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CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: A LEGAL AND CRIMINOLOGICAL APPRAISAL OF DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS*

Abstract

This paper critically appraises the persistent use of corporal punishment and physical violence as disciplinary measures in Nigerian schools. Despite the existence of international and national legal provisions safeguarding children's rights to dignity and protection from harm, the Nigerian educational system continues to normalise violent disciplinary practices. The objective of the study is to examine the legal, cultural, and criminological dimensions of corporal punishment in Nigerian schools and to assess whether these practices align with established legal standards and the best interests of the child. Adopting a doctrinal methodology, the paper analyses domestic legal instruments such as the Criminal Code, Penal Code, and the Child Rights Act alongside international human rights frameworks including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The study also draws on criminological literature and media reports to contextualise the socio-legal implications of corporal punishment. In addition, selected case studies and media-reported incidents are examined to illustrate the practical realities of enforcement and institutional response. The selection of these case studies is guided by their relevance to recurring legal and procedural gaps, as well as their representation of diverse geographical and socio-economic contexts. These sources are included particularly because many incidents of child physical abuse remain fragmented, underreported, or never progress to formal adjudication, thereby necessitating reliance on credible media documentation and investigative reports



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to fill existing empirical voids. The findings reveal a significant disjunction between legal protections and actual practice. While Nigerian laws permit moderate physical correction, numerous reported cases reveal extreme and harmful punishments that amount to physical abuse, psychological trauma, and in some instances, fatal outcomes. Cultural and religious beliefs, inadequate teacher training, and weak regulatory enforcement further perpetuate these abuses. The paper concludes that corporal punishment, in its current form and practice, no longer functions as a legitimate disciplinary tool but instead operates as a vehicle for violence against children. It calls for urgent legal reform, enhanced teacher education, and a broader cultural shift towards positive, non-violent disciplinary approaches in Nigerian schools.

Keywords: corporal punishment, schools, physical violence, children

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical violence is a very prevalent form of abuse facing the Nigerian child (UNICEF, 2024). About 90 % of children under five years have undergone some form of psychological and/or physical violence, while 80 % of 5 to 14 year olds have endured physical punishment. This form of violence is meted out to the Nigerian child in various places like the homes, educational institutions, parents' work places, among several other places, and in the society at large (UNICEF, 2024). Violence against the child in schools is the most prevalent, with percentages as high as 90 % in the rural areas and 80 % in urban areas (Ending Violence Against Children in Nigeria, 2016). These figures are however estimates and inconclusive as such violence is often not reported because it occurs mostly within the context where it is regarded as normal such as within families and at schools (UNICEF, 2024).

Anthropologist Riches (1986, 8) defines violence as: "an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses." According to Riches this definition contains the basic properties of violence, which is that the performance of violence requires little by way of specialised skills in its conception or perpetration, and that the practice of violence is highly visible to the senses, and therefore, unmistakable (Riches, 1986, 8). Henry (2000, 17) defines violence as "the use of power to harm another, whatever form it takes." According to Henry (2000, 18), 'harm' in this context is not restricted to physical pain and injury but could involve psychological, emotional, material, economic, social, identity, moral or ethical suffering. The World Health Organisation (hereinafter: WHO) also gives a definition of violence highlighting four basic ways in which a violent act is expressed; they are physical violence, sexual violence, psychological attacks, and deprivation and neglect (WHO, 1996, 6).

The focus of this paper is physical violence. Physical violence involves violent acts that cause pain and physical harm upon the victim. It includes beating, burning, kicking, punching, and the use of objects or weapons (UNESCWA, 2022).

From observations in the society and media reports, the Nigerian child is exposed to violence, in any of the four forms listed above by the WHO, but more particularly physical violence, both at home and in educational institutions, where children spend most of their waking hours. There have been reports of physical torture, neglect, psychological abuse as well as verbal abuse at the hands of child custodians in schools. This is done under the guise of training the child or punishing the child for error or wrongdoing; it is usually done by either caning, physical punishment, deprivation of break time or play, withholding of food, or bullying and psychological abuse of the child. These have also been captured in media reports consistently; for example, Punch newspapers reported that the Police arrested two persons for physically abusing a five-year-old (Punch, 2025a).

Indeed, Nigeria's laws allow for physical correction of a child either by the parent or by whoever acts as custodian of the child in school. However, the mode of correction ought not to outweigh the wrongdoing committed by the child. Section 295(1) – (6) of the Criminal Code Act (Cap. C38, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004; hereinafter: CC) provides for instances where physical correction of a child is allowed. It says that a blow or other force, not in any case extending to a wound or grievous harm, may be justified for the purpose of correction in certain instances such as correction by parents or guardians of children under sixteen years. Sadly, however, this is not the reality. Nigerian school pupils have been subjected to grievous bodily harm, wounding, torture and even death all in the name of physical correction.

This research paper seeks to bring some of these cases to the fore, examine the scope of Nigerian laws that protect children from these forms of abuse in educational institutions, and suggest reforms in the areas where the law is inadequate.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a doctrinal and socio-legal analytical methodology, designed to interrogate both the formal legal framework governing corporal punishment in Nigeria and the lived realities surrounding its continued use in schools. The doctrinal component involves a close examination of primary legal sources—statutes, case law, constitutional provisions, and relevant international instruments—to identify the extent to which Nigerian law aligns with contemporary standards on child protection. Key legislative texts analysed include the CC, Penal Code (Cap. P8, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004; hereinafter: PC), Child Rights Act (Cap. C50, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004; hereinafter: CRA), relevant state adaptations of the Child Rights Law, and judicial decisions that touch on lawful correction, assault, and children's rights. These domestic instruments are read alongside normative frameworks such as the Unit-

ed Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 1577, 20 November 20 November 1989; hereinafter: CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49, 11 July 1990; hereinafter: ACRWC), enabling a comparative evaluation of Nigeria's compliance with international obligations.

Beyond the purely doctrinal work, the research employs a socio-legal contextual analysis. This involves engaging with secondary sources—criminological literature, reports by civil society organisations, education policy documents, and empirical studies—to illuminate the cultural, institutional, and historical factors that sustain violent disciplinary practices. Corporal punishment in Nigeria cannot be fully understood in isolation from broader social attitudes to authority, childhood, and morality; therefore, the methodology deliberately integrates perspectives from child psychology, criminology, and educational theory to enrich the legal analysis.

