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for every child



BETTER DISCIPLINE FOR GHANA'S CHILDREN

A Comparative Thematic Analysis of Attitudes to and Experience of Corporal Punishment in Ghana to Inform Advocacy on Ending Violence Against Children

**By Dr Kate Danvers and
Dr David Schley on behalf of
Challenging Heights**

Contents

List of figures and tables	iii
About the Authors	iv
Acknowledgements	iv

CHAPTER 1

Introduction	1
• Research Aims	7

CHAPTER 2

Methodology, Method and Procedure	8
• Objectives	8
• Methodology	9
• Research Method	9
• Procedure for the qualitative study	9
• Ethical considerations	9
• Participants	10
• Data collection	12
• Data analysis	12

CHAPTER 3

Results and Analysis	13
• Overview of Thematic Groups, Themes and Subthemes	13
• Detailed analysis of themes	16
• Thematic group 1: Descriptions	16
• Theme 1A: Descriptions of violent punishment in school	16
• Theme 1B: Descriptions of violent punishment in the home	18
• Thematic group 2: Impact	19
• Theme 2A: Impact on the victim	19
• Theme 2B: Impact on home life	24
• Theme 2C: Impact on witnesses	26

• Theme 2D: Impact on perpetrator	27
• Thematic Group 3: Opportunities for Change, in conflict with	29
• Thematic Group 4: Barriers to Change	29
• Theme 3A: Desirable alternatives to caning	30
• Theme 4A: Undesirable alternatives to caning	32
• Theme 3B: Attitudes against violent punishment	34
• Theme 4B: Pro-violent punishment attitudes	37
• Theme 3C: Resistance, in tension with Theme 4C: Powerlessness	43

CHAPTER 4

Challenging Heights School case study and reflections	48
• Background	48
• Intervention to strengthen the non-violent discipline policy	49
• Reflections	50

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations	52
• Summary of findings	52
• Implications for advocacy campaign strategy	54
• Key messages	54
• Engagement strategy	54
• Educational campaign goals	55

REFERENCES

56

APPENDIX

Thematic Groups, Themes and Subthemes	61
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LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 1: Number of participants in each category of respondent	11
Table 2: Thematic groups, themes and subthemes	14
Figure 1: Thematic groups, themes and subthemes	15

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“ We are grateful to all who helped make the research possible, most importantly, the participants, who gave up their time to be interviewed for the research. Thanks are due to the staff of Challenging Heights, including Akua Boatemaa, John Degraft Sam, David Kofi Awusi and Dana Wachter, who carried out interviews and transcribed data. We are also grateful to the Head Teacher, Eric Asamani, and Behaviour Management Committee of Challenging Heights School for their commitment to developing our non-violent discipline policy. This research, the research report and the accompanying advocacy campaign was funded by the Members’ Initiative Fund of Family for Every Child and the research design was supported by Camilla Jones, Research Manager, Family for Every Child. We extend our gratitude, respect and admiration to Dr James Kofi Annan, President of Challenging Heights, for his inspirational leadership in promoting non-violent discipline and child rights in Ghana. ”

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



“ [Corporal punishment] directly conflicts with the equal and inalienable rights of children to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity. The distinct nature of children, their initial dependent and developmental state, their unique human potential as well as their vulnerability, all demand the need for more, rather than less, legal and other protection from all forms of violence.”

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006

“...when they continuously beat us we come to school in a very nervous state and very much afraid”

Boy, comparison school 1

Corporal punishment¹, the use of physical pain to correct or punish children, is a human rights abuse that damages children physically, emotionally, educationally and socially, and impacts on communities’ and countries’ economic and social development opportunities (Antonowicz, 2010).

At Challenging Heights, a grassroots Ghanaian non-governmental organisation, we believe passionately that every child deserves to realise their right to education, and our vision is of “a world where every child is in school and lives in a loving and caring family” (Challenging Heights, 2015). For many years, Challenging Heights has been

¹ The terms “physical punishment”, “violent punishment” and “corporal punishment” are used in the literature to describe any action intended to cause pain in order to correct or punish a child. We recognise that the choice of terminology and language are powerful means of constructing social ideas and norms (Foucault, 1969, Burr, 1995), and language can be used to minimize the severity of punishment and justify its use (O’Reilly, 2008). In line with a rightsbased approach, we are not neutral about the terms used to describe punishment and consider the term “violent punishment” to be the term that most clearly sends a message that these types of punishments are unacceptable violations of children’s rights.

active against child labour and trafficking in Ghana, and from experience with hundreds of families, we know that a safe educational environment is a protective factor against both trafficking (UNICEF, 2005) and abuse in the family home (Jones, 2015). We take a rights-focussed approach in our work (e.g. Kinderman, 2007) and have developed a model of care for trafficked children that pays as much attention to prevention of rights abuses (through building livelihoods opportunities for at risk families and promoting education in under-resourced communities) as it does to amelioration of the damage caused by trafficking (through our rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration services).

At Challenging Heights, we believe that “systemic change is important for achieving sustainable and wide reaching improvements in children’s care” (Family for Every Child, undated, pg. 40). Our model includes advocacy at the local, national and international levels to promote changes in attitudes, cultural practices and laws to benefit children’s wellbeing and promote their protection. Our approach has much in common with a community psychology approach to practice, intervention and research (e.g. Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010, Kagan et al. 2011), which sees human wellbeing and distress as rooted in the wider socioeconomic context (e.g. Riger, 1993), is interested in social and systemic change as well as individual change (e.g. Orford, 2008) and takes a “preferential option for the oppressed” (Burton, 2007), working to help redistribute power and create structural change in society (Burton, 2007).

At Challenging Heights, we believe that “systemic change is important for achieving sustainable and wide reaching improvements in children’s care”

Challenging Heights believes that corporal punishment in schools should be eradicated, both to promote the individual wellbeing of children, and to further Ghana’s development, and we are committed to pushing for systemic change to ensure this happens. In Ghana, as in many low and middle income countries, corporal punishment is legitimised by law (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2016a). The 1998 Children’s Act allows adults to use any punishment that is “justifiable” and “reasonable”, including violent punishment (Republic of Ghana, 1998). The Ghana Education Code of Discipline allows teachers to strike a child up to six times (in secondary school, four times in basic school) if sanctioned and recorded by the Head Teacher (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2016b).

The legitimisation of violent punishment in law is part of, or has contributed to, a widespread acceptance of corporal punishment in Ghana as the best way to correct children, with many Ghanaians rejecting non-violent discipline as a Western notion that risks “spoiling” children (Antonowicz, 2010). Compared to 33 low and middle income countries, children in Ghana experience the 7th highest rate of “violent discipline” (UNICEF, 2010), with over 90% of children surveyed having experienced violent discipline in the preceding month (Twum-Danso, 2010, UNICEF, 2014). Surveys find no difference in rates of corporal punishment in the home according



to the child’s age or sex, or the parent’s level of education or wealth, or whether the family lived in urban or rural areas, suggesting the practice is ubiquitous in Ghana (UNICEF, 2010).

The violence seen in Ghana’s schools is one example of “structural violence”, the process by which suffering is structured by historical and economic processes and forces conspiring to constrain agency (Farmer, 2005). Structural violence operates as a form of social control, and serves to ‘keep people in their place’: those who suffer violence on a day-to-day basis find it difficult to mount active challenges to the political, economic and social status quo (Farmer, 2005). Structural violence ensures that human rights abuses are not evenly distributed, but that the poorest experience the most violations (Farmer, 2005). The poorest children in a class are most likely to experience corporal punishment (Ogando Portela & Pells, 2015), for example in Ghana, some parents can afford to send

their children to expensive private schools where only non-violent discipline is used, but the poorest families send their children to under-resourced schools with large classes and poorly trained and supported teachers, thus increasing the chances that they will experience violence (Antonowicz, 2010).

Some surveys suggest over 70% of children in Ghana have been caned in school (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children et al., 2014), and most schools do not follow the statutory guidelines that limit how corporal punishment should be carried out (Twum-Danso, 2010, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children 2016a, 2016b). In many countries, teachers are seen as essential observers and reporters of child abuse (e.g. Welsh Office, 1995) and schools should be safe havens where children suffering from abuse in the family and community can feel listened to and empowered to report abuse (Mortimer et al. 2012).

In contrast, in Ghana, over 70% of children cite school as the place they are most likely to experience physical punishment (Twum-Danso, 2010).

A survey in 2011 suggested that 94% of parents, 92% of students and 89% of female graduates were in favour of corporal punishment in schools, whilst 64% of teachers thought it must be tolerated (Campaign for Female Education, reported in Owen, 2012). This is despite key figures in the Ghana Education Service, such as the Central Regional Director for Education, speaking out publically against the use of the cane (Ghana News Service, July 2014), and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child having strongly recommended that Ghana should prohibit the use of corporal punishment and remove from teachers' guidelines all references to disciplinary measures using physical force (United Nations, 1997). Most recently, the Director of Ghana Education Services has himself called on teachers to stop using corporal punishment, since it accounts for increased cases of school drop-outs (Graphic Online, 2016).

Some researchers have emphasised the importance of cultural attitudes towards discipline in the use of violent punishment in Ghana (Antonowicz, 2010, Twum-Danso, 2010), suggesting that its acceptance is in part driven by a sense that Ghanaian children are better behaved than children in other countries where

physical punishment is outlawed (Twum-Danso, 2010). Twum-Danso (2010) points out that the International Human Rights discourse is in stark contrast to the views of adults and children in Ghana: she found that the majority of her participants were in favour of violent discipline as long as it did not go "too far". She further suggested that laws banning corporal punishment would never be successful without popular support, and instead, efforts should focus on dialogue to develop agreed definitions of "abusive and excessive" childrearing practices (Twum-Danso, 2010).

We reject the notion that there is a level of violent discipline of children that is safe or not harmful, and believe that every time a child is physically punished it contributes to a culture of violence (Landsford & Dodge, 2008, Mncube & Netshitangani, 2014). Studies of countries which have banned corporal punishment of

children show that rates of violence do decrease after a ban, even if the laws are inadequately enforced or lack public support (Holden & Ashraf, 2016). Corporal punishment has been shown to weaken the tie between children and parents, as well as slowing down mental development, reducing school performance and increasing the probability that the child will hit others (Strauss et al. 2014). Recent research shows that the impact of violence on learning is lasting, with higher levels of violence experienced in school

at age 8 predicting lower maths achievement at age 12 (Jones & Pells, 2016). Violence is often intergenerational (UNICEF, 2014): children who suffer physical abuse may copy the violent behaviour of their elders, and eventually some grow to be parents who abuse their own children, and in this way, corporal punishment in schools has effects on child care (Jones, 2015) and wider community cohesion (Antonowicz, 2010).

Children and families in Ghana identify education as a key material need for child well-being and

the leadership of a new Head Teacher and visiting clinical and community psychologist (KD), we have further developed the non-violent discipline practices in the school to ensure they are rigorously understood and adhered to by all staff and students. Teaching staff have received training in child protection, child development and non-violent behaviour management techniques, with follow-up peer support groups to develop their classroom management approach. We have instigated rules and appropriate non-violent sanctions in every classroom, and have

Corporal punishment has been shown to weaken the tie between children and parents, as well as slowing down mental development and reducing school performance.



care, which validates a child's non-working position (Family for Every Child, 2014), but fear of abuse is often cited as a reason for school absenteeism (Antonowicz, 2010, Jones & Pells, 2016). Absenteeism has a cost in terms of communities' economic development (Antonowicz, 2010) and is a causal factor in other human rights abuses, including trafficking (UNICEF, 2005) and child marriage (UNESCO, 2014).

At Challenging Heights School, a prohibition on caning and other forms of corporal punishment has been in place since the founding of the school in 2007. Over the past two years, under

developed a school-wide code of conduct for pupils, that forms the basis of a positive discipline strategy including rewards and praise for well-behaved pupils. Our approach to non-violence also includes discouraging psychological violent discipline (such as insults, shaming, cursing, threatening and belittling), which some Ghanaian educationalists see as even more damaging than physical violence (Twum-Danso, 2010). Behaviour management techniques are developed from the operant conditioning work of Skinner (1953), and include positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, frustrative non-reward and punishment.

Non-violent behaviour management primarily uses positive reinforcement (such as praise, verbal encouragement, stickers or being clapped and acknowledged in class or assembly) to shape behaviour. Where sanctions are needed for difficult behaviour, frustrative non-reward and negative reinforcement are preferred over punishment. Frustrative non-reward is a process whereby behaviours which are reinforced by feedback from the social environment can be weakened by removing the child from the source of the feedback: for example, a child who plays around in class because he enjoys the reactions of the other children can be asked to sit at the front of the class where he cannot see the other children laughing at him; a child who keeps talking to her friends in class can be given “time out” of the classroom. Negative reinforcement describes a process whereby a desirable behaviour is made stronger if the child can escape an unpleasant consequence by doing the behaviour: for example, the head teacher stands at the gate and scolds all the children who are late, so children try to come on time to avoid the scolding. Finally, non-violent behaviour management approaches insist that any punishments that are used are not painful or damaging to the child either psychologically or physically. Withdrawing privileges (e.g. staying late after class or missing break) or giving tasks such as writing lines or doing extra classwork are all examples of acceptable non-violent punishment.

Some approaches to changing children’s behaviour rely entirely on positive methods, for example, positive discipline (Nelson, 2006) prohibits the use of punishments entirely, focussing instead on encouraging positive values and teaching problem solving and other life skills. Given that teachers’ over-reliance on punishment as a form of discipline is part of the cultural

context in Ghana (Antonowicz, 2010, Twum-Danso, 2010), in order to achieve most change at Challenging Heights School, we aimed to choose an approach that would be acceptable to teachers, as methods that were not popular were unlikely to be implemented. Our non-violent behaviour management policy emphasises discipline, and aims to balance the use of rewards and other positive methods with sanctions for bad behaviour, including non-violent punishment when necessary.

Non-violent behaviour management is widely used and promoted as a harm-free and acceptable way to help children learn how to behave (e.g. Green, 1992, Carr, 1999, Webster-Stratton, 1992, Markie-Dadds & Turner, 2009), and there is a wealth of evidence for its efficacy in the school and at home (e.g. Webster-Stratton, 1983, Kaminski et al. 2008, Wilson & Lipsey, 2007, Menting et al., 2013). We have seen its effectiveness at Challenging Heights School, and believe it is a culturally acceptable and viable alternative to corporal punishment in all Ghanaian schools. Research to date has suggested that in Ghana, many parents and teachers are unaware of alternative forms of discipline (UNICEF, 2010, Antonowicz, 2010) and this is a causal factor in the high degree of violent punishment seen in Ghana. We believe that nonviolent behaviour management can provide better discipline for Ghana’s children and ensure they can achieve their rights.

Withdrawing privileges (e.g. staying late after class or missing break) or giving tasks such as writing lines or doing extra classwork are all examples of acceptable non-violent punishment.

RESEARCH

AIMS

As well as protecting the pupils of Challenging Heights from violence in school, in line with a community psychology approach, we also want to address the structural violence in Ghanaian society and bring about transformative change (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). Closing legal loopholes that allow the use of corporal punishment in schools would send a strong message to the people of Ghana that physical violence against children is not condoned by the state.

Whilst laws may be poorly enforced, they do have an immediate impact in reducing the amount of violence children experience (Holden & Ashraf, 2016), and can be an important first step in nurturing a wider attitude change against violence against children.

Our rights-based model at Challenging Heights seeks to empower the disadvantaged and oppressed, and we strive to take a participatory approach (e.g. Ledwith & Springett, 2010) in developing our programmes. By elevating the voices of teachers, pupils and parents, we aim to create an evidence base for change to feed into an advocacy campaign that will target lawmakers in Ghana.

