



Teacher Capacity Building and the Reduction of Corporal Punishment in Secondary Schools

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Abstract : Through a review of the literature from global, regional, and Tanzanian contexts, this study examined the impact of teacher capacity building on reducing corporal punishment in secondary schools. This study aimed to assess how professional development influences teachers' disciplinary practices and to identify alternative disciplinary methods adopted as a result of teacher capacity-building initiatives. A systematic literature review approach was employed, whereby data were collected from academic journals, books, policy documents, and scholarly reports related to teacher professional development, classroom management, and school discipline practices. The reviewed literature was analysed thematically in line with the study objectives. The findings revealed that teacher capacity building significantly contributes to reducing the use of corporal punishment by improving teachers' professional knowledge, classroom management competencies, and understanding of positive discipline approaches. Teachers who receive training in learner psychology, guidance and counselling, restorative practices, and conflict resolution are more likely to apply nonviolent disciplinary methods such as counselling, mediation, behavioural guidance, classroom agreements, and positive reinforcement. The study further revealed that professional development strengthens teacher-learner relationships and promotes safer and more supportive learning environments. However, the review also identified several challenges affecting the effective implementation of alternative disciplinary methods, including overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching resources, limited training opportunities, and heavy teacher workloads. The study concludes that continuous teacher professional development, supported by effective educational leadership and institutional support systems, is essential for achieving a sustainable reduction in corporal punishment and promoting positive discipline practices in schools.

Keyword : Teacher Capacity Building, Corporal Punishment, Positive Discipline, Classroom Management, Secondary Schools

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INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalism plays an important role in ensuring quality education and the protection of learners' rights within the school environment. Professional teachers are expected to manage classrooms effectively, guide learner behavior appropriately, and maintain discipline in ways that support learning and respect the dignity of pupils (Sarmurzin 2024). However, teachers' continued use of corporal punishment in some schools raises concerns about the adequacy of teachers' professional preparation in classroom management and positive discipline practices (Thomas 2023). In this study, the reduction in corporal punishment is viewed as an outcome that can be influenced by teachers' professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through capacity-building initiatives.

Teacher capacity building refers to structured efforts aimed at improving teachers' competencies through training, workshops, mentoring, and continuous professional development. Such initiatives strengthen teachers' understanding of child development, classroom management, and alternative discipline approaches that do not rely on physical punishment (Geletu 2026). Research has shown that training programs that focus on improving teacher-student interaction and behavior management can reduce teachers' acceptance and use of violent discipline practices in schools (Chelouche et al., 2025). Capacity building therefore becomes an important factor in shaping teachers' responses to disciplinary challenges and

in promoting safer learning environments.

The use of corporal punishment in schools has been increasingly questioned worldwide because of its negative effects on learners' well-being and academic development. International education and child protection frameworks emphasise the importance of creating school environments free from violence, where discipline is based on guidance and respect rather than fear. Evidence indicates that corporal punishment may hinder learning and contribute to negative educational outcomes, whereas positive discipline approaches encourage better relationships between teachers and learners and support effective learning processes (Philip et al., 2025). As a result, many education systems have shifted their attention to strengthening teachers' professional capacity as a key strategy for reducing corporal punishment. For example, countries such as the United Kingdom and Japan have prohibited corporal punishment in schools as part of broader child protection reforms aimed at promoting safe learning environments. Germany has gone further by prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings, emphasising children's right to nonviolent education. In contrast, the United States and Malaysia present mixed experiences in which corporal punishment is restricted or discouraged in many contexts but not fully prohibited nationwide, leading to continued debates on effective discipline approaches (Hosozawa et al., 2026). These international experiences demonstrate a global trend toward

replacing punitive discipline with professional development and positive behavioral management strategies that support learners' academic and social development.