Given the limited availability of reported judicial decisions on corporal punishment in school settings, the study also relies on media-documented case studies and investigative reports. These cases were selected based on three criteria: (i) the clarity with which they illustrate recurring legal or institutional failures; (ii) their geographical and socio-economic diversity, allowing the study to avoid a narrow or regionalised portrayal of the problem; and (iii) the availability of verifiable information from reputable media outlets or civil society investigations. While media sources do not substitute for formal adjudication, they serve as a critical evidentiary bridge in a context where many incidents of child abuse are unreported, withdrawn due to community pressure, or never reach the courts due to procedural and systemic constraints.

Collectively, the methodological approach allows for a multi-layered analysis that situates legal doctrine within its practical and cultural environment. By combining statutory interpretation, normative assessment, and socio-legal inquiry, the study seeks to offer a holistic understanding of why corporal punishment persists in Nigerian schools and how existing legal frameworks can be strengthened to better protect children from violence.

3. THE CONCEPT OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

According to Bufacchi (2005), it can be safely argued that violence is a ubiquitous phenomenon, present in national and international arenas, and has been part of both public and private spheres. The problems of violence may be cardinal to a proper understanding of political life, yet the concept of violence remains elusive and often misunderstood.

Galtung (1969, 168) posits that, in conceptualising violence, it is necessary to look at it in all its forms. A good typology of violence should conceptualise it in a way which

brings the concept under different phenomena that have something very important in common, yet sufficiently disparate. This concept should also be sub-divided along a dimension that enables us talk not only about the differences between the types, but also about the relations between the types.

The WHO (1996, 6) defines violence as: “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.”

The typology proposed here divides violence into three broad categories according to characteristics of those committing the violent act: self-directed, interpersonal and collective violence. This categorisation differentiates between violence a person inflicts upon himself or herself, violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals, and violence inflicted by larger groups such as states, organised political groups, militia groups and terrorist organisations (WHO, 1996, 6).

Self-directed violence in this regard refers to actions an individual does to inflict harm upon themselves. The harm could be completely manifest or rest in the domain of the mind. Self-directed violence is subdivided into suicidal behaviour and self-abuse. Suicidal behaviour consists of suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide, or deliberate self-injury; it consists also of completed suicide. Self-abuse includes acts such as self-mutilation (WHO, 1996, 6).

Interpersonal violence is mainly classed into two types - the domestic type and the community type. The domestic type involves violent acts among family members and intimate partners. While the majority of this type of interpersonal violence occurs in home/domestic settings, it is not exclusively so. Examples of this type include child abuse, intimate partner or spousal violence and abuse of the elderly. The other type of interpersonal violence is community violence. This consists of violence involving individuals who are unrelated, and who may or may not know each other, usually taking place outside the home. This includes youth violence, random acts of violence, rape or sexual assault by complete strangers, and violence in institutional settings such as schools, workplaces, prisons, nursing homes, markets, bus stations, amongst many others.¹

Collective violence is the type that takes place in the society, motivated by political and economic factors. Collective violence is thus subdivided into social, political and economic violence. This kind of violence is committed by larger groups of individuals or by states. Collective violence with a social agenda or motive includes crimes of hate committed by organised groups, terrorist acts and mob violence. Political violence includes war and related violent conflicts, state violence and similar acts carried out by

¹ This typology of violence is the focus of this paper.

larger groups.² Economic violence includes attacks by larger groups motivated by economic gain such as attacks carried out with the purpose of disrupting economic activity, denying access to essential services, or creating economic division and fragmentation (Galtung, 1969, 177).³

The WHO goes further to explain that within these typologies of violence, there are basically, four ways in which the violent act is expressed – physical violence, sexual violence, psychological attacks, and deprivation and neglect (WHO, 1996, 7). Physical violence involves violent acts that cause physical harm to the victim for example, assault, battery, or wounding. Sexual violence is any violence that forces the victim to participate in unsolicited sexual activities. Psychological violence includes mental torture, verbal abuse, emotional abuse or causing victim to have feelings of low self-worth. Victims of deprivation and neglect are in most cases the vulnerable in society such as children, the elderly or infirm. Acts of deprivation and neglect thus include neglect of the elderly or children, denial of basic needs of a child or one's dependant (WHO, 1996, 7).

Since the late 1990s, there have been reported cases of violence against children such as torture, kidnapping, shootings, sexual harassment, rape, corporal punishment among others. Unfortunately, there has been no proper documentation of most of these violent acts. In response, a global in-depth study of violence against children was commissioned by the United Nations Resolution “United Nations study on violence against children” from 2002 to provide a global picture. The report provided information that various types of violence exist against children within the family, schools, alternative care institutions, detention facilities, places where children work and communities. An estimated 205,153 children between the ages of 0 – 14 years lost their lives to homicidal deaths between 2008 and 2017 (UNODC, 2019).

The predominant cultural belief that children must be submissive to elders, and that contrary behaviour to that must be punished, informs the acceptability of violence in the guise of correction. As such, it is rarely reported. There is therefore a paucity of literature on the subject matter, which however should not be construed as a denial of its existence, but rather highlights the justification of this research topic.

From the WHO study on violence in basic educational institutions, it was found that teachers were more guilty of psychological abuse and were less involved in physical violence (WHO, 1996, 13). Other scholars believe that teachers were dedicated and

² It should be added that in some cases, terrorist actions may not exclusively be socially motivated. Some terrorist acts are politically motivated, and there have been rife allegations even in Nigeria that some terrorist sects are being used as political weapons in the hands of some political groups. Clearly, acts committed by larger groups can have multiple motives.

³ This may include revolutionary acts, kidnapping and abduction with demand for ransom, or violent protests to reject some economic policies.

hardworking individuals, who are committed to moulding the next generation into responsible adults, and as such bullying teachers and physically violent teachers are negligible. However, if this were the reality, one may then wonder where all the varying media reports of teachers meting violence on students come from. The WHO Report stated further that the reporting of acts of violence among learners is a major step in the prevention and mitigation of impact of violence against children in schools, and yet reporting of violence is low among learners. According to the study, while most learners know who to report cases of violence to, the number of learners who actually report cases of violence is about 40 % for physical violence. This low reporting of violence is consistent with documented evidence that acts of violence are hidden and most victims are unable to report due to fear of retribution from their abusers. Sometimes the victim may be so deprived to the level of not viewing the act as violence any longer (WHO, 1996, 17).

