

HOW ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT CAN BE MADE MORE EFFECTIVE IN GHANAIAN BASIC SCHOOLS: PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Finding solutions to the challenges with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment to ensure a long-lasting discipline in schools is a concern of educational stakeholders. This study employed a qualitative research approach, involving interviews with 15 basic school teachers and focus group discussions with 15 basic school headteachers in the Mampong Municipality of Ghana, to explore their perspectives on addressing challenges associated with using alternative strategies to corporal punishment. The phenomenological research design was used to ascertain the lived experiences of the participants on the phenomenon under study. Seven action-oriented activities on the part of stakeholders were drawn from the thematic analysis of the data, as ways of addressing the challenges with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment. It was recommended among others that, for a successful use of the alternative strategies, education of stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration on the use of the strategies are necessary.

Keywords: Alternative strategies, Corporal punishment, Basic schools, Teachers, Effective, Stakeholders, Perceptions.

INTRODUCTION

Support for the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment has increased in recent times as a result of the several negative consequences of the use of corporal punishment and the perceived positive effects of the use of alternative strategies. Corporal punishment is found to result in achievement problems, retaliatory behaviour, aggression and truancy among other problems on the part of pupils (Addison, 2015; Gershoff, Sattler & Holden, 2019; Heekes et al., 2022; Le & Nguyen, 2019; Maiti, 2021). On the other hand, alternative strategies to corporal punishment are praised for a number of positive effects. Beitzel and Castle (2013), for instance, reveal that, restorative discipline, an alternative strategy to corporal punishment, (1) is successful in dealing with a variety of crime rates not excluding violent offenses, (2) has a high likelihood of acceptance as good by both parties, (3) accounts for a reduction in the level of indiscipline and (4) decreases the feeling of anger, retaliation and the propensity to seek retributive justice. Akyina and Heeralal (2024) also noted that the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment improves pupil-teacher relationships, pupils' behavior and the school climate. Other alternative strategies like the School-Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (SWPBIS) reduce office discipline referrals, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions significantly (Childs et al. 2016).

Ghana has abolished the use of corporal punishment in schools as a result of its negative consequences, and replaced it with alternative strategies (Ghana Education Service, 2019a; Selasi, 2019). This abolition however, has brought a lot of concerns from educational stakeholders in Ghana. These concerns are largely born from the perceived increase in the spate of indiscipline in Ghanaian schools, following from the abolition of corporal punishment in

Ghanaian schools. This has led to calls from some circles for corporal punishment to be reintroduced in Ghanaian schools. In a reported interview with the president of the oldest teacher association in Ghana, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), the president called for the reintroduction of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools following the recent spate of indiscipline in Ghanaian schools (Ghanaweb, 2020a). In the policy abolishing the use of corporal punishment in schools in Ghana, teachers were urged to use positive disciplinary means of behaviour modification as an alternative to corporal punishment (Ghana Education Service, 2019b).

Positive discipline refers to the use of practices like guidance and counselling, restorative discipline, spelling out of rules, rewarding of right behaviour and creation of mutually respectful environment, to bring about a right behaviour on the part of someone (Oxley & Holden, 2021; Steven, 2018). The alternative strategies to corporal punishment, particularly positive discipline, are aimed at restoring the offender rather than punishing him/her for exhibiting a wrong behaviour. These strategies, therefore, utilise practices that bring together the offender, victim and the entire community or significant players in the child's (offender's) development, to resolve the problem at stake by way of reforming the offender and appeasing the victim of the offence. Therefore, the aim of alternative strategies is mostly to appease the victim and to restore the offender by providing him/her (the offender) with skills lacking in the environment that resulted in the offence committed. Thus, alternative discipline strategies are seen as more positive in focus compared with punitive discipline, which is mostly criticised for its number of negative repercussions as a result of its retributive nature (Akyina & Heeralal, 2024). The use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment however, is beset with several challenges which need to be addressed to sustain their use.

Studies have indicated several challenges with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment. These challenges include lack of amenities in support of the use of the strategies, lack of knowledge of the use of the strategies, lack of stakeholder support of the use of the strategies among others (Abdulai & Inkoom, 2016; Akyina & Heeralal, 2024; Ampofo, 2020; Feuerborn, Wallace & Tyre, 2016; Kemetse et al., 2018; Letsa & Sadiq, 2021; Tanko et al., 2019). These challenges have the potential to discourage the use of these alternative strategies and hence, the attainment of the gains of the use of the alternative strategies, if amicable steps are not put in place to address them. With corporal punishment noted for having a number of negative returns to education, challenges with the use of its alternatives, will lead to a return to the use of corporal punishment by teachers, with its attendant negative consequences, if the challenges with the use of the alternative strategies are not addressed. It is important therefore, that in the wake of the adoption of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment by Ghana Education Service (GES), solutions are found to the challenges with the use of these strategies, so as to achieve the ultimate returns of these alternative strategies.

