

The ban on corporal punishment in a senior high school in Ghana: The perspicacity of teachers at Northern School of Business

Joseph Y. D. Quansah¹  | Solace Kudadze² | William Agoke³

¹Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

²Department of Agricultural Management and Policy, Faculty of Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

³Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana

Correspondence

Joseph Y. D. Quansah, Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, Faculty of Education, University for Development Studies, Tamale, Ghana.
Email: jquansah@uds.edu.gh

Abstract

The study investigated teachers' perspicacity at the Northern School of Business on the Ban on Corporal Punishment in Senior High Schools in Ghana. This study examined the perceptions of teachers on the policy of no corporal punishment in schools; explore alternative disciplinary methods teachers use and the implications of the ban on corporal punishment policy on students' behaviour. The study employed a descriptive research design using a questionnaire and interview as the major research instruments. The study sampled 30 of the 75 teachers in the school. The responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables and figures. The study revealed that most teachers strongly agreed that the ban on corporal punishment is not appropriate for Ghanaian students. Most teachers are not aware of the alternative strategies to deal with students' misbehaviours and therefore consider corporal punishment as the only means of ensuring students' adherence to the rules and regulations governing the school. The study also revealed that the teachers believed that the absence of corporal punishment has led to gross indiscipline among students, resulting in poor academic performance. Therefore, this study recommends that the Ghana Education Service organize a workshop for the teachers on the alternative strategies to deal with students' misbehaviours to ensure discipline in Ghanaian Senior High School.

Teachers and educational workers should be sensitized on corporal punishment and its implications on students.

KEYWORDS

ban, behaviour, corporal punishment, discipline, perspicacity

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, it is believed that character training begins at home (Dempster, 2020). However, teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' character and behaviour since students spend most of their time in school (Kilimci, 2009). Therefore, parents' and teachers' inculcation of discipline in students cannot be overemphasized in society. Students who behave in ways contrary to acceptable behaviour are normally punished in schools. Punishment is administering adverse stimuli contingent upon disapproval behaviour (Mwai et al., 2014). In Ghana, it is culturally believed that students should be sanctioned for wrongdoing to prevent unacceptable behaviours in schools by the use of disciplinary measures such as caning, forcing a learner to sit or stand in a way that will inflict pain on him or her (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2009). The Ghanaian punishment of canning children is hinged on the popular biblical saying that 'spare the rod and spoil the child'.

Research has proven that punishing students by inflicting pain on them is corporal punishment (Mwai et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2018). According to UNICEF (2018), corporal punishment is the use of physical force as a disciplinary measure to cause bodily pain or discomfort to a child, no matter how small the pain might be to the child. This means corporal punishment could take the form of caning, spanking, hitting, pinching, squeezing, paddling, whipping/whupping, swatting, smacking, scratching, pulling hair or slapping as ways to discipline a child or correct misbehaviours. The most familiar form of corporal punishment in Africa is caning. A study by UNICEF (2018) revealed that various forms of corporal punishment are practiced in schools and in the home of most African countries of which Ghana is no exception. All these forms of corporal punishment use in punishing children are receiving global condemnation because corporal punishment can directly or indirectly affect a learner's cognitive domain for life (Mwai et al., 2014).

In line with this, Law and Development (2018) opines that any and all legal provisions allowing for corporal punishment must be explicitly repealed to send clear and unambiguous message that corporal punishment is not acceptable under any circumstances. Yet, Ghanaian children are most likely to experience corporal punishment in middle childhood, between the ages of 5 and 9 (Law and Development, 2018). To conform to the Human Rights Council's laws and regulations on corporal punishment, Ghana has become a signatory to the ban on corporal punishment in schools under the Convention on the Child's Rights (UNICEF, 2018). However, Corporal punishment still occurs in Ghana in the home, school, alternative care settings, day care facilities and penal institutions (Law and Development, 2018).

To eliminate corporal punishment in the education system in Ghana, it was stated unequivocally in a statement issued by the Ghana Education Service (GES) Guidance and Counselling Unit in 2016 that teachers should only use Positive Discipline Tools (PDTs) in primary and secondary schools across the country (Danvers & Schley, 2019). This directive is in tandem with the Convention on the Right of the Child Article 37(a) which states that 'States Parties shall ensure that: (a) No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, in human or degrading treatment or punishment'. The GES' statement opened discussions and comments in the media as to how effective the ban of corporal

punishment in schools would be workable as parents and care givers continue to use the corporal punishment at home.

UNICEF (2018) notes that while corporal punishment has been banned in Ghanaian schools by a directive from the Ghana Education Service, the practice continues at home. Some Ghanaian parents believe that the only disciplinary measure for children misbehaviours is the use of corporal punishment, and they base their actions on a popular Bible verse: Proverbs 13:24, which says: 'He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him sometimes chastises him' (Danvers & Schley, 2019). However, the CRC unambiguously prohibits all form of corporal punishment of children, including in the home as enshrined in Article 19(1) which opines that 'States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child...'

