

Teachers' Perception Of The Influence Of Corporal Punishment On Student's Discipline In Secondary Schools In Bayelsa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the perception of teachers on the influence of corporal punishment on students discipline in secondary schools in Bayelsa State. A total of five hundred respondents were drawn from twenty secondary schools in four Local Government Areas. While the simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the twenty secondary schools, the purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the five hundred respondents used for the study. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The test-retest method was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument and a correlation co-efficient of 0.70 was obtained using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. Research questions designed for the study were analyzed using the weighted mean with a criterion mean of 2.5 used in taking decision while the hypothesis formulated for the study was tested with the one sample t-test using the statistical package of social science (SPSS) at 0.05 level of significance. Findings from the study shows that secondary school teachers in the study area believes highly on the influence of corporal punishment as a means of tackling student's discipline. The study shows that there is a significant influence of corporal punishment on student's discipline in the study area. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that school guidance counselor should always organized talk-show for teachers in order to re-orientate them on the perception of the influence of corporal punishment in student's discipline, students should be encouraged and praised when the need arises to motivate them to be of good behaviour always.

Keywords: Perception, Influence, Corporal Punishment, Students, Teachers, Discipline

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I. Introduction

The future of any nation depends on the young ones who constitute the potential human resources needed for the continuity of the society. Thus, to achieve sustainable development of any society, the young population must not only be preserved but also disciplined. School indiscipline in Nigeria has over time been an issue of concern for educators, policy makers, parents and the general public, owing to the outbreak of aggressiveness among young school students, violence within teacher-student relationship and vandalism, leading to perpetual existence of problem of drop out, deviant behaviours, examination malpractice, lateness and poor academic performance among students (Ali, Dada, Isiaka and Salmon, 2014).

In order to correct indiscipline cases in schools, teachers have the authority to discipline misbehaving students and hence become loco parentis, that is, on behalf of the parents of those who break school laws. However, in some cases, teachers catch feelings and react quite emotional to misbehaving students to the extent of using punishment irrationally and causes harm to students (Nakpodia, 2010). Hence, this underscored the emphasis on the need for administration of corporal punishment to be done with caution to the extent that it does not cause injuries to students.

At a global level, more and more countries are introducing legislations to protect children from corporal punishment. According to Oteri and Oteri (2018) Nigeria is not among the 60 countries, states and territories that have banned the use of corporal punishment against children though international organizations are calling for it to be outlawed.

Corporal punishment refers to intentional application of physical pain as a method of behavioural change. According to Straus and Donnelly (2005) corporal punishment can also be 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".

Pandey (2001) further discussed corporal punishment as behaviours which do not result in significant physical injury e.g. hitting, slapping, spanking, punching, kicking, pinching and shaking and that corporal punishment is being used as a means of disciplining action against children and students worldwide but as a catalytic action of education, it needs to be planned meticulously and executed with great sensitivity.

There are divergence views or perception of corporal punishment among teachers especially in developing societies including Nigeria in general and secondary school teachers in Bayelsa state in particular. This is why a study of this nature is imperative, to find out in greater details secondary school teacher's perception of the influence of corporal punishment on student's discipline in Bayelsa State.

Problem of the Statement

Corporal punishment is geared towards maintaining discipline in secondary Schools and it also curbs juvenile's delinquency in the society. However, problems arise when corporal punishment is administered wrongly on secondary school students. The use of corporal punishment however has generated much argument among educators, sociologist, philosophers as well as the psychologist as the argument has continued to raise more controversies and debate on the use of corporal punishment as a means of student's discipline in school.

School administrators are saddled with the responsibility of maintaining conducive learning environment by ensuring the operation of discipline in school for academic achievements. Indiscipline in schools can manifest itself in students' violent behaviour, poor disciplinary style, ineffectiveness and inefficiency of teacher, poor time management, and ineffective code of conduct among others. These acts of indiscipline disrupt learning and have direct impact on students' discipline and achievement.

