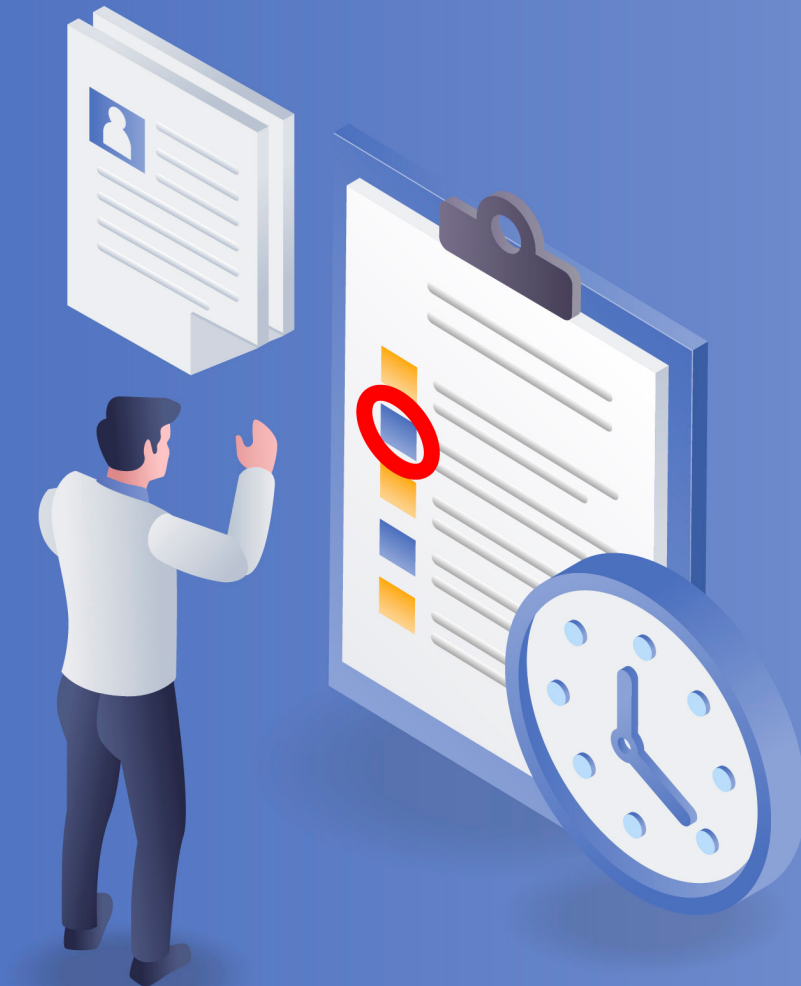




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Ban on Corporal Punishment in Schools: the Views of Basic School Teachers in Wassa Amenfi West Municipality, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This research was conducted to investigate the views of basic schoolteachers about the ban on corporal punishment in Wassa Amenfi West Municipality, Ghana. The study specifically sought to achieve three objectives: to explore the perception of teachers about the ban on corporal punishment in basic schools; to examine the teachers' views about how the ban on corporal punishment is affecting their work as teachers, and to determine alternative measures, instead of corporal punishment, used by teachers in basic schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design with a population of 720 public basic schoolteachers. The simple random technique was used to select 180 respondents for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect the data from the teachers. Data collected were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings reported that most teachers have a negative perception of the ban on corporal punishment, preferring its use in managing student discipline. The findings of the study revealed that the ban on corporal punishment hurts the work of teachers since it has made their jobs more difficult and has increased their stress levels. Alternative strategies often suggested by teachers instead of corporal punishment include guidance and counselling, manual labor, establishing rules and regulations with students, removing certain privileges from students, and suspension. It was recommended that the Ghanaian government, through the Ministry of education, revise the law concerning the ban of corporal punishment to allow for limited use of corporal punishment rather than outlaw it entirely because the ban on corporal punishment has some negative impact on teachers' work. The researcher strongly recommend that the Ministry of Education should organize seminars, conferences, workshops, and other symposia on alternative strategies to deal with indiscipline issues in the absence of corporal punishment.

