

## Teachers' perceptions of the abolition of caning in Ghanaian schools

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This study surveyed teachers' perceptions of corporal punishment and the ban on caning in basic and high school sectors of Ghana's education system. It also investigated whether there were gender differences in teachers' views about the ban on caning in Ghanaian schools. Data were collected using a five point Likert-style questionnaire administered online to a convenience sample of teachers (N=60) in public basic and senior high schools. The convenience sampling technique was used. Responses were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics and an independent samples t-test. The results revealed that most teachers disagreed with the abolition of caning in Ghanaian schools, and there was no statistically significant difference between the views of male and female teachers. Recommendations about corporal punishment are made with reference to in-service professional development, curriculum development for pre-service teachers, and priorities for further research.

### Introduction

Ghana was one of very many countries that had incorporated corporal punishment in their educational practices, as a form of disciplinary and corrective procedure. Of the numerous forms of corporal punishment, caning had been popular in Ghanaian public and private basic and senior high schools, as a quick to administer form of punishment. In the Ghanaian context, caning was a form of corporal punishment that involved using a piece of stick, ruler or the like to hit any part of another person's body, either once or a number of times, with the purpose of causing pain to that person, for minor or serious offenses committed. Caning became applied both in school by teachers and at home by parents, older siblings and other well-meaning adults in Ghanaian communities, as a disciplinary procedure for children. In extreme cases, when caning is applied uncontrollably, it may cause severe injuries to the person subjected to such punishment.

For several years, the Government of Ghana, through the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education service, made some effort to enforce a policy to abolish all forms of corporal punishment, at all levels of the education system in Ghana, in line with the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), which was ratified in Ghana in 1990 and the *Children's Act of 1998* (Act 560) (Dery, 2017). Despite the implementation of the Government's policy to abolish corporal punishment in schools, some teachers continued punishing students by caning. The Director-General of the Ghana Education Service (GES) at the time, Mr Jacob Kor, issued a statement cautioning teachers to honour the directive and desist from subjecting pupils to any form of corporal punishment, or else face appropriate sanctions (Ayitey, 2018).

In reaction to the implementation of the policy to abolish corporal punishment including caning in Ghana, various stakeholders in education including parents, teachers, religious

leaders and teacher unions stirred up public debates on the perceived consequences of education practices devoid of caning for Ghanaian children. According to Bulmuo (2017), a religious leader in Kumasi (Ashanti Region of Ghana) condemned the GES ban on caning as being against God's divine principles for upbringing children. Also, as reported by Ibrahim (2017) some teachers agitated that they could not totally do away with canes. Such agitations showed the displeasure of various parties regarding the abolition of caning in Ghanaian society.

## Literature review

### Definition and historical background of corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is defined variously, yet many of these definitions have some common features. One common definition of corporal punishment is the infliction of physical pain on an individual with the purpose of controlling or reforming his/her unacceptable behaviour but not meant to cause injury (Benatar, 2001; Donnelly & Straus, 2005). The *New World Encyclopedia* defined corporal punishment as “forced pain intended to change or punish a person's behavior” (*New World Encyclopedia*, 2017). Furthermore, corporal punishment is defined under human rights law as any punishment in which physical force is used and for the purpose of causing some pain and discomfort (*New World Encyclopedia*, 2017). These definitions show that in corporal punishment, physical force is applied to cause pain with the purpose of correcting the subject from unacceptable behaviour. Corporal punishment can be in many forms such as caning, slapping, swatting and spanking among others. The historical account of corporal punishment can be traced to the early civilization of Greece, Rome, Israel and Egypt in Africa where cane was the most often used form of corporal punishment. (Scott, 1996; *New World Encyclopedia*, 2017).

The roles played by corporal punishment are retributive and utilitarian, according to theories of corporal punishment (Benatar, 2001). Retributive theories explain that if punishment is deserved, then it is justifiable. It concerns the means of a punishment which should prevent a wrong doer and other potential culprits from committing similar offenses. The utilitarian theories of punishment recognise that there are consequences of punishment for the wrong doer, and society upholds that the total good produced by the punishment should exceed the wrong deeds. It seeks to punish the wrong doer and to discourage future wrongdoing. Theories of corporal punishment therefore stress on being retributive, preventive, reformative and deterrent when an offence is committed for which one has to be punished.

