Exploring Teachers' Lived Experiences with Regard to Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Addressing Moral Decline in Secondary Schools in Bungoma County, Kenya

Mwenesi Jephthar[1]
Joseph W. Nasongo[2]
Juma Injendi [3]

[1]mwenesijephthar@gmail.com
[2]jwamocha@mmust.ac.ke
[3]ijuma@mmus.ac.ke

[1]https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8790-7497
[2]https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6517-8158
[3]https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1335-5383

[1,2,3]Masinde Muliro University of science and Technology, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Moral formation constitutes a fundamental undertaking of every educational system. The absence of adequate moral principles among the learners invariably impedes progress for both the learner and the teacher. As a consequence, numerous strategies are consistently implemented to confront moral deficiencies in a learning environment. The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' lived experiences in regard to alternatives to corporal punishment in mitigating moral decline among learners in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study objective was as to explore teachers' lived experiences with regard to alternatives to corporal punishment in addressing moral decline in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study was grounded on a communitarian philosophy, which examine the way shared conceptions of the good are formed, transmitted, justified, and enforced. An interpretive phenomenological design was utilised. The study employed two philosophical methods for the purpose of bringing out methodological triangulation. Hermeneutic phenomenology was utilized in order to extract the lived experiences of the teachers handling discipline in secondary schools. Philosophical analysis was aimed at facilitating Socratic dialogue and establishing logical coherence from the extracted lived experiences. The target population comprised of deputy principals and heads of guidance and counselling from secondary schools in Bungoma County. To provide a representative sample, this study utilised purposive sampling in choosing schools. A sample size of four deputy principals and four heads of guidance and counselling was chosen. The sample size was guided by the principles of hermeneutic phenomenological research which is concerned mainly with the depth and not the breadth of the information. Information utilised in this study was sourced from both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using unstructured phenomenological interviews. Secondary data was gathered from articles from peer referred journals, government policy documents and reports, thematic text books, internet sources, pioneer projects, theses and newspaper articles that allude to issues of moral concern in the Kenyan context. Primary data was analyzed through IPA and secondary through document analysis. The study established that, based on the logic of Kants metaphysics of morals, the alternatives to corporal punishment as stipulated were not sufficient to address the moral decline among secondary school learners in Kenya. The study concluded that without a philosophical foundation, the proposed alternatives to corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, are insufficiently effective in addressing moral decline. The study therefore recommended that alternatives to corporal punishment should be anchored on communitarianism for them to be effective enough in handling learners behavioural problems. Additionally, Socratic mode of teaching should be emphasized in order to prepare teachers for moral development among the learners.

Keywords: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment, Lived Experiences, Moral Decline, Bungoma County

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I. INTRODUCTION

The education systems worldwide have a crucial role in shaping the character and moral values of pupils. However, in recent years, there has been a growing concern regarding a perceived decline in moral values among students. Educational institutions across the globe have observed a discernible decrease in the adherence to moral principles and ethical behavior among student populations. As a result, Sanga (2022) points out that violence in schools, sexual assault, rape, substance abuse, and homicide have become prevalent among children and adolescents around the globe. This has resulted in an adverse influence on the entire school climate.

In the past, schools mostly used punitive techniques to deal with disruptive students' behaviour. Students endured physical punishment for generations. According to Baruwa and Balogun (2020), the concept of *in loco*

parentis was common throughout the Victorian era (18th century), which is when this type of punishment originated. This philosophy required instructors to support students in both an ethical and educational manner, while also granting them parental control over children. Teachers believed that corporal punishment was acceptable, and, in fact, required. From the basis, beating children would allow to rid them of sin and prepare them to become socially correct. Years later, the views of corporal punishment were only faintly changed. According to Chenoweth and Just (2000), it was standard for both parents and schools to use corporal punishment until the 1960's. This changed when the civil rights movements arose in the 1960's and 1970's, and at that point, people became more aware of the rights of children

Conversely, the Kenyan government has endeavoured to proscribe physical punishment as a means of addressing learners' behaviour hence diminishing its application in educational settings. To begin with, legal notice No. 56 (2001), Article 91 of the Children's Act (2001), and the Republic of Kenya (2010) Constitution: Bill of Rights were used to do this, outlawing the use of physical punishment in the nation. Most recently, harassment of any kind— physical or psychological—became unlawful with the passage of the Basic Education Act (2013). Article 35 of the bill says that no child shall be punished or treated inhumanely or degradingly in any way. This carries a fine of Kshs. 100,000, six months in jail, or both.

When managing disciplinary issues, educators and school administrators were to turn to soft skills training; these were called "alternative measures to punishment." Though not well stipulated, the most embraced one is the use of guidance and counselling. It is, however, worth noting that after the ban, incidences of moral decline are still on the rise. Moyo et al. (2014) cites that after banning corporal punishment in schools, most teachers feel incapacitated and helpless in tackling learner indiscipline in schools. Why would they feel incapacitated on alternatives disciplinary measures? This study therefore sought to address the above gap by taking a phenomenological approach. Through phenomenology there was need to get the intentionality of the teachers.

