



## Perceptions and Experiences of Learners on the Banning of Corporal Punishment in South African Schools

Londeka Ngubane<sup>1</sup>, Sazelo Mkhize<sup>2</sup> and Shanta Balgobind Singh<sup>3</sup>

*University of KwaZulu-Natal, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*

**KEYWORDS** Corporal Punishment. Discipline. Illegal Practice. Rights. Violence

**ABSTRACT** The growing recognition that corporal punishment is an act of violence against children has resulted in the abolishment of this form of punishment in society, and particularly in schools. This qualitative study explores the views of learners on the administration of corporal punishment although it has been legally abolished in all South African schools. Data collection was done by means of semi-structured interviews involving selected learners in two secondary schools in the Pinetown District in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The findings suggest that regardless of the legal framework that criminalises the use of corporal punishment, the administration of this form of punishment persisted in the schools under study. Moreover, some learners had become so insensitive to the physical pain inflicted by corporal punishment, that their behaviour was exacerbated rather than curbed by practice.

### INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, the use of corporal punishment in schools was prohibited by law in 1996 when the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 was promulgated (South Africa 1996c). However, a national study by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) (2012) found that, of the 5,939 learners who had been surveyed in 2012, 49.8 percent had still been caned or spanked by a teacher or principal as punishment for displaying undesirable behaviour.

In the twentieth century, corporal punishment was one of the key methods used to discipline learners in South African schools (Makubetse et al. 2018). The latter scholars argue that “it was a blunt instrument and a panacea for all the “ills” afflicting schools. It was applied indiscriminately and, in some instances, violently for anything vaguely resembling indiscipline”. This belief was to a large extent supported by a verse in the Bible that reads, “Spare the rod and spoil the child” (Holy Bible 2000: Proverbs 13: 24). Teachers thus felt obligated to administer corporal punishment as a means of maintaining discipline and controlling learners at school (Department of Education 2000: 5).

However, endless warnings by researchers have urged that the ‘administration of corporal punishment to children is tantamount to teaching them that violence is a way of solving conflict’ (Masakhane and Chikoko 2016). This schol-

ar further annotates that ‘it also implies that children learn that violent behaviour on the part of a powerful person at the expense of a weaker one, is acceptable’ (Masakhane and Chikoko 2016). The efficacy of corporal punishment in the educational context has been hotly debated since the 80s. For example, the death of 8-year-old Nthabiseng Mtambo, who died in a hospital in the Free State in February 2016 after her Grade 3 teacher had continuously beaten her on the head with a hosepipe for not doing her homework, exposed the horrors associated with physical punishment (Röhrs 2016: 1). In another incident, Sphamandla Choma a 14-year-old boy, was left paralyzed and later died after he had allegedly been assaulted by his school principal in Middelburg, Mpumalanga “for stealing R150 from his teacher’s bag” (Masweneng 2017). Many more incidents have been cited of children sustaining injuries and even dying as a result of corporal punishment. However, anecdotal evidence and the researcher’s personal experiences confirm that many such cases remain unreported.

Various researchers maintain that corporal punishment has little value in augmenting educational potential and that it produces a malicious cycle of violence. For example, Röhrs (2017) suggests that corporal punishment “may have detrimental effects, particularly if experienced during early because early childhood experiences have a strong influence on the development of behavioural and social skills. This form of punishment

might be associated with a number of unwanted outcomes such as aggressive, delinquent and antisocial behaviours. Furthermore, corporal punishment can create a “vicious circle” of conflict and violence that carries on into adulthood. Critics of this phenomenon also maintain that when teachers punish children physically, they simulate violent behaviour that will be adopted by the victims. For example, a study conducted by Dodge et al. (1992 cited in Molepo 2010: 2) found that, at elementary schools where teachers tended to administer physical punishment, harm to peers and damage to property were exacerbated. Throughout the 1990s, sentiments repudiating the use of corporal punishment gained impetus in South Africa and this led to its abolishment in all South African schools. SASA thus introduced a novel and nonviolent approach to education in the country, and stipulates that political motivation on the part of the government and the commitment of principals, teachers and parents are essential for the successful implementation of this new approach. All these stakeholders have to work “in close collaboration to establish a new morality and behaviour” as “a centuries-old system of education that allowed the use of physical punishment has fallen away” (Molepo 2010: 2).

It is against this backdrop that a comprehensive review of relevant literature was undertaken and that individual interviews were conducted with learners from in a selected township in Kwa-Zulu-Natal province. It was envisaged that the interviews with the learners would elicit rich data that would enhance the researcher’s insight into their perceptions of the persistent use of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure in their schools. The study was thus premised on the assumption, which had been strengthened by anecdotal and media evidence, that corporal punishment was still administered in some schools in South Africa and in schools in the study area in particular. This paper reports on the data that were elicited from the senior secondary school learners that participated in the study.

### **Problem Statement**

The South African society has experienced major social, economic and political changes over the last 24 years. One of these changes is the

banning of corporal punishment in all public schools. However, debates that are embedded in religious, social and cultural values propose that it is crucial to punish children physically, as it aids to entrench the values of society, good conduct and discipline in them (Masitsa 2008: 155). Many have argued that the abolition of corporal punishment is synonymous with loosening teachers’ grip on learners (Shaikhmag and Assan 2014). The implication here is that “if used judiciously, this type punishment could be an effective way of preventing and curbing misconduct” (Ezekiel 2003: 1). However, various authors such as Bauer et al. (1990: 290-293), Porteus et al. (2001:2 1-220), and Straus and Donnelly (1994) maintain that corporal punishment does not achieve what it intends to, and that its use has become obsolete in democratic societies. Schools are meant to be safe places where learners can fulfil their educational needs. However, the problems that emanate from the persistent use of corporal punishment not only perpetuate the cycle of child abuse, but they impact negatively on academic performance and perpetuate a culture of violence in our vulnerable societies.

### **Objectives**

The study aimed to uncover the continued illegal practice of corporal punishment in some schools and to illuminate the consequences of this form of violence on young people by exploring its effects on them through their perceptions and experiences. As numerous studies focused on educators’ perceptions on the corporal punishment phenomenon and its abolishment in South African schools, this study employed a novel approach by shifting attention to the experiences and perceptions of learners as expressed through their authentic voices. It was also assumed that learners would be aware of their right to be protected against hurtful and offensive forms of discipline and that they would thus openly and frankly discuss this topic in a secure and safe environment. Based on these assumptions, the objectives listed below needed to be achieved:

- 1) Uncover corporal punishment as one of the forms of punishment that learners were subjected to at the schools under study;

- 2) Determine whether the administration of corporal punishment exacerbated or curbed undesirable behavior.
- 3) Determine if corporal punishment is, according to learner's views, an effective deterrent of undesirable behavior.
- 4) Identify alternative forms of punishment that could, according to learners, be effectively implemented to curb behavior in schools.

### **The Status of Corporal Punishment in South Africa**

In South Africa, evidence has shown that strategies to ban all forms of corporal punishment have been negligible in some schools. To resolve this matter, Mkhize (2008: 73-74) advocates that "public campaigns in all forms of the media must be speedily embarked upon to ensure the presence of nation building activities that are premised upon 'Ubuntu' and human rights in the public arena". Mkhize (2008: 73-74) commends that these campaigns must examine, expose, educate about and communicate instances of human rights abuse. Another recommendation is that pressure groups should play a role in the total abolishment of corporal punishment, which has a long history in this country.

