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# “Reach Out, Not Harm”: Navigating between Physical Punishment and Alternative Strategies in Addressing Student Discipline Challenges for a Positive Learning Environment

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**Abstract.** Based on the interpretivist ontological assumption that teachers and students hold unique positions regarding school discipline, this study explores their perspectives on using physical punishment and alternative strategies to address challenging discipline problems. 20 teachers (with more than 5 years of teaching experience) and 20 students (aged 16-18 years old) from a secondary school in Indonesia who were identified through purposeful snowball sampling were engaged via semi-structured interviews and an open online survey to capture their perspectives. Data were thematically analysed following Newton’s (1980) comparison of school discipline models to reveal both parties to be in favour of alternative discipline strategies because physical punishment was deemed to have adverse effects and does not educate. The alternative disciplining strategies proposed by the teachers and students match with the characteristics of the following models: Individual fulfilment (approach students, dialogue and negotiation), scholarly discipline (strict adherence to school rules, consistency in rule enforcement, teacher as a role model); and educational technology (reminders of school rules, progressive disciplining process). The “fair disciplining” theme in the students’ data had no model fit. Meanwhile, no evidence suggests inclinations toward the social reconstruction model of school discipline. This study provides a glimpse into the diverse disciplining strategies which are the result of a bottom-up inquiry for addressing students’ challenging behaviours to cultivate a positive learning environment.

**Keywords:** physical punishment; alternative discipline strategies; models of school discipline; Fair discipline; Teacher roles; Student roles; Positive learning environment

## 1. Introduction

A positive and distraction-free school and classroom environment is essential for effective teaching and learning (Woolfolk, 2021). This is the reason for the

establishment of school discipline, a measure that is taken to ensure student compliance with school rules. Student compliance is a behaviour learned through practice in behaving according to school rules and avoiding prohibited behaviours (Shaikhmag et al., 2016). School discipline aims to set behavioural limits to protect students and teachers from harm and threats, teach students about what is safe and unsafe, and form a positive learning environment (Mason, 2015)

There are various school discipline strategies, including traditional practices of physical punishment and alternative strategies (Irby, 2014). Physical punishment, which is commonly associated with corporal punishment (Gershoff, 2017), is intended to eliminate or control unwanted student behaviours by imposing physical disciplinary actions to create discomfort, such as pinching and hitting, as well as verbal reprimands (Cuartas et al., 2022).

Physical punishment is still practiced by most principals, teachers, and administrators in schools (Gershoff, 2017). Of interest is the fact that some studies found school students supporting its use to create order in schools and classrooms (Ghosh & Pasupathi, 2016; Heekes et al., 2022). On the other hand, some teachers do not agree with the use of physical punishment and opt to use alternative strategies that are more humanistic (Prasetyarini et al., 2020). Additionally, in Indonesia, teachers are restricted in their act of disciplining students due to legal protections accorded to students against harm. However, this restriction is seen to be abused by students and parents who resort to legal actions against perceived unfavourable handling of students' misconduct (Affandi, 2016). This situation has led Indonesian teachers to feel hesitant and unsafe in managing misbehaviours (Arifin, 2020). Based on the conflicting views discussed above and teachers' dilemmas in doing their jobs, this study aims to explore the perspectives of teachers and students at a school in Indonesia on the use of physical punishment and alternative disciplinary strategies. According to Skerritt., O'Hara., Brown., McNamara, and O'Brien (2022), to truly understand what is happening in school, the voices of different members of the school must be heard. Similarly, according to Bragg (2007), teachers' and students' voices should be seen as complementary and inter-connected, so that better decisions can be made to facilitate positive interaction between them for a positive learning environment.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Physical Punishment and Alternative School Discipline Strategies**

Although physical punishment is considered a last resort in dealing with severe violations of school rules, such as fights among students and substance abuse (Cuartas et al., 2022; Gershoff & Font, 2016), studies on student perceptions found that physical punishment is widely implemented in countries such as India, Korea, Africa south, Sudan, United States and Zambia (Gershoff, 2017; Makhani, 2013). Offenses that are often subject to physical punishment include disrupting school order, such as making noise and sleeping during class hours; academic offenses, such as not completing school assignments and cheating; and general offenses, such as skipping school and having long hair (Breen et al., 2015; Morrow & Singh, 2014). Offenses are often dealt with either physically through, for example, the use of objects, including sticks or canes (Youssef et al., 1998); hitting

(Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2013); physical contact such as pinching (Beazley et al., 2006); and forcing students to stand in embarrassing and painful positions (Ba-Saddik & Hattab, 2013) or verbally, such as yelling at students and passing degrading remarks (Cuartas et al., 2022).

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2019 reported that 42% of students globally still receive physical punishment (24% girls, 18% boys). In Indonesia, as reported by the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), the number of cases of violence in schools (84%), which includes physical punishment, is the highest in Asia compared to other countries such as Vietnam (79%), Nepal (79%), Cambodia (73%) and Pakistan (43%) (ICRW, 2015). The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), as quoted by Arifin (2020), reported more than 100 cases of physical punishment in the first half of 2018, involving 34.7% of upper secondary school students and 19.3% of lower secondary school students.

