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THE ATTITUDE OF TEACHERS

TOWARDS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

BY

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SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION IN SCHOOL COUNSELLING

AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR M. SKUY

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As long as a person is immersed in the historical situation, it does not even occur to him to realize the defects of a specific system, not because he is 'used to it', but because he sees it in its full presence and cannot even imagine that it could be otherwise.
(Sartre, in Peterson, 1974, p.44)

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Education (School Counselling) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

J. RICE

March 1987

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DEDICATION

To my father who was always so proud of me, and who provided me with so much of the richness in my life.

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ABSTRACT

Various educationalists through the ages have expressed concern over, and supported belief in the ineffectiveness of punishment as a disciplinary strategy. Despite the paucity of appropriate research support for its effectiveness and desirability, our society still legalizes the educational use of punishment.

This study addresses itself to exploring the preferences for, and attitudes towards the use of punishment and corporal punishment as disciplinary strategies, of a sample of teachers in the Johannesburg area. The sample consisted of 110 teachers from both primary and high schools; girls only, boys only, and co-educational schools. Responses to an anonymous questionnaire were analysed and recorded.

Findings demonstrated that previous experience of corporal punishment was a significant factor in relation to preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, and was more likely to result in a positive attitude towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. Thus, males showed a tendency to prefer corporal punishment to a greater extent than females.

Among the group who had not experienced corporal punishment, there was no evidence of impact on attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. Furthermore,

there was no evidence to show that teachers preferred or valued self-disciplinary strategies as important educational goals.

Non-significant differences resulted between age and attitude towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy; between teaching experience and preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy; and between subjects taught and attitudes towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> "Fear of punishment has always been the great weapon of the teacher ... The subject is so familiar that nothing more need be said about it."
> (William James, 1892, in Maurer, 1974, p.614)

The issue of whether punishment is an acceptable method of classroom management has been fiercely debated for decades and today continues to be a controversial issue. Chastisement - often violent in form - was regularly administered to the young in an attempt to enforce a strict disciplinary code (Manning, 1959; Pallas, 1973; Radbill, 1968), and it was believed that severe physical punishment was necessary in order to maintain discipline, to educate children, to please certain gods, or to expel evil spirits (De Mause, 1975; Maurer, 1974; Radbill, 1968). Justification for maltreatment has been based on religious beliefs and practices, and "spare the rod and spoil the child" permeated educational philosophy. In fact, the "rod of correction" was considered "an ordinance of God" which was to be used (Brown, 1910, p.136); and extensive biblical literature supported beatings in the name of discipline.

Throughout the Middle Ages the spirit of Puritanism provided sanction for corporal punishment. Human nature was regarded as innately evil, deceitful and foolish; and it was considered necessary to rescue children from their own depravity and beat

the Devil out of them in an effort to expel the demon and reform their characters (Nash, 1963; Radbill, 1968; Raichle, 1978; Wilson, 1982). Corporal punishment was associated with God's will, and education, like baptism and burial, was considered to fall within the church's domain (Cryan & Smith, 1980; Raichle, 1978; Wilson, 1982).

Schools, therefore, became the handmaidens of the church, and Radbill (1968) notes that not only ministers, but parents and teachers too, believed that the "foolishness bound up in the heart of the child" (p.3), could only be cured by the use of the rod, and the schoolmaster was "proverbial for his severity" (p.4).

It seems that teachers brought with them a heritage that included the use of punishment as a concomitant of the need for discipline, and though with time the practice has declined, it is still existent (Pallas, 1973). Punishment and lack of discipline are both historical and contemporary realities in our schools despite advances in the areas of child care and human growth from the various disciplines; and in the face of overwhelming evidence of the negative effects of punishment.

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1.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Issues surrounding discipline, then, have seemingly been of central importance for decades, and continue to be a persistent problem confronting schools today (Cummings, 1980; Knoff, 1984; Lunenburg, 1984; Wayson & Lasley, 1984). The saliency of pupil control has been so significant, that writers have underscored the issue on numerous occasions (Ausubel, 1961; Jones & Jones, 1981; Madsen & Madsen, 1981; Silberman, 1970; Wolfgang & Glickman, 1980); yet, despite the abundance of literature, not many authors have attempted to define the term 'discipline.'

While Binkley & Anton (1984) define discipline as "ordered behaviour that leads to better learning" (p.24), Wayson & Lasley (1984) define discipline as "the display of behavior that is socially agreed upon as appropriate in a particular situation" (p.419). Haralson (1979), on the other hand, defines discipline as "the sum of all decisions and actions school people take to maintain some semblance of institutional order and continuity through the school day and year" (p.530); Reilly & Lewis (1983) define discipline as "the prevention or handling of behavior problems in the classroom" (p.556); and Lunenberg (1984) defines discipline as "the control of pupil behavior" (p.112). Both Dreikurs (1965) and Madsen & Madsen (1981) in an attempt to analyse discipline, conclude that courage is an important element; and Dreikurs (1965), furthermore, includes the elements of firmness, consistency and security.

The term 'punishment' means to "impose a penalty for some fault," "to inflict a penalty in retribution," or "to deal with harshly" (Maurer, 1974, p.614). The word "punishment" is derived from the words "penalty" and "pain."

