Division of International Special Education & Services
Journal International Special Needs Education

Vol. 25, No. 1 pp. 2–13

Exploring the Perceived Causes and Management of Challenging Behavior in Namibian and Ghanaian Schools

Morgan Chitiyo, Ph.D.

University of North Carolina at Greensboro, United States

Felix K. Kumedzro, Ph.D.

University of Cape Coast, Ghana

Simon G. Taukeni, Ph.D.

University of Namibia, Namibia

Argnue Chitiyo, Ph.D.

Ball State University, United States

Siddiq Ahmed, Ph.D.

Prince George County Public School, United States

Lubna Alzayyat, M.S.Ed.

Duquesne University, United States

Bridget Green, Ph.D.

Duquesne University, United States

Abstract

Since challenging behaviors are present in classrooms, it is imperative to understand how teachers acknowledge and respond to these unwanted actions within their schools. The overarching purpose of this study is to understand schoolteachers' perspectives on the causes of students' unwanted behaviors and their responses in the classroom. The study was also designed to explore schoolteachers' perspectives on the relationship between the students' challenging behavior and disability. A total of 1,056 Ghanaian ($n = 502$) and Namibian ($n = 554$) schoolteachers were surveyed to identify their understanding of causes of their students' challenging behavior and how they addressed the behaviors. Results of the study indicated that the teachers perceived challenging behavior as related to discipline and not disability. Most teachers also believed that both home and school environmental factors influenced challenging behavior. Furthermore, most schoolteachers from both countries did not believe that physical punishment was an effective way to address challenging behavior and did not support its use in schools. Teacher training programs in both

countries need to emphasize the use of evidence-based proactive strategies to address students' challenging behavior in order to minimize the use of punitive strategies such as physical punishment.

Key Words: challenging behavior, schoolteacher, Ghana, Namibia, punishment

The occurrence of challenging behavior in class presents schoolteachers with acute challenges associated with dividing time and effort between instruction and managing behavior. Common challenging behaviors include bullying, calling out, off-task behavior, disruptive behavior, and out of seat behavior, among others (Sun & Shek, 2012). Research shows that schoolteachers spend a significant portion of their class time dealing with challenging behavior, thereby diverting time from academic instruction (Johnson & Fullwood, 2006). Furthermore, a great deal of administrative time and resources are also lost as administrators spend time addressing challenging behavior at the administrative level (Nooruddin & Baig, 2014). Although schoolteachers may be equipped with the requisite skills to address certain types of commonly existing behaviors, some extreme behaviors are beyond the purview of their expertise, resulting in teachers sending students out of class and/or schools recruiting outside professionals to help address the challenging behaviors (Miller et al., 2017).

Furthermore, challenging behavior has been shown to be negatively associated with students' academic performance (Riglin et al., 2014). In a study examining the relationship between teacher-reported challenging behavior and standardized measures of academic achievement, Barriga and colleagues (2002) found that students' inattention mediated the connection between challenging behavior and academic achievement. Besides, other research also demonstrated a negative correlation between challenging behavior and academic achievement (e.g., Barriga et al., 2002), suggesting a cycle of self-sustaining factors of reciprocal effect. That is, in the longer term, if left unregulated, continued existence of challenging behavior results in poor academic performance, which in turn escalates or maintains the existence of challenging behaviors. Other studies have also found negative associations between challenging behavior and academic achievement (e.g., Kremer et al., 2016; Breslau et al., 2009). For instance, Kremer and colleagues (2016) examined the relationship between externalizing and internalizing behaviors and academic achievement among 2,123 participants in the US. The authors found that both externalizing and internalizing behaviors were negatively associated with academic achievement in reading. Malecki and Elliot (2002) examined the relationship between challenging behavior and academic performance among 139 elementary school students in the state of Massachusetts in the US, in which they found challenging behaviors to be negatively predicting academic achievement.

Challenging behavior has also been observed to be associated with teacher burnout and emotional exhaustion (Hastings & Brown, 2002). Various themes of teacher burnout, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishments have consistently emerged in previous literature. Bibou-Nakou et al. (1999) defined emotional exhaustion as "feelings of being emotionally overextended and drained by the contact with other people, specifically students [and depersonalization as] impersonal and inappropriate feelings towards other people," (p. 209). These factors interrupt schoolteachers' ability to teach effectively as they create tension between students and their teachers. Hastings and Bham (2003) investigated the predictive effect of students' behavior patterns on burnout dimensions including emotional exhaustion and depersonalization among 100 British primary schoolteachers; various aspects of these students' behavior patterns significantly predicted teacher burnout. Increased levels of teacher burnout consequently reduced the quality of their teaching and relationships with students. As a result of excessive stress and burnout, some schoolteachers end up resorting to use of excessive punitive measures to address challenging behavior (Hecker et al., 2018). Not only does burnout affect schoolteachers' quality of teaching and student relations, but schoolteachers experiencing burnout are at increased risk of mental and physical health problems, as well as other out-of-work problems like marital and family relations (Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998).

School teachers' Perceptions about Challenging Behavior

Traditionally, challenging behaviors exhibited by students were attributed to a wide array of factors, chief among them, lack of parental discipline, poor parental styles, and family background (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Erbas et al., 2010; Terry, 2004). Scant research in Africa attributed challenging behavior to mental health or disability in the past (Chitiyo et al., 2014). As a result, many parents and schoolteachers in African countries perceived challenging behavior to be deliberate actions by children not having been properly disciplined (Ametepee, Chitiyo, & Abu, 2009). Furthermore, not much was known regarding the functional approach to human behavior, which is the idea that behavior serves a function (Beavers et al., 2013). This lack of understanding of the role of environmental contingencies in shaping and maintaining behavior resulted in most parents and schoolteachers in African schools resorting to punitive

methods to address challenging behavior (Alhasan, 2013; Hecker et al., 2018). Some previous research also supported the use of corporal punishment as an effective method of addressing challenging behavior. For example, schoolteachers in a study by Maphosa and Shumba (2010) reported an escalation of challenging behavior in schools following the outlawing of corporal punishment in South African schools. Schoolteachers in that study reported that they felt disempowered to discipline students following the banning of corporal punishment, resulting in escalation of challenging behavior.

