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Physical Punishment and Child Development in Babcock University, Nigeria: An Evaluation of ‘Not Sparing The Rod’

Chioma, Patricia E.

Department of Mass Communication, Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria

Ogu, Michael I.

Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract:

Despite the vast existing research on the negative effects of physical punishment, this study attempted to investigate the forms of physical punishment parents administer to their children. The aim was to determine if this mode of discipline has a negative effect on parent- child relationship, as well as the opinion of children as to whether physical punishment helps them develop positive behavior in the home and the society.

Using descriptive survey research method, structured questionnaire were purposively administered to parents and children within the Babcock University Community, Nigeria. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The result of this investigation showed that 74% of parents within the Babcock University community adopt physical punishment as a mode of child discipline. However, only 52% agreed that children who are physically punished are better behaved than those who are not.

Finally, all 74% of parents, and 74% of children agreed that physical punishment does not hamper parent-child relationship or interaction.

Keywords: *Physical Punishment, Discipline, Parent-child relationship, Corrective-mechanism*

1. Introduction

“Some people regard discipline as a choice. For me, it is a kind of order that sets me free to fly.” - Julie Andrews

Child discipline is a crucial aspect of parenting and family life. It is the primary responsibility of every parent to ensure that children are brought up to be responsible members of the society; whose behavior speak volume of the home in which they come from. The appropriate method of discipline has been in contention over the use of physical or corporal punishment against counseling.

The revolution against physical punishment began in Sweden. They began a slow and steady process of influencing the public to believe that spanking is bad; which eventually led to the ban of all forms of physical punishments. Starting by prohibiting physical discipline in secondary schools in 1928, the government strongly advertised against spanking, and slowly placed more and more restrictions on it; first in reform schools, then in childcare institutions, and finally in the home in 1979.¹

Soon, the enormous campaign against physical punishment (especially spanking) spread like wide fire from Sweden to other countries of the world, successfully influencing public opinion against the use of physical punishment as a mode of child discipline. In line with this, the United Nations organized a global treaty – the U.N Convention on the Rights of the Child- which aims to:

- Explicitly prohibit all forms of corporal punishment in the family, and
- Sensitize and educate parents and the general public about the unacceptability of corporal punishment².

Despite the high level of scholarly debates and criticisms against the use of physical punishment on children, it remains a popular means of child discipline especially in African homes and schools.

The continued relevance of physical punishment in African (Nigeria in particular) could be attributed to the high religious and cultural inclinations of the people who believe that they must obey the injunctions of the Holy Book as regards training children with the ‘rod’, as well as upholding a culture of discipline and respect. This study, therefore, sought to evaluate specifically the effects of physical punishment as a mode of discipline on the character development of children, and its influence on their personal and family wholeness.

¹Fuller, J. (2010), Corporal Punishment and Child Development. Akron Law Review, Volume 43, Issue 2

²U.N. Comm. on the Rights of the Child, Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Ireland, ¶¶ 39-40, U.N. Doc. CRC/C/IRL/CO/2 (Sept. 29, 2006).

2. Statement of the Problem

Families are made up of individuals who have attitudes that have been developed over time by the presence or absence of the right mode of discipline. However, there is a continuous argument over what constitutes the right mode of discipline for children, one which is devoid of causing harm to their development, and this has led to the advocacy against the use of physical punishment, rather parents are advised to adopt other methods of discipline that are devoid of causing the child to feel any form of pain.

Regardless of this argument, parents and adults have continued to regard and use physical punishment as an integral ingredient in the development of children in particular and the family in Africa. While some parents agitate that children are better behaved when a certain level of physical punishment is given, others are of the opinion that it is better to dialogue with and counsel children as physical punishment such as caning, slapping, spanking, beating, is not a fair way of disciplining children.

3. Objectives of the Study

This study sought to investigate the following:

- The forms of physical punishment Babcock University community parents give their children.
- The effect of physical punishment on the behavioural development of children.
- The effectiveness of physical punishment as a mode of child discipline as compared to other forms of child discipline such as counselling.
- The effect of physical punishment on parent child relationship.

