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**Effective Disciplinary Strategies to Combating Indiscipline in Public
Senior High Schools in Kumasi, Ghana**



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Effective Disciplinary Strategies to Combating Indiscipline in Public Senior High Schools in Kumasi, Ghana

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Abstract

Purpose: The effective ways of handling misbehaviour in school is rarely deliberated upon by policy makers and educators. This research studied the effective strategies used in Public Senior High Schools in the Kumasi Metropolis of Ghana.

Methodology: The mixed-method approach was used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data with structured questionnaires and interview guides.

Findings: The analysis suggests that 92.21% of parents favoured suspension over rewards (9.03%). Teachers (86.74%) favoured referring students to the disciplinary committee over writing bad comments on students' reports (34.8%). Students (86.13%) preferred use of reward to caning (57.07%) as most effective disciplinary strategy. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) further suggested a significant difference in the perspective of parents, teachers and students on the most effective disciplinary strategies like rewards ($P \leq 0.001$), inviting parents ($P \leq 0.000$), negative testimonials ($P \leq 0.000$), suspension ($P \leq 0.000$), disciplinary committee ($P \leq 0.000$), manual work ($P \leq 0.000$), and caning ($P \leq 0.000$). The managers support the use of counselling, cleaning, weeding, reflection and repeating a class as effective.

Unique Contribution to theory and practice: This study concludes with the proposition that disciplinary committee processes, suspensions and rewards for students are effective in handling student misbehaviour. It is recommended that parents, teachers, students and managers work together as collaborators in ensuring effective discipline in the school.

Keywords: *Public School, Discipline, Multi-stakeholder, Perspectives*

1. BACKGROUND

The primary objective of any educational institution is to provide students with an effective education (Lamont et al, 2013). In pursuit of this objective, educational institutions cultivate a culture and atmosphere in which every student feels secure, supported, and appreciated. Simultaneously, these institutions uphold principles of discipline and respect as fundamental expectations for student conduct (Lamont et al, 2013). Disruptive behaviour or indiscipline cannot be permitted to disrupt the central mission of the school. This is because, indiscipline among students has over the years rendered education to some extent porous by dismantling the great goodies society expected of it (Ngwokabuenui, 2015; Sackey, Amaniampong & Efua, 2016).

The prevalence of indiscipline activities in schools does not only impede teaching and learning but ultimately inhibits the building blocks to sustainable development by denying society of the needed brain for industrialization, economic growth and social cohesion. The issue of school indiscipline is not peculiar to any particular geographical location. In recent years, issues of students' indiscipline have assumed a universal canker menacing the human society and particularly for stakeholders dealing with the issues of children (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). It has become a global issue of great concern which may be attributed to the changing educational demands, socio-cultural changes, technological advancement, and children's rights issues among others (Luti-Mallei & Gakunga, 2015).

The society expects school children to be disciplined and thus, become responsible adults. Contrary to these expectations, reported acts of indiscipline are on the ascendancy among school children in many countries. Studies have shown that violence and indiscipline in schools are on the rise in developed countries. In the United States, for example, a 2018 report by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 20% of students had been bullied at school in the previous year, and 10% had been threatened or injured with a weapon. In the United Kingdom, a 2019 report by the Department for Education found that 44% of teachers had experienced violence or aggression from students in the previous year (Cornu, Abduvahobov, Laoufi, Liu & Séguy, 2022).

The issue of indiscipline in schools still remains a subject of investigation and has occupied the minds of researchers for quite some time now. Efforts to curb the numerous cases of indiscipline have led to the implementation of several measures in schools across the nations of the world. As a result, schools implement codes of conduct outlining expected behaviours and establish policies to address inappropriate conduct. For instance, a study by Lamont et al (2013) stipulated that, educational institutions adopt strategies such as out-of-school suspension and expulsion to mitigate the issue of indiscipline among students. The study further revealed that, this strategy is about 50% effective in curbing the issue of indiscipline among student in United State of America (USA).

In Ghana, various government policies have been implemented to address issues of indiscipline in public schools. Key among these initiatives has been the setting up of the guidance and

counselling units in all secondary schools. More so, the Ghana Education Service (GES) has its own code of conduct for students, teachers and head teachers while various public and private senior high schools as well as universities have their own handbooks spelling out the various forms of disciplinary behaviour people within that community should exhibit. However, examining the prevailing levels of undisciplined conduct exhibited by students in Ghana, it becomes apparent that these policies largely inadequately tackle the problem of indiscipline (Adu-Agyem, Assan & Owusu-Ansah, 2020). A research conducted by Adu-Agyem et al. (2020) highlights that while the introduction of guidance and counselling units is a commendable step, their effectiveness can be limited by factors such as the ratio of counsellors to students and the level of training and resources available to these units. Insufficient resources may hamper the ability of counsellors to provide meaningful support to students, limiting the impact of this initiative (Adu-Agyem et al. 2020). Similarly, the existence of codes of conduct and institutional handbooks is important for setting expectations and maintaining order within schools and universities. However, the enforcement and consistency of these policies may vary across institutions. Research by Asamoah and Opong (2018) suggests that in some cases, there may be challenges in enforcing discipline uniformly, leading to perceived inequalities in the disciplinary process.