4. BORDERLINE BETWEEN CORRECTION AND VIOLENCE

Parents have authority to inflict reasonable bodily chastisement on their children (Chianu, 2007, 6). In determining what is reasonable punishment, the courts in *Lander v. Seaver* ((1859) 32 Vt 114; 76 Am Dec 156) propounded that various considerations must be regarded, the nature of the offence, the apparent motive and disposition of the offender, the influence of the offender's example and conduct upon others, and the sex, age, size and strength of the pupil to be punished.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has defined corporal punishment as “any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light” and has called it a form of violence against children (General Comment No. 8 (2006): The Right of the Child to Protection from Corporal Punishment and Other Cruel or Degrading forms of Punishment (arts. 19; 29, para. 2; and 37, inter alia), United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, CRC/C/GC/8, 2 March 2007). School corporal punishment continues to be a legal means of disciplining children in a third of the world's countries. Although much is known about parents' use of corporal punishment, there is less research about school corporal punishment. There is, therefore, a need to investigate the legality and prevalence of school corporal punishment, the outcomes linked to it, and learn about interventions to reduce and eliminate school corporal punishment around the world (Gershoff, 2017, 228).

Schoolchildren of all ages are subject to corporal punishment, although it is more often used in primary schools (Clacherty *et al.*, 2005b, as quoted in Gershoff, 2017, 230; Human Rights Watch, 2008, as quoted in Gershoff, 2017, 231). In practice, school corporal punishment often involves the use of objects (Gershoff *et al.*, 2015, 5). Children around the world report that they are hit by their teachers with a variety of objects, including sticks (Youssef

et al., 1998, 977), straps (Baker-Henningham *et al.*, 2009, 299) and wooden boards. Children have reported being hit with hands or objects on virtually every part of their bodies, although the hands, arms, head, and buttocks are common targets (Ba-Saddik and Hattab, 2013, 335; Beazley *et al.*, 2006 as quoted in Gershoff, 2017, 226). Other forms of assault administered as corporal punishment include pinching, pulling ears, pulling hair, slapping the face, and throwing objects (Ba-Saddik and Hattab, 2013, 336).

It is also commonplace for teachers and school personnel to punish children by forcing them to stand in painful positions, to stand in the sun for long periods, to sit in an 'invisible chair' for long periods, to hold or carry heavy objects, to dig holes, to kneel on small objects such as stones or rice, to exercise excessively without rest or water, and to ingest noxious substances (e.g., cigarettes) (Feinstein and Mwahombela, 2010, 402; Hyman, 1995, 119).

As mentioned earlier on in this paper, even though school administrators purport to rarely use corporal punishment, and thereby report that they reserve corporal punishment for serious infractions, such as fighting with fellow students, yet interviews with students make clear that corporal punishment is used more widely (Medway and Smircic, 1992, 64). Children in India, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, the United States, and Zambia have reported being subject to corporal punishment for a range of behaviours, including not doing their homework, coming late to class, bringing cell phones to school, running in the hallway, sleeping in class, answering questions incorrectly, having an unacceptable appearance, using bad language, writing in a text book, failing to pay school fees, making noise in class, and being absent (Breen *et al.*, 2015, 134; Morrow and Singh, 2014; Mitchell, 2010, 339). Students also report that an entire class may be subject to corporal punishment for the misbehaviour of a single student or because an entire class or school performs poorly in examinations (Beazley *et al.*, 2006, as quoted in Gershoff, 2017, 226).

In Nigeria, from media reports, it is very evident that typical occurrences go on in educational institutions. Even though majority are unreported,⁴ it does not undermine its prevalence. In February 1997, a Nigerian newspaper published a story of how a student died about a fortnight after he was flogged on the head by his schoolteacher for failing to submit an assignment. Another newspaper in 1998 published a similar story in which a 17-year-old secondary school student collapsed and died later same day consequent upon flogging by his school mistress. In 2005, another newspaper reported the story of an eight-year-old pupil who lost an eye in the course of her teacher flogging her because she was unable to raise a certain amount of money through mendicancy to satisfy him (Chianu, 2007, 5).

⁴ Hence the assertion by Ending Violence Against Children in Nigeria (2016) that most violence in schools are perpetrated by fellow students.

In 2012 in Anambra state in Nigeria, a media report stated that a 12-year-old pupil was flogged to death by her teacher for not doing her homework. She was reportedly flogged numerously till she fainted and was unable to be revived at a nearby hospital she was rushed to for emergency treatment (Daily Post, 2012). A media report in 2016 told of a 10-year-old girl, who was physically abused under the guise of punishment. Her offence was that she allegedly copied a classwork from her textbook into her note during a French class work/test. The girl had been sent to live with the proprietress because her guardian believed that such an arrangement would help mould the girl's character. The victim of the abuse, as part of her punishment, was starved for three consecutive days, incarcerated in a room, which in turn forced her to eat from a carton of biscuits in the room. This resulted in her receiving more severe punishments, like pressing her head into a bucket filled with water (Punch newspapers, 13 November 2016, 57). In 2021, a teacher brutalised a three-year-old for her inability to write (Punch, 2021). In 2024, a teacher made a student carry out a prolonged form of corporal punishment which tragically resulted in the student's death. According to the reports, the students had cracked a joke in class which the teacher had perceived as rude (Punch, 2024). In 2025, a teacher and school owner in Adamawa were remanded after meting out torture to a student, in the name of punishment. The student was discovered kneeling in the hot sun, with his back covered in blood (Punch, 2025b). In the same 2025, a teacher hit a three-year old repeatedly on the head for his inability to write, and this resulted in injury to the child's ear (Punch, 2025c). There was a media report of a similar occurrence in a tertiary institution, where a lecturer meted out corporal punishment to students for mild infractions, an action which is totally against school policy (Leadership, 2024). All these grievous actions were reportedly carried out in the name of corporal punishment.