The ban on corporal punishment is a policy to encourage teachers and caregivers to use positive disciplinary tools in handling misbehaviours at home and in schools. Positive discipline is the practice of training or teaching a student to obey the code of behaviour or rules at school (Aken, 2016) without inflicting any physical pain on the student. Adler and Dreikurs (2012) posit that positive disciplinary tools focus on supportive behaviours such as setting classroom rules at the start of the year, mutual respect, effective communication, collegian planning, setting standards, addressing the causes of misbehaviours and constantly assessing the implementation of discipline. With these tools in place, it is believed that there will be a conducive environment for students to learn. According to Tartari (2019), children who have a positive learning environment feel comfortable, motivated, become enthusiastic and grow academically, socially, as well as emotionally in school. Dlamini (2011) reiterates that positive discipline exists when students feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted and safe and secure in a school environment where they interact with caring and trusted teachers.

The Ghana Education Service has already undertaken a multipronged effort to change the culture around caning in schools. This action is in the right direction since Ghana was among the first countries to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, which is a legal instrument protecting children's civil rights and emphatically prohibits all corporal punishment of children even at home (UNICEF, 2018). This effort has included the issuance of a directive ordering teachers not to use corporal punishment and the training of teachers on the alternative discipline methods to administer in place of corporal punishment (UNICEF, 2018). However, there seems to be no empirical evidence on teachers' perception of the ban on corporal punishment policy in the Northern School of Business. It is for this reason that the study seeks to;

- i. examine the perceptions of teachers towards the policy of no corporal punishment in the school
- ii. explore alternative disciplinary methods teachers use in the school
- iii. examine the implications of the ban on corporal punishment policy on students' behaviour in the school

Literature review

Corporal punishment can be defined as the use of physical pain to correct children which abuses their rights and damage them physically, emotionally, educationally and socially; and in the long run affects a country's economic and social development opportunities (Antonowicz, 2010). This stands to reason that corporal punishment affects not only the child but also the family and the nation at large. When

a child drops out of school due to persistent abuse of her or his rights through corporal punishment, then he or she is likely to become a liability or deviant (e.g., an armed robber, prostitute, etc.) to society. Another school of thought defines corporal punishment as a disciplinary action involving the infliction of physical pain upon one person by another (Swan, 2013). UNICEF (2018) posits that any form of punishment that causes pain or injury, whether physical or not, is considered corporal punishment. It also involves exerting physical force to cause a student to experience pain, but not injury, for students' behavioural modification (Makewa et al., 2017).

The Ban on Corporal Punishment in Ghana

Growing up in a typical African country and in a typical Ghanaian community, to be precise, corporal punishment is considered the definitive means of instilling discipline. According to Makewa et al. (2017), corporal punishment is seen as part of African cultural practices and is considered a vital tool in their educational process. The nature of African culture and religious practice makes most parents and teachers adhere to the Biblical quotation in Proverbs Chapter 23 verse 19 which states; 'Don't hesitate to discipline children. A good spanking won't kill them'. Most parents believe that children who are not disciplined by way of corporal punishment grow up unmannered and deviant in society. This practice makes parents and teachers who feel reluctant to practice corporal punishment be perceived as being slipshod (Makewa et al., 2017). Banda (2006) in a study discovered that the abolishing of corporal punishment in most African countries appears to be a western-based culture that seeks to undermine the culture and corrupt the moral fibre of Africans. Other researchers also believe that it is a way to give liberation to children and make them insubordinate and indisciplined in society (Amina, 2021; Ezeanolue & Nnorom, 2020).

In the Ghanaian situation, corporal punishment has been part of Ghanaian society and the educational system before and after independence. In the early 1970s, the partial banning of corporal punishment was first instituted by the GES, where head teachers were the only people permitted to cane schoolchildren or appoint a teacher to cane under his/her direct supervision (Yeboah, 2020). Even though the policy indicates that, except for the head teacher or by his/her delegation, no teacher is permitted to cane a schoolchild that was not the practice in many schools in Ghana. A study conducted by Boakye (2001) revealed that many teachers were abusing the no canning policy in Ghanaian schools.

