

PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON
CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
IN BONDO DISTRICT, KENYA

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Abstract

In Kenya, corporal punishment has been a mode of punishment until it was banned by the Ministry of Education in the year 2001. Before its ban, it was being used in nearly all the schools in Bondo District. Reports from Bondo District Education office indicate that corporal punishment is still in use in over 50% of the schools in the district, despite its ban. In more than 50% of the PTA meetings, parents and the school management committees wanted re-introduction of corporal punishment in effecting change in students' behavior. However, some of the stakeholders felt that corporal punishment was not useful in effecting behavior change among the students. Based on that, this study set out to investigate perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bondo District. The objectives of the study were to: find out the perception of students on corporal punishment, identify the perception of teachers on corporal punishment. This study was guided by a conceptual framework which shows how various stakeholders in Bondo District perceive the use of corporal punishment. Descriptive survey design

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was adopted in this study. Study population comprised of 1617 form 2 students, 516 teachers, 24 deputy principals and 24 representatives of the B.O.G. Using stratified random sampling technique, 539 form 2 students, 172 teachers, 8 deputy principals and 8 B.O.G. representatives were sampled from 8 schools that were categorized into 2 boys boarding schools, 2 girls boarding schools, 2 mixed day and boarding schools and 2 mixed day schools were sampled for the study. Questionnaires, interview schedules and focus group discussions were used to collect data. Piloting of the instruments was done in four schools that did not participate in the actual study to determine reliability of the instruments. Face validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts in the Department of Educational Psychology, Maseno University. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts. Findings of the study revealed that students do not like the use of corporal punishment while the teachers, Deputy Principals and B.O.G. prefer the use of corporal punishment. The study concluded that students do not perceive corporal punishment as instrumental in effecting behavior change but teachers, Deputy Principals and B.O.G. representatives regard corporal punishment as a useful method of effecting behavior change among students. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should restructure the policy on corporal punishment to accommodate the views of secondary school stakeholders and also come up with regular workshops to expose teachers to constructive ways of correcting students' misbehavior.

1.1 Background of the Study

Corporal punishment is the reasonable force used by school authorities to restrain unruly students, to correct unacceptable behavior and to maintain order (Mcnergney and Herbert, 2001). It's important to note that there's no clear line between corporal punishment and humiliating or degrading punishment. Very often children perceive corporal punishment as also being humiliating or degrading (Soneson, 2005). Corporal punishment is thought to violate a number of international conventions and is considered cruel, inhuman and degrading because it hurts and humiliates children, causes emotional distress, low self esteem, provokes anger and feelings of revenge and instills violent temperaments in children (Smith, 2006).

Corporal punishment works against the process of ethical development. It teaches children not to engage in a particular behavior because they will be beaten. It does not teach them to consider the reasons and ethics for not behaving in a particular manner (Soneson, 2005).

In Afghanistan, surveys carried out in three government schools in Jalalabad and 20 government schools in Mazar-i-Sharif in 2008 found very high levels of physical punishment. However, there was a strong desire among the vast majority of teachers to learn alternatives to physical discipline (Samoon, et.al, 2011). Most children in South Africa who experienced corporal punishment would prefer to be disciplined in a non-violent manner. Children would like teachers and parents to talk to them and explain what they did wrong instead of using corporal punishment or other forms of humiliating or degrading punishment (Clacherty& Donald, 2005).

Kubeka (2004) reports that teachers in South Africa argue that, without corporal punishment, discipline could not be maintained (children would neither show them respect nor develop the discipline to work hard unless they were beaten or threatened with being beaten; their power as educators had been take away; corporal punishment was quick and easy to administer, while other methods required time, patience and skill, which educators often lacked; unless they were beaten, they (the children) would think they got away with wrongdoing, and would repeat this misconduct; corporal punishment would restore a culture of learning in schools; it was the only way to deal with difficult or disruptive learners; educators had not experienced any harmful effects when it was administered to them as learners, so there was no reason why they should not administer it to their learners as well. Soneson (2005) observes that in schools where corporal punishment is used, the same learners are being beaten for the same offences over and over again.

