Effects of Corporal Punishment on Academic Attainment of Secondary School Students

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated the relationship between corporal punishment and academic attainment of secondary school students. Participants were 554 students (334 males; 220 females) randomly selected from the junior and secondary schools in Notre Dame College, Ozoro, Isoko North L.G.A of Delta State, Nigeria. Three hypotheses derived from the specific objectives of the study were tested. Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses. The results showed a significant positive relationship between corporal punishment and academic performance suggesting that when corporal punishment decreases participants in this study report increase academic performance. There is a low but significant positive relationship between personality development and academic performance meaning that as participants’ scores on personality development increase, academic performance increases. There is also a low but significant negative relationship between mental disorders and academic performance, indicating that when mental disorders increase participants report decrease academic performance. The policy and practice implications of these findings were highlighted and recommendations made to the relevant authorities.

Keywords: academic attainment, corporal punishment, secondary schools

INTRODUCTION
Corporal punishment is a type of physical punishment that is practiced deliberately to cause pain as retribution for an offence, or to control or reform an offender, or to discourage unacceptable and offensive behaviours. The Black’s Law Dictionary defines Corporal Punishment as physical punishment which means, “Punishment that is inflicted upon the body (including imprisonment)” it is the deliberate infliction of pain, intended as correction or punishment. With regard to children, “Corporal Punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing the child to experience bodily pain or discomfort so as to correct or punish the child’s misbehaviour . To Dayton (2005), Corporal Punishment is a discipline method in which a supervising adult deliberately inflicts pain upon a child in response to a child’s unacceptable behavior and/or inappropriate language. While to Straus and Donnelly (2005), it is defined as “the use of physical force intended to cause pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling a child’s behaviour”. The concept is further elaborated by Gershoff (2002) that behaviors which do not cause significant physical injury (e.g., spank, slap) are considered corporal punishment, whereas behaviours that risk injury (e.g., punching, kicking, burning) are considered physical abuse. It consists of a variety of forms or techniques i.e., slapping, kicking, hitting, biting, scratching, spanking, smacking, pinching, punching, choking, shaking, shoving; use of various things i.e, belts, sticks, wooden paddles, pins etc, painful body postures such as placing in closed places, use of electric shocks, scalding,
pulling hair or boxing ears, application of excessive exercise drills, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, and forced ingestion. The United Nation Committee on Right of the Child (UNCRC) defines corporal punishment as "any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort however light". Corporal punishment in schools is a form of punishment inflicted on student’s body by teachers, administrators, or even fellow students for various offenses. Corporal punishment in Nigerian schools is as old as its education system.

Physical or corporal punishment is the application of force to produce pain without injury to correct or control behaviours (Straus and Stewart, 1999). Many countries such as Norway, Denmark and Finland have banned corporal punishment in schools, considering it as a source of school violence (Larzelere, 1999). Most of the 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 (1990) stated that if we are legally prohibited from striking other adults, why is it okay to strike a child? Pandey (2001) said that corporal punishment is being used as a means of disciplining action against children worldwide but as catalytic action of education, it needs to be planned meticulously and executed with great sensitivity.

Nigeria is not among the 60 countries states and territories that have banned its use against children though internationals organizations are calling for it to be outlawed. The United Nations children agency estimates that around 300 million children aged two to four receive some form of physical discipline from their parents or caregivers on a regular basis. In Nigeria, the prevalence of corporal punishment by parents and others invested with parental authority remains high despite calls by many education and other national groups for its prohibition. In Nigeria’s public and private schools, corporal punishment remains a menace.

For example, Nigeria’s first national Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) conducted in 2014 by UNICEF found approximately six out of every 10 children experienced some form of violence; half of all children experienced physical violence, with parents or adult relatives being the most common perpetrator. Male teachers are the most common perpetrators of the first incident of physical violence against children in the neighbourhood. One in six girls and one in five boys’ experienced emotional violence by a parent, caregiver or adult relative. The study noted that while it is not focused on acts of discipline, many of those perpetrating the violence may be doing so in the name of “discipline”.

According to the UNICEF’s statistical analysis of violence against children collected in 2011, 91% of children aged 2-14 experienced “violent discipline” (physical punishment and/or psychological aggression) in the home in the month prior to the survey. Nearly eight in ten (79%) experienced physical punishment and 81% experienced psychological aggression (being shouted at, yelled at, screamed at or insulted). A smaller percentage (62%) of mothers and caregivers thought that physical punishment was necessary in childcare.

