



JUVENILE DELINQUENCIES: PREDICTIVE IMPACT OF PUNISHMENT ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' BEHAVIOURAL DISPOSITIONS IN LAGOS STATE

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Abstract

Children over the world at one time or the other do exhibit some levels of delinquent behaviour, and these behaviours have most times become detrimental to their psychological wellbeing and academic exploits. In view of this context, this study investigated Juvenile delinquencies: Predictive impact of punishment on secondary school students' behavioural dispositions in Lagos State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design, with the application of mixed method approach (questionnaires and a few structured open-ended questions) for data collection from a sampled population of 500 participants (Teachers-100 with 56 male and 44 females, and students-400, with 165 males and 235 females). Six research questions were answered and one hypothesis tested. Collected data were analysed with the 24th version of the SPSS, and the open-ended questions were analysed narratively. Findings of the study revealed that: Verbal warning and extra academic assignments were the most frequently used disciplinary measures. Majority of teachers agreed that punishment is necessary to maintain discipline and reduce delinquent behaviour among students. This study further established that truancy was the most prevalent form of delinquency among public secondary school students, hence, significant. Also, it was found that punishment has positive influence students' behavioural dispositions. Likewise, punishment has significant relationship with juvenile delinquency of students in public secondary schools in Lagos State. Therefore, it was recommended that schools should regularly assess the effectiveness of punishment and other disciplinary strategies in reducing juvenile delinquency. Data from these assessments can guide improvements in school discipline policies.

Keywords: Antisocial behaviour, Corporal punishment, Juvenile delinquency, School, Students

Introduction

Children over the world at one time or the other do exhibit some levels of delinquent behaviour, and these behaviours have most times become detrimental to their psychological wellbeing and academic exploits. Every anti-social behaviour among children and adolescents have been termed as a form of delinquency. Delinquent behaviour among children is referred to as juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquents are sometimes referred to as juvenile offenders. They are minors (those under the legal age of maturity) who engage in unlawful activities that serves as threat to their wellbeing and safety of the society. Juvenile delinquency is pervasive in nature, and it comes up at a child's developmental and maturation stage, and it is transient in nature, and a bit tasking to control (Dollinger & Schadbach, 2013). The review of legal structures has made provisions for handling offences by minors in a juvenile detention facility, using peculiar structures (Ugwuoke & Duruji, 2015). United State of America legal framework upholds that individuals under 18years of age charged with a criminal offence is taken for a juvenile delinquent.

Though, this may have to do with the severity of the crime in question. In some cases, individuals below the ages of eighteen may be charged and handled as an adult due to the nature of crimes committed (Siegel, 2011, Adegoke, 2015). Most expressed juvenile delinquent behaviour include examination malpractices, which is very common, vandalism, pilfering, truancy, use and abuse of drugs, bullying, assault, lying, gambling, fighting, and sexually related crimes, like rape, or pornographic activities, and a lot more (Masozi, 2015; Ugwuoke & Duruji, 2015). It is of a note that juvenile delinquent behaviour prevents students from reaching their full potential and functioning at their best academically in secondary schools. As previously established, the rise in juvenile delinquency, both in frequency and severity shows up more regularly in school (Dupper, 2010). In most unhealthy environments, violence is a frequent occurrence, which may be due to joblessness, poor recreational facilities, poor living condition and hunger. These environmental anomalies make students within this poor environment more vulnerable to exhibit anti-social behaviours, and most times triggers for delinquent behaviour. (Wahab, 2016).