From a legal perspective, the use of physical punishment has been found to conflict with international regulations that protect children and adolescents from such punishment. Physical punishment is considered to violate Article 19 of the United Nations Convention (1989) on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which protects them from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, ill-treatment, and exploitation. In Indonesian legislation, there are protections against all types of violence committed by teachers, school administrators, fellow students, and others, as found in Article 58 paragraph (1) for human rights No. 39 in the 1945 National Constitution and Article 54 of the Child Protection Act 2014, Number 35 (Sidik, 2021). However, until 2018, no punishment or penalty provisions clearly prevent the use of physical punishment in schools (Windari et al., 2018). This lack of clarity shows conflicting judgments on cases, such as the case of Aop Saopuddin versus Himawan (2013) and the case of Dharmawati versus Ayu Ashari (2017), with decisions in favour of the teacher, Aop Saopuddin, but not in favour of Dharmawati. These two cases have sparked protests among teachers in Indonesia, who see both trials as unfair. According to them, teachers should not be punished just for educating and disciplining students. They did not consider the two teachers' methods of disciplining to be severe or harmful to the students (Windari et al., 2018).

The widespread tendency to use physical punishment is due to the belief that it is highly effective (Ajowi & Omboto, 2013) and is essential to improve students' morality in order to become excellent and disciplined students (Sholeh et al., 2019; Sofiani & Askari, 2020) and to improve their academic achievement (Lestari, 2019; Prima, 2016). However, some studies report that the use of physical punishment has more negative effects than positive effects (Makhani, 2013; Shirley & Cornell, 2011), which causes students to be less motivated to learn and to be unhappy in the classroom (Ahmad et al., 2013, 2014), and the decline in academic achievement (Adesope et al., 2017; Portela & Pells, 2015). In addition, physical punishment also has the potential to cause mental health problems such as anxiety, use of illicit substances, and personality disorders (Afifi et al., 2012). In the long term, these effects will harm students and create social problems for society (Gershoff, 2017).

Some studies have found that teachers disagree with physical punishment because of its adverse effects on student development (Elbla, 2012); however, they have no other choices and are forced to use it (Ajowi & Omboto, 2013; Lwo & Yuan, 2010) due to persistent disciplinary violations and lack of administrative and parental support (Segalo, 2018). In Indonesia, Arifin (2020) reported that teachers still defend the use of physical punishment in disciplining students, and 90% reject student-friendly school campaigns based on the argument that gentle strategies will not improve student discipline.

Studies on students' perspectives confirm that students are still vulnerable to physical punishment (Prasetyarini et al., 2020; Sadik & Yalcin, 2018), and some even report disciplinary actions that are very authoritarian, inconsistent, and unfair (Morrison, 2018; Wun, 2015). Although some studies report students' support for physical punishment (Ghosh & Pasupathi, 2016; Heekes et al., 2022), Sadik and Yalcin (2018) found that students expect disciplinary actions other than physical punishment to be used to overcome discipline problems. For this reason, students' perspectives on alternative strategies are worthy of exploration.

The use of alternative disciplining strategies that are student-friendly is also studied based on specific models such as corrective disciplining (Prasetyarini et al., 2020), communication approach (Khasanah, 2019), reflective and emotional-based approach (Demirdag, 2015; Valente et al., 2019) and restorative practice (Rainbolt et al., 2019), all of which are focused on examining teachers' perceptions and practices. Meanwhile, Johnson et al., (1994) suggested that studies related to disciplinary strategies should be carried out based on a comparison of school disciplinary orientations or models. For example, Mason (2015) study attempted to compare behaviourist theory, social learning theory, and community of practice perspectives in understanding teachers' use of alternative strategies. Mason's findings confirmed that the use of discipline strategies among teachers is subject to different discipline theories in response to the circumstances, contexts, and misbehaviours they want to deal with, and they are not bound to a singular theory or model alone. This is unsurprising because although teachers have acquired knowledge and strategies from their pre-service training, the diverse student conditions and school environments may work against them and, hence, they may have to resort to alternatives that are more contextually responsive (Woolfolk, 2021). Mason (2015) argues that using strategies from different theories to handle disciplinary problems seems more effective than using strategies that are based on one theory. Modelling Mason's study, this paper explores teachers' and students' perspectives on using physical punishment and alternative strategies by referring to Newton's (1980) comparison of school discipline models. An important point to note is, in this study, disciplinary strategies are referred to as encompassing approaches, actions, methods, practices or interactions used to ensure that students comply with school rules (Canter, 2010; Marzano & Marzano, 2003).

Zak-Doron and Perry-Hazan (2023), and Mason (2015) report that the implementation of school disciplinary practices could benefit from the inclusion of stakeholders' views, besides those of school principals and administrators. Students and teachers, for example, should be involved in informing school

disciplinary procedures. In this study, the exploration of physical punishment and alternative strategies includes both teachers' and students' views as these two groups of people interact daily and are expected to form close social connections with one another, and hence, have influence over one another's behaviours, emotions and well-being (Din, 2023). Based on the ontological assumption that teachers' and students' stances on physical punishment and alternative disciplinary strategies are unique and varied, this study explores their perspectives on both based on Newton's (1980) comparison of school discipline models.

