

Effect of the timeout, response cost and corporal punishment as aversive therapy in the reduction of indiscipline among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study determined the use of timeout, response cost and corporal punishment as aversive therapy in reducing indiscipline among secondary school students of Government Secondary School Oyibo, Rivers State, Nigeria. The survey design involving pre-test and post-test was used. Secondary classes I and II (SS1 and SS2) students were purposively selected. From a population of 650 SS1 and SS2 students in Government Secondary School Oyibo, Rivers State, Nigeria, fifty-four students identified through direct observation as having disciplinary problems based on the frequency of exhibition of certain acts of indiscipline were used as the sample for this study. The acts of indiscipline targeted to be reduced were noisemaking, lateness to school, and truancy. The aversive therapy techniques applied in a bid to reduce these acts of indiscipline were time-out, response cost, and corporal punishment respectively. The instrument for data collection was an observation chart designed by the researchers, while the instrument for data analysis was a t-test for a related sample. Three hypotheses were formulated for this study and tested at 0.05 significant level. Findings revealed that the time-out technique significantly reduced the frequency of noisemaking, response cost significantly reduced the frequency of lateness to school, while corporal punishment did not significantly reduce truancy. Counselling implications of the study were stated, and useful recommendations were made such as: while using time out a technique which can effectively reduce noisemaking, the child should only be made to stay in a boring place for a few minutes; to effectively use the response cost technique to control lateness to school, the desirable possessions, points, tokens, or privileges of the offenders should be removed in planned, incremental steps; and the use of corporal punishment to reduce undesired behaviour such as truancy should be avoided since it models injurious behaviour and is not very effective; if however it must be used, it must be applied with caution and love.

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Keywords: Timeout, response cost, corporal punishment, Aversive Control, Indiscipline, students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Indiscipline among students has been a topical issue in the sense that without students being of good behaviour, day to day activities in the school may not go on well and this may

greatly affect the wider society both physically, emotionally, and socially. The rampant cases of indiscipline in Secondary schools in recent times are becoming very worrisome to stakeholders in education. The school should be a place for grooming the total child who would be complete mentally, physically, and socially. That is, such a child should not be lack cognitive, psychomotor, and affective qualities. Unfortunately, indiscipline has become a cog in the wheel of progress in the school and society, making it difficult to achieve this noble objective. This is probably why Denwigwe, Uche, Asuquo and Ngbar (2019) asserted that the consequences of students' behaviours in the school can be harmful in the sense that bad behaviour is a distraction to learning both to the students and those around them. Realising this, many concerned stakeholders show interest in combating indiscipline and ensuring discipline. Warren (2014) as cited in Odebode (2019) aptly commented that discipline is an indispensable component of schools' instructional programmes because the children are ignorant of what is expected of them and might sometimes behave like barbarians both inside outside the school.

Indiscipline has been defined in several ways and most of these definitions refer to indiscipline as having to do with lack of composure, improper training, disorder, and disobedience. Adegoke (2011) commented that teachers consider indiscipline as a very difficult task in teaching and think that the feeling of inadequacy in coping with the problems of school discipline and the disillusionment that comes when disruptive behaviour is rampant are major causes for teachers leaving the profession after a year or two of joining the teaching profession. Nwakoby (2011) defined indiscipline as the unwillingness of students to respect the constituted authority, observe and obey school rules and regulations and maintain a high standard of behaviours conducive to the teaching and learning process which are necessary for the smooth running of the school so that the educational objective will be achieved with ease. It is a failure or refusal to abide by the restraints of orderly social conduct by controlling one's desires and actions and being mindful of the rights or desires of others. Indiscipline in schools is an act

of disrespect for school rules and regulations and the non-maintenance of an established standard of behaviour, self-control, restraint, respect for oneself and others (Zubaida, 2009). It is a deviation from the normal way of doing things. Odebode (2019) asserted that indiscipline is the exhibition of behaviours that negate established rules in society and listed the forms in which indiscipline behaviours manifest as lateness to school, truancy, rioting, cultism, insulting/assaulting, drug abuse, gambling, stealing and so on. Freire and Amado (2009) cited by Odebode (2020) indicated that not wearing appropriate school uniform, lateness to school, disrespecting school authorities, stealing, verbal and physical aggression, truancy, smoking among others suggest indiscipline.

