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# K-12 Teachers' Beliefs on the Impact of Corporal Punishment on Students' Academic Performance

Robert Sanders

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K-12 TEACHERS' BELIEFS ON THE IMPACT OF CORPRAL  
PUNISHMENT ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

by

Robert Lee Sanders, II

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the Graduate School,  
the College of Education and Psychology  
and the Department/ School of Educational Research and Administration  
at The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to take a closer look into the perceptions of K-12 teachers on the impact of corporal punishment on students' academic performance. The qualitative data from this study was gained through a survey administered to K-12 teachers from schools in the state of Mississippi that allow corporal punishment and schools that do not allow corporal punishment. The survey was administered to the volunteers after their staff meetings or Professional Learning Communities. The researcher read a brief statement to the participants and collected the surveys after they completed them.

Mississippi is one of the states that still allows corporal punishment as an option for discipline in K-12 schools but each local educational agency or school board is permitted to determine if corporal punishment will be allowed in their school district.

Teachers are the primary disciplinarians in a school so this study sought to determine a teachers perceptions of the impact of corporal punishment on a students' academic performance. The age old practice of paddling and spanking a student has been removed and indicted by several agencies, corporations and educational entities but there are still places where the practice is encouraged and upheld. This study showed that the majority of the teachers who participated in this survey do not perceive corporal punishment to have a positive impact on students' academic performance.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The past few years that I have been working on this dissertation has been rewarding yet challenging. Through it all, I thank God for the wisdom and knowledge he has granted to me to see this come to pass. As a full time high school principal, minister, husband and father, I found time management to be the most crucial element in this journey. I now see the light at the end of the tunnel and I would not have made it without the guidance of my professors and committee members.

I would like to start by thanking Dr. J. T. Johnson and Dr. Mike Ward for their tremendous assistance on the front end of this process. Without their support I would have never settled on a title and focus for my study. I would also like to personally thank each member of my committee, Dr. David Lee, Dr. Myron Labat, Dr. Richard Mohn, Dr. Kyna Shelley, and Dr. Cheyenne Trussell. Dr. Lee was so patient and understanding of my frequent delays due to the many hats that I wear. However, he pushed me to keep going no matter what and that the small moments would eventually add up to a completed project. Dr. Shelley was invaluable in completing the methodology and the initial leg work regarding the details of the study. Dr. Trussell was always checking in with me from time to time to make sure progress was being made so that I would not get stagnant from on chapter to the next. Finally, Dr. Mohn was a true superhero for me breaking down the most complex issues into the simplest possible form so that I could not only grasp it thoroughly but master it. My committee was second to none and I am eternally grateful to each of you.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to several important people who are a part of my life. First of all, my beautiful wife Kendra. I love you and appreciate your constant support and understanding throughout this process. The many late nights, changed plans and countless hours I spent on this project could not have happen without you. Your quiet, loving, nurturing spirit held me up when I wanted to throw in the towel. To my mother, who had now retired but is going to school to get her bachelor's degree, thank you for allowing your children to be first to reach our goals. You worked for 30+ years to ensure that we could go to college and achieve and now I will be the first in our family to get a doctorate degree and that is all because of your sacrifice. It's your turn now and you have my complete love and support. To my church family, thank you for your prayers and kind words of encouragement to see this process through. Finally to my son, Keaston. I want you to know that anything in life that is worth having is worth working for, even if it is not easy. The sky is the limit. Whatever you want to be, it is God who makes it. Keep God first, and keep your goals in focus through tough times and you will succeed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ..... iii

DEDICATION ..... iv

LIST OF TABLES ..... viii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ..... x

CHAPTER I - BACKGROUND ..... 1

    Statement of the Problem ..... 6

    Purpose of the Study ..... 7

    Research Questions ..... 9

    Definitions of Terms ..... 9

    Assumptions ..... 10

    Delimitations ..... 10

    Justification for the Study ..... 11

    Summary ..... 15

CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF LITERATURE ..... 16

    Introduction ..... 16

    Theoretical Framework ..... 17

    History of Corporal Punishment ..... 20

    Court Cases That Impact the Application of Corporal Punishment in Schools ..... 24

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Ingraham v. Wright.....                                 | 26 |
| Garcia v. Miera .....                                   | 29 |
| Corporal Punishment and Mississippi Law .....           | 33 |
| Support for and Opposition of Corporal Punishment ..... | 35 |
| CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY .....                         | 44 |
| Research Questions.....                                 | 44 |
| Research Design.....                                    | 45 |
| Instrumentation .....                                   | 46 |
| Pilot Study.....  | 47 |
| Participants.....                                       | 48 |
| Collection Procedures .....                             | 48 |
| Data Analysis .....                                     | 49 |
| Summary.....  | 49 |
| CHAPTER IV – ANALYSIS OF DATA .....                     | 51 |
| Introduction.....                                       | 51 |
| Instrumentation .....                                   | 52 |
| Data Analysis for Section I of the Survey .....         | 53 |
| CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION.....                             | 71 |
| Summary of Procedures .....                             | 71 |
| Conclusion .....  | 72 |



|   |    |
|---|----|
| Discussion .....                          | 75 |
| Limitations .....                         | 78 |
| Recommendations for Policy .....          | 79 |
| Recommendations for Future Research ..... | 82 |
| APPENDIX A – Research Questionnaire ..... | 83 |
| APPENDIX B – IRB Approval Letter .....    | 87 |
| REFERENCES .....                          | 88 |

LIST OF TABLES

Statement 2: Characteristics of Participants-Race ..... 53

Table 2 ..... 54

Statement 3: Years of Experience as a K-12 Teacher..... 54

Table 3 ..... 55

Statement 4: Educational Characteristics of Participants ..... 55

Table 4 ..... 55

Statement 5: Participants Who Teach at Each Level ..... 55

Table 5 ..... 56

Statement 6: Disciplines Taught by the Participants ..... 56

Table 6 ..... 57

Table 7 ..... 60

Statement 4: Corporal punishment teaches students who receive it self-discipline ..... 61

Table 9 ..... 63

Table 10 ..... 65

Statement 4: Students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform  
academically ..... 65

Table 11 ..... 66

Statement 4: Students who do not receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform  
academically. .... 66

Classification Tablea,b..... 68

Classification Tablea..... 68

Correlations..... 69

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| CP Used * MS18 Crosstabulation..... | 70 |
| Variables in the Equation.....      | 70 |

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1. Theoretical Framework .....       | 17 |
| Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs ..... | 20 |

## CHAPTER I - BACKGROUND

The use of corporal punishment to discipline Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade (K-12) public school students continues to be a controversial subject among educators. Corporal punishment is defined by Fréchette et al., (2015) as “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child’s behavior” (p. 4). However, it may also include kicking, shaking, choking, shoving or the use of objects (Scheidegger, 2014). While some stakeholders believe that the use of this discipline method is an effective way to correct negative behavior, others believe that this method of punishment is more detrimental.

In K-12 public schools teachers and administrators may in loco parentis or in place of a parent administer corporal punishment (Nevin, 2014). According to Gershoff (2012), support for corporal punishment has been on a decline since 1986 but 60 % Americans still approve of corporal punishment but the numbers decrease to 38% approval for corporal punishment in schools (Gershoff et al., 2012) Additionally most children have been spanked at least once (Gershoff et al., 2012). Results from the General Social Survey (2012) support this notion, as 74% of adults approve of spanking.

According to Flanagan (2009), proponents of corporal punishment argue that this method of discipline has been used for centuries and is necessary to maintain an educational environment that is conducive to learning. Others believe that corporal punishment minimizes classroom disruptions and that it is a means for removing disruptive influences that cause the loss of instructional time (Flanagan, 2009). Another argument is that corporal punishment provides teachers with a method for controlling

students in class by disciplining students who disrupt conducive learning environments (Flanagan, 2009). But while some stakeholders support corporal punishment in public schools, some argue against it. For example, Hanly (2012) wrote that corporal punishment may lead to physical violence, anxiety, aggression, and depression among K-12 students. Hanly (2012) also asserted that the use of corporal punishment could increase lawsuits.

Due to allegations of child abuse and reports of disproportionate application of corporal punishment among students of color, many states have banned this discipline technique (Holden, Brown, Baldwin, & Caderao, 2014). Holden et al. (2014) report that of the 50 states, 31 no longer permit use of corporal punishment in public schools, while 19 state allow teachers and/or school administrators to apply his form of discipline. The states that currently permit the use of corporal punishment are Wyoming, Tennessee, Texas, Kentucky, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Arizona, Idaho, North Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, Indiana, Colorado, Missouri, Oklahoma and Georgia (Goodson & Fossey, 2012; Holden et al., 2014). Nineteen states are identified as allowing corporal punishment to continue but of those nineteen, thirteen are in the south. Of those thirteen states, five are responsible for 75% of all incidents of corporal punishment in the United States (Goodson & Fossey, 2012; Holden et al, 2014). Those states are Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas (Goodson & Fossey, 2012; Holden et al, 2014). According to Farrell (2012), the state of Mississippi ranks highest in the incidences of corporal punishment in America. Farrell (2012) specifically reports that in 2008, teachers and administrators in the state of Mississippi applied corporal punishment 38,181 times.

The Mississippi Department of Education (2015) asserts that:

“an educational institution’s mission is to provide an environment that is free of disruptions and conducive to expanding academic opportunities to its students, corporal punishment may be permitted as an optional form of discipline if deemed necessary (p. 16).”

However, the Mississippi Department of Education (2015) leaves the decision of whether or not to use corporal punishment to the discretion of each school district and grants immunity to teachers who administer the punishment unless the act is done in excess. Neither Mississippi Law nor the Mississippi Department of Education (2015) constitutes corporal punishment as child abuse or neglect. Neither do these entities oversee the process of implementation or the administration of the practice. Instead, school districts in the state adopt policies to guide those who administer corporal punishment. The Mississippi Code § 37-11-57(2013) states the following:

“Any school official such as a principal, assistant principal, teacher or assistant teacher shall not be considered liable while administering discipline, suspension and expulsion of students during the course and scope of their employment if their actions are not considered a case of excessive force or cruel and unusual punishment and fall within the proper guideline and regulations set forth by the state and federal laws in addition to the expectations outlined by the State Board of Education. Legal defense of a principal, assistant principal, teacher or assistant teacher will be the responsibility of the local school board if the principal, assistant principal, teacher or assistant teacher acted within the scope and course of their

employment when the issue occurred. If a court finds that the employee acted outside the course and scope of their employment and perhaps displayed criminal intent, the school district shall be eligible for possible reimbursement for expenses and legal fees associated with the incident. Action against an employee by a school district or an action against a school district by an employee shall be tied to the court in a similar fashion where the necessary legal fees and expenses will be associated with the same law suit. Child abuse or negligence will not be charged against a principal, assistant principal, teacher, or assistant teacher if they administered corporal punishment in a reasonable manner consistent with the state and federal laws or rules and regulations outline by the State Board of Education or the local school board in an effort to discipline a student and maintain control of the educational setting. Civil damages in a suit alleging that a principal, assistant principal, teacher or assistant teacher acted in bad faith or maybe displayed malicious intent with a total disregard of human rights and safety shall be allowed or considered valid if they acted within the scope and course of their employment. Regarding this subsection, “corporal punishment” can be defined as reasonable physical contact or the use of physical force by a principal, assistant principal, teacher or assistant teacher for the protection of students from disruptive students, to enforce a rule, maintain classroom decorum, enforce school rules, or to self-protect.”



The Mississippi Department of Education (2015) does, however, strongly suggest that each school district take strict precautionary measures before administering corporal punishment. For instance, the Department recommends that: (1) parental consent should be given in the form of written permission to designated school officials who are allowed to paddle; (2) another adult should be present when corporal punishment is administered; and (3) teachers and administrators should document their attempts to use alternate measures to correct the inappropriate behavior. However, many school districts in Mississippi do not use the aforementioned precautionary measures. Neither do their personnel follow standard procedures; instead, staff members use their own judgment when applying corporal punishment (Damond-Williams, 2012). Ultimately, the Mississippi Department of Education (2015) places the responsibilities of establishing and enforcing rules concerning the use of corporal punishment with each district's superintendent of schools. The guidelines must adhere to the following:

Corporal punishment is allowed for consideration when more amicable methods such as conferences with parents and behavioral counseling have failed to yield desired results or are deemed ineffective. On the other hand, in extreme behavior cases where corporal punishment appears to be the only appropriate form of discipline to correct inappropriate behavior, it is permitted;

All corporal punishment must be considered moderate and appropriately reasonable in the absence of possible revenge or malicious intent. Those who administer corporal punishment must consider certain factors including the age, size and condition of the student, the type of instrument

that will be utilized, with attention to the amount of force and part of the body that will be struck.

Certified school personnel such as the principal, assistant principal, and teachers are permitted to administer corporal punishment; Furthermore, the administration of corporal punishment is expected to be done in the presence of a witness that is a certified employee.

Parents or guardians should be allowed to opt in or out of the use of corporal punishment annually. It is necessary that the parent who prefers not to have their child receive corporal punishment is required to specify this request in writing to the principal of the school. (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).

This study will be reported into five chapters. Chapter I introduces the research study. Chapter II will provide a theoretical basis for the study and a review of relevant literature. Chapter III will outline and discuss the methodology that will be used. Chapter IV will present the findings and ancillary findings. Chapter V will discuss the conclusion of the study.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Corporal punishment is a disciplinary practice that has been used around the globe for many generations in nearly all cultures. Corporal punishment has been defined in many different ways by the various societies that have employed its methods. Practically all the institutions and persons responsible for rearing children have considered the practice of corporal punishment. Parents of every nation are acquainted with its uses either by practice or condemnation of its merits. Both private and public schools have

wrestled with the complexities associated with the difficulty of managing student misbehavior in an honorable and appropriate way.

The separation of church and state doctrine adopted by the United States illustrates an interesting dilemma for the practice of corporal punishment which embodies a moral and political conflict that is experienced very differently by the various groups that have supported and discredited its uses down through the years.