The current research therefore aims to reflect on Challenging Heights’ experiences of using non-violent discipline in our school, explore the impact of violent punishment, and understand attitudes for and against its use in schools.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY, METHOD AND PROCEDURE



OBJECTIVES

01. To collect evidence about children's, parents', teachers' and head teachers' real life experiences of, and attitudes to, corporal punishment;

02. To compare views on corporal punishment of participants in schools using corporal punishment with participants in a school that outlaws corporal punishment;

03. To reflect on the process of implementing, and motivating genuine support for, a non-violent discipline policy in a Ghanaian school;

04. To allow children, parents, teachers and head teachers to express their views about corporal punishment and ensure these views can feed in to a wider advocacy campaign against corporal punishment.

METHODOLOGY

In keeping with a community psychology approach to research (e.g. Kagan et al, 2011), we recognise that investigations can never be truly independent of the values of the researchers (Willig, 2001) and assert that research should be used in the service of people who suffer oppression and abuse (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010). We are engaged in action research (Lewin, 1946), where investigators are actively seeking social change at the same time as carrying out research. As staff of Challenging Heights, we are part of the social movement to promote child rights, and our research forms part of our activism, informing our advocacy against corporal punishment. A qualitative methodology was chosen as appropriate for an investigation concerned with both how participants make meaning about the world (Bryman, 2008) and giving voice to under-represented communities (Banyard & Miller, 1998).

Our attitude to knowledge (our epistemology) is partly essentialist/realist, meaning that we think there are subjective "truths" to be discovered through research, as we document and describe participants' real life experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We also believe that ideas and knowledge are socially constructed (through language, social interaction and culture) and can change with time: the research is concerned with how participants talk about their experiences and therefore contribute to ideas about corporal punishment, such as its acceptability or its effectiveness (Burr, 1995).

We include subjective reflections about our attempts to bring changes at Challenging Heights School from our dual positions of researcher/activist, to make explicit our personal contributions to the construction of the research (Willig, 2001).

RESEARCH METHOD

Our research comprises a qualitative study (results presented in Chapter 3) and subjective reflections on the success of the non-violent discipline policy at Challenging Heights School (presented in Chapter 4).

PROCEDURE FOR THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The lead researcher (KD) ensured that the research abided by the British Psychological Society's (2009) code of ethics and conduct, and unpublished guidance on ethics in international development research with children developed by Family for Every Child (www.familyforeverychild.org). A Research Manager from Family for Every Child acted as a consultant to discuss ethical aspects of the study in the planning stage. The research planning and process was informed at every stage by Ghanaian members of the research team, to ensure the activities were culturally sensitive.

The lead researcher and interview team carried out a risk assessment exercise to design the sampling and consent procedures, and to agree the practicalities of data collection. The national office of the Ghana Education Service, who regulate all activities carried out in Ghanaian schools, had previously given consent for Challenging Heights to carry out work in the district. Informed consent was obtained before each interview, with clear explanations given about the study procedures before consent was sought. For child participants, parental consent was obtained before children were asked if they would like to participate in the study. As not all participants were literate, verbal consent was obtained in some cases.

Corporal punishment is a sensitive issue in Ghana: although the practice is widely accepted in schools and homes, it is regulated by law, and we were concerned that participants would be afraid to speak about the topic for fear of getting into trouble. To provide anonymity for participants, the comparison schools are not named here, and only the participants' category (head teacher, teacher, parent, child) and sex are linked to individual quotes. Each participant was given the option of withdrawing any comments made during the interview from the data analysis and report, but at the time of interview none chose to do so. They were also aware that they could withdraw their data from the research at any point until publication of the report, but again, none chose to do so. The Challenging Heights head teacher is the only participant whose quotes are personally identifiable in this study and he has voluntarily given up his right to anonymity for the sake of the

study: without the option of anonymity, special arrangements were made for him to review and approve all quotes used in the final report. As responsible researchers from a child rights organisation, we were able to offer only limited confidentiality, and explained to our participants that we would have to act if they told us of a child who was suffering harm. Interviewers in the study were part of the wider Challenging Heights field team experienced in carrying out community child protection work, enabling us to follow up on any child protection concerns raised in the study. In practice, only one participant raised a current child protection concern: this was a case of a child trafficked into slavery, and his details were passed to the recovery team for inclusion in Challenging Heights's next rescue.

PARTICIPANTS

We used purposive sampling and snowball sampling, allowing key informants to recommend other potential participants to approach (Flick, 1999), as we wanted to hear from a range of representative voices. The 27 participants who were interviewed for this study are shown in table 1. We chose participants to get multiple perspectives on the issue at stake, and therefore interviewed 3 head teachers, 8 teachers, 8 parents and 8 children in the age group 12-16 years across three schools. The number of interviewees was limited by practical considerations such as time and staff availability. We aimed for a 50-50 gender balance: this was achieved in every category of respondent (parents, teachers, children) except head teachers, where two of the three interviewees were men.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN EACH CATEGORY OF RESPONDENT

	Challenging Heights School	Comparison School 1	Comparison School 2	Total
Head teacher	1	1	1	3
Female teacher	2	1	1	4
Male teacher	2	1	1	4
Girl (aged 12 – 16)	2	1	1	4
Boy (aged 12 – 16)	2	1	1	4
Female Parent	2	1	1	4
Male Parent	2	1	1	4
Total	13	7	7	27

Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, the comparison schools in this study were chosen by the Challenging Heights' field team as schools who had a good relationship with Challenging Heights, and had willingly participated in previous community work carried out by Challenging Heights, such as anti-slavery awareness raising. One school was from a semi-urban setting, similar to Challenging Heights School, and another from a rural setting.

All participants were from the same religious, cultural and socio-economic community, but there were differences in education, age and language fluency. The parents had generally not completed basic education, teachers at Challenging Heights School had completed Senior High School, and the remaining teachers and all head teachers had completed University education with teaching qualifications. Teachers and head teachers were fluent in English as well as local languages (Fante and Effutu), but parents generally spoke no English. Children were semi-fluent in English and fluent in local languages. Generally, the teachers were younger than the parents and head teachers,

mostly in their early 20s, and did not have children of their own. This reflects the profession of teaching in Ghana, where many young people are employed as unqualified teachers as a first step in their career, often later going on to pursue University education in teaching or other fields.

At each school, the head teachers spoke to teachers about the study and asked for volunteers, but also recommended teachers whom the researchers could approach to participate. Children at all three schools were selected randomly from a large pool who had expressed interest in the study after talks given in their classes about the research. There was a lot of enthusiasm amongst the children to be included in the study. Parents at Challenging Heights School were approached after a Parents Teachers Association (PTA) training day on child wellbeing given by Challenging Heights, and selected from a pool of volunteers. Parents from the comparison schools were approached after interviewed children gave suggestions of adults in their community who might be interviewed for the study.

DATA COLLECTION

We chose one-to-one interviews to provide privacy and allow participants to express themselves freely (Bryman, 2008). A semi-structured format allowed the interviewer to follow up on areas of interest and create a conversational tone, in order to prompt self-disclosure (Finch, 1993) and this was enhanced by the interviews being carried out by Ghanaian staff using local languages (Fante or Effutu) where appropriate. Teachers and head teachers completed their interviews in English, and interviews with parents and children were in local languages. The interview schedule was designed by the research team, with input from the Family for Every Child research consultant.

Interviews were conducted in participants' schools or homes. They were recorded, translated into English if necessary, and then transcribed. A female Ghanaian interviewer fluent in English and Fante completed the head teacher interviews, all but one of the teacher interviews and the majority of the parent and children interviews, and also served as a translator and transcriber.

The lead researcher and an additional monolingual English speaking member of staff transcribed the teacher and head teacher interviews. The remaining parent and child interviews were completed by a male Ghanaian interviewer fluent in English, Fante and Effutu who also served as a translator and transcriber.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis was carried out by the lead researcher using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), a qualitative method that is useful when the area of interest is what is being said, rather than how it is said (Bryman, 2008). A theoretical analysis, driven by the literature and our theoretical assumptions about the topic (Patton, 1990), was carried out at the semantic (meanings) level, looking for patterns in the descriptions given by participants, and making interpretations about the patterns found in the data and their broader significance (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Interviews were transcribed, and read through for familiarity, with the researcher making notes about initial ideas whilst looking out for commonalities relating to our areas of interest in corporal punishment. The main themes of interest were then coded, and data was collected for each of the codes, reading through the transcripts again.

A draft theme list was organised with similar subthemes grouped together, and then the data was read again for consistency with the themes, resulting in a refined theme map with links between each of the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

OVERVIEW OF THEMATIC GROUPS, THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

Thematic analysis of the conversations with research participants was guided by interests in children's rights and the possibilities of change in the corporal punishment practices in Ghana. We classified the data into 12 themes and 27 subthemes, which were organised into four thematic groups. These are summarised below in table 2 and presented diagrammatically in Figure 1; indicative quotes for each theme and subtheme are presented in the Appendix.

The first thematic group, Descriptions, contained detailed examples of violent punishment at school (theme 1A) and violent punishment at home (theme 1B), provided by children reflecting on their current experiences, teachers and parents reflecting on their own childhood experiences and parents reflecting on their punishment of their children. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the regulations surrounding caning in schools, teachers and head teachers did not offer descriptions of violent punishments they had perpetrated or witnessed in school but preferred to talk about their childhood experiences.

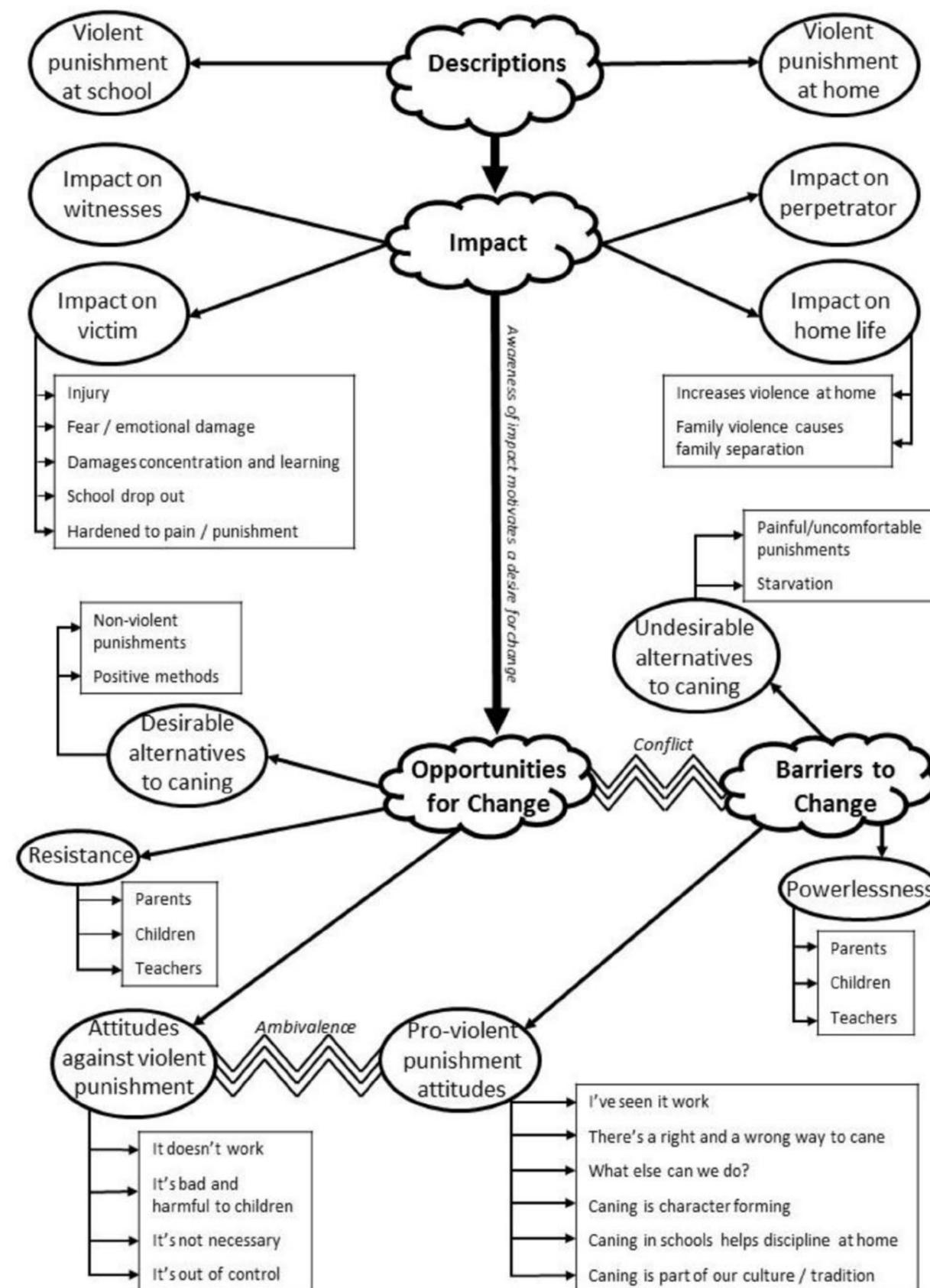
The strongest theme in the second thematic group, Impact, was the impact of violent punishment on the victim (2A), but themes of impact on the perpetrator (2D) and impact on witnesses (2C) were also noted. The theme of impact on home life (theme 2B) explored the relationship between violence at school and violence at home (2Bi), and the indirect impact of violence at school on family separation (2Bii).

Awareness of the impact of violent punishment led to the third thematic group, Opportunities for Change, which contained themes relating to desirable alternatives to caning (theme 3A), attitudes against violent punishment (3B) and action being taken by parents, children and teachers in resistance of corporal punishment (3C). Opportunities for Change is in conflict with the final thematic group, Barriers to Change, which contained themes relating to undesirable alternatives to caning (4A), pro-violent punishment attitudes (4B) and powerlessness (4C) of parents, children and teachers.

