

Influence of Reward and Punishment on Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Enugu State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the perceived influence of reward and punishment on the academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State. It was designed to determine the direction and level of influence which reward and punishment have on students' academic performance. The study took the design of a descriptive survey. The sample size was 383 respondents which were selected from the population of 135,277 students drawn from senior secondary schools in Enugu State. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The Perceived Influence of Reward and Punishment on Academic Performance Questionnaire for Students (PIRPAPQ) was designed based on a four-point Likert scale. The data generated in this study was analyzed using mean scores and the t-test statistics. The result of data analysis revealed that reward has a positive influence on the academic performance of students. It was also found that punishment influences students' academic performance. On the basis of these findings, it was recommended that teachers, school administrators, parents and care-givers should apply reward and punishment as measures for shaping the academic performance of students but should ensure that the principles of moderation and reason are followed, given that the excessive application of this variable (reward and punishment) can be counterproductive, especially in the long term. In other words, reward and punishment should only be used moderately to influence students' academic performance positively.

Key Words: *Influence, Reward, Punishment, Academic Performance*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Many a times, students test the limits and boundaries set by their teachers and other constituted authorities by exhibiting undesirable behaviours in the school environment. Students consistently indulge in misdemeanors in schools that include; fighting, bullying, stealing, absenteeism, being unruly to school authority, failure to do assignment or classwork. Such actions affect the academic performance of such students, their social life, personal functions and their families at large (Munn, 2009). In school environment and most especially secondary schools where the student population is composed of teenagers, who are vulnerable to one form of misconduct or the other, the use of punishment is seen as a sure way of influencing students' academic performance. The primary goal of using punishment is to motivate students to exhibit desirable conduct, work ethics and interpersonal skills throughout the school days both inside and outside the classroom environment (Cotton 2006) these types of desirable behaviours are often time recommended.

Cherry (2020) in his opinion on application of punishments in schools in the United Kingdom observed that, some punishments are appropriate and constructive while others are not desirable, baseless and instead intended to instill fear. This idea is also in agreement with Canter, (2013) who argued that although discipline remains one of the most common problems for teachers, some punishments such as corporal punishments should not be used because no evidence suggests that they have produced better results academically, morally or that it improves school discipline. According to Mafabi, & Mars (2003) punishments are expected to enforce compliance when students are under the care of teachers. This opinion is also shared by Ilegbusi (2013) who said that Punishments in a school system are expected to teach students the relationship between their behaviours and the outcome or accountability for their mistakes. Punishments differ in the degree of severity of their unpleasantness, and may include sanctions such as reprimands, deprivations of privilege or liberty, fines incarcerations and the infliction of pain. In a school setting, corporal punishment where pain is inflicted on students who exhibit some acts of misconduct is most common. Demagistris (2016) sees punishment as the authoritative imposition of something negative or unpleasant on a person or animal in response to behaviour deemed wrong by an individual or group. Punishment may be judged as fair or unfair in terms of their degree of reciprocity and proportionality, and can be an integral part of socialization, and punishing unwanted behaviour is often part of a system of behavioural modification which also includes rewards. Reward praises student for their good work, and thus, encourages students to put up good conduct that can guarantee students' good academic performance. Often time, students can put on with desirable and undesirable actions which lead to reward and punishment, reward has its origin in behaviourist psychology which in turn underpins many of the packages on promoting good discipline in secondary schools. These packages ensure that, schools can make a significant difference to children's conduct by setting out clear rules and specifying rewards and sanctions for breaking the rules

2.0 Background to the Study

Psychological literature has shown that academic performance of students does not depend only on the abilities of the students, but also on reward and punishment. Though scholars have argued

that reward and punishment perform different functions as regards student academic performance, both of them provide a balance and motivation for the students to learn and excel academically. According to Mafabi, & Mars (2003) punishments are expected to enforce compliance when students are under the care of teachers. This opinion is also shared by McLeod (2018) who said that Punishments in a school system are expected to teach students the relationship between their behaviours and the outcome or accountability for their mistakes. The essence of reward and punishment (sanctions) is based on the premises that, students can choose how to behave. By recognizing and rewarding “good behaviour” and punishing “bad behaviour”, it is believed that, the good behaviour will be encouraged and the bad one, discouraged.

