

Perceptions of Parents on the Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools in Zimbabwe

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Abstract- This is part of a broad study that sought to find out views of parents in Zimbabwe on the use of corporal punishment in schools. This paper looks at perceptions of parents on the policy that bars the use of corporal punishment in schools. The study used case study as a research design. The study used interview schedules and questionnaires in the collection of data. The research participants consisted of two hundred and fifty parents who were randomly selected when they were attending consultation at selected schools in Goromonzi district. The study found out that teachers were still using corporal punishment in classes as way of enforcing discipline and making sure pupils abide by accepted behaviour. They had ignored the government directive that reserved the use of corporal punishment to the school head or only any other senior teacher delegated by the head. The research also found out that the parents thought corporal punishment was an effective way of disciplining children in schools. Most of the parents were not aware of the government policy that forbade the use of corporal punishment in schools. The study recommends that the government makes an effort to educate citizens on new policies that will have been made so that they are fully implemented. There is need for teachers to be involved in fully implementing government policies. Teachers are also urged to use child friendly methods of making children change unbecoming behaviour to socially accepted behaviours. The study recommends that teachers use methods like guidance and counselling, modelling and positive reinforcement in effecting discipline and behaviour change in pupils.

Index Terms- corporal punishment, perceptions, policy, discipline and behaviour.

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of corporal punishment as a way of correcting misbehaviours has been in existence since time immemorial. To date its use is being frowned at in many circles including the educational circles and the civic society. Many countries including Zimbabwe have passed laws and adopted policies that bar the use of corporal punishment in schools. Despite the adoption of the policies there are some who still believe corporal punishment is a preferred way of disciplining wayward behaviour in children. It is the intention of this research to find out the perceptions of parents in Goromonzi District on the use of corporal punishment in schools.

II. RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the perceptions of parents on the use of corporal punishment in schools in Zimbabwe?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporal punishment - definition and background

There are many definitions for corporal punishment. Donnelly and Strauss (2005) say that corporal punishment is the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury for the purpose of controlling or correcting a child's behaviour. Benator (2001) defines corporal punishment as the infliction of physical pain upon the occurrence of perceived misbehaviour. Furthermore corporal punishment is defined under human rights law as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain and discomfort (Corporal punishment, 2011). These definitions show that there is use of physical force to cause pain in corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is usually inflicted through canning, slapping, swatting and spanking. Corpun (2007) says that corporal punishment has been present since early civilization of Greece, Rome, Israel and Egypt in Africa. In the Bible Proverbs 13:24 says "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly". The stick was the most used form of administering corporal punishment. There is an old saying which is frequently quoted which goes, "spare the rod and spoil the child."

Benator (2005) says that theories of corporal punishment can be described as utilitarian and retributive. The utilitarian theories of punishment recognize that punishment has consequences for the offender and society upholds that the total good produced by the punishment should exceed the evil. It seeks to punish the offender and to discourage future wrongdoing. Retributive theories argue that punishment is justified if it is deserved. It is not concerned about the consequences but the means of punishment which should prevent the offender and other people from committing similar acts. This then shows that the theories of corporal punishment focus on being retributive, preventive, reformatory and deterrent on the premise that an offence has been committed which one has to be punished for.

Most of the studies done to date show that spanking increases aggressive behaviour especially towards other people (Jenny, 2009). However many regard corporal punishment positively as a customary and necessary technique of child rearing. Corporal punishment in schools can thus be seen as serving a useful educational purpose. According to Corpun

(2007), the writings of John Locke influenced Polish legislators to call for the ban of corporal punishment in Polish schools in 1783. The Convention on the Rights of the Child which was adopted by the UN in 1989 forbids physical abuse of children by both parents and caregivers. The convention has been ratified by all UN members except USA and Somalia. By the early 21st Century more than 100 countries had abandoned corporal punishment in schools (Corporal punishment, 2011). Corporal punishment has thus been outlawed in many countries of Western Europe, China, Japan New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, Thailand and Zimbabwe. This view was supported by the International Convention on the rights of children (UN Children's Fund, 1999).