Intentionality in phenomenology refers to orientation of the mind to its object (Moustakas, 1994). The deliberate choice made by teachers about certain disciplinary methods and moral decline are their intentionality. Gaining an understanding of intentionality may yield significant insights regarding the implementation and impact of alternatives to corporal punishment when it comes to mitigating moral decline.

On the other hand, a lack of philosophical grounding in the strategies used may be the cause of the inability to effectively address moral decline in secondary schools. The philosophical foundation offers a coherent framework and fundamental principles for designing and implementing moral decline interventions. Without this foundation, remedies may lack depth, consistency, and long-term efficacy.

A study by Andafu (2020) on student violence against teachers attempts to put insight on this discourse by proposing a philosophical grounding in addressing the phenomenon of moral decline. The research proposes the adoption of deontological theory of morality, as espoused by Immanuel Kant, in the teaching of morality in Kenyan schools. The deontological theory of morality presupposes development of an individual's moral autonomy to guide their moral actions. Autonomy entails that, an individual is a free atom not to be influenced by external forces. However, he fails to address on the concept of how free or autonomous is a young school going child? When the self is always shaped by what surrounds it. Tempels' force thesis, as mentioned by Mudimbe (2022), suggests that this individual will still be influenced by forces such as the media. More so the study by Andafu emphasised on the pedagogical approaches in addressing moral decline. This approach could still fall into the trap of rote learning for the sake of passing exams.

Aforementioned, alternatives to corporal punishment's (ATCPs) ineffectiveness in addressing moral decline may be attributable to a lack of philosophical grounding concerning ATCPs, which could account for the increase in moral decline. The absence of a well-defined guiding philosophy may render these alternatives insufficiently comprehensive and logical in nature to effectively influence learners conduct and foster moral development.

This research sought to ground the Alternative to Corporal Punishment (ATCPs) on communitarianism and examine the potential efficacy of communitarian-inspired alternatives to corporal punishment in mitigating moral decline in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there has been a noticeable and concerning trend of moral decline observed among secondary school students in Kenya, which has had significant implications for the educational environment of the country. Aggression, bullying and arson are among the diverse behavioural problems that are indicative of this phenomenon. Andafu (2020) points that of late, the vice has shifted from the usual cases of vandalism, loss of property and arson to assault of teachers. If the trend is not properly addressed, it will not only jeopardise the safety and well-being of teachers and students but will also undermine the fundamental principles of education and social order.

In the past, the utilization of corporal punishment had been employed as a method to address instances of wrongdoing. However, there was a growing recognition of the negative psychological effects linked to this

disciplinary approach. Moreover, it is crucial to recognize that this particular approach violated the fundamental rights of the child.

As a result, there has been increasing advocacy for the adoption of alternate methods to corporal punishment as a viable alternative in the implementation of student discipline inside educational institutions, due to their proactive qualities. Nonetheless, despite the recognition of the same, researchers and educators are becoming increasingly concerned that learners' behaviours have not improved. In fact, it has been argued that moral problems have increased since the ban on corporal punishment. Mtsweni (2008) cites that after banning corporal punishment in schools, most teachers feel incapacitated and helpless in tackling learner indiscipline in schools.

This prompted the present study to conduct a phenomenological inquiry into the efficacy of these alternatives, particularly from a communitarian standpoint, so as to gain a deeper understanding of their impact on student discipline in Bungoma County, Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

To explore teachers' lived experiences with regard to alternatives to corporal punishment in addressing moral decline in Kenyan secondary schools

1.3 Research Question

What are teachers' lived experiences with alternatives to corporal punishment in mitigating moral decline in Kenyan secondary schools?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review
2.1.1 Communitarianism

The present study explored communitarianism as the underlying theoretical framework. Communitarianism, as defined by the Institute of Communitarianism Studies (2000), is a philosophical framework that prioritizes the significance of communities in understanding and promoting human dignity and well-being, as well as in assessing political institutions and engaging in political endeavours. Menkiti (1984) argues that communitarianism places emphasis on the ontological superiority of the community above the actuality of the individual. Communitarianism posits that the principles of social justice and morality are contingent upon the standards, norms, and aims established by a given community, which are seen as absolutes.

On the contrary, individual relativism posits that the concept of universal objective moral truth is non-existent, and instead asserts that an individual's personal beliefs regarding moral rightness or wrongness are indeed the true determinants of moral judgment (Hanna, 2020). Individualism aligns with the principles of liberalism theory, which posits that each person should independently determine their own conception of the good.

