, including parental involvement, written apologies, verbal reprimands, counselling sessions, temporary classroom removal, short-term suspensions, and restorative measures such as gardening. These methods emphasise accountability, empathy, and personal growth rather than fear-based compliance. Qualitative insights from teachers, pupils, education officers, and school managers further reinforced the preference for corrective approaches, highlighting the ineffectiveness of corporal punishment in fostering lasting behavioural change. The findings align with Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, which advocates for developmentally appropriate discipline that nurtures moral reasoning and self-regulation. Overall, the study concludes that alternative disciplinary strategies are not only more ethical but also more effective in promoting a safe and supportive learning environment.

Additionally, the study found that corporal punishment was predominantly harmful to primary school pupils, impacting both their physical health and psychological well-being. Quantitative data indicated that it contributed to students' dropout, psychological distress, fear, physical illness, and created hostile relationships with the teachers. While a minority of respondents observed temporary compliance, this was attributed mainly to fear rather than genuine behavioural improvement. Qualitative interviews echoed these findings, with teachers reporting emotional withdrawal and reduced participation, and pupils expressing anxiety, humiliation, and resentment. Education officers and school managers highlighted long-term psychological damage and deteriorating trust between students and educators, with some pupils even transferring schools to escape physical discipline. These outcomes contradict the principles of Piaget's developmental theory, which emphasises internalised moral reasoning and autonomy. Instead of fostering cognitive and emotional growth, corporal punishment undermines students' academic engagement and emotional security. The study concludes that corporal punishment is ineffective and detrimental to students' learning, reinforcing the need for restorative and supportive disciplinary practices.

6.0 Recommendations

Based on the findings obtained from this study, it is recommended that primary schools discontinue corporal punishment and adopt restorative, developmentally appropriate disciplinary practices that foster emotional well-being and moral growth. With 90% of stakeholders opposing physical discipline and highlighting its harmful effects, including psychological distress, academic disengagement, and strained student-teacher relationships, the findings underscore the urgent need for empathic, constructive alternatives. Strategies such as counselling, parental involvement, and restorative tasks not only align with Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory but also promote accountability, self-regulation, and a supportive school environment.

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