In many African countries, efforts to reduce corporal punishment have faced practical challenges related to overcrowded classrooms, limited teaching resources, and insufficient professional support. Under such conditions, teachers may rely on physical punishment as an immediate response to indiscipline. Studies conducted within the region show that improving teachers' understanding of discipline through professional training can help change attitudes toward punishment and encourage the use of constructive behavior management strategies (Cuartas, 2023). This situation is evident in several African countries, including Libya and Sudan, where education systems continue to face challenges related to limited resources and teacher preparation, affecting the implementation of alternative discipline approaches (Alsabaie 2022). In contrast, countries such as South Africa and Rwanda have made policy and training efforts aimed at promoting positive discipline and protecting learners' rights, although implementation challenges remain at the school level (Rwigema 2025). Similarly, Egypt, Niger, and Kenya have introduced educational reforms and teacher development programs intended to reduce their reliance on corporal punishment, yet practical constraints such as large class sizes and limited professional support continue to influence teachers' disciplinary practices. These experiences suggest

that teacher capacity building is not only a professional requirement but also a necessary intervention for improving discipline practices and promoting safe learning environments in schools across the region (Union2025).

Within the Tanzanian context, education policies emphasise the importance of safe and supportive learning environments. Despite these policy directions, corporal punishment continues to be reported in some schools, partly because of limited training in alternative disciplinary methods and challenges in classroom management. Research conducted in Tanzanian primary schools indicates that violent discipline practices remain a concern, and interventions that strengthen teachers' interaction skills and classroom management competencies have shown potential in reducing such practices (Silayo et al., 2026). These findings highlight the importance of continuous professional development in enabling teachers to manage learner behavior effectively without resorting to physical punishment.

At the school level, teachers often face demanding conditions such as large class sizes, heavy workloads, and shortages of teaching and learning materials. These challenges may increase stress and make discipline management more difficult, especially when teachers lack sufficient training in positive discipline approaches (Hulme et al., 2024). Capacity-building programs that focus on guidance and counselling skills, conflict resolution, and learner-centered teaching methods can help teachers develop confidence in

managing discipline in constructive ways. Strengthening these competencies can contribute to improved teacher-learner relationships and create classroom environments that support both discipline and learning (Geletu 2026).

Therefore, examining the impact of teacher capacity building on the reduction of corporal punishment in schools is important for understanding how professional development influences disciplinary practices. Enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge can promote positive discipline, reduce reliance on physical punishment, and improve overall classroom management. Understanding this relationship can assist education stakeholders in designing effective training programs that support teachers and contribute to safer and more inclusive school environments.

Specific Objectives

1. To assess how teacher capacity building influences teachers' use of corporal punishment in schools.
2. To examine alternative disciplinary methods that teachers use in schools as a result of capacity-building initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

How Teacher Capacity Building Influences Teachers' Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools

Globally, teacher capacity building has been recognised as an important approach for improving classroom management and reducing the use of corporal punishment in schools. In the United States,

professional development programs focus on positive behavior support, classroom management skills, and social emotional learning. These programmes train teachers to manage discipline through communication, the reinforcement of positive behaviour, and counselling rather than physical punishment (Madden 2021). Studies have shown that teachers who receive continuous professional training demonstrate improved classroom control and reduced reliance on punitive discipline practices.

In the United Kingdom, teacher training policies emphasise safeguarding, child protection, and inclusive classroom practices. Professional development programs help teachers understand the psychological effects of harsh punishment and encourage restorative approaches to discipline. Roberts (2024) explained that training in behavior management and well-being support enables teachers to handle disciplinary challenges through dialogue, reflection, and corrective guidance. As a result, schools that invest in continuous teacher development report improved teacher-learner relationships and reduced use of physical punishment.

In China, teacher capacity-building programs have increasingly focused on moral education and positive classroom management. Professional training equips teachers with skills in conflict resolution, learner guidance, and emotional support, which reduce the need for physical punishment. Research indicates that teachers who receive training in learner-centered teaching approaches are more likely to apply

preventive discipline strategies that address the causes of misbehavior rather than relying on punishment (Liu 2026). This approach strengthens classroom harmony and encourages respectful interaction between teachers and learners.

