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Contents	Page
Psychological Variables as Correlate of Students' Academic Achievement in Secondary School Economics in Oyo State, Nigeria <i>E. O. Adu & T. Oshati</i>	1
Differences among Age, Gender and School Factors in Ghanaian Senior Secondary School Students' Aspirations for Entrepreneurial Careers <i>Joshua A. Omotosho & Eric Nyarko-Sampson</i>	18
Theory-practice Dichotomy in Mathematics Teacher Education: An Analysis of Practicum Supervision Practices at One Teacher Training College in Zimbabwe <i>Michael Kainose Mhlolo</i>	34
Analysis of Students' Errors on Linear Programming at Secondary School Level: Implications for Instruction <i>E. Chinamasa, V. Nhamburo & M. Sithole</i>	54
The Impact of Computer-Assisted Instruction on Secondary School Students' Achievement in Geography <i>V. Oyedele, D. Munasirei, Y. Oyedele & S. Chikwara</i>	73
Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment as Perceived by Secondary School Students in Ilorin, Nigeria <i>F. N. Bolu-steve, M. C. Ogwokhademhe & M. A. Abejirin</i>	87
Social Media and the Moral Development of Adolescent Pupils: Soulmates or Antagonists? <i>Godfrey Museka & Nisbert T. Taringa</i>	100
The Social Reproductive Role of Christian Missionary Education in Apartheid South Africa: Evidence from History and Research <i>Aaron Ravhudzulo & Tawanda Runhare</i>	121
Book Review <i>Prof. F. Zindi</i>	144

Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment as Perceived by Secondary School Students in Ilorin, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis of Kwara state. The study was carried out using a multi-stage sampling technique. At stage one; the four local governments were purposively selected. Stratified sampling procedure was used at stage two to stratify respondents into desired characteristics of age, gender, religion, class level and school type. At stage three, simple random technique was employed to select 50 students in each of the four local governments making a total of 200 respondents from the four Local Government Area in Ilorin metropolis.

The outcome of this study showed that secondary school students in Ilorin have similar views on the perceived problems associated with corporal punishment on the basis of age, gender, religion, and class level. A significant difference was found on the basis of school type. The problems of indiscipline among students cannot be handled by teachers alone as such it was recommended that principals should employ the services of school counsellors. The government should also discourage the use of corporal punishment in school.

Background to the study

In Nigeria today, acts of indiscipline among secondary school students have become major problem in school and society at large (Korb, 2011). These problems are manifested in the form of destruction of school and public properties, cheating in examinations, alcoholism, drug addiction, sexual offences, stealing, truancy, rudeness, fighting and bullying. Effective discipline techniques are needed to curb such negative tendencies so as to maintain discipline in schools. As such, Nigerian secondary schools have employed the use of corporal punishment as a tool for maintaining discipline. Oftentimes, over-use of punishment may trigger physical or emotional problems in the affected students

(Jaiyeoba & Akintepede, 2002).

Corporal punishment is defined as the intentional infliction of physical punishment on the body (Benatar, 2001). School corporal punishment covers the official punishments of students for misbehaviour that involves striking the student a given number of times (Gould, 2007). A variety of implements may be used to inflict punishment on the offender which includes the rod, cane, horse whip (*koboko*), broom, and the use of hand. In modern times, moral and psychological considerations have brought about radical changes in the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary instrument. There has been evidence to show that corporal punishment is detrimental. In 1979, Sweden protected children against corporal punishment by banning parents from using it in any way on children as a disciplinary tool (Couture, 2001).

The use of corporal punishment in Nigerian secondary schools has always been a contentious issue. In 1977, at the height of indiscipline in the Nigerian secondary schools, the Military Government under General Yakubu Gowon deployed military personnel to secondary schools in order to restore discipline. Subsequent governments after the General Gowon regime, with the exception of the General Buhari-led government, had lukewarm attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment in the Nigerian secondary schools (Olajide, 2012).

Corporal punishment is lawful in Nigerian schools under Article 295(4) of the criminal code (Southern Nigeria). Corporal punishment is explicitly permitted in Nigerian schools for students under the age of 18, under article 55 of the Penal Code (North). The Federal Government of Nigeria says it may be carried out only on the authority of a head teacher. Corporal punishment is one disciplinary technique. In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment which are also cruel and degrading, these include punishment which belittle humiliates and threatens the child (Cast, Schweingruber & Berns, 2006). However, there are many other disciplinary techniques that adults can employ, such as: providing appropriate supervision, making rules (appropriate to the child's age and stage of development), setting and enforcing boundaries, firmly saying "no", explaining why certain behaviour is inappropriate, giving consequences, withdrawing privileges; and using

"time out", or quiet time as an alternative to corporal punishment.

