

Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation and Moral Development of Students

A case study of Secondary Schools in Western Uganda

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Abstract

This study determined corporal punishment policy implementation and moral development of students in selected secondary schools in Western Uganda. Sought further in this study was to test the hypothesis of: (i) no significant difference in the extent of CP policy implementation between urban and rural schools. (ii) no significant difference in the extent of CP policy implementation between secular and faith founded schools. (iii) no significant relationship between the extent of corporal punishment policy implementation (ECPPI) and level of moral development (LMD) of students. The descriptive comparative and correlation design were utilized. 636 senior two and three students and 66 teachers were selected through purposive, simple random sampling using random numbers. A researcher designed instruments to determine the LMD and ECPPI were used. Pearson's Correlation Coefficient, mean and regression were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the corporal punishment policy was partially implemented (Average Mean = 2.25) (Rules and regulations were reviewed, counselling sessions were conducted and minutes of the disciplinary committee were kept). LMD had a grand average mean = 1.75 (socionomous) meaning that students' actions depended on school rules and regulations. There was a significant difference in the extent of corporal punishment policy implementation and level of moral development of students between urban versus rural schools and denominational versus secular founded schools. There was a significant strong positive relationship between the extent of corporal punishment policy implementation and level of moral development of students ($r = +0.994$, Sig. = 0.000) thus authenticating Kohlberg's theory of moral development. It was concluded

that corporal punishment policy influenced the level of moral development of students and recommended that corporal punishment policy be emphasized in developing school policies that concern moral development.

Key words: Corporal Punishment, Policy Implementation, Moral Development and Students

Introduction

Moral development is a change in thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding standards of right and wrong (Durkheim, 1961). Bull (1973) uses the word morality to mean ‘manners. Morality can also be referred to as generally accepted code of conduct in a society or pursuit of good life. Traditional character educators (Strauss, 2000) emphasize processes of internalization and self-control that would result in virtuous conduct and habit creation, while cognitive supporters (Kohlberg, 1973) emphasize development of structures of moral development which underlie action choices.

In Uganda, the issue of discipline and moral development has been of concern for a long time. The Government of Uganda has since introduced several measures to boost morality of its citizens. For- example the Education Act 2008, regulation 21 (l) require that moral values be taught and upheld in schools. Many a student chose behaviors that reflect an incredible lack of self-discipline, which, may result in making them feel good, advance their personal interests, or satisfy their desire to dominate and control others (Sabin, 2006).

Current estimates indicate that half the world’s children live in countries where corporal punishment is not yet banned (Pinheiro, 2006). Corporal punishment is a deliberate act that causes pain or physical discomfort (Vally, 2005). It was during the 18th century, that, the concept of Corporal Punishment (CP) was attacked by some philosophers and legal reformers. They argued that, merely inflicting pain on miscreants was seen as inefficient, influencing the subject only for a short period of time and effecting no permanent change in their behaviour. Some believed that the

purpose of punishment should have been reformation, but not retribution. This led to CP being outlawed in Poland in 1789, followed by Sweden in 1799 (Guerra, Nucci, & Huesmann, 1994). According to Guerra, et al. (1994), in Canada, UK, Scotland, Wales, US, India and Georgia CP is lawful in the home but unlawful in schools. It is interesting to note that in Thailand, caning in schools was abolished in 2000 and reintroduced in 2002. In Malawi and South Africa, CP is lawful in the home but unlawful in schools. CP in Tanzanian schools takes the form of caning. However, it is supposed to be given by the head teacher or persons delegated by the head teacher, not by ordinary class teachers and still less by prefects (Guerra, et al., 1994). This predicament called for this study on corporal punishment policy implementation and level of moral development of students in selected secondary schools in Western Uganda.

Review of Related Literature

Corporal punishment policy implementation and moral development

A global campaign to abolish corporal punishment has been introduced to challenge the traditional dependence of discipline on corporal punishment as a tool for reforming children's misbehavior (Global Report, 2008). This campaign was highly supported by the contemporary call for protecting human rights including the right to security and human treatment (articles 3 and 5, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and child rights & physical protection (Article 19, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990). In December 2005 the UN general assembly adopted a resolution that called for the elimination of all forms of CP against children in schools and detention facilities emphasizing human dignity (MoES, 2007). This is because, corporal punishment is by its very nature, anti-human and ultimately an abusive practice that entrenches the idea that violence provides a solution to every problem in the classroom. The removal of corporal punishment in our schools is a necessary step towards the development of a culture of human rights in our country. In Uganda, CP was banned by government

circular in 2006, but has not explicitly been made into a statute. Alternatives to CP were issued in 2008 recognizing that it was still being used in schools despite the ban (Naker & Ssekitooleko, 2009). But like Namanda observes, teachers still cane students in spite of CP being unlawful (Namanda, 2012 February 29th; Masaba, 2012 August 11th). Possible reasons for continued use of corporal punishment in schools could be administrative acceptance represented by the school through not implementing the policy effectively; lack of communication with family; inability to find alternative means of discipline students etc. (Wasef, 2011).

