

# Understanding Perceptions of Teachers and Pupils towards Corporal Punishment for Pupils with Disabilities in Primary Schools in Tanzania: Implications for the Promotion of Social Justice in Education

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## ABSTRACT

In Tanzanian primary schools, corporal punishment is legally permitted and widely practiced as a disciplinary method, often extending to pupils with disabilities. This study explores the perceptions of teachers and pupils towards the use of corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities, focusing on its implications for social justice and inclusive education. A qualitative approach, employing a phenomenological design, was used to understand the lived experiences of the participants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with two head teachers and eight subject teachers, as well as focus group discussions involving ten pupils with disabilities, all purposively sampled. Thematic analysis revealed that corporal punishment is commonly justified by teachers as a means of addressing indiscipline, despite its negative impact on pupils' emotional well-being and academic engagement. Some teachers recognized the contradiction between corporal punishment and inclusive education principles, highlighting its violation of the rights of pupils with disabilities. Pupils described feeling marginalized and fearful, highlighting the adverse effects of this practice on their sense of belonging and learning environment. The study recommends a shift towards alternative disciplinary approaches that uphold the rights and dignity of all pupils, particularly those with disabilities. It emphasizes the need for targeted professional development programs to equip teachers with non-violent strategies for managing classroom behavior. Furthermore, it calls for the enforcement of inclusive education policies and the creation of support networks to foster socially just and equitable learning environments. By addressing these issues, this study contributes to the discourse on inclusive education and social justice, advocating for systemic reforms to align Tanzanian educational practices with global standards.

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## INTRODUCTION

Corporal punishment, defined as the physical infliction of pain or discomfort as a disciplinary measure, is a common practice in many educational systems globally, including low-income countries where it exacerbates inequalities and undermines children's academic achievement and well-being (Lopes & Oliveira, 2017; Schulte, 2020). Despite its long-standing presence, research highlights its detrimental effects on

children's psychological well-being, academic achievement, and overall development into healthy, productive adults (Schulte, 2020). In low-income countries, corporal punishment in schools is an under-addressed form of violence that exacerbates public health disparities and entrenches socio-economic inequalities. This issue becomes particularly alarming when it disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, such as pupils with disabilities, raising significant ethical and human rights concerns (Houwing & Bussey, 2017).

Globally, there has been a paradigm shift toward non-violent, inclusive disciplinary approaches that prioritize the rights, dignity, and well-being of children (Reyneke & Reyneke, 2018). International frameworks, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, advocate for the protection of children from all forms of violence, including corporal punishment, while emphasizing their right to education and human dignity (UNICEF, 2015). Regional initiatives, such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, have further bolstered these efforts, calling for the eradication of corporal punishment in schools (Gershoff, 2017). These frameworks underline a collective commitment to promoting alternative disciplinary strategies rooted in social justice and inclusive education.

In the African context, however, corporal punishment remains prevalent, particularly in primary schools across the region, including Tanzania (Han, 2014; Njelesani et al., 2018). While traditionally viewed as an effective method to control student behavior, this practice often perpetuates power imbalances between teachers and pupils, undermining children's rights and overall well-being. Pupils with disabilities face disproportionate impacts of corporal punishment due to systemic inequalities, insufficient teacher training on inclusive practices, and cultural perceptions that view disabilities as disciplinary challenges (Kambuga et al., 2018). This makes them not only more vulnerable to physical and emotional harm but also more likely to experience exclusion from meaningful learning opportunities.

In Tanzanian primary schools, corporal punishment has historically been regarded as a culturally accepted and effective method of maintaining discipline, including when addressing challenging behaviors among pupils with disabilities (Sungwa et al., 2022). This perception is deeply rooted in societal norms and a lack of awareness about alternative, non-violent disciplinary strategies. However, this traditional approach has faced mounting criticism for its incompatibility with modern educational principles, which emphasize the importance of creating inclusive and equitable learning environments. The continued reliance on corporal punishment not only undermines the dignity and rights of pupils but also contradicts Tanzania's commitments to international frameworks, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which advocate for the elimination of all forms of violence against children. These tensions emphasize the need for a critical examination of disciplinary practices in Tanzanian schools and the development of alternative approaches that align with the principles of social justice and inclusive education.

Existing literature indicates that studies examining corporal punishment in Tanzanian schools have primarily focused on its prevalence and general impacts on children (Ishengoma, 2012; Hecker et al., 2014; Sungwa et al., 2022). Limited research has been conducted on how corporal punishment uniquely affects pupils with disabilities and their teachers' perceptions of this practice (Kambuga et al., 2018). While there is growing recognition of the incompatibility of corporal punishment with inclusive education principles (Gershoff et al., 2015), studies rarely explore how it undermines social justice and equitable learning environments (Schulte, 2020). This study bridges this gap by examining these dynamics and investigating the implications of corporal punishment on fostering equitable and inclusive education in Tanzanian primary schools (Lopes & Oliveira, 2017).

