

# Corporal Punishment and Fa'a-Samoa: Road to Success

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## Abstract

*Samoa's corporal punishment, also known as hitting or spanking is perceived by many as unacceptable although it has been the key to educational success of many Samoans (Pereira, 2010 & Lipine, 2010). This new translation, although it is modern, it created a polarizing Samoa's society given its links to politics, humanitarian, philosophical religion influences (Gershoff, 2002; Philip Williamson, 2000). Many Samoans perceive Samoa's corporal punishment as unacceptable while the others perceive it as worthwhile and justified given the positive result they had (from it) in the past. Debates (amongst Samoans) are fuming over this issue and yet no resolution is reached. Approaches such as spanking, being yield at, scolding, being grounded, being isolated, removal of right, ear/hair pulling (etc.) are recognized (universally) as corporal punishment and unacceptable for discipline, but many Samoans believe that; Samoa's corporal punishment has moral codes and protocol, philosophy to abide by in order for it to be accepted as moral conduct, meaning it is an approach requiring steps and rules to follow.*

*However, Samoans have diverse view of corporal punishment—as stated above, they (Samoans) only recognize that (the form of corporal punishment) which is applicable to them. While the approach faces challenges Samoans have shown resilience sustaining its moral and spiritual integrity. This study reveals that variation (of Samoans views of corporal punishment) is determined by the changed circumstance of Samoans. It argues that Samoa's corporal punishment will always play an important role to success development of Samoans as long as it remains a significant force to success of Samoans. The approach has components (psychological, philosophical and spiritual) which are important aspects of faasamoa – thus, its acceptance is based upon these components, the feelings that only the Samoans understand. What's indicated is that Samoan corporal punishment is fully understood when it is applicable to Samoans. This research paper requires the students, parents and matai's views as they are directly involved in disciplining Samoan students. Data was collected through interviews. Thirty-six respondents from the various parts of New Zealand and 20 from Samoa were nominated for the interviews. There were groups and individual interviews. All the views were analyzed using the thematic analysis procedure.*

## Introduction

Corporal punishment is illegal but to many Samoans it is an important tool to develop good/proper behavior and moral thinking (Edwards, 2004; Fairbairn 1998; Lipine, 2010; Mageo 1991; Odden, 2008; Pereira, 2004 & Schoeffel and Meleisea 1996). Research (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Skinner, 1965; Fairbairn, 2002) however,

indicate that change occurs as time evolves, meaning that we alter our traditions to adapt. In the context of this study Samoans have carefully considered its traditional corporal punishment to fit in modern society. Evidences show that corporal punishment has been manifested through various forms to align with ecological, economic, cultural, political, educational and religious expectations of society (Creanza, Kolodny, Marcus, 2017). In this study, various forms of Samoa's corporal punishment produced the result benefiting many Samoans. These people adapt well to the approach they fully understand. Apparently, not one approach would benefit everyone, which raises the question; Why Samoans are divided in views regarding corporal punishment? This paper assumes that (through Samoa's corporal punishment) positive result will indeed occur for Samoans because they fully understand it. Misapplication of the approach however, can provide negative results when we do not understand what we are dealing with.

Meanwhile, corporal punishment (in faasamoa) has requirements (protocol & guidelines) to abide by. Those requirements include the following of specific protocols, rules, policy, mannerism, logic and reasoning – all those encompass love and respect, which are the key to acceptance. Negative results have also occurred as a result of misuse of corporal punishment (e.g. Observer 15 July, 2021) – such as lack of control, bad temperament, and bad intention. Successful application of corporal punishment therefore requires understanding and acceptance, as illustrated in Bronfenbrenner (1994), Bandura (1996) and Kant's (1788) concepts of perception and human development.

This research paper argues that Samoa's corporal punishment is very important to successful educational development of Samoans only if it is appropriately applied. Four areas (politics, education, religion, and culture) will be investigated to verify this claim.