Similarly, in Italy, education reforms have placed strong emphasis on inclusive education and professional development for teachers. Training programmes support teachers in managing diverse classrooms through cooperation, peer mediation, and counselling approaches. Evidence shows that teachers who participate in continuous professional development are better prepared to maintain discipline through supportive strategies that respect learners' rights and reduce the use of corporal punishment (Magni & Capriotti 2025).

In Malawi, teacher capacity building has been identified as an important factor in addressing harsh disciplinary practices in schools. Studies indicate that many teachers rely on corporal punishment because of limited training in alternative discipline methods. However, teachers who attend professional workshops on classroom management and child-centered education demonstrate a shift toward nonviolent discipline approaches such as guidance, warning systems, and behavioral contracts (Dembo 2024). These findings show that capacity building can influence teachers' attitudes and practices in discipline management.

In Zimbabwe, professional development programs have been used to support teachers in transitioning from traditional punishment practices to

positive discipline approaches. Chigudu (2025) notes that training on restorative discipline and conflict resolution helps teachers manage learner behavior more effectively while maintaining respect and fairness. Teachers who receive such training report improved confidence in their ability to handle disciplinary issues without physical punishment, contributing to safer school environments.

In Kenya, teacher capacity-building initiatives coordinated through education authorities and professional training programs have contributed to changes in discipline practices. Muthini (2025) reported that teachers who receive training in guidance and counselling, classroom management, and learner-centred teaching methods are less likely to rely on corporal punishment. Professional development helps teachers understand the importance of maintaining discipline while preserving their dignity, leading to the gradual adoption of alternative discipline strategies in schools.

In the Tanzanian context, teacher capacity building remains an important but still developing area in efforts to reduce corporal punishment. Van et al. (2025) reported that training programs focusing on positive discipline and teacher-student interactions significantly reduced violent disciplinary practices in primary schools. Teachers who participated in capacity-building activities reported improved classroom management skills and increased awareness of the negative effects of corporal punishment. However, limited access to regular training opportunities and heavy workloads continue to affect

the consistent application of alternative discipline methods. Kirika et al. (2026) argued that strengthening continuous professional development programs is necessary to support teachers in adopting effective and nonviolent discipline practices.

Therefore, evidence from global, regional, and local contexts shows that teacher capacity building influences teachers to reduce corporal punishment by improving professional knowledge, strengthening behavior management skills, and promoting positive discipline approaches. Teachers who receive adequate training are better prepared to manage discipline in constructive ways, which contributes to safer and more supportive learning environments.

Alternative Disciplinary Methods Used in Schools as a Result of Initiatives for Teacher Capacity Building

Globally, teacher capacity building has contributed to the adoption of alternative disciplinary methods that reduce the use of corporal punishment and promote positive behaviour among learners. In Argentina, education reforms have emphasised teachers' professional development as a means of improving classroom management and learner participation. Training programs have introduced teachers to restorative discipline practices, cooperative learning, and guidance-based approaches. Teachers who receive such training are more likely to manage discipline through dialogue, reflection, and learner participation than through physical punishment, which supports

respectful classroom environments (Berbain 2026).

In Germany, teacher capacity-building programs focus strongly on pedagogical competence and social-emotional learning. Teachers are trained to use preventive discipline strategies such as clear classroom rules, structured routines, and individual learner support. Professional training also encourages the use of mediation and counselling when addressing behavioural challenges. Research has indicated that teachers who receive continuous professional development are better prepared to handle discipline through communication and problem-solving approaches than through punitive measures (Linn 2025).

Similarly, in Finland, teacher education and continuous professional development emphasise learner well-being and inclusive classroom practices. Teachers are trained to apply guidance, counselling, and cooperative problem-solving as alternatives to corporal punishment. The Finnish education system promotes trust between teachers and learners, where discipline is maintained through mutual respect and shared responsibility. Studies show that strong teacher preparation contributes to the effective use of nonviolent discipline methods in schools (Egbele 2025).