A study has shown that 6% to 16% of male and 2% to 9% of female adolescents were noted to have a level of behavioural disorders that falls within the range of anti-social personality disorder, thus observed as oppositional defiant disorder, and regarded as psychopath. These are in most cases violent (Wahab, 2016). It is no gainsaying that the era of technology has drastically increased juvenile delinquencies over time, due to teenager's exposure to uncensored videos on the internet, in which most of the videos are indicators to learning different crimes displayed on these media spaces. These also includes newspapers, televisions and the likes. This is extremely unhealthy for this technology jet age due to the viewing of morally repugnant publications and pornographic contents. All these have contributed to making many young adults morally depraved (Katz, Lazarsfeld, & Roper, 2017). Most times, these delinquent children steal and pilfer from parents and around their neighbourhood, with gross disobedience to constituted authority, and highly destructive behaviour. It is obvious that when these children grow up to be full adults, they will eventually become parents, and the display of moral vices will become rampant (Matthias 2012). Notably, most delinquent behaviours may become breakouts of a broken home and single headed homes, where either of the parents is absent, also, children raised from unhealthy environments sometimes become vulnerable.

Statement of the problem

Generally, schools have experienced lot of vices and crisis in recent times. This has been seen as a result of lack of parental guidance, unhealthy peer influence, failure and collapse of social groups, and undue negligence and incompetence from school administrators, thereby, making our young adults in secondary schools to behave in an unruly manner. It has also been discovered that sexual immorality is rampant among students nowadays, thereby heightening the degree of promiscuity, resulting into teenage and unwanted pregnancies, abortions, lack of self-control, alcoholism and gross indiscipline in schools. These vices have resulted into a collapsed fabric of the society. The advent of ICT has also contributed immensely to these antisocial behaviours through undue exposure to uncensored contents on the internet, thereby increasing juvenile delinquencies among secondary school students and other adolescents. There are also gaps in previous studies on Juvenile delinquencies among students. It has

been found that most of the empirical studies reviewed did not consider children upbringing and inadequate counselling in schools as the major means to eradicating juvenile delinquencies, the studies does not establish if punishment was important to alleviating or control juvenile delinquents. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the impact of punishment on juvenile delinquent among students in public schools in Lagos.

Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to examine the impact of punishment on juvenile delinquency among students in selected secondary schools in Lagos. While the Specific objectives are to;

- i. Examine the effects of punishment on delinquent students in secondary schools in Lagos
- ii. suggest methods that can be used to curtail juvenile delinquency in Secondary Schools

Research Question

The following research question was formulated for the study:

1. What types of punishment are commonly used in public secondary schools in Lagos State?
2. Is the use of punishment necessary to maintain discipline in secondary schools?
3. What are the common delinquent behaviours observed among students in public schools?
4. Does punishment have impact on juvenile delinquent secondary school students?
5. What is the predictive impact of punishment on juvenile delinquent secondary school students' behavioural dispositions in Lagos state?
6. Does punishment influences behaviour change among students in secondary schools in Lagos State?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant relationship between punishment and juvenile delinquent secondary school students' behavioural dispositions in Lagos State.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on the theoretical postulations of Eldwin Sutherland theory of Differential Association. The theory of differential association projects on how young people in the context of a group perceives how peer pressure lure people into committing crime (Sutherland, 1947) This implies that these young ones get easily coerced into committing crimes by their delinquent peers. The theory posits with evidences that most young people with criminal friends have the propensity to commit crime. However, how the delinquent peers became delinquent must be known. Differential association as a sociological theory of criminal behaviour uses the social process approach. This is concerned with the process that makes individuals become criminalized based on mere interactions with people. This theory delineates the possibility and conditions through which people learn criminal acts. Differential Association theory is a process that gives detail of experiences a person goes through before becoming a delinquent person. It explains what makes the difference between one individual and the other and their differing point of view to be criminalised or not (Conklin, 2007). Differential association theory negates the general assumption that environmental and hereditary factors can cause crime. Criminal acts are learned through interactions with people during communication within a close circuit group (Chukwuka, 2015). Notably, it is a common fact that children understudy techniques, motivations and attitudes from others and pointing out of criminal codes which could be positive or negative. Many children have become delinquent through negative communication, hence, violates the law. The gap of communication to all delinquent acts requires learning. This implies that all delinquent act is an expression of social organisation surrounding the young adult (Regoli, Hewitt, & DeLisi, 2017). This theory incorporates the principles of operant conditioning and social psychology. It clearly emphasises the place of reinforcement and punishment in the learning of antisocial behaviours (Akers & Jennings, 2019). It is believed that these young adults and secondary school students must at one time or the other interacted with other individuals or peers that got their good deeds contaminated, hence, delinquencies sprang up in them, and punishment may be required to get them positively adjusted.

