

HITTING THE HEADLINES – THE VEIL ON CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA LIFTED

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INTRODUCTION

Evidence strongly suggests that corporal punishment in the early years, as well as when it extends into adolescence, is a major cause of negative behaviour. This includes the physical abuse of children, the physical abuse of a spouse and other adults, and masochistic sex, while depression and alienation can also be related to corporal punishment. (Strauss 1994; Strauss, Sugarman & Giles-Sims 1997).

All industrialised countries abolished corporal punishment, except the United States of America (some states at least), Canada and one state in Australia (Discipline at school (NCACPS) [Online] 2004; NASP Delegate Assembly, quoted by Riak 1999:1). Since 1996, corporal punishment has not been permitted in public schools in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 in section 10(1) and (2) states specifically that

10.1) No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.

(2) Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence that could be imposed for assault.

It is, however, clear that not all schools abide by this ban. The quantum leap in terms of corporal punishment has not materialised, and the law does not provide adequate protection against the use of corporal punishment. In truth, in many cases it seems as if little has changed since the abolition of corporal punishment in South Africa in 1997. Professionals agree that corporal punishment is still being practised throughout South Africa. "Corporal punishment is still a big problem for us – as it is worldwide ... I don't

think there's been a shift away from educators using it" (Keet in Du Bois 2002:1). This statement, accredited to an established scholar whose research credentials are undisputable, should set off alarm bells.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem to be investigated in this article is the continuing evidence that corporal punishment is still widely practised in South African public schools, despite the fact that it was abolished in 1997.

The following extract (received from a trainee teacher student in her fourth year of study at the University of Pretoria in November 2003, shortly after she had completed her practicals at a local school), will graphically explain the point.

In the school where I did my school practice a few weeks ago, both boys and girls regularly receive corporal punishment, in a variety of forms, including caning, slapping, and hitting with a fist. The headmaster is aware of the situation, but does nothing to stop it. This malpractice starts as early as Grade three. Sometimes children are spanked in front of the entire class. In a number of cases, seemingly, children are hit for no reason other than to show that the teacher has lots of power. Sadly, it seems as if corporal punishment is rife in the community as well. Some parents encourage teachers to cane their children. This practice sickens me, as children are abused physically and emotionally. Yet, they are too afraid to stand up for their rights.

Seemingly, nobody at the school cares enough to support them and put an end to this.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Broadly speaking, learners' beliefs and attitudes regarding corporal punishment and related matters will be investigated. More specifically, a number of subquestions will be investigated. Firstly, the frequency with which a number of misdemeanours occur in these schools will be investigated. Secondly, the forms of punishment meted out for certain types of misdemeanours in these schools will be determined. Thirdly, learners' opinions regarding appropriate forms of punishment for these misdemeanours will be gauged. Lastly, learners will be polled on their views regarding the appropriateness of corporal punishment for certain types of misdemeanours and on their attitudes and beliefs about the punishment of children.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The overall research design is multimethod, involving a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. An interpretative approach was chosen, implying that the aim was to understand epistemologically in a trustworthy way, but nonetheless accepting that researchers' perceptions of reality not only vary, but, in fact, differ greatly.

The first part of this article comprises an analysis of a few newspaper extracts. A literature survey was undertaken of both a number of primary and secondary scientific sources and these sources are viewed as narratives. These discourses are analysed and de-constructed. The approach is seen as an alternative to experimental methods of research. Within this approach (discourse analysis), the narratives are analysed and put into context.

The quantitative part of the study comprises the administration of a questionnaire and making statistical comparisons between learners' views on corporal punishment and related matters.

Analytical procedures

Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means and standard

deviations), were used to analyse the data.

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF SOME NEWSPAPER EXTRACTS

A cursory overview of some reports that appeared in South African newspapers over the past two years reveals that corporal punishment has not been weeded out satisfactorily. De-construction of these texts shed some light on the situation regarding corporal punishment in South Africa at present. Extracts were selected if they were found, in the researchers' opinion, to embody themes that could shed further light on the situation.

Extract 1: 'A 10-year old landed in the intensive care unit of a private hospital in Pietermaritzburg after he was allegedly smacked by his principal' (Naudé 2004:1). This type of news item guarantees, as it were, readership interest, due to its sensational nature. However, in the light of the time-honoured legal principle (innocent until proven guilty), obviously, one has to treat the information with due circumspection. Nonetheless, the message seems to be clear: Not even headmasters of schools are immune to violating the constitutional rights of learners under their guardianship. This poses a question regarding the type of leadership that is provided to subordinates in this respect.