### **Literature Review**

Corporal punishment has been an acceptable approach throughout the 18th and the 19th centuries (Frazier, 2019; Lambert, 2021). But, various influences such as politics, socio-cultural, religion and many more saw the evolution of the approach. In some areas, Lambert (2021) pointed out that lighter punishments replace heavy punishments due to influence of the United Nation. There is no doubt that transformation of Samoa's corporal punishment is also determined stated by the same force but what is unique is that it still upholds its traditional values. This

literature review discusses the reason why many Samoans uphold corporal punishment. This study assumes that Samoa's corporal punishment has physical and spiritual significance to the mindset of Samoans.

Corporal punishment is defined as a form of physical discipline that inflicts pain causing remorse and repentance (Frazier, 2019). There are other forms of corporal punishment (e.g. birching, flogging, branding, mutilation, blinding, caning, stocking, pillory and many more) used by judicial systems, home and even schools throughout Europe, for disciplinary purpose (Frazier, 2019; Lambert 2018 & Skinner, 1948). Those approaches cause not only physical pain but also mental distress enabling a withdrawal reaction. As stated above, more lenient forms of physical punishment including yielding, telling-off, isolation, refusing pupils right occurred in the early 20th century (Lambert, 2021). Those approaches although they do not encroach physical-pain they cause emotional distress causing mental stress, withdrawal reaction, feeling isolated and low self-esteem (Hecker, Hermenau, Salmen, Teicher and Elbert, 2016; Skinner, 1948).

Philosophically corporal punishment intends to punish and discipline as illustrated by Erick Erickson (2023). These two forces although they are conjoined, they play different but significant roles. Punishment which is stimuli (external) arouses a stimulus or reaction (Pandura, 1969). For Samoa's corporal punishment, Samoans must understand that we are punished for unacceptable behavior/action and the expectation is that we must refrain from repeating the same mistakes. The Bible encourages an eye-for-an-eye approach in the Old Testament, such an approach reminds of it feels to hurt others. This approach substantiates the means for morality and fair-play. It is also understood that through such an experience people can sense what is right (Lipine, 2010).

### **Corporal Punishment in the Samoan context**

In faasamoa, corporal punishment (before the church) was more severe and life threatening, but, that all changed when Samoans accepted and converted to Christianity Meleisea (1987) Many old traditional punishments were abandoned to be replaced by more lenient punishments such as sasa, fue or fasi (whipping or spanking) which Samoans regarded them as parallels to the Bible teaching. The Bible points out that spanking/hitting is justified only if it is done through love (Proverbs 13:24). That is, if you love your children punish them when they make mistake. That Biblical ideology encouraged many Samoans to believe that spanking

their children is God's will( Agafili, 2014).Many Samoans therefore perceive Punishment as justified and God given.

### **Political Influence**

Politics is one of the forces that helped redefine corporal punishment in the Samoan context. Meanwhile, corporal punishment has always been part of life, it has been a standardized tradition throughout the 18th and 19th century during the Roman Empire (Frazier, 2019). The essence of the approach was to make the offender feel what it is like to be a victim (Geoffery, 2023). In faasamoa, corporal punishment is a recognized custom (in families, church, villages and schools) although it was not legislated (Turner, 1983). But reformation of this approach occurred as human rights became part of Samoa's law. Individuality became apparent in Samoa as reflected upon the de-centralization of many Samoan traditions which included corporal punishment or sasa. Decision-making became the responsibility of parents only, contrary to the traditional setting where control is central to the ruling of chiefs or matai (Forsyth, 2004). The law on the other also forbids corporal punishment, although that power was partially neutralized by church ideology, which is the focal point of Samoans' mentality. That is, "punishment must reflect the love of God". Human rights (influenced by religion) hence became an influential force shaping this new form of sasa/corporal punishment. This new form of corporal punishment/sasa has protocols and policies such as; only the right person/s must consent to sasa; must be given only within the right reason; must be consistent and fair, carried out by parents only and sasa must convey love (Lipine, 2010). The overarching principle of sasa is love which both the discipliner and victim must sense.