Emerging practices offer alternatives to corporal punishment that align with inclusive education principles. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative discipline approaches have been successfully piloted in some African schools, demonstrating reduced behavioral issues and improved teacher-student relationships (Lakshman, 2018; Reinke et al., 2013). In Tanzania, organizations such as Save the Children have introduced non-violent disciplinary methods through teacher training programs (Save the

Children, 2016), although their implementation remains limited (Mendenhall, 2017). Expanding these initiatives could provide a foundation for reducing reliance on corporal punishment and fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity in schools (Harris & Graham, 2013).

This study examines teachers' perceptions of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities in Tanzanian primary schools from a social justice perspective. Although studies have examined the prevalence of corporal punishment in Tanzanian schools, limited attention has been given to the experiences and perceptions of pupils with disabilities and their teachers. Research focusing on how corporal punishment affects social justice and inclusive education principles remains sparse. This study bridges this gap by examining the unique dynamics of corporal punishment in the context of disability and its implications for fostering equitable learning environments. By addressing this underexplored area, the study offers insights to inform inclusive education policies and practices in Tanzania.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the theoretical framework and scholarly empirical literature.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical underpinning of this study is the Social Learning Theory developed by Albert Bandura. It was first introduced in Bandura's 1977 book and then extensively studied and applied across various research fields (Breen et al., 2015).

The Social Learning Theory places significant emphasis on the role of observation, imitation, and reinforcement in the shaping of human behaviour. The theory posits that individuals learn through the observation of the behaviours of others and the consequences that result from those behaviours (Bandura, 1977). Positive reinforcement encourages the repetition of a behaviour, while punishment discourages its recurrence. Furthermore, the theory emphasizes the role of cognitive processes in the learning process. Individuals not only respond to external stimuli but actively engage in processing and interpreting the information they receive, which, in turn, influences their behaviour and decision-making. Bandura also emphasizes that individuals are not passive recipients of environmental influences but can actively shape their surroundings through their actions (Bandura, 1986).

The social learning theory offers a framework for understanding the continuation of corporal punishment use to pupils, including those with disabilities. In the context of corporal punishment, pupils may learn by observing and imitating this form of discipline, perceiving it as normative and acceptable. Observing teachers using corporal punishment to correct other pupils can lead to the normalization of this behaviour. Furthermore, the theory highlights that behaviour is reinforced through rewards and punishments. In the context of corporal punishment, pupils may come to understand that good behaviour is rewarded with praise or reward, while undesirable conduct is met with physical violence. This reinforces the perception that corporal punishment is an appropriate disciplinary approach. Moreover, Social Learning Theory acknowledges that behaviour is influenced by environmental factors. In the case of corporal punishment to pupils with disabilities (PWDs) in Tanzanian inclusive primary schools' environment may lack teachers' with pre requisite training, sufficient resources, and may be influenced by societal norms condoning corporal punishment, could significantly contribute to the perpetuation of this practice.

### **Empirical Literature Review**

In this section, a review of empirical studies about the Prevalence and Effects of Corporal Punishment in Schools, perception of teachers about corporal punishment, factors that contribute to corporal punishment use, and the strategies for alternative disciplinary approaches.

#### *Prevalence and Effects of Corporal Punishment in Schools*

Research conducted globally and regionally has shed light on the prevalence and effects of corporal punishment in educational settings. Studies have consistently shown that pupils, including those with disabilities, are subjected to corporal punishment in schools (Han, 2014; Ifunya, 2013). This alarming reality raises concerns about the violation of children's rights, the potential for physical and psychological harm, and the perpetuation of inequality and social injustice within the educational system.

Njelesani et al (2022) employed the socio-ecological model for bullying and a qualitative descriptive approach to conduct a study on prevalence of violence including corporal punishment to Students with disabilities drawing experience of school violence in Zambia. They found that despite Zambia's adoption of legislation that bans corporal punishment in schools, a high prevalence of violence occurs but is not reported and safety was in selective environment and people such as classrooms and to teachers who coordinated issues pertaining to pupils with disabilities. Latrines were considered unsafe and some teachers blamed the students with disabilities that they were the problem and disturbance (Njelesani et al., 2022). Fareo and Owolabi (2022) employed a survey research design to a sample of 200 Junior Secondary School teachers selected by stratified sampling to assess teachers' perception of the use of corporal punishment in junior secondary schools in Mubi Education Zone, Adamawa State, Nigeria. Their study revealed that corporal punishment was still used by teachers as a form of discipline to junior secondary school students. They further revealed that mental retardation, memory loss, absenteeism in class, emotional trauma such as low self-esteem, depression and suicidal acts, physical scars, maiming and violence were among the adverse effects of using corporal punishments to students.