Review of related literature

Juvenile delinquency is globally becoming daunting, that some young children engage in different anti-social behaviours these days. The growing rate of these anti-social behaviours can possibly destroy lives within societal frameworks (Nnamdi & Ifeoma, 2015). To this end, schools as institutions of knowledge and character development are saddled with the responsibilities of wading off these anti-social behaviour and juvenile delinquencies from students as much as possible, and this is why some scholars opinionated corporal punishment as an antidote for ameliorating these vices. In a similar development, Ofodile (2017) is of the opinion that mere punishment can be applied against anti-social behaviour, and juvenile offenders as a deterrent to others. Bye and large, corporal punishment had done more harm to students for curbing offences than the good intended. Shammass (2014) established that corporal punishment may include- whipping or flogging, this was a very familiar kind of punishment many years back, though some teachers still flog students. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has explained corporal punishment as a kind of physical force inflicted on an offender in order to exert some pains and discomfort (WHO, 2025). However, punishment may include these, but not limited to them- smacks, slaps, spanks, pinches, ear and hair pulls, confining children or offenders to sit or stand in a position of discomfort (The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, 2013). Based on the application of this different corporal punishment on juvenile delinquent students, many have expressed resentment, hostility and vandalism, and above all pushes the young adult to drop out of school (Shaikhmag, Assan & Loate, 2015). It was argued that corporal punishment is a violation of rights of non-adults and adults alike (WHO, 2025).

It was however advocated that corporal punishment is a tool through which schools can achieve positive behaviour, discipline, and good character. Hence, a large number of school teachers opined that classrooms would lack decorum in the absence corporal punishment (Busienei, 2012). Though, some studies have shown that the fear of punishment alone does not deter Youth offenders, and thereby found that punishment may not be linked to reduced delinquent offences (Hirtenlehner, 2020, Hirtenlehner & Schulz, 2021). Punishment may be seen as one traditional means that serves as a deterrent to juvenile offences. Punishment may also have to do with meting unpleasant sanctions to offenders, individuals or group of people as the case may be. Traditionally, most juvenile offenders are denied every “luxury” in the home, which may include clothes, travels, and meals. According to Gade (2020), punishment may range from child discipline to criminal law, which may be a response deterrent to every undesirable and unacceptable conduct. Punishment may be further presented as a tool for inflicting pain on offending individuals as a penalty for a committed offence.

In the same vein, Walgrave (2008) also explained punishment as an intended pain to be inflicted on offenders. It is believed that this intended pain on the young adult would make him adjust positively to societal norms and deviate from every antisocial behaviour. Sometimes, offenders are caned, this is of course painful, but intended for a positive change in order to avoid such pain subsequently when found culpable. Studies have also shown that punishment have a deterrent impact on juvenile offenders, especially in the course of greater and severe punitive measure within the context of the law (Gade, 2020; Walgrave, 2008; Rooij et al., 2025). Punishment in most cases is expected to alter the unacceptable behaviour, and possibly reduce the frequencies of the offences committed, on the other hand it could stimulate crime in others (Rooij et al., 2025). Young adults have also been found not to consider punishment threats in the same manners (Lee & Solomon, 2025, Duong et al., 2025). Olaitan (2013) further regarded indiscipline as a serious problem in the classroom, and every learning task depends on how the issue is handled in the school. Conversely, the Skinner’s operant conditioning theory, argued that punishment may suppress anti-social behaviour, but does not proffer alternative positive behaviour to the offender (McLeod, 2025). There are some types of punishment, they are: Deterrence, Incapacitation, Rehabilitation- Deterrence is a form of discouragement created in an individual when he or she knows the aftermath or punitive measures that await such misconduct. Deterrent effects can either be specific in scope, where the individual in question is presumed to have a reduced chances of committing the offence again due to the punitive measure experienced. The threat of the punitive measure may in the long run discourage potential deviants within the general public from engaging in crime subsequently (Apel & Nagin, 2011, Petrich et al., 2021).