TABLE 2: THEMATIC GROUPS, THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

Thematic Group 1. Descriptions of Violent Punishment	
Theme 1A. Violent Punishment at School	
Theme 1B. Violent Punishment at Home	
Thematic Group 2. Impact of Violent Punishment	
Theme 2A. Impact on victim	
Subtheme 2Ai. Causes physical injury	
Subtheme 2Aii. Causes fear & emotional damage	
Subtheme 2Aiii. Damages concentration and learning	
Subtheme 2Aiv. Causes school drop out	
Subtheme 2Av. Children become hardened to pain and punishment	
Theme 2B. Impact on home life	
Subtheme 2Bi. Increases violence at home	
Subtheme 2Bii. Violence at home causes family separation	
Theme 2C. Impact on witnesses	
Theme 2D. Impact on perpetrator	
Thematic Group 3. Opportunities for change	
Theme 3A. Desirable alternatives to caning	
Subtheme 3Ai. Non-violent punishments	
Subtheme 3Aii. Positive methods	
Theme 3B. Attitudes against violent punishment	
Subtheme 3Bi. It doesn't work	
Subtheme 3Bii. It's bad and harmful to children	
Subtheme 3Biii. It's not necessary	
Subtheme 3Biv. It's out of control (evidenced by 3Biv(a) unfair punishments)	
Theme 3C. Resistance	
Subtheme 3Ci. Parents resisting the use of violent punishment	
Subtheme 3Cii. Children resisting the use of violent punishment	
Subtheme 3Ciii. Teachers resisting violent punishment & school as a protective factor against violence at home	
Thematic Group 4: Barriers to Change	
Theme 4A. Undesirable alternatives to caning	
Subtheme 4Ai. Painful and uncomfortable punishments	
Subtheme 4Aii. Starvation	
Theme 4B. Pro-violent punishment attitudes	
Subtheme 4Bi. I've seen it work	
Subtheme 4Bii. There's a right & a wrong way to cane	
Subtheme 4Biii. What else can we do?	
Subtheme 4Biv. Caning is character forming	
Subtheme 4Bv. Caning in schools helps discipline at home	
Subtheme 4Bvi. Caning is part of our culture / tradition	
Theme 4C. Powerlessness	
Subtheme 4Ci. Powerless parents (meaning 4Ci(a) Parents are complicit in or supportive of school punishment)	
Subtheme 4Cii. Powerless children	
Subtheme 4Ciii. Powerless teachers	

FIGURE 1: THEMATIC GROUPS, THEMES AND SUBTHEMES



DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THEMES

THEMATIC GROUP 1:

DESCRIPTIONS THEME 1A:

DESCRIPTIONS OF VIOLENT PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOL

- All participants gave examples of violent punishment in schools, mostly caning, which they spoke about as a routine occurrence:

“The very common [punishment] is caning” Boy, comparison school 1

“...the headmaster will tell you to go to his house and go and weed for him... [or] they will cane you severely... [or] they let the person kneel down or squat” Girl, comparison school 1

“When a child goes wrong if there is a need for counselling I make sure I talk to the child, if there is a need for punishment, then maybe a few lashes.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

“Sometimes we use canes, and sometimes too we use maybe scrubbing or weeding.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“And certain times too, you can just use the cane, maybe one or two strokes.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

- Several participants mentioned severe violent punishments likely to cause injury, such as being forced to hit their head repeatedly on the desk, or being beaten over and over, involving an element of ritual:

“They will put the chair in front of me so they will stretch – stretch to maybe hold the chair. And they will do it to you. This is what they have been doing, yes. Even they would call for all big boys... the big boys will come and hold your arms and your legs and they will give it to you! Pa pa pa pa pa.” Head Teacher, comparison school 1

“We were all in class, and we were disturbing, so, the teacher came to the class, and he asked us to er... head... use our head to hit the table of our desk... [we did it] for SO many times, because the teacher, he said, he want to hear the sound... of the whole thing, so many times we hit it small, and he said ‘No! You have to hit it very big... very hard, so that I can hear the sound’... so if you hit your head [smacks hand on table twice softly], on the table and he doesn’t hear... [bangs hand on table very loudly] KUM! it means you didn’t do the right thing.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

- There was often an element of public shaming involved in the punishment, with punishments being carried out in front of other pupils:

“Those at the back got the answer wrong and the whole class was caned... we were made to touch the ground with both hands outside our classroom, in front of the school’s office... two teachers [did the caning], the students chose who to go to... [the head master] was sitting in the office watching us and said that we didn’t like studying... some of our juniors gathered just to watch us crying whilst we were being caned... I started crying before it even got to my turn... I [still] think about it a lot” Girl, comparison school 1

“we were in assembly and he asked us to raise our hands. Hands up. And the hands, when I raised my hands, my zip opened. So I had to put my hand down. Hahira. I had to put my hand down and close my zip. We were in skirt and top. And he didn’t understand why I put my hand down, he came and saw that somebody has put their hand down so he came, who put their hand down? And I raised my hand, he called me in front of the whole school, then he lashed me.” Female teacher, comparison school 2

- Students also mentioned being caned unfairly, for example, a whole class being punished for the wrong-doing of a few pupils, or punishment being given for poor academic performance, rather than poor behaviour:

“we were in class one day, when my teacher asked us a question and he said that if those sitting at the back got the answer wrong he was going to cane the whole class. Those of us who were sitting in front we raised our hands but he didn’t call us. Those at the back got the answer wrong and the whole class was caned.” Girl, comparison school 1

“When we have mathematics he will come to class, then... he will ask you either multiples or addition, so... 2 times 2, then you the student must say the answer, so within some seconds you must give the teacher the answer, so if you are not able to give the answer, then you receive some lashes at your back.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

In summary, our participants spoke of caning as routine, and often used minimising language (“a few lashes”, “one or two strokes”). There was plenty of evidence that official guidelines, which mandate that caning should only happen in a supervised and limited way, are not being followed. Teachers often added a ritualised or public element to their caning of pupils, presumably to increase the fear and shame felt by the children. Participants expressed anger about punishment that they saw as unfair, or out of proportion with the crime, as has been noted in previous studies of children’s attitudes to physical punishment in schools (Twum-Danso, 2010).

THEME 1B:

DESCRIPTIONS OF VIOLENT PUNISHMENT IN THE HOME

- Most parents listed caning as just one of the ways they discipline their children, in line with research showing that most families use a combination of violent and non-violent discipline (UNICEF, 2010, 2014):

“Not giving the child food, money, insults and caning them are some of the ways... parents use to punish their children.” Male parent, comparison school 2

“sometimes I beat them a little with a cane and sometimes deprive them of good treats when they refuse to do the right thing” Female parent, comparison school 1

“I scold them a lot but if they don’t stop their actions then I beat them... I sometimes hit or knock them gently on the head but when they really do bad things I cane them.” Female parent, comparison school 2

“[At home] they beat us or scold us” Girl 2, Challenging Heights School “I’m afraid of my dad and stepmum... because they shout at me and also beat me” Boy, comparison school 2

- There was evidence that caning was sometimes so severe as to cause injury, or to alarm other adults who witnessed the punishment:

“Well, two years ago my daughter went out and came home very late, but what I heard was that she was with a guy so I beat her with rage... [my neighbours] said that even though she had done wrong I should still forgive her and stop beating her. They were pleading on her behalf, so I stopped” Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School

“it was 11:00pm and she was not around and I was looking for her all day and I asked all her friends but did not see her. So I came back home, then I heard somebody opening the door and I grabbed her and I caned her that I see blood... and when the father came he also continued and she never put that act again” Female parent 2, Challenging Heights School

- Siblings, as well as parents, administer corporal punishment:

“when I beat [my friend], my mother told me not to do that again, but my brother beat me up” Girl, comparison school 2

- Parents spoke of using physical punishment to instil good values in their children:

“I always make sure I check their home works before they sleep every school day and give them a lash or two after if they have not done it. This is to prevent them from doing it again.” Male parent, comparison school 1

“well, I remember some time ago I intentionally put one Ghana cedi in an open place in our bedroom to test my children. I wanted to see if my kids could be trusted, unfortunately for me the money was not there when I got back from work. So I realised that I was in trouble and that much measures must be put in place for their upbringing. Therefore, I caned them very well that day.” Male parent, comparison school 1

In summary, parents openly admitted to routinely caning their children alongside other forms of discipline, and readily gave examples of when they had caned excessively, causing injury, or in anger. They framed their violence as a corrective for their children, and, as Twum-Danso (2010) suggests, seemed most likely to cane excessively in response to moral transgressions (e.g. stealing, girls going out late with boys) – see pro-violent punishment attitudes (theme 4B) below.

THEMATIC GROUP 2: IMPACT

THEME 2A: IMPACT ON THE VICTIM

- The analysis revealed plenty of evidence that the use of violent punishment in schools has a negative effect on victims. Children, teachers and parents all mentioned the potential of corporal punishment to cause injury (subtheme 2Ai) and pain, and participants not only spoke of pain at the time of caning, but feeling the pain of being caned for a long time afterwards:

“Any time that they caned me I cry, if I feel the pain.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“I get pains in my buttocks whenever I sit for long” Girl, comparison school 1

“The cane that headmaster gave to me, it was very, very hot! And even, after the cane, I could not even sit properly.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

- In line with research showing that 22% of children had been caned to the point of causing bleeding or permanent scarring (Twum-Danso, 2010), our participants told us that as well as being painful, violent punishment often leads to lasting damage and injury:

“It seems I had a small scar on my leg [from being caned]” Head teacher, Challenging Heights School

“the cane hit my arm and it got swollen... even after the long break my hands were still swollen... when I got home... later on I saw that there was a blood clotting under my skin where there was a swell.” Boy, comparison school 1

“You see cuts, or marks on the body because he or she was caned, so I think it shouldn’t be allowed in other schools.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

- Some of the methods of violent punishment used could lead to serious consequences such as head injury and concussion:

“After we had done that [forced to hit forehead hard, repeatedly on the desk], I wasn’t the only person hurt. Other students, one of the students, when he went home, there was blood oozing from the nostrils, so we heard it the next day when we came to the school. And also I myself, I experienced serious headache when I went home that day.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“when I was a school child, one day I was given a punishment, they caned me and I had some nose bleeding. And I realized it was very harmful.” Head Teacher, comparison school 2

- Nose bleeds after being hit on the head suggests a head injury severe enough to cause a degree of mild brain injury or concussion: this can lead to permanently impaired learning in school (e.g. Taylor et al., 2010, Reed & Warner-Rogers, 2008). Severe injuries are more likely when perpetrators have lost control of themselves or the situation, a scenario mentioned by several participants:

“some teachers punish children with anger. This one is very bad. If you know you are going to punish the child for the child to change for the better you don’t have to use your anger to do it, sometimes if you use your anger to do it you can hurt the child.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“...when the teacher canes you, the skin can just burst and blood will ooze out. If the teacher does not handle the cane very well it can enter into the child’s eye and cause damage to the child.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“unfortunately you may hurt the children. Some of them don’t have good skin, so maybe a little swelling – accidentally the cane can hit maybe the eye or something of the child, which is accidental, because the child is not staying put for the cane. They are moving the body and everything.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

“the government should talk to the teachers to have more patience with the children and always cane them moderately and not with anger. It is sometimes quite disturbing when you see the way some teachers punish the students.” Female parent, comparison school 2

- Fear and emotional damage (subtheme 2Aii) also results from physical punishment. Several participants talked about being upset or crying when they were caned:

“I felt so bad I was crying” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“hmmmm I cried a lot [laughs] I was actually caned severely” Male teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

“[Whilst being caned] I really felt bad... ooooh, at that time, I was very sad, very sad” Head Teacher, Challenging Heights School

“I started crying before it even got to my turn... [afterwards] we all went to the classroom to cry, nobody went to buy food in my class during break time that day... I [still] think about it a lot” Girl, comparison school 1

- Feeling both acute fear at the time of punishment and a general sense of nervousness, anxiety or fear in the school environment because of the threat of punishment were also common:

“He didn’t use cane, but the way he spoke, that was already... brought enough fear. The face was just scary, he was unfriendly to me that day, so I didn’t feel comfortable, and because of I saw canes, a lot of canes around in the school, and so I was uncomfortable here in the school and I was gripped with fear.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“I have experience where... when a child does something and I pick up a cane, they get scared, you understand? I was in a class to teach, and when I got there, after teaching I was just advising them, ‘I don’t like using cane’ and they were like, ‘we don’t like this teacher’, because any time he used cane, physical punishment, ‘so any time he enter the class... we start to panic!’ Yeah!” Male teacher, comparison school 1

“we have told our parents about the books and they say that they will pay, but this particular madam keeps on screaming at us to come and pay her the money... It has made me nervous in school of late... she has given us a grace period for us to pay, but the grace period is not yet over, but she says that tomorrow she will start caning debtors...” Boy, comparison school 1

“whenever we are in class and a teacher calls somebody sitting at the back to answer I get very scared and nervous” Girl, comparison school 1

- To deal with the anxiety caused by caning and the threat of caning, children often became withdrawn:

“Personally, it changed me, because of what... the pain I had, from it. It changed me. So since that time, whenever I go to any class... to sit and to be taught, I don’t make noise. I just have to keep quiet and listen to the one who is going to speak. And even if there is no teacher in class, I just have to be quiet...” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“...sometimes you mostly have effects on the child, the caning, especially emotional pains. The person goes through a lot and he or she is not able to come out and talk to anybody.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

- This combination of acute fear at the time of abuse and chronic anxiety in anticipation of abuse are classic reactions for children living in situations of complex trauma (Herman, 1992). Shame too is a very common emotional response when children are in an abusive situation (Herman, 1992):

“I remember, I went to school late and my head teacher gave me six strokes of canes and the shorts that I was wearing got torn and I remember that often” Male parent, comparison school 2

- Complex trauma in childhood can lead to varied psychological problems later in life (Courtois et al. 2009). As has been shown in previous research (e.g. Ogando Portela & Pells, 2015) there were suggestions in our data that the emotional impact on self-esteem and personality can be lasting, even after the child has left school:

“When it comes to the emotional [impact of caning], the student... can feel inferior...” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“when I was in my tender age teacher caned me and it still sounds very hard in my mind day in day out” Head Teacher, Challenging Heights School

“honestly I don’t remember what I did. I don’t remember if it was personal or if it was a group punishment. But all I know is when you don’t do the right thing, the immediate punishment from teachers is cane. So it made me cautious of myself.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

- When children are exposed to scary and stressful environments, many show neuropsychological deficits, including poor concentration and problem solving, which impact on learning (Wilson et al., 2011, Jones & Pells, 2016), and this fact was noted by several participants (damaged concentration and learning, subtheme 2Aiii):

“...some of the children easily get frightened whenever they see the cane so even if they know what the teacher is asking them they are not able to answer because of fear” Female parent, comparison school 1

“Punishment in schools does not allow the children to concentrate well on their studies. That’s what I see.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“If physical punishment... was not used in school, like, let’s say my primary... side, I would have developed more in mathematics. Because when I got to Junior High School and the teacher was changing, and then, he was not using cane, anything, he just comes to the class and teaches, so I was grabbing everything the teacher was teaching” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

- When fear and anxiety increases and learning is affected, violent punishment can also lead to school drop-out (subtheme 2Aiv), as children try to escape the toxic environment they find themselves in:

“I know about people who also decide not to come to school because of the previous punishment which we are giving them.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

“if there is too much caning in a school too, some of the students who fear caning might refuse to go to school” Female parent, comparison school 2 “

[caning] can scare... put fear into the child. Certain times it can make a child drop out...” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“I remember there was a day I had to supervise people to be caned, 2 lashes each at assembly for not combing their hair before coming to school. That day one of the PTA [Parent Teacher Association] members was around when we were doing the caning. The [next] day when I was coming to school I ran into another PTA member and he stopped me ‘madam, what is happening with the school? You are always caning our children. You are always caning our children... and when you do that they will not stay in school’ ... Yesterday when they came most of [the parents] were complaining, ‘they’ve caned them they’ve caned them!’” Head teacher, comparison school 2

- School drop-out has been found to be a risk factor for trafficking (UNICEF, 2005) and early marriage (UNESCO, 2014), and is linked to inadequate care (Jones, 2015), as well as damaging educational and career opportunities later in life. Violence in schools therefore has a wider impact on children’s wellbeing if it leads to children leaving education to avoid painful and frightening punishments. Lastly, participants were concerned that repeated caning can make some children hardened to pain and punishment (subtheme 2Av):

“Some children when they are caned they don’t repeat the mistakes, but some become hardened. They become hardened, so you find them doing other things, after all, there’s the cane, and as for me, I can take the cane.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“some of the students never change no matter how hard they are caned... it’s always because they have gotten used to the cane so they even get more daring after they are caned” Girl, comparison school 1

- The idea that caning can actually worsen behaviour for some children is consistent with literature suggesting that children exposed to violence have a higher risk of conduct problems in school (e.g. Gilbert et al., 2009).

In summary, the data revealed varied negative impacts on children, as well as the inevitable physical pain that results from corporal punishment. Physical injuries are often severe, leading to lasting scars and even in some cases disability. Many children experience school as a traumatic environment, where repeated acts and threats of violence create both acute fear and chronic stress reactions. Some children are so afraid that they drop out of school, and for those who are fearful but stay in school, emotional disturbance can disrupt their ability to concentrate and learn and impact on their psychological development. A small number of children cope by becoming hardened to pain and punishment, leading to further difficult behaviour.

