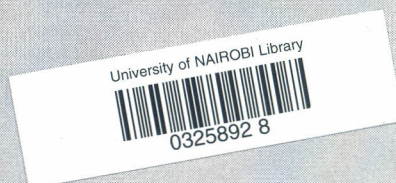


**TITLE:**  
**COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD  
DISCIPLINE AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO  
CHILD ABUSE**

**A THESIS PRESENTED IN PART FULFILMENT  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MEDICINE  
(PAEDIATRICS)  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**BY**

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**NOVEMBER 1998**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this paper is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other University.

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## DEDICATION

To my Father - Japuonj Chrispo Adalla Oronje

And

To my Husband - Mr. John Odhiambo Mudany

For their continuous support, encouragement and prayers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful:-

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. CBHW - Community based Health worker
2. FGD - Focus Group Discussions
3. KNH - Kenyatta National Hospital
4. KMWA - Kenya Medical Women's Association
5. EAMJ - East African Medical Journal

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

AYAH - One who is employed to take care of another person's children and home while such a person is at work or needs such assistance.

DISCIPLINE - The means by which parents educate and control their children's behaviour as part of training and socializing process, using a set of attitudes, behaviours, instructions and consequences.

### ABUSIVE DISCIPLINARY MEASURES (in this study)

- Any methods used to correct a child which lead to bodily harm or starvation, or have the potential of causing bodily harm evidenced by bruises, swelling, bleeding, fractures etc.

NON-ABUSIVE DISCIPLINARY METHOD - A method used to correct a child but which does not cause injury evidenced by bruises, bleeding.

CANING - A technique of discipline using a stick to inflict pain on the child who has done what is considered wrong-doing. In this study caning is only referred to as abusive if it is applied enough to cause injury evidenced by bruises, bleeding, fractures, fainting or other grievous injury.

# ABSTRACT

A community based cross-sectional study was carried out in a peri-urban slum of Nairobi called Kibera, between August 1997 and November 1997 using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The study involved direct interview of parents, focus group discussions and key person interviews. In the household survey, parents of children 18 years and below were interviewed using a semistructured questionnaire. Key informants were selected from school teachers, chiefs, child counsellors and health care personnel working within the study area. A total of 538 persons were interviewed in the household survey from three ethnic groups: Luo, Luhya and Nubi. Information obtained was subjected to statistical analysis.

The objective was to determine the community perceptions of child discipline and its contribution to child abuse.

The specific objectives included to determine: the perception of parents regarding child discipline; the modes of discipline used and the circumstances in which they are administered; what parents and community members perceive as excessive discipline i.e. child abuse and the perception of key informants regarding child discipline and child abuse.

The results obtained were as follows: regarding perceived meaning of child discipline, 376 out of 538 (70%) understood this to mean showing love and praising child for good deeds but punishing child for wrong-doing. One hundred



and eight (20%) of the study population understood discipline to mean beating of a child whenever he does wrong; ninety (16.7%) believed children should be punished for major wrong doing while 18 (3.3%) were of the opinion that children should be left on their own. The purpose of discipline according to the study population was to correct and train a child to have good behaviour with the hope that they grow into responsible adults 395 (73%); to punish a child and make him suffer to the maximum 46 (8.6%) and to make sure the child knows who is in charge 16 (3%). The most commonly used techniques of disciplining children were: caning 484 (90%), verbal reprimand 448 (83%), pinching 215 (40%), slapping 179 (33%) and denying food 104 (19%). Sixty seven (12%) of the study population confessed having used obviously abusive methods of disciplining which included: 'punching', kicking, biting, beating with nearest object, burning, cutting with razor and chasing child away from home. Two hundred and ninety six (55%) of the study population reported that their neighbours used obvious abusive disciplinary measures. Burning as a disciplinary measure was mainly used on a child who had stolen. Denial of food was commonly used on children who refused to do what was required of them. Amount and type of punishment given in most cases depended on seriousness of offence 336 (62%), frequency of offence 151 (28%), age of child 115 (21%), sex of child 28 (5%) mood of the parent 24 (4%) and time of the day 10 (1.9%). What the study population identified as excessive discipline or child abuse included any disciplinary methods used which causes: fainting 348 (64%), death 345 (63%), bleeding 300 (55%), fractures 227 (42%), swelling 196 (36%), child running away from home 192 (35%) and bruising 179 (33%). Both parents,

community and key informants clearly identified forms of discipline that could be considered abusive.

The conclusions were:

1. Community perception of child discipline is inappropriate in about 20% of the study population who understood child discipline to mean beating a child whenever he/she does wrong.
2. The commonest mode of discipline used was caning. Prevalence of abusive forms of discipline in the study community was high: 12.6% (self-reported) and 55% (reported by neighbours).
3. Both parents and key community informants were clearly able to identify forms of discipline that could be considered abusive.

The recommendations made were that appropriate intervention should be made using the results of this study as a basis: to include health education for parents/guardians; a similar study on children as the recipients of discipline and other similar studies in both urban and rural set ups should be done to find out community perceptions of discipline.

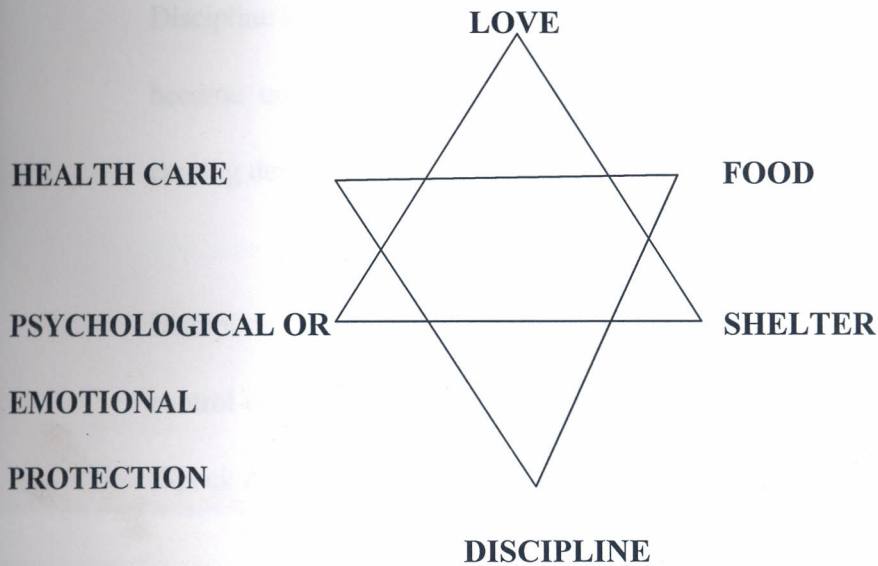
# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### NEEDS OF A CHILD

The needs of a growing child are food, shelter and clothing which are physical needs. The other needs include psychological or emotional protection, discipline and love among others. Quite often parents concentrate more on the physical and less on the emotional needs of child.

Figure 1



These needs are inter-related and denial of any of them leads to a maladjusted child. Training and disciplining a child are essential in equipping a child to live and fit into the community and family. Too much or too little is detrimental to a child's health.

In this dissertation, we examine parents and guardians' knowledge, attitude and practice of applying discipline.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Discipline is the means by which parents educate and control their children's behaviour as part of training and socializing process. It consists of a complex set of attitudes, behaviour, instructions and consequences that foster internalisation of appropriate ideals, values and behaviour. (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992).

Discipline is a necessary element in child upbringing, without which children can become uncontrollable and may turn into juvenile delinquents or runaways, causing depression both to themselves and their parents. (Dobson, 1988)

Discipline entails appropriate use of techniques to maintain a loving but firm control on the child without causing him or her psychological or physical harm. (Spock & Rothenberg, 1992).

Discipline and love are not antithetical, (Spock, 1992). The complete absence of love will destroy a child emotionally and even physically. It has been known for decades that an infant who is not loved, touched and caressed will often die (Dobson 1988). Evidence of this fact was observed as early as the thirteenth

century, when Fredrick II conducted an experiment with fifty infants. He wanted to see what language the children would speak if they never had the opportunity to hear the spoken word. To accomplish this dubious research project, he assigned foster mothers to bathe and suckle the children, but forbade them to fondle, pet or talk to the children. The experiment failed because all fifty infants died (Dobson, 1988). Hundreds of more recent studies indicate that the mother-child relationship during the first year of life is vital to the infants' survival. The middle ground of love and control must be sought if we are to produce healthy responsible children.

Discipline should be administered shortly after the disordered behaviour but not at the peak of anger in order to avoid excesses of punishment which could possibly cause injury. The children should be told what the disordered and unexpected behaviour is, and be punished if they defy and do what they clearly know as wrong. Consistency and predictability are the keys to effective discipline (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992; Dobson, 1988). The type of disciplinary measure and the amount of punishment meted out should be appropriate to the transgression and to the age of the child. Children respond best if discipline occurs in the context of a warm, affectionate accepting relationship. Short withdrawal of approvals, verbal reprimands, and brief periods outside the house are effective disciplinary measures for toddlers. Clear simple reasons for consequences should be given (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992). For the older child, physical punishment given when necessary, appropriate to the transgression and age of child well alternated with positive reinforcement helps. On the other

hand, teenagers desperately want to be thought of as adults. They deeply resent being treated like children. Spanking is the ultimate insult. Punishment for adolescents should involve lost privileges, financial deprivation and related forms of non physical retribution (Dobson, 1988).

A number of psychologists have studied child discipline. Sears et al (1957) suggested two categories of discipline - negative and positive sanctions. Positive sanctions consist of such discipline techniques as rewards and praise used by parent in order to reinforce acceptable behaviour. Negative sanctions consist of physical punishments, withdrawal of love, isolation and threats to administer any of these techniques. Parents use negative sanctions in order to curb the occurrence of undesirable behaviour in their children.

The categorisation of discipline was further defined by Becker (1964) who suggested a division into the love - oriented and the power - assertive discipline technique. The love - oriented discipline techniques include both negative and positive methods which threaten the love - relationship that normally exists between parents and the child. These threats may be in the form of either parents showing disappointment when the child misbehaves or even withdrawing love or threatening to do so because of the child's misconduct. The positive methods of discipline often include use of praise and reasoning with the child. The power assertive techniques often include physical punishment - yelling, shouting, forceful command and verbal threats. This categorisation of discipline has continued to be refined and different classifications of discipline can be

summarised (See Figure 1 Appendix V) while maintaining the principles proposed in earlier classifications (Sears et al, 1957; Becker, 1964). The current concept of discipline is to classify the same into positive and negative reinforcement which is divided into physical and non-physical punishment. Excesses of physical punishment result into child abuse while excesses of non-physical abuse result into psychological abuse. (Dobson, 1988; Krugman and Schmitt, 1992).

There is extensive literature on how positive reinforcement and punishment reinforces the child's behaviour. The earlier experiment by Pavlov demonstrated that re-inforcing a desired behaviour in dogs was achieved by giving a timely reward. The basic principles of the concept we developed is that learning is facilitated by reinforcement by both positive feed back or by punishment (negative feed back). Demonstrated approval of desired behaviour works to reinforce that behaviour. With active efforts to show approval negative reinforcement may be increasingly unnecessary. (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992; Griffin, 1994 Marilyn, 1990). Whether a parent chooses to punish once in a while or never at all depends a lot on how the parent was brought up. If they were punished occasionally for a good cause, they are likely to do the same to their children. If they were kept in line with positive guidance alone, they are apt to do the same with their children. (Spock, 1992).

The most magnificent theory ever devised for control of behaviour is: "The Law of Reinforcement" by the first educational psychologist, E. L. Thorndike. Stated

simply it reads "Behaviour which achieves desirable consequences will recur". If a child likes what happens as a result of his behaviour, he will be inclined to repeat that act. The main element of this technique is that a reward should be granted shortly after the desired behaviour. This is positive reinforcement which has proved extremely effective and powerful in obtaining desired result (Dobson, 1988; Krugman and Schmitt, 1992).

For instance a chart of responsibilities and desired behaviour as described by Dobson in 1988 may be drawn to teach children between 4 - 6 years to be responsible (appendix 1). A child may be rewarded with a penny for every correctly carried out task. The child can then be encouraged to save his money and plan a budget before spending it and thus teaching responsibility to self and to ones resources.

Through this he achieves a high sense of responsibility, learns how to count, learns to give to worthy causes, learns to control his emotions, begins to understand the concept of saving, learns the meaning of working for money and how to spend it wisely (Dobson, 1988).

Desired behaviour can be reinforced by use of punishment. Punishment is a popular method of instilling discipline which can be either physical causing pain or non-physical e.g. emotional deprivation or verbal threat. Punishment is never the main element in discipline, it is only a vigorous additional reminder that parents feel strongly about what they say. One does not sit by watching a small



child destroy something and then punish him afterward. One comes to punishment once in a while when his/her system of firmness breaks down and he/she loses control. The best test for punishment is whether it accomplishes what it's intended to achieve without causing other serious effects (Dobson, 1988). The job of the parent is to keep the child from getting into trouble rather than act as a severe judge after it has happened. (Spock, 1992).

The type of negative reinforcement that parents employ as discipline depends on their family values, social norms and religious and cultural beliefs e.g. corporal punishment, verbal reprimands, ignoring certain behaviours and temporary withdrawal of approval or attention. The shorter the delay between the transgression and consequence, the greater the chance of preventing recurrence. (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992; Dobson, 1988).

## **STUDIES ON PUNISHMENT**

Most parents are able to discipline and apply reinforcement without harming their children. Excesses of negative reinforcement can have disastrous psychological and physical consequences on the child.

The "Scapegoat" hypothesis derived from both psychoanalytic and social learning theories (Allport, 1954; Young, 1957) states that severe punishment for aggression may increase rather than inhibit the instigation to aggress. Since the child has learnt to anticipate punishment for aggression, hostile impulses will be

displaced from the original source of frustration to members of outgroups. Consequently children who are often harshly treated, severely punished and often criticised are more aggressive and more prejudiced than those who are treated otherwise (Allport, 1965; Young 1957). In a study carried out on rural adolescents in Kikuyu, Kenya in 1974, it was found that there is a relationship between parental punitiveness for aggression and children's prejudice and aggression (Guchu 1974). In this study the discipline technique used most frequently was "beating" and the father was found to beat more frequently than the mother and boys were beaten more frequently than girls (Guchu 1974).

Baruch (1949) noted that the way a child is disciplined is very important and throughout his life a child carries with him the influences of parental discipline. The question therefore is not whether a child should be disciplined but rather what the best possible methods of parental discipline are.

## **A REVIEW ON THE DIFFERENT CULTURAL PRACTICES ON DISCIPLINARY MEASURES**

Parental discipline differs widely cross-culturally (Fischer, 1966). While for example the New Englanders in U.S.A do not expect prompt obedience from their children, the Nyansongo who are a Gusii community in Kenya expect prompt obedience (Levine, 1966). Parents in U.S.A (Fischer, 1966) use less physical punishments than do parents in Taira (Maretski, 1966).

