

# Influence Of Students' Attitude Towards Physical Punishment Ban On Student Discipline In Public Secondary Schools In Ugenya, Gem And Siaya Sub-Counties, Kenya

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*Abstract: The study was undertaken in Ugenya, Gem and Siaya sub-Counties within Siaya County in Kenya. This study sought to investigate the influence of students' attitude to physical punishment ban on the level of student discipline in public secondary schools in Ugenya, Gem and Siaya sub-Counties, Kenya. Descriptive research design was used to carry out the research. The target population consisted of 166 principals, 166 deputy principals, 166 guidance and counseling teachers, 950 class representatives and the Siaya County Director of Education. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents for the study. The data was analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) and the findings presented in tables and charts for ease of interpretation. The study found that students' attitude to physical punishment ban accounted for 80.6% variation in student discipline. The study concluded that student discipline was low because of partial implementation of physical punishment ban.*

*Keywords: Influence, students' attitude, physical punishment ban, student discipline, public secondary schools*

## I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Blandford (2000) cases of student indiscipline have increased in European schools after corporal punishment was outlawed. Blandford (2000) concurs with Thompson (2002) who found out that cases of student indiscipline have increased after prohibition of corporal punishment in schools. Yahiya (2009) investigated disciplinary problems among students in Malaysia. He found out that the most common offences were violence, bullying, drug abuse defiance and truancy.

Maphosa and Shumba (2010) study in South Africa revealed that the thrust of children's rights and subsequent outlawing of corporal punishment has ushered in an era of freedom for learners who no longer have respect or fear for their educators. The study also revealed that learners do not fear or respect educators because they know that nothing will happen to them.

According to Simiyu (2003) students discipline is critical in attainment of positive school outcomes. This is because *inta alia* provides a sense of direction among learners besides

increasing a teacher's job satisfaction which is a critical correlate of commitment to school goals. In spite of the crucial role that discipline plays in the overall school outcomes, the condition of student discipline in Kenya's secondary schools has been disheartening. This is because hardly a school term goes without incidence of violent behavior being reported in the mass media (Ogetange, Kimani & Kara, 2012). Teachers use different methods to manage discipline in schools. One of the methods used and the most controversial is physical punishment.

In Kenya the government enacted the Basic Education Act 2013 which prohibited physical punishment and mental harassment in schools. Section 36 of the Basic Education Act 2013 states that: (i) No pupil shall be subjected to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, in any manner, whether physical or psychological. Despite the ban teachers are still using physical punishment and mental harassment to manage student discipline in schools. Human Rights Watch (2005) and media reports indicate that caning is rampant in Kenyan schools.

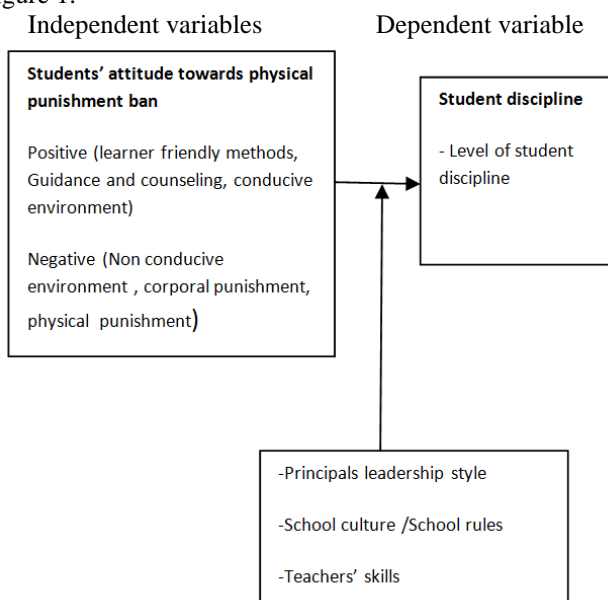
Many studies have found a strong relationship between attitude and behavior (discipline). The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and that of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) helps to explain the link between attitude and behaviour. If the attitude of students towards school rules, principals' management styles or disciplinary methods is positive, students will behave well and they will therefore not be pushed or coerced to behave well (Damien 2012). The concept discipline refers to educating someone to acquire desired behaviour. Since there is a strong relationship between attitude and discipline (desired behaviour) there was need to investigate the influence of students' attitude towards PP &MH ban on student discipline (desired behaviour).

**OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of students' attitude towards physical punishment ban on student discipline in secondary schools.

**II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The study adopted a conceptual framework based on Douglas McGregor's theory Y (Owens, 1987) as shown in Figure 1.



Source: Researcher

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) is based on the concept that when punishment is withdrawn and a conducive environment created people work. Coercion (punishment) is not needed for people to operate orderly and productively (McGregor, 1960). The study investigated the influence of students' attitude towards physical punishment ban on the level of student discipline in secondary schools. The conceptual framework postulates that students' attitude towards physical punishment ban which is the independent variable affect the level of student discipline which is the dependent variable.

**III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Attitude refers to a set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours towards a particular object, person, thing or event (Myers, 2009). Many studies have found a strong relationship between attitude and behaviour. The Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) and that of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), help to explain the link between attitude and behaviour. If the attitude of students towards school rules, principals' management styles or disciplinary methods is positive, students will behave well and they will therefore not be pushed or coerced to behave well (Damien 2012).

The concept discipline refers to educating someone to acquire desired behaviour (Cotton, 2005). Since there is a strong relationship between attitude and discipline (desired behaviour) there was need to investigate the relationship between students attitude towards PP &MH ban and student discipline. Furthermore studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between stakeholders' attitude towards a policy and the implementation of the policy. For example Lui and Forlin (2015) found out that there is a relation between education stakeholders' attitude towards an education policy and the implementation of the policy. PP & MH ban is an education policy which should be implemented in schools and students are key stake-holders in education. Therefore there was need to investigate the relationship between implementation of PP and MH ban, attitude of students to PP &MH ban, and the level of student discipline in schools.

In an American poll conducted by ABC news titled "Support for Spanking" it was found that "sixty-five percent of Americans approve of spanking", although only "26 percent say that grade-school teachers should be allowed to spank kids at school" (Mc Donald, 1999). According to Thompson (2002) southern residents of the USA, have favourable attitudes towards corporal punishment and 81.1% support its use. This is reflective of southern educators being the strongest proponents of corporal punishment in schools (Blandford, 2000). However, McDonald (1999) reminds us that public schools reflect the problems and changes in the society at large. Schools are serving larger groups of students than ever before. Students are coming from diverse backgrounds with all kinds of problems. According to Hornsby (2003), there are conflicting studies about which teachers are more likely to use paddling. It appears that as students get older, teachers administer less corporal punishment possibly as a result of being afraid of retaliation (Hornsby, 2003).

In Australia, corporal punishment was banned in schools in 1999. However most teachers still support the use of corporal punishment and this view has not changed much since corporal punishment was first banned in schools. Research conducted in Australia found that most teachers view the use of corporal punishment as necessary and many would like to use the cane as a last resort (Brister, 1999).

Sogoni (2001) carried out a research study on attitudes of students, parents, and teachers towards the use of corporal punishment in senior secondary schools in South Africa. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. The sample consisted of 360 students, 175 parents, and 60 teachers. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and

inferential statistics.. The results of the study suggested support for the view that corporal punishment should be retained as it is believed to instill good discipline which produces good results: provided there is proper supervision, which was lacking with the past education department. The study recommends that, now that corporal punishment in schools has been banned, there should be an in-built mechanism in schools to monitor caning to protect children from victimization. Rigorous in-service training and work shopping to empower teachers with alternative management skills which could render corporal punishment unnecessary should be conducted.

Mbindyo (2006) investigated discipline management and control as perceived by students in Machakos District. The study was carried out in selected public secondary schools in Kalama Division of Machakos District. The number of schools used was seven plus three, which were used for piloting. The target population was 335 students. Questionnaires were used as the sole instrument for collection of information required for the study. From the findings of the study it was established that the students' perception of methods used in the management and control of discipline in school was negative. The study recommended that there is an urgent need to try to change the students' perception of discipline if the schools are to be secure for both the students and their teachers.