During the apartheid era, the association between educators and learners was characterised by power and fear (Kapueja 2014: 37) as teachers made use of caning to maintain and enforce discipline in public schools. According to Mokhele (2006: 48), "before 1994, power and authority were the basis for control and discipline". He argues that the classroom setting was strict and the learners tended to be apprehensive as they were not granted a platform to voice their opinions and concerns regarding disciplinary matters. However, SASA "abolished the use of corporal punishment in all South African schools" (Sonn 1999: 2).

According to the Education Rights Project (2005: 10), "corporal punishment has been practised in South Africa for centuries. The history of slavery, colonialism and apartheid is also the history of the whip, the lash and the sjambok". For the duration of the apartheid years, corporal punishment was used extensively in the classroom (Education Rights Project 2005: 10). "Whipping was the most commonly used form of punish-

ment and was handed down by the legal system for young offenders .... [and] an average of 40 000 young people were caned per year" (Education Rights Project 2005: 10). This source is highly critical of the apartheid regime's sanctioning of corporal punishment, which is clear in the following statement:

*"The apartheid education system was based on a violent, anti-democratic and authoritarian philosophy. Young black South Africans were not considered capable of becoming critical and responsive citizens. Instead, they were 'educated' to become obedient 'low-wage' workers and servants in a racist capitalist system. White children were also educated to become masters and owners instead of critical thinkers. Over time, many educators and parents came to believe deeply in the usefulness of corporal punishment. Along the way, the practice of corporal punishment became deeply woven into the fabric of our society" (Education Rights Project 2005: 10).*

The banning of corporal punishment in South African schools was one of the responses that developed after the 1976 student uprising, particularly because during the time when resistance to apartheid swelled in South Africa, international perceptions and views had also begun to change. However, the prohibition of corporal punishment has resulted in teachers experiencing various disciplinary problems in schools. Mokhele (2006: 149) states that, after the abolition of corporal punishment, teachers were expected to relate to learners in a friendly manner "and to establish a more relaxed atmosphere". This scholar believes that constructive and positive teacher-learner relationships have the possibility of producing a beneficial learning environment in the classroom, and will establish whether or not a learner can benefit from the teaching and learning situation.

Article 3 in the South African Constitution (South Africa 1996a), which states that "no person shall be subjected to torture of any kind, nor shall any person be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way", prompted the publication of a booklet entitled: *'Alternatives to corporal punishment: The learning experience being introduced in schools'* by the Department of Education. This booklet states that discipline depends on "constructive, corrective, rights-based, positive educative practices" and not on

punishment nor on specific disciplinary actions that can be regarded as “punitive, destructive and negative” (Department of Education 2000: 9).

In 1994, following the first democratic elections in this country, South Africa became a true democracy with an advanced Constitution that promotes democratic values and principles. However, significant changes were needed in the education system if these democratic principles were to be employed. Teachers were thus also “expected to employ democratic principles in dealing with learner misbehaviour” (Kapueja 2014: 41). According to Edwards (2008: 130), “democratic discipline is characterised by learners’ complete and authentic involvement”. This scholar further maintains that democratic discipline is also categorised by its being sincerely involved in the teaching-learning programme. Sonn (1999 cited in Kapueja 2014: 41) states that the new democracy in South Africa introduced a culture of human rights in the country as “the culture of human rights is written into the Constitution and the Bill of Rights”. Additionally, she maintains that “discipline is not only learned at school “ children learn about discipline at home and in the communities in which they live” (Kapueja 2014: 41). Rosouw (Joubert and Prinsloo 2008: 107) confirms the latter view by stating that “historically, schools existed as a continuation of the family unit, as didactic functions could no longer be fulfilled by family members. Good discipline does not come about by chance, but needs to be purposefully managed”.

This scholar further propagates that discipline is “a teacher-directed activity whereby they seek to lead, guide, direct, manage or confront a learner about behaviour that disrupts the rights of others” (Joubert and Prinsloo 2008: 107). Discipline is used actively and beneficially where learners receive and it is a corrective approach in which they acquire self-control, respect for others and learn to accept the consequences of their actions (Kapueja 2014: 41). However, common acts of punishment seem to focus on misbehaviour, are “psychologically hurtful to learners, and [are] likely to provoke anger, resentment and additional conflict” (Joubert and Prinsloo 2008: 107).

### Theoretical Underpinning

Three criminological theories that explain the criminal phenomenon of corporal punishment

guided this study. These theories were: (i) the theory of the subculture of violence, (ii) the differential association theory, and (iii) the deterrence theory.

### The Theory of the Subculture of Violence

Although the subculture of violence thesis was originally devised to examine and explain high rates of violence among structurally marginalised populations in various neighbourhoods, the researcher applied this theory in her evaluation of the use of corporal punishment to maintain social control in some South African schools.

In 1967, Dr Marvin Wolfgang and Francis Ferracuti launched a comprehensive exposition of what they termed the *subculture of violence thesis*. This renowned theory in the field of violence endeavours to outline a methodological framework for the experiential examination of violent subcultures as it argues that, “within large and complex societies, sub-groups learn and develop specialized norms and values through differential association and organizations that emphasize and justify the use of physical force above and beyond that which is regarded as ‘normative’ of the culture as a whole” (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967: 2, cited in Mkhize 2012: 60). Central to their discussion is the notion that “higher rates of violence amongst lower-class and racialised populations could be explained by the fact that these groups have embraced values and norms that are more permissive of violence” Ontario Youth Action Plan 2016: 1). Therefore, although violence in groups is deliberated as a means of deterring young people away from delinquent behaviour, the impact that violence has on young people “may remain unidentified or undiscovered due to the fact that it is considered as normal” (Mkhize 2012: 60). As a result, children may possibly become afraid to protest or report incidences of violence as they may be perceived as ill-mannered. In this context, Matthews et al. (1999: 5) argue that “the culture of violence can also lead to a culture of silence which can be attributed to either intimidation by perpetrators... or to such an acceptance of violence as a way of life that fewer people report victimisation” (Lewis 1997).

Teachers’ perception of their own childhood experiences of corporal punishment may thus be that they were subjected to harsh forms of disci-



pline and corporal punishment and that “getting a hiding was normal” (Govender and Sookrajh 2014: 1). Based on their past experiences, many teachers perceive that corporal punishment was used effectively to control behaviour, to encourage normalised behaviour through obedience to school rules, and to establish the authority of the teacher as a giver of knowledge. Some teachers’ perceptions and experiences of corporal punishment thus entrench the perception that it is a worthwhile mechanism to establish an educator’s authority as a provider of knowledge and the custodian of discipline. Today, teachers still believe that learners will co-operate if they are able to administer corporal punishment to curb deviations from the school rules such as coming late (Govender and Sookrajh 2014: 1).