4. Research Questions

- What forms of physical punishment do Babcock University community parents give their children?
- How does physical punishment affect the behavioural development of children?
- Is physical punishment the most effective mode of child discipline?
- What are the effects of physical punishment on parent child relationship?

5. Theoretical Discourse

This study is anchored on B.F. Skinner's Behavioral Theory of Operant Conditioning and Operant Behavior which is based on a system of positive and negative reinforcement used to strengthen behaviour. Skinner posits that Behaviours are modified mainly by either changing the consequences of an action or applying new consequences to guide behaviour.

Humans often respond to verbal operands, such as; taking advice, listening to the warnings of others, and obeying given rules and laws, even without having personally experienced any negative consequences from disobeying. The knowledge of the consequences of certain behaviours can be enough to keep people from acting in certain ways. Although this may not always be the case, as many people learn lessons "the hard way", the ability to benefit from the pleasant and unpleasant experiences of others is uniquely a human characteristic³.

In the past, most parents chose to control the behaviour of their children by the use of negative reinforcement – physical punishment. However, today, many parents, school systems, and other childhood authorities attempt to provide positive reinforcement to encourage good behaviour, reserving negative reinforcement techniques only as a last resort. While the results of the use of positive reinforcement such as counselling are not usually as immediate, they are typically seen as healthier; providing children with appropriate behavioural guidelines while allowing them their dignity.

6. Literature Review

Physical or corporal punishment is the use of force to cause pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correction or control⁴. It is a mode of child discipline – the act of training children to develop orderly conduct and behavior and correcting unruly behavior by: spanking, flogging, slapping, subjecting a child to experience bodily pain or discomfort by kneeling on painful objects or stand/sit in painful positions for long periods of time.

6.1. Types of Physical Punishment

- Spanking – the act of striking the buttocks of a child to cause temporary pain without producing physical injury.
- Flogging – beating a child with a whip, stick, or strap, causing him/her to experience bodily pain.
- Slapping – hitting a child with the palm of one's hand or a flat object on the face.
- Kneeling – the act of confining a child to a position in which the weight is distributed on the knees and feet on a surface close to horizontal.

Although researchers attempt to distinguish between physical punishment and abuse, the intention of most parents (especially in Africa) is to impact some form of discipline – the guidance of children's moral, emotional and physical development, enabling children take responsibility for them when they are older^{5,6}.

³Elizabeth Grace, (2012); B.F. Skinner's Behavioral Theory

⁴Straus, M.A. and J.H. Stewart (1999) "Corporal punishment by American parents: National data on prevalence, chronicity, severity, and duration, in relation to child and family characteristics" *Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review*, 2(2):55–70

⁵Holden, G.W. (2002) "Perspectives on the effects of corporal punishment: Comment on Gershoff (2002)" *Psychological Bulletin*, 128(4):590–595.

⁶Wissow, L.S. (2002) "Child discipline in the first three years of life" in N. Halfon, K.T. McLearn and M.A. Schuster (eds.) *Child Rearing in America: Challenges Facing Parents with Young Children*, Cambridge University Press, New York (pp.146–177).

In 1928, Sweden became the first country to ban all forms of physical punishment by prohibiting the use of any form of physical discipline in its secondary schools. Its government strongly advertised against spanking, and slowly placed restrictions on it; first in reform schools, then in childcare institutions, and finally in the home in 1979. As a result of the large campaign, other countries of the world and public opinion were successfully turned against spanking⁷.

Scholars of the growing movement against corporal punishment argue that a ban on corporal discipline will create a “cultural spill-over” of nonviolence. As a result, high-profile organizations like the American Academy of Paediatrics assert that “spanking increases aggression and anger instead of teaching responsibility.”⁸ Also, academics like Dr. Murray Straus of the University of New Hampshire observed that, “a society that brings up children by nonviolent methods is likely to be less violent, healthier, and wealthier.”⁹

Considering how quickly the campaign against physical punishment is spreading, one may fear that the thesis may soon be accepted by a wider range of parents and people. A more important problem identified is that the campaign against physical punishment could be so vulnerable to scientific and statistical challenge¹⁰. For instance, Lyons and Larzelere observed that after Sweden outlawed spanking, violent behaviour did not decrease¹¹. They argued further, that “22% of Swedish parents only use physical force when they get “upset enough”. However, within ten years of the ban, physical child abuse had risen to three times the U.S. rate, and in the thirty years since the ban, child abuse has increased by over 1,400%, even though the Swedish population has only increased by about 11.5%¹². Therefore, the outlawing of physical punishment in Sweden has been largely inconsistent with their nonviolent goals.