There is a growing worldwide movement to end legal approval of corporal punishment in schools. As a result the following countries have recently banned corporal punishment by legislation or judicial decision. These are New Zealand, South Africa, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji and Thailand. (Repeal 43 Committee). In Eastern Caribbean, corporal punishment in schools was socially and legally accepted until UNICEF piloted training for teachers in Barbados in behaviour management techniques which aimed at giving alternative approaches to teachers and eventually proved successful. (UNICEF, 2009). In Mauritania, corporal punishment was broadly practiced in Koranic schools, secular primary schools and within families. However efforts to abolish corporal punishment are being effected after UNICEF in 2009 presented research findings to the president of the Imam's Network Hademine Onid Saleck. There is now a widespread understanding that corporal punishment is unlawful child abuse and harmful. The eradication of corporal punishment in India is proving difficult. India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and has many policies that ban corporal punishment in schools but these seem out of kilter with everyday realities. The government of India commissioned research that included more than 3000 children aged from 5-18 asking about physical abuse by teachers. In all age groups 65% reported being beaten at school. (The Guardian May 2015)

In the United States of America many states have banned corporal punishment in public schools, while several others including Texas, allow the practice but give parents the opportunity to opt out. In Texas corporal punishment in public schools is considered lawful unless a parent or legal guardian has refused to give permission with a signed written statement to the school board. (State Laws, 2015). Because the Supreme court of Canada decided in 2004 that school teachers can no longer use section 43 as a defence to corporal punishment of students such punishment is now illegal throughout Canada. (Repeal 43 committee, 2015). In Britain corporal punishment in state schools was banned in 1986 and in all schools in 1998. The 1998 amendment to the UK Education Act expressly allows teachers to use reasonable force to restrain students from committing an offence, causing personal injury or damage to property, or engaging in behaviour prejudicial to good order and discipline. All European countries have banned corporal punishment in schools. In Austria it was banned as long ago as 1870. According to Farrell (2015) British style formal canning for male students only is fully lawful as a punishment in Singapore schools and is strongly supported by the government. Now that school corporal

punishment has been completely abolished in the UK and most of its other former outposts, Singapore is probably the country where English school caning traditions are still most faithfully upheld. (Repeal 43 Committee, 2015)

Studies done by Zindi in 1997 found out that corporal punishment is still a popular method of behavioural correction in Zimbabwe in spite of calls to be cautious in its use in schools. Similarly, Peters (1980) argues that of all the forms of punishment in schools, the cane would be effective when used soon after the misbehaviour so that students can associate the punishment and appreciate why the act is forbidden. Spencer and Spencer (2001) maintain that corporal punishment is an integral part of the process through which schools achieve the fundamental objective they were established for, including the developing and moulding of a loyal and productive future citizen of Zimbabwe.

Parents' perceptions on corporal punishment in schools.

There are differing views on whether corporal punishment should be permissible or not in Zimbabwean schools. Parents seem to be divided on the use of corporal punishment by teachers (Mugabe and Maphosa, 2013). Donoso and Ricas (2009) found that physical punishment still remains in the social imaginary as a permitted and suitable resource for rearing children. According to Makwanya, Moyo and Njenya (2012) some studies have found that parents are of the opinion that students should be taught of their rights to protect themselves from abusive teachers. The parents in this study were found to be against the use of corporal punishment as a way of disciplining their children. It is important to understand the arguments for and against the use of corporal punishment in schools in a bid to lay the ground for the voice of parents concerning their perception on the use of corporal punishment.

Advocates of corporal punishment

Advocates of corporal punishment consider it a necessary and effective way of disciplining students, and to some students it is the only language they understand (Shumba, Ndofirepi and Musengi, 2012). This position is ingrained and has become accepted in black communities. Corporal punishment is seen as a deterrent, a reformative and retributive mechanism with the aim of bringing positive behaviour in schools and society (Chemhuru, 2010). Shumba, et al, (2012) point out that some proponents of corporal punishment have a history of being physically abused when they were young and they see no reason why that should stop. Many advocates of corporal punishment argue that it spurred them to work hard and be successful (Hapanyengwi and Chemhuru, 2015). The argument that the advocates presented in support of corporal punishment was that if it worked for them then it should work for their children. Corporal punishment is used at home and at school in Zimbabwe. In black homes, particularly in Zimbabwe, parents view spanking positively and consider it as an appropriate method of moulding positive behaviour (Shumba, et al, 2012). Teachers are regarded as parents at the school therefore they act in loco-parentis within the school and use corporal punishment (Matope and Mugodzwa, 2011). Studies have found that corporal punishment is used especially in the remote rural schools (Shumba et al, 2012). The justification for its use is that students are developed and