Classes with fewer behavioral problems over time are run by teachers who are committed to non-violent and child-centered approaches to classroom discipline (Porteus, & Ruth, 2001).The Gambian case is interesting since most teachers believe that corporal punishment is the only thing that children understand when they disobey, and most children believe that schools and parents are right in beating them. Corporal punishment is deemed to be an effective form of discipline (Tang, 2005).

Physical punishment is not conceived the same way by all stakeholders in Uganda. Some of them consider that children learn from the consequences of the wrong done while others think that children must be protected from physical punishment because it is a coercive measure rather a corrective one. In protecting children from physical punishment, some stakeholders believe that laws should be implemented in order to avoid abuses against children while others are against these laws (Damien, 2012). The deputy head teacher at Kammengo primary school in Uganda was of the opinion that the abolition of corporal punishment had a negative effect on the children's discipline. Corporal punishment was abolished, which had caused more harm than good. The pupils had become unruly, could respond anyhow to elders, generally disrespect school rules and regulations. It had led to deterioration of pupils school performance and as a result the teachers were overworked (Kabonesa & Juuko, 2007).

In Tanzania, the current school regulations regarding corporal punishment are not clear and are not followed consistently. Many teachers and parents feel that a prohibition of corporal punishment is causing a decline of discipline in the schools. There is a dual problem of too much punishment without any alternatives or the absence of any sort of consequences for poor behavior. This leaves many teachers confused and ultimately apathetic about putting any sort of boundaries for the expected behavior amongst students. Corporal punishment and verbal abuse of children is so normalized in community attitudes that teachers and other child care agencies do not even consider such behavior abusive to children (Mkombozi, 2006).

In Kenya, corporal punishment has been a mode of punishment until it was banned in the year 2001 (Republic of Kenya, 2001). Management of student discipline remains one of the major challenges to teachers in learning institutions. While some stakeholders in education such as parents and teachers call for the lift of ban on corporal punishment especially when unrest has occurred, others oppose this call (Mwai, Koros and Otieno, 2008). Parents from a school in Kilifi proposed that caning be re-introduced in school to instill discipline in students and fight drug abuse. However, education officials turned down the proposal by saying the government banned the canning of students in either private or public schools and parents in any learning institution

could not overrule the order, and that it amounted to child abuse and went against the Children's Act (Mwandoto, 2008).

There are several varied perceptions on corporal punishment in secondary schools internationally, in Africa and even in Kenya. A particular case is the management of student discipline in secondary schools in Bondo District which has remained one of the major challenges to the school's stakeholders (Afullo, 2005). The district had increasingly experienced cases of defiant students who openly confront their teachers. Cases of school dropout, rowdiness and drug abuse among students have been reported. Stakeholders in education like parents and teachers in Bondo district have attributed the rise in indiscipline to the corporal punishment ban. Some of them demanded for the re-introduction of corporal punishment (Bondo District Education Office, 2009). Therefore, there was need to find out the perception of various stakeholders on corporal punishment in the district. This study tried to establish perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment on students in secondary schools in the district.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Cases of student indiscipline in Kenya have resulted into extensive damage to property, death of students, arson, increased student dropout and even rape in some secondary schools. Teachers in Bondo district encounter difficulties in the management of student discipline in schools even after the ban on corporal punishment. There is rise in behavior misdemeanor in the schools in the district. The Ministerial policy on corporal punishment is that it should not be used in schools (Republic of Kenya, 2001). Despite that, reports from the Ministry of Education still indicate its continued use in several schools in Kenya. Bondo District is not an exception. Complaints documented from Bondo District Education Office indicate that corporal punishment is used in over 50% of schools in the district. Based on these cases, stakeholders have had mixed reactions on the use of corporal punishment. While some support its use, others are against it. As a result of this, the researcher saw the need to carry out research on perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment. The researcher therefore carried out a study to establish the perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bondo District in Kenya.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study set to establish the perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bondo District. The objectives of the study were to:

- i. Find out the perception of students on corporal punishment.
- ii. Identify the perception of teachers on corporal punishment.

1.4 Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

- i. What is the perception of students on corporal punishment?
- ii. What is the perception of teachers on corporal punishment?