Extract 2: 'The Department of Education has expressed shock over the spate of attacks on children after more parents came forward to report incidences of corporal punishment in local schools ...' . Education spokesperson Oduetse Assegaai stressed that the department was concerned about the spate of attacks on learners: 'We cannot defend teachers who defy the regulations concerning corporal punishment. There will come a time when teachers will be jailed and tried in a court of law for their wrongful actions. Large classes and learners who misbehave, do not justify the use of corporal punishment' (Kwon Hoo 2003:1).

Clearly this goes beyond mere speculation. To its credit, the Department of Education readily admits having a problem on its hands and refuses to condone the illegal behaviour of some teachers. From these brief abstracts it becomes clear that much thought has already been given to the problem and that

precipitating factors have been identified. It is obvious that factors such as large classes are exacerbating the problem and precipitating a rise in learner misdemeanours. One needs to ask if and how often policy makers and education departments embark on joint projects to deal with such crucial matters.

Extract 3: 'A survey conducted by Echo in schools in the greater Edendale and Vulilindlela found that corporal punishment is still rife. The survey was carried out following the case of Bulwer Primary School teacher Busisiwe Rosemary Gasela, who is facing murder charges for allegedly banging together the heads of S'khumbuzo Memela and three classmates as punishment for making a noise. S'khumbuzo died 11 days after the incident' (Khumalo 2003:1). This extract has all the ingredients which normally make the headlines: A sensational case, a primary caretaker being accused of murdering a teenager, indications of incongruous cruelty, and research-based data, indicating an endemic problem. The suggestions are clear. Research needs to be conducted regarding the illegal practice of corporal punishment in our schools. Furthermore, it would be rather one-dimensional to simply charge the perpetrator, and, if found guilty, sentence her. At the very least, educational, legal and psychological experts need to address such cases jointly, a national register should be compiled and findings shared with policy makers.

Extract 4: 'They are slapped, booted, whipped, pinched and hit with sticks and wooden chalkboard dusters. Corporal punishment has been outlawed for six years, but learners are still being subjected to cruel and sometimes violent attacks by teachers, often for the most trivial transgressions. But while many teachers may have put away their weapons, others, says the department of education, have found new means of control. They use sarcasm, fear and humiliation, forcing learners to do degrading things like wearing their underwear on their heads or carrying tags with hurtful signs like "I am a stupid boy"' (Bisetty 2003:1). Bisetty goes on to provide some backing details for this sensational statement. Once again, even though the contribution has been written in true journalist style (well-written, focusing on provocative data) one is left with little doubt that Bisetty is basing her story on solid facts. This time,

however, a new twist is added. Some teachers (at a loss regarding how to deal with learner misdemeanour) have reverted to unlawful, uneducational behaviour, clearly violating the constitutional rights of learners. One again, the relevant education department is readily acknowledging that it has a problem. From this extract, it is glaringly clear that, in some respects, the training of prospective teachers leaves much to be desired. Seemingly, cooperation between education departments and training institutions is (at the very least) not satisfactory.

Extract 5: 'Many teachers continue to beat students, say the department of education and many parents. The outlawed practice is popular with teachers in the rural areas, particularly in primary schools where children are unable to defend themselves or fight back' (Wa Maahlamela 2002:26).

The most worrying aspect related to this extract is the fact that, allegedly, it is the most vulnerable part of society that is being abused in this manner. Furthermore such practices appear to be rife in those regions where it is most difficult to identify and bring perpetrators to book in courts of law. Another twist is added. A finger seems to be pointing at rural regions, and primary schools in particular.

Extract 6: 'To me, it was important for a learner to experience as a *privilege*, not something by means of which he could be denigrated ... After I had for instance given him two cuts, everything was over and we shook hands. There was a feeling of warmth between you and the child, because he felt *good*. It may sound like a contradiction, but he walked out of my office with a feeling of respect and dignity' (Gericke in Greef 2002:24). Curiously, certain headmasters still see corporal punishment in a rather romantic light and express the view that corporal punishment was not all bad. From this quote, it is clear that the said headmaster, who speaks about corporal punishment with what appears to be borderline nostalgia, is blissfully unaware of research findings, which highlight the negative effects of corporal punishment. Instead, he chooses to offer a one-sided, personal view of the 'benefits' of the outlawed practice. From personal experience as psychologists the researchers would like to stress the fact that corporal punishment is still rife in South African

schools. Furthermore, this practice is often condoned by parents, who either silently condone the practice or even supply written consent, 'indemnifying' perpetrating teachers. In other instances, learners/parents would rather remain silent when corporal punishment is meted out, for fear of victimisation. A sad state of affairs indeed!