The subculture of violence theory was thus applicable to the current study as it illuminated the causes of violence in schools and the factors that provoke it. According to the Education Rights Project (2005: 10), “corporal punishment has been practiced [sic] in South Africa for centuries [and] the history of slavery, colonialism and apartheid is also the history of the whip, the lash and the sjambok.” The Christian National Education system of the apartheid era was designed for school children “to become passive citizens who would accept authority unquestioningly” (Department of Education 2000: 5). The use of the cane was thus condoned as a way of maintaining control and “dealing with those who stepped out of line” (Department of Education 2000:5.). Ntuli (2012: 23) asserts that discipline in this area was founded on the principle that “children need to be controlled by adults”, and thus verbal and physical abuse was a way of subverting children. Corporal punishment became ‘normative’ in this era in a society that saw nothing wrong with violence as a form of disciplining children. However, researchers increasingly saw “a direct link between corporal punishment and levels of violence in society” (Department of Education 2000: 5).

### **The Differential Association Theory**

This theory was formulated by Edwin Sutherland in 1939 and revised in 1947. The theory argues that criminal behaviour is learned in a similar way as law-abiding values are learned and that

this learning activity is acquired during interactions with others through a process of communication within intimate groups. Sutherland propagates that “just as one can be socialized into good behaviour, so also can one be socialized into bad behaviour (Sutherland 1947, cited in Baslakoh and Andon 2010: 4). According to Vold (2002: 217), Sutherland believed that the major difference between social confirming and criminal behaviour lay in what was learnt rather than how it was learned.

This theory thus holds that criminal behaviour is learned through contact and involvement with other persons and through non-verbal and verbal communication. According to this theory, the rudimentary part of the learning of criminal behaviour takes place within close personal groups such as the family, co-workers and among peers. The primary reference group is that of the immediate family that the individual lives and grows up with (Sutherland 1974: 11). It is held that these connections communicate the individual’s understanding of shared norms and values. “It is then assumed that if the individual is capable of learning what is acceptable in society, [he/she is] also capable of learning what is considered unacceptable” (Sutherland 1974: 12). This theory holds that behaviour is entirely a product of the individual’s social environment and that behavioural patterns depend on the values that the individual gains from significant others around him/her in society. This implies that cultural conflict is a central theme in the differential association theory.

It is also held that “regular criminal behaviour is due to differential association in a situation in which cultural conflict exists, and eventually to the social disorganization in that situation” (Bezuidenhout 2011: 143). According to the theory, “the associations that occur early (priority); that last longer or occupy a disproportionate amount of one’s time (duration); that happen the most frequently; and that involve the most intimate, closest, or most important partners/peers (intensity) [are] likely to exert the greatest effect on an individual’s decision to participate in either conforming or non-conforming behaviour” (Sutherland 1974: 12). Leighninger et al. (1996: 4) support Sutherland’s views by stating the following:

“...*differential associations vary in frequency, duration, priority and intensity. Referring to*

*the contact an individual must have with proponents of criminal behaviour, this principle suggests that there is a varying but direct relationship that affects how often, for what length of time, how important and how intense [sic] deviant behaviour occurs."*

Akers and Jensen (2006) maintain that when violent behaviour is learned, it includes methods of committing the crime which are sometimes simple and sometimes very complex. Certain behaviours are elucidated by detailed motives, drivers, rationalisations and attitudes; for example, 'a naughty-school-child-is-hit' specific attitude. The specific direction of motives is learnt from others' definitions of rules as either favourable or unfavourable. The adult or child comes into contact with people who obey the law and people who reject legal codes. This creates a conflict of ideas and adults or youngsters could become confused and frustrated. Also, Leighninger et al. (1996: 4) add that, "when an individual associates more with members of a group who favour deviance than with members of a group who favour societal norms, that individual is more inclined to act defiantly". Therefore, although the use of corporal punishment is banned in all South African schools, in most schools in the study area this practice reportedly persists. Punishing learners physically has thus become a shared norm among teachers and school principals and is apparently still favoured by most parents. It is in this context that Akers and Jensen (2006, cited by Mkhize 2012: 63) argue as follows:

*"Individuals are exposed to pro-criminal and pro-social norms, values and definitions as well as patterns of reinforcement [that are] supportive of criminal or pro-social behaviour. The more an individual is differentially associated and exposed to deviant behaviour and attitudes [that are] transmitted by means of his/her primary and secondary peer groups, the greater his/her probability is for engaging in deviant or criminal behaviour."*

Moreover, school authorities (teachers and school principals) often discuss the different techniques they use in their schools for maintaining order. If a teacher or a school principal notices that the use of corporal punishment is applied in a neighbouring school, he/she is likely to apply it in his own school as well. Once the school principal starts using or condones corporal punishment as a mech-

anism to maintain order and discipline in the school, most teachers in that school will follow his example. However, children are harmed while educators try to set an example for potential rule breakers. If one or two teachers are feared by the learners due to the intensity of the punishment they administer or the number of strokes they inflict, other teachers will see this as a positive way of engendering 'respect' among their learners. Consequently, many teachers end up emulating their role models within the school.

The phenomena described above are elucidated by the theory of imitation, which maintains that "observers tend to imitate modelled behaviour if they like or respect the model, see the model receiving reinforcement, see the model giving off signs of pleasure, or are in an environment where imitating the model's performance is reinforced" (Mkhize 2012: 63).

Sutherland (1974) states that criminal behaviour is learned through being in contact with others in a process of communication. Contact and observations are also the means of communication through which criminals learn their deviant behaviour. The differential association theory thus essentially argues that criminal behaviour is more predominant in individuals who associate and interact with individuals who exhibit criminal mindsets and behaviours than when they are among those who do not (Sutherland 1974: 5). To illustrate this point, teachers who endeavour to discipline but also reform a learner who exhibits deviant behaviour often refer to his/her involvement with the 'wrong friends', and they urge such a learner and/or his/her parents to reflect on their influence and to leave the group.

### **The Deterrence Theory**

The deterrence theory relates to punishment and goes back all the way to the early works of classical thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes (1588–1678), Cesare Beccaria (1738–1794), and Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). These social convention thinkers provided the groundwork for the modern deterrence theory in criminology (DiIulio 1959: 1). According to Elliot (2003: 1), deterrence encompasses the threat of punishment through some form of sanction.

Beyleveld (1979: 207) states that "a person is deterred from offending by a sanction if, *and only*

if, he refrains from that act *because* he fears the implementation of the sanctions, and *for no other reason*". There are two rudimentary types of deterrence: general and specific. General deterrence is intended to prevent crime among the general population (DiIulio 1959: 233). Elliot (2003: 5) further maintains that "*general deterrence* signifies the effects of threat of punishment and that threat encompasses both the risk of detection and the severity of the sanction". The latter scholar argues that, "because general deterrence is intended to deter those who witness the infliction of pain upon the guilty from committing crimes themselves, corporal punishment was, and in some places still is, carried out in public so that others can witness the pain and be deterred from committing a crime" (DiIulio 1959: 46). For example, in the school environment corporal punishment is used to maintain discipline and order among the learner population. Therefore, according to the general deterrence theory, because the punishment of a learner occurs in front of other learners, it serves as an example to those who have not yet engaged in delinquent behaviour. Conversely, *specific deterrence* is, by the nature of the proscribed sanctions, "designed to deter only the individual offender from committing that crime in the future" (DiIulio 1959: 33). Advocates of specific deterrence also consider that punishing offenders harshly will make them reluctant to reoffend in the future. Elliot (2003: 5) further propagates that '*special deterrence*' or '*specific deterrence*' denotes the effects of actual punishment on the individual offender.