Punishment can be defined either as an "aversive" or "noxious stimulus" and consequently one from which the organism will try and escape (Green, 1982, p.169; Solomon, 1964, p.239); or alternatively it may be seen as a stimulus that reduces the future probability of a behaviour that occurred prior to the stimulus (Azrin & Holz, 1966; Baer, 1971). When punishment is prefaced by "corporal," the meaning is that of pain upon the body of the person (Clarke, Lieberman-Lascoe, Hyman, 1982; Maurer, 1974); or loss of personal freedom for the commission of some offence (Clarke et al. 1982).

The notion that discipline and punishment are mutually inclusive elements in effective pupil control strategies, is a matter of increasing concern. Discipline and punishment are not synonymous, yet they continue to be seen as such and are still used interchangeably in schools (Boonin, 1979). Rather it should be said that attempts to achieve effective discipline may be made by utilizing either positive or negative disciplinary methods.

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include corporal punishments, withdrawal of privileges, detention, additional work and verbal abuse. Similarly, positive disciplinary methods may vary in form, and include behaviour modification techniques (Madsen, Becker & Thomas, 1968) such as: rewarding positive behaviour, modelling appropriate behaviour, improving communication strategies, parent consultations, drawing up contracts, and encouraging self-discipline.

Self-discipline, embodying an ideal of growth toward independence and self-control rather than dominant external authority and punitive measures (Dewey, 1897), should be the ultimate goal of disciplinary strategies. The researcher therefore regards self-discipline and corporal punishment as opposing ends of a continuum.

There exists overwhelming scientific evidence contra-indicating punishment and corporal punishment, and its effect on the learning process and behaviour (Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1953; Thorndike, 1931; Watson, 1924). Furthermore, substantial research results have produced a disturbingly endless list of undesirable side effects which are caused by these strategies.

Hentoff (1973) notes that punishment can cause a deterioration in the learning process, leading to the inhibition of learning rather than the acquisition of skills; and Holdstock (1985) argues that fear of punishment can affect the autonomic nervous

system, which may result in psychosomatic symptoms. Azrin, Hake, Holz & Hutchinson (1965) and Boren & Coleman (1970) report punishment to cause a generalized aversiveness to the total school situation, with resultant behaviour such as tardiness, truancy, dropping out of school, and distant student-teacher relationships; while other supportive research indicates that punishment may actually maintain and reinforce such undesirable behaviour (Azrin & Holz, 1966; Bongiovanni, 1977; Skinner, 1953). Therefore, while research has indicated the ineffectiveness of punishment in decreasing the occurrence of a response (Hill, 1981; Pavlov, 1927; Skinner, 1948; Solomon, 1964; Tolman, Hall & Bretnall, 1932), and has emphasized the power of punishment to evoke other competing responses (Skinner, 1948, 1953; Solomon, 1964); corporal punishment has, moreover, been found to produce and maintain the following alarming effects.

Field studies clearly indicate that, not only has physical punishment been found to give rise to avoidance behaviours, but it enhances rather than inhibits aggressive behaviour (Eron, Walder & Lefkowitz, 1970). A near perfect correlation between the amount and severity of physical punishment endured by a child from two to twelve, and the amount and severity of antisocial aggressiveness that s/he displays during adolescence, is indicated by work in progress (Button, 1973; Welsh, 1974). In addition, by striking a student, the teacher provides a living model of aggressive behaviour (Bandura & Walters, 1959).

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Bryan & Freed (1982) found that students in a high corporal punishment group described achievements as below average, reported more personal problems, more negative social interactions and negative psychological states, experienced a greater number of problems with addictions, lacked motivation, and experienced dependency and identity problems. Furthermore, various forms of psychopathy in children were found to correlate positively with the degree of physical punishment they had received (Feshbach & Feshbach, 1973).

Starr (1969) found that women teachers, as a group, had a less favourable attitude to corporal punishment than men, and Starr (1967) found that younger teachers, i.e. those under 24 years of age, were more favourable to the use of corporal punishment than an older group. Lennox (1982) in Hyman & Fina (1983) and Starr (1967) concluded that attitudes to corporal punishment are influenced by the atmosphere in which the teacher had grown up, and found that those individuals who had experienced corporal punishment at school, expressed a more favourable attitude towards it. Furthermore, teachers who were more educated and more academically able, and those who were better practical teachers, expressed a less favourable attitude towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy (Check, 1979; Moore & Cooper, 1984; Starr, 1967).

Other interesting factors revealed by research are that more severe disciplinary strategies, both physical and verbal, are

more frequently recommended and administered to males by teachers (Brophy & Good, 1970; Lippitt & Gold, 1959; Yarrow, Waxler & Scott, 1971); and Dean (1977) stated that teachers with less than four years' teaching experience used negative forms of discipline more frequently than teachers with more than four years of experience. Similarly, Check (1979), Moore & Cooper (1984), and Rust & Kinnard (1983) found a significant negative correlation between years of teaching experience and the use of punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

Research indicates that the successful disciplinarian is one who models caring, committed behaviour, and who takes time to reason and communicate with the child (Calabrese, 1985), thus showing him/her that he/she is respected as an individual (Clarke, 1984). One who uses positive rather than negative discipline strategies (Rich, 1984); one who collectively creates clear rules (Wayson & Lasley, 1984); one who is genuinely interested in pupils (Arnove & Strout, 1980); and one who is flexible, student-centred, and capable of individualizing and personalizing teaching (Arnove & Strout, 1980). A teacher should, therefore, carefully examine disciplinary strategies, as some teachers still use arbitrarily imposed custodial-type methods regardless of what research indicates. Effective teaching and disciplinary strategies require a teacher who is concerned with reasons and needs which underlie asocial behaviour - not one who relies on punishment as a means to good discipline. Punishment will merely teach the child to fear the teacher, not to respect him/her. And fear and learning, like oil and water, don't mix.

