

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

**ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINARY METHODS IN BASIC SCHOOLS– A CASE STUDY
OF GA EAST MUNICIPALITY**

BY

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**THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON,
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES DEGREE.**

INSTITUTE OF STATISTICAL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH (ISSER)

NOVEMBER 2024

DECLARATION

I, **Wedzi Kingsley**, declare that this dissertation, “**Assessing the Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Alternative Disciplinary Methods in Basic Schools—A Case Study of GA East Municipality,**” completed under the supervision of Professor Ama Pokua Fenny, is the result of my original work and that no part of it has been submitted for another degree at this university or elsewhere. All references have been duly recognized and acknowledged in the work.

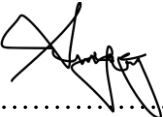
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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my colleagues, family, Pastor Emmanuel Dorleku, and friends, who in various ways, have helped me with support in pursuing my master's degree.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God Almighty for His unwavering mercies throughout my educational journey and for bringing me this far.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Prof. Ama Pokua Fenny, my supervisor, for her immense direction, profound support, and guidance during my dissertation.

I would also like to acknowledge my ISSER lecturers for imparting their knowledge and teachings, which helped my research. Additionally, my gratitude goes to the ISSER staff at the graduate office for their tireless efforts in providing timely information and assistance to us students.

Lastly, I am grateful to my family, colleagues, friends, Madam Lydia, the SHEPS coordinator at the GA East Municipality, and the teachers at the various schools under the district for their consistent support and encouragement.

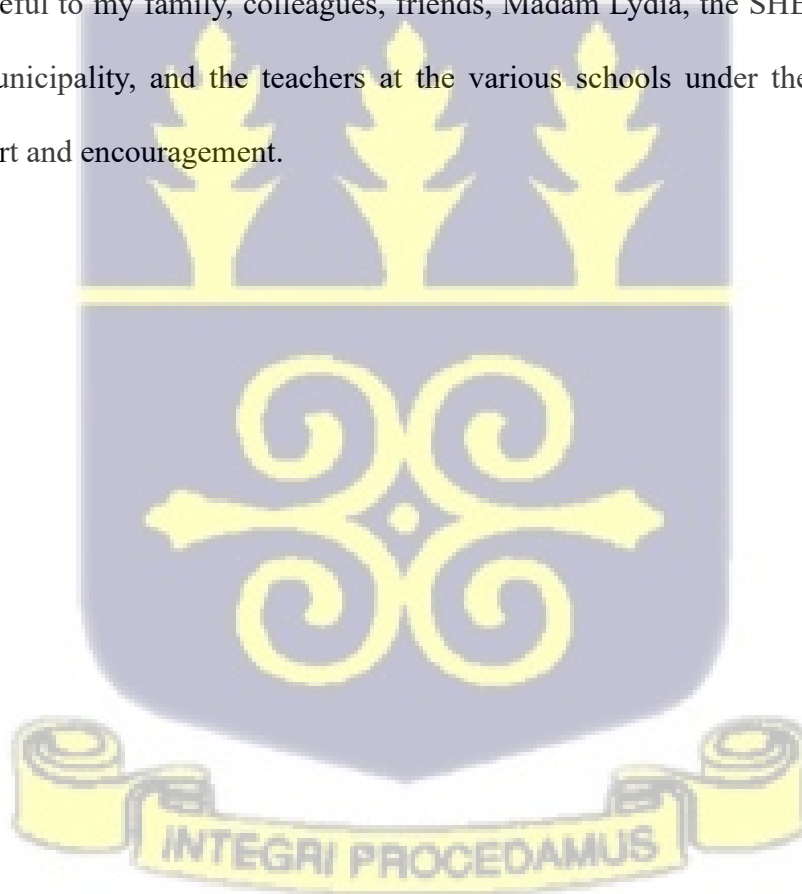


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ABSTRACT

This dissertation evaluates alternative forms of discipline employed in basic schools within the GA East Municipality in the post-corporal punishment era following the 2017 cessation of corporal punishment by the Ghana Education Service (GES). In line with international human rights obligations and increasing evidence about the negative long-term consequences of physical punishment, the GES developed a constructive disciplinary toolkit to facilitate a more conducive learning environment. The data was collected through 18 interviews with teachers, using a qualitative methodology based on the precepts of grounded theory, at six public basic schools, one in each of the municipality's circuits.

And the results point to a complex situation in which, while some educators are cognisant of alternative punishment methods like writing lines, helping to clean the school, and orchestrated classroom punishment, kneeling or standing has fewer negative implications in terms of mental and physical health than corporal punishment. A majority of teachers relayed that these strategies didn't have the swift deterrent approach or clarity as corporal punishment methods. The findings also reflect those aspects of these alternate strategies, namely the added strain of supervisors' workloads, disruptions of instructional time, and an overall perception of a loss of teacher authority, which can hinder the practical application of them. Also, cultural attitudes that have been deeply embedded in society, almost like an inescapable residue, perpetuate corporal punishment among teachers and students alike.

The findings show that the shift towards non-violent approaches to discipline is a positive move in bringing Ghanaian education in line with global norms but caution that such initiatives will only succeed if teachers receive adequate training and specific guidance, and systems are established to

help avert violence in schools. This testimony shall serve as findings available to educational policymakers, school leaders, and teachers in reforming disciplinary practices for a better classroom, which will lead to quality academic outcomes among learners in Ghana's basic schools.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global educational landscape has witnessed a paradigm shift in disciplinary practices, a movement from traditional punitive measures to approaches that emphasise positive behaviour reinforcement and the overall well-being of students. In Ghana, this shift has been underscored by the Ghana Education Service's (GES) 2017 directive to abolish corporal punishment in basic schools. The directive was not only in keeping with international human rights norms, reflected in Ghana's commitments to conventions such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, but also in response to growing evidence that physical punishment can have detrimental long-term effects on children's social, emotional, and academic development.

The present study, titled "Assessing the Effectiveness of the Implementation of the Alternative Disciplinary Methods in Basic Schools—A Case Study of GA East Municipality," is premised on the need to evaluate how the new disciplinary toolkit is being implemented on the ground. While the alternative measures (including strategies such as writing lines, assigning cleaning duties, and various forms of classroom punishment like kneeling or standing) are designed to promote a safer and more constructive learning environment, early observations suggest that their adoption has been met with mixed reactions from educators. Many teachers, steeped in long-standing cultural traditions that have historically endorsed corporal punishment, find that the immediacy of physical discipline often yields more observable compliance in the classroom. Yet, the ban on corporal punishment was introduced precisely to foster a more humane and supportive educational atmosphere, one in which discipline is not maintained through fear or pain but through clear expectations, mutual respect, and positive reinforcement.

This research is driven by several key questions. First, what alternative disciplinary methods are currently being used by teachers in the basic schools of the GA East Municipality? Second, how effective are these methods in managing student behaviour in comparison with traditional corporal punishment? Third, what challenges do teachers and school leaders encounter when implementing these alternative measures? In addressing these questions, this study aims to bridge the gap in the existing literature regarding the local implementation of non-punitive disciplinary strategies while also contributing to the broader discourse on educational reform in Ghana.

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform policy and practice. By systematically assessing the effectiveness of the GES's alternative disciplinary methods, the study provides crucial insights into whether these measures truly contribute to a more positive and safe learning environment or if there remain significant obstacles, such as inadequate teacher training, increased workload, and cultural resistance, that must be addressed. Ultimately, the findings of this study are intended to serve as a resource for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teachers, guiding future improvements in disciplinary practices and contributing to the overall enhancement of Ghana's educational system.

The following chapters will detail the relevant literature, research design, and methodological framework, followed by an analysis of the findings. This structured approach is intended to offer a comprehensive understanding of both the challenges and opportunities inherent in transitioning to alternative disciplinary methods in Ghanaian basic schools.

1.0 Background to the study

It is indisputable that education, in addition to teaching knowledge, aids in character development and appropriate behaviour. As a result, it is nearly impossible to establish a school or other educational facility without implementing disciplinary actions to prevent misbehaviour. Enhancing school safety is crucial to raising learning outcomes for every student, assert Gagnon et al. (2021). The learning environment must be psychologically, socially, and physically safe from threats, harassment, or violence across the entire school, according to school officials (Bastable et al., 2021; Heekes et al., 2022). Studies indicate that students' educational conduct, such as attendance and achievement, is influenced by their sense of safety in schools (Abusamra et al., 2021; Quail & Ward, 2022). Studies reveal that students who have a sense of safety in the classroom are more involved, get better academic results, and are more emotionally stable overall (Durrant & Ensom, 2017; Heekes et al., 2022). With an emphasis on enhancing learning environments in schools, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to end child abuse, torture, and violence (United Nations, 2016). There is evidence that students in many basic schools around the world are subject to various forms of physical discipline as a behaviour modification strategy approach, despite the global appeal and declaration to establish safe schools (Quail & Ward, 2022; Matofari, 2021).

Discipline and punishment are topics that scholars and educational policymakers from across the globe have discussed in a range of contexts. Musambai (2003) asserts that the word discipline originates from the word disciple, which means to instruct or support someone in their own growth and achievement. Additionally, discipline, in the words of Mbiti (1998), is a means of helping someone make responsible, rational judgements. Also, discipline, as defined by UNESCO (2005),

is the process of teaching or training someone to adhere to rules or a set of moral principles over a prolonged period.

On the other hand, corporal punishment is based on harsh punitive techniques to produce a deterrent effect on undesirable behaviour (Mendenhall et al., 2021). Spanking, hitting, pinching, squeezing, smacking, scratching, slapping, making a child kneel on uncomfortable objects, and making them stand or remain in uncomfortable positions for prolonged periods of time are a few examples of this kind of punishment, according to the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (2018). According to Agbenyega (2006), Ghanaian students now accept corporal punishment as a legitimate form of discipline. It pushed students to learn and improve their academic standards while also assisting them in becoming conformists and morally upright individuals (Yeboah, 2020).

Despite this, children who experience physical punishment may experience serious and enduring consequences in their social, emotional, and academic lives, among other domains (Heekes et al., 2022; Gershoff et al., 2017; Mahlangu et al., 2021). Regular physical punishment has been linked to increased criminal behaviour, uncontrollable behaviour, and the indoctrination of deviant behaviour in youngsters (Heekes et al., 2022). Additionally, studies demonstrate that violence against children promotes aggression (Gershoff et al., 2017), hinders their mental and behavioural development (Betancourt & Khan, 2008), and fuels violence in broader society (Quail & Ward, 2022). The Ghana Education Service (GES) officially prohibited physical punishment in 2017 for all students enrolled in basic schools (kindergarten, primary, and junior high) and senior high school levels to create more safe and secure learning environments in Ghanaian schools. The GES

required all teachers to adhere to the recommendations in the Positive Discipline Toolkit handbook rather than employing physical punishment (Kuwornu, 2019). The new policy aimed to establish constructive responses to misconduct that correspond with violations, promote respect between educators and students, and inculcate positive behaviour in schoolchildren through interactive methods (Gunu, 2019; Yeboah, 2020).

1.1 Problem statement

The Ghana Education Service (GES) unveiled a strategy on school discipline in 2017 with the goal of implementing it at both the basic and secondary education levels. With support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the GES developed a set of tools for instituting constructive discipline in classrooms (Kuwornu, 2019; Yeboah, 2020). The positive toolkit offers methods for dealing with different kinds of misbehaviour through positive discipline and recommends appropriate proactive or reactive measures to address them (Coverghana.com.gh, 2022). The new policy aimed to establish constructive responses to misconduct that correspond with violations, promote respect between educators and students, and inculcate positive behaviour in schoolchildren through interactive methods (Gunu, 2019; Yeboah, 2020). However, after the six-year policy's implementation (from 2017 to 2023/2024), there was no data to show that the teachers had gotten the required training to carry out the policy. It was also not noted that the policy had been reviewed since it was first enacted.

A review of the literature revealed that no studies had been conducted to assess the efficacy of the program at the district or local levels. There appears to be a gap in the corpus of current literature due to the conditions.

Although corporal punishment was still widely used in basic education, this study focuses specifically on primary schools, as pupils at this stage are in their formative years and particularly vulnerable to the long-term psychological and social impacts of punitive discipline (UNICEF, 2018; Quail & Ward, 2022). Evidence from child development research suggests that early school experiences strongly shape attitudes toward authority, learning, and conflict resolution (Betancourt & Khan, 2008). Therefore, evaluating disciplinary practices at the primary school level is crucial for understanding whether Ghana's policy shift is laying a foundation for positive behaviour and safe learning environments.

Despite the introduction of the Positive Discipline Toolkit in 2017, important aspects of its implementation remain poorly understood. Firstly, there is limited evidence on whether teachers have received adequate training to apply the recommended strategies. Secondly, little is known about how effectively the alternative methods are being applied at the school and classroom level. Thirdly, the extent to which these practices address cultural attitudes that still legitimize corporal punishment has not been examined in detail. By focusing on Ga East Municipality, this study addresses these gaps, thereby contributing to a clearer understanding of the successes and challenges of implementing alternative disciplinary methods in Ghanaian basic schools.

1.2 Scope of the study

The study is conducted in the GA East Municipality. There are six circuits in the municipality, and the study seeks to cover all the circuits, but with the limitation of time, a public basic school is selected from each circuit. Given that every basic school in Ghana is required to implement the new disciplinary method as instructed by the Ghana Education Service after the ban on corporal

punishment. It is assumed that any school in the municipality could be selected to assess the effectiveness of the alternative disciplinary methods implemented. The focus of the study was centered on teachers only and not on students' perception about the ban of corporal punishment.

1.3 Research question

1. What alternative disciplinary methods are currently being used by teachers in Ga East basic schools to manage student behaviour
2. How effective are these alternative disciplinary methods in promoting positive student behaviour and maintaining classroom order?
3. What challenges do teachers and school leaders face in implementing alternative disciplinary methods in Ga East basic schools?