In the context of Kenyan culture, a prevalent slogan among the younger generation is "my dress my choice." This phrase signifies the belief that individuals have the autonomy to pick their own attire, regardless of societal judgments or the potential for clothing to be perceived as immodest due to its short or revealing nature. The motto "*Maisha ni yangu sipangwingwi"* reflects the principles of liberalism, wherein individuals are able to independently determine what is beneficial for themselves without external intervention

Communitarianism, as an ethical theory, places emphasis on the moral significance of communities and their capacity to administer ethical judgements. In contrast to individualistic ethical theories, which place emphasis on autonomy and personal liberties, communitarian ethics places greater significance on interpersonal connections, societal unity, and the collective common good.

Etzioni (2022) argues that communitarianism is a movement for moral reform. It advocates for bolstering the family as the primary setting for instilling personal accountability, followed by schools as a backup. "Communitarianism is very important for schools and the people who work in them. A school is inherently a community of students, staff, and parents" (Arthur & Bailey, 2002).

2.2 Empirical Review
2.2.1 Alternative to Corporal Punishment

Alternative disciplinary measures are strategies for addressing disciplinary issues in schools that have been implemented in response to the prohibition of corporal punishment. A UN convention on the rights of children from 1989 endorsed the ban. By promoting nonviolence education and calling on member states to outlaw corporal punishment in all its manifestations, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) have fought for children's rights. Consequently, national laws that outlaw physical punishment have gained popularity due to rising concerns about school violence and an increasing worldwide dialogue over children's rights. Since the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child laid the groundwork, anti-violence movements have worked to include INSPIRE and the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment in their definition of physical force as a violation of human rights. A more recent addition to the UN Sustainable Development Goals was the need for "safe, non-violent learning environments," with an emphasis on ending violence against youth in all its manifestations [World Health Organization (WHO, 2019)].

In order to comply with UN statutes on the rights and protection of children, numerous UN member states passed laws outlawing corporal punishment in schools and putting in place procedures for managing students' conduct. Different nations therefore adopted different strategies as the ATCPs .For example, peer mediation is used in Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. It emphasizes individual accountability and thoughtful consideration before resolving disputes. Agesa (2015) asserts that head teachers are the only professionals in England and Wales who use harsh discipline methods and permanent exclusion.

In California, a number of tactics have been used since the use of physical punishment was prohibited, according to a study by Gershoff (2010). These tactics include peer mediation, teaching students how to resolve conflicts in an amicable and constructive way, and restorative justice, a process that fosters community and attempts to restore ties between offenders, their victims, and the community.

Corporal punishment was widely accepted and used as a method of controlling children in Bangladesh until 2008, when the Save the Children organization managed to change people's minds by holding seminars and conferences opposing the use of corporal punishment and advocating for the promotion of positive discipline among children (Fatau, 2020).

Following the prohibition of corporal punishment in South Africa, the government enacted alternatives to corporal punishment (ATCP), which include discipline methods that do not involve inflicting physical pain on students. This was championed in schools through the Department of Education publication on alternatives to corporal punishment (Mayisela, 2017). They were meant to help teachers comply with 1996 legislation abolishing corporal punishment.

In Kenya, there is no unified approach to alternative disciplinary approaches, unlike in South Africa, where there is a clear policy document on alternatives to corporal punishment. According to Agesa (2015), different schools employ different alternative disciplinary strategies. Notably, guidance and counselling is one of the most emphasized non-violent approaches to student discipline following the ban on corporal punishment, as noted by Kagoiya *et al*. (2017).

2.2.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Alternatives to Corporal Punishment in Addressing Moral Decline

The elimination of corporal punishment in schools served to both safeguard students' rights and get rid of aggressive behaviour on the part of students as well as violence in schools. But as Agesa (2015) noted, since the introduction of alternatives to corporal punishment, student behaviours have not improved. The behaviour of the students is indeed becoming worse, according to arguments made by various researchers. (Makapela, 2006) contends that disorderly conduct pervaded many South African schools as soon as pupils learned that physical punishment was forbidden. Many students seemed to take advantage of teachers because they knew they would not be physically punished.

In Kenya, studies carried out by Busienei (2012), Awala (2021), and Kindiki (2015) indicate the same scenario. Less progress was made in regulating or improving student behaviour in schools with alternatives to corporal punishment. The management of the school may soon become unfeasible due to the decline in school discipline.

Ndembu (2013) carried a study on alternate alternatives to physical punishment and secondary school students' discipline in Magumu division, Kinangop district, Kenya, which throws light on their effectiveness. The study's findings indicated the use of corporal punishment was once again endorsed by 50% of the deputy principals, while the remaining 50% supported alternative approaches. According to them, the cane was a fast and effective tool for child punishment. The students' fear of the cane is the cause of this.

Ndembu (2013) emphasised alternative approaches to corporal punishment but failed to show their impact on discipline. This study applied phenomenological analysis to investigate the teacher's perceptions of the efficacy of alternatives to corporal punishment. Gaining insight into their perspectives could uncover any disparities between the intended efficacy of these alternatives and their actual impacts.