Evidence from related studies show that spanking increases aggressive behaviour, especially towards other people (Canter, 2000; Hyman & Rathbone, 2004, cited in Agbenyega, 2006; Jenny, 2009). However, many considered corporal punishments as a customary and necessary child rearing technique. As a result, corporal punishment, specifically caning in schools, can be perceived as serving a useful educational purpose. According to Corpun (2007) cited in Kudenga (2017), Polish legislators were influenced by John Locke to call for the ban of corporal punishment in Polish schools in 1783. The

*Convention on the Rights of the Child* that was adopted by the UN in 1989 forbids both parents and caregivers from physically abusing children. All United Nations members ratified the convention, except USA and Somalia. By 2016 more than 100 countries had banned corporal punishment in schools (Sorensen, Willis, Breger & Asal, 2019). Corporal punishment is thus prohibited in many countries of Western Europe, China, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Africa, Thailand and Zimbabwe. This view was backed by the international convention on the rights of children (UNICEF, 1999; 2009).

Worldwide, the effort to end lawful approval of corporal punishment in schools is increasingly being supported by many countries. As a result, countries such as New Zealand, South Africa, Namibia, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji and Thailand have banned corporal punishment by legislation or judicial decision (Repeal 43 Committee, 2015). Corporal punishment in schools of many countries was socially and legally accepted until UNICEF organised pilot training for teachers in behaviour management techniques which aimed at giving alternative approaches to teachers and eventually proved successful (UNICEF, 2009).

### **Ban on corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools**

Corporal punishment had been administered to Ghanaian students for decades before and after independence. The Ghana Education Service (GES) partially banned corporal punishment in schools in 1970s. However, head teachers were permitted to execute caning, either on their own or by appointing their assistant or a senior teacher, to school children because many teachers were abusing caning and injuring students (Boakye, 2001, p. 1).

As at 2017, Ghana was listed among 69 countries in which corporal punishment was legally permitted (Gershoff, 2017). This shows that caning was then not fully abolished in Ghanaian schools, a situation contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which forbids physical abuse of children by both parents and caregivers and was ratified by all member countries – including Ghana in 1990. Often times, news items and letters, some of which were signed by the director general of the Ghana Education Service, were issued to caution teachers that caning, among all forms of corporal punishments, was prohibited and that any teacher found culpable would be sanctioned (Dery, 2017). Efforts to attain a complete ban on corporal punishment in schools were intensified in the years 2018 and 2019.

The rules of professional conduct for teachers in Ghana stipulate among other things that teachers shall not administer any act of corporal punishment, or any act that causes physical pain or harm to their pupils/students such as pushing, pulling, hitting and/or flogging. However, several researchers have found that caning occurred in Ghanaian basic and high schools, concluding that the existence of caning was an indication that the global effort to abolish physical punishment seemed not to be integrated into teacher training in Ghana, which lacks attention to positive behaviour modification techniques and realising children's rights (Agbenyega, 2006; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2015; Gershoff, 2017). Though there is some literature on the prevalence of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools

(Agbenyega, 2006; Adzahlie-Mensah, 2015 & Gershoff, 2017), no empirical research has been conducted on teachers' perceptions about the banning of caning in Ghanaian schools. Thus this study sought to fill a gap in the research literature.

### **Gender of teachers and attitude to the ban on corporal punishment**

Some studies conducted in various countries reported some sort of relationships between the gender of teachers and their attitude toward outlawing of corporal punishment (Emily, 2015; Humphreys, 2008). Emily (2015) concluded that female teachers had a more negative attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment whilst male teachers had a positive attitude towards outlawing of corporal punishment in Nandi North district in Kenya. Thus female teachers were against the policy of abolishing corporal punishment in Kenyan schools whereas their male counterparts supported the policy. In Ghana, no empirical data existed regarding comparison of teachers based on their gender and their attitude toward ban of caning as a form of corporal punishment in schools. This study sought also to fill this gap.

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of teachers on the government policy to abolish caning as a form of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools. The objectives of the study were to investigate:

1. What are the perceptions of teachers towards the banning of caning in Ghanaian schools?
2. Do male and female teachers show differences in attitudes towards the banning of caning?

The findings of the study would hopefully provide knowledge that would be useful to educational administrators, teacher educators and education policy makers in Ghana and beyond. Based on the findings, educational administrators may see a need to organise in-service training to enlighten teachers on the policy to abolish corporal punishment, and educate teachers on alternative positive punishment or corrective procedures. Teacher educators will also be informed of the possible need to review the content of educational psychology courses to intensify application of theories relating to motivation and punishment, to better equip pre-service teachers with sufficient knowledge on positive corrective measures and creation of friendly learning environments in schools. Educational policy makers will also be informed on the need to ensure teacher representation in policy making, so that teachers' views may be factored into policies for which they will be the main implementers.

