Effectiveness of Positive Reinforcement as an Alternative to Corporal Punishment in the Management of Student Behavior in Secondary Schools in Kenya

Pamela Awuor Onyango

School of Education
Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology,
P. O. Box 210-40601, Bondo-Kenya
Email: pamsao@gmail.com

Abstract: **The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in the management of student behavior. The study was informed by Assertive Discipline model theory. Mixed method paradigm with both quantitative and qualitative approach and a concurrent triangulation design were used in the study. The study had a target of 431 teachers, composed of 40 Head of Departments, 40 Deputy Principals and 351 classroom teachers. A sample size of 28 Deputy Principal, 28 heads of Guidance and Counseling and 196 teachers was obtained using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table. A pilot study was done in 9% of the population that did not participate in the actual study to ensure reliability of the instruments. In order to ensure validity of the instrument, the researcher sought expert judgment from university lecturers. Descriptive statistics and correlational analysis were used to analyze quantitative data while qualitative data was analyzed through thematic framework. Study findings established that positive reinforcement was effective in the management of student behavior at r=0.411.**

Keywords: **Effectiveness, Positive Reinforcement, Student, Behavior problems.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Other than teaching, teachers also manage student behavior (Nakpodia, 2012)|. Schools now face more complex acts of misconduct than before and for this reason, some members of the society believe that corporal punishment should be used to address misconduct while some advocate for instilling discipline (Mugabe & Maphosa, 2013). In America, classrooms have been experiencing change in the management of student behavior (Yaworski, 2012). Although positive measures are used in managing student behavior, increased incidents of student behavior problems have led to the adoption of positive response (Sugai & Hormes, 2002). According to Smith (2006), corporal punishment violates many international conventions, hurts and humiliates children since it causes emotional distress and lowers self esteem. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child opposes the use of corporal punishment and describes it as degrading, cruel and inhuman (Symonides & Vladimir, 2000). The United Nations has also emphasized the importance of legal reform and campaigns geared towards raising awareness about the dangers of corporal punishment, and use of alternatives to violent punishments (UNICEF, 2001). In Africa, Egypt has banned corporal punishment (Wasef, 2011). South Africa has taken several measures that are aimed at prohibiting the use of corporal punishment in schools and a teacher's manual on alternatives to corporal punishment has been availed with guides that provide training on the manual (Soneson, 2005). Nkabinde (2015) study observes that the maintenance of discipline in schools has changed as a result of the introduction of democratic discipline and cooperative discipline. In Uganda, stakeholders have divergent opinion

about physical punishment. While others support it, others believe that it is a coercive corrective measure (Damien, 2012). In Kenya, the use of corporal punishment was outlawed in the year 2001 due to the Children Act, 2001 (Government of Kenya, 2001). The Constitution of Kenya, 2010 contains the rights of children, which protect them from all kinds of punishment, violence and inhuman treatment. Teachers have been instructed by the Ministry of Education to use alternative measures to corporal punishment to address issues of indiscipline in the institutions of learning (Ministry of Education, Science & Technology, 2005). As a result, secondary schools in Kenya have come up with unique ways that are used in the management of student behavior that include positive reinforcement, guidance and counseling, exclusion and manual punishment (Agesa, 2015; Ndembu, 2013). In Bondo Sub-county, cases of defiance among students still persist (Bondo Subcounty office, 2015) and teachers face challenges in using alternative corrective measures (Alawo, 2011).

The objective of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in the management of student behavior. The current study was informed by Assertive Discipline Model by Lee & Marlene Canter (Canter & Canter, 2001). According to Assertive Discipline Model, the teacher is required to come up with a discipline plan that has 4-5 rules with consequences for breaking the rules. The rules and expectations should be presented to the students in a way that ensures they understand them. The teacher should use positive repetition to reinforce the rules by emphasizing on positive behavior as opposed to punishing the negative ones. Positive reinforcements include rewards, prizes, privileges and verbal praises. The teacher is also required to address negative behavior assertively, immediately and consistently (Malmgren, Trezek & Paul, 2005).

Assertive Discipline Theory suggests a five-step discipline hierarchy of escalating consequences when rules are broken (Canter & Canter, 2001). A student who breaks the rules is given a warning first. A student who breaks the rule again is given a ten-minute time out. Fifteen minutes are given to a student who breaks the rules for the third time. When a student breaks the rules for the fourth time the parents are summoned to school. Finally, a student who breaks the rules for the fifth time is sent to the principal's office. Assertive Discipline model allows the teacher to establish a systematic plan of discipline in advance and to communicate expectations and consequences to the students immediately (Mal mgren, Trezek &Paul, 2005).