Although schoolteachers traditionally resorted to using punitive measures such as corporal punishment, suspension, and expulsion to address challenging behavior in the past, emergent research questioning the effectiveness of these strategies illustrates some problems associated with punitive strategies. Firstly, punitive strategies only yield temporary, short-lived cessation of challenging behavior, with the behavior re-emerging or escalating in the future (Mather & Goldsten, 2001). Besides, as students get more exposed to adverse punitive measures, they gradually build resilience, resulting in future loss of utility of these strategies (Gershoff, 2002). Secondly, due to a lack of understanding of the functions of challenging behavior, most traditional strategies simply seek to extinguish problem behavior without replacing it with appropriate alternatives. Without an efficient replacement behavior, the challenging behavior will likely reemerge. Some research has also shown the use of corporal punishment as detrimental and associated with several negative outcomes including poor academic performance, low class participation, school dropout, and declining mental well-being (Gershoff, 2002; Portella & Pells, 2015).

Causes of Challenging Behavior

To effectively address challenging behavior exhibited by students in class, it is imperative for schoolteachers to understand the underlying causes of the behavior in the first place. As stated earlier, traditional perspectives about challenging behavior were mainly focused on parental discipline, parenting styles, and home characteristics as the major determinants of students' challenging behavior (Erbas et al., 2010). Little to no understanding about the functional approach to behavior led teachers and communities to believe that children in general engaged in challenging behavior because of lack of proper parental discipline and upbringing. This knowledge also influenced societal choices of approaches for dealing with challenging behavior (Patrick et al., 2005). Since prior research showed corporal punishment as an effective strategy for stopping challenging behavior, policies allowed the use of punitive measures in class. However, the traditional beliefs and knowledge about causes of challenging behavior faced retribution as research on behavioral science became more dominant. According to Baer et al. (1987), behavior does not happen in a vacuum. Instead, behavior is a function of environmental circumstances that, over time, shape behavior because of a history of learned contingencies. The field of applied behavior analysis has therefore shifted our understanding of challenging behavior, so that we now focus on the functional value of challenging behavior.

Schoolteachers' Perceptions about Causes of Challenging Behavior

Understanding schoolteachers' perceptions about causes of challenging behavior is important as it influences their selection of strategies to address the behavior. As research shows, schoolteachers' choice of ways to address behavioral challenges is, to a greater extent, associated with their understanding of what causes the behaviors (Chitiyo et al., 2014). For example, if schoolteachers or parents believe that the child's challenging behavior is a result of witchcraft, as is the belief in some African countries, they are likely to seek spiritual solutions (Chitiyo et al., 2014). Similarly, if schoolteachers ascribe students' challenging behavior to environmental factors, they are likely to seek environmental solutions to the challenging behavior (Chitiyo et al., 2014). It is, therefore, important to understand schoolteachers' perceptions about the causes of challenging behavior to develop culturally relevant behavior management practices.

Although some of this research has been done in other countries like Zimbabwe (see Chitiyo et al., 2014), not much is known about the perceptions of schoolteachers in other parts of Africa. This study is, therefore, a replication of Chitiyo et al.'s (2014) study and was meant to assess the perceptions of schoolteachers in Ghana and Namibia about the causes of challenging behavior and the behavior management strategies they used. These two countries were selected because they represent two different regions of the continent: West Africa and Southern Africa. The researchers therefore wanted to see how these issues were perceived by schoolteachers in two countries with different cultures and located in two different regions on the continent.

Teacher Training in Ghana and Namibia

Namibia

Since 1996, all teachers in Namibia are required to complete a four-year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree offered at the University of Namibia's seven different campuses scattered around the country. Prior to that, teachers for the senior education phase (grades 11-12) were required to complete a Higher Education Diploma in education, which was offered at the University of Namibia while teachers for the lower and junior secondary phase (grades 1-10) were required to complete a Basic Teacher Education Diploma, which was offered at various teacher training colleges. These colleges where later merged with the University of Namibia, resulting in the phasing out of these diplomas and replacing them with the B.Ed. program in 1996.

Ghana

Prior to 2010, teachers in Ghana were required to complete a three-year post-secondary teacher training program offered at 38 public and 3 private teacher training colleges around the country. In 2010, the 38 public teacher training colleges were converted to colleges of education awarding a Diploma in Basic Education. Diploma graduates from the colleges teach either primary or junior secondary schools. In addition to this, the colleges of education offer a four-year B.Ed. program with specialization in early childhood (2-5 years), primary (6-12 years) and junior high school (13-15 years) education. The teacher education universities, such as the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba, train graduate teachers (i.e., teachers graduating from the university). The graduate teachers usually teach at either secondary schools or teacher training colleges.

Research Questions

Given this background, this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What do schoolteachers in Ghana and Namibia perceive as the causes of challenging behavior among their students?
2. What behavior management strategies do schoolteachers in Ghana and Namibia use to address challenging behavior in their schools?
3. What are the challenging behaviors that Ghanaian and Namibian schoolteachers experience in their schools?