THEME 2B: IMPACT ON HOME LIFE

Challenging Heights is particularly concerned with factors leading to children being trafficked, including poor care, family separation and family disharmony, so the analysis explored the links between school violence and family life. There was a general sense that the use of corporal punishment in schools can lead to increased violence at home (subtheme 2Bi) via a number of factors. Firstly, participants suggested that children learn what is acceptable from the behaviours they witness at school and repeat these at home:

“When you are violent, some of the children they pick those behaviours from us, and so they grow to be violent. And that that results in violence in the home” Female teacher, comparison school 1

- This is linked to the observation that some children become hardened to pain and punishment (subtheme 2Av, see above) from being repeatedly caned, and the literature that suggests there is a so-called “cycle of violence” whereby children exposed to violence are more likely to be violent themselves, and show violent or criminal behaviour in adulthood (Widom, 1989). Antonowicz (2010) and Jones (2015) point to the link between violence in school and at home. Some parents give extra punishment at home if they hear that their children have misbehaved or been punished in school:

“I told my mum [about having to scrub the toilet as a punishment for being late in school] ...she said it was OK... she beat me again for being late...” Girl 1, Challenging Heights School

“I cane [my child] or I find another punishment, to emphasise what was given to the child in school.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“my father is a disciplinarian, sometimes when you are punished at school and then you go [home] and say it, maybe he will give you more punishment.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

- Participants also felt that the use of physical punishment in schools legitimises its use at home, and may contribute to the trivialisation of violence noted in West African communities (Antonowicz, 2010):

“maybe the child is known to be a very stubborn child, you understand? And any time they go to school the teacher will have this kind of punishment given to him. And so the mum, knowing for a fact that this kind of punishment is really helping, any time he does this and the child does this to you, you change, I am going to also apply the same thing. So most of them use the same punishment [that is used in school].” Male teacher, comparison school 1

I: Do family members ever punish their children because they hear they were punished at school?

P: Some of them. Some of them.

I: Do you think that family members are likely to use some forms of punishment at home because they are used in school?

P: Yes.

I: Why?

P: They also feel that it’s a means to correct their children to do the right thing, so some of them cane their children at home.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

- None of our participants had heard of children who ran away from home primarily in order to avoid punishment at school, but in so far as violence in school increases violence at home, there is an indirect effect of violent punishment in school on family separation. Sometimes family separation is directly linked to children performing poorly or being punished at school:

“it was as I said earlier, I went home to tell my mum that I got an answer wrong at school and she said that she was going to beat me in the evening so I ran away before evening” Girl, comparison school 1

- In contrast, there were many examples of family violence causing family separation (subtheme 2Bii):

“He went and stayed with my father for some time, because he didn’t do the right thing and, so my mum told him she was going to give him some canes, and he fled the house.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“She ran away from the house saying that she was being maltreated to go and stay with other people to continue her education.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“Those who run away because of the canes that they are going to receive. That’s what made them run away... in our community here I know a lot... sometimes they stay with their parents, father and mother, but they run away to their grandmother’s place because of the punishments. Sometimes they don’t use canes, they use their bare hands to beat them, yes. They give them slaps. And because of the slaps they run away and go to other places.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“honestly we don’t know what happened with her, all that we heard was that one of our mates had run away from home... I heard that her mother was chasing her with a cane and she ran away... it was rumoured that she had stolen money” Girl, comparison school 1

In summary, in line with previous research (Antonowicz, 2010, Jones, 2015) there was good evidence that violence in schools increases the likelihood of children experiencing violence at home, and many examples of children leaving the family home because of violence or threats of violence. This supports an indirect, rather than a direct link between violence in schools and family separation.

THEME 2C: IMPACT ON WITNESSES

- Violent punishment not only affects the child being punished, but also creates an atmosphere of fear in the school that affects child witnesses:

“whenever I see a student being caned, I get scared for the person” Girl, comparison school 1

“Some of [the other children] saw that I was right [to cane], but others were scared that it was too much.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

- There were examples of adults becoming distressed witnessing what they see to be unfair punishments:

[commenting on seeing a child carrying a table for 2-3 hours at a neighbouring school]: “[When I saw that punishment I felt] so bad. So bad. Because I was considering myself as if my younger sister comes to tell me this is what she’s doing too. I felt so bad.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

Research has consistently shown that growing up in violent circumstances has a negative impact on children, even if they are not the direct target of physical violence (e.g. Hills et al., 2016, Levendosky et al., 2013). For example, where there is violence between parents, children who witness this will suffer the same level of negative long-term emotional and developmental issues as children who are directly physically abused (Kitzman et al. 2003). Our data suggest that in violent schools, witnesses suffer similar impacts to victims, including fear and psychological damage (subtheme 2Aii) and damaged concentration and learning (subtheme 2Aiii), even if they are never physically injured themselves. Violence in schools also creates a toxic atmosphere for adults, as evidenced by the impact on perpetrators (theme 2D, see below).

THEME 2D: IMPACT ON PERPETRATOR

This theme describes the impact on the teachers and parents who carry out caning and other violent punishments. Teachers were more likely than parents to suggest there is a negative impact of perpetrating violence against children, although one parent commented that he was worried about potentially injuring his child:

“I didn’t beat him out of anger but as a form of warning to him because the kids are my own kids so if I will hurt them it would be my own burden therefore I wouldn’t even do that.” Male parent, comparison school 1

- Some teachers who held strong attitudes against violent punishment (theme 3B) described negative emotional impacts of being asked to use a cane in schools, including feeling uncomfortable, feeling bad and feeling responsible for causing pain:

“caning, hmmm, caning hmmm, I sometimes feel bad” Female teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

“If I’m using cane I don’t feel comfortable, because I know the pain I’ve gone through and I don’t want the other ones to... to go through the same thing. I don’t feel comfortable when I’m using cane, or when a student is caned. With the other ones, I feel comfortable, because the student will not feel any pain... in their skin.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“As I said I felt pains. I don’t think I will ensure that a child goes through the same thing. It is very bad.” Male teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

- For some of these teachers, it was clear that reflecting on their own physically and emotionally painful experiences of being caned helped them to empathise with their students' pain, and strengthened their belief that caning is not right. Other teachers struggled to reconcile their empathic feelings for the child with beliefs that caning is a helpful corrective measure:

“I don't feel happy about [caning], I feel the pain being inflicted on the child and I don't feel comfortable about it, but when there is no way out, certain times things are the best corrective measure, but other times too, it can scare...” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“Sometimes you cane someone and the way the person will cry you feel very sad, but not even sad, but you use it as, you want to correct him or her.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

- However even those teachers who justify caning, hold pro-violent punishment attitudes (theme 4B) or are ambivalent about caning spoke about feeling uncomfortable or upset by the caning:

“How did I feel? Heh... nobody is happy when caning.” Male teacher, comparison school 2

“[When I have to use corporal punishment] I really don't feel good. I resort to pinching instead of maybe using a cane.” Female teacher, comparison school 2

- Finally, teachers spoke about the dangers of losing control and giving in to anger whilst caning:

“Sometimes the way the children behave, if you don't hold yourself back, at the end of it, you will feel sorry for punishing them.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

“Having warned several times I decided to use the cane... So after doing that at the end of our lesson, I regretted, I felt that I shouldn't have been so angry, I vented my anger on the child.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

- In these examples, teachers clearly felt guilty about their actions, in contrast to situations where these same teachers were able to justify their use of the cane, and therefore control their negative emotions:

“once in a while, I cane children. And I don't like caning them because I always tell them I don't like brushing cane over you, I say if I cane you I have to do it so you feel it. So because of that I don't like caning; I prefer talking to the children to know that what they've done is not good” Head teacher, comparison school 2

“In general I don't like caning children... but some of them after failing all the other measures, I apply the cane and after caning I don't feel bad” Female teacher, comparison school 1

In summary, the routine use of caning in schools places many teachers who perpetrate violent punishment in a situation of “cognitive dissonance”, a state of mental discomfort or stress caused by holding conflicting beliefs, ideas or values, or behaving in a way that contradicts those values and beliefs (Festinger, 1957). All of our teacher and head teacher participants showed empathy for the pain that children suffer when violently punished, but nevertheless, those in the comparison schools continue to use violent punishments. Some are able to resolve their cognitive dissonance by justifying caning as a corrective measure (as we will see in theme 4B, pro-violent punishment attitudes), but this is not always possible in all situations, and often teacher perpetrators experience emotions including discomfort, sadness and guilt. Teachers are therefore also suffering negative outcomes as a result of the structural violence (Farmer, 2005) of the Ghanaian education system, which continues to permit, and therefore legitimise, caning as a suitable discipline measure (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2016b).

THEMATIC GROUP 3: OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE, IN CONFLICT WITH THEMATIC GROUP 4: BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Participants' conversations were generally characterised by ambivalence and mixed views about caning and violent punishment. As has been noted above, acceptance of violent punishment is culturally ingrained (UNICEF 2010, Antonowicz, 2010, TwumDanso, 2010, Owen, 2012); so much so that there is some confusion, even amongst trained staff, about what constitutes violent and non-violent punishment (desirable and undesirable alternatives to caning, themes 3A and 4A).

It is not surprising then, that the analysis uncovered tensions and struggles between themes relating to opportunities for change and barriers to change, with many participants holding positions both for and against physical punishment. Most participants held some proviolent punishment attitudes (theme 4B), with the exception of two children who did not clearly express any opinions, either for or against, and four teachers/head teachers (all at Challenging Heights School) who expressed strong opinions against violent punishment (theme 3B). Six participants held purely pro-violent punishment attitudes (two male parents, three children and one head teacher). The remaining fifteen participants were ambivalent, expressing both pro- and anti- violent punishment views at different times during their interviews, sometimes seeming not to realise they had contradicted themselves. At other times, ambivalence was more explicit:

“in two ways, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.” Female teacher, comparison school 2

“it is good in some way and bad in another way.” Male parent, comparison school 1

- This can leave participants in a confusing or confused state. For example, in just one statement, this participant suggests it's OK to make children scared, it's not OK to make children scared, caning works, and caning doesn't work:

“It depends on how you approach it... because you can even use the cane to threaten them, not necessarily using it on them, you understand? There are some cases, some children that when they see the cane itself, they get scared, I mean, they get scared you understand? I mean banning it will help. But you should have a way of I mean, going into it, you understand, or doing it. I know there are some children who you have to use cane on them before... but on the average the majority of them, using cane on them, I mean, teaching here, I mean currently, if I use cane on them I feel like, no they are not changing.” Male teacher, comparison school 1

- Thematic groups 3 and 4 will be explored in parallel here to reflect the high degree of ambivalence in the data.

THEME 3A: DESIRABLE ALTERNATIVES TO CANING

There was evidence from the interviews that teachers at both Challenging Heights School and the comparison schools are already using some discipline and behaviour management approaches that do not cause children harm. Taking a rights-based approach (e.g. Kinderman, 2007), these methods are desirable alternatives to caning and should be promoted alongside advocating for banning caning. Teachers had a range of non-violent punishments (subtheme 3Ai) including withdrawing privileges:

“Er, don't go on break... if we are going on an excursion, say, you will not go on that excursion...” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“If you don't behave well, you don't have the chance to use the library, you can't go to the ICT lab to use that place. Every student wish to go to the ICT lab, or to the library to read, to surf the internet, or use the computers, but because you have behaved differently, that is not in line with the school's code of conduct, you are deprived of... privilege.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

- Non-violent punishments also included unpleasant but harmless activities such as asking children to do extra work, clean up or stay late after class:

“We have to use non-violent... some of them are, like as I have mentioned, cleaning the urinal, collecting rubbish, they have to sweep the classroom, writing some lines...” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“Like, hmmm, letting the child work extra time, let me say, if the child should come to school late, because he or she has come to school late, you are going to let him or her work extra time from the time he or she has wasted, for instance... That can also help.” Male teacher, comparison school 2

- “Time out”, a behavioural technique where children whose behaviour is reinforced by social attention (for example other children in the class laughing at them) are removed from the situation for a short time (e.g. Webster-Stratton, 1983), was also a popular approach for dealing with disruptive students:

“I will ask you to go out. More, I can, especially with the older ones, go and stand at the back of the window that you listen from there.” Female teacher, comparison school 2

“Mostly I use time out and normally I ask them to stand outside and you don't have to prevent the children from listening or being part of the class you just have make sure that the person is at the window, views whatever you teach in class... he or she is not going to be ok with the fact that others are in class...” Male teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

- There were also some good examples of positive methods (subtheme 3Aii), including positive discipline, a respectful and encouraging approach which aims to teach children positive values and life skills as well as shaping their behaviour (e.g. Nelson 2006). Many teachers talked about the need for counselling and understanding children's difficult behaviours, rather than just using punishments:

“you have to just mentor the children, shape the behaviour so that the end of the day the person can also fit in society. That's what we are doing here in my school.” Head teacher, Challenging Heights School

“To even correct pupils it mustn't always be punishment, but counselling.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“I believe in speaking and talking to, I mean, speaking deep, it's not just about talking, you understand, like ‘Hey, bra school, come to school early, you are late’ No, that's not it. It's about taking your time, speak deep, I mean counsel the person. Every teacher should have the counselling skills.” Male teacher, comparison school 1

- This approach was popular with some parents too:

“I speak to the child and ask him why he did that and the child will apologise and say mum am sorry for doing that” Female parent 1, Challenging Heights School

“In this town people who want the wellbeing of their children advise them” Female parent 2, Challenging Heights School

- Teachers at Challenging Heights School mentioned using positive reinforcement (Skinner, 1953), including praise and concrete rewards for children who follow the school rules and behave well, but these approaches were not mentioned by teachers from the comparison schools. This probably reflects the content of behavioural management training carried out at Challenging Heights School, which emphasised the use of rewards alongside non-violent discipline:

“We have so many rewards such as giving gifts, embark on educational trips, giving them privileges in the library and ICT laboratory during break time under the auspices of code of conduct committee which supervise the acts. We sometimes award the best behaved kids in the front of the school at assembly.” Head teacher, Challenging Heights School

“We don’t only look at the bad behaviour too in school. We look at the good ones and then we reward those who behave well in school...” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“[Non-violent alternatives to punishment] should be used... Guidance and counselling. The praising. The rewarding.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

In summary, desirable alternatives to caning that do not compromise children’s rights, including non-violent punishments, time out and counselling, were already in use in all the schools in this study, and rewards were additionally in use at Challenging Heights School. This suggests that non-violent behaviour management is culturally acceptable and effective, and can be valued by teachers.

THEME 4A: UNDESIRABLE ALTERNATIVES TO CANING

In contrast to the previous section, this theme describes the various alternatives to violent punishment already in use which would not be supported by a child rights focussed approach to changing discipline in Ghana’s schools and homes. These alternatives are punishments which are potentially damaging to children’s wellbeing, including painful and uncomfortable punishments (subtheme 4Ai) and starvation (subtheme 4Aii).

It was concerning to note that teachers at both Challenging Heights School and the comparison schools were using kneeling down for a long time as a punishment:

“You can ask a child to kneel down for some time.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“...you can also be made to kneel down in the classrooms.” Girl 1, Challenging Heights School

This punishment is an example of a “stress position” (e.g. Quaker Initiative to End Torture, 2016), where someone is forced to adopt a physical position which places a large amount of weight on just a few muscles. Whilst these postures are easy to hold for a few seconds, after prolonged periods of time, they become very painful. Stress positions are defined as methods of physical torture by human rights groups including Amnesty International (2016). Other examples of stress positions found in the current research included squatting, carrying heavy equipment and combining kneeling and holding heavy equipment. For example:

“[At a school near my house] I only saw a student girl that is a female student carrying desk for a very long time... she carried the desk for almost 2-3 hours” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“In my former school when you do something wrong ... sometimes you are made to kneel down and a stone or chair will be placed in your palm, unless a teacher or senior comes to tell you to stand up you can’t” Girl, comparison school 2

- Adults sometimes appeared to think of these punishments as non-violent and listed them alongside other less harmful punishments:

“I: can you please give me more examples of the non-violent forms of punishment?”