Extract 7: She hadn't done her homework, so her teacher allegedly pinned her on the blackboard and beat her to a pulp. "I am going to teach you and all your friends a lesson" were the chilling words the 14-year-old girl from Hammanskraal remembers him threatening ... her teacher ... apparently threw water in her face to revive her before continuing the beating. "It is one of the worst assaults I've seen" said a nurse who helped doctors examine the girl. "She is in so much pain that she can barely hold her head up." The girl's mother was reluctant to have details published ... [because] she has entered into an agreement with the school that they pay the medical costs in exchange for her not pressing charges (Hosken 2004:2). Apart from what has already been said, this extract provides ample proof of the vulnerability of (especially) people living in rural areas, without the financial means to defend themselves and their children. Furthermore, the fact that, at the time of writing, no steps had been taken against the teacher for the alleged brutal assault, probably shows that headmasters are either helpless or turn a blind eye towards this type of brutal crime.



(Photo by courtesy of the Pretoria News)

Realising full well that 'reading comes from a subjective position' (Wilbraham 1996:164) rendering it 'always-already incomplete' (Parker & Burman 1993:189), it is not claimed that these deductions can be made applicable to all learners in all schools in South Africa. Although the fact that other extracts

might very well yield 'varying discursive foci for interpretation' (Wilbraham 1996:164) is taken into account, the following themes, which emerged from a careful analysis of the above-mentioned extracts, are nonetheless proposed:

- From none of these extracts (nor from any other of the ca. 64 extracts that were scrutinised) was any evidence gained that the strongest boys in the school received corporal punishment or were the target of physical abuse. Seemingly, it is especially the younger and most vulnerable part of the school population that receive the short end of the stick, as it were.
- Rural school populations in particular can be regarded as high-risk populations in terms of falling prey to this particular crime.
- For whatever reason, many teachers may be in desperate need of counselling themselves. Abusing children in this way, thereby running the risk of being tried and sentenced in a court of law, suggests serious pathology.
- Society in general and education authorities in particular are not fulfilling their watchdog role satisfactorily.
- Teachers in general and school management in particular can benefit immensely from attending in-service training with regard to the matter of corporal punishment.
- Outdated, romanticist or fundamentalist views of corporal punishment seem to lie at the heart of at least some of the notions that moderate the perpetuation of corporal punishment in our schools.

In the following paragraph a closer look will be taken at the latter point.

In South Africa the unconditional acceptance of authority (to the point of including physical violence) has not been in question until very recently and the following perspective is often put forward to justify corporal punishment.

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

For decades the Biblical perspective and the ideal of morality and character development laid the foundation for the justification of corporal punishment

in South Africa. The use of the word 'discipline' in the Bible is mistakenly equated to the concept 'corporal punishment'. Parents and teachers often quote from the Bible as their *raison d'être* for corporal punishment. In such instances, it is erroneously assumed that the word 'discipline' is synonymous with the concept 'corporal discipline'. However, Porteus, Vally and Ruth (2001:5) explain that they have come to understand that within the context of South African schooling 'discipline' has a much narrower meaning, i.e. rather '... as punishment – often physical punishment or psychological punishment, such as humiliation...'. The systematic use of corporal punishment in society has been historically associated with both authoritarian and non-democratic societies in which citizens are not prepared for civic participation but rather for simple obedience to a central authority.

According to Sagendorf (quoted by Riak 1999:1) the often repeated 'religious' argument in support of corporal punishment is based upon a few isolated quotes from the Bible (mainly the Book of Proverbs), more often than not quoted out of context and without taking into account the original meaning of the biblical text. Sagendorf goes on to say that if one uses the same kind of selective reading, it would be equally possible to use the Bible to prove that 'slavery, the rigid suppression of women, polygamy, incest and infanticide' are justified. Sagendorf rightly argues that corporal punishment cannot be reconciled with cosmic New Testament themes such as love, forgiveness and a respect for the dignity of children, as well as the principle of rejecting violence and retribution as ways of solving problems. Cryan (1987), too, contends that it is virtually possible to justify any act on Biblical grounds if biblical texts are used in isolation and out of context. Hunt (1999:1) aptly states that there is no support in the Bible outside of Solomon's Proverbs for hitting children. He stresses the fact that Jesus saw children as being close to God and urged love, not punishment.

