

Teachers' attitudes towards maintaining discipline and related practices in schools of the Uduvil Education Division in the Valikamam Educational Zone

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Background and objective: Using punishment to correct disobedience is understood to mean discipline. Students are punished in various ways, including by corporal punishment, verbal abuse, and psychological aggression. This study aims to describe teachers' attitudes towards maintaining discipline, their disciplinary practices, and assess the factors associated with the use of disciplinary methods in secondary schools of the Uduvil Education Division.

Methods: This was a school-based descriptive cross-sectional study. Data were collected from 405 teachers using a self-administered questionnaire which included demographic data, questions about attitudes towards positive and negative disciplinary methods and questions about disciplinary practices. Descriptive statistics were used to achieve the study objectives.

Results: In total, 405 teachers participated; 71.6% were female and 28.4% male. Mean age of the sample was 42.1 ± 8.7 years. The study revealed, 92.6% of teachers agreed that teachers should discipline students in a calm manner. Most (45%) disagreed with using corporal punishment as a disciplinary method, and about half (50.9%) agreed that good teachers do not use corporal punishment. Over half (54.3%) agreed on the legal abolition of corporal punishment in Sri Lanka, and 86.4% agreed there are sufficient structures within schools to deal with disciplinary issues. With respect to practice, 59.8% of teachers reported using positive methods for maintaining discipline in schools. Teachers had received training on disciplinary methods at seminars (42.7%), training programmes (13.3%), and workshops (17.5%). There was no significant association between socio-demographic factors and the disciplinary method used by teachers.

Conclusion: The majority of teachers disagree with using corporal punishment as a disciplinary method and use positive rather than negative disciplinary action. Teachers could be involved in advocating for the eradication of corporal punishment from the education system.

Keywords: Attitudes, Practice, Discipline, Teachers, Secondary School, Jaffna