The use of traditional disciplinary tactics such as detention, suspension and teacher violence, has also been a common approach in schools to curb indiscipline. However, research suggests that these tactics may not always be effective and can sometimes exacerbate the problem of indiscipline. Detention is often used as a punishment for students who have engaged in disruptive behaviour or violated school rules (Lewis, 2019). While detention may temporarily remove a disruptive student from the classroom, it may not address the root causes of their behaviour. In fact, detention may lead to resentment and defiance in some students, making them more likely to engage in further acts of indiscipline (Lewis, 2019). This suggests that detention may not always be an effective long-term solution for addressing indiscipline. Similarly, school suspensions are another disciplinary tactic commonly used to address serious misconduct. However, research indicates that suspensions may not lead to positive outcomes for students. A study by Skiba et al (2011) found that suspensions were associated with negative educational outcomes, including lower academic achievement and increased likelihood of dropping out of school. Additionally, suspended students are often left unsupervised and may engage in further misconduct outside of school (Gregory, Skiba & Noguera, 2010). Therefore, school suspensions may not be an effective approach for curbing indiscipline and may even contribute to the problem. Moreover, teacher violence, as mentioned above, is a disciplinary tactic that can have serious consequences for students. Research by Gershoff (2017) highlights the negative effects of corporal punishment on children, including increased aggression and mental health issues. The use of violence by teachers not only fails to address indiscipline effectively but also harms students both physically and emotionally (Gershoff 2017).

In contrast to these traditional disciplinary tactics, alternative approaches have also been explored and found to be more successful in curbing indiscipline. Restorative justice practices, for example, focus on repairing harm and building positive relationships between students and teachers (Morrison, 2018). These practices have been shown to reduce disciplinary incidents and improve school climate (Lamont et al, 2013). Positive behaviour interventions and supports (PBIS) is another alternative approach that emphasizes teaching and reinforcing positive behaviours rather than solely punishing negative ones (Sugai & Horner, 2009). PBIS has been associated with reduced disciplinary referrals and improved student behaviour (Sugai & Horner, 2009).

The topic of effective disciplinary tactics in public senior high schools has received relatively little attention from researchers, despite the fact that many studies have been conducted in the educational field (Kimani, 2013; Angsomwine, 2014). Numerous analyses of the existing research have been conducted to identify the variables influencing school discipline. Among these, it is noteworthy to mention peer pressure, school size, and teacher involvement, according to Kimani (2013) from the Kinangop District of Kenya. Administrator sensitivity, student socialisation, academic stress, and security mentorship have also been highlighted as elements that influence school discipline in Kenya's Thika County schools (Wairagu, 2017). Others assessed how well students and teachers understood the concept of discipline, the main causes of indiscipline, the effects of indiscipline, and the measures that are used to handle disciplinary issues (Amoasi, 2008); the frequency and regularity of indiscipline, the causes of indiscipline, and potential solutions (Sackey et al., 2016); and other factors.

The information reveals that there is little research on the efficacy of current disciplinary procedures in resolving these disciplinary concerns in PSHS, according to the aforementioned establishment. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate school disciplinary strategies to ascertain the most effective in school disciplinary management from the viewpoints of students, teachers, parents, and school administrators. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to ascertain how effective the disciplinary measures used in Ghana's Public Senior High Schools (PSHS) to combat indiscipline have been. In order to accomplish this aim, two research questions were asked, thus, what are the effective disciplinary measures used in Ghana's Public Senior High Schools (PSHS) to combat indiscipline? Are there differences in the stakeholders' perspectives on the effectiveness of the existing disciplinary strategies to combating indiscipline in PSHS?

1. METHODS

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND STUDY SETTING

The cross-sectional mixed method design was used in this study as the most appropriate because it studies various groups by merging quantitative and qualitative approaches to draw inferences concerning a group at a particular time (So et al (2013). In order to address the research inquiries, a mixed-method research design was utilized, employing a convergence model. Through the use

of stratified simple random sampling techniques, a total of 386 students and 216 teachers from Public Senior High Schools (PSHS) in Kumasi were selected to participate in the study, providing responses through questionnaires and interviews as the primary data collection instruments. Thus, it allowed for a comprehensive and holistic investigation of disciplinary strategies. This design combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches, making it suitable for studying various groups (teachers, students, parents and other educational stake holders) and drawing inferences concerning the effectiveness of disciplinary strategies in senior high schools at a particular time. The goal of the mixed methods design in this study was for participation enrichment, instrument validity and reliability, treatment integrity and significance enhancement (Collins, Onwuegbuzi & Sutton, 2006). That is, in relation to this study the mixed methods design enabled researchers to not only gather numerical data but also to explore the qualitative aspects of disciplinary strategies.

