

# 1 Principals' Attitude Towards Corporal Punishment in Nigeria 2 Secondary Schools

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## 7 **Abstract**

8 This paper dealt with principals? attitude towards corporal punishment in Delta State  
9 secondary schools. It discussed an overview of corporal punishment in schools, justification  
10 and criticism of school corporal punishment, guidelines in imposing corporal punishment in  
11 schools, effects of corporal punishment on students, and reason why school corporal  
12 punishment should be banned. It is therefore recommended that government should introduce  
13 and pass legislations prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in public schools, and that  
14 teachers and school administrators should be provided with tools and resources necessary to  
15 develop safe and effective methods for encouraging positive student?s behavior. It also  
16 recommended that that the use of corporal punishment be discouraged in the school system  
17 and there is need for principals to employ better disciplinary techniques that would yield  
18 better results.

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20 **Index terms**— Attitude, Secondary School Heads, Corporal Punishment, Nigeria.

## 21 **1 Introduction**

22 Advocates of school corporal punishment argue that it provides an immediate response to indiscipline and that  
23 the student is quickly back in the classroom learning, rather than being suspended from school. Opponents  
24 believe that other disciplinary methods are equally or more effective. Some regard it as tantamount to violence  
25 or abuse.

26 Infact, teaching in schools goes beyond gathering students for learning. It is all encompassing and discipline  
27 forms a major part of it. For Africans, especially in Nigeria, not sparing the rod is one essential Author :  
28 Department of Educational Administration and Policy Studies, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. E-mail :  
29 edwardnakpodia@yahoo.com aspect of discipline. Unfortunately, flogging, as an example of corporal punishment  
30 and as a disciplinary measure is fast declining in most Nigerian schools, a situation many attribute to the  
31 decadence among students these days. Many teachers believe flogging students has no place in today's education.  
32 To them, the advancement of technology has made it imperative that teachers develop better ingenious ways of  
33 correcting students when they err instead of resorting to corporal punishment while others believe that teaching  
34 must necessarily include the use of the cane in a world indiscipline has eaten too deep into the moral fabric of  
35 the society.

36 However, it will become unacceptable when flogging gets to the extreme. Some teachers are just too harsh  
37 and over a little provocation, they descend on students and beat them with any kind of stick available and in  
38 the process inflicting severe injuries on their body, the scars of which may have to live with them forever. Such  
39 types of correctional measure should not be allowed in school and also at home.

40 Corporal punishment entails physical chastisement of a pupil in a school. It is a punitive response to students'  
41 misbehaviour and even has a extensive biblical support in the book of Proverb 22:15 and 23:12, which says:

42 Apply thine heart unto instruction and thine ears to the words of knowledge? foolishness is bound in the  
43 heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him? withhold not correction from the child; for  
44 if thou beatest him, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shall deliver his soul from hell.

45 Today, the desirability and effectiveness of corporal punishment had been called to question ??Peretemode,  
46 1992). While some school administrators and teachers support its use, others are strongly opposed to its use.

47 However, school administrators and teachers have power and authority to administer a school disciplinary  
48 programme. This power to control and discipline students for infractions is traceable to the age doctrine of in-  
49 loco-parentis (in place of parents). This position of principals and teachers with regard to disciplinary control of  
50 students, especially in imposing corporal punishment is well explained in the Corpus. The punishment is usually  
51 administered either across the buttocks or on the hands, with an implement specially kept for the purpose such  
52 as a rattan cane, wooden paddle, slipper, leather strap or a wooden yardstick. Less commonly, it could also  
53 include spanking or smacking the student in a deliberate manner on a specific part of the body with the open  
54 hand, especially at the elementary school level.

### 55 2 S

56 Julis Secundum (79 CJS: 493). As a general rule, school principals to a limited extent at least, stand in-  
57 locoparentis to pupils under his charge and may exercise such powers of control, restraint and corrections over  
58 them as may be reasonably necessary, he is subject to such limitations and prohibitions as may be defined by law.  
59 The court in democratic societies all over the world has also viewed school officials as standing in-locoparentis,  
60 allowing them to regulate the students in any manner subject only to the standards and restraints that the  
61 parents would use in supervising the welfare of the child (Nakpodia, 2011).

62 Over the years, the inflation of corporal punishment on recalcitrant children in the country has become an  
63 accepted method of promoting good behavior and instilling notion of responsibility and decorum into the heads  
64 of mischievous students (Nakpodia, 2011). It is presumed that any parent who sends a child to school gives  
65 this authority to school officers. But the desirability and effectiveness of corporal punishment have been called  
66 to question in recent times. While some parents, teachers and school principals favour the use of corporal  
67 punishment, others are strongly opposed to its use in schools. Gregory (1995) cited in Nakpodia (2007) made the  
68 following points in support of corporal punishments that some students only respond to corporal punishment;  
69 and that corporal punishment is effective because it makes students to think twice before committing the same  
70 offence. In addition, the use of physical punishment can be a deterrent to other students who might violate a  
71 rule in the absence of such punishment.