In African societies, good manners, obedience and respect for all, especially elders, are considered valuable qualities in a growing child. Ammar (1962) studied the whole process of a child's growing up among the Egyptians and the role played by parental discipline in the acquisition of the necessary traits which enable children to conform to societal norms. Discipline, Ammar emphasises, is so important among the Egyptians that the greatest insult to an Egyptian youth is to tell him/her that he/she is undisciplined (Ammar 1962). Ammar emphasised the importance of parental discipline much more than other authors who have written on child-rearing in African setting. (Cagnolo, 1933; Kenyatta 1938; Raum 1940; Ominde 1948; Maleche 1953; Kaye, 1962; Levine 1966; Lijembe 1967; Apoko 1967; Nzioki 1967). They however, with exception of Cagnolo (1933) pointed out that various forms of parental discipline techniques were used in order to make children and youth behave appropriately and consequently conform to societal norms.

From African literature whipping is the most common form of physical punishment and physical punishment is more commonly used than psychological discipline. For example, Ominde notes that "When they (the Luo girls) are disobedient the normal disciplinary action is whipping" (Ominde, 1948). Discipline in African culture, like in Western culture, can be classified into positive and negative re-enforcement.

<b>FORMS OF PHYSICAL PUNISHMENTS USED AND DOCUMENTED IN AFRICAN LITERATURE</b>
--

- |   |
|---|
| • spanking  |
| • lashing   |
| • whipping  |
| • beating   |
| • pinching  |
| • applying pepper or ginger on the eyes or genitals of the disobedient child among Ghanaians (KAYE, 1962)   |
| • tying the disobedient child to a tree with a rope (Raum, 1940 Levine, 1966)   |
| • suspending the disobedient child over a smoking fire until he chokes (Raum, 1940)   |
| • deprivation of meals - a common punishment for the disobedient child among the Gusii in Kenya (Levine, 1966) and the Chagga of Tanzania (Raum, 1940). |

<b>NON PHYSICAL PUNISHMENTS USED</b>
--------------------------------------

<b>Verbal Reprimands</b>
--------------------------

- |  |
|--|
| • scolding   |
| • warning  |
| • abusing  |
| • cursing  |
| • threatening  |
| • forceful commands  |
| • ridiculing   |
| - withdrawal of attention  |
| - withdrawal of approval   |
| - financial deprivation  |
| -Placing the disobedient child in a bag of nettles or one with lizards, frogs or snails (Raum, 1949; Kaye, 1962) |
| - sending the disobedient child out of the house naked during broad daylight (Levine, 1966).                     |

Curses especially those of parents are very much feared by most of the Africans.

Threats of parental or relatives' curses are therefore used by both parents and relatives in disciplining children. This remains a very effective method of discipline not only for youth but also adults. (Raum, 1940; Kenyatta, 1938; Levine 1966).

Riddles and stories especially those with a moral ending, are also used in order to make children behave appropriately (Nzioki, 1967; Kenyatta, 1938). Parents also use such psychological techniques as reasoning with the child and verbal explanations (Lijembe, 1967). Appealing to children or adolescents pride or esteem, was cited by Kenyatta who said that among the Kikuyu, if a circumcised youth erred in any way he was told by his parents:

“You have passed the period of childhood and you cannot behave like this; you are circumcised and you are man enough to know right from wrong”. (Kenyatta, 1938).

Threats to carry out any of these mentioned techniques are made. These threats do not in most cases materialise.

Positive sanctions in form of either praise or material gifts are also used by African parents to reinforce desirable behaviour in children and adolescents. Some parents allow children to go out and play if they find, when they return home in the evening, that the children have done all that was required of them.

Among the Chagga youths of Tanzania, good deeds are rewarded (Raum, 1940). If a small boy fetched firewood for either his mother or grandmother he was given a calabash of milk. Adolescent girls are rewarded by being given hens which they keep to take to their husbands' home after marriage. A girl who has been very obedient was identified by the many hens she had when getting

married. Adolescent boys were given goats which became their sole property (Raum, 1940). Bad behaviour is discouraged by stern verbal reprimand or physical punishment of which whipping is common.

In their zeal to shape the character of the child using physical punishment, parents sometimes get to extremes, causing physical injury to the defenceless child. Excesses of discipline thus lead to child abuse. The initial description of child abuse in Kenya was the battered child syndrome.

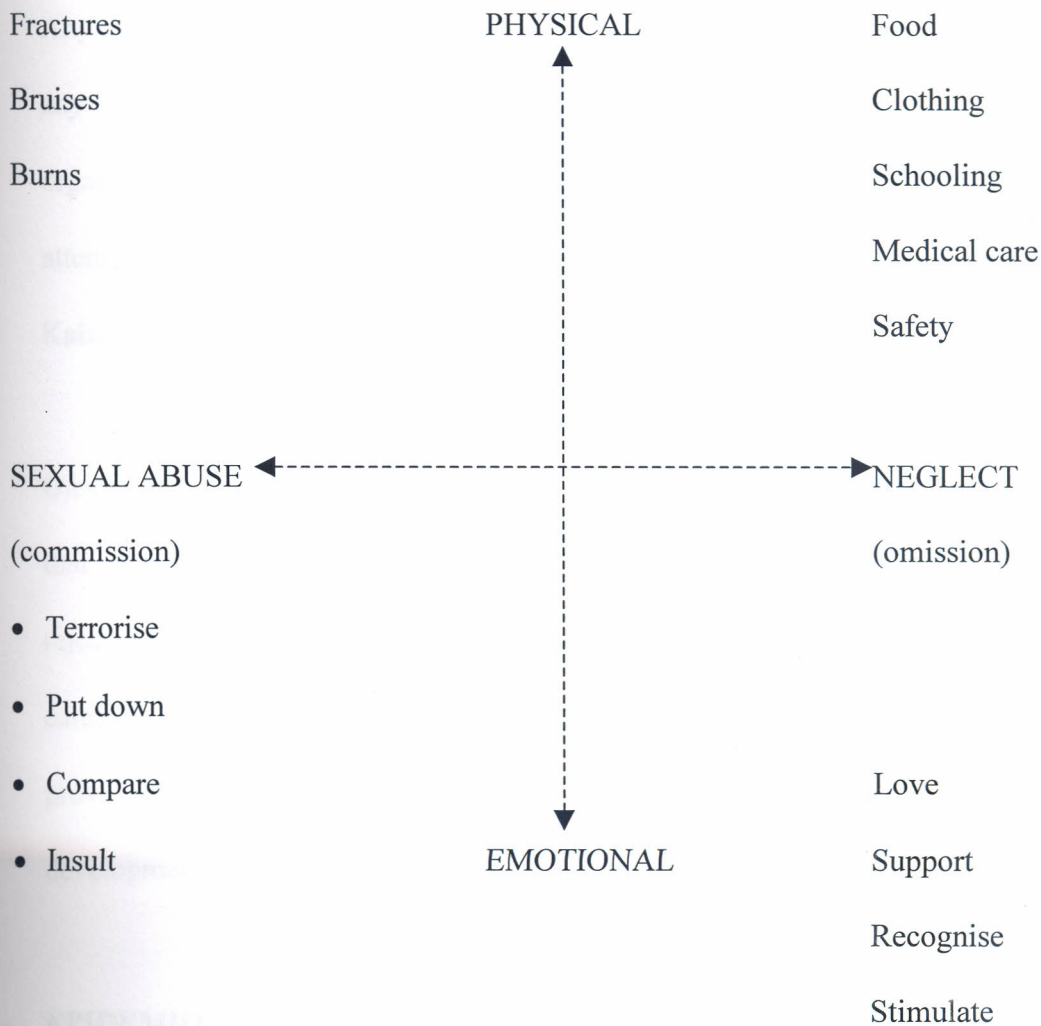
## **CHILD ABUSE**

The term child abuse refers to any maltreatment or neglect of children or adolescents by their parents or care giving adults which leads to non-accidental harm to the child's physical; psychological, emotional and spiritual development. (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992; Kalisch 1976, Kempe 1970, Stanfield, 1997).

Child maltreatment encompasses a spectrum of abusive actions, or acts of commission, and lack of actions, or acts of omission, that result in morbidity or death. Child abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.

Physically abused children may present with injuries such as bruises, fractures or burns. The neglected child is denied basic rights to food, clothing, schooling, medical care and safety, and there is omission of love, support, recognition or stimulation.

Figure 2



Physical abuse and neglect overlap and may exist at the same time or various times in the child's life. Sexual abuse may be considered a specific type of physical abuse that has emotional components. Physical abuse and neglect invariably have short and long term emotional consequences. Emotional consequences may persist long after the physical wounds heal.

Child abuse is categorised into physical abuse, that is non-accidental injury, sexual abuse and failure to thrive due to underfeeding. Since children can be

physically abused, psychologically traumatised and socially neglected a more encompassing categorisation is “children in especially difficult circumstances”. Any deliberately inflicted injury of children or adolescents by their caretakers or any corporal punishment which causes bruises, burns, lacerations, punctures, organ damage, draws blood or results in any injury which requires medical attention is regarded as physical child abuse. (Krugman and Schmitt 1992, Kalisch 1976, Onyango 1989).

On the other hand psychological abuse is intentional verbal or behavioural acts that result in adverse emotional consequences. Emotional abuse includes rejection, scapegoat assignment, isolation, criticism or terrorising of a child by caretakers. Emotional neglect occurs when a caretaker intentionally does not provide nurturing verbal and behavioural actions that are necessary for healthy development.

#### **EPIDEMIOLOGY:**

*Non-accidental injuries are on the increase globally (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992).* In the United States approximately 1% of children are reported to be abused or neglected yearly. It is estimated that new cases of physical abuse are 1,200/m cases of child abuse per year. About 10% of injuries to children aged under 5 years seen in hospital emergency rooms are non-accidental injuries.



## CHILD ABUSE IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States reports of all types of abuse increased 50% from 30 per 1,000 children to 45/1000 children between 1985 and 1992. In 1992, 2.9 million children's protective services reports were filed and 1,261 children died of maltreatment. Of reported children, 85% were <5years and 45% <1 year of age.

The actual incidence of abuse is unknown. A survey of families with children aged 3-18 years indicated that 140/1000 (14%) were kicked, bitten, punched, hit with an object, beaten up or threatened with a knife or gun in 1 year.

15% of children admitted with burns, and 50% of children <1 year old with fractures are abused (Krugman and Schmitt, 1993). In 1991, the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System indicated that 24% of 838,232 reports were of physical abuse. Of 1,229 assessments in a paediatric hospital, in 1991, 223 (28%) of 797 reports were for physical abuse and death rate was 6%. 55% cases of abuse were by parents or immediate family members. The most common perpetrators were the father (25%) mother (21%), boyfriend of mother (9%) baby sitter (8%) and step father (5%). Average age of abuser was 25 years. The presence of spouse abuse increases likelihood of child abuse.

*In the United States, mortality from non-accidental injuries is about 3% or 4000 deaths per year. The ages of victims of physical abuse are approximately one*

third under 1 year, one third from 1-6 years and one third over 6 years. Premature infants are at a 3 fold greater risk of child abuse. (Krugman and Schmitt, 1992: Krugman and Schmitt, 1993)

## **CHILD ABUSE IN AFRICA**

There are many cases of child abuse in Africa often as a result of excessive use of a given disciplinary technique which is usually caning. Injuries such as cuts, bruises, swelling and bleeding are frequently reported. Loss of teeth or dislocation of the temporo -mandibular joints following slaps on the cheeks have been reported. Following severe corporal punishment children have been reported to have fallen unconscious and even died.

In some communities the part of the body committing the crime is specifically dealt with e.g. there are reports of burning of fingers in children caught stealing, caning of lips in children found making noise in class or licking sugar etc. Pinching and twisting of ears is common and there are reports of torn eardrums with residual hearing loss. Cases of adultery or fornication are dealt with brutally e.g. by cutting up of genitals or burning of the face. Some types of the cases have been reported to the mass media (See Table I, Appendix II).

The striking observation in all these reports (Table I, Appendix II) is that the child was injured in the process of receiving corporal punishment. It is the impression of the researcher that corporal punishment is a widely accepted measure of disciplining children. Even as we develop interventions to reduce child abuse, there is a need to understand community perceptions of what is appropriate disciplinary measures and what constitutes child abuse.

In East Africa, first cases of child abuse were identified at Mulago Hospital in Uganda in 1971 (Bwibo). Similar cases were identified for the first time at Kenyatta National Hospital, Kenya, in 1972 (Bwibo) and a further 21 cases were reported on in the same hospital between 1980-1981 (Bwibo). All studies in Kenya have been hospital based and to-date there are no studies that have been reported in literature that would establish the prevalence of child abuse in Kenya. (Bwibo 1971, Bwibo 1972, Bwibo 1981).

Physically abused children in these studies presented to hospital with:

- Bruises on face, limbs and trunk.
- Fractures of limbs, ribs and skull.
- Subdural haematoma associated with fits and/or other neurological problems.
- Destruction of the end of long bones.

(Onyango, 1989; Bwibo 1971; Bwibo 1972; Bwibo 1981 Stanfield 1997,

*Bwibo and Onyango 1986)*

In a retrospective study of children with the diagnosis of Battered Baby syndrome at Kenyatta National Hospital in Kenya between 1984 and 1988 by Nduati and Muita, 30 cases were reported: 60 percent were in the first year of life; while 46 percent were abandoned children.

In this study, sex of the child did not influence abuse unlike findings in literature where boys are cited more likely to be abused in the first year of life. The thirty victims in this study did not have other risk factors cited in literature e.g. physical handicap, mental retardation and hyperactivity. Mothers were found to be the most frequently implicated individuals that perpetrated the abuse. Fourteen mothers abandoned their babies while seven mothers battered their children. Other close family members were the next most commonly implicated individual in child battering in these series, as in other studies. (Nduati and Muita, 1989)

Numerous cases of physical child abuse go unreported especially those which occur in the rural areas where parental and teacher brutality in the name of child discipline has reached an alarming height, at times culminating in death (Appendix II).

## **PREDISPOSING FACTORS**

Non accidental injuries are reported among children of all ethnic, social, geographic, religious, educational, occupational and economic groups, but is more common among the poor and in families experiencing crisis, such as

unemployment, overcrowding, inadequate education, social isolation and family upheavals. Other factors that are contributory are early parenthood before 20 years, large families, persons with criminal tendencies and violence within the family. (Nduati 1989; Hams 1975; Krugman and Schmitt 1992; Spock 1992; Dobson 1988; Castle 1975; Stanfield 1997).

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS AND METHODOLOGY

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Child abuse is indeed a known and a serious problem which is on the increase globally. In the United States approximately 1% of children are abused or neglected. New cases of physical abuse are 1,200 per million population per year. About 10% injuries to children under 5 years of age seen in hospital emergency rooms are due to abuse (Schmitt and Krugman, 1992).

In Kenya, cases of child abuse were first identified by Bwibo at Kenyatta National Hospital in 1972 (Bwibo 1972; Onyango, 1989). Mothers were found to be the single most important group responsible for battering children (Nduati and Muita, 1989). It has been observed that poor discipline is one of the factors contributing to the increase in numbers of street children, truancy, runaways and drug users (Onyango, 1991). In this research on street children in Kenya, Onyango showed that factors contributing to the increase in street children were largely socio-economic; others included family related problems like single parenting, large families, poor discipline, unemployment, overcrowding and instability in the family (Onyango, 1991).

Parents are largely responsible for the discipline of their children. It is important therefore that their perceptions, knowledge and practice of the same is appropriate.