P: scrubbing the toilet, sweeping the gutters or [laughs a little] holding your ears and squatting up and down continuously for some time.” Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School

“since there is no caning in [our school] we sometimes ask them to squat, sweep the class for a day, to sharpen pencils, to pack books into the cupboard and other punishments” Female teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

It was particularly disappointing to find stress positions still in use at Challenging Heights School, where teachers have received training in non-violent discipline that explicitly prohibits their use. This points to a need for ongoing training and thorough induction in non-violent discipline methods to cope with the relatively high staff turnover at Challenging Heights School.

As well as punishments designed to cause pain, some of the non-violent punishments chosen in schools involve physical labour. As over a fifth of children in Ghana are economically active, often helping families with physical labour such as farming, carrying goods to sell and fishing (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014), many parents and teachers are likely to consider this a culturally acceptable form of punishment. Physical labour need not be harmful or painful if given for small periods of time after carefully considering the age and ability of the child, but caution must be used to ensure the punishments are not out of proportion, thus risking pain, discomfort or negative health consequences:

“I think the caning is better than digging the refuse dump... there are a lot of punishments they can give us but the digging of the refuse dump is what I don’t like because it’s not good for health... By the time we get there we see children who have defecated around the refuse dump and also when we burn the rubbish the smoke enters into us which makes us sick.” Boy 1, Challenging Heights School

- Although not used at school, starvation (subtheme 4Aii) was commonly mentioned as a punishment at home:

“some of the punishments [at home] are you are not given food from morning to evening” Girl, comparison school 2

“When [my parents] do not give me food it makes me afraid... that I will die or fall sick” Boy 1, Challenging Heights School

Withholding food as a regular punishment also has the potential to cause physical and psychological damage to children and is seen by teachers as an undesirable alternative to caning:

“they starve them as a means of punishment... they deny them of giving them their immediate needs as a means of punishment. Which also have their own disadvantages.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

“I think there are some parents, if they come to the school and hear that their kids have been punished, some get very upset, they get very angry... sometimes they can even go, ‘You, the teacher came to report you, so you are not going to eat...’ which would be a different thing... I mean that’s, that’s school life, it happened at school, so you can’t say that your son... he refused to do assignments, so when he comes home we are not going to give him food... which is very bad.” Male teacher, comparison school 1

In summary there was evidence that teachers and parents do look for alternatives to caning, but they often substitute painful and uncomfortable punishments or starvation for caning and beating. These choices could be linked to attitudes that children need to “feel” a punishment in order for it to be effective, or could be due to teachers and parents being unaware of effective methods of non-violent discipline (What else can we do?, subtheme 4Biii). The use of undesirable alternatives that threaten children’s health and wellbeing is concerning and must be addressed in any advocacy campaign which proposes alternatives to violent discipline in schools.

THEME 3B: ATTITUDES AGAINST VIOLENT PUNISHMENT

Identifying and understanding attitudes both for and against violent punishment can provide an opportunity for change, as advocacy campaigns aim to change attitudes and strengthen the views of those who already hold anti-punishment attitudes. In this study, attitudes against violent punishment fell into four main groups:

Firstly, some were against violent punishment because they felt it was ineffective: it doesn’t work (subtheme 3Bi):

“some children are not afraid of any punishment whether being caning, scrubbing, or digging the refuse dump, these kind of children need talking to about the attitude they put up so as they can stop” Boy 2, Challenging Heights School

“I think when children change on their own will or using non-violent procedure it usually go well with them but if it is punishment, a time will come, they will still go back to that behaviour” Head teacher, Challenging Heights School

“[corporal punishment doesn’t change behaviour] because these children that we are having here or have in modern Ghana know that whenever I misbehave you will ask me to go and do punishment so it’s not helping them at all.” Female teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

“Me, sometimes I even think, you caning the child, you are wasting your energy, you are wasting your time” Male teacher, comparison school 2 the same

In contrast with this rather functional attitude, others saw violent punishment as bad and harmful to children (subtheme 3Bii). This position was based on a moral perspective, often informed by empathy with children’s suffering (theme 2A, Impact on victim):

“Nowadays, I don’t think that corporal punishments are okay because the teachers abuse the children with these corporal punishments, my kids are always coming home with complaints all the time. Moreover, some of the children easily get frightened whenever they see the cane so even if they know what the teacher is asking them they are not able to answer because of fear. It is bothering us the parents.” Female parent, comparison school 1

“[If you ban corporal punishment in schools] you are not causing emotional pain to anybody you are not causing physical pain to anybody, you are giving the child rights to education and other things.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“[Corporal punishment in schools] is bad, it is really bad” Female teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

“I think [caning] is the one that is very, very bad, apart from the other ones we use, it’s OK, non-violent, but for the caning, it is violent. And maybe a teacher slapping, knocking, all those ones too should be taken out.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“To me corporal punishment it’s not good” Head teacher, Challenging Heights School

Others argued that violent punishment is not necessary (subtheme 3Biii), as there are other effective non-violent punishments available:

“When the child misbehaves, you have other policies and strategies to get the child, rather than using the cane.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“that’s why we do guidance and counselling in school. We don’t just do it for no reason. We do it so we can handle children. So punishment should really be banned, it should be more of conversation, knowing the problem of the kids, bringing their parents inside, I think it will help.” Male teacher, comparison school 1

Finally, there were those who felt that violent punishment should be banned because teachers are using it in a way that is out of control (subtheme 3Biv), for example, caning unfairly, excessively or in anger:

“some [of the parents] said that you don’t have to cane for a child to get hurt.” Girl, comparison school 2

“[my family] asked me why the teacher didn’t call any of the students who raised their hands, and I told them that they said that those at the back do not like studying so if they got the answers wrong the whole class was going to be caned. And my mum said that the teacher is very foolish” Girl, comparison school 1

“it will affect the child... especially when the student is caned and the teacher caning is caning out of anger, the student will be shocked. I think the problem should... should be... taken out of school.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“some parents say they should punish the children, but [I think] some teachers will inflict their anger on the child when they are punishing.” Male parent 1, Challenging Heights School

“teachers should be advised not to beat the children when they are supposed to bring something to school and their parents have not yet gotten some for them. It is quite unfair to the children.” Female parent, comparison school 2

Whilst for some participants this attitude was linked with other reasons that caning should be banned (e.g. male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School), for others, the idea that excessive caning or caning in anger is worse than routine or controlled caning was linked to pro-violent punishment attitudes, which justify caning if it is used in the right way (subtheme 4Bii, see below).

As has been previously noted, participants’ views on caning are on the whole characterised by ambivalence and struggle between pro- and anti- positions. It is noteworthy that the only participants who held attitudes against violent punishment without also holding pro-violent punishment attitudes all used arguments that caning is morally wrong or bad (subtheme 3Bii). This suggests that advocacy appealing to moral arguments might have most success in reducing ambivalence and changing attitudes. It also suggests that the experience of managing classrooms without the use of violent discipline might itself change attitudes, as all of the Challenging Heights teachers and head teacher expressed attitudes against violent punishment. Receiving training in non-violent punishment and then putting those ideas into practice would give respondents anecdotal evidence that non-violent punishments work, thus strengthening their belief that caning is not necessary (subtheme 3Biii), and allow them to express morally held beliefs (subtheme 3Bii) in line with their behaviours. In this way, the teachers at Challenging Heights School are not experiencing the cognitive dissonance suffered by many perpetrators of violent discipline (Theme 2D: Impact on perpetrator).

THEME 4B: PRO-VIOLENT PUNISHMENT ATTITUDES

When considering pro-violent punishment attitudes, we should remember that violent punishment is so ubiquitous in Ghana that there were no participants in our study who had not been caned as children, and all of our adult participants admitted to currently caning or having in the past caned children. They are therefore likely to be strongly invested in justifying their actions and the use of corporal punishment more generally. UNICEF (2014) found that 50% of Ghanaian adults express the opinion that physical punishment is “necessary”, but point out that the share of children experiencing physical punishment is far higher than 50% (in Ghana, over 70% report having been hit, and over 90% report experiencing some kind of violent discipline, UNICEF 2014, 2010). This suggests that people either misrepresent their own views in research, or continue to cane even when they think it is the wrong thing to do, perhaps because of societal pressures (Antonowicz, 2010, Twum-Danso, 2010). Anecdotal evidence was cited very strongly by participants in the study, who related times when they had seen violent punishment work (subtheme 4Bi), or when they themselves felt their behaviour had changed as a result of caning:

“[the caning changed the child] He calmed down. He was no longer troublesome” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“since that incident, I decided to put down the cane, for the past, let me say two or three months, I have not used the cane, so they have decided to come to school any time that they want. But yesterday a situation was worse, so I decided to cane late comers. And today they came in their numbers. So you can see it’s a testimony for you, that sometimes the cane also helps.” Male teacher, comparison school 2

“I realised that what I did was wrong so I forgot about [being caned] so from there I did not put that act up again... it really helped me to change” Male parent 1, Challenging Heights School

“They were 3 female friends who used to walk together and hang around boys together. After I caned my daughter she was not seen with them again. The other two girls are school dropouts with kids right now but my daughter is still in school. The punishment really helped my child.” Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School

“yes please, [being caned] has changed me... I won’t fight in school ever again” Boy, comparison school 1

The argument that being caned changes children ignores the possibility that other, non-violent methods may also have prompted change, and is linked to the lack of awareness of non-violent punishment methods found in previous studies in Western Africa (UNICEF, 2010, Antonowicz, 2010). Unlike the Challenging Heights teachers, most respondents in this study did not have anecdotal evidence for the efficacy of non-violent methods.

Some justified caning only if it was used in a very controlled way, suggesting that there is a right way and a wrong way to cane (subtheme 4Bii):

“it would be bad if you use your anger, but it would be good as compared to the background of these children. Even if he does something wrong in the class he doesn’t maybe do his assignment...

always you ask him or her to do it and he comes to school not doing it, you have to at least give him or her two canes... I do believe that this punishment change behaviour. If you do it. But if you add anger to it, that worsens everything.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“Yes [caning] helps but some of the teachers cane too much, so they should [put] the cane down small but rather give them work to do at the school” Female parent 1, Challenging Heights School

“[Caning] is good in a way but also bad in a way because some teachers cane unnecessarily... but some cane to the extent of hurting the children, so we get some parents going to the school, and I will prefer the cane being used but in a sensible way.” Female parent 2, Challenging Heights School

“It becomes bad when it becomes too much...” Male parent, comparison school 1

“I wish they abolish the squatting and weeding and maintain the caning but they shouldn’t cane as severely but be more cautious whilst caning us.” Girl, comparison school 1

“Caning is different than beating the person.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

Twum-Danso (2010) found similar attitudes towards physical punishment at home and in school in Ghana, and suggested that there are cultural norms that allow people to differentiate between what they see as justified discipline and abuse. However, our data suggests that the existence of these norms does not protect children from injury or other harm, as we have seen in thematic groups 1 and 2.

Some supported violent punishment because they did not seem to know of any other alternatives, so were at a loss to know what else to do (subtheme 4Biii):

“If you ban it and say ok, we should not use any cane at all in the school, these children will say oh anything that I do, they will not cane me, so I will do whatever I like. Do you understand what I’m saying?” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“If schools stop using corporal or physical punishment the students will take the teachers for granted and won’t change from their wrong behaviours.” Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School

“[Non-violent punishment] will not help because if I don’t go out for break I can even send someone to get me food, so I can decide not to do my homework, because if I don’t I will only be made not to go out for break, but cane will ginger the child.” Male parent, comparison school 2

Linked to this was the idea that children ought to feel a punishment for it to be effective and that words are not enough to correct children:

“I think caning is sometimes very good for correction. This is because when you punish a child with a cane the pain helps the child not to repeat that wrong thing he/she did. It could take weeks and the child might still be feeling the pain. But if you just warn the child there is not much impact.” Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School

“I think non-violent punishments like eyeing the child or warning them are more effective at home than at school. It is more effective to cane them at school.” Male parent, comparison school 1

“they should advise us to learn but if we do not change then they can whip us” Boy, comparison school 2

“I believe that if the child does something wrong and the cane is not going to be used then the child should have something that he or she can feel so as to know that it is because of what he did... if they cancel [punishment that inflicts pains on children] totally, the children will spoil.” Male parent 1, Challenging Heights School

These attitudes falsely conflate punishment and discipline, assuming that without punishment there will be no discipline, and they also rest on a lack of knowledge about available forms of non-violent punishment and positive discipline, or misunderstandings about their efficacy. This supports previous research showing that many parents and teachers in low and middle income countries are unaware of methods of non-violent discipline (UNICEF, 2010, Antonowicz, 2010).

Many participants shared the idea that caning is character forming (subtheme 4biv), helping children know right from wrong and shaping their morals:

“One thing I know is first and foremost I regret for putting up that particular behaviour and I think what the teacher does was to shape me.” Male teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

“for me, if you punish my child in school I am not that concerned because you are teaching him [what] is good” Male parent 1, Challenging Heights School

“I think if you misbehave and a teacher punishes you there is nothing wrong with it... you definitely won’t repeat a wrong doing you were punished for.” Female parent, comparison school 2

Some of our participants suggested that if caning is banned, children will become stubborn or spoiled:

“[banning caning] will impart negatively on the behaviour of children seriously.” Male teacher, comparison school 2

“[Banning caning] will affect the children at school and the children will become very stubborn so I wouldn’t stop using corporal punishment because the school has stopped” Female parent, comparison school 1

Twum-Danso (2010) suggests that in Ghana, children must learn “respect, obedience, honesty, humility, reliability, fear of God, and responsibility to both family and community” (pg. 31), and that physical punishment is seen as crucial to the correct socialisation of children. She suggests that physical punishment is most often used when children transgress the crucial values that make a “good” person in Ghana (Twum-Danso, 2010), and that it is widely accepted in many West African societies that failure to use physical punishment to instil these values represents a failure of parenting or a failure of care (Twum-Danso, 2010, Antonowicz, 2010). This explains why several of our participants even went so far as to say they needed the punishments:

“That caning also corrected me. Corrected me to not be late.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“I said nothing because I know what I did was wrong and need response to the tune of whatever I requested for.” Male teacher 2, Challenging Heights School

Similarly, children suggested that violent punishment can be used to encourage learning:

“I: How should schools help children learn to behave well and also get good grades?

P: by caning us” Girl 1, Challenging Heights School

“if the caning policy is there and the child does not read his or her note and when you ask him or her a question and if he is not able to answer, you cane him or her so that next time, the student will realise that I was caned because of not learning” Boy 2, Challenging Heights School

“caning will help us to take our books more seriously.” Girl 2, Challenging Heights School

All three of these comments were made by children at Challenging Heights School, a non-caning school, and it is interesting to speculate whether or not experiencing caning in a learning environment would have changed their opinions. It was not possible to determine from this study how far children felt free to express their own opinions, and how far they felt they must express attitudes that they felt were expected of them, but given children’s relative lack of power (United Nations, 1959, and subtheme 4Cii), this should be considered as a possibility. However other studies have also found pro-violent punishment attitudes amongst children (Twum-Danso, 2010, UNICEF, 2014), suggesting that the views expressed by children in our study reflect the success of the socialisation process. “Children have been socialized so well that they regurgitate the values their parents are trying to instil in them.” (Twum-Danso, 2010, pg. 46). Another reason for pro-violent attitudes amongst children is that they too benefit from the acceptability of corporal punishment, as they use it on younger siblings in their role as carers, and on younger pupils in school (Twum-Danso, 2010). Children therefore also have a vested interest in justifying the use of caning.