72 On the other hand, Rathiff (1980) also cited in Nakpodia (2007) opposed corporal punishment based on the  
73 following reasons "that it is cruel; unreasonable corporal punishment is too difficult to prove in court, holds  
74 considerable potential for child abuse and tends to be discriminating; and also there are more effective non  
75 physical alternative that can be used in correcting student misbehavior.

76 Each year, hundred of thousands of students are subjected to corporal punishment in public schools despite the  
77 many problems associated with the hitting or paddling of students. Aside the infliction of pain and the physical  
78 injuries which often result from the used of physical punishment, these violent disciplinary methods also impact  
79 students' academic achievements and long -term well-being even after school. Despite significant evidence that  
80 corporal punishment is detrimental to a productive learning environment, there is still no federal prohibition on  
81 the use of physical discipline against children in public schools.

82 On the other hand, corporal punishment tends to prevent students from committing any serious offence; it  
83 creates fear in the minds of pupils and reforms the offender because pupils generally do not like their names to  
84 go into such books. Below is a format of a corporal punishment book; as one of the major pillars of punishment  
85 in general:

### 86 3 II. Corporal Punishment in Schools: an Overview

87 In Nigeria, the administration of corporal punishment has led to the loss of lives and permanent injury or  
88 disfigurement of pupils. The results of such unreasonable brutal and excessive corporal punishment has on  
89 several occasions led to legal suits by parents or guardians against the teacher concerned and the state Ministry  
90 of Education. Most state Ministries of Education in the country have therefore responded by restructuring the  
91 category of staff who can administer the cane.

92 According to Peretemode (1992), Imo State Education Edict in 1989 in Nigeria states that: All punishment  
93 shall be reasonable, taking into account the age and sex of the offender and the nature of the offence. Corporal  
94 punishment shall be administered only by the school head, and no male teacher shall administer corporal  
95 punishment on a female student (p.11).

### 96 4 The Rivers State Ministry of Education Circular

97 Letter of May, 1984, referred to in the chapter, even went steps further to dictate the maximum number of strokes  
98 (6) that may be administered and the offences that may attract such punishment. The National Association of  
99 School Nurses define it as "the intentional infliction of physical pain as a method of changing behavior, which may  
100 include methods such as hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, use of various objects (paddles,  
101 belts, sticks or other), or painful body postures. Wikipedia free Encyclopedia sees school corporal punishment  
102 as covering all official punishments of school student for misbehaviors that involves striking the student a given

103 number of times in generally methodical and premeditated ceremony, the punishment is usually administered  
104 either across the buttocks or on the hands with an implement specially kept for the purpose.

105 The American College Dictionary, (1953) defines corporal punishment as "physical injury inflicted on the  
106 body of one convicted of a crime and including the death penalty, flogging, sentence to a term of year etc," The  
107 Californian Educational Code, (1990) Compact Edition, Section 49001 defines it as "the willful infliction or  
108 willfully causing the infliction of physical pain on a pupil".

## 109 **5 III.**

### 110 **6 Types of Corporal Punishment**

111 Corporal punishment which is a kind of physical punishment that involves a deliberate infliction of pain as  
112 retribution for an offence is mainly divided into three (3) types:

113 1. Parental or Domestic Corporal Punishment : This involves that inflicted by parents on their ward because  
114 most parents believed nothing else has worked except corporal punishment. It encompasses all forms of corporal  
115 punishment administered at home by parents or guardians.

## 116 **7 Judicial**

117 Corporal Punishment : This is part of a criminal sentence ordered by a court of law, closely related to, it is  
118 prison corporal punishment ordered either by the prison authorities or by a visiting court.

119 3. School Corporal Punishment : These are corporal punishment undertaken within schools, when students  
120 are punished by teachers or school administrators for wrong done against rules and regulations.

## 121 **8 IV. Justification and Criticism of School Corporal Punish- 122 ment**

123 The issue of school corporal punishment have raised a lot of problems round the world as most people and  
124 countries sees it as inhuman, a physical and psychological danger to its receivers and a source of abuse to the  
125 child.

126 During the 18th century, the concept of corporal punishment was attacked by some philosophers and legal  
127 reformers, some believe merely inflicting pain on miscreants it inefficient, since corporal punishment influences  
128 the subject only for a short period of time and effects no permanent change in their behavior whose purposes  
129 should be reformative and not retribution.