## **JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY**

From medical literature and newspaper reports, it is obvious that child abuse and especially physical battering in the name of disciplining a child is on the increase in Kenya. There is no study that has systematically shown what the local communities regard as acceptable child discipline and child abuse. All reports on child abuse have been either hospital based or overt cases which appear in the mass media. It is possible that there are other serious occurrences of physical and psychological abuse that are ongoing and not yet recognised by the health professionals. Once the baseline views, knowledge and practices are known efforts can be made to curb unnecessary morbidity and even mortality from excessive corporal punishment.

## **STUDY AREA**

The study was conducted in homes, health facilities and schools within and near Kibera. Kibera is a division within the city of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. The residents of Kibera are of the low income villages (slums) of Kambi Muru, Kisumu Ndogo, Silanga, Sisi kwa Sisi, Laini Saba, Namba nane, Kianda, Lindi,

Soweto, Makina, Mashimoni and Gatwekera. There are few middle income areas situated in Kibera, and these are: Fort Jesus, Ayany, Olympic and Karanja.

Within the slum, health care services are provided for by small private clinics. There is an immunisation/nutrition clinic near the division offices (Kibera immunisation/nutrition clinic in Kibera I.N.C.) run jointly by the Ministry of Health and the Kenya National Capacity Building for Child Survival and Development Project.

There are some Nairobi Municipality health facilities situated on the peripheries of Kibera, these include Woodley Maternal and Child Health/ Family Planning (MCH/FP) clinic and Langata Health Centre. Kenyatta National Hospital, the tertiary referral hospital for Kenya is situated within walking distance of Kibera. Within the area are several private clinics run by nurses and a few medical officers.

## **SOURCE POPULATION**

The population of Kibera is estimated to be about 250,000, 43% being women (Census, 1989). Ten percent of the population is aged less than 1 year, and 20% aged between 1 to 5 years. About 15% of adult women are said to have no formal education, 50% had some primary education and about 25% had some secondary education. About 66% of these women are unemployed. The mothers of children aged 18 years and below were drawn from this population.



Kibera is a multi-ethnic low income society. Within the slums there is tendency for people to congregate and live according to their ethnic groups and backgrounds. The study was conducted among parents from specific ethnic groups, mainly the Luo, the Nubian and the Luhya, who were the largest ethnic groups in Kibera at the time of the study and were a “convenient” sample.

## **STUDY POPULATION**

There were 3 categories of individuals who were interviewed. The first were parents of children 18 years and below, of the Luo, the Nubian and the Luhya community who live within the study area; fathers and mothers were interviewed separately. The second group were care givers or guardians, maids, ayahs within the study households. The third group were key informants and included teachers, chiefs and health personnel serving the study area.

## **AIM**

To determine the community perceptions of child discipline and its contributions to child abuse.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

1. To determine the perception of parents regarding child discipline.

2. To determine the modes of discipline used and the circumstances in which they are administered.
3. To determine what the parents and community members perceive as excessive discipline i.e. child abuse.
4. To determine the perception of key persons namely teachers, chiefs and health care workers regarding child discipline and child abuse.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **STUDY DESIGN**

This was a cross-sectional study using both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection.

### **QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION**

Information was sought on what parents/guardians thought was an appropriate number of times to punish one child in one day and what magnitude of punishment children of different age groups should get i.e. toddlers, pre school, primary school and adolescents.

## **QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION**

Information was sought on common views/perceptions of parents regarding child discipline, common modes of child discipline and circumstances under which they are administered, what parents/care-takers regard as excessive measure of child discipline that is child abuse, perceptions of key persons and focus groups regarding child discipline and child abuse and modes of disciplining a child in hypothetical case scenarios.

### **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (FGD)**

Focus group discussions were carried out among parents selected from the Luo, Luhya & Nubian communities. For each community, the parents were grouped into four groups: the single mothers, the married men, the married women and a mixed group of married men and women and grandparents. Twelve focus group discussions were carried out.

The groups were largely heterogeneous, consisting of parents of different ages, parity, and level of education, but largely homogenous in terms of sex, and consisted of parents from nearby areas to alleviate travelling costs or time which could discourage participants. Participants were informed one week prior to the interview and their participation confirmed a day prior to the interview by Community Health workers. Focus group discussions were carried out at the chief's camp or nearest open ground deemed neutral and suitable to avoid deference

effect which can occur if discussions are conducted within a medical institution or other ground which would influence the participants responses.

Before the FGD started the personal details of each member were recorded. The investigator and research assistants introduced themselves and explained the general purpose of the meeting.

The participants were assured that there were no right or wrong answers, and that it was alright to express their views even if they differed from others.

The principal investigator guided the discussions and gave respondents a fair chance to avoid some dominating the discussion, and to avoid participants interrupting one another. Consent to tape discussions and take notes was obtained. Respondents were assured that all comments would be treated with confidentiality and used for research purposes only. The discussions followed a prepared topic guide.

## **SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The study area was mapped out to identify villages with the highest concentration of the study ethnic groups namely the Luo, Nubi and Luhya. The study area was then mapped out to identify eligible households with parents of children 18 years and below. Using a table of random numbers the study households were then selected. This was done with the help of the chief, the community based health

workers, village elders and guides. Whichever parent was found was interviewed, and if both were present they were interviewed separately, one at a time, preferably away from the other parent. This was done to achieve the confidence and full participation of the parent especially the women who are likely to feel intimidated by their husbands. Each parent or guardian was thus interviewed on a separate questionnaire and for purposes of analysis it was noted whether the respondent was a mother, father, guardian or ayah. If both parents were to be interviewed together, the researcher would have gathered mainly the views of the fathers.

### **SAMPLE OF KEY PERSONS**

Key informants were those people deemed knowledgeable in child disciplinary issues. Their selection was based on their competence. They were required to be knowledgeable, articulate, communicative, willing and interested in talking about child discipline and child abuse. To select those who are knowledgeable, unstructured questionnaires were administered to key persons in the area of child discipline, namely: school teachers, health workers, child counsellors, chiefs, assistant chiefs and village elders. Those who sounded knowledgeable from the way they answered the questionnaire, and were found to be interested in further discussion, articulate and communicative were selected. Some of these capabilities were established from people who knew the key informant well, and confirmed by the principal investigator. About six key persons were recruited and given an appointment for in-depth interview.

Health personnel working in health facilities within the study area were requested to fill out separate questionnaires. A visit was paid to the schools within or nearest Kibera and teachers in these schools requested to fill out separate questionnaires after permission to do so was granted by the Head teacher. From their responses those deemed knowledgeable, and confirmed to be articulate, communicative, willing and interested in discussions on the subject of child discipline were recruited as key informants. A total of six key informants were selected, to include health workers, teachers and the chief(s). Key informants were assured that all information given would be handled with confidentiality and would only be used for purposes of research.

## **REVIEW OF PRINT MEDIA**

The researcher spected through newspapers and newsletters over the past two years and noted the cases of child abuse that were highlighted in the media. A few of such articles that show physical child abuse are shown in Appendix II.

## **INFORMAL DISCUSSION**

While in the community, the members of the community identified the researcher as one who was concerned about the manner in which they administered discipline, and called on her whenever they thought there was an extreme action taken against a child who had committed an offence. One such a case is detailed out in the discussion of results.

## **EXCLUSION CRITERIA**

- Any person who was not a Luo or a Luhya or a Nubian.
- Any person who was not a parent or guardian or care provider as at the time of the study.
- Absence from the study area of a parent or guardian as at the time of study.

## **SAMPLE SIZE FOR THE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY**

Due to paucity of data in the area of perceptions of discipline, an accurate calculation of sample size could not be done. The final sample size achieved reflected a sample size of convenience, determined by available resources and time.

A total of 190 Luos, 172 Luhyas and 176 Nubians were interviewed.

## **PROCEDURE**

The questionnaire (Appendix III) was translated from English to Kiswahili, Luhya, Luo and Nubi, and back to English to ensure reproducibility and to improve its quality mainly with regard to range of possible answers and for purposes of rewording the questions.

Appropriate amendments were made. Two research assistants who understood the native language and had a minimum of O-Level education were recruited for each ethnic group. The principal investigator went through the finalised questionnaire with the research assistants and ensured that they clearly understood the questions, were able to clearly administer them and correctly record the responses of parents and key informants. A tape recorder was used mainly to tape focus group discussions.

The principal investigator and six research assistants reported to the study area by 9.00 a.m. from Monday to Friday.

## **ETHICAL ISSUES**

Permission to carry out the study was sought from:-

1. The Office of The President.
2. Kenyatta National Hospital Ethical Committee.
3. The Local Chiefs in the study area.
4. Head-teachers of the selected schools.



5. The C.S.D. Programme Management for Kibera I.N.C.
6. The City Council (for Woodley Clinic & Langata Health Centre).

Written consent or thumbprint was obtained from participants in the study. Persons found to be ill in the course of research were referred to the appropriate health facility. Parents found to have inappropriate child discipline practices were counselled and educated appropriately. Personal information obtained during the interview was treated with confidentiality.

The study was deemed to be of benefit in child rearing patterns in the area.

## **DATA MANAGEMENT**

### **QUANTITATIVE DATA**

- Data was entered into a computer SPSS.
- Data was analysed using a computer PC SPSS.
- Results were presented using tables and graphs.
- *Determination of descriptive statistics was done.*

- Appropriate statistical models were used for comparison of variables.

## **FOR QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

Methodological triangulation of data collected by the different qualitative techniques was applied in order to obtain a consensus on the community perceptions of child discipline and child abuse in the study community. Data analysis for the qualitative part of the study was an on-going process. Notes for Focus Group Discussions were written in the field and cross-checked with radio taped discussion. Areas of consistency or discrepancy were noted. Where necessary repeat visits were made to clarify issues arising.

Data analysis was carried out by summarising the verbatim reports and reviewing their contents. Actual responses of interviewees were noted and at times quoted verbatim. Appropriate frequency tables of various parameters were drawn and evaluated. Results were presented using tables.

# CHAPTER 3

## RESULTS

**TABLE 1**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY**  
**POPULATION**

CHARACTERISTIC	TOTAL POP. N=538(%)	LUO N=190(%)	LUHYA N=172(%)	NUBI N=176(%)
<b>1.GENDER, MALE</b>	110(21)	36(18.5)	32(18.6)	43(24.4)
<b>FEMALE</b>	428(79)	154(81.5)	140(81.4)	133(75.6)
<b>2. RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD</b>				
1. FATHER	105(19.6)	32 (16.8)	32 (18.6)	41 (23.3)
2. MOTHER	390(72.8)	136(71.6)	131(76.2)	123(70.3)
3. GUARDIAN	35(6.5)	20(10.5)	6( 3.5)	9( 5.1)
4. AYAH	6(1.1)	2(1.1)	2( 1.2)	2(1.1)
<b>3.MARITAL STATUS</b>				
1. SINGLE	89(16.6)	26(13.7)	24(18.6)	39(22.3)
2. MARRIED	405(75.7)	156(82.1)	134(77.9)	115(65.7)
3. DIVORCED	33(6.2)	6(3.2)	13(7.6)	14(8.0)
4. WIDOWED	8(1.5)	2(1.1)	1(0.6)	7(4.0)
<b>4. AGE OF INTERVIEWEES</b>				
1. LESS THAN 26 YEARS	231(43)	101(53.2)	77(44.8)	53(30.1)
2. 26 - 35 YEARS	158(29.4)	54(28.4)	52(30.2)	52(29.5)
3. 36 - 45 YEARS	93(17.3)	25(13.2)	28(16.3)	40(22.7)
4. 46 - 55 YEARS	45( 8.4)	10( 5.3)	13( 7.6)	22(12.5)
5. 55 YEARS & ABOVE	10( 1.9)	-	2( 1.2)	8(4.5)
<b>5. OCCUPATION</b>				
1. EMPLOYED	91(13.3)	28(14.7)	27(15.7)	36(20.5)
2. SELF EMPLOYED	175(32.8)	61(32.1)	45(26.2)	69(39.2)
3. UNEMPLOYED	267(49.9)	100(52.6)	95(55.7)	70(39.8)
<b>6.LEVELOF EDUCATION</b>				
1. NO FORMAL EDUCAT.	51(9.5)	13( 6.8)	14( 8.1)	24(13.6)
2 ADULT CLASSES ONLY	31( 5.8)	8( 4.2)	4( 2.3)	19(10.8)
3. PRIMARY EDUCATION	235(43.8)	98(51.6)	84(48.8)	53(30.1)
4. SECONDARY “	182(33.8)	66(34.7)	62(36.0)	54(30.7)
5. COLLEGE & ABOVE	38( 7.1)	5(2.6)	8( 4.7)	25(14.2)
<b>7. CARETAKERS</b>				
1) PARENTS	494(92.5)	171(90)	161(93.6)	162(92)
2) NON PARENTS	40( 7.5)	19(10)	11(6.4)	10(5.7)
<b>8.THOSE WHO DISCIPLINE CHILDREN:</b>				
YES	524(98.3)	189(99.5)	167(97.1)	172(97.7)
NO	9( 1.7)	1( 0.5)	5( 2.9)	3( 1.7)

## **Demographic Characteristics (Table 1)**

Five hundred and thirty-eight (538) adults were interviewed in the household survey of whom 73% were mothers and 20% fathers. Three quarters of the respondents were married, 13% were salaried, 33% self employed and 50% were unemployed. Forty four percent of the respondents had at least a primary school education and only 40% with secondary or above secondary education. Seventy percent of the respondents were aged below 35 years. Overall 98% of the respondents had been involved in disciplining a child. The three ethnic groups of Luo, Luhya and Nubi were comparable in terms of gender distribution, distribution between fathers and mothers.

The Nubi were more likely to be single either from having never married or through divorce or widowhood.

**TABLE 2**

**PERCEIVED MEANING OF CHILD DISCIPLINE**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) Beating of a child whenever he does wrong	108(20.1)	37(19.5)	34(19.8)	37(21)
b) Punishing a child occasionally when he commits a big offence	90(16.7)	31(16.3)	28(16.3)	31(17.6)
c) Showing love and praising a child when he does good but punishing when he does wrong	376(69.9)	134(70.5)	122(70.9)	120(68.2)
d) Leaving the child to do whatever he wants to do	18 (3.3)	7 (3.7)	6(3.5)	5 (2.8)
e) Others	36( 6.7)	12(6.3)	12( 7)	12( 6.8)

*Others:* - warning first before punishing.

-Counselling, correcting & training a child; showing by example what should be done.

-Teaching a child good manners.

We sought to know what people understood child disciplining to be. Three hundred and seventy six out of 538(69.9%) persons understood discipline to mean showing love and praising child when he does good but punishing wrong doing. One hundred and eight (20.1%) of the study population understood discipline to mean beating of a child whenever he does wrong, ninety (16.7%) believed children should be punished for major wrong doing while 18 (3.3%) were of the opinion that children should be left on their own. The three ethnic groups were comparable in this perception. (Table 2).

**TABLE 3****PERCEIVED PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a)To punish a child and make him suffer to the maximum	46( 8.6)	14( 7.4)	16( 9.3)	16( 9.1)
b)To make sure the child knows who is in charge	16( 3)	4( 2)	3( 2)	9( 5)
c)To correct a child, teach him to have good conduct and to make him/her grow into a responsible person	395(73.4)	139(73.2)	129(75)	127(72.2)

The study population were requested to define the purpose of disciplining a child. Three hundred and ninety five out of 538 (73.4%) disciplined children to correct and teach good conduct with the hope that they would grow into responsible adults. For 8.6% of them, purpose of discipline was to punish and to make the child suffer to the maximum while 16 (3%) wanted to let the child know who is in charge. (Table 3).