On the other hand, physical punishment is prevalent in countries like Singapore. It may be common to hear opponents of physical punishment hold views that, despite the fact that physical punishment may produce immediate discipline and conformity, in the longer run, it may tend to increase the probability of deviant behaviours, which may include delinquency in adolescence and ability to pioneer violent crime in adults.

If the above opinions are true, then we would expect that a country like Singapore; where school-teachers administer corporal punishment on unruly students, parents and adults cane children, and the government administers capital and other criminal punishments on adults, would be one of the most violent and academically deficient societies in the world. But this is in fact the opposite.

Despite the fact that, according to a 2009 statistics on Singapore, its population has risen by 27% in the past ten years¹³, yet, the crime rates in the country have dramatically dropped. In fact, several independent assessments have indicated that Singapore has a crime rate that is far lower than those in most of the popular Western nations and indeed lower than the average crime rate in rural America¹⁴. A 2009 report of the National Centre for Education Statistics has also shown that Singaporean school-children have done very well on international academic tests—taking second and third places in math, and first place in science¹⁵.

6.2. Physical Punishment and Physical Abuse

Discipline basically involves teaching children to be able to differentiate acceptable mode of conduct and moral. The essence is to make them aware of the values, norms and actions that are acceptable in their family and society. Although researchers have attempted to distinguish between physical punishment and child abuse, this has proven very difficult to accomplish, as there is no general agreement about the dividing line between physical punishment and abuse. It is not impossible to define what “safe smack”, “loving slap”, “fair knock” are. It may only be possible to differentiate between abusive and non-abusive parents as regards to how often and how severe they physically punish their children; whether that physical punishment is purportedly for correcting children, and whether they let the children know the reason for their being physically punished.

⁷See No. 1

⁸American Academy Of Pediatrics, What Is The Best Way To Discipline My Child?, available at http://www.aap.org/publiced/BR_Discipline.htm (recommending natural consequences, logical consequences, withholding privileges, and timeout, but not spanking).

⁹Murray A. Straus, *Corporal Punishment by Parents*, 8 V A.J.SOC.POL'Y &L. 7, 52 (2000).

¹⁰OkeyChigbo, Bum Rap: Antspanking Activists Should Take a Time-out, Next City (Summer 1998)

¹¹Lyons, J.S. & Larzelere, R.E. (1996), Where Is Evidence That Non-Abusive Corporal Punishment Increases Aggression? Presentation at the XXVI International Congress of Psychology, Montreal (Aug. 18, 1996)

¹²See No. 12

¹³Singapore Department Of Statistics, Statistics, Time Series on Population (MidYear Estimates), available at (accessed on October 29, 2012) <http://www.singstat.gov.sg/stats/themes/people/hist/popn.html>

¹⁴David Levinson et al., (2002) (“Singapore, once a lawless and pirate-infested island, is now one of the safest places in the world. . . . When compared with numerous developed countries, Singapore has one of the lowest crime rates.”); JOSEPH SLABEY ROUCEK, JUVENILE

DELINQUENCY 339 (1970) (saying juvenile crime in Singapore was “almost negligible” in 1970).

¹⁵NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, HIGHLIGHTS FROM TIMSS2007: MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT OF U.S. FOURTH AND EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENTS IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT 32 (2009), available at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009001_2.pdf (showing that Singapore ranked first in science for both fourth and eighth grade international tests); *id.* at 7, available at http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009001_1.pdf (showing that, in the fourth and eighth grade math portion of the TIMSS, Singapore ranked second and third respectively)

6.3. Physical Punishment and Parent-Child Relationship

One of the major concerns about the use of physical punishment is the fact that it can have an adverse effect on the quality of parent-child relationship. Often times, children develop secure attachment with their parents through warm, positive parent-child interactions. The inability of a child to maintain this interaction is attributed to the use of physical punishment as a disciplinary measure, which yields harshly punitive parent-child interactions. In 2002, Gershoff reviewed eleven American based studies on the use of corporal punishment and its effect on parent-child relationship. Although the studies draw conclusions to the fact that physical punishment was positively associated with poorer child-parent relationships¹⁶, Gershoff came to the conclusion that as a parenting technique, physical punishment may not be harmful when used in a non-abusive manner.