To end this abuse in Ghanaian schools, the CRC was ratified in 1990 to enforce the complete abolishment of corporal punishment of all forms at all levels of education. The Ministry of Education enforced this policy through the Ghana Education Service to ensure that teachers adopt alternative strategies to deal with children's misbehaviours other than corporal punishment. In 1998, the Children Act (Act 560) was enacted to give more protection to children, which criminalizes the inflicting of pain on children as a form of punishment (Dery, 2017). The full implementation of the policy to abolish corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools stirs up public reactions and debates among educationists, politicians, parents' religious leaders and civil society on the possible consequences of child development and training. According to Bulmuo (2017), a religious leader in the Ashanti Regional Capital of Ghana, Kumasi, condemned the policy of banning caning in schools as being against God's divine principles for children's upbringing. He even quoted the Bible in Proverbs 22:15 and 23:13-14 to support his claim. Some teachers also showed displeasure with the policy because the outright ban on canning in Ghanaian schools is a fertile ground for breeding gross indiscipline (Ibrahim, 2017). According to Ayitey (2018), these public outcries prompted the director-general of the GES at the

time, Mr Jacob Kor, to issue a warning to all teachers to refrain from using any form of corporal punishment in the schools or face the full wrath of the law.

Despite the government of Ghana's efforts through the Ministry of Education and GES, with the support from other NGOs to enforce this policy, Ghana was listed among 69 countries where corporal punishment was legally permitted in 2017 (Gershoff, 2017). This implies that there is a disparity between what is stated in the law books and policy documents and what is being practice. To strengthen teachers' compliance and adherence to the outright ban on corporal punishment, the professional code of conduct for teachers in Ghana included among other things that; teachers should not engage in any activity that causes physical pain or harm to their pupils/students (Yeboah, 2020). A recent study has revealed that during the 2018/2019 academic year, the GES intensified actions to ensure the compliance on the ban of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools at all levels (Yeboah, 2020).

Teachers' perception of corporal punishment

According to Mweri (2010), teachers perceived corporal punishment as the only ideal way of ensuring discipline in schools. Teachers assumed that when students know that they will be punished for performing poorly, it will motivate them to perform better in school (Mweri, 2010). Mtsweni et al. (2010) observes further that most teachers feel incapacitated and helpless in dealing with students' misbehaviours when corporal punishment was ban in Ghanaian schools.

According to Youssef et al. (1998), teachers play an important role as disciplinarians, and thus, to assume their responsibilities, they have to adopt various disciplinary measures to effectively deal with students' misbehaviours. It appears that most teachers feel that the obvious way to deal with students' misbehaviours or prevent them from indiscipline acts is through the infliction of some level of pain on them. Rajkoomar (2012) posit that subjecting students to some level of pain or corporal punishment is useful for teachers because it helps them to maintain discipline in school.

The moulding of children to become responsible citizens in Ghanaian society is a multifaceted approach that requires the various stakeholders' effective contribution in the use of appropriate strategies to discipline children. The key among these stakeholders is the home or the family where parents are in charge and the school where teachers are responsible. These two groups are required to adopt the same approach in dealing with students' indiscipline and misbehaviours. According to Makewa et al. (2017), parents are using corporal punishment at home as a disciplinary strategy to deal with children's misbehaviours while teachers are banned from using the same approach to deal with students' misbehaviours. These disparities, where corporal punishment is endorsed in children's homes but prohibited in schools make using alternative strategies of dealing with misbehaviours seem not effective and deterring. Kimani et al. (2012) revealed in a study that, the use of corporal punishment in the home reinforces teachers' use of corporal punishment in school, although it is prohibited; most teachers feel that since the use of corporal punishment is working well in dealing with misbehaviours at home, there is no need to ban it at school.

Several studies have revealed that most teachers feel disgruntled about the outright ban on corporal punishment in schools (Cosmas & Almon, 2010; Loretta, 2004; Makewa et al., 2017; Mtsweni, 2008; Rajkoomar, 2012). Most teachers feel that dealing with 40 to 50 students in a classroom requires extra strategies that will prevent them from misbehaving. However, many teachers are unaware of the extra strategies to use to discipline students besides corporal punishment (Twum-Danso, 2010). Consequently, some teachers hold the view that teachers should be trained extensively on alternative

strategies to deal with indiscipline through the use of alternative strategies other than corporal punishment (Makewa et al., 2017; Muchira, 2012).

Alternative disciplinary methods

To avoid the use of corporal punishment in schools, Danvers and Schley (2019) suggested the use of withholding privileges as an alternative disciplinary method to use in schools. For example, when a student misbehaves, the teacher can tell him or her not to use the information communication technology laboratory or library because he/she has gone contrary to the school's code of conduct.

Reinforcement is another suitable way of disciplining students. It is considered a positive disciplinary measure to correct misbehaviours without inflicting physical pain on the child. Reinforcement simply means rewarding good behaviour and encouraging students to repeat the same for more reward. For instance, the best-behaved students can be awarded during speech and prize-giving days to encourage other learners to emulate their behaviour. It has been proven that in schools where rewards exceed the number of punishments, students become more disciplined and vice-versa (Yahaya et al., 2009).

