

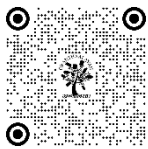


EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINE METHODS IN GHANAIAN BASIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED BASIC SCHOOLS WITHIN THE GREATER ACCRA REGION, GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Ghanaian teachers' perspective on the use of alternative disciplinary methods in basic schools compared to corporal punishment within the Greater Accra Region, contributing to the national debate on school discipline. The study adopted a mixed-method approach, utilizing surveys and interviews to collect data in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' perspective. 200 teachers participated in the survey, and in-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of the respondents. The findings revealed that while many teachers historically viewed corporal punishment as an effective disciplinary tool, a significant majority recognized its detrimental impacts, including physical injuries, psychological trauma, and increased aggression among students. Conversely, the study found strong support for alternative disciplinary methods such as positive reinforcement, restorative practices, and socio-emotional learning programs. Teachers reported that these methods were effective in promoting positive behavior, reducing disciplinary incidents, and enhancing students' social and emotional skills. The qualitative insights emphasized the importance of fostering a positive school environment through non-violent methods that build trust, respect, and mutual understanding. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Ghana Education Service (GES) continue to enforce the ban on corporal punishment and ensure compliance with guidelines on alternative disciplinary methods. It also suggests the provision of continuous professional development for educators, adequate resource allocation, and public awareness campaigns to shift cultural beliefs towards non-violent forms of discipline.

Keywords: Corporal Punishment, Alternative Discipline, Positive Reinforcement, Restorative Practices, Socio-Emotional Learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Alternative discipline methods refer to non-punitive and research-based approaches that help manage student behavior through positive reinforcement, restorative justice, and socio-emotional learning (SEL). These methods replace traditional punitive measures such as corporal punishment and exclusionary discipline [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#). The concept of alternative discipline is often linked to John Dewey (1916), who advocated for progressive education and student-

centered discipline. Dewey opines that students should understand the consequences of their actions instead of being forced into obedience through punishment. In the same vein, he believes that education should shape moral reasoning and self-discipline rather than instill fear of authority [Dewey \(1916\)](#). Since Dewey's progressive education movement, alternative discipline has gained global attention. According to [Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor \(2016\)](#), these non-violent approaches help improve student behavior, academic success, and emotional well-being. In the same light, [Shannon & Buckley \(2017\)](#) argue that alternative discipline methods foster self-regulation, accountability, and conflict resolution in students. Instead of using physical punishment or emotional coercion, these approaches emphasize positive engagement with students while maintaining discipline and structure.

The shift toward alternative discipline methods globally has mainly been influenced by scientific research, human rights advocacy, and legal reforms. Many countries have adopted non-violent disciplinary models, aligning their education systems with international human rights policies such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) and the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2020). According to [Gershoff \(2002\)](#), countries that eliminated corporal punishment saw improvements in student well-being, classroom behavior, and teacher-student relationships. For example, Sweden, Finland, and Norway were among the first nations to ban corporal punishment and introduce restorative justice models, positive behavioral interventions, and social-emotional learning programs [Parkes \(2015\)](#). In the same light, these Scandinavian education systems emphasize holistic student development, where discipline is maintained through communication, conflict resolution, and emotional support. Studies show that these countries have experienced lower school violence rates, higher student engagement, and improved academic performance following the shift to non-punitive discipline strategies [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#). However, challenges remain in several regions where traditional, authoritarian discipline models are still dominant. According to [Simonsen et al. \(2008\)](#), the United States has recorded reductions in student suspensions and improved school climate following the adoption of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). In the same vein, these interventions encourage student engagement while reducing disciplinary infractions. Yet, [Skiba et al. \(2011\)](#) argue that disparities persist, especially in minority and low-income communities where zero-tolerance policies still disproportionately affect students. Similarly, [Ogando Portela et al. \(2015\)](#) highlight that in Latin America, the resistance to banning corporal punishment stems from cultural norms that equate physical punishment with discipline.

Across Africa, some countries have adopted legal frameworks banning corporal punishment, yet cultural resistance, weak enforcement mechanisms, and inadequate teacher training continue to hinder full implementation. According to [Morrell \(2001\)](#), South Africa was one of the first African nations to abolish corporal punishment in 1996, following the end of apartheid. In the same light, the country's disciplinary policies now emphasize restorative justice and positive behavioral support, contributing to reduced school violence and improved student engagement. Similarly, Kenya and Uganda have introduced non-violent discipline models, incorporating peer mediation and socio-emotional learning into their education systems. According to [UNICEF \(2020\)](#), Kenyan schools that implemented structured positive reinforcement programs recorded lower dropout rates, improved academic achievement, and better teacher-student relationships. In the same light, these programs reduced classroom conflict and increased student

cooperation. However, the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2020) points out that many African educators still believe that corporal punishment is the most effective way to maintain discipline. In Nigeria for example, cultural and religious beliefs continue to normalize physical punishment as a disciplinary tool [Morrell \(2001\)](#). According to [Ogando et al. \(2015\)](#), although both countries have made legal commitments to reduce corporal punishment, implementation remains inconsistent due to a lack of teacher training, limited public awareness, and weak enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, [UNESCO. \(2020\)](#) highlights that many schools in Africa lack the infrastructure and trained personnel to implement behavioral interventions and restorative practices.

Despite global advocacy, legal prohibitions, and extensive research highlighting the harmful effects of corporal punishment, its elimination in Ghanaian schools remains a significant challenge. According to [Human Rights Watch. \(2018\)](#), while Ghana has taken steps to align its educational policies with international human rights standards, corporal punishment remains widespread due to deep-rooted cultural beliefs, weak enforcement mechanisms, and teacher resistance. The Ghana Education Service (GES) officially banned corporal punishment in schools through the 2013 Guidelines on Corporal Punishment, yet empirical evidence suggests that many teachers continue to use physical discipline ([UNICEF. \(2020\)](#)). In the same vein, [Akyina & Manu \(2024\)](#) argue that reports of students being caned, slapped, and subjected to other forms of physical punishment in Ghanaian schools highlight a significant gap between policy and practice. This discrepancy raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of legal bans without proper teacher sensitization, institutional support, and public awareness campaigns. The abolition of corporal punishment has also sparked debate among educators, with many arguing that its removal has led to a decline in classroom discipline (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020). In the same light, some Ghanaian educators and parents believe that corporal punishment was an effective tool for managing student behavior, and that its removal has led to increased cases of student indiscipline, absenteeism, and defiance. This perceived lack of effective alternatives contributes to resistance against policy changes, making it essential to investigate teachers' perspective on how alternative discipline strategies work in Ghanaian classrooms. According to [Heeralal \(2024\)](#), without a full understanding of how teachers implement alternative disciplinary methods, the effectiveness of these policies remains uncertain, further hindering their successful adoption in schools.