Some educational researchers are in favor of K-12 teachers and/or administrators use of corporal punishment and deem it a necessary practice for correcting behavior and thereby maintaining students' rights to a free public and appropriate education. Other stakeholders contend that corporal punishment is child abuse, which can lead to aggression, violence, and depression. While there is a plethora of literature that focuses on the negative consequences of corporal punishment on the mental and physical well-being of K-12 public school students, there is a paucity of research which focuses on teachers' perceptions of the impact of corporal punishment on student achievement. The unwavering support of corporal punishment in schools had decreased tremendously but discipline is still necessary to sustain academic achievement. There are varying opinions from educators regarding the best practice to correct student behavior and the methods that would ensure the greatest positive results academically and behaviorally. Therefore, this study will address this problem by providing a better understanding of teachers' beliefs about how corporal punishment may impact the motivation of K-12 students to improve their academic performance.

### *Purpose of the Study*

Public schools have been an important part of the American community for several decades but now there is more discussion on the problems with public education and the need to reform the way we educate our children. Several studies have pointed to a myriad of issues that plague public schools such as high dropout rates, high rates of poor performance by minority groups on standardized test, high numbers of minorities in public schools, increased teacher turnover, the national teacher shortage, aging facilities, lack of uniform academic standards across states and district, high teenage pregnancy rates, and extreme discipline problems in classrooms. All of these issues are real concerns for people who work in public schools and for those who send their students to public schools. The creation of charter schools and alternative education programs are direct responses to several of the issues associated with public schools. Discipline is one of the premier concerns that is front and center on the stage of issues with public schools. Options in methods of discipline have varied over the years but corporal punishment is among the options that has received the most scrutiny in the past 20 years. Several districts have banned corporal punishment. There are still several states and districts that use corporal punishment as an option for disciplining students but the majority have condemned it. In most schools, the teachers are on the front lines of discipline because most issues occur in class. The study will examine the perspectives of K-12 teachers in the State of Mississippi regarding the effects of corporal punishment on student achievement. While some teachers support corporal punishment as a option for discipline, others do not support it. Then while, some teachers believe that corporal punishment has a positive effect on a student's academic performance and there are some who believe that it has a negative effect. This study will examine several teachers'

beliefs in hopes of drawing conclusions that will impact public education and school discipline in a positive way.

### *Research Questions*

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for improving student performance academically?
2. To what extent do K-12 teachers' believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions?
3. To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline?
4. To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that the current regulations and procedures used to administer corporal punishment in the district where they are employed are effective?
5. Is there a possibility that poor minority children are given corporal punishment more often than affluent majority students?
6. To what extent do K-12 teachers believe corporal punishment as an effective method for motivating students to perform better academically?

### *Definitions of Terms*

1. Corporal Punishment: Corporal punishment can be defined as reasonable physical contact or the use of physical force by a principal, assistant principal, teacher or assistant teacher for the protection of students from disruptive students, to enforce a rule, maintain classroom decorum, enforce school rules, or to self-protect (Mississippi Code § 37-11-57).

2. In loco parentis – In loco parentis refers to any individual who acts in place of a parent or parents (Levesque, 2013).
3. Motivation – eagerness to work or act, or the process of creating a willingness in someone to do something or complete an action (Nordgren, 2013).
4. Stakeholders – People who are committed to the success of a school and those who invest their money effort and time into the school. State representatives, city council members, elected officials, administrators, teachers, staff members, parents, students, extended family members, community members and local business leaders. (Flanagan, 2009).
5. K-12 teachers - For this study, K-12 teachers consist of instructors certified by the state of Mississippi to teach students in grades Kindergarten through twelve grades.
6. Mississippi Subject Area Test- State test administered in Algebra I, Biology I, English II and US History to high school students. Students must pass these state test in order to receive their high school diplomas.

### *Assumptions*

An assumption is the belief that an idea is true without actual proof (Creswell, 2014). There are two primary assumptions for this study: (1) Only certified K-12 teachers will complete the survey; and (2) The participants will provide accurate and honest answers to survey questions and will do so without fear of negative consequence for these responses.

### *Delimitations*

Delimitations are the planned or initially acknowledged boundaries of a study. Delimitations should not be considered weaknesses of a study (Creswell, 2014). One delimitation of the study is that it is limited to the perceptions of corporal punishment from teachers employed in Mississippi. Second, the study is limited to data from three academic years: 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 as these are the most recent years with available data from the Mississippi Department of Education. The study is also conducted at high schools in one state, which has the highest number of reported incidences of corporal punishment. Therefore, the views and opinions of the participants may differ from those perceptions of teachers employed in states where corporal punishment is not permitted or in states where corporal punishment has been reported at significantly lower rates than those reported in Mississippi. One limitation of the study is that respondents may have given socially desirable responses when using a self-reporting instrument such as a survey. Another limitation is that there are no uniform laws or policies established in Mississippi for reporting incidences of corporal punishment in K-12 public schools. Data for each paddling is counted as only one incidence for the same child so the record only specifies the total number of paddled students not particularly how many times a student received a paddling individually (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2010, p. 2).

#### *Justification for the Study*

Approximately 25 miles outside of Mississippi's state capital, there is a district that includes nine schools that serve approximately 4, 224 students and employ 270 K-12 teachers (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015). Datum from the Mississippi Department of Education further (2015) reveal that one teachers serves as a PK teacher.

The district employs 16 kindergarten teachers, 123 elementary teachers, 100 secondary teachers and 30 teachers who provide instruction to ungraded students. Also employed in the district are approximately 292 classified additional staff members. 61 instructional aides are also employed in the district. About 6 instructional coordinators; 8 guidance counselors; 8 media specialists, 10 district administrators and 17 district administrative support staff. Additionally, there are approximately 19 administrators, 12 school administrative support staff, 19 individuals who are employed under Student Support services and 130 other support services staff. The school district operates on an annual budget of \$31, 840,000 in revenue. Of the budgeted amount \$20,042,000 is received from federal sources, \$2, 098, 000 is received from local sources, and \$9,118, 700 is from state sources. In addition, \$19, 367,000 or 59% of the budget is spent for classroom instruction. This figure equates to about \$4,586 in expenditures per student (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).

Within the district is a school that serves approximately 592 students in grades 9-12. During the 2012-2013 school year, there were 177 ninth grade students, 144 tenth grade students, 144 eleventh grade students and 127 twelfth grade students. Of the 592 students, 294 are males and 298 are females. The school is considered a Title I school and therefore receives federal monies to improve the academic performance of economically disadvantaged students. Specifically 390 of the students who attend the school are eligible to receive free lunches and 67 are eligible to receive reduced-price lunches. The school employs 40 teachers; each serves about 20 students during each class period (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).



One of the school's visions is to "provide a safe and supportive, student oriented environment. ...." (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015). Another of the school's goals is to "Increase the academic achievement of all students in all subjects." (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015). Also noted is the school's beliefs that "Teachers, students and all staff will be provided with an environment conducive for high academic performance and continued growth and development." However, decreasing numbers of discipline infractions, which ultimately resulted in the application of corporal punishment, along with declining Algebra I and English II scores on the Mississippi Subject Area Test, indicates that corporal punishment may have an impact on academic achievement. For example, school during the 2010-2011 academic school year, teachers and administrations applied corporal punishment 498 times. During the 2011-2012 academic year, teachers and administrators applied corporal punishment a total of 461 times, a decrease of 37 occurrences. During the 2011-2012 school year, administrators applied corporal punishment a total of 241 times. During the 2012-2013 school year, administrators within the district imposed corporal punishment 351 times, which was 110 less times than in the previous year. Coincidentally, during the same years, the percentages of students, who successfully passed the algebra and the English subject area test also decreased (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).

In 1999, the Mississippi State Senate adopted academic standards for K-12 graduation. This legislation was called the Mississippi Student Achievement Improvement Act. The Mississippi Student Achievement Improvement Act indicates that each student should at the least demonstrate basic mastery in English II, US History, Algebra I and Biology I (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015). Additionally,

students seeking to earn a K-12 diploma must met the graduation requirements which stipulated passing all subject area state test. In several school across the state of Mississippi, the percentages of students who demonstrated mastery in Algebra I and in English has consistently declined since 2010 (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015). For example, at one school in the State of Mississippi, during the 2010-2011 year, 91 % of the students who attend the school passed the subject area test in Algebra I. During the 2011-2012, 87% passed the Algebra I subject area test and in 2012-2013 76% passed. Therefore, from 2010 to 2013, the percentage of students who passed the subject area test in Algebra I at this school declined by 15%. As it relates to the subject area test in English II, during the 2010-2011 academic year 74% passed the assessment. During the 2011-2012 year, 68% of the students who attend that school passed the English II subject area assessment and during the 2012-2013 65% passed. Therefore, from 2010 to 2013, the number of students who passed the subject area test in English II declined by nine percent (9%) (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015). Due to the apparent correlation between declining test scores and decreasing instances of corporal punishment in this school district, stakeholders should consider the facts as stated above, which outline that there has been a decline in the use of corporal punishment in student discipline and there has also been a decline in the academic performance of students on state test. There are several factors that could have contributed to the decline in test scores and the decline in the use of corporal punishment. Perhaps districts that administer corporal punishment have seen a drop in their discipline infractions that would merit the use of corporal punishment. Another possible consideration could be that academic performance has decline due to the increasing teacher shortage and lack of

quality instructors. As an educator, I know that poor discipline practices in a classroom, school or district will impact student performance. If students are suspended as opposed to paddled, then they miss out on quality instruction that can positively affect their performance on state test. Therefore, this study will examine K-12 teachers' beliefs on the impact of corporal punishment on academic achievement.

### *Summary*

Chapter I provided an introduction to corporal punishment and the controversies surrounding the topic. The Mississippi Code § 37-11-57(2013) and the Mississippi Department of Education (2015) provide information on corporal punishment including guidelines, regulations, and rules. The statement of the problem was presented as a paucity of research that focuses on teachers' perceptions of the impact of corporal punishment on student achievement. The justification of the study was the concern for decreasing English II and Algebra I scores as indicated by the Mississippi Department of Education's test results at several schools in the State. This is also coupled with the decline in the use of corporal punishment in several schools across the state as well. The six research questions that will guide the study were listed and definitions of terms to help further clarify the study were presented. The limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study were also presented.

## CHAPTER II - REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### *Introduction*

Corporal punishment remains to be a controversial topic in the United States. Although about 90% of parents throughout America support the use corporal punishment, many states have adopted laws tend to protect the victims (Zolotor & Puzia, 2010). To the contrary, in the state of Mississippi, laws tend to protect those who administer the discipline technique (Damond-Williams, 2014). Support for corporal punishment, which tends to be imbedded in religious beliefs based upon the bible, is also often negatively associated with abuse, poor academic performance and psychological deficiencies (Gershoff et al., 2012). As a result of various outcomes associated with corporal punishment, threats of lawsuits have increased, litigation has impacted school policy relating to discipline, and ultimately, the application of corporal punishment has been on the decline (Lacefield, 2010). Nineteen (19) states still permit the use of corporal punishment (Holden, 2014). However, policies and procedures for asserting corporal punishment vary from state to state, from district to district and in some instances, from school to school. While many researchers and professional organizations do not support the application of corporal punishment in any setting, others support it as a method for improving student behavior and for protecting classroom environments so that they are conducive to learning.

Teachers have an on-going responsibility to provide a safe and orderly learning environment for all students (Flanagan, 2009). Because conducive classroom environment are necessary for student learning and learning outcomes, educational researchers should consider the impact of corporal punishment on academic performance

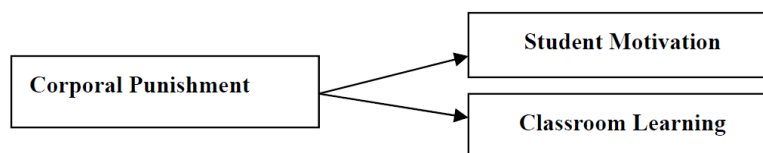
Part of this responsibility involves punishing those who interrupt instructional time and who violate their peers' rights to learn in an environment that is free from disruptions, threats, or harm. Therefore, the proposed study will examine K-12 teachers' perceptions of the impact of corporal punishment on students' academic performance.

The purpose of Chapter II is to present the literature associated with corporal punishment. The review was conducted using the University of Southern Mississippi's electronic databases. Overall, Chapter II provides the framework for understanding the history of corporal punishment and associated laws. The first part of this review will focus on Maslow's Motivational Theory. The second part discusses the history of corporal punishment. The third part focuses on significant court cases associated with corporal punishment. The fourth section focuses on laws governing corporal punishment in the state of Mississippi. The final section of the literature review will focus over supporting and oppositional views of corporal punishment.

### *Theoretical Framework*

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework put forth by Maslow (1943). It is important to note that Maslow and Ahmad, Said and Khan had very different perspectives in their approaches to motivation but both acknowledged a correlation between corporal punishment on student motivation and classroom learning.

Figure 1. Theoretical Framework



Maslow concluded that all individuals have five basic needs, which he ranked in hierarchical order. These needs are (1) physiological needs; (2) safety needs; (3) love and belonging needs; (4) esteem needs; and (5) self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). According to Maslow (1943), unmet needs motivate individuals to act and that each need had to be met before the individual could progress to the next level. Once a need had been met, it would no longer serve as a significant motivational force for the individual.

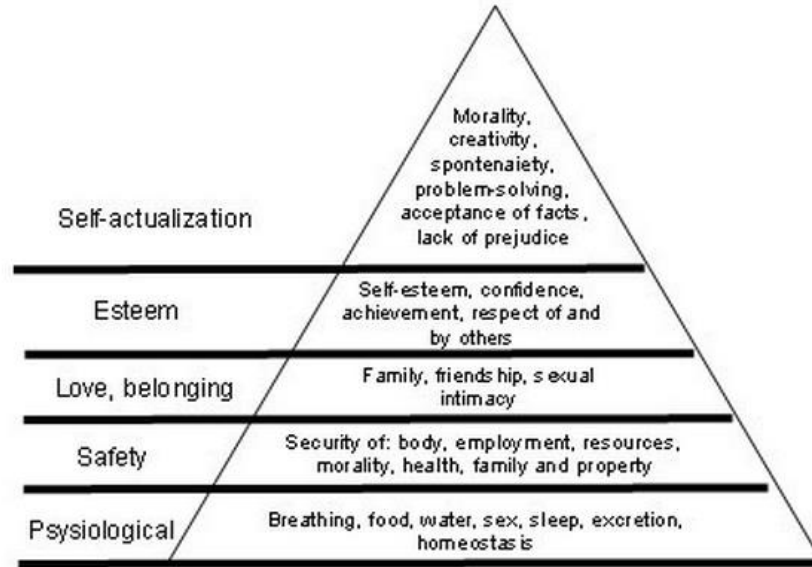
The first of Maslow's (1943) basic needs is physiological. These include the most basic needs such as food, water, air, shelter, and sleep. The physiological needs are necessary for survival. Maslow (1943) stated that a "person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else (p. 373)". The second need, the need for safety is most relevant to this research study because both students and teachers need to feel safe and secure in their school environment (Sadri & Bowen, 2011). Whitaker et al. (2009) asserted that educational leaders "must realize that the teachers and staff members of their organizations must have their safety needs met" and that "It's not enough for staff members just to be safe; they must also feel safe (p. 5).

