



ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT USED BY SELECTED BASIC SCHOOL TEACHERS IN MAMPONG MUNICIPALITY, GHANA

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Abstract:

This study was conducted to determine the alternative strategies to corporal punishment used by some basic school teachers in Mampong Municipality in the wake of the abolition of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools. The study used a qualitative research approach and phenomenological research design to study 15 basic school teachers and 15 headteachers who were purposively sampled for the study. Interviews and focus group discussions were used to collect data. It was found that the teachers used positive discipline strategies, such as rule setting, rewards presentation, guidance and counselling and mild punishment strategies, such as task assignment, withdrawal from pleasant activity and upstanding as alternative strategies to corporal punishment. This implies that the teachers follow the recommended discipline policy of the Ghana Education Service (GES). It was recommended, among others, that continuous professional education should be conducted by GES for the teachers to keep them abreast of the use of alternative strategies.

Keywords: alternative strategies, corporal punishment, basic schools, teachers, positive discipline, guidance and counselling, restorative discipline, Mampong Municipality

1. Introduction

Indiscipline acts are rampant in Ghanaian schools and have become a matter of concern to educational stakeholders. Many incidences of indiscipline in Ghanaian schools are recounted in the literature. Ofori (2018), in a study of 530 respondents made up of 120 teachers and 410 students in Abuakwa South Municipality to determine their perception

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of the growing incidence of indiscipline in Ghanaian schools, identified that acts of indiscipline perceived in Ghanaian schools include disrespect to school rules, wearing of unprescribed attire, failing to do class and home assignments, lying to teachers, and sexual relationships among pupils resulting in teenage pregnancies. Alcoholism, lateness, truancy, and drug abuse were other acts identified by the respondents.

Gyapong and Subbey (2021) discovered several similar forms of indiscipline in the Agona West Municipality, notably in Agona Swedru junior high schools. A total of 120 students were randomly selected for the study, which was a descriptive survey. The study revealed, in ranked order, the following as the commonest forms of indiscipline exhibited by the pupils: use of threatening and disrespectful language, absconding from school, frequent movement in class, disturbing in class, disobedience to teachers, improper use of school materials, and lack of independent work. The rest were physical aggression, fighting, and disorganization by the students. Therefore, the quest for a lasting solution to indiscipline in school continues to be an overriding concern of education stakeholders in Ghana. To this end, several strategies have been used in the past and present to control indiscipline among school pupils.

The literature on measures of controlling school indiscipline in Ghanaian schools has emphasized the use of corporal punishment as a common means of controlling school indiscipline (Ghana Education Service, 2016; Ministry of Gender and Social Protection, 2018). This strategy was previously approved by the Ghana Education Service (GES), the regulatory body of pre-tertiary education in Ghana. However, because of several negative consequences associated with its use, such as lower class achievement, depressive feeling, retaliatory vengeance, and physical, mental, and health problems, as enumerated in studies such as Gershoff, Sattler and Holden (2019), Heekes *et al.* (2022), Le and Nguyen (2019) and Maiti (2021), the Ghana Education Service (GES) took steps to abolish its use in 2019 through an administrative policy (Ghana Education Service, 2019). Furthermore, the GES recommended the use of alternative strategies, particularly positive discipline and other humane forms of behavior modification strategies, as alternatives to corporal punishment (Ghana Education Service, 2019). Alternative strategies are believed to be more effective and less harmful in effect, as compared with corporal punishment.

2. Alternatives to Corporal Punishment

There are several alternatives to corporal punishment. Among them are the following discussed below:

2.1 Positive Discipline

Positive discipline is a new classroom management approach adopted by most countries. It is based on the ideas of positive psychology. It uses positive reinforcement instead of punishment, proactiveness rather than reaction, and collaboration, not the top-down approach in decision-making (Oxley & Holden, 2021). Positive discipline involves the use

of rewards, incentives and encouragement to bring about desirable behaviours on the part of an individual (Steven, 2018). There are several other components of positive discipline. These include inculcating the skills of problem solving in students, allowing students to make their own choices and utilizing a step-by-step process to solve problems. Others are training students to use positive life procedures in solving their problems, and guidance and counselling of students (Eaton, as cited in Steven 2018). Positive discipline also involves teachers and caregivers establishing care and supportive relationships with students. This leads to assistance and support for the students rather than fear as in the case of punishment. It also makes students self-dependent and self-regulatory rather than being controlled by the teacher (Wang & Kuo, 2019).

Positive discipline has a number of benefits. First, it facilitates learning and boosts the development of the individual. Second, it makes the individual independent and self-supportive, leading to a feeling of self-acceptance. Third, it helps in controlling disruptive behaviour (Beerli, 2020). Predescu and Darjan (2017) have also underscored some benefits of a positive discipline approach in schools and recommended that teachers be trained in its use. There is, therefore, overwhelming support for positive discipline in the literature. There are three (3) main positive discipline strategies: restorative discipline, positive behavioural intervention and support, and collaborative and proactive solutions used in schools (Oxley & Holden, 2021). Other approaches to discipline that fall under the positive discipline umbrella are guidance and counselling (Adam-Yawson *et al.*, 2021; Glasheen, Shochet & Campbell, 2016). Guidance is defined as the assistance offered to pupils to make intelligent decisions and choices in life (Everitt *et al.*, 2018; Mathwasa & Sibanda, 2020; Morana, Schacht, Scherp & Maedche, 2017). Counselling, on the other hand, is a one-on-one interaction between a counsellee and a counsellor, for a change in the behaviour of the counsellee (Audu, Ali & Pur, 2017; Forouzanfar, & Gholamali Lavasani, 2018). With interventions using guidance and counselling, the child with disciplinary concerns is assisted through guidance services to overcome them.