Also, alternative approaches that teachers can use to handle students' misbehaviours include guidance and counselling. The guidance part focuses on nurturing good behaviour while the counselling part assists students to cope with life situations (Kgomotso et al., 2015). Kgomotso et al. (2015) recommended pastoral policy as an alternative method in place of corporal punishment in school. The pastoral policy will be achieved through increased involvement of stakeholders like pastors, elders, opinion leaders and other stakeholders to have a forum with students to address their grievances and instill discipline in them.

Furthermore, UNICEF (2018) recommended Parent–Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) as one of the best methods to use instead of corporal punishment in disciplining children. It is therefore bestowed on teachers establish a cordial relationship with the students through constant advice on good behaviour and counselling them.

The implications of the ban on corporal punishment policy on students' behaviour

UNICEF (2018) posits that the ban will relief students from physical injuries inflicted on them through corporal punishment. The Director of Ghana Education Service called on teachers to stop using corporal punishment; since it accounts for increased cases of school drop-outs (Danvers & Schley, 2019). It can be deduced from the GES Director's speech that, upon banning corporal punishment in schools, most students will feel comfortable at school and overcome the fear that is associated with corporal punishment. That is, students who were afraid of being disciplined through physical violence can now freely access education without fear or anxiety in their hearts. This also suggests that as soon as corporal punishment is banned completely from Ghanaian schools, children's mental faculties will develop and this will boost their academic performance since it is believed that corporal punishment affects children's cognitive domain (Kambuga et al., 2018).

Danvers and Schley (2019) suggested the use of withdrawing privileges when dealing with students' misbehaviours in place of corporal punishment. The implication of withdrawing privileges is that some students who dislike reading or computing will even rejoice when asked not to go to the library due to misconduct; such students will continue to misbehave and become a source of nuisance to the teachers, knowing full well that they cannot be beaten no matter the offence. It will also mean

that it will get to a stage when teachers cannot control students' indiscipline due to the ban on corporal punishment. It is also believed that the ban on corporal punishment in schools could lead to moral decay among students (Makewa et al., 2017). Makewa et al. (2017) narrated how students see the ban on corporal punishment as an opportunity to misbehave, knowing that teachers cannot corporally punish them anymore. According to Masitsa (2008) students have become ill-disciplined because they openly challenge teachers' authority knowing that nothing would be done to them. Cosmas and Almon (2010) reiterate in their study that students no longer respect their teachers after corporal punishment was abolished in schools. It could be concluded that the ban on corporal punishment has both good and bad aspects depending on the angle or perspective from which one is looking at it.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted both a qualitative and quantitative research approach with a descriptive survey design. According to Kuranchie (2016), descriptive survey design appropriately describes situations as they naturally occur using both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Amedahe & Gyimah (2018), indicated that the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches leads to triangulations, which enhances the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

The research was conducted in the Northern School of Business located in the Sagnarigu District of the Northern Region of Ghana. The school has 75 teachers, comprising a headmaster, 2 assistant headmasters, 4 Heads of Departments and 68 teaching staff. Purposive sampling was adopted to select the seven teachers in authority (i.e., the head, assistants and the heads of each department), while convenient sampling was also engaged to recruit 23 teachers making the total sample size of the study 30 teachers. The headmaster, assistant headmaster and heads of departments were purposively included in the sample because they are the duty bearers and instrumental in the disciplinary issues in the school. Convenient sampling became necessary for this study to enable the researcher to strictly adhere to the novel Corona Virus Pandemic (COVID-19) protocols as instituted by the Government of Ghana through the Ministry of Health and Ghana Health Service. Dörnyei (2007) supported this justification by stating that convenient sampling is appropriate when members of the target population meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time or the willingness to participate and are included in the study.

A questionnaire was designed in a 5-point Likert scale with 'Strongly agreed = 1', 'Agreed = 2', 'Neutral = 3', 'Disagreed = 4' and 'Strongly Disagreed = 5'. The Likert scale was used to make the respondents indicate their level of agreement on a list of factors that could influence teachers' perception of the ban on corporal punishment. A Likert scale is useful in conducting surveys in business-related areas such as marketing or customer satisfaction, the social sciences and attitude-related research projects (Rinker, 2014). The questionnaire and the interview were administered personally by the researchers, and the response obtained was analysed and presented in tables and graphs.

Data analysis and management is seen as the organization of data collected into patterns and classifications while taking note of possible relationships and linkages (Patton, 2002). The quantitative data collected was coded and analysed with the use of the Statistical Programme for Service Solution (SPSS) version 22 application. The generated results from this analysis were presented on frequency tables for easy interpretation and understanding of the research outcome.