Quantitative data provided insights into the effectiveness of disciplinary actions, while qualitative data helped in understanding the reasons behind students' indiscipline and the impact of different strategies on their behaviour. In this study, the principle of triangulation by convergence model employed supports the usage of multiple data sources, which guaranteed the credibility of the findings of the study (Chako, 2017; Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Thus, the principle of triangulation by convergence model enhanced the credibility of the study's findings by cross-verifying information from a multi-stakeholder perspective. It also ensured that the conclusions drawn about effective disciplinary strategies are robust and reliable. The central idea is about utilizing quantitative and qualitative approaches together in order to provide a better understanding of the research problems than either approach alone (Creswell & Plano, 2011).

The study area for this research is the Kumasi metropolis. Administratively, Kumasi metropolis is divided into four (4) sub metropolitan District councils, namely, Bantama, Manhyia, Nhyiaeso and Subin with population closely knit together in a harmonious relationship hosting major centers of higher learning including the best ranked university in Ghana (GSS, 2013). Data were sourced from Students, Parents, Teachers and the Directors of Education from the area of study. Structured questionnaires and interview protocols were the instruments used for the quantitative and qualitative data collection. Additionally, a five-point likert scale was used to assess respondents' views on the effectiveness of the existing school disciplinary strategies.

2.2 SAMPLING AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

For the purpose of collecting quantitative data, the stratified simple random sample approach of the probability sampling design was used, and for the purpose of collecting qualitative data, the non-probability sampling technique which is purposive sampling was employed. A sample size of 386 PSHS pupils and 216 teachers were chosen using the stratification technique. The optimum sample size was determined using the Yamane (1973) calculation based on the number of pupils enrolled in the various PSHS in the Kumasi Metropolis. Yamane's mathematical formula for calculating sample size is as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the population, and e is the sampling error, which is typically specified as 0.05 (5%). At the time of the survey, there were 12,284 (N) students enrolled throughout the four PSHS that were chosen from among form ones, twos and threes for the 2019 - 2020 school year in the Kumasi Metropolis. Therefore, the following formula may be used to obtain the sample size for the student population for the Kumasi Metro:

$$n = \frac{12284}{1 + 12284(0.05)^2}$$

$$= 386$$

With the supposition that there is one parent for every kid, the total sample size of students (n) is 386. The total number of PSHS teachers chosen by the Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly (KMA) for the academic year 2019–2020 was 470 (N). The number of teachers in the sample for Kumasi can alternatively be calculated as follows:

$$n = \frac{470}{1 + 470(0.05)^2}$$

$$= 216$$

The foregoing suggests 216 (n) as the total sample size of the teacher-participants

However, the researcher decided to include one parent (either the mother or the father) for each student when it came to the parents, giving the study's sample of parents a total of 386. Thirteen people were selected for the study using the purposive sampling method from the 26 targeted directors/headmasters in the Kumasi Metro and the four selected schools, including four headmasters, four senior housemasters, two managers of educational units, and three directors of education in PSHS in Kumasi.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The research utilized structured questionnaires and interview protocols as its main data collection methods. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions with a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree) for responses. To measure effectiveness using the Likert scale, a set of statements that measured the aspects of disciplinary strategy's effectiveness that we are interested in were posed. For example, in measuring the effectiveness of discipline policy in high schools, the researcher developed statements such as: The new GES discipline policy of *no caning* has helped to reduce student misbehavior; that the new discipline policy has been fair and consistent among others.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first section gathered information about the participants' demographic characteristics, while the second section focused on the study's objective, which was to identify the most effective school disciplinary strategies and to ascertain differences in perspectives among teachers, parents and students. On the other hand, the interview guide consisted of open-ended questions to cross-verify the information given by other stakeholders.

The researcher collected the quantitative data from students, teachers and parents from Islamic Senior High School, Kumasi Technical Institute, Opoku Ware School and Serwaa Nyarko Senior High School. Concerning the student-respondents, 386 questionnaires were administered to students from the four PSHS in the Kumasi Metro following permissions from the headmasters of the respective schools. The simple random lottery method of sampling was employed to select students from the various classes. The selected students were assembled at the schools' dining halls after school session in order not to disrupt school lesson hours. The investigator together with some of the research assistants explained the objectives of the study after which they were given the questionnaires to fill instantly and returned them before leaving the hall. Regarding the teachers, having explained the objectives of the study to them, the researcher administered 216 questionnaires to respond within two working days. The parent-participants were not available in the actual two weeks sanctioned for the data collection. In order to have their inputs gathered, the researcher and the schools' authorities decided to meet the parents during the Parent -Teacher Association (PTA) meetings where respondents were randomly selected. With respect to the qualitative studies, the research participants were 13 in number comprising the management members of the schools and the directors who manage education in the study area. They were given letters of consent with the study objectives clearly stated. The interview sections lasted for just one hour thirty minutes with electronic audio recording of the events.