Corporal punishment continues to occur in schools throughout the world, both in countries where it is legal and countries where it is banned, leading to estimates that millions of children are subject to legalised assault at their schools (WHO, 2021). Although the majority of research to date on corporal punishment has been focused on parents' use of it, there is sufficient data on several potential outcomes of school corporal punishment to engender concern about its continued use around the world, Nigeria inclusive (Gershoff, 2017, 231). The United Nations has clearly stated that corporal punishment violates the CRC. Specifically, Art. 19 thereof guarantees protection from all physical and mental violence, Art. 37 provides for protection from cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment, and Art. 28 provides that school discipline should be consistent with children's 'human dignity.' Given the above that school corporal punishment is a form of violence that violates children's human rights, arguments about its effects on children are, or at least ought to be, moot.

Judging by the prevalence of the use of corporal punishment in Nigerian schools over the years and even till date, one would wonder whether it has fulfilled the objective of its existence, as it is evident from its repeated deployment, that it fails to achieve any deep-rooted character moulding, but rather causes pain and at the worst death to its recipients. This is an obvious transmogrification of the quest for discipline to a crime of violence, meted out on the most vulnerable of society, who are deserving of protection from anything that threatens their physical and emotional well-being. There is a need for all stakeholders to adhere to the intendment of the law on this, to wit, reasonable correction without causing grievous harm to the recipient. To foster this, it is advantageous to understand the causative factors that occasion physical abuse on pupils in Nigerian schools, as well as the effects and consequences of physically violating a child in a bid to correct same.

5. CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE ON THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL PUPIL

The idea of corporal punishment in schools was obviously intended to enhance academic performance as well as moral uprightness of pupils. In addition, it is a means of justice, fairness and order, in line with general aims of criminal punishment (Okonkwo and Naish, 2005, 28-37). Ordinarily, the occasional resort to corporal punishment, meted out in line with the manner stipulated by law may be acceptable. However, the abuse and torture, resulting into harm and degradation of the child, is what this paper sets out to highlight and address. More emphatically, corporal punishment is valuable if used appropriately. There is a huge difference between the appropriate use of it and the abuse of it. Section 295(6) of the CC states that the punishment should be commensurate to the offence, it should not cause grievous bodily harm or wounding, that it should be reasonable, and that it should be understandable by the recipient. The four requirements create a sort of boundary which the parents and guardians, as well as their delegates must not cross. Absence, therefore, of any of these negates the intention of the correction. Viewing the situation with criminological lens, it is of necessity to examine the trend in a holistic manner. The question that would arise is why should a teacher cross the boundary of correction and discipline to abuse and cause violence?

5.1. CAUSES OF PHYSICAL ABUSE ON PUPILS

The culture of violence is existent in the school system, with the teachers themselves not exempted from being at the receiving end. Teachers in turn vent their frustrations on pupils, and misdirect their aggression towards same, innocent and guilty alike. These

frustrations exist as a result of a multiplicity of reasons such as inadequate remuneration, delayed or non-payment of wages, generally poor conditions of service, among others⁵ (This Day, 2025). Some of these frustrated teachers let loose their bottled-up bitterness when pupils minimally upset them. The consequence is that corporal punishment, which is otherwise meant to be used sparingly and for grave offences, is used frequently and thus abused (Chianu, 2007, 2).

Another cause of the high prevalence of corporal punishments in schools is the proliferation and mushrooming of private schools, occasioned by the substandard state of public schools in the country. According to the Universal Basic Education Commission (hereinafter: UBEC), there are 91,252 private schools (primary and secondary) across the nation (UBEC, 2022). Cashing in on the latter, and in a bid to reduce costs, it is not uncommon to find school proprietors employing untrained teachers, some of whom are themselves fresh secondary school leavers, who are in their late teens and early twenties, ill-equipped on modes of early childhood and child education. They do not possess the emotional balance and temperance needed to remain calm in the face of pressure and tantrums characteristic of children and rebellious pupils. The natural consequence of this is a misuse of the teacher's authority by a quick resort to the cane (Chianu, 2007, 2-3).

With a faulty value system, filled with flagrant display of impunity in misconduct by otherwise role models, society has rubbed off on children and the youth wrongly (Ogedegbe and Ikhidero, 2024, 15). Children nowadays are not oblivious of these ills in the society, and worse still, regard the seeming ability to get away with wrongdoing.⁶ There is no gainsaying the fact that the society in which schools are situated, is in turmoil. Cheating, injustice, filthy lifestyles, heartrending violence and crimes, and most brazen corruption have gone on in all tiers of government. Young school children are not shielded from this and as such emulate these lifestyles, which they practise at home and at school. Thus, school children are prone to violence, obscene language, stealing and base home training. This new trend has forced teachers to seek a short-term solution to maintaining order in their classrooms by using the cane.

In some cases, teachers may be willing to jettison corporal punishment, but it has been found that a lack of skill/training to manage students with positive discipline strategies, coupled with deep-seated cultural norms and strong religious inclinations, make these set of teachers to fall back to corporal punishment (Dorathy *et al.*, 2025, 265).

⁵ Primary school teachers in the nation's federal capital territory were on strike between March and July 2025 over unpaid minimum wage and other welfare concerns.

⁶ For instance, in 2018, a media report stated that some students of a tertiary institution refused to pay school fees, claiming that 'snakes swallowed the money' (Benue state university shut down, 2018). This defence is obviously a fallout from the alleged claim by a Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (hereinafter: JAMB) employee, who claimed that a python swallowed some missing amount of money belonging to the Parastatal264 (Vanguard, 2018).

Still, in spite of the enumerated causes of the abuse of corporal punishment in schools, they are in no way justifiable.

