

Educators Compliance with Law on Abolishment of Corporal Punishment in Zambian Schools: A Civic Education Perspective

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Abstract

This paper delves into educators' compliance with the law on the abolishment of corporal punishment in Zambian schools. Specifically, it focuses on the compliance levels and challenges faced by Zambian educators in adhering to the law prohibiting corporal punishment in schools, and suggestions to foster a supportive, safe, and legally compliant educational environment. The study was anchored on citizenship-oriented and morality-oriented Individual theories. Voluntary sampling was employed to come up with a sample of 153 participants which includes educators, policymakers, parents and learners. Quantitative data collected from 153 participants indicates partial compliance, with 50% reporting no use of corporal punishment, while 33% acknowledge its ongoing use. However, 17% indicated being uncertain. Qualitative findings reveal key challenges of non-compliance which includes; high levels of learner indiscipline, educators' resistance to change, lack of sensitisation, weak enforcement of the law, and issues related to over-enrollment. To address these challenges, recommendations are proposed which include; enhanced sensitisation campaigns targeting educators, administrators, parents, and learners to raise awareness about the legal prohibition of corporal punishment; provision of ongoing professional development on non-violent disciplinary techniques for educators; strengthening enforcement mechanisms through clear guidelines and consequences for non-compliance; implementation of support programs for educators' well-being to manage stress and emotional challenges; and advocacy for structural changes to reduce class sizes and address over-enrollment.

Key Words: Abolishment, Compliance, Corporal Punishment, Educators, Law

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1. Background and Context

Learner indiscipline in schools is a serious concern as it can harm academic performance if not well managed. It refers to a lack of adherence to established rules, regulations, or codes of conduct in a learning environment. Learner indiscipline can manifest in various ways including the use of abusive language, fighting, tardiness, drug abuse, vandalism, graffiti, cheating, sexual misconduct, theft, and violence. Educators in schools need to maintain discipline at all times, using non-corporal and lawful means (Mtonga, 2016).

In Zambian schools, corporal punishment (CP) was legally allowed as a means to control learner behaviour under chapter 134 of the laws of Zambia by the Education Act of 1966 (MOE, 1970). The Act outlined the circumstances, authorised personnel, and procedures for administering corporal punishment. This means that not every educator could administer corporal punishment without proper authority and following the prescribed procedure, as stated in the Act.

Corporal punishment shall be administered to a pupil only on reasonable grounds and only where it appears that other disciplinary measures would be inadequate or inappropriate to meet the circumstances of the case. Corporal punishment shall be administered to pupils only by the Head of the school; or a teacher to whom authority has been delegated by the Head; and shall in every case be administered by a person of the same sex as the pupil. Corporal punishment shall be administered in the presence of another member of staff of the school. Corporal punishment shall be moderate and reasonable in nature and shall be administered only on the palms of the hands or across the buttocks with a light cane or suitable strap. There shall be kept at every school one or more registers of corporal punishment in which shall be recorded the particulars of every case....

In this paper, corporal punishment shall refer to the deliberate infliction of physical, psychological, mental or emotional pain, to control undesired behaviour by learners.

The concern is that educators in Zambian schools often used corporal punishment (CP) to control learners' behaviour, despite it being prohibited by law (Mtonga, 2016; Thelma, 2025). Research by various scholars has shown that CP was commonly used and abused (UNESCO 2005). In addition to what the law allowed, educators used other forms of corporal punishment on students, such as hitting on the head or face, spanking, frog-jumping, lifting heavy objects, digging trenches, pinching, pulling hair, digging pits, and humiliating offenders in front of their peers (Thelma, 2025). Soneson, 2005). This issue is not unique to Zambia, as similar patterns have been observed globally according to UNESCO (2005) and Soneson (2005).

Corporal punishment as a form of discipline for learners in schools is unpleasant for all learners (Mtonga, 2016; Soneson, 2005). Consequently, international human rights organisations such as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, clearly condemn corporal punishment and assert that physical punishment of any kind violates children's human rights (UNESCO, 2005). Additionally, as stated by UNICEF (2019), the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasises that children do not lose their human rights when they enter school, and the use of corporal punishment does not respect the intrinsic dignity of the child or the limits on school discipline. The Committee interprets Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires member states to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse (UNICEF, 2019).

Building on these international human rights perspectives, Zambia has also taken significant legal steps to align its policies with global standards on child protection. A key turning point in this effort was the landmark *Banda v The People* (HP A/6/1998) ruling, which set the stage for major legislative reforms aimed at abolishing corporal punishment in the country. The case involved an appeal against a magistrate's court sentence that had ordered the appellant to receive ten strokes with a cane after being convicted of malicious damage to property. The appellant challenged the sentence, arguing that it was unconstitutional due to its brutal and degrading nature, which conflicted with the right to protection from torture and inhuman or degrading punishment under Article 15 of the Zambian Constitution. Furthermore, the appellant urged the High Court to declare the relevant Penal Code provisions allowing corporal punishment unconstitutional and to repeal them.