MOTIVES FOR CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

According to Bauer, Dubanowski, Yamauchi and Honbo (1990:290-293), Porteus *et al.* (2001:21-220), Rose (1989:43) and Strauss (1994), the motives provided for administering corporal punishment

include the belief that corporal punishment enhances character development, is effective, quick and relatively easy, achieves temporary compliance, makes people feel powerful, contributes to rapid reduction or elimination of unwanted behavioural patterns and facilitates discrimination learning, is needed as a last resort, is harmless, induces respect, is the only language that children understand, and that behavioural problems increase in its absence. Research indeed tells an interesting story.

EDUCATIONAL - PSYCHOLOGICAL SIDE-EFFECTS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON AN ADOLESCENT

Corporal punishment not only perpetuates the cycle of child abuse, it also impacts negatively on academic achievement (Discipline at school (NCACPS) [Online] 2004). The educational-psychological side-effects of corporal punishment are probably as harmful as the physical effects and include loss of self-esteem, an increase in anxiety and fear, damage to the functioning of the ego, creation or enhancement of feelings of loss, helplessness and humiliation, enhancement of feelings of aggression and destructive and self-destructive behaviours, a shortened attention span, attention-deficit disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and impaired academic achievement. Corporal punishment sends out a signal that it is acceptable to express one's feelings of anger by hitting others in retaliation. When children, natural imitators that learn through modelling, experience that their parents try to solve problems by physical beating, they often model their behaviour on that of their parents, assuming that it is in order to abuse those smaller than oneself, and do not learn creative problem-solving skills (Hunt 1999:1-3). These matters impact negatively on the development of the ability to establish meaningful relationships, and precipitate sexual difficulties in adulthood (Cryan 1995:37; Bauer *et al.* 1990:289-290; Cryan 1987:151; Hunt 1999:1-3; Hyman 1987; Rose 1989:43-44; Strauss & Donnelly 1993:439). Corporal punishment in the early years correlates to a significantly positive degree with violent behaviour in later years. Research shows that almost all of the most dangerous criminals were regularly threatened and punished during their early years (Hunt 1999:1-3).

Lytton (1997) argues that 'power assertion' (physical

punishment, and other negative parental reactions to child misbehaviour, including yelling at a child, or deprivation of privileges) has correlated positively with delinquency, aggression, academic failure, and other forms of psychopathology (Ellison, Bartkowski & Segal 1996). Lytton (1997:12) convincingly and boldly states 'I know of no study contradicting this finding.'

A POSITIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND CRIME

Agnew (1983:234), and Maurer and Wallerstein, quoted by Cryan (1987:151-152; 1995:37), argue conclusively that the administration of corporal punishment correlates significantly positively with crime in later life. These authors' findings regarding the link between corporal punishment and criminal behaviour include the following: 18-year-old adolescents in prison are more likely to have received more severe punishment than those who are not, and those who received less severe punishment (or no punishment at all). A significant correlation exists between severe punishment in early youth and lawbreaking. Severe punishment is the single most important correlate of juvenile delinquency.

Schreiber and Haberman (1995) stress the fact that for students engulfed in a culture of violence, classrooms in schools often offer a last chance to expose themselves to more constructive ways of relating to one another. These authors express the view that teachers have to advocate respect for offenders, while critically examining their behaviour. Hostility must be deflated, not giving victims the satisfaction of returned scorn. It should be realised that aggression is a normal psychological response to environmental violence and this reality should be discussed in every class, special course, and assembly.

A number of solutions to the problem of violence in schools have already been suggested in an earlier article (Maree 1999; 2000; 2001). Ball (1989:23-25), Cryan (1987:146-153; 1995:37), Hunt (1999:1-3), Kessler (1985:175-176), and the NASP (1998:1-3) propose a number of measures to reduce the spiral of violence in schools. These include (Maree 2001):

- Measures to change learner behaviour.
- Educating and supporting parents.
- Educating and supporting teachers.

- Changing the school environment.
- Facilitating the role of consultants and psychologists.
- Involving the role of the state.
- Facilitating an internal locus of control.

Above all, it should be kept in mind that, although it is much easier to control by authority than to identify and work through deeper-lying reasons for undesirable behaviour, discipline will in any event go wrong if the causes and motives for undesirable behaviour are not dealt with appropriately.

Attention will now be focused on the quantitative part of the current research.

METHOD

Measuring instrument

A brief questionnaire, comprising five parts, was constructed, based on a number of other studies (Anderson & Payne 1994, Jordan, Matibiri & Charumbira 1995). Subparts of the questionnaire include the following: (1) 14 items on socio-demographic variables, (2) 7 items for punishment received and 7 items for punishment recommended for misdemeanours in the school situation, (3) 17 items on punishment to be used for misdemeanours, (4) 8 items on the self-rated frequency of misdemeanours, and (5) 13 items on attitudes and beliefs about punishments of children. A split-half reliability test was done on the measuring instrument and a reliability coefficient of .98 was calculated. Content validity was established by giving the questionnaires to four experts in education for their perusal and comments.