One of the main challenges in fully adopting alternative discipline in Ghana is the cultural perception of discipline itself. Many Ghanaian communities equate discipline with physical correction, with parents and teachers believing in the notion of "spare the rod, spoil the child" [Morrell \(2001\)](#). In the same light, this deep-rooted belief system makes it difficult for educators to embrace non-violent discipline strategies, as many still see them as ineffective or foreign concepts. Furthermore, many Ghanaian teachers have received little or no formal training in alternative discipline methods, leaving them ill-equipped to implement these strategies effectively ([Ogando Portela et al. \(2015\)](#)). According to [Akyina & Manu \(2024\)](#), countries that have successfully replaced corporal punishment with alternative discipline models have invested in teacher training, professional development, and public awareness campaigns. In the same light, [UNESCO. \(2020\)](#) argues that the failure to provide such resources in Ghana has led to the slow and inconsistent adoption of non-violent disciplinary approaches. Taking the above background into consideration, this current study seeks to achieve the following objectives

- 1) Provide insights on corporal punishment in basic schools by presenting teachers' perspective
- 2) Highlight the effectiveness of alternative forms of discipline in basic schools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. THE CONCEPT OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal punishment, broadly defined as the use of physical force to discipline students, includes practices such as spanking, caning, slapping, or any form of physical action intended to cause pain or discomfort. Historically, it has been regarded as an effective means of instilling discipline in educational settings, with its origins deeply rooted in traditional and cultural beliefs regarding behavior correction [Akyina & Manu \(2024\)](#). The rationale behind corporal punishment is based on the assumption that inflicting pain deters undesirable behavior while reinforcing obedience and compliance with school rules. The historical use of corporal punishment dates back to ancient civilizations, where it was employed in both domestic and educational settings to enforce authority and maintain order ([Beecham & Nakayiza \(2024\)](#)). In many societies, physical punishment was considered necessary for socializing children and instilling moral values. In the same vein, traditional African societies widely accepted corporal punishment to ensure that children respected authority and adhered to societal norms ([Thelma et al. 2025](#)). Similarly, in Western educational systems, corporal punishment was extensively practiced and remained a core disciplinary measure until the late 20th century, when research highlighted its adverse effects ([Oben & Hui, 2025](#)).

However, contemporary research and global advocacy movements have led to increasing scrutiny of corporal punishment due to its harmful impact on children's well-being. Empirical studies have demonstrated that corporal punishment leads to various negative outcomes, including physical injuries, psychological trauma, and increased aggression among children ([Khamala, Amunga, & Ashioya, 2025](#)). According to the American Psychological Association (APA) (2019), children who experience corporal punishment are more likely to develop aggressive behavior, antisocial tendencies, and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. In the same vein, [Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor \(2016\)](#) assert that physical punishment correlates with poorer academic performance, lower cognitive development, and decreased classroom engagement. Beyond immediate psychological and physical harm, corporal punishment is said to undermine student-teacher relationships, creating an environment of fear rather than respect. According to [Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor \(2016\)](#), the punitive nature of corporal punishment fosters resentment and distrust, making students less likely to participate in classroom activities. This negative classroom climate not only affects students' academic progress but also limits their ability to form positive peer relationships and develop problem-solving skills ([Nasongo & Injendi \(2025\)](#)). In the same light, scholars have argued that classrooms governed by fear and intimidation hinder effective learning, as students are more focused on avoiding punishment than actively engaging in educational activities ([Beecham & Nakayiza \(2024\)](#)).

Furthermore, the use of corporal punishment is increasingly viewed as a violation of international human rights norms, particularly those outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989). According to [Human Rights Watch. \(2018\)](#), corporal punishment in schools violates children's fundamental rights to dignity, protection from harm, and humane treatment. The CRC explicitly calls for the protection of children from all forms of violence, injury,

or abuse, reinforcing the need to eliminate corporal punishment in schools (Thelma et al. 2025). In response, global organizations such as the United Nations and the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children have strongly advocated for banning corporal punishment worldwide, urging governments to adopt non-violent disciplinary methods. As a result of growing evidence against corporal punishment, there has been a significant global shift towards non-violent disciplinary approaches. In the same light, educational authorities, child protection agencies, and advocacy groups emphasize the importance of positive discipline strategies that focus on teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior without resorting to physical punishment (Akyina & Manu (2024)). These alternative discipline approaches include positive reinforcement, socio-emotional learning, and restorative justice, all of which promote accountability and self-regulation without inflicting harm. This transition reflects a broader understanding of child development and psychology, acknowledging that effective discipline should focus on guiding, supporting, and equipping children with problem-solving and self-management skills. Scholars opine that rather than enforcing compliance through fear, discipline should be structured to promote personal responsibility and respect for authority through constructive behavioral management techniques (Oben & Hui, 2025).

2.2. NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal punishment has been widely criticized due to its negative effects on children's physical, psychological, and academic development. Empirical research has consistently highlighted that physical punishment does not lead to long-term positive behavior changes but contributes to various adverse outcomes. According to Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor (2016), corporal punishment is strongly associated with increased aggression, antisocial behavior, emotional distress, and academic underachievement. Similarly, Skiba et al. (2011) argue that punitive disciplinary measures foster hostility, resentment, and fear among students, ultimately leading to a counterproductive learning environment. Given these findings, educational scholars and child development experts continue to advocate for non-violent disciplinary approaches that prioritize positive behavioral reinforcement and socio-emotional development (Durlak et al. (2011)).

2.2.1. PHYSICAL INJURIES

One of the most immediate and visible consequences of corporal punishment is physical injury. Empirical studies have documented cases of students suffering bruises, cuts, fractures, and even internal injuries due to excessive punishment (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020). According to Zolotor et al. (2008), children who experience repeated physical punishment are at a higher risk of sustaining chronic pain and long-term musculoskeletal damage. Similarly, Gershoff (2016) asserts that physical punishment can lead to unintended injuries that may not be immediately visible but have long-term health implications. In some extreme cases, severe physical discipline has resulted in permanent disabilities or even fatalities (Heekes et al. (2022)).

Research further suggests that the normalization of physical punishment in educational settings may desensitize students to violence, leading to an increased acceptance of aggression as a conflict resolution method (UNESCO. (2020)). In a comparative study conducted by Ogando Portela & Pells (2015) across five countries, it was found that students who were regularly subjected to corporal

punishment displayed heightened tolerance for physical aggression, reinforcing the notion that violence is an acceptable response to misbehavior.