A report by Amnesty International in 2014 titled, ‘Welcome to Hell Fire: Torture and other Ill-treatment in Nigeria’ and based on visits to police stations and prisons throughout Nigeria and interviews with hundreds of former detainees revealed widespread torture and ill-treatment, including of children in detention.

Similarly, a report carried out at the end of the Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania (TEGINT) project, a 2007-2012 initiative to transform the education of girls in northern Tanzania and northern Nigeria, found that in Nigeria at least 71 per cent of community members and 72 per cent of girls agreed “it is not okay for teachers to whip a girl who comes late to school because she was caring for a sick relative.” The report surveyed the opinions of 629 girls and 186 community members. The statistics are endless. Data collated in 2010 under “round 4” of the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey programme (MICS4), there was a record of 91 per cent of children aged between two and 14 years that experienced violent “discipline” – physical punishment and psychological aggression – in the home for at least one month. Seventy-nine per cent experienced physical punishment, 34 per cent subjected to severe physical punishment (being hit or slapped on the face, head or ears or being hit over
and over with an object) and 81 per cent of the children were made to go through psychological aggression – being shouted at, yelled at, screamed at or insulted. It did not end there. Mahmoud, et al (2011) in a survey of 172 elementary school teachers in Ilorin City, Kwara State of Nigeria, 80 per cent of respondents had seen pupils being punished by elementary school teachers with a cane; 46 per cent had seen pupils being punished with a horse-whip –koboko; and 30 per cent with a hand. Similarly, 61 per cent of the teachers had seen pupils being hit on the buttocks, 49 per cent on the back, 52 per cent on the palm of the hand, 20 per cent on the head and 16 per cent on the face. Twenty-nine per cent of these teachers said they favoured the use of corporal punishment by elementary school teachers.

Also from statistics collected in 2010 under round 4 of the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey programme (MICS4), 91% of children aged 2-14 experienced violent “discipline” (physical punishment and/or psychological aggression) in the home in the past month. Seventy-nine per cent experienced physical punishment, 34% severe physical punishment (being hit or slapped on the face, head or ears or being hit over and over with an implement) and 81% psychological aggression (being shouted at, yelled at, screamed at or insulted). In another study by the African Child Policy Forum in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Senegal, which was prepared and reported by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2018), it was found that hitting, beating and forced hard work were the most prevalent forms of violence against girls, and that most of the physical violence experienced by girls was corporal punishment. The study involved a survey of 3,025 young women (nearly 600 per country) aged 18-24 about the violence they had experienced in their childhood. In Nigeria, 84% had been hit during their childhood, 90% beaten, 55% kicked, 71% denied food and 17% choked or burned. Parents and close relatives were the most common perpetrators of physical violence.

Corporal punishment in Nigerian schools is as old as its education system. From the Traditional education system in the south to the Almajiri/Islamic education system in the north, corporal punishment as a means of correction and discipline has largely gone unchanged in schools. However, findings by family physicians, pediatricians, clinical psychologists, school psychologists, counsellors etc. argue that corporal punishment does not work to correct negative behavior permanently (Bauman, 1998). 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 Rohner, Ronald, Kean, Kelvin, Cournoyer and David (1991) holds that the more a society tends to legitimate the use of violence to attain ends for which there is widespread social approval, the greater the likelihood of illegitimate violence. Discipline in raising and teaching of children is necessary if they are to become socially productive and responsible adults. Punishment is only a method of disciplining and corporal punishment is only one aspect of punishment (Sanderson, 2003). Arab, Waseem, Umar, Mohammed, and Qaisar (2011) opined that parents, guardians and teachers, who use harsh and punitive practices to discipline their children, may succeed in making the child conform to their standards but resentment will be reflected by the child’s behaviour sooner or later. A frequently punished child will be a problematic person later in life because the child being sensitive reacts to the behaviour and discipline of adults either at school or at home (Kaur, 2005). Corporal punishment, if very frequent, may become an ongoing hardship for children and it has greater potential for producing 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 school (Straus, 1991).

Research studies suggest that corporal punishment is an ineffective and unsuccessful method to maintain discipline and has major destructive and damaging effects on the physical and mental health of individuals on whom it is imposed (Straus & Mouradian, 1998; Gershoff & Bitensky, 2007; Lynette, 2001; Greydanus, et al., 2003). Corporal punishment negatively affects the student’s personality and academic achievement. Its frequent use creates adverse effects in the behavior of an individual. According
to Pandey (2001), corporal punishment is physiologically and psychologically destroying the lives of children. The use of corporal punishment not only causes physical pain but it also causes mental harassment, worthlessness, shyness, sense of helplessness, depression, inferiority complex, violent behavior, inflexibility, self-doubt, social withdrawal, lowered self-respect, tension and anxiety which result in reducing his self-confidence. Likewise, Pearlin (1989) stated that frequent use of corporal punishment may become a continuous hardship for children and possess greater potential to produce adverse and negative effects.

