

## **The Influence Of Gender On The Attitude Of Teachers Towards Outlawing Of Corporal Punishment In Primary Schools In Nandi North District**

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**Abstract:** *The abolishment of corporal punishment without finding effective alternative methods of managing behavior in pupils has led to indiscipline and conflicts in primary schools in Kenya. The study sought to establish whether there is any influence of gender on the attitude of teachers towards outlawing of corporal punishment in primary schools in Nandi North District. The population of the study comprised of primary school teachers in Nandi North district. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was 713 teachers, however, the sample size was 217 teachers selected through stratified sample random sampling techniques whereby schools were grouped according to their various characteristics and participating schools picked randomly by lottery method to ensure equal chances of participation with the selected schools. Data was collected by use of closed-ended questionnaire and interview schedules. Data was then analyzed by use of frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test whether there is an influence of teachers' gender, on attitudes towards the outlawing of corporal punishment in Nandi North district primary schools. Results of the study showed gender had significant influence on teachers' attitudes towards outlawing of corporal punishment in schools. In view of the findings, the study recommends a need to create awareness on alternative methods to corporal punishment and also the overall effects of corporal punishment on the child.*

**Key Terms:** *Gender, Attitude, corporal punishment, influence*

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### **I. Introduction**

Corporal punishment refers to intentional application of physical pain as a method of changing behaviour (Mercurio, 1972). It includes a wide variety of methods such as hitting, slapping, spanking, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, shoving, choking, use of various objects (wooden paddles, belts, sticks, pins, or others), painful body postures (as placing in closed spaces), use of electric shock, use of excessive exercise drills, or prevention of urine or stool elimination.

Corporal punishment in schools does not refer occasional need of a school official to restrain a problematic student or use physical force as a means of protecting members of the school community subject to imminent danger (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

Corporal punishment against children has received support for thousands of years from interpretation of legal and religious doctrines, including those beliefs based on Judeo Christian and other religions (Watson 1995). Worldwide, corporal punishment has been a conventional method in disciplining children and youth since time immemorial. In Kenya, the use of corporal punishment in schools has roots in the British colonial practices of student discipline that included the widespread caning of students whenever teachers perceived them as breaking school rules and norms or even dismally performing. Gradually, the practice became an accepted method of enhancing discipline in schools in Kenya, which had a high degree of cultural acceptance and approval (Muthiani, 1996). Traditionally, corporal punishment is tied to school discipline with the term discipline itself being problematic and having several ramifications for all actors in education (Rosen, 1997; Slee, 1995). Interpretations of discipline include a branch of knowledge; training that develops self-control, character, orderliness or efficiency; strict control to enforce obedience; and treatment that controls or punishes and as a system rules (Rosen, 1997). The practice was even acknowledged in various education policy papers, including the Educational Regulations of 1972 governing the administration of corporal punishment in schools.

Corporal punishment was banned in Kenyan Schools in the year 2001 through Legal Notice No. 56 of 2001. This notice effectively repealed Legal Notice No. 40 of 1972, which had introduced corporal punishment into the Education Act. Section 11 to 14 of Education Act gave provisions on; how, when and by whom corporal punishment could be applied, including the size and type of cane to be used. These Sections of Education Act, as read then, provided that corporal punishment could be inflicted in cases of grave neglect of work, lying, bullying, gross insubordination, indecency, truancy or the like. It also stated that corporal punishment could only be inflicted by the head teacher, a teacher in the presence of the head teacher or a housemaster in the case of a

boarding school with the authority of the head teacher. It even went ahead to specify where it should be inflicted and the size of the cane to be used.

Records of every case of students punished were supposed to be kept by the head teacher with the child's name, age, offence, number of strokes inflicted and the date (Human Rights Watch, 1999). The outlawing of corporal punishment by the government received mixed reactions from the teachers and the public. While some perceived the move as worthy, many others, including educationists saw the move as an invitation for anarchy to dominate in schools. According to Griffin (2000), a leading Kenyan educationist, the ban of corporal punishment was bound to escalate the already sunken state of school discipline and it would translate to poor academic standards, especially because of numerous riots and strikes. Another leading education scholar, Eshiwani (2001), argued that the ban on caning was causal to the escalation of unrests in schools and appealed to the Ministry of Education to rescind the decision if discipline had to be restored in schools. He called for the amendment of the Children Act (2001) to reintroduce corporal punishment in schools on the premise that such laws were frustrating the efforts of teachers to instill discipline among students. From the foregoing, it can be seen that to many, corporal punishment served as a major sanction that controlled behaviour of students, who would avoid cases of indiscipline in schools in order to avoid punishment. Outlawing it, they argued, would thus create an avenue for indiscipline.