*General deterrence* intends that the overall class or school population (or at least potential wrongdoers in the school) will learn from the experience of punished learners and will refrain from following their example. *Specific deterrence* is based on the notion that people will learn from their own experience. It is thus proposed that learners, when punished, will learn from the bad experience of punishment and that this will deter them from further undesirable behaviours. Elliot (2003: 5) argues that "*specific deterrence* should be stronger than *general deterrence* since the actual experience must be more powerful than the theoretical knowledge of sanctions or vicarious punishment". Thus deterrence is only one compliance-generating tool. Advocates of deterrence believe that people choose to obey or violate the

law after calculating the gains and consequences of their actions.

According to Elliot (2003: 2), the presence or introduction of a sanction may deter or avert an undesirable behaviour in a number of different ways, such as the following:

"(i) *Knowledge of the sanction affects perception of the cost of offending so that compliance is seen as more attractive than offending;* (ii) *Knowledge of the sanction, coupled with a belief in the sanctity of law or unquestioning legal authority, may be sufficient for compliance;* (iii) *Sanctions may also have moral-educative and habituate effects so that they may be causally involved in the generation of moral beliefs and inhibitions and [thus] laws may be obeyed purely by force of habit;* (iv) *The implementation of sanctions, rather than the mere threat, may reduce offences by incapacitating potential offenders, reforming them, or by creating, via stigmatisation of the offender, informal pressures to comply.*"

Deterrence refers to some amalgamations of the above different mechanisms, but for strict usage the first mechanism ("Knowledge of the sanction affects perception of the cost of offending so that compliance is seen as more attractive than offending") must always be present, or else the compliance gaining approach is something other than deterrence (Elliot 2003: 2). This statement suggests that people evaluate the costs and benefits of offending, and the cost is the threat of sanctions.

The argument underpinning deterrence is that the risk to law breakers must be made so excessive and the punishment so severe, that people will believe that they have more to lose than gain from an offence (Elliot 2003: 3). For example, historically in England and the United States execution by hanging was carried out in public. Thus the public and family members "were allowed to attend so that they could see what happened to those who broke the law" (DiIulio 1959: 233). The core of deterrence is thus the threat of punishment. As a result, "barbed wire and fierce dogs are intended as deterrents provided that their presence is deliberately made obvious" (DiIulio 1959: 233). These examples illustrate how the threat of corporal punishment is used as a deterrent in most schools where it is still administered. For example, one anecdotal piece of evidence that prompt-

ed this study was that instruments of punishment (pipes and sticks) that were used to inflict pain on learners in the study area would be left within learners' sight on some teachers' desks.

Deterrence is thus associated with the severity and certainty of sanctions. "The more severe a punishment is...the more likely [it is] that a rationally calculating human being will desist from criminal acts" (DiIulio 1959: 235). However, the dilemma is that punishment that is too severe is unjust, and punishment that is not severe enough will not deter criminals from committing crimes. Classical theorists such as Beccaria suggest that if people know that their undesirable behaviours will be punished, they will desist from committing criminal activities in the future. Furthermore, punishment must be immediate to deter crime. "The closer the application of punishment is to the commission of the offense, the greater [is] the likelihood that offenders will realize that crime does not pay" (DiIulio 1959: 235).

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The larger study was demarcated to four schools in the Pinetown District in KwaZulu-Natal. This paper reports the findings based on data elicited by learners from the two secondary schools involved in the study. Due to the limited scope of the study, the findings may not be generalised to all the learners and schools in the circuit. It must be emphasised that, due to the sensitive nature of corporal punishment as a disciplinary measure and the vulnerability of both learners and teachers, this study deliberately avoided a perusal of any records of punishment meted out to learners in the schools. The narratives of the learners were thus not verified and it is acknowledged that some participants might have avoided, slightly twisted or exaggerated the truth to some extent for reasons that were beyond the scope of this study.

This study employed a qualitative research design. Primary data were collected by conducting face-to-face interviews with 30 participants from two senior secondary schools in July 2017. The researcher personally visited the identified schools to interview learners who had been selected randomly from class lists provided by an authorised educator and who had indicated their willingness to participate in the study. Semi-structured

interviews were conducted and the same questions were asked each time, but their open-ended nature and phrasing allowed for further probing questions to elicit thick data. An interview schedule had been prepared beforehand based on anecdotal evidence, the researcher's personal experiences and observations, and the literature review.

The population comprised senior secondary school learners and the sample was selected from the total number of the most senior learners (Grade 11 and Grade 12) of each school. The two senior secondary schools were purposively selected. One was an orderly school with good infrastructure and one was a disorderly school with poor infrastructure. The selection of schools with diverse disciplinary and infrastructural backgrounds was because it is generally assumed that orderly schools with good infrastructure and adequate resources tend to enable effective teaching and learning, while disorderly school environments, poor infrastructure and insufficient resources result in ineffective teaching and learning. Secondary schools were deliberately chosen for this study because the literature review had suggested that senior secondary learners were exposed to higher rates of corporal punishment than junior secondary or primary school learners. The sample comprised 30 learners; thus 15 learners from each senior secondary school. In the first school (Athena secondary school), 15 learners were selected from grade 11 to grade 12. The ages of these participants varied from 16-19. There were 8 boys and 7 girls. In the second school (Metis secondary school), 15 learners were selected from grade 11 to grade 12. The ages of these participants varied from 16-19. There were 8 boys and 7 girls. Pseudonyms were used for ethical reasons. The grade mentor (a senior teacher) from each school assisted in the selection of the sample by providing the researcher with a list containing the names of all learners in each grade. Using the lists, the participants were randomly selected so that each learner had a fair chance of participating in the study. No evidence of earlier punishment or history of behaviour was used to select the participants.

As most studies on corporal punishment investigated the views of parents, guardians or educators, learners were the key informants in this study that investigated the use of corporal



punishment in the current era when this disciplinary practice is outlawed. Since it was impossible to trace all schools where corporal punishment had been exposed and to interview all the learners who had been involved either as victims or as peer witnesses, 30 was deemed a sufficient number to represent these two schools. Since the nature of the study was exploratory, the sample was relatively limited and therefore the findings may not be generalised.

### Challenges and Limitations

Four limitations had to be vigilantly monitored to ensure that credibility and dependability were not compromised. The first limitation was the comparatively small scope of the study. While the trustworthiness of this study can in no way be brought into question, it must be acknowledged that the sample group was limited and biased to a certain extent. Interviews were conducted with learners from only two schools in one education district, which is a drop in the ocean when the entire South African school population is considered. Moreover, the fact that the researcher used only learners may have slanted the findings to some extent as the views of other major role players (teachers, principals, members of the school governing body and parents) were not elicited and thus the process of triangulation was limited (Neuman 2004: 136) and the dependability of the findings could not be verified. However, the intention was to listen only to the voices of learners regarding the administration of corporal punishment in the schools. Because positive rapport was established with these young people during the interviews, the researcher is confident that their narratives reflected their real perceptions and actual experiences to a significant degree.