In Austria, teacher capacity-building initiatives have supported the integration of inclusive education and positive discipline practices. Teachers receive professional training on conflict resolution, classroom communication, and learner support strategies. As a result, teachers commonly use

mediation, behavioural reflection, and parental involvement as alternative disciplinary measures. These approaches help learners understand the consequences of their behavior while maintaining their engagement in the learning process (Ecker 2022).

In Ghana, teacher capacity building has increasingly been recognised as important in reducing harsh disciplinary practices in schools. Training programs organised by education authorities and development partners have introduced teachers to guidance and counselling, positive reinforcement, and behavior monitoring strategies. Ntumi et al. (2025) reported that teachers who receive professional training are more likely to adopt supportive discipline methods that encourage self-discipline among learners than to rely on corporal punishment.

In Egypt, teacher professional development programs have aimed at improving classroom management skills and learner guidance. Ghazala (2024) observes that teachers who participate in in-service training increasingly use verbal warning, counselling, and corrective academic tasks as alternatives to physical punishment. Although challenges such as large class sizes remain, capacity building has helped teachers develop more constructive ways of addressing indiscipline in schools.

In Uganda, efforts to improve teacher capacity through professional training have also influenced discipline practices. Murphy et al. (2026) noted that teachers trained in learner-centred approaches and guidance techniques

often use discussion, conflict resolution, and peer mediation as alternative disciplinary methods. These approaches promote positive teacher-learner relationships and reduce the reliance on corporal punishment in classrooms.

In the Tanzanian context, teacher capacity-building programs focusing on positive discipline and classroom interaction have contributed to the adoption of alternative disciplinary methods such as counselling, verbal guidance, restorative practices, and extra academic tasks. Mathias and Lupeja (2026) reported that teachers who received training on positive discipline strategies reported increased use of nonviolent discipline approaches and improved classroom management. Vuje et al. (2026) further noted that training initiatives have helped teachers apply classroom agreements and conflict resolution techniques to manage learner behavior effectively. However, challenges such as limited training opportunities and large class sizes continue to affect consistent implementation across schools.

Overall, evidence from different countries shows that teacher capacity building plays a significant role in helping teachers adopt alternative disciplinary methods in schools. Through continuous professional development, teachers gain practical skills that enable them to manage discipline through guidance, communication, and restorative approaches rather than through corporal punishment. These practices contribute to safer learning environments and support positive behavioural development among learners.

METHODS

Data collection methods refer to the procedures used to identify appropriate sampling units and to obtain information from them (Harbatkin et al., 2025). In this study, the findings, conclusions and recommendations were drawn from a critical review of selected academic journals, scholarly books, and research reports. The reviewed literature was organised and analysed in line with the stated research objectives. Owing to the absence of reliable primary data on the specific issue under investigation, this study adopted a systematic literature analysis approach as the main method of data collection (Sun et al., 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

How Teacher Capacity Building Influences Teachers' Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools

The reviewed literature indicates that teacher capacity building plays a significant role in reducing the use of corporal punishment in schools. In different contexts, professional development programs have been shown to improve teachers' knowledge of classroom management, strengthen their understanding of child development, and promote the use of positive and nonviolent discipline strategies. Studies from the United States and the United Kingdom have shown that teachers who receive training in positive behavior support, safeguarding, and social-emotional learning are more likely to manage learner behavior through communication, guidance, and reinforcement than through physical punishment (Madden, 2021; Roberts,

2024). Similarly, evidence from China and Italy suggests that training in learner-centred approaches and inclusive education equips teachers with preventive discipline skills that reduce classroom conflicts and limit the need for harsh punishment (Liu, 2026; Magni & Capriotti, 2025).