INTRODUCTION

For many children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, corporal punishment was an important component of their education. It was widely considered as a non-controversial and universally accepted method of ensuring school discipline. By definition, corporal punishment is the infliction of physical pain on an offender for his offense or misbehavior (Wilson, 2002). This corporal punishment is defined in school as the use of physical force by school authorities to cause discomfort but not injury to a kid in order to correct or control a child's behavior (Jambor, 2001; Straus, 1997; Vockell, 1991). Since ancient civilizations, this type of punishment has been a standard technique for instilling discipline. Teachers believe that without corporal punishment, discipline cannot be maintained and that students will be rude to the teacher and fail to learn the discipline to work hard (Kubeka, 2004). Teachers preferred the use of physical punishment in controlling school discipline because it was quick and easy to administer compared to other discipline management approaches, which they believe involve time, patience, and talent, all of which educators sometimes lack.

The legal use of corporal punishment establishes precise guidelines within which the punishment is performed, limiting the potential for abuse. As part of efforts to

promote a secure and protective learning environment for children, the Ghana Education Service (GES) officially outlawed all types of corporal punishment of children in schools in Ghana in 2017. The Ghana Education Service released a positive discipline toolkit in January 2019 as an alternative to corporal punishment for all instructors to use. Some individuals and organizations are advocating for full reintroduction of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools to enhance student behavior and learning standards (Abgenyega, 2006). The reasons for the rise in student indiscipline have been varied, and there is debate among Ghana's public on what factors contribute to student indiscipline in schools. According to the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Africa is well-known for utilizing corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure in schools (Abgenyega, 2016). For example, 92 percent of girls in Botswana are beaten; 80 percent of girls in Egypt are physically punished, and 88 percent of girls in Togo are physically abused. Even though the report did not cover Ghana's use of corporal punishment in schools, there is a lot of evidence to imply that it is used. The most popular kind of child discipline used by many parents and teachers is corporal punishment. Many individuals hold the opinion that many homes and schools still use corporal punishment, which causes many kids to play

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truant. Even though there are numerous laws and acts, both domestically and internationally, that forbid the use of corporal punishment on children in any setting, the practice is still pervasive in many Ghanaian homes and schools, which many people believe is the root of the children's generally poor wellbeing. Parents, teachers, and religious groups in Ghana have voiced opposition to the policy's adoption banning physical punishment, including caning. The Ghana education service (GES) has banned the use of corporal punishment and inhumane punishment in schools and introduced new guidelines to deal with all disciples' issues among children. In a letter issued by lawyer, Anthony Boateng, the Deputy Director-General of Ghana Education Service (GES) to all regional directors has cautioned against the continued and use of corporal and inhumane punishment in schools.

The Ghana government's decision to make corporal punishment illegal has mixed reactions among teachers. While some teachers applauded the action, many others saw it as an invitation for chaos to take hold in the classroom. Ghana's government, through the Ministry of Education, released a new circular in January 2019 prohibiting corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools. Despite the Government's objective of abolishing corporal punishment in schools, some teachers continue to practice it. Mr. Jacob Kor, the Director-General of the Ghana Education Service (GES) at the time, issued a statement warning teacher to follow the direction and refrain from using corporal punishment on students, or face disciplinary action (Ayitey, 2018). Many countries, including the United Kingdom, have stopped using corporal punishment due to its negative effects (Agbenyega, 2006), and Ghana has also banned the practice of inflicting physical pain as a form of punishment, but some teachers in Ghana, including Wassa Amenfi teachers, continue to use it as a form of punishment. Although law in Ghana prohibits corporal punishment, some teachers have found it difficult to implement the ban in their classes by introducing alternatives. Also, it is not clear why some teachers in Ghana used corporal punishment despite the government ban in Ghana. This study therefore sought to determine teachers' perception about the prohibition of corporal punishment and to explore alternative corrective measures used by teachers in place of corporal punishment in Wassa Amenfi West Municipality.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used the convergent parallel mixed design method. The study was conducted in Wassa Amenfi West Municipality in the western region of Ghana. The municipality is located in one of the wettest areas in the country. The average annual rainfall for the south and north is 173 mm and 140 mm respectively. The study was purposively selected because it has a history of indiscipline issues reported by teachers after the ban on corporal punishment in Ghana. The population for the study was 720 basic schoolteachers from the

public schools in Wassa Amenfi West Municipality. The sample size for the study was 180 respondents, which represented 25% of the population size. The sample size was chosen based on Creswell's (2014) recommendation that at least 25-35% of the population can be used for a study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select eighteen (18) public basic schools. Simple random sampling was also used to select teachers from the selected basic schools after which 10 (ten) teachers were picked randomly without replacement from each selected school.