Naker (2005) as (cited in Naker & Ssekitooleko, 2009) was a study in Uganda that involved 1400 children and 1100 adults about their experiences with violence, punishment and discipline. The survey results indicated that corporal punishment was indeed a common practice. More than 98% of the children surveyed reported experiencing corporal punishment. Caning was the most popular form of corporal punishment, followed closely by slapping and pinching. Similar findings were reported by Agbenyega (2006), UNICEF in 2010 (cited in Wasef, 2011) and Talwar (2011).

Gershoff (2008)'s study synthesizes one hundred years of social science research and many hundreds of published studies on physical punishment conducted by professionals in the fields of psychology, medicine, education, social work, and sociology. Findings indicate little research evidence that physical punishment improves children's behavior in the long term. In contrast, there is substantial research evidence that physical punishment puts children at risk for negative outcomes, including increased aggression, antisocial behavior, mental health problems, and physical injury. Similar findings were reported by Smith (2006), Johannes (2005) and Tungata (2006).

Smit (2010) studied the role of school discipline in combating violence in schools in the East London Region, University of Fort Hare East London, SA found out that a culture of violence exists in these schools, and that corporal Punishment is still practiced. Similar findings were reported by Natsiopoulou (2011) and Wasef (2011).

Masaba (2012) surveyed 30 primary schools in the greater Kampala and found out that only 1 school (the Aga Khan primary school) had complied with the education ministry's ban on corporal punishment in schools reflecting only 3%. The report further indicated that in the year leading to 2006, the police received many complaints about teachers causing bodily injuries to pupils in the name of corporal punishment. For example, in July 2006, five students of Mandela comprehensive senior secondary school in Arua were hospitalized after being severely caned by a group of teachers (Masaba, 2012).

Null Hypothesis

The null hypothesis tested in this study was: (i) no significant difference in the extent of CP policy implementation between urban and rural schools and between secular and faith founded schools. (ii) no significant relationship between the extent of corporal punishment policy implementation and level of moral development of students in secondary schools in Western Uganda.

Methods

Using the descriptive survey design particularly the descriptive comparative and correlation designs data were collected using SPSS (Nelson et al., 2022). The descriptive correlation design was used to establish whether there was a significant relationship between the corporal punishment policy implementation and level of moral development of secondary school student. And the descriptive comparative design was used to establish whether there was (i) a significant difference in the extent of CP policy implementation between urban and rural schools and (ii) a significant difference in the extent of CP policy implementation between secular and faith founded schools. The sample size of 636 students and 66 teachers was selected from the population using Slovin's formula. The sample size was selected utilizing purposive

sampling technique which based on the following inclusion criteria to qualify for the study: (1) male or female students in any of the faith and secular and (2) students of S2 and S3 of the selected secondary schools. For teachers the experience of 5 years was required. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test indicated that the instruments were acceptable with alpha above 0.5. To determine the extent of corporal punishment policy implementation and level of moral development means were used. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to establish whether there was a relationship between extent of corporal punishment policy implementation and level of moral development of students. The regression analysis R^2 determined the influence of corporal punishment policy implementation on moral development of students in secondary schools.

Findings and discussion

Table 1 on Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Average Mean</i>			<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Rank</i>
	<i>S'ts</i>	<i>T'rs</i>	<i>T'tal Av.</i>		
<i>Impersonality</i>	2.54	2.84	2.69	<i>Implemented</i>	1
<i>Immediacy</i>	2.30	2.80	2.55	<i>Implemented</i>	2
<i>Shared understanding of rules and regulations</i>	2.09	2.75	2.42	<i>Implemented</i>	3
<i>Objectivity</i>	2.06	2.72	2.39	<i>Implemented</i>	4
<i>Consistency</i>	2.04	2.46	2.25	<i>Not Implemented</i>	5
<i>Governance</i>	1.93	2.17	2.05	<i>Not Implemented</i>	6
<i>Entrapment</i>	1.86	2.07	1.97	<i>Not Implemented</i>	7
<i>Right of appeal</i>	1.53	1.87	1.70	<i>Not Implemented</i>	8
<i>General Average</i>	2.04	2.46	2.25	<i>Not Implemented</i>	