II. RESEARCH METHODS AND MATERIALS

2.1 Research Design:

Mixed methods approach which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2014) was used for the study. Qualitative data allowed the researcher to find out how much of the characteristic or attribute was present (Oso & Onen, 2011). Quantitative approach is grounded on variables which are measured through numbers and analyzed using statistical procedures (Chifwambe, 2010). A combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches within the mixed methods approache, concurrent triangulation design was used. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed at the same time of the research study. Both components were given equal priority (Murdin, 2009).

2.2 Study participants:

The population of the study was composed of 40 deputy principals, 351 teachers and 40 heads of guidance and counseling from public secondary schools in Bondo Sub County. The sub county was made up of four categories of schools; namely sub county, county, extra-county and national schools.

2.3 Research Instruments:

 Data collection was done using questionnaires, interviews schedules and document analysis guides. The researcher used the questionnaire due to the efficacy and ease of construction (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Through the interview schedules the researcher was able to obtain information that could not be directly observed. Document Analysis Guides allowed the research to access data conveniently and to save time.

2.4 Data Collection Procedures:

Data collection procedures began after the acceptance of the proposal by the university supervisors. Permission for data collection was granted by the National Council of Science and Technology. The researcher considered ethical issues concerned with the privacy of possible and actual participants, voluntary nature of participation and maintenance of confidentiality of data provided. In order to provide anonymity, the researcher avoided the use of real names of the

participants.Questionnaires were given to sampled teachers while deputy principals and heads of guidance and counseling were subjected to interview schedules that were tape recorded. Major and minor offences books from secondary schools constituted the document analysis guides.

2.5 Data Analysis:

Analysis of data was done quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics and correlational analysis with the aid of statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 22. Data on the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in managing student behavior was analyzed. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed using Thematic Analysis, which followed the principles of thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006).The topics which emerged in the study were categorized, explained, interpreted and summarized as key findings. Verbatim quotations which emerged from the interviews were transcribed and eventually coded, as was in Raburu (2015). The excerpts and themes which emerged from the study were grouped into categories in line with the objectives of the research. Acronyms were used by the researcher to identify the participants.

III.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guides were used to collect data. The data collected enabled the researcher to establish effectiveness of positive reinforcement in the management of student behavior.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Positive Reinforcement

Indicator	SA	A	U	D	SD
Positive reinforcement enhances a sense of belonging in the students.	30(15.71%)	50(26.18%)	22(11.52%)	63(32.98%)	26(13.61%)
Positive reinforcement motivates students not to repeat undesirable behaviour	86(45.03%)	72(37.70%)	20(10.47%)	7(3.66%)	6(3.14%)
Positive reinforcement has helped students overcome social and behavioural problems.	77(40.31%)	72(37.70%)	31(16.23%)	7(3.66%)	4(2.09%)
Positive reinforcement makes students develop positive attitude towards school.	124(64.92%)	53(27.75%)	14(7.33%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)

Table 1 shows that respondents who believed positive reinforcement enhanced a sense of belonging in the students were 41.89% (Strongly Agree15.71%; Agree 26.18%) while those who argued that it did not were 45.59% (Disagree 32.98%; Strongly Disagree13.61%). The findings imply that most respondents did not believe that positive reinforcement enhanced a sense of belonging in the students. On the contrary, Bickford (2012) study in America argues that teachers believe their students gain from positive reinforcement like praise, and they intend to continue using it. Caldarella (2011) study in the Western United States concurs that School wide Positive Behaviour Support improves student behaviour, just as Noorudin (2014) study in Pakistan that influence of awards on student behaviour is very effective. However, Reupert and Woodcock (2011) study   in Australia argues that the corrective strategies used by preservice teachers are low level and do not prevent student misbehaviour. Ching (2012) study in the Philipines agrees that rewards do not play a big role in promoting positive behaviour. Bechuke and Debela (2012) in South Africa also agrees that learner misconduct results from teachers' use of rewards and specific rules.

Contrary to the belief that alternative corrective measures do not enhance a sense of belonging, qualitative findings from interviews established that positive reinforcement plays a vital role in the management of student behaviour. Learners who were reinforced sustained acceptable behaviour. Due to this, they gained confidence and closely related with their teachers. They developed a sense of belonging, which made them behave appropriately, as was noted:

Positive reinforcement is very effective and should be continuous. It brings students closer to the teachers and gives them confidence [DP 16].