### **Method**

A descriptive quantitative methodology was used in this study. The descriptive methodology has varied approaches such as observation studies, correlation research and survey research. Among the various approaches to descriptive methodology, survey research was employed in this study because it was found to be most suitable. Gay (1992) held the view that descriptive surveys are very useful when investigating educational

problems. According to Best and Khan, cited in Amedahe (2002), descriptive research concerns itself with conditions or relations that exist. These include practices, attitudes and opinions that are held. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p.187), “survey research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people – perhaps about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes or previous experiences – by asking them questions and tabulating their answers”, with the ultimate goal of generalising to a larger population.

This design was chosen because it has the merit of gathering diverse responses from a wide range of people. Furthermore, a descriptive survey helps to present the true state of affairs for a given situation after data have been collected from a number of people who respond to the same set of questions (Gay, 1992). This approach is more suitable for this research because it was intended to acquire information about how teachers in basic and high schools perceived the prohibition of caning in schools.

### **Participants**

The study was carried out in the Cape Coast Metropolis in Ghana. The Metropolis is inhabited by people from all regions of the country, Ghana, who have settled there for a variety of reasons including educational pursuits and employment. The study targeted all teachers of public basic schools comprising kindergarten, primary and junior high schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis. The teachers comprised both females and males, with professional education qualifications of all levels – certificate, diploma, bachelor and masters degrees – and all kinds of teaching experiences. The target population taught in schools of varying class sizes, typically about 25 to 50 pupils. As a norm in Ghanaian public basic schools, the target teachers had no teacher aides as assistants in their classrooms, thus they all worked by themselves.

The sample consisted of 60 teachers comprising 29 males and 31 females, selected from public basic schools in Cape Coast Metropolis, in the Central Region of Ghana. A convenience sampling technique was used, the justification being that a sampling frame of all teachers in Cape Coast was not available to the researcher. Moreover, the pilot study had revealed that many teachers were unwilling to participate in the study, because they were afraid to give information relating to government policy. Therefore, a consent message containing a hyperlink to the online questionnaire was sent to *WhatsApp* chat groups for teachers in Cape Coast, with strong assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, after which 60 responded.

### **Data collection instrument**

A questionnaire method was selected, being widely used for collecting survey information in a structured and often numerical format. Also, it is useful for the collection of data without the presence of the researcher, and it is often comparatively straight forward to analyse (Cohen et al., 2005). Questionnaires are effective instruments for acquiring factual information about practices and conditions of which the respondents are presumed to have knowledge, and enquiring into opinions and attitudes towards the subject.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was deemed appropriate for this study because the respondents are all literate in English.

The questionnaire for this study contained thirteen items, three seeking demographic information (gender, age and highest educational attainment), and ten seeking information on teachers' perceptions about caning in schools, using Likert-style options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree.

I developed the questionnaire with guidelines from a related study carried out in Kenya (Mwai, Kimeni & Kipsoi, 2014). Relevant information from the literature also aided in the design of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section provided a brief introduction to the purpose of the study, sought consent of the potential subjects for voluntary participation, and stated an assurance of confidentiality of the identity and information provided by the participants. The second section of the questionnaire sought demographic information about the respondents, and the third section focused on how teachers perceived caning in schools as punishment and its prohibition by the Government of Ghana.

The content and face validity of the questionnaire were established with a senior lecturer in education studies at a university in Ghana and the reliability was tested using *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) after a pilot test. The reliability test indicated Cronbach's alpha 0.853 on 22 responses to the 13 items of the questionnaire. This was greater than the acceptable alpha value of 0.70, therefore the instrument was found to be reliable enough to be used for the main study.

### **Data collection procedures**

Pilot-testing was carried out at two basic schools in the K.E.E.A. Municipality in the Central Region of Ghana from 5 to 9 November, 2018. The schools where the pilot study was conducted shared some commonalities with all the basic schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis, in terms of teacher population and qualifications, hence the selection of those schools for the pilot-testing.

The main data collection was conducted from 28 December 2018 to 15 January 2019. I posted a hyperlink to the online questionnaire (created with *Google Forms*) with consent invitation message in *WhatsApp* groups of teachers in the Cape Coast Metropolis, inviting all to voluntarily participate in the study. Membership of the *WhatsApp* groups comprised teachers teaching in public basic schools in the Cape Coast Metropolis, originally created by circuit supervisors or teachers assigned by the circuit supervisors. Contacts of all public basic school teachers in the respective circuits were added to the groups for the purpose of routinely communicating official messages to the teachers within the respective circuits in the Cape Coast Metropolis. Teachers in the *WhatsApp* groups also had the right to share information relevant to the teaching profession. On the end date of the data collection, I downloaded the responses given by participants to the questionnaire and imported these into *SPSS* for analyses.

## Data processing and analysis

Data obtained from the completed questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics – frequencies and percentages – generated in *SPSS*. Additionally, I used independent samples t-test to compare the means of males and females with regard to their inclination towards caning.

