



INFLUENCE OF NON-PHYSICAL DISCIPLINARY METHODS ON SECONDARY SCHOOLS STUDENTS IN KISII CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

This study investigated the efficacy of non-physical modes of punishment in addressing secondary school student discipline in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya, following the ban on corporal punishment in 2001. The research aims to identify effective non-physical disciplinary methods, understand the influence of the school environment on student behavior, assess the effectiveness of different punishment modalities, and propose preventive measures for addressing indiscipline. Utilizing Bentham's Utilitarian Theory of Punishment as a framework, the study employs a survey design to capture real-life experiences of teachers and students. Data from 45 secondary schools, 45 principals, 45 heads of department of guidance and counseling, 310 teachers, and 15,000 students were collected through questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were employed for data analysis, revealing a belief among respondents that the rise in student indiscipline is linked to the corporal punishment ban. However, non-physical modes of punishment were generally considered effective, particularly guidance and counseling. The findings underscore the importance of investing in counseling services to address students' psychological and emotional needs, thus fostering positive behaviors and maintaining school order. This research contributes to the existing knowledge base and lays groundwork for further studies in the field of student discipline management.

Keywords: Non-physical punishment, Punishment, Discipline, Guidance and counseling.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Training people to follow rules and punishing them for breaking them helps in maintaining discipline in schools worldwide. Many countries, including those in Europe, abandoned corporal punishment in schools after the 2001 Children Act, which states that all forms of physical punishment in schools are prohibited to protect the rights and well-being of children. This change follows the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires countries to protect children from physical and psychological harm. Many European countries have banned school physical punishment because it can encourage cruel and masochistic conduct. Instead, detention, enforced labor, suspension, expulsion, and privilege deprivation are supported. International medical and psychological organizations, such as the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association, have also opposed corporal punishment, citing its negative effects on students. (Dorpat, 2007).

In most African countries, school discipline is punishing. Some schools have banned corporal punishment. In 1996, South Africa abolished physical punishment and suggested verbal warning, imprisonment, suspension, and manual labor. School disruption remains despite the ban on corporal punishment and these measures (Marais 2010). Drug usage, assault, theft, absenteeism, and truancy are forms of indiscipline exhibited by students and they impact on teaching and learning (Khewu 2012). Tanzanian school principals administer corporal punishment according to criteria (Khewu 2012). Despite these measures, student indiscipline persists. After corporal punishment was outlawed in 2001, the Kenyan government promoted guidance and counseling as an alternative discipline method (Republic of Kenya, 2001).

However, recent trends show a return of student indiscipline in Kenyan secondary schools, indicating that current disciplinary tactics are ineffectual. Once the responsibility of school officials, suspension now requires extensive bureaucratic processes, delaying disciplinary action. Only the Board of Governors, through the secretary, can suspend students under Ministry of Education guidelines. The Board of Governors only recommends student expulsion to the permanent secretary, Ministry of Education, delaying punishment. Despite occasional guidance and counseling services, disciplinary issues persist, compromising the favorable learning environment needed for academic success (Kerubo, 2020). This is why schools require creative punishments to promote discipline and academic success. Innovative disciplinary procedures that improve discipline and education are needed to address these issues. This study examines alternative punishments and student conduct in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya, to fill this gap.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the ban on corporal punishment in Kisii County's secondary schools since 2001, students' indiscipline continues to escalate. This increase is often attributed to the policy shift away from corporal punishment (Kerubo, 2017). In response, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology recommended the adoption of guidance and counseling, with parent involvement, as an alternative approach to managing student discipline. However, the implementation of disciplinary measures such as suspension, enforced labor, detention, and deprivation of privileges has not yielded desired outcomes, as evidenced by recurring strikes in Kisii Central Sub-County secondary schools. This study aims to assess and analyze the effectiveness of existing modes of punishment in addressing student indiscipline, with the goal of identifying non-physical methods that can effectively mitigate this persistent issue.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of punishment dates back to ancient times, as evidenced by biblical narratives such as Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden for disobedience (Genesis 3:23-24). Expulsion remains a disciplinary measure utilized in Kenyan secondary schools to address misconduct. Similarly, detention, defined as confining individuals to a specified location for a set duration, has historical roots, as seen in biblical accounts of the Israelites' captivity (Barasa, 2007). In Europe, the moral justification of punishment has been extensively debated, leading to the prohibition of corporal punishment in seventeen countries by 2007. The Council of Europe views physical punishment as a form of violence and a violation of human rights, advocating for peaceful parenting practices devoid of physical force (Council of Europe, 2007). Numerous countries worldwide have followed suit, abolishing corporal punishment in schools and homes to safeguard individuals from harm (Butchart & Barbar, 1998).