The villages however brand different forms of corporal punishment as a result of ineffectiveness of the law. As noted in the Samoan Observer, June 2023 some villages have reached out to traditional methods due to many Samoans taking the law for granted. Similar to Tamihere's proposal to the New Zealand government in the 1980's to reintroduce the Maori traditional punishments where the natives are more alerted to, than the white man's law (New Zealand Herald, 1987). So, when Samoans were punished, they are expected to understand the reasons and the causes for the punishment. Although there have been transformations to the approach however, the law has manifested on faasamoa (as reflected in Samoa Prime Minister's speech in parliament, 2023) as the core for control and peace

(OCIS, 2012). What that means is that corporal punishment that serves the values (love & respect) of faasamoa is legitimate and acceptable (Lipine, 2010). The other countries including the United States of America, the Middle Eastern countries, Asians and African countries also perceived cultural values as the key to proper behaviour.

Further change to corporal punishment in Samoa occurred as the state has established a law banning physical punishment in its schools. Apparently, the new law appeared too lenient which led to freedom of expression, fears competitions, violence and failure amongst many Samoa's

secondary schools. Transformation of corporal punishment occurred whereby some traditions were assimilated. to modern Samoans many local schools in Samoa used *dotegia* (scold), and light spanking to discipline students. Still, the teachers pointed out that some students have taken the modern corporal punishment for granted and many have ended up failing school examination as a result. As indicated by Agafili (2014) there is a philosophical impact of traditional Samoans corporal punishment that no one understands but Samoans. He believes that many Samoans will benefit via the Samoan corporal punishment if it becomes part of school discipline. Those students who failed did not fully understand the approach meaning that the parents have lapsed in their roles.

Meanwhile, the United Nation Human Right policy [which encourages non-physical disciplinary approach became the backbone of modern education policies, deriving disappearance of the corporal punishment (Lanbert, 2021) in many countries but, in Samoa such a change became problematic to not only Samoans but many other Pacific Island nations – As noted above, ill-discipline problems were increasing not only in schools but also at home. Fortunately, Samoa's cultural setting (including *faamatai*, social control and Samoa's traditional disciplinary approaches) as recognized in the family, church and village communities were well catered for (Tuiatua, 2006). These units are well established and equipped to facilitate disciplinary needs. Such a model was successfully implemented by the Germans during the German administration (Victoria University of Wellington, 1879). The *matai* system worked hand in hand with the police which eased the workload and stress for both. Even the parliament of Samoa (through the ministers) they worked cooperatively with the village councils and parents to utilize affective use of traditional means for control. As stated above, even more recently, the former Prime Minister of Samoa (himself) was circumstantial about non-physical disciplinary approach hinting the reintroduction of the traditional

Samoa corporal punishment in the schools, although he is aware of the UN human right policies (Samoa Observer, 2020). Following that the government (Tuilaepa's) allowed spanking in school only to discipline and not injuring the students. Being closely associated with China, it is assumed that reactivation of the traditional Samoan sasa would lead to success, as perceived by the Chinese (Chu Zaohui, 2019).

Apparently, corporal punishment is illegal but many Samoans disputed that (Lipine 2010) as they have reaped positive outcomes from it (Lipine, 2010). This is the resilience of Samoans to revitalize this tradition which has reflected in a transformed sasa, a similar attitude reflecting their defiance of foreign rule during the New Zealand administration of Samoa (Meleisea, 1986; Tupuola, 2004; Tanuvasa, 2002). Having said all this, those approaches are only applicable given that they are part of the culture or customs. As I have stated earlier in this discussion Samoans have diverse perception of faasamoa, and their beliefs of corporal punishment will provide insight of how to discipline them.

### **Corporal punishment and social change**

Henri Chompers, David, and McLellan (2023) in reviewing Carl Marx theory of social change they postulated that cultural traditions will always change as we continue to interact with other cultural forces. They summed up saying that interaction with environment provides an understanding of who we are as individual/group, and in reflection to that is the way corporal punishment develops. As indicated above corporal punishment (through the years) went through social change not only within Samoa's community but other cultures. Having taught in China for over twelve months (2001 – 2003) I found that (in many country schools) teachers are encouraged to use corporal punishment to discipline their children (Tavita, 2003). The students showed sympathy to how they have been treated believing that the teacher's know better what is right for them. Whereas in the rich schools the teachers do not physically spank their students, but they often give them additional homework as punishment. The Middle Eastern countries also recognize physical punishment (Skin, 2023), believing that it is God's will – all cultural traditions in the Middle Eastern countries are aligned to their religion teachings which means that everyone is expected to understand them. For example, Islam's and even Christian's doctrines encourage corporal punishment. In many European countries change have been made to corporal punishment (Skin,