The idea that caning helps shape character, and a lack of caning causes behaviour problems, was also reflected in subtheme 4Bv, caning in schools helps discipline at home:

“if he is not punished at school, he will bring that attitude home” Male parent 1, Challenging Heights School

“[If schools stopped using caning], this would definitely spoil the children so I would have to cane them more often myself to prevent them from getting spoiled.” Male parent, comparison school 1

Parents use threats of caning from teachers to back up their own discipline measures:

“whenever I eye my child I threaten to tell his teacher about his behaviour... and that always puts them in check because they are always afraid of their teachers. But if the teachers are not allowed to cane the children, then the kids will not fear or respect their teachers... [if caning was banned] I would have to cane them myself since the teacher’s threat trick will not work anymore.” Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School

“... [banning caning] will really be a bother to us the parent... because we need the teachers to be at least scaring them a little with the cane for us.” Female parent, comparison school 2

The use of teachers as an extension of home discipline is related to cultural attitudes that support the notion that any adult in the community can and should correct a child they find to be doing wrong (Antonowicz, 2010, Twum-Danso, 2010). When threats don’t work, it is common for parents to bring children to school to be caned when they are struggling to discipline the children at home:

“sometimes, it’s the parents who come in and tell you to cane their children because they have left them to do whatever they want and when it’s too much, they come to you the teacher, and say that you the teacher should cane. Which, which, I really don’t like.” Female teacher, comparison school 2

“Yesterday like this, a parent came to report their ward, that we should cane her. We told the parent that she is the best person to discipline her child. If I should cane her, she will get afraid of me, but what about you the parent, when she comes to the house, is she going to respect you?” Male teacher, comparison school 2

Twum-Danso (2010) found that more educated professional people are more likely to reject the idea of others physically punishing their children, preferring their permission to be sought first, or for the wrongdoing to be brought to their attention so they could punish their children themselves. This might explain the attitudes of teachers in our study, who generally did not feel comfortable being used as the “back-up” discipline for behavioural problems in the home. Participants used the Christian Bible to justify their use of violent punishment suggesting that violence towards children is part of the culture or tradition in Ghana (subtheme 4Bvi):

“I personally don’t feel good when I have to use corporal punishment on a child, but when the need arises and I have to use that punishment, I do that. Because the Bible teaches us, when we spare the rod, we spoil the child, so it’s inevitable to use the cane as a means of punishment.” Head teacher, comparison school 2

“Even the Bible said to do it, don’t spare the rod to spoil the child” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“oh yes I really believe that [the beating] has changed my son, after all the Bible even says that we should do it” Male parent, comparison school 1

Despite many Christian traditions rejecting violence towards children and taking a different interpretation of the teachings of the Bible, using a religious justification is a powerful means of coping with guilt and other negative feelings perpetrating violence can produce (subtheme 2D). Twum-Danso (2010) noted similar justifications in her study, but argues that they are heavily influenced by Evangelical Christianity, and rely on an overly literal and selective view of the Bible, with too much attention being paid to Old Testament teachings and not enough to the teachings of Jesus outlined in the New Testament. She suggests that this reliance on the Bible as justification is in conflict with an assertion that physical punishment is part of “African culture” (Twum-Danso, 2010), an attitude that was not commonly expressed in our study. Only one participant held this attitude [emphasis added]:

“Banning it completely I don’t agree with... because there are some... without the cane, the African child will not change. Excuse me to say that. So if you banish it completely, it won’t help.” Female teacher, comparison school 1

This is an extraordinary statement to make about a continent with 55 internationally recognised states and over 480 million children under the age of 15 (Population Reference Bureau, 2015), but draws on faulty logic: firstly, that the level of violence used against children in Ghana is “typically African”. As we have seen, this is not the case: Ghana has higher levels of violent punishment than many other African nations (UNICEF, 2010). Secondly, this speaker is drawing on discredited racist ideas that there is something different (perhaps culturally or genetically) about African children compared to other children of the world. Cultural or traditional justifications for violence are powerful, but ignore the concept that culture and traditions evolve and develop with time (UNESCO, 1996), as can be seen in the increasing reliance on Evangelical Christian interpretations of the Bible to justify violence against children.

In summary, in keeping with previous research (Twum-Danso, 2010), there was evidence from our study that both victims and perpetrators of violent punishment consider it necessary and beneficial. Whilst consideration is given by some to the appropriateness of different types of violence in differing circumstances, its legitimacy overall is not questioned, reinforcing Twum-Danso’s (2010) view that there is cultural agreement on an acceptable level of corporal punishment. The acceptance of corporal punishment is perhaps unsurprising in a culture with entrenched patriarchal, hereditary and social power hierarchies (Antonowicz, 2010) where parents and education professionals are offered few, if any, alternative approaches to disciplining children (UNICEF, 2010).

Particularly challenging are the perceived links between the use of violence as a corrective measure and religious or cultural traditions, and the strong pro-caning sentiments expressed by the children in our study. However, as we have previously noted, our participants are ambivalent: clearly both troubled by using violence (see also theme 2D, impact on perpetrator) and motivated by a desire to do the right thing (shaping children’s character and not allowing them to “spoil”). It is this ambivalence and strong sense of value-driven behaviour that provides an opportunity for change, if non-violent discipline can be presented as a viable alternative method of shaping children’s characters in line with cultural expectations in Ghana.

THEME 3C: RESISTANCE, IN TENSION WITH THEME 4C: POWERLESSNESS

Theme 3C, Resistance reflects our particular concern with examples of parents, teachers and children resisting the use of caning and other violent punishments in schools, as Challenging Heights’ advocacy campaign hopes to build on already existing movements and attitudes in Ghana. However, any act of resistance to an oppressor is necessarily constrained by the oppressed person’s relative lack of power (e.g. Kagan et al., 2011), and there were also many examples of powerlessness (Theme 4C) in our data, which will be discussed alongside examples of resistance. Children in particular are in a powerless position relative to both parents and teachers, and have long been understood as in need of special protection and care (e.g. UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990). In our study, children’s powerlessness (subtheme 4Cii), and how this constrains resistance and action was clearly expressed by teachers reflecting on personal experiences of being caned in childhood

“During that time, we were very, very afraid of our teachers, so we didn’t say anything.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

“... we all know how it is...That day, I don’t remember crying... it was painful, but what do you do?” Female teacher, comparison school 2

However, child participants were less likely to link fear and inability to act, and simply expressed their powerlessness in terms of their fear of abusing adults (subtheme 2Aii), for example:

“when they continuously beat us we come to school in a very nervous state and very much afraid” Boy, comparison school 1

One child participant had ideas of how things should change:

“I think a meeting should be called for both parents and teachers to be spoken to reduce the punishment they give to children.” Girl, comparison school 1

but in our interviews there was only one direct example of children's resistance to violent punishment (subtheme 3Cii), and this was in a family context, where perhaps some children hold more power than they do in school:

“those days when my parents used to use cane on me, they stopped because I addressed them, I told them that when they use cane on me, I get more angry, so it's better that they approach me, tell me don't do this, and my dad started using that method, and it helped!” Male teacher, comparison school 1

Children are unlikely to resist when, as has been seen above, and in previous research (Twum-Danso, 2010, UNICEF, 2014), they have been socialised to hold pro-violent punishment attitudes.

Teachers (and head teachers in particular) are obviously in a much more powerful position than children, as they are the ones holding the cane, and in the cultural context of this study they have higher education, professional power and status than many of the parents whose children they are teaching. In these positions of power, we might expect action in line with the attitudes against violent punishment (theme 3B) and awareness of the negative impact on the victim and perpetrator (themes 2A & 2C) that most teachers expressed in our study. Nevertheless, there were few examples of teachers publicly resisting use of the cane in schools, for example, refusing to carry out a punishment as instructed by the head teacher, or arguing against the use of the cane in public. Those examples of teacher resistance (subtheme 3Ciii) that did exist were mainly in relation to parents:

“[Parents] cane them. I can remember an incident at home, a boy I think pushed one boy on the floor on the stairs, the mother came in with a cane. So I told her, we don't cane here. If you want to cane your child, let him come home or outside the school, not in the school. She said ‘I still want to cane him in the school’ I said, no that's not allowed. Indeed, your child has misbehaved but I will not allow her to cane in school” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School

Whilst there was little evidence of teachers showing resistance to school caning, there was good evidence that teachers have the potential to be a protective factor against violent punishment at home, as parents value their opinions:

“I remember one student came to my house, because of this kind of punishment... I took him home to his parents... and so when you have a personal experience on this, it helps, you know... what the person is going through with their parents. [The parents] listened to me” Male teacher, comparison school 1

“when I finished beating [my son] his class teacher came to ask me why I beat him. I told her that he was playing some games at school I didn't like that was why I caned him like that for him to stop and she said okay” Female parent, comparison school 2

This concept of school and teachers as a protective factor against abuse, which is an accepted fact in many countries (e.g. Mortimer et al. 2012), is one that could be strengthened in Ghana alongside seeking a ban on corporal punishment in schools. It may be that teachers act to protect children at home but not in school because they feel relatively powerful in relation to parents, but feel they lack power or relevant knowledge and skills to challenge other teachers, their head teacher or the schooling system. Teachers also hinted that they occasionally felt powerless in relation to their pupils too, and that this might affect their choice of discipline methods:

“We know Challenging Heights not be using canes in their school, so we will be very much happy if you can at least give us the form of punishment that you people use so that we can also employ in our schools to help control the behaviour in the children.” Male teacher, comparison school 2

“We realise that it's difficult to mould them because they have come from a home with certain problems, so it's difficult to... for them to accept correction in order to keep up with the school rules and regulations” Female teacher, comparison school 1

“if you look at the majority of the students of Winneba here, they're very, all of them, their parents are illiterate, the majority of them, maybe 70 or 60 percent. They are all fishermen and the fish mongers... So this exception in their background, their attitude is different from those who are educated, those who are coming from educated homes, their attitudes are different from those coming from the big cities.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

Here, teachers are suggesting that their pupils come from disadvantaged backgrounds, therefore their behaviour is more challenging, and as teachers, they lack the skills and resources to discipline without resorting to violence. Teachers' powerlessness (subtheme 4Ciii) is therefore closely linked with failures in teacher training (Antonowicz, 2010) and pro-caning attitudes (What else can we do?, subtheme 4Biii) that argue caning is necessary because there are no other effective methods.

In contrast to teachers, parents spoke openly about parents' powerlessness (subtheme 4Ci) in relation to teachers:

“I can't [warn the teacher] because the teachers are always there to train him” Female parent 1, Challenging Heights School

“...entreat... the government to be stern on the teachers, he has the power to caution them and not we the parents.” Female parent, comparison school 2

“Even if the teacher has no good reason to punish the child I don't think there is anything I can do at all, after all he/she is a teacher and knows what he/she is about.” Female parent, comparison school 2

This powerlessness was reinforced by examples where teachers had intimidated parents who complained about punishment:

“My daughter one day came home with bruises all over her body claiming that her teacher caned her so I told her father to go and investigate into the matter. The teacher explained that he didn’t intentionally... the head teacher... was upset about the child reporting to us the parent instead of him, so he even wanted to dismiss my ward, but the father explained that it was out of fear that made the child do that so they should understand.” Female parent, comparison school 1

These power dynamics, where teachers reason with and talk round parents who complain, often force parents into a position of complicity in, or support of schools’ punishments (subtheme 4Ci(a)):

“I went to the school to find out [why my son was caned] and was told that he was not serious but likes playing during lesson time with those sitting around him... well, after the explanation the teacher gave me I felt he was right to beat him, after all I don’t want the money I am spending on my kid to go wasted.” Male parent, comparison school 1

“I went to see the teacher and asked him what the child had told me and what happened. The teacher said he asked the child to stretch the hand so as he can cane the palm but unfortunately the cane hit the finger nails... I was not angry because I have a lot of conversations with the teachers” Female parent 1, Challenging Heights School

Despite these difficulties, amongst all groups in our study, parent resistance (subtheme 3Ci) to caning was the most evident, and parents often directly challenged teachers and head teachers:

“[in my former school] sometimes [one of the teachers] canes us and tells us to go home so when we went home, [our parents] called for PTA [Parents’ and Teachers’ Association meeting] and told him not to do that. We got ourselves hurt through the caning process... [the teachers] said we were caned because we did not do the instruction given out and also we were making noise but some [of the parents] said that you don’t have to cane for a child to get hurt.” Girl, comparison school 2

“In some school if you punish a child the whole community can come after you...” Head teacher, Challenging Heights School

“His class teacher beat him continuously till his back was bruised for not having some of the new uniform... I was very angry so I was going to the Education Office to report the teacher and I met the head teacher before getting to the office... I reported to her and she promised me she’d take heart and that she would talk to the teacher.” Female parent, comparison school 2

There is some evidence that parent resistance affects real change and schools are taking note:

“I remember when we opened school this term, most of their hair was bushy, so we give them the opportunity to go to the house on several occasions to cut them. But, they were proving stubborn. So I decided to settle the things. So we gave them two, two lashes. By the end of the day, some of the parents were complaining that most of their children, they are [inaudible] yeah, suffering a lot of injuries and so they came in their numbers and they complained. Since then we have decided to put down the cane and use other method of punishing them. As a punishment that we regretted using.” Male teacher, comparison school 2

“In the olden days if you punish someone, if you are able to punish maybe a ward, the parents will also punish the ward. But these days it has been changed because of the policy that they don’t have to cane children in school. So this policy has gone into the community and now the community is also getting it that nowadays you don’t have to punish the children. So if you punish them the child will go home and tell the parents and the parents will come to the school. It’s happening, if you cane the child and if you don’t take care” Head teacher, comparison school 1

“[guidance to reduce caning in schools] affected the relationship between the teacher and the parents... the parents will defend the child against the teacher.” Head teacher, comparison school 1

In summary, children are in a very powerless position, and whilst they can eloquently describe the impact of punishment on them and engage in advocacy campaigns, it is up to the adults around them to take responsibility to reduce violent punishment in school and at home. Teachers in this study showed good ability to effect change in the home, but seemed less likely to effect change in schools, reflecting a skills gap in non-violent management techniques. In our study, parents showed the most potential as actors to reduce punishments in schools, if they can overcome the power dynamics between parents and teachers and stand up for their children.

However, the acts of resistance we see are teachers intervening when they think parents have gone too far, and parents intervening when they think teachers have gone too far. In this way, adults in our study are not taking a stand against physical punishment in itself, but helping to police the line between “acceptable” physical punishment and abuse according to local cultural norms (Twum-Danso, 2010).

CHAPTER 4 CHALLENGING HEIGHTS SCHOOL CASE STUDY AND REFLECTIONS



INTERVENTION TO STRENGTHEN THE NON-VIOLENT DISCIPLINE POLICY

In early 2014, a change in leadership at the school provided an opportunity to revisit and revitalise the non-violent discipline policy in Challenging Heights School. As a first step, all teachers completed a 5-day training course (provided by KD), covering topics including child development, child protection, behaviour management, understanding trauma, management of aggression and counselling skills. This was followed up by fortnightly facilitated peer discussion groups, where teachers shared ideas, difficulties and successes in using non-violent discipline in practice, and the head teacher encouraged the development of individualised rules and consequences for each classroom.

At the same time as providing alternative skills for the staff, a senior manager (DS) worked with the head teacher to enforce the existing rules against caning in the school. New guidelines were developed to ensure every teacher understood that not only was caning prohibited, but also threats, keeping canes in the classroom and other forms of violent punishment. Teachers who could not abide by these regulations were subject to disciplinary procedures, and in some cases, dismissed from the organisation.