## Results and discussion

### Demographic data

Demographic characteristics are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents gender, age range and highest qualification (N=60)

		Number	Percent
Gender	Male	29	48.3
	Female	31	51.7
Age range (years)	Below 26	14	23.3
	26-35	36	60.0
	36-45	8	13.3
	Above 45	2	3.3
Highest qualification	Diploma	20	33.3
	Bachelor's degree	33	55.0
	Master's degree	7	11.7

The highest qualification rows indicate that all the participants were senior teachers, as none indicated a qualification below Diploma, although the questionnaire provided a space for other qualifications.

### Research Q1: Teachers' perceptions on banning caning in Ghanaian schools

In order to obtain information on the perception of teachers regarding the ban of caning in Ghanaian schools, ten statements made in the questionnaire in a form of Likert scale asked each respondent to tick respective options for each of the statements that best described the views of the respondent teacher to indicate whether or not, and to what extent, he or she agreed with such statements. Their responses reflected their attitudes to the phenomenon.

Figure 1 presents the responses of teachers to the statement that “students should be caned as a corrective measure”; 15% of the respondents affirmed that they strongly agreed, and 48.3% agreed, thus a total of 63.3% supported caning as a disciplinary tool for correcting students' unacceptable behaviours. This view contrasts with a finding by Mwai, Kimeni & Kipsoi (2014) who reported in a similar study conducted in Kenya that a majority of the teachers disagreed with the statement that corporal punishment should be used to correct deviant behaviour.

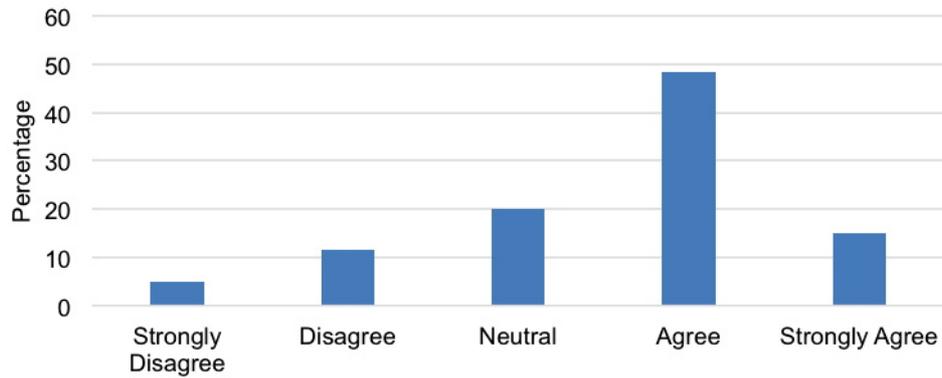


Figure 1: Teachers' views on caning being used as a corrective measure

Figure 2 shows responses to the statement that “caning is the most effective method of correcting children”; 33.3% disagreed and 21.7% strongly disagreed. In effect, 55% of the respondents disagreed with the statement, indicating that they did not perceive caning as the most effective method of correcting children. This accords with Canter (1989) cited in Agbenyega (2006) that corporal punishment should not be used because there is no evidence suggesting that it has produced better results academically, morally or that it improves school discipline. Likewise, Cheruvalath & Tripathi (2015) reported on the views of some teachers that corporal punishment is ineffective in deterring students from misbehaving.

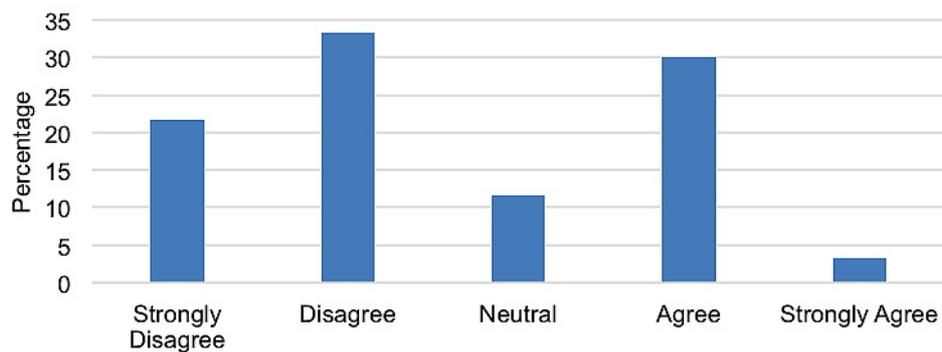


Figure 2: Teachers' view of caning as most effective method of correcting children

Figure 3 presents the responses to the statement that “when caning in schools is abolished, school children will be out of control of teachers”. To this, 18.3% responded that they strongly agree and 31.7% agreed. Thus a total of 50% of the respondents believed without caning, teachers wouldn't be able to control children in school. However, 30% disagreed and 11.7% strongly disagreed, an indication that 41.7% believed teachers could still control children in school even when caning is banned.