A search through prominent databases have not documented much from the perspective of Ghanaian teachers, the solutions to the challenges with the use of the alternatives strategies to corporal punishment. At best, most of the studies have utilised quantitative research approach to find out teachers' perceptions of abolition of corporal punishment, missing the real voices of the participants as to what should be done to sustain the use of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment. As a new policy by GES, the sustainability of the use of it depends on finding amicable solutions to its challenges so as to engender trust and confidence in the strategies and hence the policy on the part of the stakeholders.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The available literature (e.g. Akyina & Heeralal, 2024; Djabrayan & Hannigan, 2019) has documented several challenges with the use of alternative strategies which when not resolved can hamper the numerous positive attainments of the use of these strategies. This study, therefore, was commissioned with the aim of exploring the perceptions of the users (teachers and headteachers) of these strategies, as to how the challenges with the use of the alternative strategies could be addressed, so as to make for effective use of these strategies in schools. A qualitative approach was adopted to undertake an in-depth study, to explore the perceptions of the participants on this phenomenon. The problem addressed in this study therefore was how can the challenges with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment be addressed in basic schools in Ghana? The research question: How can alternative strategies to corporal punishment be made to work more effectively in Ghanaian basic schools? was the overriding research question that guided this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Alternative strategies to corporal punishment

Several alternatives to corporal punishment are accounted for in the literature. One notable alternative strategy is positive discipline. Positive discipline entails teachers and care givers establishing care and supportive relationships with students, which leads to character reformation (Wang & Kuo, 2019). Oxley and Holden (2021) allude that it uses positive reinforcement instead of punishment, proactiveness rather than reaction, and collaboration not the top-down approach in decision making. Beerli (2020) underscores the following advantages with the use of positive discipline. First, it facilitates learning and boosts the development of the child. Second, it makes the child independent and self-supportive, leading to a feeling of self-acceptance on the child's part. Third, it helps in controlling disruptive behaviour. Positive discipline is the recommended alternative discipline policy of Ghana Education Service (GES) (Ghana Education Service, 2019b). The policy stipulates four (4) approaches to addressing students' disciplinary challenges. These are mainly, clear spell out of school rules, use of non-punitive measures like cautions and reminders, use of counselling and use of stakeholder conferencing, as can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Steps in using positive discipline strategies

Nature of misbehavior	How to deal with the misbehavior
Step 1- No exhibition of misbehavior	Put in place preventive measures like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly spelling out rules and regulations of conduct • Appreciating pupils for good behavior • Counselling pupils to show good behavior • Creation of mutual respect for teachers and pupils
Step 2 – Trivial/first time offences	Use of non-punishable measures like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminders • Cautions • Investigation of reasons and causes of misbehavior • Drawing offender's attention to benefits of good behavior
Step 3 – Frequent/very serious offences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw offender's attention to the gravity and repetitive nature of the offence • Use counselling, behavior contracts, token economy and constant follow ups.
Step 4 – Lingering, risky and disruptive behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-community conferencing • Constant pupil monitoring • Intensive counselling of pupil

Source: Ghana Education Service (2016) Adapted

Oxley and Holden (2021) have emphasised three (3) main positive discipline strategies used in schools. These are restorative discipline, positive behaviour intervention and support, and collaborative and proactive solutions.

The term, restorative discipline, refers to “a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of an offence and its implications for the future” (Marshal, as cited in Borton, 2008:216). On the other hand, the National Commission on Restorative Justice (NCRJ) defined restorative discipline as “a victim-sensitive response to criminal offending, which, through engagement with those affected by crime, aims to make amends for the harm that has been caused to victims and communities and which facilitates offender rehabilitation and integration into society” (NCRJ, 2009:34). Studies by Blood and Thorsborne, Queensland Education Department, Youth Justice Board, as cited in Payne and Welch (2015), have testified to the effectiveness of restorative discipline over punitive discipline in dealing with school-based misbehaviour. To this extent, it is said that the restorative discipline approach is more effective in the school system than in the court system because of the close nature of interaction in the school system (Payne & Welch, 2015). In the school situation, restorative discipline seeks to mend the sour relationship between pupils and educators as a way of resolving conflicts between them and as a way of showing empathic understanding towards the perpetrator of the offence (Jeznik, Kroflic & Kuhar, 2020; Oxley & Holden, 2021; Vanjaarsveld, 2011).

Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (PBIS) is another positive discipline approach often utilised in schools. This approach, which relies on positive reinforcement, has been used extensively in over 26,000 schools in the United States of America (OSEP Technical Assistance Centre on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2017; Oxley & Holden, 2021). PBIS has the basic aim of changing the environment of the school and processes for positive behaviour among pupils, teachers and the general staff. It, therefore, aims at changing the classroom environment by creating the right environment for the exhibition of positive behaviour. The benefits of PBIS have been expressed in several studies and hence, it is recommended for use to address a number of school-based disciplinary and learning problems. In a longitudinal study of 1,122 schools in the Florida area, Childs et al. (2016) found that implementing School-Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (SWPBIS) reduced office discipline referrals, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions significantly. Similarly, Gage et al. (2020) studied the effect of SWPBIS and school disciplinary exclusions. The study, which was a conceptual replication of already conducted studies on SWPBIS, looked at 98 schools strictly implementing SWPBIS and 98 schools not implementing it in California area. The results indicated that the schools strictly implementing it had reduced suspensions on the part of students.

Collaborative Proactive Solutions (CPS) is another approach to disciplinary control which comes under the umbrella of positive discipline. This approach emanated from the psychological orientation of the psychosocial, behaviour-cognitive and ecological way of managing behaviour problems (Oxley & Holden, 2021). Studies have documented its effectiveness in resolving several behavioural problems. Greene and Winkler (2019), in their study of 11 empirical studies, found that it had a significant effect in limiting school referrals, exclusions and detentions. Furthermore, they found the approach efficacious in families, schools and therapeutic processes in addressing behavioural problems.

Several other alternative strategies exist which have proven successful in their use to address disciplinary challenges of students. These strategies include guidance and counselling, positive

reinforcement, token economy and behaviour contract. The rest are Premack principle, proximity control and time out. Several studies have documented the successes of the use of these strategies in addressing students' indiscipline (Dabone, Graham & Fabea, 2015; Kim et al., 2022; Rahmadhony, 2019; Weaver et al., 2020).

Challenges with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment

A number of studies have documented some challenges with the use of alternative strategies. These challenges call for redress, to ensure the successful use of the alternative strategies. Akyina and Heeralal (2024) identified challenges relating to delay of time, non-co-operation of teachers and students and high cost of implementation. The rest were lack of knowledge of the use of the strategies and non-continuity of the use of the strategies at home. Enumerating the factors that hinder the implementation of the alternative strategy, Djabrayan and Hannigan (2019) in a study, found the following factors: lack of support of District Education Directorate in the implementation of the strategy, parental and community resistance of the use of the strategy, gaps in communication around the use of the strategy between teachers and school administrators and lack of time on the part of the administrators of the strategy to follow through to the end in the use of the strategy. These factors indicate that a conscious effort should be made by implementors of alternative discipline strategies to ensure their success. It is, therefore, necessary that the needed training, resources and motivation be given to stakeholders of any disciplinary approach to ensure its success.

Specifically, the implementation of a token economy presents challenges, including an increased workload for teachers, who must allocate additional time to observe and document the appropriate behaviors of students. Secondly, it might be costly in terms of money to acquire the tangible objects in exchange of the token given (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990). On the use of guidance and counselling, Mante and Li (2021) identified the following challenges with their use: lack of facilities for training, inadequate funds, inadequate counselling sessions and non-availability of peer counsellors hamper the proper institutionalisation of guidance and counselling in schools. Feuerborn, Wallace and Tyre (2016) studied the perception of teachers on the implementation of SWPBIS and found that the challenges with its implementation emanated from staff support and agreement on its use and, hence, the greatest need expressed by the implementors was for collaboration in its implementation.

Ways of improving the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment

Though restorative discipline has been found successful in controlling school discipline, its successful implementation is found to be dependent on teachers' training on restorative discipline and, hence, requires re-orientation of teachers towards school discipline (Oxley & Holden, 2021; Weaver & Swank, 2020). Oxley and Holden (2021) further assert that to successfully implement restorative discipline strategy a high level of training is needed by the staff who will implement the strategy. Without that, its implementation is likely to fail. Therefore, the implementation of the strategy without the requisite training of staff may result in an unintended outcome. Seliskar (2020) emphasised this point further, listing a number of variables that must be present on the part of students, teachers, counsellors and school administrators in order for restorative practices to be implemented successfully. These problems, according to him, are a barrier to the successful implementation of restorative practice programme and must be addressed. On the student side, Seliskar (2020) stated that the following factors influenced the successful application of restorative practices: first, ability of peers to confront their peers during restorative sessions; second, ability of students to strike a balance between completing their class assignment and partaking in restorative practice

sessions; and third, students learning to take leadership responsibilities during restorative practice sessions. It follows from these that students should be trained on these for a successful working of restorative practices in schools.