Positive discipline strategies use the tenets of other established behaviour modification strategies, namely positive reinforcement, token economy, behaviour contract, Premack principle, proximity control, and time out. These strategies are, therefore, classified under the umbrella of positive discipline strategies. These strategies will be discussed next.

2.2 Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement is an approach of initiating and sustaining behaviour, in which what a person likes is presented to him or her following the performance of a desired behaviour in order to sustain or increase the probability of that behaviour recurring (Ackerman, 2019; Feldman, 2019; Woolfolk, 2016). Essuman, Nwaogu, and Nwachuku (1990) have enumerated some advantages and disadvantages of the use of positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is very effective in the acquisition of numerous skills. It helps in the classroom through an increase in learning and discipline behaviour from the giving of positive feedback like praise and other rewards. It is, however, not

effective at times as a behaviour modification strategy. A large resort to it leads to a situation where people expect a reward in order to behave right. In the absence of a reward, they will not behave right. Furthermore, its frequent use also leads to an external locus of control rather than an internal locus of control in a person. Studies have shown that positive reinforcement is effective in a number of areas of behaviour modification. In a study by Lopez *et al.* (2017), positive reinforcement was found effective in growing people's creative art behaviour and in the classroom. Wood *et al.* (2011) found that teachers have successfully used it to modify pupils' undesirable behaviours. Samodra and Faridi (2021), on the other hand, established a positive correlation between positive reinforcement and self-confidence and speaking performance in a study of fifth-grade students in Indonesia. Similarly, Shegay, Orazova, and Krivosheeva (2020) showed the power of positive reinforcement in students' learning English as a foreign language and found that it is the most efficient way of increasing English language learning. These studies show that positive reinforcement is a tested strategy for behavior modification.

2.3 Token Economy

The token economy, also known as a token system, is a system of reinforcement where indirect rewards are given or taken away as a means of obtaining concrete rewards (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990; Robacker, Rivera, & Warren, 2016). In the token economy, indirect systems like giving of points, stars and cards are used as a means of getting tangible rewards. So, when a desirable behaviour is exhibited by someone, a point or star is given to him/her. If the points accumulate to an agreed-upon number, the participant is given, for example, an exercise book as a reward. If the child displays an undesirable behaviour, a point is deducted from the accumulated points to discourage the exhibition of that behaviour.

In general, the token economy can be used to manage a range of behavioural infractions in schools. Essuman, Nwaogu and Nwachuku (1990) have outlined that the token economy can be used to modify and improve behaviour in schools and homes, improve pupils' concentration and performance in school and manage pupils' disruptive behaviours. Sanborn and Schuster, cited in Essuman, Nwaogu, and Nwachuku (1990), identified six processes for ensuring successful token economy practice. First, the specific behavior of a child that needs to be modified should be determined, and reasonable goals should be set with the child. Second, the teacher or parent must offer the token if the desired behaviour is exhibited by the child and vice versa. Third, the given token must be backed by verbal reinforcement. Fourth, a continuous but not intermittent reinforcement schedule should be used for the initiation and continuance of the agreed-upon behaviour. Fifth, negative behaviours should not be rewarded with a token and finally, standards of behaviour expectations should be raised with the passage of time.

Difficulties with the use of token economy include an increase in the teacher's work as he/she has to allot extra time to observe and record appropriate behaviour. Secondly, it might be costly in terms of money to acquire tangible objects in exchange for the token given (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990). Despite these challenges with

its use, the token economy has been found to be effective in behavior modification. Rahmadhony (2019) assessed the power of the token economy among 5th grade students in Indonesia and found that it is very effective in reducing truancy. Ahkam, Anwar, and Aryanti (2020), on the other hand, enquired about the effect of the token economy on the motivation for mathematical learning and found that the token economy greatly increased the motivation for mathematical learning in an experimental study conducted with 7th grade pupils. Kim *et al.* (2022), in an analysis of 24 studies on token economy carried out from 2000 to 2019 in classrooms of general and special needs students in kindergarten to 5th grade, concluded that token economy has largely positive effects on behaviour in these classrooms. Shakespeare, Peterkin, and Bourne (2018), in a study carried out in Jamaica to find out the effect of token economy on the modification of disruptive behaviour among primary school children, found that the use of token economy minimized classroom disruptive behaviour significantly. Again, its use led to improved academic performance of the pupils and built positive relationships between teachers and students and between students and students. All the above-enumerated studies, as well as studies by DeJager *et al.* (2020), Trevino-Maack *et al.* (2015), and Williamson and McFadzen (2020), have shown the effect of the token economy on behaviour. In sum, it encourages the right behaviors and eliminates disruptive behaviours.

2.4 Behaviour Contract

Behaviour contract, also known as a contingency contract, is a method of behaviour modification that relies on the reinforcement of appropriate behaviour. In this approach, an agreement is signed with a child that when an appropriate behaviour is exhibited over a specific period of time, a reward would be given to him/her (Cooper, Heron & Heward, 2019; Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990). Thus, the teacher and the child sign the contract with the expected terms to be met by both parties.