**TABLE 4****PERCEPTION ON ACCEPTABLE PERSONS TO METE OUT PUNISHMENT**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) Father	258(47)	69(36)	99(55)	90(51)
b) Mother	340(62.0)	97(51)	128(72)	115(66)
c) Teacher	121(22)	21(11)	40(23)	60(34)
d) The maid	20(4)	-	4(2)	16( 9)
e)Others: relatives or authorities e.g. chief, police etc.	67(12)	19(10)	28(16)	20(11)
f)Whoever is around at the time of offence	312(57)	119(62)	79 (41)	114(65)

\*Others:- Neighbours, relatives, any elderly person, the church leader, authorities e.g.chief, police.

The majority of study participants said a child should be disciplined by the mother (62%), father (47%) or whoever is around at the time of the offence (57%). The father was considered as a suitable person to discipline the child by a third of the Luo community compared to a half of Luhya and Nubi community. A similar trend was seen in the identification by the teacher as an acceptable person to mete out punishment. Teachers were cited an acceptable person to discipline a child by 11% of the Luo community compared to 23% among the Luhya's and 34% among the Nubi (Table 4).

**TABLE 5**  
**SITUATIONS THAT WARRANT PUNISHMENT**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) Whenever a child commits an offence or wrong-doing	269(50)	94(49.5)	85(49.4)	90(51.1)
b) After repeated wrong- doings	233(43.3)	83(43.7)	75(43.6)	75(42.6)
c) Whenever the parent feels it should be done	18(3.3)	6(3.2)	6(3.5)	6( 3.4)
d) Occasionally for a big offence	18( 3.3)	7(3.7)	6(3.5)	5(2.8)

Respondents were asked how often a child should be punished. Two hundred and sixty nine out of 538 (50%) would punish a child whenever he commits an offence or wrong-doing while, 233 (43.3%) of 538 reported that they would punish after repeated wrong-doings. Three percent of the interviewees each felt that discipline should be administered out when the parent finds it necessary or following a major offence (Table 5).

**TABLE 6**  
**TIMING OF PUNISHMENT**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) When the father comes home	22(4)	10(5)	5(3)	7(4)
b) At the time the offence is committed	408(75)	154(80)	139(78)	115(66)
c)After the last meal of the day	37 (7)	13 ( 7)	19(11)	5( 3)
d) When there is no visitor	103(19)	29(15)	35(20.0)	39(23)
e)When the parent is annoyed beyond control	24(4)	3(2)	6(3)	15(9)

The participants were asked to state when is the most appropriate time for disciplining children. Four hundred and eight out of 538(75%) of the study population reported that they would punish the child at the time of the offence or wrong-doing. One hundred and three (19%) of 538 parents preferred to punish a child when there were no visitors. A small number of clients 24 (4%) of 538 felt punishment should be metered out when the parent was annoyed beyond control.

The three communities were similar except the Nubi who had a higher proportion of respondents indicating that timing of punishment was when they were annoyed beyond control 9% compared to 2% among the Luo and 3% in the Luhya community (Table 6).



**TABLE 7**  
**HOW DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a)Cane the child for every wrong-doing	72(13)	24(12.6)	23(13.4)	25(14.2)
b)Judge the weight of wrong-doing then decide on the mode of punishment	449(83.5)	159(83.7)	145(84.3)	145(82.4)
c)Verbal reprimand	35( 6.5)	13( 6.8)	10( 5.8)	12( 6.8)
d) Forgive all the time	-	-	-	-

Four hundred forty nine (83.5%) out of 538 of the people interviewed would judge the weight of the wrong-doing then decide mode of punishment. Seventy two (13%) of 538 parents felt that the child should be caned for every wrong doing while 35 (6.5%) felt that a verbal reprimand was sufficient. The three communities were very similar in this perception (Table7).

**TABLE 8**  
**DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES WHICH HAVE BEEN USED AT LEAST ONCE**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176(%)</b>
a) Caning	520(96.7)	183(96.3)	166(96.5)	171(97.2)
b) Slapping	179(33.3)	62(32.6)	54(31.4)	63(35.8)
c) Punching	36(6.7)	13( 6.8)	12( 7.0)	11( 6.3)
d) Pinching	215(40)	74(38.9)	67(39)	74(42.0)
e) Pulling ears	107(19.9)	36(18.9)	33(19.2)	38(21.6)
f) Kicking	22(4)	10(5.2)	5( 3)	7( 4)
g) Biting	18( 3.3)	6( 3.2)	6( 3.5)	6( 3.4)
h) Beating with nearest object	50 (9)	22(11.4)	8( 4.5)	20(11.4)
i) Burning	30( 5.6)	4( 2)	14( 8)	12( 7)
j) Cursing	18( 3.3)	6( 3.2)	6( 3.5)	6( 3.4)
k) Warning	448(83.3)	157(82.6)	142(82.6)	149(84.7)
l) Scolding	89(16.5)	31(16.3)	29(16.9)	29(16.5)
m) Deny food	104(19)	38(20)	19(11)	47(27)
n) Chasing away	40( 7)	18( 9)	9(5)	13( 7)

The one single most commonly used method of discipline is caning (Table 8) used by 520 out of 538 (96.7%) respondents. Four hundred and forty eight out of 538 (83.3%) warn their children. The top five physical methods of discipline used are caning (96.7%), pinching (40%), slapping (33.3%), pulling ears (19.9%) and denial of food (19%). The obviously abusive methods reported used were denial of food (19%), beating with the nearest object (9%), chasing away (7%), burning (5.6%), kicking (4%) and biting (3.3%).

**TABLE 9**

**CHILD DISCIPLINE METHODS IN THE COMMUNITY AS REPORTED BY OTHERS**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
1) Obvious abusive methods	296(55)	105(55.4)	96(56)	96(54.6)
2) Caning + other physical methods	358(66.5)	125(65.8)	113(65.7)	120(68.2)
3) Verbal reprimand	233(43.3)	80(42)	74(43)	79(44.9)
4) Guidance and counselling	54(10)	19(10)	17(9.9)	18(10.2)
5) Abusive non-physical methods e.g. chase away from home	18( 3.3)	6(3.2)	6(3.5)	6( 3.4)
6) Leave the child to do as he wishes	29( 5.3)	10( 5.2)	5( 3)	10(6)
7) Seek religious help (use bible, church, pastor)	18( 3.3)	7( 3.7)	6( 3.5)	5( 2.8)

Respondents were asked to state how their neighbours administered discipline and response were as shown.

**\*OBVIOUS ABUSIVE METHODS REPORTED**

*Hitting child with a stool, club, stone, boxing, kicking, cutting hands, hammering toes or nails, denying food, hitting head against the wall or floor, tying feet on the roof head down then lashing with belt till child faints, strangling etc.*

Individuals are less likely to report behaviour that is incriminating but will readily do so if it is perceived as a third person report. With this view point the study

participants were requested to list the various discipline measures they have observed their neighbours mete out to their children.

A little over half of the study participants reported on neighbours using obviously abusive methods of disciplining children. These included bizarre practices such as hitting the child with a stool, club, stone, kicking them, cutting the hands, denying food, hitting the head against the floor or wall, tying feet on the roof with the head hanging down, lashing the child until they faint or even strangling the child. List I shows all the methods of child disciplining that were used in this community that were abusive. Two thirds of the study participants reported on neighbours caning their children while 43% reported on the use of verbal reprimand. Only a small proportion - 3% reported on neighbours seeking counselling services as a way of dealing with discipline problems. Members of the 3 communities reported very similar experiences with their neighbours (Table 9).

**LIST I**  
**OBVIOUS ABUSIVE DISCIPLINARY TECHNIQUES REPORTED USED**  
**IN THE STUDY COMMUNITY**

1.	Beating with dangerous object e.g. stool, club, stones, sharp objects.
2.	Cutting hands with a knife or panga or jembe.
3.	Denying food.
4.	Biting with teeth.
5.	Punching
6.	Kicking
7.	<p>Burning hands or other parts of the body by:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Using an iron box.</li> <li>ii) Tying hands with polythene and placing into the fire until the hands burn to some extent.</li> <li>iii) Pouring paraffin over the hands and lighting up with a matchbox.</li> </ul> <p>This disciplinary measure is mainly used on children who are found stealing and is believed to be a lasting solution to the problem.</p>
8.	Cutting with a razor and applying pepper on cut wounds.
9.	Hitting head against the wall or floor "mpaka asikie moto" i.e. until the head feels hot.
10.	Breaking the hand.
11.	Pouring cold water, unclothing child then caning till the child faints.
12.	Tying the child to the bed.
13.	Hanging child on the roof.
14.	Strangling.
15.	Locking up in the cupboard or in a room for days without food.
16.	Killing.

**TABLE 10**

**SOME EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S WRONG-DOINGS AND PUNISHMENTS GIVEN IN THE RECENT RECALL**  
**(Obtained from Questionnaire - Appendix III)**

<b>AGE OF CHILD</b>	<b>NATURE OF WRONG-DOING</b>	<b>PUNISHMENT GIVEN</b>
1. 9 month old baby (Luo)	Vomiting feeds	Slapped
2. 11 months baby (Luo)	Bit the mother's breast when being breastfed	Caned
3. 2 year old (Luo)	Broke an egg	Beaten with slippers
4. 3 year old (Nubi)	Eating so much (overeating)	Thorough beating
5. 6 year old boy (Luo)	Stole money (10%)	Burning of hands and all parts of the body with an iron-box
6. 6 year old boy (Luhya)	Stoned others	Beaten by a stone
7. 9 year old boy (Nubi)	Rude	Denied food for two days
8. 9 year old boy (Nubi)	Stole money (20/-)	Tied on the roof head down, beaten till "rod broke" removed and locked in cupboard without food for two days
9. 16 year old girl (Luo)	Played with boys	Beaten thoroughly: "I almost killed that girl" she was chased away from home
10. 17 year old girl (Luo)	Dressing and walking like the "Nubian prostitutes"	Clubbed, kicked, bitten by teeth and chased away from home

Table 10 presents some of the punishments that were metered to children and were categorised as being abusive.

**TABLE 11**

**SELF REPORTED METHODS USED IN CHILD DISCIPLINE**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) Cane	484(90)	171(90)	153(89)	160(90.9)
b)Hand (pinching, slapping)	46( 8.6)	19(10)	15( 8.7)	12( 6.8)
c) *Obvious Abusive Methods (Kicking, boxing, stoning, using sharp objects, burning, cutting with razor)	67(12.6)	25(13)	21(12)	22(12.8)
d) Verbal Reprimand	18( 3.3)	7( 3.7)	6( 3.5)	5( 2.8)
e)Detention/Restriction e.g. Lock-up in the bedroom	17( 3.2)	7( 3.7)	4( 2.3)	6( 3.4)

An overwhelming majority, 484 out of 538(90%) of people use the cane. Sixty seven out of 538 (12.6%) admitted that they use obvious abusive physical methods of discipline. The study participants were requested to list the techniques they had used at least once in disciplining a child. These are listed on table 8. The most commonly reported methods of disciplining a child were caning, verbal reprimand, pinching, slapping, pulling the ears and denying food. These methods of disciplining a child occurred with equal frequency in the three communities.

To facilitate data analysis these self reported methods of disciplining a child were categorised into five broad categories; caning, physical discipline using the human hand (pinching and slapping), obvious abusive methods of disciplining a child (kicking, boxing, stoning, using sharp objects, burning, cutting with a razor)verbal reprimand and final category of detention/restriction. The data is presented in table

11. Overall 90% of the respondents caned children as a means of disciplining them, 8.6% pinched or slapped children, 12.6% used obviously abusive methods and only 3% used verbal reprimand or detention and restriction as discipline measures. (Table 8 and 11).

**TABLE 12**  
**DISCIPLINARY METHODS USED MOST COMMONLY (SELF REPORTED)**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) Caning	467(86.8)	165(86.8)	149(86.6)	153(86.9)
b) Pinching	107(19.9)	36(18.9)	33(19.2)	38(21.6)
c) Slapping	127(23)	31(15)	33(18)	63(36)
d) Scolding	53( 9.9)	20(10.5)	17( 9.9)	16( 9.1)
e) Verbal	36( 6.7)	13( 6.8)	11( 6.4)	12( 6.8)
f) Denying food	18( 3.3)	6( 3.2)	5( 2.9)	7( 4.0)
g) Warning	36( 6.7)	12( 6.3)	13( 7.6)	11( 6.3)
h) Counselling	18( 3.3)	6( 3.2)	6( 3.5)	6( 3.4)

Comment:

Caning was used by 467 out of 538(86.8%) of the study population, pinching 20% and slapping 23%. Table 12 presents data on the most commonly used method of disciplining children within the 3 communities of Luo, Luhya and Nubi living in Kibera. The pattern reflects what the participants exposed as their personal approach to disciplining children and what the neighbours do. Physical means of disciplining the child were the most frequently used methods. (Table 12).

In Table 11 when asked “which method do you use to discipline your children?” 484 (90%) of 538 said they cane, 46 (8.6%) of 538 said they use hand to either

pinch or slap, sixty seven (12.6%) of 538 admitted use of obvious abusive physical methods, 18 (3.3%) quoted use of verbal reprimand while 17 (3.2%) said they used detention or restriction.

In Table 12, the same respondents when asked which methods they use most commonly to discipline the children mentioned caning (86%) pinching, (19.9%) slapping (23%) scolding (9.9%) warning (6.7%) denying food (3.3%) and counselling (3.3%). The use of methods like pinching, slapping and verbal reprimand came out more conspicuous in this second question. The researcher speculates that when the question was first asked "which method do you use to discipline" the respondents considered and mentioned what they use in serious offences. When specifically asked which method they use most commonly they now mentioned more of the warning, pinching and slapping. One would need to explore the discrepancy of these reports perhaps by using qualitative methods.



**TABLE 13**  
**RATING OF OFFENCES BY THE STUDY COMMUNITY**  
**N=100**

	<b>Percentage</b>	
	<b>Major</b>	<b>Minor</b>
Lack of respect for other people's property		
Stealing	100	0
Selling property without permission	100	0
Offences that may cause trouble with others		
Lack of respect	100	0
Disobedience	100	0
Abusing people	89	11
Cheating	70	30
Potentially dangerous acts		
Beating others	63	37
Coming home late	87	13
Spending night out	88	12
Dangerous play	71	29
Drug abuse	100	0
Offences related to developmental age		
Breakages	13	87
Making noise/crying	12	88
Playing in the dust	10	90
Losing items e.g. pencils	12	88
Bed wetting	9	91
Licking sugar	12	88

The participants were asked to list the types of offences children committed and whether they condoned them to be major or minor offences.

Table 13 lists the offences and their rating by the study participants. Offences that were related to lack of respect with other people's property, offences that would cause trouble with adults and neighbours and potentially dangerous acts were considered as major offences while misdemeanours that were related to a child's developmental age were considered as minor offences in most instances.

Parents/guardians differed in their views of what they considered minor or major offence as shown, but certain offences were uniformly accepted as major and these include: stealing, disobedience, lack of respect, selling family property and drug abuse.