In African contexts, the literature further demonstrates that teacher capacity building contributes to gradual changes in teachers' attitudes and disciplinary practices. Studies from Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Kenya reveal that many teachers initially rely on corporal punishment because of limited exposure to alternative discipline approaches. However, after they attend professional training programs, teachers increasingly adopt guidance, counselling, restorative discipline, and structured behavior management strategies (Dembo, 2024; Chigudu, 2025; Muthini, 2025). In Tanzania, research shows that capacity-building programs focusing on positive discipline and teacher-learner interaction have contributed to a reduction in violent disciplinary practices, although implementation remains inconsistent because of limited training opportunities and heavy teacher workloads (Van et al., 2025; Kirika et al., 2026).

It can be observed that teacher capacity building influences disciplinary practices through three main pathways. First, training improves teachers' professional competence by providing practical skills for managing classroom behavior without relying on fear or punishment. Second, capacity building helps change teachers' attitudes by increasing awareness of the

psychological and academic effects of corporal punishment on learners. Third, professional development strengthens teacher confidence, enabling teachers to apply alternative discipline methods consistently. These findings support the view that corporal punishment is often linked not only to teacher beliefs but also to limited professional preparation in behavior management.

However, the literature also presents several limitations that require critical consideration. While many studies report positive outcomes of capacity-building programs, most focus on short-term changes in teacher behavior rather than long-term sustainability. In some contexts, teachers return to traditional disciplinary practices when institutional support and follow-up training are lacking. Furthermore, some studies tend to assume that training alone is sufficient to eliminate corporal punishment, without adequately addressing structural challenges such as large class sizes, a shortage of teaching resources, and high teacher workload, which may limit the practical application of alternative discipline methods. These findings suggest that capacity building should be accompanied by supportive school policies, administrative supervision, and continuous mentoring.

Thus, the reviewed literature clearly shows that teacher capacity building is an effective strategy for reducing corporal punishment; however, its success depends on consistency, contextual relevance, and institutional support. Training programs should move beyond theoretical knowledge and focus on practical classroom strategies that

teachers can easily apply within their working conditions. In the Tanzanian context, strengthening continuous professional development and integrating positive discipline training into teacher education programs may contribute significantly to sustainable changes in disciplinary practices. Therefore, teacher capacity building should be viewed not as a one-time intervention but as a continuous professional process aimed at improving both teacher practices and learner well-being.

Alternative Disciplinary Methods Used in Schools as a Result of Initiatives for Teacher Capacity Building

The reviewed literature shows that teacher capacity building has contributed to the adoption of alternative disciplinary methods that reduce reliance on corporal punishment and promote positive learner behaviour. Across global contexts, professional development programs have enabled teachers to shift from punitive discipline approaches to supportive and preventive strategies. Studies from Argentina indicate that teachers who receive training in restorative discipline and cooperative learning increasingly manage discipline through dialogue, reflection, and learner participation rather than physical punishment (Berbain, 2026). Similarly, evidence from Germany shows that teacher training in social-emotional learning and pedagogical competence encourages the use of structured classroom rules, mediation, and counselling as effective alternatives to corporal punishment

(Linn, 2025). In Finland and Austria, strong teacher preparation systems emphasise learner well-being, inclusive education, and conflict resolution, resulting in the widespread use of guidance, behavioural reflection, and parental involvement as disciplinary strategies that support learner responsibility and engagement (Egbele, 2025; Ecker, 2022).

In Africa, the literature reveals similar patterns, although implementation varies depending on available resources and institutional support. In Ghana and Egypt, teacher capacity-building programs have introduced alternative disciplinary methods such as guidance and counselling, verbal warning, behavior monitoring, and corrective academic tasks. Teachers who participate in professional training demonstrate increased use of supportive discipline approaches aimed at developing self-discipline among learners (Ntumi et al., 2025; Ghazala, 2024). In Uganda, studies have shown that training in learner-centred approaches has encouraged teachers to apply discussion, peer mediation, and conflict resolution techniques, which strengthen teacher-learner relationships and reduce the use of physical punishment (Murphy et al., 2026). Within Tanzania, research findings indicate that teachers who undergo capacity-building programs increasingly adopt counselling, classroom agreements, restorative practices, and academic support tasks as alternatives to corporal punishment. However, limited access to regular training and large class sizes continue to affect the consistent application of these

approaches across schools (Mathias & Lupeja, 2026; Vuje et al., 2026).