### Comparison of School Discipline Models

Table 1 is the researchers' simplified adaptation of Newton's comparison of the four main types of educational models that underlie school discipline approaches and strategies: Individual fulfilment, scholarly discipline, educational technology, and social reconstruction.

**Table 1: Comparison of school discipline models**

School discipline models	Focus	Teacher roles	Student roles
Scholarly discipline ( <i>Zero tolerance</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mastery of intellectual knowledge and skills</li> <li>• Order</li> <li>• Uniformed and fixed rules</li> <li>• Expected student compliance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authority figure who monitors, controls, sanctions, punishes</li> <li>• Firm in implementation of rules</li> <li>• Role model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Controlled and monitored by authority figure</li> <li>• Comply and respect order and rules</li> </ul>
Educational technology ( <i>Behaviourism</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioural change</li> <li>• Reinforcement and reward for desirable behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforce and reward positive behaviours, not punish</li> <li>• Remind, explain about rules</li> <li>• Reinforcer of positive behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptive respondent to positive reinforcements</li> <li>• Capable of behavioural change</li> </ul>
Individual fulfilment ( <i>Humanistic</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student initiative, self-regulation</li> <li>• Rules are guidelines, and changeable (not fixed)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counsellor</li> <li>• Helper</li> <li>• Guide towards behavioural change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to differentiate the right from the wrong</li> <li>• Self-regulation</li> </ul>
Social reconstruction ( <i>Social justice</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social change and improvement</li> <li>• School as micro (miniature) society</li> <li>• Democratic construction of school rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborator and co-creator of fair school rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborator and co-creator of fair school rules</li> </ul>

Each model is described as follows: (A) The scholarly discipline model is an educational model that arises from the traditional understanding of education (Bruner, 1977 as cited in Takaya, 2008), which focuses on the mastery of knowledge and intellectual skills. This model prioritises regularity (order) and compliance with the rules set by authorised adults, namely the school principal, the school administration and, possibly, the teacher. Students must cooperate and comply with the rules to ensure regularity and order. Punishment is uniform or consistent and carried out when the offence is identified. The teacher is an authority figure who monitors student behaviours and implements rules strictly. At the same time, the teacher must be a role model who behaves according to school rules. (B) Based on behaviourism (Skinner, 1968; as cited in Molenda, 2008), the educational technology model defines school discipline as involving behaviour change through reinforcement/reward activities. Rules are created to encourage and reward behaviours, not to monitor and punish rule violations. Students are seen as adaptive respondents to positive reinforcements and are expected to be able to form the prescribed behaviours. The teacher acts as an explainer, reminder, and reinforcer of the expected behaviours (Algozzine et al., 2019). (C) The individual fulfilment model is a humanistic model (Maslow, 1968 as cited in Woolfolk, 2021) that emphasises student initiative and self-regulation as the central heart of the educational process. Based on this model, students are considered responsible for their behaviours, and school rules guide or inform how students should behave. School rules are not a fixed standard: They can, in fact, change. The teacher acts as a counsellor who does not direct and punish but guides the student to form and reform his behaviours consciously. (D) The social reconstruction model defines the school's goal as social change and improvement (Eisner & Vallance, 1974; McNeil, 1981, as discussed in Alsalem, 2018). The school is seen as a miniature society governed by the school population, including the students. The formation and implementation of rules is the shared responsibility of every school member in a democratic manner, and the rules are reviewed for their effectiveness in guaranteeing justice and safeguarding the interests of all members. Punishments and rewards are based on collaborative group decisions, whereby student voices influence decisions. In this study, Newton's comparison of the discipline models is used to categorise disciplinary strategies based on the stances of teachers and students.

### **3. Research Methodology**

Based on the ontological understanding mentioned in the previous section (Braun & Clarke, 2013), a qualitative research approach is considered appropriate to obtain the perspectives of teachers and students on both aspects. This case study was carried out in a secondary school in East Java. This school was identified based on its location, which is close to two schools that were involved in student demonstrations in 2018, namely on April 5 (Aminudin, 2018) and November 22 (Nadhiroh, 2018) due to student dissatisfaction with the way their school principals dealt with student disciplinary problems, which involved the use of abusive language and intimidation. Both demonstrations demanded that the two principals be transferred. The school identified as the context of this study was chosen based on the assumption that there is a high probability of the spread of student protest in the future to nearby schools in the same district, motivated by

the demonstrated dissatisfactions and protests that are seen to be successful in bringing about change (Bond & Bushman, 2017).

The data collection process in this study occurred when the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 was still prevalent and disabled vital access to the field, such as access to schools, travel, and transport. Due to the difficulties in contacting students and teachers to become study participants, the researchers employed purposeful snowball sampling (Marshall et al., 2016), whereby the initially interviewed teachers, with the help of the school discipline teacher, were asked to identify students and other teachers from the school who were willing to become interview participants. Because the research topic is somewhat a sensitive one, not many, especially the students, who were willing to become the study participants. Twenty teachers (10 males, 10 females) with more than 5 years of teaching experience and 20 students (6 males, 14 females) aged 16-18 years (secondary grades 4-6), with prior records of disciplinary actions (as confirmed by the school discipline teacher) were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on physical punishment and alternative disciplinary strategies. The identities of the teachers and students, together with the school and its location, are treated with strict confidentiality, and the participants are only identified based on codes such as the following examples: G19 (teacher 19) and P2 (student 2).