In order to examine complex issues that were not adequately captured in quantitative terms, phenomenological hermeneutics was crucial. The above study did not fully capture the hidden aspects of the phenomenon, which needed to be revealed through lived experiences of the teachers with regard to the alternatives to corporal punishment

The study conducted by Maphosa and Shumba (2010) suggested that the escalation of learner disciplinary cases in schools was indicative of a failure by teachers to establish sufficient alternative disciplinary capabilities following the prohibition of corporal punishment in South African schools. The investigation implemented a

qualitative methodology. The methodology employed was a case analysis of three junior secondary schools that were deliberately chosen.

Researchers discovered that educators experienced a sense of powerlessness in their capacity to enforce discipline in the absence of corporal punishment. In addition, educators disclosed that learners do not regard or dread them due to their awareness that they will not be subjected to any form of punishment, including corporal punishment. Despite the educators' awareness of alternative disciplinary measures, they perceived them as ineffective and time-consuming (Maphosa & Shumaba, 2010).

Furthermore, a study on the principles of alternatives to corporal punishment strategies and disciplinary practices in schools carried out by Moyo et.al. (2014) provides additional insight into the efficacy of ATCPs in managing students' moral behaviour. The study sought to ascertain the degree of consistency that existed between disciplinary practices in schools and the principles of the Alternatives-to-Corporal Punishment strategy. Their findings showed that there was no clear correlation between the ideas of the alternatives-to-corporal-punishment strategy and the school's established disciplinary procedures.

A study by Du Preez and Roux (2010) gives great insight on the phenomenon of the alternatives to corporal punishment. They not that teachers, parents, cultural and religious groups feel that the government had undermined their right to be consulted as the key role players in education of their children. The alternative to corporal punishment according them undermined what they stood for and what they would like to see their children become. Masitsa (2008) observes that traditional leaders insisted that corporal punishment is a traditional practice and a cultural right. This clearly indicates that there was no dialogue in regard to the change on disciplinary approaches in schools.

On the other hand, a study by Mayisela (2017) indicates that despite there being stipulated policy on alternatives to corporal punishment in South Africa, majority of the teachers indicated that they have not accessed them. He further argues that it seems that the primary conversation around corporal punishment is one of cautioning teachers against using it, with little to no real debate supporting their ability to reprimand without resorting to corporal punishment. It is worth to note that in the Kenyan scenario there is no clear stipulated policy on alternatives to corporal punishment apart from apart from putting emphasis on the resort to guidance and counselling which has its own setbacks as discussed earlier.

In summary the above studies have clearly given thought on what we know about the world in terms of alternatives to corporal punishment in mitigating moral decline in schools. They have revealed that the instances of indiscipline are still on the rise even in the presence of alternatives to corporal punishment however th1e nature of philosophical study would want to go further and respond to why it is so. This is through moving from what we know about the world to what it means to be in the world and this is gained through phenomenology which the above studies have not ventured into. The study ventured into interviewing teachers so as to uncover the subjective experiences with alternatives to corporal punishment this could probably give insight into why the alternatives might not be perceived as effective.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) was implemented in this investigation. This qualitative research methodology facilitated the examination of the "lived experiences" of the participants in the study.

3.2 Study Location

The study research was situated in the entire country due to the pervasive nature of the issue across the entire country. However, for the sake of specificity, schools in Bungoma County were selected as the primary focus, given that the county is among those that had witnessed incidents of school unrest in the past two years.

3.3 Target population

The study targeted deputy principals and heads of guiding and counselling in Bungoma County, Kenya, particularly those who had recently experienced the phenomenon. In this selection, there was no need to visit schools that had not experienced violence, for there would not be any phenomenon to study.

3.4 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study adopted purposive sampling as a method of participant selection. This approach was chosen because it ensures that persons chosen to engage in the phenomenological study possess substantial and relevant experiences related to the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

The research used a sample size of eight participants. They were selected from schools in Bungoma County, consisting of three boys' boarding secondary schools, two girls' boarding secondary schools, and three mixed day and

boarding secondary schools. The selection was made by the researcher's discernment, specifically targeting schools that had encountered the predominance of the phenomenon under investigation

3.5 Data Collection Method

Unstructured phenomenological interviews were used for the study. This is a common way to collect data in phenomenology because it helps people give detailed accounts (Vagle, 2018). Conversational, open, and dialogic are words that describe unstructured conversations. Secondary data was obtained from existing studies, policy documents, and reports on alternatives to corporal punishment and moral decline in secondary schools in Kenya.