It is anticipated that such knowledge will help to inform policies regarding both pre-service and in-service teacher preparation regarding behavior and classroom management in these countries and, hopefully, in the two regions.

METHOD

Participants

Participants in this study were a convenience sample of 1,056 schoolteachers—554 (52.5%) from Namibia and 502 (47.5%) from Ghana. To participate in the study, individuals had to be in-service teachers and participation was voluntary based on availability and willingness to participate. Before completion of the survey, the participants were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and that they could opt-out of the study at any point if they chose to. Participants from Namibia were recruited via personal contacts of the third author who sent the survey instrument to them electronically and requested that they distribute hard copies of the instrument at their respective schools. In addition, the third author also personally visited 50 schools that were easily reachable and distributed copies of the survey instrument via principals of these schools. The 50 schools represented eight of Namibia's 14 regions (i.e., Kavango-East, Kavango-West, Ohangwena, Oshana, Omushati, Oshikoto, Khomas, and Kunene). The 50 schools were almost evenly distributed between urban and rural settings. Participants from Ghana were recruited by the second author who randomly selected 20 schools out of the 63 public basic schools within the Cape Coast Metropolitan Education Directorate in the Central Region of the country; half of the schools were rural, while the other half were in urban settings. After identifying the 20 schools, the second author used their research assistants to distribute hard copies of the surveys across the schools. The social economic status of the participants from both countries varied from low to medium based on locale. Also, since English is the language of instruction in both countries, the survey was administered in English using paper and pen format.

Instrumentation

A survey instrument developed by Chitiyo et al. (2014) was used for this study. The instrument comprised 12 five-point Likert-type questions (i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree) designed to measure six factors, four open-end questions and one question soliciting demographic information. Five of the six factors were possible causes of problem behavior (i.e., disability, school-related factors, classroom-related factors, home-related factors, and watching television), while the sixth factor measured schoolteachers' perceptions about physical punishment. The instrument was designed such that a pair of items measured one factor. For this current study, non-parametric correlations (Spearman's *r*) between each pair of variables making up the factors were computed to check the internal consistency of the factors and the results are presented in Table 1; all the correlations were statistically significant at the .01 alpha level. Through the five open-end questions, the schoolteachers were asked to identify the problem behaviors they most experienced in their schools and classrooms, describe how they, and their schools, managed the identified problem behaviors, and identify the type of special education and related services professionals working in their schools (Chitiyo et al., 2014).

Data analysis

Data from the Likert-type items were analyzed using descriptive statistics while data from the open-end questions were analyzed through thematic analysis where the responses were considered significant statements communicating something meaningful (Creswell, 1998). The fifth and sixth authors coded all the statements and codes were re-examined by the first author. Categories that emerged from patterns of similar codes were analyzed for overarching themes. The first author reviewed the original data to ensure that the themes accurately depicted the data and meaning intended by the participants.

Table 1
Inter-item Reliability

	Spearman's correlation and *p* value	Factor	Items
Pair 1	-0.226 (.001)*	Disability-related factors as cause of challenging behavior	Behavioral problems are a disciplinary problem, not a disability
			Behavioral problems in school may be a result of disability
Pair 2	0.128 (.001)*	School-related factors as cause of challenging behavior	The nature of the school environment can contribute to problem behaviors
			Children display problem behaviors at school because of lax school disciplinary policies
Pair 3	0.285 (.001)*	Classroom-related factors as cause of challenging behavior	The classroom environment can contribute to problem behavior in the classroom
			The way we (schoolteachers) teach can contribute to problem behavior in the classroom
Pair 4	0.442 (.001)*	Home-related factors as cause of challenging behavior	Most problem behaviors in school are caused by poor parenting at home
			Children display problem behaviors at school because they are not properly disciplined at home
Pair 5	0.275 (.001)*	Media (television) as cause of challenging behavior	Children learn problem behavior from the media
			Children who watch television at home display more problem behaviors in school
Pair 6	0.509 (.001)*	Physical punishment's effectiveness in managing challenging behavior	Physical punishment is an effective way of managing problem behavior
			Teachers should be allowed to use physical punishment for children who exhibit problem behavior

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

RESULTS

Almost half of the 1,056 participants ($n = 496$; 47%) were female and 417 (40%) were male; the rest did not indicate their gender. About 13% ($n = 137$) of the participants taught secondary school while 62% ($n = 650$) taught primary school; the rest did not indicate the school level they taught. Among the 886 schoolteachers who provided their ages, their ages ranged from 19 to 80 years with a mean of 32 years ($SD = 7.8$) and a mode of 30 years ($n = 85$; 8%). The schoolteachers' years of experience ranged from 0.5 to 43 years, with a mean of seven years ($SD = 6.1$) and a mode of five years (12%).

Most teachers in both Ghana and Namibia (84%; $n = 889$) either agreed or strongly agreed that challenging behavior was a disciplinary and not disability issue. Separating this by country, 89% ($n = 447$) of Ghanaian schoolteachers either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement while 80% ($n = 442$) of Namibian schoolteachers either agreed or strongly agreed. In the same vein, only a few schoolteachers from both countries (25%; $n = 264$) either agreed or strongly agreed that challenging behavior was a result of disability. By country, 23% ($n = 113$) of Ghanaian schoolteachers and 27% ($n = 151$) of Namibian schoolteachers either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. These results are presented in Figure 1.

In terms of school-related factors contributing to challenging behavior at school, most schoolteachers from both countries believed that school and classroom environmental factors influenced challenging behavior. While a clear majority of schoolteachers from both countries either agreed or strongly agreed that the three factors (i.e., the nature of the school environment, the classroom environment, and the teachers' teaching style) influenced challenging behavior, only half (51%, $n = 541$) of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the fourth item (i.e., children display challenging behavior because of lax school disciplinary policies) influenced challenging behavior.