**TABLE 14**

**WHEN TO STOP CANING A CHILD WHO HAS DONE SOMETHING WRONG**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL P. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
1) When the child asks for forgiveness	216(40.1)	78(41.1)	71(41.3)	67(38.1)
2) When the parent feels the canes/beatings are enough	108(20.1)	38(20)	35(20.3)	35(19.9)
3) When the child starts bleeding or gets injured e.g. bruises, swelling, fainting, fractures	84(15.4)	43(22)	23(13)	18(10)
4) After the child has cried enough	18(3.3)	6(3.2)	6(3.5)	6(3.4)
5) After a short time/few strokes	179(33.3)	63(33.2)	57(33.1)	59(33.3)

The participants were asked to indicate at what point the child is sufficiently punished. Forty percent of the population stopped when the child begged for forgiveness, 20% when the parent felt the punishment was sufficient while 84 out of 538(15.4%) of the people interviewed did not stop caning/beating the child until the child was injured, as evidenced by bleeding, bruising, swellings, fractures or fainting. Some worrying remarks noted in those interviewed include answers like:

1. "When I start beating a child I do not stop until somebody stops me". (Nubian)

2. "I don't stop caning until I see blood". (LUO) "Ok anyal weye nyaka ane remo".

(Table 14).

**TABLE 15**

**DETERMINANTS OF TYPE OF PUNISHMENTS GIVEN**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOTAL P. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) Seriousness of offence	336(62)	98(51)	133(74)	105(60)
b) Sex of the child	28(5)	19(10)	8(5)	1(0.6)
c) Age of the child	115(21)	55(29)	29(16)	31(18)
d) Frequency of offence	151(28)	59(31)	29(16)	63(36)
e) Mood of the parent	24(4)	10(5.2)	8(5)	6(3)
f) Time of the day	10(1.9)	8(4.2)	2(1.2)	-

Most respondents: 336 out of 538 (62%) said that the type of punishment given was determined by the seriousness of the offence or wrong-doing. The other popularly mentioned determinants were frequency of offence and age of child mentioned by 151 (28%) and 115 (21%) respectively. (Table 16).

TABLE 16

WHAT THE COMMUNITY CONSIDERS AS EXCESSIVE CHILD DISCIPLINE

CHARACTERISTIC	TOTAL POP. N=538 (%)	LUO N=190 (%)	LUHYA N=172 (%)	NUBI N=176 (%)
<b>• When the disciplinary method used causes:-</b>				
a) Bleeding	300(55)	116(60)	96(54)	88(50)
b) Bruising/ blisters/scars	179(33)	75(39)	57(32)	47(27)
c)Swelling	196(36)	70(36)	63(35)	63(36)
d) Fractures	227(42)	100(52)	54(30)	73(42)
e) Fainting	348(64)	192(100)	62(35)	94(54)
f)Child running away from home	192(35)	72(38)	48(27)	72(41)
g) Death	345(63)	126(66)	93(52)	126(72)
h)Other physical injuries	58(11)	31(16)	15(8.4)	12(7)
i)Use of dangerous tools or weapons to discipline e.g. panga, knife, club, kicking, boxing	7(1.3)	7(4)	-	-
j)Excessive caning	42(8)	16(8)	26(15)	-
k)Chasing away from home	3(0.5)	0	3(2)	0
*Discipline can never be overdone				

Everyone interviewed knew at least one sign of excessive child discipline 348 out of 538 (63%) knew that excessive punishment can cause fainting, 345 out of 538 knew that excess punishment can cause death. (Table 16). Excessive punishment

was one that caused: bleeding, mentioned by 300 people (55%), bruising 179 (33%), swelling 196 (36%), fractures 227 (64%) and 192 (35%) among others.

**TABLE 17**  
**WHEN THE COMMUNITY FEELS DISCIPLINE IS OVERDONE**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOT POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
1. When it causes physical injuries	198(36.8)	70(36.8)	65(37.8)	63(35.8)
2. When dangerous or definitely abusive tools are used e.g. panga, knife, club	72(13.4)	26(13.7)	23(13.4)	23(13.1)
3. When child is beaten excessively	250(46.5)	88(46.3)	86(46.5)	82(46.6)
4. When child is chased away from home	72(13.4)	25(13.2)	25(14.5)	22(12.5)

Whereas caning is considered a normal disciplinary measure in this community, excessive caning is perceived as overdone discipline by 250 out of 538 (46.5%) of the study population. One hundred and ninety eight out of 538 (36.8%) said that discipline is overdone when it causes physical injuries. Seventy two (13.4%) of 538 say discipline is overdone when dangerous or definitely abusive tools are used e.g. pangas, knives, clubs, etc. Seventy two (13.4%) of 538 mentioned chasing away of a child as overdone discipline (Table 17).

TABLE 18

OUTCOME OF CHILDREN SUBJECTED TO EXCESSIVE PUNISHMENT

CHARACTERISTIC	TOT POP. N=538 (%)	LUO N=190(%)	LUHYA N=172 (%)	NUBI N=176 (%)
1.Become Runaways	287(53.3)	99(52.1)	91(52.9)	97(55.1)
2.Develop ill health	162(30.1)	55(28.9)	54(31.4)	53(30.1)
3.Commit suicide/die	31(6)	11(6)	15(8)	5(3)
4.Become 'immune' to punishment: Become "strong- headed" "kichwa ngumu"	189(35)	56(29)	75(42)	58(33)
5. Become withdrawn and miserable "Anakuwa na huzuni"	176(32)	84(44)	42(23)	50(29)
6.Become well-behaved	18(3.3)	6(3.2)	5(2.9)	7(4.0)

Respondents were asked what the expected outcome was in children who are subjected to excessive punishment.

Overall, the study population reportedly were aware of the dangers of excessive discipline on a child. Very few 18 out of 538(3.3%) believed that a child subjected to excessive punishment becomes well behaved. (Table 18). Two hundred and eighty seven out of 538 (53.3%) said the children would run away from home. One hundred and sixty two (30.1%) said the children would develop ill health while 31 (6%) said the children could commit suicide. One hundred and eighty nine out of 538 (35%) said children who are subjected to excessive punishment become *'immune' to punishment, and no longer care about threats of intended punishment*

They become "strong-headed" and very difficult to control. One hundred and

seventy six out of 538 (32%) of respondents said the children would become withdrawn and miserable. Clearly, the vast majority of parents knew that excessive punishment does not lead to a good outcome of the child.

**TABLE 19**

**REPORTED VIEWS ON FACTORS WHICH LEAD TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS OVER-DISCIPLINING THEIR CHILDREN**

CHARACTERISTIC	TOT POP. N=538 (%)	LUO N=190 (%)	LUHYA N=172 (%)	NUBI N=176 (%)
1.Drunkenness	18(3.3)	7(3.7)	6(3.5)	5(2.8)
2.Mother not the biological parent	35(6.5)	14(7.4)	10(5.8)	11(6.3)
3.Domestic tension and poverty	249(46)	67(35)	82(46)	100(57)
4.Single parent	4(0.7)	2(1)	1(0.6)	1(0.6)
5."Difficult Child" Rude, disobedient children <i>"kichwa ngumu"</i>	234(43.5)	80(42.1)	77(44.8)	77(43.8)
6. Peer Pressure	18(3.3)	6(3.2)	6(3.5)	6(3.4)
7. Ignorance/ Illiteracy	47(9)	5(3)	9(5)	33(18.4)
8. The devil	5(1)	4(2)	1(0.6)	-
9. Culture	4(1)	-	-	4(2.3)

Factors more likely to be reported as contributory to excessive discipline were domestic tension, poverty and stress mentioned by 249 out of 538 (46%) people, and "difficult children" mentioned by 234 out of 538 (43.5%) of the study population. Other factors mentioned as contributing to excessive discipline included: illiteracy and ignorance (9%), mother not being the biological parent (6.5%), drunkenness (3.3%), peer pressure (3.3%), culture (1%), the devil (1%) and single parenting (0.7%). (Table 19).

**TABLE 20****AGE AT WHICH PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE e.g. BEATING IS COMMENCED**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOT POP. N=538 (%)</b>	<b>LUO N=190 (%)</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 (%)</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 (%)</b>
a) Below 1 year	18(3.3)	6(3.2)	6(3.5)	6(3.4)
b) Age 1-5 years	286(53.2)	101(53.2)	90(52.3)	95(54)
c) After 5 years	216(40.1)	76(40)	70(40.7)	70(39.8)

Two hundred and eighty six out of 538(53.2%) commence physical discipline between age 1 and 5 years. (Table 20). Eighteen out of 538 (3.3%) start beating a child before one year of age, while 216 (40.1%) start beating after 5 years of age.

**TABLE 21****AGE AT WHICH PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE IS STOPPED**

<b>CHARACTERISTIC</b>	<b>TOT POP. N=538 %</b>	<b>LUO N=190 %</b>	<b>LUHYA N=172 %</b>	<b>NUBI N=176 %</b>
1) 5-10 years	54(10)	19(10)	17(9.9)	18(10.2)
2) 11-15 years	252(46.8)	89(46.8)	84(48.8)	79(44.9)
3) 16-18 years	89(16.5)	32(16.8)	28(16.3)	29(16.5)
4) Over 18 years	89(16.5)	30(15.8)	26(15.1)	33(18.8)
5) At any age depending on the child's character	26(4.8)	4(4.7)	11(6.4)	6(3.4)
6) After they get married/start working	18(3.3)	5(2.9)	6(3.0)	7(4.0)

Majority of parents stopped caning children once they are 11 years and above.

Thirty six per cent stop when the children are 16 years and above. (Table 21).



## **FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Focus group discussions were conducted among parents from the Luo, Luhya and Nubi communities in groups of 8 - 12 participants. The content of discussions was largely similar to what parents were asked in direct person to interviews, except that in the focus groups we also gave hypothetical case scenarios of offences and sought to know how parents dealt with the different offences. For every question posed, there were various responses, but in every case we sought the consensus of the group, while still noting the content of the individual responses. In some cases it was easy to gather the feelings of the majority, while in others it was difficult to reach a consensus.

## **PERCEIVED MEANING OF CHILD DISCIPLINE**

Generally speaking, there was much similarity in perceived meaning of discipline used. Majority said discipline means to train a child to have a good behaviour, knowing right or wrong, being obedient and growing up into a respectful and responsible adult.

However, some people felt that discipline and caning are one and the same thing. "There is no discipline without caning". Such people stated the view that for a child to be disciplined he must feel pain in his body.

## METHODS OF DISCIPLINE USED

Caning was the most common method of discipline reported. Other methods of discipline used include:

- ◆ denial of food
- ◆ verbal reprimand, especially warning, scolding and abusing
- ◆ giving manual work
- ◆ talking to child
- ◆ looking at the child sternly
- ◆ threatening the child
- ◆ training the child to behave well
- ◆ taking child to the chief
- ◆ forgiving the child
- ◆ slapping
- ◆ pinching/pulling ears
- ◆ punching
- ◆ kicking
- ◆ biting
- ◆ burning
- ◆ beating with slippers
- ◆ beating with nearest objects
- ◆ order child to remain in the house

In the focus group discussions, parents did not come out strongly to say that they used obviously abusive methods of discipline. When they mentioned them, most of the time it was used by “somebody they know”. Although caning is the most commonly used method of discipline, a number of parents would warn first, then cane if child repeats a mistake they are already warned about.

## **PERSONS WHO SHOULD ADMINISTER PUNISHMENT**

Many respondents were of the opinion that a child should be punished by the mother since she spends much time with the child; others mentioned were the father or any elderly person or a relative present at the time the child commits the offence or mistake. Single mothers said, as expected that the mother should discipline the child. Married mothers also said they should play a key role in punishment since they spend most of the time with the child. Fathers interviewed expressed the view that the mother who is likely to be present at the time of offence should discipline the child, but majority of fathers said that they would be involved in disciplinary action if the offence was major enough to be reported to them.

Not many parents mentioned the teacher spontaneously when asked who should discipline the child.

## **PERCEIVED PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE**

Majority of the participants said the purpose of discipline is to make a child have good behaviour which would enable the child to fit well in the society and would lead the child to a good future. There was much similarity in response from the various groups: single mother, married mothers, men or grand parents.

## **WHEN DISCIPLINE SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED**

Most people said that punishment should be given at the time the mistake is done. A few remembered to mention that discipline should start when the child is young so that the child grows up knowing what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour and should continue until the child is old enough to know right and wrong.

## **SITUATIONS THAT WARRANT PUNISHMENT**

A large proportion of parents felt that punishment should be given for every wrong-doing of the child. Others said that punishment should not be given too often otherwise the child gets used to punishment and becomes very difficult to control. They said that sometimes one may cane, other times give manual work, other times warn, and other times just forgive, especially if the offence is minor. A number of parents expressed that they would warn the child first, then punish

if the child repeats the same mistake. A few would warn severally before caning the child.

## **WHAT IS CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF PUNISHMENT**

Parents mentioned that there is no standard measure of “enough punishment”.

Majority felt they would punish enough to make child realise their wrong-doing but not enough to harm the child. Some parents said they would cane until they feel it is enough, or until their anger subsided.

Some parents said “a few strokes of the cane on the bottom of a child lying down” is appropriate amount of punishment. A large number said punishment is not enough until the child asks for forgiveness.

Some parents said that you should cane the child until he realises his/her mistake, “*unagonga kichwa chake mpaka asikie moto*”, you knock his/her head until he/she feels hot.

The amount of punishment will depend on the age of the child and how annoyed the parent is. Some of these parents felt that punishment is not enough until the child has been injured, evidenced by swelling, bruising, bleeding or fracture. Such parents believed that that is the surest way of getting the child out of bad behaviour. One such a parent mentioned that he could use a panga to cut the child, or a hoe (jembe) to dig the head, or a hammer to smash the nails of the

offending child. Other parents in this group felt that these disciplinary measures mentioned by one of them were too extreme.

## **WHAT THIS COMMUNITY CONSIDERS EXCESSIVE PUNISHMENT**

Even though they did not quite agree on how much punishment is appropriate, the participants mentioned that punishment is excessive if it causes injury to the child evidenced by bleeding, fractures, swelling, unconsciousness or death. If a child was beaten enough to require medical treatment, that is excessive. Some parents did not think that bruises and swelling should be included under excessive punishment as they occurred frequently when they caned children.

Other forms of excessive punishment mentioned include:

- ◆ denial of food
- ◆ locking the child outside at night
- ◆ biting with teeth
- ◆ pouring a bucket of water on the child
- ◆ strangling the child
- ◆ kicking the child
- ◆ dashing the child on the ground
- ◆ beating a child all the time even for minor mistakes
- ◆ limping of a child following punishment
- ◆ beating till the child cannot cry.

## **PERCEIVED MEANING OF CHILD ABUSE**

Most participants in these focus groups said they know about child abuse and even said that it is common in their community. Some of the perceived meanings are:

- ◆ causing injury or hurting a child in the name of discipline, e.g. mother burning her own child for stealing, which they said is a common practice.
- ◆ parents refusing to provide necessities for their children e.g. food, clothing or education.
- ◆ parents chasing the child away or making the child run away through their actions or extreme hostility or mistreating the child. This they said has led to a number of children running to the streets and becoming street children.
- ◆ denying a child food for several days.
- ◆ beating a child excessively and for every minor offence.

