

IMPACT OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS IN BASIC SCHOOLS IN HOHOE MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this study was to investigate the impact of punishment on the academic performance of learners in Hohoe Municipality and also to explore how to enhance acceptable behaviours among learners leading to their good academic performance. The research paradigm adopted for the study was qualitative focusing on descriptive and survey techniques. Convenience as well as purposive sampling methods were employed in the study whilst questionnaire, interview and observation were used to collect field data which was analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis and other statistical media. The study revealed that, students who suffer corporal punishment in schools within the study area become timid and experience truancy. Also, it came out that, some of the victims become school dropout. It was however recommended that, counselling in schools within the area should be well resource to provide good counselling services to the learners. Also, Religious and Moral Education should be well taught in Schools in the study area so that learners could learn good moral values hence apply them in Schools.

Keywords: Corporal Punishment, Hohoe Municipality, Academic Performance, Learners, Basic Schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Punishments are seen by many as some of the best ways to control behavior of individuals. Some equally consider it as a way of rewarding wrong doers negatively in society.

Day-in-day -out in Ghanaian educational institution these days, there are media reportage of students misbehaving either towards their peers or teachers. A situation that is so troubling because the learners are considered the future leaders who are to have the mantle of leadership and if their behavior is nothing to write home about, the future of the nation is not secured. According to Oti & Doe (2025), corporal punishment is a force to discipline individual through acts such as spanking, canning, slapping or any form of action intend to cause discomfort or pain. Some psychologist and Educationists argue that there is a relationship between learner's academic performance and punishment that are given out to them. One could imagine a learner who is punished and thinking of carrying out that punishment as well as coping with the academic work. There would be emotional torture and as well, friends could tease an individual who has undergone a punishment; a situation which could make such an individual to feel demean or looked down upon.

There is no doubt that learners who behave well and avoid punishment do well academically than those who are always caught in punishment. Think of a learner who is serving a punishment, get late to class; get teased by the colleagues hence become emotionally down. Even though the intentions of punishment are to correct the offenders to reform, it is however interesting that many children activist have come out with laws forbidden the enforcement of punishment in schools. Such organization focus on corporal punishment which they claim are dangerous to the life of the

children.

However, the fact remains that when the child goes wrong and he/she is not reprimanded, the result on the child in the long term would not be good for the immediate family and society at large. And in the same way, it is agreed that punishment could affect the emotion and the academic work of the learner.

It would therefore behoove on the learners to keep to good behavior hence have an atmosphere of peace to learn. This should equally go to the children and gender activists who are against corporal punishment of learners to engage in enough campaigning and educating the learner to put up good behavior so as to avoid such Punishment.

Hohoe municipality is one of the quiet areas in the Volta region of Ghana. The municipality is noted for its trading activities as it is a nodal settlement connecting to other adjoining states. The municipality could boast of many educational institutions such as Colleges of Education, a University, and many pre-tertiary institutions thus first and second cycle educational institutions. Because of such educational institutions available, learners are certain to one way or the other encounter punishment in many forms.

This study therefore is appropriate to investigate how punishment influences academic performance of learners hence propound recommendations to the major state holders.

2.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Day-in-Day-out, there have been media coverage on indiscipline in schools as well as punishment being administer to the learners. Gender activists and other Non-Governmental Organizations are also on the nerves of schools warning the schools to be cautious in offering punishment to students or abolish punishment completely arguing from the legal perspective that learners deserve some right from such punishments. In the Ghana Education code of conduct manual for teachers (2017), as well, section 3.8 a (i) spelt it out clear that:

An employee shall not administer any act of corporal

Punishment, or any act that inflicts physical pain on the

Children or causes physical harm to their students such as

Pushing, pulling, hitting and or flogging.