Quantitative data analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS version 20 for the generation of percentages in descriptive statistical analysis. For the inferential statistical analysis, ANOVA was also used to assess the significant difference in the stakeholders' perspective on the subject matter. Content analysis was executed to present the data obtained from the personal interviews with the help of the Nvivo 11 analytical tool.

2. RESULTS

This section presents the responses on the effectiveness of existing disciplinary strategies to managing student indiscipline. On a scale of 1 to 5, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed with the most effective way of dealing with school indiscipline from the perspective of parents, students and teachers in the Public Senior High Schools, with 1 meaning you Strongly Disagree, and 5 meaning you Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Frequency Distribution on the Effective Disciplinary Strategies to Combating Indiscipline in Public Senior High Schools

	Disagree			Neutral			Agree		
	Stu	Tr	Par	Stu	Tr	Par	Stu	Tr	Par
Positive Tool kit (EEA 1)	14.14 %	11.05 %	7.76 %	5.60 %	12.71 %	6.15 %	80.27 %	76.24 %	86.09 %
Withdrawal (EEA 2)	21.06 %	16.02 %	6.8 %	6.67 %	6.63 %	10.68 %	72.2 %	77.35 %	82.53 %
Peer Discipline (EEA 3)	10.4 %	13.81 %	8.09 %	5.07 %	17.13 %	8.09 %	84.53 %	69.06 %	83.82 %
Rewards (EEA4)	8.54 %	6.63 %	8.09 %	5.33 %	14.92 %	11.00 %	86.13 %	78.46 %	80.9 %
Bad Comments on Reports (EEA 5)	42.14 %	34.8 %	5.5 %	10.40 %	29.28 %	9.71 %	47.46 %	35.91 %	84.79 %
Inviting Parents to the school (EEA 6)	28.27 %	16.02 %	6.47 %	6.40 %	15.47 %	8.09 %	65.07 %	68.51 %	85.44 %
Poor Testimonials (EEA 7)	44.27 %	30.38 %	4.53 %	12.27 %	23.76 %	13.59 %	43.2 %	45.86 %	81.87 %
Suspension (EEA 8)	31.73 %	12.71 %	3.24 %	9.60 %	19.34 %	4.53 %	58.67 %	67.96 %	92.24 %
Referral to Disciplinary Committee (EEA 9)	20.8 %	3.87 %	6.15 %	9.67 %	9.39 %	5.18 %	69.6 %	86.74 %	88.67 %
Manual Work (EEA 10)	34.66 %	16.57 %	1.62 %	6.93 %	20.44 %	10.03 %	58.4 %	62.98 %	88.35 %
Caning (EEA 11)	57.07 %	23.76 %	3.56 %	7.73 %	13.26 %	19.42 %	35.2 %	62.99 %	76.7 %

EEA1- Application of GES school rules, EEA2- Withdrawal, EEA3 Students formulating school rules, EEA4- Rewards of good behaviour, EEA5- Bad comments on students in a terminal report, EEA6- Inviting parents to the school, EEA7-Testimonials with negative comments, EEA8- Suspension from school, EE9- Referral to the disciplinary Committee, EEA10- Manual work, EEA11- Caning.

From Table 1 the results revealed that 92.21% of parents supported suspension of students from school as most effective. The least effective way of ensuring discipline by parents was rewards (9.03%). Teachers (86.74%) observed that referring students to the disciplinary committee in the schools was the most effective strategy. The least effective discipline strategy by teachers (34.8%)

was the writing of bad comments on terminal reports. Students (86.13%) preferred the use of reward for good behaviour as the most effective strategy. The least effective discipline perspective for the students is caning (57.07%). The parent-participants vouch for the effectiveness of the suspension of recalcitrant students from school in dealing with indiscipline in schools.

Table 2 Changes in Stakeholders' Perspective on the Effective Disciplinary strategies in combating indiscipline in Public Senior High Schools

