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**BALANCING THE CONCEPT OF THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD AND  
THE APPLICATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Corporal punishment is a complex issue having social, cultural, religious and human rights dimensions. While the abolitionists of corporal punishment argue that it violates the constitutional right of the child not to be subjected to cruel or degrading treatment, the retentionists take the position that corporal punishment per se does not amount to cruel or degrading treatment: it is an essential means of instilling discipline in learners. This article asserts that the Nigerian law, as it presently stands, permits the use of corporal punishment so far as it does not occasion grievous harms on the children. It is argued that this arrangement exposes children to abuses, which in some cases results in a serious or permanent injury which is contrary to the concept and philosophy of the "best interests" of the child. The article advocates for alternative methods of enforcing discipline in schools. It posits that in all cases warranting discipline, the paramount consideration should be the best interest of the child.