Essuman, Nwaogu, and Nwachuku (1990) indicated that behaviour contract can be generally used to resolve interpersonal conflicts and to stimulate appropriate behaviour on the part of the child. Problems with the use of this strategy, as noted by Essuman, Nwaogu, and Nwachuku (1990), are the unwillingness of parents and teachers to sit and sign contracts with their wards and pupils, respectively, and the high chances of parents and teachers not fulfilling their part of the contract. Despite these setbacks in the use of behaviour contracts, studies have indicated a positive outlook for behavior contracts in behavior modification.

Bowman-Perrott *et al.* (2015), in a quantitative report of 18 single-case research literature on the use of behaviour contract as a behaviour modification approach, found that, in general, behaviour contract had a moderate effect on the behaviour of the participants. It was, however, found that behaviour contracts could modify behaviour irrespective of the student's grade level, state of disability and gender. The study further indicated that academic performance is positively impacted by behaviour contract. Similarly, Alwahbi (2020), in a comprehensive analysis of 32 studies on behaviour

contract documented in major databases, arrived at a conclusion that behaviour contract, to a large extent, produces positive results in its application. In studies with participants with no disabilities, behaviour contract produced positive results in 15 out of 19 studies and mixed results in 4 studies. In studies involving participants with disabilities, behaviour contract produced 11 positive results and only 2 mixed results, showing its effectiveness in behaviour management. On the other hand, Edgemon *et al.* (2021), in a study to examine the effect of behaviour contract on 11 children in foster homes and treatment facilities, found a different outcome. The study indicated that behaviour contract worked in modifying the behavior of six participants but led to no change in behaviour for 5 of them. The conclusion from the study was that behaviour contract has mixed results. It can be concluded from the foregoing discussion that behaviour contract produces positive results even though some mixed results are produced at times.

2.5 Premack Principle

David Premack has devised a scheme based on reinforcement called the Premack principle for encouraging appropriate behaviour (Premack, 1965). According to Premack, a behaviour that occurs at a fairly high frequency on the part of someone can be used to reinforce a behaviour that occurs at a fairly low frequency on his or her part so that over time, both behaviours become reinforcing (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990; Premack, 1965). Therefore, when a teacher allows his pupils to play their favorite game (a behaviour that occurs at a fairly high frequency) after completing their assignment (a behaviour that occurs at a fairly low frequency), the Premack principle is applied. Studies have indicated that Premack principle has been applied in behaviour modification to an appreciable success. For instance, studies by Herrod (2022) and Herrod *et al.* (2022) have enumerated the positive effects of Premack principle.

2.6 Proximity Control

Another approach commonly used to modify behaviour is proximity control. In this approach, instead of using verbal reinforcement, a teacher or parent who wants to ensure the exhibition of a right behaviour, physically plants himself or herself in the situation to guide and control the exhibition of that behaviour (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990). For instance, if a teacher wants to prevent the behaviour of cheating in examination, he/she makes sure that he/she is physically present in the examination room to control the cheating on the part of the students. Though this strategy is seen as not encouraging the development of internal and self-directed behaviour (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990), it has been found successful in behaviour modification. A study by Weaver *et al.* (2020) on staff use of proximity control in controlling inappropriate behaviour identified that it was very effective in significantly reducing pupils' unacceptable behaviours. Gunter *et al.* cited in Weaver *et al.* (2020) also found that proximity control increased pupils' academic performance in classrooms of pupils with severe behaviour disorders.

2.7 Time Out

Time out is another strategy of behaviour control. In this approach of behaviour modification, a person who is exhibiting an unwanted behaviour is removed for a brief period of time from the environment that reinforces that behaviour and brought back later (Ryan *et al.*, 2007). Thus, by so doing, the undesirable behaviour is terminated. It is seen as a mild form of punishment that removes undesirable behaviour (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990). In practice, Essuman, Nwaogu, and Nwachuku (1990) emphasized that the time period of time-out should be relatively short. In the classroom, conditions should be in place for the child to still benefit from teaching when taken out of the reinforcing environment. The use of time out has been reported to be successful in the management of disruptive behaviours in schools (Geiger & Geiger, 1996; Ryan *et al.*, 2007).

3. Problem Statement

With the abolition of corporal punishment and the subsequent introduction of alternative strategies by the Ghana Education Service (GES), it is imperative to find out if the teachers really use the newly introduced alternative strategies (positive discipline strategies) to deal with indiscipline in their schools. This is because no known studies from the search of prominent databases have documented the alternative strategies used by Ghanaian teachers after the abolition of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools. This gap was intended to be filled by this study by contributing to the literature on the use of alternative strategies in Ghanaian schools. Again, since there are several specific strategies that come under the positive discipline strategies umbrella, it is necessary to find out which specific strategies the teachers use and how do they use them? This study, therefore, was carried out with the objective of identifying, describing, and understanding the alternative strategies used by the teachers and to ascertain if the alternative strategies they use agree with the recommendations of Ghana Education Service (GES) so as to fill the gap that is, lack of studies in the literature on the use of alternative strategies to corporal in Ghanaian schools.

Therefore, two research questions guided the study. These were:

- 1) What are the alternative strategies used by teachers in the Mampong Municipality?
- 2) How are the used alternative strategies, in line with the recommendations of the Ghana Education Service (GES)?