moulded into loyal, patriotic and productive citizens of the country (Matope and Mugodzwa, 2011). Matope and Mugodzwa (2011) also present an argument that force must be used when negotiations and peaceful means fail. Advocates of corporal punishment have thwarted voices of children concerning corporal punishment arguing that children are young, do not know what is right for them and are not yet intellectually developed to understand how corporal punishment works for their own benefit (Chemhuru, 2010). The argument is supported by some studies that cite older people as admitting that corporal punishment they got in school helped them become a better person. Hapanyengwi and Chemhuru (2015) posit that countries that campaign for the outlawing of corporal punishment like America have chaos in their own schools because corporal punishment is illegal.

Craigmore College in South Australia uses corporal punishment whenever it is required and all staff and parents are aware of these policies before enrolling in the school (Tucci, 2006). The parents sign a form declaring that they are aware of the school's disciplinary policies and agree before the child attends school. The corporal punishment is administered by senior staff or the principal. The errant pupil is smacked once or twice on the bottom by a wooden paddle. It is done away from the presence of other pupils. There seems to be similarities with the Zimbabwean scenario except that the implementation used differs with the school. Lansford, Tapanya and Oburu (2011) say that there is little evidence that corporal punishment results in better behaviour with the exception of inducing immediate compliance. However Hapanyengwi and Chemhuru (2015) is of the opinion that some students respond more to corporal punishment than any other form of discipline.

Points against the use of corporal punishment

Humanitarians seek to abolish corporal punishment in Zimbabwe arguing that it is inhuman, abusive and breaches children's fundamental human rights (Shumba et al, 2012). The impugners of corporal punishment consider it humiliating and say it should never find its way back in Zimbabwean school system and society at large (Hapanyengwi and Chemhuru, 2015). The student may come to believe that the only way that society functions is through the use of force or violence. The teacher in using corporal punishment is modelling to the child that problems can be solved through the use of force. Gudyanga et al (2014) say that corporal punishment creates enmity between the teacher and student and may in turn result in the student not

liking the subject taught by the teacher. This detachment and resentment may affect the emotional development of the student.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a case study research design. This research method was used as the researcher felt it was the most ideal for the study. Bryman (2004) states that a case study is a type of observational information collection method in which an individual or group of people is studied in depth so as to recognise behavioural, emotional and cognitive virtues that are generally correct. Case study relates to the gathering and presentation of full information about a certain respondent or small group often including the details of participants. Emphasis according to Nkomo (2007) is placed on examination and description of the issue being looked at. A case study looks at the interaction of all variables so as to offer absolute understanding of the situation. Nkomo (2007) puts it that there is an in-depth explanation of the issue under evaluation, the conditions under which it is used, the kind of people included in it and the nature of the area in which it is situated.

The research instruments used in the study were questionnaires. Questionnaires were convenient because it is possible for the research participant to analyse the subject and respond honestly and independently without the interference of the researcher. Tuckman (1972) supports the use of questionnaire saying it solicits information or data from inside a person's head and makes it possible to measure what a person knows, likes, dislikes and thinks.

The research used probability sampling technique of random sampling where there was a possibility of each person in the population being selected. The sample consisted of two hundred and fifty parents from five randomly selected schools in Goromonzi district who were attending consultation days at their children's respective schools. The researcher sourced for information on when the randomly selected schools held their consultation days. The researcher then visited the schools on the consultation days to distribute the questionnaires. The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics and qualitative data analysis techniques.