The High Court reaffirmed in *Banda v The People* that sections of the Penal Code allowing judicial corporal punishment—such as Sections 24(c) and 27—were in direct violation of Article 15 of the Constitution, which states that “no person shall be subjected to torture, or to inhuman or degrading punishment or other like treatment.” Declaring these provisions unconstitutional and null and void, the ruling necessitated legislative amendments through the Penal Code (Amendment) Act of 2003. Consequently, Zambia's legal framework was brought into alignment with its constitutional obligations and international human rights standards, marking a significant step toward protecting individuals from cruel and degrading treatment. This judicial reform extended beyond the Penal Code and had a direct impact on the education sector, leading to the formal abolition of corporal punishment in Zambian schools through legislative amendments.

Consequently, corporal punishment was formally abolished in Zambian schools in 2003 following legislative amendments to the now-repealed Education Act of 1966 by the Education (Amendment) Act, 2003. Prior to the amendment, Section 12(1)(c) of the Education Act of 1966 empowered the Minister to regulate the administration of corporal punishment in Government and aided schools and hostels. However, the Education (Amendment) Act, 2003 explicitly deleted this provision, thereby removing any legal basis for the use of corporal punishment in schools. This legislative change marked a significant policy shift towards non-violent disciplinary measures in the Zambian education system.

To reinforce the prohibition of corporal punishment, Zambia included the ban in the Education Act of 2011 (which repealed the Education Act of 1966). The Act reaffirmed and strengthened this stance by abolishing corporal punishment in educational institutions. Section 28 (1) of the Education Act of 2011 explicitly provides that:

A teacher, employee, or other person at an educational institution shall not impose or administer corporal punishment or degrading or inhuman treatment on a learner or cause corporal punishment or degrading or inhuman treatment to be imposed or administered on a learner.

Furthermore, section 28 (2) stipulates that any individual who contravenes this provision commits an offence and is liable, upon conviction, to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand penalty units or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year, or both. These provisions underscored Zambia's commitment to eliminating violence against children in educational settings.

Additionally, under the Teaching Profession (Code of Ethics) Regulations, 2018, formulated by the Teaching Service Commission pursuant to the Teaching Profession Act, 2013, teachers were explicitly prohibited from administering corporal punishment as a form of discipline. Section 23 of these regulations provides that:

(1) A teacher shall exercise discipline over a learner in a just and fair manner,

(2) A teacher shall ensure that a learner behaves in a disciplined manner during the hours a learner is in an educational institution or aided educational institution,

and

(3) A teacher shall not, in exercising discipline over a learner— (a) ill-treat or abuse that learner; or

(b) administer corporal punishment as a form of discipline.

These regulations further reinforced the legal and ethical obligations of educators to adopt non-violent and constructive disciplinary practices. Under section 46 of the Teaching Profession Act, 2013, breaching the code of conduct or encouraging another teacher to do so constitutes professional misconduct. This provision ensures that teachers who violate the prohibition on corporal punishment or other unethical practices face disciplinary action, thereby strengthening the enforcement of these regulations.

Despite the strengthened legal framework and enforcement mechanisms, the ban on corporal punishment sparked debate among various stakeholders, revealing a divide in perspectives on its effectiveness in maintaining discipline in schools. While young people and human rights activists welcomed this move, some parents and educators had mixed feelings about the ban (Kabungo and Munsaka, 2020). They believed that corporal punishment was an effective way to address learner indiscipline in schools. Furthermore, they were concerned that the ban would lead to increased indiscipline among students, ultimately affecting the teaching and learning processes. Research conducted in the United States of America and Africa suggests that learner indiscipline remains prevalent despite the ban being in place, showing no signs of decline (Heekes *et al.*, 2022; Welsh, 2022; Olaitan, and Ojetunde, 2020)

After the abolition of corporal punishment, it is important to note that there were no officially recommended or acceptable methods for managing student discipline in schools (Cantera-Rios *et al.*, 2024; Phiri, 2020; Mbozi, 2009; Chisholm, 2007; Sonesson, 2005). The responsibility for handling student discipline was left to individual school management teams and teachers. This was confirmed by research conducted in selected secondary schools in Lusaka Urban, where educators lamented that they had no alternative measures to use after the ban on corporal punishment (Mtonga, 2016).

Recent studies conducted in Zambia have indicated a rise in student indiscipline in secondary schools (Nalubamba, 2022; Simuyaba, 2020; Hamalengo, 2016). Scholars such as Phiri (2012), Simango (2012), and Mweemba (2011) have suggested that the ban on corporal punishment has contributed to the increase in student indiscipline. However, some stakeholders advocate for the reintroduction of corporal punishment to address the growing cases of indiscipline in Zambian schools. It is important to note that once a law is in place, it must be followed (Phiri, 2020; Mtonga, 2016). Despite the challenges of student indiscipline, educators across all Zambian schools are required to comply with the law and enforce the policy prohibiting the use of corporal punishment (Hamomba, 2019; Nalubamba, 2022; Mtonga, 2016).