The table below illustrates the dynamic nature of stakeholders' perspectives on effective disciplinary strategies in Public Senior High Schools.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
EEA1	Between Groups	11.887	2	5.944	4.214	.015
	Within Groups	1215.886	862	1.411		
	Total	1227.773	864			
EEA2	Between Groups	21.246	2	10.623	6.633	.001
	Within Groups	1380.458	862	1.601		
	Total	1401.704	864			
EEA3	Between Groups	34.9	2	17.45	14.879	.000
	Within Groups	1010.966	862	1.173		
	Total	1045.866	864			
EEA4	Between Groups	15.662	2	7.831	7.202	.001
	Within Groups	937.339	862	1.087		
	Total	953.001	864			
EEA5	Between Groups	328.804	2	164.402	90.527	.000
	Within Groups	1565.446	862	1.816		
	Total	1894.25	864			
EEA6	Between Groups	77.111	2	38.556	11.544	.000
	Within Groups	2878.896	862	3.34		
	Total	2956.007	864			
EEA7	Between Groups	291.773	2	145.887	66.595	.000
	Within Groups	1888.349	862	2.191		
	Total	2180.123	864			
EEA8	Between Groups	181.449	2	90.724	61.742	.000
	Within Groups	1266.625	862	1.469		
	Total	1448.074	864			
EEA9	Between Groups	38.232	2	19.116	14.754	.000
	Within Groups	1116.825	862	1.296		
	Total	1155.057	864			
EEA10	Between Groups	185.066	2	92.533	56.602	.000
	Within Groups	1409.2	862	1.635		
	Total	1594.266	864			
EEA11	Between Groups	534.274	2	267.137	56.113	.000
	Within Groups	4103.722	862	4.761		
	Total	4637.995	864			

EEA1- Application of GES school rules, EEA2- Withdrawal, EEA3- Students formulating school rules, EEA4- Rewards of good behaviour, EEA5- Bad comments on students in a terminal report, EEA6- Inviting parents to the school, EEA7-Students being given testimonials with negative comments, EEA8- Suspension from school, EEA9-Referral to the Disciplinary Committee, EEA10- Manual work, EEA11- Caning

The analysis of variance as shown in Table 2 suggested a significant difference in the perspective of parents, teachers and students on rewards ($P \leq 0.001$), inviting parents ($P \leq 0.000$), negative testimonials ($P \leq 0.000$), suspension ($P \leq 0.000$), disciplinary committee ($P \leq 0.000$), manual work ($P \leq 0.000$), and caning ($P \leq 0.000$). The analysis of variance suggests a significant difference in the perspective of the three participating groups.

In addressing the issues of indiscipline in PSHS, the directors and managers of the schools were asked to examine the effectiveness of the existing disciplinary strategies in combating the menace of indiscipline in PSHS. The following were the responses from the participants;

3.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF CANING VERSUS THE NEW POSITIVE DISCIPLINARY TOOLKIT

Speaking about the new toolkit that the Ghana Education Service (GES) instituted to replace caning and corporal punishment, the Director/Head/Master 1 said the following;

“Recently, we have come out with the Positive Disciplinary tools. The GES believes that caning is a form of inhumane treatment that can destroy the confidence of the child to be able do what the child is destined to do. It is also believed that the mere sight of cane can cause fear in students. The toolkit therefore goes in for counselling”
(Director/Head/Master 1)

This toolkit, however, was not mentioned by the majority of the respondents who were the managers of the schools, suggesting that they may not be aware of its existence, even though some of the responses were in line with the provisions of the toolkit. The only two respondents who mentioned this are top officials of the Director/Head/Master 1 and 2. Moreover, some interviewees suggested in their responses that the mode of communication of policies on the toolkits were not the best, although the policies themselves may be useful. For instance, the Director/Head/Master 1 made the following remarks in this regard;

“No formal policy document has been given to us. Recently we were told the GES is against what we are using.... Once your employer tells you to do something you have to obey.”
(Director/Head/Master 1)

Although the GES policy of *no caning* has undoubtedly had a considerable impact on the disciplinary approaches in public senior high schools, it is worth noting that some of the responses

suggest that not all stakeholders may be in support of the ban on corporal punishment. For instance, the Director/Head/Master 3 has the following to say;

“I think the policy is rather breeding indiscipline. Gone are the days when we were in school when you misbehave you are whipped and that serves as a deterrent to somebody who might be having the same idea. I am not saying that caning is the best form of discipline but it helps put some fear in some of the recalcitrant students.”
(Director/Head/Master 1)

The divided opinions on caning as a tool for dealing with students who misbehave, points to the possibility of policy inconsistency in the GES. The policy mismatch comes when what is happening on the grounds remains far different from the GES policies. For instance, Director/Head/ Master 9 asserted that;

“There is a clear mismatch between the policies given such as counselling instead of punishment and what actually happens on the ground.” **(Director/Head/Master 9)**

It can be inferred from the findings above that respondents had mixed feelings about abolishing of corporal punishment in schools. There is, obviously, a policy mismatch, as the findings suggest that the policy may not agree with what pertains on the grounds; and does not incorporate the culture and aspirations of the people they are meant for. Consequently, some respondents suggest that there is a need for policymakers to review some of the disciplinary policies. For instance, the Director/Head/Master 3 has the following to say;

I think that policies should be drawn by technocrats, religious bodies and educationists based on our cultural upbringing and not necessarily based on Western lines.