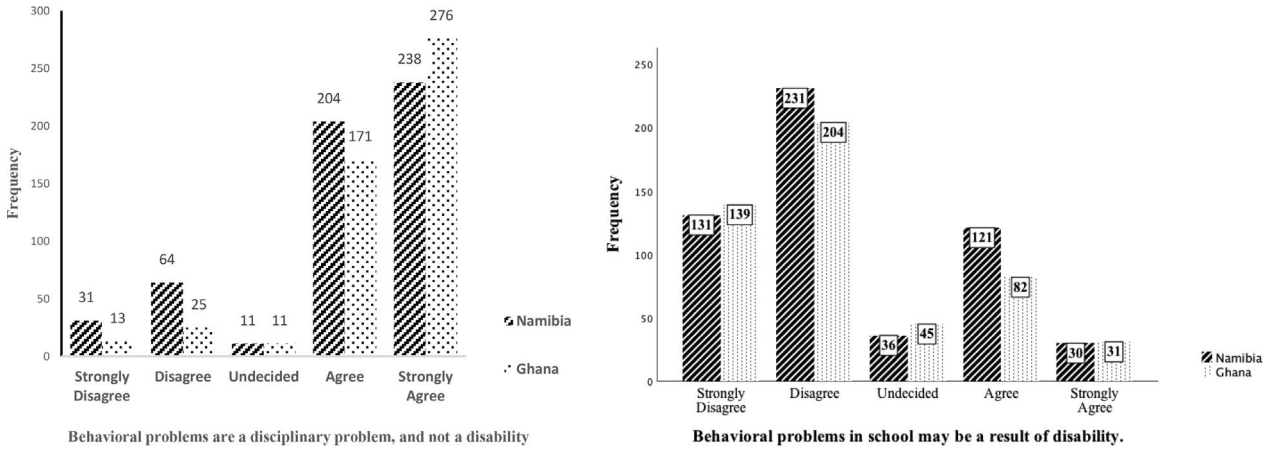

Figure 1: *Distribution of Teachers' Responses on Items Assessing Disability as A Cause of Problem Behavior*

Responses to these four items on school-related factors are presented in Table 2.

In terms of home-related factors, most of the schoolteachers from both countries (66%; $n = 694$) either agreed or strongly agreed that children displayed challenging behavior at school because they were not properly disciplined at home. Similarly, 76% ($n = 798$) of the teachers from both countries either agreed or strongly agreed that most challenging behaviors at school were a result of poor parenting at home. About 62% ($n = 653$) of the schoolteachers from both countries indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that children learned challenging behavior from the media. However, only 36% ($n = 385$) of the schoolteachers from both countries indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed that watching television contributed to students displaying more challenging behaviors at school. These results are presented in Table 2. A visual analysis of the graphs suggests that the schoolteachers from the two countries responded uniformly across each of the items.

The schoolteachers were also asked about their opinions about the use of physical punishment to manage challenging behavior in school. Overall, most of the schoolteachers from both countries either strongly disagreed or disagreed (65%; $n = 690$) that physical punishment was an effective way to manage challenging behavior. Separating this by country, 63% ($n = 318$) of Ghanaian schoolteachers and 67% ($n = 372$) of Namibian schoolteachers either strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. Similarly, a majority of schoolteachers (57%; $n = 606$) from both countries either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they should be allowed to use physical punishment in schools; by country, 58% ($n = 293$) of Ghanaian schoolteachers and 56% ($n = 313$) of Namibian schoolteachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. These results are displayed in Figure 2.

Through open-ended questions, the schoolteachers were asked to identify the main challenging behaviors that they experienced in their classrooms and schools, as well as strategies that they used to address the challenging behaviors. Results for the open-ended questions are presented in Tables 3 and 4. The most frequently identified challenging behaviors included noise-making, tardiness, stealing, off-task behavior, and violent behavior (e.g., bullying and fighting). The schoolteachers indicated that they addressed these challenging behaviors mostly via punishment (they did not specify the type), counseling, holding parent-teacher conferences, and referral to disciplinary committees. The challenging behaviors and the ways they were addressed appeared to be similar across the two countries.

Finally, the schoolteachers were asked to indicate the types of special education and related service professionals who worked in their schools. The only professionals identified across the two countries were school psychologists, school counselors, and special education teachers.

DISCUSSION

This study surveyed 1,056 Ghanaian and Namibian schoolteachers to understand their perceptions about causes and management of challenging in their schools. It is interesting that most schoolteachers in this study, both in Ghana and Namibia, believed that challenging behavior was a disciplinary issue and was not disability-related. This finding is consistent with previous findings from a Zimbabwean study by Chitiyo et al. (2014). While it is true that some challenging behavior that children exhibit at school may be a disciplinary issue and not related to disability, it is also true that challenging behavior may be a manifestation of an underlying disability. It is necessary to separate the two so that children with disabilities are not penalized for behavior that stems from disability. Instead, such students would need behavioral support plans designed to equip them with socially appropriate behavior necessary for them to be successful in both school and community environments.