Positive discipline approaches are advocated as alternatives to punitive measures, aiming to promote effective rule enforcement and innovative disciplinary methods. Punitive policies are criticized for their ineffectiveness in addressing disciplinary issues and their

contribution to increased dropout rates (Butchart & Barbar, 1998). In the United Kingdom, non-punitive disciplinary methods are favored following the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools. Studies highlight the adverse effects of physical punishment on students, including the development of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (Phillips, 2012). Scholars such as Foucault (1977) denounce corporal punishment as brutal, advocating for educational restitution and positive strategies to foster self-discipline in students (Gossen, 1996). Normative approaches involving support, proactive interventions, and verbal warnings are emphasized (Khewu, 2012). Lacey (1988) rejects the retributive view of punishment, advocating for a reformatory approach to guide young students toward responsible behavior.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: UTILITARIAN THEORY

The theory employed in the study is the Utilitarian Theory of Punishment, as articulated by Jeremy Bentham in 1948. This theory posits that the primary purpose of punishment is to deter future wrongdoing and emphasizes the consequences of punishment for both the offender and society. It suggests that punishment should aim to achieve the greatest good for society by preventing future crimes and rehabilitating offenders. The Utilitarian approach contrasts with the Retributive Theory of Punishment, which focuses on retribution and restoring moral balance. Bentham (1948) emphasizes the dual function of deterrence and rehabilitation in the Utilitarian Theory of Punishment. Deterrence aims to prevent future crimes by discouraging both the offender and potential wrongdoers in society, while rehabilitation focuses on reforming the offender through education and training.

In the context of secondary schools, the Utilitarian Theory of Punishment can be particularly effective in addressing indiscipline by promoting non-physical modes of punishment, such as counselling and educational programs. These methods align with the principles of deterrence and rehabilitation, providing students with the guidance and moral education necessary for character formation. Additionally, the Utilitarian approach emphasizes preventive measures to curb indiscipline, such as creating a supportive school environment and implementing programs that promote positive behavior. These measures aim to reduce the incidence of misbehavior and prevent future disciplinary issues. (Stephen, & Simiyu, 2022). The Utilitarian Theory of Punishment provides a comprehensive framework for addressing indiscipline in secondary schools through deterrence, rehabilitation, and preventive measures, aligning with the goal of achieving the greatest good for society.

Research methodology

The study employed a survey-based approach for data collection. The design was selected for this study because the researcher aimed at unveiling peoples' attitudes on modes of punishment used in secondary schools; that is, what actually exists in schools. Data was collected from principals, deputy principals, teachers, counsellors, and students in order to have a complete picture of the topic at hand.

Research design

The study adopted a descriptive research design which is concerned with determining the frequency with which something occurs or the relationship between variables. A descriptive research design was preferred in this study since it allows for analysis of different variables at the same time and enables the researcher to describe variables, situations and conditions (Erikand & Marko, 2011). In addition, descriptive research design was chosen because it enables the researcher to generalize the findings to a larger population.

Location of the study

The study was carried out in Kisii Central Sub-County. It's in Kisii County whose capital town is Kisii. It has a population of about 1,375,063 (USAID Kenya 2013) and an area of 2.069 KM². It has various economic activities. The economy of Kisii Central Sub-County is centered on agriculture, mainly on maize and sugarcane industries due to high rainfall experienced throughout the year. The county has 206 schools and has experienced a number of strikes in the recent past. The researcher, therefore sought to push for non-physical approaches to punishment to curb such behaviour in students. By assessing the actual situation on the ground, the study arrived at some ways of punishing students other than corporal punishment.