## **DETERMINANTS OF AMOUNT OF PUNISHMENT**

To the majority, amount of punishment depended on the seriousness of the offence and the amount of anger. Some parents mentioned that the age of the child also determined how much punishment could be meted out.

# **HYPOTHETICAL CASE SCENARIOS**

## **1. Discipline administered to a child who has stolen**

Majority of parents said they would cane or beat the child thoroughly, some said they would not only cane but threaten to take the child to jail, or hand the child over to the chief or police. Some parents would warn sternly, others would deny the child food while one parent advised that such a child should not be given sweet things and the shopkeeper should not sell any sweets or any other delicacies to the child.

## **2. Punishment given in common child offences e.g. refusal to go when sent (disobedience) fighting and rudeness**

One parent said he would slap, cane, warn and lock the child outside for sometime. The majority of parents said they would cane the disobedient child and force the child to go wherever the child had been sent. Some mentioned that for the fighting child, they would cane all children involved in the fight while rudeness was largely punished by caning and/or denial of food.



### **3. Discipline given to children with tendency to wander from home e.g. to the streets**

Parents mentioned various strategies which included:

Giving them work to keep them busy at home, denying the child money, constantly warning the child, caning the child thoroughly. One participant suggested that parents should work together to get their children from the streets. Some parents suggested that such children should be taken to boarding schools, approved schools or be sent to stay in the rural home, while others said they would hand them over to the police.

Even though parents mentioned the various strategies they could employ, some mentioned that for children, whom they had lost to the streets, nothing they did ever seemed to succeed in getting the child to fit again in the home. A number of them mentioned strategies which would keep the child away for long periods of time, e.g. boarding school, approved school or rural home.

#### **4. Punishment given for common teenage offences e.g. coming home late, abusing drugs, pregnancy, etc.**

For the teenagers coming home late in the night, some parents especially the mothers said they would find out why and counsel the child appropriately. Others had a radical stand, they would lock the child outside, or send back to wherever the child has come from or beat thoroughly. A few parents mentioned that they would take such children to the police or chief. For children/adolescents smoking bhang or abusing other drugs, majority of parents mentioned that they would hand such children over to the chief. Some parents said they would leave them alone and hope that children would reform on their own. A few who were Christians said they would pray for the children and involve the pastors in counselling. For the pregnant teenage girl, majority of these parents had a gentle approach, they would receive her peacefully, allow her to go through pregnancy and delivery, take the child and try to get the girl back to school. Meanwhile they would get more information regarding the 'father' of the coming baby. Only a few parents mentioned that they would chase the girl away.

#### **5. Discipline given to child losing items at school**

Most parents found it normal for children to lose things like pencils at school and they just warned the child and bought another. Others felt they must cane a child who continues to lose things at school. One participant felt strongly that it is

parents who should be trained not to allow their children to come home with stolen strange things, this way children will stop stealing.

## **6. Discipline given to a bedwetting child**

Most parents felt that children should not be beaten for bedwetting, but rather trained to pass urine before going to bed from when they are young. Some parents advised that such children should not be given fluids at night. Other parents felt that the children should be left alone, as they would stop with time. From the Luo community, parents used threats of tying a snake round the waist of a bedwetting child and at times took the skin of a molted snake and carried out the threat. This however was no lasting solution despite the great psychological trauma caused to the child.

# KEY PERSONS INTERVIEWS

## 1. Perceived meaning of child discipline

*All the six key informants gave definitions to the effect that child discipline means correcting and/or training a child so that the child grows up into a responsible person knowing right from wrong, enabling the child to be acceptable in the society.*

The specific description as narrated by the informants are as shown below:

- Child discipline refers to method of correcting and maintaining proper behaviour, attaining socially acceptable standards of honesty, morality and conscientiousness (medical doctor).
  
- Child discipline is the means of correcting a child in such a way that the child grows up to a responsible person knowing right from wrong, enabling child to be acceptable in the society (clinical officer).
  
- Child discipline is the teaching, instructing or tutoring a child, not necessarily punishing; or training a child to be a learner of you as the teacher or parent or guardian.

- It is the training of mind and character, to produce self control and habits of obedience (primary school teacher). - Child discipline is the training of a child's emotions, actions and personal feelings so that the child has self discipline under any given circumstances (nursery school teacher and headmistress).
- Child discipline refers to the whole process of helping children to develop self-control: putting limits, correcting misbehaviour, guiding, counselling and encouraging children to feel good about themselves, teaching them to think for themselves. It is a walk (child counsellor).
- Child discipline refers to counselling a child to grow up into a good responsible adult (assistant chief). Some of these definitions sounded very rich and the author reported them as they were said by the various key informants.

## **2. Persons who should administer punishment**

All the six informants said that children should be punished by their parents. Four of them said that guardians should also punish wrong-doing in a child under their custody. Three out of six mentioned teachers, two mentioned any mature and responsible person around at the time the offence is committed, others mentioned include the church and the society. The child counsellor mentioned

that anybody more responsible than the child or who knows the child well may administer punishment.

**KEY INFORMANTS VIEW ON PERSONS WHO SHOULD ADMINISTER PUNISHMENT**

CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER OF RESPONSES <small>N=6</small>
Parent	6
Guardian	4
Teachers	3
Any mature/responsible person around at the time of mistake	2
Church	1
Society	1

**3. When discipline should be administered**

All the six key informants reported that discipline or punishment should be administered promptly for example, giving punishment immediately after the wrong-doing. Rewards likewise should come shortly after the desired or good *behaviour*. *One informant mentioned that discipline should be started when the child is young. He said that if you teach a child what is right when he is young, when he grows up he will not depart from it. One key informant said that one should only administer punishment after a child defies a warning.*

**4. How discipline should be administered**

The informants had different views on how discipline should be administered. One said that administration of discipline should depend on the type of frequency of offence done.

The doctor emphasised that discipline must be graduated as follows:

- i) Verbal - clear expression to the child of what is wrong;
- ii) Temporary withdrawal of privileges;
- iii) Definite measurable and acceptable application of the cane, to be done in a firm but kind manner. The child should know that he is being punished for his deeds and not his person.

Three of the key informants emphasised that punishment should be administered with love. The primary school teacher was quite categorical. She said that discipline should be administered by taking a firm stand at the appropriate time and acting. She said that a teacher or parent must gain and maintain respect, set limits, teach reason and obedience, so long as it is not attacking the self image or self respect of the child. She concurred with others that discipline should be administered with a lot of love, indiscriminatively and sparingly. The child counsellor mentioned that the person concerned with the discipline has to understand the child's development and discipline must be administered according to the kind of problem. The administrator's stand was clear. He said that discipline should be administered by lashing severally with a belt or "*kiboko ya Kimaasai*". He reported that at times he would tie the child on the roof and lash with the belt. He however said that when children did good he rewarded them e.g. with a trip to the game park, hotel, etc.

## **5. Purpose of discipline**

Four out of six key informants noted that the purpose of discipline was to correct misbehaviour, train a child and help him/her grow into a responsible person. One informant said the purpose of discipline is to let the child realise his/her mistake in order to obtain remorse, change of behaviour and control of the situation. Two of the informants emphasised that the purpose of discipline is to train a child into self government or to help the child become a self-regulating person, while one informant said the purpose of discipline is to make children respect mankind.

## **6. How often a child should be punished**

Two out of six key informants said the punishment should be occasional, only where non-punitive measures fail. Other two informants said that a child should be punished when he/she repeats what he/she is already warned about or when the child commits a major offence. The primary school teacher said “you come to punish when the child deliberately challenges your parental or training authority in a defiant way”. The child counsellor reminded the researcher that a child needs not be punished but disciplined, the frequency of punishment would depend on type and frequency of wrong-doings.



## **7. What is considered appropriate amount of punishment**

Like in the focus group discussions, there was no consensus of opinion on what appropriate amount of punishment is. Three out of six key informants (50%) said that appropriate amount of punishment is the minimum punishment that would make the child realise his/her mistake without causing harm to the child physically, emotionally or psychologically. A health worker mentioned that appropriate amount of punishment was any form of punishment which would not necessitate medical treatment and was justified according to the seriousness of offence and age of child. The nursery school teacher who maintained that any form of physical punishment is abusive said that denying a child something he/she really likes for a day is appropriate amount of punishment. The primary school teacher added that appropriate amount of punishment is enough that would not make a child feel disliked or not respected enough for a child's safety given at the right time with a right attitude.

The child counsellor said that in case of caning, a child should not get more than three strokes. He said that spanking is not useful because it does not teach children how to change and what to do. Instead guidance and counselling, praise and reward would help to shape the child's character and encourage good behaviour.

## **8. What is considered as excessive punishment**

Three informants said that any punishment which causes trauma whether physical or psychological is excessive. Two of these named examples of excessive punishment which included: burning, cutting a child, starving, beating till child bleeds, gets fractures or any injuries requiring medical attention. Examples of excessive punishment given by the nursery school teacher included: making a child kneel down for hours, making a child stand in a corner for hours or any form of physical punishment including beating or denial of food. Both teachers agreed that indiscriminate caning is excessive punishment and entails child abuse. Excessive punishment, one teacher added, was one which inflicted pain, harm or permanent hatred. The counsellor advised that anybody who is very angry should not beat a child.

## **9. Perceived meaning of child abuse**

All the six informants mentioned excessive caning or excessive corporal punishment as a form of child abuse. The definition of child abuse however was slightly different from one person to the other and included the following;

- taking advantage of children's relative innocence and ignorance;
- misuse of children by exposing them to heavy work (child labour);
- any form of physical or mental torture, or sexual harassment or negligence on parents side leading children to running away from homes to the streets.

- any form of punishment: physical, mental or emotional that would mar a child for life;
- denying children their rights and taking advantage of them or punishing to half-death or death;
- any act by a person, group or society designed to inflict harm on a child or prevent him/her from realising normal growth and development.

#### **10. Determinants of amount of punishment given to a child**

Three out of six said that the amount of punishment administered would depend on seriousness of mistake or offence. This is similar to the majority opinion in household survey and focus group discussions. Two key informants said amount of punishment also depended on age of child. The chief and the nursery headteacher said that how much punishment a child received would depend on the level of discipline already attained by the child. Other determinants of amount of punishment mentioned by the informants included: frequency of offence, health of child, environment, mental stability and whether mistake is deliberate or accidental. The child counsellor said that the amount of punishment would depend on the impact of the previous punishment, if the previous punishment did not help modify behaviour, think of a different mode of discipline for example, counselling or use of praise or reward.

## **11. Other modes of discipline apart from caning or beating**

Half of the key informants mentioned guidance and counselling as an important alternative to caning. Other modalities of discipline mentioned which can be used apart from caning include: warning, temporary withdrawal of specific privileges, correction of whatever was damaged with parent participation, keeping the child housebound over the weekend, stopping child from watching of favourite programmes on television, withholding birthday or Christmas gifts and assigning of compulsory chores. One informant emphasised the use of positive reinforcement to encourage good behaviour for example, use of praise and reward, encouraging children to feel good about themselves and think for themselves.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

There are no studies done locally which have systematically outlined people's perception of child discipline. A few studies have been done on views and awareness of child abuse and neglect though most of these studies still remain unpublished (Onyango, 1993; Onyango, 1994). These studies have utilised both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, each of which have their limitations. Studies which have applied the quantitative method in most cases prompt responses which means that the researcher might influence the respondents. In this research the qualitative study gave a general overview of the disciplinary techniques used in the study area, the circumstances in which they were administered, and what the community regarded as excessive discipline or child abuse. The validity of the information was tested in the quantitative study or household survey. The responses in the survey were not prompted in order to avoid influencing the results. These two approaches were complimentary and were used to minimise the limitations of each other.

*The findings of this study cannot be generalised to the national level but they do give an indication of what the local community perceives child discipline to be, an understanding which will be useful in developing strategies to reduce physical*

child abuse in the name of discipline. In this study three different ethnic groups were used: two southern Nilotes (Luo, Nubi) and one Bantu (Luhya). There were tremendous similarities in their perception and practice of discipline. It would however be interesting to conduct the same study in rural environments.

In this study, 70% of the study population had appropriate perception of the meaning of child discipline, it involved showing love and praising the child for good behaviour but punishing wrong-doing. Twenty percent of this study population understood child discipline to mean beating a child whenever he/she does wrong, an understanding which is likely to lead to excessive caning/beating which is child abuse. In Focus Group Discussion such advocates of caning went ahead to explain that there is no discipline without caning. They maintained that a child cannot be disciplined unless he/she felt pain in his/her body. In her study conducted both in urban and rural set ups, Onyango found that beating of children was the commonest mentioned behaviour by both children, general public and opinion leaders which constituted child abuse (Onyango, 1993; Onyango, 1994).

What came out as the main objective of discipline was to correct children and train children to have good behaviour with the hope that they would grow into responsible adults. However, for some parents the main purpose of discipline was to punish a child and make the child suffer to the maximum or make the child know who is in charge (12%), an attitude likely to lead to child abuse.

Regarding acceptable persons to mete out punishment, the respondents, majority of whom were mothers (73%) said that the mother should play the biggest role in meting out punishment (62%) since she spends most of her time with the child and witnesses most of the child's wrong-doings. Other persons mentioned include father (47%), teacher (22%), maid (4%), relatives (12%) and whoever is around the time of the offence (57%).

In line with this, parents said that punishment should be administered at the time the child does wrong (75%). The modes of discipline used in the study community were diverse. Power assertive modes of punishment were more often applied than love oriented techniques. Caning was the most commonly used method of discipline. This is similar to findings by Ominde among the Luo who noted that whipping was the most commonly used method of discipline (Ominde, 1952). A study done among the Kikuyu in 1974 by Guchu similarly showed that "beating" was the disciplinary technique most commonly employed. Other methods of *discipline used ranged from non-abusive to obviously abusive methods of discipline*, with the potentially abusive techniques lying somewhere in between. These included slapping, pinching, verbal reprimand, pulling ears and denying of food which were among the most commonly used methods. The obviously abusive methods of discipline used included kicking, punching, stoning, using sharp objects, burning, cutting with razor, hanging on the roof and strangling among others, reported by 12.6% of the study population. Only 3% used verbal reprimand most commonly. In this study, caning was only classified as abusive if it was used enough to cause actual physical injury evidenced by bruising, bleeding, fractures or

other injury. When the same study population was asked to say the methods of discipline used by their neighbours, 55% reported on neighbours using obviously abusive methods of disciplining children which included hitting the child with a stool, club, stone, kicking, biting, cutting hand, denying food, hitting the head against the wall or floor, tying feet on the roof with head hanging down, lashing child to fainting point and strangling the child as reflected in List I. Use of counselling as a way of instilling discipline was found to be minimal. Members of the three communities - Luo, Luhya and Nubi reported very similar experiences with their neighbours. Some abusive physical methods as revealed from this study have also been reported from other parts of Africa e.g. applying pepper on the eyes or genitals of a disobedient child among Ghanaians (KAYE, 1962), tying disobedient child to a tree with a rope (Raum, 1940, Levine 1966), suspending the disobedient child over a smoking fire until he/she chokes (Raum, 1940), deprivation of food among the Gusii in Kenya and Chagga of Tanzania (Raum 1940, Levine 1966).

