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Parents' Perception of the Relationship between Discipline and Abuse of Students by Teachers in Delta State Post Primary Education

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Abstract

The study spotlights parents' perception of the relationship between discipline and abuse of students by teachers in Delta State post-primary education. Discipline in educational settings is a crucial aspect of student development, aimed at teaching responsibility, respect, and self-control. However, the line between discipline and abuse can often become blurred; leading to a range of perceptions among parents regarding what constitutes acceptable disciplinary practices that does not infringe on the rights of the child. This uncertainty can result in conflicts between parents, teachers, and schools, and potentially affect students' educational experiences and well-being. Qualitative and quantitative survey were deployed using ex-post facto design. The sample used for this study is 250 parents, 25 teachers and 25 students in the study area. The sampling procedure used was the stratified random sampling technique. This was done by dividing the total population into smaller groups known as strata and taking random samples from each group. Questionnaire titled "Parents' Perception of Discipline and Abuse Questionnaire - PPDAQ" was used as the instrument to collect data from participants. The researcher administered a total of 250 questionnaires to randomly selected participants in the study area. Simple percentages, mean scores, standard deviation and coefficient of determination using 2.50 as a benchmark to provide answers to the research questions. Pearson Product Moment Statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In conclusion, parents' perception of the relationship between discipline and abuse of students by teachers varies and is widely influenced by different factors such as cultural background, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, personal experiences etc. It therefore recommended that educational stakeholders such as government, policy-makers, educational institutions, teachers and parents should develop and implement positive disciplinary policies that prioritize students' well-being and safety.



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Keywords:

Parents' Perception, Discipline, Abuse, Post Primary Education, Nigeria.

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Introduction

The evolution of discipline in schools has been significant throughout history. Early educational systems often used punishment as a primary method of discipline, reflecting societal norms of the time where physical discipline was commonly accepted in homes and schools. As research in psychology and education progressed over the decades, there has been a shift towards recognizing the negative effects of such practices, leading to movements advocating for non-violent, positive disciplinary methods (Epstein, 2021). Discipline in educational settings plays a critical role in teaching student's responsibility, respect, and self-control. However, the distinction between discipline and abuse can often become unclear, resulting in differing perceptions among parents regarding acceptable disciplinary practices. This uncertainty can lead to conflicts between teachers, schools, and parents, potentially impacting students' educational experiences and well-being (Haidt & Joseph, 2017).

Parents' views on teacher discipline vary significantly, with some considering certain actions necessary for classroom order and others perceiving even mild punishment as abuse, especially when it involves physical or verbal aggression towards their child. This perception is influenced by cultural norms and personal childhood experiences with discipline (Durrant & Ensom, 2022). Most parents strongly oppose corporal punishment by teachers, viewing it as abuse that harms a child's development. According to Gilliam (2020), the intersection of discipline and abuse in education has been a key focus for researchers, psychologists, and policymakers due to its implications for child welfare, educational outcomes, and community trust. Different cultures have varying views on acceptable disciplinary methods, with some societies accepting harsher punishments. Parents also consider their child's individual needs when evaluating teacher disciplinary actions (Haidt & Joseph, 2017).

In many Western nations, the emphasis on children's rights has led to decreased tolerance for corporal punishment and physical discipline in schools. Parents may perceive physical interaction as abusive rather than disciplinary. As a result, emotional or psychological discipline methods are preferred, with strict guidelines on acceptable behaviour management (Bear, 2020). In contrast, some cultures, particularly in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, may still view physical discipline as an acceptable means of teaching respect and obedience. Here, the distinction between discipline and abuse may be drawn differently, with some parents regarding mild physical correction as disciplinary rather than abusive (Ajayi, 2019).

However, the blurred lines between discipline and abuse have made it increasingly challenging for teachers to implement discipline. This ambiguity creates apprehension among

teachers and encourages unruly behaviour in children who feel immune to punishment. The implications of this trend are far-reaching, influencing students' future behaviour and perceptions of accountability. As society readily punishes offenders, children's awareness of the limits on disciplinary actions may contribute to increasing indiscipline and unruliness. Ultimately, this may negatively impact self-regulation, respect for authority, independence, learning attitudes, and behavioral trends.