V. RESULTS

Demographic Data

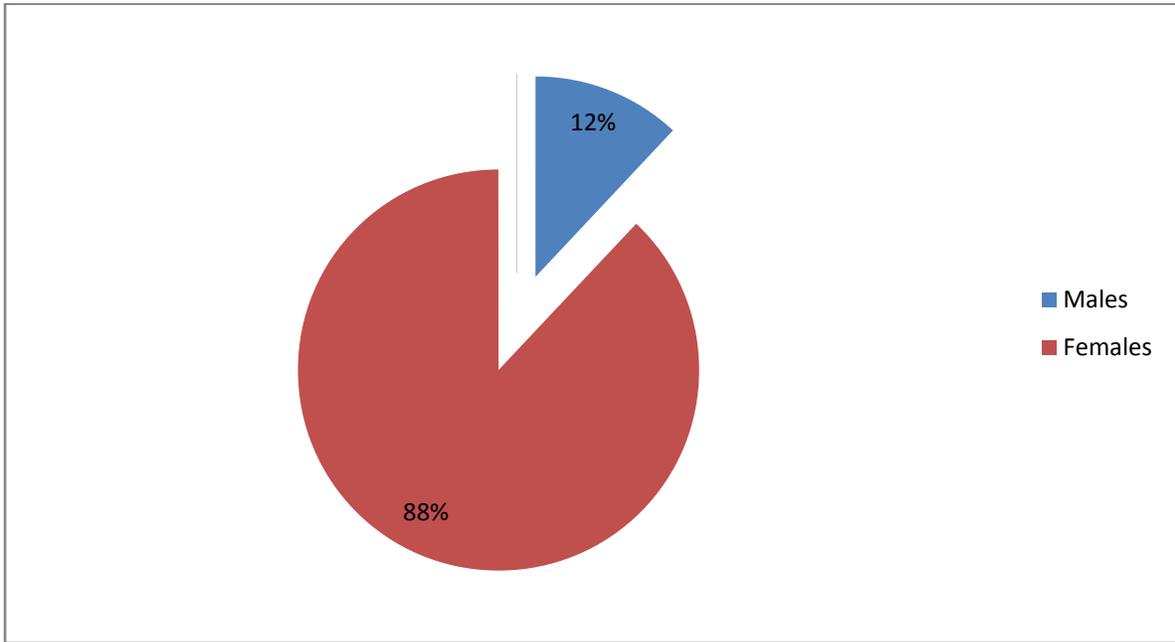


Fig 1: Respondents by sex

The pie chart above shows that 12% of the respondents were males and 88% were females. This shows that many females in Goromonzi District stay at home mothers. They were

available at home throughout the whole week when the researcher was collecting data.