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Despite the negative connotations conjured up by discipline strategies practised in bygone days, and despite associations made between discipline and negative terms such as 'punishment,' 'control' and 'retribution' (Gephart, Strother & Duckett, 1941), modern educationalists tend to define discipline in positive terms and stress self-discipline as the ultimate goal (Aquerrebere, 1985; Behan, 1985; Binkley & Anton, 1984; Morton, 1978; Wayson & Lasley, 1984). Overall it seems that the goal of a democratic approach to discipline should be the development of an individual who is able to exercise self-control in an atmosphere compatible with the principles of equality, mutual respect and freedom of choice.

CHAPTER 2

THE STUDY

2.1 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

It is evident, according to the literature and research, that the questioning of the use of both physical and verbal punishment is not a recent phenomenon. Many great thinkers through the ages have expressed concern over, and supported belief in, the ineffectiveness of punishment as a disciplinary strategy. While punishment has been found merely to temporarily suppress undesirable behaviour (Skinner, 1971), overgeneralized punishment produces harmful side-effects (Azrin & Holz, 1966; Church, 1963; Johnston, 1972), making it an inappropriate and unsuitable disciplinary strategy.

Despite increased knowledge about child care and human growth from the various disciplines, and despite the paucity of appropriate research support, our society still legalizes the educational use of punishment. An elaborate and often vehement ideology of justification for the physical and verbal punishment of children, has developed. However, there is no scientific basis for justifying the use of punishment. In contrast, based on previous findings, modern educationalists tend to regard positive disciplinary strategies, and especially self-

discipline, as the ultimate educational goal (Wayson & Lasley, 1984).

Research shows that, as a group, male teachers tend, more than female teachers, to favour corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy (Starr, 1969); and younger teachers are more favourable to the use of corporal punishment than older teachers (Starr, 1967). Furthermore, attitudes towards corporal punishment are seemingly influenced by the atmosphere in which the teacher has grown up (Lennox, 1982; Starr, 1967); and less experienced teachers tend to show a greater preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy (Check, 1979).

This study therefore addresses itself to exploring the above findings within the South African context, in particular with regard to white teachers who teach in Transvaal Education Department schools. The researcher also considered it desirable to investigate whether a tendency existed for physical education teachers to show a preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, since there is a common conception that, as physical education teachers tend to be more concerned with physical activity, they therefore tend to emphasize stoicism and physical punishment rather than other forms of punishment.

Overall then, this is an important research area that is deserving of more attention than it has yet received.

2.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The general aim of the present study was to investigate the attitudes of white teachers in Transvaal Education Department schools, towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. In addition, different variables among teachers would be explored. More specifically the aims were:

1. To determine whether positive disciplinary strategies, and in particular self-discipline are considered important educational goals.

2. To determine whether male teachers as a group have a greater preference for corporal punishment than do females.

3. To determine whether younger teachers, i.e. those under 25 years of age, are more favourable to the use of corporal punishment than an older group.

4. To determine whether attitudes towards corporal punishment are influenced by the atmosphere in which the teacher had grown up, i.e. do those individuals who had experienced corporal punishment at school, express a more favourable attitude towards it?

5. To determine whether less experienced teachers show a greater preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

6. To determine whether physical education teachers show a greater preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

2.3 METHOD

2.3.1 SUBJECTS

A total of 110 white teachers participated in the study. Subjects were drawn from lower/middle and upper/middle socio-economic status groups from each sector of Johannesburg (i.e. North, South, East, West, and the central Johannesburg area), thus both inner urban and suburban areas were represented. Primary and high schools were equally distributed across areas.

Of the total of 110 teachers, 29 were male, and 81 were female. In addition, 90 of the subjects taught at co-educational schools of which there were nine; 10 of the subjects taught at an all-girls' school of which there was one; and 10 of the subjects taught at an all-boys' school of which there was one.

Subjects' teaching experience ranged between 6 months and 31 years; while the mean teaching experience was 11,02 years, with 50% of teachers having less than 10 years' teaching experience. The ages of the subjects ranged from under 25 to 55 years of age and over, and the majority of teachers fell within the range 25 - 34 years of age.

2.3.2 MEASURES

The data used in the study were derived from an anonymous questionnaire which was administered to the sample of teachers. Of a total of 13 items, the first six may be considered as biographical, while the following six dealt with the concepts of discipline and punishment, with the final item inviting any additional comments of the subjects.

The first six items dealt with subjects' sex, age, number of years' teaching experience, primary/high school teacher, co-ed/all-boys'/all-girls' school, and subjects taught. The following six items investigated how important the subject considered discipline to be, how important the subject considered punishment to be, what form of punishment he/she had personally received at school, what form of punishment he/she considered to have been most effective on him/her, what form of discipline he/she considered to have been most effective on him/her, and what form of punishment and/or discipline he/she considered to be most effective on today's children.