In relation to the provisions above, many studies have gone out echoing. the dangers corporal punishment has on learners. One of such authorities is Gyan et al (2018) who worked on causes of indiscipline among senior secondary schools in Ghana, Opoku- Adusei (2021) also investigated similar study on impact of punishment on behavior and academic work of Senior High Students in Ejisu- Juabeng Municipality of Ashanti Region. Dogbe et, al (2022) investigated on effects of disciplining cases on St. Theresa college of education students in Hohoe. However, limiting this study to the pre-tertiary level by critical scrutiny with empirical lens shows that enough is not done in the Hohoe municipality in relation on the topic under study. It is in view of this that this study is carried out to explore how corporal punishment in schools have direct bearing on academic performance of the learners and also to explore how to enhance or encourage acceptable behaviors among learners in the study area.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1 Investigate the impact of punishment on the academic performance of the learners in Hohoe Municipality.

2. Explore how to enhance acceptable behaviours among learners leading to better academic performance in schools in Hohoe Municipality.

Research Questions

1. To what extent do punishments affect academic performance of Learners in Schools in Hohoe Municipality?
2. How could acceptable behaviours of Learners be enhanced in schools in Hohoe Municipality to boost academic performance?

3. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Corporal Punishment

Punishment are rewards that are offered to the recalcitrant individuals who in one way or the other violate set down rules or regulation. There punishment could be offered to wrong doers in all human institutions such as schools, churches and homes.

According to Aboagye (2019), corporal punishment is a disciplinary action taking against an individual who violates a law. He adds that, the intention of such punishments is to Shape the individual to conform to standards. He opines that, in implementing a corporal punishment, the offender is supposed to experience pain as a result of use of physical force. He sums up that, despite the fact that these punishments are giving, their intention is to correct the behavior of the child but not to harm them.

Corporal punishment is any negative reward that is giving out to the individual which would result to the involvement of physical force hence causing discomfort to the individual (kyeremeh and Badu- Yeboah no date) They equally share with the earlier authorities that; corporal punishment is giving out to reform those individuals who are considered non conformists in society. They argue that, despite the perception of people on corporal punishment, in the long run it would certainly Shape the individual or learner to conform to acceptable behaviors in society.

It could therefore be concluded based on the assertions of the authorities above that, corporal punishment has to do with the individuals exerting extra physical force to execute a giving task to serve as a deterrent to others.

Relationship between learner's behavior and academic performance

Behavior have direct influence on academic performance. of course as the adage goes *garbage in, garbage out*. Meaning whatever behavior that one puts in that is what the result would come out to be. A good behavior would produce good outcome and vice versa.

According to kyeremeh et al; (2019), there is direct relation between punishment and academic success of the learner. They opine that punishment put anxiety and fear in learners, make them look down upon themselves and also feels ridicule by their peers. And once a learner thinks of all these attributes he/ she would be emotionally and mentally down to do serious academic work; which would lead to poor performance. They add that a child who for thinking of the punishment alone would shiver and that would affect his or her ego. They therefore suggest that for the academic work of learners not to retrograde, alternative measures must be employed to enforce discipline among learners but without corporal punishment. Gyan et al (2015) equally share that as indiscipline increases in the schools. The state holders must apply appropriate sanctions to deter others. They opine that one of such measures is the corporal punishment that are still found in schools. They further add that in as much as corporal punishment could help curb indiscipline in

school; it goes a long way to affect the overall performance of the learners in the academic work. They corroborate that punishment affect the learners psychologically and also it makes the learners look down upon themselves, in addition to being teased by their peers. They therefore suggest that other alternatives should be explore before the corporal punishment becomes last resort.

Ampofo (2021) also states that even though punishment as a whole is what the learner understands; its negative effects on the learner outweighs that of the positives. He cites an example to buttress the point that, because of negative impact corporal punishment brings to the learners, Ghana Education service bans implementation of corporal punishment in schools since 2017; and the then minister of Education called on the parents to take on teachers who would flout the directive and still apply corporal punishment in schools.

It could therefore be deduced from the assertions of the authorities above that, corporal punishment has direct influence on the academic performance of learners. Balance should therefore be drawn on how punishment should be enforced and also how the learners should be discipline in schools.

Causes of punishment in schools

In as much as there is indiscipline in schools; there should be punishment to deter, other potential non-conformist. Gyan et al; (2015) corroborate Causes of punishment in schools that, many factors contribute to the indiscipline that is seen in schools today. They opine that the individual themselves and their character traits serve as one of the reasons the learners misbehave. They identify the school itself as loosing track on effective monitoring thereby leaving the learner to go astray. They blame the parents as well for over pampering their wards that they grow to become deviant students. In addition, the authorities opine that, social media also influences students to indulge in unwanted behavior thereby leading to application of punishment in schools.