In this study, parents/guardians reported their use of non-physical but obviously abusive forms of child discipline like chasing the child away from home, locking up the child in the house or cupboard or locking the child out at night. This compares with practices among the Ghanaians and Tanzanians who place the disobedient child in a bag of nettles or lizards, frogs or snails, (Raum 1940, Kaye 1962), or with the Gusii in Kenya who sent the disobedient child out of the house naked during broad daylight (Levine 1966). In this study, any disciplinary technique was used depending on the severity of the offence according to the



parent/guardian, but burning as a disciplinary technique was used specifically on children found stealing and was believed to be a lasting solution to the problem. Even though it was recognised as excessive disciplinary measure, burning is a common practice in this community as revealed by Focus Group Discussions, yet only 6% in the household survey confessed to having burnt their children. The researcher was called by the community to witness one case of a child who had just been burnt by an iron-box in every part of the body: head, face, neck, limbs, trunk, buttocks up to the sole of the feet. The child burnt was a six year old child in standard one accused by her mother of stealing ten shillings (10/-) and using it to buy pancakes. The enraged mother lit an iron-box and burnt her child in the manner described above.

The mother was a 24 year old housewife of primary school education, whose husband was a casual labourer in a factory. She had five children in total, the youngest were twins aged one year. When the researcher interviewed her she admitted that she was under stress, taking care of these five children with barely enough money to feed them. She was sufficiently counselled and handed over to a social worker for follow up while child was admitted to hospital. Excessive punishment was openly reported suggesting that it is well acceptable by the study community.

The participants in this study were asked to indicate at what point they would stop caning or when they thought the child was sufficiently punished. Forty percent stopped when the child begged for forgiveness, 20% stopped when they (parents)

felt that punishment was enough, while 15% of the people interviewed did not stop until the child was injured as evidenced by bleeding, bruising, swellings, fractures, fainting etc. Some of the parents went ahead to make their point very clear: “When I start beating a child I do not stop until somebody stops me.” What worried the researcher was the fate of such a child if indeed there was no one to stop the parent. Another parent openly declared that he can never stop caning until he sees blood.

Results of this study are in many ways comparable with those found by Tigest Ketsela and Derege Kebede in Ethiopia in 1997. They researched on physical punishment of Elementary School Children in Urban and Rural Communities in Ethiopia. Unlike our study where parents and guardians were the interviewees, in the Ethiopian study they interviewed children, the actual recipients of discipline. Seventy nine percent of the urban and 76% of rural subjects in the Ethiopian study reported some form of physical punishment. Similarly the Kenyan study revealed an overwhelming use of physical punishments. In our Kenyans study conducted in the urban slums, we found that mothers were expected to play the biggest role in disciplining the child since they spend most of their time with children. Similarly in the Ethiopian study, it was noted that in urban areas, mothers played the greatest role in punishing their children, while in the rural communities there was expectation of teachers to play a role in molding the children’s behaviour.

In our Kenyan study, only 22% of parents/guardians mentioned the teacher as an acceptable person to mete out punishment, compared to 62% who mentioned the mother. In the Ethiopian study, like in our Kenyan study, majority of the children

were punished by whipping or caning. In the Ethiopian study where the researcher examined the school-children, close to 21% of the urban and 65% of the rural respondents had skin bruises or swelling due to inflicted punishment. In our Kenyan study where we only questioned parents/guardians, 12.6% of them volunteered use of obviously abusive physical methods of discipline, which may well be the 'tip of the iceberg' as many parents may not readily volunteer such information. Fifteen per cent of the parents admitted that they would not stop beating their children until the children are injured, evidenced by swelling, bruises, bleeding or other injury. It is possible that if this study was conducted on children the prevalence of injured children following punishment would be much higher than what parents said.

In this study participants were asked what they considered as excessive child discipline which would constitute child abuse. All the parents interviewed knew at least one sign of excessive discipline but only 8% mentioned caning as a method that could cause excessive discipline. They, however, mentioned that methods leading to excessive discipline include those which can cause bleeding (55%) bruising (33%) swelling (36%) fractures (42%) fainting (64%) child running away from home (35%) death (63%) use of dangerous tools (1.3%) and other physical injuries (11%).

In Onyango's study both in urban and rural setting, where she tried to find out more about awareness of child abuse and neglect, both children, and the general public pointed out that behaviours which constitute serious child abuse include beating,

deprivation of food and deprivation of education but the order was different depending on who was being interviewed. According to the children, beating of children was the most serious form of child abuse followed by deprivation of food and deprivation of education. According to the public, beating of children came third after food deprivation and deprivation of education. According to opinion leaders, beating of children did not even feature as a form of child abuse, instead they mentioned deprivation of education, deprivation of food and sexual molestation as constituting the most serious forms of child abuse.

In this study, parents, guardians and key persons were interviewed. In the interview of parents/guardians, beating of children is only considered abusive if it causes physical injury evidenced by bleeding, bruising, swelling and fractures. In the focus group discussion, parents said that if a child was punished enough to require medical treatment then that was considered excessive punishment.

Like Onyango's study, participants of the focus group discussions recognised denial of food as a serious form of child abuse, but deprivation of education was mentioned by only a few people. Other abusive methods of discipline considered excessive by participants of FGD, included locking the child outside at night, biting with teeth, pouring a bucket of cold water on the child, strangling the child, kicking, dashing the head on the wall or floor, beating until the child cannot cry or until the child walks with a limp.

The key informants in this study differed in their view of excessive discipline. Five of the six key informants mentioned that any punishment that would cause physical, emotional or psychological trauma is excessive punishment. One informant who happened to be of white race and a teacher of nursery school children maintained that any form of physical punishment was abusive. Her list of excessive punitary measures included making a child stand in a corner for hours, or kneel for hours, or denial of food or beating of a child. In that school in which she was the headmistress she largely used positive reinforcement to shape the behaviour of the children like drawing stars in the books or back of hands when they did well, giving sweets etc. She punished when the child became completely unruly, by putting the child in isolation, talking to the child and hearing from the child. At home she punished her children by denying them something they really like for example, a chance to watch their best programme on television, or denying them a birthday treat. Even though the administrator used power assertive and at times abusive methods like tying a child on the roof and lashing with a belt, he at times used positive reinforcement like taking children out to the game park or hotel when they behaved well. This compares with positive reinforcement used by the Chagga whereby a child who behaved well was given a calabash of milk, adolescent girls were given hens to keep and young men were given goats. (Raum,1940).

All the key informants gave descriptions of child discipline to the effect that child discipline entailed all the methods that are used to instruct, train and correct a child, helping the child to have good behaviour which would enable the child to grow

into a responsible adult. The uniqueness of the different descriptions as given by key informants from different fields is preserved in the text.

In their description of child abuse, all the six key informants mentioned excessive physical punishment as a form of child abuse. Two of the six mentioned taking advantage of children's relative innocence and ignorance as constituting child abuse. Among the things mentioned as examples of child abuse are: any form of physical or mental torture, sexual harassment or negligence of the child, misuse of children by exposing them to heavy work (child labour), denying children their rights, any act by a person group or society designed to inflict harm on a child or prevent him/her from realising normal growth and development.

*Parents/guardians in this study were asked about the expected outcome in children subjected to excessive punishment. 53% said the children would run away from home, usually to the streets, 30% said the children would develop ill health, 6% said the children would commit suicide, 35% said the child would become immune to punishment, while 32% said the child would become withdrawn. 3.3% said the child would become well behaved.*

Even though some of these parents disciplined their children excessively, 97% of them knew that the outcome of excessive discipline was not good. Only 3.3% thought that a child who is excessively disciplined becomes well behaved.

The study participants were asked to mention factors which led parents to give excessive punishments to their children. The contributory factors mentioned included poverty and domestic tension (46%), indiscipline on part of the children: “difficult children” (44%) ignorance and illiteracy on the part of parent (9%) “foster” mother (6.5%), drunkenness (3.3%), peer pressure (3.3%), culture (1%) and the devil (1%). This compares with studies done by Onyango in 1994. In both the rural and urban areas, she found that factors contributing to child abuse included;

- ◆ economic related problems facing families;
- ◆ ignorance of the rights of the child;
- ◆ irresponsible parenthood attributed to alcohol;
- ◆ family conflicts and instability and
- ◆ emotional mental problems.

In her interview of the general public in Nairobi during the 1994 study, the respondents were of the view that physical abuses are mainly caused by economic problems of poverty in the families (mentioned by 27%), emotional problems (mentioned by 23%) and indiscipline on the part of the children (mentioned by 15%). In this study indiscipline on the part of the children was mentioned by 44% of the participants as a factor making parents mete out excessive measures of discipline.

In this study, parents were asked to state the methods they used to discipline. The methods they mentioned were mainly physical, power assertive modes of discipline. Twelve point six percent of them mentioned the use of disciplinary methods that were obviously abusive. The researcher, presuming possibility of lack of honesty in confessing use of abusive methods for fear of victimisation, asked the same respondents which methods of discipline were used by their neighbours. The difference was marked as 55% of them mentioned that their neighbours use obviously abusive methods of discipline. It could well be that this is close to the truth of what actually happens, given that the parents now talked freely without guilt feelings or fear of intimidation. Still, the difference in percentage may be invalid as several respondents may be talking about the same neighbours' child whom they saw being battered. Whichever the case may be, the prevalence of child abuse resulting from excessive discipline is likely to be above the 12.6% which was voluntarily confessed by the respondents. The researcher feels that a study on children to include physical examination of children following punishment may be more revealing. As the direct recipients of discipline, children may describe more accurately how punishment is metered out to them, and examination would reveal evidence of abuse including bleeding, swellings, bruises or scars depending on how soon after punishment the child is examined. A study on parents in the rural set up, away from the stress of urban slums may reveal different results.



## CONCLUSIONS

1. Majority of parents/guardians have appropriate perception of the meaning and objective of discipline; however, one fifth of the population report child discipline practices likely to lead to child abuse.
2. The modes of discipline used are mainly power assertive types, more of physical than non-physical, the commonest being caning. The type of punishment used depends on severity of offence. Prevalence of physical child abuse resulting from use of excessive measures of discipline is high.
3. Most parents/guardians know about child abuse and what constitutes excessive discipline which include disciplinary measures which lead to bleeding, bruising, swelling, fainting and fractures. They recognised that excessive discipline is detrimental to the child.
4. The key informants used in the study were knowledgeable in issues of child *discipline and child abuse*.
5. Whereas the majority of the study population had good knowledge, prevalence of abusive practice of discipline was unacceptably high.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of this study it is recommended that;

1. Health education be given to parents, guardians and caretakers to;
  - i) *enhance their knowledge on appropriate* child disciplinary measures; more so to reach the 20% with inappropriate perception.
  - ii) enhance their knowledge on child abuse;
  - iii) emphasise the negative effects of excessive disciplinary measures on the growth and development of the child.
2. A similar study should be conducted on children as the recipients of discipline.
3. A study should be conducted to find out why there is a discrepancy between good knowledge and practice with particular focus on the risk factors for child abuse.
4. A study should be conducted on perceptions of discipline in rural set-ups.

# APPENDIX I

For instance a chart of responsibilities and desired behaviour may be drawn to teach children between 4-6 years to be responsible as shown.

## "MY JOBS" - CHILD 4 TO 6 YRS

NOVEMBER 1 2 3 4 5 6...30

1. I brushed my teeth without being told.
2. I straightened my bed without being told.
3. I picked up my clothes without being told.
4. I emptied the dustbin without being told.
5. I obeyed Mummy today.
6. I obeyed Daddy today.
7. I said my prayers tonight.
8. I was kind to my brother/sister today.
9. I said "thank you" and "please" today.
10. I went to bed last night without complaining.
11. I gave clean water to the dog today.
12. I went to bath without delay today.
13. I washed my hands when I came from the toilet.
14. I completed my homework today.

(Dobson, 1988)

## APPENDIX II

TABLE I

Some documented case reports from Mass Media in East Africa mainly Uganda and Kenya in the recent past

1.	A 15 year old standard eight pupil of the Githunguchu Primary School in Kenya collapsed and died minutes after a caning meted out by three teachers. (The Daily Nation, Friday, July 19, 1996)
2.	A five year old Ugandan girl spent most of her last 3 years tethered to a bedstand at home all day as her parents went out for work. She was mentally handicapped and her parents feared she would wander off and get lost.
3.	A matron, annoyed by a primary school child who addressed her by a nickname punished the child by pouring 8 basins of cold water on him at night and made him sleep outside naked and cold till morning. (Child-Link - ANPPCAN UGANDA)
4.	A business woman caused grievous harm to her 14 year old housemaid who she suspected to be having sexual deals with her husband. (Daily Nation, Feb 10, 1996)
5.	In Uganda a Standard 7 pupil who left out a number in a class exercise received 21 strokes of the cane from every teacher and the headteacher until he became unconscious. When taken for treatment to the school nurse the nurse refused to treat him because she does not "treat stroked bottoms". (CHILD-LINK ANPPCAN - UGANDA Testimony page 17)
6.	In Nakuru businesswoman was reported to have been biting her 14 year old housegirl as a form of punishment for eating her baby's food.(Daily Nation, Feb 7th, 1996)
7.	<i>A pupil at Buddo Junior School died after being kicked and beaten by his "friends". Another pupil died at Namityango after severe bullying.</i> (Child-Link, ANPPCAN - UGANDA)

# APPENDIX III

## RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY PERCEPTION OF CHILD DISCIPLIN AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO CHILD ABUSE

### QUESTIONNAIRE I

#### BIODATA

1. NAME OF INTERVIEWEE ..... TRIBE .....  
VILLAGE .....
2. Sex: Female..... Male.....
3. RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD:
  - FATHER
  - MOTHER
  - GUARDIAN
  - AYAH
4. MARITAL STATUS :
  - SINGLE
  - MARRIED
  - DIVORCED
  - WIDOWED
5. AGE OF INTERVIEWEE:  
  - a) • Less than 26 yrs ( $\leq 25$ )
  - b) • 26 - 35 yrs
  - c) • 36 - 45 yrs
  - d) • 46 - 55 yrs
  - e) • over 55 yrs
6. WHAT IS YOUR OCCUPATION?  
  - a) • Employed
  - b) • Self Employed
  - c) • Unemployed

7. WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION?

- a) No formal Education
- b) Adult classes only
- c) Primary Education
- d) Secondary Education
- e) College and above

8. DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN? - YES  
- NO

9. WHAT ARE THE AGES OF YOUR CHILDREN?

- a) Below 6 years
- b) 6-11 years
- c) 12-18 years
- d) Over 18 years

10. DO YOU DISCIPLINE YOUR CHILDREN? - YES  
- NO

11. WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY CHILD DISCIPLINE?

	YES	NO
a) Beating of a child whenever he does wrong	...	...
b) Punishing a child occasionally when he commits a big offence.	...	...
c) Showing love and praising the child when he does good but punishing him when he does wrong	...	...
d) Leaving the child to do whatever he wants to do	...	...
e) Other (specify) .....		

12. WHO SHOULD DISCIPLINE A CHILD WHEN HE DOES A WRONG THING?

- a) The Father
- b) The Mother
- c) The Teacher (if child is school going)
- d) The Maid/Househelp
- e) Whoever is around at the time of offence (anybody)

f) Who else

13. WHEN SHOULD A CHILD BE DISCIPLINED?

- a) When the Father comes home
- b) At the time the offence is committed
- c) After the last meal of the day
- d) When there is no visitor
- e) When the parent is annoyed beyond control

14. HOW SHOULD YOU AS A PARENT (OR GUARDIAN) ADMINISTER DISCIPLINE?

- a) Cane the child for every offence
- b) Judge the weight of the offence then decide on the mode of discipline
- c) Verbal reprimand
- d) Forgive all the time
- e) Other (specify)

WHAT DO YOU USE WHEN ADMINISTERING DISCIPLINE?