3.1 Significance of the Study

Ascertaining this was necessary because, it would help stakeholders of education in the Municipality to be aware of the alternative strategies the teachers use to offer the necessary training and support to help the teachers in their effective use of the strategies. Furthermore, it would help the educational stakeholders in the Municipality to plan and expose other strategies within the positive discipline umbrella, which the teachers do not

use. This would help teachers to increase their repertoire of knowledge on the use of alternative strategies. The study will further shed more light on the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment in the Municipality to guide discussions on the subject at Professional Learning Community (PLA) sessions in the Community. Last but not least, the findings will add to the literature and, therefore, knowledge on the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment in schools.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Framework

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

4.2 Population, Sample and Sampling Procedures

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

4.3 Data Analysis Procedure

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

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

4.4 Demographics of the Participants

Tables 1 and 2 present the demographic information of the participants of the study.

Table 1: Demographic data of the interview participants

Participant Code	Sex	Age Range	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Educational Qualification	Current Rank
P1	Male	41-50 years	20	M. Ed.	Assistant Director I
P2	Female	31-40 years	12	B.Ed.	Assistant Director II
P3	Female	31-40 years	15	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P4	Female	31-40 years	12	M. Ed.	Assistant Director I
P5	Male	31-40 years	13	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P6	Female	31-40 years	10	B. Sc. (Dip. Ed)	Assistant Director II
P7	Male	41-50 years	14	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P8	Male	20-30 years	5	Diploma	Senior Superintendent II
P9	Male	31-40 years	10	Diploma	Senior Superintendent II
P10	Male	31-40 years	10	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent

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P11	Female	20-30 years	7	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P12	Female	31-40 years	11	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P13	Male	41-50 years	18	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P14	Male	31-40 years	9	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P15	Male	41-50 years	21	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II

From Table 1 above, it can be seen that nine (9) male and six female teachers were interviewed. They had years of teaching experience ranging from the least of five (5) years to the highest of twenty-one (21) years. Just two (2) of the participants had their highest academic qualification as Diploma. Most of them had Bachelor's degrees, with two (2) of them having Master's degrees. In terms of their ranks in the teaching profession, just two (2) of them were at a near lower rank in the profession, that is, Senior Superintendent II. The majority of them were in the middle and higher ranks, namely, Principal Superintendent and Assistant Director, respectively. This means that the participants had considerable experience in teaching, and hence, they tapped from their rich experiences to share their perceptions of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment they use or have used in the course of their teaching.

Table 2: Demographic data of the focus group participants

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

FGD3	Male	51-60	28	MPhil.	Assistant Director I
	Female	41-50	23	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	51-60	24	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	51-60	26	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	41-50	23	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II

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

5. Findings

From the analysis of the data obtained from the participants in the interview and the focus group discussions, two main themes were identified in respect of their use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment. These themes were the use of positive discipline strategies and mild punishment strategies. The findings obtained under these two identified themes are presented below:

5.1 Positive Discipline Strategies

Five positive discipline strategies were identified as commonly used by the participants of the study. These strategies were rule setting, rewards presentation, and guidance and counselling. The rest were changing of seating positions and parental consultation. These five strategies, which formed the sub-themes under this theme are presented below.

5.1.1 Rule Setting

The setting of rules was identified by the participants as one of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment they use. Participants P1, P2, P7, P13 and focus groups FDG1 and FDG2 indicated that they normally set rules with or for their students at the start of lessons and arrive at laid down consequences for the breach of the rules. However, the consequences do not include the use of corporal punishment.

P1 indicated that he outlines rules at the start of the lesson:

“In class, at the beginning of lessons, I spell out the rules, and if flouted, appropriate measures other than corporal punishment are taken.” (P1)

P2 and P6 agreed with P1 in terms of setting rules in class:

“Again, according to the Directorate, every teacher is to make rules in the classroom. So, in my class, I have the rules pasted there. The children made the rules themselves.” (P2)

“I set rules at the beginning of the lesson to ensure that students comport themselves.” (P7)

P7 indicated that to ensure that students know what is required of them in class, rules are set for the class:

“At times too, I normally set rules with them so that they will know these are the rules of the classroom.” (P7)

P13, FGD1 and FGD2 further indicated that they set rules in class. These participants and groups, however, stressed that normally, they set the rules with their students:

“So together with the learners, we sit down and set rules and what should be done when somebody goes against the rules.” (P13)

“Now instead of caning, we sit with them and then set rules and measures that would be taken when the child breaks the rules.” (FGD1)

“Another thing I have been doing is allowing the children themselves to come out with the rules and regulations in class, and then I print them and then I give to everybody and the class captain for each to go through every morning.” (FGD2)

The setting of rules with class is in line with the tenets of the positive discipline toolkits (Ghana Education Service, 2016). The toolkits indicate that to prevent indiscipline in class, teachers must make rules and regulations clear to learners. This, it is believed, will make learners aware of what constitutes right and wrong behaviours in class in order for them to exhibit the right behaviours and do away with the wrong ones. Chinnappan, Rapp and Burkhart (2020) identified that classroom misbehaviour decreased substantially to less than 10% in a classroom with clear set-out rules.

5.1.2 Rewards Presentation

The presentation of rewards was identified as one of the alternative strategies used by the participants of the study. This is in line with the tenets of positive discipline, which states that pupils should be appreciated for the exhibition of right behaviours as a way of encouraging them to keep up with those behaviours and to urge other students to also exhibit such behaviours (Ghana Education Service, 2016).