Paul (2020) conducted a qualitative study on the impact of corporal punishment on students' discipline in Tanzanian Secondary Schools with a focus to Bukombe District as a case study. His study found that Corporal punishment was administered in accordance with Corporal Punishment Act of 1978 and the Ministry of Education and Training guidelines on how to carry out corporal punishment in secondary schools in Tanzania. Furthermore, corporal punishment was rewarded to students with poor academic performance. Students had different opinions; some said that corporal punishment should be administered in schools to facilitate change in behaviours and most of them comply with school regulations. On other hand, head teachers said that corporal punishment should be applied because of students' disrespect to teachers and students fighting with others but yet other teachers opinioned that misconducts of students were not reduced by corporal punishment because Students had less respect to teachers and regulations (Ibid, 2020).

Theoretical frameworks, such as social justice theory, provide a lens through which to analyze the dynamics of corporal punishment and its implications for pupils with disabilities. Social justice theory emphasizes the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and treatment, promoting equality and equity for all individuals within society (Rawls, 1971; Nussbaum, 2006). Applying this framework to the context of corporal punishment in schools, it becomes evident that the use of corporal punishment can perpetuate inequality and hinder the realization of social justice in education.

#### *Reasons for Prevalence and Perceptions on Corporal Punishment*

Existing literature suggests that primary school teachers' beliefs, African and society's culture, lack of education and awareness on corporal education, lack of teachers' tolerance, announcement and command from corporal punishment, National Educational Act on corporal punishment, and the tendency of Tanzanians not being interested with reading as well as attitudes play a crucial role in shaping their use or non-use of corporal punishment (Mwashiuya & Juma, 2023 and Zuilkowski et al., 2019). and their perceptions of pupils with disabilities. Importantly, the literature also acknowledges the challenges faced by teachers in addressing indiscipline in the absence of effective alternatives to corporal punishment. Limited training and professional development opportunities is also nominated as hindering teachers' ability to implement positive discipline strategies and create inclusive learning environments (Ahmed et al., 2015; Houwing & Bussey, 2017; Zuilkowski et al., 2019).

However, a growing body of research highlights teachers who hold reservations about the use of corporal punishment, recognizing its contradictions with educational principles and the rights of pupils with disabilities (Marshall, 2020). These teachers advocate for alternative disciplinary approaches that prioritize positive discipline, inclusion, and the promotion of social justice in education.

In Nigerian (Ojo, 2018) examined the use of corporal punishments from psychological positions. The study by Ojo (2018) revealed that teachers in Nigeria use of corporal punishment and they often considered it as an integral part of education and thus it retains its place in teaching. Educators believe that corporal punishment has the power to reduce bad behavior among educated children, and increases the hope that the latter will adopt desired behaviors in the future, even in the absence of their caregivers. However, there are some positive and non-corporal methods of correcting student's misbehaviour including adequately equipping teachers with alternative methods of such as counselling, reinforcement and rewards (Ibid, 2018).

Using a descriptive quantitative methodology Yeboah (2020) investigated on teachers' perceptions on the abolition of caning in Ghanaian schools and found that majority of the teachers favoured caning as a disciplinary measure in school, a majority felt it was not the most effective disciplinary tool, whilst yet another majority felt that caning should be resorted to when other disciplinary procedures failed.

Ladislav (2023) used a qualitative approach to collect data within life story approach. The semi-structured interviews, direct and indirect observations of educational actors were employed to collect information on corporal punishment as an educational practice for Burundian children's maladaptive behavior. The focus was particularly on the assessment of the disposition of children education stakeholders including parents, teachers and social workers.

Ladislav (2023) found that religious beliefs, the personality of the educators and psychic tensions linked to the general context are the main reasons for the use of corporal punishment. Furthermore, they add that teachers and other stakeholders supported the use of corporal punishment, provided it does not surpass certain limits. Sensitivity to the effects of corporal punishment on children is generally low and at times led to serious bodily harm, requiring prolonged hospitalization of the victim. For some people, not punishing children would be synonymous with cowardice, a violation of biblical scripture, with a high risk of exposing children to more dangerous consequences. Ladislav (2023) recommend for the introduction of positive parenting programs in Burundian education so as to combat the early onset of maladaptive behavior in children.