Research situation and time of administration of the questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered in the Limpopo Province, Capricorn district in May 2001.

Sample

One black school was chosen randomly. (n = 69, male 41, female 28); one Asian (n = 53; male = 31, female = 22), and one white (n = 143, male = 60, female = 83). Purposive sampling was used in the case of the latter two schools, since there is only one English

medium white and only one Indian school in the district. In all the schools, the learners were randomly chosen. Mean ages ranged from 17 to 25.

Ethical measures

Permission was requested and obtained in writing from the education departments as well as from the schools to conduct the research and publish the findings. The assurance was given that no individual would be identified.

Limitations of the research

The following are a number of the limitations of the study:

- The study was limited in scope.
- Standardised questionnaires were not used in the research.
- The group was limited and the possibility of statistical inference or generalisation was also limited.
- A different researcher may very well interpret the results in a different way.

RESULTS

Table 1 comprises learners' reports of the frequency of six misdemeanours on a monthly basis.

TABLE 1: LEARNERS' REPORTS OF THE FREQUENCY OF SIX MISDEMEANOURS

Item	M (SD)
1. Being late	1.90 (1.01)
2. Noisiness	1.88 (1.2)
3. Smoking cigarettes	1.50 (1.07)
4. Vandalism/purposeful destruction	1.45 (.92)
5. Staying away from school without good reason	1.42 (.83)
6. Drinking alcohol	1.36 (.89)
7. Smoking cannabis	1.34 (.91)

In Table 2 learners' views on the appropriateness of using corporal punishment for various school

problems, by gender (all schools) are given.

TABLE 2: LEARNERS' VIEWS ON APPROPRIATENESS OF USING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT FOR VARIOUS SCHOOL PROBLEMS BY GENDER (ALL SCHOOLS)

	Should be used Male (Female)	Should not be used Male (Female)	Not sure Male (Female)
1. Cursing,bad language	21(27)	61(48)	18(25)
2. Rude, unmannerly to teachers	29(39)	50(44)	21(17)
3. Fighting	42(47)	19(35)	39(18)
4. Stealing from other learners	56(52)	29(34)	15(14)
5. Not doing homework	26(31)	61(51)	13(18)
6. Damaging school property	53(51)	30(34)	17(15)
7. Cheating in class	46(36)	33(43)	21(21)
8. Throwing things in class	22(33)	59(48)	19(19)
9. Breaking school rules	37(42)	41(41)	22(17)
10. Telling lies	25(28)	55(52)	20(20)
11. Stopping other learners from working	22(34)	56(44)	22(22)
12. Chewing gum, sweets in class	14(16)	75(66)	11(18)
13. Not paying attention in class	13(20)	69(60)	18(20)
14. Not completing class work	21(24)	60(54)	19(22)
15. Talking/whispering during lessons	19(22)	63(61)	18(17)
16. Doing badly in tests or exams	8(16)	79(66)	13(18)
17. Arriving at school late	21(25)	64(49)	15(26)

Table 3 provides an overview of children's perceptions of parental beliefs and punishment regarding corporal punishment.

TABLE 3: PARENTAL BELIEFS AND PUNISHMENT SCALES (ALL SCHOOLS) (ALMOST NEVER = 1; RARELY = 2; OFTEN = 3; ALMOST ALWAYS = 4)

Beliefs	M(SD)
1. Punishment is the best alternative to correct children's behaviour	3.26(1.57)
2. Children who never have been punished won't learn to behave properly	3.41(1.51)
3. The law is fair in permitting parents to punish their children	3.26(1.58)
4. Very aggressive children should be punished to moderate their behaviour	3.33(1.58)
5. If punishment worked for me it should work for my children as well	2.81(1.55)
6. The stricter the parents are, the better the children turn out	2.76(1.65)
Moderate Punishment	
1. Insulted or swore at him/her	2.09(1.44)
2. Slapped or spanked him/her	1.96(1.39)
3. Stormed out of the room or house	1.94(1.31)
4. Pushed, grabbed or shoved him/her	1.74(1.32)
Severe Punishment	
1. Burned or scalded him/her	1.56(1.21)
2. Kicked, bit or hit him/her with a fist or another object	1.37(1.07)

Table 4 summarises punishments received for misdemeanours by African learners, by gender.