Therefore, considering the scarcity of research work focusing on the teacher's perception of corporal punishment on student's discipline in secondary school in the study area, this study would help to fill the gap and would thus investigate the perception of teachers on corporal punishment on students discipline in Bayelsa State.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine teachers' perception of the influence of corporal punishment on students' discipline in secondary school in Bayelsa State. Specifically, this study intends to:

1. Identify the perception of teachers on the influence of corporal punishment as a means of student's discipline in Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State.
2. Investigate the forms of corporal punishment Students are subjected to in Secondary Schools in Bayelsa state.
3. Identify the perceived dangers associated with the use of corporal punishment in Secondary Schools in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

- i. What is the perception of teachers on the influence of corporal punishment in student's discipline in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
- ii. What forms of corporal punishment are students subjected to in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?
- iii. What are the perceived dangers associated with the use of corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Hypothesis of the Study

There is no significant influence of corporal punishment on student's discipline in secondary schools in Bayelsa State

Who is a Teacher?

The term teacher connotes one who teaches, in a specific term, one whose occupation is to teach. In general term, a teacher can be the parents, clergy, elder, neighbour, coach etc. as long as such an individual spends part of his/her time to show, direct, guide and impart about knowledge to influence another individual that would bring about change in behaviour. According to Anyaogu and Anugom as reported by Victor (2023) conceived teacher as one who engages in an interactive behaviour with one or more students for the purpose of effecting a change in the behaviour of students.

The teacher is that person whose duty is to co-ordinate, control and organizes the activities of the classroom. He/she has the ability to ensure that classroom activities are well conducted.

The teacher is the most important human resources in the development and sustenance of any system of education as well as the achievement of pre-determined educational goals as no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers.

Conceptualization of Corporal Punishment

Corporal Punishment in schools occurs when the teacher or the "adult-in-charge" purposely inflicts pain upon a child in order to stop that child's unacceptable behaviour and/or inappropriate language. The immediate aim of such punishment is usually to stop the offence, prevent its recurrence and set an example for others. The purported long-term goal is to change the child's behaviour and to make it more consistent with the adult's expectations. In corporal punishment, the adult usually hits various parts of the child's body with a hand, or with canes, paddles, yardsticks, belts, or other objects expected to cause pain and fear. According to Dayton as cited in Andero and Stewart (2002) Corporal punishment covers official punishments of school students for misbehaviour that may involve striking the student a number of times in a generally methodical and pre-meditated ceremony. Less commonly, it could involve spanking the student in a deliberate manner on a specific part of the hand or body. According to Andero and Stewart (2002) the punishment usually takes many forms, including spanking, shaking, choking, excessive exercise, and confinement in an uncomfortable space and it usually imposed for violent acts, like fighting with another student, and non-violent acts, like possessing cigarettes, talking in class, swearing, throwing food, not doing assignments amongst others. According to Human Right Watch (2008) most teachers actually think they do well by punishing students, also believing that it is the best way to motivate students in order to behave more appropriately but they are mistaken by that way of thinking because the improper act or behaviour is just prevented for a while only. As a matter of fact, long term results of this kind of punishment are either to react against it as most commonly done by the students or to surrender.

Forms of Corporal Punishment

Hardy (2004) noted that caning is the popular form of corporal punishment consisting of numerous strikes on buttocks, hands, shoulders and on soles of the feet which have long lasting negative effects. Additionally, Ogando and Pells (2015) observed that teachers use canning, slapping, kicking, scratching, pulling hair or ears, pinching and whipping to maintain discipline and punish children for poor academic performance. Bruises and cuts are regular end products of school punishment with severe injuries including broken bones, knocked out teeth and internal bleeding which cause long term emotional distress. Further reports showed that children are forced to kneel down in front of the class for long hours as a form of discipline even though it disrupts learning. Many schools and teachers make children to engage in physical labour as a punishment which includes, digging trenches, slashing grass and uprooting tree stumps, cleaning toilets with no detergents and protective gloves.