There is no evidence that discipline is better when corporal punishment is used and in many cases, the schools where corporal punishment is rampant have the worst discipline records (Kopansky, 2002). On the other hand, teachers may feel that they have been completely stripped off their powers and have no control over their students and they feel they have been given no alternatives. As a result they feel completely helpless. Others, for the same reason, continue to cane students and even when a child is injured, they are rarely disciplined. Thus, current responses to the various incidents of corporal punishment remain inadequate.

It remains unclear whether the practice of corporal punishment has ended and how do the teachers feel about the outlawing of the practice and its possible efficacy. Since the practice of corporal punishment had for many years been culturally accepted and socially institutionalized in Kenya (Human Rights Watch, 1999), it was hypothesized in this study that possibly teachers' attitudes towards the practice have not quite changed significantly. Attitude of school teachers on the efficacy of this method are likely to influence its preference and prevalence in schools in many different ways as they go about making decisions regarding management, discipline, and career choices. A survey of the teachers' attitude towards corporal punishment against the backdrop of its ban in Kenya thus provides relevant data for educational policy makers.

Studies carried out in Zimbabwean schools by Shumba (2001) showed that 94.1% of teachers interviewed and were against outlawing of corporal punishment were males while 5.9% were females. This finding may reflect aspects of African culture, since it is mainly the responsibility of the fathers to discipline children within the home. Muthiani (1996) found out that there were no great differences in attitudes towards corporal punishment across the gender categories though more males (84.12%) than females (79.17%) were against outlawing of corporal punishment, while more female teachers (16.67%) than male (12.50) supported outlawing of corporal punishment.

In Kenya sentiments on corporal punishment can be traced from the African tradition concerning duties of males and females in the society, especially in regard to the place of women in the society. Most of the harsh physical punishments have been administered by male teachers. Men feel that they are custodians of authority and power due to their circumcision rites. Therefore they become heads of families and custodians of laws thus beat up their errant wives and children. On the other hand children and women have been suffering the same fate and that is why women are reluctant to use corporal punishment in disciplining children. An elderly male teacher from Machakos by the name Mutunga supported this view. He stated that, "A child is very ignorant and needs some caning in order to learn" (Mutunga, 1981).

Times are changing and most of the traditional African beliefs are dying out, therefore it would be unfair to determine the influence of gender on teachers' attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment basing on the African belief and by using just isolated cases, like the one from Mutunga cited here. This study therefore was carried out to confirm whether male teachers are against outlawing of corporal punishment compared to female teachers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cases of indiscipline, including destructive riots and drug abuse, have become common in most secondary schools in Kenya. Numerous research reports have emphasized the central role of teachers, as the principal agents of socialization for school-going children, in molding youths and instilling discipline in them and managing students' behaviour. To this end, educationists have for centuries employed several methods in managing and maintaining student discipline. These methods have included reinforcement of accepted behaviour aimed at correcting and modifying behaviour, sanctions and punishment aimed at discouraging unacceptable forms of behaviour.

The policy of outlawing of corporal punishment was a major educational change, which required planning by the Ministry of Education. According to Stoner and Ortega (1995), a change organization is inevitable; however, for any change to be effective, it has to be planned. In this case, the outlawing of corporal punishment in Kenyan schools was a radical change, since corporal punishment has been used since the initiation of formal education. Attitudes that people hold may influence how they act, either positively or negatively. There was therefore need to investigate the influence of gender on the attitude of teachers towards the outlawing of corporal punishment in Kenya.

## **II. Materials And Methods**

The study adopted the ex-post-facto (after-the-fact) research design. In this design the researcher examines naturally existing relationships in which treatment is done through natural selection rather than by manipulation (Oso & Onen, 2005). The design attempts to determine the cause or consequences of differences that already exist between or among groups of individuals. It begins with a noted difference between two groups and then look for possible causes for, or consequences of, this difference. It is thus functional for researchers seeking to establish relationships that have already occurred or that cannot be manipulated directly (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). This study examined the influence of teacher demographic factors of gender, age, experience and level of education on their attitude towards the outlawing of corporal punishment in Kenya. The demographic factors, which were the independent variables in this study, were inherently immanipulable.