TABLE 4: PUNISHMENTS RECEIVED, BY GENDER (AFRICAN)

	Sex	Expulsion	Suspension	Digging trenches	Caring	Exclusion from class	Slashing grass	Solitary detention	Writing lines	Gardening	Reporting every 30 minutes	Cleaning toilets	Other
Noisiness	M	8	11	11	5	3	30	14	0	0	14	2	2
	F	15	15	11	0	11	30	0	7	0	0	11	0
Tardiness	M	0	11	9	6	6	20	0	9	6	14	11	8
	F	0	14	7	4	18	29	4	7	4	11	2	0
Truancy	M	0	22	11	3	0	28	0	3	3	17	11	2
	F	0	11	7	7	7	33	0	0	4	5	26	0
Vandalism	M	3	6	12	6	9	27	0	3	0	12	22	0
	F	8	15	23	0	4	23	8	4	0	12	3	0
Cannabis	M	3	23	9	6	3	14	0	6	3	14	14	5
	F	4	32	18	7	0	14	4	7	0	7	7	0
Alcohol	M	38	0	3	3	3	16	6	6	3	16	6	0
	F	0	25	14	7	7	21	0	4	11	7	0	4
Cigarettes	M	3	6	6	6	6	27	6	3	9	21	6	1
	F	14	7	14	11	0	22	4	6	4	11	7	0

In Table 5 punishments received, by gender (whites) are shown.

TABLE 5: PUNISHMENTS RECEIVED, BY GENDER (WHITES)

	Sex	Expulsion	Suspension	Digging trenches	Caning	Exclusion from class	Slashing grass	Solitary detention	Writing lines	Gardening	Reporting every 30 minutes	Cleaning toilets	Other
Noisiness	M	0	2	2	0	4	2	2	11	4	0	33	70
	F	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	11	0	0		81
Tardiness	M	2	0	5	0	2	2	2	12	2	0	31	70
	F	0	4	0	0	4	0	1	1	3	1		85
Truancy	M	2	12	2	2	0	5	2	7	0	2	52	61
	F	0	12	0	0	0	0	6	3	0	3		74
Vandalism	M	9	22	2	2	2	2	0	2	4	2	20	49
	F	5	24	1	0	4	0	1	4	0	1		60
Cannabis	M	53	17	0	2	4	4	0	0	0	0	20	17
	F	53	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2		26
Alcohol	M	13	49	2	2	4	2	2	4	0	0	31	19
	F	12	42	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5		38
Cigarettes	M	7	29	0	0	0	2	2	4	0	0	50	51
	F	1	48	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	5		43

Table 6 shows punishments received, by gender (Asian).

TABLE 6: PUNISHMENTS RECEIVED, BY GENDER (ASIAN)

	Sex	Expulsion	Suspension	Digging trenches	Caning	Exclusion from class	Slashing grass	Solitary detention	Writing lines	Gardening	Reporting every 30 minutes	Cleaning toilets	Other
Noisiness	M	7	7	0	10	30	3	13	7	3	3	4	13
	F	0	5	0	5	50	5	0	20	0	0	0	15
Tardiness	M	0	0	4	0	30	0	4	13	9	13	5	22
	F	0	13	0	0	33	0	7	7	0	0	0	40
Truancy	M	5	15	10	10	10	0	10	15	0	5	10	10
	F	0	22	0	0	22	0	0	11	0	0	12	33
Vandalism	M	10	15	10	5	10	0	15	5	5	0	10	15
	F	0	33	0	0	33	11	0	11	0	0	11	1
Cannabis	M	21	43	14	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	8	0
	F	0	67	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
Alcohol	M	21	43	7	7	7	7	0	0	7	0	1	0
	F	11	56	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22
Cigarettes	M	6	50	6	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
	F	0	50	0	13	13	0	0	13	0	0	0	11

Table 7 shows punishments recommended for

misdemeanours by African learners according to gender.

TABLE 7: PUNISHMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR MISDEMEANOURS BY AFRICAN LEARNERS, BY GENDER

	Sex	Expulsion	Suspension	Digging trenches	Caring	Exclusion from class	Slashing grass	Solitary detention	Writing lines	Gardening	Reporting every 30 minutes	Cleaning toilets	Other
Noisiness	M	3	17	8	6	14	28	3	11	0	6	46	0
	F	4	14	7	4	11	21	0	11	4	18	6	0
Tardiness	M	8	14	6	6	8	22	0	3	0	14	17	2
	F	7	22	7	7	15	22	7	4	4	4	1	0
Truancy	M	3	21	6	6	3	27	9	3	6	9	7	0
	F	0	4	15	8	8	35	4	8	0	8	8	2
Vandalism	M	0	21	15	3	6	21	6	6	3	12	4	0
	F	11	19	11	0	4	26	0	0	4	15	10	0
Cannabis	M	0	37	11	3	0	17	6	0	3	17	6	0
	F	4	23	12	4	19	15	4	0	0	19	0	0
Alcohol	M	9	37	9	6	6	11	3	0	3	9	7	0
	F	11	29	7	4	14	11	0	0	7	17	0	0
Cigarettes	M	3	20	6	6	9	17	3	9	6	17	40	0
	F	4	15	15	15	15	19	7	0	4	6	0	0

Table 8 indicates punishments recommended, by

misdemeanours by African learners according to gender.