1.4 Objectives of the study

The primary objective is to assess the effectiveness of alternative disciplinary methods in Ghanaian basic schools, with a focus on Ga East Municipality. Specifically, the study seeks to:

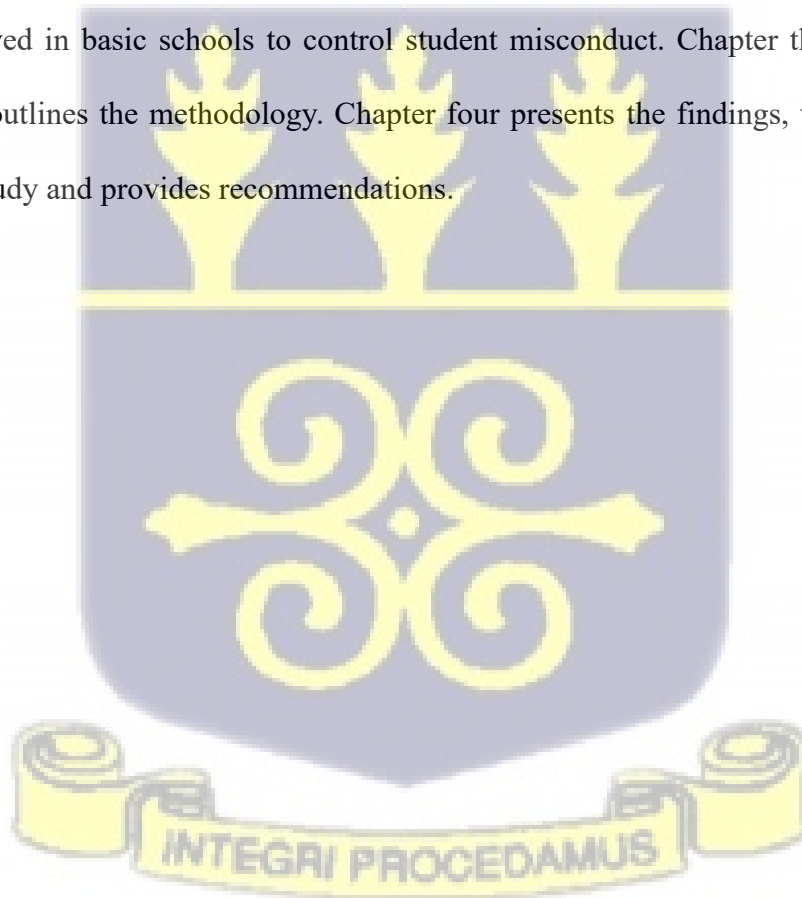
1. Evaluate the extent to which teachers have adopted and adhered to alternative disciplinary methods
2. Examine the perceived effectiveness of alternative disciplinary methods in managing student behaviour and promoting safe learning environments.
3. Identify the challenges and limitation teachers and school leaders encounter in implementing the alternative disciplinary methods.

1.5 Significance of the Study

It is expected that at the end of the study, the adherence to the ban on corporal punishment is assessed, and the other means of controlling students' misconduct are examined with their effect, whether it has been successful or not. It is also purposed that the study will serve as a useful reference material for the academic society for further research in the municipality and related topics.

1.6 Organization of the study

The next chapter reviews the existing literature on corporal punishment and alternative disciplinary methods employed in basic schools to control student misconduct. Chapter three describes the study area and outlines the methodology. Chapter four presents the findings, while chapter five concludes the study and provides recommendations.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research on school discipline with a focus on basic education in Ghana and international trends and practices. The importance of discipline in schools as a base for the smooth teaching and learning environment cannot be overstated. The process of establishing school discipline includes maintaining classrooms conducive to effective learning while ensuring students' social and moral development alongside their cognitive development. In the absence of a well-articulated disciplinary framework, schools would invariably descend into chaos with repercussions on student performance and the general educational process.

Like many other systems, Ghana's educational system has been in a state of flux, much more specifically in the area of school discipline. The changes have been greatly motivated by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which lays great emphasis on protecting children from all forms of physical and mental abuse. As a signatory to the CRC, Ghana has, therefore, sought to modify its national discipline policy in line with international standards by moving away from the use of corporal punishment and implementing more positive child-centred strategies. However, this transition has not come easy. Ghanaian culture and education have long held onto corporal punishment, so the Ghana Education Service's (GES) "no caning" directive has sparked much debate on the effectiveness of alternative forms of discipline (GES, 2017).

This chapter analyses the processes of the development of Ghana's national discipline policy as well as its compatibility with international initiatives for the promotion of children's rights and

local implementations. Foremost among these was the prohibition of corporal punishment, a watershed changes from policy that seeks to encourage punishment-free, restorative approaches in lieu of physical punishment. Nonetheless, while this policy is consistent with international human rights norms, implementing it in schools across Ghana has faced challenges, especially in rural and underprivileged areas, where often, teachers lack the support or training required to effectively use alternative disciplinary measures (Asiedu-Addo, 2020).

In addition, the chapter looks at the broader implications of physical punishment, relying on studies from Ghana and other countries to prove its effect on psychology, society, and education. The research reveals that while physical punishment can produce immediate compliance, it can also result in harmful long-term consequences such as increased aggression, truancy, and decreased academic performance (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Given these findings, a paramount concern must be to change from punitive measures that may threaten the well-being of the student toward a greater emphasis on behavioural management, conflict resolution, and reinforcement.

The evaluation also scrutinises the hurdles that came into existence after the banning of corporal punishment, especially regarding the assurance of discipline in schools without any form of physical chastisement. Many teachers complain that discipline has become increasingly difficult to administer using alternative control strategies, especially in large, crowded classrooms. There remain some uncontroversially informal methods of implementing physical punishment in certain schools where this may be tolerated informally despite its prohibition, due in part to varying resources and training opportunities to enforce the regulations (Mensah, 2021). A more thorough training programme and resources will need to be developed to guarantee the successful

implementation of the "no caning" policy, further raising questions regarding whether the school system is able to support teachers in implementing non-violent disciplinary approaches. International outlooks on discipline and indiscipline will be explored in this chapter. In each case, the focus will be on how foreign countries, after abolishing corporal punishment, have tried to tackle the issue of school discipline. Schools worldwide – in the US, for example, and down to South Africa – have experimented with various alternative techniques to discipline, with some doing so more successfully than others. These techniques include peer mediation, restorative justice processes, and social-emotional learning programmes. The review will provide sober insights into how similar approaches may be applied in Ghana, with lessons that could inform more future legislative policies and educational reforms.

Another essential feature of the literature review is the examination of the theoretical frameworks underlying the different approaches to discipline. Theories such as Thorndike's Conduct Modification Theory and Canter's Assertive Discipline Model provide important ideas about how to manage student behaviour effectively with no physical punishment. These theories state that for responsible behaviour and a good culture in the school, there must be an unbroken chain of consequences, positive reinforcement, and clear expectations (Canter & Canter, 2001; Thorndike, 1932). With a discussion of these theoretical perspectives, this chapter aims to broaden understanding of the principles of alternative disciplinary approaches and their relevance to the Ghanaian context.

This chapter, by way of concluding, provides a framework for an in-depth examination of the key issues surrounding school discipline in Ghana, especially with reference to the move from corporal

punishment to more viable forms of discipline. The understanding sought will enable the chapter to carefully assess the challenges and opportunities facing the Ghanaian education system as it works toward creating a safe, supportive, and conducive learning environment for every student. This assessment will involve looking at national policies and trends, research findings, and theoretical frameworks.

2.1 School Discipline Policy in Ghana

These transformations, perhaps more than in any other country, have recently occurred in Ghana from the standpoint of student discipline. It is these changes brought about by global and international standards that pertain to children's rights. In 1990, Ghana made a commitment to child rights and safety when it ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC is a binding international convention on the rights of children that seeks to protect them from abuse, violence, and exploitation. Ghana's bold step in 2017 was the issuance of a "no caning" directive by the Ghana Education Service (GES) that effectively prohibited physical punishment in the schools as prescribed by the provisions of the CRC (GES, 2017).

Corporal punishment, being one of the prime folk philosophies to address student misconduct, therefore represented a major departure from Ghana's previous approach to maintaining discipline in schools. This directive is part of a much larger trend favouring child-friendly and non-violent methods of correction that respect the rights and dignity of the child. Ghana's abolition of corporal punishment puts it alongside an increasing number of countries that have chosen a more

progressive approach toward punishment believed to bring about long-lasting behavioural change rather than creating fear.

2.2 The Influence of International Conventions

The impetus for the GES's "no caning" policy was Ghana's obligation to commit herself to international human rights frameworks with respect to the CRC, which obviously states that every child has the right to be protected from all sorts of physical or mental abuse. Ghana is also a party to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which puts special emphasis on the protection of children from inhuman or degrading treatment. These international arrangements have played an important role in shaping the national discourse around school discipline and protection of children from abuse, thereby compelling policymakers to review traditional forms of punishment that can be deemed abusive or hurtful (UNICEF, 2014).

In this regard, the GES policy is a major step toward reforming Ghana's educational system along the lines of international best practices. Today, the focus is on establishing non-punitive strategies that engender a positive learning environment where children are encouraged to behave responsibly, with accountability, but never by the means of inflicting pain. Positive behavioural reinforcement, behavioural contracts, peer mediation, counselling, and other restorative justice practices, essentially all interventions that focus on restoring the dignity of the child, therefore, seek to address the reasons for indiscipline instead of punishing the misbehaviour (Asiedu-Addo, 2020).

2.3 Challenges in Implementation

Even if the aims of the "no caning" order are laudable, its application in practice is proving difficult. Some educators – predominantly in developing and rural areas, where caning and other forms of physical punishment have been common for long – have opposed the move from corporal punishment. Research also shows that many of these teachers lack training or knowledge of alternative disciplinary methods (Asiedu-Addo, 2020). Teachers who see corporal punishment as the easy and effective means to control the classroom have found it difficult to change over to non-physical methods because they cannot find methods as effective as corporal punishment in curbing disruptive behaviour. Teachers find it hard to manage student conduct in rural settings due to large class sizes and lack of resources. Many instructors would effectively address such incidents of indiscipline if they had sufficient training in alternate methods, but lack of such training has rendered such opportunities futile. Some educators therefore contend that children are more inclined to push the limits of appropriate behaviour in the absence of threat of physical punishment.

Consequently, they say, there has been an increase in instances of disobedience and defiance – a perception that has arisen mostly because of the absence of physical punishment (Mensah, 2021).

Again, the "no-caning" policy fails because of a lack of enforcement and oversight mechanisms. The GES has set clear directives against corporal punishment, yet concerns emerge about the degree of adherence to these directives, particularly in remote rural schools with little regulatory oversight. There have been reports that, even though corporal punishment is officially outlawed, covertly some schools do still administer it. Perhaps the teachers are simply unaware of the regulations or wilfully ignore them, maybe because they have no other options or because they

view discipline in a different light (Antwi, 2019). In such instances, the enforcement of the policy has been negated by a lack of supervision and accountability, which further perpetuates the use of physical punishment for disciplinary action.

2.3.1 Disconnect Between Policy and Practice

One of the major difficulties that hampers the pursuit of effective discipline in schools in Ghana is the gap between policy-making and actual implementation. Although the "no caning" policy indicates the commitment of Ghana towards protecting the rights of children, the situation is often contrary. Deprived of proper guidance, resources, or training on using alternative disciplinary approaches effectively, teachers, especially in under-resourced settings, have to grapple with daily challenges regulating student behaviour. This gap raises serious doubts about schools being able to put any non-punitive strategy into effective practice.

Moreover, the challenges that the regulation is likely to face concerning implementation stem from the cultural framework in which discipline is viewed and applied in Ghana. Many communities in Ghana perceive corporal punishment as an important and even necessary form of child training. In Kyei-Gyamfi (2020), it is stated that children learn responsibility, compliance, and respect mostly through physical punishment handed down by parents and teachers. Thus, the shift toward non-violent methods of discipline is thus not welcomed by all stakeholders; some have expressed doubts about the potential of alternative methods to change behaviour. This cultural opposition to the GES policy will likely act as a barrier to its adoption in some contexts, particularly in areas where the old ways of disciplining have gained a stronghold.

Secondly, the need for assistance to properly train teachers introduces another challenge, which can be said to represent an important factor contributing to the success of the "no caning" policy.

In order to successfully implement alternative disciplinary measures, a number of Ghanaian teachers have asserted that they require training and professional development. Teachers might then find it hard to guide students' behaviour toward the designs of the policy or resort to informal forms of punishment when untrained.

Educational experts maintain that workshops, seminars, and ongoing professional development training are essential to aid instructors in making the changeover from corporal punishment to more restorative forms of discipline. Such programmes would provide helpful techniques for managing behaviour while fostering the acceptance among instructors of the notion of non-punitive approaches as more effective and humane methods to deal with indiscipline (Asiedu-Addo, 2020). Hence, besides teacher training, schools should be empowered to implement these strategies by providing behaviour specialists, counselling services, and enough staff such that discipline can be upheld without resorting to physical punishment.

2.3.2 Broader Implications for Ghana's Education System

The educational policy of no caning in Ghana carries down to define and implement discipline in dimensions even broader. The trend in discipline toward non-violence is itself a mirror of the heightened understanding that secure and supportive learning environments are very important in any setup where the child feels listened to and appreciated. This goes hand in hand with a global

trend in education toward a child-centred approach, emphasising students' emotional and psychological well-being as a prerequisite for academic success.

Some visible coordinated efforts will need to be committed at every level of the educational system to realise the desired result of this programme. This involves equipping and supporting teachers, hence also interplaying with the community, parental involvement, and government programming. Parents and guardians must work closely with the school to ensure discipline at home is the same as that in school proper. Subsequently, the government is to supervise how the policy is being put into place and to hold schools responsible for violations against this corporal punishment ban (GES, 2017).

2.4 Global Perspective on Discipline and Indiscipline

Disciplinary issues generally are an international concern, with incidents affecting all educative systems across global fronts. In nations like South Africa, the US, and the UK, concrete steps were taken to counter those issues by the abolition of corporal punishment in schools. However, serious perennial problems of indiscipline still confront the education systems in those territories against these legal setups (Gershoff, 2017). This observation indicates that outright bans of corporal punishment are not adequate; it requires something else – the resolution of fundamental behavioural problems.