The next factor on Maslow's hierarchy is the need for love and a sense of belonging. Maslow (1943) asserted that individual's whose basic and safety needs were met would "hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, and will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal" (p. 381). Maslow's next level of human motivation is the need of esteem, which includes responsibility, reputation, prestige, recognition, self-respect, and respect from others (Sadri & Bowen, 2011; Whitaker et al., 2009). Maslow

(1943) stated that all people have a need or desire for a high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others. Maslow (1994) further classified motivational characteristics into two categories. First, he asserted that humans have a desire for strength, achievement, adequacy, independence, freedom, and confidence. Second is the human desire for reputation or prestige, attention, and importance or appreciation (Maslow, 1943).

The fifth tier of Maslow's original hierarchy is self-actualization. Maslow (1943) defined this trait by stating "what a man can be, he must be" (p. 382). This need for humans to become everything that they are capable of becoming varies from person to person. Employees who have satisfied the lower level needs can focus on bettering themselves and the world around them (Maslow, 1943; Sadri & Bowen, 2011). Maslow later added an additional level to his tier, self-transcendence. The motivational level of self-transcendence involves an individual seeking to further a cause beyond personal potential towards peak experience, Maslow found this additional tier through the realization that peak experiences often led individuals to go beyond the very self that was being actualized, becoming relatively egoless in the process. Figure 2. displays the five levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and factors associated with each.

Figure 2. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



### *History of Corporal Punishment*

In order for effective teaching and adequate learning to take place, schools must be free from violence, safety, and the threat thereof (Hans, 2011). Moreover, there is a correlations between safe and orderly school environments and student cognitive and behavioral outcomes (Lenta, 2012). According to the literature by Alexander and Alexander (2011), corporal punishment is most often equated with a school authority paddling a student's buttocks in order to maintain discipline. Corporal punishment can take on other forms such as not allowing a child to use the restroom, forced exercise, pinching and shaking (Lenta, 2012).

Gershoff et al., (2012) wrote that corporal punishment, which has biblical roots, can be traced to precolonial England. During precolonial times, corporal punishment was used mostly by Christian parents and teachers, who supported the practice with their beliefs from biblical scriptures such as "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; ; but he



that loveth him chasteneth him betimes diligently” (Proverbs 13:24); “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Proverbs 19:18); “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15); “Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die” (Proverbs 23:13) ; “Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:14); and “The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15). Also during precolonial times, several techniques of corporal punishment were used such as applying beatings with a rod or using twigs to hit students , using a wooden ruler to hit hands, and using a three-prong leather strap to strike (Gershoff et al., 2012; Lambert, 2012). Middleton (2012) wrote that early American schools were patterned after English schools and followed their traditions of corporal punishment, which were established in the early English boarding schools. In the 1800s, disciplinary action was simple and used to regain order in the class (Middleton, 2012). However, corporal punishment became controversial in some regions of the country. One example of such controversy is the synopsis reported by McGreevy (2003).

McGreevy (2003) reports that in 1859 a boy who attended a Catholic school in Boston was whipped senselessly by a school administrator when he refused to read from a particular version of the Bible. McGreevy (2003) specifically reports that the boy refused to read the Ten Commandments from the *King James Bible* version of the bible, he was whipped until for over one half an hour and until his skin was pierced and he started to bleed. Although the boy explained that he had been advised by his parents not to read from the version, an administrator came into the classroom and beat him severely.

The incident led to a Catholic children to demonstrate by walking out of the Boston Public Schools. Nonetheless, today the Boston Public Schools continues to use corporal punishment. DiPietro (2003) wrote about another controversy concerning the use of corporal punishment.

DiPietro (2003) adds that in 1866, a girl student was whipped because she was whispering in class. The teacher, who taught elementary school in Cambridge, Massachusetts, gave the girl 15 to 20 lashings on her hands. Consequently, the girls' parents sued the teacher and the case went to trial. However, no litigation resulted and corporal punishment in the school was not abolished. The incident marked the first instance of parents speaking out against the cruelty of corporal punishment

Middleton (2012) reports that the application of corporal punishment began to shift during the 1960s because of the Civil Rights Movement. According to Middleton (2012), during integration which occurred during the early 1970s and just after the Civil Rights Era, the notion of African Americans administrators using corporal punishment to discipline White students and White administrators using corporal punishment as a means of punishment for African American students was not well-accepted. Also during the 1970s, in addition to the increase of Americans' awareness of child abuse, the Supreme Court ruled in the *Tinker v. Des Moines Community Independent School District Case* that students' right to free speech in the schools was not disruptive, especially when they were being paddled against their will. Furthermore, the use of corporal punishment began to lead to more lawsuits against school districts. However, the Supreme Court also ruled in *Ingraham v. Wright* (1977) that "reasonable but not excessive force may be allowed by a teacher for the purpose of disciplining a child" (p. 661) and that "school administrators

and teachers are permitted to exercise the use of such force when deemed necessary for the education, training and proper control of a child” (p. 662). Section 147(2) of the decision further states that reasonable physical force or corporal punishment may be administered when one lawful parent or guardian has voluntarily provided permission to an administrator or teacher in order to control a child who imposes upon the learning opportunities of others. There were 150 factors that were deemed as reasonable punishment. Factors include the mental condition of the student, the nature of his offense, and the motive of the offense. The American Law Institute (2015) adds that an individual who uses excessive force against a child may be sued by the victim and prosecuted in a court of law and that students have the right to defend themselves against a teacher or school administrator who uses excessive force when administering corporal punishment.

In July of 2009, a press release written by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, highlighted the tremendous racial disparity noted in the administration of corporal punishment in American schools. As a gesture of regard for the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil Rights Act known as Title VI, a report from the Office of Civil Rights in 2006 identified African Americans as comprising 17% of the total enrollment in school in the U.S. but as for the percentage of students receiving corporal punishment in schools, African Americans were at 38%. In 2010, a Democrat from New York, Representative Carolyn McCarthy authored a bill called *Ending Corporal Punishment in Schools Act*, aimed at prohibiting the U.S. Department of Education from providing funds to schools that used corporal punishment as a discipline method. This bill became known as H.R. 5628 and most support for it came from senators and representatives who were democrats

from states that had already abolished corporal punishment as a practice in schools. However, republicans from southern states and Midwestern states that allow corporal punishment were not in favor of this bill and they worked to see to it that it was never made legislation.

States began to adopt bans for corporal punishment in schools but a profile of the type of students who receive corporal punishment continued to emerge. The National Center of the Study of Corporal Punishment and Alternatives in Schools conducted a series of studies that revealed the characteristics of students who would be most likely to receive corporal punishment. The study showed that people living in rural areas, people living in the South, blacks, minorities and the poor were most likely to be recipients of corporal punishment. (“Discipline at School,” 2010) More data also revealed that states still using corporal punishment had the lowest pupil expenditures, highest illiteracy and poverty rates. Federal data revealed that Mississippi was the leading state in the United States that had the highest number of students being disciplined physically.

#### Court Cases That Impact the Application of Corporal Punishment in Schools

Laws in many states allow corporal punishment of students who attend public schools. According to rulings from several court cases, the administration of corporal punishment is contingent upon whether the technique being applied is in a way that can be deemed excessive. As demonstrated in the 1931 ruling of the California State Court in *People v. Curtiss*, principal Annie Curtiss paddled a seven-year old student, Louis Cortese, who had been in a fight. In the court’s report it was stated that, “While laying flat on his stomach, the student, while upon a table, was whipped with a paddle that was roughly three inches wide, 18 to 20 inches long, and close to one-half inches thick”

(p. 782). In the eye witness account, it was stated that several teachers laughed while Louis, his brother, endured 30 or 31 strikes with the paddle. Louis, according to a doctor's testimony, was left with four or five inch marks on his buttocks which were black and blue and red in hue. Curtiss was ultimately found guilty of a misdemeanor in this case and fined \$100. Curtiss filed an appeal citing that the punishment inflicted at her hands was reasonable due to the standard defining "unjustifiable" punishment being unclear and thus unconstitutional. The appellate court made the decision to uphold the original verdict citing that the word "unjustifiable" was defined as punishment of a child "which was unauthorized or inexcusable under the circumstances that *could not be defended*, or vindicated" (p. 779).

In 1902, in a similar case surrounding corporal punishment, an appellate court reversed the decision of a Texas trial court. In *Stephens v. State*, the court ruled to charge a teacher with battery due to the magnitude of the whipping given to the child. (*Stephens v. the State*, 1902). A charge of aggravated assault against the child, Willie Thompson, was handed down to A.J. Stephens, a Valley Springs Public Free School teacher in Llano County (p. 67). Information in the case indicated that 12-year old Thompson had written an insulting note degrading a female student. After obtaining and comparing samples of handwriting and grammatical tendencies, Mr. Stephens concluded that Willie Thompson was the penman of said note. Upon Mr. Stephens' instruction, another student retrieved two green mesquite switches which Mr. Stephens repeatedly struck Willie Thompson on the legs and shoulders with. After breaking the first switch within three or four licks, a total of 27 strokes were inflicted with the second. It was reported that "Willie Thompson was left with blue stripes and bruises from his hips to his ankles" (p. 68). The fact that the

student was void of underwear and embodied only cotton pants was later highlighted. In a statement from Stephens, he maintains that the student “was not struck out of spite, ill will or anger, but for the sole purpose of maintaining discipline” (p. 68). Late the next evening, Willie Thompson’s parents learned of the beating and filed charges against Stephens the very next morning, which was Sunday. A conviction of simple assault carrying a fine of \$5 was imposed upon Mr. Stephens, however, it was declared that the evidence failed to prove the actions of Mr. Stephens exceeded reasonableness. In his testimony, Mr. Stephens indicated his “outrage that one of his pupils going to his school could write such a note about one of the girls there (p. 68). In keeping with the Texas Penal Code Article 593, teachers are given power, at their discretion, without accountability as long as the punishment cannot be proven to be malicious or excessive. In addition, violence is not unquestionably equated to assault or battery in the following situations: lawful moderate discipline of a child by a parent, a ward by his guardian, an apprentice by his master, or a scholar by his teacher. Due to the reversal of the judgment in the *Stephens* case, there appears to be reason to believe there is some reluctance in the enforcement of accountability of teachers in criminal conduct as it refers to reprimanding students, regardless of the severity. The effects of excessive force are recognized by the common law but is limited to the point when the one inflicting the punishment exceeds their authorization of the administration of the punishment. Once that threshold has been crossed, it is then that a child has the right to offer defense (ALI, 1965, p. 273).

### *Ingraham v. Wright*

The 1977, the case of *Ingraham v. Wright*, involves two Florida school district students who sued on the constitutional grounds that the corporal punishment

administered them was “cruel and unusual” and that their right to due process had been overlooked. The allegations of their Eighth Amendment and Fourteenth Amendment rights being violated were supported by the fact that they were not granted a hearing before the beating ensued. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the school district, intimating that as far back as colonial times no hearings had been afforded prior to corporal punishment being applied. Additionally the court ruled that the Eighth Amendment applied solely to prisoners who were incarcerated and bared no relevance to public school students. With the four-to-five ruling, it was advised that in the event the punishment was deemed excessive, a civil suit could be filed by the student or criminal charges brought against the teacher in egregious cases. There have been, following the *Ingraham* case, numerous lawsuits filed by students citing violation of their Fourteenth Amendment rights to due process in reference to excessive corporal punishment, which the appellate courts ruled in students favor. This was due to the finding that the corporal punishment was so excessive that there was a shock to the conscience of the court, thus determining it to be a violation of the constitution.

The United States Supreme Court, in 1977, was faced with two junior-high students claiming that the constitutional rights and the freedom from cruel and unusual punishment of students were being violated by the infliction of corporal punishment. James Ingraham and Roosevelt Andrews filed suit against Mr. Wright, a Dade County principal, in 1971 as well as two assistant principals, Mr. Deliford and Mr. Barnes, alleging their rights to freedom from cruel and unusual punishment had been violated. Ingraham was held by force by the assistant principals and given 20 repeated licks with a wooden paddle after he subsequently ignored the command to assume the paddling

position. Damages were demanded by Ingraham due to his claim of personal injuries, namely, being prescribed sleeping pills, cold compresses, laxatives and rest for up to ten days at home were reported. The majority ruling of the court was that, “there was no application of the Eighth Amendment to children attending public school receiving corporal punishment from teacher and administrators” (*Ingraham v. Wright*, 1976, p. 912). Ultimately no damages were awarded to the students for this or their secondary claim that their rights to due process was violated by not allowing them a due process hearing prior to the discipline of corporal punishment being administered. The fact that corporal punishment had been practiced in the public school system since colonial times without a prior hearing was cited by the Supreme Court as justification for this ruling. A refusal by the U.S. Supreme Court to declare corporal punishment in the schools as violation of a student’s constitutional rights as stated within the Eighth Amendment was sustained by their analysis that matters of this nature could be adeptly handled within the civil and criminal courts. Furthermore, there was no requirement, as it pertains to the U.S. constitution, that afforded students a hearing prior to the administration of corporal punishment. “Paddling of recalcitrant children has long been an accepted method of promoting good behavior and instilling notions of responsibility and decorum into the mischievous heads of school children. We do not here overrule it” (*Ingraham v. Wright*, 1976, p. 921).

A number of courts, following the decision of the Supreme Court in *Ingraham*, have revisited whether excessive corporal punishment of students is an unethical infringement upon the child’s body and categorical violation of due process.



Lewis Wasserman (2011) compiled a comprehensive law review in which he determined every federal circuit court, with one exception, in consideration of whether corporal punishment so serious that it is perceived as grossly unjust, has ruled that it is indeed a violation of the victim's Fourteenth Amendment right of due process. One stand-alone court, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, took an adverse stance and ruled that regardless how excessive the administration, sufficient countermeasures exist in the Texas state law for students paddled excessively while receiving corporal punishment, thus no violation of a constitutional right is made (Wasserman, 2011).