2.2.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA

Beyond physical harm, corporal punishment has been linked to severe psychological trauma. Children who experience frequent physical discipline often develop heightened levels of fear, anxiety, and emotional distress, which can have lasting implications for their mental well-being ([American Psychological Association. \(2019\)](#)). A meta-analysis by [Gershoff \(2013\)](#) revealed that children who were physically punished showed higher rates of depression, withdrawal, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to those who experienced alternative disciplinary methods.

Similarly, [Reuben et al. \(2016\)](#) found that children exposed to corporal punishment demonstrated elevated levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, which in turn negatively affects brain development and cognitive function. [Tomoda et al. \(2009\)](#) used neuroimaging techniques to show that children subjected to frequent physical punishment exhibited reduced gray matter volume in brain regions associated with emotional regulation and decision-making. These findings suggest that corporal punishment does not merely affect children in the short term but can also have profound long-term psychological effects that extend into adulthood.

2.2.3. INCREASED AGGRESSION AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOR

A paradoxical effect of corporal punishment is that instead of reducing aggression and misbehavior, it often increases violent tendencies in children. According to [Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor \(2016\)](#), children who are subjected to frequent physical punishment are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors toward peers, siblings, and authority figures. This phenomenon is explained through [Bandura \(1977\)](#) Social Learning Theory, which suggests that children learn behaviors by observing and mimicking those around them. If physical aggression is modeled as a method of discipline, children internalize this behavior and replicate it in their interactions with others.

Supporting this claim, [Durrant & Ensom \(2012\)](#) found that children who were physically punished demonstrated higher levels of bullying, delinquency, and antisocial behavior. Similarly, [Fergusson et al. \(2013\)](#) conducted a longitudinal study in New Zealand. They found that individuals who had been subjected to corporal punishment in childhood were significantly more likely to engage in criminal activities and interpersonal violence later in life. These findings indicate that corporal punishment does not correct behavior but instead contributes to the perpetuation of aggression and antisocial tendencies.

2.2.4. IMPAIRED ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Corporal punishment not only affects students' emotional well-being but also has detrimental effects on academic performance. Studies have shown that physical punishment induces fear and anxiety, making it difficult for students to focus on learning ([Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor \(2016\)](#)). According to [Straus & Paschall \(2009\)](#), children who experience frequent corporal punishment score lower on cognitive ability tests and standardized academic assessments. Similarly, [Baumrind et al. \(2012\)](#) assert that children subjected to physical discipline often exhibit lower levels

of motivation, decreased participation in classroom activities, and higher dropout rates.

Furthermore, research conducted by [Kibler et al. \(2020\)](#) in low-income schools found that students who reported experiencing corporal punishment had significantly lower levels of school engagement and academic self-efficacy. This suggests that corporal punishment not only affects students' emotional well-being but also diminishes their belief in their own academic potential, leading to long-term negative educational outcomes.

2.2.5. HOSTILE AND FEARFUL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Corporal punishment in schools often creates a climate of fear, negatively impacting students' ability to learn. According to [UNESCO. \(2020\)](#), a supportive and inclusive classroom environment is important for effective learning, yet schools that practice corporal punishment often cultivate a culture of anxiety and distrust. Similarly, [Skiba et al. \(2011\)](#) argue that a fearful learning environment stifles students' creativity and willingness to participate in class discussions, further hindering their academic progress. A study by [Gershoff \(2016\)](#) found that students in schools with punitive discipline policies reported lower levels of peer trust, reduced teacher support, and an overall decline in school satisfaction. In contrast, schools that adopted positive discipline strategies, such as restorative practices and socio-emotional learning programs, experienced greater student engagement and cooperation ([Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#)).

2.2.6. CONTRADICTION WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS

Corporal punishment has been widely condemned as a violation of children's rights under international human rights law. According to [Human Rights Watch. \(2018\)](#), corporal punishment directly contravenes the principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which calls for the protection of children from all forms of physical and psychological violence ([United Nations. \(1989\)](#)). Similarly, the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2020) argues that countries that have not yet banned corporal punishment in schools are failing to uphold their legal and ethical obligations to protect children. A growing number of governments and international organizations have recognized the urgent need to replace physical punishment with non-violent disciplinary approaches. Research suggests that countries that have banned corporal punishment, such as Sweden, Finland, and Germany, have reported significant improvements in school safety, student well-being, and academic performance ([Parkes \(2015\)](#)).

2.3. GLOBAL SHIFT TOWARDS NON-VIOLENT DISCIPLINE

The global transition from corporal punishment to non-violent disciplinary methods has been largely driven by legal reforms, empirical research, international advocacy, and evolving societal attitudes towards child-rearing and education. Historically, corporal punishment was a dominant disciplinary method across various cultures, as it was believed to instill obedience and moral discipline in students. According to [Straus \(1994\)](#), ancient societies, including Greek and Roman civilizations, widely practiced physical punishment in educational and domestic settings to maintain authority. In the same [vein, Pallas \(2013\)](#) opines that corporal

punishment remained a standard practice in Western education systems until the 19th and early 20th centuries, when philosophers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau began advocating for child-centered education and non-punitive disciplinary approaches. Similarly, [Dewey \(1916\)](#) argues that learner-centered education fosters critical thinking and positive behavioral development, further challenging the effectiveness of authoritarian discipline models.

According to the [United Nations. \(1989\)](#), a pivotal shift away from corporal punishment occurred during the mid-20th century, influenced by human rights movements and scientific research on child development. The Universal Declaration of [Human Rights Watch. \(2018\)](#) and the Convention on the [Rights of the Child \(CRC\) \(1989\)](#) explicitly recognized the right of children to be protected from physical and psychological violence, leading to global policy discussions on school discipline reforms. Similarly, [UNESCO. \(2020\)](#) asserts that education policymakers and international organizations, including UNICEF and Human Rights Watch, have played significant roles in advocating for non-violent discipline by exposing the adverse effects of corporal punishment on child development. Similarly, [Human Rights Watch. \(2018\)](#) highlights that prohibiting corporal punishment in schools has been central to educational reforms in many nations, particularly in Europe and Latin America.

A growing body of empirical research has provided compelling evidence against corporal punishment. According to [Gershoff \(2002\)](#), a meta-analysis of 88 studies demonstrated that corporal punishment is strongly correlated with increased aggression, antisocial behavior, and lower cognitive performance. Similarly, [Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor \(2016\)](#) affirm that children subjected to corporal punishment are at higher risk of mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, as well as academic underachievement. In the same vein, [Tomoda et al. \(2009\)](#) argue that neuroscientific studies indicate that exposure to physical punishment alters brain development, leading to heightened stress responses and impaired emotional regulation. These findings have fueled widespread opposition to corporal punishment, reinforcing the need for alternative, evidence-based discipline strategies.