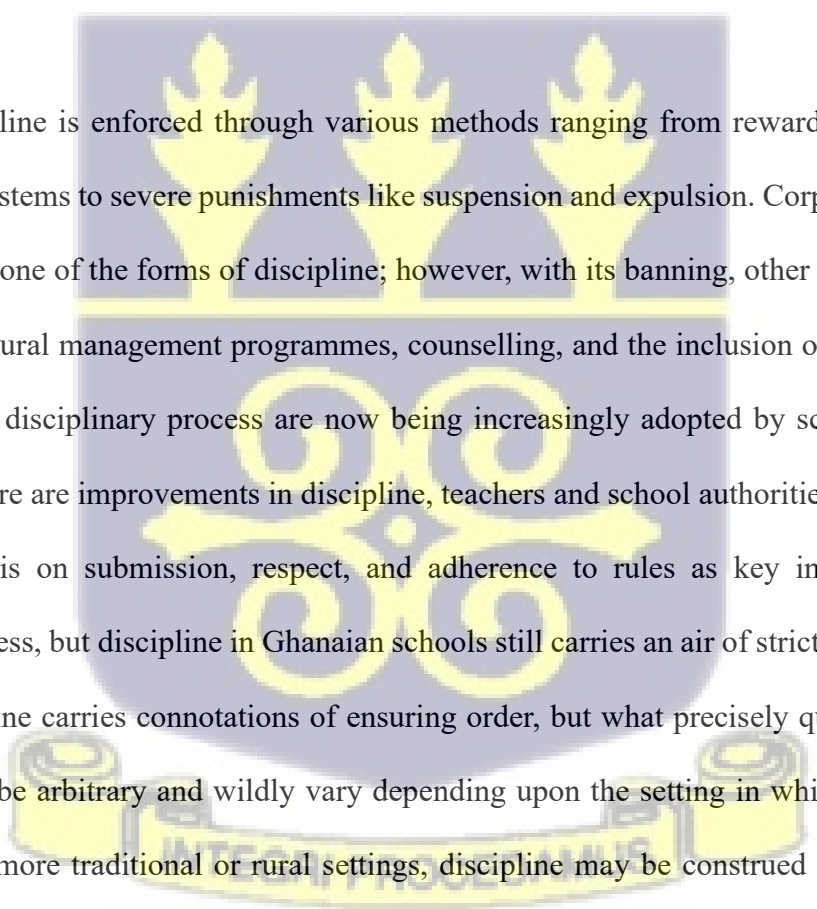
Positive disciplinary options, with an emphasis on non-violent forms of resolution, have found very strong support lately. These alternatives encompass behaviour modification techniques that

were intended to help induce desirable behaviour and restorative justice approaches that would work toward mending the relationships and repairing the harm done rather than punishing the wrongdoers (UNICEF 2014). These actions include insisting on other forms of discipline since corporal punishment was outlawed in South Africa. Evidently, even though the behaviour modification methodology has thus far sought to bring about positive conditions for teaching and learning, the persistence of discipline problems among trainees has seen many calls for greater variability of approaches (Rubela, 2022). A work in progress in Ghana, the transformation of punitive approaches toward non-punitive discipline procedures have made very slow headway owing in part to resistance from teachers largely accustomed to the classical view of physical punishment. With all the cultural importance of physical punishment as a method of controlling the schools, many teachers still believe in its effectiveness (Adinkrah, 2021). Such factors challenge the implementation of recent disciplinary approaches, as changing traditions and strongly held views can be enormously difficult.

The broad picture of discipline and indiscipline in education throughout the world suggests that there is a complex interaction between laws, cultural norms, and the efficiency of several types of discipline. For many countries, the path of reform toward more efficient and compassionate forms of discipline is well engaged; however, indiscipline remains an article needing a more holistic approach. To ensure that all students learn in a secure and conducive environment, this would involve not just the implementation of non-punitive measures but also thorough training of teachers, community engagement, and continuous evaluation of disciplinary procedures.

2.5 Discipline and Indiscipline

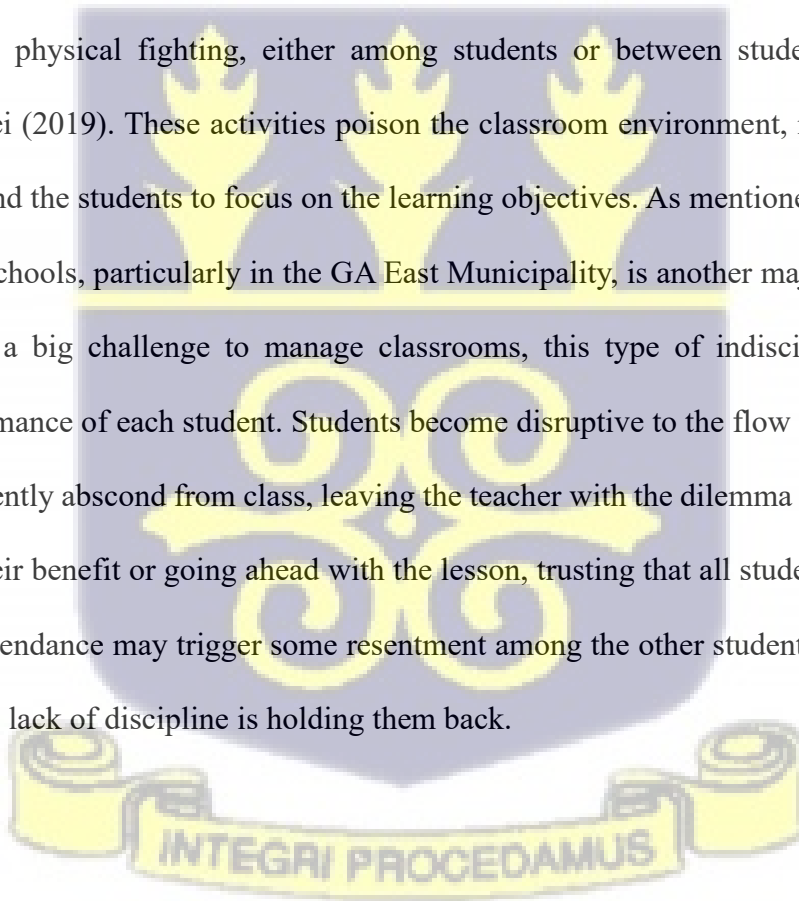
Discipline is the bedrock of an effective educational system; it is necessary to cultivate a helpful environment for quality teaching and learning. In Ghanaian schools, discipline is associated with harsh punitive methods, intended to ensure the adherence of pupils to prescribed rules, social codes, and expectations. The maintenance of order is not the only goal of discipline; the other objectives are to nurture the personal development of pupils, instil moral values, and promote the kind of socially acceptable behaviour upheld by broader social norms. Good discipline assists pupils in remaining focused and respecting authority persons, rules, and fellow pupils, hence promoting academic success and social development (Mensah and Antwi, 2021).



In Ghana, discipline is enforced through various methods ranging from rewarding and positive reinforcement systems to severe punishments like suspension and expulsion. Corporal punishment has always been one of the forms of discipline; however, with its banning, other means that focus more on behavioural management programmes, counselling, and the inclusion of the parents and guardians in the disciplinary process are now being increasingly adopted by schools (Ampadu, 2020). While there are improvements in discipline, teachers and school authorities in Ghana place especial emphasis on submission, respect, and adherence to rules as key ingredients in the educational process, but discipline in Ghanaian schools still carries an air of strictness. More often than not, discipline carries connotations of ensuring order, but what precisely qualifies as "good discipline" may be arbitrary and wildly vary depending upon the setting in which the discipline occurs. Here in more traditional or rural settings, discipline may be construed as an oppressive deference to authority figures, with little room for student autonomy and communication. In contrast, a discipline that nurtures self-regulation, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence is

supported by more open systems of education – in particular, where such are affected by international child rights treaties. This varied perception of discipline creates confusion for teachers in Ghana as they seek ways to balance the traditional demands of strictness with the contemporary needs of child-centred learning and positive behaviour reinforcement (UNICEF, 2014).

Directly opposite of discipline is the range of actions that would undermine the authority of the teachers and school administration and impinge on the process of learning. The common forms of indiscipline in Ghanaian schools include absenteeism, truancy, tardiness, disrespect for authority, cheating, and student aggression. More severe forms of indiscipline include vandalism, bullying, drug abuse, and physical fighting, either among students or between students and teachers, according to Osei (2019). These activities poison the classroom environment, making it difficult for the teacher and the students to focus on the learning objectives. As mentioned by Osei (2019), absenteeism in schools, particularly in the GA East Municipality, is another major concern. Apart from making it a big challenge to manage classrooms, this type of indiscipline impacts the academic performance of each student. Students become disruptive to the flow of lecture delivery when they frequently abscond from class, leaving the teacher with the dilemma of either repeating the lesson for their benefit or going ahead with the lesson, trusting that all students are following. This irregular attendance may trigger some resentment among the other students as they perceive that their friend's lack of discipline is holding them back.



2.5.1 The Impact of Indiscipline on Classroom Management

When discipline is lacking in and out of the learning environment, the effects are felt by both the teacher and the students. Teachers find it difficult managing classes due to increased misconduct on the part of students, especially those in urban schools like in the GA East Municipality.

Disruptive behaviour like talking back, flouting instructions, and fighting with fellow students threatens to terminate the learning process in a matter of seconds in large classes, where little or no individualised attention is possible (Antwi, 2019). Teachers end up spending energy and time trying to control student behaviour rather than teaching effectively, thus adding to their dissatisfaction and burnout. Indiscipline affects the overall academic performance of pupils outside the classrooms. Much precious teaching and learning time is lost to misbehaviour. The result might be a drop in academic performance since disengaged students learn less and perform worse on tests (Mensah & Antwi, 2021). Furthermore, schools can turn into a wild jungle under the circumstances: such overwhelming indiscipline gives no room for a pupil's sense of safety and comfort.

2.5.2 Addressing Indiscipline in Schools

In order to address the matter of indiscipline effectively, schools should adopt an all-encompassing strategy embracing both preventive and corrective measures. The aim of preventive measures is to create an environment in schools in which students are encouraged to behave well because they feel appreciated and are respected for who they are. There are various ways in which this can be achieved, namely, through social-emotional learning (SEL) programmes that teach students to regulate their emotions, resolve interpersonal conflicts peacefully, and establish healthy

relationships, and peer mentoring, which sees senior students as role models for their younger counterparts (Adinkrah, 2020).

On the contrary, corrective measures respond to wrongdoing in a fair but firm, consistent, and positive manner. Due to sometimes warranted instances of serious misconduct, expulsion and suspension ought to be treated as measures of last resort. Schools can instead institute restorative justice approaches to compel students to make amends for their transgressions toward those whom they have harmed. This way of holding students accountable also serves to repair damaged relationships and trust within the school community at large (Mensah, 2020).

2.6 Corporal Punishment

For many years, physical punishment has been a common discipline in the Ghanaian schools that were used as the means of enforcement. Some of the commonest ways of humane punishment for correcting behaviour and instilling respect have been slapping, caning, and other forms of corporal punishment. Many in Ghanaian society saw it as a culturally and practically necessary method, especially in educational setups with relatively large student populations and limited funding opportunities (Ampadu, 2020). The caning of children was by far viewed as the best form of punishment in urban and rural school assignments since the teachers thought that corporal punishment would ensure instant obedient behaviour and instil deference in their authority. In many traditions, corporal punishment would be perceived as a legitimate and sometimes helpful means of guiding a child's moral and social development, rather than an end in itself. Teachers would often justify its application on the grounds that it was the quickest, most efficient way of controlling student behaviour, especially in large classrooms where individualised attention was

nearly impossible. For many years, both parents and educators held the belief that "spare the rod, spoil the child," which meant that physical punishment would discourage disobedience and reinforce such virtues as self-control, hard work, and respect (Asiedu-Addo, 2021). Thus, corporal punishment was accepted as an indispensable means of maintaining order and became ingrained in Ghanaian school culture.

The proponents of corporal punishment see the instant conformity that it achieves as one of its greatest assets. The students concerned tend to stop the misbehaviour right after being subjected to corporal punishment, thus re-establishing some order in an otherwise disorderly classroom. It can be readily understood why, during the long history of its application, corporal punishment is viewed as particularly useful in under-resourced schools with large numbers of pupils, making it difficult to attain control by non-physical means (Ampadu, 2020). In specific instances, teachers seem to think that corporal punishment is the only method left for them to retain classroom order and attention. This often results in short-term advantages of immediate compliance, even though such punishment seriously damages children long-term. Numerous studies have shown that corporal punishment, rather than helping instill respect for authority, fosters abhorrence; thus, the learning climate transforms into one that is premised on the fear of punishment rather than self-motivation or constructive participation (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Whereas students might comply due to fear, their apparent obedience is often sustained by growing resentment towards authority and apathy towards learning. Ultimately, this approach undermines students' sense of agency and autonomy, detracting from their capacity and desire to learn.

2.6.1 Psychological and Social Outcomes

Corporal punishment's harmful psychological and social effects on children constitute some of the most significant arguments against it. In research conducted in various contexts, including Ghana, it has been found that children subjected regularly to physical punishment are more likely to exhibit elevated stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). In schools where there is a steady atmosphere of fear under the physical punishment, students may become preoccupied with evading punishment rather than engaging themselves in their education. Freedom of critical thought, creativity, and intellectual curiosity – essential things to a well- rounded education – can be stifled in this fear-based learning environment. Correlatively, physical punishment has been associated with increased behavioural problems and aggression. According to studies, children who experience physical punishment become more violent both at school and at home. The social learning hypothesis states that children learn to behave by observing and imitating authority figures. As Bandura writes, when children are exposed to adults using physical force to resolve conflicts, they are likely to emulate such behaviours in their interactions with peers. Thus, schools applying corporal punishment could be said to nip in the bud any attempt to halt a perverse cycle of violence where students become subjects and objects of hostility.