Statement of the Problem

There exists a significant variance in how parents perceive the disciplinary actions taken by teachers. While some view certain practices as necessary for maintaining order and fostering educational growth, others might interpret the same actions as abusive or harmful. This discrepancy in perception as a result in cultural, educational, socioeconomic or personal backgrounds might lead parents to have widely differing views on acceptable disciplinary methods, causing friction between educational institutions and families. Students might experience stress or confusion if they are caught between the expectations of their parents and the disciplinary approaches of their teachers. This can affect their mental health, academic performance, and overall school experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to:

1. Examine parents' perception of the relationship between discipline and abuse of students by teachers in Delta State post primary education.
2. Find out factors that influence parental perceptions of the relationship between discipline and abuse of students by teachers in Delta State post-primary education.
3. Establish strategies that can be employed for effective discipline and reduce abuse of students by teachers in Delta State post-primary education.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide to study:

1. What are parents' perception of the relationship between discipline and abuse of students by teachers in Delta State post-primary education?
2. What factors influence parental perceptions of the relationship between discipline and abuse of students by teachers in Delta State post-primary education?
3. What are the strategies that can be employed for effective discipline and reduce abuse of students by teachers in Delta State post-primary education?

Review

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Social Learning Theory propounded by Albert Bandura (1977). The theory posits that people learn new behaviours by observing and imitating others. In the context of this study, Social Learning Theory suggests that parent' perceptions of discipline and abuse of students by teachers may be influenced by their own experiences, cultural norms, socioeconomic, educational background, and beliefs. Bandura essentially

means cognitive factors, while by the term environment, he means the social models around as well as the circumstantial contingencies pressing upon the individual.

The concept of modelling requires studying other individuals within the environment to establish how new behaviours are learned and nurtured. Drawing from Bandura (1977), Felson and Lane (2009) noted that through exposure to the environment, children attain symbolic image of the molded behaviour which in turn influences their activities. Molded behaviour has the potential to influence children's thoughts and later on to imitate the observed actions whether acceptable by society or not. In this regard, parents who use corporal punishment have children who exhibit aggression due to the cruel experiences that have been exposed to. This is based on the premise that parents view abuse of discipline as a symbolic representation of how to deal with inappropriate behaviour.

Parents' perception of discipline and abuse

School discipline refers to the policies, procedures, and practices used to manage students' behaviour and maintain a safe and orderly learning environment. Effective school discipline involves creating a positive school culture, setting clear expectations and consequences, and using evidence-based strategies to support students' behaviour and academic success. However, parents' perceptions of teacher discipline vary widely, with some viewing certain disciplinary actions as necessary for maintaining classroom order, while others perceive even mild forms of punishment as abuse, particularly when it involves physical or verbal aggression towards their child. This perception is influenced by various factors (Durrant & Ensom, 2022). Most parents today strongly oppose corporal punishment by teachers, considering it a form of abuse and harmful to a child's development.

According to Marcos, Jared & Sandra (2016), perceived physical punishment as abuse can cause physical harm and emotional trauma to students. They also view discipline such as verbal abuse, humiliation, and psychological manipulation as causing emotional harm and damaging students' self-esteem. Parents may also perceive ignoring and failing to provide necessary care and support as a form of abuse from teachers to students. Discipline such as suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary discipline practices can be abusive and perpetuate systemic inequalities as perceived by parents (Mina, 2013).

Factors that influence parental perceptions of discipline and abuse

Research by Tiller (2020) indicates that parents from diverse cultural backgrounds may hold varying perceptions of discipline and abuse. For example, certain cultures may view physical punishment as an acceptable means of discipline, while others may consider it abusive. The socio-economic status of parents may also impact their expectations and perceptions of teacher behaviour. Specifically, parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds may be more inclined to accept physical punishment as a means of discipline. Religious beliefs may also play a role in shaping their views on discipline and punishment. For instance, some religions may emphasize the importance of physical punishment as a means of discipline (Jones, 2023).