3.6 Data Analysis

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to explicate primary data from phenomenological interviews of the co-researchers who had experienced the phenomena. Document analysis was utilised for a variety of secondary data sources, including refereed journals, research papers, newspaper articles, e-books, and documents.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

This section presents findings on the lived experiences of teachers regarding alternatives to corporal punishment in addressing moral decline in Kenyan secondary schools. Table 1: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of interview transcripts, from first- to second-order constructs, and derived themes on the lived experiences of teachers in using alternatives to corporal punishment to mitigate moral decline in Kenyan secondary schools.

Table 1
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) of Interview Transcripts

FIRST ORDER CONSTRUCTS	SECOND ORDER CONSTRUCTS	DERIVED THEMES
GC1 there is relative increase in cases of indiscipline because the number of teachers with both knowledge and passion of guiding and counselling students is less than needs	Lack of enough knowledge on ATCPs	Parental Helplessness Teacher Intervention
GC2: Controlling discipline is very challenging because some students just listen to advise but do not take it seriously, in the absence of corporal punishment the office has been dehorned, the talking is just like making noise	Challenges in gaining student cooperation	Sense of Helplessness among Teachers
DP1: The measures, are not as effective as corporal punishment corporal punishment was effective as a deterrent measure because learners were afraid of suffering the pain and this avoided creation of other bigger mistakes that we see in schools like learners confronting the teachers and even some driving a nail in the head of a teacher just because you have been asked to go and remind your parent to pay fees	Perceived effectiveness of CP	Lack of Deterrence Mechanism
DP2 is a good idea but some mistakes are beyond G & C for instance when a learner threatens to fight a teacher and you are there before thinking of guiding and counselling your instinct tells you to act first and make sure the student will not repeat the mistake, or even to some extent you have heard of a learner stubbing another in school how where do you begin?	ATCPs alone cannot address severe misbehaviours	Inadequate Communitarianism
GC3: To some extent it has really worked especially where the teacher, parent and the student are involved.	Collaborative involvement	Importance of Communitarianism
DP3: The government should consider involving teachers and other stakeholders in society when they come up such with some policies. They just give us to implement without looking into what is exactly on the ground	Disconnect between policy and practice	Policy-Practice Gap
DP4: From where I sit we do not fully understand the available alternatives to corporal punishment for instance the suspension that we thought was one of the most effective is discouraged by a lot of bureaucracy am told even giving manual work is not allowed . The G&C that is supposed to help here lacks professionals	Inadequate preparation for ATCPs	Inadequate Training and Resources
GC4: I think I was chosen to be a G&C teacher because I am the patron of the Christian Union and I preach on parade, this are two different things, I feel am not well equipped for the office	Lack of awareness	Need for Specialized Training

Table 1 above presents an interpretative phenomenological analysis of teachers' lived experiences on ATCPs in addressing moral decline in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya. The first-order constructs reflect direct quotes from respondents, providing insight into their experiences and perceptions. The second-order constructs categorize these experiences, while the derived themes synthesize the overarching ideas. The hermeneutic approach involves the researcher interpreting participants' interpretations of their experiences, thereby enhancing the understanding of the phenomenon

4.1.1 Lived Experiences of Teachers on Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (ATCPs)

The study establishes that the lived experiences of the teachers in Bungoma County regarding the ATCPs in curbing moral decline reveals several challenges and frustrations.

First and foremost, **GC1** said "there are fewer trained professionals with the necessary knowledge and passion for G&C than what is required." This means that of competent counsellors undermines the efficacy of G&C, as a preferred alternative to corporal punishment. The life world of teachers therefore, reveals a gap between the intended impact of ATCPs and the practical realities within schools.

Students' resistance to non-punitive measures further complicates the challenge of maintaining discipline. **GC2** Expressed that "…In the absence of corporal punishment the office has been dehorned, the talking is just like making noise" by this GC2 compares the abolition of corporal punishment to the "dehorning" of the disciplinary system, implying that the authority of teachers has been reduced. In the absence of corporal punishment, students frequently heed to advice but fail to consider it seriously.

The aforementioned lived experience underscores the challenge of establishing respect and control in students who are accustomed to responding exclusively to punitive measures. It implies that an authoritative weight may be lacking in ATCPs in their current state to effectively enforce discipline on the other hand teaches could be lacking Socratic dialogue a skill that will make their dialogue with the students effective in the absence of CP

Some teachers perceive corporal punishment as a deterrent that prevents a high level of   indiscipline. **DP1** reveals instances of severe student misconduct, involving physical confrontations with teachers and even violence. The teacher asserts "… corporal punishment was effective as a deterrent measure because learners were afraid of suffering the pain and this avoided creation of other bigger mistakes that we see in schools." This means that corporal punishment, despite its severity, effectively prevented such occurrences by instilling a sense of fear. The teacher believes that the absence of corporal punishment is a major contributor to the rise in these extreme behaviours, which the ATCPs are unable to address. This   indicates that the alternatives to corporal punishment are inadequate for managing instances such kind of indiscipline.