Cases of indiscipline in schools today are rampant and very saddening. Denga (1983) noted that television, disco halls, sexually explicit movies, and the drug culture have exposed young people to adult issues at an impressionable age. Students tend to prefer such extracurricular activities as disco parties, travelling, dancing, dating, and spotting activities to showing interest in the school and the activities therein. Students also regard students' unrest, violence, and disobedience as the in thing. Consequently, acts of indiscipline escalate from day to day. Cases of indiscipline among students have remained a source of worry to stakeholders in education.

The disciplinary problems and how to curb them have continuously bugged the minds of teachers, parents, counsellors, and administrators. Being very much concerned about the incessant cases of indiscipline that have eaten deep into the progress of the school system, they strive to minimize them. For instance, 'War against Indiscipline' was introduced in Nigeria in 1984 to curb indiscipline in the Nigerian society, with the schools inclusive. Nigerian Peace Corps and Nigerian Civil Defence Corps have been introduced in Secondary schools to ensure better behaviour among secondary school students. Denwigwe (2015) proposed the idea of using assertiveness training and value re-orientation early enough to arrest restiveness among youths. Elughe (2014) noted that indiscipline has persisted in the school system in Nigeria, the efforts by the school authorities, government, and well-meaning individuals notwithstanding. Murithi (2010) cited by Odebode (2019) apparently in support of this view added that despite all the contributions by the government towards curbing acts of indiscipline in the society, the act seems to be on the increase in the schools and the society at large. Lending credence to this, Ndubuisi (2018) opined that the rate of indiscipline tends to be on the increase despite the various measures taken by successive governments to curb the menace among students to bring about a socially stable society.

One of the efforts at reducing this social cankerworm of indiscipline among secondary school students is the use of Aversive control techniques which are the commonest types of Behaviour modification. Aversive control technique

(examples time-out, response cost, and corporal punishment) means a form of conditioning in which an undesirable response is extinguished through association with punishment. It is a technique that may be unpleasant, noxious, or cause discomfort to the child when used to alter the occurrence of a specific behaviour. Time-out technique means to correct an undesirable behaviour by making a child stay in a boring place for a few minutes after which he or she is brought out from the boring place (Schmitt, 2021). Wolf, McLaughlin and Williams (2006) defined time out as a punishment procedure based on the assumption that it will be experienced as aversive by the subject and reduce the frequency of a behaviour. It helps a child to stop, think and gives time to regain control of his emotions. Webster (2019) explained that response cost is an aversive control technique that involves the removal of desirable possessions, points, tokens, or privileges in planned, incremental steps following the occurrence of undesirable behaviour or failure to meet a specific goal. It is the removal of reinforcement when an undesirable or disruptive behaviour is displayed. Corporal punishment or physical punishment is anything done to cause pain or discomfort (such as spanking, slapping, pinching, hitting, or pulling) in response to a child's behaviour. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2014), corporal punishment is a method of disciplining in which a supervising adult deliberately inflicts pain upon a child in response to a child's unacceptable behaviour and or inappropriate language. The immediate aims of such punishment are usually to halt the offence, prevent its recurrence and set an example for others.

Morawska and Sanders (2011) used the time out technique, as an aversive control technique to discipline some young children and concluded that it is an effective disciplinary strategy to reduce aggressive and non-compliant behaviour. Donaldson & Vollmer (2011) used a timeout procedure to reduce disruptive behaviour and found it to be effective. Bostow and Bailey (1969) used brief timeout for disruptive and aggressive behaviours and reinforcement for appropriate behaviours with two retarded patients in a state hospital ward setting. Findings revealed that loud vocal behaviour which may be likened to noisemaking was significantly reduced. Sara (2017) revealed from his study on the effectiveness of time out to reduce lateness among secondary school students that timeout significantly reduced the level of lateness. Solter's study (2000) as cited by Sara (2017) however showed that timeout is delusionary and harmful and cannot reduce the level of lateness. Vegas, Jenson and Kircher (2007) revealed that timeout helped in reducing problem behaviours in children.