Teachers are worried about the aggression being directed to them by both students and their parents. This has resulted into some students being expelled, others suspended, forced to do hard labour at school, chased out of classes all of which seem to affect their academic performance. They further argue that some forms of punishments like corporal punishment could lead to physical injury if teachers are not careful in its administration. This would lead to absence from schools and consequently reducing the academic performance of the injured students. Ideally, schools set discipline for the proper governing of the various lifestyles of students that is the dos and don'ts. Adeymo (2005) opines that regulations on the other hand are authoritative disciplines with a course of law intended to promote discipline in school. Lupton and John (2013) argue that the operation of schools' is directly influenced by the way the schools' administered student's disruptive behaviour. They further explained that the parameters for students' behaviour and academic expectations must be clearly stated to students. Bargh (2000) opined that punishment is a means of controlling disruptive behaviour. He further stated that if punishment is the logical result of misconduct, the student is likely to accept it without resentment. Teachers need always realize the appropriateness of punishment before initiating it. Cotton, & Coon (2006) also contends that uniform punishment can be an effective way of controlling students' behaviour if students, teachers and school administrators know and understand that punishment are firm, fair and consistent.

Rewards and punishments are two techniques used frequently by teachers in classrooms for controlling behaviours. A reward is used for getting a behaviour to occur more often. It can be explained more technically by the term "positive reinforcer" which, when presented immediately following a behaviour, causes the behaviour to increase in frequency (Martin & Pear, 2008).

Reeves (2003) described giving a child a reward for showing good behaviour or work ethics as a “visible sign” that the children are succeeding. This is because reward helps to develop good “habits of mind” that can lead to success in “school and life”. Reward systems are sometimes known as behaviour modification which may be dependent on a system of extrinsic rewards and may have no connection to the task or to the intrinsic learning. The purpose of using punishment is for eliminating inappropriate behaviour. A punisher is used when presented immediately following a behaviour, causes the behaviour to decrease in frequency (Martin & Pear, 2008), and the principles states that if somebody do 3 something that is immediately followed by a punishment, then that person is less likely to do the same thing again in a similar Situation (Macleod, 2008).

Adeyemo (2005) in his study on the level of discipline in secondary schools in Nigeria, established that there is wide spread violation of school rules and regulations which was capable of obstructing

the smooth functioning of the school system and thereby affect pupils' performance. Adeymo further opines that regulations are authoritative disciplines with a course of law intended to promote discipline in school. The study carried out by Kuleana with regard to corporal punishment realized that, teachers who walk into the class holding a stick make the children fearful and tremble (URT, 2006). This situation makes students not to pay attention in learning. Because of fear, sometimes students may not effectively participate in giving contributions, ideas, experiences and opinions about what they know in regard to the lesson.

Newby (2011) in a study of fifth grade teachers showed that "more of the students of a teacher who facilitated an intrinsic orientation asked for additional work and exhibited less frequent off-task behaviours, in comparison with students of a teacher focusing on a more extrinsic orientation. This study suggests that students will gain the confidence which they need to succeed when the message is clear that the teacher believes they can do so. In the presence of a reward system, the students are being taught that the task is either so boring that it needs a reward to be completed, or that the students are probably incapable of completing the task, so as to need a reward to motivate the learning process. In either event, the reward is counterproductive and results in students who feel insecure about their abilities to complete tasks on their own. Reward and punishment are now in operation in many primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. Teachers and students seem to embrace reward and punishment as they are reported to have beneficial effects on students' behaviour in general. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the perceived influence of reward and punishment on academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed the descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey is characterized by describing data on variable of interest and it is useful for gathering factual information, data on attitudes and preferences, belief and predictions, behaviour and experiences-both past and present (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). This research designed is appropriate for the study because it enables the acquisition of a rich, robust, holistic description and understanding of the problem under investigation, which is to investigate and explore the perceived influence of reward and punishment on student academic performance among secondary schools in Enugu State.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all the public and private senior secondary schools in Enugu State, with a population of 135,277 students, based on the Enugu state Ministry of Education 2018. Enugu State has seventeen (17) Local Government Areas, and equally according to Ministry of Education Enugu State, there are five hundred and fifteen (515) public and private senior secondary schools in the state. The schools in their categories are 314 public and 201 private schools respectively. In this study, the population of interest consisted of all the students in the seventeen (17) Local Government Areas in the state.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

A total of 383 students were sampling for this study. The sampling was randomly selected from the total number of students that formed the population of the study, this followed Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling procedure. In the sampling procedure, stratified sampling was used in selecting male and female students in order to ensure representation.