Subjects were asked to state preferences, and to rate items according to four point scales ranging from extremely important to extremely unimportant. In addition, they were given the opportunity to freely state their beliefs and opinions (see Appendix A).

2.3.3 PROCEDURE

A letter requesting permission for teachers to take part in the study and soliciting the co-operation of the Transvaal Education Department, was sent to the Bureau for Educational Research (see Appendix B). Ten questionnaires were completed at each of the eleven pre-selected schools.

Administration of questionnaires was carried out by an assistant, who handed ten questionnaires to each school. After completion at the school's convenience, they were collected and analysed. The researcher, thus, had no control of variables which might have influenced completion of the questionnaires.

2.3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study was a non-experimental type study, using an ex post facto design. Because the data obtained on the variables were categorical, differences between the variables on the biographical, punishment and discipline dimensions were examined using two-dimensional contingency tables and chi-square analysis.

All statistical analyses were completed with the SAS (1985) package.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

3.1 A DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSE FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF THE SAMPLE (N=110) TO THE QUESTIONS

The following table provides a detailed description of the response frequencies and percentages of the sample in relation to the questions.

TABLE 1 : DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSE FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF THE SAMPLE (N=110) TO THE QUESTIONS

QUESTION	OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	%
Question 7	Do you consider discipline in schools today to be:		
	Extremely important	78	70,9
	Important	32	29,1
	Not very important	0	0
	Extremely unimportant	0	0
Question 8	Do you consider punishment in schools today to be:		
	Extremely important	25	22,7
	Important	78	70,9
	Not very important	6	5,5
	Extremely unimportant	1	0,9
Question 9	What form of punishment did you receive personally at school?		
	Verbal punishment	52	47,3
	Corporal punishment	3	2,7
	Verbal & corporal punishment	53	48,2
	Other	2	1,8
Question 10	What form of punishment do you consider to have been most effective on you?		
	No punishment	7	6,4
	Verbal punishment	47	42,7
	Corporal punishment	8	7,3
	Verbal & corporal punishment	38	34,5
	Other	10	9,1

TABLE 1 (cont.): DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSE FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES OF THE SAMPLE (N=110) TO THE QUESTIONS

QUESTION	OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	%
Question 11	What form of discipline do you consider to have been most effective on you?		
	No discipline	7	6,7
	Verbal punishment	23	22,1
	Corporal punishment	5	4,8
	Verbal & corporal punishment	12	11,5
	Other punishment	20	19,2
	Positive disciplinary strategies	23	22,1
	Self-discipline	14	13,5
	Missing	6	-
Question 12	What form of punishment and/or discipline do you consider to be most effective on today's children?		
	Verbal punishment	23	21,1
	Corporal punishment	11	10,1
	Verbal & corporal punishment	56	51,4
	Other punishment	8	7,3
	Positive disciplinary strategies	9	8,3
	Self-discipline	2	1,8
	Missing	1	-

Question 7: Do you consider discipline in schools today to be: extremely important; important; not very important; extremely unimportant?

This question reflected all teachers as regarding discipline to be either extremely important (70,9%), or important (29,1%). None of the respondents chose the last two options, indicating that discipline is highly regarded in our schools today. Similarly, Question 8 reflects most teachers as regarding punishment to be either extremely important (22,7%), or important (70,9%). Only seven (6,4%) respondents considered punishment to be either not important or unimportant in schools today. As Questions 7 and 8 resulted in homogeneous answers, they did not prove useful for further analysis.

Question 9: What form of punishment did you receive personally at school? Verbal punishment; corporal punishment; verbal & corporal punishment.

Responses indicated that both verbal punishment, and a combination of verbal and corporal punishment were the most frequent forms of punishment administered to the sample, whilst corporal punishment alone was infrequently administered.

Question 10: What form of punishment do you consider to have been most effective on you? No punishment; verbal punishment; corporal punishment; verbal & corporal punishment.

Responses to this question indicated that the sample, in turn, regarded verbal punishment, and a combination of verbal and corporal punishment to have been the most effective on them.

Question 11: What form of discipline do you consider to have been most effective on you? No discipline; the following forms of discipline.

This question was coded into no discipline, punishment, and positive disciplinary responses, since respondents supplied both positive disciplinary responses and negative disciplinary responses, i.e. punishment responses. Verbal punishment, corporal punishment, verbal and corporal punishment, and other punishment were all coded as punishment responses; while positive disciplinary strategies and self-discipline were coded separately. It is interesting to note that punishment was regarded as having been the most effective disciplinary form (64,4%) as compared to positive disciplinary strategies and self-disciplinary strategies (35,6%) i.e. $\chi^2 = 8{,}64$, $p < 0{,}05$). This significant difference illustrates a strong preference for punishment strategies as compared to other disciplinary strategies.

Question 12: What form of punishment and/or discipline do you consider to be most effective on today's children? Verbal punishment; corporal punishment; combination of verbal & corporal punishment; other.