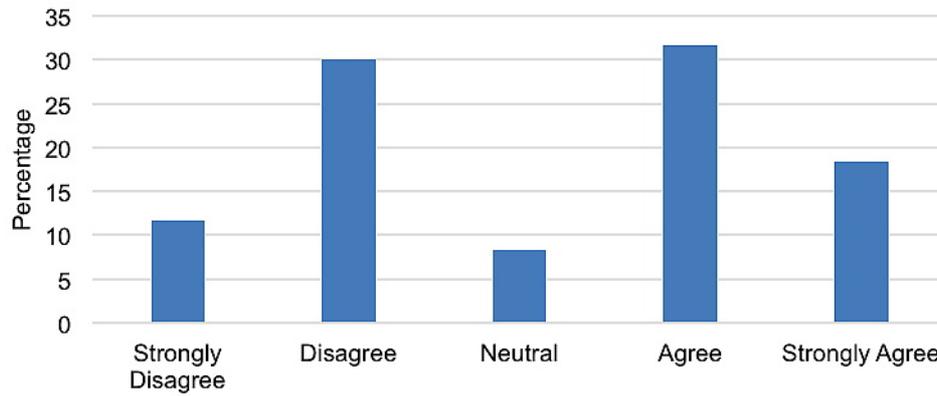


Figure 3: Teachers' view of likelihood of school children getting out of control when caning is banned

Figure 4 presents responses to the statement that “caning in schools should be allowed by Ghana Education Service” (Ghana Education Service implements Government policies on education in Ghana); 21.7% showed that they strongly agreed and 55% agreed. Thus a majority of teachers (76.7%) desired permission for caning to be allowed in Ghanaian schools.

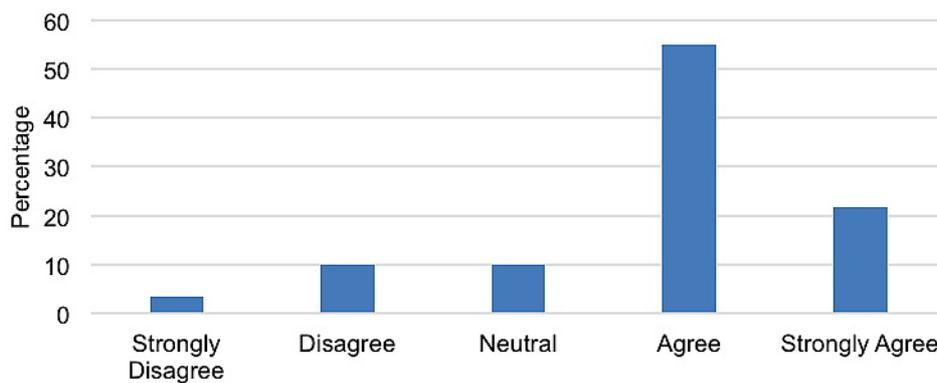


Figure 4: Teachers' desire for caning to be allowed in Ghanaian schools by Ghana Education Service

Figure 5 shows the responses of teachers to the statement that “when caning is allowed in schools, students will learn better”. A majority (51.7%) agreed or strongly agreed, compared with disagreed or strongly disagreed (35%). This is consistent with the Agbenyega (2006) who indicated that one of the motives behind the use of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools was to motivate students to learn and improve academic standards. Teachers holding this view are clearly against abolition of caning in schools.

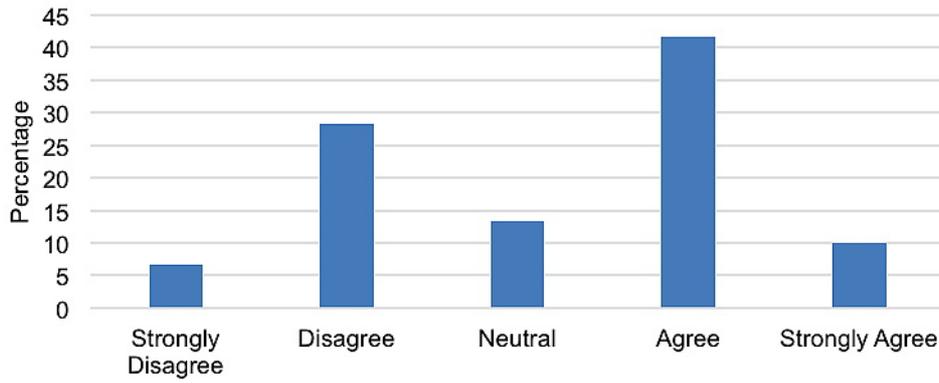


Figure 5: Teachers' view that students will learn better when caning in schools is allowed

Figure 6 shows responses to the statement that “caning should be used when other non-hurtful measures fail”, with 25% strongly agreed and 55% agreed, compared with 18.3% disagreed and strongly disagreed. This establishes that most teachers were not in favour of completely banning caning in Ghanaian schools, feeling that caning should be allowed in certain cases when other corrective methods fail.