The questionnaire was made up of four (4) sections. Section A had four (4) items that contained demographic information about the respondents, such as their age, gender, teaching experience, and professional qualifications. Section B had eight (8) items that explored the perception of teachers about the ban on corporal punishment in basic schools. Section C examined teachers' views on how the ban on corporal punishment is affecting their work. In order to obtain information on the perception of teachers regarding the ban on corporal punishment and teachers' views on how the ban on corporal punishment is affecting their work, statements made in the questionnaire in the form of a seven (7) Likert scale was used. The instrument for data collection was a 5-point modified Likert-type response options in which respondents were asked to rate their responses on each of the items. Section D of the questionnaire consisted of unstructured items where the respondent was required to give their own opinions based on the alternative measures, instead of corporal punishment, used by teachers in basic school to ensure discipline.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Background of the Respondents

The statistics provided in the Table 1 show that the majority of the respondents were male, which is 51.5 %, while 48.5 % are females. According to the data, 20.5% of the teachers were between the ages of 20 and 29, 55.0% were between the ages of 30 and 39, 18.9% were between the ages of 39 and 50, and 5.6% of responders were beyond the age of 50. The vast majority of responders were found to be between the ages of 20 and 39. This suggests that the majority of the teachers in the study are still young or in their working years. Additionally, the table above shows that 51 (28.3%) of the teachers had a diploma and 70 (38.9%) had a bachelor's degree in education.

Those with a bachelor's degree in science and a postgraduate diploma in education accounted for 21 (11.7 %), while those with a bachelor's degree in arts and a postgraduate diploma in education were (2.2 %). There were 12(6.7%) teachers having a master's degree in education. The results show that majority of the basic teachers had a bachelor of education certificate. It is also evident from Table 1 that 27.7% had teaching experience ranging from one to ten years, 56.6 % had teaching experience ranging from eleven to twenty years, and 25.0

% had teaching experience ranging from twenty-one to thirty years. 16.7% had been teaching for more than 30

years. Because the majority have been teaching for more than ten years, the teachers are relatively experienced.

Table 1: Demographic distribution of the teachers

Variable	Sub-scale	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	51	51.5
	Female	48	48.5
Age	20-29	37	20.5
	30-39	99	55.0
	40-50	34	18.9
	Over 50	10	5.6
Professional qualification	Diploma	51	28.3
	Bachelor in Education	70	38.9
	BA with PGDE	20	11.1
	BSc with PGDE	21	11.7
	BA with Diploma	4	2.2
	Master in Education	12	6.7
	Others	2	1.1
Teaching experience	1- 10	50	27.7
	11-20	102	56.6
	21-30	45	25.0
	Over 30	30	16.7

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Teachers View on How the Ban on Corporal Punishment is Affecting Teaching and Learning

From the result presented in Table 2, 41.1% agreed while 39.4% strongly agreed that the absence of corporal punishment has increased student misbehavior. The study of Mtsweni (2008), asserted that after the banning of corporal punishment in schools, most teachers feel incapacitated and helpless in dealing with the rise in student misbehavior in schools. From the results of the study, 35.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that the ban on corporal punishment empowered students to look down upon teachers. 31.7% of the study respondents agreed the ban on corporal punishment empowered students to look down upon teachers. Thus, the majority of the respondents accepted that the ban on corporal punishment empowered students to look down upon teachers. This implies that learners do not respect teachers anymore because no one can force them to do anything, which means that they are taking advantage of the prevailing situation. This finding is consistent with a UNESCO (2001) report that said that many Kenyan teachers believe that the absence of corporal punishment would cause schools to become chaotic, with the effect that students would become even more disrespectful to teachers by the time they reached high school. It was also realized from the results that 40.6 % of the respondents strongly agreed that banning corporal punishment has increased violence in schools, while 28.3% agreed with these sentiments.

As can be postulated in the table above, 30% of the

respondents agreed that students will learn better when corporal punishment in schools is allowed, and 26.7% of respondents also strongly agreed. Twenty-nine (16.1%) of the respondents were undecided. This implies that about 56.7% of the respondents agreed that students will learn better when corporal punishment in schools. The findings suggest that most teachers felt that corporal punishment has a positive impact on students' academic performance. This finding is in line with the study Abgenyega (2006), whose research revealed that some individuals and organizations are advocating for full reintroduction of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools as a means of enhancing student behavior and learning performance. The study findings indicated that 21.1% of the teachers strongly agreed that other methods of maintaining discipline in schools besides corporal punishment are ineffective, 26.1% agreed, 16.1% were undecided, 24.4% strongly disagreed and 12.2 % disagreed that other methods of maintaining discipline in schools besides corporal punishment are ineffective. The results indicate that teachers utilize alternatives to corporal punishment, but the majority of the teachers believed that the alternative measures are ineffective when compared to corporal punishment. This may be attributed to inadequate training for teachers on adoption of innovative discipline management strategies in schools.