*Garcia v. Miera*

In the case of *Garcia v. Miera* (1987), Teresa Garcia, a student who attended Penasco Elementary School in Penasco, New Mexico, was told by her principal Theresa Miera, to report to her office following an incident where Garcia hit a boy for kicking her. Once there, Garcia refused to consent to a paddling after the command from Mrs. Miera. Instead, Garcia voiced that her father had stated the need for "Mrs. Miera to shape up." (*Garcia*, 1987, p. 650) This declaration led to the first of two beatings, which were described as severe, wherein upon assistance from defendant J. D. Sanchez, Garcia was beaten with a wooden paddle that "was split down the middle in a way that it clapped [and] grabbed when hit with it." Miera hit Garcia five times on the front leg as J. D. Sanchez held her upside down by her ankles (*Garcia*, 1987 p. 652). A two-inch cut and a "welt" was left on her leg that was observed in the restroom by Garcia's teacher, Ruth Dominez, after she "noticed blood coming through [Garcia's] clothes" (*Garcia v. Miera*, 1987). The parents of Garcia voiced their concern to Miera after the incident, asking that

“Theresa not be spanked again unless it is justified and we are called and [Miera] said okay, no problems.” (*Garcia*, 1987, p. 653).

On May 13, 1983, a second incident took place in which Garcia was requested to go to Miera’s office after making accusatory remarks that during a field trip a student’s father and a teacher were kissing and the teacher had transferred love letters to the father by the student. Despite Miera’s agreement to contact Theresa’s parents prior to paddling her again, Miera struck Garcia twice before she refused to take another hit. At this time defendant Edward Leyba, an administrative associate at the school, was called to assist and began pushing Garcia over a chair where she was to bend over and she was hit an additional three times. A struggle ensued resulting in Garcia hitting her back on the desk leading to her submission to three more swats. The school nurse was referenced saying that as a result of the beating Garcia was left with her “buttocks bright red with [a] crease across both.” (*Garcia*, 1987, p. 655) The account from Dr. Albrecht, Garcia’s attending physician, indicated that “the bruises Theresa had on her buttocks were not like any I have seen from routine spankings. I’ve done hundreds of physicals of children who have been spanked....These were more extensive, deeper bruises.” (*Garcia*, 1987, p. 655) Garcia experienced pain and severe bruises lasting over a period of two or three weeks.

During the course of the beating which occurred May 13, Garcia’s requests to call her mother were repeatedly denied by Miera, who responded by saying she knew the law (p. 653). A series of photographs taken on May 13 and May 18 highlighting the austerity of the injuries were provided as evidentiary support in the case. Statements given by Betsy Martinez after examining Garcia disclose that a child injured in this manner in the home setting would have warranted “a called to [the police department’s] Protective

Services.” (*Garcia*, 1987, p. 653) The two beatings were ruled by the Tenth Circuit to be excessive in a way that constituted a violation of the constitution in keeping with the Supreme Court’s implication in *Ingraham* (1977) that corporal punishment inflicted on a level that shocked the conscience of the court was unconstitutional. A majority of the federal courts perceive an implicit nature in reference to excessive corporal punishment in schools in the public sector as outlined in the Tenth Circuit ruling of *Garcia v. Miera* (1987). With the inclusion of four other teachers, principal Theresa Miera received a summary judgment in a suit brought against them for executing two beatings upon nine-year-old Theresa Garcia in 1983. Concluding that “the law determining whether excessive corporal punishment can propagate a legitimate claim to the denial of due process has yet to be ingrained” and that “good faith immunity was the defendants shielding defense from liability” the original judgment was set forth (*Garcia v. Miera*, 1987, p. 652). Upon the appeal filed to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals by Theresa, the federal trial court’s ruling was overturned citing the corporal punishment alleged by Theresa Garcia, if proven, aggregated a violation of true due process due to it’s shock to the conscience of the court.

On February 10, 1982, the initial spanking, as outlined by the Tenth Circuit, stemmed from Garcia hitting another student after being kicked by him. During the course of the whipping, upon Garcia’s refusal to submit and making the declarative statement in reference to Miera, the principal called for the assistance of Mr. Sanchez, another teacher, to restrain her by “holding her by the ankles upside down while Miera paddled her with a wooden paddle” (p. 653). Garcia took five blows with the paddle on her front legs without regard to the paddle being split in the middle, causing her skin to

be pulled and grabbed with each lick. Mrs. Dominez, Garcia's teacher, spotted blood permeating through the child's clothing and, upon further examination, noticed the "welt", later found to be a two-inch cut which would result in a permanent scar. Garcia's parents requested that Miera not spank the child again without their notification and Miera agreed (p. 654). A second beating commenced fifteen months later in May 1983 wherein Garcia allegedly raised an accusation that a teacher, Ms Mestas, was kissing the father of a student on a school field trip. In this instance another teacher was called to again aid in restraining Garcia after she refused to allow Miera to continue to paddle her after the first two lashes were given. Mr. Leyba pushed Garcia to the chair where she was to bend over and receive a remaining three licks. There came a struggle resulting in Garcia hitting her back on Miera's desk and obtaining pain and bruising. Miera, during this time, refused Garcia's plea to call her mother and Garcia concluded with pain and severe bruises on her buttocks lasting several weeks (p.655). It was the declaration of the Garcia's during appeal, that the excessive corporal punishment handed down by the school officials was a direct violation of their daughter's right to due process. The school nurse's account, as reported, was that Garcia's "buttocks were bright red with a crease across both", while a second nurse said that upon her examination of Garcia, the nature of the bruising and injuries received, if at home, would have prompted a "call to the police department's Protective Services" (p. 655). These testimonials accompanied by that of the treating physician insisting that the bruising found on Garcia was "more extensive, deeper bruises" than any found in the hundreds of other physicals he has performed on other children who had been spanked, drove the appellate court to rule that a public school child's substantive due process rights are violated, at some point of excessiveness

and brutality, by beatings administered by government-paid officials” (p. 655). Affidavits of healthcare officials, the bleeding and permanent scarring, pictures of the injuries and the weeks of pain ultimately steered the courts to determine that “if it amounted to a brutal and inhumane abuse of power that causes a shock to the conscience of the court then the application of corporal punishment may have violated the due process of students” (p.658). This declaration compelled the case be brought back to trial due to the appellate court’s conflict with the lower court.

### *Corporal Punishment and Mississippi Law*

A total of 19 states, including Mississippi, consent to the execution of corporal punishment in the public schools by educators. The explanation of corporal punishment, as illustrated in Mississippi Code § 37-11-57 (2), is ”using *reasonable* physical force or physical contact” necessary “for self-protection, to enforce school rules, maintain discipline or to protect oneself or other students from disruptive students”. Two clauses have been appropriated by the Mississippi legislature denoting the acceptance of corporal punishment in school as a form of disciplinary action, despite there not being a specific state law that clearly permits it. It can be implied that any protections afforded by Mississippi school districts and their employees against lawsuits concerning corporal punishment are parallel with the common law, as in most states. While one statute bestows immunity upon employees, the other extends immunity to school districts and their employees against non-excessive corporal punishment litigation. State law in Mississippi gives way to the use of corporal punishment, in that Mississippi Code § 37-11-57(2), explains it to be any use of physical force or contact by teachers, principals or assistant teachers and principals as a necessity in maintaining and enforcing discipline or

for the protection of other students or themselves from disruptive students. Negligence or child abuse are not claims that can be voiced under Mississippi law except in cases of excess, thus granting immunity to those teachers who utilize corporal punishment without it being noted as excessive. Guidelines have been positioned at the local level for those who administer corporal punishment in Mississippi schools; however, they are not required by state law. Freedom of discretion has been awarded individually to each Mississippi district, making a systematic guide for precautionary measures essentially non-existent. Even said, proper documentation, parental consent, the presence of additional school officials during paddling as well as delegation of only select officials to implement the punishment are examples of the guidelines devised to reduce the occurrence of excessiveness during the administration of corporal punishment.

During the 2005-2006 school year, according to data released by the Office for Civil Rights, Mississippi schools imposed corporal punishment upon 7.5% of its students, giving the state the highest percentage rate of corporal punishment in schools in the United States. Mississippi reports 40% of the total number of documented instances, along with Texas, in the U.S. As outlined in Section 11-46-9 (1) (2013) of the Mississippi Tort Claims Act, government entities or employees “shall not be liable for claims” when “acting within the course and scope of their duties in the administration of corporal punishment or taking action to maintain control and discipline among students, as defined in Mississippi Code § 37-11-57, by a teacher, assistant teacher, principal or assistant principal of a public school district in the state.” Such statutory immunity hinges upon certain circumstantial substance and claims are allowed to advance as permitted by law, on the basis that the teachers, assistant teachers, principals or assistant principals “act

maliciously or in bad faith and exhibit a willful disregard of safety or human rights.” In short, the privilege of Mississippi professional employees to impose the use of reasonable corporal punishment can be revoked if in fact the punishment is considered to be malicious in intent, excessive or outside the scope of the duties of the employees who administered it.

### *Support for and Opposition of Corporal Punishment*

The lack of federal policy as it relates to corporal punishment in schools is a direct reflection of the U.S. Supreme Court ruling that grants discretion to the states. Although there is an evident absence of supportive literature on individuals and organizations who are for corporal punishment, Downs (2015) argues a greater likelihood that Christians would administer corporal punishment. Brown and Okeke (2012) wrote that administrators having 0-10 years of experience acquiesce corporal punishment is supported by society and showed to be an effective way to diffuse objectionable behaviors in students, and additionally suppress and modify undesirable conduct (Brown & Okeke, 2012). Corporal punishment was supported in 1985 by an astounding 47% of the US population and 60% of teachers, principals, and school board members. Even with the decline of the practice across the consequent 20 years, 74% of parents admit to spanking their children (“Corporal Punishment in Schools,” 2003).

Advocates of corporal punishment are in agreement that there lies within the threat of spanking and paddling some power of intimidation which acts as a deterrent to misconduct and provides a certain motivation or intense incentive for students to steer toward obedience rather than unruly conduct. Additional notations indicate that even the sight of a wooden paddle on display in a principal’s office evokes an atmosphere of order

for some students (Romano et al., 2013). The swiftness of corporal punishment administered by teachers diminishes the need for lengthy detentions and suspensions, whether in-school or after school, to a matter of seconds. Devoid of discussions reminding students of their misconduct before and after punishment, students who are paddled are not spending days or hours stressing about the punishment (Romano et al., 2013).

According to Oas (2010) there is an appreciation for principals, teachers and school boards who enforce corporal punishment by those parents who choose the same course of action at home. They believe it to be synonymous to their own guidelines and methodologies of enforcing obedience. The persuasion is that the unification of disciplinary tactics declines the feeling of disconnect between the home and school while allowing improvement in behavior. Hancock highlights the low cost associated with administering corporal punishment stating the cost of wooden paddle is basal while spankings are typically furnished during school hours in the principal's office. There is no additional staff required to supervise or oversee suspensions and detentions resulting in corporal punishment being of minimal expense. Payroll remains unaffected due to teachers not being required to spend additional hours grading or reading assignments designated as punishments and administrative paperwork is limited to minimal documentation of when, why, where and by who. The use of corporal punishment, in states that allow it, is governed by individual school districts that use their own discretion for creating rules of administration. Representatives of the school district or a child's principal should be consulted by parents in regards to the review of guidelines for their district (Oas, 2010).



Rollins (2012) asserts that even though there is a trend of decreasing corporal punishment in schools, openly advocating it in an academic paper while earning a degree in education cost one graduate student at a Jesuit college his graduate status. The college withdrew his registration for the following term because of “grave concerns . . . about [his] personal beliefs regarding teaching” (Healy, 2005). Attitudes about favoring corporal punishment are discouraged in current times to the point that a teacher even being accused of practicing it can be subject to dismissal. In one particularly sensitive situation, a teacher allegedly engaged in corporal punishment by pulling a chair out from under a student (Rollins, 2012). A growing sentiment insists that corporal punishment amounts to a form of physical assault and should be banned in both schools and homes (Rollins, 2012)

Hague (2007) proposed that a constitutional challenge to end corporal punishment in schools based on the Ninth Amendment could succeed, since the court case in *Ingraham v. Wright* (1977), using the Eighth Amendment, had failed. The Ninth Amendment reads, “The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people” (Constitution of the United States). Hague argues that the Ninth Amendment could well include parental rights as a right “retained by the people.” He further reasons that if the Court ever rules that parents have this right, they could end corporal punishment in schools, since consequently the state must have a compelling reason to use corporal punishment in schools. However, with the declining use of corporal punishment, there may never have to be another constitutional challenge to end its use in schools.

The Center for Effective Discipline maintains an “independent, non-profit, factual” website devoted to corporal punishment. The Center for Effective Discipline also provides examples of references to corporal punishment abuses that make international headlines. It is also possible to view video clips of actual canings, paddling for demonstration purposes, and mainstream news stories about corporal punishment. The same Center for Effective Discipline sponsors another website as the headquarters for both the National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools (NCACPS) and End Physical Punishment of Children (EPOCH-USA). On the website, the Center actively enlists community leaders and parents to sponsor a “SpankOut Day” on April 30th. (Center for Effective Discipline, 2008). Two prominent names often mentioned in the literature as being vocal opponents of corporal punishment are Irwin A. Hyman (1936-2005) and Murray A. Straus. Hyman, a school psychologist and college of education professor, directed a number of doctoral dissertations and founded the National Center for the Study of Corporal Punishment and Alternatives in 1977, based at Temple University in Philadelphia. Hyman (1996) summarized twenty years of research on corporal punishment with the intention of changing public policy and attitudes and banning corporal punishment in school.

In 2000, the American Academy of Pediatrics’ Committee on School Health recommended that corporal punishment be abolished in all states. Its position paper cited three of Hyman’s publications as the sources for understanding the adverse effects of corporal punishment. Straus, a prolific writer against corporal punishment, has become affiliated with the Family Violence Research Program of the Family Research Laboratory at the University of New Hampshire. Chapters from his book, *Beating the Devil Out of*

*Them* (1994), are frequently reprinted as well as referenced on anti-corporal punishments websites. Straus theorizes that any hitting of children in the home inevitably leads to aggression and depression in children, and initiates domestic abuse, too. Anecdotal support for Straus's theory was provided by a recent double homicide committed by an eight-year-old boy who murdered his father and a family friend after reportedly receiving his 1000th spanking. Allegedly, the youngster kept a tally of the number of spankings he received and vowed to kill his tormenters after his 1000th. Little corroboration was known about the severity or frequency of those spankings, except for a comment by the boy's grandmother, who said, "I knew this would happen. They were too hard on (the boy)" (Wagner, 2008). Three months later, the boy pleaded guilty to negligent homicide of the family friend in juvenile court and avoided standing trial as an adult (Wagner, 2009).