2023) but the principle however, has always been maintained. Such as those who immigrate to live in the other countries improvise by adopting their host countries cultural ideas to enhance their own cultures. For example, in New Zealand, many Middle Eastern immigrants have adopted the child-centered approach (as theorized by Piaget (1954) which they perceive as mentally stressed and worthwhile for their children.

With many Samoans, their views of corporal punishment are different, and their views are genuine and appropriate for their development. Cherry (2022) theorized that situation stating real meaning is that which is proposed by the actors (and not the observers). His theory emphasizes that the world has many different forces which our perceptions are influenced by, and only “We’ understand how to cope with those forces. For Samoans, Lipine (2010) found that many Samoans apply the forms of corporal punishment suitable to them, believing that they are important to their children’s upbringing. Samoans all believe in the Samoan proverb which says that; “e aoao le tama e tusa ai ma ona ala aua a matua e le toe te’a ese ai lava” or “nurture the child according to his/her ways (faasamoa) for he/she will never forbid those ways in the future”, this and many more, the type of social influence Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli’s (1996) conceptualized in their concepts of perception. The underpinning phenomenon from those findings is that understanding is the basis of practice, for educational context, corporal punishment is relevant only when students are familiar with it, which means that it needs to be part of the student’s social upbringing first to be applicable.

In New Zealand many Samoans transform corporal punishment to suit the New Zealand condition (Lipine, 2023 & Fairbairn, 2002). They sustained the meaning and value of this approach through punishment of emotion rather than literally hurting the skin. A Samoan proverbial expression that; o tama a tagata e fafaga I upu ma tala a’o tama a manu e fafaga I fuga o laau – human is reared via words while bird is reared with flowers” – this expression appeals to many Samoans as they are so proud of who they are. Samoa’s counseling or otegia becomes the preferences for many Samoans believing that it suits their circumstances.

While corporal punishment is perceived as a significant force to achieve success, it has also been used to achieve unacceptable goals. For example, social pressure (i.e. financial, political, personal, religion) has driven many Samoans to use corporal punishment to the extreme which has unacceptable consequence. Such as in some schools in Papua New Guinea, many students are spanked to torture

and enslaved (Whiting, 2019). Whereas in Samoa, many young Samoans have become victims of physical abuse due to family members' cruelty (Observer, 2023), although traditionally, corporal punishment has protocols to abide by (Agafili, 2014). What's indicated in this section is that Samoa's corporal punishment can be outlawed once people step outside the protocols to achieve different goals. Such as some Samoans are carried away and not following the real value of corporal punishment, due to anger, enviousness, hatred or vengeance.

### **Corporal Punishment and Faasamoa**

As stated above, the traditional Samoa's corporal punishment involves hitting, strapping, telling-off, ear/hair pulling, pinching, scolding, counseling, isolation, disowning (Agafili, 2014; Pereire, 2010). The approach however, evolves through time. For example, otegia or telling off replaces hitting. This approach involves harsh and aggressive tone/manner aims to hurt the subject's emotion (Agafili, 2014). Samoans believe such an approach is more effective than literal hitting" (Agafili, 2014) as it has an everlasting effect on Samoans. This approach also has guidelines as it can also produce severe consequence if it is not done correctly. It can produce emotional scars that can be damaging.

Some Samoans however, prefer spanking as it has always been part of their upbringing. These people accept corporal punishment because it is not only traditional to them but it has provided positive result for them noted Pandura Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, Pastorelli (1996) concept of learning. In the rural areas many Samoans still apply the traditional Samoan corporal punishment (Lipine, 2010) as they perceive it as an act of love (noted Frazier's, 2019 & Campbell, 2016 & Greenspan (1975). Meanwhile mistakes can be made (especially when people breached the protocols of corporal punishment, as stated above, hence, an awareness that there is a fine line not to overstep (noted Greenspan, 1975) discussion of trust and acceptance.