TABLE 8: PUNISHMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR MISDEMEANOURS BY WHITE LEARNERS, BY GENDER

	Sex	Expulsion	Suspension	Digging trenches	Caring	Exclusion from class	Slashing grass	Solitary detention	Writing lines	Gardening	Reporting every 30 minutes	Cleaning toilets	Other
Noisiness	M	4	0	2	22	26	4	4	28		2	2	6
	F	0	0	3	1	32	1	7	31	4	3	1	17
Tardiness	M	2	2	5	20	15	10	0	12	10	10	7	7
	F	0	0	3	3	19	4	3	28	4	9	3	24
Truancy	M	5	21	5	30	2	5	14	5	2	7	2	2
	F	0	31	6	5	6	0	12	13	6	13	5	3
Vandalism	M	9	32	2	25	8	4	8	4	4	0	4	0
	F	4	41	3	10	6	1	13	7	3	0	8	4
Cannabis	M	64	20	2	6	2	4	0	2	0	0	0	0
	F	65	26	1	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	3
Alcohol	M	24	35	6	15	2	2	2	2	0	4	8	0
	F	28	47	0	0	3	0	9	4	1	1	4	3
Cigarettes	M	15	40	0	24	2	4	2	2	2	0	5	4
	F	19	53	1	1	3	1	8	6	0	3	2	3

Table 9 indicates punishments recommended, by

gender (Asian schools).

TABLE 9: PUNISHMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR MISDEMEANOURS BY ASIAN LEARNERS, BY GENDER

	Sex	Expulsion	Suspension	Digging trenches	Caning	Exclusion from class	Slashing grass	Solitary detention	Writing lines	Gardening	Reporting every 30 minutes	Cleaning toilets	Other
Noisiness	M	4	4	4	4	21	0	17	17	4	8	17	0
	F	0	12	0	12	41	0	24	6	0	0	56	0
Tardiness	M	0	12	4	4	12	4	23	12	0	23	6	0
	F	0	7	7	7	43	0	14	0		14	8	0
Truancy	M	4	25	0	8	4	4	8	21	4	13	9	0
	F	7	21	7	7	21	0	14	7	7	0	9	0
Vandalism	M	7	26	7	19	0	4	7	0	11	7	12	0
	F	7	33	0	0	13	13	13	0	7	0	14	0
Cannabis	M	39	42	0	4	0	4	0	0	0	4	7	0
	F	25	50	0	0	0	0	6	6	6	0	7	0
Alcohol	M	20	60	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	4	8	0
	F	13	60	0	7	0	0	7	0	0	7	6	0
Cigarettes	M	16	40	8	12	0	4	8	0	0	0	12	0
	F	6	63	0	6	0	6	6	0	6	0	7	0

DISCUSSION

From Table 1 it is clear that, not unexpectedly, late-coming proved to be the biggest general trouble-provoking factor, followed closely by noisiness and smoking. An examination of Table 2 shows that while learners in general feel that stealing from others and damaging school property are the two misdemeanours that deserve corporal punishment most, it is equally clear that poor achievement in tests and examinations and eating or chewing in class are viewed as the two misdemeanours that are the most undeserving of corporal punishment. From Table 3 it is clear that, on the whole, learners echo how their parents feel about the need for corporal punishment to 'discipline' their children.

Table 4 reveals that in the case of black learners, manual labour (digging trenches, slashing grass, gardening) was used for the lesser offences and suspension, cleaning toilets or expulsion was increasingly used as the misdemeanours became more serious (truancy, cannabis, and alcohol use). The most popular forms of punishment for misdemeanours were slashing grass, suspension and reporting every 30

minutes, in that sequence. Table 5 shows that expulsion and suspension were the most common punishments meted out for smoking cannabis and cigarettes and for taking liquor in the case of white learners, whereas scrutiny of Table 6 indicates that Asian learners were mostly punished by being expelled from the school. Curiously, the unproductive punitive measure of writing lines remains a popular form of punishment in all these schools.