The personal fallout of severe corporal punishment can potentially include depression, aggression, post-traumatic stress, violence, and anxiety according to a position paper from the Journal of Adolescent Health ("Corporal Punishment," 2003). Showing support for this theme, Scott-Greenfield (2003) gathered data from a statewide mailed survey to 500 school districts in Pennsylvania and eventually concluded that 63 schools employing corporal punishment have higher rates of violent incidents involving weapons. And yet, Spencer (1999) examined the differences between ridicule and corporal punishment at home and at school. He found that although exposure to ridicule at school and corporal punishment at home was a combination that had negative psychological outcomes in adulthood, the adults who were just exposed to corporal punishment admitted that it had a positive effect on them as adults.

Corporal punishment in schools has a tremendous record of opposition from several professional organizations. The NASP, also known as the National Association of School Psychologist, continues to retain its current opposition and distain for the use of corporal punishment. Furthermore, the NASP is fighting legally to have sanctions that support the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary method removed. Educating the public on the harmful effects and dangers of corporal punishment is a hallmark commitment of the NASP and other professional organization. Offering educational alternatives and supports for more appropriate means of discipline continues at the forefront of these organizations. (National Association of School Psychologist, 2006)

Misuse and abuse that may leave children physically and emotionally harmed for life is one of the tenets the NASP is attempting to bring to the attention of the public. (p.1) The fact that corporal punishment is not known for producing positive changes in student behavior; precipitates the cycle of child abuse; supports pro-violent attitudes in youth, has a negative impact of a child's educational development, social and psychological well-being is expressed clearly by the NASP (2006).

The following techniques and solutions have been offered by the NASP as alternatives and strategies in educating and supporting student academic achievement (National Association of School Psychologist, 2006):

- Group counseling for individuals and families;
- Provide anger management, problem resolution skills, social skills training, and conflict resolution skills.
- Calm enforcement of class rules, school rules with consistent, and fair methods.

- Include an instructional and reflective component for disciplinary consequences and encourage clear behavioral expectations and guidelines that are meaningful to students.
- Identify academic and behavioral deficiencies as well as strengths so that students can obtain instruction that is appropriate as well as achieving academic success.
- Consider incremental consequences through a systems approach for prevention and intervention to encourage compliance with rules and expectations.

Another organization that has strongly affirmed its opposition for the use of corporal punishment is The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). An announcement in 2009 by NASSP revealed that more than 223,190 public school students were disciplined through corporal punishment (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2009). Despite the abolition of corporal punishment in several countries, and it is no longer utilized in prisons, mental institutions, the military and other entities, several states still employ corporal punishment as an acceptable means of correcting behavior of students in public schools. Several organizations have joined forces to support the end of corporal punishment along with the NASSP such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, The American Medical Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the National Association of Elementary Principals, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, The National Association of State Boards of Education, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Education Association, and the American Bar Association.

Calls for an end to corporal punishment have come from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2010) with claims that “the use of physical force with

the infliction of pain (p.1) as a means to settle interpersonal conflicts by children sends the wrong message.” Educating the public about the harmful effects over the long-term is the main principle that professional organizations are using to urge school districts to abandon the use of corporal punishment and to seek positive alternative measure to correct inappropriate behavior. In 1993, under President Clinton’s administration, over 107 professional organizations signed on open letter that was sent to the White House. Some of the organizations were the National Exchange Club Foundation for the Prevention of Child Abuse, the National Association of Counsel for Children, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Committee for Rights of the Child, and the National Mental Health Association, calling for the use of corporal punishment in school to come to an end. The letter highlighted the fact that most European countries have banned the use of corporal punishment and it urged President Clinton to adopt less violent practices for discipline. Parents and Teachers Against Violence in Education wrote the letter (1993) which quoted B.F. Skinner’s claims that corporal punishment caused embarrassment and harmed children emotionally all the while it degrades the teaching profession. Parents, teachers, spouses or police that administer punitive measures have well-known effects such as: 1) attacks on teachers and vandalism at schools called counterattack, 2) withdrawal into a sullen do nothing state better known as apathy, 3) truancy which is also known by educators as an escape, with serious and violent by products depending on the severity of the punishment.

The ASCA, also known as the American School Counselor Association, is another group that is strongly opposed to corporal punishment for discipline. Improving healthy development and protecting children is believed to be one of the responsibilities

of the ASCA and it tries to work toward implementing such practices. Building a trusting relationship on love is necessary and very difficult to do when authority figures use physical force involving spanking in public schools, striking students with a paddle contradicting positive relationships. ASCA (2012) reports that the employment of corporal punishment in public schools can result in negative outcomes such as “depression and other negative social and mental health issues, cognitive development being impacted negatively, elimination of trust between adults and children, increases in child abuse, stealing, cheating, bullying, assaulting peers, a lack of remorse for wrongdoing, lying and an increase in antisocial behavior” (p. 14).

Chapter II presented the literature on Maslow’s Motivational Theory, the history of corporal punishment, significant court cases associated with corporal punishment, laws governing corporal punishment in the state of Mississippi, and supporting and oppositional views of corporal punishment. Maslow (1943) Motivational Theory is important to this study because it assumes that educational leaders must protect students’ rights to a free appropriate and public education by providing safe and orderly classroom environments. Secondly, the literature presented information that revealed that corporal punishment has biblical roots and can be traced to precolonial England. The literature review also noted how significant rulings in cases such as *Ingraham v. Wright* (1977), *Harris v. State* (1918), *People v. Curtiss*, *Ingraham v. Wright*, and *Garcia v. Miera* (1987) impact the use of corporal punishment in K-12 public schools. Mississippi Laws that govern corporal punishment was also explained. In particular is the Mississippi Code § 37-11-57. Views of proponents and opposers of corporal punishment were also presented. Chapter II, the literature review, ended with a summary.

## CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design and methodology used to conduct the study. The chapter includes a description of the research questions, the participants in the study, the research design, the instrument used, the process for data collection, and the statistical analysis procedures. The principal goal of this research study is to investigate teachers' beliefs about the impact of corporal punishment of student achievement. Specifically, the study investigated teachers' beliefs about the use of corporal punishment as an effective way to motivate high school students to perform at optimal levels in academically.

### Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

RQ<sub>1</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for improving student performance academically?

RQ<sub>2</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions?

RQ<sub>3</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline?

RQ<sub>4</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that the current regulations and procedures used to administer corporal punishment in the district where they are employed are effective?

RQ<sub>5</sub> – Is there a possibility that poor minority children are given corporal punishment more than affluent majority students?



RQ<sub>6</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for motivating students to perform better academically?

In addition, the following Research Hypothesis will be tested:

RH1 – The extent to which teachers report corporal punishment as being effective (for improving performance, decreasing classroom disruptions, for teaching students self-discipline, for motivating students' overall academic performance) will be related to whether the teacher works in a corporal punishment district or a non-corporal punishment district.

### Research Design

A quantitative research design will be used to answer the aforementioned research questions. Quantitative research designs maximize objectivity and are easier to replicate (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research designs are also based on statistical analysis and investigate large samples (Cozby & Bates, 2012). The results are often more easy to generalize to larger populations and researcher interpretations tend to be more objective (Creswell, 2012). The most common types of quantitative research designs are descriptive, correlational, causal comparative, and experimental (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). This study will use a survey design. A survey collects data from selected individuals at a single point in time. This type of design is effective for providing a snapshot of the current behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs in a population (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009). This design also has the advantage of providing data relatively quickly making it possible for the data to be analyzed and conclusions drawn in a more timely manner than with longitudinal studies in which data are collected two or more times.

## Instrumentation

The researcher will work with a team of experts made up of university professors and k-12 teachers and administrators within the state of Mississippi to develop an instrument that will allow participants of the study to answer the research questions that will guide the current quantitative study. First, the team of experts will review the research questions and survey instrument. Second, responses and feedback of the pre-test group will be used to make revisions to the questionnaire that will lead the participants in the study to describe k-12 teachers' beliefs about the following: (1) corporal punishment as an method for improving student performance in mathematics and in reading; (2) the academic performance of students who receive corporal punishment compared to those students who do not receive corporal punishment; (3) corporal punishment as an method for decreasing classroom disruptions; (4) corporal punishment as a method for teaching students self-discipline; (5) corporal punishment as a method for motivating students to improve their overall academic performance; and (6) current regulations and procedures related to the administering of corporal punishment in the district where they are employed are effective.

Data will be collected using a questionnaire, which consists of items whereby teachers are able to provide responses which will be given point values as follows: Strongly Disagree—1 point, Disagree—2 points, No Opinion- 3 points; Agree—4 points, and Strongly Agree—5 points.

## Pilot Study

The researcher developed an initial instrument that sent out to principals in the Simpson County School District as well as Principals in Hattiesburg Public Schools. The panel of experts reviewed the instrument and provided feedback to the researcher which was used to modify the instrument in an effort to ensure that the instrument was appropriate and reliable. The instrument was revised and several items were added as a result of the advice from the expert panel. In addition, the instrument's scale reliability was shown to be appropriate by the panel of experts.

The revised instrument collects demographic data such as gender, highest degree earned, years of experience, type of school worked in, subject areas taught and if corporal punishment is allowed in their school, in the first section. Section two has the items that directly relate to the research questions and research hypothesis. Questions number 2 and 16 relate to research question 1 which ask if corporal punishment is an effective method for improving student performance in mathematics and in reading. Questions 9 and 12 relate to research question 2 which ask about the differences between the academic performance of students who receive corporal punishment and those students who do not receive corporal punishment. Question 3 relates to research question 3 which ask if corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions. Question 4 relates to research question 4 which ask if the use of corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline. Questions 18 and 20 relate to research question 5 which ask if corporal punishment is an effective method for motivating students' overall academic performance. Questions 10 and 13 relate to

research question 6 which ask if the current regulations and procedures used to administer corporal punishment in districts that use it are effective.

### Participants

The participants in this study will include certified teachers in grades K-12 within school districts in the state of Mississippi that allow corporal punishment and those who do not allow corporal punishment such as: Simpson County Schools, Hattiesburg Public Schools, Forest County Schools, Meridian Public Schools, Jackson Public Schools, Clinton Public Schools and Hinds County Schools. Demographic information will be collected within the survey to report years of experience, level of training, and area of certification. Participation in the study will be voluntary. Participant names and identity of the districts where they are employed will be kept confidential to encourage their participation in the study.

### Collection Procedures

The research protocol for this study will be submitted for approval to The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board and to the superintendents of the participating school districts. Data collection will begin after obtaining permission from the superintendent of education in each participating school district and after obtaining approval from the IRB at The University of Southern Mississippi. The researcher will contact the administrators for the schools in the districts that have been approved for participation and request to attend a staff meeting for the purpose of distributing and collecting the questionnaires from the teachers who will participate in the study. The researcher will inform the administrator that the time required to conduct the survey will not exceed 15 minutes. The researcher will go to each school and conduct the

survey during the staff meeting and collect the survey from the teachers before leaving the school.

### Data Analysis

Once data are collected from the teachers, data analysis will begin. The researcher will transfer the responses from the survey instrument into SPSS to analyze the data. Descriptive procedures will be used to analyze the data. Specifically, descriptive statistics will also be used to report the mean and standard deviations for each group. Teachers' beliefs will be quantified using a five-point Likert scale. The results will be presented in table format with a summary explaining the data. First, the data will be grouped by the teachers' gender, educational level and years of experience and frequencies will be ran in order to analyze the general demographics of the participants. Second, SPSS will be used to present descriptive and inferential statistics for each group. Next, research questions will be grouped together and Cronbach Alphas will be run in order to determine if there is a strong relationship between the research questions. Averages will also be ran in SPSS with the results analyzed. Finally, a logistic regression will be ran in SPSS in order to determine if we can predict if a teacher is in a school with corporal punishment or not in a school that allows corporal punishment through the analysis of their responses to the surveys.

### Summary

Chapter III, the Methodology presented the six research questions that will guide the study. Next, the chapter indicated that a quantitative research design will be used during the study. Descriptive statistics will be used to describe what teachers believe about the use of corporal punishment as an effective method to motivate K-12 students to

perform at optimal levels academically. A team of experts will contribute to the development of a survey instrument that will lead participants of the study to answer the research questions that will guide the current quantitative study. A pilot study will be conducted to determine validity and reliability of the instrument. Participants of the study will include certified teachers in grades K-12 within school districts within the state of Mississippi that utilize corporal punishment as a means of disciplining K-12 students. Demographic information will be collected throughout the survey to report years of experience, level of training, and area of certification. Participation in the study will be voluntary. Participant names and identity of the districts where they are employed will be kept confidential to encourage their participation in the study.

## CHAPTER IV – ANALYSIS OF DATA

### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of K-12 teachers in the State of Mississippi regarding the effects of corporal punishment on student achievement. A quantitative research design was used to answer the six research questions that guided the study. Participants of the study included certified K-12 teachers employed within school districts in the state of Mississippi that allowed corporal punishment and those who did not allow corporal punishment. The survey that was used in the study (Appendix A) was distributed to K-12 teachers from 4 elementary schools, three middle schools, and four high schools. Of all of the teacher participants in the study, 111 teachers worked in schools where corporal punishment was not used to discipline students. There were 117 teachers who worked in a school where corporal punishment was used to discipline students. Two of the elementary schools allowed corporal punishment and two did not. Of the middle schools, one allowed corporal punishment and two did not. Of the high schools two allowed corporal punishment and two did not. Two hundred and twenty eight surveys were distributed and 228 returned to the researcher.