According to [Morrell \(2001\)](#), the global policy shift towards non-violent discipline gained momentum in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, leading to legal bans on corporal punishment in many countries. Sweden became the first nation to prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including schools, in 1979, setting a precedent for other nations. Similarly, [Parkes \(2015\)](#) states that by the early 2000s, countries such as Finland, Norway, Denmark, and South Africa had introduced legal bans on corporal punishment in schools, integrating non-violent discipline frameworks into their education systems. In the same vein, [Osher et al. \(2016\)](#) assert that many Asian nations, including Japan and South Korea, have gradually phased out physical punishment in schools, replacing it with socio-emotional learning (SEL) and restorative justice approaches.

Empirical studies have shown that the implementation of non-violent discipline strategies yields positive behavioral and academic outcomes. According to [Simonsen et al. \(2008\)](#), schools that adopt Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) have experienced reduced classroom disruptions, increased student engagement, and improved teacher-student relationships. Similarly, [Shannon & Buckley \(2017\)](#) conducted a study across 40 schools in the United States, concluding that restorative justice practices resulted in a 43% reduction in suspensions and a 37% decrease in disciplinary referrals. In the same vein, [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#) affirm that socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs contribute to

higher academic performance, reduced bullying, and improved student behavior. These findings suggest that alternative discipline methods mitigate behavioral issues and promote a positive school climate.

Despite the growing adoption of non-violent disciplinary approaches, several challenges persist. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2020) notes that cultural resistance, inadequate teacher training, and weak enforcement mechanisms hinder the complete elimination of corporal punishment in many parts of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Similarly, [Osher et al. \(2016\)](#) argue that although legal bans exist, compliance remains inconsistent, particularly in communities where corporal punishment is deeply embedded in cultural norms. In the same vein, [Morrell \(2001\)](#) opines that many educators and parents still believe in the effectiveness of physical discipline, viewing it as essential for maintaining order in schools. However, as more research continues to emphasize the benefits of non-violent discipline, the trend towards child-friendly disciplinary approaches is expected to expand globally.

2.4. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK IN GHANA

In response to international human rights standards and the documented negative effects of corporal punishment, Ghana has undertaken significant legal and policy reforms to prohibit its use in schools. These measures align with global best practices, demonstrating Ghana's commitment to safeguarding children's rights and ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment. The legal and policy framework integrates national legislation and international human rights instruments, providing a comprehensive approach to protecting children from physical and emotional harm in educational settings. The introduction of regulatory guidelines, legislative prohibitions, enforcement mechanisms, and international collaborations highlights the country's efforts to eradicate corporal punishment and promote alternative discipline strategies.

One of the most significant policy interventions addressing corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools is the introduction of the "Guidelines on Corporal Punishment" by the Ghana Education Service (GES) in 2013. These guidelines explicitly ban the use of corporal punishment in all educational institutions and instead promote alternative disciplinary strategies, such as positive reinforcement, restorative justice, and socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs (GES, 2013). The guidelines provide a structured framework for schools, outlining acceptable and unacceptable disciplinary practices to foster a positive and supportive learning environment. According to [UNICEF. \(2020\)](#), the GES guidelines emphasize a rights-based approach to discipline, ensuring that students are treated with dignity and respect. Furthermore, these guidelines mandate regular teacher training and professional development programs, equipping educators with alternative classroom management techniques that foster student engagement and academic performance ([Gershoff et al., 2018](#)). Empirical research suggests that schools implementing SEL-based discipline strategies experience improved student behavior, reduced disciplinary infractions, and a more inclusive classroom environment ([Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#)).

Complementing the GES guidelines, the Children's Act of 1998 (Act 560) serves as a comprehensive child protection law that reinforces the prohibition of corporal punishment in educational settings. Section 13 of the Act explicitly bans all forms of physical punishment, defining it as any disciplinary measure involving physical force intended to cause pain or discomfort ([Children's Act, 1998 \(Act 560\)](#)). This broad definition ensures that all physical punishments, including minor forms of

spanking, are recognized as a violation of children's rights. Similarly, [UNESCO \(2021\)](#) asserts that the Children's Act is integral in aligning Ghana's legal framework with international human rights instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989). The Act guarantees that every child in Ghana is protected from all forms of violence—physical, mental, or emotional. Furthermore, [Ogando Portela & Pells \(2015\)](#) argue that legal protections against corporal punishment are essential in creating a school environment where students feel safe and respected. Research has demonstrated that countries with robust legal frameworks prohibiting corporal punishment report lower rates of school-based violence and improved student well-being (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020).

The Ghanaian government has established multiple enforcement mechanisms to ensure effective implementation and compliance with the GES guidelines and the Children's Act. The Ghana Education Service (GES), the Ministry of Education, and law enforcement agencies collaborate to monitor school adherence to anti-corporal punishment policies. According to [Human Rights Watch. \(2018\)](#), schools found in violation of these guidelines face administrative sanctions, including fines, withdrawal of teaching licenses, and legal actions against educators engaging in corporal punishment. Additionally, Ghana has established Child Protection Units (CPUs) within the Ghana Police Service, which are responsible for investigating cases of corporal punishment and child abuse. These units operate in collaboration with social welfare departments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that victims receive legal protection and psychological support ([UNICEF. \(2020\)](#)). Public awareness campaigns have also been launched to educate parents, teachers, and communities on the dangers of corporal punishment and the benefits of alternative discipline methods (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2020).

Recognizing the importance of capacity building, the GES and Ministry of Education have prioritized teacher training programs to promote non-violent discipline strategies. These training sessions focus on positive behavior reinforcement, conflict resolution strategies, and the implementation of socio-emotional learning approaches (GES, 2013). According to [Simonsen et al. \(2008\)](#), educators trained in evidence-based discipline strategies report fewer classroom disruptions and improved student-teacher relationships. Research by [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#) further highlights that schools integrating socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs experience significant improvements in student engagement, academic achievement, and overall school climate. Similarly, [Shannon & Buckley \(2017\)](#) found that restorative justice approaches reduce suspension rates, improve student accountability, and enhance peer relationships. These findings reinforce the importance of teacher training as a core component of Ghana's strategy to eliminate corporal punishment.