Gresham (1979) compared the effectiveness of response cost and timeout in reducing rates of non-compliance in a class of educable mentally retarded children. By response cost, tokens were taken away from a child contingent upon noncompliance with teacher commands while during a timeout, non-compliant children were placed outside of the group for 1 minute for each non-compliance. Findings

revealed that response cost and time out respectively were effective in the reduction of non-compliant behaviour. Burchard and Barera (1972) used the response cost technique to reduce the frequency of some disruptive behaviours among some individuals. Some works were also done using corporal punishment to see if it can reduce undesirable behaviour. According to World Health Organisation (WHO) (2021), evidence shows that corporal or physical punishment increases children's behavioural problems over time and has no positive outcomes. Gershof (2002) in a meta-analytic and theoretical review of corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviours and experiences, revealed that corporal punishment was not effective in reducing undesirable behaviour. More adverse outcomes were associated with corporal punishment, with immediate compliance as the only benefit.

A meta-analysis by Larzelere and Kuhn (2005) revealed that physical punishment was not very effective in reducing a child's undesired behaviour. In other words, corporal punishment increases undesirable behaviour than reducing it. On the other hand, the result of a study by Wadesango, Gudyanga, and Mbengo (2014) on the effectiveness of corporal punishment in dealing with deviant behaviour in pupils in Chibuwe cluster schools in Chipinge District, using 60 respondents revealed that corporal punishment is effective in temporarily controlling deviant behaviour in pupils.

Statement of the problem

The problem of this study is that the secondary school which should be a place to churn out well-groomed students who would be the leaders of tomorrow and useful members of their society now produce many badly behaved students. Secondary school students rather than submit themselves to orderly social conduct, sometimes involve themselves in disruptive behaviours. If these behaviours are not adequately controlled, they would become problematic to themselves and their school and nation at large. Many a time there are riots and wanton destruction of school property. These are ill winds that blow nobody any good as effective teaching and learning are disturbing.

Various efforts used to reduce indiscipline among secondary school students have not yielded the desired results. Some of the efforts used to curb or reduce indiscipline in secondary schools are aversive control techniques. Many a time the aversive control techniques fail to achieve the desired objectives because those who use them, especially teachers fail to consider their suitability and method of application before using them. It is very necessary, however, for teachers to take great care in choosing and applying the techniques they use to modify students' behaviour.

This is because if their methods fail to achieve the desired results by correcting the misbehaviour of students, then the teaching and learning situation will be greatly hampered. Based on this, the researchers reasoned that perhaps the

proper use of aversive control could reduce indiscipline. The present study, therefore, investigated the effect of timeout, response cost and corporal punishment as aversive therapy in the reduction of indiscipline among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The study objectives were to

- i. determine the effect of time-out technique on noisemaking among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- ii. investigate the effect of response cost technique in reducing the frequency of lateness to school among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria
- iii. ascertain the effect of corporal punishment technique in reducing the frequency of truancy among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant effect of the timeout technique in the reduction of noisemaking among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant effect of response cost technique in the reduction of lateness among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
3. There is no significant effect of corporal punishment technique in the reduction of truancy among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quasi-experimental design in form of a pre-test post-test only design. It investigated the effects of three aversive control techniques namely timeout, response cost, and corporal punishment in the reduction of three disciplinary problems namely noise-making, lateness, and truancy respectively. Using eight class teachers at Government Secondary School Oyibo, Rivers State trained by the researchers as research assistants on the use of aversive control as behaviour modification to identify students with disciplinary problems, 54 students were selected through direct observation as the sample for this study. Out of this number, twenty were noisemakers, twenty-six were latecomers, and eight were truants. They included both sexes, with ages ranging from 14 to 18 years and SS1 and SSII classes.

The instrument for data collection was a researcher-made observation chart with three sections A, B, and C. Section A was designed to get the personal data of the students and included such details as name of students, age sex, and class. Section B was used to record the frequencies of an exhibition of the target behaviour before the application of the aversive control techniques. Section C was used for

recording the frequencies of an exhibition of the target behaviour after the application of the aversive control techniques. One form was used for recording information about the participants on noisemaking, one on lateness, and another on truancy. One expert in Guidance and Counselling and two experts from Measurement and Evaluation in the University of Calabar, Nigeria were asked to scrutinize the instrument for face and content validity. To determine if the instrument is reliable, a pilot study using 30 students of similar characteristics with the study respondents was done and a reliability index of 0.77 which was deemed high was obtained.