Similarly, according to Straus (1991), the frequent use of corporal punishment increases the possibility of abnormal, disruptive and disturbing behaviours, such as aggression or violence; adolescent criminal behavior and aggressive acts inside and outside the school. Corporal punishment has been linked with a number of psychological and behavior disorders in children and adults i.e., truancy, theft, running away from school and behavior problems. In addition, it also causes anti-social behaviors i.e., dishonestly, cheating, threatening and bullying (Gove & Crutchfield, 1982; Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997; West & Farrington, (1973).

Scholars have also identified that corporal punishment creates an environment of education that is unproductive, punitive and unfavorable. Children become victims, and anxiety or fear is introduced to all in such a classroom. Severe physical punishment does not enhance the behavior or academic performance of students inside the school. According to Hickman (2008), in the states where corporal punishment is frequently practiced their schools have showed unsatisfactory academic performance as compared to those state where corporal punishment is banned. Stephen et al. (2003) explained that corporal punishment is a destructive and damaging method to maintain discipline and is ineffective in creating an educational atmosphere in which students can flourish. Schools and teachers should be encourage to develop positive behavior supports instead of severe and threatening disciplinary strategies, which have been verified to be effective in reducing the need for harsh discipline and supporting a secure, fruitful and productive learning atmosphere.

In contrast to the literatures, some research studies have revealed that corporal punishment is a useful method for maintaining discipline and correcting the misbehavior of children. According to Gershoff and Bitensky (2007), corporal is an effective form of correcting child misbehavior.

This study therefore, is premised on examining and identifying various impacts of corporal punishment on students’ academic performances and their personalities. And finally, to examine the effect of corporal punishment on mental disorders

Hypotheses
The following research hypotheses were formulated:
1. There is no significant relationship between corporal punishment and students’ academic performance/career
2. There is no significant relationship between corporal punishment and students’ personality development.
3. There is no significant relationship between corporal punishment and mental disorders.

METHODS
Design and Participants
This is a cross-sectional survey. The participants where 554 students which included 7 JSS1 students (1.30%), 33 JSS2 students (6.00%), 46 JSS3 students (8.30%), 93 SS1 students (16.8%), 285 SS2 students (51.4%), and 90 SS3 students (16.2%) selected to Notre Dame College, Ozoro

Measures
Corporal punishment – the independent variable – was measured with a discipline management scale divided into three sections namely, 1. School rules and regulations with 8 items, 2. Time management with 6 items and 3. The administration of punishments with 6 items. While Academic performance – dependent variable – was measured with a student academic performance scale with 4 items. The scale
was scored according to 5-point Likert response format with options that ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The pre-tested scales yielded a test re-test reliability coefficient of 0.83.

**Procedure**
At the onset of the administration of instruments in order to collect data, the relevant heads (principal, and vice principals of both academics and administration) of the two schools (senior and junior) were approached for permission to conduct the survey among their students. To obtained informed consent and reduce self-report bias, confidentiality and anonymity were provided through a lighted sentence at the top of the questionnaire that request the participants to indicate their interest in participating in the study and not to disclose their identities in anyway. The administration of questionnaire was done by the researchers on a face-to-face basis. This was to ensure minimal amount of errors as well as substantial return rate of the duly filled questionnaires. Also, to ensure the reliability and validity of the measuring scale, a pilot study was conducted with 50 respondents drawn from a private secondary school. A total of six hundred (600) questionnaires were distributed, out of which five hundred and fifty-four (554) representing 92.3% were returned. Therefore, the analysis was based on the correctly filled and returned 554 questionnaires.

**RESULTS**

**Table 1: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation showing the relationship between corporal punishment and academic performance (n=554)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>S.D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Academic Performance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.73**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.26* 0.60**</td>
<td>13.08</td>
<td>6.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Corporal Punishment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personality Development</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>0.68**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>9.06</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mental Disorders</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.37*</td>
<td></td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey, 2018

**Correlation significant at 0.01, *Correlation significant at 0.05**

The results showed a significant positive relationship between corporal punishment and academic performance (r = -.73; p<.01). This means that when corporal punishment decreases participants in this study report increase academic performance. There is a low but significant positive relationship between personality development and academic performance (r = 0.26; p<.05), suggesting that as participants’ scores on personality development increase, academic performance increases. There is also a low but significant negative relationship between mental disorders and academic performance (r = -.37; p<.05), indicating that when mental disorders increase participants report decrease academic performance.