5.2. EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE ON SCHOOL PUPILS

It has been found that the use of corporal punishment as a means of discipline in schools has caused physical and psychological harm, and even disruption to children's education (Dorathy *et al.*, 2025, 264). Corporal punishment tends to affect optimal performance in learning. While nothing in the statistics shows that children who are often beaten perform better, there is in fact a direct link between disinterest in learning and low performance in academics in children who were exposed to such abuse. In a study in Nigeria, children who attended a school that allowed corporal punishment (slapping, pinching, hitting with a stick) had lower receptive vocabulary, lower executive functioning, and lower intrinsic motivation than children who attended a school that did not allow corporal punishment (Talwar *et al.*, 2011, 810). The strongest demonstration of the links between school corporal punishment and children's learning to date has come from UNICEF's Young Lives study of children in four developing countries, namely Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam (Ogando Portela and Pells, 2015). The study followed children over time and linked corporal punishment at age eight to school performance at age 12, thus eliminating the possibility that children's later school performance could have justified the deployment of prior corporal punishment. Children from each country reported increased rates of school corporal punishment (from 20 % to 80 % of the children) when they were eight years of age. The more the corporal punishment they received at age eight, the lower their scores were in mathematics, in two samples (Peru and Vietnam) and the lower their vocabulary scores, in Peru. Importantly, in none of the countries did school corporal punishment at age eight predict better school performance at age 12.

Children tend to become nervous, and have a perpetual fear of being beaten during learning such that they end up not being able to assimilate anything during classes due to fear and anxiety of the pain of the corporal punishment and the violence (Gershoff, 2017, 232, 233).

Closely linked to the above, it has been observed that corporal punishment affects the mental health of children as well as their psychological well-being. School corporal punishment was the strongest predictor of depression among school children in a study in Hungary (Csorba *et al.*, 2001, 20), and this was more so than corporal punishment by parents. Among a sample of Tanzanian children, school corporal punishment was linked to decreased empathic behaviour (Hecker *et al.*, 2014, 888). In Pakistan, school corporal punishment was linked to greater hostility, pessimism, and depression (Naz *et al.*, 2011, 137). In a cross-sectional study in Egypt, children who received corporal pun-

ishment reported that they were also more disobedient, stubborn, verbally aggressive, and likely to lie than children who did not receive corporal punishment (Youssef *et al.*, 1998, 981).

Psychologists are opposed to any aggression towards children, including the use of physical punishment. One common concern is that the use of physical punishment often leads to aggressive behaviour in children. Although some other psychologists counter this, it has been established in some empirical studies that there exists a relationship between physical punishment of children of varying ages and the propensity to become aggressive adults. The qualitative studies of clinical populations found that most aggressive individuals had histories of parental physical punishment (Kandel, 1992). By extension, it can safely be assumed that physical punishment at the instance of school teachers can also beget aggression in children. The prevalence of physical punishment in schools across the nation may be responsible for the restiveness and aggression recorded in different groups of juvenile delinquents, which may even continue into adulthood.

Physical injury, bodily harm and even death are other effects of corporal punishment. From some of the Nigerian examples given above, it can be seen that these have been some of the resultant effects of such abuse and violence. Even though there is no empirical evidence to show that corporal punishment will always result in any of the above, even one of such is already too many and significant. Studies in a range of countries have documented high rates of injury related to school corporal punishment. Any injury to a child from corporal punishment is regrettable and a death at the hands of teachers is particularly tragic, especially given that it was preventable (Gershoff, 2017, 232).

Though rare, corporal punishment can engender a chain of tragic events, done in a bid to resort to self-help, owing to feelings of dissatisfaction due to perceived laxity in dealing with infractions of this nature. Some parents have been reported to take the law into their hands by attempting to get even with a teacher that they perceive to have crossed the boundary of correction to violence. Though under-reported, there have been incidences of parents slapping teachers, having them beaten up for beating their wards. In Anambra state in Nigeria for example, a school teacher was killed by a parent for flogging a pupil (Vanguard, 2017).

Even as far back as the early 20th century, German writer Magnus Hirschfeld⁷ wrote extensively on sexual crimes and abuse, although his work was focused on what he described as sexual minorities (Britannica, 2025). The aspect of his works that is of interest in this research paper is in one of his writings, where he described the amount of

⁷ German physician who was an important theorist of sexuality and a prominent advocate of gay rights in the early 20th century.

physical abuse children go through in the hands of adult caregivers, and how it was even socially accepted. Hirschfeld wrote on corporal punishment “the word *Prügelpädagogen*, which has no single English equivalent, describes educators who use beatings and other forms of physical violence against children as part of their methods of discipline” (Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V., 2017).⁸ Hirschfeld further questioned the acceptability of this form of everyday abuse, while society condemned non-harmful actions in an exaggerated manner. To emphasise his point, Hirschfeld compared how society praised a teacher who inflicted physical pain on children and then seek to punish a teacher who “acted tenderly” towards a female pupil (Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V., 2017). From Hirschfeld’s works in this subject area, one can deduce his abhorrence of corporal punishment, as well as his acceptance of actions tending towards sexual perversion which he deemed harmless. Although the author of this paper does not in any way subscribe to his notions on harmless paedophilia, an interesting corollary of excessive corporal punishment is what is known as sexualised corporal punishment. In this context, some scholars have related corporal punishment as a subtle means of sexual violence, a phenomenon known as sexualised corporal punishment (Turner *et al.*, 2024). In this regard, teachers mask sexual abuse in administering corporal punishment, either by the parts of the body they hit (buttocks, breasts), or by using vulgar language as they administer the punishment (Butt and Hearn, 1998, 204).

The effects of the abuse experienced from the different forms of corporal punishment are far reaching and utterly defeat the need for the mode of punishment in the first place. It must be pointed out that this paper is not in any way to exonerate bad behaviour on the part of youngsters. Corporal punishment is not the only means of effective discipline and ought to be a last resort, as some of the school owners claim is their ethos. The thrust is that if and when resorted to, the proper use of corporal punishment, as specified, must be adhered to.

6. LEGAL STATUS OF AND LEGAL ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal punishment is legally prohibited in schools in 128 countries and allowed in 69 countries. It is banned in all of Europe and most of South America and East Asia. In the developed world, only three industrialised countries - Australia, the Republic of South Korea, and the United States - continue to allow school corporal punishment. In Australia, school corporal punishment is banned in five of its eight states and territories,

⁸ Hirschfeld was prompted to write the critique after revelations about the unbelievable mistreatment of children in the state-funded Bavarian children’s home Mariaquell, where around seventy children suffered sustained physical abuse and cruelty under the governance of a medical doctor and a Jesuit pastor.

while in the United States it is banned from public schools in 31 of 50 states (Gershoff, 2017, 225). As of today, while the Republic of South Korea has prohibited corporal punishment in schools, it is now 33 of the 50 states of the United States have banned corporal punishment. In Australia, corporal punishment was completely banned in private schools by 2019, but still allowed in some government schools in the Western Australia region. It is worthy of note that if an adult were to be hit with an object such as schoolchildren are, it would be considered an assault in any of these countries. The 69 countries that legally permit school corporal punishment, to say nothing of the 149 countries that allow corporal punishment in homes, are not providing children with equal protection under the law, despite their more vulnerable status (Gershoff, 2017, 225).