According to Seliskar (2020), factors for the successful application of restorative practices on the part of teachers are the ability of teachers to learn and share duties and supervision within the classroom, establishing restorative practices requirements in the classroom and ability to confront issues in class while at the same time ensuring coverage of the learning content in class. Finally, helping students to overcome their challenges in the classroom is a task the teacher must be able to perform. On the side of school counsellors, Seliskar (2020) posits that issues that have to be dealt with relate to counsellors' ability to confront difficult students and challenges and learning to help others in the operationalization of the restoration process. Finally, on the part of school administrators, challenges that need to be addressed enumerated by Seliskar (2020) are motivating teachers to believe in themselves to successfully implement restorative practices and recruiting staff who believe in the philosophy of restorative practices. Seith (2019), in this regard, noted that the restorative discipline failed in Scotland because of a rush in its implementation. Teachers did not receive adequate training and, therefore, lacked the preparation needed for the policy's implementation. Consequently, the teachers noted that the approach was unsuccessful and aggravated disciplinary problems as compared with policies prior to the implementation of the restorative discipline policy.

Djabrayan and Hannigan (2019) also identified in a study of fifty-two California-based school administrators that the following factors support the use of the alternative strategies: availability of physical tools, resources and know-how of how to implement the strategies; availability of a support system in place to ensure prevention, possible intervention and remediation of wayward behaviour; and willingness of staff and teachers to implement the alternative discipline strategy.

METHODOLOGY

Research framework

In terms of the research framework, that is, research paradigm, research approach, and research design, this study adopted constructivism– interpretivism paradigms, qualitative research approach, and phenomenological research design respectively. The constructivism–interpretivism paradigms are based on the premise that knowledge is not objective in its form but is something that has to be constructed from the point of view of the experiencer (Guba, 1990; Iofrida et al., 2018). These paradigms were adopted because the researchers wanted to construct knowledge from the views of the participants of the study. A qualitative approach was adopted to enable the researchers to explore and describe the perceptions of the participants of the study on the phenomenon under study. Since the study was conducted with the intention of understanding the participants' experiences of their use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment, mainly in terms of how the challenges with the use of the alternative strategies could be addressed, the Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological design was adopted for the study. Gill (2020) asserted that Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method follows the line of descriptive phenomenology by Husserl. It originated from psychology and its method of enquiry is scientific. The aim of Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method is to reach out to the core essence of a particular phenomenon.

Population, sample and sampling procedures

Fifteen basic school teachers who had experience in the use of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment, by having undergone professional teacher education which in part,

includes topics on behaviour modification strategies of pupils, were purposefully selected for the study after the necessary ethical clearance was obtained. These teachers were engaged in an in-depth interview on their experiences with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment in terms of how the challenges with their use could be addressed. Furthermore, fifteen headteachers with experience in the use of the alternative strategies, by virtue of their training and use of the strategies, were engaged in focus group discussion to ascertain their experiences on the use of the strategies in terms of how the challenges with their use could be addressed. There were three focus groups of five members each. The focus group discussion data were used to triangulate the data from the interviews in the course of the analysis of the data. The interview as well as the focus group discussion guides were developed by the researchers and content validated by the Ethical Review Committee of College of Education, University of South Africa.

Data analysis procedure

The data from the two research techniques used for data collection namely the interview and the focus group discussion were thematically analyzed using Giorgi, Giorgi and Morley's (2017) guide to phenomenological studies to arrive at the themes and the sub-themes of this study. Giorgi, Giorgi and Morley (2017) have presented steps undertaken to arrive at the essence of a phenomenon in the Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method. These steps are collecting the lived experiences of the key experiencers of the phenomenon under consideration, reading through the transcripts of the lived experiences and drawing meaning units from them after bracketing your experiences, and lastly, using the meaning units to form themes and sub-themes after assuming a scientific phenomenological reduction position. These were the steps used in arriving at the themes and sub-themes of this study during the data analysis.