Ghana's legal and policy initiatives have been strongly supported by international organizations, including UNICEF, Human Rights Watch, and the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACP). According to [UNICEF \(2021\)](#), these organizations have provided technical expertise, funding, and advocacy support for the implementation of Ghana's anti-corporal punishment policies. The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, established in 2001, has played a pivotal role in raising awareness, influencing policy decisions, and promoting non-violent discipline strategies in Ghana and other countries. As Margaret Tuite, EU Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child,

stated: "Every word written and said by GI embodies the principles of children as rights holders; they are an inspiration to all of us."

Similarly, [Human Rights Watch. \(2018\)](#) asserts that global partnerships and knowledge-sharing initiatives have enabled Ghana to adopt and implement international best practices in education policy reform. Research shows that countries that engage in collaborative child protection efforts report higher compliance with anti-corporal punishment laws ([Parkes \(2015\)](#)).

Despite progress in legal and policy measures, challenges in enforcement and cultural resistance remain significant obstacles. The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2020) notes that cultural beliefs, limited resources for monitoring compliance, and a lack of alternative disciplinary training for some teachers hinder the full implementation of anti-corporal punishment policies. Similarly, [Osher et al. \(2016\)](#) emphasize that corporal punishment remains deeply ingrained as an acceptable disciplinary practice in many communities, making full compliance with the law difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, research highlights that schools that successfully transition to evidence-based, non-violent discipline strategies experience lower rates of student misconduct, higher academic performance, and improved school climate ([Gershoff et al. 2018](#); [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#)).

2.5. ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINE METHODS

Empirical research has provided strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of alternative discipline methods over corporal punishment in fostering student discipline, improving behavior, and enhancing academic achievement. Scholars and policymakers have increasingly advocated for non-punitive approaches, emphasizing their role in creating a positive school climate, reducing behavioral problems, and promoting socio-emotional growth among students. A meta-analysis conducted by [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#) on over 213 school-based interventions involving 270,000 students found that schools implementing structured socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs observed a 27% improvement in student behavior and an 11% gain in academic performance. These findings suggest that discipline strategies that incorporate social-emotional development contribute to better student behavior and improved learning outcomes. Similarly, a longitudinal study by [Payton et al. \(2008\)](#) revealed that students exposed to SEL programs demonstrated greater self-regulation, lower levels of aggression, and improved classroom participation, compared to those subjected to punitive disciplinary practices.

Empirical studies have also supported restorative justice approaches as an effective alternative to punitive discipline. A study by [Shannon & Buckley \(2017\)](#) examined the impact of restorative justice programs in 40 schools across the United States and found that schools that implemented peer mediation, restorative circles, and conflict resolution practices experienced a 43% reduction in student suspensions and a 37% decrease in disciplinary referrals. The study concluded that restorative approaches promote accountability and social cohesion by allowing students to recognize the consequences of their actions and actively participate in repairing harm. Additionally, [Osher et al. \(2016\)](#) conducted a large-scale study on the impact of restorative discipline in schools. They reported that students in restorative-based schools exhibited lower levels of aggression and higher engagement in positive peer relationships. Empirical studies also support positive reinforcement as an essential component of effective school discipline. [Skinner & Belmont \(1993\)](#) conducted a classroom-based experiment that found that students who received consistent reinforcement for appropriate behavior showed higher

motivation, greater attention to academic tasks, and stronger teacher-student relationships. Similarly, [Simonsen et al. \(2008\)](#) reviewed research on evidence-based classroom management strategies and found that teachers who actively used reinforcement methods experienced fewer classroom disruptions and improved student compliance.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study on the effectiveness of alternative discipline methods in Ghanaian basic schools is grounded in several interrelated theories and models. These include Social Learning Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Restorative Justice Theory. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which alternative disciplinary methods can influence student behavior, academic performance, and overall school climate.

3.1. SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social Learning Theory, developed by Albert Bandura, posits that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling. According to this theory, individuals learn not only through direct experience but also by observing the behaviors of others and the outcomes of those behaviors ([Bandura \(1977\)](#)). In the context of school discipline, this theory suggests that students learn appropriate and inappropriate behaviors by observing the actions of their peers and the responses of authority figures such as teachers. When applied to alternative disciplinary methods, Social Learning Theory implies that positive reinforcement and restorative practices can promote desirable behaviors by providing clear, observable examples of the consequences of both positive and negative actions. For instance, when students observe their peers being praised or rewarded for good behavior, they are likelier to imitate those behaviors. Conversely, when they see peers engaging in restorative practices, such as making amends for misbehavior, they learn the importance of accountability and reconciliation.

3.2. SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Self-determination theory (SDT), proposed by Deci and Ryan, focuses on the motivation behind people's choices without external influence and interference. SDT posits that people have three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are satisfied, individuals are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and psychologically healthy ([Deci & Ryan \(2000\)](#)). In the context of school discipline, SDT suggests that disciplinary methods that support students' autonomy, competence, and relatedness will be more effective in promoting intrinsic motivation and positive behavior. Alternative disciplinary methods such as positive reinforcement and socio-emotional learning align with SDT by emphasizing developing students' self-regulation skills, fostering a sense of competence through positive feedback, and enhancing relatedness by building supportive teacher-student relationships. For example, positive reinforcement strategies, such as praise and rewards for desirable behavior, help fulfill students' need for competence by acknowledging their achievements. Restorative practices, which involve students in the process of resolving conflicts and making amends, support autonomy by giving them a voice in the disciplinary process. Socio-

emotional learning programs promote relatedness by teaching students to understand and manage their emotions and build positive relationships with others.

3.3. RESTORATIVE JUSTICE THEORY

Restorative Justice Theory focuses on repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than merely punishing the offender. This theory emphasizes accountability, making amends, and involving all stakeholders in the resolution process (Zehr (2002)). In the school setting, restorative justice practices include engaging students in understanding the impact of their actions, taking responsibility, and working towards repairing any harm caused. Restorative justice practices, such as peer mediation, conflict resolution circles, and restorative conferences, align with the principles of Restorative Justice Theory. These practices encourage students to reflect on their behavior, understand the consequences of their actions, and actively participate in the resolution process. This approach addresses the immediate issue and promotes long-term behavioral change by fostering a sense of responsibility and empathy. In the context of this study, Restorative Justice Theory provides a framework for understanding how restorative practices can reduce disciplinary incidents, improve student relationships, and create a positive school climate.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopted a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design, which integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively understand teachers' perspective on corporal punishment and alternative disciplinary methods. The mixed-methods approach was selected because disciplinary practices in schools involve both measurable trends and deeply rooted socio-cultural influences, making it essential to explore both numerical patterns and contextual factors (Creswell & Plano Clark (2018)).