Target population

The geographical focus for this study was Kisii Central Sub-County, which is home to 45 public secondary schools and has a student population of approximately 15,000 and a teaching staff of around 400, as reported by the County Education Office in 2014. The intended subjects for this investigation included the 45 secondary schools, 45 school principals or deputy principals, 45 Heads of Departments for Guidance and Counseling, 310 teachers, and the 15,000 students. Consequently, the overall target population for the study is estimated to be 15,400 individuals.

Table 1 : Target population

Variable	target population	(%) Sample	Sample
Principals	45	3%	14
Heads of department	45	3%	14
Teachers	310	20%	92
Students	15000	74%	342
Total	15400	100%	462

Source: Author (2024)

Sampling procedures and techniques

Sampling, as defined by Kombo (2006), entails the methodological steps taken by a researcher to select subjects or items for study. In the context of this research, a non-probability sampling design was utilized. Deputy principals, guidance counselors, students, and teachers with a minimum of five years of work experience were purposefully chosen for inclusion in the study. Additionally, members of the disciplinary committees within schools assisted in identifying individuals with a history of disciplinary infractions were included in the research. This sampling approach was selected because the chosen participants are directly involved with discipline-related issues within the educational setting. For this particular study, the sampling ratios were set at 1:10 for students and 1:30 for principals, deputy principals, and teachers. Given that the total target population for this research stands at 15,400 individuals, the sampling ratios are designed to provide a balanced and representative cross-section of the larger population.

Therefore, sample;

$$30\% \text{ of } 15400 = 462 \text{ respondents}$$

Data Collection Research Instruments

Research instruments are methods of collecting data from the sample population (Nsubuga 2000). In this study the researcher used questionnaires. Questionnaire is one of the instruments

to be used. A set of questions were prepared, validated and distributed to respondents of the sample population. Questionnaires are a preferred choice due to the larger target population. They are relatively economical in terms of cost and time because data can be solicited from a large number of people. This instrument also facilitated easy and quick collection of information within a short time given that it has no geographical limitations. The use of questionnaires leads to more accurate information because respondents have enough time for checking facts and pondering on the questions asked (Walliman & Buckler, 2008).

Reliability and Validity of Research Instruments

To control quality, the researcher endeavored to attain reliability and validity of at least 70%. Instruments were piloted in some schools which were not included in the study sample and modified if need be. According to mohajan (2017), Reliability pertains to the stability and consistency of measurements over time. Specifically, it assesses the degree to which similar outcomes are produced when employing either different iterations of the same data collection instrument or repeated instances of data gathering. A reliable instrument yielded consistent results, reinforcing the credibility and reproducibility of the research findings. Test-retest reliability was conducted to the sample population to compare results. Data collected was piloted in two schools by use of spearman's rank correlation coefficient before it is rolled out to other target group. The two schools were not included in the target population.

Validity is the degree of success of an instrument in measuring what is set so that differences in the individuals can be taken as presenting true picture of characteristics under studies. It is basically asking a relevant question in the least ambiguous way (Mugenda & Mugenda 2003). Respondents' views gathered from questionnaires were assessed critically to ascertain whether (validity of these instruments) the instruments measured what is planned originally.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher plans to elucidate both the purpose and importance of the study to all participants. Additionally, assurances regarding the preservation of anonymity and confidentiality were provided to the respondents. These ethical considerations aim to foster a trusting environment, encouraging candid responses that enhance the study's validity and reliability. Thereafter, questionnaires with closed-ended questions were presented to respondents directly by the researcher to obtain data. Respondents were requested to fill the questionnaires in written.