Corporal punishment encourages acts of aggression and leads to school dropout and truancy. Where physical punishment becomes a routine, students are likely to regard the school as threatening and hazardous, causing them to develop negative attitudes towards it. With an attempt to escape the pangs of physical and emotional pain that punishment brings, this aversion to school might lead to increasing absenteeism. The implications of school withdrawal may equally hamper students' long-term academic and social opportunities if they go into full dropout status (Mensah & Antwi, 2021).

The use of corporal punishment could negatively impact poverty and inequality in the country, where education is a crucial pathway of social and economic mobility.

2.6.2 The Transition Away from Corporal Punishment

The responses to Ghana's ban on corporal punishment have been mixed. International organisations such as UNICEF, child advocacy groups, and human rights organisations commend the measure as one of the key advancements toward protecting children's rights and ensuring a safer learning environment (UNICEF, 2014). In Ghana, there is now growing recognition that schools should provide an environment that promotes the holistic development of children without fear or coercion. The banning of corporal punishment in schools is yet another step in the international campaign for child-centred, non-violent disciplinary approaches. Yet, many teachers, particularly in primary schools, contend that alternatives to corporal punishment simply do not work as well in large, disruptive classrooms. Teachers in these settings often report feeling overwhelmed with the sheer numbers of pupils they must supervise, lacking the time, resources, or capacity to effectively employ alternative non-physical forms of discipline, as suggested by Mensah (2020). Alternatives such as behaviour contracts, counselling, and positive reinforcement require patience, time, and individual attention – all scarce resources in an underfunded and overcrowded school. Thus, in the absence of effective and quick alternatives, teachers feel untrained to manage disruptive behaviour without the immediate corrective effect of corporal punishment.

Moreover, some teachers think that the abolition of corporal punishment has led to an increase in school indiscipline. They argue that without the threat of punishment, students are more likely to defy authority and disobey school regulations, which disrupts classroom management and

consequently lowers educational standards (Antwi, 2019). These teachers claim to lack the necessary alternative means of maintaining order in schools where community support is low and parental involvement is scarce.

2.6.3 Defense for Corporal Punishment

With the rising tide of international opposition to corporal punishment in recent years, in countries like Ghana one still finds supporters who view incidences of corporal punishment as an effective discipline. This, proponents argue, is deeply rooted in culture and long viewed as an acceptable and necessary means of maintaining respect and order, especially in the traditional African setting. Physical punishment, according to them, promotes compliance and proper behaviour in communities where respect for elders and authority is of prime importance (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2020). To many, physical punishment is not just a means of discipline but rather an integral part of child-rearing that helps them internalise social norms and values from an early age.

2.6.4 Perceived Effectiveness and Control

Corporal punishment supporters sometimes claim that such punishment has instant and visible effects. Students can instantly be pushed back on track with the help of corporal punishment in instances where a quick correction of wrongdoing is needed to maintain order. For instance, some would say that slapping or caning, treated in a somewhat controversial manner, is an appropriate measure for persistent disobedience, tardiness, and the like (Ampadu, 2020). Such punishment is argued to serve as a tangible reminder of the pain of misbehaviour, thus reinforcing the authority of the teacher and consequently discouraging other students from misbehaving. For this quick

correction strategy to be deemed a necessary evil, many resources – these being behavioural specialists and trained personnel – are often unavailable.

In cultures where social cohesion and deference are heavily emphasised, some view corporal punishment as performing the necessary role of traditionally defined discipline and respect. Those in favour of fast enforcement of physical discipline believe such quick enforcement is important to deter further indiscipline and preserve a learning atmosphere within the classroom. Advocates of physical punishment within the area of education and parenting argue that those children who are physically punished develop into polite and well-behaved individuals capable of dealing with authority figures and social expectations (Adinkrah, 2020). Viewed from this perspective, corporal punishment is seen as an intentionally controlled method of discipline meant to benefit the child in the long term rather than being considered an abusive method.

2.6.5 Challenges of Implementing Alternatives

Corporal punishment, proponents argue, is justified primarily because there are not many effective alternatives, particularly in resource-constrained environments. For many Ghanaian schools, particularly those operating in very poor conditions, the use of non-disciplinary punishments creates a major challenge. There is usually a lack of training on alternative discipline techniques recommended by bodies like UNICEF (2014), which include counselling, restorative justice, or positive reinforcement. Schools may get the resources to train and apply these techniques correctly. When left unsupported, teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with worsening cases of indiscipline with which they contend on a daily basis. So, they resort to corporal punishment because it is a method they know and feel might contain the discipline in the classroom.

There are also situations in which advocates feel that only those pupils who are punished physically will behave; otherwise, verbal warnings or other forms of discipline fail. In these cases, the argument goes that physical punishment becomes essential in inculcating respect for authority and obeying rules by the teacher. According to Mensah (2021), teachers clinging to corporal punishment often maintain it is the only thing that ever works to improve student behaviour, particularly among older pupils who are more likely to defy authority.

2.6.6 Impact of Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment has been shown by countless studies to have a negative impact on children's educational attainment, emotional well-being, and mental health. In Ghana, where this was once a common practice and was only recently abolished, research shows that children subjected to punitive measures day after day go through severe psychological and emotional anguish. Their ability to learn is marred by this emotional distress in many forms, such as anxiety, depression, and heightened fear (Mensah & Antwi, 2021). While it may feel like corporal punishment produces immediate compliance or obedience, it invariably produces results that are injurious in the long run, crippling the child's ability to function socially as well as academically.

Corporal punishment that is routinely inflicted has been shown to bring students away from the values and self-worth ideas. If they fear being physically punished, students might take less interest in class activities and express themselves freely. This fear instils avoidance behaviours such as class avoidance tactics, which in turn impair their social and cognitive growth (Gershoff, 2017). Moreover, corporal punishment can poison the teacher-student relationship and create additional indiscipline, instilling hostility and an even greater degree of animosity against authority figures

like teachers and school administrators. Evidence suggests that students who receive corporal punishment may act aggressively – a behaviour that will only compound indiscipline. Studies show that children who receive such physical punishment are more likely to model violent behaviour, thereby creating vicious cycles of aggression in and out of the classroom. Children exposed to physical punishment may gradually develop their view of violence being an acceptable mechanism to handle conflict or disappointment, reinforcing the "violence-begets-violence" theory while increasing bullying and peer aggression in schools (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). Such behaviour may escalate into severe misconduct, including vandalism, absenteeism, and other forms of antisocial misconduct that will disrupt the learning environment even further.

Corporal punishment, apart from having behavioural effects, also has effects on academic achievement. Studies have shown that students who tend to be punished frequently tend to perform worse relative to those who are not punished at all (Ampadu, 2020). This is because the very threat of punishment can create a tension-filled environment for learning that impairs concentration, memory recall, and critical thinking abilities. Fear of punishment may also dissuade students from participating in class discussions or taking intellectual risks – the gradual decline in such behaviours may result in poorer academic performances over an extended period. In extreme circumstances, children may be so stressed and afraid of corporal punishment that they refuse to go to school – a scenario that increases dropout rates. The retention rates and the general academic achievement consequently become huge indicators of educational improvement in the Ghanaian basic educational system (Mensah & Antwi, 2021). In addition, Ampadu (2020) indicated that children subjected to physical punishment tend to develop dislike toward learning in general. They come to see education as painful and embarrassing – factors that may hamper their motivation and

aspirations to succeed academically. Particularly worrying is that in rural societies in Ghana, where quality education is already scarce, students from these areas leaving school because of the bad experience of physical punishments will impact their future half-lives and further prevent the nation from moving toward eradicating poverty and educational disparities.

Corporal punishment carries broad consequences for society as well. The social learning theory posits that children learn behaviour by observing and imitating the actions of others in their immediate environment, especially those in positions of authority. Teachers who use corporal punishment might therefore hinder the development of good conflict resolution skills in students by modelling aggression as an acceptable response to disobedience. Instead of being taught the skills necessary to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way or cope with frustration, students may accept such aggressive forms of response as the norm (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, studies have shown that physical discipline is negatively correlated with the cognitive development of children. Unending punishment creates a state of chronic stress, which is a drawback to the full working capacity of the brain

According to Gershoff and Grogan-Kaylor (2016), stress hormones such as cortisol interfere with a child's ability to pay attention in class and may even obstruct the learning and memory functions carried out by parts of the brain such as the hippocampus. The cognitive effects of corporal punishment become a major impediment in the way of national goals for development in Ghana, where socioeconomic development highly relies on educational attainment. It is worth noting that there are different gendered factors regarding physical punishment. Research suggests that boys, more than girls, are pegged for physical punishment, usually with the justification that they are "tougher" and need more corporal discipline to learn how to behave (Ampadu, 2020). This unequal treatment perpetuates a socialisation process whereby boys find masculinity identified with

aggression and with being able to withstand physical pain, which in turn reinforces negative gender stereotypes. On the other hand, females may face more psychologically damaging types of punishment, such as verbal abuse and social exclusion, which carry their own adverse effects on the emotional welfare of girls.

2.7 The Ban of Corporal Punishment

In 2017, Ghana made a radical shift in its approach to school discipline by abolishing corporal punishment in schools. The Ghana Education Service (GES), which strived to harmonise national policies with international human rights agreements like the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), was instrumental in this decision (GES, 2017). These treaties safeguard children by creating an environment that is nurturing and not punitive.

After the ban, GES ordered all schools to practise positive disciplinary measures to create a constructive and supportive environment for learning. Some of the recommended measures included counselling, behaviour contracts, and positive reinforcement. These measures are meant to enhance relationships between students and teachers and promote positive behaviours. Positive discipline seeks to re-educate children and guide them toward better behaviour without having them fear punishment that harms their mental and emotional well-being. Nevertheless, the nationwide implementation of the prohibited corporal punishment has remained inconsistent, as highlighted by the reports. Corporal punishment is frequently used to discipline kids in schools, particularly those in the rural areas. This continuity is largely attributed to teachers' lack of resources and training in alternative forms of discipline (Amoateng, 2020). Without adequate

support and training, many teachers, especially those who had been using corporal punishment, would find it difficult to make the switch.

Such belief has led the majority of the educators to think that alternative methods are a waste of time and will not work for immediate behavioural challenges in the classroom, which has been one big obstacle to the implementation of the ban on corporal punishment. For instance, some teachers fear that interventions such as behaviour contracts and counselling will not yield immediate results, especially when disruptive behaviour needs to be immediately addressed (Antwi, 2019). Many teachers feel pressured to keep order in their classrooms, which contributes to their reluctance to fully embrace positive disciplinary techniques. Therefore, in some instances, teachers may feel provoked and view physical punishment as a quicker palliative for those bothersome students. This perspective highlights another serious flaw in the kind of support given to teachers in moving away from the punitive approach.

2.7.1 Challenges of Indiscipline After the Ban of Corporal Punishment

Frankly, Ghana's ban on corporal punishment is a step toward more humane and supportive methods of teaching; however, the ban has actually caused different problems with student discipline. Indiscipline in schools across the country has reached alarming proportions, much to the distress of school authorities and teachers alike.

- **Lack of Clear Guidelines and Support**

There are innumerable reasons for alternative disciplinary measures to be held in abeyance. Most particularly, the absence of clear directions and governmental support for their practical

implementation is one of the major concerns put forth by teachers. Adinkrah (2021) claims that the absence of a clear non-punitive discipline setting has set teachers at a loss as to how to manage their classrooms effectively. Many people have different views as to what constitutes reasonable discipline due to this kind of disagreement, thus ensuring that discipline is arbitrarily put into application.

Most teachers feel that without a concerted effort, it is difficult to come up with ways of solving disruptive behaviour. The absence of normal punitive consequences allows students to experiment with borders in an ambiance of confusion in the control of disciplinary measures. This appears to have resulted in an escalation of indiscipline in certain instances, which makes it more difficult for teachers to adjust to new paradigms of discipline.

- **Educators' Feelings of Inadequacy**

Many teachers feel inadequately prepared to suppress chaos without using corporal punishment, a rather serious problem. The traditional discipline paradigm, which relied mainly on punitive measures, offered a way – perplexing, although troublesome – to maintain order. Teachers who have shifted to other methods lament their lack of effective classroom management training that does not include physical punishment. This unfortunate feeling sometimes leads teachers to stress and burnout, which in turn become exacerbating factors for indiscipline in schools.

Another possible consequence is hostility in the classroom environment and tense relationships. When well controlled, anger on the part of a teacher may lead to debilitating student-teacher relationships. In a less favourable situation, teachers often have more pressing matters on their minds, which can lead to them loosening the enforcement of rules, resulting in greater overt

disruption from students. In turn, these less disciplined students become less accountable for their behaviour, thus encouraging further erosion of discipline.

- **Increasing Absenteeism and Disrespect**

Of course, there are behavioural variations that have been observed since the outlawing of the corporal punishment system that have been researched in Accra. For example, Ampadu discovered a significant increase in contempt for authority from the teachers' perspectives and an increase in absenteeism reported by the same. Such patterns stir worry owing to the fact that they indicate a breakdown in one of the important relations that make teaching and learning effective, namely that between teachers and students. "Concerning the increasing patterns of absenteeism, this could be due to students feeling less obliged to go to class, as they do not think misconduct will carry serious consequences. The rudeness exhibited toward teachers and other school personnel is likely to promote a sick atmosphere of learning in which students feel free to defy authority. Such tendencies pose a stark challenge to teachers as they attempt to maintain a law-abiding environment in an encouraging atmosphere."

2.8 Conclusion

The literature review outlines the difficulties facing Ghana as it transitions from corporal punishment toward alternative forms of discipline. Although the policy is in accordance with international human rights standards, many challenges have arisen in its enactment. Problems regarding the preparation of teachers, lack of resources, and cultural resistance to change exist in most schools, especially in the GA East Municipality. Schools should, therefore, be adequately

supported through training, provision of materials, and clear guidance on implementing alternative discipline methods to handle cases of indiscipline.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in two theoretical paradigms: Thorndike's Behaviour Modification Theory and Canter's Assertive Discipline Model.