P2 and P11 narrated that they use rewards as a way of discouraging absenteeism in class:

“Again, those students who don’t absent themselves from school each term, I buy them biscuits.” (P2)

“What I do at the end of the term is, if you don’t absent yourself from school, I will give you 2 or 3 exercise books.” (P11)

The other participants, generally use rewards to encourage the right behaviours in class, as shown in these narratives:

“I also use rewards. If a child does something right, I call him before the class and tell the class I am rewarding him/her to set as example for others.” (P4)

“Those who put up good behaviour in class, I give them lots of rewards like pens and books and those who misbehave, I don’t. Again, I also reward students who behave well at the end of the term. So, I have seen that there has been improvement in discipline.” (P8)

“Also, I reward the pupils for right behaviour. Maybe I give them biscuits and the rest. I do that.” (P10)

“Sometimes, in my class, I buy candy. I buy a pack and send to class. If you misbehave, you will not get one, but if you answer all your exercises correctly, you get one, and that is what I am doing.” (P12)

“I praise and encourage children with the little effort they make.” (FGD1)

“When I am teaching, sometimes I reward them. If I ask a question and no one is willing to answer and one answers, I give him/her 5 cedis, and subsequently more students will raise their hands.” (FGD3)

The findings from the participants in relation to their use of rewards in teaching agree with the assertions of Lopez *et al.* (2017), Samodra and Faridi (2021), and Shegay, Orazova and Krivosheeva (2020) that rewards play a significant role in modifying people’s behaviour, with students, not an exception. They further support the claim by Essuman, Nwaogu and Nwachuku (1990) that rewards lead to an increase in positive behaviours. The use of rewards is in line with the positive discipline tenets.

5.1.3 Guidance and Counselling

Another strategy in consonance with the positive discipline strategy, which the participants indicated that they use to maintain discipline in school is guidance and counselling. Guidance and counselling, as used by the participants, involved the participants acting as counsellors and offering the needed help to the students as counselees. It also involved the teachers referring the students to other teachers for

guidance and counselling. The participants indicated the following as how they use guidance and counselling to ensure better behaviours in school:

“Other times too counselling. If someone misbehaves, I make him or her know the consequences of what he or she has done, and I counsel him or her.” (P1)

P3 similarly expressed the use of guidance and counselling and went ahead to say that, sometimes, it works, and other times, it does not work:

“Sometimes guidance and counselling, but some of the students will adhere and some do not.” (P3)

P5, on the other hand, indicated his use of guidance and counselling and gave an optimistic view of it:

“When one does something wrong, I counsel him/her, and I think that is yielding positive results.” (P5)

P2 reiterated that she uses guidance and counselling, and parental involvement to ensure a change in the behaviour of her truant students:

“For those who are truant, I ask them the reasons why, and sometimes I give them counselling and visit their parents.” (P2)

In the same vein, P13 indicated her use of guidance and counselling and parental involvement in dealing with disciplinary concerns.

“At times I do counsel them. I invite their parents, and together we sit and talk.” (P13)

Other participants also expressed their use of guidance and counselling in the course of dealing with indiscipline among students:

“I counsel them when the children do something wrong. I talk to them.” (P4)

“I also counsel the students. Those who misbehave in class, I counsel them about their future because they cannot continue with this behaviour to the secondary and tertiary levels.” (P8)

“I guide and counsel them. I call others to talk to them.” (P11)

“I use the counselling too in dealing with especially the extraordinary problems. I do that a lot.” (P12)

"I sit with the child and explain the behaviour he or she is putting up so that he or she gets to know that what he or she is doing is not morally right so that he or she can change."
(FGD2)

The use of guidance and counselling agrees with the findings of Oduh, Agboola and Amufa (2020), Dabone, Graham and Fabea (2015), and Agi and Jackson (2020) that guidance and counselling significantly reduce school indiscipline and improve students' academic performance.

5.1.4 Changing of Seating Positions

One unconventional strategy that the participants indicated that they use to maintain discipline in class is changing of seating positions of learners who disturb in class. This strategy entails moving a student who is putting up an inappropriate behaviour from his/her seating position to a new position where he/she is not likely to put up that behaviour. This new position might be to ensure appropriate proximity control by the teacher, or the position might not have the reinforcing stimulus that is causing that behaviour. The following verbatim quotes from the participants indicate their use of this strategy, and when and how they use it:

"Some of them, I change their seating positions." (P4)

"If I see a student disturbing too, I normally change the seating arrangement in class for those disturbing to come and sit in front. They don't disturb again." (P6)

"For some children, they move from this place to this place. So, what I do is, I let them sit at a particular place in front of me so that they cannot have the chance of moving from place to place." (P15)

"We have a change of seats. If the child misbehaves, I change the seating position. He or she can sit by the teacher or in front. I remove him or her from the area he or she was seated that facilitated the behaviour and he or she gets closer to me so that I can monitor him or her." (FGD1)

Changing of seats is in line with the use of proximity control to modify behaviour of pupils. Proximity control facilitates changing of inappropriate behaviour in class as supported by studies like Weaver *et al.* (2020). Thus, the use of changing of seats, which is a non-punitive measure, is a tenable alternative strategy to corporal punishment (Ghana Education Service, 2016).