Table 2
Teachers' Responses on Items Assessing School and Home Environmental Factors as Causes of Problem Behavior

			Number of Teachers (%)				
Factors	Items	Country	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
School environmental factors as a cause of problem behavior	The nature of the school environment can contribute to problem behaviors.	Ghana	16 (3)	56 (11)	14 (3)	260 (52)	154 (31)
		Namibia	16 (3)	33 (6)	9 (2)	291 (53)	202 (36)
	The classroom environment can contribute to problem behavior in the classroom.	Ghana	23 (5)	70 (14)	36 (7)	271 (54)	102 (20)
		Namibia	15 (3)	43 (8)	18 (3)	326 (59)	145 (26)
	The way we (schoolteachers) teach can contribute to problem behavior in the classroom.	Ghana	44 (9)	137 (27)	51 (10)	219 (44)	49 (10)
		Namibia	22 (4)	124 (22)	45 (8)	292 (53)	68 (12)
	Children display problem behavior at school because of lax school disciplinary policies.	Ghana	37 (7)	152 (30)	79 (16)	169 (34)	63 (13)
		Namibia	34 (6)	125 (23)	72 (13)	226 (41)	83 (15)
Home environmental factors as a cause of problem behavior	Children display problem behavior at school because they are not properly disciplined at home.	Ghana	18 (4)	95 (19)	51 (10)	216 (43)	118 (24)
		Namibia	27 (5)	130 (23)	32 (6)	258 (47)	102 (18)
	Children who watch television at home display more problem behaviors in school.	Ghana	54 (11)	244 (49)	79 (16)	98 (20)	25 (5)
		Namibia	27 (5)	202 (36)	60 (11)	175 (32)	87 (16)
	Most problem behaviors in school are caused by poor parenting at home.	Ghana	32 (6)	74 (15)	40 (8)	215 (43)	139 (28)
		Namibia	17 (3)	74 (13)	15 (3)	263 (47)	181 (33)
	Children learn problem behavior from the media.	Ghana	37 (7)	130 (26)	85 (17)	195 (39)	54 (11)
		Namibia	15 (3)	91 (16)	40 (7)	292 (53)	112 (20)

Note: Ghana (n=502); Namibia (n=554); the percentages are rounded off

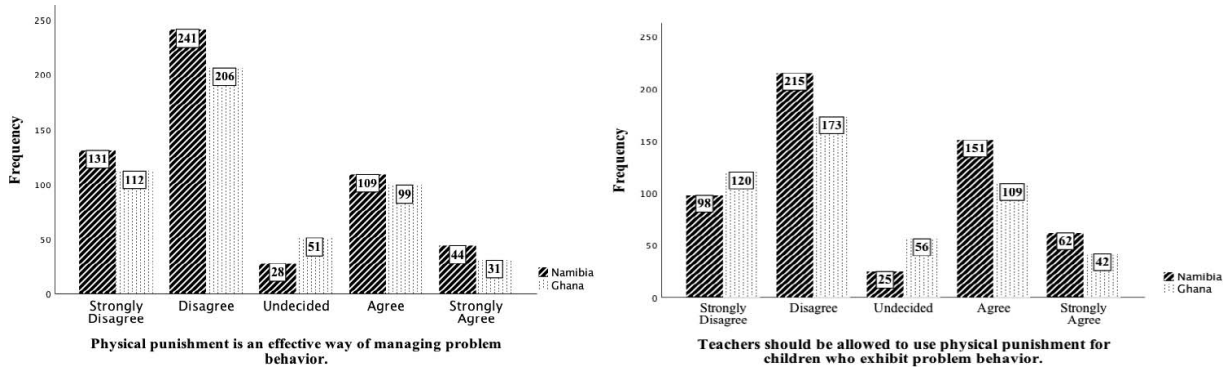

Figure 2: *Distribution of Teachers' Responses on Items Assessing Use of Physical Punishment for Managing Problem Behavior*

Table 3
Responses to Open-Ended Questions for Namibia

Open-ended item	Responses
Most frequently identified problems teachers experience in their classroom	Disruptive behaviors ($n = 120$), Noise making/Laughing ($n = 287$), Indiscipline ($n = 36$), Insulting ($n = 72$), Bullying ($n = 175$), Fighting ($n = 89$), Abusive language ($n = 72$), Lack of respect ($n = 85$), Late coming to school ($n = 135$), Absenteeism ($n = 40$), Truancy ($n = 53$), Laziness ($n = 20$), Stealing ($n = 80$), Off-task behavior/inattention ($n = 76$), Sleeping in class ($n = 43$)
Most frequently identified problems teachers experience at school	Smoking ($n = 9$), Stealing ($n = 37$), Indiscipline ($n = 20$), Disrespect ($n = 25$), Bullying ($n = 44$), Fighting ($n = 152$), Lateness ($n = 122$), Drug and alcohol abuse ($n = 25$), Sexual immorality ($n = 10$), Pregnancy ($n = 9$), Absenteeism ($n = 50$), Truancy ($n = 65$)
Most frequently identified strategies teachers used to manage children who exhibit problem behaviors	Punishment ($n = 152$), Counseling ($n = 83$), Contacting the students' parents ($n = 148$), Referral to disciplinary committee ($n = 42$), Advising the students ($n = 120$), Giving the students activities to work on ($n = 12$)
Most frequently identified strategies schools used to manage the identified problem behaviors	Punishment ($n = 164$), Counseling, advising ($n = 127$), Teacher–parent conferences ($n = 133$), Referral to disciplinary committee ($n = 43$), Suspension ($n = 25$), Educate parents ($n = 25$)

Note. Some respondents reported multiple items on some or all of the questions.