Statement of the problem

Corporal punishment has become a contentious issue among scholars in recent times. Cast et al., (2006) reported that physical punishment teaches aggressive behaviour, and hinders the development of important problem-solving skills. The analysis revealed that individuals who were physically punished during their childhood are more likely to engage in physical and verbal aggression.

Fayyad (2005) reported that corporal punishment can cause disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depression disorder (MDD) and separation anxiety disorder (SAD). White and Smith (2004) observed that corporal punishment, when used as a disciplinary tool, could trigger sexually coercive behaviours. The purpose of this study was to identify the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students in Ilorin metropolis.

Research hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of age.
- 2) There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of gender.
- 3) There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of religion.
- 4) There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of class level.
- 5) There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of school type.

Methodology

Research design

The descriptive method was adopted for this. Bogdan and Biklen (2004) says descriptive survey describes variables in a given situations and established relationship between variables. Yates, Starnes and Moore (2008) pointed out that this method is preferred because it captures the complexity of everyday behaviour.

Sample and sampling procedure

A total of 200 students in Ilorin metropolis were used. For administrative convenience and adequate representation of the students across Ilorin metropolis, the study was carried out using a multi-stage sampling technique. At stage one; the four local governments were purposively selected and this includes Ilorin East, Ilorin West, Ilorin South and Ilorin Central. Stratified sampling procedure was used at stage two to stratify the respondents into desired characteristics of gender, age, religion, class level and school type. At stage three, simple random technique was employed to select 50 students in each of the four local governments making a total of 200 respondents from the Local Government Area of Ilorin metropolis.

Instrumentation

The main instrument of this study is a questionnaire titled: *Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment Questionnaire (PACPQ)*. The questionnaire had two (2) sections, A and B. Section A contained the demographic data of the respondents while Section B consisted of 14 items which the respondents were required to respond to on a 4-Point Likert Scale of SA - Strongly Agreed = 4 points, A - Agreed = 3 points, D - Disagree = 2 points, and SD - Strongly Disagree = 1 point. In order to establish the validity of this instrument, copies of the questionnaire were given to three (3) lecturers in the Department of Counsellor Education, University of Ilorin. Their corrections and suggestions were considered in the final selection of the items on the questionnaire. Reliability of the questionnaire was established using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained

Data analysis

The data were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and mean ranking of mean values. The t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tools were employed to test the research null hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Result

Table 1

Mean and Rank Order on the Respondents Perception on the Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment

Item No.	As far as I'm concerned	Mean	Rank
11	<i>corporal punishment makes me angry</i>	3.29	1 st
10	<i>corporal punishment causes physical injury</i>	3.22	2 nd
3	<i>the use of corporal punishment creates depression</i>	3.15	3 rd
1	<i>corporal punishment promotes stubbornness</i>	3.06	4 rd
13	<i>corporal punishment promotes truancy</i>	3.04	5 th
8	<i>corporal punishment causes students to run away from classes</i>	3.03	6 th
4	<i>corporal punishment can create anxiety and fear in students</i>	3.01	7 th
14	<i>corporal punishment can lead to child abuse</i>	2.96	8 th
12	<i>students who are corporally punished often bully their juniors</i>	2.95	9 th
9	<i>corporal punishment promotes violent behaviour</i>	2.94	10 th
7	<i>corporal punishment causes poor academic performance</i>	2.69	11 th
2	<i>corporal punishment can lead to low self-esteem in students</i>	2.38	12 th
5	<i>corporal punishment can cause inferiority complex to student</i>	2.31	13 th
6	<i>corporal punishment can cause psychological damage to student</i>	2.31	14 th

Table 1 shows that item 11 which states that “*As far as I'm concerned, corporal punishment makes me angry*” is ranked 1st with a mean score of 3.29. Ranked 2nd with a mean a score of 3.22 is item 10 which states that “*As far as I'm concerned, corporal punishment causes physical injury*”. Ranked 14th with a mean score of 2.31 is item 6 which states that “*As far as I'm concerned, corporal punishment can cause psychological damage to students*”.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of age.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value showing the Difference in Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment as Perceived by Secondary School Students on the Basis of Age

Age	N	Mean	SD	Df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
7 -17 years	174	59.64	7.20	198	0.98	1.96
18 years and above	26	61.11	6.42			

Table 2 shows that the calculated t-value is less than the critical t-value as such the hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of age.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of gender.