In the analysis of the interview data, the interview participants were represented with the alphanumeric codes P1-P15 while the three focus groups were represented with alphanumeric codes FGD1-FGD3. This was done to ensure anonymity of their responses. Strategies, such as member checking, triangulation, and audit trail were used after obtaining the data to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

Demographics of the participants

Tables 2 and 3 present the demographic information of the participants of the study.

Table 2: Demographic data of the interview participants

Participant Code	Sex	Age Range	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Educational Qualification	Current Rank
P1	Male	41-50 years	20	M. Ed.	Assistant Director I
P2	Female	31-40 years	12	B.Ed.	Assistant Director II
P3	Female	31-40 years	15	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P4	Female	31-40 years	12	M. Ed.	Assistant Director I

P5	Male	31-40 years	13	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P6	Female	31-40 years	10	B. Sc. (Dip. Ed)	Assistant Director II
P7	Male	41-50 years	14	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P8	Male	20-30 years	5	Diploma	Senior Superintendent II
P9	Male	31-40 years	10	Diploma	Senior Superintendent II
P10	Male	31-40 years	10	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P11	Female	20-30 years	7	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P12	Female	31-40 years	11	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P13	Male	41-50 years	18	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P14	Male	31-40 years	9	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P15	Male	41-50 years	21	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II

From Table 2 above, it can be seen that nine (9) male, and six female teachers were interviewed. They had years of teaching experience ranging from the least of five (5) years to the highest of twenty-one (21) years. Just two (2) of the participants had their highest academic qualification as Diploma. Most of them had Bachelor's degrees, with two (2) of them having Master's degrees. In terms of their ranks in the teaching profession, just two (2) of them were at a near lower rank in the profession, that is, Senior Superintendent II. The majority of them was at the middle and higher ranks, namely, Principal Superintendent and Assistant Director, respectively. This means that the participants had considerable experience in teaching, and hence, they tapped from their rich experiences to share their perceptions of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment they use or have used in the course of their teaching.

Table 3: Demographic data of the focus group participants

Group Code	Sex	Age Range (Years)	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Educational Qualification	Current Rank
FGD1	Male	41-50	26	MPhil.	Deputy Director
	Female	41-50	21	M. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	41-50	27	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Female	51-60	28	B. Ed.	Assistant Director I
	Male	41-50	21	M. Ed.	Assistant Director II
FGD2	Male	41-50	21	M. A.	Assistant Director II
	Male	31-40	14	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Female	31-40	12	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Female	41-50	20	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	31-40	14	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
FGD3	Male	51-60	28	MPhil.	Assistant Director I
	Female	41-50	23	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	51-60	24	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	51-60	26	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	41-50	23	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II

In relation to the focus group discussions, five females and 10 males formed the three (3) focus groups. Twelve (12) of them were at the rank of Assistant Director II, two (2) were at Assistant Director I, and one (1) was at the rank of Deputy Director. Their range in terms of years of teaching experience was twelve (12) to twenty-eight (28) years.

FINDINGS

There are a number of factors that beset the effective use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment as alluded in the literature (Akyina & Heeralal, 2024; Blanco-Portela et al., 2017; Ceulemans, Lozano & Alonso-Almeida, 2015; Jochim & McGuinn, 2016). The participants gave their perceptions of how, from their experiences of the alternative strategies, their use can be made more effective. After the analysis of their expressed perceptions, one major theme was detected. The theme was action-oriented activities required of stakeholders.

The participants indicated that for alternative strategies to corporal punishment to be more effective in dealing with disciplinary challenges in school, there should be some action-oriented activities on the part of stakeholders in the implementation of the policy. These stakeholders include but not limited to parents, teachers, school counsellors, Ghana Education Service, school administrators and headteachers. Seven action-oriented activities were noted by the participants from their experiences with the use of the alternative strategies, as ways of making them more effective. These were rule setting with pupils, education of stakeholders on the alternative strategies, parental involvement, strengthening of guidance and counselling, and commitment by all teachers. The rest were uniformity in the use of the strategies and motivation of teachers.

1. Rule setting with pupils

For alternative strategies to be more effective in school, teachers must set rules with pupils. This was the perception expressed by the participants. The setting of the rules will not be an imposition on the pupils, but a collaborative work by them to arrive at agreeable rules of conduct in school and the consequences of the break of the rules. The following quotes from them affirm the sub-theme:

P1: In class, we must have rules set by students in collaboration with the teacher and the rules documented.

P5: Pupils should be involved in decision making. If they make their own rules, these are the dos and don'ts in class, I think positive behaviour would be encouraged.

P6: I see it that, if the students set their own rules in class, then they know what to do and what not to do.