1.5 Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions guided the study:

- i. Students undergo corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bondo district.
- ii. The selected respondent views reflected their actual perceptions on corporal punishment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aimed at finding out the perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment in secondary schools. Where possible, the results of the study would form a basis for school behavioral management for teachers in relation to their positive involvement in the education of students. The results of the study would be expected to provide insights that would enable stakeholders to effectively handle student indiscipline cases without using corporal punishment and policy makers to formulate good policies on corporal punishment on student discipline.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in secondary schools in Bondo District. The study specifically sought to determine perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment. Form 2 students were used for the study because they had two more years in school and were likely to make contributions, knowing that they stood to benefit from any positive changes likely to be implemented by policy makers in the education sector.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

- i. Since this study covered only Bondo district, the findings cannot be generalized.
- ii. Some respondents like teachers did not talk about the use of corporal punishment freely because corporal punishment has been banned by the government of Kenya.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The study was based on a conceptual framework showing how various stakeholders in Bondo District perceive the use of corporal punishment. The independent variable was corporal punishment. When corporal punishment is used on the learner, it causes pain, injury and fear. Repeated use of corporal punishment does not produce the desired result of correction and a change of heart in the students (Kindiki, 2009). It's on that ground that the Ministry of education abolished the use of corporal punishment (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The dependent variable was perception of stakeholders on corporal punishment. Some stakeholders advocate for the use of corporal punishment while others are against its use. The intervening variable is the Ministry of Education policy on corporal punishment. Even though corporal punishment has been banned, some stakeholders still advocate for its use in schools. However, the Ministry of Education policy is against the use of corporal punishment in schools. This has further been illustrated in figure 1.

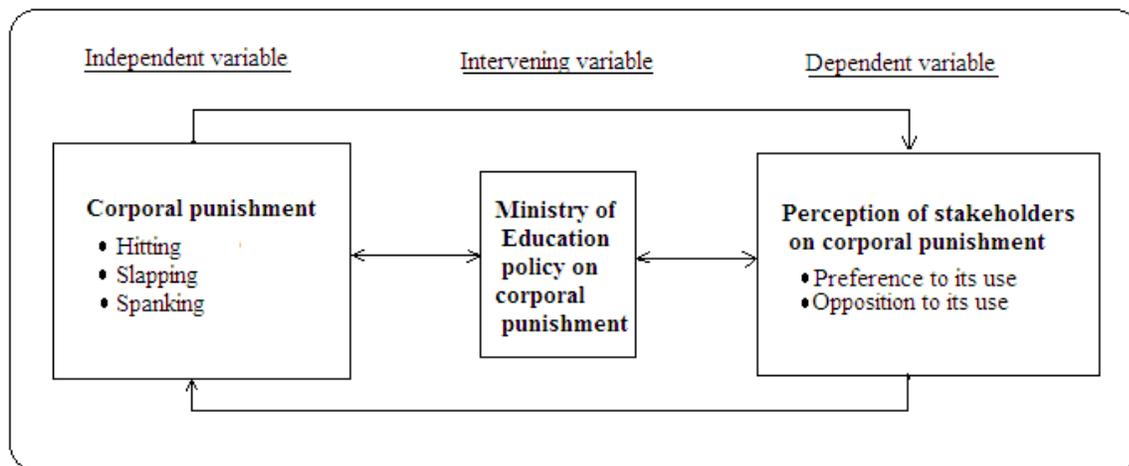


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Perception of Stakeholders on Corporal Punishment.

Source: self

The figure1 illustrates the connection between independent variable and dependent variable. It also illustrates the connection between intervening variable and both independent and dependent variable.

2.0 Results

2.1 Perception of Teachers on Corporal Punishment

A study was carried out in a Korean public middle school to establish perception of teachers on corporal punishment. Six Korean English and Foreign Language (EFL) teachers were interviewed. It was determined that educational system factors led Korean EFL teachers to use and/or support the use of corporal punishment rather than the belief that corporal punishment helped their students. The teachers acknowledged some of the negative effects, but most of them believed the benefits outweighed the negatives, which in turn led them to perceive corporal punishment as beneficial in managing Korean EFL classrooms particularly classrooms with 40 or more students ('O'Donnell, 2006). Even though the EFL teachers used corporal punishment, they were aware it had negative and positive effects.