Thorndike's behaviour modification theory posits that behaviour is a function of its consequences. In this framework, behaviours that are followed by positive reinforcement are more likely to be repeated, whereas those followed by negative consequences are less likely to recur. However, one limitation of this theory is its heavy reliance on external reinforcement, which may not foster intrinsic motivation among students over time.

Canter's Assertive Discipline Model emphasises the importance of clear rules, consistent consequences, and teacher authority in managing classroom behaviour. This model has proven effective in establishing immediate behavioural control. Nonetheless, its focus on external control and rigid enforcement can sometimes overshadow the need for flexibility, potentially neglecting the development of self-regulation and intrinsic motivation in students.

Integrating these two models is intended to provide a more comprehensive and balanced approach to classroom management in Ghanaian basic schools. While Thorndike's model highlights the role of reinforcement in shaping behaviour, Canter's model underscores the importance of establishing a structured and authoritative learning environment. Together, they offer a holistic lens: one that

values the consistency of external reinforcement while also acknowledging the need for promoting internal motivation and self-regulation among students.

Other theoretical frameworks, such as Glasser's Choice Theory, which emphasises internal motivation and students' personal responsibility for their behaviour; Positive Behaviour Interventions and Support (PBIS), which advocates for a whole-school approach to positive reinforcement; and the Restorative Justice Model, which focuses on understanding and repairing the harm caused by misbehaviour, were also considered. However, these models serve more as complementary perspectives rather than the primary focus. Their insights further underscore the importance of flexibility and the development of intrinsic motivation in effective classroom management.

By combining key elements of Thorndike's and Canter's models, this study seeks to mitigate the limitations inherent in each approach when used in isolation. This integrated conceptual framework is expected to better capture the complexities of implementing alternative disciplinary methods in Ghanaian basic schools, where cultural, structural, and resource-related factors significantly influence classroom dynamics.

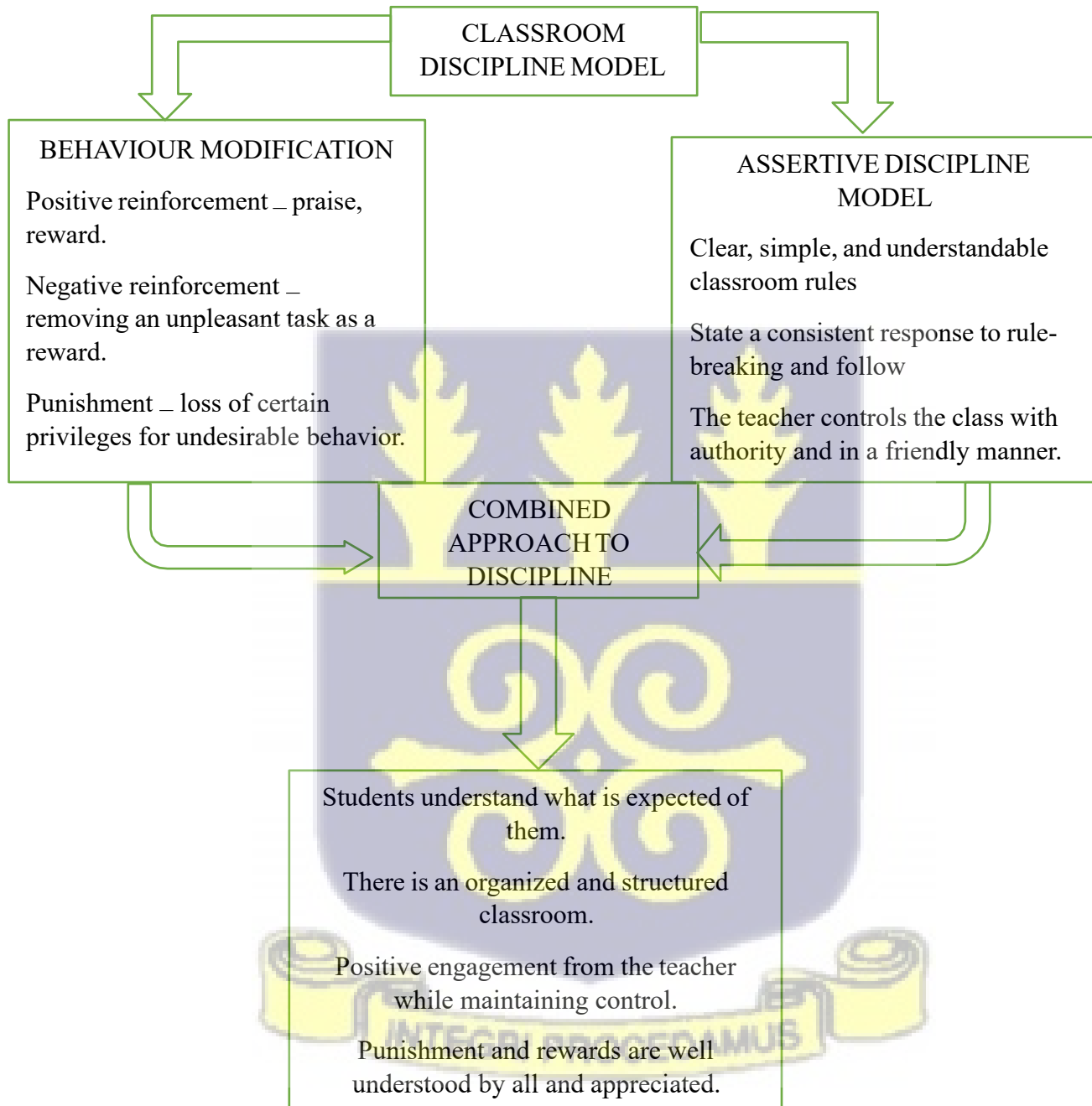
While several other theoretical models were considered, including Glasser's Choice Theory, Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and the Restorative Justice Model, Thorndike's Behaviour Modification Theory and Canter's Assertive Discipline Model were selected because they best align with the Ghanaian basic school context. In many public schools, teachers manage large class sizes, limited resources, and entrenched

cultural acceptance of corporal punishment. Thorndike's emphasis on reinforcement provides practical strategies for shaping behaviour even in resource-constrained settings, while Canter's focus on clear rules and teacher authority reflects the realities of Ghanaian classrooms where maintaining order is a daily challenge. Together, these models offer a balanced framework that not only supports behaviour change but also acknowledges the structural and cultural constraints faced by Ghanaian teachers.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Alternative Disciplinary Methods in Basic Schools

Source: Adapted from Canter (2001) and Thorndike (1932).



Explanation of the Diagram

- 1. Thorndike's Behaviour Modification: Emphasises the use of reinforcement and consequences to shape and modify student behaviour.**
- 2. Canter's Assertive Discipline: stresses teacher authority and a structured classroom environment.**
- 3. Balanced Approach: Integrates both reinforcement (Thorndike) and structure/authority (Canter) for a more holistic method of classroom management.**
- 4. Alternative Disciplinary Methods: Applies this balanced approach in basic schools, replacing or reducing reliance on corporal punishment.**

2.9.1 Canter's Assertive Discipline Model

Lee and Marlene Canter's Assertive Discipline Model accentuate the key role of teachers in instilling discipline and predictability in the learning environment. According to this model, the basis of classroom management is derived from the explicit definition of behavioural expectations and the constant reinforcement of good and bad behaviour with sanctions (Canter & Canter, 2001). The model advocates for clear, assertive, and confident communications from the instructor as they create that nurturing environment in which learning can occur.

In Ghana, the Assertive Discipline Model stands for a more significant shift away from traditional means of disciplining, which have often been punitive and physical. Rather than meting out severe punishment, teachers are now encouraged to foster a learning environment in which the children know how to behave. This means not just laying down the law but engaging students in a discussion

about its importance in establishing a sense of duty and ownership in them. Children will thus begin to understand the ramifications of their behaviour in a nurturing backdrop, where maintaining positive staff-student relationships would help minimise indiscipline.

2.9.2 Thorndike's Behaviour Modification Theory

Thorndike's early work on operant conditioning (Thorndike, 1932) laid the foundation for behaviour modification theory, which posits that behaviours followed by positive reinforcement are more likely to recur, whereas those followed by negative consequences tend to diminish. In educational contexts, this translates into systematic techniques, such as verbal praise, tangible rewards (e.g., tokens), or privileges that encourage desirable student behaviours and deter undesirable ones.

From the standpoint of this study's conceptual framework, several key variables emerge:

1. Teacher Reinforcement Strategies

- **Type and Frequency of Reinforcement:** For instance, whether teachers rely on verbal praise, symbolic rewards (like stickers or tokens), or extended privileges.
- **Timing and Consistency of Reinforcement:** How quickly and consistently reinforcements are applied after a desired behaviour.

2. Student Behavioural Outcomes

- **Positive Behaviours:** increased attentiveness, cooperation, and respect for peers and authority.

- Negative Behaviours: Disruptions, defiance, or other forms of misconduct that might decrease with effective reinforcement.

3. Teacher Attitudes and Perceptions

- Acceptance of Non-Punitive Measures: The extent to which teachers believe in and adopt behaviour modification principles.
- Confidence and Skill in Implementation: Teachers' capacity to apply reinforcement techniques consistently.

4. Policy and Environmental Context

- School Policy on Discipline: Alignment with Ghana Education Service directives that discourage corporal punishment.
- Resource Availability: Training, materials, and administrative support to implement non-punitive approaches effectively.

These variables link directly to Thorndike's behaviour modification theory by illustrating how systematic reinforcement can shape student behaviour over time. In the broader theoretical framework of this study, where Thorndike's approach is paired with Canter's Assertive Discipline Model, the emphasis on positive reinforcement (Thorndike) intersects with structured teacher authority (Canter). This intersection underpins the "balanced approach" proposed in the conceptual framework: a classroom environment that is both consistent and supportive, thereby reducing the need for harsh punitive measures.

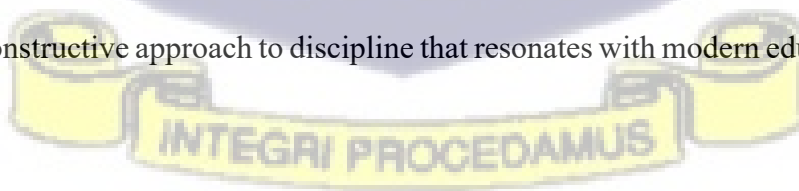
By highlighting how teacher-led reinforcements (independent variable) influence student behavioural outcomes (dependent variable), the study underscores Thorndike's principle that

learning, and by extension, classroom discipline, is optimised when positive behaviours are immediately and consistently rewarded. In the Ghanaian context, where schools are transitioning away from corporal punishment, these variables become critical indicators of how effectively alternative disciplinary methods can be adopted and sustained.

2.9.3 Relevance to the Ghanaian Context

These two concepts must form the frame of reference for the whole study, since Ghanaian educators find their way through the difficulties involved in the transition from traditional, punishment-based, or reactive discipline to more constructive and positive approaches. Thus, this framework will evaluate the alternatives to disciplinary practice in basic schools in Greater Accra (GA) East Municipality against the litmus test of how well they foster a positive learning environment. Expected outcomes besides reduced indiscipline are an improved set of social and emotional skills in the students, leading to better academic performance and ultimately a higher rating of school climate.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework constitutes a powerful point of departure for studying the effectiveness of alternative disciplinary methods in Ghanaian educational settings. It contends the need for clear expectations, constructive feedback, and an overall transition toward a more conducive and constructive approach to discipline that resonates with modern educational practices worldwide.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The study procedure is described in this chapter. It explains the methodology that was employed to conduct this study. The research looked at the various disciplinary tactics utilised by teachers in elementary schools. The Ghana Education Service has banned the use of corporal punishment in the classrooms. This incident highlighted the importance of using alternative disciplinary techniques that do not injure the pupil physically. The study's main goals are to look into the alternative disciplinary strategies that are being utilised in schools in the GA East Municipality, evaluate their effectiveness, and look into the problems that instructors face while using these alternative disciplinary approaches and ask for their recommendations to improve classroom discipline.

Corporal punishment has other effects than the physical pain it inflicts on the individual; it has psychological and emotional effects on the student while affecting students' performance. When students are subjected to severe physical penalties, their attitudes and academic performance do not improve. Nonetheless, additional methods of discipline can be used to keep an eye on students' behaviour in classrooms. The study specifically aimed to address how teachers have applied these useful alternative disciplinary strategies, also known as the positive tool kits, in the classroom. Sections on research design, participant selection, instrumentation, data collection methods, and data analysis make up this chapter.

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach

The current study employed a qualitative study design to explore participants' perceptions and experiences with the alternative disciplinary measures instituted by the Ghana Education Service (GES). Qualitative approaches are particularly well suited for studying complex, context-dependent phenomena, like changes in school discipline practices, because they enable researchers to document rich perspectives, lived experiences, and the sociocultural conditions that shape stakeholders' responses. By understanding teachers' experiences directly, this study explored the effectiveness of the new measures, the difficulties faced in implementing these measures, and the implications of this for their implementation strategies.

In addition to simply appraising outcomes, the qualitative approach sought to shed light on the context of these disciplinary measures, how they had emerged, how teachers were being informed about them, and how they aligned with or departed from longstanding norms of disciplining classrooms in Ghanaian basic schools. This contextual lens is important because the success of any intervention is determined by several factors, including institutional support, training of teachers, attitudes of the community, and availability of resources. By documenting teachers' in-depth accounts, the study offers a vivid backdrop against which to assess the practicality and sustainability of the GES's alternative disciplinary methods.



3.2 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study design informed by grounded theory principles. A case study approach is appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of how a specific national policy the GES ban on corporal punishment is being implemented at the local level in Ga East Municipality. Grounded theory complements this by allowing themes to emerge inductively from teachers' perspectives, rather than being limited by pre-determined categories (Milliken, 2010). This design is particularly relevant because little is known about how alternative disciplinary methods are understood, applied, and experienced in Ghanaian basic schools. By focusing on teachers lived experiences, the design ensures that the research questions on adoption, effectiveness, and challenges are addressed with contextual depth and empirical grounding. Furthermore, grounded theory offers structured analytical steps that guided the study, supporting systematic coding, integration of themes, and the alignment of data collection with analysis.