According to the findings, 58.9% of teachers believed that the prohibition on corporal punishment will cause school children to be out of control in school, while 29.4% did

not believe that the ban on corporal punishment will not cause school children to lose control in school. This finding indicates that many teachers argued that without corporal punishment, schools would descend into violence and as a result, pupils would become even more unruly to be controlled. The results also show that 29.4% of the teachers agreed the ban on corporal punishment serves no purpose in schools, and 27.8% of respondents

strongly agreed. About 11.1% of the respondents were undecided. 16.7% of respondents strongly disagreed that the ban on corporal punishment serves no purpose in schools, and the other 15% of them disagreed. The findings imply that the teachers had a strong belief in and regard for corporal punishment because majority of them felt that the ban on corporal punishment served no purpose.

Table 2: Perception of teachers about the ban on corporal punishment in basic schools

Statement	Strong Agree	Agree	Undecide	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
It is the absence of corporal punishment that has increased student's misbehavior.	71 (39.4%)	74 (41.1%)	8 (4.4%)	17 (9.4%)	10 (5.6%)
The ban on corporal punishment empowered students to look down upon teachers.	64 (35.6%)	57 (31.7%)	12 (6.7%)	26 (14.4 %)	21 (11.7%)
Banning of corporal punishment has increased violence in schools.	73 (40.6%)	51 (28.3%)	18 (10.0%)	22 (12.2%)	16 (8.9%)
Students will learn better when corporal punishment in schools is allowed.	48 (26.7%)	54 (30%)	29 (16.1%)	24 (13.3%)	25 (13.9%)
Other methods of maintaining discipline in schools besides corporal punishment are effective.	38 (21.1%)	47 (26.1 %)	29 (16.1%)	44 (24.4%)	22 (12.2%)
The ban on corporal punishment would cause schoolchildren to be out of control in school.	43 (23.9%)	63 (35.0%)	21 (11.7%)	27 (15.0%)	26 (14.4%)
The ban on corporal punishment serves no purpose in schools.	50 (27.8%)	53 (29.4%)	20 (11.1%)	30 (16.7%)	27 (15%)
Teachers have no authority in schools because of the absence of corporal punishment	19 (10.6%)	29 (16.1%)	18 (10.0%)	54 (30%)	60 (33.3%)

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Teachers' Views on How the Ban on Corporal Punishment is Affecting Their Work as Teachers

The results revealed that 61 teachers out of 180 teachers, which translate to 33.9%, agreed that the ban on corporal punishment is negatively affecting their work as a disciplinarian. This is solid proof that teachers' methods of correcting learners had been negatively affected by the ban on corporal punishment. Moreover, the majority of teachers (55.5%) felt that the ban on corporal punishment has made their work as teachers difficult. This is in accordance with Mwai (2014), whose research found that teachers continue to advocate corporal punishment in schools due to the difficulty of maintaining classroom discipline and the lack of resources and training for alternate forms of punishment. The findings also show that a significant portion (50.5%) of teachers agreed that there is more stress on them than before as a result of the ban on corporal punishment. This is consistent with the findings of Gladwell (1999), who found that a significant portion of respondents said that teaching had become challenging after the abolition of corporal punishment. When teachers were asked if the ban on corporal punishment has reduced their sense of dignity as a teacher, 37.8% of teachers strongly disagreed, while 28.3% disagreed as compared to 11.7% who strongly agreed and 11.1% who agreed. These results imply that

teachers strongly disagreed that the ban on corporal punishment has reduced their sense of dignity as a teacher. The thrust of children's right and subsequent banning of corporal punishment that has ushered in an era of freedom for learners has not reduced their sense of dignity as educators. This means teachers' sense of dignity cannot be demanded forcibly through corporal punishment.

Majority of teachers representing 35.6% and 33.9%, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively to the idea that they are unable to enforce classroom instructions due to the ban on corporal punishment. This supports an earlier finding by Fonkouda (2009), who discovered that a teacher's capacity to exert control over and be in charge of the classroom environment depends on his or her power and authority. As a result, effective teachers don't really need tools like the cane to maintain order in their classrooms; rather, their discipline should emerge from the ethics of the school, their personality and their traditional role as teachers.