A second step was developing a positive discipline strategy. The head teacher, KD and DS facilitated a workshop with child representatives from each year group to develop a code of conduct, laying out the positive behaviours expected from every child at Challenging Heights School. Funding was made available for a modest reward scheme, and those children following the code of conduct were placed on a “roll of honour” and publically congratulated with praise and small gifts.

A small group of teachers who showed particular commitment to the non-violent discipline policy were chosen to form a behaviour committee, both to administer the roll of honour reward scheme, and to act as leaders on non-violent discipline within the teaching staff. This committee developed additional rewards (such as school trips) and privileges (such as access to the library and ICT centre at break time) for those on the roll of honour, and kept enthusiasm high amongst the children and staff for the code of conduct.

BACKGROUND

Challenging Heights School was founded by Dr James Kofi Annan in 2007 to provide education for socially disadvantaged children from communities at high risk of child trafficking. It started with just a few classes and volunteer teachers, but today provides education for over 700 children from nursery level to Junior High School, with some of the best academic results in the region. As Challenging Heights School is part of a charity, and heavily subsidises the education of its pupils, teacher retention has always been an issue, with wages generally not competitive with those paid to qualified teachers in the state sector. As is the situation in many private schools in Ghana, the majority of teachers at Challenging Heights School have completed Senior High School, but have not gone on to specialised teacher training, and for many, teaching is their first job.

Challenging Heights School has always had a prohibition against caning. In early 2014, when we began our interventions to strengthen the non-violent discipline policy at Challenging Heights School, a few core staff members were ideologically committed to non-violence, but due to high staff turnover and the relative inexperience of many of the staff, most felt ill equipped to discipline a class without the cane. As a consequence, some teachers did cane sometimes, leading, if caught, to their dismissal from the organisation. Others obeyed the instruction not to cane, but still used other violent punishments such as kneeling or squatting, threats of caning, or simply keeping a cane visible in the classroom to act as a warning to students.



REFLECTIONS

At the time of providing initial training, although there were some teachers who were excellent non-violent discipline advocates, attitudes amongst the staff were in the majority pro-violent discipline. Teachers expressed all the pro-caning attitudes found in this study: they had seen caning work, they did not know of other alternatives, they felt that caning is character forming and as long as it was not overdone, it is good for children and part of caring for them. They used cultural (“we Africans...”) and Biblical (“spare the rod and spoil the child”) justifications for caning, and dismissed nonviolence as a Western import, that was not relevant to their culture. In general, they equated non-violence with a lack of discipline and classroom chaos, and caning with well-behaved students.

Teachers also expressed a great deal of frustration about the very difficult behaviour they faced in the classroom, as they struggled to control large numbers of students, whom they felt did not respect them. Teachers felt that the cane had been taken away from them, and that this left them exposed, lacking authority and skills to manage a class.

They felt that the students had all the power, knowing that teachers could be dismissed for caning.

Teachers at Challenging Heights had indeed had the cane taken away from them and nothing given to them

in terms of alternative methods of discipline. Those few who had been teaching at Challenging Heights for a long time and who were personally committed to the child rights values underpinning the organisation as a whole had received some previous training, or had educated themselves and found creative ways of managing a class, but newly arrived teachers, lacking training, could only base their teaching methods on their own experiences of being taught in schools where violent discipline was the main method used.

During the course of our intervention, there was a lot of resistance, and behaviour change came before attitude change: teachers were required to try non-violent discipline, and many remained unconvinced of its efficacy even after training and beginning to try these techniques in the classroom. In the early days, strict enforcement, such as monitoring the classrooms and reminding teachers of the consequences for flouting the policy, was necessary to ensure teachers were not using violent methods. Gradually as teachers began to see some early successes with non-violent discipline, and hear from other teachers who

Our intervention is a work in progress, and will require ongoing leadership from the head teacher and wider organisation of Challenging Heights to ensure practices do not slip back into reliance on the violent approach that is more common in Ghanaian schools.

were more committed to non-violence as a stance, their confidence in the techniques grew. During this stage, it was necessary to promote a strong message, in keeping with Ghanaian cultural practice, that we wanted the teachers to

have authority and the children to be highly disciplined: this focus on better discipline helped many teachers try the non-violent techniques, as they were willing to give up violent discipline if they felt there was something else that would also be effective. Over time, we noticed that attitudes began to change, with more teachers speaking up in favour of non-violence, and several moving to become champions of non-violence within the school.

Our intervention is a work in progress, and will require ongoing leadership from the head teacher and wider organisation of Challenging Heights to ensure practices do not slip back into reliance on the violent approach that is more common in Ghanaian schools. In the absence of the ability to recruit trained teachers, staff turnover is a particular challenge, necessitating regular repetition of training programmes to ensure that all teachers have the required skills to manage a class using non-violent and positive methods. Although there are still occasions where individual teachers fall down, there is reason to be hopeful. Our experience has shown us that providing skills in non-violent and positive discipline, together with management oversight that enforces the ban on violence, gradually leads to attitude change, and in turn, a greater uptake of non-violent management skills.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Our research provided additional evidence that the structural violence of the Ghanaian Education system harms children who experience or witness it, causing them physical and emotional damage and leading to poor educational outcomes including school drop-out. Additionally, it harms perpetrators of violence, who, empathising with their victims, feel unease, guilt and shame even as they believe caning is the right thing to do. Furthermore, corporal punishment in schools increases the probability of family violence and is detrimental to family care.

The evidence of harm and the high degree of empathy adults have for the suffering of the children they punish is in stark contrast to the investment in corporal punishment that the majority of our participants expressed. Our research supports previous studies that suggest that the harm caused by violent punishment is seen by both perpetrators and victims as a price worth paying to ensure children are well disciplined (Antonowicz, 2010, Twum-Danso, 2010).

Discipline is seen as an inherent part of parental love and care (Twum-Danso, 2010), and highly valued by adults and children (Family for Every

Child, 2014). Thus there is greater tolerance of violence in the home than in schools (Twum-Danso, 2010) with strong emphasis on using “proportional” violence to build the moral character of a child. Our study found ambivalence towards violent discipline, with most participants expressing views both for and against its use. However, ambivalence about violent punishment and empathy with children suffering harm does not lead to changes in behaviour because many parents and teachers do not feel there are effective nonviolent alternatives and are unwilling to sacrifice the high level of discipline they believe violent punishment engenders.

Our experience at Challenging Heights School suggests that behaviour change can be effective in bringing about attitude change and that, to a lesser extent, regulation can modify behaviour. Teachers who were trained in non-violent and positive behaviour management, and required to practice these techniques, were first sceptical, but later moved to advocate against violent punishment. In contrast, strict enforcement of a no-caning policy without providing clear alternative discipline measures reduced the incidence of violence but did not change teachers’ perceptions of the value of violent discipline.

Although we believe legislative change can drive social change, this is contingent on regulations being understood and enforced. In Ghana, where the state has limited enforcement capacity, many laws are openly flouted; for example, Ghana has strong laws against trafficking which are rarely enforced (US Department of State, 2015). In practice only those statutes genuinely valued by enforcement agents, who are themselves the product of socialisation that accepts violent punishment (TwumDanso, 2010), are implemented. Neighbouring countries including Togo and Benin have both implemented a total ban on corporal punishment in schools and at home, but have not yet achieved anything close to this in practice (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment, 2016a). Thus attitudinal change, behaviour change and legislative change are intimately linked.

For both local and systemic change people need to be empowered to operate differently and to personally experience alternatives to violent punishment which offer the possibility of better discipline. We therefore recommend that developing the capacity of teachers and parents to discipline their children using positive and nonviolent behaviour management techniques

should go hand in hand with calls for political change. This is in line with recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2015), following its last review of Ghana’s progress (Session 069, 9th June 2015). It called for both legislative changes and awareness raising programmes, calling on the Government of Ghana to amend all legislation in order to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment as “reasonable” and “justifiable” correction or discipline, particularly in the Children’s Act (1998) and the Juvenile Justice

Act (2003); and further strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes — including campaigns — with the involvement of children, in order to formulate a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating child abuse and corporal punishment (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2015).

We therefore identify the following key messages, engagement strategies and educational campaign goals to be pursued in any advocacy programme campaigning against violent punishment in general, and corporal punishment in schools in particular.

Teachers who were trained in non-violent and positive behaviour management, and required to practice these techniques, were first sceptical, but later moved to advocate against violent punishment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

KEY MESSAGES

- Advocacy should engage with the cultural imperative that Ghanaian children be well disciplined and respectful, and not allow the debate to become polarised into non-violence or discipline. We must focus the debate on “better discipline”: how we discipline (not whether or not we discipline) and not allow a message to develop that violence is the only effective form of discipline.
- Even teachers who think caning is necessary, effective or inevitable do not like having to use the cane. Advocacy messages should focus on the impact of caning on perpetrators and the improved wellbeing for teachers who are properly supplied with training in non-violent and positive forms of discipline.
- Both those who are for and against the use of violent discipline can agree that “discipline without abuse” is a Ghanaian value. Advocacy campaigning must build on this to avoid being seen as externally driven.
- Assertions that violent discipline is an inherent part of African culture must be countered by, for example, highlighting Ghana’s high rate of violent discipline compared to other African countries, and the fact that other West African countries have already outlawed corporal punishment.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

- There is very good evidence in our data for the harm of violent discipline, including negative impacts on academic performance, physical injury, causing fear and emotional damage, and increasing likelihood of school dropout. Advocacy should build on the empathy shown for the pain and harm caused to children, and teachers’ unease at having to use the cane.
- Teacher advocates who are experienced in non-violent discipline and can clearly articulate effective alternatives to violence should be recruited to provide training and testimony. Attitudes can be challenged when teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own negative experiences of being caned at school. All teacher training in discipline techniques should include this component.
- Participants differentiated between abusive and non-abusive violent punishment that is perceived to limit harm, but there was evidence in our study that norms about acceptable punishment are often violated. Whilst we believe that no violence towards children is acceptable, it may be counter-

productive to engage with a debate around whether or not “controlled” violent punishment causes harm. Instead, the advocacy focus should be on better discipline, and the effectiveness of alternate non-violent forms of discipline – i.e. we do not need violence if we can have better discipline through nonviolent means.

- To counter religious justifications for violent punishment, recruiting religious leaders to the coalition against caning will be very important to provide weight to alternative interpretations of religious teachings.

EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN GOALS

- Teachers and parents feel powerless to control children without violence often because they do not know of any better discipline strategies. Therefore, training in non-violent behaviour management and positive discipline techniques will be key to changing attitudes, as it will provide experiential evidence of the efficacy of a non-violent approach. There are opportunities to provide training, given that Ghana Education Service have shown willingness to develop non-violent approaches in teacher training (Graphic Online, 2016).
- Pro-violent punishment attitudes are common amongst parents, and they are often complicit in, or supportive of, caning in schools, as well as using violent discipline in the home. Parents will also require training in positive and nonviolent discipline.
- Messages promoting non-violence should clearly state that violent discipline incorporates psychological violence, stress positions, excessive physical labour and any other punishments intended to cause physical or emotional harm, not just caning or beating.
- Advocacy should not focus on the efficacy/inefficacy of corporal punishment: given the high prevalence of caning in Ghana, and lack of exposure to effective non-violent methods, most Ghanaians will have anecdotal evidence of a child changing their behaviour after being caned (regardless of any other damage that may have been caused). Advocacy should focus on the harms that can be caused (even during so-called “effective” caning), and the efficacy of alternative forms of discipline. In this way, a message that nonviolent discipline is better discipline because it is as effective, and less harmful than physical punishment, can be developed.

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APPENDIX: THEMATIC GROUPS, THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

Thematic Group	Theme	Subtheme	Indicative Quotes
1. Descriptions of Violent Punishment	1A. Violent Punishment at School		<p>"Most schools take advantage of... punishing children mercilessly. I know most of the schools around they used to punish children mercilessly like caning them early in the morning, going to fetch sand from the seaside, bringing stones to school and all sorts of punishment." Female teacher 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"...the teacher came to the class, and he asked us to er... head... use our head to hit the table of our desk... [we did it] for SO many times, because the teacher, he said, he want to hear the sound... of the whole thing, so many times we hit it small, and he said 'No! You have to hit it very big... very hard, so that I can hear the sound'... so if you hit your head [smacks hand on table twice softly], on the table and he doesn't hear... [bangs hand on table very loudly] KUMI! it means you didn't do the right thing." Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"They will put the chair in front of me so they will stretch – stretch to maybe hold the chair. And they will do it to you. This is what they have been doing, yes. Even they would call for all big boys... the big boys will come and hold your arms and your legs and they will give it to you! Pa pa pa pa pa." Head Teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"Those at the back got the answer wrong and the whole class was caned... we were made to touch the ground with both hands outside our classroom, in front of the school's office... two teachers [did the caning], the students chose who to go to... [the head master] was sitting in the office watching us and said that we didn't like studying... some of our juniors gathered just to watch us crying whilst we were being caned... I started crying before it even got to my turn... I [still] think about it a lot" Girl, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I always make sure I check their home works before they sleep every school day and give them a lash or two after if they have not done it. This is to prevent them from doing it again." Male parent, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I'm afraid of my dad and stepmum... because they shout at me and also beat me" Boy, comparison school 2</p> <p>"Well, two years ago my daughter went out and came home very late, but what I heard was that she was with a guy so I beat her with rage... [my neighbours] said that even though she had done wrong I should still forgive her and stop beating her. They were pleading on her behalf, so I stopped" Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School</p>
	1B. Violent Punishment at Home		

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2. Impact of Violent Punishment	2B. Impact on home life	2AV. Children become hardened to pain and punishment	<p>"They become hardened, so you find them doing other things, after all, there's the cane, and as for me, I can take the cane." Female teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"Some of the students never change no matter how hard they are caned... it's always because they have gotten used to the cane so they even get more daring after they are caned" Girl, comparison school 1</p> <p>"When you are violent, some of the children they pick those behaviours from us, and so they grow to be violent. And that that results in violence in the home" Female teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I came [my child] or I find another punishment, to emphasise what was given to the child in school." Female teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I feel I will be punished at home if I commit the same offense I committed at school" Boy 2, Challenging Heights School</p>
		2Bi. Increases violence at home	<p>"I went home to tell my mum that I got an answer wrong at school and she said that she was going to beat me in the evening so I ran away before evening" Girl, comparison school 1</p> <p>"[My brother] went and stayed with my father for some time, because he didn't do the right thing and, so my mum told him she was going to give him some canes, and he fled the house." Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"Caning! That day! ...I was weak...my whole body, I was weak!... My mum too eh... my mum was supporting [my father] eh, <i>this boy oh, he will smoke, he will smoke... Give it to him, he smoked!</i>" ...It was an uncle who came to save me then... blood! Blood was all over me! I was running all over the house... I will go here, then he will come... I will go right here then he will come... Ah! ...I had to run away from the house, because my parents were not understanding me... I plan on running away kraaa, I wouldn't come back... Hm. I went to sleep at a friend's house... I left, I just left in the night" Male teacher, comparison school 1</p>
2. Impact of Violent Punishment	2D. Impact on perpetrator	2C. Impact on witnesses	<p>"Whenever I see a student being caned, I get scared for the person" Girl, comparison school 1</p> <p>"If I'm using cane I don't feel comfortable, because I know the pain I've gone through and I don't want the other ones to... to go through the same thing." Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p>
		2Di. Violence at home causes family separation	<p>"How did I feel? Heh... nobody is happy when caning." Male teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"Having warned several times I decided to use the cane... So after doing that at the end of our lesson, I regretted, I felt that I shouldn't have been so angry, I vented my anger on the child." Female teacher, comparison school 1</p>