Table 7 shows that the three most recommended punishments by black learners are suspension, slashing grass, and reporting every 30 minutes, and the four least recommended punishments expulsion, caning, solitary detention and gardening. The most popular punishments recommended for cannabis, alcohol or cigarette use are suspension, reporting every 30 minutes, and slashing grass; for truancy or vandalism slashing grass, suspension, reporting every 30 minutes, and digging trenches; for noisiness or tardiness slashing grass and suspension. Female learners favoured slashing grass and suspension for vandalism, and slashing grass for truancy. Table 8 reveals that expulsion and suspension were the most recommended forms of punishment for more serious

misdemeanours by white learners (*id est*, smoking cannabis and cigarettes and taking liquor), whereas writing lines and exclusion from class were white learners' punishment of choice for less serious offences. Lastly, examination of Table 9 shows that Asian learners recommended expulsion for more serious offences (*id est*, truancy, vandalism, smoking cannabis, and taking liquor). Curiously, exclusion from class and solitary detention were recommended for the less serious offences such as noisiness and tardiness.

Zindi (1995) found, however, that among Zimbabwe's secondary school learners almost all surveyed would like to see corporal punishment abolished. This is not entirely the case in the current sample of learners, since a number of learners in all groups (albeit a small number) recommended corporal punishment for almost every type of misdemeanour. Anderson and Payne (1994) found that approximately 75 percent of Barbadian learners surveyed still approved the use of corporal punishment, although their comments also suggested that a considerable degree of routine (and illegal) 'flogging' or 'lashing' by regular classroom teachers occurred, which many wished to see stopped.

The authors agree with Porteus *et al* (2001:29-64) that in order for real change to come about, changes in the following broad areas have to be moderated:

- At a personal level (internal locus of control), educators will need to change their personal approach to this malpractice.
- The underlying learning barriers and needs of learners must be addressed satisfactorily.
- The concept of democratic discipline must be accepted and practised by all concerned.
- Building community, *id est*, creating classrooms based on respect and dignity is a requisite.

Furthermore, the development and operationalising a set of school rules and a code of conduct are crucially important factors.

The Society for Adolescent Medicine concludes that corporal punishment in schools is an ineffective, dangerous and unacceptable method of discipline. The use of corporal punishment in school reinforces the notion that physical aggression is an acceptable and

effective means of eliminating unwanted behaviour (Greydanus, Pratt, Greydanus & Hoffman 1992). We could not agree more.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the findings may have some role to play in exerting pressure on schools to eliminate some of their more ritualized and pedagogically counterproductive practices. In our opinion, the current results support a number of findings from previous studies, e.g. far too often, it seems as if corporal punishment is an outlet for 'pent-up feelings of adults rather than an attempt to educate children' (Hitting ..., 1996:9), while seemingly, many ways of disciplining learners currently are not aimed at building self-discipline, do not take learners' basic needs into account, and do not suggest an attempt at improving the underlying problem of an inadequate configuration of relationships (Porteus *et al* 2001).

It is agreed that many alternatives to corporal punishment are available and have proven their worth (Discipline at school (NCACPS) [Online] 2004). We also believe that drawing up of a set of written (and workable) school codes and rules (an overview of which is provided in Maree 1999; 2000), compiled co-operatively by a panel, which should, ideally, at least comprise teachers from different schools, facilitators and consultants, e.g. experts from the field of education law, experts on the constitution, psychologists, parents and children), should be the logical starting point for any intervention programme. These codes and rules should be visible, be communicated to children and their parents on admission (and regularly thereafter), be implemented consistently and revised on a regular basis (Ball 1989:23-25; Cryan 1987:146-153; 1995:37; Hunt 1999:1-3; Kessler 1985:175-176).

Lastly: Should our observations be correct (and we believe this to be the case), the time has probably come for a national indaba to be held on the matter of continuing corporal punishment in our schools as a matter of extreme urgency. The signal that is far too often being sent out to defenceless children is that might is right. This indicates potential tragedy for our already crime-ridden society. It seems that perpetrators are still choosing to ignore the ill-effects

of this kind of degrading, inhumane behaviour (and, by and large, getting away with it). In the light of the spiral of violence in South African schools, we should like to state that authoritative research on the topic has shown that corporal punishment is significantly linked to a rise in violence. As has already been stated: The destructive chain: violence (including corporal punishment) fear → violence, hate and anxiety → retribution → more violence, needs to be broken. Installing fear, 'proving' one's authority over inferiors, and implementing outdated ways of disciplining learners have no place in our postmodern society.

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