International legal instruments discourage corporal punishment in schools and in fact advocate for its outright removal. The United Nations has stated that corporal punishment violates the CRC because it erodes the rights of a child to human dignity, and subjects the child to physical and mental violence, cruel and inhuman or degrading punishment, and therefore has called on countries to ban corporal punishment in all settings, including schools, in order to ensure the safety of children and to be in compliance with the CRC (Pinheiro, 2006). Likewise, section 11(d) of the CRA prohibits actions that strip children of their dignity, and expose them to servitude while in custody of parents or at school.

Generally, in Nigeria, by law, a teacher has authority to inflict corporal punishment on a pupil. As stated earlier on in this paper, the CC states that corporal punishment should be commensurate to the offence, it should not cause grievous bodily harm or wounding, that it should be reasonable, and that it should be understandable by the recipient. Furthermore, according to section 295(4) of the CC, a parent can delegate this authority to correct to any person whom he or she entrusts permanently or temporarily with the governance or custody of his or her child. These four requirements create a boundary which parents and guardians, as well as their delegates, must not cross. Actions against teachers' authority to inflict corporal punishment are grounded either on excessiveness or on the absence of the teacher's authority in the first place.

A teacher challenged for excessive use of corporal punishment may have recourse to some defences. The first of such is parental delegation. Our penal laws empower parents to inflict reasonable bodily chastisement on their children, and this authority can be delegated to school teachers. This is provided for in section 295(1)-(6) of the CC, and section 55 of the PC. However, in a situation where the parent or guardian expressly withholds such authority, the teacher's authority ceases. Express withhold may be either verbal or written. As provided by law, such authority can only be withdrawn by a parent and not a pupil. It is of no import whether the school in question is a government-owned or privately-owned school, since the law makes no provision for any such

distinction. Ultimately, the courts interest is in the all-round welfare of the child, such that a parent's reason for withholding must not be frivolous and the teacher must not be excessive; a balance must be struck between the two.⁹

Another defence a school teacher may have recourse to when the authority to inflict corporal punishment is challenged, is the fact that such actions were borne out of necessity. Necessity is used here to mean that a teacher is excused from liability if he/she acts under pressure of circumstance to protect life or health of other pupils in a reasonable manner, and with no other acceptable alternative. Over a century ago, in *Patterson v Nutter* ((1886) 57 Am Rep 818, 819), a United States Judge suggested that the source of a teacher's authority to administer corporal punishment has shifted from parental delegation to the necessities of society in which the schools exist. The Judge stated that the master of a school is necessarily invested with much discretionary power; he is placed in charge of a large number of children with varying temperaments and ages, and must effectively govern them. The manner by which he chooses to maintain the order (through punishment and issuing of rules) is largely a product of his sense of judgement and at his discretion. The same principle was laid down in New Zealand, in the case of *Hansen v Cole* ((1890) 9 NZLR 272).

Preservation of discipline is another of the defences available to school teachers whose authority to inflict corporal punishment is being challenged. This defence is closely linked to the defence of necessity, because in this case, in order for a teacher to maintain discipline among the various children in their care, he or she must necessarily instil some form of discipline by using the cane, to prevent a total breakdown of law and order, as well as to avoid the crumbling of the entire school system. If teachers fail in this duty and harm is done to a school child as a result of the teacher's lack of supervision, the school would be liable in a tort of negligence. This was the decision in *Beaumont v Surrey County Council* ((1963) 61 LGR 443).

The last of the defences open to teachers accused of excessive use of corporal punishment is when the teachers act in pursuit of a public duty. Public duty presupposes the existence of public policy. Public policy is the principle that states that no one should lawfully do that which has a tendency to be injurious to the public or against public good; it varies with time, habits, opinions, economic and social needs, customs, and the moral aspirations of the community. Schoolteachers, especially those in government-owned schools, are regarded as agents of the government, and as such share in government's Constitutional duty of public safety, order, morality and health. This is provided for in sections 4(2)(7) and 7, and item 2(a) Second Schedule to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Cap. C23, Laws of the Federation

⁹ At common law, the schoolteacher's authority to inflict corporal punishment is implied in his favour so long as the punishment is reasonable and for a just cause. See: Chianu, 2007, 6-9.

of Nigeria, 1999; hereinafter: 1999 Constitution). As far back as 1977, the Supreme Court of the United States held in the case of *Ingraham v Wright* ((1977) 430 US 651; 97 S Ct 1401) that parental authority over children while in school is subservient to that of the teachers, who possess governmental authority to preserve order and correct pupils' behaviour. In two reported Nigerian decisions on corporal punishment, the courts held that teachers' authority to inflict corporal punishment is founded on public duty. In *Olusa v Commissioner of Education, Ondo State and Olaniyan* ((1985) HCNLR 1133), a school teacher invited the plaintiff to serve her in her quarters after regular school hours. The school teacher later discovered that her money was missing from the house, and suspecting the plaintiff, she flogged her and locked her up in a room in a bid to extract a confession from her. The unfortunate pupil could not contest this infringement of her rights to personal liberty till she graduated from the school two years later. The pupil's action for false imprisonment was held statute-barred and the court also held that, pursuant to section 35(1)(d) of 1999 Constitution, an adult is empowered to detain a minor for the purposes of preventing him/her from committing a crime. The legality of this action in itself is questionable. A teacher has authority to send a pupil on errand so long as the errand has educational value. The authority of a teacher to send a pupil on errands was settled almost a century ago in the case of *Smith v Martin and Kingston Upon-Hull Corporation* ((1911) 2 KB 775). The law, however, frowns upon an errand that has an amorous or religious undertone, nor should any errand be such as would be classified as exploitative or forced labour. The question would then be whether an errand to wash dishes and sweep [as was the case in this instance] is educational.