3.3 Data Collection Technique

On-site interviews served as the main means of gathering data for the study. The interviews were conducted using the questions found in the Interview Guide. On the other hand, participants were allowed to openly discuss their experiences. Consent was obtained, and ethical guidelines were followed as the participants in the interviews were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

3.4 Instrumentation

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to help gather data. As it gives interviewers a clear set of instructions and can provide coherent, comparable qualitative data, the semi-structured interview guide was selected. All of the interview questions in the manual were free-form. Still, the interview questions sparked further conversation. They were asked issues such as, "How do they handle misbehaviour in the classroom?" and "Have they been using the alternative disciplinary methods suggested by GES?" along with "What challenges do they face while administering these alternative methods?"

3.5 Sampling and Demographics of Participant

This study employed a purposive sampling approach to select participants who could provide rich and relevant information for addressing the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2015; Etikan et al., 2016). A total of eighteen participants took part in the study: twelve classroom teachers; six from lower primary and six from upper primary, and six headteachers. These participants were drawn from six public basic schools, with one school selected from each of the six educational circuits in the Ga East Municipality to ensure a fair geographical and circuit-level representation. Teacher selection was based on whether they had taught both before and after the ban on corporal punishment or only after the ban. This criterion was particularly important, as it allowed for a comparison of teacher perspectives across the two time periods, shedding light on changes in disciplinary practices, perceptions of their effectiveness, and the challenges teachers face in transitioning to new approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Including teachers who had only taught in the post-ban era was equally valuable, as their participation provided insight into how alternative

disciplinary strategies are understood and applied in the absence of prior experience with corporal punishment.

The demographic profile of participants was intentionally diverse to capture multiple perspectives on school discipline. Years of teaching experience ranged from fewer than five years to more than twenty years, and both male and female educators were represented. Roles included classroom teachers and headteachers, ensuring that data reflected viewpoints from different levels of school leadership and classroom practice (Patton, 2015). Participation was entirely voluntary, with the cooperation of school headteachers secured prior to data collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in neutral settings, typically within the school environment, and lasted approximately 45–60 minutes per participant. This diverse sample of roles, experience levels, and school circuits provided a rich basis for exploring the study's objectives, including the identification of disciplinary strategies, their evaluation, the challenges encountered, and participants' recommendations for improving discipline in schools.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data collected from interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis guided by grounded theory coding procedures. The process involved three stages. Open coding was applied by carefully reading through each transcript to identify recurring words, phrases, and concepts expressed by participants. This initial stage produced a large set of codes that reflected teachers' experiences and perspectives on alternative disciplinary methods.

Then, through axial coding, related codes were grouped into broader categories. For instance, codes relating to classroom management challenges, increased workload, and lack of student respect

were grouped under the category of “implementation challenges.” Similarly, codes that reflected positive classroom relationships, reduced fear, and improved behaviour were grouped under “perceived effectiveness.”

And finally, in the selective coding stage, these categories were refined into three overarching themes that directly addressed the research questions: (i) adoption of alternative disciplinary methods, (ii) perceived effectiveness, and (iii) implementation challenges. The coding was conducted manually to remain close to the data, with recurring patterns checked against the research objectives for consistency.

To strengthen validity, illustrative quotes from participants were included in the findings to demonstrate how the themes were grounded in the teachers’ own words. This transparent and systematic approach ensured that the themes emerged inductively from the data rather than being imposed by the researcher.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

During the research, it was essential to keep the information acquired from respondents and the study confidential. The researcher ensured that participant responses could not be linked to the respondents in the study. To ensure anonymity, respondents' names were not asked during the interviews. The confidentiality notion was respected throughout the data collection process. Respondents were also allowed to participate willingly, while their rights and values were honoured. Prior to conducting interviews, the researchers obtained full consent from the respondents. In addition, only content that was relevant to the investigation was evaluated. To

ensure validity, interview questions were aimed toward answering the researcher's research questions (What are the ethical considerations in research design, 2020).



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULT

4.0 Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to assess the implementation of alternative disciplinary measures in basic schools in the GA East municipality following the prohibition of corporal punishment. Specifically, the study explored:

1. The alternative disciplinary methods being used to control students' behaviour.
2. The effectiveness of these positive disciplinary toolkits.
3. The challenges encountered in instilling discipline using alternative methods.

This chapter presents the results obtained from interviews with study participants. The presentation of the results is organised around the three research questions, with supporting evidence from both quotations and participant feedback.

The analysis of teachers' opinions regarding alternative disciplinary measures led to the emergence of three key themes:

- **Teachers' Opinions on Alternative Methods**

Teachers expressed varied views on the new disciplinary interventions proposed by the GES. Some commended the initiative for reducing the infliction of pain on students, while others noted the difficulty in transitioning from traditional methods to these new approaches.

- **The Efficacy of Alternative Disciplinary Methods Used by Teachers**

Participants discussed the effectiveness of these measures, highlighting that while some alternatives show promise in promoting discipline, many teachers believe that the immediate

impact of corporal punishment is unmatched. They noted that alternative methods often require additional supervision, which can interrupt instructional time and reduce overall effectiveness.

- **Shortcomings of Alternative Disciplinary Measures**

Teachers also identified several limitations, including increased workload, a lack of student respect for teachers, and adverse effects on academic performance. These shortcomings suggest that without proper implementation and support, alternative disciplinary measures may not achieve their intended outcomes.

4.1 Teachers' Opinions on the Alternative Disciplinary Methods

Teachers expressed a mixed range of opinions regarding the new disciplinary interventions introduced by the Ghana Education Service (GES) as an alternative to corporal punishment. Many acknowledged the initiative's intent to reduce the infliction of pain on students. For instance, one teacher commented, Interviewee 2:

"It is a good initiative that has been implemented following how students were abused out of anger from some teachers." emphasising that the new measures could help curb excessive physical punishment.

However, several teachers also noted that these alternative methods remain unfamiliar, making it challenging to abandon the longstanding practice of caning.

Interviewee 6 highlighted this concern by stating,

"This method is so new to us, and the students are much more disciplined when the cane is around."

This remark underscores the difficulty in fully transitioning to the new system when traditional methods are deeply ingrained.

In addition, some teachers questioned the practicality and effectiveness of certain alternative measures.

Interviewee 1 observed:

“Oh, some may be workable, some may not. Look at the lines that the child has to write; till when? Is the child taking it home to go and write?”

This comment reflects scepticism about whether methods like writing lines can yield long-term behavioural changes, as they may be viewed as overly time-consuming or easily circumvented by students.

Overall, while there is recognition of the potential benefits of the GES’s new disciplinary toolkit, the teachers’ feedback indicates a significant learning curve and a strong attachment to traditional methods, particularly caning, which appears to have an immediate and noticeable impact on student behaviour.

With reference to the alternative disciplinary methods that are being used to control students’ behaviour, though some participants stated that they do not use alternative disciplinary methods, others expressed that they are attempting to make this new disciplinary approach work.

The analysis of participants’ responses led to three sub-themes: a) writing lines, b) cleaning, and c) classroom punishment that includes kneeling and standing.

A) Writing Lines

According to some interviewees, writing lines is a type of punishment deployed by school officials to reprimand misbehaving students. Teachers' comments were, for the most part, comparable.

These responses were aimed at writing many lines of a single sentence or words. For instance, Interviewee 1 indicated that

“...Sometimes I will ask them to write lines...”

Interviewee 6 mentions that writing lines is one of the most common alternatives being used. This was highlighted when he said,

“We most often give them lines to write, sometimes sentences to write...”

Interviewee 4 mentioned that amongst the many alternative methods, writing lines is one of them. He stated,

“We’ve been using so many disciplinary measures, such as the writing lines method.”

Conversely, one of the instructors stated that the pupils regard the writing of lines as a simple activity. They finish it in a matter of seconds, making it appear as though you never penalised them.

B) Cleaning

Almost all participants mentioned this alternative method of discipline. Some teachers stated they prefer assigning students who misbehave to clean the compound. In an interview with Interviewee 6, he elaborated on how cleaning can serve as a corrective disciplinary method alongside aiding environmental cleanliness.

In his statement he said,

“If there is a place around the compound that is dirty, we ask them to sweep. If not for anything, they are helping keep the place tidy. We ask them to sweep repeatedly. It depends, maybe a week or two.”

He explained that sweeping is a standard household chore in Ghana; thus, extending the sweeping for a few days or even a week makes it quite punitive. Some teachers also resort to picking up litter as a method of discipline. One teacher mentioned that as this method of discipline is good, it is most appropriate when not done or assigned during instructional hours.

C) Classroom punishment that includes kneeling and standing

Although kneeling may, to some extent, cause physical pain to its victims, some teachers, upon interaction, consider it an alternative to corporal punishment. In an interview with one of the teachers, he revealed that he usually asks students to kneel for a period of time. In his statement he said,

“Mostly kneeling down in the classroom for about 15 minutes.”

Another also mentioned that sometimes, she instructs students who misbehave to stand for a while. She stated,

“I usually ask them to stand at the back while they listen.”

However, she lamented that this approach does not always solve classroom misbehaviour, as some students take advantage of the punishment to distract the class. While some students make funny jokes, some make gimmicks, causing the other pupils to laugh while the lesson is ongoing.

To quote, she said, *“Okay, some of the time, I only ask you to stand at the back and raise your hands for a short time. And that one too, I’m not able to let the person stand there because as they stand there, they would even be causing the others to laugh and be making noise at the same time. Yes, they distract the class and all that.”*

In summary, teachers were cognisant of the alternative disciplinary measures that have been meted

out by the GES. Sweeping classrooms and compounds, cleaning, and writing lines were among the few measures that practically every instructor was aware of.

4.2 The Efficacy of Alternate Disciplinary Methods Used by Teachers

The GES is working with schools to adopt and accept alternatives to corporal punishment. They are specifically keen on options that would address effectively and appropriately when students misbehave, while also allowing students to stay in school and progress academically and behaviourally. Although some teachers stated that these alternatives are not useful to them, we received a generally good response in our quest to ascertain how successful these alternatives are. Teachers who are averse to this new approach claim that most children are accustomed to the cane and only act appropriately when they see it. As a result, they bolstered the argument that the new disciplinary techniques have not been efficient.

He remarked in an interview with interviewee 5 that,

“I do not use these because these students are so conversant with the cane that it is the only thing that would make them listen.”

Alternative discipline measures, according to another teacher, are ineffectual because they typically entail supervision, which delays or interrupts instructional time, whereas corporal punishment is a "quick fix".

In his words, he said,

“We use the canning, although we have been asked not to. We realise with canning immediately you rebuke the child; you can just continue with teaching, but with asking the child to pick, you have to monitor it.”

Four of the seven interviewees admitted that these solutions were ineffective. While a few complained that students are not afraid to be punished because these alternatives rarely cause any pain, the essence of the punishment is not achieved; others argued that the majority of alternative disciplinary methods are household chores that are carried out in a typical Ghanaian home. As a result, pupils may fail to recognise the corrective or punishing nature of any penalties they receive. It was described as a "cool chop" by participant 6. He stated:

"For me it is not working. It is very difficult because children take it as normal things that go on at home."

He also mentioned that the alternative methods of discipline make the students fearless. He elaborated that, prior to the ban on corporal punishment, students were more composed in and out of the classroom because they knew that they would be caned should they misbehave. In his words, he said they fear the cane. However, after the ban, these same students have become unbothered by what punishment may be given to them because they are aware that whatever may come, the cane they fear so much will not be used on them.

According to participant 2, the new intervention meted out by GES seems to be having no effect on the students at all.

To quote, he said,

"With this new method introduced, it seems not to have any effect on students. There may be a situation whereby you punish a student to write 'I will always do my homework'. The student knows if he or she does not write it, they won't be punished, so they won't write it, especially the grown ones."

One of the teachers debunked the efficacy of the alternative disciplinary methods because, unlike corporal punishment, these alternative methods do not generate immediate results. Hence, emphasising the effectiveness of corporal punishment instead.

Interviewee 5 stated,

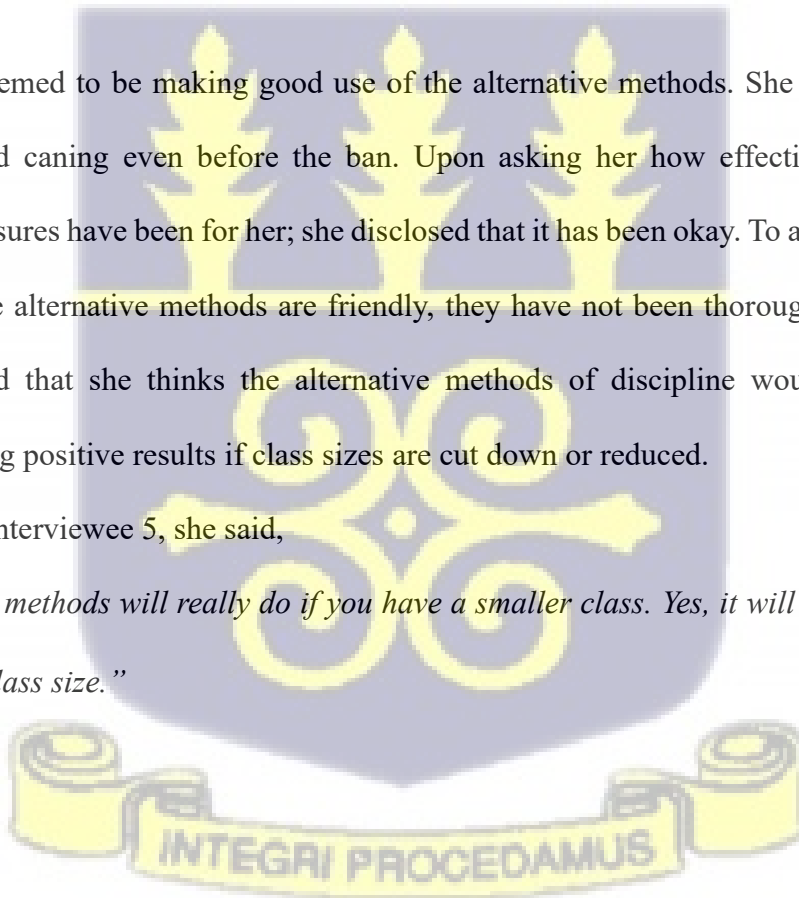
“I think the corporal punishment. This is because immediately, you are able to correct the child right there. The child is right to be aware of the reason why he/she is being punished.”