Teacher's Perceptions of the Influence of Corporal Punishment on Student's Discipline

Fareo and Owolabi (2022) in their study averred the following as perception of teachers about the use of corporal punishment in school. They include hitting student(s) with object at hand regardless of the harm it might caused would curb his/her wildness, withdrawal of certain privileges from the student(s) is a good way of reprimanding them, cleaning of toilet and sweeping of classroom as a way of breaking student's stubbornness, flogging on the hand and buttock is a way of showing disapproval of unacceptable behaviour, subjecting the student to take up painful body posture for a period of time is another way of instilling discipline, subjecting students to manual labour during break or after school hours is a good way of correcting unwanted behaviour, denying student(s) their lunch is also another way of instilling discipline in school, student tend to obey and respect their elders more when they know that corporal punishment would be administered them if they go against the rule, any act that inflict pains on students would make them learn their lesson and behave more wisely in the future, embarrassing students in front of his peer would make him think twice before doing that same act again, without corporal punishment, students tend to be more wayward, disrespectful and uncontrollable and finally teachers believed that corporal punishment is the best way of correcting indiscipline and waywardness of students.

According to Ogbe (2015) in his study on the 'Analysis of Parents/Teachers Perception of the Use of Corporal Punishment in Primary Schools,' both parents and teachers agreed that corporal punishment is an ideal practice for molding children in primary schools. Parents and teachers, males and females, urban and rural parents/teachers did not show any significant difference on their perception of the use of corporal punishment in schools. The study further recommended that corporal punishment should be restored where it is dysfunctional and there is the need to legislate law to protect teachers on their practice of molding children through corporal punishment.

According to UNICEF (2005) many teachers argue that without corporal punishment schools would be in chaos. Learners would become unruly when they reach high school. Teachers contend that corporal punishment is a disciplinary tool available to control large class size hence administered by overwhelming number of teachers in school to enforce discipline.

Dangers Associated with Corporal Punishment

Nakpodia (2010) argues that corporal punishment has harmful effects. The use of corporal punishment by use of spanking is linked to aggression, anti-social behaviour, mental health problems, cognitive difficulties, low self-esteem and other negative effects. The evidence against corporal punishment of ineffective deterrence mechanism suggests that deterrent corporal punishment leads to aggression and hostility. On top of that corporal punishment brings about violent behaviours' in the society since it does not encourage learners to behave appropriately. Besides, it weakens the relationship between the learners and educators.

Corporal punishment causes psychological harm including emotional damages, negative self esteem, negative feelings about going to school and negative outcomes for academic performance. Those arguing against corporal punishment insist that the advancement of technology bring ingenious ways of correcting student when they misbehave instead of resorting to corporal punishment (Nakpodia, 2010).

According to Fareo and Owolabi (2022) the dangers associated with the use of corporal punishment are numerous and detrimental to safe teaching and learning. They outlined the following as dangers associated with the use of corporal punishment in school.

1. Corporal punishment leads to mental retardation which includes memory loss and absenteeism in class.
2. Corporal punishment cause emotional trauma which includes low self-esteem, depression and suicidal acts.
3. Corporal punishment causes physical scars as a result of broken and swollen skin where the pain was inflicted.
4. Corporal punishment causes maiming or disability of students.
5. Corporal punishment causes psychological trauma in which the student see violence as a normal way of life and
6. The fear of corporal punishment leads students to drop out of school.

II. Methodology

The survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised all the two thousand eight hundred and ninety three (2893) teachers in the one hundred and forty seven (147) public secondary schools in Bayelsa State. The sample for this study is five hundred respondents drawn from twenty secondary schools in four local government areas spread across the three senatorial districts in the state. The simple random sampling technique was used in selecting the four local government areas used for the study namely; Yenagoa Local Government Area, Southern Ijaw Local Government Area, Ogbia Local Government Area and Sagbama Local Government Area. The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the twenty schools and the five hundred teachers (respondents) used for the study.