Corporal punishment in Pakistan has existed for nearly 143 years. Recently, efforts have been made to ban punishment. Teachers' opinion supporting this ban is growing. Some teachers however; still feel that those who use corporal punishment should not be punished, as corporal punishment is seen as part of doing the job. Teachers who support the ban feel that corporal punishment is a lazy means of action (Iqbal, 2003). Here, teachers have mixed reactions concerning the use of corporal punishment.

In Trinidad corporal punishment has been banned for nearly 3 years and teachers and parents are requesting its reinstatement. It is felt that children are becoming increasingly unruly and corporal punishment would assist in reinstating order in schools (Richards, 2003). It is worth noting here that parents as well as teachers support the use of corporal punishment.

According to Sonesson (2005), studies conducted in South Africa show that physical and corporal punishment were ineffective and the teachers who used them in disciplining students did so

because they were subjected to them when they were young. On the other hand, in a study that Mtsweni (2008) conducted on the role of educators in the management of school discipline in the Nkangala Region of Mpumalanga, South Africa, findings indicate that after the banning of corporal punishment in schools, most educators felt incapacitated and helpless in dealing with learners with indiscipline in schools. Learners are believed to have become ill disciplined to the extent that they even openly challenge the teachers because they know nothing can be done to them.

Agbenyega (2006) reports on the practice of corporal punishment in two basic schools in Ghana. The findings reveal that an overwhelming majority of the teachers (94 and 98 percent) use corporal punishment to enforce school discipline. The results further indicate that the majority of the teachers in both school sites administer corporal punishment to students who perform poorly in academic work. Another aspect of the result of the study is that a large number of teachers from all the schools indicate their unwillingness to discontinue corporal punishment in their schools. The findings here would imply that corporal punishment was seen as remedy to poor academic performance.

In Uganda, in a debate held by teachers from different schools in Uganda, teachers have claimed to be given alternatives to deal with the unruly students. Teachers found it hard to surrender their old habits of corporal punishment. Some teachers do not know what to do because in the education curriculum there is no component on how to punish students. Since they do not know what the limits should be, teachers punish students using their own experience (Damien, 2011). However, other teachers claim that there is no research done to show that corporal punishment makes a student better. Helping a student is about reinforcing the good and in turn, the teachers will be destroying the bad, therefore motivation is the key of discipline; that a person who uses corporal punishment does not vary the methods of teaching' that a stubborn student needs love, counseling and guidance (Mugemuzi, 2003). Just as in Pakistan, teachers in Uganda also have mixed reactions on corporal punishment.

In Tanzania, regular teachers have been reported to administer corporal punishment at recurring intervals in a vast number of primary and secondary schools. The teachers reported that this was the only way they knew to change behavior (Feistein & Mwahombela, 2010). Many Kenyan teachers have mixed feelings and varied opinions about the withdrawal of corporal punishment by the government. Some teachers find the alternative correctional measures counter-productive and prefer caning (Ngare, 2008).

Siringi (2006) observes that most parents and teachers in Maasai land in Kenya consider that corporal punishment if properly employed, becomes one of the most effective ways to instill the discipline necessary for children to learn or grow well. Kamau (2003) observes that for many years in Kenya, teachers have relied and still rely on corporal punishment to discipline errant students despite corporal punishment being outlawed.

Musau (2007) studied emerging issues as a result of banning corporal punishment as a disciplinary method in primary schools in Wote Division, Makeni District. The findings revealed that 80 per cent of teachers believe in caning as a disciplinary method in schools as it is very effective in controlling indiscipline because it is fast, feared by pupils hence it instantly corrects misbehavior. Musau's study showed the belief of teachers on the effectiveness of corporal punishment, even though the study majorly concentrated on corporal punishment ban.

Even though a big percentage of the teachers believe in the effectiveness of corporal punishment, the study was only concentrated in primary school therefore there was need to consider the perception of teachers in secondary schools.

2.2 Perception of Students on Corporal Punishment

While there has been a great deal of literature on the physical punishment of children, relatively very little has taken into account children's own views. Therefore, little is known about children's perceptions of their own experiences of physical punishment (Gershoff, 2002). This is particularly so for children in non-Western societies where Montgomery (2009) asserts that despite the abundance of anthropological studies on childrearing, very few have focused on children's own feelings and reactions to disciplinary measures.