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the initial planning was to use semi-structured face-to-face interviews (Marshall et al., 2016; Silverman, 2010). Interview questions were constructed to meet the following information needs: (1) The appropriateness of using physical punishment and explanations; (2) alternative strategies considered appropriate and explanations. However, these questions have been transformed into a semi-structured questionnaire using an online application to make it easier for students and teachers to respond. Further, after the collected data had been analysed and the interview questions had been improved, in the second phase, face-to-face online interviews using video-conferencing were carried out to obtain further elaborations related to the answers the teachers and students gave in the questionnaire. All online interviews were recorded for transcription and analysis purposes.

Thematic analysis was carried out manually to identify patterns for themes related to using physical punishment and alternative strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The data were analysed, in the beginning, separately and then listed in a code book (Saldana, 2013) as an analysis guide, which is updated continuously based on an inductive analysis process (to enable the emergence of themes from teacher and student data) and deductive process (based on models of discipline and research questions). The details of the analysis are discussed in the following sections. Following Lincoln and Guba (1985), this study employed the triangulation of interview data and online questionnaire data, as well as the member check of interview transcription and initial theme formation, to establish credibility (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

#### 4. Data Analysis

##### Data Analysis: Views on the use of physical punishment

Table 2 details the data analysis related to the teachers' and students' views on using physical punishment to discipline students. Two main themes were identified for the data of teachers and students who agreed with using physical punishment, namely "punishment to educate" and "only mild punishment". There are additional student statements coded as "fairness in punishing". Furthermore, for teachers and students who believe that corporal punishment is inappropriate, the analysis of their interview data produced 10 codes through the data reduction process, categorized into 3 main themes: Present-day relevance, adverse effects on students, and corporal punishment is not educational.

**Table 2: Theme development for views on using physical punishment**

Use of physical punishment	Themes	Sample interview data extracts
Appropriate	Punish to educate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“...as long as it educates” (G12)</li> <li>“In order not to repeat the same mistakes and feel afraid” (P2)</li> </ul>
	Light punishment only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“only light ones” (G6)</li> <li>“as long as it is within a reasonable limit” (G10)</li> </ul>
	Fair in punishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Teacher is fair when punishing students, no one is to be exempted” (P14)</li> </ul>
Not appropriate	Present-day relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“I disagree with its use because different time, different behaviours.” (G4)</li> <li>“Need to keep up with current ways of disciplining” (P9)</li> </ul>
	Negative effects of physical punishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“We don’t know about the strength, condition and health of the students. The fear is that if we give physical punishment, there will be things that we don't want to happen, happens” (G11)</li> <li>“Some teachers are too harsh when students make mistakes, so much so that the students respond by continuously violating it [the rules].” (P11)</li> </ul>
	Physical punishment does not educate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Physical punishment... for me personally I don't agree because that makes me less educating” (G3)</li> <li>“The more rudely treated, the more difficult the students become” (P5)</li> </ul>

##### Data Analysis: Alternative disciplining strategies

Based on 20 teacher responses and 20 student responses related to alternative discipline strategies to overcome student discipline problems, the initial phase of the data coding process to identify all alternative strategies produced 32 initial codes. These codes then underwent a reduction process involving combining codes with similar meanings to make up for the final number of 14 codes. They were then categorized into 4 main themes along with their respective sub-themes to match with Newton's most relevant discipline models. For example, the theme



of "strictly following school rules" and its sub-themes were found to meet the characteristics of the scholarly discipline model and were, therefore, matched accordingly. Meanwhile, the theme "progressive pre-punishment warnings and reminders" was developed to capture statements that emphasize giving students opportunities to change their behaviours with the view to prevent punishment, thus resembling Newton's educational technology model.

**Table 3: Theme development for alternative discipline strategies**

Themes	Sub-themes	Sample interview data extracts
Strictly adhered to school rules  <i>(Scholarly discipline)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In accordance with published school rules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"according to the school rulebook" (G17, P19)</li> <li>"when there are students who violate then I report directly to the disciplinary teacher" (G5)</li> <li>"Strict in punishing the student according to the rules that have been applied in the school" (P6)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistency in disciplining</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Consistently control student behaviour" ((G8)</li> <li>"Don't give empty threats" (P19)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counsellor and parents' involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"If there is a serious violation, for example, the student is often late, or is not in a complete school attire, then he/she should be taken directly to the counselling teacher" (G4)</li> <li>"Bring this problem to the parents" (P18)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher as a role model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"The teacher should set an example first so that no student feels "aah this teacher is not disciplined, why do I need to be disciplined"" (G2)</li> <li>"Set an example so that students also come on time" (P15).</li> </ul>
Progressive pre-punishment warnings and reminders  <i>(Educational technology)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give warning</li> <li>Give reminders</li> <li>Stage by stage disciplining measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Give a warning" (P15)</li> <li>"Remind students first" (G14)</li> <li>"It should start with good words...But if after 2 or 3 times warnings but still violating, they should be punished more severely" (P4)</li> </ul>
Approach the students  <i>(Individual fulfilment)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation/negotiation</li> <li>Dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Dialogue about his mistakes that have costed him and the school. Then give punishment that is educating" (G15)</li> <li>"The teacher does not need to be too strict but can touch the heart, touch the mind of the student to follow the rules" (P3)</li> </ul>
Fair discipline  (-)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Be as fair as possible in making decisions" (P5)</li> <li>"Teachers need to be fair, all students who make mistakes must be punished according to the rules" (P12)</li> </ul>

## 5. Findings And Discussion

This section discusses findings related to teachers' and students' perspectives on physical punishment. Data analysis revealed a division of their views on physical punishment as "appropriate" and "inappropriate", with only 5 teachers and 3 students holding that using physical punishment is appropriate.