The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The test-retest method was used in ascertaining the reliability of the instrument. Scores obtained were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation co-efficient and a correlation co-efficient of 0.70 was obtained. The administration and collection of the instrument was done by the researchers with the help of five research assistants. All the five hundred copies of the questionnaire distributed were successfully retrieved from the respondents. The weighted mean was used in analyzing the research questions. A criterion mean of 2.5 was used in making decisions. Hence any item response that receives mean equal to or greater than 2.5 was considered to be positive response while any item that receives below 2.5 was considered to be negative. Finally, the one sample t-test was used in analyzing the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23.

III. Results

The results of the mean analysis are as follows

Research question one: What is the perception of teachers on the influence of corporal punishment in student's discipline in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean response of the respondents on the perception of teachers on the influence of corporal punishment in student's discipline.

No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{x}_w	Remark
1	Corporal punishment is a valuable tool for instilling appropriate social behaviour in students	150 6000	180 540	100 200	70 70	500 1410	2.82	Agreed
2	Corporal punishment in schools helps to eliminate bad and unwanted behaviour in students	177 708	193 579	64 128	66 66	500 1481	2.96	Agreed
3	Without corporal punishment, schools will be chaotic and disorganized	134 536	178 534	65 130	123 123	500 1323	2.65	Agreed
4	Corporal punishment makes students to obey school rules and regulations	210 840	167 501	101 202	22 22	500 1565	3.13	Agreed
5	Corporal punishment also makes students to be orderly in class	167 668	189 567	89 178	55 55	500 1465	2.93	Agreed

6	Corporal punishment enhances student's academic performance	196 784	164 492	73 146	67 67	500 1489	2.97	Agreed
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Item one on the table above shows that out of the five hundred respondents 150 strongly agreed that corporal punishment is a valuable tool used by teachers in the study area for instilling appropriate social behaviour in secondary school students. 180 agreed, 100 respondents disagreed while 70 respondents strongly disagreed. This gave a mean score of 2.82 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50. This means that teachers in the study area have the perception that corporal punishment instills appropriate social behaviour on secondary school students.

Item two shows that 177 respondents strongly agreed that corporal punishment in schools helps to eliminate bad and unwanted behaviour in students. 193 agreed, 64 disagreed while 66 strongly disagreed. This produced a mean of 2.96 which is far above the criterion mean of 2.5. Hence, the response of the respondents is positive. Similarly, item three also produced a positive response as 134 and 178 respondents agreed and strongly agreed respectively that without corporal punishment, secondary schools in the study area will be chaotic and disorganized. 65 respondents disagreed and 123 strongly disagreed. This item gave a mean score of 2.65 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. Item 4 on the table also shows that teachers in the study area have the perception that corporal punishment makes students to obey school rules and regulations as 240 respondents strongly agreed, 167 agreed, 101 disagreed and 22 strongly disagreed. This produced a mean item of 3.13 which is far above the criterion mean of 2.5. Teachers in the study area also believe that corporal punishment makes students to be orderly in class. This is shown in item five (5) as 167 respondents strongly agreed, 89 agreed 89 disagreed while 55 strongly disagreed. This gave a mean score of 2.93 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Finally, on table one (1) above, item 6 revealed that the respondents agreed that the fear of corporal punishment enhances student's academic performance in secondary schools in the study area. This item has 196 respondents strongly agreed, 164 agreed, 73 disagreed while 67 respondents strongly disagreed with a weighted mean score of 2.97 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Research question two: What forms of corporal punishment are students subjected to in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean response of forms of corporal punishment

No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{x}_w	Remark
7	Flogging students in the hands and buttocks is a common form of corporal punishment used by teachers in the study area.	200 800	180 540	70 210	50 50	500 1600	3.2	Agreed
8	Standing in the sun is also used to punish students in the study area.	170 680	200 600	100 200	30 30	500 1510	3.02	Agreed
9	Kneeling down, pulling of ears and hairs is also another form of corporal punishment used by teachers in the study area.	180 720	209 627	85 170	26 26	500 1543	3.08	Agreed
10	Forced manual labour such as cutting of grasses, sweeping of classrooms and cleaning toilet	150 600	170 510	80 160	100 100	500 1370	2.74	Agreed
11	Denying students food during break time (lunch time)	140 560	150 450	60 120	150 150	500 1280	2.56	Agreed
12	Forcing students to stay in an uncomfortable position for a long time	180 720	150 450	80 160	90 90	500 1420	2.84	Agreed