The interviewee 7 also added that the alternative disciplinary measures have not been thoroughly effective, as they sometimes do not address the issue of indiscipline among students but rather encourage it.

Interviewee 1 seemed to be making good use of the alternative methods. She initially disclosed how she disliked caning even before the ban. Upon asking her how effective the alternative disciplinary measures have been for her; she disclosed that it has been okay. To add, she mentioned that although the alternative methods are friendly, they have not been thoroughly effective. She further explained that she thinks the alternative methods of discipline would be thoroughly effectual, yielding positive results if class sizes are cut down or reduced.

In the words of interviewee 5, she said,

“The alternative methods will really do if you have a smaller class. Yes, it will really work if you have a smaller class size.”



4.3 Shortcomings of the Alternative Disciplinary Methods

The analysis of teacher interviews revealed several shortcomings associated with the implementation of alternative disciplinary methods. These shortcomings can be categorised into four major themes, each with multiple sub-themes that illustrate the challenges in detail.

4.3.1 Increased Teacher Workload and Monitoring Challenges

A. Heightened Administrative Burden

Teachers consistently reported that the new disciplinary methods substantially increase their workload.

For example, Interviewee 1 explained:

“It has increased our workload. If you ask a student to write 50 or 100 lines, it's not just about the act of writing; you must verify that the student is actually writing correctly. Some students start writing and then merely scribble aimlessly just to fill the space.”

This additional burden not only diverts teachers' attention from instructional duties but also increases the time spent on routine supervisory tasks, thus affecting overall efficiency.

4.3.2 Supervision Difficulties

Many teachers expressed that the alternative methods require constant supervision, which disrupts the natural flow of the school day.

Interviewee 4 noted:

“When using methods like picking up litter, you must continuously supervise, even during marking sessions, which is extremely challenging.”

Similarly, Interviewee 3 stated:

“For instance, if you assign a pupil to sweep the classroom after school, you have to wait until you’re sure they have completed the task. While it may not seem like a huge time sink, it inevitably affects our schedule and distracts from our primary teaching responsibilities.”

These supervision challenges mean that teachers must multitask extensively, often compromising the quality of both disciplinary monitoring and academic instruction.

4.3.3 Erosion of Teacher Authority and Student Indifference

- **Loss of Teacher Authority**

Several teachers expressed concern that the implementation of alternative disciplinary measures has diminished the authority traditionally held by teachers.

Interviewee 6 observed:

“Children do not take us seriously anymore when it comes to discipline. They do not respect these new methods because they compare them to the corporal punishment they remember from their own school days.”

This sentiment indicates that without the fear associated with physical punishment, students may not regard the teacher’s instructions with the same seriousness, thereby undermining the teacher’s role in the classroom.

- **Inadequate Deterrence and Student Complacency**

Teachers reported that the lack of immediate punitive consequences in alternative methods makes them less effective as deterrents.

For instance, Interviewee 5 stated:

“Implementing this new method is very difficult because we cannot simply do away with corporal punishment. We often have to resort to it simultaneously, which diminishes the perceived severity of the alternatives.”

Furthermore, many teachers noted that students quickly become accustomed to these methods and fail to internalise the lesson. As one teacher remarked, the alternative methods sometimes lead to complacency, where the student does not perceive any real threat or consequence, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of the disciplinary intervention.

4.3.4 Negative Impact on Instructional Time and Academic Performance

- **Disruption of Lesson Schedules**

A common concern among teachers was that the alternative disciplinary measures significantly disrupt instructional time.

Interviewee 2 explained:

“It takes us back in so many ways because you prepare your scheme of work for the term. I have about 23 weeks, and I expect to complete 12 or 9 topics. If these methods delay our progress, for example, if a topic that should take 2 weeks ends up taking 3 weeks, how will we ever complete the entire curriculum?”

This delay not only disrupts the academic schedule but also forces teachers to rush through content, thereby compromising the quality of education.

- **Adverse Effects on Academic Achievement**

Several teachers indicated that the alternative methods can lead to a decline in academic performance. Without the immediate deterrence of physical punishment, students tend to exhibit lower levels of focus and commitment to their studies.

Interviewee 5 remarked:

“This disciplinary method is really affecting students’ academic performance. They learn only when they want to, and overall academic achievement is being compromised.” Additionally,

Interviewee 2 noted that even when discipline is enforced, the continued lack of a strong punitive element results in a scenario where, despite punishment, students remain indifferent, an outcome that ultimately hinders academic progress.

4.3.5 Challenges in Consistent Implementation and Effectiveness

- **Inconsistency in Enforcement**

Teachers highlighted that the alternative disciplinary methods are not implemented consistently across classrooms and schools.

Interviewee 1 commented:

“Monitoring students is challenging. When a child is disruptive, you might have to continuously adjust, bringing the child closer; changing their seating arrangement repeatedly, which distracts the class and makes consistent enforcement very difficult.”

This inconsistency leads to mixed results, with some students not receiving a uniform message regarding acceptable behaviour.

- **Lack of Immediate Deterrence**

A significant drawback identified was the failure of alternative methods to produce an immediate corrective response.

Interviewee 6 elaborated:

“When you ask a child to write lines, there is no immediate consequence like you would get with corporal punishment. The delay in punishment makes it less effective in correcting behaviour promptly.”

Without an immediate deterrent, students may perceive the punishment as a mere formality rather than a corrective measure, thereby reducing its overall efficacy.

- **Cultural and Contextual Barriers**

Teachers also indicated that cultural norms and long-standing practices significantly influence the acceptance of disciplinary methods. Several respondents noted that many students and even parents still hold a preference for corporal punishment, as it is deeply embedded in the local culture. This cultural inertia makes it difficult for alternative methods to gain traction and be fully effective in changing student behaviour.

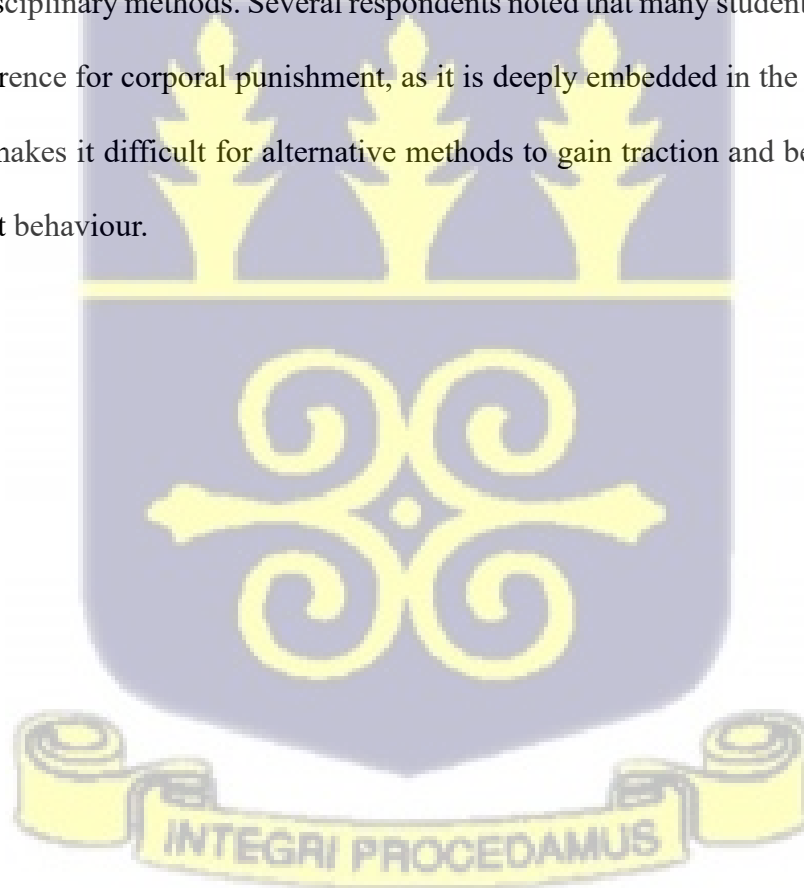


Table 1. Key Themes, Findings, and Supporting Evidence

Theme / Sub-theme	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence /Quotes
Teachers' Opinions on Alternative Methods	Teachers expressed mixed views about the new disciplinary methods. While many appreciate the effort to reduce physical pain, others find it difficult to shift away from traditional methods like caning.	- Interviewee 2: "It is a good initiative that has been implemented following how students are abused out of anger from some teachers." - Interviewee 6: "This method is so new to us, and the students are much more disciplined when the cane is around."
Writing Lines	Writing lines is commonly used as an alternative method. Some teachers find it useful, but others argue that students complete the task too quickly, diminishing its punitive effect.	Interviewee 1: "...Sometimes I will ask them to write lines..." - Interviewee 6: "We most often give them lines to write, sometimes sentences to write..." - One teacher noted that pupils finish it in a matter of seconds.

	Cleaning tasks are frequently used as a disciplinary measure. When extended over several	Interviewee 6 explained: “If there is a place around the compound that is dirty, we ask them to sweep. If not
Cleaning	days, it becomes a more punitive activity and also helps maintain a clean environment.	for anything, they are helping keep the place tidy.”
Classroom Punishment (Kneeling/Standing)	Some teachers use classroom punishment methods like kneeling or standing as alternatives. These methods may provide a temporary solution but can lead to distractions and inconsistent effects.	- One teacher mentioned: “Mostly kneeling down in the classroom for about 15 minutes.” - Another stated: “I usually ask them to stand at the back while they listen.” - However, some reported that students often make fun of these measures.

Efficacy of Alternative Methods	Alternative disciplinary measures generally show mixed efficacy. They often lack the immediate corrective impact of corporal punishment and require additional supervision.	- Participant 5: “I do not use these because these students are so conversant with the cane that it is the only thing that would make them listen.” - Some teachers noted that while alternatives might work, the immediate impact is missing.
Increased Workload & Monitoring Challenges	The new methods increase teacher workload due to the need for continuous supervision and verifying task completion, which interrupts instructional time.	- Interviewee 1: “It has increased our workload. If you ask a student to write 50 or 100 lines, it's not just about the act of writing; you must verify that the student is actually writing correctly.” - Interviewee 4 noted constant supervision is challenging.



Erosion of Teacher Authority & Student Indifference	The absence of immediate punitive measures diminishes teacher authority, and students may not take alternative methods seriously.	• Interviewee 6: “Children do not take us seriously anymore when it comes to discipline. They do not respect these new methods because they compare them to the corporal punishment they remember.”
Impact on Instructional Time & Academic Performance	The extra time required for supervising alternative disciplinary tasks disrupts lesson plans and slows curriculum	• Interviewee 2: “If a topic that should take 2 weeks ends up taking 3 weeks, how will we ever complete the entire curriculum?”
	progress, which can negatively affect academic achievement.	• Teachers mentioned that the extra supervision interferes with teaching time.



Inconsistency Implementation in	Alternative disciplinary methods are not uniformly enforced across classrooms, leading to mixed results and reduced overall effectiveness.	• Interviewee 1 mentioned the challenge of continuously adjusting seating arrangements and supervision. • Interviewee 6 noted that the lack of immediate consequences undermines the deterrent effect of the methods.
Cultural Barriers	Deep-rooted cultural preferences for corporal punishment create resistance to accepting alternative methods, as both students and parents are accustomed to traditional practices.	• Several teachers highlighted that many students and parents still favor corporal punishment, as its immediate impact is well-known and culturally embedded.



4.5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses the connections between the study's results and the existing literature, revisits the research on corporal punishment and its impact on behaviour, and further explores the themes that emerged from the analysis of teacher opinions on alternative disciplinary measures. The discussion is organised into three sections corresponding to the major themes identified in the results: teachers' opinions on alternative methods, the efficacy of alternative disciplinary methods, and the shortcomings of these methods. In addition, the chapter addresses the limitations of this study and explores the broader implications of the findings for the educational sector.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

4.6.1 Teachers' Opinions on Alternative Disciplinary Methods

The study revealed a wide range of teacher opinions regarding the GES's alternative disciplinary measures. Many teachers expressed initial support for the new interventions, acknowledging the intent to reduce the infliction of pain on students. However, a consistent theme across the interviews was the challenge of transitioning away from corporal punishment. Several teachers reported that the new methods are still too unfamiliar and that students appear more responsive when physical punishment is used. These findings resonate with previous research, which suggests that deep-rooted cultural practices and established disciplinary routines can hinder the adoption of innovative methods.

Furthermore, some teachers voiced scepticism about the practical application of certain measures, such as the writing lines method, which they felt did not yield long-term behavioural changes. This perspective highlights the gap between theoretical benefits and actual classroom effectiveness.

4.6.2 Efficacy of Alternative Disciplinary Methods

In terms of efficacy, the results indicate that while alternative disciplinary measures have some positive attributes, they do not consistently produce the desired immediate behavioural correction. Many teachers observed that alternative methods often require prolonged supervision and do not have the instantaneous deterrence associated with corporal punishment. This aligns with existing literature that argues immediate consequences are crucial for behaviour modification. Moreover, the need for continuous monitoring disrupts instructional time, further reducing the effectiveness of these methods.

Teachers also noted that the lack of immediate impact contributes to a gradual erosion of discipline, with students becoming less fearful of misbehaviour. This finding suggests that without the prompt, decisive action characteristic of traditional methods, the alternative approaches may not sufficiently deter indiscipline.