Incapacitation

Incapacitation as a punitive approach has to do with identifying those that are culpable and prone to causing harm presently or in the future in the society., hence, a protective measure is put in place to keep such an individual in custody for a lengthy period of time (Grau et al. 2018,). This will invariably reduce the chances of experiencing further crimes in the society.

Rehabilitation

The behavioural principle in curbing criminal act is often referred to as rehabilitation. It may be presumed that the causes of the criminal offences are attached to some external factors, which include social pressure, psychological hindrances and situational challenges. Rehabilitation is an internal change that results in extinguishing targeted negative conducts, and consequently, the process of rehabilitation would involve managing those factors to decrease the degree of occurrence of the criminal offences (Irwin, et al., 2012, Craig et al. 2013). This has become a more popular trend in prisons nowadays as against the previous practice that lacks moral legitimacy, scientific standing or pragmatic gains (Cullen & Gilbert, 2013). Notably, these types of punishment on offenders is dependent on the severity of the offence committed. In the study of Ugwu & Stanly (2017) on family dynamics as a major cause of delinquent behaviours among - in school students in Asari -Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State. With a population of four hundred and forty-five (445) participants drawn from SS1 and SS2 classes, which formed the sample from ten public senior secondary schools. Findings reveal that parents had an influence on student's delinquent behaviours.

Corporal punishment refers to punishments in which physical pains is intended to be inflicted upon the transgressor. Punishment may be judged as fair or unfair in terms of their degree of reciprocity and proportionality to the offense. Punishment also requires the penal state to ensure that the "correct" amount of punishment is imposed, although with different justifications very significantly on how to determine what constitutes that "correct amount". (Ashworth, 2015). Investigating the relationship between corporal punishment and Secondary School Students positive conduct. It is worthy of note to admit that Juvenile delinquent behaviours remain a big problem in Lagos state secondary schools. Hence, most students suffer setbacks or inconsistency in their moral conduct and partly affecting their academic performance due to the prevailing delinquent behaviours. Juvenile delinquent behaviours do not take place in vacuum, but with some factors traceable to delinquencies. It is often believed that every delinquent child is a product of the home, thereby making the parents the first point of contact as possible influencers due to their upbringing, which may be faulty at a point in time. For these reasons, most delinquent children are exempted from state prosecution because they are regarded as minors.

Method

Descriptive research design was adopted for this study, using a mixed method approach. This comprises the application of a quantitative and qualitative data for emphasis. The study population comprises all public secondary students of Lagos Island secondary schools. The samples of 400 students and 100 teachers were randomly selected from all the public secondary schools in Lagos Island. A self-made questionnaire was designed for data collection for the students and teachers, titled Questionnaire on Juvenile Delinquency among Secondary Students in Lagos Public Schools, using a Four-Likert scale - "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree". And ascertaining the reliability and validity of the instrument empirically, within a four-week interval, which gave a coefficient value of 0.65. while a few open-ended questions were asked alongside in the questionnaires. The quantitative data was analysed using version 24 of the SPSS, items were rated by calculating the frequency table and ratios. While the few open-ended questions were narratively analysed, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used as the statistical tool for the measure of relationship between the variables.

Results

This study presents the results of the data collected from both teachers and students in public secondary schools in Lagos Island.

Demographic Information of Respondents

Analysis of Respondents' (Teachers) Demographic Data

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	56	56.0	56.0	56.0
Female	44	44.0	44.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 1 above shows that 56(56.0%) of the respondents were male teachers, and while 44(44.0%) of the respondents were female teachers. This implies that most of the respondents in this study were male teachers.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 20-29years	18	18.0	18.0	18.0
30-39years	32	32.0	32.0	50.0
40-49years	28	28.0	28.0	78.0
50years and above	22	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 2 above shows that 18(18.0%) of the respondents were between 20-29years, 32(32.0%) of the respondents were between 30-39years, 28(28.0%) of the respondents were between 40-49years, and while 22(22.0%) of the respondents were between 50years and above. This implies that most of the respondents in this study were teachers between 30-39years.