**Summary of Findings**
1. There is significant negative relationship between corporal punishment and academic performance.
2. There is significant positive relationship between personality development and academic performance.
3. There is significant negative relationship between mental disorders and academic performance.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The study was designed to investigate corporal punishment and academic attainment. Corporal punishment adversely affects academic performance of students. The following table statistically illustrates that corporal punishment is associated with academic performance/career of the students that is explicitly depicted by results of this study. The discussion on impacts has been drawn in percentages having a comparative analysis of mild and severe punishment in the form of ratio given in parenthesis. The respondents have evidently enumerated that corporal punishment has effects over the academic performance/career students (65%) while mild CP has also adverse impacts (35%). By continuing with the impacts of CP, it is observed that mild and severe punishment impedes the class participation, decreases the attendance and increases the dropout rate that is indicated by respondents likewise (39%:61%), (46%:54%) and (24%:76%) respectively.
It has been further elucidated by the results that both mild and severe corporal punishment have adverse impacts; although both have a minnow variation yet justifiable that mild punishment has fewer impacts over students as compared to severe. The respondents expressed that mild and severe corporal punishment have negative effects on students’ confidence, creation of fear and hesitation, hindrance towards learning and resulting in poor academic performance; that is clarified by the percentage in parenthesis respectively for each indicator i.e. (45%:55%), (44%:56%), (27%:73) and (12%:88%). Punishment in one form or another, always been found as a mercenary in promoting smooth running of activities signified by the present study. Results of the research palpably show that mild and severe corporal punishment tends to hinder students’ creativity, create reluctance among students and prevail inferiority complex among the students with a percentage of (18%:82%), (38%:62%) and (33%:67) respectively. Resultantly, the overall association of corporal punishment and academic performance/career, which was proposed in the hypotheses, has been judged by applying chi-square test, the value of P=.000<.05, which shows that the result is significant and there is a strong association between corporal punishment and academic performance/career.

Another area of this research study is students, psychology that is affected by corporal punishment. In such a run the psychology may dominate over the social aspect in the context of its importance in the life of an individual as supported by respondents that the absence of corporal punishment relieves the psychological effects (66%) while the presence of mild corporal punishment also have any adverse effects over psychology of the student i.e. (34%). Enacting to the impacts of mild and severe corporal punishment, this research study reveals that punishment; whether mild or severe, has adverse impacts over the mental level of an individual as it causes depression, lowers self-esteem of students, causes pessimism among students and prevails apprehension figured in a respective form of percentages in parenthesis as (42%:58%), (36%:64%), (44%:56%) and (27%:73%). The data further highlights the psychological effects of both mild and severe corporal punishment covering more aspects of human psychology that are interpreted by the respondents. Such effects have been illuminated to the forefront in the form of creating inferiority complex among students, mental harassment, augmentation of aggression and creation of hooliganism with the percentages followed by each indicator, like; (47%:53%), (26%:74%), (20:80%) and (22:78%) respectively. Consequently, the pointed data expresses that the relationship of corporal punishment with psychological effects, which was proposed in the hypothesis has been validated and measured by applying chi-square test, the value of P=.000<.05, shows that the result is significant and the relationship is strongly found between corporal punishment and psychological effects on students.

Personality and its normal and expected development is one the important aspects of individual’s life that is affected by the application of corporal punishment. The results gained through conduction of this research have a relation with corporal punishment and the course of up gradation in personality development of the students. The results authenticates the fact that absence of corporal punishment has no adverse impacts on personality development of the students (65%) while the presence of mild corporal punishment is regarded as a discipline oriented activity for students, which brings punctuality and well-disciplined personality as stated by (34%). Information mentioned in the table reveals that application of mild and severe corporal punishment is regarded with numerous disorders in personality of the student that is suppression of students’ potentials for growth and development, impulsion and emotional instability and necessitation of students towards insurgency and non-compromising behavior and a source of social mal-adjustment with the percentage and ratio of (44%:56%), (43%:57%), (40%:60%) and (07%:93%) respectively. In the context of effects over personality development of students, this research study has further dug-out the aspects which are worth-mention for being affected through mild and severe punishment. In such a run the respondents have pointed out that such punishments engrains the seeds of hostility and revenge towards society, creates passive-aggressive behavior, prevalence of hatred among students and causes frustration among students; (22%:78%), (44%:56%), (50%:50%) and (08%:92%) respectively.