Both punishment and discipline were included in the phrasing of Question 12, but as only punishment options were offered, this question may be regarded as being loaded in favour of punishment responses. Although positive disciplinary oriented respondents (10,0%) responded by utilizing the 'other' category, the majority of respondents (89,1%) opted for negative disciplinary responses.

However, the categories of negative disciplinary strategies i.e. punishment strategies, and positive disciplinary strategies i.e. discipline and self-discipline strategies, could have been regarded as mutually exclusive. Accordingly, teachers could have been responding only within the framework of negative disciplinary strategies.

3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINARY STRATEGIES, AND IN PARTICULAR SELF-DISCIPLINE AS AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL

Data from Question 12 was used in order to achieve the second aim, the 'other' category resulting in remarks pertaining to positive disciplinary strategies and self-discipline as an educational goal. A table of detailed responses is provided on the following page.

TABLE 2 : IMPORTANCE OF POSITIVE DISCIPLINARY STRATEGIES, IN PARTICULAR SELF-DISCIPLINE AS AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	%
Verbal punishment	23	21,1
Corporal punishment	11	10,1
Verbal & corporal punishment	56	51,4
Other punishment	8	7,3
Positive disciplinary strategies	9	8,3
Self-discipline	2	1,8
Missing	1	-

Positive disciplinary strategies, and in particular self-discipline, are not regarded as important educational goals by this sample of teachers. Whilst 56 (51,4%) of the sample regarded a combination of verbal and corporal punishment as an effective form of punishment on today's children, and therefore an assumed highly valued strategy and educational goal; nine (8,3%) respondents considered positive disciplinary strategies to be an effective and important educational goal; and only two (1,8%) of the respondents mentioned self-discipline as an important educational goal.

3.3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SEX AND PREFERENCE FOR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OR OTHER METHODS OF PUNISHMENT

A χ^2 test was performed to determine the difference between males and females in their preference for corporal punishment vs other methods of punishment as a disciplinary strategy. Accrding to

this test, a tendency towards significance was found to exist between sex and preference for corporal punishment as opposed to other methods of punishment (χ^2 = 7,317, p = 0,07). These results imply that, while a majority of both male and female teachers indicate a preference for corporal punishment as compared to other methods of punishment, as a group male teachers tend to have a more favourable attitude towards corporal punishment as opposed to other methods of punishment, than do females (i.e. 82,76% of the sample of 29 male teachers show a preference for corporal punishment as compared to 54,32% of the sample of 81 female teachers).

3.4 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AGE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

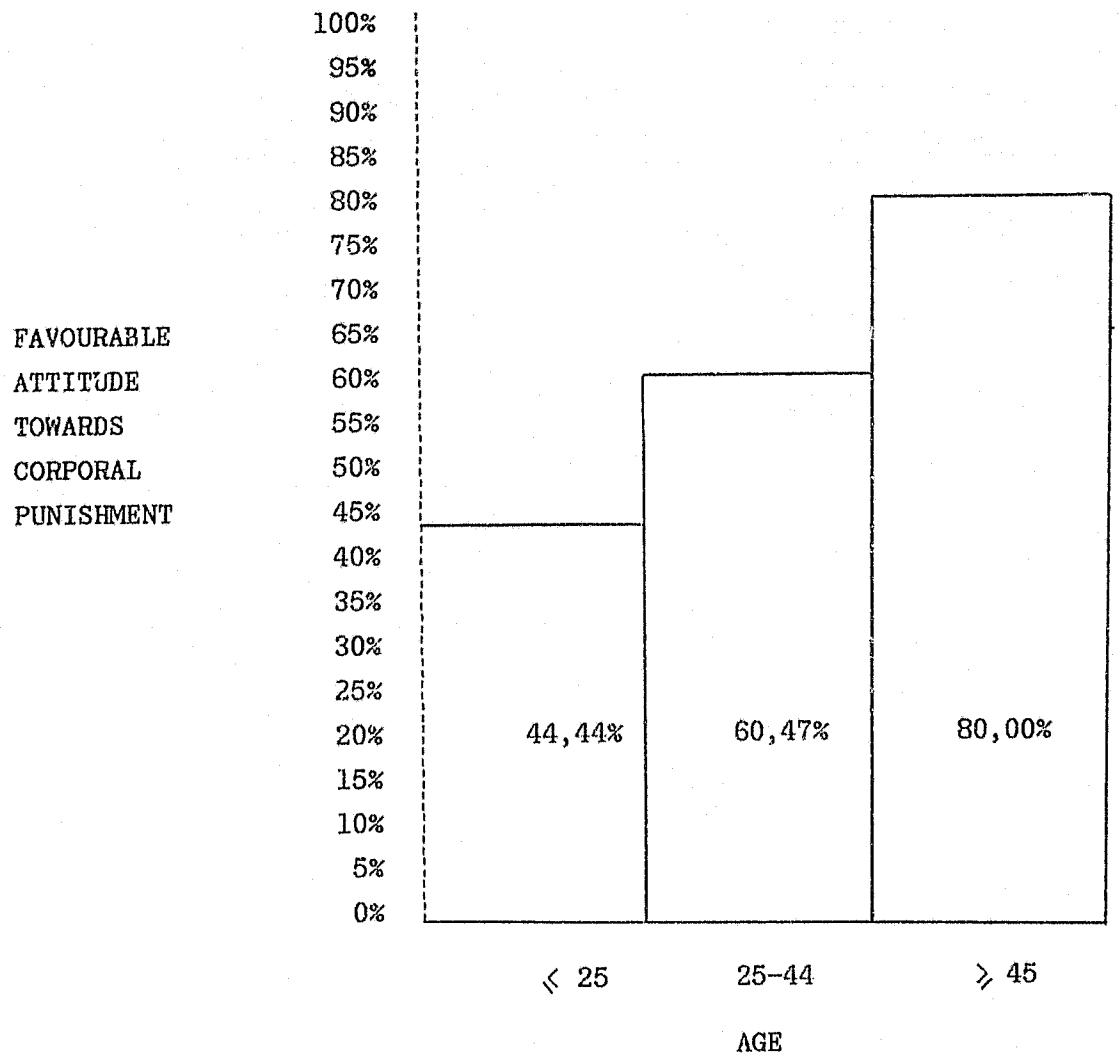
Differences between the various age groups and their attitudes towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy was examined by means of a χ^2 test.

