

Managing Student Discipline without Corporal Punishment: A Contemporary Perspective on Disciplinary Measures in Secondary Schools

Onesmo Amos Damka¹

¹Jordan University College, A Constituent College of St. Augustine University of Tanzania,
P.O. Box 1878, Tanzania – East Africa

Publication Date: 2026/07/14

Abstract: This study explores contemporary disciplinary measures for managing students without corporal punishment in secondary schools. The study explored secondary data gathered from Google Scholar, ERIC search, Research-Gate, Newspapers, Websites, and PubMed searching databases. The study found sequential disciplinary procedures such as exclusion, suspension, and expulsion measures to be effective in the management of students without using corporal punishment. The study found also available alternatives to corporal punishment, including positive reinforcement, guidance and counselling, non-physical punishment, jointly setting rules and regulations, and verbal reprimand. The study underscores the importance of changing disciplinary procedures from corrective interventions to exclusionary, suspension, and expulsion for effective management of students to advocate non-violent disciplinary frameworks. This study recommends that parents, teachers, and administrators adopt the modern disciplinary measures that align with the replacement of corporal punishment strategies. Furthermore, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology revise the National Educational Act on corporal punishment by accommodating a new framework of maintaining human dignity and self-discipline.

Keywords: Student Discipline, Corporal Punishment, Secondary Schools.

How to Cite: Onesmo Amos Damka (2026) Managing Student Discipline without Corporal Punishment: A Contemporary Perspective on Disciplinary Measures in Secondary Schools. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(6), 3352-3356. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26jun1959>

I. INTRODUCTION

➤ Background to the Problem

The word discipline is derived from the word disciple, which implies teaching or helping one to grow and to achieve obedience and self-control in obeying the existing rules and regulations (Setiani & Rifayanti, 2022; Adika & Dafit, 2023). This implies the ability to promote self-control among the learners towards the implementation of established rules and regulations. However, most of the institutions are faced with the indiscipline cases such as disobedience to teachers and class representatives, fighting, poor response to calls bells, bullying, truancy, stealing and use of drugs, sleeping in class, absenteeism among others, are some of the common features of indiscipline (Aymelo, 2022; Kamara et al., 2023; Adeoye, 2024). In order to instill discipline, educators have used methods of rewards and punishments for good and bad behaviors. School indiscipline has not only caused students to turn on each other but also has made them deviant to their teachers. Most of the empirical literature specified that mismanagement of students; culminate into indiscipline cases such as disobedience, truancy, aggression, bullying, and substance abuse, which result in high rates of theft cases,

absenteeism, and poor academic performance (Admasu, 2022; Kaluku, 2023; Yelewonah, 2024; Cremin, 2025).

Corporal punishment as a method of restoring students' discipline was adopted in the education system, particularly at secondary school levels, in Tanzania during the colonial era. This was noted by the recent studies by Sungawa et al. (2022) and Lumato and Mwila (2022), which signposted that corporal punishment in Tanzania can be more specifically traced back to the legacy of the German and British colonial rule that lasted from the Berlin Conference up to the independence of the country. Due to cases of indiscipline among students, the government of Tanzania established the Corporal Punishment Act in 1979 to address disciplinary problems in schools under the Education Act of 1978. The studies by Kazenga (2024) and Stephen (2024) verified that the aforesaid act legalized teachers to administer corporal punishments for certain behavior after a full enquiry and in the presence of a witness. This did not mean that corporal punishment was going to be the only method thought to be effective in maintaining discipline. It was recommended for certain indiscipline cases only, and the schools were expected to use it along with other methods of punishment. The

regulation was revised in 2002 following Education Circular No. 24 of 2002, which reduced the number of strokes from 6 to 4 but it gives authority to the Heads of Schools to punish by striking students with a light flexible stick on their hand or in a clothed buttocks and the records of that punishment be kept in a book for future reference (Corporal Punishment regulation, 1979 & 2002). The recent policy indicates that corporal punishment remains legal with minimal revision of the Rule of Four that strokes must not exceed four per offense (Daily News, 25 September 2025). Other punishments included in the regulation are exclusion, suspension, and total expulsion of students from the School. However, despite these regulations, corporal punishment in Tanzania has been rampantly applied in schools without much reference to the said regulations.