3.4 Instrumentation

A self-designed questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The 23 items questions are based on a 4-point Likert rating scale with the options of strongly Agree 4, Agree 3, Strong Disagree 2, Disagree 1. Following the Likert scale type, questionnaire was administered to all respondents by the researcher and collected back with the help of researcher assistants.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

A total of 383 research questionnaires which was arranged using four Likert scale, were administered and were all collected. The questionnaire was given to students across the ten selected senior secondary schools from 3 local government (Enugu North, Enugu south and Nsukka Local government) using simple random sampling techniques. The selected schools are: Army Day Secondary School, Day Secondary School, Metropolitans Girls Secondary School, College of Immaculate Conception, Holy Rosary College, Uwani Secondary School, Queen of the Rosary Secondary School, Shalom Secondary School, Igbo Eze Secondary School and Government Secondary School Nsuka.

3.6 Reliability of the Instrument

The questionnaire designed by the researcher was presented to the supervisors and two other experts in the Faculty of Education, University of Abuja for the purpose of face and content validity. Items that were considered vague, ambiguous and irrelevant were edited to ensure that the questionnaire serves the purpose for which it was designed.

To determine the reliability status of the instrument, a pilot test was carried out using a school that was not participate in the main study. The split-half method of reliability was used. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) was used to correlate the responses of the two sets. The analysis yielded a reliability index of 0.70. Thus, the instrument was adjudged to be reliable.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

In the method of data analysis, mean response and standard deviations were used to answer all the research questions, while the t-test analysis was used in analyzing the significant differences between male and female students' perceptions on the influence of reward and punishment on academic performance.

4.0 RESULTS

Research Question One: *What is the perceived influence of reward on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Enugu State?*

Table 1: Perceived Influence of Reward on Students' Academic Performance in Enugu State

S/N	Statements	Mean	SD	Decision
Positive Influences				
1	Reward motivates students to engage in additional assignments which are more challenging and can lead to high academic performance.	3.55	0.66	Agree
2	There is educational, moral and character development value in performing tasks for the reward which results to good academic performance	3.37	0.88	Agree
3	Rewarding students for good performance tends to develop/build their confidence as a quality in them	3.55	0.60	Agree
4	Reward encourages students to put in good behaviours that can guarantee students' good academic performance.	32.82	0.72	Agree
5	Teachers who reward the good conduct or excellent performance of their students create a positive ground for healthy competition among their students.	3.51	0.62	Agree
Sectional Mean/Std. Dev		3.45	2.82	Agree
Negative Influences				
6	Students who continually get rewards for activities which are expected of them are stripped of the opportunity to learn to perform task for their own value	2.84	1.02	Agree
7	Praise for students, can easily loose its meaning and effectiveness.	2.71	0.94	Agree
8	Students devalue the tasks and fail to perform in the future in the absence of the desired reward.	2.78	1.02	Agree
9	When students are often rewarded for all activities perform, it may likely decline their effort with the absence of reward	2.100	0.83	Agree
10	Too much praises giving to a particular student may result to inferiority complex on the rest of other students	2.95	1.04	Agree
Sectional Mean/Std. Dev		2.85	1.90	

Table 1 As shown in table 1 above, the level of students' agreement on the positive and negative influence of rewards on the academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State was analysed. The sectional mean is 3.45 and 2.85 for positive and negative influence respectively. This shows that students agree that certain positive and negative influences are associated with use of rewards in schools. That is student agreed in sectional mean of 3.55 that Reward motivates students to engage in additional assignments which are more challenging and can lead to high

academic performance, the also agreed Rewarding students for good performance tends to develop/build their confidence as a quality in them with a sectional mean of 3.37, and furthermore it was agreed that Students who continually get rewards for activities which are expected of them are stripped of the opportunity to learn to perform task for their own value with the sectional mean of 2.84, also When students are often rewarded for every activities perform, it may likely decline their effort with the absence of reward with a sectional mean of 2.1. In comparative terms however, from the table above positive influence of reward on the students have a sectional mean of 3.45 while the negative influence of reward on students have a sectional mean of 2.85, therefore students tend to perceive rewards to have more positive than negative influence on students' academic performance.