Secondly, the school principals were very uneasy when the researcher explained the intention of her visit and mentioned the title of the research study, and they verbalised their concerns regarding the sensitivity of the data and possible exposure to the media and the Department of Basic Education. To alleviate their fears, the researcher explained that the purpose of the study was not to report them to the Department of Basic Education or that it meant to apportion blame, but only to contribute to the body of knowledge on corporal punishment. The researcher also

assured them of the learners' and their schools' anonymity and that the information would be treated as confidential. Thirdly, the researcher had to obtain permission from the University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal, the Department of Basic Education, the school principals, and the parents of the learners before the study could be conducted. This was a challenging and time-consuming process. As was previously stated, the use of corporal punishment in schools is a sensitive issue because it is illegal in South Africa and several principals and educators lost their jobs because they had contravened the law in this regard. Some principals were thus reluctant to cooperate and allow their students to participate as they saw the research study as a potential 'witch hunt' that could maybe expose them. Some learners felt uneasy when asked if corporal punishment was used in their schools. The researcher had to continuously remind the participants about the purpose of the research. Due to this fear, some teachers could also have influenced the learners not to give a true reflection of what was happening in their schools lest they got caught. However, the researcher assured the learners of their guaranteed anonymity and her ethical subscription to confidentiality and the implications thereof, and the researcher is confident that the findings are a relatively true reflection of the situation pertaining to corporal punishment in the schools under study.

## OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

### Learners' Understanding of Corporal Punishment

The data elicited apprehension about the continued use of corporal punishment in the two schools. The learners narrated various experiences of and perceptions about the topic under study. Not only did these students confine their definition of corporal punishment to the direct infliction of pain on the physical body, but they took it beyond physical pain when they referred to corporal punishment as an approach to control undesirable behaviour to maintain discipline and order in the school. The following narrative reflects what most participants had to say:

**P1:** "*Corporal punishment is something that was implemented so that we, the learners, can decrease our levels of being disruptive in school.*"

P1's response resonates with a statement by Kapueja (2014: 24), who argues that corporal punishment is "the continuous emphasis that has been placed on the need for children to fear their teachers/parents, on the maintenance of strict discipline, and to enforce absolute obedience to the authority of the parent/teacher and the laws of God". This statement also reflects the National Christian Education philosophy: "Corporal punishment is based on a view that children need to be controlled by adults and measures such as sarcasm, shouting and other abusive forms of behaviour were ways of teaching children a lesson or ensuring that they were afraid" (Ntuli 2012: 23).

Participant 2 stated:

**P2:** "*Corporal punishment is where learners are beaten by educators when they have done something wrong.*"

Hyman (1990: 10) offers a definition that is replicated by the definition given by P2: "Corporal punishment in the school is the infliction of pain or confinement as a penalty for an offence committed by a student."

In many schools, each offence that the learners commit is punished, and this often occurs through the use of corporal punishment. This point was made by some participants who stated that corporal punishment was inflicted even for 'petty offences':

**P3:** "*Corporal punishment is any form of punishment that is used by educators to ensure we obey the school rules.*"

**P4:** "*It is a form of physical punishment that is given to learners when they have done something wrong.*"

**P5:** "*Corporal punishment is basically beating up children.*"

**P6:** "*It's something...a method that is used to control learners' undesirable behaviour.*"

All the elements provided in the learners' definitions are reflected in Straus's (1994: 4) definition: "Corporal punishment against a child is the use of physical force with the intention to cause a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control of the child's behaviour."

More definitions read as follows:

**P7:** "*It's when children are hit when they have done something wrong.*"

**P8:** "*It's a method used to keep students on the straight and narrow so that they behave.*"

**P9:** "*It is when you hit a child.*"

**P10:** "*It's the beating up of children violently and painfully.*"

There are some contradictory views in the literature about corporal punishment as not all researchers are of the view that corporal punishment is a harmful and damaging practice that has negative effects on a child. Many argue that two factors must be taken into consideration when distinguishing between corporal punishment and physical abuse, namely *intensity* and *intention*. The latter statement is supported by the deterrence theory which is concerned with the severity of and the reasons for punishment. This theory posits that "the more severe a punishment [is]...the more probable [it is] that a rationally calculating human being will desist from criminal acts" (DiIulio 1959: 235).

### Learners' Perceptions on the Use of Corporal Punishment

Most learners did not support the continued use of corporal punishment, as some saw merit in it. Nine of the 30 respondents supported corporal punishment in statements such as the following:

**P1:** "*It's a good thing because there are still a few learners who misbehave and disrespect teachers.*"

**P7:** "*Corporal punishment is a good disciplinary method because you find that some learners will behave and respect the teachers because they are afraid of being beaten.*"

**P9:** "*It should be continued because it helps us black children to learn. If they beat us we then become afraid to misbehave.*"

Considering the above comments, one can arguably construe that some people in the current generation have adopted previous generations' norm that the use of physical punishment is something that must be accepted as its removal from the social order may result in a chaotic state. Corporal punishment has long been associated with the viewpoint that people in the social order are not capable of critical thinking and self-discipline and that they must thus be closely controlled or monitored by those in power through physical punishment. This viewpoint has been passed on from generation to generation

and it can be contended that, until such a belief system is abolished and people shift their mindset from the infliction of corporal punishment to other alternative means of maintaining discipline, South African schools will never become 'corporal punishment-free zones'.

It is believed that the observation of values will provide insight into group norms. Thus individual action, attitude and perception are key to understanding the collective phenomena that comprise culture. With this in mind, Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967: 153) suggest the following:

*"We suggest that, by identifying the group with the highest rates of violence, we should find in the most intense degree subculture of violence, and having focused on these groups we should subsequently examine the value system of their subculture, the importance of human life in the scale of values, the kinds of expected reactions to certain types of stimuli, perceptual differences in the evaluation of stimuli, and the general personality structure of the subcultural actors."*

The 21 remaining participants who were against the continued use of corporal punishment were adamant that it has negative effects. The following are what some of them had to say:

**P5:** *"The continued use of corporal punishment does not help in any way! For me it has not helped. Initially I was afraid of corporal punishment but once we got beaten repeatedly we've all become used to it. They beat us and we get over it, so it does not work!"*

**P6:** *"Corporal punishment does not help; instead, it worsens the situation and should be stopped."*

**P7:** *"They should stop beating us! It's illegal and it does not help."*

**P11:** *"I think corporal punishment should be stopped because the South African law says it's illegal"*

**P12:** *"It should be stopped! We once attended a workshop where people from the Department of Education stated that corporal punishment is illegal but they are still beating us."*

**P13:** *"They should stop beating us because each year children die at the hands of their educators. Our lives are not safe!"*

In order to work towards the eradication of all forms of violence in society, corporal punishment was legally prohibited in South African schools through the Constitution of South Africa Act No.

108 of 1996 (South Africa 1996a), the South African Schools Act (SASA) No. 84 of 1996 (South Africa 1996c), and the National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996 (South Africa 1996b). A golden thread that ran throughout this study was the vision and aim of the Constitution of South Africa that envisages a country that is free of all forms of violence. However, when the prevalence of corporal punishment in some schools is considered, this aim has not been achieved.

Although the learners indicated that they were resistant to beatings, other red flags that suggested that violence might escalate rather than abate were raised, and it may be argued that learners will continue to display undesirable behaviour regardless of the forms of punishment meted out to them. These red flags are gangsterism, the use of drugs ("smoking weed" was mentioned in particular), truancy, and a general disrespect for teachers and discipline.