Kiptela (2011) carried out a study to investigate students' perception of discipline and Authority in Taita Taveta County, Kenya. They found that students in Taita-Taveta District have a very strong negative attitude towards discipline and authority. These findings therefore, indicate that students do have attitudes that mediate all the activities undertaken at school hence influencing student behavior. It can also be concluded that the perception of students towards discipline and authority is a function of the various disciplinary approaches adopted by the educational managers, especially the head teacher, deputies, teachers and prefects in relation to discipline plus lack of accompanying rationale, guidance and counseling. They recommended that this negative attitude towards disciplinarians needs to be changed for the secondary schools to achieve their overall goals and objectives.

Simiyu (2003) carried out a study on attitudes of teachers and pupils towards use of corporal punishment in Nakuru municipality primary schools. The study employed a survey research design. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The study sample consisted of 72 teachers and 160 pupils. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse data using SPSS software package. The study found out that corporal punishment was still being practiced in some schools. According to the study, teachers and pupils justified the use of corporal punishment under the belief that it had merit. According to the study, corporal punishment is effective in controlling discipline in schools. The study concluded that teachers and pupils had a positive attitude towards corporal punishment and they felt that corporal punishment is a catalyst for good academic performance and the most effective deterrent for bad behavior, laziness, and a corrective measure.

The finding of this study indicates that there is a relationship between the attitude of learners towards physical punishment and the level of student discipline. Teachers used physical punishment to control discipline because the students

had a positive attitude towards physical punishment. Otherwise the students would rebel against it like the case of strikes witnessed in 1990's (Ajowi, 2005).

In a related study, Ogetange et al (2012) carried out a research study on teachers and pupils' views on persistent use of corporal punishment in managing discipline in primary schools in Starehe Division. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Simple random sampling was used to select 60 teachers and 300 pupils in primary schools in Starehe Division. Instruments of data collection were questionnaires and interviews. Data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study found out that corporal punishment was a regular school experience for the pupils. Both teachers and pupils perceived corporal punishment as part of school ethos and culture. The positive attitude towards corporal punishment has contributed to its persistent use in schools for discipline management. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education should train teachers on alternative strategies to deal with disciplinary problems other than the use of corporal punishment.

The reviewed studies investigated the attitude of teachers and students towards corporal punishment ban in schools but not the influence of students' attitude towards physical punishment ban on student discipline. This is the gap the current study intended to fill.

#### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey and correlational research designs. The study population was 1429 respondents. That is, 168 principals, 168 deputy principals, 168 guidance and counseling teachers, 924 class representatives and the Siaya County Director of Education. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 116 principals, 116 deputy principals, 116 guidance and counseling teachers and 274 class representatives. Saturation sampling was used to select the County Director of Education. The instruments of data collection were questionnaires, observation guide, interview schedule and document analysis guide. The content validity of the questionnaires, document analysis guide and interview schedule were addressed by research experts and their comments and suggestions were incorporated in the instruments. To enhance reliability, piloting was done in nine schools. Test-retest method was used to estimate the reliability of the instruments. Quantitative data on students' attitude towards physical punishment ban and level of student discipline collected by use of questionnaires and document analysis guide was analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and means. Regression analysis was used to establish the influence of students' attitude towards physical punishment ban and level of student discipline. Qualitative data collected by use of the in-depth interview, observation guide and focus group discussion was transcribed and arranged into themes as they emerged from the data.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A. LEVEL OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The level of student discipline was rated by Deputy Principals, Guidance and Counseling (G&C) teachers and class secretaries by responding to questionnaire items. The respondents were asked to rate discipline in schools by rating frequency of various infractions in schools. High frequency of the infractions indicated low discipline level. That is: 1-Very Low (more than 11 cases experienced per term), 2- Low (9-11 cases experienced per term), 3-Moderate (6-8 cases experienced per term), 4-High (3-5 cases experienced per term), 5-Very High (0-2 cases experienced per term). The level of student discipline was measured using infractions experienced in schools whereby the respondents rated students discipline in relation to the infractions on a 5- point rating scale. The indicators of discipline were offences like truancy, noise making and lateness. The assumption was that these are the common offences in schools (Yahaya, 2009). Table 4.6 shows respondents rating of discipline.