Table 4
Responses to Open-Ended Questions for Ghana

Open-ended item	Responses
Most frequently identified problems teachers experience in their classroom	Disruptive behaviors ($n = 24$), Noise making ($n = 187$), Lack of respect ($n = 78$), Bullying ($n = 104$), Fighting ($n = 115$), Abusive language ($n = 27$), Absenteeism ($n = 56$), Lateness ($n = 58$); Stealing ($n = 26$), Off-task behavior ($n = 75$)
Most frequently identified problems teachers experience at school	Bullying ($n = 109$), Insulting ($n = 43$), Fighting ($n = 115$), Stealing ($n = 34$), Smoking ($n = 11$), Abusive language ($n = 25$), Disruptive behaviors ($n = 57$), Lack of respect ($n = 98$), Absenteeism ($n = 60$), Lateness ($n = 94$), Drug and alcohol abuse ($n = 35$), Sexual immorality ($n = 14$), Pregnancy ($n = 14$)
Most frequently identified strategies teachers used to manage children who exhibit problem behaviors	Punishment ($n = 179$), Counseling ($n = 72$), Contacting the students' parents ($n = 133$), Referral to disciplinary committee ($n = 33$), Advising the students ($n = 172$), Giving the students activities to work on ($n = 27$)
Most frequently identified strategies schools used to manage the identified problem behaviors	Punishment ($n = 135$), Counseling or advising ($n = 129$), Teacher–parent conferences ($n = 232$), Referral to disciplinary committee ($n = 72$), Suspension ($n = 42$), Giving the students verbal warnings ($n = 55$), Sending the students back home ($n = 21$)

Note. Some respondents reported multiple items on some or all the questions.

Just like their counterparts in the Zimbabwe study (Chitiyo et al., 2014), most schoolteachers in this current study believed the nature of the school and classroom environments and the teachers' teaching styles could contribute to challenging behavior. This is important because it implies that the schoolteachers recognized the impact of their actions in promoting challenging behavior. It could also be interpreted as an acknowledgement by the schoolteachers that they understand the role they can play in helping to reduce challenging behavior among their students by adjusting their teaching styles and redesigning the classroom and school environments, which are the very tenets of positive behavior support interventions. Both pre-service teacher preparation and professional development programs for in-service schoolteachers should therefore prepare them to use proactive and evidence-based interventions such as positive behavior supports that focus on environmental and instructional adjustment to support socially acceptable behavior.

Positive behavior support requires a shift in perspective; schoolteachers have to quit blaming the child and focus on environmental factors that contribute to challenging behavior. Results of this study are disconcerting yet important in that they highlight the need for teacher preparation or professional development programs that will help to change some schoolteachers' perceptions so that they can embrace the philosophy of positive behavior support.

While most of the participants from both countries believed that school-related factors contributed to challenging behavior, most of the participants also believed that home-related factors such as poor parenting skills contributed to problem behavior. This is not surprising as research elsewhere shows that parenting style influences children's behavior (Hosokawa & Katsura, 2018). This finding highlights the importance of effective collaboration between schoolteachers and parents when it comes to understanding and managing challenging behavior. Having consistency between the child's two most important environments, home and school, will promote more sustainable behavioral outcomes for the child (Garbacz et al., 2018). Schoolteachers should, therefore, learn effective collaboration skills so that they can work effectively with parents in addressing the behavioral needs of their children.

It is noteworthy that most of the schoolteachers from both countries did not agree that physical punishment was an effective way to manage challenging behavior or that schoolteachers should be allowed to use it. Even though physical punishment was recently banned in both countries, it is still used in schools in both countries (UNICEF, 2018; Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018). However, research indicates that punishment is not an effective way to manage challenging behavior as it has negative effects (Abdullah & Goodman, 2008; Dupper & Montgomery Dingus, 2008) and can also often be abused (Shumba, 2001; Chitiyo et al., 2014). However, if there are no readily available alternative strategies to use, schoolteachers will default to the use of punitive strategies like corporal punishment (Elbla, 2012). Teacher preparation and professional development programs across these countries should educate schoolteachers on the use of evidence-based proactive behavior management strategies, such as positive behavior supports, as this may negate the use of corporal punishment, which most teachers do not seem to support anyway, according to results of this study.

The need to educate schoolteachers on the use of proactive behavior management strategies is further supported by the finding that schoolteachers from both countries indicated that they mostly addressed their students' challenging behavior using punishment, counseling, holding parent-teacher conferences, and referral to disciplinary committees. These strategies are reactionary and not proactive. However, research indicates that proactive or preventive approaches are more effective in addressing challenging behavior in schools than reactive and punitive strategies (Darjan & Tomita, 2014). Many of the challenging behaviors that schoolteachers in both countries identified as most prevalent seem to be minor behaviors such as being disruptive, making noise, and insulting others, which can be sustainably minimized with the effective use of positive behavior supports.

In order to eliminate the use of the less effective punitive strategies, in line with both national and international prohibition of punitive strategies such as corporal punishment (e.g., spanking, slapping or pinching), both Ghana and Namibia, among other African countries, should embrace the use of proactive and positive strategies in order to create safe and effective school environments. Gauging by the perceptions of schoolteachers and the banning of physical punishment in Ghana and Namibia, the time may be ripe for such needed change as teachers in both countries seem to embrace one of the underlying tenets of proactive and preventive behavior management practices in positive behavior supports, i.e., the child's environment can influence their behavior.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It is clear from results of this study that practitioners need to embrace the use of proactive and evidence-based interventions such as positive behavior supports to effectively address challenging behavior among their students. There is abundant literature demonstrating the efficacy of positive behavior support interventions (e.g., Bradshaw et al., 2010; Bradshaw et al, 2008). In addition, schoolteachers need to understand that some challenging behavior may be an indication of lack of skill on the part of the learner. As such, if students do not know how to behave appropriately, they need to be taught how to do so, just as we teach students

who do not know how to read or write. Finally, schoolteachers need to work more closely with parents to promote consistency and, therefore, sustainability of behavioral outcomes across the child's two most important environments, home and school. Teacher preparation programs should consider ongoing professional development focusing on how to design positive school and classroom environments, how to teach socially appropriate behavior, and how to effectively collaborate with families.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