In Tanzania, Kambuga et al (2018) employed a quantitative approach and a descriptive survey design to examine the status of discipline and the use of corporal punishment to address students' repugnant behaviours in secondary schools. They found that some teachers perceive corporal punishment as an effective disciplinary strategy, particularly in dealing with indiscipline cases among students (Kambuga et al., 2018). Majority of the students wished that corporal punishment should be stopped and teachers should use the nurturing strategies such as guidance and counselling and un-hating manual works (Ibid, 2018). It could thus be argued that stakeholders' beliefs regarding the use or non-use of corporal punishment are often influenced by cultural norms, personal experiences, one's position such as teacher or pupil, and a lack of awareness about alternative discipline strategies.

#### *Strategies to Reduce Corporal Punishment*

Guided by Kelman's Social Influence Theory and mixed method approach, Mwashuiya & Juma (2023) researched on the role of media in reducing the use of corporal punishment in Tanzania. They (Ibid, 2023) found a strong conviction that the media have played significant role on reducing the use of corporal punishment in secondary schools through reporting on corporal punishment incidents.

#### *The Social Justice Vantage of Corporal Punishment*

Corporal punishment is a violation of children's rights. International human rights law is clear that children have a right to legal protection from all corporal punishment in all settings of their lives. It is legally

prohibited in schools in 128 countries and allowed in 69 (35%) (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children [Global Initiative], 2016). Corporal punishment continues to occur in schools throughout the world, both in countries where it is legal and countries where it is banned (Gershoff, 2017).

The United Nations has plainly stated that corporal punishment violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC) (United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2007 & Gershoff, 2017), specifically Article 19's guarantee of protection from all physical and mental violence, Article 37's protection from cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment, and Article 28's provision that school discipline should be consistent with children's 'human dignity' (United Nations, 1989).

Worldwide, the effort to end lawful approval of corporal punishment in schools is increasingly being supported by many countries. As a result, countries such as New Zealand, South Africa, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji and Thailand have banned corporal punishment by legislation or judicial decision (Yeboah, 2020).

In the Tanzanian context, the ban of corporal punishment is still to be achieved in the home, some alternative care settings, day care, schools, some penal institutions and as a sentence for crime. Article 13 of the Law of the Child Act 2009 in mainland Tanzania provides for "justifiable" correction; article 14 of the Children's Act 2011 in Zanzibar confirms that parents may discipline their children providing it does not lead to injury (UNICEF, 2020). These provisions should be revoked to ensure that no law condones corporal punishment in schooling and childrearing. Teachers in schools continue to inflict corporal punishment despite the directives that head teachers will administer or delegate to another teacher.

While previous studies have explored the prevalence, effects, role of media in combatting corporal punishment and perceptions of corporal punishment in Tanzanian schools generally, there is a dearth of research specifically examining primary school teachers' perceptions of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities from a social justice perspective. This study aims to bridge this gap by digging into the detailed perceptions of teachers, their beliefs, experiences, and the broader social justice implications of corporal punishment in Tanzanian primary schools. The findings will contribute to the existing literature by uncovering the complexities and potential consequences of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities, and the need for alternative disciplinary strategies rooted in social justice and inclusive education principles.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was conducted in Moshi municipality of Tanzania, in two (2) Inclusive Primary Schools. The selection of the Inclusive Primary Schools as the study settings was based on their diverse pupil's population, including those with disabilities. This setting provided a rich context for exploring primary school teachers' perceptions of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities in Tanzanian primary schools.

A qualitative research approach was employed to uncovering into the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding corporal punishment and its implications for pupils with disabilities. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of individuals' lived experiences and provides a rich understanding of the social and cultural contexts that shape their perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The phenomenological design was chosen to align with the research objective of understanding primary school teachers' perceptions related to using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities. Phenomenology focuses on exploring individuals' experiences and the meaning they attribute to those experiences (Creswell, 2013). This design was well-suited to capture the complex perceptions and lived experiences of the participants about corporal punishment.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select twenty (20) participants including two (2) head teachers, eight (8) subject teachers, and ten (10) pupils with disabilities. Teachers who had experience of teaching pupils with disabilities in the primary school setting were included in the study. Table 1 indicates the sample category, sample size and strategy for sampling employed as well as tool for data collection.

**Table 1.** Sample Category, Sample Size, Strategy for Sampling and Tool for Data Collection

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Sample size</b>	<b>Sampling Procedures</b>	<b>Data collection Tool</b>
<b>Head Teachers</b>	2	Purposive sampling	Interview
<b>Teachers</b>	8	purposive sampling	FGD
<b>Students</b>	10	purposive sampling	FGD
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>		

The criteria for participant selection thus included teachers who had at least five years of teaching experience and those who had encountered instances of using corporal punishment to pupils with disabilities. The purposive sampling approach was justified by the need to include participants who had direct experience in using corporal punishment to pupils with disabilities. By selecting teachers with a range of teaching experience and encounters with corporal punishment, the study aimed to capture diverse perspectives and gather rich data on the topic.