A stratified random sampling technique was used to select participants for the survey, ensuring that different categories of teachers (e.g., by years of experience, and school type) were adequately represented in the sample. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was employed to select participants for the interviews, allowing for the selection of individuals with rich and relevant experiences regarding the study's focus. The survey targeted approximately 200 teachers from various basic schools in the Greater Accra Region, a sample size deemed sufficient to achieve a representative sample and ensure statistical validity. Approximately 20-30 teachers were selected for the interviews, a sample size sufficient to reach data saturation and obtain diverse perspectives.

Data collection methods included using a structured questionnaire developed based on existing literature and validated instruments. The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of teachers to ensure clarity and reliability. The survey was distributed electronically via email or administered in person, depending on the participants' availability and preference. Semi-structured interview guides were developed to facilitate the interviews, which were conducted face-to-face.

4.1.1. DATA ANALYSIS

The study employed descriptive statistical analysis for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data to comprehensively understand teachers' perspective on corporal punishment and alternative disciplinary methods. Survey responses were analyzed using frequencies and percentages to summarize patterns, with results presented in tables to illustrate distributions across demographic variables. Interview responses were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through thematic analysis, involving coding, categorization, and identification of key themes to capture teachers' insights on discipline practices.

4.1.2. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent from participants, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, and obtaining ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection began. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly maintained, with all data anonymized and any identifying information removed from the transcripts and survey responses.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. DEMOGRAPHY OF PARTICIPANTS

A total of 200 teachers from various basic schools participated in the survey. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented in the following tables, along with interpretations.

Table 1

Table 1 Gender Distribution of Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	110	55
Male	90	45

The gender distribution among the participants was pretty balanced, with a slight majority of female teachers (55%). This indicates a representative mix of perspectives from the study's male and female educators. The balanced gender representation is essential as it ensures that the findings are not biased towards the views of one gender, providing a more comprehensive understanding of teachers' perspective on discipline methods.

Table 2

Table 2 Years of Teaching Experience

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-5 years	40	20
6-10 years	70	35
11-20 years	60	30
Over 20 years	30	15

Most participants had between 6 to 10 years of teaching experience (35%), followed by those with 11 to 20 years of experience (30%). This diverse range of experience levels suggests that the findings incorporate insights from both relatively new and more seasoned educators. Teachers with different lengths of experience bring varied perspectives and practices regarding discipline, which enriches the data and provides a holistic view of the effectiveness of alternative disciplinary methods.

Table 3

Table 3 School Type		
School Type	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Public	120	60
Private	80	40

Most participants were from public schools (60%), with the remaining 40% from private schools. This distribution ensures that the study captures a broad spectrum of experiences from different types of educational institutions. The perspectives from teachers in both public and private schools help identify differences in the implementation and effectiveness of discipline methods across these settings, offering a dynamic understanding of the context in which these methods are applied.

5.2. TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN BASIC SCHOOLS

5.2.1. QUANTITATIVE INSIGHTS

Participants were made to respond to survey questions regarding their insights on corporal punishment in basic schools. Their responses are presented in Table 4 in percentages.

Table 4

Table 4 teachers' perspective Corporal Punishment					
Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Corporal punishment has been an effective disciplinary method in the past	30	35	10	15	10
Corporal punishment leads to physical injuries among students	40	30	10	15	5
Corporal punishment causes psychological trauma to students	45	25	10	10	10
Corporal punishment increases aggression among students	35	25	15	15	10

The data indicates that 65% of teachers agreed that corporal punishment had been an effective disciplinary tool in the past. This suggests that historically, many teachers viewed physical discipline as a practical way to maintain order in schools. However, while some teachers still recognize its previous role, the majority acknowledge its harmful consequences. Notably, 70% of teachers agreed that corporal punishment leads to physical injuries, emphasizing a widespread concern about the immediate harm inflicted on students. Similarly, 70% of teachers believed that corporal punishment causes psychological trauma, indicating that teachers are aware of the long-term emotional and mental health consequences. The findings

also reveal that 60% of teachers agreed that corporal punishment increases aggression in students, supporting the argument that violence breeds more violence rather than reducing indiscipline.

Qualitative insights

The in-depth interviews provided rich insights into teachers' perspective about corporal punishment. Through thematic analysis, key themes emerged, capturing the most common views among participants.

Theme 1: Fear-Based Discipline Does Not Lead to Long-Term Behavioral Change

Several teachers expressed concerns that corporal punishment may lead to temporary compliance but does not teach students the correct behavior. One teacher explained: "Corporal punishment often results in fear rather than respect. Students are more scared of the pain than understanding their mistakes"(Participant 3)

This suggests that rather than fostering genuine behavioral transformation, corporal punishment creates a compliance-driven response based on fear of pain rather than learning from one's mistakes. Another teacher echoed this sentiment, stating: "It may stop the behavior temporarily, but it doesn't teach the right behavior. It creates a hostile environment"(Participant 6)

This highlights the counterproductive nature of corporal punishment, as it fails to encourage self-regulation or positive discipline but instead fosters a hostile and fearful school environment.

Theme 2: Corporal Punishment Contributes to a Hostile Learning Environment

Teachers also noted that corporal punishment creates a toxic atmosphere in schools, where students feel unsafe, anxious, and disengaged from learning. One participant emphasized: "Students act out for many reasons, sometimes it's frustration, family problems, or learning difficulties. Beating them does not solve these underlying issues"(Participant 1)

This assertion by participant 1 reflects concerns that corporal punishment does not address the root causes of misbehavior but instead causes students' stress and frustration, which may lead to further misbehavior or disengagement from academics. Another teacher added, "When students fear teachers, they are less likely to ask questions or seek help when they struggle. This weakens the student-teacher relationship and affects learning outcomes" (Participant 4)

Theme 3: Cycle of Aggression and Reinforcement of Violent Behavior

Several teachers expressed concerns that corporal punishment may inadvertently promote violence among students. One teacher explained: "If we use violence to solve problems, students will do the same. They learn that aggression is an acceptable way to handle conflict"(Participant 8)

This suggests that corporal punishment can normalize violent behavior, reinforcing the idea that force and physical discipline are effective means of resolving conflicts. Another participant noted: "Some students become more rebellious after being beaten, and they start fighting their peers. It creates more aggression instead of solving the problem"(Participant 5)

Theme 4: Growing Support for Alternative Discipline Approaches

While some teachers acknowledged that corporal punishment had been effective in the past, many now see alternative discipline methods as more

constructive and sustainable. One participant shared: "Positive reinforcement helps students feel valued and motivates them to behave well"(Participant 7)

This perspective aligns with findings from the survey data, which showed that 80% of teachers believe positive reinforcement improves student behavior. Similarly, another teacher expressed: "Restorative practices teach students accountability and empathy, which are important for their development"(Participant 9)

This reflects an increasing shift among educators toward non-violent discipline strategies, as they recognize the value of fostering emotional intelligence, accountability, and self-regulation among students.