While there is abundant literature demonstrating the efficacy of positive behavior support strategies, most of this research has been done in industrialized countries, such as the United States (Horner et al., 2009), Australia (Poed & Whitefield, 2020), and Canada (Kelm et al., 2014). To the authors' knowledge, there is no research done in Africa on the applicability of positive behavior support interventions for children who exhibit challenging behavior. As such, there is a need to investigate how these proactive strategies can be applied in African countries like Ghana and Namibia. This study, therefore, lays the groundwork for future research as it highlights current teacher perceptions and therefore the need for both pre-service teacher training and professional development on proactive behavior management. Future research should, therefore, explore how these practices can be culturally relevant to promote their adoption in African schools. Such research could help to transform behavior management in schools across Africa from being punitive to being proactive/preventive.

LIMITATIONS

This study is not without limitations. First, the sample for this study was a convenience sample; therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution, as they may not generalize across schoolteachers in the two countries. Also, given the research questions, descriptive statistics were used instead of inferential statistical techniques, which might also limit the generalizability of the findings. Notwithstanding these limitations, the results provide invaluable information, which could inform both pre-service teacher preparation and in-service teachers' professional development programs in the area of classroom and behavior management in both countries as well as across the continent.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study yielded both interesting and encouraging results. While most of the schoolteachers from both Ghana and Namibia believed that challenging behavior was a disciplinary issue and was not disability-related, most also believed that environmental factors, both home-related and school-related, influenced challenging behavior. Furthermore, most schoolteachers from both countries did not believe that physical punishment was an effective way to address challenging behavior and did not support its use in schools. These are interesting findings because despite being banned in both countries, punitive strategies (e.g., physical punishment) are still used in schools. These results are insightful for both pre-service teacher preparation and in-service professional development programs for schoolteachers in these countries because they highlight the need to educate the teachers on proactive research-based behavior management strategies, which could negate the use of punitive strategies.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, A. & Goodman, R. (2008). Harsh corporal punishment of Yemeni children: Occurrence, type and associations. *Child Abuse and Neglect: The International Journal, 32*(8), 766-773. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.01.001

Ametepee, L. K., Chitiyo, M. & Abu, S. (2009). Examining the nature and perceived causes of indiscipline in Zimbabwean secondary schools. *British Journal of Special Education, 36*(3), 155-161. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8578.2009.00428.x

Alhasan, A. B. (2013). School corporal punishment in Ghana and Nigeria as a method of discipline: A psychological examination of policy and practice. *Journal of Education and Practice, 4*(27), 137-147. https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/9890

Aunola, K., & Nurmi, J. (2005). The role of parenting styles in children's problem behavior. *Child Development, 76*(6), 1144-1159. https://doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2005.00841.x

Baer, D. M., Wolf, M. M., & Risley, T. R. (1987). Some still-current dimensions of applied behavior analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 4*(20), 313-327. https://doi.org/10.1901/jaba.1987.20-313

Barriga, A. Q., Doran, J. W., Newell, S. B., Morrison, E. M., Barbetti, V., & Robbins, B. D. (2002). Relationships between problem behaviors and academic achievement in adolescents: The unique role of attention problems. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 10*(4), 233-240. https://doi.org/10.1177/10634266020100040501

Beavers, G. A., Iwata, B. A., & Lerman, D. C. (2013). Thirty years of research on the functional analysis of problem behavior. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 46*, 1-21. https://doi: 10.1002/jaba.30.

Bibou-Nakou, I., Stogiannidou, A., & Kiosseoglou, G. (1999). The relationship between teacher burnout and teachers' attributions and practices regarding school behavior problems. *School Psychology International, 20*(2), 209-217. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034399020002004

Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). Examining the effects of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student outcomes: Results from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*(3), 133-148. https://doi:10.1177/1098300709334798

Bradshaw, C. P., Reinke, W. M., Brown, L. D., Bevans, K. B. & Leaf, P. J. (2008). Implementation of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) in elementary schools: Observations from a randomized trial. *Education and Treatment of Children, 31*(1), 1-26. https://doi.org/10.1177/0145034399020002004

Breslau, J., Miller, E., Breslau, N., Bohnert, K., Lucia, V., & Schweitzer, J. (2009). The impact of early behavior disturbances on academic achievement in high school. *Pediatrics, 123*(6), 1472-1476. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2008-1406

Chitiyo, M., Chitiyo, G., Chitiyo, J., Oyedele, V. I., Makoni, R., Fonnah, D. J., Chipangure, L. (2014). Understanding the causes and management of problem behavior in Zimbabwean schools: Teacher perceptions. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(11), 1091-1106. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2013.875068

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Sage.