DP2 mentioned that "... is a good idea but some mistakes are beyond G & C for instance when a learner threatens to fight a teacher and you are there before thinking of guiding and counselling your instinct tells you to act first." This reveals that, the instinct to act promptly overrides the potential for guidance and counselling in situations of physical danger, such as when a student threatens to harm a teacher. **DP2** observes that the immediate priority is self-protection when confronted with threats or violent behaviour, allowing little opportunity to consider G&C.

However, a few educators acknowledge that ATCPs may be effective when there is cooperation among teachers, parents, and learners. **GC3** said that "To some extent it has really worked especially where the teacher, parent and the student are involved." This implies that success is attained when all stakeholders are engaged, underscoring the need of collaborative endeavour. This corresponds with the communitarian perspective, which highlights collective responsibility in moral development. However, it also underscores the challenges that arise in the absence of cooperation, since the efficacy of ATCPs is significantly contingent upon the active engagement of all stakeholders.

A significant discontent exists over the government's top-down policy-making method. Teachers perceive that they frequently feel excluded in the decision-making process, with policies imposed for execution without regard for the real challenges encountered in practice. **DP3** highlights the necessity of involving teachers and other stakeholders in the development of disciplinary policies, criticising the absence of consultation. The implementation of ATCPs is further complicated by the disparity between policy and practice, as teachers feel disempowered and constrained by decisions made without their input. This underscores the necessity of dialogue, particularly moral dialogue, which is a key principle of communitarianism.

Furthermore, certain educators perceive themselves as inadequately prepared for their responsibilities in G&C, which undermines the potential efficacy of ATCPs. For instance, GC2 views its selection for the G&C position purely on the basis of their status as a Christian Union patron, despite feeling inadequately equipped for the responsibility. This experience indicates a more extensive problem in which teachers are assigned critical responsibilities without the requisite training or support, which exacerbates the challenges associated with the implementation of ATCPs.

Finally, the lived experience of the teachers in DP4 demonstrates a significant lack of awareness regarding the available ATCPs and frustration with them. The teacher acknowledges that they are not aware of the available options, which suggests a more general issue of insufficient information and training for educators regarding ATCPs.

It is this lack of awareness that worsens the challenges that teachers encounter in effectively administering discipline. Teachers are unable to effectively implement ATCPs due to the absence of clear guidance or exhaustive training on the available alternatives, which leaves them to navigate complex situations, lacking the necessary tools and confidence.

The alternative disciplinary landscape is further complicated by the teacher's reflection on the discouragement of suspension due to bureaucratic obstacles and the prohibition of manual labour as a disciplinary measure.

The bureaucratic procedures, along with ambiguity over permissible or effective practices, restrict teachers in selecting and implementing appropriate techniques. This confusion is worsened by the very fact that guidance and counseling (G&C), which is intended to play a critical role in ATCPs, lacks trained professionals

Teachers are not only unaware of a wide range of alternatives, but they are also uncertain about how to employ the few that are supposed to be in place, as these options are either insufficiently supported or restricted by institutional policies.

In general, the teacher's experiences underscore numerous critical obstacles associated with the implementation of ATCPs in Bungoma County. Although the alternatives to corporal punishment are well-meaning, their effectiveness is frequently impeded by a lack of resources, training, and collaboration. In significant cases of indiscipline, teacher's express frustration with the ineffectiveness of current measures and advocate for a greater level of involvement in policy-making.

. These lived experiences indicate that in order for ATCPs to be effective, they must be more closely aligned with the realities that teachers encounter, and teachers must be provided with the necessary tools and support to effectively manage indiscipline.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the analysis of existing literature reviewed, it is evident that alternatives to corporal punishment tactics encompass nonviolent methodologies for managing students. These techniques aim to effectively convey the message that there exist more constructive means of resolving conflicts, so fostering in learners a disposition towards peaceful conflict resolution.

The utilization of corporal punishment has been perceived as conveying a misguided message that violence is the most effective means of conflict resolution. Nonetheless, implementing alternatives to corporal punishment as a means of addressing violence within the student population has not yielded satisfactory results, as these same students have exploited the ban on corporal punishment and are now exhibiting violent behaviour against their teachers.

According to a study conducted by Andafu (2020), it has been observed that the focus of violence has switched from the conventional occurrences of vandalism, property damage, and fire, to instances of physical attack targeting teachers.

According to Agesa (2015), the intended purpose of implementing alternative disciplinary measures in schools was to mitigate violence and foster positive behaviour among students. However, Agesa (2015) asserts that there has been no observable improvement in student behaviour as a result of these measures.

According to the National Crime Research Centre and the Report on the inquiry into students' unrest in secondary schools in Kenya (National Crime Research Centre, 2017) the issue of violence has persistently increased despite the government's endeavors to reinstate discipline among students.