Again, the data obtained from the unstructured interviews were thematically categorized and subjected to narrative and descriptive analysis to confirm or refute the results of the quantitative data analysis. Kuranchie (2016) supported the use of unstructured interviews by indicating that, it allows the interviewer to 'ramble' to get insights into the attitude of the interviewees. The results

obtained were analysed concurrently with quantitative data to facilitate easy triangulation of results. The triangulation of results enhances the credibility and reliability of the research findings (Amedahe & Gyimah, 2018).

The consent of the respondents was sorted, privacy and confidentiality were secured and their values and right were not violated. For anonymity purposes, alphabets A, B, C... were used to represent interviewees. Professional and ethical policies were highly adhered to ensure the integrity, honesty and objectivity of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 30 respondents sampled for this study.

The results from Table 1 show that most teachers (83.4%) are between the ages of 20 and 39 years with considerable experience. This category of teachers is very good for the study because they have enough years to spend in the teaching profession and therefore, their views are highly needed in every policy and programme that seeks to improve the education system. All the teachers in the school hold at least a first degree as a minimum academic qualification required to teach in the senior high school. The study also shows that the majority of the teachers (83.3%) are professionally trained and may have enough knowledge of how to handle student misbehaviours. This implies that majority of the teachers understand the implications of the use of corporal punishments in the school. In an interview, a teacher indicated that, as part of teachers' professional training, they were exposed to the merits and demerits of the use of corporal punishment and how to apply the alternative corrective measures. This means that the teachers have the required qualification and the requisite knowledge and expertise to deal with students' misbehaviours using alternative strategies instead of corporal punishment.

TABLE 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	20–29	14	46.7
	30–39	11	36.7
	40–49	5	16.6
Sex	Male	26	86.7
	Female	4	13.3
Years in teaching	Less than 5 years	3	10.0
	5–10 years	11	36.7
	11–15 years	10	33.3
	16–20 years	6	20.0
Level of education	Postgrad. Diploma in Education	15	50.0
	Degree	9	30.0
	Masters	6	20.0
Professional teacher	Yes	25	83.3
	No	5	16.7

Knowledge about the ban on Corporal Punishment Policy in Schools

Table 2 shows the participants' responses to their knowledge of the ban on corporal punishment in schools.

The response indicates that the majority of the teachers 29 (96.7%) of the 30 are aware of the ban on corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools at all levels. In an interview, the teachers were asked to explain what they understood about corporal punishment. In response, a teacher defined corporal punishment as a;

“it is a form of punishment that inflicts pain on the offender's body or punishment meted out to an individual that causes injury or severe damage and pain. In the school situation, it involves exerting some level of physical pain on a student for misbehaviours or as a way of preventing possible misbehaviours” (Respondent, D).

The definition given by the teacher above further deepens the fact that they are highly aware of what exactly constitutes corporal punishment. This is also in line with Swan's (2013) definition, which states that corporal punishment is a disciplinary action involving the infliction of physical pain on one person by another. Other respondents also described corporal punishment as any punishment that severely affects the child, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and causes pain to a student in response to the student's undesirable behaviour.

Another interesting definition that emanated from the responses stated that corporal punishment involves; *‘using aggressive behaviour to teach children how to solve problems with violence.’* (Respondent, E). This teacher perfectly understood corporal punishment as UNICEF (2018), posited corporal punishment as any form of punishment that causes pain or injury, whether physical or not. The meaning of corporal punishment from this angle goes beyond the inflicting of physical pain to include emotional pains as well.

The appropriateness of the ban on corporal punishment for Ghanaian students

In this section, the researchers find out the respondents' opinions on the ban on corporal punishment in a Ghanaian school. The table below shows the responses from the sampled teachers (Table 3).

Surprisingly, out of 30 teachers, only six teachers, representing (20%), think it was appropriate to ban corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools with 24 teachers representing 80% against the ban. This result implies that most of the teachers still believe that the best way to deal with students' misbehaviours in Ghanaian schools is the application of corporal punishment. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mtsweni (2008); Rajkoomar (2012); Cosmas and Almon (2010); Loretta (2004); Makewa et al. (2017) and Chiang (2009), which revealed that most teachers believe that corporal punishment is the surest and best formal approach to deal with students' misbehaviours in Ghanaian schools.

TABLE 2 knowledge of policy on corporal punishment in schools

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	29	96.7
No	1	3.3
Total	30	100

TABLE 3 Appropriateness of the ban on corporal punishment for the Ghanaian students

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	20.00
No	24	80.00
Total	30	100

The researchers decided to probe further to unleash the reason behind their response on the appropriateness of the ban on corporal punishment, the responses given include the following;

“The ban on corporal punishment makes students go wayward while teachers will lose respect” (Respondent, G). “The law seems to give the Ghanaian child unlimited freedom by this they are no longer afraid of anybody or anything even their parents at home cannot control them” (Respondent, E) “the ban has brought about gross indiscipline in our schools” (Respondent, B).