Similarly, one of the heads of department remarked:

Positive reinforcement makes students feel motivated and they develop a sense of belonging that makes them change their behaviour [HOD 1].

The expressions of DP 16 and HOD1 imply that positive reinforcement is effective in managing student behaviour. Dodge (2011) in America concurs that students are supposed to be acknowledged for demonstrating desirable behaviour just as Dasaradhi, Ramakrishna and Rayappa (2016) in India also agree that there's need for a teacher to encourage students to have interest in what they are learning. The study findings are in tandem with Alhassan (2013) study which says that rewards are useful in behaviour change since they encourage the learners to continue behaving appropriately. However, Ching (2012) in the Philipines contends that many students don't realize the use of rewards and penalties in their schools. Foncha, Keppe and Ambogdia (2014) too in South Africa agree that alternatives to corporal punishment do not play the role that corporal punishment used to play. Similarly, Anayo (2014) in Kenya says rewards make learners to behave well with the expectation of being rewarded, but they lack the self drive and the responsibility to do the right thing.

Study findings from the minor occurrence book established that learners whose names were no longer appearing in the list of noise makers were rewarded for the improvement they had shown. They maintained good conduct by making sure that they did not make noise in class as a result of being positively reinforced. This suggests that positive reinforcement enabled learners to maintain desirable conduct. The study finding tallies with Brown (2013) in America that teachers rely on positive reinforcement approaches that increase positive behaviour among the learners. In addition, Ndembu (2013) in Kenya concurs that alternative strategies like rewarding positive behaviour are effective in the management of behaviour. On the contrary, Bechuke and Debela (2012) argue that teachers manage learner behaviour through bribing, which leads to misconduct among the learners. Moreover, Foncha, Keppe and Abongdia (2014) contend that in the absence of corporal punishment, alternative corrective measures do not make learners disciplined and responsible.

Additional quantitative findings established that positive reinforcement motivated students not to repeat undesirable behaviour. This was confirmed by majority 82.73% (Strongly Agree 58.64%; Agree 21.47%) of the respondents. The findings imply that positive reinforcement impacts positively on learner conduct and prevent them from repeating undesirable behaviour. The findings tally with Reinke, Stormont, Herman and King (2014) study in America which says that increasing the use of positive reinforcement improves the outcome of students, especially those who are prone to behaviour problems. In addition to the quantitative findings, qualitative findings from interviews revealed that praise was suitable in managing student behaviour, as was observed:

There's a student that I have been praising for behaving appropriately. He keeps on promising that he will not be mentioned at the assembly for undesirable behaviour. For a whole year now he hasn't been mentioned at the assembly. He has also improved in academic performance [DP13].

The sentiments of DP 13 imply that praise makes learners acquire positive behaviour change and also improves academic performance. Rahimi and Karkami (2015) in Iran agree that recognition influences learner behaviour positively. Inkoom (2012) in Nigeria also agrees that praising a well behaved student during school gathering promotes student discipline. However, Maphosa (2012) in South Africa argues that major forms of indiscipline require retribution. Damien (2012) augments that rewards shouldn't be used quite often. Another respondent who was also interviewed believed that positive reinforcement, especially in the form of praise modifies the behaviour of learners, as was noted:

I used to punish Nancy (not her real name) for coming to school late. I later realized that her home was far. Due to this, I advised her to start the journey to school early. I began to praise her whenever she came to school on time. I continued praising her whenever she reported to school earlier than other students whose homes were not so far. Today she does not come late [DP 8].

The views of DP 8 suggest that positive reinforcement in the form of praise is effective and motivates the learners to have the desire to behave appropriately. Bickford (2012) study in America agrees that praise effectively reduces students' disruptive behaviour. Brown (2013) study in New Zealand concurs that positive reinforcement increases positive behaviour among students. Dasaradhi, Ramakrishna and Rayappa (2016) in India agrees that teachers need to encourage effort through specific praise. However, Mohrbutter (2011) in USA argues that teachers need professional development to enable them manage student behaviour appropriately. Aboluwodi (2015) in Nigeria concurs that the use of retribution in the African context leads to positive behaviour change. Another respondent observed that rewarding learners for any slight positive change in behaviour makes them behave appropriately:

A student who has been repeatedly involved in misbehaviour can be rewarded for any slight positive change. This has contributed to positive behaviour change in most of my students [HOD 17].