An important factor for understanding is that Samoa's corporal punishment has been viewed as an acceptable approach to many Samoans because they understand it. A process called mediation in faasamoa entails discussion between parents and their children enabling understanding of one another as well as rules and Samoan customs/expectation. In my experience as a Samoan (having lived and brought up in Samoa during my childhood/youthful years) I found that "Mediation is a significant part of Samoa's corporal punishment, it makes me accept being



punished. Traditionally, Samoans are taught to accept Samoa's corporal punishment believing that it is the key to success and God's will (Agafili, 2014). Research (Lipine, 2010) found that mediation is often the responsibility of mother, grandparents and the elderly. Those people are more influential to many young Samoans noted Pandura's (Kendra, 2022) neuro-system's concept. In Lipine's (2010) research, he found that all participants support Samoa's corporal punishment, believing it is a symbol of love and care for them, which is similar to many Maori people's support for the Maori disciplinary traditions in New Zealand (Fred, Jeanne Biddulph and Chris Biddulph (2003). A similar approach can be attributed to educational success of many Aboriginals of Australia - A renovation of Torre Strait Island Education Strategy allowing the Aboriginals to revisit their educational traditions has led to successful achievement of many of their children (Department of Education South Australia, 2018). It is believed that through mediation students fully appreciated their corporal punishment traditions. An important consideration from this is that corporal punishment needs nurturing for understanding and awareness. Jesus himself demonstrated a form of corporal punishment which is different from that of the Old Testament which the Islamic believes in - He used verbal and body languages to discipline the people. He told them off and damaged their goods which hurt them emotionally. His actions showcased transformations of sasa in the new era (New Testament). Some (like the Muslims) include the old traditions in their cultures to abide by and their siblings also accept those changes. Even some Samoans, they still apply the traditional Samoa's corporal punishment and their children accept them. As I have stated above, some would rather follow their traditional sasa because it is relevant to their development and identities.

### **Methodology**

A qualitative approach with an emphasis on phenomenology is crucial for this study. An ontological approach to gather information was implemented, as this is more genuine (Kant, 1788) particularly in research such as this. Hence, a wide range of views from the participants were collected which added more value to the existing literature (Wood, 2015). Sixty participants including 58 students, a retired senior police inspector and a well know matai and short story writer in Samoan were interviewed. These participants provided their own versions of how Samoa's corporal punishment contributed to their success in education. Their

views are testimonial to how this approach survives through generations which is important to the understanding of future educational development for Samoa and the other Pasifika students.

Thematic analysis procedure was required for the analysis of data as this is more appropriate for understanding the data of research of this nature (Barun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004), especially in research concerning a large number of participants. The data were coded and then categorized into patterns and themes, which made them easier to understand.

Two themes identified; First, the passion to be successful. Second, the capacity to deal with inconsistencies. Each of these themes rests upon a strong cultural orientation.

### **Theory**

A theoretical perspective describing continuity and evolution of thoughts and ideas is a significant part of this study as it provides an understanding of the claim. Skinner's (1965) theory of logic, perception and behavior forms the basis of understanding of continuity of Samoa's corporal punishment, let alone transitions that eventuate transformation of this approach. Famously known for his punishment and reward concept since the 17th to the 20th centuries, at the same time heavily criticized due to changed circumstances particularly the human right policy by the UN, Skinner claims that the root of logical thinking, reasoning and behaviors is culture. He supports cultural evolution but claims that we adjust to suit change, which in the context of this study, we make change or alter our traditions to suit modern change. His concept of "punishment" and "reward" is subject to interpretations given his support to evolution. The underpinning phenomenon for this study is that punishment redirects the minds to do the right things (Skinner, 1938 & Bandura, A. Barbaranelli, Caprara, Pastorelli, 1996).

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The analysis of data unveils important information entailing the rationality of Samoa's corporal punishment (in the form of sasa). Grounded on political, cultural, educational and religious influences Samoa's corporal punishment is cemented in the mindset of many Samoans.