Dogbe et al (2022) as well share that, because government has taken over especially the mission schools from the missionaries; monitoring and implementation of student punishment has reduced thereby encouraging learners to indulge more into unacceptable behaviors. They opine that, mission schools turn to inculcate biblical and other moral values in the learner there by helping to curb indiscipline. They add that once learners misconduct themselves, punishment would surely be applied.

According to Asare et al (2015) as well, one main cause of punishment among students is indiscipline or violation of rules. They share that in the school establishment, the laws are clear when a student violates a rule. They further share that, once laws are broken, punishment would surely be applied. They therefore suggest that in order to hold students more accountable and responsible, they should be involved in the decision or law making so that, they automatically become enforcer of the laws that they were part to formulate.

Asare - Adinkra et al (2018) equally argues that, there would not be punishment without a violation of rules or any misconduct. They state that the main reason why punishment is giving is that, learners or some individuals have broken bounds. They add that, once a law is broken, a punishment must be given to match with the offence. They cite the Colleges of Education and opine that once the indiscipline has risen among students in the Colleges, punishment must be used by College management to control such unacceptable behavior. They were emphatic that, indiscipline in schools in general in Ghana has contributed to poor academic performance. Therefore, punishment must be used to check the behavior of such recalcitrant students.

It could therefore be inferred from the scholars above that, punishments are applied due to indiscipline or misconduct from students. So teachers do not punish for the sake of punishment

but as a result of misbehavior from students.

Impact of Corporal Punishment on academic performance of learners

Surely there are ways corporal punishment would impact on the academic progress of learners. Punishment in general, Comes to either reform the individual or to re-inforce them negatively. Ofori et al (2018) as well opine that, indiscipline and other corresponding punishment affect performance in teaching and learning situation. They outline thematic areas where the impact would occur as follows:

Inability of learners to concentrate in class, loss of productive time due to lateness or absenteeism due to the punishment; likely hood of becoming a school dropout due to the humiliation from peers and shyness. They identify the rest as disrupting of productive / class hours to settle dispute and also teachers see such students as threat. They argue that the assertion discussed above could ruin the career and future of learners. They therefore suggest that talks and counselling should be giving to learners to shape their behavior rather than using punishment which would impact negatively on the learners.

Kyeremeh, owusu-Addo (2023) side with the earlier scholars and add that due to punishment administer to the learners, it results to building low esteem among them which kills the potentials in them. Also they share that punishment discourages learners from attending class regularly for out of shame or fear of being punished multiple times. In addition, corporal punishment could go with health implication. They captured the voice of some respondent student ‘‘the feelings of punishment discourage them from attending class regularly’’

Another learner was captured revealing as ‘‘ when I receive corporal punishment I show symptoms of dejection in studies and also do not participate in teaching and learning process enthusiastically’’. There is correlation between punishment and the academic progress of the learner (Opoku –Adusei, 2021). He asserts that when individuals are rewarded positively, it encourages them to put in more effort to excel in that venture; and similarly, when they are negatively rewarded, it affects their ego by dumping their spirit. He therefore agrees with the earlier authorities that when the learners are punished, kills their spirit are killed thereby affecting their academic input and in the same vein when they are praised it encourages them to do more. It could therefore be inferred from the assertion of all the schools that, corporal punishment diminishes academic performance of learners.

4. METHODOLOGY

The best paradigm that suit this study is qualitative research design. These involves collecting and analyzing what people do (Bandari, 2025). Descriptive and survey techniques were used to carry out and present the study.

For the data collection tools, mixed method approached was adopted.

The population of this study targeted learners and teachers of selected schools within the Hohoe municipality of the Volta region. The population distribution is as follows:

Table 1: Population distribution of the study

Category / Target Population	Accessible Population
Students	85
Teachers	10
Headteachers	05

Total Population of the Study = 100

Sampling technique

85 students were selected at random from among selected schools within the study area. Ten (10) teachers were as well selected using convenience sampling method. The researcher residing within the municipality met the teachers as and when he deems fit and at the convenience of the teachers. Purposive sampling technique was equally used to get head teachers into the study. Because of the Ghana Education Service (GES) directive on punishment, it is only the headmasters that are given some privileges in some instances to administer punishment. With this knowledge at the back of the mind of the researcher; he had to target the head teachers in the selected schools to contribute meaningfully in the study; hence the adaption of this sampling approach.