Similarly, Omoshola (2021) asserted that parents' own experiences with discipline and abuse can influence their perceptions. Parents who were physically punished as children may be more likely to accept physical punishment as a means of discipline. The education level of parents may also impact their understanding of child development and discipline. For example, parents with higher education levels may be more likely to comprehend the negative effects of physical punishment. Furthermore, parents' own parenting style may influence their expectations of teachers. For instance, parents who employ positive reinforcement techniques at home may expect teachers to utilize similar methods.

Adeola (2023) indicates that school culture and policies can significantly influence parents' perceptions of discipline and abuse. For example, schools with strict no-tolerance policies for physical punishment can shape parents' understanding of what constitutes abuse. Moreover, teachers' behavior and communication styles can impact parents' perceptions. Teachers who use positive reinforcement techniques, for instance, may be viewed more favourably by parents. The quality of the relationship between schools and parents is also crucial in shaping parents' trust and perceptions. For example, parents who feel comfortable approaching teachers may trust their judgments about discipline (Dereje, Nega & Amenti, 2014; Shumba, 2023).

According to Paris (2022), parents' emotional reactivity can influence their perceptions of discipline and abuse. Highly emotional parents, for instance, may perceive physical punishment as abusive. Anxiety and stress levels in parents can also impact their perceptions, leading parents experiencing high stress to view teacher behavior as abusive. Furthermore, parents' confidence in their ability to influence their child's education can shape their perceptions, with confident parents more likely to trust teachers' judgments about discipline.

Strategies that can be employed for effective discipline and to reduce abuse

Gershoff (2017) pointed out strategies that can be employed to improve discipline by teachers and reduce abuse on students such as; providing teachers with training on effective discipline methods, child development, and conflict resolution. Encourage teachers to use positive behavioral supports, such as positive reinforcement and restorative practices. Help teachers develop emotional intelligence to manage their own emotions and respond to student behavior effectively. Provide teachers with strategies for effective classroom management, such as setting clear expectations and using non-verbal cues (Saunders, 2013).

According to Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor (2016) who highlighted some strategies for effective discipline and reducing abuse such as to developing and implementing school-wide discipline policies that emphasize positive behavioral supports and reduce the use of physical punishment. Implement restorative practices, such as restorative circles and restorative mediations, to build community and resolve conflicts. Provide student support services, such as counseling and mentoring, to help students manage their behaviour and develop social-

emotional skills. Encourage parent-teacher collaboration to develop consistent discipline strategies and provide support for students (Marcos, Jared & Sandra, 2016).

However, Alan, George & Rose (2015) asserted that educators should teach social-emotional skills, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, to help students manage their behaviour and develop positive relationships. Empower students to take ownership of their behaviour and develop self-discipline skills. Use positive reinforcement strategies, such as praise and rewards, to encourage positive behaviour. Solicit student feedback to understand their perspectives and develop discipline strategies that are responsive to their needs. Engage with the community to develop partnerships and provide resources that support discipline and reduce abuse. Provide parent education programs to help parents develop positive discipline strategies and support their children's social-emotional development. Advocate for policies that support positive discipline practices and reduce the use of physical punishment. Parents, schools and communities can work together to improve discipline, reduce abuse, create safe and supportive learning environments (Gershoff, 2017).

Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative survey using ex-post facto design. The sample used for this study is 250 parents, 25 teachers and 25 students in the study area. Informed consent was obtained from the parents of the students. The sampling procedure used was the stratified random sampling technique. This was done by dividing the total population into smaller groups known as strata and taking random samples from each group. Questionnaire titled "Parents' Perception of Discipline and Abuse Questionnaire - PPDAQ" was used as the instrument to collect data from participants. The researcher administered a total of 300 questionnaires to randomly selected participants in the study area. Simple percentages, mean scores, standard deviation and coefficient of determination using 2.50 as benchmark to provide answers to the research questions. Pearson Product Moment Statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 1: Pearson "r" on Parents' perception of discipline and abuse

Variables	N	X	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign	Decision
Parents perception	300	0.80	1.83	0.68	0.05	Significant
Discipline and abuse		0.85				

Data in table 1 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on parents' perception of discipline and abuse. The mean was 0.80 and 0.85. The calculated r - value was 1.83 while the critical r-table value was 0.68 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was greater than the critical r-table value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 2: Pearson “r” on Factors influences parental perceptions of discipline and abuse

Variables	N	X	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign	Decision
Factors that influence parents' perception	300	2.78	1.92	2.96	0.05	Not Significant
Discipline and abuse		2.94				

Data in table 2 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on factors that influences parental perceptions of discipline and abuse. The mean was 2.78 and 2.94. The calculated r - value was 1.92 while the critical r-table value was 2.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was lesser than the critical r-table value, the null hypothesis is retained.

Table 3: Pearson “r” on Strategies that can be employed for effective discipline and reduce abuse

Variables	N	X	r-Cal.	r-Crit.	Level of Sign	Decision
Strategies that can be employed for effective discipline and reduce abuse	300	3.73	1.74	0.98	0.05	Not Significant
Discipline and abuse		3.34				

Data in table 3 revealed Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis on strategies that can be employed for effective discipline and reduced abuse. The mean was 3.78 and 3.34. The calculated r - value was 1.74 while the critical r-table value was 0.98 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r - value was greater than the critical r-table value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

This study focuses on parents' perceptions of the relationship between discipline and the abuse of students by teachers in post-primary education in Delta State. It explores the

factors that influence these perceptions and suggests strategies for implementing effective discipline while reducing instances of abuse by teachers in this educational context. The findings indicate that parents' views on the relationship between discipline and abuse can vary significantly. Some parents see certain disciplinary actions as essential for maintaining order in the classroom; however, others may interpret even mild forms of punishment as abusive, especially when it involves physical or verbal aggression towards their children. These perceptions are often shaped by cultural norms and personal experiences with discipline from the parents' own childhoods.

The study also highlighted factors that influence how parents perceive the relationship between discipline and abuse. Parents from different cultural backgrounds may have varying views on what constitutes discipline versus abuse. For instance, some cultures may see physical punishment as an acceptable form of discipline, while others may deem it abusive. More so, a parent's socio-economic status can affect their expectations and perceptions regarding teacher behaviour. Parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds, for example, may be more inclined to accept physical punishment as a disciplinary method. Furthermore, religious beliefs can also shape views on discipline and punishment; some religions may emphasize the use of physical punishment as a key aspect of discipline.

The findings identified several strategies that can be used to promote effective discipline and reduce instances of abuse. These includes; providing teachers with training on effective discipline methods, child development, and conflict resolution; encouraging the use of positive behavioral supports, such as positive reinforcement and restorative practices; helping teachers develop emotional intelligence to manage their own emotions and respond to student behaviour effectively; offering strategies for effective classroom management, such as setting clear expectations and using non-verbal cues. These approaches can create a more supportive and productive classroom environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, parents' perception of the relationship between discipline and abuse of students by teachers varies and widely influenced by different factors such as cultural background, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, personal experiences etc. Thus, understanding parents' perception of discipline and abuse, schools can develop targeted strategies to promote positive discipline practices, prevent abuse, create a safe and supportive learning environment for all students.

Recommendations

It therefore recommended that educational stakeholders such as government, policy-makers, educational institutions, teachers and parents should develop and implement positive discipline policies that prioritize students' well-being and safety. Teachers should receive training on positive discipline strategies, cultural competence and recognizing sign of abuse. School should encourage parent-teacher collaboration to build trust and address concerns

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about discipline and abuse. Schools should strive to create a supportive and inclusive culture that prioritizes students' well-being and safety.

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