Teachers who have expressed disapproval of the ban on corporal punishment indicated that they find it extremely difficult to deal with students who break the school rules with impunity, making it tempting to resort to corporal punishment. This revelation implies that despite all efforts by the government through the Ministry of Education and GES, Civil Society groups and human rights organizations, some teachers have not come to terms with the negative implications of corporal punishment. This calls for an urgent sensitization programme for teachers and educational workers on the repercussions of corporal punishment on the emotional, physical and psychological development of students.

Teachers' cooperation with the policy on corporal punishment

The study assessed whether the teachers were obeying the policy on corporal punishment or not.

Table 4 revealed that the majority of the sampled teachers 17 (56.67%) obey the ban to some extent while 10 (33.33%) teachers indicated that they strictly adhere to the ban. These results suggest that, even though most of the teachers see the ban as inappropriate, they still obey the policy to some extent. In an attempt to find out the extent to which this policy is obeyed, the teachers indicated that sometimes after exhausting all the alternative corrective measures, they apply corporal punishment as a last resort. In an interview, a teacher indicated that;

‘I strictly adhere to the ban on corporal punishment but in the extreme case where I exhaust all alternative corrective measures, I report to the head teacher and we apply a minimal canning’ (Respondent, F).

On other hand, three teachers representing 10%, indicated that they do not adhere to the ban and therefore use them in their teaching and learning process. This implies that despite the effort to avoid the use of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools, some of the teachers still think that it is the surest way to deal with student misbehaviours. This finding is consistent with the findings of Mtsweni (2008); Rajkoomar (2012); Cosmas and Almon (2010); Loretta (2004); Makewa et al. (2017)

TABLE 4 Teachers' obedience to the policy of corporal punishment

Obedience level	Frequency	Percentage
Strictly obey	10	33.33
Obey to some extent	17	56.67
Grossly violated	3	10.00
Total	30	100

TABLE 5 Kind of corporal punishment mostly applied in the school

Kind of corporal punishment	Frequency	Percentage
Spanking	1	3.3
Slapping	3	10.0
Paddling	1	3.3
Hard labour	13	43.3
Caning	7	23.3
Kneeling	2	6.7
Frog matching	2	6.7
None	1	3.3
Total	30	100

and Chiang (2009), which revealed that most teachers believe that corporal punishment is the surest and best formal approach to deal with students' misbehaviours in Ghanaian schools.

The kind of corporal punishment mostly applied in the school

The researchers tried to examine the type of corporal punishment commonly used in schools and the results are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5, revealed that 13 (43.3%) of the teachers indicated that hard labour which includes weeding the school compound is the most commonly used corporal punishment in the school, followed by canning 7 (23.3%) and slapping 3 (10%). The result shows that kneeling and frog matching is the least used in the school. During the data collection process, it was observed that most of the teachers were not willing to declare the kind of corporal punishment used in schools.

Consequences of the most common type of corporal punishment used to discipline students

The researchers examined the consequences of corporal punishment, mostly applied in dealing with students' misconduct.

The results from Figure 1 show that the major consequences of corporal punishment on students' attitudes were identified as absenteeism and dropping out of school. This implies that corporal punishment has a negative implication on students' attendance as most students will choose to stay home to avoid being canned or weed around the school compound. Danvers and Schley (2019) in their study

revealed that some children are so afraid of corporal punishment, especially canning which makes some of them drop out of school completely.

Again, truancy was identified as the third consequence of corporal punishment in the school. Truant students are regularly absent from school. Some of the students lie to their parents that they have gone to school but would not be in school just to avoid corporal punishment. Hence, 'corporal punishment does more harm than good' looking at the negative effects so far.

Perceptions of teachers on the policy of corporal punishment

Table 6 below shows the findings on the teachers' perceptions of the ban on corporal punishment.

The results from Table 6 show that 16 (53.7%) of the teachers strongly agreed that corporal punishment helps students obey the school rules and regulations while 36.7% of the teachers agreed that corporal punishment enhances the enforcement/obedience of school rules. This means that the teachers' perceived corporal punishment as an important tool by which students could be made to obey school rules. Only three people either disagreed or strongly disagreed that corporal punishment would not help students obey school rules.

About 93% of the sampled teachers either agree or strongly agree that corporal punishment is an instiller of discipline in students. This finding is in line with Mweri (2010), who explains that corporal punishment is perceived to be very ideal for teachers in correcting or disciplining students because it is a way to instill discipline in them.