Objective 2: Highlight the Effectiveness of Alternative Forms of Discipline in Basic Schools

1) Quantitative insights

Teachers' insights on alternative disciplinary methods were gathered through survey responses and in-depth interviews. The survey results are summarized in Table 5, reflecting teachers' views on the effectiveness of positive reinforcement, restorative practices, and socio-emotional learning programs.

Table 5

Teachers' Views on Alternative Discipline Methods					
Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree
Positive reinforcement improves student behavior and academic performance	45	35	10	5	5
Restorative practices effectively reduce disciplinary incidents and improve student relationships	40	35	10	10	5
Socio-emotional learning programs enhance students' social skills, emotional well-being, and academic outcomes	50	35	5	5	5

A significant majority of teachers (80%) agreed that positive reinforcement improved student behavior and academic performance. This suggests that teachers widely recognize the value of acknowledging and rewarding positive behavior as a means to encourage and sustain it. Similarly, 75% of teachers believed restorative practices effectively reduced disciplinary incidents and improved student relationships. This indicates a strong endorsement for methods that focus on repairing harm and fostering student understanding and empathy. Furthermore, 85% of teachers agreed that socio-emotional learning programs enhanced students' social skills, emotional well-being, and academic outcomes. This overwhelming support highlights teachers' importance on developing students' emotional intelligence and social competencies as foundational elements for a positive school climate.

Qualitative insights

The in-depth interviews provided rich insights into how teachers perceive and implement alternative disciplinary methods. Through thematic analysis, key themes emerged, capturing the most common views among participants.

Theme 1: Positive Reinforcement Encourages Intrinsic Motivation and Lasting Behavioral Change

Teachers emphasized that positive reinforcement helps students develop a sense of self-worth and motivation. One teacher explained, "Positive reinforcement helps students feel valued and motivates them to behave well"(Participant 9)

This suggests that acknowledging good behavior fosters internal motivation, making students more likely to repeat positive actions without external enforcement. Another teacher noted; "When students are rewarded for good behavior, they develop self-discipline. They begin to understand that their actions have positive consequences"(Participant 6)

Theme 2: Restorative Practices Foster Accountability and Empathy Among Students

Many teachers emphasized that restorative discipline helps students take responsibility for their actions and learn from mistakes. One teacher shared, "Restorative practices teach students accountability and empathy, which are important for their development" (Participant 10).

This highlights that restorative justice encourages students to understand how their actions affect others instead of punitive consequences, fostering a sense of responsibility and social awareness. Another teacher added, "When students resolve conflicts through dialogue instead of punishment, they learn problem-solving skills and how to express themselves constructively"(Participant 1)

Theme 3: Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs Contribute to Holistic Student Development

Teachers overwhelmingly supported SEL programs, describing them as transformative in shaping students' emotional and social skills. One teacher explained, "Socio-emotional learning programs have been transformative. They help students manage their emotions and interact positively with others, creating a better school environment"(Participant 4)

This suggests that teaching students' emotional regulation and interpersonal skills creates a more supportive, respectful, and collaborative school climate. Another participant shared: "Students who go through SEL training show better self-control, communicate more effectively, and are less likely to engage in disruptive behavior"(Participant 2).

6. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study's findings align with existing literature on the negative effects of corporal punishment and the effectiveness of alternative disciplinary methods.

6.1. TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

In relation to the first objective, the study revealed that 65% of teachers believed corporal punishment had been effective in the past, reflecting its deep-rooted cultural acceptance in Ghanaian schools. However, 70% of teachers acknowledged that it leads to physical injuries and psychological trauma, suggesting an increasing awareness of its negative consequences. Additionally, 60% of teachers agreed that corporal punishment increases aggression, reinforcing arguments that rather than curbing indiscipline, it may inadvertently perpetuate violent behavior among students. These findings align with [Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor \(2016\)](#), who conducted a meta-analysis on corporal punishment and found that children subjected to physical discipline exhibited higher levels of aggression, antisocial behavior, and anxiety disorders. Similarly, the American Psychological Association

(2019) highlights that punitive discipline negatively affects students' self-regulation abilities and social behaviors, contributing to increased defiance and emotional distress.

While a significant portion of Ghanaian teachers still hold onto the historical perception of corporal punishment as an effective disciplinary tool, global literature has primarily discredited this view. For instance, Straus (1994) suggests that corporal punishment was historically perceived as a necessary means of socializing children into discipline, a perspective deeply embedded in many African and Asian educational traditions. However, recent studies have increasingly challenged this notion, pointing to scientific evidence on its adverse effects on child development. In contrast, a survey by [Simonsen et al. \(2008\)](#) found that alternative disciplinary strategies, such as positive reinforcement and structured behavioral interventions, yield better long-term behavioral improvements than punitive methods. This aligns with the findings of the present study, which show growing teacher support for non-violent forms of discipline.

The Self-Determination Theory ([Deci & Ryan \(2000\)](#)) provides an essential framework for understanding why corporal punishment is counterproductive. This theory emphasizes that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental to motivation and behavioral regulation. Corporal punishment undermines students' sense of autonomy by imposing discipline through fear rather than internal motivation. This aligns with the qualitative insights from teachers, where one participant stated, "Corporal punishment often results in fear rather than respect. Students are more scared of the pain than understanding their mistakes." This statement highlights a key contradiction within punitive discipline: while it may impose immediate compliance, it does not encourage genuine behavioral change or moral development. Instead, it fosters external regulation, where students modify behavior to avoid punishment rather than because they understand the underlying values of discipline ([Deci & Ryan \(2000\)](#)).

Furthermore, Social Learning Theory ([Bandura \(1977\)](#)) explains how students model behaviors they observe. If students experience physical discipline as a primary means of conflict resolution, they are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors themselves. This reinforces the study's finding that 60% of teachers recognized that corporal punishment increases aggression. The modeling of aggression by authority figures normalizes violence as an acceptable response to misbehavior, perpetuating a cycle of aggression in both academic and social settings. This is supported by [Gershoff \(2016\)](#), who argues that punitive disciplinary strategies often have a paradoxical effect, as children subjected to corporal punishment tend to become more aggressive rather than more disciplined.