Table 3: Highest Qualification Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid NCE	18	18.0	18.0	18.0
B.ED/B.SC(ED)	46	46.0	46.0	64.0
M.ED	24	24.0	24.0	88.0
PHD	6	6.0	6.0	94.0
Others	6	6.0	6.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 3 above shows that 18(18.0%) of the respondents hold NCE degree, 46(46.0%) of the respondents hold B.ED/B.SC(ED) degree, 24(24.0%) of the respondents hold M.ED degrees, 6(6.0%) of the respondents possess Ph.D degree, and while 6(6.0%) of the respondents fall under other qualifications. This implies that most of the respondents in this study holds B.ED/B.SC(ED).

Table 4: Years of Teaching Experience Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1-5years	20	20.0	20.0	20.0
6-10years	34	34.0	34.0	54.0
11-15years	26	26.0	26.0	80.0
16years and above	20	20.0	20.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 4 above shows that 20(20.0%) of the respondents were between 1-5years of teaching experience, 34(34.0%) of the respondents were between 6-10years of teaching experience, 26(26.0%) of the respondents were between 11-15years of teaching experience, and while 20(20.0%) of the respondents were between 16years and above. This implies that most of the respondents in this study were teachers who have between 6-10years of teaching experience.

Research Question One: What types of punishment are commonly used in public secondary schools in Lagos State?

Table 5: Types of Punishment Used in Public Secondary Schools (N = 100)

S/N	Types of Punishment	Yes	(%)	No	(%)
1	Verbal warning	92	92.0	8	8.0
2	Extra academic assignment	85	85.0	15	15.0
3	Manual labour	78	78.0	22	22.0
4	Corporal punishment	69	69.0	31	31.0
5	Suspension	74	74.0	26	26.0
6	Referral to school counsellor	81	81.0	19	19.0
Total		100			

Table 5 above shows the types of punishment commonly used in public secondary schools in Lagos State according to teachers' responses. The findings reveal that verbal warning is the most commonly used punishment, with 92 teachers (92.0%), extra academic assignment (85.0%), referral to the school counsellor (81.0%), manual labour (78.0%), suspension (74.0%), and while corporal punishment (69.0%).

Research Question Two: Is the use of punishment necessary to maintain discipline in secondary schools?

Table 6: Punishment and Juvenile delinquency

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Remarks
1	Punishment is necessary to maintain discipline in secondary schools	42 42.0%	38 38.0%	12 12.0%	8 8.0%	100 100%	Agreed
2	Punishment reduces the occurrence of delinquent behaviours.	36 36.0%	40 40.0%	15 15.0%	19 19.0%	100 100%	Agreed
3	Harsh punishment leads to more rebellious behaviour among students.	28 28.0%	32 32.0%	24 24.0%	16 16.0%	100 100%	Agreed
4	Consistent punishment improves students' moral behaviour.	34 34.0%	41 41.0%	16 16.0%	9 9.0%	100 100%	Agreed
5	Some students repeat offences even after punishment.	45 45.0%	37 37.0%	11 11.0%	7 7.0%	100 100%	Agreed
6	Counseling is more effective than punishment in addressing delinquent behaviour.	39 39.0%	43 43.0%	12 12.0%	6 6.0%	100 100%	Agreed
7	Punishment has a long-term positive impact on student behaviour.	31 31.0%	38 38.0%	19 19.0%	12 12.0%	100 100%	
Grand Total		255 36.4%	269 38.4%	109 15.6%	67 9.6%	700 100%	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From table 6 above, analysis of items 1 to 7 shows that 524(74.8%) of the respondents agreed that punishment is necessary to maintain discipline in secondary schools, indicating its importance in controlling student behaviour. Most teachers also agreed that punishment reduces delinquent behaviours and improves students' moral conduct, suggesting that punishment can serve as an effective disciplinary tool, and while 176(25.2%) disagreed.