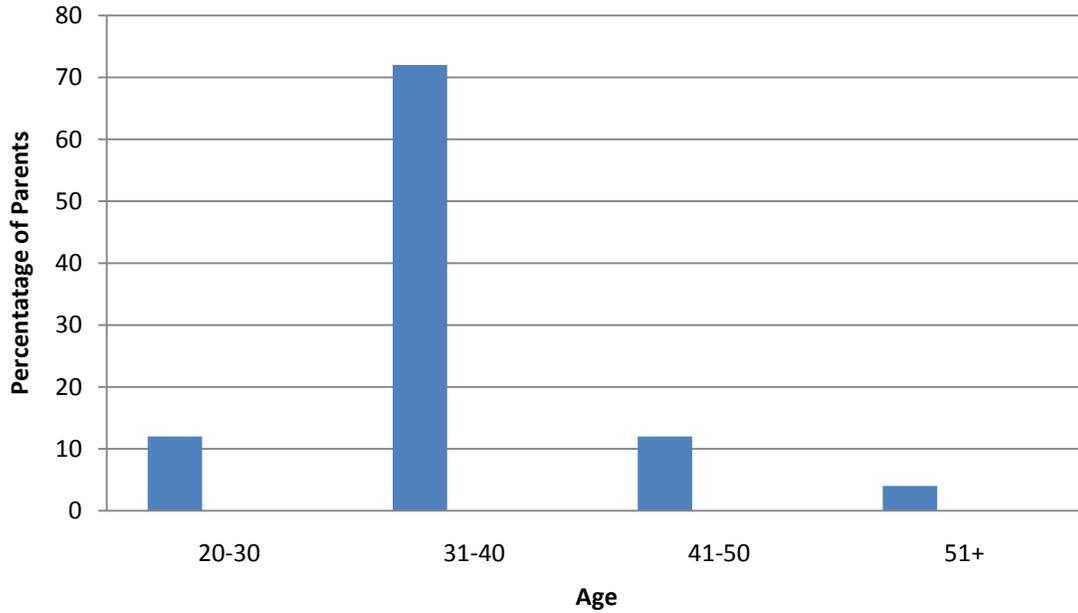


Fig 2: Respondents by age

The presentation above shows that 12% of the respondents are between ages 20-30, 72% are between the ages 31-40, 12% are between the ages 41-50 and 4% are over 50 years..

Table 1. Respondents according to academic qualifications
 N=250

Qualification	Grade 7	ZJC	'O' Level	'A' Level	Other	Total
No. of Parents	20	70	130	30	0	250
Percentage	8	28	52	12	0	100

The table shows that 8% of the respondents went up to grade 7, 28% attained ZJC, 52% have 'O' Level and 12% have 'A' Level. The presentation shows that the majority of the parents went up to 'O' Level. There are however some who only did primary education. Some went to form 2 and hold the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate. The majority went up to 'O' Level and very few had 'A' Level.

			Know	
No. of parents	30	200	20	250
Percentage	12	80	8	100

From the table above 12% of parents think that corporal punishment is allowed in schools, 80% think its banned and 8% do not know whether it is allowed or not. Asked whether they were aware of the use of corporal punishment in school most parents indicated that it had been used on their children.

Table 2: Perceptions of parents on government policy on the use of corporal punishment in schools

1. N=250

Option	Yes	No	Don't	Total
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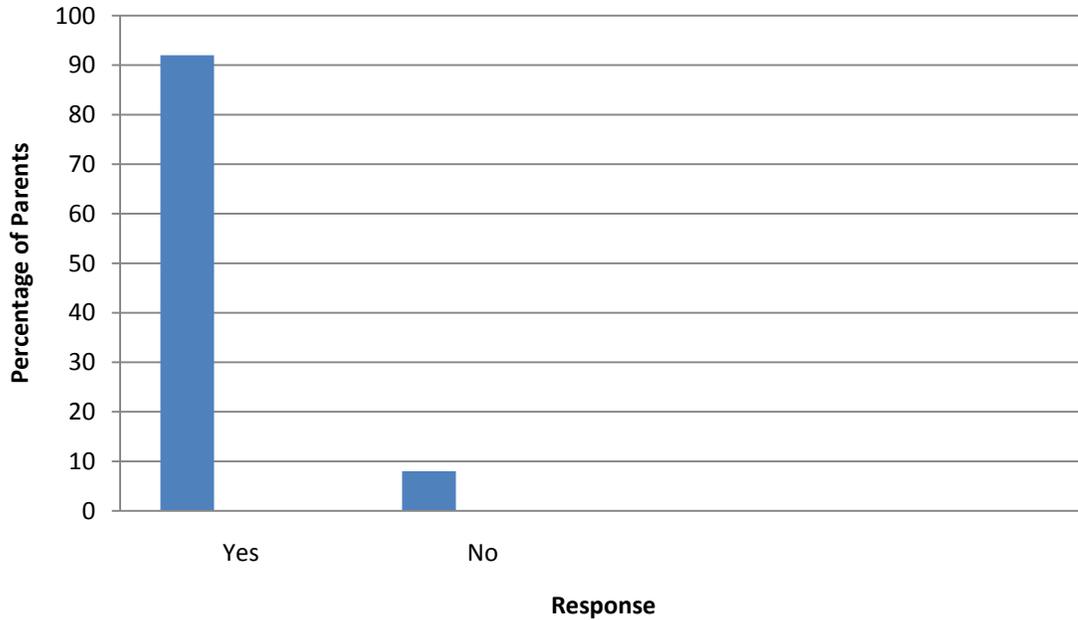


Fig 3: Whether parents use corporal punishment to reform students' behaviour

On the diagram 92% of parents said they used corporal punishment to discipline their children and 8% said they did not use it on their children. Asked how frequently their children had been beaten by teachers the highest number of parents indicated that corporal punishment was administered rarely. The results are shown in table 3 below.