The researchers briefed the eight class teachers on the use of aversive control techniques in reducing indiscipline. These class teachers assisted them with data collection. Three aversive control techniques namely time-out, response cost, and corporal punishment to be used on the noisemakers, latecomers, and truants respectively were emphasized. Apart from briefing them on how to use the techniques, they were briefed on how to observe the students and identify those who had such disciplinary problems as noisemaking, lateness, and truancy. After a one-month observation of the students in all classes, a total of fifty-four students were identified either as noisemakers, latecomers and truants depending on the frequencies with which they exhibited these targeted behaviours. These frequencies were recorded as pre-treatment or pre-test scores. The aversive control techniques (time-out, response cost, and corporal punishment respectively) were applied to the students each time these behaviours were exhibited. The period of application lasted for another one month. This was followed by a 28-day post-treatment observation during which the frequencies of the exhibition of these acts were recorded as the post-treatment or post-test scores. To ascertain the effectiveness of the three aversive control techniques in reducing noisemaking, lateness, and truancy respectively, the data collected were analyzed using the t-test for a related sample as the statistical instrument.

III. RESULT

A hypothesis- by- hypothesis presentation of the result was done after testing each hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

There is no significant effect of the timeout technique in the reduction of noisemaking among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria. The summary of the analysis of the pre-and post-treatment scores of the t-test for the related sample of noisemakers is presented in Table 1.

Table1:t-test for related sample Analysis of the Effect of Timeout on Noisemaking

Variable: Noisemaking	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	p-value
Pre-test	20	8.2632	1.09758		
				9.988	.000
Post-test	20	4.000	1.52177		

Significant at .05 level

The analysis in table 1 revealed that the pre-test mean and the standard deviation for the frequency of noisemaking were 8.2632 and 1.09758 respectively while the post-test mean and the standard deviation for the frequency of noisemaking were 4.000 and 1.52177 respectively. The result of the t-test for related samples on the effect of timeout technique on noisemaking among secondary school students in Government Secondary School Oyibo, Rivers State, Nigeria gave a t-value of 9.988 with a p-value of 0.000. With a P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance, the hypothesis 1 is rejected. This shows that there is a significant effect of the timeout technique in the reduction of noisemaking among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant effect of response cost technique in the reduction of lateness among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 2: t-test for related sample analysis of the Effect of Response Cost on Lateness to School.

Variable: Lateness	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	p-value
Pre-test	26	7.8846	1.27521		
				6.558	.000
Post-test	26	4.5060	1.30217		

Significant at .05 level

The analysis in table 2 revealed that the pre-test mean and the standard deviation for the frequency of lateness were 7.88846 and 1.27521 respectively while the post-test mean and standard deviation for the frequency of lateness were 4.5060 and 1.30217 respectively. The result of the t-test on the effect of response cost technique on the frequency of lateness among secondary school students in Government Secondary School Oyibo, Rivers State Nigeria gave a t-value of 6.558 with a p-value of 0.000. With a P-value of 0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance, hypothesis 2 is rejected. There is, therefore, a significant reduction in the students’ frequency of lateness due to the application of the response cost technique.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant effect of corporal punishment technique in the reduction of truancy among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Table 3: t-test for related sample Analysis of the Effect of Corporal Punishment on Truancy by Students.

Variable: Truancy	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	p-value
Pre-test	8	6.5000	1.19523		
				.364	.645
Post-test	8	7.1250	1.145774		

Not Significant at .05 level

The analysis in table 3 revealed that the pre-test mean and standard deviation for the level of truancy were 6.5000 and 1.19523 respectively while post-test mean and standard deviation for the level of lateness were 7.1250 and 1.145774 respectively. The result of the t-test on the effect of response

cost technique on the level of lateness among secondary school students in Government Secondary School Oyibo, Rivers State Nigeria a gave t-value of 0.364 with a p-value of 0.645. With a P-value of 0.645 which is more than 0.05 level of significance, hypothesis 3 is retained. Therefore, there is no significant effect of corporal punishment technique in the reduction of truancy among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The following findings were made from the study:

1. There is a significant effect of the timeout technique in the reduction of noisemaking among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.
2. There is a significant reduction in the students' frequency of lateness due to the application of the response cost technique.
4. There is no significant effect of corporal punishment technique in the reduction of truancy among Secondary School Students in Rivers State, Nigeria.

V. DISCUSSION

Findings from this study revealed that there is a significant reduction in the frequency of noisemaking due to the application of the timeout technique. With this, hypothesis one was rejected. This is in line with the research findings of Boston and Bailey (1969) which revealed an effective reduction of the loud vocal behaviour of a retarded adult using the time out technique. This also agrees with the study by Morawska and Sanders (2011) using the time out technique, as an aversive control technique to discipline some young children with the finding that it is an effective disciplinary strategy to reduce aggressive and non-compliant behaviours. The finding is also corroborated by Donaldson & Vollmer (2011) who used the timeout procedure to reduce disruptive behaviour and found it to be effective, and Oluwafemi (2019) who revealed that the timeout technique can reduce noisemaking among students.