6.4. Biblical Provisions for Physical Punishment

The bible states that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"¹⁷. This text asserts the authenticity of the Bible as a base for all counsel on life and living. There are several scriptural texts that seem to support physical punishment for children, and have been used by parents and others as justification for administering physical punishment on children.

The phrase "*spare the rod and spoil the child*" is often wrongly attributed as being a phrase in the Holy Bible, but it does not appear there. According to Rossi, it was first written in a poem by Samuel Butler in 1664¹⁸.

Physical punishment is strongly recommended in the Old Testament book of Proverbs, authored by the Wisest King that ever lived – King Solomon. The following quotations, culled from the *King James Version* (KJV) of the Bible strongly recommend physical punishment:

The book of proverbs prescribes the use of physical punishment. This is evident in the following texts:

- "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes (diligently).*"¹⁹
- "*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.*"²⁰
- "*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*"²¹
- "*Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.*"²²
- "*Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell (Shoel).*"²³
- "*A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back*"²⁴
- "*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.*"²⁵

An additional verse in the New Testament that is occasionally cited as justification for physical punishment of children says: "*for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*"²⁶

Despite these texts and others, Bower is of the opinion that:

There is no mandate from God to beat children. Within the entire Law or Torah, where God outlined what He required of his people, there is no instruction to beat children. For an issue proclaimed as so important, there is no instruction within scripture of how or when to beat or even who to beat... Jesus was a teacher and Rabbi and an expert in interpreting the scriptures. There is no evidence to suggest that he cited the scripture to justify hitting children...²⁷

God would not give such a mandate to maltreat or abuse any of His human creatures, let alone children, but He mandated His disciples "*...suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God*"²⁸. 'Suffer' is a transitive verb that involves submission or a force to endure. God requires that children be 'forced' to conform to the dictates of His inspired words, which are the only sure source of safety, protection and counsel for their lives. It is His desire that parents and adults alike correct the children in love; whether through physically punishment, counselling, meditation or any other means, all these should be done in love.

Parents are forbidden to correct their children in anger and hatred, because when a child is hated, no method of correction or punishment would make the child remorseful. Parents are also admonished not to provoke their children to anger by indiscriminate unreasonable punishments, where simple verbal rebukes and counsels would have served as more appropriate corrective measures. Children must not always be physically punished, but seldom, when the need arises, 'the rod must be used to drive foolishness far from a child', and in love.

¹⁶Corporal Punishment in Children- What Does it Accomplish? Posted on December 15, 2010 by Richard Niolon PhD <http://www.psychpage.com/family/disc.html> (assessed October, 30 2012).

¹⁷2Tim. 3:16, KJV

¹⁸Rossi, H. (2005) Sparing the Rod. Beliefnet.com, 2005-FEB, at: [//www.beliefnet.com](http://www.beliefnet.com)

¹⁹Proverbs 13:24, KJV

²⁰Proverbs 19:18, KJV

²¹Proverbs 22:15, KJV

²²Proverbs 23:13, KJV

²³Proverbs 23:14, KJV

²⁴Proverbs 26:3, KJV

²⁵Proverbs 29:15, KJV

²⁶Hebrews 12:6-7, KJV

²⁷,sjd

²⁸Luke 18: 16, KJV

7. Methodology

The study adopted the survey research method. A sample size of 100 respondents: 50 parents and 50 children were selected using the purposive sampling technique- the deliberate selection of the sample size based on specific characteristics or qualities. Respondents consisted of married staff and students (of both undergraduate and postgraduate level) within Babcock University community, and children within ages 7 – 20 years. The essence for the 50 children respondents in this study was to compare the response of parents to that of children to research question 2 (what are the effects of physical punishment on parent-child relationship?). Structured questionnaires were self administered by the researchers, while the gathered data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

8. Presentation of Data and Analysis

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Single parent	1	2%
Married	48	96%
Widow	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 1: Demographic information of parent respondents

Analysis:

The table above shows that out of a total of 50 parent respondents for this study, 1(2%) is a single parent, 48 (96%) are married, 1 (2%) is a widow. Therefore majority of the parent respondent for this study are married.