Though most teachers and school administrators are aware of the implications of corporal punishment on the learners' outcomes, some students drop out of school to escape such physical punishment. This is strongly supported by a proverb that says spare the rod and spoil the child to justify the ruthless physical punishment of students (Magobe, 2025). These stakeholders based their argument on considering it to be the easiest and cheapest way to teach students a lesson that automatically discourages them from similar practice in the future. Besides, the presence of overcrowded classrooms made it difficult to manage the students' learning process, such as by making noises, sleeping in class, and performing poorly in assignments and examinations. Conversely, most educational gurus have pointed out the long-term consequences of corporal punishment, as it teaches students that violence is ok and thus acceptable. Various studies (Mboma, 2023; Kwira, 2025) found a link between corporal punishment and antisocial behaviours, such as criminal behavior, and they are more likely to make students aggressive toward other students. The study carried out by Inshabisa (2025) in Tanzania emphasizes that corporal punishment has a side effect on student well-being as it attempts to affect physical and emotional abilities. Additionally, corporal punishment does not teach students the reasons for misbehaving and, in most cases, turns into physical abuse of a child, creating fear and low self-esteem among the students, which affects their cognitive growth.

This calls attention among the educational gurus to establish the best practices for disciplining students that are relevant to avoid physical pain by developing healthy lifestyles and a conducive teaching and learning environment that is a reflection of respect for human rights (Mwashiyu & Juma, 2023; Nyahiri, 2024). Moreover, there is a need to align and localize disciplinary measures to international and regional agreements which guarantee respect for human dignity that prohibit the use of degrading punishment; thus includes Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and Child Protection Act. For example, the UNCRC official report of the 7th Session in November 1994 discourages the use of corporal punishment. Kau (2024) and Hatano et al. (2024) pointed that UNCRC report termed the measure of instilling discipline as cruel,

inhuman and degrading and thus directed educational institutions and other superior organs to come up with more humane methods of punishment in schools focusing on guidance and counseling, pastoral teaching, positive reinforcement, peer counseling, use of rewards, involving students in decision making, sending for parents among others. In Tanzania, Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) and Tanzania Education Network (TenMet) highlighted the importance of reforming disciplinary measures to maintain human dignity and promote students' self-esteem (Human Rights, 2025). This prompted the researcher's intention to explore available alternatives to corporal punishment, the modern disciplinary measures, and the best practices for managing students without corporal punishment.

➤ *Research Objectives*

To highlight the contemporary perspectives on disciplinary measures of managing students' discipline without corporal punishment.

To explore the available alternatives to corporal punishment.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study explored secondary data gathered from Google Scholar, ERIC search, Newspapers, Websites, Research-Gate, and PubMed searching databases. The study included literature that lasted for five years to establish the gap and make an intervention regarding the management of students without corporal punishment.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

➤ *Contemporary Perspectives on Disciplinary Measures of Managing Students' Discipline*

The study highlighted the modern perspective on disciplinary measures of managing students to replace corporal punishment, namely: exclusion, suspension, and expulsion, which is a total exclusion of students from school, as explained in detail below.

- *Exclusion Measure*

This refers to the temporary removal of a student from the regular classroom or school activities for a specific period. Valdebenito et al. (2023) and Jones et al. (2023) describe school exclusion as a discipline measure that involves sanctions imposed on students, such as loss of privileges, extra work, break/lunch detention, and after-school detentions. This shows that a measure is often used as a short-term disciplinary measure. During the period of exclusion, students may be placed in an alternative educational setting, receive special counseling, or be assigned additional work to complete.

- *Suspension Measure*

This involves the temporary removal of a student from attending classes or participating in school activities for a specific period. Luwumba et al. (2022) and Stephen (2024) insisted that students' discipline can also be improved by suspending students with misconduct for a certain period of

time. The suspension punishment is usually a more severe disciplinary action than exclusion and can range from a few days to several weeks. Suspended students are expected to stay away from the school premises during the suspension period. The purpose of suspension is to provide a consequence for the student's behavior, allow time for reflection, and allow the student to modify their behavior during the suspension time (Saiteu & Otieno, 2022; Kinunda, 2024).

- *Expulsion Measure*

This is the most severe disciplinary action that can be taken by an educational institution. This entails the permanent removal of a student from the school, effectively terminating their enrollment. This aligns with the findings by Maanga (2020) and Augustino (2023) that a student is permanently expelled from school as a last resort for resolving his/her disciplinary issues. Expulsion is typically imposed for serious or repeated misconduct that significantly disrupts the learning environment or jeopardizes the safety of others, as the expelled students are generally not allowed to return to the same institution.