### **Political Influence**

Corporal punishment although it was central to various Samoa's political altercations, it is still recognized as an important approach for development of Samoans (Lipine, 2022). Some Samoans do not accept corporal punishment, but others however, are more reserved and conservative given the positive educational result they received in the past. The difference between those Samoans can be linked to how they adapt to their political environments (noted Bandura, A. Barbaranelli, Caprara, Pastorelli's, 1996) theory of perception. Such as, some still used the traditional Samoans methods while the others weaved their way around using the alternatives (new methods). Both methods are reflections of how Samoans adapt to the circumstances. An important part of this transition is acceptance – as indicate earlier in this discussion, Samoa's corporal punishment requires mediation and practice. Those processes require deep understanding, precision, fairness, honesty patience and tolerance. Modern political circumstances can easily mislead Samoans but these people value their culture hence, politics of recognizes faasamoa with regard to ruling and management. Varying circumstances (law, culture & religion) of Samoans are important aspects to be considered as they are determinants of those people's perception and desires. Consideration of the old and modern traditions is of high value as this would create a harmonizing Samoans. Such as the Samoan government's corporative ruling and discipline with the village counsels/churches. The fact that most political leaders are village leaders themselves - hence the possibility of Samoa's corporal punishment flourishing in the future for Samoans is very high. Many of those politicians are more lenient toward faasamoa, and as I have indicated above, those people would do whatever it takes to reserve faasamoa and more so, secure their political stances. One can argue that it is through such an understanding enabling the other forms of corporal punishment in the Samoan setting. Samoans also understand that there is a fine line between physical and mental damage and they makesure they do not overstep it.

### **Cultural Influence**

One of the main reasons for continuity of corporal punishment today is the resilience of Samoans in maintaining faasamoa. In the Samoan setting, there is an expectation that all Samoans must abide by the values of faasamoa (Agafili, 2014) to be recognized as Samoans. Various Samoan traditional corporal punishments (as

mentioned above) are still recognized as they impinge deep meaning to Samoans. More change to faasamoa have occurred as a result of influence of Human right – control thence became the responsibility of parents, meaning that only parents have the right to spank or hit their children. The respondents stated that they accept being punished by their parents because they trust them. They added that no one loves them more than their parents – that is, they sense love the same time their parents hit/spank them. One may ask how can one senses love through punishment; One respondent stated that his parents often give him counselling when he makes mistakes, and he would be spanked if he repeats the same mistakes. He added that his parents always want him to do the right thing, but being stubborn forced him to disobey, and so he expects punishment in the end. An important pointer from this is that the Samoan culture has evolved which largely impacts on transformation of corporal punishment. The real meaning of Samoa's corporal punishment is love that imparts Samoa's' consciousness and resilience as reflected in the continuity of the Samoan corporal punishment today and the future. Fearful of the consequence of their wrongdoing is a natural instinct (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996) but Samoans look beyond that for they are aware of the good result in the end.

The findings indicate that environment evolves and people must adapt to be successful. In this study, the students and their families adapted via assimilation, accommodation and adoption of modern ideas to enhance their Samoan values. Some Samoans were unsuccessful however, due to lack of understanding of how to adapt (noted Healy, Jane, 1994 analysis of adaptation). Thorough understanding of cultural values and circumstance involved leads to successful transitions' (Gassmann, Enkel, Chesbrough, 2010, the key to continuity of Samoa's corporal punishment. Success therefore is achieved and fully appreciated when are disciplined.

The findings support that interaction with environment influences perception (Pandura,.1996). Revolution of Samoa's corporal punishment was determined the will of Samoans to preserve their values. The transition had been successful (noted Lipine's, 2010 research) but only to those who fully understand faasamoa and the changing circumstances they were involved in. That is, they took courtesy to protocols and Samoan values. What this mean is that we must be fully alert of situations and make amends accordingly to adapt (Reeves, 2006).