Results were non-significant (χ^2 = 3,318, p = 0,190), implying that no significant differences exist between age and attitudes towards corporal punishment. This means that attitudes towards corporal punishment are independent of age.

However, although no significant differences exist between age and attitudes towards corporal punishment, it is interesting to note apparent differences in the proportions of the subsample. It appears that as teachers get older, their attitudes towards corporal punishment become more favourable. For example, in the

age group of 25 years and younger, only 44,44% of teachers have a favourable attitude towards corporal punishment; in the age group of 25-44 years, 60,47% of teachers have a favourable attitude towards corporal punishment; while in the age group of 45 years and older, 80,00% of teachers have a favourable attitude towards corporal punishment. The following histogram illustrates graphically the above trend.

FAVOURABILITY OF ATTITUDES
TOWARDS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT FOR
THE VARIOUS AGE GROUPS



It is possible that the small and disparate sample numbers prevented a significant outcome.

3.5 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Both the attitudes of those who had received corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, and those who had not received corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, were investigated in relation to their attitudes towards corporal punishment.

Results indicate that significant differences exist between previous experience of corporal punishment and attitudes towards corporal punishment ($\chi^2 = 10,827$, $p < 0,001$). Of the sample, 43 (76,79%) of those who received corporal punishment, favoured it as a disciplinary strategy, while only 13 (23,21%) of the sample who had experienced corporal punishment, did not favour it as a disciplinary strategy. Of the group who had not experienced corporal punishment, 25 (46,30%) favoured it as a disciplinary strategy, while 29 (53,70%) did not favour it as a disciplinary strategy. In this instance there were no significant differences.

In addition, of the group who had a positive attitude towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, 43 (63,24%) had experienced corporal punishment, while 25 (36,26%) had experienced other disciplinary methods.

3.6 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND PREFERENCE FOR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OR OTHER METHODS OF PUNISHMENT

A χ^2 was used to assess the significant of the difference between years of teaching experience and preference for corporal punishment.

Results indicate that no significant differences exist between years of teaching experience and preference for corporal punishment or other methods of punishment (χ^2= 0,114, p = 0,735). This result implies that teaching experience does not significantly affect attitudes with regard to a preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

Although teachers with more than five years of teaching experience appear to show a greater preference for corporal punishment as opposed to other methods, in comparison to those teachers with five or less years of teaching experience (59,38% as opposed to 40,63%), the difference is not significant. It is important to note that the variable of teaching experience probably correlates with the variable of age, and that the question of age vs experience has not been examined here.

3.7 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SUBJECTS TAUGHT AND PREFERENCE FOR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The χ^2 performed on the difference between the attitudes of physical education teachers and the attitudes of teachers who teach all other subjects, and preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, yielded the following results.

Physical education teachers tended to show a slightly greater preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, when compared to teachers who teach other subjects. The χ^2 value is, however, non-significant (χ^2= 0,312, p = 0,576).

Of the 100 teachers who taught other subjects, 61 (61,00%) indicated a preference for corporal punishment, whilst 39 (39,00%) rejected corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy; and of the ten teachers who taught physical education, seven (70,00%) indicated a preference for corporal punishment, whilst three (30,00%) rejected corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. Both groups, then, show a definite preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

3.8 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Results from the study revealed that:

3.8.1 Previous experience of corporal punishment made a significant impact on attitude towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, in that those who had received corporal punishment, favoured it as a disciplinary strategy. Moreover, previous experience of corporal punishment was more likely to result in a positive attitude towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

Among those who did not experience corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, there was no evidence of impact on attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

3.8.2 Males, in contrast to females, tended to favour corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

3.8.3 No significant differences were found to exist between:

* age and attitudes towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy
* teaching experience and preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, and
* subjects taught and preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

However, the following trends were found:

* older teachers had more favourable attitudes than their younger peers towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy
* teachers with more than five years of teaching experience had a greater preference than those with fewer years of experience for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, and
* physical education teachers had a greater preference than teachers of other subjects for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy.