Table 3

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value Showing the Difference in Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment as Perceived by Secondary School Students on the Basis of Gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Male	110	60.44	6.96	198	1.35	1.96
Female	90	59.08	7.25			

Table 3 shows a calculated t-value of 1.35 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Thus the null hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of gender.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of religion.

Table 4

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Showing the Difference in Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment as Perceived by Secondary School Students on the Basis of Religion

Source	Df	SS	Mean Square	Cal. F-value	Crit. F-value
Between Groups	2	46.712	23.35	0.46	3.00
Within Groups	197	10016.843	50.84		
Total	199	10063.555			

Table 4 shows a calculated F-value of 0.46 and a critical value of 3.00. The calculated F-value is less than the critical F-value, therefore the hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of religion.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of class level.

Table 5

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value Showing the Difference in Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment as Perceived by Secondary School Students on the Basis of Class Level

Level	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
J.S.S	83	60.38	6.40	198	0.92	1.96
S.S.S	117	59.44	7.57			

The t-test result on table 5 reveals that a calculated t-value of 0.92 is less than the critical t-value of 1.96. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of class level is accepted

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of school type.

Table 6

Mean, Standard Deviation and t-value Showing the Difference in Problems Associated with Corporal Punishment as Perceived by Secondary School Students on the Basis of School Type

School Type	N	Mean	SD	df	Cal. t-value	Crit. t-value
Private	129	58.56	7.80	198	3.52*	1.96
Public	71	62.15	4.89			

*Significant, $p < 0.05$

Table 6 shows the calculated t-value of 3.52 is greater than the critical t-value of 1.96. As such, the hypothesis is rejected; hence there is a significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of school type.

Discussion

Most secondary school students of different age groups in Ilorin metropolis perceive the problems associated with corporal punishment

the same way. This observation disagrees with the report of Adeyemo (1999) that secondary school students differ in their perception of corporal punishment on the basis of age. This locational disparity might be due to the dynamic nature of each of the society.

That corporal punishment is viewed in the same way across the gender divide further supports the report of Gershoff (2002) that most students hate corporal punishment because they believe that such form of punishment can predispose aggressive behaviour. On the basis of religion, no significant difference was found in the students' perception. Robert (2000) in his studies found that most religion prescribed the use of punishment as a means of correcting wrong doers. Hence, respondents are bound to perceive corporal punishment the same way. In Nigeria for example, majority of the religion endorse the use corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure when and where necessary.

There is no disparity in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students' in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of class level. This is in agreement with Greydanus (2010) whose finding indicated that students' have the same attitude towards corporal punishment regardless of class or level. This means that students are likely to attribute similar problems to corporal punishment.

There is a significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students' in Ilorin metropolis on the basis of school type. Wasef (2011) found that students' in public schools are frequently punished than those who attend private schools. The finding reveals that students who attend private schools tend to be better behaved than those who attend public schools. It is clear that students can be influenced by their immediate environment, that is, what constitutes schooling may vary from place-to-place, depending on the environment and culture of the place. It is therefore no surprise that there are disparities between the public and private schools.

Implications for counselling practice

- ✍ There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of age.
- ✍ There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of gender.
- ✍ There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of religion.
- ✍ There is no significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of class level.
- ✍ There is a significant difference in the problems associated with corporal punishment as perceived by secondary school students on the basis of school type.

Recommendations

- ✍ The problems of indiscipline among students cannot be handled by teachers alone as such principals should employ the services of school counsellors.
- ✍ The government should discourage the use of corporal punishment in School. Parents should be encouraged to give moral education to their wards at home.
- ✍ Teachers should be exposed to behavioural modification techniques such as assertive training, positive reinforcement as an alternative to corporal punishment.

Conclusion

The findings of this study have colossal implications for counselling. The disadvantages of corporal punishment clearly outweigh the

advantages. During Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, the school counsellor can give enlightenment talks, encourage teachers and parents to use disciplinary measures which are non-violent and that they should avoid subjecting students to harsh physical punishments of any form. Through group counselling, the counsellor can teach the children how to be assertive without being aggressive. They should be taught how to express anger and frustration without violence.

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