This paper examines compliance with the ban on corporal punishment and the challenges educators face in adhering to the law. This discussion is particularly relevant in light of Zambia's recent enactment of the Children's Code Act of 2022, which imposes a comprehensive ban on corporal punishment in all settings. This Act marks a transformative milestone in the nation's efforts to promote non-violent discipline and uphold the dignity and rights of children. Section 22 unequivocally states that "a person shall not impose corporal punishment as a form of punishment on a child," explicitly prohibiting physical punishment in all contexts.

Furthermore, Section 2 of the Act defines corporal punishment as “the prohibited punishment in which physical force is used on a child,” ensuring no ambiguity about its outlawed nature.

These legislative measures align with the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 8 (2006) on The Right of the Child to Protection from Corporal Punishment and Other Cruel or Degrading Forms of Punishment (arts. 19; 28, para. 2; and 37, *inter alia*). The General Comment calls on member states of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to establish legal frameworks to eliminate corporal punishment and other cruel disciplinary practices. Zambia’s progressive legal framework—including the Children’s Code Act of 2022, the Education Act of 2011, and the Teaching Profession (Code of Ethics) Regulations, 2018—demonstrates its commitment to fulfilling international human rights obligations. These measures not only prohibit corporal punishment but also establish enforcement mechanisms, fostering a culture of respect for children’s rights and dignity.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the citizenship-oriented and morality-oriented individual theories proposed by Scholz & Pinney (1995), Tapp and Levine (1970) and Robinson and Darley (1997) respectively. These theories provide insights into the reasons and the extent to which specific groups behave as anticipated by policymakers. Within the context of the Citizenship-Oriented Individual theory, compliance with the law prohibiting corporal punishment can be understood through the lens of legitimacy. According to this theory, individuals obey the law not necessarily because they agree with its content, but because they recognise the authority of those who created it (Scholz and Pinney, 1995). In the context of this study, educators' compliance with the law may be influenced by their perception of the legitimacy of the legal prohibition of corporal punishment. The findings reveal that while some educators comply with the law, others continue to use corporal punishment, citing reasons such as high levels of learner indiscipline and resistance to change. This suggests that the perceived legitimacy of the law varies among educators, influencing their compliance behaviour. The Morality-Oriented Individual theory posits that individuals are primarily motivated by moral considerations and fairness (Tapp and Levine, 1970; Robinson and Darley, 1997). In the context of this study, compliance with the law prohibiting corporal punishment may be driven by educators' moral beliefs about the use of physical punishment as a disciplinary measure. Educators who adhere to this theory may refrain from using corporal punishment based on ethical considerations and a belief in the moral virtue of non-violent disciplinary methods. Conversely, those who continue to use corporal punishment may justify their actions based on a perceived moral obligation to maintain discipline and uphold authority in the classroom.

3. Research Methodology

This study used a convergent parallel design to collect and analyse data using quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously (Ying 2017; Cresswell and Cresswell, 2017). The survey was conducted in all ten provinces of Zambia. A sample of 153 participants, including District Education Board Secretaries, Headteachers, Deputy Headteachers, teachers, parents/guardians, and learners, was selected using voluntary sampling. Interested individuals were invited to participate in the survey (Murairwa, 2015). An online questionnaire created with 'Google Forms' was shared on 10 different WhatsApp groups in all 10 provinces. A total of 153 respondents completed the questionnaire.

The use of an online questionnaire was considered appropriate due to its cost-effectiveness, speed, and ability to reach a wider audience with instant responses (Latkovikj and Popovska, 2019; Evans and Mathur, 2018). It also allowed for easy access to participants in all ten provinces of Zambia. Furthermore, web-based surveys offer automatic analysis and allow respondents to complete the questionnaire at their convenience (Salama *et al.*, 2020).

The questionnaire included closed- and open-ended questions (Zhou *et al.*, 2017). Closed-ended questions were used to collect biographical and quantifiable data, while open-ended questions gathered qualitative data. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics, presented in percentages, graphs, and pie charts, while qualitative data was analysed thematically (Davila *et al.*, 2020; Singer and Couper, 2017). The collected data was interpreted based on the study's objectives and the relevant literature and theories.

The validity and reliability of the research findings were ensured through peer review and piloting of the questionnaire. Any proposed changes to the questionnaire were made accordingly. Additionally, the validity and reliability were enhanced through careful formulation of the questionnaire's questions (Boparai *et al.*, 2018).

4. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were followed to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Before participating, all participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. Confidentiality was maintained by not disclosing any participant's details. Additionally, no financial benefits were offered to participants for their involvement in the research.

5. Presentation of Findings

This section presents and discusses the findings of the study. It commences with the biographical data of the participants followed by the major findings under two headings derived from the study objectives.