Whereas some learners supported the continued use of corporal punishment, the majority renounced it outright. However, persistent reports of the use of corporal punishment in schools prove that there are individuals who resist its abolishment regardless of the consequences. This practice is thus still widely debated by the mass media, stakeholders in schools, and academia. One argument that is strongly against the abolishment of corporal punishment is that the 'power' of teachers has been significantly weakened and that there are no alternative methods for maintaining discipline in schools (Porteus et al. 2001: 1).

### **The Persistent Use of Corporal Punishment in Schools**

The most significant finding of this study is the differing opinions that were expressed by the learners regarding the prevalence of corporal punishment. A minority of the learners said that corporal punishment was no longer used in their schools, while the majority freely told the researcher that corporal punishment was still being imposed. The following were statements that denied the use of corporal punishment:

**P1:** *"No, not anymore. It was used before but now they have stopped."*

**P2:** *"They used it before but not anymore."*

**P3:** *"No, it is not used in our school." (This boy laughed when he said it and looked away.)*

**P4:** “When it was still in use, it was used very often because the learners were misbehaving and they did not listen. Its use was very effective back then because we were misbehaving but they don’t use it anymore.”

**P5:** “Corporal punishment is not used in this school; teachers talk to us when we’ve done wrong.”

However, during my visit I distinctly noticed punishment tools such as pipes and sticks on some teachers’ desks and even in the library where the interviews were conducted. These ‘tools’ were clearly visible (nobody had thought of hiding them) which was a clear indication that corporal punishment was still being inflicted on the learners. Therefore, the fact that some participants informed me that this form of punishment was no longer used in their schools resonated with the culture of violence theory, which is the ‘*herd instinct*’ (my view) that motivates both victims and perpetrators to remain silent about an injustice. Matthews et al. (1999: 5) note that “the culture of violence can also lead to a culture of silence which can be attributed to either intimidation by perpetrators... [or to] such an acceptance of violence as a way of life that fewer people report victimization” (Lewis 1997). Even in situations where learners are beaten and abused by their educators, they cannot report such incidents as corporal punishment in most township and rural schools is considered ‘normal’ even though it was abolished a long time ago. The above responses are also enlightened by the theory of the subculture of violence, which suggests that there are certain experiences that act as causal factors in the development of a subculture. It further suggests that historical experiences translate into a culture which is then communicated from generation to generation as an acceptable philosophy even after the original underlying societal conditions have already disappeared.

In contrast to the comments reported above, the rest of the participants in these two senior secondary schools distinctly referred to the persistent use of corporal punishment:

**P16:** “Yes. It is used. They beat us every day.”

**P17:** “Corporal punishment is used here at our school. In fact, our school is famous for having the most intense use of corporal punishment in the entire township.”

**P18:** “Yes, our teachers and the principal do hit us here at school.”

**P19:** “I have been in this school since grade eight and they have never stopped beating us.”

**P20:** “Yes, it is still being used in this school. Some teachers give us beatings for no reason. If one or two learners have transgressed, they will beat the entire class and tell us that ‘an injury to one is an injury to all’.”

**P21:** “Yes, it’s still being used and a lot. There are certain teachers who are famous in the school for giving the most severe beatings. If you arrive late and one of those teachers is on duty at the gate, you are foolish if you don’t go back home and come back the next day because the beating you will get will leave you screaming like a mad person.”

**P22:** “Yes, it’s something that is used every day and the teachers are unremorseful about it.”

**P24:** “It’s still used here at school. They [teachers] usually give us no fewer than five [lashings]”.

**P25:** “Yes, it’s still being used here at school and also in other schools here in the township.”

The majority of the respondents openly admitted that they had been victims of this form of abuse. Soneson and Smith (2005: 4), who conducted a similar study, indicate that people who live in poverty, irrespective of their ethnic background, are generally inclined to use corporal punishment. The latter authors suggest that numerous boys and girls of all ages are subjected to corporal punishment in the home and at school. They exclude children from ‘rich’ parents and suggest that corporal punishment is not used as a disciplinary measure in the context of affluent home environments. However, the fact that most children who reside in rural areas, including townships, are exposed to this severe form of punishment at home and at school was highlighted by this earlier study which found a general, but not a specific, pattern of corporal punishment being more frequently experienced by children in rural than in urban areas. High-income communities tend to use alternative non-violent forms of discipline. Similarly, Harber (2001) states that violent crime is prevalent in South Africa and that schools in underprivileged areas suffer from serious problems caused by gang-related crime.

### Types of Punishment

The study revealed that various methods of punishment were applied in the schools under



study, with some measure of success. Below are some of the responses offered by the learners in these two schools?

**P1:** *"We are hit on the palms of our hands with a pipe."*

**P2:** *"Sometimes we get suspended from school depending on the offence we have committed."*

**P3:** *"They beat us with a pipe on the buttocks. We usually get no fewer than five strokes."*

**P4:** *"We get the 'nothing fewer than five' on the buttocks."*

These responses illustrate why schools in the study area were notorious for the harsh forms of punishment meted out to the learners. Participant 4's response resonated with an incident that occurred in 2005 when a Grade 10 learner died after allegedly being beaten by a school principal. In the current study, the data suggest that corporal punishment was highly prevalent in the schools under study. Moreover, there was a negative relationship between the use of corporal punishment and learner behaviour, as undesirable behaviours were not stemmed because the severity of the punishments did not decline. This appears to have created a vicious cycle that occurs when behaviours are not corrected and educators then feel that beating the learners is the only way to maintain order in the school. This strongly suggests that, if these schools had modified their operative disciplinary measures, the existing cycle of learner misbehaviour could have been curbed. If that had been achieved, teaching and learning in these schools would have become more effective.

Other measures of punishment were also revealed:

**P:** *"Sometimes we get kicked out of the class."*

**P6:** *"If we arrive late, they sometimes make us pick up litter around the entire school."*

**P7:** *"They make us stand in an empty school hall for an entire day. Sometimes it's difficult to even stand, especially when I'm high from smoking weed."*

**P8:** *"They beat us. Sometimes they take you to the staffroom and there three to five teachers will be waiting for you and each will give you a punishment of nothing less than five lashes on the buttocks."*

**P9:** *"They detain us for misbehaving."*

Clearly, these schools attempted to utilise some of the alternative measures to corporal punishment that had been published by the Department of Basic Education subsequent to the banning of corporal punishment in all South African schools in 1997. These sanctions are generally used in schools where corporal punishment has been abolished, particularly in suburban schools where there are structure, faultless discipline and unparalleled results because of well prepared, competent and driven teachers as well as parents who are actively involved in the daily proceedings of their children's schools. However, the participants' responses revealed that alternative forms of punishment were few and seldom used, and it is thus surmised that educators in township schools may regard such forms of sanctioning time consuming and demanding for various reasons. For example, they may argue that, because something like detention necessitates supervision while the teacher could be doing something 'more constructive', this form of punishment is undesirable. It may be regarded as easier and much more convenient to lash out at learners time and again, as it does not require much effort, thought or reflection on the teacher's part. Such a form of punishment is instant and it also assists the teacher in immediately releasing an internal emotional response to the learner's disruptive behaviour or challenging attitude.