➤ *Available Alternatives to Corporal Punishment*

This study explored the available alternatives to corporal punishment in secondary schools as follows:

- *Positive Reinforcement to Limit the Repetition of Students' Misbehaviors*

This is achieved by issuing rewards such as exercise books, pens, and certificates, and by praising students who perform well in front of their teachers, classmates, or parents; also by listing their names on the notice boards (Hasanah, 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2025). Moreover, if a teacher rewards students by giving them positive attention, the teacher can punish a particular pupil by ignoring that pupil's attempts to be disruptive. Meanwhile, a student may break the rules because he or she wants the teacher's attention. If the teacher is not angered by the students' misdeeds, then they're less likely to perform the act in the future. The studies carried out by Zondo et al. (2023), Serano (2023), and Deshpande (2025) verified the significance of applying positive reinforcement towards the process of enhancing positive discipline by preventing students from engaging in misbehavior and ensuring that students do not repeat the same offense.

- *Effective Guidance and Counselling Programmes*

Streamlined conversations and listening between students and their academic staff, as a way to demonstrate caring and understanding of their problems. As noted by Sitinjak and Canu (2023) and Rahma et al. (2023), students feel comfortable when they know there is a teacher or supporting staff member who cares about their challenges. The teachers should be equipped with guidance and counselling skills to enable them handle students' indiscipline issues. Parveen and Akhtar (2023) specified that students need guidance and counselling services to improve the quality of learning outcomes, as it facilitates them to resolve social, emotional, and behavioral challenges essential for improving academic excellence. This denotes that utilizing guidance and counseling services in schools fosters the

creation of a holistic and fertile environment for the teaching and learning process that is compatible with the contemporary era of globalization and the digital revolution.

- *Use of Non-Physical Disciplinary Measures*

Ahmed et al. (2023) described that an alternative to corporal punishment is non-physical punishment by making students understand their mistakes and thus creating a positive teacher–student relationship. This entails that students are subjected into other forms of punishments to replace corporal punishment including; removal of rewards and other pleasures, sitting on the chair or mat at the back of the room, inviting their parents to school premises for further discussion, assigned non-academic activities like washing walls, slashing and mopping; and writing statement describing the negative effect of their misbehaviors and make apologize for the mistake in front of their classmates. The application of this disciplinary measure enhances students' interest in the learning process.

- *Jointly Setting Rules and Expectations*

Discipline measures are more effective if the parents, administrators, teachers, and their students set rules, regulations, and expectations at the beginning of the term (Li, 2024; Iloka, 2025; Uchenna, 2025). This enables students to know the rules in advance, and thus, there are no surprises when the instructor penalizes those who break them. Students are more likely to perceive the punishment as just, to maintain their respect for the teacher, and to obey the guidelines if the regulations are made explicit than if not. This assumes that the participatory setting of rules and regulations creates ownership of classroom rules and thus makes students abide by the teaching and learning process confidently.

- *Verbal Reprimand and Taking Responsibility for Their Action*

This involves talking and listening to the students regarding their misbehavior actions for the teacher to explain what the student has done wrong to discourage such behavior in the future, also applied as an alternative punishment measure (Zondo et al., 2023; Suroso, 2024). Moreover, making a student responsible for their own action can be a punishment enough; for instance, if something has been damaged, the student could be asked to mend it, or if a student stole something from classmates, make him or her return the item and apologize (Halomoan et al., 2023; Badawi, 2024). This means that the verbal warning and apology technique enables students to repent their offenses and promise not to repeat them in the future. Additionally, it enables students to be responsible for their actions, thus creating a soft skill of accountability.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that sustainable management of students' discipline without the application of corporal punishment calls for enhancing the quality of teachers and supporting them in implementing evidence-based strategies of restoring students' discipline. The study also underscores the importance of changing disciplinary procedures from corrective interventions to exclusionary, suspension, and

expulsion for effective management of students to advocate non-violent disciplinary frameworks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, the study recommends the educational practitioners as follows:

Parents, teachers, and administrators should advocate for the modern disciplinary measures that align with the replacement of corporal punishment strategies.

Heads of schools should embark on training teachers in professional guidance and counselling, the use of positive reinforcement, and a non-physical punishment system.

Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to revise the National Educational Act on corporal punishment by accommodating a new framework of maintaining human dignity and self-discipline.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Adeoye, A. M. (2024). Learners 'Indiscipline: Constructing a Model Of Social Control Among Principals In Secondary Schools. *Journal of Public Administration, Finance & Law*, (33).
- [2]. Adika, R., & Dafit, F. (2023). The Teacher's Role in Forming Student Discipline Character in Elementary Schools. *Scaffolding: Journal of Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme*, 5(1), 647-660.
- [3]. Admasu, N. (2022). Students' Disciplinary Problems In Secondary Schools: The Case Of Jeldu Woreda (Doctoral dissertation, Ambo University).
- [4]. Ahmed, D., & Rashid, S. (2023). Alternative Strategies to Corporal Punishment: Teachers' Practices at Secondary School Level. *Pakistan Journal of Society, Education and Language (PJSEL)*, 10(1), 1-12.
- [5]. Augustino, E. (2023). Role of Education Stakeholders in Managing Discipline Among Day Public Secondary School Students Living in Rented Houses in Tanzania: A Case of Nzega District in Tabora-Tanzania (Master's thesis, University of Dodoma (Tanzania)).
- [6]. Aymelo, K. (2022). Students' indiscipline in secondary schools: The case of the eastern part of Ethiopia. *International Journal of Advances in Scientific Research and Engineering*, 8(06), 78-88.
- [7]. Cremin, H. (2025). *Rewilding Education: Rethinking the Place of Schools Now and in the Future*. Taylor & Francis.
- [8]. Daily News Reporter (September 25, 2025). Tanzania Breaks the Ice on Corporal Punishment in Schools. <https://dailynews.co.tz/tanzania-breaks-the-ice-on-corporal-punishment-in-its-schools/#:~:text=24%20of%20002%2C%20that%20the,been%20officially%20delegated%20in%20writin g>. Retrieved on 10th January 2026.
- [9]. Deshpande, A., Ahmed, S., & Bahreini, R. (2025). Prevalence of Disrespectful Behaviors in Classrooms and Effective Management Strategies for Teachers: A Review. *Medical Education Bulletin*, 6(1), 1041-1049.
- [10]. Halomoan, I. S., Moeis, I., & Yakubu, A. (2023). An overview of the strength of implementing democratic values in an Islamic boarding school atmosphere. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2), 190-206.
- [11]. Hasanah, M., Arafat, Y., Barni, M., Raya, A. T., & Aprilianto, A. (2024). Teachers' Strategies for Managing Disruptive Behavior in The Classroom During The Learning Process. *Nazhruna: Journal of Pendidikan Islam*, 7(3), 628-645.
- [12]. Hatano, A., Matsuda, H., & Negishi, Y. (2024). The impact of the United Nations human rights treaties on the domestic level in Japan. In *The Impact of the United Nations Human Rights Treaties on the Domestic Level: Twenty Years On* (pp. 608-698). Brill Nijhoff.
- [13]. Human Rights, 2025. LHRC and TENMET Demand Ban on Corporal Punishment Amid Rising Student Abuse Cases. https://humanrights.or.tz/sw/news-events/lhrc_tenmet#:~:text=On%20February%2026%2C%202025%2C%20media,complete%20a%20class%20group%20assignment. Retrieved on 10th January 2026.
- [14]. Iloka, P. C. (2025). Parental and Community Perspectives on Principals' Oversight of Teacher Punishment In Secondary Education: Legal Implications. *African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies*, 15(2).
- [15]. Ishabisa, Adenias (2025). "Effects of Corporal Punishments on Students' Learning: A Case of Selected Secondary Schools in Tanzania." *Tanzania Journal of Sociology: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 2*. <https://commons.udsm.ac.tz/tjsa/vol11/iss2/>. Retrieved on 10th January 2026.
- [16]. Jones, R., Kreppner, J., Marsh, F., & Hartwell, B. (2023). Punitive behaviour management policies and practices in secondary schools: A systematic review of children and young people's perceptions and experiences. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 28(2-3), 182-197.
- [17]. Kaluku, E. N. (2023). Influence of head teachers' administrative practices on students' discipline in public secondary schools in Machakos sub-county, Machakos county, Kenya (Doctoral dissertation).
- [18]. Kamara, Y., Koroma, C., & Kaserero, S. (2023). Factors Contributing to Students' Indiscipline Behaviour at Public Secondary Schools. In the *Economics, Business, Entrepreneurship & Social Sciences International Conference*.
- [19]. Kau, I. (2024). Teachers' Psychological Transformation from the use of Corporal Punishment to Alternative Disciplinary Measures in South African Schools (Master's thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa).
- [20]. Kazenga, J. N. (2024). Teachers' perceptions on the use of corporal punishment in selected public secondary schools of Kahama urban district, Tanzania (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Zambia).