Ethical considerations

The participants were informed about what their involvement in the study and their consent was sought before going on with data collection. The researcher also ensured that privacy of the respondents is well kept. According to Gay, Mills & Airasian (2009) researchers protect their privacy when they know the study does not disclose that information. To achieve this, anonymity was used to ensure privacy by asking respondents not to indicate their names anywhere in the questionnaires. When analyzing the data and writing the report, the researcher avoided bias by reporting as accurately as possible the results from the field without introducing personal bias. The study also guaranteed that academic materials applied in the study are correctly cited and authorship correctly credited to avoid plagiarism. Finally, the researcher also attempted to ensure precision in data collection and analyzing, proper interpretation of data and presentation of findings accurately, without exaggerating and manipulation.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

The researcher issued 462 questionnaires, 351(75.97%) of the respondents returned their questionnaires while 111(24.03%) of the respondents did not return their questionnaires. The study therefore, had a respondent rate of 75.97%

Non-physical modes of punishments

The study sought to determine non-physical modes of punishments used on secondary school students' discipline in Kisii Central Sub-County, Kenya. The study findings revealed that a mean of 4.0627 with a standard deviation of 1.31434 of the respondents suggested that increase of student's indiscipline can be attributed to ban of corporal punishment, a mean of 4.0285 with a standard deviation of 1.32850 of the respondents suggested that nonphysical modes of punishment are effective. The study further revealed that a mean of 3.5385 reflecting a standard deviation of 1.46895 of the respondents suggested that students prefer suspension to corporal punishment, a mean of 4.0798 with a standard deviation of 1.33070 of the respondents revealed that family background determine character of students. The study also found out that a mean of 4.1709 with a standard deviation of 1.28034 of the respondents revealed that expulsion deters students from misbehavior, a mean of 3.7920 with a standard deviation of 1.49458 of the respondents suggested that strict rules and well-defined guidelines promote discipline. On the other hand, the study revealed that a mean of 3.9487 with a standard deviation of 1.42936 of the respondents revealed that school culture helps curb misbehavior while a mean of 4.2137 reflecting a standard deviation of 1.27725 of the respondents suggested that guidance and counseling services deter/ prevent indiscipline. Majority of the respondents ascertained that guidance and counseling services deter/ prevent indiscipline in the study carried out on assessment of non-physical modes of punishment on secondary school students' discipline in Kisii central sub-county, Kenya.

Table 2 : Non-physical modes of punishments

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Increase of student's indiscipline can be attributed to ban corporal punishment	351	1.00	5.00	4.0627	1.31434
Nonphysical modes of punishment are effective.	351	1.00	5.00	4.0285	1.32850
Students prefer suspension to corporal punishment	351	1.00	5.00	3.5385	1.46895
Family background determine character of students	351	1.00	5.00	4.0798	1.33070
Expulsion deters students from misbehavior	351	1.00	5.00	4.1709	1.28034
Strict rules and well-defined guidelines promote discipline.	351	1.00	5.00	3.7920	1.49458
School culture helps curb misbehavior	351	1.00	5.00	3.9487	1.42936
Guidance and counseling services deter/ prevent indiscipline	351	1.00	5.00	4.2137	1.27725
Valid N (listwise)	351				

Reliability statistics

The Reliability Statistics table presents the Cronbach's Alpha for the set of items under study. Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency, indicating how closely related the items in a set are. A value of .897 suggests a high level of internal consistency among the four items, which is further supported by the Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items, slightly higher at .903. This slight increase implies that standardizing the items, thereby giving each the same variance, improves the reliability marginally. The high alpha values indicate that the items measure the same underlying construct, making the set suitable for further analysis.

Table 3 : Reliability statistics

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.897	.903	4

CONCLUSION

The findings from the study reveal that non-physical modes of punishment, such as guidance and counseling, suspension, and expulsion, play a significant role in maintaining student discipline. The data suggests a general consensus that non-physical punishments are effective. However, there is a notable perception that the ban on corporal punishment may have contributed to an increase in student indiscipline. This highlights the importance of balancing the severity and implementation of non-physical punishments to maintain discipline effectively. Additionally, the impact of family background and school culture on student behavior underscores the need for holistic approaches that involve both the school environment and family dynamics.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop Comprehensive Behavioral Programs: Schools should consider developing comprehensive behavioral programs that encompass a range of strategies to address disciplinary issues effectively. These programs should include elements such as guidance and counseling services, moral education, and community service initiatives. By addressing the underlying causes of misbehavior and promoting positive behavioral changes, such programs can contribute to creating a more disciplined and supportive school environment. Additionally, involving students in the formulation and review of these programs can enhance their sense of responsibility and ownership, leading to better compliance with school rules and reduced instances of indiscipline.

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