The research population of this study comprised of all public primary school teachers in Kipkaren division, Nandi North district. Nandi North district has a total of 724 primary school teachers of which 30% (217) were sampled. Thirty percent (30%) teachers were selected to participate in the study. The choice of 30% was based on the recommendation Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). Proportionate sampling was used to select the teachers from each of the 20 schools in order to ensure equal representation of the schools. This is a method whereby a researcher divides the population into homogenous strata and then selects individuals from each stratum by simple random sampling in proportion to the total number that describes the stratum (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). In selecting the respondents from each school, simple random sampling technique by way of lottery was employed. Survey questionnaires were employed to collect data relevant to this study. Since the research data collected was largely quantitative in nature and related more to individual attitudes, which cannot be observed but can be better tapped through self-reports (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000), the questionnaire is considered most appropriate.

Data generated by the questionnaires were coded at two levels; nominal level and interval level. Demographic data was treated as nominal data. Responses for each of these factors; gender, age, level of education and working experience and gender was accorded an arbitrary categorical code (e.g. gender; 1 = male and 2 female). Data from the TCPAS were treated as at the interval level. According to Kinnear and Gray, (2000), interval data are numbers expressing quantity in an independent scale, and is often used in capturing psychometric data such as attitude, personality types as well as IQ levels. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), interval scales, especially in the form of Likert-type items are often used in measuring perceptions and attitude in educational research. The 15-point Likert options of the TCPAS were weighted as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD); 2 Disagree (D); 3 Undecided (UD); 4 Agree (A); 5 strongly Agree (SA). All negative statements were reverse coded. Data pertaining to the objectives of the study were generated and analyzed accordingly.

The data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program for analyses and interpretations. The data was then analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics includes frequencies, percentages and means. The inferential statistics was Pearson product moment correlation, t-test and One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). ANOVA is a parametric test used when a researcher wishes to compare individuals belonging to three or more groups on one dependent variable. The t-test is used for independent variables to compare two groups e.g. females and males on one dependent variable and attitude of teachers towards corporal punishment.

## **III. Results And Discussion**

The first null hypothesis stated that: there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment in primary schools in Nandi North district. To test this hypothesis, the participants were asked to indicate their gender on the biographical form and to respond to the items in the questionnaire used to collect data about their attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment in primary schools. Their responses were scored and the mean scores obtained are reported in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Gender and Teachers' Attitude Towards Corporal Punishment

Gender	N	Attitude	
		Mean	SD
Female	123	53.85	7.69
Male	92	51.26	9.52
Total	215	52.55	8.65

To test whether the mean scores obtained by male and female teachers were significantly different, a t-test for independent samples was conducted. The result of the analysis indicated that there was a statistically significant difference  $t(213) = 2.21, p = .028$ . It was concluded that female teachers had a more negative attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment than the male teachers who had a positive attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment in Nandi North district. The teachers' attitudes were significantly related to gender.

An examination of the gender mean differentials indicated that female teachers reported significant higher mean scores on disagreement with supporting the outlawing of corporal punishment in schools than male teachers. These findings disagreed with the findings of NFER (1952 and NEA (1960, 1961) who reported that male teachers support the use of corporal punishment than female teachers. However, this agrees with the findings of Muthiani (1996) who found out that a teachers' gender has no significant influence on his or her attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment.

Probably the differences between male and female teachers attitudes towards the outlawing of corporal punishment in Nandi North primary schools is due to traditional African set up of allocation of roles according to gender. In African culture, males were taught as authority figures who could physically discipline the woman and children in the family. The woman on the other hand was supposed to ensure that the children were well disciplined and only issues regarded as serious would be taken up by the male figure. Based on this research female teachers supported the use of corporal punishment and thus called for its introduction as compared to their male counterparts.

#### **IV. Conclusion And Recommendation**

The study concluded that gender had a significant influence on teachers' attitudes towards outlawing of corporal punishment. It is recommended that there is need to create awareness on alternative methods to corporal punishment and also the overall effects of corporal punishment on the child.

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