130 Poole, Ushkow and Nader (1991), supporters of corporal punishment in schools say that "as soon as the student  
131 has been punished he can go back to his class and continue learning in contrast to out-of-school suspension which  
132 removes him from the education process and gives him a free holiday." Berrigan, a catholic priest also justifies the  
133 use of corporal punishment as it saves much staff time that would otherwise have been devoted to supervisory  
134 detention classes or in-school suspension.

135 Most people take school punishment as a disregard to humanity, unreasonable, holds considerable potential  
136 for child abuse, tends to be discriminatory with children from poor home etc.

## 137 **9 V. Guidelines in Imposing Corporal**

138 Punishment in Schools Gorton (1983) identified the following ten guidelines extracted from various court cases  
139 and often recommended by educational authorities: a. Corporal punishment should not be used at all except  
140 when the acts of misconduct are so antisocial in nature or so shocking to the conscience that extreme punishment  
141 seems warranted -Actus Rea "actual performance of the act" as opposed to Mens Rea. b. The particular offences  
142 that will result in corporal punishment should be specified. c. Evidence that other non-physical methods were  
143 used earlier in attempt to help improve the students' behaviour should be required before corporal punishment  
144 is employed. d. Corporal punishment should not be used in those situations were physical restraint is more  
145 properly called for. e. If possible, a neutral party, specifically identified should administer the punishment,  
146 rather than the person who was in conflict with the student. f. Corporal punishment should be administered  
147 only in the presence of another or administrator (or parent) as witness, an individual who was not in conflict with  
148 the student -Amicus Curiae "a friend in the matter, one who is not a party to the case but appears to call his  
149 attention to some point of law or facts". Also, the school administrator can authorize another one's authority by  
150 the virtue of his office", "exofficio -by virtue of his office". g. Exempt from receiving corporal punishment those  
151 students who have psychological or medical problems. h. Provide due process before administering the corporal  
152 punishment, including informing the student of the rule that has been broken presenting the student with the  
153 evidence indicating that the student has violated the rule and providing the student with an opportunity to  
154 challenge the allegation -Audi Alterem Partam "give the other side a chance; judgment can only be passed after  
155 hearing both parties to a case". i. Specify the kinds of documentation that will be required for administering  
156 corporal punishment. j. Forbid corporal punishment to be used on a continuing basis for those students whose  
157 behaviour does not improve after it has been initially administered.

158 **10 VI. Effects of Corporal Punishment on Students**

159 Harsh physical punishments do not improve students' in-school behavior or academic performance but one way  
160 or the other cause more harm than what we have already. The following are some effects of school corporal  
161 punishment: 1. Causes depression, fear and anger. 2. Causes withdrawal from school activities. 3. Lowered  
162 school achievement. 4. Difficult with concentration. 5. Antisocial behavior. 6. Intense dislike of authority. 7.  
163 Somatic complaints and lose of respect.

164 The above mentioned effects of school corporal punishment have made some organizations opposed to the sue  
165 of corporal punishment in our schools nowadays.

166 **11 VII.**

167 **12 Reason Why School Corporal Punishment Should be  
168 Banned**

169 Due to the lasting effects placed on pupils when given these painful punishments, some countries have banned the  
170 use of corporal punishment in schools, while some still regards it as good means of punishment because it serves  
171 as a means of deterrent to others. The reasons why it should be banned are: 1. It has no place in the education  
172 of children. Corporal punishment is not allowed in the military, mental institutions and prison, research shows  
173 that children who are beaten and abused are more likely to be prone to depression, low self esteem and suicide.  
174 2. It perpetuates the cycle of abuse.

175 Despite the above two reason why corporal punishment should be banned, 20 states still permit it in its schools.  
176 They are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indian, Kansas, Kentucky, etc.

177 **13 VIII. Conclusion and Recommendations**

178 The study revealed that corporal punishment is the most frequently used form of punishment in secondary school;  
179 corporal punishment is not an effective tool in disciplinary control; and finally, there was significant difference  
180 between public and private secondary schools in the use of corporal punishment. It was recommended that  
181 the use of corporal punishment be discouraged in the school system and there is need for principals to employ  
182 better disciplinary techniques that would yield better results. The simple fact that corporal punishment as a  
183 disciplinary measure is not part of any education curriculum indicates that education at every level knows that  
184 corporal punishment has no place in the classroom; discipline can and should be taught by examples. In order to  
185 prevent the continued use of violence or the imposition of corporal punishment against children in our schools,  
the following recommendations were made. <sup>1 2</sup>



Figure 1:

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DATE	PUPIL'S NAME	SEX	AGE	CLASS	OFFENCES	PUNISHMENT BY	WHICH PRINCIPAL	GIVEN	REMARK
5/01/2012	Akpasubi Joel	M		12	1A Fighting and injuring Obornodje Gloria	10 strokes of the cane and a field to cut	Vice Principal Mr. Onosakponome	As deterrent	

Figure 2: Table 1 :



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