In *Ekeogu v Aliri* ((1991) 1 NSCC (Pt II) 343), there was a case of theft within the neighbourhood of the school and the pupils were urged by the teachers to go and watch the ensuing mob on the suspected thief with the intention that they learn a lesson thereby. Thereafter, the school bell rang calling the pupils back to class and as they ran back in, a teacher lashed at them indiscriminately. One of such whips landed on the plaintiff's eye, permanently damaging the eye as a result. The Supreme Court held that the punishment was excusable on the ground of accident.

A note of caution is to be exercised in private owned schools; where a parent sends his child to a private school, a contract is entered into between the parent and the school board. The contract entered into here is not the type referred to under the law of contract, but usually contained in the school policy signed and accepted by parents at the entry point. A parent may either expressly or by implication [arising from the school's promise not to inflict corporal punishment] withdraw the teacher's authority to corporally chastise the child. Thus, the teacher's authority ends (Chianu, 2007, 15).

In contemporary times, some of the states in Nigeria have expressly prohibited the use of corporal punishment in schools. Though very few, they include Lagos, Ekiti,

Nasarawa and Katsina. In post policy evaluations, Lagos and Katsina have experienced better behaviour and reduced truancy among the students (Deutsche Welle, 2023). In spite of this, the society's receptiveness of ban is low. It is unthinkable that a Nigerian child would be allowed to develop and grow without the deploy of the "rod", a tool endorsed by the saying 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. This belief is deeply entrenched in strong cultural and religious ethos, which endorse harsh disciplinary methods. As a result, teachers and school administrators continue to use this method, believing it to be the only effective means of maintaining order in the school settings. Proponents of corporal punishment also argue that, when moderately applied, it serves as an immediate corrective measure that deters indiscipline and reinforces respect for authority—particularly in contexts where alternative behavioural management tools are limited or poorly understood. Even where pupils are unjustifiably recipients of physical violence in the name of corporal punishment, a lack of awareness as to their rights and means of seeking redress hinders any justice for them in this regard. There is also the issue of weak and ineffective institutional framework that prevents implementation of bans (Dorathy *et al.*, 2025, 276).

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Corporal punishment in schools has been an age-long practice in many countries all over the world, with varying degrees of acceptability. In Nigeria, cultural and religious biases make it very difficult to totally do away with corporal punishment. Statistics world over show the difference in prevalence in different countries. While most schools justify its use as a quest to mould the character of children, the reality shows that there is a thin line between correction and abuse or violence. Clearly, the intention of advocates of corporal punishment is not to maim or harm children in any way; as such a strict adherence to the original intention must be stuck to.

Children need to be protected but they also need to be disciplined. Ultimately, the overall best interest of every child is the interest of any good justice system, and this must be vigorously pursued. International instruments, as well as domestic laws emphasise this objective. For instance, Art. 4(1) of the ACRWC provides that in all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration. Similarly, the CRA provides in section 1 that the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration in any action concerning a child by an individual, public or private body, institutions of service, court of law, administrative or legislative authority. Similar provisions are contained in Art. 3(1) of the CRC.

Death, permanent physical injury or psychological damage are clearly not in the purview of the best interest of the child. The sad reality, however, is that there have been tragic occurrences and outcomes of the use of corporal punishment in schools. Such incidents should no longer be regarded as corporal punishment but as criminal acts of violence which must be eradicated completely from Nigerian schools. It is interesting to note that some of the court cases, both domestic and foreign, have not clearly named these acts of violence as such. In the New Zealand case of *Hansen v Cole* ((1890) 9 NZLR 272), a school teacher caned a student on the thumb, as a result of which an infection set in due to improper care. In the child's action for a tort of battery, it was held that a person suffering a wrong, whether on his person or otherwise, cannot claim from the wrongdoer compensation for consequence which, if he had exercised prudence, would not have followed. This approach, with due respect, seems to be legalistic to the neglect of the well-being of the wounded child.

In the United States case of *Ingraham v Wright* ((1977) 430 US 651; 97 S Ct 1401), one of the appellants was subjected to more than 20 strikes with a paddle while being held over a table in the principal's office, for failing to respond to his teacher's instructions with alacrity. As a result of the severe paddling, he suffered hematoma requiring medical attention, and this kept him from school for several days. Another pupil was paddled several times for minor infractions; he was struck on his arms in the process and this deprived him the full use of his arms for a week. On a claim that their rights not to be subjected to cruel and unusual punishment had been violated, the United States Supreme Court held that the Constitutional provisions on such rights did not apply to corporal punishment as a means of maintaining discipline in public schools. Again, while this position may be legally correct, it is worrisome that neglect to chastise teachers who inflict such grievous bodily harm on pupils in the name of discipline seems to be a subtle legalisation of violence against children.

The two Nigerian cases of corporal punishment earlier discussed in previous sections showcase the above point even more vividly. In both cases of *Olusa v Commissioner of Education, Ondo State and Olaniyan* and *Ekeogu v Aliri*, there seem to be a legalisation of violence against the school pupils.

All the above decisions, both within and outside Nigeria, are almost unbelievable and leaves one wondering whether the best interest of the child in each was pursued. They are clearly at variance with both local and international instruments for the protection of children. School corporal punishment is consistently linked to negative effects to and harmful consequences on children's learning, physical safety, and mental health, and life, which has the potential of culminating in acts of violence towards the very children society is required to protect and nourish.

Children by their nature cannot behave well all of the time; leaving a child to the throes of their misbehaviour can be a detriment to their own learning, as well as a distraction to the learning of their peers, not mentioning it being also be a major source of general disorderliness in the school. It is thus necessary, the world over, for school personnel to institute a code for discipline, and at the same time maintain a balance between preserving classroom orderliness and inflicting violence and harm upon children. There needs to be a distinct line drawn between correction - even with the cane - and physical violence. Corporal punishment ought to be restricted to very rare and severe cases, and be meted out by selected teachers, with an approved cane. Severe cases such as bullying, cheating, stealing, violence, among others, would necessarily attract corporal punishment. Indiscriminate use of any object, resulting in wounds and bodily harm, physical abuse of any nature as a result of its use should be completely eradicated. The negative effects far outweigh any good that may lie in the legitimacy of corporal punishment. There is need for an urgent reform in the law prescribing stiff penalties for occasions where there is an *ultra vires* act on the part of the teachers in using this method of discipline.

