

PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTS ON THE ABOLISHMENT OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN MZILIKAZI DISTRICT SCHOOLS OF BULAWAYO METROPOLITAN PROVINCE***Chafa Admire**

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Abstract

The study's goal was to find out how parents felt about physical punishment being banned in schools. The purpose of the study was to ascertain how parents felt about physical punishment, to uncover the reasons behind their opinions against it, and to provide tactics for winning over parents to the idea of forbidding physical punishment. Semi-structured interviews were employed in conjunction with a case study to gather data for the study. The study found that parents had negative attitudes toward the ban on corporal punishment, that parents' perceptions of the ban were based on cultural upbringing, personal experiences, societal perceptions, and religious moral beliefs, and that in order for parents to be open to the government, schools, and teachers proving to them that there are other forms of discipline that are even more effective, it was their responsibility to do so. The study suggested that before enacting a new law, such as outlawing physical punishment, government representatives should hold extensive consultations with parents. The majority of research participants reported that they were not consulted on matters pertaining to their children's futures; hence, those who advocated for the outlawing of corporal punishment must address the unfavourable impressions at their source. The government should not just assume that parents will accept the ban on the spot. Instead, education stakeholders should collaborate to attempt and provide parents with an alternative to physical punishment for enforcing discipline. The study suggested that additional research be done to evaluate the efficiency of physical punishment versus alternative forms of discipline in primary schools.

Keywords: Corporal punishment, Perception, Discipline, Abolishment.

INTRODUCTION

According to the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children Global Initiative (2016), 128 countries have made corporal punishment illegal in schools, whereas 69 countries (or 35%) have authorized it. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2007) has explicitly stated that corporal punishment is prohibited by Article 19 (which guarantees protection against all forms of physical and mental violence), Article 37 (which protects against cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment), and Article 28 (which states that school discipline should be consistent with children's "human dignity") (United Nations, 1989). Every child has the right to be shielded from abuse and violence according to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, also known as the African Children's Charter. According to the Charter, states must make sure that parental and school-based punishment upholds the human dignity of the child. The Children's Charter also requires states to guarantee that parents and other caregivers refrain from torturing their children or subjecting them to inhuman or degrading treatment, and those children in detention cannot be punished or subjected to torture as part of the juvenile justice system. The South African Schools Act (no. 84 of 1996) forbade corporal punishment in the country's educational system starting in 1997. This Act makes it very clear that corporal punishment is not permitted in schools (section 10[1]), and that violating this provision is illegal (section 10[2]). A group of independent Christian schools (Christian Education) contested the ban in 1998. In a historic ruling rendered in 2000, the Constitutional Court maintained section 10 of the Schools Act as well as the previous high court ruling.

The question was whether Parliament had infringed upon the rights of parents whose children attended independent schools and who, because of their religious beliefs, had approved of teachers using physical punishment. 2017 saw the High Court of Zimbabwe find that article 60(2)(c) of the Education Act was unconstitutional, therefore outlawing corporal punishment. Nonetheless, a number of parents, educators, public servants, and religious institutions have urged Parliament to reconsider the school's prohibition on physical punishment, claiming it is a primary factor in the growth in juvenile criminality (MUCHABAIWA, 22 April, 2022 *Newsday*). "If the Bible says, when a child misbehaves, he must be beaten, who are we to argue with the Bible?" Nyathi (2022, 12) said. One of the biggest obstacles is that kids know that being physically assaulted in school is against school policy because it violates their rights. Despite recommendations to use caution while using physical punishment in schools, Zindi (1997) discovered that Zimbabweans continue to favor this form of behavioral correction. According to Peters (1980), the cane is the most effective form of discipline in schools when it is applied shortly after the infraction so that pupils can make the connection and understand why the activity is prohibited. According to Shumba et al. (2012), the process by which schools accomplish the primary goal for which they were created namely, the formation and shaping of a devoted and useful future citizen of Zimbabwe includes the use of corporal punishment. The researcher noted that in Mzilikazi District, parents were still advocating for corporal punishment, as a means to correct deviant behavior among the learners. It is against this background that this study sought to assess the perceptions of parents on the abolishment of corporal punishment in Mzilikazi District Primary Schools of Bulawayo Metropolitan Province.

Theoretical Framework: Social Learning Theory

Bandura's 1963 social learning theory served as the study's compass. According to the social learning hypothesis, punishment works to inhibit reactions rather than cause avoidance reactions. Reprimands don't always result in behavior changes; instead, they teach people how to get around detection and punishment. Emotional reactions like shame, anxiety, or rage can be triggered by extrinsic cues like an adult imposing punishment, as stated by Bandura & Walters (1963) in Kudenga (2017). Children can then learn to halt the pattern of behavior or escape punishment by picking up on the emotional trigger. Since both non-reward and emotionally conditioned responses focus on behavior that is socially unacceptable, they are comparable in how they produce a reaction. The study aimed to expose the parents' perceptions based on how the inflicting of pain could be justified in terms of correcting deviant behaviour of the learners in Mzilikazi District Primary Schools of Bulawayo Province.

METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by Interpretivism paradigm, with its ontological assumption that there are multiple truths. A qualitative approach was used which enabled the use of a case study as the research design. Data was generated using semi-structured interview guide. From a population of 32 schools divided into 6 clusters, a sample of 1 cluster with 5 schools was randomly selected. School heads and 5 parents from each school were conveniently selected to be part of the sample.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Perceptions of parents towards corporal punishment

Results showed that parents are not pleased with the prohibition on physical punishment. More than that, they believe that learning cannot occur properly or effectively without the use of physical punishment. The study's findings are consistent with and lend support to earlier research on the subject. Ganira, Ila, & Odundo (2019) investigated parents' and teachers' perceptions of the use of physical punishment in Rwandan primary schools. They said that, in spite of efforts by governments and legal organizations to totally outlaw the practice in order to support children's healthy development, physical punishment is still used worldwide. The use of corporal punishment injures children's rights to development, growth, and freedom from violence. According to Ganira, Ila, and Odundo (2019), human rights organizations, international organizations, and experts consistently oppose the use of physical punishment in households, schools, and child care facilities for the sake of the wellbeing of the children. Therefore, the foundation of Ganira, Ila, and Odundo's (2019) study was the idea that, in many nations, corporal punishment has evolved into a standard practice in homes and schools where children's rights and liberties are infringed upon and mistreated. One of the main obstacles to preventing and treating child abuse in Rwanda is the widespread use of corporal punishment against children, both at home and in schools (Ganira, Ila & Odundo, 2019). This study examined perceptions of teachers and parents on practice of corporal punishment in primary schools in Rwanda. Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Secondary data was obtained through review of critical policy documents.

Basis of the perceptions of the parents on the ban of the corporal punishment

The participants' research responses demonstrated that the parents' perspectives were influenced by their cultural upbringing, individual experiences, society perceptions, and religion moral beliefs. The outcomes of the recommended tactics for persuading parents to support the outlawing of physical punishment were displayed in the section that followed. The study's findings corroborated those of other research projects carried out across the globe. According to Chemhuru (2010), corporal punishment is viewed as a retributive, reformative, and deterrent tool meant to promote positive behaviour in schools and society. According to published research, some supporters of physical punishment experienced physical abuse as children and do not believe that this should change (Shumba *et al.*, 2012). Numerous supporters of physical punishment claim that it motivated them to succeed and put in a lot of effort (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru, 2015 cited in Gomba, 2015). Advocates of physical punishment contended that since it was effective for them, it ought to be effective for their kids as well. Studies indicate that adherence to a sect of Christianity that promotes Biblical literalism, including Evangelical Protestantism, is associated with more supportive attitudes toward harsh punishments of children, including school corporal punishment, corporal punishment of children by parents and harsh punishment for juvenile crime (Gombal 2015). Political conservatism is linked to authoritarian views that support societal control and places a higher value on deference to authority and obedience than on children's autonomy and creativity. As a result, conservative individuals are linked to greater support for parental physical punishment and severe sentence for young offenders. Furthermore, political conservatism has been associated with resistance to change, which could account for the continued acceptance of physical punishment in some regions even though it has been widely abandoned in others (Lakoff, 2010).

Strategies to make parents receptive to the banning of corporal punishment

According to the study, in order for parents to accept the government's ban on physical punishment, schools and instructors have to demonstrate to them that there are other, more effective means of discipline. It was also necessary for non-governmental organizations and institutions to educate parents about alternative approaches to teaching discipline in their children. The study's findings corroborated a study on teachers' authority: methods for establishing discipline in a time beyond corporal punishment (Egunlusi, 2020). The relationship between discipline and authority in South African schools is examined in this study. Corporal punishment was an authoritarian form of discipline during the apartheid era. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, which forbids the use of corporal punishment in schools, is a result of the new democratic Constitution, which guarantees every citizen's right to equality, freedom, security, and dignity. Since corporal punishment is prohibited, it is the duty of schools to establish disciplinary procedures that allow students to feel safe and secure enough to acquire self-control. According to the study, more seasoned educators understood the idea of authority than less seasoned educators. While some new teachers struggle to assert their authority in the classroom because they confuse "authority" with "being authoritarian," experienced teachers

know what it means to be an authority figure and what is needed for it to be used effectively (Kerby, 2007).

Recommendations

The study recommended that:

- Prior to implementing a statutory instrument, such as the outlawing of physical punishment, government officials will be required to thoroughly consult parents. The majority of research participants reported that they were not consulted on a matter concerning their children's future.
- The movers of the ban of corporal punishment needed to tackle the negative perceptions from the root cause of the negative perceptions. The Government should not just assume parents would take the ban from the surface and agree with it.
- Education stakeholders needed to work in unison to try an offer the parents with better option to instilling discipline, besides corporal punishment.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

1. What is the reaction of parents towards the ban of corporal punishment?
2. How do parents view the use of parents towards corporal punishment?
3. Why do parents value corporal punishment over any other form of punishment?
4. How do parents compare the effectiveness of corporal punishment over other alternative forms of punishment?
5. As the deputy head of the school, what reason do you have to support parents over their negative attitude towards the ban of corporal punishment?
6. How can the school help to make parent support the ban of corporal punishment?
7. Which strategies can be adopted to make parents receptive to the banning of corporal punishment?