The views of HOD 17 suggest that positive reinforcement contributes to positive behaviour among the learners. The research findings show that teachers should be very keen in noticing any slight behaviour change that would warrant for reinforcement. Similarly, Rahimi and Karkami (2015) in Iran agree that recognition and involvement are effective discipline strategies. Guner (2012) in Turkey concurs that positive reinforcement approaches effectively increase positive behaviour among the students. Bickford (2012) in America also agrees that praise is an effective means of reducing students' disruptive behaviour and teachers believe their students gain from positive reinforcement like praise. However, Dodge (2011) in America maintains that school administrators are unprepared to meet the rising challenges that face leaners' social, emotional and behavioural learning needs. Kemunto, Nderitu and Nderitu (2014) in Kenya concur that teachers rely on harsh and threatening disciplinary methods and it's necessary to encourage them to develop positive behaviour support.

Findings from the document analysis guides revealed that student leaders who did their work efficiently were positively reinforced by being given material rewards. This motivated them and they sustained desirable conduct, which was an indication that positive reinforcement was effective in the management of student behaviour. The study findings are in agreement with Guner (2012) in Turkey which agrees that rewards are effective in managing behaviour. Rahimi and Karkami (2015) in Iran also agrees that reward is an effective strategy in managing student behaviour. On the contrary, Reinke, Stormont, Herman and King (2014) in America argue that rewards improve learner behaviour, although they are more effective on learners who are prone to misconduct. Moreover, Anayo (2014) adds that after the ban on corporal punishment, the alternative corrective measures do not cause behaviour change in the learners.

Further quantitative findings confirmed that positive reinforcement helps students overcome social and behavioural problems. This was reported by majority 78.01% (Strongly Agree 40.31%; Agree 37.70%) of the respondents. Learners who were reinforced for desirable conduct avoided unacceptable behaviour and related relatively well with people around them. In a study conducted in America by Rhodes (2014) it was established that gaining the attention of students and praising them for good behaviour was effective in behaviour management. Dhaliwal (2013) in India too agrees that teachers manage challenging behaviours by encouraging and motivating students in learning by building a personal relationship with those that have challenging behaviour. Similarly, Inkoom (2013) in Nigeria confirmed that when good comments are written in the terminal reports of well behaved students, their behaviour improves. However, Ajibola and Hamadi (2014) in Nigeria believe that causes and kinds of disciplinary problems faced by the learners determine the disciplinary measures to be undertaken. Kindiki (2015) study in Kenya adds that teachers believe that the only way to manage student behaviour is through corporal punishment. In addition, qualitative findings indicated that learners who were recognized amongst so many others were a source of positive influence to other students. The use of material rewards like shirts, books and clapping motivated them in the presence of other students and caused them to envy such recognition, as was remarked:

 The most disciplined student is awarded publicly so that others can emulate and uphold good behaviour [HOD 14].

The perceptions of HOD 14 imply that a learner who is positively reinforced in public gets motivated and desires to maintain desirable conduct. In addition, information from document analysis guide confirmed that the use of material rewards sustained good conduct. For instance, learners who always completed their assignments on time were rewarded through material rewards like books and pens. They too were recognized before their fellow students, and this motivated them. Dodge (2011) study in America concurs that learners should be rewarded for desirable behaviour through tokens and recognition of desirable character shown by them. Besides, these study findings agree with Foncha, Kepe and Abongdia (2014) study in South Africa that praising of well behaved students during school gathering promotes student discipline. Ndembu (2013) study in Kenya concurs that students prefer alternative strategies to corporal punishment. However, Bechuke and Debela (2012) in South Africa argue that an individual's desirable or undesirable behaviour does not depend on an external stimulus that can be seen. Similarly, Ajibola and Hamadi (2014) in Nigeria adds that group rewards are more effective than individual ones that make the learners egocentric.

Quantitative findings established majority of respondents 92.67% (Strongly Agree 64.92; Agree 27.75%) believe that positive reinforcement makes students develop positive attitude towards school. Learners who are reinforced develop positive attitude towards activities related to the school. Qualitative findings from interviews also confirmed that learners who were reinforced developed positive attitude towards school, as was expressed by one respondent:

 Learners who are reinforced have positive attitude towards school. They want to identify with the school and feel that they are part and parcel of the school [HOD10].

The perceptions of HOD 10 imply that learners who are reinforced would want to identify with their school. Therefore, positive reinforcement is an important corrective method in determining the learner's attitude towards school. Learners who have positive attitude towards their school are likely to develop desirable behaviour since they would want to conform to the required standards of behaviour. Reinke, Stormont and Herman (2014) in USA believe that positive reinforcement improves student behaviour. Similarly, Rahimi and Karkami (2015) in Iran concur that reinforcement of learners increases their motivation. Moreover, Ching (2012) adds that rewards are effective, especially if well used. However, Moyo, Khewu and Bayaga (2014) study in South Africa suggests the use of demerits in managing student behaviour. Damien (2012) study in Uganda also maintains that rewards should not be monotonous.