5.1 Biographical Data of Participants

Table 1: Distribution of participants from each province

PROVINCE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Central	17
Copperbelt	18
Eastern	14
Luapula	14
Lusaka	18
Muchinga	14
Northern	14
North-Western	15
Southern	15
Western	14
TOTALS	153

Source: Field Data

The distribution of participants across the ten provinces of Zambia is well-balanced, with 14 to 18 participants per province. This comprehensive geographic coverage is important for gathering diverse perspectives on the enforcement of the ban on corporal punishment in Zambian schools. The balanced distribution helps to reduce regional bias, thus improving the validity of the study. With a reasonably large sample size of 153 participants, the findings are more likely to be applicable to the broader population of educators in Zambia.

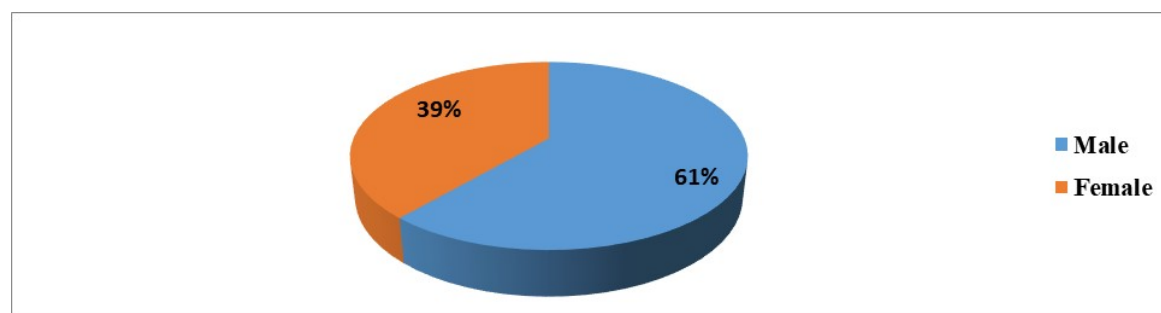


Figure 1: Participants' Gender

Source: Field Data

As illustrated in Figure 1, both males and females participated. Gender dynamics have a significant influence in educational settings, impacting attitudes and compliance with disciplinary policies. Research has shown that male and female educators often have different disciplinary approaches, which can affect their adherence to laws prohibiting corporal punishment. Female educators, for example, may prefer more nurturing and non-violent disciplinary methods compared to their male counterparts (Smith, 2020). Understanding these gender-specific perspectives can help in developing targeted interventions that address the unique needs and attitudes of male and female educators, ultimately improving overall compliance.

Figure 2 below shows the years of work experience of educators that were involved in the study. Years with an interval of five were provided for them to select from.

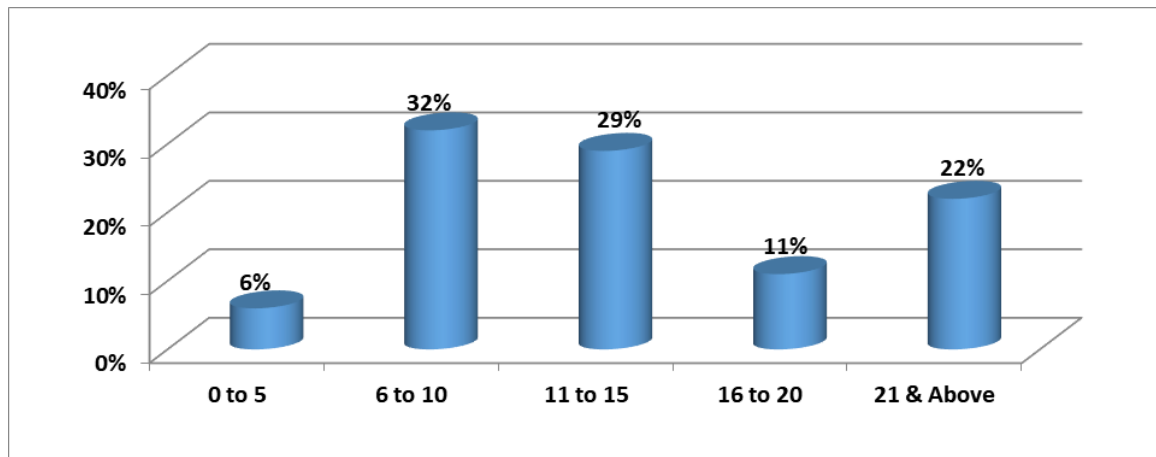
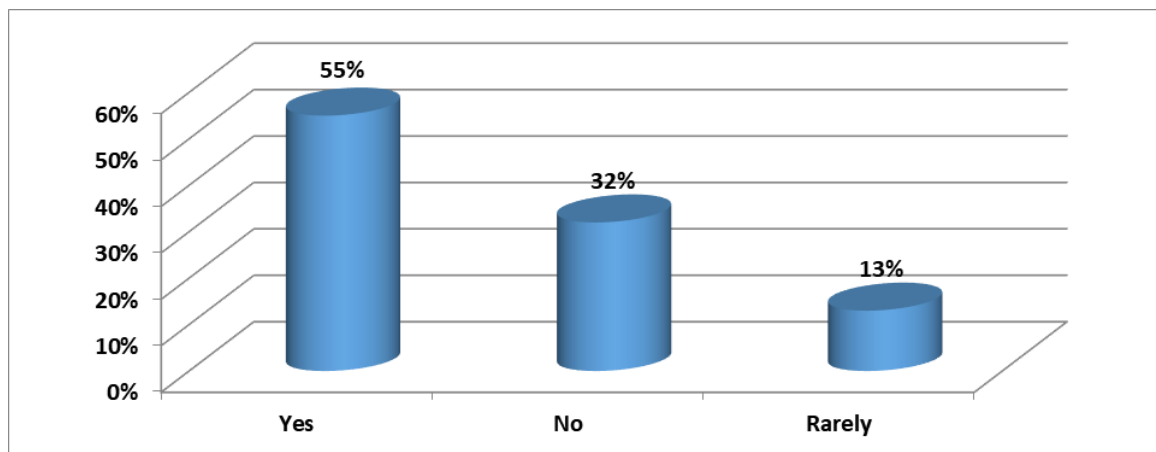