P7: Every teacher should go to the classroom and then set rules with the students. If you do that, it helps the students to conform and help make learning easy.

The above quotes indicate that the participants perceive that with clear rules set by teachers and pupils, alternative strategies will work effectively to reduce the spate of indiscipline in school. This agrees with Chinnappan, Rapp and Burkhart (2020) and Ghana Education Service (2016) that rule setting significantly modifies pupils positively.

2. Education of stakeholders on alternative strategies

Education of stakeholders on the alternative strategies was the most widely expressed measure by the participants for making the alternative strategies more effective. To this end, many of the participants indicated that they and most teachers do not receive continuous education and training on the use of these strategies. They, therefore, indicated that there should be education and training of the various stakeholders of the policy for its effective implementation. The following were the ways they expressed this perception:

P1, P3, P4, P5, P11, FGD1 and FGD2 called for education of teachers who are one of the key implementors of the strategies:

P1: If there is education for the teachers, it will go a long way to help.

P3: Education on the use of the alternative strategies should go for teachers. The teachers who like corporal punishment, if you ask them to stop, they tell you they don't have any alternative one. So, I think education on the alternative strategies should go for them.

P4: The GES should organize training programmes for us because it is not clear to some of us the teachers, and some are not even aware of the alternative strategies.

P5: Teachers should be adequately educated on these strategies. The last time I checked, there is a printout on alternative strategies, but it has not been publicized to teachers to know unless you take it upon yourself to do research on them. So, there should be workshops to educate teachers on the alternative strategies.

P11: The education on the use of the alternative strategies should be massive. They just said we should not beat the children or stop using corporal punishment, but they did not give us anything. Like there wasn't any detailed alternative to it.

FGD1: The teachers need to be educated on the new paradigm shift. The teachers need to be educated. You know this time round; we have the chance to meet on Thursdays. So, we can designate one of the Thursdays and we consistently take them through.

FGD2: I think that on the part of GES, they have to educate headteachers and teachers and then come out with the reasons why they think corporal punishment should be abolished and then the reasons why we should use the alternative means of disciplining the children.

On the other hand, P2, P9, P12, P13, FGD2 and FGD3 called for the widening of the scope of education to cover parents, students and other stakeholders of education:

P2: The policy makers in education, they should educate us both the parents, teachers, pupils, everybody. They should educate us more on the alternative strategies. What we are supposed to do about it. All they say is stop caning the children, stop giving them corporal punishment but no, nothing. We ourselves are just introducing these strategies. So, every teacher will tell you his or her strategies. We don't have a common strategy.

P9: We should educate not only the teachers but parents on the alternative strategies.

P12: Most times too, we don't know what the alternative strategies are. That is the problem. Most teachers don't know other alternative strategies to corporal punishment. There should be education on the part of teachers, parents and in fact, everybody on their use.

P13: All these things boil down to education. These strategies should not be given only to teachers. We should have the awareness to all the population especially the parents because they are beating their children at home.

FGD2: The education shouldn't be focused on only the teachers because these tools we are using, at times you have to call the parents, not only the parent but stakeholders like PTA, SMC and others. So, they also need to be educated.

FGD3: We need education both the school, teachers and the parents. We need education on this. Recently, a parent said "This time round you don't cane them that is why they are misbehaving. You need to start". We have to educate ourselves of these new strategies.

P8, P14 and P15 mentioned, specifically, that the education of the stakeholders should take the forms of seminars, workshops, meetings and the likes:

P8: They have to educate us on how we are going to use the alternative strategies. They have to organize seminars for us to educate us.

P14: I think the right channel is to have a meeting with the parents and then discuss this old strategy and the new strategies we want to introduce so that they can get adequate knowledge on them.

P15: To me there should be workshops for teachers to update them on the need for and importance of using the new methods of discipline.

These narratives indicate that to the participants, education on the workings and benefits of the use of the alternative strategies is worthwhile to ensure the effective use of the strategies, as supported by Seith (2019), Seliskar (2020) and Djabrayan and Hannigan (2019).

3. Parental involvement

Involvement of parents in the issues of indiscipline of their children was seen as one way of strengthening the use of alternative strategies of corporal punishment. This involves teachers, headteachers and parents sitting together to discuss issues relating to the misbehavior of the child. This strategy, which forms part of the restorative discipline strategy, is seen as one way of making alternative strategies effective in school, as indicated in these narratives:

FGD3: One thing is, the teachers must work hand-in-hand with the parents. They must work side-by-side with the parents for these strategies to be effective. I think without the consent of the parents, this will not work.