## **Educational Influence**

The problem is that, education theorists (e.g. Bruner, 1991; Fairbairn, 2002; Piaget, 1958) believe that all disciplinary approaches requiring physical contact are irrelevant for teaching and learning as they fail to provide positive but negative outcomes, the concept which is encouraged for all teachers (Lipine, 2010). In theory such an approach makes sense by practically Samoa's sasa /corporal punishment being proactive throughout the village and church communities (Agafili, 2014). During my observation of the schools in Apia and New Zealand, I noted various forms of corporal punishment being applied which attracted various students' reactions - some students accepted while other others objected. Those who supported corporal punishment or sasa were advised by their parents that their teachers are their second parents and that they have the right to discipline them through sasa. Many of those students had good passes in examinations, whereas the others who objected their teachers failed. Apparently, those who passed examinations have the passion to succeed while the others didn't. Accordingly, their passion to succeed aroused as a result of understanding their parents' advice. The others however, felt that it is their right to decide what to accept and what not to accept. The parents also allowed those students to decide for themselves which impacted negatively on their learning attitudes and other students. In school those students lack cooperative learning skills as (Piaget, 1954) indicated an important part of successful learning. They lack understanding of Samoan values which could have been a cause for encouragement and determination. Apparently, all those students were born in Samoa, exposed to faasamoa and corporal punishment; unfortunately, they decided to use a different learning style they never understand in their schools. Teachers on the other did not fully comprehend the student's situation and hence they could not resolve the problems. Some teachers apply the traditional spanking irrelevantly – they assumed that Samoan would understand it, not knowing that students are of various background and upbringing. It could be argued that the Ministry of Education of Samoa (MESC) was quick to implement a new approach (which lacked cohesion with faasamoa) that many Samoans are unfamiliar with. In realizing this set-back the National University of Samoa and MESC have worked cooperatively renovating theoretical and practical framework enabling positive outcomes (Pausisi, 2020). A few teachers stated that the change in approach enabled them to successfully relate to their students – the students respect and pay attention to

their teachers because they are familiar with their teaching and disciplinary approaches. They added that they accept corporal punishment because their teachers have started to work cooperative with the parents.

Samoa's corporal punishment becomes a requirement for many Samoans. Ninety (90%) of NUS participants for this study indicated that they prefer the alternatives (literature review) to corporal punishment (e.g. otegia, being scolded, right restriction etc.) believing that those alternatives impose even greater success result. They also pointed out that otegia and scolding (although they do not hurt the skin) they provide emotional pain and stress (Khosravani, Glani, 2007), the approach many Samoans are aware of. Those approaches however, have made a big difference in terms of result in school examination and study behaviours of the students in their schools.

The findings support that corporal punishment is undeniably an approach that will always play a significant role to success of Samoan students. Given the complex situation of modern Samoa, Samoans have learnt to adjust, which they have done through transformation of the traditional corporal punishment (refer to influence of faasamoa in the literature review). Those modern forms are recognized as important replacements of the former which is different from what other people understand. As I have stated above, being scolded, isolated or having restricted rights, are different in the Samoan context, they do not only hurt feelings and emotion, but create a strong will and compassion for future drive – it can be argued that only those who have deep value of faasamoa will have this impact. Many young teachers are utilizing modern alternatives to classroom learning believing that it has been a success so far. The students are coping with the approach, but only in odd cases mistake are made when protocols are not followed.

However (as noted above), the old version of corporal punishment is still active, particularly in the villages, and many students from those areas perceive it as the most important approach for them. Is it right to change what those students believe in or should we let them be? Lipine (2010) found that corporal punishment is successful when students accept it. In that regard not the same level of corporal punishment applies successfully to all Samoans students, as stated above, Samoa's corporal punishment will always guarantee success when it is fully understood. Education critics have been one dimensional in their views of this approach, and not being considerate of how other people perceive it. As noted by Meleisea (1987) and Tupuola, (2004) that Samoans have always blended modern ideas to

enhance the values of faasamoa, and whilst that has resulted in transformation of many Samoan customs, it secured continuity of faasamoa values in modern societies. As indicated in the literature, the essence of corporal punishment in faasamoa (as understood by all Samoans) is to express care and love, the keys to success (Mageo, 1988 & 1991). Those findings confirm that corporal punishment has been filtered down through generations, but Samoans had to choose what is more relevant to them, a move requiring awareness and understanding.