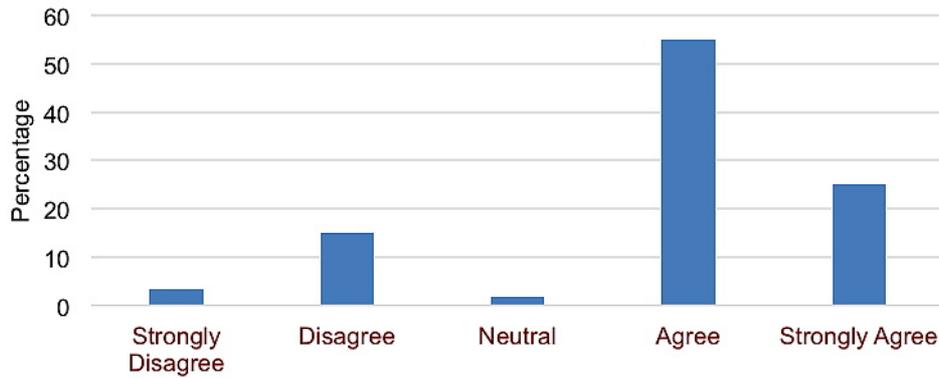


Figure 6: Teachers' inclination to use caning when other corrective measures fail

Figure 7 shows responses to the statement that “caning in school makes the school an uncomfortable place for children”. With 8.3% strongly disagreed, 30% disagreed, 8.3% neutral, 48.3% agreed and 5% strongly agreed, the results are surprising. Though a majority of teachers felt that caning would make the school environment uncomfortable for children, they were mostly in favour of caning in school, as indicated by Figures 4, 5 and 6.

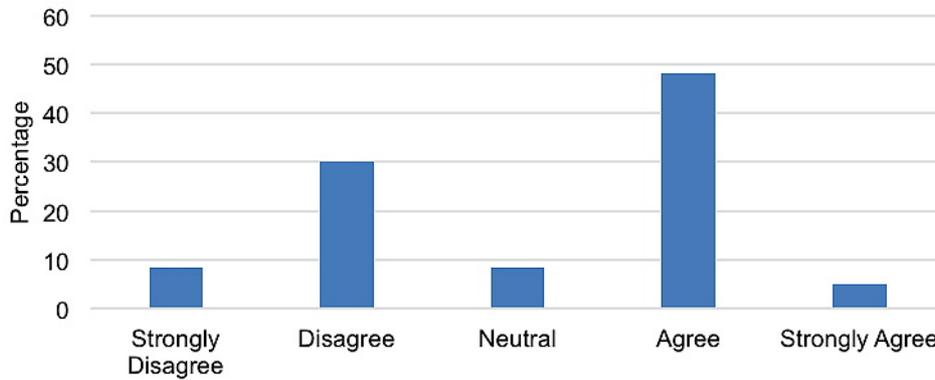


Figure 7: Teachers’ perception about caning making school uncomfortable for children

Figure 8 shows responses of teachers to the statement that “teachers should be allowed to cane with discretion”. That is, should they be allowed to cane school children with discretion, even while caning is prohibited by government policy? of the Respondents showed strongly agreed 15% and agreed 58.3%. However, 8.3% were neutral, and 18.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed. So a majority of the teachers being were in favour of teachers being allowed to cane at their discretion.

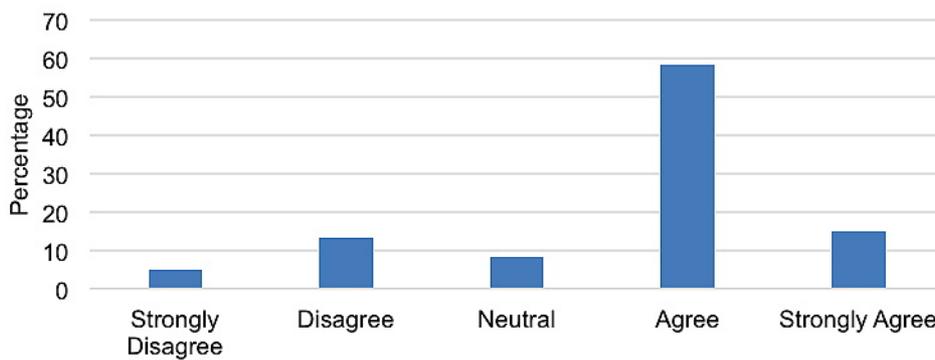


Figure 8: Teachers’ perception that they should be allowed to cane children with discretion