Data were collected through focus group discussions to pupils and classroom teachers. A total of two FGDs were thus conducted in which one was for pupils and another one for teachers. Each FGD session ranged within 90 to 110 minutes and were heterogeneous in terms of gender. Focus group discussions provided an opportunity for participants to engage in group conversations, allowing for the emergence of shared perspectives and lively interactions. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to Head teachers. These provided a deeper exploration of participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and reflections. Each interview session ranged within 50 to 60 minutes. Both the FGDs and interviews took place at school in which the interviews were conducted in the Head teachers' offices while the FGDs took place in the staff room (teachers' office). These places were suggested by the study participants as they considered them conducive and safe for conversations.

The use of focus group discussions and individual interviews was justified by the aim to capture both collective and individual perspectives on using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities. Focus group discussions allowed for the exploration of shared experiences and group dynamics, while individual interviews facilitated a more in-depth exploration of participants' personal views and reflections.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the focus group discussions and individual interviews. Thematic analysis is a flexible and comprehensive approach that allows for the identification of patterns, themes, and categories within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis method was chosen to uncover the underlying themes and meanings related to teachers' perceptions of corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities.

According to Caulfield (2023) thematic analysis allows major concepts or themes to be identified. The analysis followed the steps of data familiarization, coding, theme development, and revision to ensure a rigorous and comprehensive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researchers read the field notes in the notebooks and listened to audio records of interview sessions to familiarize with the data. Then classified major issues and scrutinized the data to identify information that was relevant to the research questions and objectives. Thereafter, a verbatim transcription of the interview sessions was made to discern initial themes. The coding involved relating the data with the themes created. Summarization strategy was employed to identify initial ideas that may be further developed or excluded as the analysis proceeds (Lochmiller, 2021). Therefore, the analysis involved preparing and inductively organizing the data during and after data collection, creating the themes, and coding. Then researchers clustered resembling codes to echo a coherent and meaningful pattern. The verification of themes was achieved by re reading the transcripts and associating with the text elements such as words, sentences, and paragraphs from each transcript (Ary et al., 2010). To attain anonymization, pseudonym strategy was employed in which ones' position such as Head teacher, Teacher and Pupils with Disabilities were used instead of their names (Lochmiller, 2021). Based on the fact that the study

findings were drawn from one district only, a comprehensive study can be conducted in other parts of Tanzania with different contextual features using different theories and methodology. Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the research process to protect the rights and well-being of the participants. Research clearance from the University of Dodoma was obtained and the Regional Administrative Secretary in Kilimanjaro region was availed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary participation and the confidentiality of their information. The participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequences. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to ensure anonymity in the reporting of findings is achieved. Thus, positions of participants such as Head teacher, teacher and pupils with disabilities were used instead of their names. The ethical considerations were integrated into the research process to safeguard the participants' rights, privacy, and well-being.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are subsequently presented and discussed based on the research objectives.

### ***Perceptions of Teachers Regarding Corporal Punishment to Pupils with Disabilities***

The findings indicated that corporal punishment was widespread, commonly employed and generally positively perceived disciplinary practice in Tanzanian primary schools. Teachers reported that it was regularly used as a method to control indiscipline among all students, including those with disabilities. In this regard, one informant teacher shared that:

Corporal punishment is deeply embedded in our school's disciplinary practices. It is seen as a necessary means to maintain discipline among all pupils regardless of their conditions including disabilities. We therefore punish pupils often whenever they commit indiscipline cases. Those with disabilities are equally indiscipline as their counterparts without disabilities so we don't spare them.

On the same tone another participant head teacher had the following to share:

We normally inflict corporal punishment to all pupils including those with disabilities. If we totally neglect punishing them to correct their behaviors. We know that failure to punish them may make them feel that they are segregated and are not the same as their fellow pupils. However, we inflict a corporal punishment relevant to their disability conditions.

The findings that corporal punishment was deeply rooted in primary schools to all pupils including those with disabilities suggest that teachers perceived it a desirable discipline measure. Furthermore, the findings concur with those by Kambuga et al (2018), Ojo (2018) & Ladislav (2023) which indicated that pupils including those with disabilities are subjected to corporal punishment in schools. The findings of this study further reinforce the tenets of the Social Learning Theory acknowledged by Albert Bandura that behaviour is reinforced through rewards and punishments. Thus, pupils' good behaviour is rewarded positively, while undesirable conduct is counteracted using corporal punishment. The findings of this study that teachers still inflict corporal punishment even when we have laws and guidelines prohibiting it and confining the same to the head teachers raises a number of questions. We know that teachers in Tanzanian schools are trained workforce who are expected to know the plethora of negative consequences of corporal punishment and its legal standing in the country, the prevalence and positive perceptions towards the use of corporal punishment even to pupils with disabilities again raises a number of questions.