What may be noted in the above responses is that learners openly and without shame referred to their delinquent behaviour; for example, they came late and they smoked weed (marijuana). It is particularly the latter practice that gives cause for reflection, as the adverse impact of marijuana on a child's mind and behaviour has been well recorded in the literature (Tanda and Goldberg 2003; Large 2011). The implication of this finding is that such learners are beaten and punished, but that these schools have no other corrective strategies in place to assist their learners in changing this devastating habit that may only get worse with time. The matter-of-fact manner in which the learners referred to this behaviour also suggests that this culture has been deeply entrenched in their life-world. Therefore, at face value, it appears a travesty that the schools do nothing more than inflict corporal punishment 'to assist' these learners. However, as this was not a focal point of the study, it may only be suggested that future

studies pay concerted attention to this problem in schools.

Other forms of sanctioning were also revealed:

**P10:** "They give us verbal warnings but it depends on the transgression you have made."

**P11:** "If you are caught talking around when the teacher is teaching, they sometimes order you to teach the class as punishment."

**P12:** "Sometimes they make us do public apologies."

Kamugane (2008) also refers to writing an apology and/or reading it aloud as a disciplinary approach used in schools. The latter study revealed that punishment in the form of public apologies, kneeling in front of the class and standing in front of the class were among the approaches that educators in these schools frequently used. Earlier studies and the current study thus suggest that teachers rely heavily on approaches that humiliate and belittle learners with the aim of 'disarming' students who are deviant and who misbehave and to bring them down from their perch as 'heroes' among their peers. Such approaches were also used with some level of success in the schools under study, particularly because the psychological pain involved was used as a deterrent for future misbehaviour.

**P13:** "They make us kneel on the floor for an entire lesson."

**P14:** "They make us stand in front of the class as a form of punishment."

However, the persistence of these measures testifies to their ineffectiveness.

### Corporal Punishment Exacerbates and Encourages Undesirable Behaviour

It was noted that physical punishment became more severe as the learners got older. For example, 24 of the learners stated that corporal punishment influenced them to continue displaying undesirable behaviour, while only six stated that, because they feared corporal punishment, they totally abandoned the undesirable behaviour after the first hiding. Some of the six learners stated the following:

**P1:** "I was involved in a fight. Myself and the girl I fought with were given a beating by three teachers on the hand. From that day onwards I never fought at school again."

**P2:** "Teachers here at school don't have time for games; they beat you one time! Since the last beating I got I've been a very well-behaved boy."

**P3:** "I no longer misbehave. There's a certain teacher here at school who takes you to the staff room once you've misbehaved to go and be beaten by three to four other teaches. I'm an angel now here at school."

Some of the 24 learners who indicated that corporal punishment influenced them to continue displaying undesirable behaviour stated the following:

**P1:** "The more they beat me the angrier I become and this causes me to make more noise in class."

**P2:** "If the teacher beats me for something I did not do I lose respect for that teacher and give them attitude during the lesson."

**P3:** "We've been receiving beatings for all our schooling years, from grade 0 to grade 12, so being beaten is nothing! You can beat me today but that won't stop me from smoking and selling weed here at school. I need the money." (This statement was followed by loud laughter.)

The above responses seem to confirm that corporal punishment is rarely a lasting solution to a disciplinary issue. The learners persisted in misbehaving and some displayed more aggression and disrespect for the educators when they were subjected to corporal punishment. It is evident that these learners were more likely to be destructive in the classroom and on the school premises and it follows that they had a hard time to concentrate in class. The fact that these learners normalised and thus accepted the use of physical violence is an indication that there is a high likelihood that they will beat their own children in the future, and thus the cycle of violence could continue from generation to generation.

**P4:** "I fight here at school as a way to protect myself. The beatings won't make me stop fighting because I have to protect myself and show that I'm no coward!"

**P5:** "I can say I've become used to the beatings, even when I'm walking to school at a slow pace and know that I might end up arriving late if I continue walking at that pace, I just carry on walking like that. I don't get the motivation to walk any faster because I know I'll be hit even if I'm a minute late."

**P6:** "If you talk in class they beat you up for making noise, and if you keep quiet you get a

*beating for being passive. So, I just do whatever I want because I know in the end I'll still get a beating."*

**P7:** *"Once I've been beaten I start behaving because I'm scared of corporal punishment but I repeat the offence anyway!"*

### CONCLUSION

This paper illuminated numerous facets related to disciplinary methods used in schools, with specific reference to corporal punishment. The study revealed that many South African schools still employ and rely heavily on the punitive approach as a means of maintaining discipline in schools. Debates that were evaluated in this study on the validity and applicability of corporal punishment suggest that this topic is highly contentious and that scholars and researchers still do not agree on its place as a disciplinary tool in schools, regardless of human rights considerations. It was against this backdrop that the study was conducted on the premise that learners' authentic voices would enlighten many nebulous areas that still exist in this ongoing debate, and it is believed that this goal has been achieved. Regardless of the sensitivity of issues surrounding corporal punishment and the clear illegality of this practice, it must be emphasised that the study was not intended to allot blame on anyone nor to start a 'witch hunt'; rather, its intention was to highlight areas that require urgent attention and intervention if the Department of Basic Education's objectives of a democratic, human rights-based schooling system is to be realised. The study clearly illuminated that the use of physical punishment in South Africa schools is not a novel phenomenon; however, what this study found to be novel was the reality that many of the learners that were interviewed were not aware that the infliction of corporal punishment is an illegal act and a form of abuse. Additionally, the findings suggest that, if in the township schools that were investigated in this study physical punishment is accepted and normalised by the students and some even believe that without this practice in the schooling system order and discipline will not be maintained, future studies need to be conducted on a wider scope, and the results should be utilised to eradicate this fallacy through awareness campaigns and strict measures by relevant authorities.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Careful consideration of the findings that emerged from the data prompted the following recommendations:

Learners should be involved in the development of the code of conduct and the establishment of classroom rules. By including learners in rule-making, their voices will be heard and they will appreciate the fact that their contributions are valued. At the commencement of the school year, the principal and educators should disseminate an updated version of the code of conduct to learners and their parents. Rules and the consequences of breaking them should be discussed during a session that is set aside for this purpose. During life-skills education, educators ought to include topics on ethical issues, tolerance, conflict management, and problem solving. Schools must encourage and recognise any good behaviour displayed by learners. For example, awards should be given for positive, disciplined behaviour. Learners become more resolute if they are applauded and encouraged for work well done. Because children like to explore, each learner should be encouraged to participate in two or more sporting or cultural activities. In most rural and township schools, sporting activities are seldom emphasised; however, if appropriate extracurricular activities are introduced, most learners will be fully engaged every day. All educators and principals should be thoroughly trained on how to handle or manage discipline in their schools without resorting to corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is illegal and punishable by law. Principals are the custodians not only of school discipline, but also of the law, and if they turn a blind eye to illegal activities at their schools it is tantamount to a severe and punishable misdemeanour. The behaviour of such principals should be exposed and the necessary steps should be taken in the interest of all learners.

### REFERENCES

- Akers RL, Jensen GF 2006. The empirical status of the social learning theory of crime and deviance: The past, present, and future. In: FT Cullen, JP Wright, KR Blevins (Eds.): *Taking Stock: The Status of Criminological Theory*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, pp. 3-7.