Moreover, the data presented in table 3 show that majority of the teachers (71.0%) disagreed that they do not feel safe to do their work due to the ban on corporal punishment. It is not therefore surprising that 62.3% disagreed that the ban on corporal punishment has lowered their interest and morale in teaching. The results imply that despite the

several reported cases of challenges faced by teachers as a result of the ban on corporal punishment, they still have the passion and interest to impact knowledge in the lives of students. Some of the findings are inconsistent with the findings of Naong (2007), who reported in a previous study that the current state of teaching in South Africa

is marked by extremely difficult conditions, particularly,
 (i) The incidence and impact of stress,
 (ii) Low morale, and
 (iii) The number of teachers quitting or planning to leave the profession.

Table 3: Teacher's view's on how the ban on corporal punishment is affecting their work

Statement	Undecide	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The ban on corporal punishment is negatively affecting my work as a disciplinarian.	9 (5.0%)	11 (8.3%)	41 (22.8%)	61 (33.9%)	54 (30.0%)
The ban on corporal punishment has made my work as a teacher difficult.	13 (7.2%)	21 (11.7%)	46 (25.6%)	60 (33.3%)	40 (22.2%)
There is more stress on me than before as a result of the ban on corporal punishment.	15 (8.3%)	45 (25.0%)	29 (16.1 %)	56 (31.1%)	35 (19.4%)
The ban on corporal punishment has reduced my sense of dignity as a teacher.	20 (11.1%)	68 (37.8%)	51 (28.3%)	20 (11.1%)	21 (11.7%)
I am unable to enforce classroom instructions due to the ban on corporal punishment	12 (6.7%)	61 (33.9%)	64 (35.6%)	21 (11.7%)	22 (12.2%)
I do not feel safe to do my work due to the ban on corporal punishment.	15 (8.3%)	69 (38.3%)	59 (32.8%)	16 (8.9%)	21 (11.7%)
The ban on corporal punishment has lowered my interest and morale in teaching.	12 (6.7%)	64 (35.6%)	48 (26.7%)	36 (20.0%)	20 (11.1%)

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Alternative Measures, Instead of Corporal Punishment Used by Teachers in Basic Schools

Alternative measures, instead of corporal punishment used by teachers in basic schools was investigated. According to the findings in Table 4, 16.1% of teachers suggested that counseling and guidance was an effective alternative measure that was used instead of corporal punishment to discipline students in their schools. The current study is in line with the finding of Ayieko (1988) who asserted that counseling and guidance services are crucial to student behavior management and academic improvement. Additionally, it is in line with the report of Collins (2002), who asserted that counseling and guidance are crucial because they give learners insight into their working knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, which in turn changes their maladaptive behaviors. Based on the data in Table 4, 14.4% of the teachers recommended using manual work as a substitute for corporal punishment when disciplining students. Manual work is the physical work, which includes tasks that are basic not degrading or lowly (Khewu, 2014).

Some of the teachers wrote the following comments:

"I let the students mob the school laboratory and trim the school complex."

"Some of the penalties I offer the student include cleaning the bathroom and urinal, picking up rubbish, watering the flowers, and picking up stones."

This is consistent with a study by Simatwa (2012) that found that most schools employed manual work as a form of punishment, such as removing a tree stump. Similar to this, Maphosa (2011) found that the most common form

of punishment for serious cases of indiscipline in schools was manual labour.

Furthermore, the study shows that 12.8% of teachers suggested that an alternative to corporal punishment in schools was to let children write words repeatedly in their books to express regret. Some of the teachers made the following comments in writing:

"Writing of scripts such as I promise I will never misbehave in class again in an exercise book".

"In their workout books, they wrote a swift brown fox jump over a slow dog 2000 times."

"I do assign children a lengthy paragraph to duplicate it numerous times, and as a consequence, their handwriting improves as a result of doing that."

"Let that pupil fill out an activity book with an apology for that offense."

The study finding indicates that 9.4% of the teachers suggested that withdrawal of certain privilege from the learners was an alternative measure used to discipline students instead of corporal punishment. Some of the comments made by the teachers in writing are:

"Withdrawing children from participating in specific activities that make them joyful causes them to quit engaging in some of their wrongdoing"

" Isolating the child from the game he or she likes best and detaining the child in school for the number of minutes after school are a form of alternative measures I use instead of corporal punishment."

Students may not disbelieve again, since they feel degraded for taking privileges away from them. Detention during the break instead of corporal punishment is a

lighter punishment that would make the learner regret the behavior and therefore make him/ her not to repeat. Additionally, 8.3% of the teachers who took part in this study said that praise and rewards were very important in sustaining discipline in basic schools. Typical comments were as follows:

“I reinforce positive behavior by praising pupils for their good behavior and acknowledging students’ actions.”