- [21]. Kinunda, A. C. (2024). Exploring the School Leadership Practices on Managing Students' Discipline Among Secondary Schools in Mbeya City, Tanzania (Master's thesis, University of Dodoma (Tanzania)).
- [22]. Kwira, J. G. (2025). Examine Heads of Primary Schools' Capabilities in Supervising the Administration of Corporal Punishment to Pupils in Mbeya District Council (Doctoral dissertation, The Open University of Tanzania).
- [23]. Li, L. (2024). Teacher Disciplinary Authority in International Schools: Balancing Parental Expectations and Educational Boundaries. *Advances in Education, Humanities and Social Science Research*, 12(1), 319-319.
- [24]. Lumato, E., & Mwila, P. M. (2022). Stakeholders' Perceptions about the Use of Alternative Punishment in Maintaining School Discipline: A Case of Bagamoyo District, Tanzania. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 36(6), 6-21.
- [25]. Maanga, M. B. (2020). Parents' Involvement in Managing Students' Discipline in Community Secondary Schools in Tanzania: A Case of Dodoma City Council (Master's thesis, University of Dodoma (Tanzania)).
- [26]. Magobe, L. (March 14, 2025). School Corporal Punishment Defies Children's Best Interests. <https://www.ippmedia.com/the-guardian/features/read/school-corporal-punishment-defies-childrens-best-interests-2025-03-13-170212>. Retrieved on 10th January 2026.
- [27]. Mboma, N. G. (2023). The Role of Heads of Public Secondary Schools in Involving Parents in the Management of Students' Behaviours in Rufiji District, Tanzania (Master's thesis, University of Dodoma (Tanzania)).
- [28]. Mwashuiya, E. F & Juma, Z. R (2023). The Role of Media in Reducing the Use of Corporal Punishment in Dodoma Schools in Tanzania. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 7 (4), 405 – 415. <https://jrjiejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/JRIIE-7-4-041.pdf?> Retrieved on 10th January 2026
- [29]. Nyahiri, N. S. (2024). Enhancing Students' Discipline in Day Secondary Schools in Dodoma City Council: Insights from School Management Teams (Master's thesis, University of Dodoma (Tanzania)).
- [30]. Parveen, Darakhshan, and Shameem Akhtar. "The role of guidance and counselling in schools: A literature review." *International Journal of Indian Psychology* 11, no. 2 (2023).
- [31]. Rahma, A., Hopeman, T. A., & Anggraeni, W. A. (2023). Are Guidance and Counselling Services Necessary in Elementary Schools? Literature Study of the Urgency of Guidance and Counselling in Elementary Schools. *The Eastasouth Journal of Learning and Education*, 1(01), 01-05.
- [32]. Rahmawati, D., Salsabila, Z. A., & Fauriza, N. B. M. W. (2025). Teachers' Strategies in Managing Grade 7 Students' Misbehaviors in an Efl Classroom: An Observational Study at Smp Negeri 1 Kandangserang. *Sindoro: Cendikia Pendidikan*, 18(1), 1361-1370.
- [33]. Saiteu, L. L., & Otieno, K. O. (2022). Challenges Facing Teachers in Enhancing Discipline among Secondary School Students in Arusha City, Tanzania. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 6(1), 233-243.
- [34]. Serrano, C. (2023). Managing Student Misbehavior in New York Classrooms: A Qualitative Generic Study (Doctoral dissertation, National University).
- [35]. Setiani, R., & Rifayanti, R. (2022). Influence of Self-Control and Peer Conformity on Disciplined Behavior. *Aji Internasional Journal of Social Science*, 1(1), 9-20.
- [36]. Sitinjak, C., & Canu, Z. (2023). The importance of guidance and counseling in effective school learning. *Jurnal Ilmiah Global Education*, 4(1), 12-19.
- [37]. Stephen, H. (2024). Disciplinary Measures for Managing Students' Misconduct in Secondary Schools in Tanzania (Master's thesis, University of Dodoma, Tanzania).
- [38]. Sungwa, R., Jackson, L., & Kahembe, J. (2022). Corporal Punishment in Preschool and at Home in Tanzania (pp. 51-74). Singapore: Springer.
- [39]. Suroso, E. (2024). Between Reprimands and Support: An Exploration of Politeness in Teacher-Student Interaction in the Classroom Environment. *Qalamuna: Journal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Agama*, 16(2), 1527-1544.
- [40]. Uchenna, M. A. (2025). The Role Of School Principals In Supervising Teacher Discipline: Legal And Ethical Considerations. *Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 19(3).
- [41]. Valdebenito, S., Gaffney, H., & Jolliffe, D. (2023). PROTOCOL: School-based interventions for reducing disciplinary school exclusion: An updated systematic review. *Campbell systematic reviews*, 19(3), e1344.
- [42]. Yelewonah, G. A. S. (2024). Indiscipline in Senior High Schools in Techiman North District, Ghana (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cape Coast).
- [43]. Zondo, S., Mncube, V. S., & Emmanuel, O. A. (2023). Strategies teachers use to implement positive discipline in schools. *Prizren Social Science Journal*, 7(1), 79-88.