The study findings have also shown that teachers had divided perception over the use of corporal punishment as an immediate and effective method to address behavioral issues in and outside the classroom. Some believed that it provided a quick response to maintain order and create a conducive learning environment. One informant teacher had this to reveal:



Corporal punishment has an immediate impact on students. It catches their attention and teaches them a lesson, leading to improved behaviour and concentration in the classroom. I personally go to the class with a stick to threaten the noise makers and those who do not follow as I teach.

While many teachers in Tanzanian primary schools view corporal punishment as a quick and effective method to manage discipline, others expressed reservations. Some teachers acknowledged that excessive use of corporal punishment contradicts inclusive education principles, leads to fear, and undermines a supportive learning environment for all pupils, including those with disabilities. One teacher expressed their reservations, stating:

I used to think corporal punishment was effective, but I have come to realize it creates fear and resentment instead of respect. For pupils with disabilities, it makes them feel singled out and ashamed because their challenges are often misunderstood, which excludes them further from the rest of the class.

On the other hand, some teachers reported to have refrained using corporal punishment. One of the participant teachers had this to say:

I have abandoned whipping pupils but majority of teachers still use sticks to punish pupils. They forget the fact that corporal punishment has negative consequences for the child's learning, develops fear, hates the teacher and loses motivation. Corporal punishment undermines the principles of education. It goes against the idea of providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, including those with disabilities

The findings of this study that teachers had positive perceptions over the use of corporal punishment is inconsistent to the principles of inclusive education. The findings that some teachers had negative perceptions on corporal punishment in schools reflect a hope as far as the promotion of social justice is concerned. While many teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of corporal punishment, some expressed reservations, particularly concerning its application to pupils with disabilities. They recognized that using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities contradicted the fundamental principles of education and violated their rights and dignity. The study participants who have negative perceptions of corporal punishment to pupils including those with disabilities. These findings imply the importance of promoting social justice and inclusivity in schools. They emphasized the need for alternative discipline strategies that consider the diverse needs and rights of all students, including those with disabilities. In this regard, the headteacher informants shared the following opinion:

We need to explore alternative strategies to discipline students particularly those with disabilities. It is crucial to create an inclusive environment that upholds social justice and respect the rights of every pupil. Pupils can be given counselling, mentorship, providing sufficient work to pupils

The findings on alternative discipline strategies imply the need to strengthen guidance and counselling by having professional counsellor in schools, verbal warning. The findings have also reinforced the fact that corporal punishments perpetuate hatred and at times a source of revenge, truancy, drop out and injury. Families need to be involved at every stage of growth and development of pupils.

Further, the findings reveal that the widespread use of corporal punishment undermines the principles of fairness and equality central to social justice theory. Subjecting pupils with disabilities to the same disciplinary measures as their peers, without considering their unique needs, reflects a systemic inequity. This practice perpetuates marginalization, as it disregards the rights and dignity of vulnerable learners, contradicting the ideals of equitable and inclusive education (Houwing & Bussey, 2017). Emphasizing alternative discipline strategies rooted in restorative practices and empathy is crucial for fostering a socially just learning environment (Mayeza & Bhana, 2017).

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into primary school teachers' perceptions of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities in Tanzanian primary schools. The findings highlight that corporal punishment is a pervasive disciplinary practice in Tanzanian primary schools, affecting students of all abilities, including those with disabilities. These findings align with previous studies that have documented the widespread use of corporal punishment in educational settings (Boydell et al., 2017; Han, 2014; Marcus, 2014). However, it is important to note that while corporal punishment may be prevalent, its efficacy and long-term effects on students' well-being and educational outcomes are subjects of debate (Gershoff et al., 2018; Gershoff, 2017).

Teachers' perceptions of corporal punishment as an effective method to maintain discipline reveals the underlying belief that it serves educational purposes. These findings resonate with studies that have explored teachers' perspectives on the efficacy of corporal punishment as a disciplinary tool (Houwing & Bussey, 2017; Kish & Newcombe, 2015). However, research has also shown that alternative discipline strategies, such as positive behaviour support and restorative practices, can yield better outcomes in terms of student behaviour, emotional well-being, and academic engagement (Busienei, 2012; Khanyile, 2014). Therefore, it is important to promote the adoption of evidence-based, non-violent discipline approaches that align with the principles of inclusive education.

The presence of teachers who express reservations about using corporal punishment, particularly on pupils with disabilities, reflects a growing recognition of the ethical and legal implications associated with such disciplinary practices. These findings align with studies that emphasize the need to safeguard the rights of students with disabilities and create inclusive learning environments (Houwing & Bussey, 2017; Mayeza & Bhana, 2017). It is essential to further explore the experiences and perspectives of teachers who question the use of corporal punishment to gain deeper insights into their motivations and concerns.