3.2 SUSPENSION FROM SCHOOL

The Director/Head/Master 4 made the following comments on their disagreement to the use of suspension in dealing with indiscipline in the schools;

“In the case of students who are suspended internally or externally, they miss out on class work”. **(Director/Head/Master 4)**

Guidance and counselling

There has always been a majority call for a much more resilient approach to dealing with students found guilty of indiscipline rather than inflicting pain on their bodies. In place of such abuse, the majority of the participants settled on counselling and engaging students through various pragmatic means. The Director/Head/Master 1 said the following in this regard;

“So they don’t want us to do anything that will create a negative impression in the mind of the child. They feel that resorting to counselling, taking the child as a personal friend.”
(Director/Head/Master 1)

In response to handling students who prove difficult in schools, the participants unanimously cited guidance and counselling. The Director/Head/Master 3 emphasized the need for parent contribution in the following words;

“Guidance, parental control, i.e. parents need to have time for their kids and not resort to spanking their children.” (Director/Head/Master 3)

Among the many responses raised by the participants, the Director/Head/Master 5 anchored his view to counselling, and suggested students being drawn closer to teachers in the remarks below;

“They need to be counselled and they need to be drawn closer to the teacher.” (Director/Head/Master 5)

3.3 DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEES

One of the stiffer disciplinary measures to dealing with students who go wayward is making them face the disciplinary committee. The popularity of the disciplinary committee in the PSHS follows the need to have students heard before taking appropriate measures with respect to their responses. The Director/Head/Master 4 believes this is the most proper means of dealing with students who break school rules and regulation. He said the best way out could be;

“Through the use of disciplinary committees, the schools can address the menace of indiscipline because the students who form part of the disciplinary committee accept disciplinary outcomes in the process.”

(Director/Head/Master 4)

The choice of making recalcitrant students face the disciplinary committee has been made by the Director/Head/Master 6 in the following remarks;

“We give room for first, second and third offences and the necessary sanctions are applied. We also have disciplinary committees who ensure that students who misbehave are given a fair hearing. Sometimes students are made to sign bonds in the presence of their parents.” (Director/Head/Master 6)

In addition to the foregoing solutions, Director/Head/Master 4 had this to say;

“The disciplinary committees sit on incidences of indiscipline and determine the necessary course of action, be it dismissal or suspension from the school are some ways in dealing with the issues.” (Director/Head/Master 4)

3.4 COLLABORATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

Of the several means available to combating the canker of indiscipline among students, the respondents mainly proffer education, media campaign, collaboration between NGOs and religious bodies, involving the PTA, using school rules and regulations, disciplinary measures such as outright suspension or dismissal, backing of GES initiatives, appropriate punishment, engaging

parents on how to straighten students' conducts, using denominational services and programs to engage students, GES codes of conduct, counselling, and involving parents in the hearing of disciplinary cases by the disciplinary committee, among others as some of the solutions. Director/Head/Master 1 made the following revelations;

“We try to educate the teachers on how to handle the students. There are other stakeholders who are helping to address some of these challenges. There are also NGOs but in a more formal way there should be more collaboration from the church or religious groups because by and large the major religious groups all frown on some of the acts of indiscipline. However, there are differences in opinions among the religious sects as to how these issues should be dealt with.” (Director/Head/Master 1)

The Director/Head/Master 1 suggested the following;

I am of the view that in terms of disciplining the child it should be holistic, bringing parents on board. (Director/Head/Master 1)

Some of the respondents proffered other disciplinary actions that could be adopted to beef up discipline in the public senior high schools. One respondent suggested that officials of GES and the schools, in general, should cultivate the culture of visiting students to talk to them and remind them of why they need to discipline themselves in order to get to where they are supposed to be. Another respondent felt that the process of repetition should be revisited, and schools should be empowered to take hard-line decisions. The respondent further opined that the long disciplinary procedures adopted by the schools should be shortened; and that school officials should be mindful of the rights of the people and the laws of the land when disciplining students.

3. DISCUSSION

This current study examined the effectiveness of disciplinary strategies among students in public Senior High Schools in the Kumasi metropolis. The results from the study posit that positive reinforcements like reward of good behaviour helps students to be more disciplined. This supports the findings of Otero and Haut (2016) that students develop faster and better in schools where there are more rewards (positive reinforcement) than punishment. They found that students in schools with more rewards (positive reinforcement) developed faster and better than students in schools with fewer rewards. They found that positive reinforcement can take many forms, including verbal praise, tangible rewards, and privileges. In agreement, other studies have reported participants support for reward as a source of motivation for good behaviour in school (Ma, Li, Chen, Yue, Shaheen, Majrashi & Zheng, 2022, Karamalla, 2021). This suggests that students believe that being rewarded for good behavior encourages them to continue behaving well. This belief is likely to shape their behavior positively, as they may strive to earn rewards and recognition through good conduct. This aligns with the literature on positive reinforcement in education, where rewards and

recognition are seen as effective strategies for promoting positive behavior in students (Owusu-Ansah, 2019).