6.2. EFFECTIVENESS OF ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINARY METHODS

Considering the second objective, the study found strong teacher support for alternative discipline methods, indicating a growing shift away from corporal punishment towards more constructive, student-centered approaches. A significant 80% of teachers endorsed positive reinforcement as an effective tool for improving student behavior and academic engagement. Additionally, 75% affirmed the effectiveness of restorative practices in resolving conflicts and fostering accountability among students. In comparison, an overwhelming 85% recognized the value of socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs in enhancing students' emotional intelligence, social skills, and interpersonal relationships.

These findings align with previous research emphasizing the long-term benefits of positive discipline strategies. [Skinner & Belmont \(1993\)](#) argue that positive reinforcement, which includes praise, rewards, and incentives, enhances students' intrinsic motivation and engagement, leading to improved academic performance and social behavior. [Simonsen et al. \(2008\)](#) further highlight that students who receive consistent positive reinforcement exhibit higher levels of compliance with school rules, lower disciplinary infractions, and a greater sense of self-efficacy. This is supported by a teacher in the study who noted, "Positive reinforcement helps students feel valued and motivates them to behave well." This statement highlights the power of recognition and encouragement in shaping student behavior, reinforcing the idea that students respond positively when they feel appreciated and respected.

Restorative practices, another widely endorsed approach, emphasize conflict resolution, accountability, and repairing harm rather than punitive measures. [Shannon & Buckley \(2017\)](#) found that school restorative justice programs significantly reduce disciplinary incidents and improve student-teacher relationships, leading to a more harmonious school climate. This study's findings mirror those results, as 75% of teachers acknowledged the effectiveness of restorative practices in managing discipline issues. One teacher in the study stated, "Restorative practices teach students accountability and empathy, which are important for their development." This perspective aligns with Restorative Justice Theory ([Zehr \(2002\)](#)), which suggests that discipline should focus on repairing relationships and promoting communal responsibility rather than simply punishing misconduct. Restorative practices foster greater emotional maturity and conflict management skills by encouraging students to acknowledge the consequences of their actions and seek resolutions through dialogue and mediation.

Socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs were the most highly endorsed alternative disciplinary method, with 85% of teachers recognizing their value in fostering students' emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills. Research by [Durlak et al. \(2011\)](#) supports this, demonstrating that SEL programs improve self-awareness, self-regulation, and responsible decision-making, contributing to better academic outcomes and reduced behavioral issues. [Payton et al. \(2008\)](#) further emphasize that SEL curricula help students develop resilience and adaptability, essential skills for navigating social interactions and handling stress constructively. One teacher in this study reinforced this point by stating, "Socio-emotional learning programs have been transformative. They help students manage their emotions and interact positively with others, creating a better school environment." This highlights the holistic impact of SEL programs, which reduce disciplinary infractions and equip students with lifelong emotional and social competencies.

The theoretical framework used in this study further supports the effectiveness of these alternative disciplinary approaches. Self-determination theory ([Deci, & Ryan \(2000\)](#)) posits that students are more likely to internalize positive behaviors when they feel autonomous, competent, and socially connected. Positive reinforcement and socio-emotional learning strategies directly align with this theory by nurturing students' intrinsic motivation and self-regulation skills. Similarly, Social Learning Theory ([Bandura \(1977\)](#)) suggests that students learn behaviors through observing and modeling. When students see teachers rewarding good behavior or encouraging restorative dialogue, they are more likely to adopt those behaviors, leading to a positive reinforcement cycle within the school environment.

7. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have important real-life implications for discipline in Ghanaian schools. While corporal punishment has traditionally been used to maintain order, its harmful effects such as physical injuries, psychological trauma, and increased aggression are now widely recognized. This study confirms that alternative disciplinary methods like positive reinforcement, restorative practices, and socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs can help reduce misbehavior while also promoting student accountability, emotional intelligence, and long-term positive behavior. These alternative approaches show promising results in schools that have already stopped corporal punishment, these alternative approaches show promising results. Positive reinforcement helps students stay engaged, builds better relationships between teachers and students, and creates a more supportive learning environment. Restorative practices are being used to resolve conflicts peacefully, reduce violence, and help students take responsibility for their actions. SEL programs teach students how to manage emotions, improve social skills, and perform better in school, preparing them for life beyond the classroom.

If these methods are fully adopted across Ghana, schools could see fewer discipline problems, improved academic performance, and healthier social interactions. Over time, students who develop empathy, self-discipline, and problem-solving skills will carry these strengths into adulthood, helping to build a society that values understanding and cooperation rather than punishment and fear. However, making this shift successful requires support from the government, continuous teacher training, and a change in cultural attitudes about discipline. While many teachers support these alternative methods, they need proper training and resources to apply them effectively. Schools must also receive funding and materials to implement these strategies.

Additionally, parents and communities need to be educated on the benefits of non-violent discipline so that students receive consistent guidance both at home and in school. Ghana's education system is at a turning point. Choosing to embrace alternative discipline methods fully will not only bring the country in line with global best practices. Still, it will also ensure that students grow up in a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment. If this transition is fully embraced at all levels, Ghanaian schools could be a model for other developing nations moving away from punitive discipline. The future of education lies in methods that promote discipline through encouragement, respect, and emotional growth, preparing students not just for exams but for life.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends several key actions to improve implementing alternative disciplinary methods in Ghanaian basic schools. First, the Ghana Education Service (GES) must maintain and enforce the ban on corporal punishment while ensuring all schools adhere to guidelines for alternative methods. To achieve this, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework should be established to regularly assess schools' compliance and the effectiveness of their disciplinary practices. This will help identify gaps and provide targeted support, ensuring a consistent and successful transition away from corporal punishment. Additionally, the GES should organize regular training workshops for teachers, focusing on positive reinforcement, restorative practices, and socio-emotional learning. These workshops should equip educators with practical strategies to manage student

behavior constructively, fostering a supportive and positive learning environment that promotes holistic development.

Furthermore, adequate resources must be allocated to support the implementation of alternative disciplinary methods. This includes funding for training programs, materials for socio-emotional learning activities, and tools for restorative practices. Schools should also have resources to develop curricula and systems that recognize and reward positive behavior. Ensuring schools are well-resourced is critical for the sustained success of non-violent disciplinary approaches. Finally, public awareness campaigns are essential to educate parents, teachers, and the broader community about the harms of corporal punishment and the benefits of alternative methods. These campaigns should aim to shift cultural attitudes and practices towards non-violent discipline through informational sessions, media outreach, and community engagement. By fostering societal support, these efforts can help create an environment that embraces supportive and non-violent disciplinary practices.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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