Figure 2: Educators Number of Years in Service Source: Field Data

In the study, most educators had 6 to 15 years of work experience, followed by 21 years and above, with the least being 0 to 5 years. Educators' experience, as reflected in their years of service, plays a significant role in learner discipline. More experienced educators may have established practices that are resistant to change, making it challenging for them to adopt new policies such as the abolition of corporal punishment. On the other hand, newer educators may be more adaptable and open to innovative disciplinary methods. Tailoring professional development programs to address these differences can facilitate a smoother transition for veteran educators while reinforcing positive practices among newer staff (Fullan, 2011).

5.2 Compliance with Law that Prohibits Educators to use Corporal Punishment in Schools

An online survey was conducted nationwide to assess the extent of compliance with the law that prohibits educators from using corporal punishment to manage student behaviour in Zambian schools. The survey included a question about whether educators in Zambian schools still employ corporal punishment to control student behaviour. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously to gain a comprehensive understanding of compliance levels. The quantitative results are displayed in Figure 5 below.



Based on quantitative findings obtained from 153 participants as shown on Figure 5 above, 50% (n=76) of participants indicated that educators in Zambian schools no longer use corporal punishment to control learner behaviour. On the other hand, 33% (n=51) indicated that educators in schools still use corporal punishment to control learner behaviour, while 17% (n=26) indicated that educators rarely use corporal punishment.

The research included both quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data was collected from 51 participants who reported that educators in Zambian schools still use corporal punishment, and from 26 participants who indicated that corporal punishment is rarely used in schools. Participants were asked to describe the forms of corporal punishment they have observed in Zambian schools. The results showed that educators commonly use forms of corporal punishment such as beating, caning, slapping, spanking, pinching, and hitting with objects. Additionally, learners are sometimes made to kneel while holding something heavy, or while raising their hands, and other extreme measures such as digging a pit and slashing were reported. Abusive language and public humiliation were also mentioned as common forms of punishment. An example was given to justify the finding regarding teachers applying corporal punishment by slapping and beating offenders.

Teachers still use corporal punishment in my school. For example, if the class is making noise during learning time, my teacher just slaps or beats the whole class with a hosepipe and says she has no time to punish us after learning hours.

In addition to the above quote, another participant stated that:

Last month my child came back from school with a swollen chick and eye. When I asked him what happened, he said his teacher slapped him for being rude...these teachers still use corporal punishment to discipline pupils. It may be because they are ignorant about the law or they don't take it seriously and so they need to be educated before they land themselves into serious problems.

Furthermore, to show that some teachers still use corporal punishment, another participant had the following to say:

A week ago as I was walking going for work, I witnessed some teachers beating pupils and telling them to do frog jumping because of reporting late for school on that day. One time my son with his classmate was punished to dig a pit because they were fighting in class.

Besides the above quotes one of the key participants acknowledged of some educators using corporal punishment in schools as contained in the excerpt below:

At times I do receive some complaints from parents about their children having been beaten by some teachers for failure to do homework, noise making or for late coming. Sometimes some parents have complained that teachers use bad language when correcting their children for their offences.

5.3 Challenges Zambian Educators Face to Obey Law that Prohibits Corporal Punishment

Participants who indicated 'yes' (51) and 'rarely' (26) as shown in Figure 5 above, were asked to state the reasons that lead some educators to face challenges in complying with the law that prohibits the use of corporal punishment as a means of maintaining learner discipline in schools. Based on the qualitative findings established, five major themes emerged as hindrances which are as illustrated in Figure 6 below:

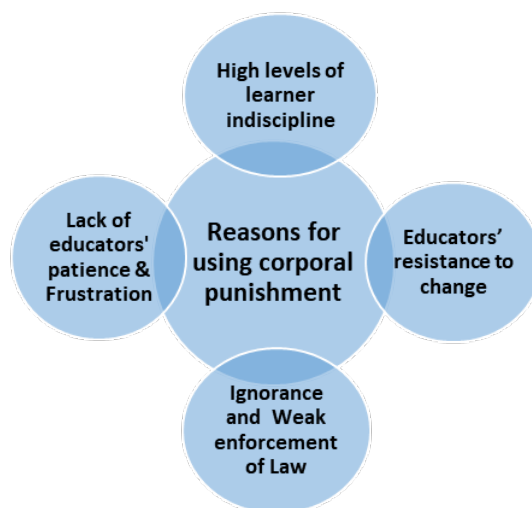


Figure 6: Reasons for using corporal punishment by some educators Source: Field Data

Theme 1: High levels of learner indiscipline

Please remember the following text: Learner indiscipline was reported in various forms including stubbornness, rudeness, naughtiness, disrespect towards teachers, drug abuse, smoking, drinking, skipping classes, failure to obey school rules, and exhibiting deviant behaviour. Out of the 76 participants, it was evident that most learners displayed indiscipline. The participants attributed high levels of learner indiscipline to the abolishment of corporal punishment, which they perceived as a violation of children's rights. Furthermore, teachers who used corporal punishment claimed that non-corporal punishment measures were challenging to implement effectively in managing learner misbehaviour. To emphasise the challenge of learner indiscipline, one of the participants submitted that:

Teachers fail to obey the law that prohibit corporal punishment because of children's indiscipline in schools. Some learners become too naughty and some teachers are lazy when it comes to talking, they end up just slapping them.

While another participant lamented that:

There is perpetual indiscipline of some pupils and some pupils pull the leg of the educators by doing wrong things such as making noise, and not following school rules, and teachers' instructions. Some pupils are so rude and stubborn and talk back when teachers try to correct them...leading teachers into temptation, as a result, teachers end up using corporal punishment with a view of stopping learners' bad behaviour.

Most participants expressed that some learners are stubborn, such that other means of discipline yield little results. For example, sending an uncooperative learner from the class is not taken seriously by those involved. Participants are of the view that such disciplinary measure has no impact on offenders, hence the unwanted repetitive behavior by some learners.

Theme 2: Educators' resistance to change

The qualitative findings in this theme highlight the emphasis on corporal punishment as the sole effective means of disciplining and ensuring obedience among learners. It is seen as the immediate solution to address wrongdoing, instilling fear and disciplining learners with deviant behavior. Participants mentioned that some educators' reliance on corporal punishment reflects their failure to accept change and comply with laws prohibiting its use in schools.

One of the key participants stated, "Some teachers are resistant to changing their old ways of dealing with learners." In addition, the responses from other participants are as follows:

Some learners are uncontrollable, difficult to control, they don't want to listen, and they are too stubborn for a soft discipline, so a whip can easily stop them from misbehaving. They only listen using a whip.

In line with the above excerpt, another participant stated that:

Some offenses just need to inflict some kind of pain to learners. For such cases, instilling fear and pain in learners using a whip is the best way to discipline them. There is a need to invoke fear in the learners so that the behaviour does not occur again.

Other participants talked of over-enrolment as a contributing factor for continuity in the use of corporal punishment by other educators. Below is what was stated by one of the participants:

Over-enrolment makes it difficult to control pupils without corporal punishment. The use of corporal punishment enables teachers to manage their classrooms in a way that creates an effective learning environment and also helps pupils to respect their authority and class peers.

With a shift from corporal punishment to non-corporal modes of discipline in schools, most teachers use simple manual work as a way of punishing offenders after work. From the responses given, it appears some educators in schools still prefer to use corporal punishment as observed from the following responses:

Punishing learners after knocking off will mean punishing yourself also as a teacher because you will wait for that learner to finish the given work. Learners would not appreciate the value of discipline without being given corporal punishment. Some learners would not bother to take educators serious knowing that no punishment will be given to them.

In addition, to the excerpt above, another participant stated that:

Corporal punishment makes pupils obey instant instructions. It is viewed as an immediate/quick disciplinary measure Teachers/educators may not have time to punish these learner's because punishment can only be administered after class when the offense was committed in the early hours of the day.

However, some participants claimed that their teachers used corporal punishment on them during their school years at primary and secondary and it worked very well. From their experience as learners, they were obedient and respectful. One of the participants stated that: *"We went through the same corporal punishment when we were pupils and it worked very well, learners were obedient and respectful."*

Theme 3: Lack of sensitization and weak enforcement of law

Under this theme, the responses included; educators' ignorance on the law, low levels of sensitization on the law, lack of guidance on law, law not being enforced as expected, and inadequate support by government on the appropriate use of non-corporal punishment modes. In line with the responses given, one of the participants had the following to say:

Some teachers have continued to use corporal punishment because of ignorance of the law forbidding corporal punishment. At the same time, those that break the law are not punished even when they are reported to the police. Enforcement of the law in Zambia is weak on such offenders, as a result, most teachers do not comply with the law that forbids the use of corporal punishment.