**Table 4: Appropriateness of physical punishment**

	Appropriate	Not appropriate
Teachers	G6, G10, G12, G13, G19	G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G7, G8, G9, G11, G20, G14, G15, G16, G17, G18
Students	P2, P14, P18	P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P15, P16, P17, P19, P20

Although the teachers and students think physical punishment is still relevant, it should be "light only; for example, students are told to run or do push-ups" (G6). The use of physical punishment also needs to be based on a "reasonable limit" (G10) that does not harm students (G13) and that has "good consequences" (G19). This perspective is based on the opinion that physical punishment can improve student discipline and "does not harm them because physical punishment can make students disciplined again" (G12). The few teachers in this study who support physical punishment contradict Arifin (2020), who reported that teachers in Indonesia still widely defend its use. Despite the small number, the need for its use matches the findings of previous studies in which teachers and students are reported to be of the view that physical punishment is relevant and necessary to instil good discipline as part of students' development of well-being (Heekes et al., 2022) and so that they become more manageable (Demirdag, 2015).

Teachers and students who disagree with physical punishment give the following reasons: Present-day relevance, harmful effects on students, and physical punishment does not educate.

### *Present-day relevance*

Some students consider the use of physical punishment as an "old-fashioned" practice (P9). Therefore, according to them, teachers and schools "need to keep up with the current ways" of disciplining students (P17). The same thing was stated by a teacher on the argument that there are various alternative methods nowadays that are "educative in nature" (G9). Also stated is the inappropriateness of physical punishment from the point of view of current student behaviours that are different from those of the past – due to "different times and different behaviour" reality (G4). Some teachers see this incompatibility from the perspective of legislation and regulations because "teachers used to be able to use physical punishment, while teachers now cannot." (G2). Although there are no explicit legal provisions related to physical punishment (Windari et al., 2018), the legal cases reported earlier may be why these teachers choose to be vigilant.

### *Adverse effects of physical punishment*

The concern of some teachers (for example, G2, G4, G9) about the "bad effects" is also why they disagree with using physical punishment. In emphasizing the effects of physical punishment on students, teachers described two types: Adverse effects and the absence of good effects. From the adverse effects, long-term effects on physical and mental health are stated. G5 thinks physical punishment can "affect the psyche and mentality of children until adulthood." G11, on the other hand, believes that students are different in terms of their health and ability to face physical punishment. Therefore, she is worried about the consequences that may arise from it:

*"The fear is that if we give physical punishment, there will be things we do not want to happen, happen."*

Students such as P11 and P20 also feel worried about aspects of safety and comfort that may be compromised due to excessive physical punishment. For example, P12 questioned the safety aspect as follows:

*"Cleaning the fish pond is not our duty as students, so our right to feel safe and comfortable is not fulfilled because cleaning the fish pond is very dangerous."*

The concern of these teachers and students about the negative impact on physical and mental health is reasonably justifiable as previous research reports found that it harms the physical ability of students (Gershoff & Font, 2016; Pereira, 2021), affects their mental health (Brehm & Boyle, 2018), disrupts their socio-emotional development (Sheridan & McLaughlin, 2016), create emotional effects and fear (Pereira, 2021), and even affects their academic achievement (Hussain & Muhammad, 2017; Portela & Pells, 2015).

### *Physical punishment does not educate*

In addition to the adverse effects, the teachers and students in this study also feel that physical punishment does not have good effects on students. G8, for example, is of the view that "there is no effect [physical punishment] on students" because "students keep repeating the same disciplinary violations". The same thing is voiced by P13, who feels that physical punishment cannot curb negative behaviours because "if given a stricter punishment, such as physical punishment, it even increases the mischief."

This concern was also raised by P11, who related to what happened in his school, where when the teachers were too harsh in dealing with students with disciplinary problems, "the students responded by breaking the disciplinary rules continuously." In other words, for them, physical punishment does not stop students' bad behaviour and, even worse, potentially increases dissatisfaction and violations of disciplinary rules (Lansford, 2017; Lansford et al., 2014; Zhu et al., 2019). In addition to not agreeing with physical punishment, P6 emphasized that physical punishment should not be the primary option because students may break the rules due to factors such as "getting stressed over personal matters such as family problems and others". This means that the reason why students break the rules must also be considered before disciplinary action is taken.