Undoubtedly, 90% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that corporal punishment is a means by which character is shaped while the remaining 10% of the respondents were neutral. Similarly, 40% of the teachers agreed that the ban on corporal punishment will reduce respect for teachers while 23.3% of the teachers hold a contrary view. Again some of the teachers are of the view that corporal punishment should not be banned in Ghanaian schools. With the perception that students will go wayward without corporal punishment, 38% of the teachers strongly agreed on this while 31% either strongly disagreed or disagreed with 3.4% not certain. This means that majority of the teachers believe that the ban on corporal punishment will make the student go wayward. Interestingly, 36.7%

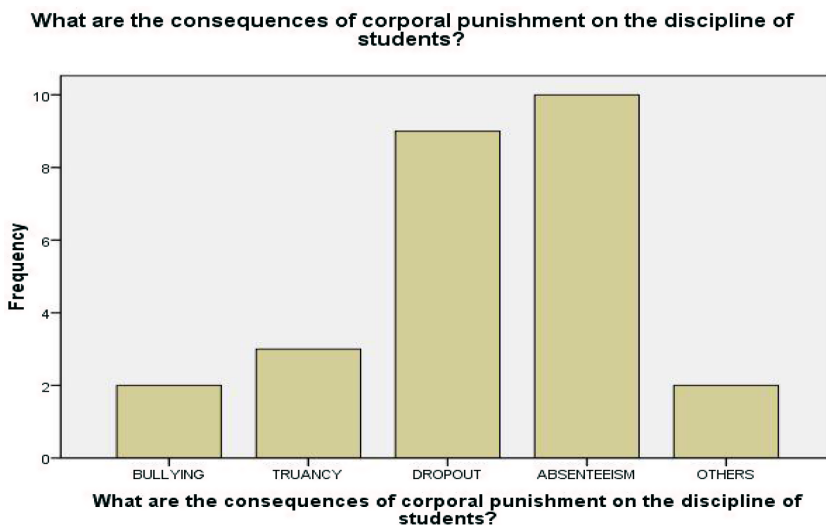


FIGURE 1 Consequences of corporal punishment on the discipline of students.

TABLE 6 Teacher perception of the ban on corporal punishment (CP)

Perception	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
CP help students to obey	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	0	11 (36.7%)	16 (53.7%)
CP instill students' discipline	0	0	2 (6.3%)	13 (43.3%)	15 (50.0%)
CP helps in shaping the character	0	0	3 (10.0%)	13 (43.3%)	14 (46.7%)
Without CP, students would not respect teachers	3 (10.0%)	7 (23.3%)	2 (6.7%)	12 (40.0%)	6 (20.0%)
Without CP students will go way ward	1 (3.4%)	6 (20.7%)	3 (10.3%)	8 (27.6%)	11 (37.9%)
Teachers should use CP	2 (6.7%)	1(3.3%)	1(3.3%)	16 (53.3%)	10 (33.3%)
CP outlives its usefulness	9 (30.0%)	14 (46.7%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)
Children prefer CP to others	8 (26.7%)	12	5 (16.7%)	3 (10.0%)	2 (6.7%)
Supervised CP is beneficial to students	1 (3.3%)	0	3 (10.0%)	10 (33.3%)	16 (53.3%)
CP makes students respect teachers	3 (10.0%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10.0%)	9 (30.0%)	10 (33.3%)
CP makes students dislike school	5 (16.7%)	6 (20.0%)	11 (36.7%)	5 (16.7%)	3 (10.0%)
It hurts to give CP	1 (3.4%)	11 (37.9%)	5 (17.2%)	8 (27.6%)	4 (13.8%)
CP should be used as a last resort	1 (3.3%)	7 (23.3%)	6 (20.0%)	7 (23.3%)	9 (30.0%)
CP ban restricted teachers	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	4 (13.3%)	8 (26.7%)	15 (50.0%)
Teachers should be allowed to use CP	0	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	12 (40.0%)	15 (50.0%)
CP degrades the teacher	8 (26.7%)	14 (46.7%)	4 (13.3%)	2 (6.7%)	2 (6.7%)
CP does more harm than good	14 (46.7%)	13 (43.3%)	2 (6.7%)	1 (3.3%)	0

Note: Figures in parentheses are the percentages.

of the teachers were not able to tell whether corporal punishment made students dislike school or not. Nonetheless, 26.7% either agreed or strongly agreed that corporal punishment makes students dislike school.

Again, 86.6% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that supervised corporal punishment is beneficial to students. According to a teacher, supervised corporal punishment refers to a corporal punishment being supervised by a higher authority in the school like the headmaster, senior housemaster etc.