Analysis of the collected data further indicates that corporal punishment has a vast range of effects over personality development of the students, which brings passive alteration in the course of personality development.
development. The information depicts that mild and severe corporal punishment brings imitation of passive methods for self-satisfaction, creation of self-pity among students and exists rigid and violent nature, which is prominent from the respective percentages in parenthesis i.e. (40%:60%), (44%:56%) and (17%:83%).

Illuminating and analyzing the enumerated results, it is observed that there is a strong association of corporal punishment with personality development of the students that causes irregularities and abnormalities in students’ personalities, which was proposed in the hypothesis has been authenticated and analyzed by applying chi-square test where the value of $P=.000<.05$, which shows that the result is significant and there is a strong association between corporal punishment and irregularities students’ personality development in long terms.

CONCLUSION
Corporal punishment; being a matter of concern has multidimensional and obnoxious impacts over the academic performance/career and socio-psychological well-being of the students. This research study explicitly concludes that corporal punishment encompasses numerous impacts that are worth-mention and worth-analyze, prominently include distortion of academic performance/career; brings havoc to psychology of the students and almost devastates the process of personality development. In addition, the whole research activity elucidates that the prevalence of corporal punishment is extremely high in schools of the target area, which are drawing the shadows of adversity in shape of high drop-out in schools. Furthermore, evidences have been found through research that corporal punishment plays a significant role to hinder the learning capacity of students and impede the zeal of creativity. The research has palpable results in the course of impacts, brought over the subject students, where at a stage it was justified for being a lucrative act in order to reconstruct the behavior and personality of the students. On the contrary, instead of rehabilitation, this study also concludes that it has obnoxious and long term effects on psychological well-being of the students. Students are harassed and severely beaten to that extent where their behavior is molded towards aggression and wrath. Such an aggressive approach from teachers and re-aggression from students’ causes apprehension and hooliganism rather than to correct their behavior and conduct in classes.

The results of the conducted research represent factual information that corporal punishment may be regarded as a blizzard in the course of mental alienation and a lethal for pro-active thought process. Additionally, the conducted research study further concludes in a diverse manner that corporal punishment suppresses the inner potentials of the students. It was highlighted that the trend of punishment tends to create abhorrence and the sense of hatred among the students. Further, those who are frequently subject to corporal punishment engrave an anti-social personality having rivalry thoughts towards society. Continuing with the anti-social attitude, it hampers the adjustment of students in society where they imitate the passive methods for self-satisfaction and prevent long term adverse impacts on personality of the individual. In short, the overall research findings come to a unanimous conclusion that corporal punishment is a monster, which is hindering the overall smooth functioning of the subject person as well as the society with adverse effects on future of the nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS
It is therefore recommended as follows.

• This study extends and suggests that the teachers shall be encouraged to avoid corporal punishment as well as psychologically aggressive disciplinary methods and must use alternative forms of correction of students’ misbehavior. In regard to attain such purpose, teachers training and education programs that emphasize alternative disciplinary tactics to corporal punishment and psychological aggression may make an important contribution to reconciliation of both students and teachers.

• In addition, awareness must be brought among teachers pertaining to the adverse impacts of corporal punishment on students’ academics, psyche and personality development.

• Students shall be counseled through awareness programs for being polite and respectful to their teachers. They shall be intimated regarding the usefulness of punctuality, conduction of homework,
eschew of making noise in class, confirm health and hygiene, and shall not quarrel with their school fellows. Moreover, parents’ role is inevitably significant in order to consult the teachers, ask for the students output and progress and performance in curricula and co-curricular school affairs.

- Abolishing corporal punishment in schools by government is not inadequate, as it is not only harmful to students but also violates children's rights. There is need for legislation to be implemented so as to protect children from violence, to promote and ensure human rights.
- Keeping in consideration the socio-cultural and religious values of the area; the role of Non-Governmental Organizations is highly significant, which can bring general mass awareness about the impacts of corporal punishment through arrangement of seminars, campaigns, workshops.
- Mass media is one of the most effective sources to highlight the issues of major concern, formation and changing human behaviors and attitudes. In this context, media should be involved zealously to strive for elimination of such a menace in shape of telecasting different programs, talk shows, documentaries, articles in newspapers and magazines etc.

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