Indicators of discipline	OMR	ANOVA
Vandalism	2.38	(F(2,501)=0.365,p=0.694)
Noise making	2.14	(F(2,501)=0.056,p=0.945)
Lateness	2.56	(F(2,501)=0.070,p=0.933)
Not doing homework	2.51	(F(2,501)=0.333,p=0.717)
Sleeping in class	2.32	(F(2,501)=0.117,p=0.890)
Not putting on school uniform	2.36	(F(2,501)=4.069,p=0.018)
Vulgar Language	2.57	(F(2,501)=0.524,p=0.593)
Vernacular speaking	2.70	(F(2,501)=0.591,p=0.554)
Deviant behaviour	2.43	(F(2,501)=0.099,p=0.905)
Sneaking	2.26	(F(2,501)=0.368,p=0.692)
Boy-girl carnal knowledge	2.56	(F(2,501)=0.562,p=0.571)
Fighting in school	2.85	(F(2,501)=0.320,p=0.726)
Delinquency	2.37	(F(2,501)=0.120,p=0.887)
Cheating in examinations	2.03	(F(2,501)=0.064,p=0.938)
Drug abuse	2.41	(F(2,501)=0.660,p=0.517)
Bullying School mates	2.54	(F(2,501)=0.002,p=0.998)
Theft in school	2.48	(F(2,501)=1.019,p=0.362)

Disobedience to teachers	2.29	(F(2,501)=0.014,p=0.986)
Truancy	2.10	(F(2,501)=0.213,p=0.808)
Defiance (co-Curricular activities)	2.25	(F(2,501)=0.475,p=0.622)
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.41</b>	<b>(F(2,501)=0.003,p=0.997)</b>

Source: Field Data, 2016

Key: OMR=overall mean rate

Table 4.6: Level of Student Discipline as Rated by Deputy Principals, Guidance and Counseling Teachers and Class Representatives (D/P: n=116, G&C: n=116 and C/R: n=272)

The highest overall mean rates were 2.85 (moderate) for fighting and 2.70 (moderate) for mother tongue speaking. On the other hand the lowest overall mean rates were 2.03 (low) for cheating in examinations and 2.10 (low) for truancy. These results show that the most frequent offences are cheating in examinations and truancy which indicate low discipline. The least frequent offences are fighting and mother tongue speaking which indicate moderate discipline. Hence the level of student discipline in relation to fighting and vernacular speaking was moderate as the overall means were 2.85 and 2.70 respectively.

The overall mean rate for all the infractions was 2.41 which indicated that deputy principals, G&C teachers and class secretaries generally rated the level of student discipline as low. The level of student discipline in relation to all the infractions was low. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was carried out to find out any difference between the means of the three categories of respondents for the overall discipline level based on all the offences. Table 4.4 shows that the differences between the means are statistically not significant: (F (2,501) = 0.003, p = 0.997). Hence the three categories of raters were in agreement.

The study established that in Ugenya, Gem and Siaya Sub-Counties student level of discipline was low as signified by the mean rating of 2.41. This is because there were many cases of truancy with a mean rating of 2.10, defiance to co-curricular activity with a mean rating of 2.25, disobedience to teachers (MR=2.29), sneaking (MR=2.26), cheating in examinations (MR=2.03), delinquency(MR=2.37) and drug abuse (M=2.41). The other indicators that had fewer cases were: theft in school (MR=2.48), bullying (MR=2.54), Boy-girl carnal knowledge (MR=2.56) and fighting in school (MR=2.85).

B. STUDENTS ATTITUDE TO PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT BAN

Students are the ones affected by discipline policies. They are supposed to abide by the school rules. Hence it was important to establish the attitude of students towards physical punishment ban. Class representatives were therefore asked to rate their attitude towards physical punishment (PP) ban by indicating the favorableness of statements on PP ban using the rating scale: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree,



5-Strongly Disagree, for negatively stated statements. For positively stated statements, the rating scale was: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly Agree. Table 4.7 shows class representatives rating of attitude towards physical punishment ban in schools.