Figure 9 shows the responses of teachers to the statement that “teachers who hurt students physically should be sanctioned”; 18.3% strongly disagreed or disagreed, with 18.3% neutral, and 63.3% agreed or strongly agreed. So most were in favour of the statement that teachers who hurt students by caning should be subjected to appropriate sanctions. Interestingly, though majority of teachers were in favour of the practice of caning and thus against its prohibition by the Ministry of Education, they were also in favour of punishment for teachers who caused injury to school children through caning.

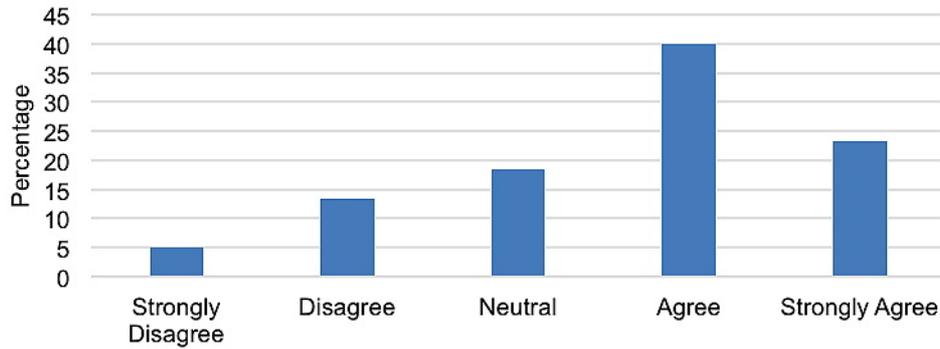


Figure 9: Teachers' agreement that there should be punishment for teachers who hurt students physically

Figure 10 shows responses to the statement, "If caning was allowed, I would like to use it more often to discipline students"; 16.7% strongly agreed and 36.7% agreed, a total of 53.4% who were in favour of the statement, whilst 6.7% were neutral, and 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed. So a majority of the teachers were inclined towards caning, if allowed.

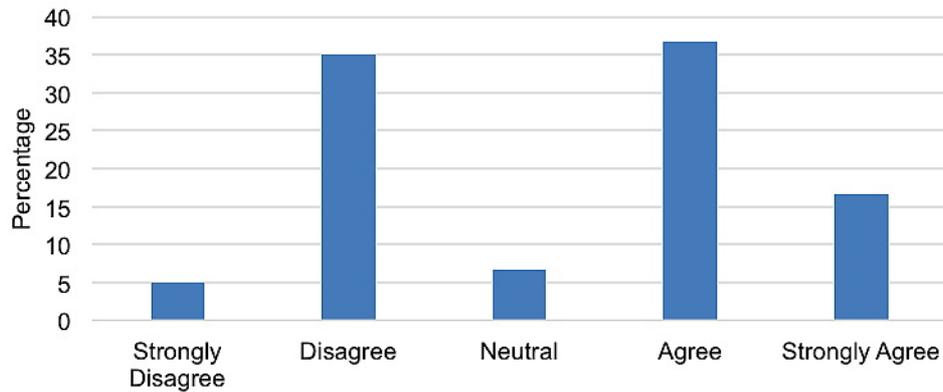


Figure 10: Inclination of teachers to cane students if allowed

### Research Q2: Attitudes of male and female teachers towards banning caning

Table 2 shows the average of responses from male and female teachers towards the banning of caning in schools. Averages were calculated on the basis strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, neutral = 3, agree = 4 and strongly agree = 5, with scores summed over all ten Likert-style items in the survey Table 3 shows the result of an independent samples t-test to test for the significance of the difference.

Table 2: Means and standard deviations of male and female responses

Gender	Mean	Standard deviation
Male	2.728	.8298
Female	2.807	.5452

Table 3: Table of test of equality of variances and equality of means

Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means			
F	sig.		t	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean diff.
6.280	0.015	Equal variances assumed	-0.438	0.663	-0.07887
		Equal variances not assumed	-0.432	0.668	-0.07887

The Levene's test for equality of variances was used to determine whether the two samples had equal or unequal variances. The result, shown in Table 3, gave a p-value of 0.015 which is less than the alpha value of 0.05 used for the analysis. The test is statistically significant, meaning the variances are not equal. Therefore, the p-value of 0.668 for the test of equality of means among the males and females is the appropriate one for the decision. Since the p-value 0.668 is also greater than the significant level of 0.05, the results show no significant difference between male and female teachers' attitudes towards the banning of caning in Ghanaian schools. This finding contrasts with Emily's (2015) findings that female teachers had more negative attitudes towards banning corporal punishment, than male teachers.