Table two (2) above shows that flogging students in the hand and buttocks is a common form of corporal punishment used by teacher in secondary schools in the study area. This is shown in item 7 with a weighted mean of 3.2 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Similarly, forcing students to stand in the sun is also another form of corporal punishment used by teachers in the study area as shown in item 8 which gave a mean score of 3.02 which is far above the criterion mean of 2.5. Kneeling down, pulling of ears and hairs are all forms of corporal punishment used by teachers in the study area. This is shown in item 9 on table 2 as 180 respondents strongly agreed, 209 agreed, 85 disagreed while 26 strongly disagreed with a mean score of 3.08 which is far above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Furthermore, forced manual labour such as cutting of grasses, sweeping of classrooms and cleaning of toilet are also forms of corporal punishment used in secondary school students are subjected to in the study area. This is shown in item ten (10) on table two above with a mean score of 2.74 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Another form of corporal punishment in secondary schools in the study area is denying students food during break time (lunch time). This item produced a mean score of 2.56 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5 as indicated on item 11.

Finally, on table two (2) above, the respondents agreed that forcing students to stay in an uncomfortable for a long time is also another form of corporal punishment students in secondary school in the study area are subjected to. This item gave a weighted mean of 2.84 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Research question three: What are the perceived dangers associated with the use of corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Mean response of perceived dangers associated with corporal punishment

No	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	\bar{x}_w	Remarks
13	Emotional trauma which include low self esteem and depression	112 448	178 534	111 222	89 89	500 1293	2.59	Agreed
14	Corporal punishment causes physical scars on students	109 436	188 564	100 200	103 103	500 1303	2.61	Agreed
15	Corporal punishment leads to mental retardation including loss of memory	05 21	07 21	197 394	291 291	500 726	1.45	Disagreed
16	Corporal punishment leads to student's absenteeism in class	166 664	202 606	88 176	44 44	500 1490	2.98	Agreed
17	Corporal punishment causes maiming or even disability in students	177 708	183 549	100 200	40 40	500 1497	2.99	Agreed
18	The fear of corporal punishment leads to students drop out of school	209 836	185 555	62 124	44 44	500 1559	3.12	Agreed
19	Corporal punishment causes psychological trauma in which the students see violence as a normal way of life	103 412	100 300	109 218	188 188	500 1118	2.23	Disagreed

Item 13 in table 3 above shows that out of the five hundred respondents 112 strongly agreed that corporal punishment causes trauma which include low self-esteem and depression in students, 178 agreed, 111 disagreed and 89 strongly disagreed. This gave a mean score of 2.59 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Corporal punishment also causes physical scars in students. This is shown in item 14 with a mean score of 2.61 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Item 15 show that the respondents disagreed that corporal punishment leads to mental retardation including loss of memory. This is indicated in the responses of the respondents as 05 strongly agreed 07 agreed, 197 disagreed while 291 strongly disagreed. This gave a mean score of 1.45 which is less than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Another perceived danger associated with corporal punishment is that it leads to student's absenteeism in class. This statement is supported by the response of the respondents on item 16. This item gave a mean score of 2.98 which is far above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Furthermore, corporal punishment causes maiming or even disability in students. This is shown in item 17 with a mean score of 2.99 which is above the criterion mean of 2.5.

Similarly, the fear of corporal punishment leads to students drop out of school. This item has a mean score of 3.12 which is far above the criterion mean of 2.5 as shown in item 18 on table three (3).