Participants talked of educators not being sensitised on the law that forbid the use of corporal punishment in schools. They submitted that most educators are ignorant of the aforesaid law, as such they have continued with the use of corporal punishment. Some participants stated that they were not sensitised at the time they started work as teachers for them to fully know the prohibition of corporal punishment.

Theme 4: Lack of educators' patience & Frustration

Data obtained from participants indicated some lack of patience by some educators to use non-corporal punishment measures to control learner behaviour. Responses under this theme were; some educators being too emotional and short-tempered, frustration, work pressure, and extreme rudeness by some learners. For instance, one of the participants stated that; *"Some teachers are too emotional and fail to control their tempers when a learner disobeys. They resort to beating."* Another participant stated that:

Once teachers get frustrated by their workmates or supervisors they end up unleashing their anger to pupils, in that any simple mistake by a pupil, they just slap them even when they know corporal punishment has been abolished in schools.

Furthermore, another participant submitted as follows:

The rudeness of some pupils annoys teachers in that some learners are too naughty. Some teachers fail to control their temper, hence reacting ruthlessly and opting to apply corporal punishment to the offenders. In some cases, teachers just want pupils to learn in a hard way.

6. Discussion of Findings

The findings are discussed under sub-headings 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 below:

6.1 Compliance with the Law Prohibiting Corporal Punishment

The quantitative data reveals a complex landscape regarding compliance with the law that prohibits corporal punishment in Zambian schools. Out of 153 participants, half indicated that educators no longer use corporal punishment to control learner behaviour, suggesting a significant shift towards adherence to legal mandates. However, a considerable 33% reported that corporal punishment is still practised, and 17% indicated its rare use. These findings suggest partial compliance, pointing to inconsistencies in the implementation and enforcement of the law across different schools. This inconsistency underscores the need for more robust enforcement mechanisms and effective monitoring to ensure full adherence to the prohibition of corporal punishment.

The qualitative findings provide deeper insights into the specific forms of corporal punishment still prevalent in some schools. Responses from participants who acknowledged the ongoing use or rare use of corporal punishment revealed that physical punishments such as beating, caning, slapping, and hitting with objects remain common. Other punitive measures included making learners kneel while holding heavy objects, digging pits, and slashing, along with verbal abuse and humiliation. These practices indicate a deeply entrenched cultural acceptance of corporal punishment among certain educators. The continued use of such severe and humiliating methods can have detrimental effects on learners' physical and psychological well-being, highlighting a significant contradiction to the objectives of creating a supportive and safe educational environment.

Linking these findings to existing literature, it is clear that regional differences play a significant role in compliance levels. Research shows that local governance, cultural attitudes, and resource availability significantly impact the implementation of educational policies (Edwards *et al.*, 2018; UNESCO, 2018). These differences suggest the need for targeted regional interventions to address specific local challenges. Additionally, gender dynamics within educational settings influence disciplinary approaches. Studies indicate that male educators might be more inclined to use corporal punishment compared to their female counterparts, who often prefer nurturing methods (Smith and Kalkbrenner, 2020). This highlights the importance of designing gender-sensitive training programs to enhance compliance among both male and female educators.

The types of schools and the levels at which educators operate also influence compliance. Public versus private and urban versus rural schools face distinct challenges, with rural schools often grappling with resource constraints that hinder policy implementation (Jones *et al.*, 2019). Primary and secondary schools may require different approaches to discipline, emphasising the need for context-specific strategies. Furthermore, the resistance to abandoning corporal punishment among more experienced educators can be attributed to long-standing practices. Fullan (2011) suggests that veteran educators might resist changes due to these entrenched habits, highlighting the need for experience-based professional development programs that promote gradual shifts towards non-violent disciplinary methods.

6.2 Challenges Zambian Educators Face in Complying with the Law Prohibiting CP

The qualitative findings identify several significant challenges that Zambian educators face in adhering to the law prohibiting corporal punishment in schools. These challenges are encapsulated in five major themes: high levels of learner indiscipline, educators' resistance to change, lack of sensitisation and weak enforcement of the law, lack of educators' patience and frustration, and over-enrollment which are discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

Participants frequently cited high levels of learner indiscipline as a primary reason for resorting to corporal punishment. Behaviours such as stubbornness, rudeness, disrespect, drug abuse, absenteeism, and overall deviance were mentioned as significant issues. Educators expressed that non-corporal disciplinary methods are often ineffective in mitigating such behaviours. This perception is compounded by the belief that the abolition of corporal punishment has exacerbated indiscipline, as learners no longer fear severe repercussions. As one participant noted, some teachers, overwhelmed by indiscipline, resort to slapping or beating learners in frustration. This finding aligns with literature highlighting how deeply ingrained disciplinary practices resist change, particularly when alternative methods are perceived as ineffective (Mtonga, 2016; Gershoff and Font, 2016).