5.1.5 Parental Consultation

Parental consultation came up as one of the alternative strategies used by the participants of the study. This approach involves the participants inviting the parents of learners with

habitual problematic behaviours for a discussion on ways of solving the problems. The participants also, at times, visit the parents at home to enquire and discuss about the behaviour of their problematic pupils. The narratives below show how the participants use this strategy in addressing pupils' problematic behaviours:

"At times, I invite the parents and sit down with them as well as the child and then I enquire as to what is going on in the house. Some of the behaviours, the children take them from home and exhibit them in school." (FGD2)

"Also, involving parents is good. When you document the chronic misbehaviours of the child and then at a point, the parents are invited, after you have tried to make sure that he does the right thing and he is still consistently doing what is not good, you invite the parents and you sit together, then you think of steps you will take." (FGD1)

"In our case, we normally call parents and sit down with them and talk about the child's behaviour." (FGD3)

Parental consultation is a form of restorative practice which aims at finding out the root causes of disciplinary concerns of students. It is an aspect of consultation service in guidance and counselling. Its use is in line with the assertion of Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017) who found support for parental involvement in addressing disciplinary challenges of learners and ensuring learners' success in school.

5.2 Mild Punishment Strategies

Apart from the use of positive discipline strategies in addressing disciplinary issues of learners, the participants further indicated the use of some mild forms of punishment as a way of reforming and deterring students from engaging in misbehaviour. These mild forms of punishment are, however, not pain inflicting as in the case of corporal punishment. The sub-themes identified under this theme were task assignment, withdrawal from a pleasant activity, upstanding and brief detention.

5.2.1 Task Assignment

Assignment of a task to a student to do for exhibiting inappropriate behaviour came up as one of the strategies used by the participants in controlling learners' misbehaviour. The assigned tasks are in various forms and are purposely for deterrent and reformative reasons. These tasks are, however, not pain-inflicting as in the case of corporal punishment. The narratives below indicate the nature of tasks the participants normally assign to their learners who exhibit inappropriate behaviours and the intent of assigning those tasks to them.

P2, P3, P4, P7, P9, P10 and FGD3 assign tasks involving cleaning and reading to their students who behave inappropriately as a way of reforming them and deterring

others from engaging in the same behaviour. The narratives below show the specific tasks the participants assign to their students:

"Sometimes during break, I will ask you to pick broomsticks left on the floor after cleaning." (P2)

"Giving duties for the child to perform. For example, cleaning the classroom for the next one week." (P3)

"I sometimes give the pupils a portion to sweep." (P4)

"At times, I ask them to clean the classroom or pick sachets from the classroom to serve as a deterrent to others." (P7)

"In my class, if a learner misbehaves, the person will clean the chalkboard for the whole week." (P10)

"Another alternative that I use is that, whenever I see you misbehaving in class and there is a reading task in the course of a lesson, you will read to prevent you from misbehaving." (P9)

"I let latecomers pick broomsticks and at the end of the day, we get brooms to sweep the compound. Also, I let the student to sweep the classroom, lower-level students' classroom if the student is in the upper class." (FGD3)

Another form of task assignment utilized by the participants is line writing. Line writing is an act of providing a student who has put up an inappropriate behaviour an exercise book and a pen, and instructing him/her to write a statement several times in the exercise book. This task serves two main purposes, namely, deterring the person from putting up that inappropriate behaviour once again because of the tedious nature of the writing and secondly, improving the handwriting of the student for the continuous writing of the statement. The narratives below show how line writing is utilized by the participants:

"I let them to write "I will not do that again" for half a book. It is an academic exercise which will improve their writing." (P3)

"Instead of corporal punishment, I now use writing of many lines. For instance, if one refuses to submit an assignment, I will ask him to write many lines of the statement "I will always submit my assignment"." (P5)

"If I give an assignment and you fail to do it, you are going to write it three times in the exercise book." (P6)

"Sometimes when they misbehave, I tell them to write lines. I give them sheets to write "I will not talk in class"." (P12)

"I ask some of them to write in a whole book "I will never do that again"." (P13)

"The strategy I use is that I let the student write the reason why he did not do right in school." (P14)

"Sometimes if a child misbehaves, I let him write an essay to explain why he is misbehaving." (FGD2)

"In my case, one of the strategies I use is writing lines. If you go wrong or what you are doing is outside what is expected, you are told to write lines. For instance, if you are late, you are told to write "I will not come to school late again"." (FGD3)

Task assignment which comes in several forms, is effective in modifying behaviour (SplashLearn, 2022). Though punitive in nature, its consequences are not as bad as corporal punishment which leads to lasting damaging effects on the offender. Task assignments can lead to learning of moral behaviour and academic skills like cleanliness and improved handwriting, respectively (SplashLearn, 2022).

5.2.2 Withdrawal from Pleasant Activity

Withdrawal from or denying someone the opportunity to partake in a pleasant or satisfying activity also came up as one of the alternative strategies used by the participants. This involves identifying what a student who has put up an undesirable behaviour likes and denying him/her the opportunity to enjoy it because of his/her misbehaviour. This is called negative reinforcement, that is, the withdrawal of something an organism likes following an undesirable behaviour in order to discourage that behaviour from recurring (Feldman, 2019: 332; Salkind, 2008: 45). The verbatim quotes below show how the participants use this strategy in the course of disciplining their students:

"Things that the students have interest in doing, I withdraw from them. For instance, withdrawing him from the school football team because of bad behaviour." (P3)

"I make him lose a privilege. Let's say the person is a footballer and during the time of training he misbehaves, I will ask him not to partake in the football competition." (FGD2)

Withdrawal of privileges, which serves to change the offender and to deter others from committing that same inappropriate behaviour, is seen as effective in behaviour modification. Findings by Clark (2018) support the effectiveness of the use of this strategy.