P6: I just invite the parents. The parents will come here, and I will discuss everything with them. If I do that, it becomes effective.

P4: For me, sometimes I invite the parents and tell them the kind of behaviour their children are putting up. I urge the parents to talk to them. When I do that, sometimes it works.

Parental involvement in the discussion and solution of the child's misbehaviour is seen in these narratives helpful.

4. Strengthening of guidance and counselling

Strengthening of guidance and counselling in schools also came up as one way the use of alternative strategies can be made more effective. Guidance and counselling helps by way of addressing one's educational, vocational and personal-social concerns. The participants from the following narratives indicated that strengthening the guidance and counselling service in school will help in the furtherance of the use of the alternative strategies:

P5: GES should strengthen the Guidance and Counselling unit to make it more effective. The teacher is multitasked. The coming in of the counsellor will help relieve the teacher, the load of attending to lessons and ensuring class discipline.

FGD2: Guidance and counselling should be strengthened in schools. We have just one coordinator for the whole municipality. How can just one person be going through the many schools in the municipality? There should be counselling coordinator in every school.

The narratives above affirm the findings that guidance and counselling improves the level of discipline of pupils and other aspects of life of the pupils (Agi & Jackson, 2020; Kanus, 2018; Oduh, Agboola & Amufa, 2020).

5. Commitment by all teachers

The willingness and commitment of teachers and other stakeholders to embrace the use of the alternative strategies was found to be one factor that will ensure the effectiveness in the use of the strategies. When stakeholders, on the other hand, show apathy towards the use of the strategies, effective results would not be achieved. These expressions are found in the following quotes from the participants:

P7: All teachers must take part in it. There should be commitment from all. It should not be left with one.

P11: Teachers should change their minds on the use of alternative strategies. We think it is adding a lot of loads to our work. We must be committed to their use.

P12: Teachers should realise that the alternative strategies have come to stay and hence they should be committed to using them.

FGD1 expressed the form of commitment required by teachers in the form of appeal for patience and time in the use of the strategies for their success:

FGD1: Though it is not easy, we need patience to be able to implement the alternative strategies to corporal punishment. We need time to adjust to the new strategies. The teachers will have to understand that they need time and patience when they are using the alternative strategies. This one is not the instance justice thing and as a result, you need time and patience to be able to implement it.

These narratives above point to the fact that teacher commitment holds the key to success in the use of the alternative strategies.

6. Uniformity in the use of the strategies

One factor identified that makes for the effective use of the alternative strategies is the use of the same strategies at home and school. The same strategies should also be consistently used at home and school or else, two communications are sent to the child. The school communicates to the child that corporal punishment is not good but at home, corporal punishment is used, indicating to him that it is a good measure of controlling misbehaviour. This quote from P9 backs the need for uniformity of the use of the alternative strategies at home and school:

P9: At home, parents should be using those strategies as used by teachers in school. Yea, there should be uniformity of the of the alternative strategies in school and at home.

7. Motivation of teachers

Adequate motivation of teachers was also indicated as one factor that propels teachers to use the alternative strategies. With increased workload as a result of the use of the strategies, coupled with the spending of material resources in the use of some of the strategies, adequate motivation will urge teachers to use these strategies. The narrative below from FGD1 points to this fact:

FGD1: Teachers also should be motivated. There is lack of motivation but if there is something attached to whatever he or she is doing, teachers will do more. Sometimes, some of the strategies will need resources. For example, visiting parents for consultation will require money to board taxi but if these resources are not there, they make the work more difficult.

DISCUSSION

It came out from the study that, for alternative strategies to work more effectively, some actions should be taken by stakeholders of the policy. The actions included setting rules with pupils, education of stakeholders on the strategies, parental involvement, strengthening of guidance and counselling in schools, commitment and motivation of teachers, and the use of uniform strategies by all stakeholders.

As alluded to in previous studies (Burden, 2020; Chandra, 2015; Chinnappan, Rapp & Burkhart, 2020; Dörnyei & Muir, 2019; Gregory et al., 2019; Korpershoek et al., 2016), rule setting with pupils facilitates the exhibition of behaviours by pupils. This is because these rules would not be imposed rules, but rules arrived at by consensus. Rule setting, once again, is one of the tenets of the positive discipline strategy (Ghana Education Service, 2016). Teachers' agreement to set rules with students will, to a long extent, improve discipline since the students will willingly obey the rules.