2. Impact of Violent Punishment	2A. Impact on victim	2Ai. Causes physical injury	<p>"A physical hurt like when the teacher canes you, the skin can just burst and blood will ooze out. If the teacher does not handle the cane very well it can enter into the child's eye and cause damage to the child." Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"...when I was a school child, one day I was given a punishment, they caned me and I had some nose bleeding. And I realized it was very harmful." Head Teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"the cane hit my arm and it got swollen... even after the long break my hands were still swollen... when I got home... later on I saw that there was a blood clotting under my skin where there was a swell." Boy, comparison school 1</p>
		2Aii. Causes fear & emotional damage	<p>"...when they continuously beat us we come to school in a very nervous state and very much afraid" Boy, comparison school 1</p> <p>"When I was in my tender age teacher caned me and it still sounds very hard in my mind day in day out" Head Teacher, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"Personally, it changed me, because of what... the pain I had, from it. It changed me. So since that time, whenever I go to any class... to sit and to be taught, I don't make noise. I just have to keep quiet..." Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"Any time that they caned me I cry, if I feel the pain." Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p>
2. Impact of Violent Punishment	2A. Impact on victim	2Aiii. Damages concentration and learning	<p>"Punishment in schools does not allow the children to concentrate well on their studies. That's what I see." Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"about 90% of the class, when the teacher enters the class, they get scared, and so their mind will be carried away that, if the teacher asks a question and they don't get it, he's going to use physical punishment, so, they're always alert, their minds are not even on the class. They're thinking about the punishment" Male teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"...some of the children easily get frightened whenever they see the cane so even if they know what the teacher is asking them they are not able to answer because of fear" Female parent, comparison school 1</p>
		2Aiv. Causes school drop out	<p>"...if there is too much caning in a school too, some of the students who fear caning might refuse to go to school" Female parent, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I know about people who also decide not to come to school because of the previous punishment which we are giving them." Head teacher, comparison school 2</p>

3. Opportunities for Change	3Biv(a). Evidenced by unfair punishments	conversation, knowing the problem of the kids, bringing their parents inside, I think it will help.” Male teacher, comparison school 1
		“Nowadays, I don’t think that corporal punishments are okay because the teachers abuse the children with these corporal punishments, my kids are always coming home with complaints all the time.” Female parent, comparison school 1 “when they say someone is a head teacher it means he is responsible for the teachers so if we want caning to be reduced in the country then, the head teacher should monitor the teachers on how they cane the children so that the teachers do not overdo it.” Male parent, comparison school 1 “teachers should be advised not to beat the children when they are supposed to bring something to school and their parents have not yet gotten some for them. It is quite unfair to the children.” Female parent, comparison school 2 “we were in class one day, when my teacher asked us a question and he said that if those sitting at the back got the answer wrong he was going to cane the whole class. Those of us who were sitting in front we raised our hands but he didn’t call us. Those at the back got the answer wrong and the whole class was caned.” Girl, comparison school 1
	3Biv. It’s out of control	“I went to the school to find out [why my son was caned] and was told that he was not serious but likes playing during lesson time with those sitting around him...” Male parent, comparison school 1 “...we gave them two, two lashes. By the end of the day, some of the parents were complaining that most of their children, they are [inaudible] yeah, suffering a lot of injuries and so they came in their numbers and they complained. Since then we have decided to put down the cane and use other method of punishing them.” Male teacher, comparison school 2 “His class teacher beat him continuously till his back was bruised for not having some of the new uniform ... I was very angry so I was going to the Education office to report the teacher and I met the head teacher before getting to the office... I reported to her and she promised me she’d take heart and that she would talk to the teacher.” Female parent, comparison school 2
	3C. Resistance	3Ci. Children resisting the use of violent punishment

3. Opportunities for change	3A. Desirable alternatives to caning	3Ai. Non-violent punishments	“Er, don’t go on break... if we are going on an excursion, say, you will not go on that excursion...” Female teacher, comparison school 1 “I will ask you to go out. More, I can, especially with the older ones, go and stand at the back of the window that you listen from there.” Female teacher, comparison school 2 “Please some of the punishments used in my school are, digging of refuse dump, scrubbing the washrooms or weeding at the back of the school when it is bushy.” Boy 2, Challenging Heights School
		3Aii. Positive methods	“you have to just mentor the children, shape the behaviour so that the end of the day the person can also fit in society. That’s what we are doing here in my school.” Head teacher, Challenging Heights School [“Non-violent alternatives to punishment] should be used... Guidance and counselling. The praising. The rewarding.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School “We don’t only look at the bad behaviour too in school. We look at the good ones and then we reward those who behave well in school...” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School “I feel punishment alone does not correct children” Head teacher, comparison school 2
	3B. Attitudes against violent punishment	3Bi. It doesn’t work	“Me, sometimes I even think, you caning the child, you are wasting your energy, you are wasting your time” Male teacher, comparison school 2 “some children are not afraid of any punishment whether being caning, scrubbing, or digging the refuse dump, these kind of children need talking to about the attitude they put up so as they can stop” Boy 2, Challenging Heights School “my advice is that... it shouldn’t be encouraged, I mean physical punishment, you understand” Male teacher, comparison school 1
		3Bii. It’s bad and harmful to children	“I don’t think [corporal punishment is] a good thing. It’s not a good thing because... it’s not a good thing because it doesn’t allow the child to concentrate and sometimes you mostly have effects on the child, the caning, especially emotional pains. The person goes through a lot and he or she is not able to come out and talk to anybody. You see cuts, or marks on the body because he or she was caned, so I think it shouldn’t be allowed in other schools.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School
	3Biii. It’s not necessary	“When the child misbehaves, you have other policies and strategies to get the child, rather than using the cane.” Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School “that’s why we do guidance and counselling in school. We don’t just do it for no reason. We do it so we can handle children. So punishment should really be banned, it should be more of	

			<p>"Caning is different than beating the person." Head teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"If schools stop using corporal or physical punishment the students will take the teachers for granted and won't change from their wrong behaviours." Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"If you ban it and say ok, we should not use any cane at all in the school, these children will say oh anything that I do, they will not cane me, so I will do whatever I like." Head teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I think caning is sometimes very good for correction. This is because when you punish a child with a cane the pain helps the child not to repeat that wrong thing he/she did. It could take weeks and the child might still be feeling the pain. But if you just warn the child there is not much impact." Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"One thing I know is first and foremost I regret for putting up that particular behaviour and I think what the teacher does was to shape me." Male teacher 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"for me, if you punish my child in school I am not that concerned because you are teaching him [what] is good" Male parent 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"I think it should be as it is, they shouldn't ban caning outright but also not increase the caning. [If schools stopped using corporal or physical punishment] it will really be a bother to us the parent... because we need the teachers to be at least scaring them a little with the cane for us." Female parent, comparison school 2</p> <p>"...if he is not punished at school, he will bring that attitude home" Male parent 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"Oh yes I really believe that [the beating] has changed my son, after all the Bible even says that we should do it" Male parent, comparison school 1</p> <p>"...without the cane, the African child will not change. Excuse me to say that. So if you banish it completely, it won't help. And some of the offences committed, that is the best that you can do to help the child." Female teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"Even if the teacher has no good reason to punish the child I don't think there is anything I can do at all, after all he/she is a teacher and knows what he/she is about." Female parent, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I went to the school to find out [why my son was caned] and was told that he was not serious but likes playing during lesson time with those sitting around him... well, after the explanation the teacher gave me I felt he was right to beat him, after all I don't want the money I am spending on my kid to go wasted." Male parent, comparison school 1</p>
4. Barriers to Change	4C. Powerlessness	4Bv. Caning in schools helps discipline at home	<p>"Oh yes I really believe that [the beating] has changed my son, after all the Bible even says that we should do it" Male parent, comparison school 1</p> <p>"...without the cane, the African child will not change. Excuse me to say that. So if you banish it completely, it won't help. And some of the offences committed, that is the best that you can do to help the child." Female teacher, comparison school 1</p>
		4Bvi. Caning is part of our culture / tradition	<p>"Even if the teacher has no good reason to punish the child I don't think there is anything I can do at all, after all he/she is a teacher and knows what he/she is about." Female parent, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I went to the school to find out [why my son was caned] and was told that he was not serious but likes playing during lesson time with those sitting around him... well, after the explanation the teacher gave me I felt he was right to beat him, after all I don't want the money I am spending on my kid to go wasted." Male parent, comparison school 1</p>
		4Ci. Powerless parents	<p>"Even if the teacher has no good reason to punish the child I don't think there is anything I can do at all, after all he/she is a teacher and knows what he/she is about." Female parent, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I went to the school to find out [why my son was caned] and was told that he was not serious but likes playing during lesson time with those sitting around him... well, after the explanation the teacher gave me I felt he was right to beat him, after all I don't want the money I am spending on my kid to go wasted." Male parent, comparison school 1</p>
		4C(i)a. Parents are complicit in or supportive of school punishment	<p>"I remember one student came to my house, because of this kind of punishment... I took him home to his parents... And so when you have a personal experience on this, it helps, you know ... what the person is going through with their parents. [The parents] listened to me" Male teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"...the mother came in with a cane. So I told her, we don't cane here. If you want to cane your child, let her come home or outside the school, not in the school. She said 'I still want to cane her in the school' I said, no that's not allowed. Indeed, your child has misbehaved but I will not allow her to cane in school" Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"You can ask a child to kneel down for some time." Female teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"sometimes you are made to kneel down and a stone or chair will be placed in your palm, unless a teacher or senior comes to tell you to stand up you can't" Girl, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I think the caning is better than digging the refuse dump... there are a lot of punishment they can give us but the digging of the refuse dump is what I don't like because it not good for health" Boy 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"When [my parents] do not give me food it makes me afraid... that I will die or fall sick" Boy 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"they starve them as a means of punishment... they deny them of giving them their immediate needs as a means of punishment. Which also have their own disadvantages." Head Teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"[caning] changes a lot. It changes a lot, a very, very lot. [Interviewer: How?] as I gave you the instance, they were not coming to school, when I used the cane, they came in their numbers." Male teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I've been teaching for the past 20 years and at the mere sight of the cane, you are notified to compose yourself. So without that – we'll have problems." Head teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"They were 3 female friends who used to walk together and hang around boys together. After I caned my daughter she was not seen with them again. The other two girls are school dropouts with kids right now but my daughter is still in school. The punishment really helped my child." Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"From my view, I think that corporal punishment is sometimes good. I'm saying that from my view, sometimes it's good. Depends on how you are going to use it." Head teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I wish they abolish the squatting and weeding and maintain the caning but they shouldn't cane as severely but be more cautious whilst caning us." Girl, comparison school 1</p>

			<p>3Ciii. Teachers resisting use of violent punishment and school as a protective factor against violence at home</p> <p>4Ai. Painful and uncomfortable punishments</p> <p>4Aii. Starvation</p> <p>4Bi. I've seen it work</p> <p>4Bii. There's a right and a wrong way to cane</p>
4. Barriers to change	4A. Undesirable alternatives to caning	4Aii. Starvation	<p>"When [my parents] do not give me food it makes me afraid... that I will die or fall sick" Boy 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"they starve them as a means of punishment... they deny them of giving them their immediate needs as a means of punishment. Which also have their own disadvantages." Head Teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"[caning] changes a lot. It changes a lot, a very, very lot. [Interviewer: How?] as I gave you the instance, they were not coming to school, when I used the cane, they came in their numbers." Male teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I've been teaching for the past 20 years and at the mere sight of the cane, you are notified to compose yourself. So without that – we'll have problems." Head teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"They were 3 female friends who used to walk together and hang around boys together. After I caned my daughter she was not seen with them again. The other two girls are school dropouts with kids right now but my daughter is still in school. The punishment really helped my child." Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"From my view, I think that corporal punishment is sometimes good. I'm saying that from my view, sometimes it's good. Depends on how you are going to use it." Head teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I wish they abolish the squatting and weeding and maintain the caning but they shouldn't cane as severely but be more cautious whilst caning us." Girl, comparison school 1</p>
		4Bi. I've seen it work	<p>"I've been teaching for the past 20 years and at the mere sight of the cane, you are notified to compose yourself. So without that – we'll have problems." Head teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"They were 3 female friends who used to walk together and hang around boys together. After I caned my daughter she was not seen with them again. The other two girls are school dropouts with kids right now but my daughter is still in school. The punishment really helped my child." Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"From my view, I think that corporal punishment is sometimes good. I'm saying that from my view, sometimes it's good. Depends on how you are going to use it." Head teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I wish they abolish the squatting and weeding and maintain the caning but they shouldn't cane as severely but be more cautious whilst caning us." Girl, comparison school 1</p>
		4B. Pro-violent punishment attitudes	<p>"I remember one student came to my house, because of this kind of punishment... I took him home to his parents... And so when you have a personal experience on this, it helps, you know ... what the person is going through with their parents. [The parents] listened to me" Male teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"...the mother came in with a cane. So I told her, we don't cane here. If you want to cane your child, let her come home or outside the school, not in the school. She said 'I still want to cane her in the school' I said, no that's not allowed. Indeed, your child has misbehaved but I will not allow her to cane in school" Female teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"You can ask a child to kneel down for some time." Female teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"sometimes you are made to kneel down and a stone or chair will be placed in your palm, unless a teacher or senior comes to tell you to stand up you can't" Girl, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I think the caning is better than digging the refuse dump... there are a lot of punishment they can give us but the digging of the refuse dump is what I don't like because it not good for health" Boy 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"When [my parents] do not give me food it makes me afraid... that I will die or fall sick" Boy 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"they starve them as a means of punishment... they deny them of giving them their immediate needs as a means of punishment. Which also have their own disadvantages." Head Teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"[caning] changes a lot. It changes a lot, a very, very lot. [Interviewer: How?] as I gave you the instance, they were not coming to school, when I used the cane, they came in their numbers." Male teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"I've been teaching for the past 20 years and at the mere sight of the cane, you are notified to compose yourself. So without that – we'll have problems." Head teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>"They were 3 female friends who used to walk together and hang around boys together. After I caned my daughter she was not seen with them again. The other two girls are school dropouts with kids right now but my daughter is still in school. The punishment really helped my child." Male parent 2, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>"From my view, I think that corporal punishment is sometimes good. I'm saying that from my view, sometimes it's good. Depends on how you are going to use it." Head teacher, comparison school 1</p> <p>"I wish they abolish the squatting and weeding and maintain the caning but they shouldn't cane as severely but be more cautious whilst caning us." Girl, comparison school 1</p>

“CORPORAL PUNISHMENT HAS BEEN SHOWN TO WEAKEN THE TIE BETWEEN CHILDREN AND PARENTS, AS WELL AS SLOWING DOWN MENTAL DEVELOPMENT AND REDUCING SCHOOL PERFORMANCE”.

Withdrawing privileges e.g. staying late after class or missing break or giving tasks such as writing lines or doing extra classwork are all examples of acceptable non-violent punishment.

At Challenging Heights, we believe that “systematic change is important for achieving sustainable and wide reaching improvements in children’s care”.

	4Cii. Powerless children	<p>“During that time, we were very, very afraid of our teachers, so we didn’t say anything.” Male teacher 1, Challenging Heights School</p> <p>“Some [parents] follow up to the school to tell us to cane that child again.” Female teacher, comparison school 1</p>	
	4Ciii. Powerless teachers	<p>“We know Challenging Heights not be using canes in their school, so we will be very much happy if you can at least give us the form of punishment that you people use so that we can also employ in our schools to help control the behaviour in the children.” Male teacher, comparison school 2</p> <p>“We realise that it’s difficult to mould them because they have come from a home with certain problems, so it’s difficult to... for them to accept correction in order to keep up with the school rules and regulations” Female teacher, comparison school 1</p>	