Age distribution	Frequency	Percent
10-13 Yrs	27	54%
14-16 Yrs	18	36%
17-19 Yrs	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 2: Demographic information of children respondents

Analysis:

The table above shows that out of a total of 50 children respondents for this study, 27 (54%) are within ages 10 -13 years, 18 (36%) within ages 14 – 16 years, and 5 (10%) within ages 17-19 years. Therefore, majority of the children who participated in this study were within ages 10 – 13 years.

RQ 1: What forms of physical punishment do Babcock University community parents give their children?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	37	74%
No	9	18%
No response	4	8%
Total	50	100%

Table 3: Distribution of parents who adopt physical punishment as a mode of child discipline

Analysis:

The table above shows that 37 (74%) of parents physically punish their children, 9 (18%) parents adopt other means of child discipline other than physical punishment, while 4 (8%) did not respond. Therefore, this establishes the fact that most parents adopt physical punishment as a mode of child discipline.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Slapping	1	3%
Kneeling	8	22%
Flogging	15	40%
Spanking	6	16%
All of the above	4	11%
No response	3	8%
Total	37	100%

Table 4: Distribution of the forms of punishment administer on children

Analysis:

The table above shows that 1(3%) out of the 37 parents who adopt physical punishment as a mode of child discipline adopt slapping, 8(22%) adopt kneeling, 15(40%) adopt flogging, 6(16%) adopt spanking, 4(11%) adopt slapping, kneeling, canning, and

spanking, while 3(8%) did not disclose the forms of physical punishment they adopt. This analysis shows that parents in Babcock University community adopt the physical punishment of flogging their children.

RQ 2: How does physical punishment affect parent child relationship?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	6	12%
Agree	7	14%
Undecided	0	0
Disagree	25	50%
Strongly Disagree	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Table 5: (Parent response): children who are physically punished do not have close relationship with parents?

Analysis:

The table above presents parents perception of the effect on physical punishment on parent child relationship. Their responses show that 6(12%) Strongly Agree that physically punished children do not have close relationship with parents, 7 (14%) Agree that children who are physical punished do not have close relationship with parents, 25 (50%) Disagree that children who are physically punished do not have close relations with parents, while 12 (24%) Strongly Agree that children who are physically punished do not have close relations with parents.

From the analysis, it can be seen that while only 26% concur to the opinion that physically punished children do not have close interaction with parents, 74% which is a majority of the parent respondents do not concur to the opinion that physical punishment hampers close relations between parents and children. However, the validity of their position is verified in table 7 which presents the opinion of children who are physically punished on the effect of physical punishment on their relationship with parents.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	39	78%
No	10	20%
No response	1	2%
Total	50	100%

Table 6: Children response- Distribution of children who are physically punished by parents

Analysis:

The table above shows that out of 50 children respondents for this study, 39 (78%) are physically punished by their parents, 10 (20%) are not physically punished, while 1 (2%) did not respond. this reveals that most children within the Babcock University community are physically punished by their parents.

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	9	23%
No	29	74%
No response	1	3%
Total	39	100%

Table 7: Do you find it difficult to interact with your parents because they physically punish you?

Analysis:

The table shows that 9 (23%) of the 39 children who admitted that their parents physically punish they have difficulties interacting with their parents, 29 (74%) do not have difficulties interacting with parents, while 1(3%) did not respond. The analysis shows that majority of the children who are physically punished do not have difficulty interacting with parents as a result of the mode of discipline adopted by their parents. This shows an agreement with parent response in table 5.

RQ 3: What are the effects of physical punishment on the behavioural development of children?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	3	6%
Agree	13	26%
Undecided	1	2%
Disagree	20	40%
Strongly Disagree	13	26%
Total	50	100

Table 8: Physical punishment makes children develop rebellious behaviour toward parents and siblings.