Other findings from this study showed that there is a significant reduction in the frequency of lateness due to the application of the response cost technique and this led to the rejection of hypothesis two. This is corroborated by the research findings of Fox and Pietras (2013) which revealed the use of response cost technique to reduce the frequency of some disruptive behaviours among some individuals. The findings also agree with Keeney, Fisher, Adelinis and Wilder (2000) who worked on the effect of response cost on the treatment of aberrant behaviour maintained by negative reinforcement and discovered that the response cost contingency reduced destructive behaviour by 87% from baseline levels even though the negative reinforcement contingency remained in place.

The research findings also revealed that there is no significant reduction in truancy due to the application of corporal punishment. With this finding, hypothesis three was retained.

It could be that the students feared the use of the cane by the teachers and consequently dodged classes just to avoid being caned by their teacher. It could also be that the students have developed a hatred for their teacher and the subject. This finding agrees with Achebe's (1983) opinion that corporal punishment models injurious behaviour. Gershof (2002) in a meta-analytic and theoretical review of corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviours and experiences, revealed that corporal punishment was not effective in reducing undesirable behaviour, this also concurs with the findings of this study. More adverse outcomes were associated with corporal punishment, with immediate compliance as the only benefit. In line with the findings of this study also, a meta-analysis by Larzelere and Kuhn (2005) revealed that physical punishment was not very effective in reducing a child's undesired behaviour. In other words, corporal punishment increases undesirable behaviour than reducing it. This study, on the other hand, is not in line with the result of a study by Wadesango, Gudyanga, and Mbengo (2014) on the effectiveness of corporal punishment in dealing with deviant behaviour in pupils in Chibwe cluster schools in Chipinge District, using 60 respondents and revealing that corporal punishment is effective in temporarily controlling deviant behaviour in pupils on a short-term basis.

Minor findings indicated that 19 out of the twenty noisemakers had the frequency of their noisemaking reduced, the frequency of lateness reduced in 21 out of 25 latecomers, while the frequency of truancy reduced in two out of the eight truants. The minor findings also reflect the stated hypotheses.

Implications for Counselling

Counsellors are expected to have a good understanding of the application of the various behaviour modification techniques especially aversive control techniques to reduce indiscipline so that they can provide appropriate guidance on the correct usage. They should also be conversant with the various acts of indiscipline that the students frequently engage in so that they can counsel the students on the need to be disciplined. As counsellors, they should always be patient with students and show empathy. This paper implies that counsellors should be the livewire in the business of ensuring character education and discipline in the school setting.

VI. CONCLUSION

Limited in scope as this research may be, it could be concluded that the timeout technique effectively reduced the frequency of noisemaking, while the response cost technique effectively reduced the frequency of lateness. The corporal punishment technique, however, did not effectively reduce truancy. Minor findings revealed that fourteen out of the twenty noisemakers had the frequency of their noisemaking reduced, the level of lateness reduced in sixteen out of the twenty-six students, while the level of truancy reduced in two out of the eight students. It then follows that the effectiveness of the aversive control techniques depends on the type, the individual who commits the offence, his needs, and interests,

as well as the offence he has committed. These factors should therefore be considered when the choice of a technique is being made.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study the following recommendations were proffered:

1. In using time out a technique that can effectively reduce noisemaking, the child should only be made to stay in a boring place (i.e., a place that he does not find interesting, and which will discourage him from engaging in the undesirable behaviour in future) for a few minutes.
2. To effectively use the response cost technique to control lateness to school, the desirable possessions, points, tokens, or privileges of the offenders should be removed in planned, incremental steps.
3. The use of corporal punishment to reduce undesired behaviour such as truancy should be avoided since it models injurious behaviour and is not very effective; however, if it must be used, it must be applied with caution and love.
5. Classroom teachers, parents and government should work in collaboration with school guidance counsellors in the business of discovering the best disciplinary measures to ensure that students are helped to be of good behaviour.
6. Teachers and counsellors should be engaged in continuous professional development concerning the best ways of achieving discipline in schools.

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