This section undertook an in-depth examination of several prominent themes that emerged during the analysis of teacher narratives, providing a comprehensive exploration of the diverse perspectives inherent within the educational domain. The aforementioned themes provided insights into the complex array of factors, difficulties, and novel concepts that influence the dialogue surrounding disciplinary interventions within educational institutions.

4.2.1 Lack of Moral Dialogue

The aforementioned lived experiences and the literature review yield three distinct interpretations. The hermeneutic interpretations provide insight into the subject matter. This study examined an environment created by policymakers for learners in the context of corporal punishment (CP) and alternative disciplinary approaches. It also explored the world that learners construct through their own interpretation of the ban on CP. Additionally, it investigated the lifeworld of teachers who are responsible for implementing these policies and spend significant amounts of time with the learners. This pertains to the existence within the realm of the educator.

According to phenomenologists, individuals and their surroundings are subject to construction. Humans are shaped by the environment in which they reside while simultaneously actively constructing their own reality based on personal experiences (Koch, 1995). This process is accomplished by the act of self-interpretation.

According to Barrow (2017), Martin Heidegger posited that individuals have the inherent capacity for self-interpretation, wherein the act of interpretation takes place within the framework of everyday experiences. This implies that our quotidian experiences play a pivotal role in the construction of our surrounding environment.

The policymakers therefore, driven by their good intentions, have created an educational environment that aims to eliminate acts of violence and cruelty. The learners, as self- interpreting entities, have formed their own reality, wherein the existence of alternative to corporal punishment (ATCP) policies ensures that they will not face physical punishment repercussions. Consequently, this perception on ATCPs may influence learners to resort to violence.

On the other hand, the teacher has a unique perspective on the world that is a result of the policymakers' position against corporal punishment. The perception is that the learner has been granted a greater degree of rights compared to the teacher. Furthermore, it should be noted that the teacher did not participate in the formulation of the policy. This can be demonstrated by the anecdotes mentioned in DP4 [exploit teachers to such an extent that their behaviour escalates]:

> *"The government should consider involving teachers and other stakeholders in society when they come up with some policies. They just tell us to implement without looking into what is exactly on the ground."*

The primary theme derived from the aforementioned analysis of the teachers' lived experiences suggests that a lack of dialogue was evident in all three instances. This absence of dialogue may potentially explain why the alternatives to corporal punishment have not proven to be a more successful substitute, ultimately rendering them insufficient for effectively addressing the issue of moral decline. This is seen through the ongoing increase in moral degradation.

Du Preez and Roux (2010) claim that a number of stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and religious groups, believe that the government has disregarded their right to be involved as primary participants in their children's education, which further elucidates the lack of dialogue.

Teachers also conveyed that the implementation of this technique disregarded personal experiences, which contradicts their core values and their vision for the development of their students. This comment further highlights the disregard for the teacher's life world, specifically their existence within their own environment.

Hence, it is imperative to emphasise the importance of shared responsibility among the government, community, faith-based organisations, schools, and families in order to promote the overall well-being and development of students. Nevertheless, based on the analysis of existing scholarly material and the lived experiences of the teachers, it is evident that the responsibility for instilling moral values in children has predominantly fallen upon teachers. One notable challenge in this context is the substantial student population within educational institutions, which consequently imposes a considerable demand on teachers. The resolution of this issue necessitates the adoption of a communitarian mindset in the management of discipline among learners.

4.2.2 Lack of Awareness

The prominent emergence of the theme of "lack of awareness" was observed in the lived experiences of teachers, highlighting a significant challenge in effectively implementing alternatives to corporal punishment (ATCPs) in Kenyan secondary schools. Teachers, being essential participants in the educational system, assume a crucial responsibility in the effective implementation and execution of disciplinary policies and initiatives. The lack of awareness among teachers regarding the existence and details of ATCPs has significant implications for the successful integration of these alternatives

Kenya has not implemented a comprehensive and clearly defined policy regarding alternatives to corporal punishment (ATCPs), which has resulted in a limited understanding of these alternatives among teachers. On the contrary, in 2001, the South African Ministry of Education issued guidelines proposing an alternative approach to corporal punishment. However, an important observation emerges in the context of South Africa: notwithstanding the explicit distribution of guidelines regarding the Alternative to Corporal Punishment (ATCP), criticisms persist regarding the escalation of disciplinary problems in schools. This occurrence gives rise to inquiries concerning the effectiveness of these policies.

One noteworthy observation derived from the reviewed literature of South Africa, is that certain teachers have demonstrated a limited understanding of the available alternatives to corporal punishment, despite the presence of well-defined guidelines outlining these options. This discovery underscores the notion that the mere dissemination of policies does not inherently result in teachers being aware of and comprehending them. In Kenyan scenario there are no stipulated ATCPs and there is lack of awareness about them and also in South Africa there are clearly stipulated policies on

An ontological viewpoint could potentially be used to examine the problem of lack of awareness regarding the implementation of alternatives to corporal punishment (ATCPs) in secondary schools in Kenya and South Africa.