Alternative disciplinary measures used in place of corporal punishment

In this section, the teachers were interviewed on the alternative disciplinary measures employed in dealing with misbehaviours among students in the school. In an interview with the teachers, it was revealed that most of the teachers had a fair knowledge of the various alternative disciplinary measures to curb students' misbehaviours. In an interview, a teacher was asked to describe how to deal with student misbehaviours without corporal punishment and this is the response;

"I either ask my student to run around the school block for some time as a form of punishment or I give him/her a groundwork which sometimes includes, picking up rubbish at the school compound. I sometimes rebuke the students in front of her colleagues. The nature of the offence committed depends on the alternative disciplinary to use" (Respondent, A).

This suggests that most of the teachers are aware of the various alternative measures to deal with students' misbehaviours. This finding contradicts a study by UNICEF (2018) and Antonowicz (2010) that suggested that many teachers in Ghana are unaware of the better alternative forms of discipline and that this is a causal element in the high degree of corporal punishment among Ghanaian homes and schools.

On the other hand, some teachers believe that advising the students to be of good behaviour is the best measure to correct students' misbehaviours. Some teachers mentioned counselling, denying the students what he/she wants, rebuking, sending the students to call their parents and deprivation of privileges as the alternative measures to ensure school discipline in school.

Again, the teachers were asked to express their opinion on the effectiveness of the alternative disciplinary measures used in place of corporal punishment. Some of the teachers agreed that the use of alternative measures is very effective since it makes students respect and obey school rules and regulations. In an interview, a teacher was asked to describe how to deal with students' misbehaviours without corporal punishment and this was the response;

"Initially, I thought corporal punishment is the only way to deal with students' misbehaviours but now I know that is not true. I realise that corporal punishment only reduces the child's status and makes the child hard. I think a variety of other punishments like denying the child what he likes best, rebuking the child in front of his colleagues, and asking the child to go home to collect the parents are punitive enough to make many children conform to the norm."

(Respondent, F)

Again, some of the teachers hold a contrary view by saying that the use of alternative disciplinary measures is not an effective measure of dealing with students' misbehaviours. One of them added that most of the students are only afraid of corporal punishment since it is the only means of disciplining them in the past and in their homes. Makewa et al. (2017) confirmed this finding by stating that, parents are using corporal punishment at home as a disciplinary strategy to deal with children's misbehaviours while teachers are working to achieve the same goal as parents are highly prevented from using the same strategy that is working for the parents. These inconsistencies in dealing with students' misbehaviours have made the work of teachers extremely difficult.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, it came to light that some of the teachers believed that the ban on corporal punishment served as a demotivation for effective teaching and learning, which was found as a recipe for poor performance, especially among final-year students. It was realized that some of the teachers are not aware of the alternative disciplinary measures as some of the teachers subject the students to hard labour such as weeding around the school compound, digging, etc. and thinking it is an alternative disciplinary measure.

The study revealed that some of the teachers believed is the ban has given the students enough room to disobey school rules and regulations with impunity which has resulted in a proliferation of social vices and immorality, disobedient and disrespectful students, and difficulty in controlling deviant students.

On the other hand, some of the teachers believed that the ban on corporal punishment and the effective use of alternative disciplinary measures would lead to disciplined students in schools and society. The result also shows that corporal punishment has a negative consequence on students' absenteeism and dropout.

The study's evidence led to the conclusion that teachers in the study area were aware of the ban on corporal punishment but their attitude towards its implementation was negative. This study established that the practice and belief in corporal punishment among teachers are still dominant in our education system.

The study also affirmed other equally important strategies for ensuring discipline among students at the secondary level. These non-physical disciplinary measures as an alternative to corporal punishment include asking the misbehaving students to sit at the back of the classroom and to come out with ways to correct their misbehaviours. Other alternative disciplinary measures include asking students to perform additional academic work, rebuking, asking the students to go for their parents, and denying the students their favourites among others.

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made for policy consideration and future studies:

1. Teachers should continuously be trained on alternative disciplinary methods to avoid the continued use of corporal punishment as a way of dealing with students' misbehaviours.
2. The Ghana Education Service should ensure stringent sanctions on teachers who engage in corporal punishment in the schools. Secondary school headmasters and headmistresses must be charged with greater responsibility and sanction authority to administer to teachers.
3. Sensitization workshops should be organized for teachers to let them know about the negative effects of corporal punishment on individuals and society at large. This sensitization must demystify the perception that corporal punishment's ban serves as a demotivation for effective teaching and learning, which was found to result in poor performance, especially among final-year students.
4. The ban on Corporal punishment should strictly be enforced in the homes of the children to bring uniformity in the strategies of dealing with students' misbehaviours by the teachers and parents in the school and home respectively.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

ORCID

Joseph Y. D. Quansah  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7425-2209>

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Joseph Y. D. Quansah is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies, University for Development Studies. His research interests include educational administration and teacher education.

Solace Kudadze is a Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Management and Policy, University for Development Studies.

Williams Agoke is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations, University for Development Studies.

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