Each of the 228 participants completed the survey which consisted of two sections. The first section was designed to answer questions about the participants' demographics. The second part of the survey included 20 statements, to which the participants either responded 1 (strongly disagree); 2 (disagree); 3 (have no opinion); 4 (agree); or 5 (strongly agree). Also, question 21 on the survey asked the participants to rank order which race of students they believed were most likely to receive corporal

punishment. To analyze the data from Section II, a Cronbach Alpha was run using the data from each group of statements (scales) in order if a relationship existed between the participants' answers. In addition, a logistic regression was run in SPSS as a way to determine the relationship each scale had to the research question. The logistic regression addressed research questions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6. The researcher visited each school and conducted the survey during the staff meeting. Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data collected from the surveys.

### *Instrumentation*

The instrument used for the study was created by the researcher, university professors, K-12 teachers, and school administrators within the state of Mississippi. The instrument, which used a five point Likert-scale, consisted of two sections. The first section of the survey was designed to collect demographic data such as gender, highest degree earned, years of experience, type of school worked in, subject areas taught and if corporal punishment was allowed in their school. The second section of the survey had two items that directly relate to the research questions and research hypothesis. Statements 2, 9, 12, 14 and 16 relate to research question 1 and were designed to determine the participants' beliefs about corporal punishment as an effective method for improving student performance academically. Statements 1, 3, 7, and 8 were designed to answer research question 2 which focused on corporal punishment as an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions. Statement 4 was included to answer the third research question and specifically to determine if corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline. Statements 5, 10, 13, and 15 related to research question 4 which ask if the current regulations and procedures used to



administer corporal punishment are effective. Statement 21 related to research question 5 which ask if poor minority children are given corporal punishment more often than affluent majority students. Statements 18 and 20 were included to answer research question 6, which asked if corporal punishment is an effective method for motivating students to perform better academically.

#### Data Analysis for Section I of the Survey

Section 1 of the survey was designed to answer demographic information about each of the participants. Of the 228 K-12 teachers who received the survey, 228 completed Section 1. Results from Section 1 of the survey indicated that of the 228 respondents, 52 (22.8%) were males and 176 (77.2%) females. According to the responses provided from the survey, 127 or 55.7% were Caucasian; 81 or 35.5 % were African American; five or 2.2 were Hispanic and five or 2.2 % were Native American; and ten or 4.4 were multi-racial. Table 1 represents the racial demographic data on the K-12 teachers.

*Statement 2: Characteristics of Participants-Race (n=228)*

| Race:            | Frequencies: | Percentages: |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| African American | 81           | 35.5%        |
| Caucasian        | 127          | 55.7%        |
| Hispanic         | 5            | 2.2 %        |
| Native American  | 5            | 2.2%         |
| Multi-Racial     | 10           | 4.4%         |
| Total:           | 228          | 100%         |

The participants' working experience ranged from 0 years to 30 plus years. Fourteen (6.1%) of the respondents had 0 to 1 year of working experience, 50 (21.9%) had 2 to less than 5 years of working experience, 65 (28.5%) had 5 to 10 years working experience, 72 (31.6%) had 11 to 20 years of experience and 27 (11.8%) had 21 to 30 plus years of experience. Table 2 displays the years of experience for the K-12 teacher participants.

*Table 2*

*Statement 3: Years of Experience as a K-12 Teacher (n=228)*

| Years of Experience:         | Frequencies: | Percentages: |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 0 months to 1 year           | 14           | 6.1%         |
| 2 years to less than 5 years | 50           | 21.9%        |
| 5 years to 10 years          | 65           | 28.5%        |
| 11 to 20 years               | 72           | 31.6%        |
| 21 to 30 years               | 27           | 11.8%        |
| Total:                       | 228          | 100%         |

Education level of the respondents ranged from a Bachelor's degree to a Specialist degree. One hundred thirty-seven (60.1%) respondents held a Bachelor's degree, 89 (39%) held a Master's degree, and 2two (.9%) held a Specialist degree. Table 4 displays the educational levels of the K-12 teacher participants.

*Table 3*

*Statement 4: Educational Characteristics of Participants (n=228)*

| Educational Level: | Frequencies: | Percentages: |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Bachelors          | 113          | 60.1%        |
| Masters            | 89           | 39%          |
| Specialists        | 2            | .9%          |
| Total:             | 228          | 100%         |

Fifty-five (24.1%) respondents taught in an elementary school; 65 (28.5%) taught in a middle school, and 113 (49.6%) taught in a high school. Table 5 displays the numbers and percentages of teachers who taught in elementary, middle, and high schools.

*Table 4*

*Statement 5: Participants Who Teach at Each Level (n=228)*

| School Level: | Frequencies: | Percentages: |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Elementary    | 55           | 24.1%        |
| Middle        | 65           | 28.5%        |
| High          | 113          | 49.6%        |
| Total:        | 228          | 100%         |

The teachers also reported the discipline areas they taught. Fifty-five (24/1%) taught English/Language Arts. Thirty-one (13.6%) taught mathematics. Forty (17.5%) taught science. Sixty-six (28.9%) taught social studies. Thirty-six (15.8%)

taught elective classes. Table 6 displays the numbers and percentages of teachers who taught each subject area. The following part of Chapter IV will present an analysis of the data for each survey question for Section 2.

*Table 5*

*Statement 6: Disciplines Taught by the Participants (n=228)*

| School Level:         | Frequencies: | Percentages: |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| English/Language Arts | 55           | 24.1%        |
| Mathematics           | 31           | 13.6%        |
| Science               | 40           | 17.5%        |
| Social Studies        | 66           | 28.9%        |
| Electives             | 36           | 15.8%        |
| Total:                | 228          | 100%         |

**RQ<sub>1</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for improving student performance academically?**

The first research question was designed to determine K-12 teachers’ beliefs about the use of corporal punishment as an effective method for improving students’ academic performance. Statement numbers 2, 9, 12, 14 and 16 of the survey instrument were designed answer the first research question. Statements 9, 12 and 14 were recoded in SPSS because these statements contained “no or not” in their wording. Table 7 displays the participants’ responses to Statements 2, 9, 12, 14, and 16. Each statement related to the research question regarding students who receive corporal punishment performing better academically. In statement 2, 43.9% of the participants strongly

disagreed that students who receive corporal punishment perform better academically. Statement 9 was recoded because it was negatively stated saying that the use of corporal punishment has no effect on the students' academic achievement. Although it was recoded, 40.4% of the participants strongly disagree with the statement and only 21.5% agreed. Statement 12 had 44.3% of the participants to report that they strongly disagreed that corporal punishment has a negative effect on a student academically and 28.1% strongly agreed with the statement. Statement 14 was also recoded and 44.7% of the participants strongly disagreed with the statement that students who do not receive corporal punishment perform better academically than those students who receive corporal punishment. Statement 16 had only 5.3% of the participants to strongly disagree that academic achievement is highest when corporal punishment is a disciplinary method and 40.8% strongly agreed with the statement.

*Table 6*

|  | 1<br>Strongly<br>Disagree | 2<br>Disagree | 3<br>No<br>Opinion | 4<br>Agree | 5<br>Strongly<br>Agree |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|------------------------|
| <u>Statement 2</u><br>Students who receive corporal punishment perform better academically                                   | 43.9%                     | 13.2%         | 4.4%               | 15.8%      | 22.8%                  |
| <u>Statement 9</u><br>(reverse scored)<br>The use of corporal punishment has no effect on the students' academic achievement | 40.4%                     | 21.9%         | 9.6%               | 6.6%       | 21.5%                  |
| <u>Statement 12</u><br>(reverse scored)<br>Corporal punishment has a negative effect on a student academically               | 44.3%                     | 15.8%         | 4.8%               | 7%         | 28.1%                  |

Table 6 continued

|   |       |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <p><u>Statement 14</u><br/>(reverse scored)<br/>Students who do not receive corporal punishment perform better academically than those students who receive corporal punishment</p> | 44.7% | 26.8% | 22.4% | 5.7%  | .4%   |
| <p><u>Statement 16</u><br/>Academic achievement is highest when corporal punishment is a disciplinary method</p>  | 5.3%  | 19.7% | 9.6%  | 24.6% | 40.8% |

For research Question 1, the Cronbach alpha was .840. A Cronbach alpha above .7 indicates strong internal consistency between the teachers' responses relating to corporal punishment as an effective method for improving student performance academically. The mean for this scale was 2.39 and the standard deviation was 1.23. The overall results indicated that the majority, of the participants "strongly disagreed" that students who receive corporal punishment perform better academically and strongly agreed that the use of corporal punishment has no effect on the students' academic achievement. The also participants also "strongly disagreed" that corporal punishment has a negative effect on a student academically and that students who do not receive corporal punishment perform better academically than those students who receive corporal punishment. Further, the participants "strongly disagreed" that academic achievement is highest when corporal punishment is a disciplinary method.

An analysis of the overall results further indicated that 43.9% of teachers did not believe that students who receive corporal punishment perform better academically and only

22.8% believed that it did. Therefore, for RQ 1, overall, the data indicated that the participants did not support corporal punishment as an effective method for improving student performance academically.

**RQ<sub>2</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions?**

The second research question was designed to determine the extent to which K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom discipline. Statements 1, 3, 7, and 8 from the survey instrument were designed answer the second research question. Statement 8 had to be recoded because it was negatively stated. Statement 1 required the participants to report their beliefs about corporal punishment as an effective method for correcting student behavior. For Statement 1, the majority, 101 or 44.3% of the participants reported that they “strongly disagreed” that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom discipline however, 24.6% strongly agreed. Statement 3 required the participants to report their beliefs about corporal punishment helps to decrease classroom disruptions. 40.4% of the participants reported that they strongly disagreed and 21.5% strongly agreed. Statement 7 required the participants to report their beliefs about should teachers be allowed to use corporal punishment and 57.5% of the participants strong disagreed and 13.2% strongly agreed. Statement 8 asked the participants if corporal punishment is an ineffective form of discipline and 40.8% of the participants strongly disagreed and 28.5% strongly agreed. Statement 8 was also recoded because it was negatively stated.

Table 7

|   | 1<br>Strongly<br>Disagree | 2<br>Disagree | 3<br>No<br>Opinion | 4<br>Agree | 5<br>Strongly<br>Agree |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|------------------------|
| <u>Statement 1</u><br>Corporal punishment is effective in correcting student behavior.              | 44.3%                     | 11.4%         | 5.3%               | 14.5%      | 24.6%                  |
| <u>Statement 3</u><br>Corporal punishment helps to decrease classroom disruptions.                  | 40.4%                     | 21.9%         | 9.6%               | 6.6%       | 21.5%                  |
| <u>Statement 7</u><br>Teachers should be allowed to use corporal punishment.                        | 57.5%                     | 8.8%          | 4.4%               | 16.3%      | 13.2%                  |
| <u>Statement 8</u><br>(reverse scored)<br>Corporal punishment is an ineffective form of discipline. | 40.8%                     | 19.3%         | 7%                 | 4.4%       | 28.5%                  |

For research Question 2, the Cronbach alpha was .885, which indicates a strong relationship between the teachers' responses relating to extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions. Further analysis indicated that 57.7% of the participants believed that corporal punishment is an ineffective way to correct student behavior; 39.1% believed that corporal punishment is effective; and 5% had no opinion. The mean for this scale was 2.58 and the standard deviation was 1.37. The overall results indicated that the majority of the participants strongly disagreed that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom discipline and that corporal punishment helps to decrease classroom disruptions. They also disagreed that teachers should be allowed to use corporal punishment and that corporal punishment is an effective form of discipline.



Therefore, for RQ 2, overall, the data indicated that the participants did not support corporal punishment as an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions.

**RQ<sub>3</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline?**

The third research question was designed to determine the extent to which K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline. Statement 4 from the survey instrument was designed answer the third research question. For Statement 4, the majority, 102 or 44.7% of the participants reported that they “strongly disagreed” that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching student’s self-discipline. There were 24 or 10.5% who “disagreed” that that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching student’s self-discipline. Equal numbers and percentages of the participants had no opinion about the statement. Fifty-two (52) or 22.8% of the participants “agreed” that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline and 52 or 22.8 % strongly agreed with the statement. *Table 8* displays the participants’ responses to Statement 4.

*Statement 4: Corporal punishment teaches students who receive it self-discipline.*

*(n=228)*

| <u>Response:</u>  | <u>Frequencies:</u> | <u>Percentages:</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 102                 | 44.7%               |
| Disagree          | 24                  | 10.5%               |
| No Opinion        | 25                  | 11%                 |
| Agree             | 25                  | 11%                 |
| Strongly Agree    | 52                  | 22.8%               |

Table 8 continued

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|        |     |      |
|--------|-----|------|
| Total: | 228 | 100% |
|--------|-----|------|

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**RQ4 – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that the current regulations and procedures used to administer corporal punishment in the district where they are employed are effective?**

The fourth research question was designed to determine K-12 teachers’ beliefs about the current regulations and procedures used to administer corporal punishment in the district where they are employed. Statement numbers 5, 10, 13, and 15 of the survey instrument were designed answer the fourth research question. Statements 10 and 15 were recoded because they were negatively stated. Statement 5 required the participants to report the degree to which they believed that the use of corporal should have strict regulations. For Statement 5, six (6) or 2.6% of the participants “strongly disagreed” that the use of corporal should have strict regulations and 53.1% strongly agreed. Statement 10 was recoded and 42.5% of the participants strongly disagreed that corporal punishment should not be allowed in public schools and 25.4% strongly agreed. Statement 13 had 47.7% of participants to strongly disagree that corporal punishment should be the first form of discipline used with students and 5.3% strongly agreed. Statement 15 was recoded and 42.5% strongly disagreed that students perform better academically where corporal punishment is not a disciplinary method and 14.9% strongly agreed.

Table 9

|   | 1<br>Strongly<br>Disagree | 2<br>Disagree | 3<br>No<br>Opinion | 4<br>Agree | 5<br>Strongly<br>Disagree |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| <u>Statement 5</u><br>The use of corporal punishment should have strict regulations.  | 2.6%                      | 1.3%          | 5.3%               | 37.7%      | 53.1%                     |
| <u>Statement 10</u><br>(reverse scored)<br>Corporal punishment should not be allowed in public schools.                                 | 42.5%                     | 24.6%         | 4.4%               | 3.1%       | 25.4%                     |
| <u>Statement 13</u><br>Corporal punishment should be the first form of discipline used with students.                                   | 47.4%                     | 20.2%         | 11%                | 16.2%      | 5.3%                      |
| <u>Statement 15</u><br>(reverse scored)<br>Students perform better academically where corporal punishment is not a disciplinary method. | 42.5%                     | 25.4%         | 8.3%               | 8.8%       | 14.9%                     |

For research Question 4, the Cronbach alpha was .608. Therefore, there was not a strong relationship between the teachers' beliefs that the current regulations and procedures used to administer corporal punishment in the district where they are employed are effective. The scale mean was 2.28 and the standard deviation was 1.27. Further analysis indicated that 67.1% of teachers did not believe that corporal punishment should be allowed in schools; 28.5% believed that it should be allowed; and only 4.4% were neutral. The results indicated that the majority of the participants strongly agree that the use of corporal should have strict regulations and strongly disagreed that the use

of corporal punishment has no effect on the students' academic achievement. In addition, they strongly disagreed that corporal punishment has a negative effect on a student academically and that students who do not receive corporal punishment perform better academically than those students who receive corporal punishment. Therefore, for RQ 4, overall, the data indicated that the participants did not support corporal punishment as an option in schools.