Research Question Three: What are the common delinquent behaviours observed among students in public schools?

Table 7: Common delinquent behaviour observed

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Remarks
1	Truancy	44	36	12	8	100	Agreed
		44.0%	36.0%	12.0%	8.0%	100%	
2	Fighting	39	34	17	10	100	Agreed
		39.0%	34.0%	17.0%	10.0%	100%	
3	Bullying	36	38	16	10	100	Agreed
		36.0%	38.0%	16.0%	10.0%	100%	
4	Stealing	41	33	15	11	100	Agreed
		41.0%	33.0%	15.0%	11.0%	100%	
5	Examination malpractice	35	31	20	14	100	Agreed
		35.0%	31.0%	20.0%	14.0%	100%	
6	Substance abuse	38	29	19	14	100	Agreed
		38.0%	29.0%	19.0%	14.0%	100%	
Grand Total		233	201	99	67	600	Agreed
		38.8%	33.5%	16.5%	11.2%	100%	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From table 7 above, analysis of items 1 to 6 shows that 434(72.3%) of the respondents agreed that teachers' responses on common delinquent behaviours observed among students in public secondary schools in Lagos State, and while 166(27.7%) disagreed. This implies that truancy is the most commonly observed delinquent behaviour, with the majority of teachers agreeing that students frequently skip school without permission. Fighting and bullying were also widely reported, suggesting the presence of aggressive and antisocial behaviours among students. Similarly, stealing and examination malpractice were identified as common offences, indicating issues related to dishonesty and violation of school rules. Furthermore, substance abuse was reported as a significant concern, highlighting the involvement of some students in risky and harmful behaviours.

Research Question Four: Does punishment have impact of juvenile delinquent secondary school students?

Table 8: In your opinion, does punishment have an impact on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	79	79.0	79.0	79.0
No	21	21.0	21.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 8 above shows teachers' opinions on whether punishment has an impact on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Lagos State. The findings reveal that the majority of respondents, 79 teachers (79.0%), agreed that punishment has an impact on juvenile delinquency, and while 21 teachers (21.0%) indicated that punishment does not have an impact. This implies that most teachers believe punishment

plays an important role in influencing students' behaviour and controlling delinquent acts in secondary schools.

Research Question Five: What are the effects of punishment on delinquent students in secondary schools Lagos Secondary schools?

Table 11: Experience of Punishment on delinquent students

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Remarks
1	I have been punished in school before.	130 32.5%	143 35.8%	73 18.3%	54 13.5%	400 100%	Agreed
2	The punishment I received was fair.	141 35.3%	143 35.8%	64 16.0%	52 13.0%	400 100%	Agreed
3	The punishment helped me understand my mistake.	113 28.3%	90 22.5%	119 29.8%	78 19.5%	400 100%	Agreed
4	Punishment in any school is effective in correcting behaviour.	120 30.0%	120 30.0%	78 19.5%	82 20.5%	400 100%	Agreed
5	Punishment discourages students from repeating offences.	151 37.8%	118 29.5%	94 23.5%	37 9.3%	400 100%	Agreed
Grand Total		655 32.8%	614 30.7%	428 21.4%	303 15.1%	2000 100%	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From table 11 above, analysis of items 1 to 5 shows that 1269(63.5%) of the respondents agreed that experience of punishment and its influence on delinquent behaviour among students in secondary schools, and while 731(36.5%) disagreed.

Research Question Six: Does punishment influences behaviour change among students in secondary schools in Lagos State?

Table 12: Punishment and Behaviour Change

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Remarks
1	Punishment improves discipline in secondary schools.	132 33.0%	147 36.8%	64 16.0%	57 14.3%	400 100%	Agreed
2	Some students become more involved in delinquent acts after punishment.	206 51.5%	89 22.3%	55 13.8%	50 12.5%	400 100%	Agreed
3	Counselling is more effective than punishment in correcting delinquent behaviour.	160 40.0%	139 34.8%	58 14.5%	43 10.8%	400 100%	Agreed
4	Harsh punishment makes students more rebellious.	98 24.5%	95 23.8%	140 35.0%	67 16.8%	400 100%	Disagreed
Grand Total		596 37.3%	470 29.4%	317 19.8%	217 13.6%	1600 100%	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From table 12 above, analysis of items 1 to 4 shows that 1066(66.7%) of the respondents agreed that punishment influences behaviour change among students in secondary schools, and while 534(33.4%) disagreed.