5.2.3 Upstanding

Another strategy, though punitive but mildly punitive in nature, that the participants indicated that they use to maintain discipline in school, is making students misbehaving in class stand up for a brief period as a way of embarrassing them for engaging in that inappropriate behaviour. The standing up is for a brief period and is not intended to cause pain, but to show disapproval for the behaviour exhibited. This strategy is mostly used by the participants on occasions when students were disturbing or not paying attention in class, as indicated in these narratives:

“What I do is, I sometimes ask disturbing students to stand up in the course of the lesson while others are seated.” (P1)

“When I am teaching and one is disturbing the class, I make him stand up or go and stand at the back of the classroom.” (P2)

“Later too, I tell them that if you misbehave, you will stand up and you will stand in the class for some time before you go and sit down.” (P12)

“If I see that you are misbehaving in class, I just call you and ask you to come and stand at one corner of the class so that they will be looking at you and as they look at you, you will be ashamed.” (P14)

This strategy though can be very embarrassing to the students, and serves to deter others from similar misbehaviours in the classroom. Sidin (2021) acknowledged standing up as a form of inconvenient punishment used to ensure discipline in the classroom.

5.4 Brief Detention

This strategy involves detaining, for a brief period, a student who has exhibited inappropriate behaviour to reform him and to serve as a deterrent to others who contemplate committing that same misbehaviour. The detention is normally to prevent the offender from enjoying a privilege like going for a break so that he/she will put up good behaviour next time round. The following quotes from the participants indicate how they practice brief detention to ensure discipline in class:

“If they do something wrong, I will ask them to stay back during break for a certain period.” (P7)

“Whenever a student misbehaves in class or does not pay attention in class, what I do is normally I don’t allow him or her to go out for a break during break time. Yea, that is because when you allow him to sit in the class while his or her friends are on break, seeing them play while he or she is in class, he or she will not repeat it again.” (P9)

“If a student misbehaves, I isolate him. Maybe during a break, I let him sit in class for about 5 minutes and I will let him join his friends at the break.” (P14)

“Then removal of privileges. When there are privileges for example, during break, you are not going. You are sitting down with me for us to do reading.” (FGD1)

Detention is a common strategy used in various classroom jurisdictions to modify behaviour. Though its use has been criticized in various studies (McCann, 2017; Saloviita, 2017), it is supported by other studies (Bayraktar & Dogan, 2017; Fletcher-Wood, 2020).

6. Discussions

It emerged from this study that the participants used two main alternative discipline strategies in the course of their work. These were the use of positive discipline strategies and some forms of mild punishment strategies. The use of the positive discipline strategies is in line with the current discipline policy of Ghana Education Service which stipulates that teachers should use positive discipline strategies as stipulated in the positive discipline toolkits to ensure discipline on the part of students (Ghana Education Service, 2016; Ghana Education Service, 2019). The use of some mild forms of punishment is not in sync with the current positive discipline regime. However, this form of punishment is not as debilitating and dehumanizing as in the case of corporal punishment. Though punishment in nature, they are mild and some academic and moral values are attained from them by students when they are used. They are, therefore, acceptable for use by teachers as a form of discipline per the code of conduct of Ghana Education Service (Ghana Education Service, 2017).

The study found that the teachers use rule setting, presentation of rewards, guidance and counselling, changing of seats and parental consultation as forms of positive discipline strategies in disciplining students. This agrees with the tenets of positive discipline toolkits of Ghana Education Service (Ghana Education Service, 2016; Ghana Education Service, 2019). These strategies also agree with the tenets of positive discipline as stipulated by Steven (2018). Steven (2018) noted that positive discipline strategies utilize rewards, incentives, encouragements and counselling to bring about positive behaviour.

Rule setting significantly limits classroom misbehaviours (Chinnappan, Rapp & Burkhart, 2020). Rewards and motivation of students have significant effects on classroom behaviour, largely bringing about positive behaviour on the part of students (Lopez *et al.*, 2017; Samodra & Faridi, 2021; Shegay, Orazova & Krivosheeva, 2020). The

use of guidance and counselling in modifying behaviour is supported by several studies (Agi & Jackson, 2020; Dabone, Graham & Fabea, 2015; Oduh, Agboola & Amufa, 2020). Changing of seats is an unconventional strategy. However, its use follows the principle of withdrawing a reinforcing stimulus from the environment to cause positive behaviour. It operates like the proximity control strategy of behaviour modification, the effectiveness of which is attested to in the literature (Essuman, Nwaogu & Nwachuku, 1990; Weaver *et al.*, 2020). Involvement of parents in collaborative effort with other school stakeholders in solving a child's problem is a widely utilized approach to problem-solving as reported in the literature (Allen & White-Smith, 2018; Baker *et al.*, 2016; Castro *et al.*, 2015; Mahuro & Hungi, 2016; Park, Stone, & Holloway, 2017) and hence, its use is in line with the tenets of positive discipline.