Ontology, a philosophical study of the nature of being and existence, offers a framework to comprehend how awareness, or its absence, influences and is influenced by the educational realities in both scenarios.

4.2.3 The Ontological Dimensions of Lack of Awareness

Awareness is fundamentally an ontological state comprising of being cognizant of certain realities, possessing knowledge, and having the consciousness to exercise on that knowledge. In the context of ATCPs, awareness is the comprehension of the existence, purpose and application of these ATCPs. Lack of awareness, therefore, can be seen as an ontological deficit, where the being of the teachers in relation to their professional roles, is incomplete.

The philosophical notion of "Being-in-the-World" (*Dasein*) as proposed by Martin Heidegger, may be used to comprehend the presence of teachers inside the educational domain. Heidegger in Richardson (2012), argues that our comprehension of the world and our position within it is not only cognitive, but also profoundly existential. The teachers' lack of awareness of ATCPs indicates a separation from a crucial aspect of their professional realm. This ontological divide impacts their perception of their duties, their interaction with their learners, and the overall educational goals.

Teachers in Kenyan scenario lack the necessary ontological foundation to integrate these practices into their professional identity due to the absence of a clearly defined policy on ATCPs. They are educators in a landscape that lacks fundamental knowledge, resulting in a fragmented existence. Similarly, in South Africa, where guidelines are present but not completely internalised, teachers' ontological state is one of disjointness. Despite possessing the information, it does not integrate into their being-in-the-world as educators.

Ontological security is a mental state that is stable and is derived from a sense of continuity in relation to the events in one's life, as defined by Giddens. In the educational context, ontological security for teachers would entail a clear, consistent awareness of disciplinary practices that align with broader educational policies and goals . Ontological insecurity is worsened by the lack of awareness regarding ATCPs, which results in teachers feeling uncertain, unsupported, and disconnected from the educational mandates they are expected to fulfil.

In order to address the disparity in awareness and implementation of alternatives to corporal punishment (ATCPs) in Kenyan and South African secondary institutions, there is need to apply the principles of communitarian philosophy, as articulated by Amitai Etzioni. Communitarianism underscores the significance of shared values and responsibilities, as well as the role of the community in influencing individual behaviours Etzioni (2022) In order to promote a more integrated and effective approach to ATCPs, we can suggest a framework that entails collective engagement and responsibility by implementing this philosophy.

4.2.4 Communitarian Philosophy and the Ontological gap in Awareness on ATCPs

A fundamental principle of communitarianism is that individuals are profoundly ingrained in social contexts, and their actions are significantly influenced by communal norms and values. The community is pivotal in the moral development of its members, according to Etzioni (2022). In the context of education, this implies that policymakers, teachers, learners, and parents collaborate in order to establish and uphold ATCPs.

Therefore, it is imperative to establish community dialogues and forums. Regular dialogues and forums with teachers, parents, and students to discuss the significance and methods of ATCPs can serve as platforms for the exchange of best practices, challenges, and experiences.

Furthermore, it is necessary to include all stakeholders in the formulation and improvement of policies linked to ATCPs in order to foster collective policy development. When teachers and parents engage in policy formation, they are more inclined to comprehend, embrace, and execute these policies proficiently.

Utilising the principles of communitarian philosophy to address the issue of lack of awareness regarding ATCPs underscores the significance of community engagement, shared responsibility, and the establishment of social norms that endorse non-violent disciplinary strategies. By cultivating a collaborative approach and establishing a supportive infrastructure, we can effectively bridge the ontological divide and guarantee that teachers are well-informed and prepared to implement ATCPs. This comprehensive approach not only resolves the immediate issue but also advances the long-term goal of establishing a more cohesive and morally-based educational environment.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study asserts that without a philosophical foundation, the proposed alternatives to corporal punishment in secondary schools in Bungoma County, Kenya, are insufficiently effective in addressing moral decline. The ATCPs are unable to effectively resolve the persistent issues of moral decline due to a lack of a philosophical foundation. Without an underlying guiding principle, these alternatives fail to instil consistent, lasting ethical values in students, often resulting in

disciplinary approaches that are fragmented and reactive. The study suggests that anchoring these alternatives in a communitarian philosophy could provide the necessary structure and direction for a more effective approach.

5.2 Recommendations

There should be a policy review that provides clear guidelines for ATCPs and there should be need for teacher involvement to ensure that disciplinary policies align with the practical realities of the school context. Teachers and other stakeholders should actively participate in the policy-making process, allowing for the creation of feasible and realistic ATCP practices. Mores so, there should be establishment of alternative discipline training programs that will benefit teachers and equip them with Socratic dialogue skills that will help them handle learners in post corporal punishment era.

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