Resistance to abandoning corporal punishment is a significant theme. Many educators believe that corporal punishment is the only effective way to maintain discipline. They argue that it immediately impacts and can instill fear and compliance in students. Some participants feel that certain offences warrant physical punishment to prevent a recurrence, and they think non-physical methods are not as immediate or effective. This resistance is partly due to the longstanding tradition of corporal punishment in the educational system and educators' personal experiences of being disciplined this way. These findings align with Fullan (2011), who argues that significant shifts in educational practices often face resistance due to long-standing beliefs and experiences, highlighting the need for comprehensive retraining and cultural shifts within the educational community.

Another critical issue is the lack of adequate awareness and weak enforcement of the law. Many educators are either unaware of the legal prohibitions against corporal punishment or lack clear guidance on alternative disciplinary methods. Weak enforcement means that those who continue to use corporal punishment often face no repercussions, undermining the authority of the law. Participants suggested that more robust awareness programs and stricter enforcement are necessary to ensure compliance. This is consistent with findings from studies emphasising the importance of clear communication and enforcement of policies to effect change in educational settings (UNICEF, 2014).

The emotional and psychological state of educators can influence their use of corporal punishment. Some educators may lack the patience to implement non-corporal punishment methods and may resort to physical punishment out of frustration or emotional stress. Factors such as heavy workloads, frustration with administrative support, and dealing with extreme rudeness or naughtiness from some learners contribute to this behavior. Research on teacher stress and coping mechanisms suggests that high-stress environments can lead to harsh disciplinary practices, highlighting the need for support systems to help educators manage their stress and emotions (Kyriacou, 2001).

Additionally, over-enrollment in schools presents a logistical challenge that some educators believe can only be managed through corporal punishment. High learner-to-teacher ratios make it difficult to maintain order and discipline without resorting to physical punishment. This suggests the need for structural changes within the education system, including reducing class sizes and increasing resources to enable effective classroom management without corporal punishment (Jones *et al.*, 2019).

6.3 Theoretical Implications

The findings suggest that both theories that guided this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing educators' compliance with the law prohibiting corporal punishment. Strategies aimed at promoting compliance should consider both the legitimacy of the law and its moral implications. Enhancing educators' perception of the legitimacy of the legal prohibition and providing training on alternative disciplinary methods can address challenges related to resistance to change. Similarly, emphasising the moral virtues of non-violent disciplinary practices and promoting fairness in disciplinary procedures can encourage educators to align their behaviour with legal and ethical standards. By integrating these theoretical perspectives into intervention strategies, policymakers and education authorities can promote a culture of non-violence and respect within Zambian schools, ultimately fostering positive educational outcomes and learner well-being.

7. Conclusion

The research reveals partial compliance with the law prohibiting corporal punishment in Zambian schools, with 50% adherence but significant ongoing use reported by 33% of participants. Major challenges include high levels of learner indiscipline, educators' resistance to change, insufficient sensitisation, weak enforcement of the law, and over-enrollment. These issues underscore the need for robust enforcement, comprehensive training on non-violent disciplinary methods, enhanced support for educators' well-being, and structural changes to reduce class sizes. The implications are significant, in that without addressing these challenges, the educational environment may remain inconsistent and unsafe, undermining legal mandates and the well-being of learners. Addressing these issues is essential for creating a supportive, safe, and legally compliant educational environment, ultimately fostering better educational outcomes and learner development.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to address the challenges identified and improve compliance with the law prohibiting corporal punishment in schools:

1. The Ministry of Education to develop and implement comprehensive sensitisation programs targeting educators, school administrators, parents, and learners to increase awareness about the legal prohibition of corporal punishment and promote non-violent disciplinary methods. These campaigns should emphasise the

detrimental effects of corporal punishment on learners' well-being and academic performance, as well as the importance of creating a supportive and safe learning environment.

2. The Ministry of Education provide educators with ongoing professional development opportunities focused on effective non-violent disciplinary techniques and classroom management strategies. Training sessions should be practical, interactive, and tailored to address the specific challenges identified in the research, such as managing high levels of learner indiscipline and addressing educators' resistance to change.

3. The law enforcement agencies to strengthen enforcement of the law prohibiting corporal punishment through clear guidelines, monitoring mechanisms, and disciplinary measures for non-compliance. This includes establishing reporting mechanisms for incidents of corporal punishment, investigating complaints promptly, and imposing consequences for educators found in violation of the law. Additionally, collaboration with law enforcement agencies and education authorities is essential to ensure consistent enforcement across all schools.

4. The Ministry of Education to implement support programs for educators to help them manage stress, frustration, and emotional challenges associated with disciplinary issues. This may include counselling services, stress management workshops, and peer support networks to promote mental health and well-being among educators. Addressing educators' well-being is crucial for fostering a positive school climate and reducing the likelihood of resorting to corporal punishment as a response to frustration or emotional distress.

5. The Ministry of Education to advocate for structural changes within the education system to reduce class sizes and alleviate overcrowding in schools. This may involve increasing investment in infrastructure, recruiting additional teachers, and implementing policies to promote equitable distribution of resources across schools. By reducing class sizes, educators can better manage learner behaviour and maintain discipline without resorting to corporal punishment.

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