In this study, the findings in relation to the positive discipline strategies used by teachers do not include other strategies like behaviour contracts, Premack principle, modelling, positive behaviour and support, and collaborative and proactive solutions which are reported in the literature as effective. The non-use of these strategies might probably be due to teachers' lack of knowledge of these strategies. The use of positive discipline strategies is a new policy in Ghana and, therefore, requires extensive education to expose the various strategies under it to teachers. In the current state of things, the teachers are familiar with the common positive discipline strategies but not relatively newer strategies like positive behaviour intervention and support, and collaborative and proactive solutions. Extensive education on the strategies will expose teachers to the various types of strategies under the general umbrella of positive discipline strategies. The next focus of the discussion is on the mild punishment strategies used by teachers.

The use of mild punishment strategies, though not in tune with the current policy of positive discipline stipulated by the Ghana Education Service in the positive discipline toolkits (Ghana Education Service, 2016), is permissible per the code of conduct of Ghana Education Service (Ghana Education Service, 2017). These strategies are largely deterrent in nature rather than causing harm or treating the offender of law in a dehumanizing manner as in the case of corporal punishment (Malsch & Duker, 2016; Rai, 2020). However, these strategies largely aim at reforming the offender as in the case of positive discipline (Karim, 2020).

The use of a task assignment strategy is found useful in modifying behaviour and it is supported by some studies (Brown, 2022; Kubanek, Snyder & Abrams, 2015; Polirstok, 2015; SplashLearn, 2022; Steel *et al.*, 2016). Though tedious to do on the part of the offender, it is a deterrent to misbehaviour. Furthermore, teachers prefer its use because of the benefits accrued from it to students, particularly, the learning of academic skills and moral behaviours. The withdrawal of a pleasant activity is a form of negative punishment, and its use is in sync with the literature on behaviour modification (Feldman, 2019:332; Salkind, 2008:45).

The upstanding strategy, in its extreme form, is corporal punishment since it is intended to cause pain and discomfort to the offender. However, the upstanding strategy as practiced in Ghanaian schools, is not done to cause pain but to inconvenience the

offender to deter him/her from misbehaviour as it is done for a brief period. Again, the brief detention is not the same as the normal long detention, which is more punitive in nature, but here, the offender is to remain briefly in class, deprived of a privilege for a short period and made to enjoy the privilege subsequently. Therefore, though the mild punishment strategies are not in sync with the current motive of discipline, which is to reform the offender, the use of these strategies is popular with teachers because they are deterrent but not dehumanizing and injurious in effect as in the case of corporal punishment.

7. Summary and Conclusions

The overall outcome of the study is that the teachers use some forms of alternative strategies to maintain discipline in school. These include the approved strategies of GES that is, positive discipline strategies. The positive discipline strategies they use are rule setting, rewards presentation and guidance and counselling. The rest are changing of seating positions and parental consultation. Furthermore, they use some forms of mild punishment in maintaining discipline in school. These forms include task assignment, withdrawal from pleasant activity, and upstanding and brief detention. These strategies show a combination of the use of both reinforcement and mild punishment strategies in the course of ensuring discipline in school.

It can be concluded from the findings of the study that some Basic school teachers in Mampong Municipality use some forms of alternative strategies to corporal punishment in maintaining discipline in school. Their used strategies are largely based on positive discipline and mild punishment strategies. These findings indicate their adherence to the recommended strategies by GES to maintain discipline in schools. The use of these strategies also shows that the teachers normally implement the behaviour modification strategies they are taught during their basic formation as teachers. Though some forms of punishment strategies are used by the teachers, these strategies are largely negative types of punishment rather than positive types of punishment and hence are not pain inflicting on the pupils as compared with the use of corporal punishment.

The findings therefore imply that some teachers use alternative strategies to corporal punishment in maintaining discipline in school. Therefore, the necessary support needed to be given by educational stakeholders to sustain their use should be ensured. With the use of these strategies by the teachers, teaching and learning are expected to be boosted as the alternative strategies have several advantages like improved relationships between teachers and pupils, improved pupils' behaviour and improved school climate. The achievement of these advantages from the use of these strategies will in the long run improve pupils and teachers' performance for the attainment of the goals of education.

8. Recommendations

It is recommended for stakeholders of education in Mampong Municipality to take these steps to ensure that teachers continue to use the alternative strategies to corporal punishment in schools:

- 1) Continuous professional education on the alternative strategies to corporal punishment like positive discipline strategies and other forms should be given to teachers to ensure that they develop further interest in the use of the alternative strategies and also, be on top of the use of the strategies at any time.
- 2) Several other alternative strategies to corporal punishment like the Premack principle, behaviour contract, shaping, and positive reinforcement among others which the participants did not indicate that they use in maintaining discipline in school, should be made known to them through education and training programmes.
- 3) Positive punishment forms like task assignments, brief detention and upstanding should be monitored by school heads so as not to be excessive in form to result in school dropouts. To this end, teachers should be encouraged to rather use more of negative punishment strategies rather than positive punishment strategies since frequent assignments of unpleasant tasks, upstanding and brief detention can reduce pupils' interest in school.
- 4) In terms of educating teachers on the use of alternative strategies, Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions can serve as important forums for such education, to deepen teachers' knowledge of the strategies.
- 5) Further research should be carried out in the Municipality by way of a descriptive survey, to ascertain the number of teachers who use the alternative strategies and how they use them.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in the production and publication of this article.

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