Statement	Attitude					
	SA	A	N	D	SD	MR
<b>PP ban has made students to:</b>						
Behave well	27	54	14	41	136	2.25
Not to do homework	131	49	22	54	16	2.17
Come early to school	22	49	11	49	141	2.13
Go against school rules	27	41	27	41	136	3.80
Respect teachers	49	44	5	54	120	2.44
Commit major offences	27	49	27	55	114	3.67
Be obedient	27	54	14	41	136	1.98
Be rude	135	41	22	44	30	2.23
Be non violent	60	49	11	49	103	2.68
Commit minor offences	114	49	14	73	22	2.41
Not to be truants	14	54	14	49	141	2.08
Be bullied	130	44	22	43	33	2.28
<b>Overall attitude</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>2.53</b>

Source: Field Data, 2016

Key: MR-mean rates, PP-physical punishment, SA=strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=strongly Disagree, N=neutral

Table 4.7: Students' Attitude towards Physical Punishment Ban (n=272)

The overall mean rate for all the statements was 2.53 which is neutral on the rating scale. Therefore the study established that in Ugenya, Gem and Siaya Sub-Counties students have a neutral attitude towards physical punishment ban as signified by the overall mean rating of 2.53. A neutral attitude means that it is neither positive nor negative attitude. The subject is indifferent to the statement. This finding seems to contradict Damien (2012) who found that pupils had a negative attitude towards corporal punishment. This could be because Damien (2012) targeted primary pupils while the current study targeted secondary school students who are more mature (adolescents) and can reason better and know their rights (Butler, 2008).

The hypothesis that was used to establish the influence of students' attitude to physical punishment ban on student discipline was: "Students attitude to physical punishment ban has no significant influence on the level of student discipline in secondary schools." To determine the influence of students attitude towards physical punishment ban on students discipline, inferential statistics were used. First, relationship between students' attitude to physical punishment ban and level of students discipline was established before determining influence of students' attitude towards physical punishment ban on students' discipline. Pearson's r correlation coefficient was computed in order to establish if there was a relationship between students' attitude to physical punishment ban and

level of students discipline before determining influence. The results were as shown in Table 4.8.

		Level of student discipline
students attitude to physical punishment ban	Pearson Correlation	.898**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	272

Table 4.8: Correlation analysis of the influence of Students Attitude towards Physical Punishment Ban and the Level of Student Discipline

Correlation coefficient between students' attitude towards physical punishment ban and the level of student discipline as noted in Table 4.8 was 0.898. This indicates that there was a high relationship between students' attitude towards physical punishment ban and the level of student discipline. For instance an increase in the attitude of students towards PP ban will result in an increase in student discipline. The relationship was significant (r=0.898, N=272, p<0.05).

To illustrate the relationship between attitude to physical punishment ban and the level of student discipline a scatter plot was generated (Figure 4.1).

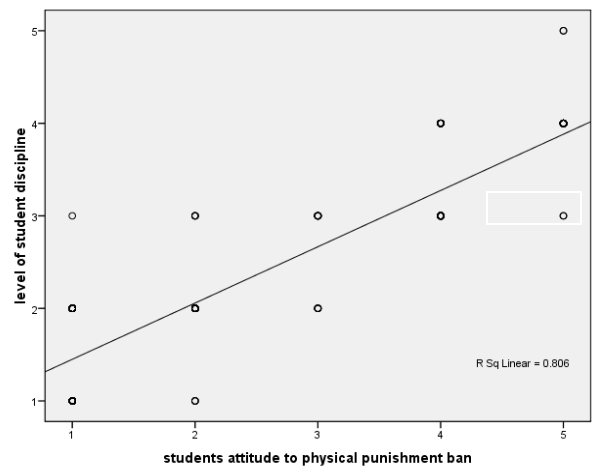


Figure 4.1: Relationship between students attitude to physical Punishment ban and student discipline

The scatter plot of the relationship between teachers and students attitude towards physical punishment ban and the level of student discipline suggested a linear positive relationship between the two variables. It is possible to predict accurately a school's level of students discipline from students' attitude towards physical punishment ban. Figure 4.1 indicates that as students attitude towards physical punishment ban increases (becomes more positive) the level of students discipline increases.

To estimate the influence of students' attitude towards physical punishment ban on level of student discipline, coefficient of determination was computed. The results were as shown in Table 4.9.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.898 <sup>a</sup>	.806	.805	.489

a. Predictors: (Constant), students attitude to physical punishment ban

Table 4.9: Regression analysis of the influence of Students Attitude towards Physical Punishment Ban and the Level of Student Discipline

From Table 4.9 it can be revealed that the attitude towards physical punishment ban accounted for 80.6% of students' level of discipline as signified by the coefficient of 0.806. This means 19.4% was due to other factors.