The findings of this study also highlight the critical role of social justice and inclusivity in creating equitable learning environments. Corporal punishment, as a disciplinary method, perpetuates inequality and impedes the realization of inclusive education. These findings align with research that emphasizes the importance of promoting positive school climates, respectful relationships, and non-violent discipline strategies to foster social justice and inclusivity (Houwing & Bussey, 2017; Mayeza & Bhana, 2017). Building on these insights, it is imperative to invest in comprehensive interventions that address the underlying factors contributing to the use of corporal punishment while promoting alternative strategies rooted in restorative justice, social-emotional learning, and positive behaviors support.

### ***Perceptions of Pupils with Disabilities Regarding Corporal Punishment to them***

The findings of this study revealed mixed perceptions among pupils with disabilities regarding the use of corporal punishment in schools. A majority of the pupils expressed negative views, describing corporal punishment as harmful, unfair, and a violation of their rights. They highlighted that corporal punishment instilled fear, embarrassment, and resentment rather than promoting positive behavior. Pupils also noted that it created emotional distress and discouraged active participation in class. In this regard, one of the participant pupils has the following to say:

I feel scared and ashamed when the teacher punishes me in front of my classmates. Sometimes I don't even want to go back to school the next day because I feel like everyone is laughing at me.

In the same way of thinking, another pupil commented:

I hate corporal punishment and I consider it as a violation of our rights. I had never been beaten by my parents and I respect everyone. However, some teachers are fond of punishing pupils such that they would provide general corporal punishment to the whole class.

Another pupil highlighted the emotional toll, stating:

When I am punished, I feel embarrassed and scared. It's hard to focus on learning when I am afraid the teacher will hit me again.

This statement reflects the emotional toll corporal punishment takes on pupils with disabilities, making them feel humiliated and isolated. Another pupil emphasized how corporal punishment contributed to loss of motivation and hindered learning:

When the teacher beats me, I lose interest in learning. I feel like no matter how hard I try, I will still be punished, so I just give up.

Such experiences highlight how corporal punishment not only affects students' emotional well-being but also jeopardizes their academic progress. Pupils also reported that corporal punishment resulted in strained relationships with teachers, creating a hostile learning environment. One pupil explained:

I hate teachers who punish me and I am less interested in studying their subjects. Our Mathematics teacher is particularly hated due to his frequent use of corporal punishment. He normally come to the class with sticks and inflict a severe punishment to those who fails to answer his questions. I greatly hate this approach.

These sentiments illustrate the damaging effects corporal punishment has on the teacher-student relationship, further alienating pupils with disabilities and preventing meaningful engagement in the learning process.

On the other hand, findings have revealed that there a relatively few pupils who perceived corporal punishment as a rightful thing to the wrong doors especially those with indiscipline cases such as fighting, late coming and so forth. The participant pupil thus had the following to say:

I believe that teachers as parents can punish pupils including those with disabilities but with a reasonable degree due to his/her condition. However, some of us despite our disabilities are the source of corporal punishment.

Sharing the same views another pupil mentioned:

Even though I have a disability, I think small punishments are okay when we make mistakes. But it should not be too harsh because it can hurt us physically and emotionally.

These perspectives highlight a belief among some pupils that corporal punishment can be justified if it is applied with fairness and sensitivity to individual circumstances, including disabilities.

Despite this minority view, most pupils emphasized the need for alternative disciplinary approaches that focus on guidance and positive reinforcement. They advocated for strategies such as counseling, peer mentoring, and verbal warnings, which they believed would create a more supportive learning environment. One pupil stated:

*I wish teachers would talk to us when we make mistakes instead of hitting us. Sometimes we need advice, not punishment, to understand what we did wrong.*

Similarly, another pupil suggested:

*Teachers should try to help us solve problems instead of beating us. We need someone to listen to us and explain things calmly.*

These views reflect a growing awareness among pupils about the importance of promoting inclusivity and respect for their rights. They highlight the need for disciplinary practices that align with the principles of fairness, dignity, and social justice.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, several important conclusions can be drawn regarding primary school teachers' perceptions of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities in Tanzanian primary schools. The study revealed valuable insights into the prevalence of corporal punishment, its perceived effectiveness by some teachers and pupils, reservations among teachers and pupils, and the broader implications for social justice and inclusivity.

Firstly, corporal punishment was found to be a pervasive disciplinary practice in Tanzanian primary schools, affecting pupils including those with disabilities. However, this prevalence varied across schools and regions, indicating the influence of local contexts and cultural attitudes. These variations emphasize the need for context-specific interventions at legal, policy, and practice levels to address corporal punishment and promote alternative discipline strategies rooted in non-violence and inclusivity.