Students however generally disagreed with the use of caning or flogging in dealing with student indiscipline in Public Senior High Schools. This means that, students view caning as a harsh and punitive approach that does not address the root causes of indiscipline. This perception may lead to resistance or resentment among students, potentially exacerbating the problem of indiscipline (Owusu-Ansah, 2019). This finding is in agreement with the position of school managers in this study who posit that the use of canes as a disciplinary strategy should be replaced with the Ghana Education Service Positive Disciplinary Tools, introduced in 2016. The ‘Toolkit provides alternative mechanisms for dealing with indiscipline in schools such as counselling, meetings with students’ parents, cleaning, reflection periods, et cetera, for handling students who fail to abide by school rules. This means that school managers believe that caning is inhumane and can have a detrimental impact on a child’s confidence and mental well-being. Their belief in the positive disciplinary toolkit shapes their behavior by promoting a more compassionate and supportive approach to addressing indiscipline. They advocate for understanding the underlying issues behind misbehavior and providing counseling to students, treating them as personal friends rather than resorting to punitive measures. This belief may lead to a school environment that prioritizes students’ emotional and psychological well-being (Amoah, 2018).

The rejection of caning and other forms of corporal punishment by the managers of Public Senior High Schools for counselling as spelt out in the new toolkit, affirmed by Egbo (2013) who concedes that counselling programmes are aimed at assisting students to achieve their self-actualized state. Bear, Minke and Manning (2002) further recommends methods such as counselling and teaching positive aptitudes of problem solving and decision making. However, it is essential to note that not all stakeholders are in favor of the ban on corporal punishment. Some of the Directors of Education, argue that caning serves as a deterrent and instills fear in recalcitrant students. This belief may influence behavior by leading to a more traditional and punitive approach to discipline. These stakeholders may resist the shift towards positive disciplinary strategies, fearing that it may lead to increased indiscipline. However, the support for caning contradicts Gebrezgabiher and Hailer (2015) who in their critical review of literature on caning and other forms of punishment opine that most of the time, results of caning and corporal is short-lived; though not enough literature has approved or disapproved it. Pandey (2001) concurs with a middle ground opinion that caning must only be employed with diligent caution because if not handled well can lead to students feeling of mental harassment, insecurity, inferiority, anxiety depression, lack of self-confidence, shame, and self-doubt among others.

The teacher-participants in general identified referral to the Disciplinary Committee as the most effective strategy to combating the problem of indiscipline in our schools. This is in line with Onah (2015) who examined indiscipline actions among students in Nigeria where teachers identified

caning, sending students to the disciplinary committee and kneeling as some of the strategies that help in curbing indiscipline among students. However, Urieh (2008), researched into the perspective of students on the impact of strict implementation of school rules and regulations in educational facilities. Most of the respondents disagreed with strict enforcement of these rules through the disciplinary committee because they think that school management will use that to control their lives in school. Atunde (2019) reported on results from a study on the prevalence, causes and management of misbehaviour in Nigerian public schools. The study established that to solve the problem of indiscipline, there must be the enforcement of rules and regulations in the school settings. However, teachers disagreed with the effectiveness of writing bad comments on students' testimonials as effective disciplinary strategy. In agreement to this, Omote, Thinguri and Moenga (2015) spoke against the incidence of indiscriminate punishment, noting that such unsystematic punishments may make students more hostile and resentful.

In the case of the participating parents, they agreed that the use of suspensions in dealing with disciplinary challenges is most effective while the least is reward or positive re-enforcement. Interestingly, the parent-participants vouch for the effectiveness of suspension of recalcitrant students from school in dealing with indiscipline in schools. Suspension as a remedy for student indiscipline has also been reaffirmed by Atunde and Aliyu (2019) where participants showed general acceptance of this exclusionist strategy in dealing with indiscipline. The utilization of suspensions and ejections might be an instrument for "pushout" to compel "troublemakers or bad students not to prevail in school" or to leave early (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; p.339). When students are pushed out of school through suspension, they become overly exposed and the propensity to deviate more is high (Urieh, 2008)

The analysis suggests a significant difference in the perspective of teachers, students, parents and the directors of education on the most effective disciplinary strategy in managing misbehaviour among students in the High schools. three participating groups. That is, while teachers emphasize enforcement of rules through the disciplinary committee as against bad comments on reports, students choose reward against caning, parents opted for suspension against rewards and the managers of the schools choose counselling, cleaning among others. The ensuing undoubtedly significant variance in the perspectives of the participating stakeholders suggests the discovered complexities associated with the management of student behaviour. Similarly, Smyth and Quail (2017) in their analysis of disciplinary practices in Ireland gathered the views of school heads, teachers, parents and children in 857 primary schools. The findings revealed that used homework and class activities as punishment in correcting children. Other schools used measures outside the normal policy prescriptions such as sports, termination of popular courses (such as physical education), writing lines and warning cards used in school settings. Furthermore, 39% of schools employed detention sometimes, while 38% adopt school suspensions to correct students. The significant differences in the stakeholders' opinions on various disciplinary strategies suggest a lack of consensus and uniformity in the implementation of discipline policies in PSHS. This

highlights the need for policy makers to review and harmonize existing disciplinary policies to ensure consistency and alignment with the Ghana Education Service (GES) guidelines. It is essential that policies are not only well-defined but also effectively communicated and understood by all stakeholders, including head teachers, school coordinators, officers, and circuit coordinators.