**RQ<sub>5</sub> – Is there a possibility that poor minority children are given corporal punishment more often than affluent majority students?**

The purpose of the fifth research question was to examine the respondents' beliefs about whether or not impoverished students from minority groups are given corporal more frequently than their more affluent majority peers. Question 21 was included in the survey to collect quantitative data relating to the respondents' beliefs about which minority student groups receive punishment more often. The data indicated that teachers believe that poor minority students receive corporal punishment more often than their affluent majority students. Blacks students were 40% likely to receive corporal punishment, next were mixed students with 30%, Hispanics were 20% likely to receive corporal punishment, Caucasian students were 8% likely and Asians were 2% likely to receive corporal punishment.

**RQ<sub>6</sub> – To what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for motivating students to perform better academically?**

The purpose of the sixth research question was to determine the extent to which the respondents believed that corporal punishment is an effective strategy for motivating student to perform better academically. Statements 18 and 20 from the

survey were designed to answer the final research question. For Statement 18, the respondents responded with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 to the following statement: Students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. For Statement 18, the majority, 95 or 41.7% of the respondents reported that they “strongly disagreed” that students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. There were 47 or 20.6% who “disagreed” that students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. Nineteen or 8.3% had no opinion about the statement. Forty (40) or 17.5% of the participants “agreed” that students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically and 27 or 11.8 % strongly agreed that students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. Table 16 displays the participants’ responses to Statement 18.

*Table 10*

*Statement 4: Students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. (n=228)*

| <u>Response:</u>  | <u>Frequencies:</u> | <u>Percentages:</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 95                  | 41.7%               |
| Disagree          | 47                  | 20.6%               |
| No Opinion        | 19                  | 8.3%                |
| Agree             | 40                  | 17.5%               |
| Strongly Agree    | 27                  | 11.8%               |
| Total:            | 228                 | 100%                |

For Statement 20, the respondents responded with a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 to the following statement: Students who do receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. For Statement 20, 90 or 39.5% of the respondents reported that they “strongly disagreed” that students who do not receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. The majority, 93 or 40.8% “disagreed” that students who do receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. Twenty-nine or 12.7% had no opinion about the statement. Five (5) or 2.2% of the participants “agreed” that students who do not receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically and 11 or 4.8 % strongly agreed that students who do not receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. Table 17 displays the participants’ responses to Statement 20.

*Table 11*

*Statement 4: Students who do not receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically. (n=228)*

| <u>Response:</u>  | <u>Frequencies:</u> | <u>Percentages:</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Strongly Disagree | 90                  | 39.5%               |
| Disagree          | 93                  | 40.8%               |
| No Opinion        | 29                  | 12.7%               |
| Agree             | 5                   | 2.2%                |
| Strongly Agree    | 11                  | 4.8%                |
| Total:            | 228                 | 100%                |

To answer RQ6, the researcher entered the data for Statements 18 and 20 into SPSS. Question 20 was recorded and afterwards a Cronbach Alpha was run to determine that if there was a correlation between the two statements. The Cronbach alpha was .341, which is below .7, which indicates there is no relationship. Next, the frequency was run. The frequencies indicated that 62.3% of teachers did not believe that corporal punishment was an effective method to motivate students to perform academically and only 29.3% believed that it should be allowed. There were 8.3% of the respondents who were neutral. Therefore, for RQ 6, the data indicated that the majority of the teachers did not support corporal punishment as an effective method for motivating students to perform better academically.

### **Logistic Regression**

In his book *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2009*, Andy Field explains that “logistic regression is multiple regression but with an outcome variable that is a categorical variable and predictor variables that are continuous or categorical. In its simplest form, this means that we can predict which of two categories a person is likely to belong to given certain other information.” (Fields, 2009) In this research study, the logistic regression was set to predict if a teacher worked in a school with corporal punishment or without corporal punishment based on their responses to research questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6.

*Classification Tablea,b*

|                    |         | Predicted |     |  |            |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|-----|--|------------|
|                    |         | CP Used   |     |  | Percentage |
| Observed           |         | 0         | 1   |  | Correct    |
| Step 0             | CP Used | 0         | 111 |  | .0         |
|                    |         | 1         | 117 |  | 100.0      |
| Overall Percentage |         |           |     |  | 51.3       |

- a. Constant is included in the model.
- b. The cut value is .500

In this classification table there is a prediction model that shows 111 teachers were in a school without corporal punishment and 117 were in a school that did use corporal punishment. The overall percentage is 51.3%. In this naive model there is no information except the frequency of teachers in schools that used corporal punishment and those who were in schools that did not use corporal punishment. This offers a baseline of 51.3% of the people surveyed were in a school that used corporal punishment. This gives us the assurance that our predictions should be right at least 51.3% of the time.

*Classification Tablea*

|                    |         | Predicted |     |  |            |
|--------------------|---------|-----------|-----|--|------------|
|                    |         | CP Used   |     |  | Percentage |
| Observed           |         | 0         | 1   |  | Correct    |
| Step 1             | CP Used | 0         | 0   |  | 100.0      |
|                    |         | 1         | 117 |  | 100.0      |
| Overall Percentage |         |           |     |  | 100.0      |

- a. The cut value is .500

The next classification table express that the model predicted with 100% accuracy



the teachers who were in a school with corporal punishment and the teachers who were not in a school with corporal punishment. It is extremely rare for this model to predict with 100% accuracy which suggested that there was an issue in the model which required further investigation. A correlation matrix was run to further investigate the issues that surfaced.

### Correlations

|          |                     | CD_Mean | SPA_Mean | AD_Mean | SD4    | MS18   | CP Used |
|----------|---------------------|---------|----------|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| CD_Mean  | Pearson Correlation | 1       | .877**   | .574**  | .814** | .379** | .410**  |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     |         | .000     | .000    | .000   | .000   | .000    |
|          | N                   | 228     | 228      | 228     | 228    | 228    | 228     |
| SPA_Mean | Pearson Correlation | .877**  | 1        | .784**  | .774** | .453** | .460**  |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000    |          | .000    | .000   | .000   | .000    |
|          | N                   | 228     | 228      | 228     | 228    | 228    | 228     |
| AD_Mean  | Pearson Correlation | .574**  | .784**   | 1       | .511** | .461** | .456**  |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000    | .000     |         | .000   | .000   | .000    |
|          | N                   | 228     | 228      | 228     | 228    | 228    | 228     |
| SD4      | Pearson Correlation | .814**  | .774**   | .511**  | 1      | .377** | .397**  |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000    | .000     | .000    |        | .000   | .000    |
|          | N                   | 228     | 228      | 228     | 228    | 228    | 228     |
| MS18     | Pearson Correlation | .379**  | .453**   | .461**  | .377** | 1      | .944**  |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000    | .000     | .000    | .000   |        | .000    |
|          | N                   | 228     | 228      | 228     | 228    | 228    | 228     |
| CP Used  | Pearson Correlation | .410**  | .460**   | .456**  | .397** | .944** | 1       |
|          | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000    | .000     | .000    | .000   | .000   |         |
|          | N                   | 228     | 228      | 228     | 228    | 228    | 228     |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation matrix revealed that question 18 was a perfect predictor with the exception of 1 person. After reviewing the results, it was determined that one more test was needed as a double check . The cross tabulation table showed that people who answered a 1 or 2 were in a school that did not have corporal punishment with the

exception of one person and people who responded a 4 or 5 to question 18 were in schools that did have corporal punishment. As a result, question 18 was removed from the logistic regression model to examine the new results.

*CP Used \* MS18 Crosstabulation*

| Count   |   | MS18 |    |   |    |    | Total |
|---------|---|------|----|---|----|----|-------|
|         |   | 1    | 2  | 3 | 4  | 5  |       |
| CP Used | 0 | 82   | 28 | 1 | 0  | 0  | 111   |
|         | 1 | 0    | 0  | 8 | 61 | 48 | 117   |
| Total   |   | 82   | 28 | 9 | 61 | 48 | 228   |

Question 18 was removed from the logistic regression and it revealed that the mean (AD) for the administration of corporal punishment or RQ4 was the only significant predictor in the logistic regression model because it was below .05. Furthermore, odds ratio labeled as Exp(B) in the table shows that the AD Mean is 1.947. The interpretation of this number is that the odds of a teacher supporting corporal punishment are 1.947 times greater for a teacher who scored a 4 or 5 as opposed to a teacher who scored a 3, 2, or 1.

*Variables in the Equation*

|                     |          | B      | S.E. | Wald   | df | Sig. | Exp(B) | 95% C.I. for EXP(B) |       |
|---------------------|----------|--------|------|--------|----|------|--------|---------------------|-------|
|                     |          |        |      |        |    |      |        | Lower               | Upper |
| Step 1 <sup>a</sup> | CD_Mean  | .200   | .257 | .607   | 1  | .436 | 1.221  | .738                | 2.020 |
|                     | SPA_Mean | -.023  | .386 | .004   | 1  | .952 | .977   | .459                | 2.082 |
|                     | AD_Mean  | .666   | .221 | 9.080  | 1  | .003 | 1.947  | 1.262               | 3.002 |
|                     | SD4      | .218   | .150 | 2.105  | 1  | .147 | 1.244  | .926                | 1.669 |
|                     | Constant | -2.393 | .386 | 38.437 | 1  | .000 | .091   |                     |       |

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: CD\_Mean, SPA\_Mean, AD\_Mean, SD4.

## CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of K-12 teachers in the State of Mississippi regarding the effects of corporal punishment on student achievement. While some teachers support corporal punishment as an option for discipline, others do not support it. On the other hand, some teachers believe that corporal punishment has a positive effect on a student's academic performance and there are some who believe that it has a negative effect. By examining the various perspectives held by K-12 teachers regarding the impact of corporal punishment on student achievement, school leaders can draw conclusions and create solutions that will impact public education and school discipline in a positive way. This chapter provides a summary of the procedures used, a discussion of the findings, conclusions, recommendations for policy, practice and recommendations for future research.

### *Summary of Procedures*

After obtaining permission from The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board and the local superintendents from the participating districts, contact was made to the principals of each school securing a date and time to come and distribute the surveys to the teachers who volunteered to complete a survey. A total of 228 teachers participated by completing and returning a survey. Part one of the survey instrument (Appendix C) collected descriptive information from the teachers such as gender, race, highest degree earned, years of experience, type of school they worked in, the subject area they taught and if their school allowed corporal punishment as an option for disciplinary infractions. Part two of the survey contained the questions related to their perspectives on corporal punishment and they used a likert scale to rate their perspectives

on each question. The last question asked the teachers to rank the students they believed were more likely to receive corporal punishment. Finally, the data from the surveys was analyzed and used to test the research hypothesis which is, The extent to which teachers believe corporal punishment as being effective for improving performance, decreasing classroom disruptions, for teaching students self-discipline, for motivating students' overall academic performance which is related to whether the teacher works in a school that allows corporal punishment or a school that does not allow corporal punishment.

### Conclusion

Section 1 of the survey was designed to answer demographic information about each of the participants. Of the 228 K-12 teachers who received the survey, 228 completed Section 1. Results from Section 1 of the survey indicated that of the 228 respondents, 52 (22.8%) were males and 176 (77.2%) females. According to the responses provided from the survey, 127 or 55.7% were Caucasian; 81 or 35.5 % were African American; five or 2.2 were Hispanic and five or 2.2 % were Native American; and ten or 4.4 were multi-racial. The participants' working experience ranged from 0 years to 30 plus years. Fourteen (6.1%) of the respondents had 0 to 1 year of working experience, 50 (21.9%) had 2 to less than 5 years of working experience, 65 (28.5%) had 5 to 10 years working experience, 72 (31.6%) had 11 to 20 years of experience and 27 (11.8%) had 21 to 30 plus years of experience. Education level of the respondents ranged from a Bachelor's degree to a Specialist degree. One hundred thirty-seven (60.1%) respondents held a Bachelor's degree, 89 (39%) held a Master's degree, and two (.9%) held a Specialist degree. Fifty-five (24.1%) respondents taught in an elementary school; 65 (28.5%) taught in a middle school, and 113 (49.6%) taught in a high school. The

teachers also reported the discipline areas they taught. Fifty-five (24/1%) taught English/Language Arts. Thirty-one (13.6%) taught mathematics. Forty (17.5%) taught science. Sixty-six (28.9%) taught social studies. Thirty-six (15.8%) taught elective classes.

The first research question of this study was to what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for improving student performance academically. The overall results indicated that the majority, of the participants strongly disagreed that students who receive corporal punishment perform better academically and strongly agreed that the use of corporal punishment has no effect on the students' academic achievement. Participants also strongly disagreed that corporal punishment has a negative effect on a student academically and that students who do not receive corporal punishment perform better academically than those students who receive corporal punishment. Further, the participants strongly disagreed that academic achievement is highest when corporal punishment is a disciplinary method. An analysis of the overall results further indicated that 43.9% of teachers did not believe that students who receive corporal punishment perform better academically and only 22.8% believed that it did. Therefore, for the first research question overall, the data indicated that the majority of the participants did not support corporal punishment as an effective method for improving student performance academically.

The second research question of this study was to what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions. The data analysis indicated that 57.7% of the participants believed that corporal punishment is an ineffective way to correct student behavior; 39.1% believed

that corporal punishment is effective; and 5% had no opinion. The overall results indicated that the majority of the participants strongly disagreed that corporal punishment is an effective method for decreasing classroom discipline and that corporal punishment helps to decrease classroom disruptions. They also disagreed that teachers should be allowed to use corporal punishment and that corporal punishment is an effective form of discipline. Therefore, for the second research question, overall, the data indicated that the participants did not support corporal punishment as an effective method for decreasing classroom disruptions.