Education of stakeholders on the use of the alternative strategies was the major suggestion from the participants on how to make the alternative strategies more effective. This is in line with a number of studies on factors for the successful implementation of alternative discipline strategies (Djabrayan & Hannigan, 2019; Seith, 2019; Seliskar, 2020). Education and training

on the use of the strategies will make the stakeholders aware of the strategies, understand the workings of the strategies and be able to implement them when necessary. Essuman, Nwaogu and Nwachuku (1990) noted that there are specific situations in which each behaviour modification strategy is used. Education of stakeholders on these strategies will help in this direction.

Parents are major stakeholders in the development of the child. They have a lot of information concerning the behaviour and the root causes of misbehaviour on the part of their children. Their consent to involve themselves in the development of the child, as required in the case of restorative discipline strategy, helps in the academic progress and discipline of the child. Studies (Baker et al., 2016; Hampden-Thompson, & Galindo, 2017; Hill, 2015; Muller, 2018; Ule, Živoder, & du Bois-Reymond, 2015) affirm that parental involvement plays a critical role in the academic achievement and discipline of the child.

Strengthening of guidance and counselling in school will play a great role in improving the use of positive discipline and, in the long run, improve discipline. Studies have indicated that guidance and counselling helps students to adapt to a new school environment (Lemasa, 2018; Kanus, 2017), equips students with necessary educational, career and personal-social information (Ali & Shaliq, 2019; Wambeti & Mwenda, 2016; Sedofia & Ocansey, 2013), and helps students out of their educational, vocational and personal-social concerns (Lasode et al., 2017; Ali & Shaliq, 2019). Guidance and counselling also reduces indiscipline in school (Agi & Jackson, 2020; Kanus, 2018; Oduh, Agboola & Amufa; Salgong, Ngumi & Chege, 2016). However, rendering of guidance and counselling in Ghanaian schools is beset with several challenges such as lack of stakeholder support, lack of logistics and negative perceptions towards its use (Abdulai & Inkoom, 2016; Ampofo, 2020; Kemetse et al., 2018; Letsa & Sadiq, 2021; Tanko et al., 2019). Strengthening of guidance and counselling in schools through the provision of the needed amenities for guidance and counselling will help in the course of the use of positive discipline strategies in school and, in the long run, improve school discipline. Teacher commitment is key to the success of a policy. If teachers are not committed to the implementation of a policy by the regulatory body, the policy is bound to fail. Therefore, the call for commitment on the part of teachers is in the right direction. Furthermore, the use of the same strategies in school and at home will help the pupils to see the importance of the strategies, as it will prove that parents and teachers are committed to the use of the strategies.

Finally, it came up that if teachers are well motivated, it will boost their morale and make them more committed to the use of the alternative strategies. This agrees with findings of studies on teacher motivation that motivation helps teachers to strive towards a goal of achieving a set target, work above themselves and help in pupils' performance and discipline (Heinz, 2015; Keller, Neumann & Fischer, 2017; Mangaleswarasharma, 2017; Nwakasi & Cummins, 2018; Salma & Sajid, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Teachers can be motivated in monetary ways or by a token system, where accumulation of points for the effective use of the alternative strategies aids their promotion to the next professional rank. This will help encourage the use of the alternative strategies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that, despite the challenges with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment in schools, teachers perceive that the putting in place of some measures by educational stakeholders can improve their use. To this end, since alternative strategies have become the accepted norm for managing indiscipline in schools for ethical reasons, it is imperative to implement the actions identified in this study to improve their effectiveness and

ensure their successful application in educational settings. Therefore, the challenges associated with using alternative strategies to corporal punishment do not warrant abandoning them; rather, they highlight the need to implement the strategies identified in this study. Implementing these strategies is expected to sustain the ongoing adoption of the current policy on alternative strategies, thereby preventing a return to corporal punishment and its associated negative consequences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for educational stakeholders, based on the findings of the study, for improvement and sustainability of the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment in schools:

- 1) Teachers and pupils must collaboratively set classroom rules. This will make for easy compliance by pupils as they would not see the rules as an imposition.
- 2) There should be education of teachers on the workings of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment. In pursuant of this, several forums should be created by educational managers to educate teachers on the tenets of various alternative behaviour modification strategies.
- 3) Educational managers should rope in parents on the education on the use of the alternative strategies, to enable parents to be aware of the strategies and use them at home.
- 4) Guidance and counselling should be strengthened in schools with the provision of human and material resources required for their use.
- 5) Teachers must be committed to the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment. They should develop positive attitude towards the use of these strategies.
- 6) Educational managers should motivate teachers who use these strategies to sustain their use and to urge others who do not use them to use them.
- 7) Uniform alternative strategies should be adopted for use in a particular education district.

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