Table 13: Delinquent Behaviour in School

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Remarks
1	Truancy is common in my school.	174 43.5%	159 39.8%	43 10.8%	24 6.0%	400 100%	Agreed
2	Fighting is common in my school	129 32.3%	139 34.8%	66 16.5%	66 16.5%	400 100%	Agreed
3	Bullying is common in my school.	128 32.0%	157 39.3%	90 22.5%	25 6.3%	400 100%	Agreed
4	Stealing is common in my school.	164 41.0%	107 26.8%	89 22.3%	40 10.0%	400 100%	Agreed
5	Examination malpractice is common in my school.	119 29.8%	93 23.3%	96 24.0%	92 23.0%	400 100%	Agreed
6	Substance abuse is common in my school.	162 40.5%	95 23.8%	105 26.3%	38 9.5%	400 100%	Agreed
Grand Total		876 36.5%	750 31.3%	489 20.4%	285 11.9%	2400 100%	Agreed

Source: Field Survey, 2026

From table 13 above, analysis of items 1 to 6 shows that 1626(67.8%) of the respondents agreed that perceptions of the prevalence of different forms of delinquent behaviour of students in secondary schools, and while 774(32.3%) disagreed.

Table 14: In your opinion, does punishment have an impact on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid No	85	21.3	21.3	21.3
Yes	315	78.8	78.8	100.0
Total	400	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Table 14 above presents respondents' opinions on whether punishment has an impact on juvenile delinquency in secondary schools in Lagos State. The results show that 315 respondents (78.8%) answered "Yes", indicating that they believe punishment has an impact on juvenile delinquency; and while 85 respondents (21.3%) answered "No", suggesting that a smaller proportion do not see punishment as having any significant effect on delinquent behaviour.

Testing of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between juvenile delinquency and punishment of students in public secondary schools in Lagos State.

Table 15: Juvenile delinquency and punishment of students

Variables	Mean	SD	N	r-cal	p-val	Remarks
Juvenile delinquency	2.81	1.05	400	0.462	0.001	Ho rejected
Punishment of students	2.96	1.22				

**** Significant, P < 0.05**

Table 15 above shows the Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between punishment and juvenile delinquency among students in public secondary schools in Lagos State ($r = 0.462$, $p < 0.05$). Since the p-value (0.001) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that punishment has a significant relationship with juvenile delinquency among students.

Discussion of Findings

This finding revealed that teachers commonly use various forms of punishment, including verbal warning, extra academic assignments, manual labour, corporal punishment, suspension, and referral to school counsellors. Verbal warning and extra academic assignments were the most frequently used disciplinary measures, indicating that teachers prefer corrective and less severe forms of punishment. This implies that teachers recognize the importance of maintaining discipline while also attempting to promote learning and behavioural correction. This finding is also in tandem with (Watson, 2008, Gade, 2020). These findings also revealed that students had experienced punishment and improves discipline and discourages repetition of offences in school. This study supports the argument of McLeod (2025) based on Skinner's theory, who maintained that while punishment may suppress undesirable behaviour, it does not teach alternative positive behaviours.

This study further revealed that the majority of teachers agreed that punishment is necessary to maintain discipline and reduce delinquent behaviour among students. Teachers also agreed that consistent punishment improves students' moral behaviour and promotes compliance with school rules. These views are consistent with Olaitan (2013). However, many teachers also indicated that harsh punishment may lead to rebellious behaviour among students, and some students repeat offences even after punishment. This is also consistent with the findings of some authors (Gade, 2020, Rooij et al., 2025). This suggests that while punishment may be effective in controlling behaviour temporarily, it may not always produce long-term behavioural change. This finding also revealed that punishment improves discipline, and students become more involved in delinquent acts after being punished. This suggests that punishment can sometimes produce unintended negative consequences. This finding is consistent with the social learning theory proposed by Bandura (1977), which emphasizes that behaviour is learned through observation, modelling, and reinforcement. If punishment is harsh or humiliating, students may model aggression or develop resentment rather than reform their behaviour.