The third research question of this study is to what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline. The majority, 102 or 44.7% of the participants reported that they strongly disagreed that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching student's self-discipline. There were 24 or 10.5% who disagreed that that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching student's self-discipline. Equal numbers and percentages of the participants had no opinion about the statement. Fifty-two (52) or 22.8% of the participants agreed that corporal punishment is an effective method for teaching students self-discipline and 52 or 22.8 % strongly agreed with the statement.

The fourth research question of this study is to what extent do K-12 teachers believe that the current regulations and procedures used to administer corporal punishment in the district where they are employed are effective. The data analysis indicated that 67.1% of teachers did not believe that corporal punishment should be allowed in schools; 28.5% believed that it should be allowed; and only 4.4% were neutral. The results indicated that the majority of the participants strongly agree that the

use of corporal should have strict regulations and strongly disagreed that the use of corporal punishment has no effect on the students' academic achievement. In addition, the participants strongly disagreed that corporal punishment has a negative effect on a student academically and that students who do not receive corporal punishment perform better academically than those students who receive corporal punishment. Therefore, the data indicated that for research question four, the participants did not support corporal punishment as an option in schools.

The fifth research question was is there a possibility that poor minority children are given corporal punishment more often than affluent majority students. The data indicated that teachers believe that poor minority students receive corporal punishment more often than their affluent majority students. Blacks students were 40% likely to receive corporal punishment, next were mixed students with 30%, Hispanics were 20% likely to receive corporal punishment, Caucasian students were 8% likely and Asians were 2% likely to receive corporal punishment.

The sixth research question was to what extent do K-12 teachers believe that corporal punishment is an effective method for motivating students to perform better academically. The data indicated that 62.3% of teachers did not believe that corporal punishment was an effective method to motivate students to perform academically and only 29.3% believed that it should be allowed. There were 8.3% of the respondents who were neutral. Therefore, for research question six the data indicated that the majority of the teachers did not support corporal punishment as an effective method for motivating students to perform better academically.

### *Discussion*

The use of corporal punishment to discipline Kindergarten-12<sup>th</sup> grade (K-12) public school students continues to be a controversial subject among educators. While some stakeholders believe that the use of this discipline method is an effective way to correct negative behavior, others believe that this method of punishment is more detrimental. According to Flanagan (2009), proponents of corporal punishment argue that this method of discipline has been used for centuries and is necessary to maintain an educational environment that is conducive to learning. Others believe that corporal punishment minimizes classroom disruptions and that it is a means for removing disruptive influences that cause the loss of instructional time (Flanagan, 2009). Another argument is that corporal punishment provides teachers with a method for controlling students in class by disciplining students who disrupt conducive learning environments (Flanagan, 2009). But while some stakeholders support corporal punishment in public schools, some argue against it. For example, Hanly (2012) wrote that corporal punishment may lead to physical violence, anxiety, aggression, and depression among K-12 students. Hanly (2012) also asserted that the use of corporal punishment could increase lawsuits.

Due to allegations of child abuse and reports of disproportionate application of corporal punishment among students of color, many states have banned this discipline technique (Holden, Brown, Baldwin, & Caderao, 2014). Holden et al. (2014) report that of the 50 states, 31 no longer permit use of corporal punishment in public schools, while 19 state allow teachers and/or school administrators to apply his form of discipline. The states that currently permit the use of corporal punishment are Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky,



Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Wyoming (Goodson & Fossey, 2012; Holden et al., 2014). Thirteen of the 19 states that allow corporal punishment are in the south. Of those 13 states, five are responsible for 75% of all incidents of corporal punishment in the United States (Goodson & Fossey, 2012; Holden et al, 2014). Those states are Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Texas (Goodson & Fossey, 2012; Holden et al, 2014). According to Farrell (2012), the state of Mississippi ranks highest in the incidences of corporal punishment in America. Farrell (2012) specifically reports that in 2008, teachers and administrators in the state of Mississippi applied corporal punishment 38,181 times.

However, the Mississippi Department of Education (2015) leaves the decision of whether or not to use corporal punishment to the discretion of each school district and grants immunity to teachers who administer the punishment unless the act is done in excess. Neither Mississippi Law nor the Mississippi Department of Education (2015) constitutes corporal punishment as child abuse or neglect. Neither do these entities oversee the process of implementation or the administration of the practice. Instead, school districts in the state adopt policies to guide those who administer corporal punishment.

The Mississippi Department of Education (2015) does, however, strongly suggest that each school districts take strict precautionary measures before administering corporal punishment. For instance, the Department recommends that: (1) parental consent should be given in the form written permission to designated school officials who are allowed to paddle; (2) another adult should be present when corporal punishment is administered; and (3) teachers and administrators should document their attempts to use

alternate measures to correct the inappropriate behavior. However, many school districts in Mississippi do not use the aforementioned precautionary measures. Neither do their personnel follow standard procedures; instead, staff members use their own judgment when applying corporal punishment (Damond-Williams, 2012). Ultimately, the Mississippi Department of Education (2015) places the responsibilities of establishing and enforcing rules concerning the use of corporal punishment with each district's superintendent of schools. School districts should consider the perceptions of its teachers and administrators regarding corporal punishment before implementing its use or eliminating the practice. Those districts that have retained the use of corporal punishment should continue to follow the guidelines established by the Mississippi Department of Education to ensure that its use is not connected to revenge or malicious intent, that the instrument used is consistent with the size, and age of the student, and that a witness is present when corporal punishment is administered.

### *Limitations*

The generalizations from this study are limited to the population from which this sample was taken. Schools that allow corporal punishment and schools that do not allow corporal punishment participated in this survey. These schools were primarily in the southern part of Mississippi which restricts the researcher's ability to make generalizations about the findings application to all schools and districts in the state.

Some of the teachers who volunteered to participate in the survey worked at schools that do not allow corporal punishment so their responses may have been impacted by their desire to be socially appropriate. On the other hand, that may also be

true for the teachers who volunteered to participate who work in school that allow corporal punishment. Participants' bias towards corporal punishment may have had a positive or negative impact on the results as well. Their individual bias could stem from a bad experience with corporal punishment as a child or student which may have impacted their responses to the survey. Consequently, this study focused primarily on the perceptions that were reported by the teachers and there was no consideration for any objective data.

### Recommendations for Policy

When examining the results of this study it became apparent to the researcher that the support for corporal punishment in schools as a disciplinary method is decreasing yet there is still some support of its practice. The majority of the teachers who volunteered to participate in this study showed that teachers in schools with corporal punishments and those who are not in schools that allow corporal punishment do not perceive it to have a positive impact on students' academic achievement overall. The participants also believe that the students who are more likely to receive corporal punishment are the minority students less affluent socio economic backgrounds which does not support the idea that corporal punishment is a non-biased approach to student discipline. However, there are still school districts that support and practice corporal punishment and even Greenville Public Schools, according to the Associated Press (2017), is discussing reconsidering their policy against corporal punishment and perhaps reinstating it as a practice in the Greenville Public Schools with parental permission. The Mississippi Department of Education outlines criteria that should be followed by any district allowing corporal punishment: Corporal punishment is allowed for consideration

when more amicable methods such as conferences with parents and behavioral counseling have failed to yield desired results or are deemed ineffective. On the other hand, in extreme behavior cases where corporal punishment appears to be the only appropriate form of discipline to correct inappropriate behavior, it is permitted;

All corporal punishment must be considered moderate and appropriately reasonable in the absence of possible revenge or malicious intent. Those who administer corporal punishment must consider certain factors including the age, size and condition of the student, the type of instrument that will be utilized, with attention to the amount of force and part of the body that will be struck.

Certified school personnel such as the principal, assistant principal, and teachers are permitted to administer corporal punishment; Furthermore, the administration of corporal punishment is expected to be done in the presence of a witness that is a certified employee.

Parents or guardians should be allowed to opt in or out of the use of corporal punishment annually. It is necessary that the parent who prefers not to have their child receive corporal punishment is required to specify this request in writing to the principal of the school. (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).

The results of this study could be used as a catalysis to rid the state of Mississippi of the practice of corporal punishment altogether because the majority of the teachers who participated did not perceive corporal punishment to be effective for improving student academic performance, decreasing classroom disruptions, teaching students self-discipline or motivating students to perform better academically. This data suggest that other disciplinary methods may be more productive with students. The following

practices are currently employed in schools in the state of Mississippi as options for discipline with students:

- In school isolation
- Time out/ redirection of improper behavior
- Parent conferences
- PBIS (positive behavior interventions system)
- Out of school suspension
- Change of placement to the alternative school
- Expulsion

These options have positive and negative results as any method would have but it is up to the individual school district and schools as to what they believe to be the most appropriate method to use when addressing inappropriate behavior. Those districts and schools who choose to continue using corporal punishments should collect data on the demographics of the students receiving corporal punishment and examine their gender, race and socio economic background. Furthermore, those districts should also review the student's academic performance prior to the corporal punishment and their performance after the corporal punishment with the intent to determine if the use of corporal punishment is having a positive impact on the students' academic achievement. Having that data on hand will be beneficial in considering the effects of that method of discipline. It would also be prudent to survey the teachers in that district or school about their perceptions of the use of corporal punishment. There is also research that suggest that corporal punishment may be more effective at the lower grades as oppose to the higher

grades. As a result, district may consider employing corporal punishment at the elementary and middle school levels and not at the high school level.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

As a result of conducting this research, additional ideas emerged that the researcher felt would either continue or add to the findings of this study.

1. Future research on corporal punishment could be done in a qualitative study that focuses on the grades and test scores of the students who have received corporal punishment in school districts in the state of Mississippi to determine if students who receive corporal punishment perform higher on state test or poorer as compared to students who do not receive corporal punishment.
2. Future research could be conducted on the school district ratings for districts that allow corporal punishment and those district who do not allow corporal punishment. An in-depth study could be done with their test results as a way to support the idea that schools that do not allow corporal punishment perform better than district that do allow corporal punishment. This could possible lead to support to eliminate corporal punishment or to expand its use depending on the results of the study.
3. Future research on PBIS could be done in a qualitative study that focuses on the grades and test scores of students who have received PBIS in school districts in the state of Mississippi to determine if the students who experienced the PBIS incentives performed higher on state test or poorer as compared to students who do not receive PBIS. For that matter, you can consider this research with any of the alternatives to corporal punishments.

APPENDIX A – Research Questionnaire

This survey is a part of a research study on corporal punishment. Your participation is completely voluntary. However, by answering the questions on this survey you are granting permission for your answers to be used in the completion and results of this survey. For more information about the study or the survey, you can contact the researcher at [rlsanders2@yahoo.com](mailto:rlsanders2@yahoo.com).

I. Directions: Please place an **X** on the line that best describes you.

**Gender:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

**Race:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Caucasian \_\_\_\_\_ African- American \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic \_\_\_\_\_  
Asian

\_\_\_\_\_ Native American \_\_\_\_\_ Multi-Racial \_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Highest degree earned:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's \_\_\_\_\_ Masters \_\_\_\_\_ Specialist \_\_\_\_\_ Doctorate

**Years of experience:**

\_\_\_\_\_ 0-1yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ 2-5 yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ 5-10yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ 11-20yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ 21-30+ yrs.

**Type of School you work in:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Elementary \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School \_\_\_\_\_ High  
School

**Subject Area/Area of Concentration:**

\_\_\_\_\_ English/Language Arts \_\_\_\_\_ Mathematics \_\_\_\_\_ Science  
\_\_\_\_\_ Social Studies \_\_\_\_\_ Electives

Corporal punishment is allowed in your school as an option for disciplinary infractions.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

- II. **Directions:** Please **circle** the appropriate number that corresponds to how you feel about the following statements with **1** representing that you strongly disagree, **2** representing that you disagree, **3** representing that you have no opinion, **4** representing that you agree, and **5** representing that you strongly agree.

Corporal punishment can be defined as a “painful, intentionally inflicted physical penalty usually by paddling a child, administered by a person in authority for disciplinary purposes.” (Cohen 2014)

1. Corporal punishment is effective in correcting student behavior.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

2. Students who receive corporal punishment perform better academically.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

3. Corporal punishment helps to decrease classroom disruptions.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

4. Corporal punishment teaches students who receive it self-discipline.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

5. The use of corporal should have strict regulations.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

6. Only principals or assistant principals should use corporal punishment.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

7. Teachers should be allowed to use corporal punishment.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree



8. Corporal punishment is an ineffective form of discipline.

Strongly Agree 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly

9. The use of corporal punishment has no effect on the students' academic achievement.

Strongly Agree 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly

10. Corporal punishment should not be allowed in public schools.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

11. Corporal punishment should only be administered by parents.

Strongly Agree 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly

12. Corporal punishment has a negative effect on a student academically.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

13. Corporal punishment should be the first form of discipline used with students.

Strongly Agree 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly

14. Students who do **not** receive corporal punishment perform better academically than those students who receive corporal punishment.

Strongly Agree 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly

15. Students perform better academically where corporal punishment is **not** a disciplinary method.

Strongly Agree 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly

16. Academic achievement is highest when corporal punishment is a disciplinary method.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

17. Corporal punishment prevents high absenteeism of students with behavior problems.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

18. Students who receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

19. Students who do not receive corporal punishment have better attendance rates.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

20. Students who do not receive corporal punishment are motivated to perform academically.

Strongly 

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

 Disagree Strongly Agree

21. In your opinion, how likely are the following groups to receive corporal punishment. **Rank your answer with 1 being highly likely and 5 being highly unlikely.**

\_\_\_\_\_ White students

\_\_\_\_\_ Black students

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian students

\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic students

\_\_\_\_\_ Mixed-race students

## APPENDIX B – IRB Approval Letter



### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001

Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | [www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board](http://www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board)

### **NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the “Adverse Effect Report Form”.
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.

Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 17073101

PROJECT TITLE: K-12 Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Corporal Punishment on Students' Academic Performance

PROJECT TYPE:

Doctoral Dissertation

RESEARCHER(S):

Robert Sanders

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and

Psychology DEPARTMENT: Educational

Research and Administration FUNDING

AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review

Approval PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 09/14/2017 to  
09/13/2018

**Lawrence A Hosman, Ph.D.**

**Institutional Review Board**

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