Research tools

Questionnaire, interview as well as observation were used to gather data for this study.

Data analysis Procedure

Quantitative data gathered was analyzed with statistical media whilst interviews adopted thematic content analysis with words coded and transcriptions made manually with tallies hence conclusion drawn appropriately. The researcher as well being an educator brought his observation skills and expertise to fore and passed judgement based on the focus of the study in question.

Analysis of Data

The analysis of the Eighty-five (85) Learners who answered the questionnaire are as follows:

The learners consisted of 45 males and 40 females.

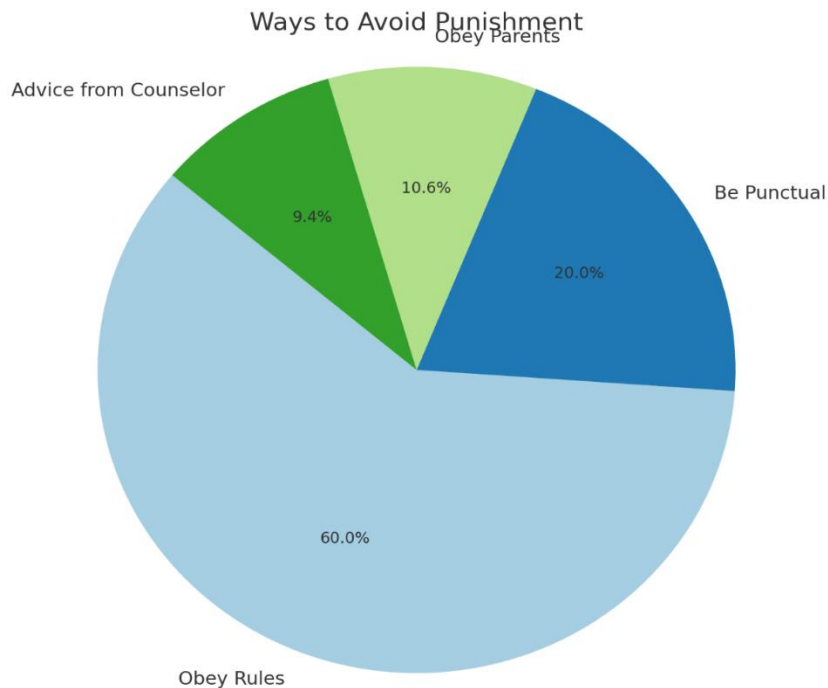
Asked whether they were punished in school before, 75 of them representing 88 % answered that, yes, they were punished before whilst the remaining respondents responded they were never punished as of the time of this study.

On how they feel when they are punished, 80 of them expressed that, they feel very bad whilst 5 of them never provided any answer to that item.

They were to state whether punishment affect academic performance in schools. 80 of them again responded to Yes and 5 stated NO.

In justifying the response above, they stated that, punishment affect them psychologically, it makes them afraid, it wastes their time for studies and it tags them as bad students as well.

On what to do to avoid punishment, 51 of them thus 60 % of them stated obeying of rules, 17 Learners representing 20 % identified Punctuality to class, 9 of them (10 %) stated obeying of parents. The remaining respondents stated advice from school counselor. This illustration is seen below:



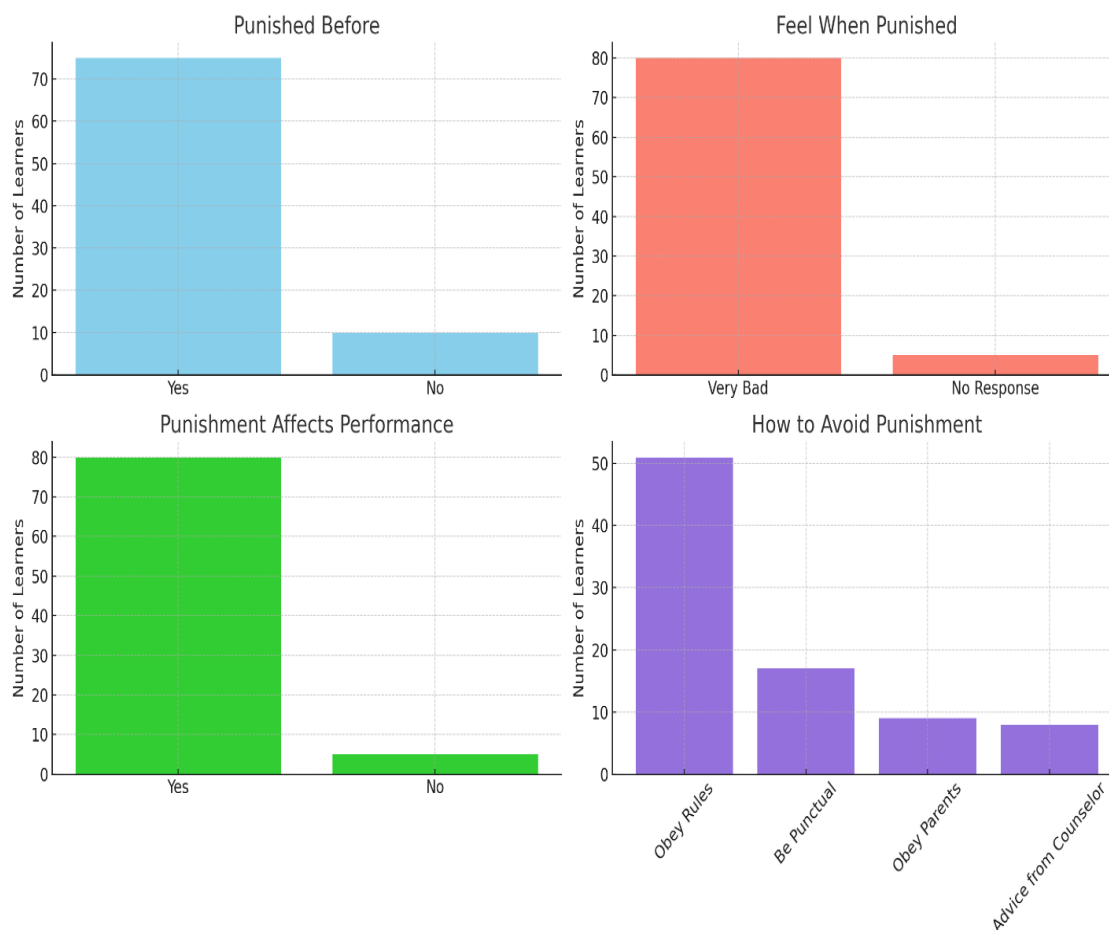
On what to do to enhance academic performance in the school, 60 respondents representing 70 % outlined obedience and studying hard. 10 of them (11 %) stated that learners reading extra materials at home. 15 of them (17 %) stated good teachers posted to the schools to teach.

All the Responses above are empirically represented below:

Table 2: Distribution of responses of the Learners

Variable	Response	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	45	52.9%
	Female	40	47.1%
Punished Before	Yes	75	88.2%
	No	10	11.8%
Feel When Punished	Very Bad	80	94.1%
	No Response	5	5.9%
Punishment Affects Performance	Yes	80	94.1%
	No	5	5.9%
How to Avoid Punishment	Obey Rules	51	60.0%
	Be Punctual	17	20.0%
	Obey Parents	9	10.6%
	Advice from Counselor	8	9.4%

Bar Charts of Learner Responses



Ten (10) teachers who were interviewed with the help of interview guide have this to say; All of them agreed that corporal punishment is still in use in schools. On why they administer punishment, 6 of them thus (60 %) responded that students in the current era are so recalcitrant to the extent that nothing scares them than such corporal punishments. In addition, because of the advocacy of human rights and gender activist, the students feel they are un touchable event when they go wrong. So such punishments given out to them serves as a deterrent to other students. The remaining respondents, equally shared that such punishments are giving to them so to reform their behaviour. Anytime they remember inconveniences they go through in executing the punishment, it would help them to conform to acceptable character

On the relationship between punishment and academic performance of the learners, all the teachers responded that students who abstain from punishment do better in class than the other counter parts; they attribute that to the fact that, those who do not think of any punishment have the free mind to concentrate than others who panic anytime they see their teachers thinking they may be

tagged as notorious or bad students

The teachers unanimously stated that the only way students could conform to rules in schools is enforcement of punishments, the students being involved in decision making through the Student Representative Council (SRC) and counseling sessions.