RESULTS

Research Question Two: *What is the perceived influence of punishment on the academic performance of students in secondary schools in Enugu State?*

Table 2: Perceived Influence of Punishment on Students' Academic Performance in Enugu State

S/N	Statements	Mean	SD	Decision
Positive Influences				
1.	Punishment decreases the probability of a bad behaviour recurring by administering aversive stimulus	3.04	0.69	Agree
2.	When students witness or hear about severe punishment giving to offenders, they tend to refrain from committing offences in the future	3.15	0.70	Agree
3.	Most Students become better person when punish and accompanied by the reasoning for being punish	3.25	0.75	Agree
4.	Punishment that is followed with positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviour help to controlled and maintain further misbehaviour	3.07	0.77	Agree
5.	Punishment goes along with learning in other to reduce excess of misbehaviour in schools	3.30	0.73	Agree
6.	For fear of cane, students develop reading habit.	2.60	0.99	Agree
7.	Repeating class which is a form of punishment pushes students to be industrious	2.91	0.89	Agree
Sectional mean/Std. Dev		3.06	2.27	
Negative Influences				
8.	Undue punishment could create low self-esteem among the affected students which affects their academic performance	2.96	0.97	Agree
10.	Punishment may lead some students to depression which affects their academic performance	3.34	0.77	Agree

11.	Punishment could lead student of becoming school drop-out due to stress which affects their academic performance	3.05	0.86	Agree
12.	Punishment may lead to fear, and fear may lead to examination fever or anxiety	3.35	0.73	Agree
13.	Some form of punishment may inflict injury on students	3.41	0.68	Agree
14.	Punishment may make some student hardened	3.38	0.65	Agree
Sectional mean/Std. Dev		3.25	2.48	

As shown in table 2 above, students reponse to the level of shows influence of punishment on the academic performance of secondary school students in Enugu State. The sectional mean analysed is 3.06 and 3.25 for positive and negative influence respectively, shows that students agree that certain positive and negative influences are associated with use of punishment in schools. The students agreed that positive punishment decrease the probability of a bad behaviour recurring by administering aversive stimulus at a sectional mean of 3.04, also agreed Punishment that is followed with positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviour help to controlled and maintain further misbehaviour with a sectional mean of 3.30, furthermore the students agreed that negative punishment may lead some students to depression which affects their academic performance with a sectional mean of 3.34 and also agreed that Punishment may lead to fear, and fear may lead to examination fever or anxiety with a sectional mean of 3.35. In comparative terms however, from the table above, the positive influence of punishment have a sectional mean of 3.06 while the negative influence of punishment have a sectional mean of 3.25, therefore students tend to perceive punishment to have more negative than positive influence on students' academic performance.

H_{01} : *There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of reward on academic performance of male and female students in secondary schools in Enugu State.*

Table 3: T-test on the Difference between Males and Female on Perceived Influence of Reward on Academic Performance

Variable	Gender	Number	Mean	S.D	t-value	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
Positive Influence	Male	207	3.45	2.82	-0.34	381	0.74	Accepted
	Female	176	3.46	0.41				
Negative Influence	Gender	Number	Mean	S.D	t-value	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
	Male	207	2.85	1.90	-1.57	381	0.12	Accepted
	Female	176	3.63	0.81				

The analysis on Table 3 was carried out to determine whether there is significant difference in perceived influence of reward on academic performance of students. The result for the section on

shows a significant difference with P value of 0.74 which is more than the 0.05 level since the P value is greater, the hypothesis has been accepted, which means, there is no significant difference between male and female students in their perception of the positive influence of reward on academic performance of students.