In the other more frequent infractions by children, such as noise-making, distraction, laziness, quarrelling (which are commonplace among healthy children), other effective modes of punishment that are geared towards positive motivation ought to be employed. Reward for good behaviour and positive competitive drive instilled in students to encourage good behaviour, are some viable options to punishment for lesser infractions. On no account should children be punished for academic deficiency, lateness (especially for elementary school pupils), and other situations the children may find themselves, which are beyond their control.

In view of the above, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Parents and the entire society, particularly teachers need to understand that meting out violence to children in the name of discipline is barbaric and harmful to the development of such a child. The government needs to work on the buy-in of the society by providing enlightenment on the dangers of physical abuse of children.
2. Even though Nigerian laws allow moderate and commensurate use of the cane, it is suggested that strict adherence to stipulated laws be maintained. Infractions on the part of teachers must be dealt decisively with. Each time physical injury is caused as a result of corporal punishment, that should outweigh any necessity for it, and the perpetrator must bear the full consequences of the law for their actions. Teachers must also undergo mandatory trainings on positive discipline strategies to minimise the quest for the use of corporal punishment to manage their students.

3. The age range whereby corporal punishment is allowed ought to be fixed at a minimum as well as a maximum, particularly where the use of the cane is allowed. Nigerian penal laws completely exonerate any child below the age of seven years from criminal liability, by virtue of section 30 of the CC. This should be extended to the application of corporal punishment. There ought to be a total outlaw of the use of the cane on children below the age of seven years in schools.
4. Underreporting of incidences of violence is a reality. The reason for this is the fear of worse torture and violence inflicted upon the child who reports. To curb this, and in order to encourage reporting so as to bring perpetrators to book, there ought to be a mechanism whereby the identity of the complainant is protected, and in cases where a teacher or school personnel is facing charges for violence against a child, there necessarily must be a signed undertaking on the part of the teacher or school that no further abuse will be inflicted on the child.
5. Pupils with known health conditions such as asthma, sickle cell anaemia or any other medical condition that has been disclosed to the school, must be exempted from corporal punishment altogether, without necessarily any express withdrawal by parent or guardian.
6. School-teachers who have on more than one occasion been found guilty of acts of violence towards pupils should not only be liable in civil or criminal laws, but must be declared unfit to tutor children.

Legislative reform, advocacy, and education are needed to ensure that acts of violence under the aegis of school corporal punishment must be abandoned once and for all, so that children can attend school without fear of violence or death at the hands of school personnel.

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**TJELESNO KAŽNJAVANJE I FIZIČKO NASILJE: PRAVNA
I KRIMINOLOŠKA PROCJENA DISCIPLINSKIH PRAKSI U
NIGERIJSKIM ŠKOLAMA****Sažetak**

U ovome se radu kritički analiziraju tjelesno kažnjavanje i fizičko nasilje kao disciplinske mjere u nigerijskim školama. Unatoč međunarodnim i nacionalnim pravnim odredbama koje štite dječja prava na dostojanstvo i zaštitu od nasilja, nigerijski obrazovni sustav i dalje nasilne disciplinske prakse smatra normalnima. Cilj je istraživanja ispitati pravne, kulturne i kriminološke dimenzije tjelesnog kažnjavanja u nigerijskim školama te procijeniti u kojoj mjeri takve prakse odgovaraju utvrđenim pravnim standardima i najboljim interesima djeteta. Primjenjujući doktrinarni pristup, u radu se analiziraju nacionalni pravni mehanizmi poput Kaznenog zakonika (Criminal Code – primjenjuje se u južnim saveznom državama) i Kaznenog zakonika (Penal Code – primjenjuje se u sjevernim saveznom državama) i Zakona o pravima djeteta, uz istodobnu usporedbu s međunarodnim okvirima zaštite ljudskih prava, uključujući Konvenciju UN-a o pravima djeteta i Afričku povelju o pravima i dobrobiti djeteta. Istraživanje se također oslanja na kriminološku literaturu i medijske izvještaje kako bi kontekstualiziralo društveno-pravne implikacije tjelesnog kažnjavanja. Osim toga, analizirane su odabrane studije slučaja i medijski izvještaji kako bi se prikazala praktična stvarnost provedbe i institucionalnog odgovora. Odabir ovih studija slučaja vođen je njihovom relevantnošću za ponavljajuće pravne i proceduralne praznine, kao i njihovom reprezentativnošću u različitim geografskim i socioekonomskim kontekstima. Ovi izvori uključeni su osobito zbog činjenice da mnogi incidenti fizičkog zlostavljanja djece ostaju fragmentirani, nedovoljno prijavljeni ili nikada ne dolaze do formalnog sudskog postupka, što nameće potrebu oslanjanja na vjerodostojnu medijsku dokumentaciju i istraživačke izvještaje kako bi se popunile postojeće empirijske praznine. Spoznaje ukazuju na znatnu razliku između pravne zaštite i stvarne prakse. Dok nigerijski zakoni dopuštaju umjerenu tjelesnu kaznu kao oblik discipliniranja, brojni prijavljeni slučajevi otkrivaju ekstremne i štetne kazne koje se svrstavaju u fizičko zlostavljanje, psihološku traumu, a u nekim slučajevima i smrtonosne ishode. Kulturna i vjerska uvjerenja, neadekvatno obrazovanje nastavnika te slaba provedba propisa dodatno pogoršavaju ta zlostavljanja. U radu se zaključuje da tjelesno kažnjavanje u svojoj sadašnjoj formi i praksi više nije sredstvo discipliniranja, već oblik nasilja nad djecom. Naglašava se hitna potreba za pravnom reformom, kvalitetnijom edukacijom nastavnika te kulturnom promjenom usmjerenom prema pozitivnim, nenasilnim metodama discipliniranja u nigerijskim školama.

| Ključne riječi: *tjelesno kažnjavanje, škole, fizičko nasilje, djeca*