No. of parents	80	30	40	100
Percentage	32	12	16	40

From this table 32% of the parents said their children had been beaten 1-3 times in a month, 12% said 1-3 times in a week, 16% said they had been beaten almost daily and 40% said their children had rarely been beaten.

Table 3. Frequency of use of corporal punishment

2. N=250

Option	1-3 times a month (a)	1-3 times a week (b)	Almost daily (c)	Rarely (d)
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Table 4. Reaction when teachers beat children

Reaction when teachers beat children	% of parents				
	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a) The child must have done something wrong	20	28	52		
b) I would go and see the teacher	4	12	24	8	52
c) I would report it to the school principal				16	84
d) I have to talk to the social worker				12	88
e) There is nothing I can do about it		56	16	24	4

20% of the parents indicated that it is very often when a child is beaten if he/she has done something wrong. 28% said it is often when they think that a child will have done something wrong and 52% said it is only sometimes when they think the child must have done something wrong. The majority of the parents i.e. 50% indicated that they would never go and see the teacher if their child is beaten at school. 40% of the parents said they would go and see the teacher very often if their child is beaten. 24% said they sometimes go and see the teacher if the child is beaten at school. 84% of the parents said they would never report it to the school principal if a teacher beats their child 16% said they rarely complained to the principal. 88% of the parents said they would never talk to the social worker if their child was beaten at school and 12% said they rarely talked to the social worker. 56% of the respondents said oftentimes they think there is nothing they can do about it if their child is beaten.

Table 5: Parents' views on the use of corporal punishment in schools

N=250

Parents' views	Advocates of corporal punishment	Impugners of corporal punishment
No. of parents	220	30
Percentage	88	12

The diagram shows that 88% of parents are for the use of corporal punishment in school and 12% are against its use in schools. Those who are for its use gave reasons why it must be used. These reasons included not doing home work, disrupting the class by talking or playing, talking in class and not completing given tasks.

Table 6 Reasons for using corporal punishment in children
 N=250

	Frequency	
	No.	%
a) Low grades in exams	50	20
b) Not doing homework	170	68
c) Giving a wrong answer to a questions	30	12
d) Forgetting books or any of the class material	150	60
e) Talking behind the teacher's back	140	56
f) Disrupting the class by talking or playing	230	92
g) Attacking another student	130	52
h) Disobeying teacher's orders	160	64
i) Making you take private lessons	30	12
j) Beating unrelated to the student's behaviour	30	12

20% of the parents indicated that teachers could beat children for getting low grades in exams. 68% of the parents said children could be beaten for not doing homework. 12% of the parents said children could be beaten for giving a wrong answer to a question. 60% of the parents said children could be beaten for forgetting books or any of the class materials. 56% of the respondents thought children could be beaten for talking behind the teacher's back. 92% of the respondents thought disrupting the class by talking or playing is a reason which may cause teachers to beat children. 52% indicated that pupils could be beaten for attacking another student. 64% of the respondents indicated that pupils could be beaten for disobeying teachers' orders. 12% of the respondents thought some teachers can beat children to make

them take private lessons and 12% indicated that some children were beaten for reasons unrelated to their behaviour.

Parents expressed their views on the use of corporal punishment when answering question The following excerpts show some of the parents' views.

Excerpt 1

It should be used in moderation with the intention of helping the child change behaviour to an accepted one.

Excerpt 2

It is a practice that has been used for a long time bearing good results though it is inhuman considering today's standards.

Excerpt 3

It must be understood that its use shows failure on the part of teachers to use child friendly methods disciplining children.

Excerpt 4

Children should not be given corporal punishment because corporal punishment affects a child's growth and performance in school

Responses given were that it is dangerous, it injures pupils, and it hurts children physically and mentally, it affects growth and performance and that it doesn't change pupils' behaviour. Most of the interviewed parents were against the use of corporal punishment as it has negative effects on the overall growth of the child. Most of the results of the interview were different from what was got from the questionnaires.