Specifically, teachers and students who disagree with physical punishment also believe this method does not educate or benefit student development. For example, teacher G3 stated that physical punishment "makes us less educated, and the permanent effect is not there for students". G20 explained that "this is not how to educate children to develop their mental discipline capabilities". This statement is also found in G7's interview response, "What should be addressed is their mental state, how to wake them up mentally"; therefore, for this teacher, physical punishment cannot achieve that desired outcome. A similar point was raised by P8, who suggested that teachers use "emotional" approaches and "improve the environment for learning" to overcome students' discipline problems.

The teachers' and students' statements above give the impression that physical punishment is not a way to educate students. They are convinced it does not have a good effect and can even be a prolonged challenge. Instead, students' mental development needs to be targeted through developing their mental maturity and using emotional approaches to discipline. This is also reported in Gershoff and Font (2016), whose meta-analysis found that physical punishment does not educate students to be better social beings and that it is consistently associated with negative effects, including increased aggressive and anti-social behaviours and poor cognitive skills that make it difficult for effective learning to occur.

#### **Alternative disciplining strategies**

This section discusses teachers' and students' perspectives about alternative disciplining strategies using the following themes: Strict adherence to school rules, teacher as a role model, progressive pre-punishment warnings and reminders, approach to the students, and fair disciplining. Table 5 matches the suggested alternative strategies, teacher and student tendencies, and school discipline models. Teachers were found to be inclined towards strictness in disciplining students, while students were more inclined towards using reminders about the school rules.

**Table 5: Alternative strategies, strategy tendencies, and discipline models**

<b>Alternative disciplining strategies</b>	<b>Related models (Newton, 1980)</b>	<b>Teachers (N=20)</b>	<b>Students (N=20)</b>
Strictly adhered to school rules	Scholarly discipline	G4, G5, G6, G8, G10, G11, G12, G13, G16, G17, G19 (N=11)	P5, P6, P8, P18, P15, P17, P19 (N=7)
Teacher as role model	Scholarly discipline	G2, G5, G7, G8, G9, G11 (N=6)	P15, P17 (N=2)
Progressive pre-punishment warnings and reminders	Educational technology	G1, G2, G4, G6, G7, G14, G18, G20 (N=8)	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P15, P16, P19, P20 (N=11)

Approach the students	Individual fulfilment	G3, G6, G10, G13, G15, G19 (N=6)	P1, P3, P6, P10, P17 (N=5)
<i>Fair disciplining</i>	-	G18 (N=1)	P2, P4, P5, P12, P14, P16 (N=5)

### *Strictly adhering to rules*

One recommended strategy for disciplining students is to follow "strictly" (G5) the school rules as they are. This strategy is found more in the teacher interview data than in the student interview data. Teachers who believe that physical punishment should be used to discipline students (G6, G10, G12, G13, G19), as shown in the earlier Table 4, are consistently found to choose firm strategies when overcoming student discipline problems. Meanwhile, other teachers (G4, G5, G8, G11, G16, G17) who disagree with physical punishment also adhere to strictness in implementing school rules. The same thing can be seen in the student data where even though they (P5, P6, P8, P18, P15, P17, P19) disagree with physical punishment, they emphasize strictness in following school rules to discipline.

These teachers and students believed that disciplinary efforts should be "according to the school rulebook" (G17, P19). In line with this opinion, disciplinary responsibility is placed on the shoulders of discipline teachers (G5, G17). According to G5, disciplining is the discipline teacher's job, not the job of a class teacher.

*"Because our job is only to reprimand, we report directly to the disciplinary teacher when students violate."*

G6 and G16 agreed and stressed that serious offences should not be tolerated. In fact, according to them, students should be "kicked out of school" or punished according to "the rules that have been applied at school" (G6).

In addition to strictly following existing rules, the teachers and students highlight the importance of implementing rules "regularly" (G17) so that teachers can "consistently control students' behaviours" (G8). In this way, students are expected to understand that teachers and schools have no tolerance for misbehaviour at any time or situation. Teachers should not announce the punishment set for breaking the school rules as "empty threats" (G19), but it "needs to be proven" (P5) through strict disciplinary actions as has been set. The purpose is for students to feel "terrified" and not to "repeat the same mistakes" (P6).

In addition to the need for consistency in disciplining students, when students repeat the same mistakes, it is emphasized that this matter be brought to the attention of counselling teachers and parents (P8). G4, for example, stated that "If there is a serious violation, for example, the student is often late, or is not dressed in a complete school attire, then he/she should be taken directly to the counselling teacher" or as stated by P18, "bring this problem to the parents". A complaint to the student's parents is the "last step" to "demand action" if the counselling teacher still fails to guide problematic students (G6).

Strictness in following school rules is one of the characteristics of the scholarly discipline model (Newton, 1980) in which school rules are considered fixed, and teachers and students need to follow them to establish a conducive learning environment to achieve mastery of knowledge. The inference from the findings above is that these teachers and students place importance on smooth teaching, learning, and mastery of knowledge, and therefore, any disruption to achieving these goals cannot be tolerated (Sholeh et al., 2019). The consistent implementation of rules and punishments is essential to ensure that every student complies with the rules because, according to Irby (2014), inconsistent implementation of rules and punishments is believed to confuse students about what is considered acceptable and unacceptable and will cause them to question the rules designated.