Source: Field Data, 2012

Note: *S'ts* = Students, *T'rs* = Teachers, *T'tal Av.* = Total average for Students and Teachers

Legend for the Extent on Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (Summary Table)

<i>Mean range</i>	<i>Response mode</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
2.34-3.00	Yes	Large
1.68-2.33	No	Some

1.00-1.67

Don't know

Negligible

This finding-duplicates what is in Lincon College Kabale rules and regulations, number 25: Standing or sitting outside the main gate/along the main road during the day or after night prep is prohibited. Students who violate, this will be punished by caning or given any punishment deemed right. In Australia, education minister Lynne Kosky confirms that for 20 years corporal punishment has been banned from public and catholic schools and remained exclusive only in some independent schools (Tomazin, 2004). This was similar to the Taiwan info journal (website of the China Republic Information Bureau), finding that in 93.5% of the schools visited, physical violence is still prevalent. Of the 1, 311 responses received from the 159 primary and lower secondary schools taking part in the survey, 70% complained of having been smacked in public Namanda (2012 February 29th), UNICEF & Save the Children, (2003), Action Aid International Uganda (2004), Talwar (2011) and Masaba (2012, August 11th) who carried out a survey in 30 primary schools in great Kampala found out that only one school (Aga Khan Primary School) was not caning. Naker and Ssekitooleko (2009) present that many teachers agree that when they discuss or read about positive discipline it makes sense, but when they attempt to practice it on a day-to-day basis it becomes harder to understand. When considering alternatives to CP Tungata (2006) and Larzelere (1996) found out that there was a significant relationship between the use of positive alternatives to corporal punishment and maintenance of discipline in schools.

Why CP persists Johns Hopkins University researchers Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1989) found out that rules were unclear or perceived as unfairly or inconsistently enforced; students did not believe in the rules; teachers and administrators did not know what the rules were or disagreed on the proper responses

to student misconduct; teacher-administration cooperation was poor or the administration inactive; teachers tended to have punitive attitudes; misconduct was ignored; and schools were large or lacked adequate resources for teaching (Agbenyega, 2006; Morrell, 2001). This was true when the researcher came across St. Mary's College Rushoroza rules and regulations of particular concern being 25: Any other way of behaviour that the authorities may consider out of place even if not mentioned in the rules listed above, shall be considered, as indiscipline and action shall depend on its gravity. Some school discipline codes of conduct are fuzzy and not clear on expectations and their consequences. This vagueness in rules and regulations promotes arbitrariness in the administration of discipline and at times may attract resistance.

From table 2 it is clear that students are at level two of Kohlberg's moral development. This finding is affirmed by Bull (1973) when he found that young children relied more on external morality and that the primary sources of socionomous (external morality) were parents, teachers, Sunday school, police and rarely cited friends. The key to strong character is to define to youth what it is right to do and to challenge them to build moral and spiritual strength with a positive approach to do it.

Table 2 on Level of Moral Development

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>Average Mean</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<i>Obedience</i>	<i>2.08</i>	<i>Socionomous</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Order</i>	<i>1.89</i>	<i>Socionomous</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Universal</i>	<i>1.28</i>	<i>Heteronomous</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>General Average</i>	<i>1.75</i>	<i>Socionomous</i>	

Source: Field Data, 2012

Legend for the Level of Moral Development (Summary Table)

Mean range	Response Mode	Interpretation
2.34-3.00	It is the right and good thing to do	Autonomous level
1.68-2.33	It is provided by rules and regulations	Socionomous level
1.00-1.67	I fear being punished	Heteronomous level

Table3

Significant Difference in the level of Moral Development (LMD) Between Urban and Rural Schools

(Level of Significance = 0.05)

Category	School Location	Mean	Critical t-value	Computed t-value	Sig.	Interpretation of Difference	Decision on Ho
LMD	Urban	56.7	1.96	-2.246	.025	Significant difference	Rejected
	Rural	57.5					

Source: Field Data, 2012

Legend: If the significant value is equal or less than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is significant.

If the significant value is more than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is not significant.

Using the t-test at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the level of Moral Development (LMD) between urban and rural schools was rejected at 0.05 level as shown in table 6A [$t(311) = -2.246$, Sig. = 0.025 ($P < 0.05$)]. The significant difference was supported by the difference in the mean scores urban (56.7) and rural (57.5) and computed or observed t-value and the critical t-value ($t_o > t_c$: $2.246 > 1.96$).