H₀₂: *There is no significant difference in the perceived influence of punishment on academic performance of male and female students in secondary schools in Enugu State.*

Table 4: T-test on difference of Male and Female Students on the Perceived Influence of Punishment on Academic Performance

Positive Influence	Gender	Number	Mean	S.D	t-value	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
	Male	207	3.06	2.27	-2.25	381	0.03	Rejected
	Female	176	3.11	0.48				
Negative Influence	Gender	Number	Mean	S.D	t-value	df	Sig (2 tailed)	Decision
	Male	207	3.25	2.48	0.34	381	0.73	Accepted
	Female	176	3.24	0.51				

The analysis on Table 4 was carried out to determine whether there is significant difference in perceived influence of punishment on academic performance of students. The result shows a significant value of 0.03 which is less than the 0.05 ($P < 0.05$) level of significance. therefore, the hypothesis has been rejected, which means, there is significant difference between male and female students in their perception of the positive influence of punishment on academic performance of students.

Discussion of Findings

From the findings in this study, it shows that the respondents are in agreement that rewards have more positive influence on academic performance of students than negative rewards, with a sectional mean of 3.45 and 2.85 for positive and negative influence respectively. It further indicates that reward motivates students to engage in additional assignments which are more challenging and can lead to high academic performance of students; with a mean of 3.35. This is because reward helps to develop good mindset that can lead to success in school and in life generally. Essentially, this finding is consistent with Skinner's (1938) construct on positive reinforcement which states that frequent use of reinforcement (i.e rewards) modifies and influences students' behavior.

The study also found that reward encourages students to put in good attitudes that can guarantee their good academic performance with a mean of 3.82. This is in line with Skinner's theoretical construct that reward can be used to create consequences for desired behaviour. It also implies that teachers who reward the good conduct or excellent performance of their students create a positive ground for healthy competition among their students.

On the negative influence of reward, the study further revealed that students who are often rewarded for every activity performed may tend to show a decline in their performance. This is in

line with the research of Deci and Ryan (2005), who stated that students who are often rewarded for every activity performed, may likely decline their academic effort with the absence of further reward since the society does not reward people for performing expected tasks.

The findings further revealed the respondents' perception of punishment as negative influence on students' academic performance as against a positive one. This is in agreement with Guthrow' (2012) who argued that the school becomes an anxiety producing environment for students if punishment be is frequently used as a tool for correcting misbehaviors. When students develop tension and anxiety, it is most likely that their academic performance will be negatively impacted. It is also likely the student receiving punishment may tend to demonstrate fear, not only with undesirable behaviour but also with the person who administers it or with the situation in which it occurs.

On the issue of negative punishment, the study found out that punishment may lead to fear, and fear may lead to anxiety in examination (mean = 3.35). Also, undue punishment could create low self-esteem among the affected students which tend to affect their academic performance (mean = 2.96). This confirms an earlier study by Kuceana (2006) who found out that, corporal punishment create fear in students. This fear in return, affects their capacity and disposition to learning (URT, 2006). In other words, an atmosphere of fear tends to make students not to concentrate in the class. This is because fear distracts students from participating effectively in the learning process. Their ideas, experiences and opinions about what is being taught are being stifled out by fear.

The study also upholds the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female students in their perception of the positive influence of reward on academic performance with $P > 0.05$. It further shows that there is no significant difference between male and female perspectives on the negative influence of reward on academic performance of students with $P > 0.05$. This is consistent with the study of Munn (2009) who stated that reward praises student for their good work and, thus encourage them to put good attitudes that can guarantee students' good academic performance. Furthermore, the results revealed a significant difference between male and female students on the perception of positive influence of punishment on academic performance of students with $P = 0.03$. This is in agreement with Lindsay' (2008) who found that there is some gender distinction with regard to the impact of punishment on children. And there is no significant difference between male and female negative influence of punishment on academic performance of students (sig of 0.73).

5.0 Conclusions

The study concludes that reward influences the academic performance of students. Similarly, punishment exerts some level of influence on students' academic performance. In other words, reward and punishment in their positive and negative forms have the potential of shaping students' academic performances. This influence on students' performance may be positive or negative. It therefore, behooves on teachers to determine how to apply these measures to achieve the desired effect on students' academic performances. The researchers in this study therefore, concludes that reward and punishment are behaviour formation/modification instruments which can be used to impact students' academic performance positively or negatively depending on how they are used.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the researchers recommends that teachers and school administrators should apply punishment measure on students but they must ensure that it is in accordance with the school punishment procedures or rules set aside by the school for punishing offenders to enhance good academic performance. Again, reward should be encouraged more in the classroom than punishment since the latter when use excessively has the tendency to create fear in students which prevents effective learning.

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