3.8.4 There is no evidence that positive disciplinary strategies, and in particular self-discipline, are regarded as important educational goals by this sample of teachers.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Certain limitations of the study should be noted. The researcher had no control over administration of questionnaires, which was carried out by an assistant, thus confounding variables such as motivation to complete questionnaire, mood of teacher, time of day chosen to complete questionnaire, etc., may have coloured findings. In addition, findings pertain only to the South African context, more specifically to white teachers in the employ of Transvaal Education Department schools in both the inner urban and suburban areas of Johannesburg.

4.1 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

The findings, as previously summarized, are discussed under the headings of the aims, as follows:

4.1.1 Aim 1 : To determine whether positive disciplinary strategies, in particular self-discipline, are considered important educational goals

There is no evidence that positive disciplinary strategies, and in particular self-discipline, are regarded as important educational goals by this sample of teachers.

These findings are in direct contradiction to the findings of Aquerrebere (1985), Behan (1985), Binkley & Anton (1984), Morton (1978), and Wayson & Lasley (1984), who found that modern educationalists tend to regard positive disciplinary strategies and especially self-discipline as the ultimate educational goal. These results reflect a less democratic, more punitive approach to education; and it seems that self-control and the principles of equality and freedom of choice, are not regarded particularly highly by this sample of educationalists. It is important to note that, as the majority of teachers fell within the range 25 - 34 years of age, they were considered to be modern educationalists by the researcher.

4.1.2 **Aim 2 : To determine whether male teachers as a group have a greater preference for corporal punishment than do female teachers**

Findings suggest that, as a group, male teachers tend, more than female teachers, to favour corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. This is in accordance with the findings of Starr (1969).

The high percentage of male respondents who indicated a preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, could reflect an outdated but nevertheless legal negative disciplinary strategy in our society at present, and a paucity of alternative, more positive techniques in our educational system, and ignorance or lack of training in or access to them.

4.1.3 **Aim 3 : To determine whether younger teachers i.e. those under 25 years of age are more favourable to the use of corporal punishment than an older group**

Starr's (1967) findings that younger teachers i.e. those under 24 years of age were more favourable to the use of corporal punishment strategies than an older group, are in contrast with this study's findings. Although results were non-significant, there was a tendency for corporal punishment strategies to be favoured by all age groups, the oldest age group (≥ 45) indicating the greatest preference for the use of this strategy.

This finding could indicate that the younger generation of teachers are exhibiting more democratic principles with a greater emphasis on an internal locus of control. Alternatively, this finding could be explained by the small proportion of the sample that fell into the category of those of 24 years of age and younger which may have affected results, since only nine respondents fell into this category.

4.1.4 **Aim 4 : To determine whether attitudes towards corporal punishment are influenced by the atmosphere in which the teacher had grown up**

A highly significant relationship was found to exist between previous experience of corporal punishment, and attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. These findings support those of Lennox (1982) and Starr (1967) who concluded that attitudes to corporal punish-

ment are influenced by the atmosphere in which the teacher had grown up, and that those individuals who had experienced corporal punishment at school, expressed a significantly favourable attitude towards it. Moreover, it was found that previous experience of corporal punishment was more likely to result in a positive attitude towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. One might conclude then, that the finding that "violence breeds violence" is therefore supported.

Interestingly, among the group who did not experience corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, there was no evidence of impact on attitudes towards the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy. Therefore, whereas among the group who had experienced corporal punishment, a significant impact on attitudes toward corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy was found; among the group who had not experienced corporal punishment, no significant impact on attitudes towards corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy was found.

These findings suggest that factors other than personal experience of corporal punishment, influence one's attitude towards it e.g. social mores. It is possible that the emphasis placed on violence and physical punishment in our society would more likely be acted out by those who had previously experienced corporal punishment, thereby reinforcing social norms; whereas those who had not experienced corporal punishment were more likely to display independent patterns of thought. In

other words, those who are perpetuating physical violence as a result of social mores, display a decreased ability to think independ ly.

4.1.5 Aim 5 : To determine whether less experienced teachers show a greater preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy

Although the findings of this report suggest that both those teachers with five and less years of teaching experience, and those with more than five years of teaching experience are almost equally punishment-oriented; a more significant relationship between experience and preference for corporal punishment and punishment strategies may have resulted had there been a greater number of respondents in the category of those with five and less years' teaching experience. Alternatively, these findings may once again indicate a more democratic outlook and a greater emphasis on self-c ntrol by the younger generation of teachers.

Thus, the finding by Check (1979), Moore & Cooper (1984), and Rust & Kinnard (1983) of a significant negative correlation between years of teaching experience and the use of punishment and corporal punishment as disciplinary strategies, was not supported by the findings of this research report.

4.1.6 Aim 6 : To determine whether physical education teachers show a greater preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy

Although no differences were found to exist between subjects taught and preference for corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, it is interesting to note that seventy percent of physical education teachers showed a preference for corporal punishment strategies. However, perhaps the insubstantial sample size of only 10 prevented the results from being more conclusive.

4.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The differences found between certain variables and the tendency to preference for punishment and corporal punishment strategies, have major implications for our educational system and for society in general.

In terms of society at large, the heavy over-reliance on the use of corporal punishment may well reflect the high level of violence evident in our society at present. A society with a high level of violence justifies and supports violence. Research shows that violence breeds violence, and by legalising corporal punishment as a disciplinary method within an educational system, this vicious cycle is being perpetuated.