#### *Teacher as a role model*

A strategy considered necessary by a few teachers and students is the teacher being a guide to behaving as prescribed, that is, as a role model. This strategy is also an essential component in the scholarly discipline model. According to G9 and G8, when the teachers themselves adhere to school rules or "get themselves used to" the behaviour set by the school, this action will "empower all teachers to be role models for students to follow to be disciplined" (G8). Students will have guidance on good behaviours and what is expected of them by the school because "teachers are the great influence on students by showing good examples" (G5) so that "students' characters becomes better" (P17). For example, if students must be on time for school, the teacher must "show by example so that students also will come on time" (P15).

As explained by G11, the difficulty in ensuring that students comply with school rules is due to the factor of "the teachers themselves not setting a good example" or exhibiting "prohibited behaviours" (G11). As argued by Emmer and Stough (2001), teachers collectively, as role models, have the potential to positively impact how students behave and are disciplined, in addition to increasing their credibility as teachers (Gage et al., 2019).

#### *Progressive pre-punishment warnings and reminders*

An alternative strategy that teachers and students also suggest is to apply the approach of "giving a warning" (P1, P15, P19) and "reminding students first" (G14) about their mistakes and the school rules before more decisive action is taken. This method allows students to improve their behaviour (P19). However, in warning students about the consequences of their mistakes, P1, P2, P7, and P15 emphasized that the teacher should do it prudently and not with "harsh words" (P2). It is also stated that teachers should give "good advice" (P3) and "clear instructions" (P16) so that students understand their mistakes and the consequences if the mistakes are repeated. While verbal warnings are most commonly used, other methods can also be used, such as "recording the score of disciplinary violations in the student's record" (P8) or making a "declaration letter" (G20) as an early warning which explains the offence committed.

In situations where warnings and reminders may be ignored by students who break the rules, it is also recommended that warning/reminders and disciplining actions be implemented in stages or progressively (Algozzine et al., 2019), which

begins with "several times giving reminders or light punishment" (G1), before the students are being subjected to heavier penalties. However, if the same mistake is repeated, the following steps are taken, such as bringing the case to the counselling teacher or the discipline teacher, or at the final resort, the offender should be given an appropriate punishment as follows:

*By warning or reminding, and if it is found to occur too often, apply light sanctions (G18)*

*"The thing we do is if the students come late to school; if they are late once, a reminder is given; if twice, we tell them to go around the field and write, "I will not repeat it". If it is the third time, they go around the field and add more writing. Lastly, we ask them to meet the counselling teacher if the same issue happens for the fourth and fifth times." (G2)*

P7 too has a similar opinion:

*"Approach them, initially guide them, and give a warning, but if it continues, punish according to the offence; if it is the long hair, it should be trimmed. "*

The strategy of giving "progressive pre-punishment warnings" to overcome student discipline problems is similar to one of the components in the educational technology discipline model, which states that rules are meant as a guide on how to behave positively and not for immediate execution of penalties. This strategy is the most popular among the students in this study. It is a preliminary step before more decisive action is taken. This process needs to happen in stages (Algozzine et al., 2019), which starts with explaining their mistakes and reminding them of the prescribed punishment or recording the students' mistakes in the disciplinary record book. Indirectly, this strategy gives clear expectations to students about what behaviour is tolerated and not tolerated by the school and guides them through a progressive disciplinary process (Algozzine et al., 2019). In this way, students are allowed to think about the consequences of their mistakes and to learn to improve their behaviour with the information that they have (Sadik & Yalcin, 2018). Despite its seeming similarity to the strategies named within the educational technology model, the match is not comprehensive, as none of the student or teacher interview data mentioned the use of rewards or positive reinforcement as strategies as emphasized in the model.

### ***Approach the students***

Analysis of data related to alternative discipline strategies also shows the argument of some teachers and students that disciplining, at times, does not need to be too strict but instead is preceded by the teacher's methods of "approaching the students" (P6) to form "a good relationship between teacher and student" (G19), and so that, "students do not feel tired of being scolded" (P10). P3 expressed the view that teachers who discipline students should take the approach of "touch[ing] the heart, touch[ing] the mind" of the students so that they are more obliged and "comfortable in obeying the rules".

One of the methods of approaching students is to ask them why they broke school rules and then give a reasonable warning or reminder without saying "harsh words" (G3, G15). This strategy involves efforts to dialogue and make

"consultations" with the students (G6). Dialogue is seen as necessary by G13, who suggests that students be "called and asked" about the reasons for breaking the school rules. This is also suggested by P1, who believes that breaking the rules could be some students' ways of getting the teacher's attention, and therefore, approaching the rule-breaking students first is better than going ahead with punishment:

*"The student should be asked first because maybe he has problems outside of school, so he is misbehaving to seek attention, so the teacher should ask why he often breaks the rules." (P1)*

In addition to asking students why they break the rules, teachers should also tell the student about "his mistakes that have cost him and the school" (G15). Following this, a negotiation may be held as done by G3:

*"I will not simply punish students who are late once or twice to class. However, I will offer or ask, if they are late again, what will the punishment be for them? I offer something like that to students." (G3)*

This aligns with P7's view that teachers should be more "patient and thorough in judging students". According to P17, approaching students without getting angry and using "good words" can only be achieved when "teachers understand student character education". This strategy of approaching students has similarities with the individual fulfilment model in Newton (1980), which describes the teacher's role as a supporter, a guide, and a counsellor. In addition, this strategy directly gives students the right to rethink and evaluate their behaviours through discussion with the teacher and encourages them to take responsibility for their behaviours (Helman, 2017; Moen, 2015; Thompson, 2015).