“I demonstrate compassion and concern to undisciplined pupils while motivating well-behaved discipline children.”

“Applauding excellent behavior at school events and making positive remarks in termly reports may be utilized to manage students’ behavior in schools.”

Setting rules and regulations with the pupils was another significant alternative technique that teachers recommended. About 6.7% of the teachers thought that setting of rules and regulations with the students was an effective alternative measured used in schools instead of corporal punishment. The findings indicate that the maintenance of discipline in a school also depends on how rules and regulations with the students are established. If rules and regulations are not set in the classroom, students may establish their own pattern of behavior. This finding is in line with Adams (2003) who found that rules and regulations are among the strategies designed to instill good conduct. The study deviates with

the study of Jeruto and Kiprop (2011), which came to the conclusion that students’ opinions are not taken into account when decisions are made regarding the formulation of school regulation, student discipline, and the nature of consequences.

The finding shows that 5.6% of the teachers substituted suspension for corporal punishment in the classroom. The term “suspension” describes the temporary expulsion of pupils from school due to a disciplinary offense (Skiba & Sprague, 2008). According to the report, children who committed major offenses were subject to suspension and were required to miss school for a set length of time. According to Kaguamba and Muola (2010), suspension was one of the methods used in Kenya to address students’ behavioral problems. However, Skiba and Sprague (2008) argue against the use of suspension and claim that schools with greater rates of suspension typically exhibit worse academic quality, pay little attention to the school environment, and obtain bad evaluations on school governance measures. Table 4 lists additional alternative measures that are successful for teachers but less frequently used by teachers. These include sacking students from class, using persuasive words, restraining love from students, kneeling down, doing extra assignment, sending the students to the headmaster and others.

Table 4: Alternative measures, instead of corporal punishment, used by teachers in basic schools

Teachers’ suggestions	Frequency	%
Giving guidance, counselling and advice to students and educating them on social vices behaviors.	29	16.1
There should be more counselling coordinators in the various schools.	6	3.3
Motivating well discipline students and showing love and care to indiscipline students.	4	2.2
Listen to students.	3	1.7
Verbal warning and caution them.	5	2.8
Writing a sentence like “I will not do that again repeatedly.	23	12.8
Giving manual or physical work around the school to the students.	26	14.4
Doing more extra assignment.	4	2.2
Kneeling down.	3	1.7
Let them squat.	3	1.7
Advising parents to inculcate good behavior and portray good morals to students.	4	2.2
clearing the chalkboard for the day for 2 days.	1	0.6
Suspension	10	5.6
Denying of students’ privilege from activities they interested.	17	9.4
Sending the learner to the headmaster or Head of Department.	3	1.7
Restraining love and care from the students for a while.	3	1.7
Motivate and reward the good behavior, such as acknowledging students’ behavior and the use of praises.	15	8.3
Setting of rules and regulation with the students.	12	6.7
Making s students sign bonds for good conduct.	4	2.2
Using Persuasive word.	2	1.1
Reciting the national anthem by students.	1	0.6
Sack them from the class.	2	1.1
Total	180	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

CONCLUSION

This study used the convergent parallel mixed design method. The population comprised teachers within Junior High Schools in the Wassa Amenfi West Municipality of Ghana. A random sample of 180 respondents was used for the study. Regarding teachers' perception of the ban on corporal punishment in basic schools, the findings revealed the majority of the teachers have a negative attitude towards the ban on corporal punishment. That shows that teachers in basic schools, who are expected to implement the corporal punishment ban, still favor its use in the management of student discipline. In terms of teachers' views about how the ban on corporal punishment is affecting their work as teachers, the study concluded the levels of learners' indiscipline after the ban of corporal punishment have increased in basic schools, which has caused a negative significant impact on the work of teachers. Alternatives to corporal punishment that teachers use include guidance and counseling, showing love, withholding privileges, suspension, and positive reinforcement. Teachers, on the other hand, thought that these alternative methods were ineffective as compared to corporal punishment. The researcher strongly recommends that the Ministry of Education should organize seminars, conferences, workshops, and other symposiums on alternative strategies to deal with indiscipline issues in the absence of corporal punishment. The Ghana Education Service should strengthen guidance and counselling units in basic schools so that teachers should be well trained on how to carry out their duties to improve their skills.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, further study should concentrate on parents' and students' perceptions of the prohibition of corporal punishment in Ghana's basic schools.

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