Analysis:

The table above presents parent's perception of the effect of physical punishment on the behavioural development and attitude of children toward parents and siblings. It shows that 3 (6%) strongly agree that children who are physically punished develop rebellious behaviour toward parents and siblings, 13 (26%) Agree that children who are physically punished develop rebellious behaviour toward parents and siblings, 1(2%) were undecided, 20 (40%) Disagree that children who are physically punished develop rebellious behaviour toward parents and siblings, 13 (26%) strongly disagreed that children who are physically punished develop rebellious behaviour toward parents and siblings. The analysis shows that while 32% concur that physical punishment makes children develop rebellious behaviour toward parents and siblings, 66% do not agree.

RQ 4: Is physical punishment the most effective mode of child discipline?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	11	22%
Agree	15	30%
Undecided	4	8%
Disagree	11	22%
Strongly Disagree	9	18%
Total	50	100%

Table 9: Children who are physically punished are better behaved than those who are not

Analysis:

The table above presents the perception of parents on the effectiveness of physical punishment as a mode of child discipline. It shows that 11 (22%) of the respondents Strongly Agree that children who are physically punished are better behaved than children who are not, 15 (30%) Agree children who are physically punished are better behaved than children who are not, 4(8%) are undecided, 11(22%) Disagree that children who are physically punished are better behaved, while 9 (18%) Strongly Disagree that children who are physically punished are better behaved than children who are not.

From the analysis above, majority (52%) of the respondents are of the opinion that children who are physically punished are better behaved than children who are not, while 40% of the respondents do not agree.

9. Discussion of Findings

- 74% of parents within the Babcock University community adopt physical punishment as a mode of child discipline.
- Although slapping, kneeling, flogging, and spanking are the most common forms of physical punishment these parents give their children, 70% of the parents adopt canning than any other form of physical punishment.
- 70% of parents who adopt physical punishment as a mode of child discipline use forms of physical punishment that cause immediate pain to their children, such as: slapping, canning and spanking.
- Both parents and children confirmed the fact that physical punishment does not hinder close relationship neither does it hamper the interaction between parents and their children, as seen in the comparative analysis of parent and children response to research question two in tables 6 and 8 above. The statistics show that 74% of both parent and children respondents disagree that physical punishment prevents close interaction between parents and their children. Therefore this reveals that the lack of close parent children relationship within the family is hinged on other factors.
- Physical punishment as a mode of child discipline does not lead to rebellious behaviour among children in the family as confirmed by 66% of the parent respondents.

10. Conclusion

Although a wider range of individuals and researchers consider physical punishment a negative method of developing children's behaviour, which may result in other emotional, psychological and social challenges for the child in the long run, it is also important to note that physical punishment has far-reaching benefits that will positively impact the child throughout his/her lifetime, as our study has shown.

It is obvious that our present society put children at risk of bad and unruly behaviours; with the presence of rapidly increasing technology, mass media, among others, and as such, parents are advised to be more intentional, and pay a more serious attention to the development of their children's character and behaviours.

Finally, like the Bible admonishes in Ephesians 4:15 whatever method of discipline used on children must be done in love. Physical punishment administered in love could be a very effective antidote to training children who would grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.

11. Recommendations

Firstly, Parents ought to note that there is no such thing as a child is too young to be disciplined. This is because the character or behaviour of children is formed during the first seven years of their lives. Though they may be considered young and fragile at that age, it is important for parents to apply certain measures of discipline.

Secondly, there is need for some measure of physical punishment in child discipline. It does not have to be on regular bases as there are certain times when counselling and warning is sufficient, however parents should ensure that they adequately punish their children when they misbehave as well as correct them by telling them the right thing to do next time.

Thirdly, it is good to counsel and dialogue with children, however, that in itself cannot be enough, even the Bible states in the book of Hebrews 12:6-7: that “the Lord disciplines those he loves, and punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Fourthly, parents should not segregate their children. For example they should not show preference for their children. Though all children do not act alike as one might be headier than others, parents should learn to strike a balance in discipline.

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