### **Church Influence**

One of the forces that encourage continuity of corporal punishment is religion. Samoa is a Christian country and its policies are central to the Christian doctrine (Lipine, 2010). The Bible recommends corporal punishment as a preventative measure against immorality (e.g. ruthlessness, disobedience, dishonesty, etc.) and many Samoans take seriously. As stated in the review, the Bible is the word of God and Samoans (like many other Christians) they observe the word of God. So, ignorance of the Bible's recommendations is ignoring God which is a sin. All practices in the Bible (including corporal punishment) encompass love and those practices evolve as time went by. For example, in the Old Testament, physical punishment was more appropriate as that was the only disciplinary method Christians understood. In the New Testament counseling was recommended, only to an extent when parent can spank their children. Church pastors can no longer spank children as they have been used to in the past as such an authority has been inherited. Some participants stated that their parents use physical and emotional spanking to discipline them which are more meaningful to them because they are part of their Christian upbringing. Some on the other indicated that their parents only counsel them. These findings indicate that tradition [as recommended by church] plays a significant role on how these participants are disciplined - it appears that the forms the participants understand more are those that are part of their upbringing.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that corporal punishment in Samoa continues to exist. It's significance to Samoa's spiritual, socio-economic and educational developments substantiates its place in the mindset and consciousness of many Samoans. An important indicator from the findings is that positive outcome encourages positive

behaviour. In this study, corporal punishment which has always been the key to successful achievement of many Samoans appears that such a force is potentially a force to be reckon with and will hold its place for the future of many Samoans. Generally speaking, corporal punishment is physical punishment to refrain from the mistakes. For Samoans, corporal punishment is a system conveying love, respect, honesty and diligence. Ecological influences however, diversify people's perception of culture (Darwein, 1959), but Samoans, being resilient, conservative of their values (refer to literature review) made sure Samoa's corporal punishment survives. And in reflection to that transformation of corporal punishment was made. It must be noted that Samoans didn't make changes to corporal punishment overnight, they needed to fully understand faapalagi first in order to assimilate, (a process by Piaget, 1954). Samoans merged the two cultures enabling the successful continuity of Samoan traditions to reflect Samoa's values (respect & love), like the Samoan proverbial expression which says that; e eseese auala ae tutusa lava uiga or different methods but the same meaning. The literature review and the findings indicate that politics, socio-economic, education and religion play a big role which could hinder decision making of many Samoans, but Samoans (as stated in the literature review), they have been able to adjust. What's being articulated is that Samoa's corporal punishment is preserved because it has a deep meaning to many Samoans, which means that it is wrong to point out that such an approach is unacceptable, let alone its positive significance to development of many Samoans today and the past. As discussed in the findings, corporal is more than just hitting or scolding (etc.), the approach has deep spiritual influence that only Samoans would understand (Agafili, 2014 & Lipine, 2010). No wonder why many Samoans are adamant with sasa.

Many educators dispute the importance of corporal punishment in classroom learning as they view it as hindering student's learning, but those views are merely bias because of the influence of faapalagi. Nicole, Stephens, Townsend & Hazel, Rose & Taylor, Sarah & Phillip (2012) asserted that not one theory thoroughly explains all cultures, which in the context of this research study; it means that it is not accurate to describe/explain corporal punishment in faasamoa via the faapalagi perspective. The fact is that Samoans have diverse views of faasamoa as they continue to expose to/and accept western cultures, the transition discussed and clarified by Bronfenbrenner's, 1994 ecological system theory. How they adjust faasamoa to modern cultures depended entirely on circumstance, a clear indication of continuity diversity of faasamoa, a process supporting Darwein's



theory of evolution (1989). What is more unique about Samoans is that they are conservative of their Samoan values (love & respect) and they would do whatever it takes to reflect those values. In the context of this study, various forms of corporal punishment verify meaning and values that are important to Samoans. This study indicates that corporal punishment is a Samoan tradition which has protocols and rules to abide by. Like any other culture, Samoa's corporal punishment will vary as time goes by (noted Darwin, 1985), but Samoans (as noted in this study) will always find a way to make sure of its continuity.

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