To establish whether student attitude towards physical punishment ban was a significant predictor of the level of student discipline ANOVA was computed. The results were as shown in Table 4.10.

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1					
Regression	268.388	1	268.388	1.123	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	64.520	270	.239		
Total	332.908	271			

a. Predictors: (Constant), students attitude to physical punishment ban

b. Dependent Variable : Level of student discipline

Table 4.10: ANOVA results for students' attitude to PP ban and student discipline

ANOVA test shows that the results are statistically significant: (F (1, 270) = 1.123, p=0.000). The calculated p-value is less than the critical p-value of 0.05. Therefore students' attitude towards physical punishment ban is a significant predictor of students' discipline.

To establish the actual influence of students' attitude to physical punishment ban on the level of student discipline linear regression was computed. The results were as shown in Table 4.11.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	.790	.056		14.030	.000	.679	.901
students attitude to physical punishment ban	.630	.019	.898	33.513	.000	.593	.667

a. Dependent Variable: level of student discipline

Table 4.11: Linear Regression analysis of Students Attitude towards Physical Punishment Ban and the Level of Student Discipline

From Table 4.11 it can be noted that one unit increase in students' attitude towards physical punishment ban will lead to 0.630 units of increase in levels of student discipline as signified by the coefficient 0.630. The equation for the regression line is  $Y = 0.790 + .630X$  where X is the attitude towards physical punishment ban and Y is the level of discipline (Fig 4.1). The equation indicates that as the attitude towards physical punishment ban becomes more positive the level of discipline also increases.

Simiyu (2003) carried out a study on attitudes of teachers and pupils towards use of corporal punishment in Nakuru municipality primary schools. The study found out that corporal punishment was still being practiced in some schools. According to the study, teachers and pupils justified the use of corporal punishment under the belief that it had merit.

Students had a positive attitude to physical punishment since they believed it had merit. Teachers therefore used physical punishment (caning) to manage student discipline. The study concluded that physical punishment was effective in controlling discipline in schools. Simiyu (2003) study shows that pupils in Nakuru Municipality primary schools had a positive attitude towards physical punishment and hence teachers successfully used this method to control student discipline. This explains the persistence use of physical punishment in primary schools in Nakuru Municipality. Simiyu (2003) study supports the current study in that pupils had a positive attitude towards physical punishment and teachers therefore used this method to effectively manage student discipline. Simiyu (2003) study concluded that physical punishment is effective in controlling discipline in schools.

Ogetange et al (2012) carried out a research study on teachers and pupils' views on persistent use of corporal punishment in managing discipline in primary schools in Starehe Division. The study found out that physical punishment was a regular school experience for the pupils. The study found out that pupils perceived physical punishment as part of school ethos and culture. Hence its persistent use in schools for discipline management. Since pupils had a positive attitude towards physical punishment, teachers used it to manage student discipline. Ogetange et al (2012) study seems to contradict the findings of this study. This can be explained by the fact that Ogetange et al (2012) study focused on primary school pupils who are too young to reason. The current study focused on secondary school students (adolescents) who are aware of their rights (Butler, 2008).

The Wangai report revealed that student violence and strikes of the 1990's was as a result of students rebelling against inhuman discipline management methods (R.O.K., 2001). Students had a negative attitude towards these methods and the use of these methods by teachers resulted in more indiscipline. The findings of the Wangai report are therefore in line with the current study.

The cited studies only related the use of corporal punishment in schools to student discipline but did not establish the relationship between students' attitude towards physical punishment ban in schools and student discipline. The current study did establish that the influence of students' attitude towards physical punishment ban on the level of student discipline was strong in schools in Ugenya, Gem and Siaya Sub-counties.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study established that the attitude towards physical punishment ban accounted for 80.6% of variance in student discipline. The study revealed that students attitude towards physical punishment ban was a significant predictor of student discipline. The study also established that one unit increase in student's attitude towards physical punishment ban will lead to 0.630 units of increase in student discipline.

## VII. RECOMMENDATION

Teachers should enlighten students on physical punishment ban and effects of physical punishment on learners. This will make students to have a positive attitude towards physical punishment ban with subsequent increase in student discipline.

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