Finally, on table three, the respondents disagreed that corporal punishment causes psychological trauma in which students see violence as a normal way of life. This is shown on item 19 which has a mean score of 2.23 which is less than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Test of Hypothesis

T-test of the influence of corporal punishment on discipline

One sample statistic			One sample test			
N	Mean	Std	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)	Decision P. 0.05
500	17.4720	1.65974	235.390	499	0.000	Sig.

The t calculated is greater than table value and sig.2-tailed of 0.000 is less than 0.05 level of significance, hence null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis accepted. Therefore, there is a significant influence of corporal punishment on student's discipline in secondary schools in Bayelsa State.

IV. Discussion Of Findings

Findings of the study on table one shows that corporal punishment is a valuable tool used by teachers in the study area in instilling appropriate social behaviour in secondary school students. Corporal punishment also helps in eliminating bad and unwanted behaviour in students. The table also shows that secondary school teachers believes that without corporal punishment, schools will be chaotic and disorganized. Similarly, teachers in the study area are of the opinion that corporal punishment makes students to obey school rules and regulations and that corporal punishment makes students to be orderly in class.

There is also the perception among teachers in the study area that the fear of corporal punishment enhances student's academic performance in class. These findings are in line with the submissions of Fareo and Owolabi (2022), Ogbe (2015) and UNESCO (2005)

Furthermore, the study also reveals that flogging students in the hands and buttocks is a common form of corporal punishment in secondary schools in the study area. Also keeping students standing in the sun, kneeling down, pulling of ears and hairs, forced manual labour such as cutting of grasses, sweeping of classrooms and cleaning of toilets, denying students food during lunch time as well as forcing students to stay in an uncomfortable position for a long time are all various forms of corporal punishment secondary school students are subject to in the study area. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Hardy (2004), Oganda and Pells (2015) and Fareo and Owolabi (2022).

The study also revealed that corporal punishment causes emotional trauma which include low self-esteem and depression, scars on students, brings about absenteeism in class, causes maiming or even disability in students as well as drop out of students from school. This finding buttressed the submission of Nakpodia (2010) and Fareo and Owolabi (2022).

Furthermore, the study also find out that corporal punishment does not lead to mental retardation including loss of memory as well as psychological trauma in which students see violence as a normal way of life. These findings are in disagreement with the submission of Fareo and Owolabi (2022) and Nakpodia (2010) whose findings were contrary.

Finally, the study revealed that there is a significant influence of corporal punishment on student's discipline in the study area.

V. Conclusion

Corporal punishment has being an integral part of the educational system of most nations especially the developing countries. Despite the numerous dangers associated with the administration of corporal punishment, most teachers cannot do without it. Till date most teachers sees corporal punishment as a veritable instrument in child upbringing and should necessarily be used. Some teachers strongly believes that spare the rod and spoil the child is not only biblical but real. Hence, some teachers believe in corporal punishment and its power in the discipline of students, classroom control and academic performance. That is why in spite of all the controversies and dangers surrounding the use of corporal punishment in schools, its usage is still very prominent especially among developing countries.

Corporal punishment is prominently used in the study area as most teachers believe highly on its potency in tackling cases of indiscipline among students. This is why there is need for re-orientation of teachers about their perception of the use of corporal punishment in line with alternatives to corporal punishment in student discipline.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

- (1) Seminars and workshops should be periodically organized to improve teacher's knowledge and skill on classroom management, effective discipline methods and children's rights.
- (2) Teachers should be continuously trained in anger management.
- (3) School guidance counselor should always organized talk-shows for teachers in order to re-orientate them on their perception of the importance of corporal punishment on student's discipline.
- (4) Students should be encouraged and praised when the need arises to motivate them to be of good behaviour always.
- (5) Teachers should have good understanding of individual students in their classes to elicit good behaviours.
- (6) School administrators should be empowered in the use of alternative methods of controlling students in schools in the study area.
- (7) Legal regulations and implementation on corporal punishment should be adhered strictly.
- (8) Lastly, school supervisors should effectively enforce regulation concerning corporal punishment in secondary schools in the study area.

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