Darjan, I. & Tomita, M. (2014). Proactive strategies for efficient discipline policy. *Journal of Community Positive Practices, XIV*(2), 28-36. http://www.jppc.ro/index.php/jppc/article/view/236

Dupper, D. R., & Montgomery Dingus, A. E. (2008). Corporal punishment in US public schools: A continuing challenge for school social workers. *Children and Schools, 30*(4), 243-250. https://doi.org/10.1093/cs/30.4.243

Elbla, A. I. F. (2012). Is punishment (corporal or verbal) an effective means of discipline in schools?: Case study of two basic schools in greater Khartoum/Sudan. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 69,*1656-1663. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.12.112

Erbas, D., Turan, Y., Aslan, Y. G., & Dunlap, G. (2010). Attributions for problem behavior as described by Turkish teachers of special education. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*(2), 116-125. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932508327461

Garbacz, S. A., McIntosh, K., Vatland, C. H., Minch, D. R., & Eagle, J. W. (2018). Identifying and examining school approaches to family engagement within schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 20*(3) 127–137. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300717752318

Gershoff, E. T. (2002). Corporal punishment by parents and associated child behaviors and experiences: A meta-analytic and theoretical review. *Psychological Bulletin. 128*(4), 539-579. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.128.4.539

Guglielmi, R. S., & Tatrow, K. (1998). Occupational stress, burnout, and health in teachers: a methodological and theoretical analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, *68*(1), 61-99. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543068001061

Hastings, R. P., & Bham, M. S. (2003). The relationship between student behavior patterns and teacher burnout. *School Psychology International, 24*(1), 115-127. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034303024001905

Hastings, R. P., & Brown, T. (2002). Coping strategies and the impact of challenging behaviors on special educators' burnout. *Mental retardation*, *40*(2), 148-156. https://doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765(2002)040<0148:CSATIO>2.0.CO;2

Hecker, T., Goessmann, K., Nkuba, M., & Hermenau, K. (2018). Teachers' stress intensifies violent disciplining in Tanzanian secondary schools. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 76,* 173-183. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2017.10.019

Horner, R., Sugai, G., Smolkowski, K., Eber, L., Nakasato, J., Todd, A., & Esperanza, J. (2009). A randomized, wait-list controlled effectiveness trial assessing school-wide positive behavior support in elementary schools, *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 11*(3), 133-145. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098300709332067

Hosokawa, R., & Katsura, T. (2018). Role of parenting style in children's behavioral problems through the transition from preschool to elementary school according to gender in Japan. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *16*(1), 21. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16010021

Johnson, H. L., & Fullwood, H. L. (2006). Disturbing behaviors in the secondary classroom: How do general educators perceive problem behaviors? *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 33*(1), 20-39. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A144014457/HRCA?u=anon~30e5f2a&sid=HRCA&xid=1eebf1b9

Kelm, J. L., McIntosh, K., & Cooley, S. (2014). Effects of implementing school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports on problem behavior and academic achievement in a Canadian elementary school. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 29*(3), 195-212. https://doi.org/10.1177/0829573514540266

Kremer, K. P., Flower, A., Huang, J., & Vaughn, M. G. (2016). Behavior problems and children's academic achievement: A test of growth-curve models with gender and racial differences. *Child and Youth Service Reviews,*

67, 95-104. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.06.003

Malecki, C. K., & Elliott, S. N. (2002). Children's social behaviors as predictors of academic achievement: A longitudinal analysis. *School Psychology Quarterly, 17*(1), 1-23. https://doi.org/10.1521/scpq.17.1.1.19902

Maphosa, C., & Shumba, A. (2010). Educators' disciplinary capabilities after the banning of corporal punishment in South African Schools. *South African Journal of Education, 30*(3), 387-399. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/60033

Mather, N., & Goldstein, S. (2001). *Learning disabilities and challenging behaviors: A guide to intervention and classroom management*. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Miller, S., Smith Bonahue, T. & Kemple, K. (2017). Preschool teachers' responses to challenging behavior: The role of organizational climate in referrals and expulsions. *International Research in Early Childhood Education, 8*(1), 38-57. https://doi.org/10.4225/03/5a6d259f0b6a6

Nooruddin, S. & Baig, S. (2014). Student behavior management: School leader's role in the eyes of the teachers and students. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 10*(2), 1-20. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1030577.pdf

Patrick, H., Turner, J. C., Meyer, D. K., & Midgley, C. (2005). How teachers establish psychological environments during the first days of school: Associations with avoidance in mathematics. *Teachers College Record, 105*(8), 1521-1558. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9620.00299

Poed S., & Whitefield P. (2020). Developments in the implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports in Australian schools. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *56*(1), 56-60. https://doi:10.1177/1053451220910742

Portella, M. J. O., & Pells, K. (2015). *Corporal punishment in schools: Longitudinal evidence from Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Viet Nam*. Office of Research-Innocenti: UNICEF. https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/788-corporal-punishment-in-schools-longitudinal-evidence-from-ethiopia-india-peru-and.html

Republic of Namibia, Ministry of Education Arts and Culture (2018). Assessing inclusive education in practice in Namibia challenges and opportunities in leaving no child behind. https://www.inclusive-education-in-action.org/resources/assessing-inclusive-education-practice-namibia-challenges-and-opportunities-leaving-no

Riglin, L., Petrides, K., Frederickson, N., & Rice, F. (2014). The relationship between emotional problems and subsequent school attainment: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Adolescence, 37*(4), 335-346. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2014.02.010

Shumba, A. (2001). The nature, extent and effects of emotional abuse on primary school pupils by teachers in Zimbabwe. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*(8), 783-791. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(02)00351-4

Sun, R. C. F., & Shek, D. T. L. (2012). Student classroom misbehavior: An exploratory study based on teachers' perceptions. *The Scientific World Journal*, 1–8. https://doi:10.1100/2012/208907

Terry, D. J. (2004). Investigating the relationship between parenting styles and delinquent behavior. *McNair Scholars Journal, 8*(1), 87-96. https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1042&context=mcnair

UNICEF (2018). Corporal punishment in Ghana: A position paper on the legal and policy issues. https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/1956/file/Corporal%20Punishment%20in%20Ghana.pdf

CORRESPONDENCE

Communication:
Morgan Chitiyo, Ph.D.
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
School of Education
Room 444, School of Education Building
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, NC 27403
m_chitiyo@uncg.edu