The finding seems to agree with Skinner (1938), who came up with the term operant behaviour which implies that organisms operate on the environment. For

example, research by Helwig, Arnold, Tan and Boyd (2003) in different cultures of Asia, America and Europe (Zimba, 1987 and Killen et al., 2000) demonstrated that children in traditional cultures form a mixture of judgments on the dimensions of morality, social convention, and interpersonal obligation, while also maintaining concepts of persons as autonomous agents with choices, entitlements, and rights.

Table 4

Significant Difference in the Level of Moral development (LMD) Between Faith and Secular Founded Schools

(Level of Significance = 0.05)

Category	School Type	Mean	Critical t-value	Computed t-value	Sig.	Interpretation of Difference	Decision on Ho
LMD	Faith	81.9	1.96	-19.32	.000	Significant difference	Rejected
	Secular	66.6					

Source: Field Data, 2012

Legend: If the significant value is equal or less than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is significant.

If the significant value is more than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is not significant.

Using the t-test at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the level of Moral Development (LMD) between faith founded and secular founded schools was rejected at 0.01 level as shown in table 6B [$t(321) = -19.32$, Sig. = 0.000 ($P < 0.05$)]. The significant difference is supported by the difference in the mean scores, faith founded (81.9) and secular founded (66.6) and computed or observed t-value and the critical t-value ($t_o > t_c$: $19.32 > 1.96$).

This is supported by the findings of Good and Cartwright (1998) study that found that Bible college students, showed moral growth during their freshmen year yet reverted to lower-level thinking by their senior years. Good and Cartwright concluded that, the senior students had learned to think at higher stages yet chose to ignore that moral philosophy in favor of conforming to the expectations of their religious community. This finding was supported by Wilcox (1986) when he reported evidence that some people may demonstrate lower moral development because they fear being labeled as troublemakers or socially deviant. Similar findings were reported by Beach (1952), Waltke (1995) and Guttman (1984)

Table 5

*Significant Difference in the Extent of Corporal Punishment**Policy Implementation (ECPPI) Between Urban and Rural Schools**(Level of Significance = 0.05)*

Category	School Location	Mean	Critical t-value	Computed t-value	Sig.	Interpretation of Difference	Decision on H_0
ECPPI	Urban	229	1.96	-3.297	.001	Significant difference	Rejected
	Rural	233					

Source: Field Data, 2012

Legend: If the significant value is equal or less than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is significant.

If the significant value is more than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is not significant.

Using the t-test at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (ECPPI) between Urban and Rural schools is rejected at 0.01 level as shown in table 6C [t(311)]

= -3.297, Sig. = 0.001 ($P < 0.05$)]. The significant difference was supported by the difference in the mean scores, urban (229) and rural (233) and computed or observed t -value and the critical t -value ($t_o > t_c$: $3.297 > 1.96$).

De Wet (2003) who examined the perceptions and experiences of educators regarding safety at their schools, and from the educators' responses in the Eastern Cape found that the environment in which the schools were located constituted a problem regarding safety. This location was responsible for approximately 50% of all reported crimes in South Africa which were committed by youths between the ages of 14 and 18 years of age. Similar results were reported by Smith (1989)

Table 6

Significant Difference in the Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (ECPPI) Between Faith and Secular Founded Schools
(Level of Significance = 0.05)

Category	School Type	Mean	Critical t -value	Computed t -value	Sig.	Interpretation of Difference	Decision on H_o
ECPPI	Faith	311	1.96	-18.785	.000	Significant difference	Rejected
	Secular	261					

Source: Field Data, 2012

Legend: If the significant value is equal or less than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is significant.

If the significant value is more than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is not significant.

Using the t -test at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (ECPPI) between faith founded and secular founded schools was rejected at 0.01 level as shown in table 6D [$t(321) = -18.785$, Sig. = 0.001 ($P < 0.05$)]. The significant difference was

supported by the difference in the mean scores, faith founded (311) and secular (261) and computed or observed t-value and the critical t-value ($t_o > t_c$: $18.785 > 1.96$).

This finding is similar to Grasmick, Morgan and Kennedy (1992)'s published study in support for corporal punishment in the schools. The authors of this article found that respondents categorized as Fundamentalist Protestant in general supported the idea of corporal punishment in schools more than other respondents.

Table 7

Significant Relationship between the Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (ECPPI) and Level of Moral Development (LMD)

(Level of Significance = 0.05)

<i>Variables Correlated</i>	<i>Computed r-value</i>	<i>P-Value</i>	<i>Interpretation of correlation</i>	<i>Decision on Ho</i>
<i>ECPPI vs. LMD</i>	<i>.994</i>	<i>.000</i>	<i>Significant correlation</i>	<i>Rejected</i>

Source: Field Data, 2012

Legend: If the significant value is equal or less than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is significant.

If the significant value is more than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is not significant.