4.6.3 Shortcomings of the Alternative Disciplinary Methods

The shortcomings identified in the study are multifaceted. First, many teachers reported an increased workload, as alternative disciplinary methods require extensive supervision and administrative oversight. The additional burden on teachers, particularly when coupled with the need to verify task completion (e.g., ensuring that students truly write out assigned lines), detracts from instructional time and diminishes the overall classroom experience.

Second, the alternative methods have been criticised for undermining teacher authority. Several interviewees highlighted that, in the absence of corporal punishment, students often fail to take disciplinary measures seriously, leading to a decline in respect for teachers. This erosion of

authority is problematic, as it weakens the overall disciplinary framework and can lead to further indiscipline.

Third, the implementation of these methods has been found to negatively impact instructional time and academic performance. Delays caused by the supervision of alternative disciplinary activities have resulted in disrupted lesson plans and reduced classroom efficiency. Teachers reported that extended disciplinary sessions hinder the completion of the syllabus and, in turn, affect student learning outcomes.

4.7 IMPLICATIONS

The study's findings have significant implications for educational practice and policy:

- **For Schools and Teachers:**

The mixed effectiveness of alternative disciplinary measures suggests that schools must carefully evaluate how these methods are implemented. Teachers need adequate training and support to manage the increased workload and to integrate these methods effectively without compromising instructional time.

- **For the Educational Sector:**

The erosion of teacher authority and the observed negative impacts on academic performance highlight the need for a balanced approach. Stakeholders must consider how to maintain discipline while ensuring that alternative methods do not inadvertently lower academic standards.

- **For Future Research:**

The findings point to the necessity for further studies that explore hybrid models of discipline. Future research should investigate how elements of traditional and alternative methods might be combined to optimise classroom management while preserving instructional efficiency.

The results of this study provided insights into various aspects of teacher discipline in most schools in the country, and they confirmed some of what is already known. While the definitions of corporal punishment that emerged in this study are in keeping with the literature, the main idea of corporal punishment can be very much understood by those victims who experience it much. Corporal punishment signals to the child that a way to settle interpersonal conflicts is to use physical force and inflict pain. Such children may in turn resort to such behaviour themselves. They may also fail to develop trusting, secure relationships with adults and fail to evolve the necessary skills to settle disputes or wield authority in less violent ways. Corporal punishment is considered to be, if not the best, the most satisfying means of disciplining in the Ghanaian culture. Discipline has got to be one of the key areas in instilling discipline or moral values in Ghanaian society. It is likely that many parents who use corporal punishment consider it to be an elicited response to a child's problematic behaviour. And this has been overly accepted in the schools because it is believed to be the best form of behavioural change. Corporal punishment, as most people in Ghanaian society think, is the correct measure in instilling discipline or making people turn to a new and acceptable behaviour. The use of corporal punishment has so many effects on the person in question. Over the past two decades, however, an increasingly rigorous body of research has suggested that corporal punishment contributes to increases in a broad spectrum of child behaviour problems (Gershoff; Grogan-Kaylor). Indeed, some important research suggests that measurable outcomes of corporal punishment use may persist well into adulthood (MacMillan

1999). The results of this study yield timely, informative, and enlightening insight into a topic that has impacted many lives everywhere. The study provided insights into various forms of discipline being employed in most basic schools in the country, and these findings confirmed the already known. This research indicates that corporal punishment is seen as one of the most significant methods of discipline. As this research and the literature demonstrate, physical pain to the body can be treated, save death, but the emotional and psychological effects can affect the person so deeply since they cannot be seen (Brenda 2010). Before moving into a detailed interpretation of the results and their implications, it is important to revisit the research questions posed within this study. The research questions are: What alternative disciplinary methods are being used to control students' behaviour? How effective are these positive toolkits that have been employed in schools to control students' behaviour? And what challenges do teachers and school leaders face in instilling discipline in schools using the alternative discipline methods?

4.8 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that while the GES's positive disciplinary toolkit has been implemented in many schools, its overall effectiveness remains mixed. On one hand, the introduction of these alternative methods represents a progressive move toward non-violent discipline; on the other hand, deep-rooted cultural practices and a lack of comprehensive understanding continue to impede their full acceptance and consistent implementation.

4.8.1 Teacher Familiarity and Resistance to Change

Teachers expressed a clear preference for corporal punishment, which is deeply entrenched in the Ghanaian educational context. Many reported that they still favour the immediate and decisive nature of physical punishment over alternative methods. This sentiment is supported by previous research that highlights the immediate behavioural compliance achieved through corporal punishment (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016). For instance, when asked to compare the methods, many teachers stated that students are noticeably more disciplined when the cane is used, suggesting that the new disciplinary toolkit has not yet supplanted the effectiveness of traditional methods.

4.8.2 Lack of Comprehensive Training and Understanding

A recurring theme in the interviews was the insufficient understanding of the new disciplinary toolkit. Several teachers indicated that they either did not fully comprehend what the alternative measures entailed or were reluctant to adopt them because of a longstanding reliance on corporal punishment. This gap in knowledge undermines the potential of the toolkit. As noted by Bloomfield and Deane (2004), effective implementation of any new system requires robust training and a clear communication strategy. Without proper orientation, both teachers and students misinterpret the new methods. For example, some students mistakenly believe that being asked to sit in a particular place signals the end of disciplinary action, leading to confusion and non-compliance.

4.8.3 Implications for Teacher Authority and Classroom Management

The study also reveals that the new toolkit appears to erode teacher authority. Many teachers expressed concern that without the tangible impact of physical punishment, students become indifferent toward disciplinary measures, ultimately reducing respect for teachers. This decline in authority can have broader implications for classroom management and overall discipline. According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), students model the behaviours they observe in authority figures; thus, if teachers appear ineffective, students may adopt a similarly lax attitude toward discipline. This finding reinforces the need for a balanced approach that preserves the teacher's ability to enforce discipline while gradually introducing alternative methods.

4.8.4 Impact on Instructional Time and Academic Achievement

A significant concern raised by teachers was the disruption to instructional time. Supervising the alternative disciplinary measures, such as ensuring that students complete tasks like writing lines or cleaning, often interrupts lessons and delays the completion of the curriculum. Teachers reported that extended disciplinary sessions lead to reduced academic performance, as the delays force them to rush through lessons or leave parts of the syllabus uncovered. This is consistent with findings by Jones (2010), who noted that excessive administrative demands in classroom management can detract from the primary instructional objectives.

4.8.5 Broader Implications and Need for Policy Interventions

The mixed reception of the alternative disciplinary toolkit has broader implications for educational policy and practice. The data suggest that while the GES's initiative represents an important step

toward more humane disciplinary practices, its success depends on a comprehensive strategy that includes ongoing teacher training, clear guidelines, and stakeholder engagement. Policymakers must consider the cultural context in which these methods are being introduced. A sustained effort to educate teachers, students, and parents about the benefits and proper use of the toolkit is essential. Furthermore, the development of supportive policies, such as targeted training programmes and additional resources for classroom management, could bridge the gap between the theoretical advantages of alternative disciplinary measures and their practical application.

In summary, the findings underscore the complexity of transitioning from traditional to alternative disciplinary methods in Ghanaian schools. The evidence indicates that adoption remains partial (Objective 1), as many teachers still rely on corporal punishment out of habit or cultural acceptance. With regard to effectiveness (Objective 2), alternative methods show promise in fostering respect and communication, but they also create practical concerns such as time demands and perceived loss of authority. Finally, implementation challenges (Objective 3) remain significant, including inadequate training, lack of clarity, and insufficient policy support. These challenges highlight the need for stronger teacher capacity-building and stakeholder engagement.

Nevertheless, the findings also demonstrate that alternative disciplinary methods hold considerable potential for reshaping the culture of discipline in Ghanaian basic schools if implementation is supported consistently. Only through a multifaceted approach combining training, supervision, and community sensitisation can the benefits of the Positive Discipline Toolkit be fully realised without compromising academic performance or effective classroom management.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Conclusion

This study assessed the implementation of the Ghana Education Service's (GES) alternative disciplinary methods in basic schools within the GA East Municipality. The findings provide a clear, objective-based response to the study's aims.

Firstly, regarding the adoption of alternative methods (Objective 1), the study identified that teachers are primarily using a limited set of strategies from the GES toolkit, namely writing lines, assigning cleaning duties, and classroom punishments like kneeling or standing. However, this adoption is partial and often coexists with a lingering preference for corporal punishment, indicating a significant gap between policy intent and classroom reality.

Secondly, concerning the perceived effectiveness (Objective 2), the results are mixed. While teachers acknowledge the ethical merit of non-violent methods, a majority perceive them as less effective than corporal punishment due to the lack of immediate deterrence, increased need for supervision, and the failure to command the same level of student compliance. This perception directly impacts their application and sustainability.

Thirdly, the study investigated key challenges (Objective 3), revealing that inadequate training, increased teacher workload, erosion of teacher authority, and disruptive effects on instructional time are critical barriers. These challenges are compounded by deep-seated cultural norms that legitimize corporal punishment, creating a resistant environment for the new policy.

In conclusion, while the policy shift towards alternative discipline is a positive and necessary alignment with international human rights standards, its implementation in the GA East Municipality is fraught with difficulties. The findings suggest that without addressing the

foundational issues of teacher capacity, resource constraints, and cultural resistance, the policy risks being ineffective or inconsistently applied, potentially undermining both discipline and academic outcomes. The implications for policy are clear: a successful transition requires more than a directive; it demands a comprehensive, supportive system for change.

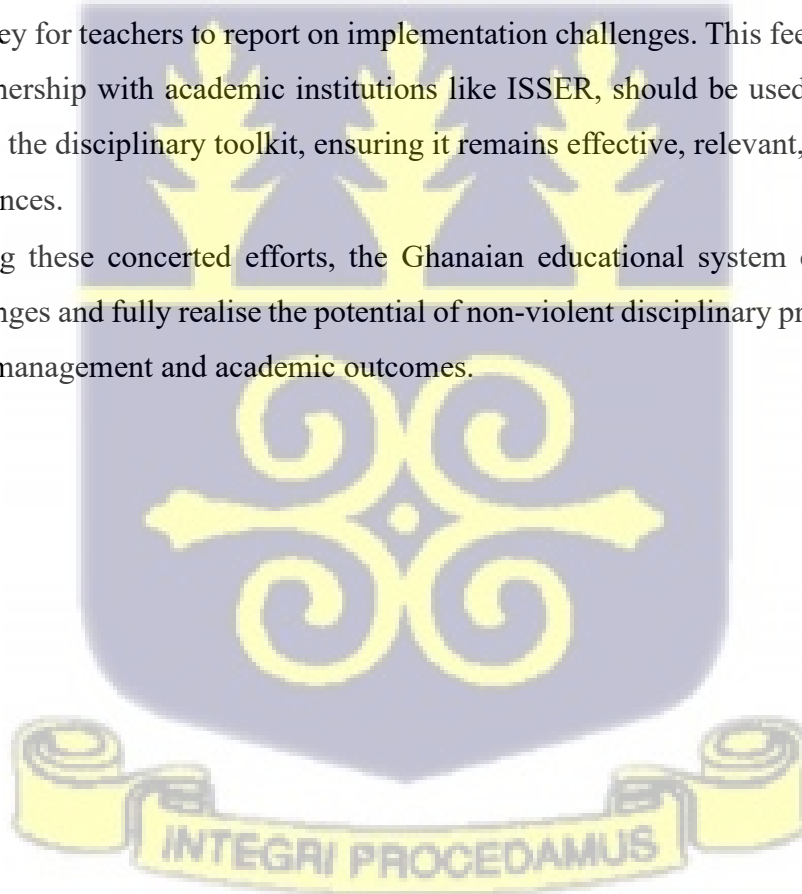
5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of alternative disciplinary measures in basic schools:

- **Enhanced Teacher Training and Professional Development:** The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the GES should move beyond one-time seminars to establish a system of ongoing, practical, and context specific training. This should involve the GES Directorate of Training, in partnership with educational psychologists and NGOs, developing modular programs integrated into the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) framework. These programs must include demonstrations, role-playing scenarios relevant to Ghanaian classrooms, and peer-learning sessions to equip teachers with practical skills in positive behaviour management.
- **Provision of Adequate Resources and Support:** Schools must be equipped with the necessary resources to implement alternative disciplinary measures effectively. This includes not only providing teaching aids for positive reinforcement but also addressing the critical issue of overcrowding by deploying additional support staff. The MoE and District Assemblies should prioritize the provision of these resources and support personnel, particularly in large schools, to help distribute the supervisory burden and ensure disciplinary tasks do not disrupt instructional time.
- **Clear Guidelines and Consistent Policy Enforcement:** The GES should develop and disseminate clear, detailed, and practical guidelines for implementing alternative disciplinary measures. The Curriculum Research and Development Division (CRDD) should create a step by step manual with flowcharts for addressing specific misbehaviors, templates for behaviour contracts, and low-resource strategies. These guidelines must be distributed to all schools, and the GES Inspectorate

Division should enforce consistent application through regular monitoring and by including effective implementation as a key performance indicator during school inspections.

- **Stakeholder Engagement and Parental Involvement:** To facilitate a smoother transition, it is essential to actively engage all stakeholders. Headteachers and School Management Committees (SMCs), with support from the GES Public Relations Unit, should launch a structured sensitization campaign. This should include mandatory PTA meetings and community durbars at the start of each academic year to explain the rationale and benefits of positive discipline, using flyers and local radio discussions in dominant languages to build consensus and counter cultural preferences for corporal punishment.
- **Periodic Evaluation and Policy Revision:** Given the dynamic nature of educational environments, the MoE and GES should institutionalize a feedback mechanism for periodic policy review. The GES Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Division should establish an annual anonymous survey for teachers to report on implementation challenges. This feedback, potentially gathered in partnership with academic institutions like ISSER, should be used to systematically refine and adjust the disciplinary toolkit, ensuring it remains effective, relevant, and responsive to frontline experiences.
- By implementing these concerted efforts, the Ghanaian educational system can overcome the identified challenges and fully realise the potential of non-violent disciplinary practices to improve both classroom management and academic outcomes.



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