## Key findings

Most of the teachers (63.3%, Figure 1) were in favour of caning as a disciplinary tool for correcting students' unacceptable behaviours. Ironically, another majority of teachers (55%, Figure 2) did not consider caning as the most effective method of correcting children. Half of the teachers (50%, Figure 3) expressed a view that the banning of caning would leave school children out of control by teachers. Seventy-six percent (76%, Figure 4) of the teachers desired the restoration of caning in Ghanaian schools. A majority of respondents, 51.7% (Figure 5) were of the view that students would learn better if caning was allowed. Up to 80% (Figure 6) of the respondents were inclined to use caning when other methods of correcting or disciplining children failed to achieve the desired purpose. Although fifty-three percent (53.3%, Figure 7) agreed that caning makes school an uncomfortable place for children, a majority (73.3%, Figure 8) were in favour of teachers being allowed to cane at their discretion. About sixty-three percent (63.3%, Figure 9) were in favour of the statement that teachers who injured students by caning should be subjected to appropriate sanctions. About fifty-three percent (53.4%, Figure 10) of the teachers affirmed that if caning was allowed, they would like to use it more often to discipline students. Lastly, no statistically significant difference was found between the attitudes of male and female teachers toward the banning of caning in Ghanaian schools.

It is interesting to note some contradictory responses provided by the teachers in the findings. Firstly, although a majority of the teachers favoured caning as a disciplinary measure in school, a majority felt it was not the most effective disciplinary tool, whilst yet another majority felt that caning should be resorted to when other disciplinary procedures failed. Another area of contradiction is related to the effects of caning on school children and teachers' desire for reintroduction of caning. Whereas many teachers expressed a desire for reintroduction of caning in schools, with some reasoning that it would make students learn better and not go wayward from control by teachers, another majority felt that caning would make the school an uncomfortable place for students and still others expressed a view that teachers should be permitted use their discretion to cane school children.

## **Conclusions**

On the basis of the findings of this study, I can conclude that most teachers in Ghana are not in support of the policy of the Ministry of Education to abolish caning in Ghanaian schools, and they would prefer that caning be continued in schools, but administered by teachers in a way that would not cause injury to students.

It can also be concluded from the findings of the study that male and female teachers have the similar perceptions about caning in Ghanaian schools, and thus the majority being not in support of its abolition holds regardless of gender.

## **Recommendations**

As this study indicated that most teachers in Ghana did not support the Government policy of banning caning in Ghanaian schools, I recommend that the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service organise a substantial in-service educational program throughout the country, to ensure that teachers are well-informed on the need for and rationale for banning caning in Ghanaian schools. Likewise, education policy makers the world over must fully educate teachers, who are the main implementers of education policies, prior to implementation in order to secure the best possible cooperation. Also, curriculum development for teacher education programs should include positive disciplining techniques, to equip pre-service teachers with better capacities for managing deviant behaviours in schools, without resorting to corporal punishment. Again, the psychology and learning theory components of pre-service teacher education programs could be taught in a more practical and contextualised manner, to enhance pre-service teachers' abilities to apply such learning towards creating more conducive school environments, where learners feel secure and mentally healthy, so that there may be a much reduced risk of conflict over a step such as the prohibition of caning in schools. Finally, the Ministry of Education, and all policy makers of education, must involve teacher representatives in policy making so that teachers' views may be considered in making policies that are to be implemented by the teachers, in order to avoid conflicting views at the implementation stage.

### Limitations and suggestions for future research

The distribution of the sample was not across all the regions of the country, and the sample size was not large (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 214). As this may affect generalisability of the findings, future research could expand the scope to cover more regions of the country and to increase the sample size. This study also lacked data on the perception of teachers regarding what constitutes caning in Ghanaian schools, thus further research may address this gap. Another limitation of this study was that although ambivalences were revealed in the findings, this study did not probe further into the reasons for such contradictory responses. Hence, future research may explore the reasons behind the contradictory views expressed by many teachers regarding caning in schools as revealed in the findings.

Also, this study did not cover empirical evidence on the frequency of cases of caning in Ghanaian schools, hence further research would be necessary in this regard. Moreover, further qualitative research in the forms of interviews and focus groups is suggested to solicit in-depth reasons for teachers' displeasure with the banning of caning in Ghanaian schools, which was not addressed in this study. Lastly, further research may be conducted on parental practices of corporal punishment in Ghana and its possible influence on the practices of teachers in schools.

### Acknowledgement

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