Research shows, too, that there is no scientific basis for justifying the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, and abundant evidence indicates the detrimental effects of corporal punishment. Yet, despite psychological and educational research findings contra-indicating the use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary strategy, it remains the treatment of choice by many educationalists. This implies that there is a gap between research findings, and practice in schools generally.

Implications are that our teacher training programmes need to address the issue of effective methods of discipline, and teachers need to be well versed in alternative, positive discipline strategies. A wide variety of positive techniques to modify behaviour and improve the learning ability of pupils may be employed. For example, the child may be removed from the conflict situation; s/he may be consulted after the period or after school; parents may be consulted; positive behaviour may be reinforced and negative behaviour ignored; direct eye contact may be maintained; appropriate behaviour patterns may be modelled; or school counselling services may be utilized.

One of the most effective alternatives is counselling. The aim of the counsellor is to resolve the conflict between the pupil and the school in an educative and satisfactory way. Mutual explanation, listening, sympathetic attitudes, interpretation of pupils and teachers to each other, looking at problems in

new ways, the expression of opinions and feelings are all part of this process. Counsellors confer and work closely with parents, social workers, welfare departments, children's homes and other similar institutions, and by discussing problems openly and releasing underlying tensions and emotions, hidden motivations can be investigated and understood.

Ultimately, then, self-discipline should be the goal of today's educational system. Self-discipline in children may be fostered by intrinsically motivating children within the school situation, to the extent that the child is meaningfully engaged. Discipline problems would substantially decrease or diminish if activities and work were appropriately geared to the developmental level and interest level of the child, thus resulting in greater involvement of the student.

The major responsibility should be transferred from the teacher to the student, and dependency on an outside force or agent to remain in self-control, should be discouraged. And since a major sign whereby a society may be judged as civilized is that it seeks to manage its affairs without resort to violence, a greater emphasis should be placed on self-discipline which contributes positively and significantly to the social climate.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICULARS OF TEACHER

*Note: Verbal punishment includes any punitive and/or derogatory remark aimed at the student e.g. name-calling.
Corporal punishment includes any form of punishment aimed at the body.

PLEASE PLACE AN X IN THE BOX CORRESPONDING TO YOUR ANSWER:

1. SEX: Male
   Female

2. AGE: Under 25
   25 - 34
   35 - 44
   45 - 54
   55 and over

3. NUMBER OF YEARS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE: _____

4. PRIMARY/HIGH SCHOOL: _____

5. CO-ED./ALL BOYS' OR GIRLS' SCHOOL: _____

6. SUBJECTS TAUGHT: _____
   _____

7. DO YOU CONSIDER DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS TODAY TO BE:
   Extremely important
   Important
   Not very important
   Extremely unimportant

8. DO YOU CONSIDER PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS TODAY TO BE:

Extremely important

Important

Not very important

Extremely unimportant

9. WHAT FORM OF PUNISHMENT DID YOU RECEIVE PERSONALLY AT SCHOOL?

Verbal punishment

Corporal punishment

Combination of verbal and corporal punishment

Other (please state)_____

_____

10. WHAT FORM OF PUNISHMENT DO YOU CONSIDER TO HAVE BEEN MOST EFFECTIVE ON YOU?

No punishment

Verbal punishment

Corporal punishment

Combination of verbal and corporal punishment

Other (please state)_____

_____

11. WHAT FORM OF DISCIPLINE DO YOU CONSIDER TO HAVE BEEN MOST EFFECTIVE ON YOU?

No discipline

The following form/s of discipline:_____

_____

12. WHAT FORM OF PUNISHMENT AND/OR DISCIPLINE DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE ON TODAY'S CHILDREN?

Verbal punishment

Corporal punishment

Combination of verbal and corporal punishment

Other (please state)_____

_____

13. ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

1 Jan Smuts Avenue
Johannesburg
2001 South Africa

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG Tel (011) 716-1111

Tel (011) 716-5287
Enquiries: Division of Specialised Education
Date: 9 May 1986

Bureau for Educational Research
Ou Raadsaal
Private Bag X76
Pretoria
0001

Dear Dr Lane,

Regarding our telephone conversation of the 18 April, I would hereby like to submit an outline of my proposed research report, in partial completion of an M.Ed. Degree in School Counselling.

I have given the matter a great deal of thought, and have concluded that research into the role of discipline in both home and school is warranted. In view of the prevailing unstable socio-economic conditions and resultant high rate of unemployment, home relationships deteriorate and concomitant disciplinary problems at school are evidenced.

I would therefore like to aim my research at the staff members of a sample of schools in Johannesburg. This sample would include both primary and high schools; co-educational and boys only/girls only schools.

In an effort to conserve time, I have deleted some of the original questions and as a result have included only one unavoidable five-point scale. I have administered the questionnaire to a few subjects and it appears that it should not take more than two to three minutes to complete.

I would greatly appreciate any assistance you may be able to furnish with regard to this project.

Yours faithfully,

(MRS) JANET RICE

I have carefully considered the area of research and the enclosed questionnaire, and would appreciate your support of this research project.

PROFESSOR MERVYN SKUY
EDUCATIONAL AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
HEAD, DIVISION OF SPECIALISED EDUCATION

Author Rice J E
Name of thesis The attitude of teachers towards corporal punishment 1987

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