The study suggests that teacher capacity building contributes to the use of alternative disciplinary methods through several mechanisms. First, training equips teachers with practical skills for proactively managing behavior, thereby preventing disciplinary problems before they escalate. Second, capacity building strengthens teachers' understanding of learner psychology and behavior, enabling them to respond to indiscipline in ways that support learning rather than punishment. Third, professional development encourages a shift in teachers' beliefs about discipline, promoting the view that discipline should guide behaviour rather than inflict pain. These outcomes indicate that alternative disciplinary methods are more effective when teachers are supported with continuous learning opportunities and practical classroom strategies.

Despite these positive findings, the literature also presents several issues that require critical reflection. Many studies emphasise the benefits of alternative disciplinary methods without fully examining the contextual challenges teachers face in implementing them. In developing countries, large class sizes, limited time, and insufficient support systems may reduce teachers' ability to consistently apply counselling or restorative practices. Additionally, some studies focus mainly on teacher training outcomes without assessing learners' perceptions or long-term behavioural change. This creates a gap in the understanding of whether alternative disciplinary methods

produce sustainable improvements in discipline and learning outcomes. Furthermore, capacity-building initiatives sometimes rely on short-term workshops that may not lead to lasting behavioural change among teachers if follow-up support and monitoring are absent.

Therefore, the literature demonstrates that teacher capacity building is a necessary foundation for the adoption of alternative disciplinary methods, but it is not sufficient on its own. Effective implementation requires continuous professional development, supportive school leadership, and education policies that reinforce positive discipline practices. In the Tanzanian context, strengthening school-based training, mentorship, and peer learning among teachers could enhance the consistent use of nonviolent discipline approaches. Therefore, alternative disciplinary methods should be understood as part of a broader school culture that promotes respect, guidance, and learner responsibility rather than punishment, ensuring safer and more inclusive learning environments.

CONCLUSION

Teacher capacity building is an important strategy for promoting positive discipline and improving classroom management practices in secondary schools. Equipping teachers with professional knowledge and practical skills enables them to manage learner behaviour in constructive and learner-centred ways that respect learners' rights and dignity. Continuous professional development helps teachers adapt to changing educational demands

and strengthens their ability to create safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments.

Reducing corporal punishment requires more than policy directives alone; it demands sustained institutional commitment to teacher professional development, supportive school leadership, and effective implementation of positive discipline approaches. Schools and education authorities should therefore prioritise continuous training, mentorship, and professional support systems that empower teachers to apply nonviolent disciplinary practices effectively. Strengthening teacher capacity building can contribute significantly to improved school discipline, enhanced teacher-learner relationships, and the overall quality of education.

Recommendations

Education authorities should strengthen continuous professional development programs that focus on positive discipline, classroom management, and learner psychology to enhance teachers' ability to manage discipline without relying on corporal punishment. Teacher training institutions should also integrate positive discipline and behavior management courses into preservice teacher education so that teachers can enter the profession with adequate skills and appropriate attitudes toward learner discipline. At the school level, mentorship and peer support systems should be established to help experienced teachers guide others in the application of nonviolent discipline strategies, while school leadership

should regularly monitor and support teachers through supervision and professional guidance rather than punishment-oriented control measures. Schools should further promote the consistent use of alternative disciplinary approaches such as counselling, restorative dialogue, classroom agreements, mediation, and positive reinforcement as standard practices. In addition, education stakeholders should provide practical training that demonstrates how alternative discipline methods can be effectively implemented in large classrooms and resource-limited environments, while parents and communities should be sensitive to positive discipline approaches to ensure consistency between school and home practices. Overall, strengthening teacher capacity building, community awareness, and institutional support systems contributes to reducing corporal punishment and promoting safe, inclusive, and learner-centred school environments.

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