### ***Fair disciplining***

The last theme, "fair disciplining," arose from interview and questionnaire data from some student participants and only one teacher participant. Fair disciplining entails treating all students who have committed an offence equally regardless of their standings, and that disciplinary actions are carried out thoughtfully and do not violate their rights. Some students insist that teachers "do not discriminate between one student and another" (P16), for example, by "defending a smart or rich student even if he makes a mistake" (P2). Therefore, in disciplining students, all students who make mistakes "must be punished according to the rules", and no one is exempted (P12). This is seen as necessary by teacher G18, the only teacher coded under fair disciplining, who explains that "when we are not being fair, then the teacher and the rules will not be taken seriously by the students".

P14 agreed that every teacher has a way of disciplining students. However, his/her actions must be based on "justice, firmness, love, and a sense of responsibility as a person who is given the role of advancing the nation". Further, P5 commented that teachers should be as fair as possible in making decisions such as "protecting the student's privacy when he commits violations", and not letting the student "be shunned by his peers or peer groups after being caught breaking the rules".

The fair disciplinary strategy does not match any of the models listed by Newton (1980). It is different from the social reconstruction model, which highlights the



importance of student participation in developing and improving school discipline rules. However, this theme delivers a message of justice in disciplining, connected to the sub-theme "consistency in disciplining students" to reflect the desire for fair treatment of all students, upheld through consistent disciplinary actions for all students without favouritism. Interestingly, this sub-theme involves two requirements: Seriousness in the implementation of established rules (scholarly discipline) and justice in implementing school rules and penalties without discrimination. Therefore, the theme of "fair disciplining" can be seen as something the students expect to ensure that whatever disciplinary strategy is used, it should be implemented as fairly as possible. The emergence of this theme raises the question of the importance of student voices, together with teacher voices, to be heard in the management of school discipline and rules (Mason, 2015; Moen, 2015; Thompson, 2015) so that the implementation of disciplinary actions is democratic and fair as encapsulated in the social reconstruction model.

Overall, this study found that teachers tend to stick to strict disciplinary strategies and abide by existing school rules, which can be surmised as based on the scholarly discipline model, although most of them do not accept physical punishment. The students, on the other hand, think that a disciplinary strategy that is student-friendly and that gives them the opportunity and space to improve themselves should be prioritized. Physical punishment is not deemed appropriate and, therefore, is not a popular solution in managing students' misbehaviours. Although a few teachers and students agree with the use of physical punishment, they indicate the limits of its implementation so as not to harm students.

The rejection of physical punishment and the tendency of teachers and students to adopt safe and humanistic disciplinary strategies contradict past claims of Indonesian teachers favouring physical punishment as reported in Windari et al., (2018) and Arifin (2020) and do not match the views of teachers and students in other studies that see physical punishment as a necessity (e.g. Ajowi & Omboto, 2013). However, the findings of this study are limited because attempts were not made to match each teacher and student to the strategies of their choice. Instead, the analysis focused on the pattern of responses alone. The researchers did not control the participants' responses to fit particular models. They had the freedom to express their views. Therefore, some teachers and students have named more than one strategy as an alternative to physical punishment, which may fall under different discipline models.

Next, this study is limited to identifying the disciplinary strategies expressed by teachers and students without relating their choices to the purposes of schooling, which underpin each of Newton's school discipline models. Further, this study did not ask the teachers and students to relate, based on their lived experience, to the impact of their chosen disciplinary strategies. The two limitations direct the need for future research: One is to examine the interplay of teachers' and students' beliefs about the purpose of schooling and their proposed disciplinary strategies, and the second is to explore their accounts of the impact of the proposed strategies on managing disciplinary problems.

## 6. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the perspectives of teachers and students, based on their experiences at school, about disciplinary strategies. This intention drove the researchers to consider the use of multiple models to understand their perspectives. The reference to Newton's comparison of disciplinary models is, therefore, appropriate to obtain their different positions on how disciplining should be because, as Mason (2015) and this study found, school discipline practices need not be explained by a single model only. The findings in this study suggest that contextual factors, such as concerns for student safety and well-being, demands for student protection against harm, and legal implications (Sipahutar et al., 2024) may require careful thoughts about which strategies are safe and practical. Thus, considerations of strategy use from multiple models are reasonable (Woolfolk, 2021).

The exploration of students' and teachers' perspectives provides a repertoire of alternative disciplinary strategies that seem to make sense to both parties. More importantly, this study offers school administrators and policymakers a bottom-up instance of how to address school discipline issues. By listening to teachers and students, concerns and ways to overcome conflicts arising from dissatisfaction with each other and top-down school disciplinary processes could be discerned. Teachers and students interact with each other daily (Din, 2023); Their views about workable solutions should therefore be sought after. The selection and development of school rules and alternative disciplinary strategies, together with regular examination of their effectiveness, should be a community effort (Zak-Doron & Perry-Hazan, 2023) and include those who are directly affected by them to develop a sense of ownership.

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