A correlation analysis through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis that positive reinforcement was not effective in the management of student behaviour. Table 4.9 shows the result of the test.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between Positive Reinforcement and Students Behaviour

Correlations		Positive reinforcement	Students Behaviours
	Pearson Correlation	1	.411**
Positive reinforcement	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	191	191
	Pearson Correlation	.411**	1
Students Behaviours	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	191	191
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 2 shows that there`s a positive relationship between positive reinforcement and management of student behaviour. From the results, a Pearson`s correlation coefficient of r=0.411 was obtained. This shows that positive reinforcement is effective in managing student behaviour. This study finding is in line with Roache and Ramon (2011) study in Australia who agree that inclusive management strategies like reward make students responsible for their peer`s behaviours and their own behaviour. Similarly, Ching (2012) study in Philippines agrees that rewards and sanctions are effective if based on school principles. Kemunto and Nderitu in Kenya (2014) study also agrees that positive reinforcement is necessary since it encourages students to develop positive behaviour support. However, Reupert and Woodcock (2011) study in America differs that some teachers lack confidence in certain behaviour management strategies. The findings tally with Agle (2014) study in South Africa which says that inadequate praise does not effect positive behaviour change among the learners.

The current study used scatter plot to give further demonstration about the relationship between positive reinforcement and management of behaviour, as was depicted in figure 1.
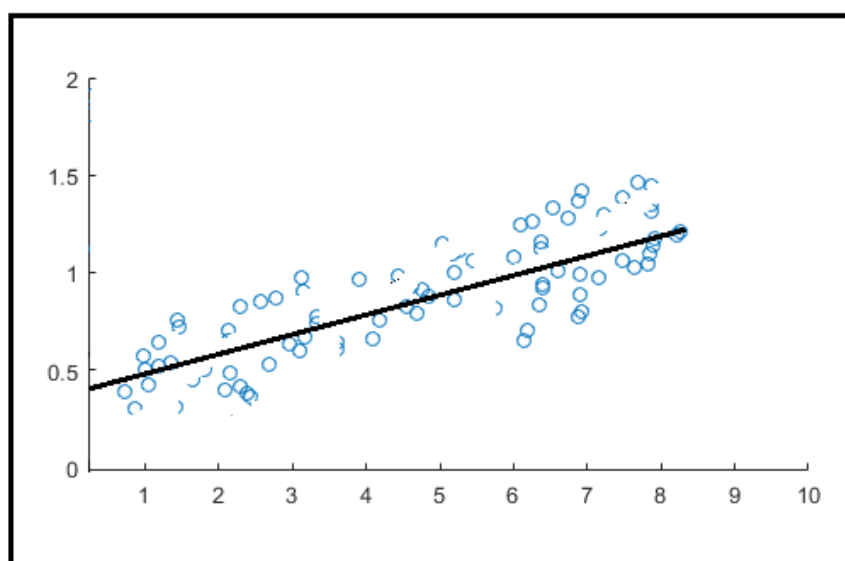
Figure 1: Scatter plot for Correlation between Positive reinforcement and Management of Student Behaviour

From table 4.2, it was established that there was a positive relationship between positive reinforcement and management of student behaviour. This was confirmed after obtaining a Pearson Correlation Coefficient of r=0.411. The graph in figure 4.4 also shows that there is a positive relationship between positive reinforcement and management of behaviour. Therefore, it follows that positive reinforcement is effective in managing behaviour. Similarly, Dodge (2011) study in America agrees that students are supposed to be acknowledged for demonstrating desirable behaviour. Akella (2014) in USA concurs that if learners are acknowledged for showing positive behaviour, they get encouraged to repeat the same. Omomia and Omomia (2014) in Nigeria also agrees that behaviour problems are not likely to occur when learners are actively involved and interested. However, Bechuke and Debela (2012) in South Africa contend that teachers' use of rewards causes learner misconduct. Damien (2012) study in Uganda argues that positive reinforcement in the form of rewards should be used conveniently

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The study established that corporal punishment was still in use, despite the use of positive reinforcement in managing student behaviour. This implied that teachers did not follow the government policy on the management of student behaviour. Additionally, it was established that some teachers were not conversant with alternative corrective measures of managing student behaviour.

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