In accordance with the findings respondents had different perspectives when it comes to managing indiscipline in the schools as to the most and the least effective. The results suggest educating head teachers, involving parents, educating students, and keen supervision as some of the ways suggested by the Directors of Education and School Heads for the implementation of the GES disciplinary strategies. The suggestion by one manager for the education of head teachers, school coordinators, officers, and circuit coordinators to work together is crucial. Training should focus on the principles of holistic discipline, emphasizing alternatives to punitive measures and the involvement of parents in the disciplinary process. Also, the statement made by a manager about the mismatch between policies advocating counselling instead of punishment and actual practices on the ground highlights the need for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Policy makers should establish systems to monitor the implementation of disciplinary strategies in PSHS to ensure adherence to guidelines and the promotion of best practices. This can include regular assessments, feedback mechanisms, and reporting structures to identify and address policy inconsistencies. This position of collaboration among all stakeholders is concurred by Silva (2017) who in addressing the solution to the problems of indiscipline in his qualitative work in the year 2016 from the view of teachers further suggested that indiscipline problems may be solved through stakeholder collaboration.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to address indiscipline in Public Senior High Schools (PSHS) in Ghana, effective school discipline measures are being examined from the perspectives of students, teachers, parents, and school managers, this research makes the following recommendations:

5.1 Promoting Alternatives to Suspension

Given the finding that suspension is still preferred as a disciplinary measure in Public Senior High Schools (PSHS), it is recommended that school administrators and policy makers actively promote alternatives to suspension. This can be achieved by implementing guidance and counselling programs within schools that focus on addressing the root causes of student indiscipline. These programs should provide students with the opportunity to receive counselling, mentoring, and support to address their behavioural issues. Additionally, school administrators should collaborate with teachers, parents, and student leaders to create a more inclusive and holistic approach to discipline. By offering alternatives to suspension and involving all stakeholders, schools can reduce the reliance on punitive measures and create a more conducive learning environment. To implement this, schools can establish guidance and counselling departments with trained professionals who can work with students exhibiting disciplinary issues. Training workshops can

be organized for teachers and parents on effective counselling and mentoring techniques. Student leaders can be trained to assist in peer counselling and mediation. Regular meetings involving all stakeholders can be convened to discuss and implement alternative disciplinary strategies. By promoting alternatives to suspension, schools can expect a reduction in the number of students suspended, improved student behaviour, and a more supportive and nurturing school environment.

5.2 Encourage Student Participation in Discipline

The study highlights the importance of involving students in the disciplinary process. Therefore, it is recommended that schools actively encourage and facilitate student participation in discipline-related matters. This can be achieved by allowing students to be present during disciplinary committee meetings and giving them the opportunity to voice their concerns and perspectives. Student leaders should also be empowered to exercise responsible leadership in promoting discipline among their peers. By involving students in the decision-making process and valuing their input, schools can create a sense of ownership and responsibility among students towards maintaining discipline. To implement this, schools can establish student disciplinary committees that include student representatives. These committees can meet regularly to discuss discipline-related issues and propose solutions. Student leaders can undergo leadership training programs that focus on conflict resolution and peer mediation. Encouraging student participation in discipline can lead to a more inclusive and democratic approach to addressing indiscipline, fostering a sense of responsibility among students, and enhancing their engagement in maintaining discipline within the school.

5.3 Strengthen Collaboration between Parents and School Administrators

The study underscores the need for collaboration between parents and school administrators in addressing indiscipline. Therefore, it is recommended that schools and the Ministry of Education actively work together to strengthen this collaboration. School administrators should organize regular meetings and workshops involving parents to discuss discipline-related issues and strategies. Parents should be educated on their role in instilling discipline in their children and should be encouraged to actively participate in the disciplinary process when necessary. By fostering strong partnerships between parents and school administrators, a unified approach to tackling indiscipline can be achieved. To implement this, schools can organize parent-teacher meetings specifically focused on discipline. Workshops and seminars can be conducted to educate parents on effective discipline strategies and their role in promoting discipline. School administrators can establish communication channels to keep parents informed about disciplinary matters. Strengthening collaboration between parents and school administrators can lead to improved communication, shared responsibility for discipline, and a more supportive home-school environment, ultimately reducing incidents of indiscipline in PSHS.

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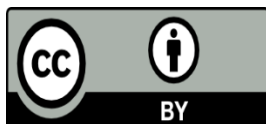
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