- Bauer GB, Dubanowski R, Yamauchi LA, Honbo KAM 1990. Corporal punishment and the schools. *Education and Urban Society*, 22: 285-299.
- Beylveid D 1979. Identifying, explaining and predicting deterrence. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 19(3): 205-224.
- Bezuidenhout C 2011. *A South African Perspective on Fundamental Criminology*. South Africa: Pearson Education.
- Department of Education 2000. *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Dilulio J 1959. Deterrence Theory. From <<https://marisluste.files.wordpress.com/>> (Retrieved on 2 February 2017).
- Dodge KA, Bates JE 1999. Reactive and proactive aggression in school children. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 106(1): 37-51.
- Education Rights Project 2005. Farm Schools: Introduction to the Issues. *ERP Issue Paper 3: Transforming Farm Schools*. University of the Witwatersrand: Education Policy Unit.
- Edwards CH 2008. *Classroom Discipline and Management*. New York: Wiley.
- Ezekiel J 2003. Opponents underrate corporal punishment in schools. *Business Times*, 16: 1-2.
- Govender DS, Sookrajh R 2014. 'Being hit was normal': Teachers' (un)changing perceptions of discipline and corporal punishment. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2): 1-13.
- Holy Bible 2017. Deuteronomy and Proverbs. Cape Town: The Bible Society.
- Hyman IA 1990. *Reading, Writing, and the Hickory Stick: The Appalling Story of Physical and Psychological Abuse in American Schools*. United States of America: Lexington Books.
- Joubert R, Prinsloo S 2008. *The Law of Education in South Africa*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Kamugane LF 2008. *Impact of the Ban on Corporal Punishment on Students Discipline in Secondary Schools in Nembure Division of Embu District, Kenya*. Med. Project, Unpublished. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.
- Kapueja IS 2014. *Discipline in Schooling: A Study of Rural Secondary Schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal*. Doctoral Dissertation. Mhlathuze: University of Zululand.
- Large M 2011. Cannabis Use and Earlier Onset of Psychosis. Arch Gen Psychiatry. From <[https://www.csamasam.org/sites/default/files/impact\\_of\\_marijuana\\_on\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents.pdf](https://www.csamasam.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_marijuana_on_children_and_adolescents.pdf)> (Retrieved on 15 February 2018).
- Leighninger L, Popple B 1996. *The Ethnographer's Toolkit 5*. Walnut Creek: Altimira Press.
- Lewis Sharon 1997. A cry that no one hears. *Children First*, 2(16): 24-26.
- Makubetse M, Bodibe O, Mchiza-Mkhize E 2018. Instil Discipline in Schools But Don't break the Pupils. Daily Maverick. From <<https://mg.co.za/article/2018-11-16-00-instil-discipline-in-schools-but-dont-break-the-pupils>> (Retrieved on 19 September 2019).
- Masakhane SD, Chikoko V 2016 Corporal punishment contestations, paradoxes and implications for school leadership: A case study of two South African high schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(4): 2.
- Masitsa G 2008. Discipline and disciplinary measures in a Free State Township: Unresolved problems. *Acta Academia*, 40(3): 234-270.
- Masweneng K 2017. Pupil Paralysed After Alleged Assault by Principal Dies. From <<https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2017-03-20-pupil-paralysed-after-alleged-assault-by-principal-dies/>> (Retrieved on 3 August 2019).
- Matthews I, Griggs R, Caine G 1999. *The Experience: Review of Interventions and Programs Dealing With Youth Violence In Urban Schools in South Africa*. Durban: Independent Projects Trust.
- Mkhize NBS 2008. *Perceptions and Mental Models of Teachers on Corporal Punishment in Schools*. Master's Degree Thesis, Unpublished. Durban: Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Mkhize SM 2012. *Effects of Community Violence on Learners in a Rural Context*. Master's Dissertation, Unpublished. Durban: Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Mokhele PR 2006. *Teacher-Learner Relationship in the Management of Discipline in Public High Schools*. Master's Degree Thesis, Unpublished. Pretoria: UNISA.
- Molepo N 2009. Beyond Corporal Punishment: Teachers' Perceptions and Suggested Alternatives to the Abolishment of Corporal Punishment in South African Schools. Master's Dissertation, School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand. From <[www.wiredspace.wits.ac.za](http://www.wiredspace.wits.ac.za)> (Retrieved on 2 February 2017).
- Neuman L 2004. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boston: Pearson.
- Ntuli LT 2012. *Managing Discipline in a Post-Corporal Punishment Era Environment at Secondary Schools in the Sekhukhune School District, Limpopo*. Dissertation for a Master of Education Degree. Pretoria: UNISA.
- Ontario Youth Action Plan 2016. Review of the Roots of Youth Violence: Literature Reviews. Volume 5, Chapter 9. From <[http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/oyap/roots/volume5/chapter09\\_subculture\\_violence.aspx#!](http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/professionals/oyap/roots/volume5/chapter09_subculture_violence.aspx#!)> (Retrieved on 5 October 2018).
- Porteus, K, Vally S, Ruth T 2001. *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment: Growing Respect and Discipline in the Classrooms*. Sandown: Heinemann.
- Röhrs S 2016. Twenty Years On: Corporal Punishment in Schools is Alive and Well. Daily Maverick. From <<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-03-14-twenty-years-on-corporal-punishment-in-schools-is-alive-and-well/#.Wp0Dw-hubcs>> (Retrieved on 30 March 2017).
- Röhrs S 2017. Shifting Attitudes And Behaviours Underpinning Physical Punishment of Children. *Briefing*



- Paper*. Children's Institute University of Cape Town, Cape Town.
- Shaikhmag N, Assan TED 2014. The effects of abolishing corporal punishment on learner behaviour in South African high schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(7): 3.
- Soneson U, Smith C 2005. *Ending Corporal Punishment of Children in South Africa*. Arcadia, Sweden: Save the Children.
- Sonn B 1999. *Discipline in Schools: Discipline in a Culture of Human Rights*. Cape Town Via Africa.
- South Africa 1996a. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act No. 108 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- South Africa 1996b. *National Education Policy Act No. 27 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- South Africa 1996c. *South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Straus MA, Donnelly DA 1994. *Beating the Devil Out of Them: Corporal Punishment in American Families*. New York, NY, US: Lexington Books/Macmillan.
- Sutherland EH 1974. *Criminology*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Tanda G, Goldberg SR 2003. Cannabinoids: Reward, Dependence, and Underlying Neurochemical Mechanisms: A Review of Recent Preclinical Data. *Psychopharmacology (Berl)*, 169(2): 115-134. From <[https://www.csam-asam.org/sites/default/files/impact\\_of\\_marijuana\\_on\\_children\\_and\\_adolescents.pdf](https://www.csam-asam.org/sites/default/files/impact_of_marijuana_on_children_and_adolescents.pdf)> (Retrieved on 5 June 2016).
- Vold GB, Bernard TJ, Snipes JB 2002. *Theoretical Criminology*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wolfgang M, Marvin E, Ferracuti F 1967. *Subculture of Violence: Toward an Integrated Theory of Criminology*. London: Tavistock.

---

**Paper received for publication in August, 2019**  
**Paper accepted for publication in September, 2019**