Everton, et.al (2003) in the study on punishment of children in elementary schools in the United Kingdom established that small children tend to regard all punishment as unfair or undiscovered. Corporal punishment is physiologically as well as psychologically damaging to children's lives since it affects them by not only inflicting physical pain but also mental harassment, feeling of helplessness, worthlessness, depression, inhibition, aggression, shame and self-doubt, guilt, social withdrawal, feeling of inferiority, rigidity, lowered self-esteem, stress and heightened anxiety which may reduce his/her self confidence (Pandey, 2001).

Naz, et.al (2011) investigated the impacts of corporal punishment on students' academic performance/career and personality development up-to secondary level education in Pakistan. The results show that corporal punishment has multidimensional impacts upon students' academic performance/career, psyche and personality development. The study suggests that teacher education, training and awareness regarding curbing ways of corporal punishment and adopting alternative ways to correct students' misbehavior is inevitable.

In a study by the New Hampshire University, it was revealed that caning children may get them to behave in the short term but does more harm than good to their brain. The study showed that avoiding spanking and correcting misbehavior may prevent major implications that arise as a result of corporal punishment that is inflicted on children (Kigotho, 2009).

Corporal punishment is thought to violate a number of international conventions and is considered cruel, inhuman and degrading because it hurts and humiliates children, causes emotional distress, low self esteem, provokes anger and feelings of revenge and instills violent temperaments in children (Smith, 2006). Bremer (2011) studied the use of corporal punishment in schools in Egypt. According to the findings of the study, 50% of the students involved asserted that they never respected teachers who beat them. Bremer argues that this contradicts the traditional assumption that corporal punishment maintains teacher respect.

Many children's rights activists believe that the practice of corporal punishment violates human rights standards. They appeal to a number of human rights instruments, central to which is Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which protects children from all

forms of physical or mental violence (Archambault, 2007). In South Africa student organizations began to demand the end of corporal punishment in the 1970's (Department of Education, 2002). Corporal punishment was viewed as abuse in the classroom and by the 1980's "Education without Fear" was a slogan developed by learners, educators and parents to campaign against the hitting of children (Morrel, 2000).

Tungata (2006) investigated maintenance of discipline in schools in the post corporal punishment era in South Africa. The study established that learners, teachers and parents hold different views about alternatives to corporal punishment. While teachers and parents are in agreement on using parental involvement as an alternative to caning, learners do not want parents to be involved. The findings reveal that teachers are not in favor of alternatives that need to be supervised by them.

In Ghana, investigations into care constitutions and schools revealed that corporal punishment of children was widely used by teachers. As a result of corporal punishment some children developed fear and dislike for their caregivers with many others playing truant to escape corporal punishment at school (UNICEF, 2010). Damien (2012) studied attitudes of stakeholders towards physical punishment on pupils of international and national schools in Uganda. According to the study, it is not proved that all African children subjected to physical punishment behave in an expected manner or perform very well. When physical punishment is used in anger, it becomes physical abuse; obviously, it must impact negatively. In these circumstances it will cause injuries, and in the worse, death.

Archambault (2009) investigated the practices and meanings of corporal punishment in Maasai homes and schools. The study dealt with primary school pupils and established that children resent being the recipients of corporal punishment even though there is much to suggest that they accept what it stands for. For a start, corporal punishment has an effect on students. They fear being beaten and talk about it as an effective disincentive for bad behavior. They do not hesitate to describe situations which in their opinions merit a good beating suggesting that they perceive it as an effective pedagogical tool.

From these studies, primary school pupils had a perception that corporal punishment caused physical injuries and emotional instability. This study therefore sought to find out the perception of secondary school students on corporal punishment.

3.0 Conclusions

3.1 Perception of Students on Corporal Punishment

Out of the students involved in the study, 80% did not support the use of corporal punishment in effecting change in students' behavior while 20% maintained that it was effective.

3.2 Perception of Teachers on Corporal Punishment

All (100%) of the teachers preferred the use of corporal punishment in effecting change in students' behavior while 60% of them used it in effecting behavior change among the students.

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