VI. DISCUSSION

During the course of their work as education practitioners, the researchers encountered many parents in schools who asked them to beat their children so that they may behave well or produce good results. There was also a story in the media about a head teacher who beat a child to death and was being tried at court. This then prompted the researchers to find out the perceptions of parents in Goromonzi Schools on the use of corporal punishment in schools. The results of the study showed that 12% of the parents said it was allowed, 80% of the parents said it was not allowed and 8% did not know whether it was allowed or not. These results show that the majority of the parents know corporal punishment is not allowed and only a small percentage think it is allowed. These findings however may suggest that parents know corporal punishment was being used in schools even though they thought it was banned. This was reflected by the parents' response to question 1 which asked if their children had been beaten at school to reform their behaviour. 92% of the parents indicated that their children had been beaten. This showed that the parents knew corporal punishment was being used in schools.

When asked how frequently their children had been beaten at school 40% of the parents indicated that children had been beaten on rare occasions and 32% said 1-3 times a month, 16% said almost daily. This shows that corporal punishment was used on children at school. A small percentage indicated their children were beaten almost daily. These results differ from those found by Matope and Mugodzwa (2011) who found that corporal punishment was prevalent and used often in Gweru urban schools. All the parents in this study indicated that they would

not report to the school if corporal punishment had been used on their children. This indicates that they were not advocates of the banning of the use of corporal punishment in schools. When asked to give their views on the use of corporal punishment 88% of the parents indicated that they were advocates of corporal punishment and 12% indicated that they were against the use of corporal punishment in schools.

Gomba (2015) did a study to find the perspectives of parents with regards to the use of corporal punishment in schools. His findings showed that parents advocated for the continued use of corporal punishment. The study revealed that parents considered corporal punishment had immediate benefits, future benefits and was also cited in the bible. These results are similar to this study. The research study found that many parents are advocates of corporal punishment. The differences are that in this study was limited to parents in Goromonzi District and Gomba (2011) study was targeted at parents from all over Zimbabwe since he used a private boarding school. Parents from different parts of Zimbabwe attended visitation days at the school.

A study of parents' perceptions on the use of corporal punishment in pre primary institutions in Kenya done by Kimengi and Mwai (2014) showed that 78% of parents agreed that teachers should use corporal punishment to modify deviant behaviour. These results are similar to the findings of this study in that the majority of the parents which is 88% showed that they were advocates of corporal punishment and 12% showed that they were against the use of corporal punishment. The difference in those studies is that Kimengi and Mwai (2014) looked at pre primary institutions and this study looked at primary school institutions.

The results from the research study showed that most parents felt corporal punishment should be used. However they indicated that it should be used in moderation. Some indicated that the child should be made to understand why corporal punishment was being used. 72% of the parents showed that corporal punishment was an effective method of disciplining children and 28% thought it was ineffective. These results are similar to those found by Kimengi and Mwai (2014). They found that 78% of parents agreed that teachers should use corporal punishment to modify deviant behaviour. 63% of parents agreed that teachers should be allowed to use corporal punishment with discretion.

Wasef (2011) did a study to find out why corporal punishment was still being practised in Egypt despite its legal ban. He found out that some parents wanted their children to be beaten and thus allowed and tolerated teachers who used corporal punishment on children in schools. The parents were also found to be using corporal punishment at home which they find nothing wrong in it being used in the classroom.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The study made the following conclusions:

- Teachers were still using corporal punishment in classes despite the existence of a policy that bans its use in Zimbabwean schools.
- Parents were still in favour of use corporal punishment in schools despite the existence of

Government policy that forbade its use in schools.

- Most parents knew that corporal punishment was not allowed in schools but still wanted it applied to their children.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The research study makes the following recommendations:

- There is need for the Government to conduct vigorous education campaigns in an effort to publicise their new policies. This will make their citizens have the willpower to implement the policies.
- Teachers are urged to support the Government in implementing modern policies so as to be in line with world-wide trends.
- Teachers should make an effort to use child friendly methods of instilling discipline among their pupils instead of using methods likely to lead to litigation.
- There is need for teachers to methods like guidance and counselling, modelling and various reinforcement techniques in effecting discipline and behaviour change in their pupils.

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