- Cane
- Hand
- Other (specify) .....

15. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE PURPOSE OF DISCIPLINE?

- a) To punish the child
- b) To correct the child
- c) Make the child suffer to the maximum
- d) Make sure the child knows who is in charge
- e) Make the child grow into a responsible person

HOW DO YOUR NEIGHBOURS ADMINISTER DISCIPLINE?

.....  
.....  
.....

16. HOW OFTEN SHOULD A CHILD BE PUNISHED?

- a) Continuously
- b) Whenever he commits an offence
- c) After repeated offences

- d) Whenever the parent feels it should be done
- e) Occasionally for a big offence

17. WHICH METHOD HAVE YOU EVER USED TO CORRECT A CHILD?  
(TICK)

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Caning   | • Cursing                |
| • Slapping                                       | • Warning                |
| • Boxing   | • Scolding               |
| • Pinching                                       | • Denying food           |
| • Pulling/twisting ears                          | • Chasing from the house |
| • Kicking  |                          |
| • Biting   |                          |
| • Beating with nearest object                    |                          |
| • Burning of hand or the offending part of body. |                          |

18. WHICH METHOD DO YOU USE MOST COMMONLY?

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| • Caning          | • Scolding     |
| • Pinching        | • Abusing      |
| • Slapping        | • Denying food |
| • Other (Specify) |                |

19. a) WHEN DID YOU LAST PUNISH YOUR CHILD?

.....  
.....

b) WHAT DID THE CHILD DO AND HOW DID YOU PUNISH HIM/HER?

OFFENCE PUNISHMENT METED OUT AGE OF CHILD

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4



HOW DO YOU PUNISH A CHILD WHO HAS COMMITTED A MINOR OFFENCE?

.....  
.....  
.....

(Choose one child)

i) MAMA NJERI'S NEIGHBOUR FOUND HER CHILD STEALING MONEY.

- What do you think she should have done?

.....  
.....  
.....

\*\*Only for Parents of Teenagers (12-18 yrs)

ii) What would you do if your daughter or son CAME HOME V. LATE (after 10 p.m.)

- a) Scold him/her thoroughly
- b) Cane/beat him/her
- c) Send him/her back to wherever she/he came from
- d) Lock him/her out
- e) Counsel him/her
- f) Find out what happened
- g) Explain why it is wrong
- h) Other (specify) .....

23. WHICH METHOD WOULD YOU USE TO PUNISH THE FOLLOWING OFFENCES?

VERBAL BEAT REPRIMAND FORGIVE OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

- a) REFUSAL TO BE SENT \_\_\_\_\_
- b) REFUSAL TO FEED \_\_\_\_\_
- c) LOOSING PENCIL/BOOK AT SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

d) BREAKING A CUP OR PLATE

e) CHEATING

---

24. WHAT DETERMINES THE METHOD YOU USE TO PUNISH A CHILD?

- a) Seriousness of offence
- b) Sex of the child
- c) Age of the child
- d) Frequency of the offence
- e) Mood of the parent
- f) Time of the day

25. IS IT POSSIBLE TO DISCIPLINE A CHILD WELL WITHOUT CANING HIM?

- YES
- NO

26. FOR THE CHILD WHO HAS COMMITTED AN OFFENCE AND YOU DECIDE TO PUNISH, WHEN DO YOU STOP?

- a) .....
- b) .....
- c) .....
- d) .....
- e) Other (specify)

27. WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER AS EXCESSIVE CHILD DISCIPLINE?

When it causes:

- |                            |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a) Bleeding                | e) Fainting                     |
| b) Bruising                | f) Child running away from home |
| c) Swelling/scars/blisters | g) Death                        |
| d) Fractures               | h) Other (specify)              |

28. i) DO YOU KNOW ABOUT CHILD ABUSE?- YES

ii) WHEN DO YOU THINK DISCIPLINE IS OVERDONE?

.....  
.....  
.....

iii) WHAT HAVE YOU OBSERVED HAPPEN TO CHILDREN  
SUBJECTED  
TO EXCESSIVE PUNISHMENT?

.....  
.....  
.....

29. WHAT DETERMINES THE SEVERITY OF PUNISHMENT THAT  
YOU GIVE?

- a) Seriousness of offence
- b) Frequency of offence
- c) My mood (feelings)
- d) Time of the day

30. YOU HAVE SEEN SOME OF YOUR NEIGHBOURS  
OVERDISCIPLINE THEIR  
CHILDREN. WHAT ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTES TO THIS?

.....  
.....  
.....

31. WHEN DO YOU START ADMINISTERING PHYSICAL DISCIPLINE  
e.g. BEATING?

- a) Below age 1 year.
- b) Age 1-5 years.
- c) After 5 years.

32. AT WHAT AGE DO YOU STOP CANING/BEATING CHILDREN?

.....

.....

.....

# APPENDIX IV

## RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD DISCIPLINE AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHILD ABUSE

### QUESTIONNAIRE II (KEY PERSONS)

NAME :..... AGE:..... SEX:.....

OCCUPATION:.....

NAME OF INSTITUTION(WORK PLACE):..... RESIDENCE.....

ADDRESS :.....

TELEPHONE:.....

#### INSTRUCTIONS:

Kindly answer the following questions in the space provided or additional paper if space inadequate.

1. What do you understand by child discipline?

.....

.....

2. Who should discipline a child when he does wrong?

.....

.....

3. When should a child be disciplined?

.....

.....

4. How should discipline be administered?

.....  
.....

5. What is the purpose of disciplining a child?

.....  
.....

6. How often should a child be punished?

.....  
.....

7. What would you consider as appropriate amount of punishment?

.....  
.....

8. What would you consider as excessive punishment?

.....  
.....

9. What do you understand by child abuse?

.....  
.....

10. What should determine the amount of punishment given to a child?

.....  
.....

11. Which other modes of discipline can be used apart from caning or beating the child?

.....  
.....

12. What options are there for a child in whom beatings have failed to shape the character?

.....

.....

**RESEARCH ON  
COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD DISCIPLINE  
AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHILD ABUSE**

**TOPIC GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

1. Child discipline - the meaning.
2. Who should discipline the child.
3. When to discipline.
4. Mode/style of administration of discipline.
5. Purpose of child discipline.
6. Frequency of punishment (how often).
7. Quantity of punishment.
8. Excessive Punishment: What do you consider excessive punishment.
9. What is Child Abuse (physical).
10. Determinants of amount of a severity of punishment.
11. Other modes of discipline apart for physical punishment.
12. Hypothetical case scenarios:  
What would you do if you found your child:
  - a) STEALING YOUR MONEY
  - b) REFUSING TO OBEY YOU
  - c) TEENAGER COMING HOME LATE
  - d) LOSING THINGS e.g. PENCILS AT SCHOOL
  - e) LICKING SUGAR
  - f) BEDWETTING
  - g) FIGHTING WITH THE NEIGHBOURS CHILD



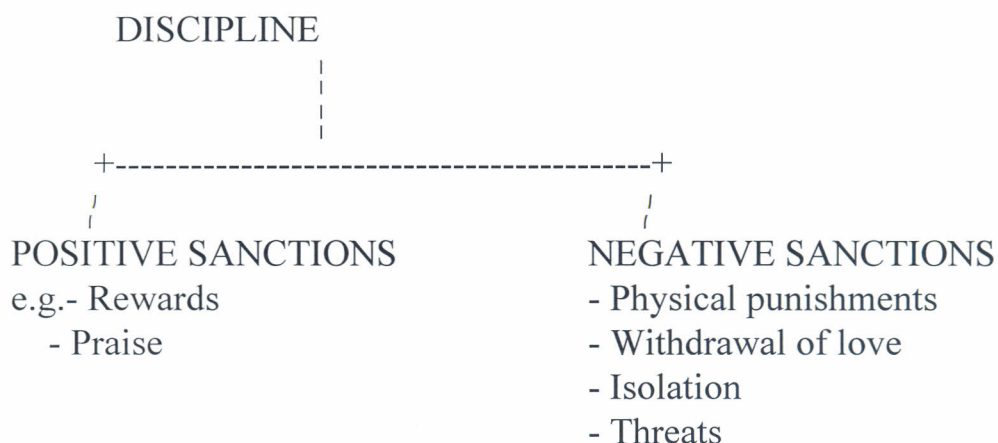
- h) GETTING PREGNANT (young girl)
- i) ANSWERING YOU RUDELY
- j) GOING TO BEG FOR MONEY IN THE STREET
- k) STARTING TO SMOKE BHANG (adolescent)

## APPENDIX V

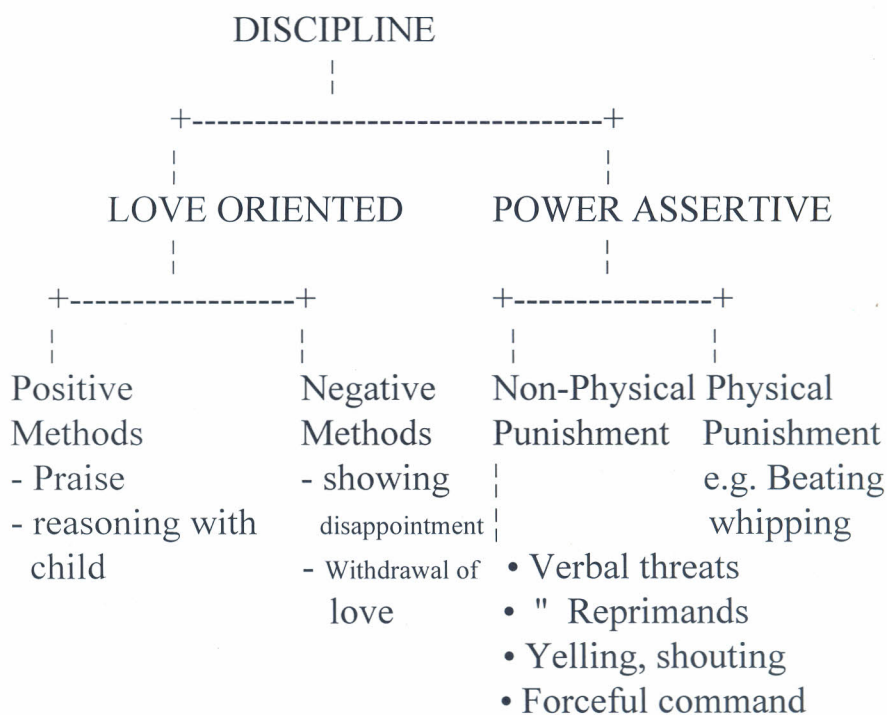
### SUMMARY OF DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES

Figure 1:

1. SEARS ET AL (1957)



2. BECKER (1964)



(4,5)

3. **PSYCHOLOGIST** (BULL, 1967) <sup>(6)</sup>  
**VIEW**

DISCIPLINE

⋮

+-----+

⋮

**PHYSICAL**

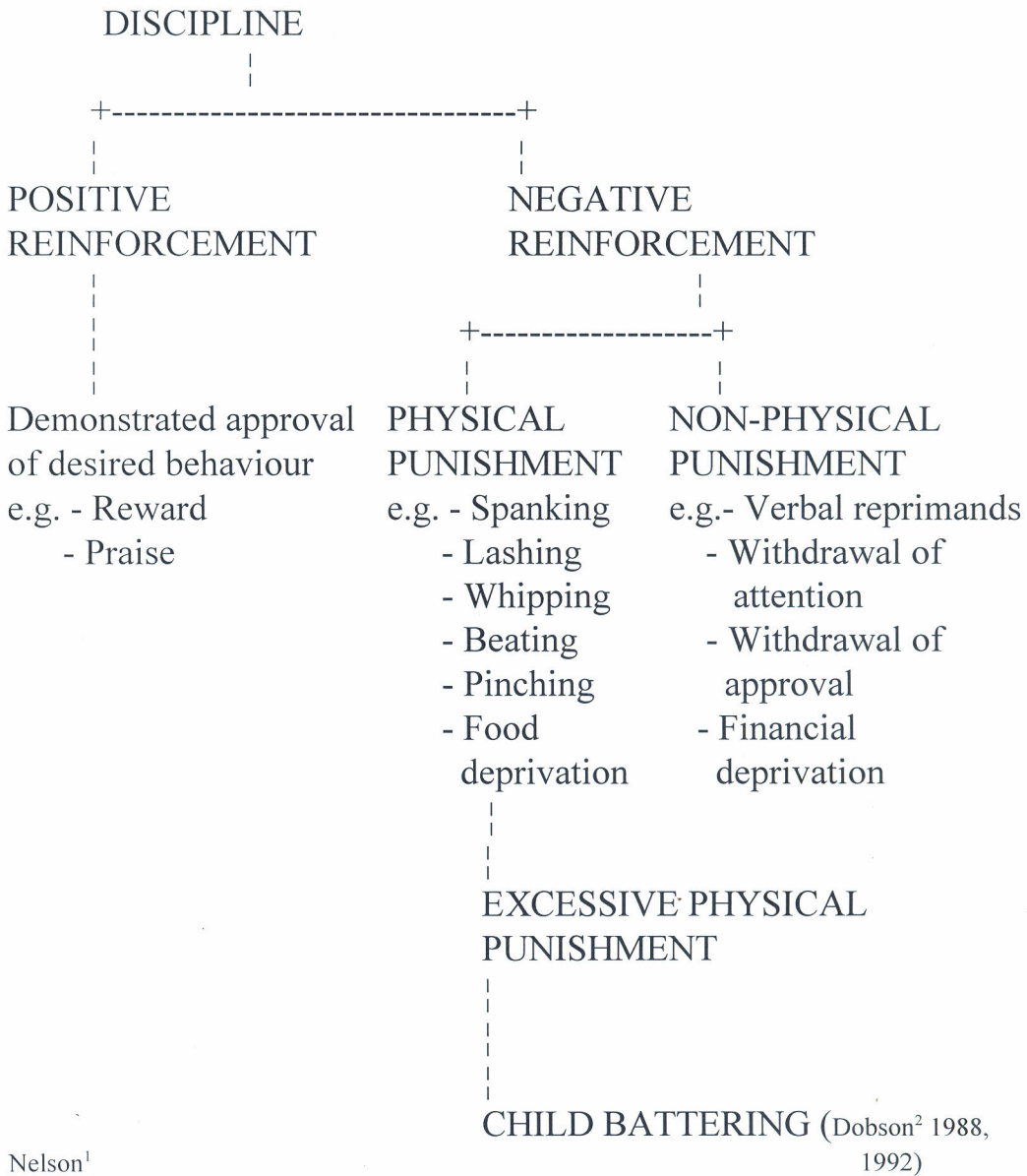
- Physical punishments
- Beating, slapping, whipping
- Deprivation of meals
- Withdrawal of privileges

⋮

**PSYCHOLOGICAL**

- Withdrawal of love
- Threats
- Isolation
- Expression of disappointment
- Yelling

4. Modified, combining most of the above (Dobson, 1988)



Nelson<sup>1</sup>

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