Five Head teachers were equally interviewed and the responses are herein discussed:

On whether they administer corporal punishment in their schools, 4 of them representing 80 % responded to Yes with the remaining respondents answering in Negative.

On why they administer corporal punishment to students, 3 of them thus 60 % stated that the learners put up deviant behaviors and so the punishment is administered to reform them. The remaining respondents also answer that; punishment are giving to serve as deterrent to other students and also such punishments are given to check indiscipline among students.

On the issue of relationship between punishment and academic performance, all of them unanimously agreed that students who avoid punishment always do well than those who always find themselves in punishment situations.

They all again stated that moral values should be inculcated into the curriculum and taught so the students could live good lives. Also counselling sessions should be intensify in the schools so students would be periodically psyche to conform to acceptable behaviors.

The researcher also from observation noted that corporal punishment does occur among students within the study area. He identified corporal punishment to manifest in a form of canning, kneeling down and raising up of both hands of learners. He observed also that such punishment are given to deter other recalcitrant learners. The researcher observed from a perspective as an educator that, students who always indulge in bad behaviors leading to subsequent punishments always perform poorly academically than those who avoid punishment.

He therefore suggested that, religious and moral education in schools should be well taught and practice by students. In addition, he stated that, parents should also give good training to their wards at home. And also, counselling must be given to students at least every week so that learners are kept on their toes never to fall short of school rules.

Presentation of Findings

The study made it clear that, corporal punishment is administered in a form of canning, squatting, kneeling down and raising up of both hands by the learners.

The study revealed that students who suffer corporal punishment in schools within the study area become timid and nervous when they see authorizes and also experience truancy in school.

In addition, they are tag as stubborn by their peers hence do not want to mingle with them. This affect their learning abilities. Some also absent or drop out of school due to the fact that others may tag them as bad.

It was revealed also that, indiscipline in schools could be curbed when many counselling sessions are organized for the students to always put them on their toes.

It came out also that, religious and moral values should be well intensify in schools so that students would always live moral and upright lives in the school and society at large.

Furthermore, parents are also encouraged to nurture their wards morally and in the fear of the lord at home so that they grow to become responsible citizens.

Also, some award schemes should be instituted in the schools so that best students are well and openly motivated in an organized durbar to help motivate all to be well behaved.

Furthermore, Student Representative Councils should be well strengthen to allow students

involvement in decision making. Once they are part of law making, they would help enforce its implementation resulting to discipline. The findings of the study therefore confirm assertion of Opoku Adusei (2021) and Dogbe et al;(2022). And also that of Ampofo (2021).

5. CONCLUSION

The focus of the study was to explore the relationship between punishment in schools and their impact on learner's academic progress and also to find out ways through which learners could be well behaved in schools. It was revealed that, there is a connection between punishment and academic performance of learners in schools. It came out that those learners who are often punished do not perform academically well unlike their counterparts who avoid punishment. It was revealed that, good parental guidance, counselling session in schools, strengthening of the Student Representative Council (SRC) in schools could help learners to be more discipline.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Office of counsellor should be created in the schools within Hohoe municipality; staff with a professional counsellor to take care of the social life of the learners.
2. Worship sessions that are held in schools should be strengthen and such occasions should be used to enlighten the students on virtues of Christianity or teaching of good values in the Qur'an in case of Moslem students.
3. Speech and prize – giving days should be periodically organized to reward students with good moral and virtues in the study area.
4. Parent association meetings should be encouraged in the area where the problems of the students could be discussed and remedy propound.
5. Religious and moral education should be well taught in the schools in the area so that learners could learn good moral values hence apply them in their everyday life including teaching and learning situation.

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