Secondly, while some teachers perceived corporal punishment as an effective method to maintain discipline, research has shown that alternative approaches, such as guidance and counselling, mentorship, teacher-parent partnerships, religious teachings, and restorative practices, offer better outcomes in terms of student well-being, emotional engagement, and academic achievement. However, the acceptance or rejection of these approaches may also depend on local cultural and institutional dynamics, which future research should investigate.

The reservations expressed by some teachers regarding the use of corporal punishment, particularly when applied to pupils with disabilities, indicate a growing recognition of the ethical, inclusivity, and legal implications associated with such disciplinary practices. These reservations highlight the need to ensure the protection of the rights and dignity of all students, regardless of their abilities, and to create inclusive learning environments that foster their full participation and development.

The findings of this study also highlight the broader implications for social justice and inclusivity in Tanzanian primary schools. Corporal punishment perpetuates inequality and impedes the realization of inclusive education. It is essential to address the underlying factors contributing to the use of corporal punishment and invest in comprehensive interventions that promote social justice, uphold the rights of students with disabilities, and create equitable learning environments.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of primary school teachers' perceptions of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities in Tanzanian primary schools. The findings emphasize the need to challenge the prevailing reliance on corporal punishment and promote alternative discipline strategies that align with the principles of inclusivity, non-violence, and positive school climates. By prioritizing the well-being, rights, and educational experiences of all students, we can work towards fostering environments that promote social justice, inclusivity, and the holistic development of every child.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

Based on the findings of this study, several policy recommendations are proposed to promote positive discipline practices and enhance social justice in Tanzanian primary schools.

Firstly, it is essential for the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology as well as relevant stakeholders to categorically prohibit the use of corporal punishment in schools, aligning with international human rights standards and existing legislation. Clear guidelines should be established to ensure consistent enforcement and monitoring of disciplinary practices, with a focus on promoting non-violent approaches.

Secondly, policymakers should prioritize the development and implementation of comprehensive policies that foster inclusive education. These policies should address the specific needs of pupils with

disabilities, providing guidelines for teachers and schools on creating supportive and inclusive learning environments. Special attention should be given to providing adequate resources, training, and support for teachers to effectively manage classroom behaviors and promote positive discipline practices.

Thirdly, efforts should be made to establish mechanisms for reporting and addressing incidents of corporal punishment in schools. This may include setting up anonymous reporting systems, establishing disciplinary committees, and implementing consequences for educators who engage in corporal punishment. Collaboration between schools, parents, and community organizations is crucial in creating a culture of accountability and promoting alternatives to corporal punishment.

### **Practice Recommendations**

To promote positive discipline practices and enhance social justice in Tanzanian primary schools, the following practice recommendations are proposed:

Firstly, teachers and school administrators should be provided with comprehensive training on alternative discipline strategies that prioritize non-violence and inclusivity. Professional development programs should focus on equipping educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage classroom behaviour, build positive relationships with students, and implement restorative practices.

Secondly, schools should prioritize the creation of positive and inclusive school climates that promote respectful interactions and value the rights and dignity of all students. This can be achieved through the implementation of proactive strategies such as social-emotional learning programs, peer mediation initiatives, and the establishment of student support systems.

Thirdly, collaboration between teachers, parents, and students is essential in creating a shared understanding of positive discipline practices and fostering a supportive learning environment. Schools should engage parents and caregivers in dialogues about disciplinary approaches, providing them with resources and information on alternative strategies. Students should also be actively involved in the development of school rules and disciplinary policies, promoting a sense of ownership and accountability.

### **Future Research Directions**

While this study provides valuable insights into primary school teachers' perceptions of using corporal punishment on pupils with disabilities in Tanzanian primary schools, further research is needed to deepen our understanding and inform future interventions.

Firstly, longitudinal studies can be conducted to assess the long-term effects of alternative discipline strategies on students' academic performance, socio-emotional well-being, and overall school experiences. This would provide more comprehensive evidence of the benefits of non-violent approaches and help sustain positive changes in disciplinary practices.

Secondly, quantitative research can explore the experiences and perspectives of pupils with disabilities themselves, shedding light on their perceptions of disciplinary practices and their impact on their educational journeys. Understanding the voices and experiences of these students will further inform inclusive practices and ensure their active participation in shaping school environments.

Finally, comparative studies across different regions in Tanzania and other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa can provide insights into how cultural and regional variations influence the acceptance or rejection of corporal punishment. Testing alternative disciplinary methods within different contexts can also help identify culturally appropriate and effective strategies for promoting non-violent discipline.

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