This study further established that delinquent behaviours such as truancy, bullying, fighting, stealing, examination malpractice, and substance abuse are common in public secondary schools in Lagos State. Truancy was identified as the most prevalent form of delinquency. This finding suggests that juvenile delinquency remains a significant concern in public secondary schools. These behaviours may negatively affect students' academic performance, social relationships, and overall school environment.

This study also revealed that punishment has a significant relationship with juvenile delinquency among students. This implies that punishment influences students' behaviour; however, its effectiveness depends on the method, fairness, and consistency of its application, this corroborates the views of Ashwort (2015). However, the findings also suggest that punishment alone may not be sufficient to completely eliminate delinquent behaviour. Effective discipline requires a combination of punishment, counselling, parental involvement, and behavioural intervention programs.

Extracts from the open-ended questions from students and teachers

Some students suggested the following:

01- "Punishment is good, but must be fair in achieving positive results"

101- "Counselling students can be more helpful than punishment alone through flogging"

151- "Parents should be more concerned about their children's upbringing to avoid deviant behaviours"

Some teachers also suggested the following:

10- "Punishing students for deviant behavior is impactful"

56- "Every punishment that does not aim at changing behaviour is baseless"

78- *“School Counsellors must be up and doing to redirect deviant students without much rigours of punishment”*

100- *“basically, punishing deviant students waste a lot of significant periods for better things in the school”*

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of punishment on juvenile delinquency in public secondary schools in Lagos State. Based on the findings, the paper concluded that punishment has a significant influence on juvenile delinquency among students in public secondary schools in Lagos State. The results from both students and teachers indicate that punishment is widely used as a disciplinary measure to maintain order and control students' behaviour. Teachers commonly apply disciplinary strategies such as verbal warnings, extra academic assignments, suspension, manual labour, and referral to school counsellors. The findings also revealed that punishment contributes to maintaining discipline and may help reduce certain delinquent behaviours such as truancy, fighting, bullying, stealing, examination malpractice, and substance abuse. However, the study further showed that punishment alone does not completely eliminate delinquent behaviour, as some students continue to engage in misconduct even after being punished. Therefore, the study concludes that while punishment remains an important tool for maintaining discipline, it should not be used as the only method of behaviour control. A balanced disciplinary approach that integrates fair punishment, guidance and counselling, moral instruction, and parental involvement is more effective in reducing juvenile delinquency and promoting positive behavioural development among secondary school students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and respondents' comment, the following recommendations were made:

Schools should implement behavioural intervention programs that target specific delinquent behaviours such as truancy, bullying, stealing, and substance abuse. These programs can include peer mentoring, conflict resolution workshops, and reward systems for positive behaviour.

School counselling should be taken more seriously. Counselling intervention can curb deviances if used appropriately.

Punishment should be given to delinquent students as a means of deterrent and to also inculcate good morals/behaviour in the adolescents in the end.

Government should review existing disciplinary policies to ensure that punishments are fair, proportionate, and consistent across schools.

Corporal punishment should be taken off available strategies for punishing juvenile delinquents in schools.

Schools should regularly assess the effectiveness of punishment and other disciplinary strategies in reducing juvenile delinquency. Data from these assessments can guide improvements in school discipline policies.

Parents and guardians should be actively involved in monitoring and correcting students' behaviour. Teachers should do a routine follow up to ensure that students have adequate change of attitudes, character and behaviours after punishment. The school management should highly appraise, reward and motivates students with exceptional good moral behaviours and values such as honesty, cleanliness, orderliness, self-control and obedience to school rules and regulations.

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