From Table 7 it was found out that the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between the Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (ECPPI) and the level of Moral development of students was rejected at 0.01 level [$r = +0.994$, Sig. = 0.000 ($P < 0.05$)]. Referring to these findings where $r = +0.994$, it implies that there is a strong positive significant relationship between the variables. Turning it into a linear equation then, $LMD = -13.936 + 0.994ECPPI$ implying that for every unit of

standard deviation of ECPPI implemented, 0.994 of standard deviation of LMD will be realized.

Table 8

Regression Analysis Between the Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (ECPPI) and Level of Moral Development (LMD)
(Level of Significance = 0.05)

<i>Variables Regressed</i>	<i>Computed F-value</i>	<i>Adjusted R2</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>Decision on Ho</i>
<i>ECPPI Vs. LMD</i>	<i>52720</i>	<i>.988</i>	<i>.000</i>	<i>Significant effect</i>	<i>Rejecte d</i>

Source: Field Data, 2012

Legend: If the significant value is equal or less than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is significant.

If the significant value is more than, 0.05 level of significance, the interpretation is not significant.

Table 8 indicates that there is a strong significant positive relationship between the Extent of Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation (ECPPI) and Level of Moral Development (LMD) of students of selected secondary schools [$F(1,634) = 52720$, Sig. = 0.000 ($P < 0.05$)]. Corporal Punishment Policy Implementation is an explanatory factor of moral development of students as it accounted for 98.8% (Adjusted R2 = .988), meaning that one standard deviation of Corporal Punishment Policy Implemented results into 98.8% variance in moral development of students.

This finding is in agreement with Straus and Paschall (1999) study which tested the hypothesis that the use of corporal punishment (CP) such as slapping a child's hand or spanking is associated with restricted development of cognitive ability among 806

children age 2 to 4 and 704 children age 5 to 9 in the National Longitudinal Study of Youth. Cognitive ability was measured at the start of the study and four years later. The analyses controlled for ten parenting and demographic variables, including mother's emotional support and cognitive stimulation, child's birth weight, age and gender. Children of mothers who used little or no CP at all gained in cognitive ability relative to children who were not spanked.

Conclusion

The students' moral development level was socionomous (Average mean = 1.75) meaning that students' actions depended on school rules and regulations. Corporal punishment policy was to some extent implemented (Average Mean = 2.25). Issues implemented (Rules and regulations were reviewed, Counselling sessions were conducted, A minutes record file was maintained). Issues not implemented (Caning is still going on in schools, educating teachers and parents on the use of alternatives to Corporal punishment not done, Defiant teachers are not punished because head teachers and parents condone the use of corporal punishment and no punishment record book). There was a significant difference in the extent of corporal punishment policy implementation between urban versus rural schools and faith versus secular founded schools. This was the same for the level of moral development of students between urban versus rural schools and faith versus secular founded schools. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected. The extent of corporal punishment policy implementation and the level of moral development of students [$r = +0.994$, sig. = $0.000(P < 0.01)$] was strongly, positively correlated indicating significant relationship at 0.01 level of significance. This result therefore rejected the null hypothesis. The study was able to bridge the gaps identified in the previous studies. The study has documented extent of corporal punishment policy implemented in schools and level of moral development of students in secondary schools in Western Uganda. Though the

level of moral development also depended on other elements, Kohlberg's theory of moral development was validated as discipline remained a strong explanatory element in the level of moral development of students exhibited.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Sports to come up with ways of ensuring that Ministry policies are implemented. There should be a follow up team to see to it that policies are implemented and reviewed at periodic interval of say two years and the Ministry to revitalize, the directorate of inspectorate. The Ministry of Education and Sports to provide schools with dummy/ prototype/ temperate of school rules and regulations for adaptation to suite local conditions for uniform implementation. This to include an element stating that corporal punishment was banned. Teacher education to emphasize disciplinary alternatives to corporal punishment such as emotional intelligence, counselling and guidance, modeling, positive school culture development, conflict management and anger management among others. Copies of school rules and regulations should be copied to students, teachers and parents for ease of reference. This should be done at the beginning of each school year. A code of conduct both for the school and classroom be developed democratically to enforce positive culture and a sense of responsibility. This should be bound in a book and charts displayed on classroom notice boards. School rules and regulations should be constructed in positive language, prescribe disciplinary measures in case of default and intervention and support programmes. Corporal punishment should be outlawed even at home. The current ban for schools should be supported by a statutory instrument. Also, a follow up mechanism be developed and implemented. Modeling the rules that students are to follow should be required of all adults. All adults in a community, especially parents and teachers, need to model integrity, honesty, respect and self-control.

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