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# Survey of Students' Perceptions of Assertive Discipline and Restorative Discipline in American Christian Academy, Ibadan, Nigeria.

## **Abstract**

This action research study investigated the perceptions of students regarding two discipline methods, Restorative Discipline (RD) and Assertive Discipline (AD), at American Christian Academy, Nigeria. The total number of participants was sixty-six students from grades seven through nine. Participants were divided into two groups: grade seven (experimental group) and grades eight and nine (control group). The experimental group was exposed explicitly to the Restorative Discipline Method for four weeks while the control group continued to be exposed to the Assertive Discipline Method (the norm in the school). At the end of four weeks, both groups were given a questionnaire containing ten questions each for both discipline methods (RD and AD). A comparison of the responses within each group and between the groups was carried out. The results of the study suggested that the difference in perceptions of both groups to RD and AD was not statistically significant. There was also an indication that a blend of both discipline methods will benefit American Christian Academy.

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A Survey of Students' Perceptions of Assertive Discipline and Restorative Discipline in  
American Christian Academy, Ibadan, Nigeria.

by

Okunade, Adedayo Oladeji

(B.Sc. (ed) University of Agriculture, 1996)

Action Research Thesis  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Masters of Education

Department of Education  
Dordt College  
Sioux Center, Iowa  
(May, 2015)

A Survey of Students' Perceptions of Assertive Discipline and Restorative Discipline in  
American Christian Academy, Ibadan, Nigeria.

By

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### **Abstract**

This action research study investigated the perceptions of students regarding two discipline methods, Restorative Discipline (RD) and Assertive Discipline (AD), at American Christian Academy, Nigeria. The total number of participants was sixty-six students from grades seven through nine. Participants were divided into two groups: grade seven (experimental group) and grades eight and nine (control group). The experimental group was exposed explicitly to the Restorative Discipline Method for four weeks while the control group continued to be exposed to the Assertive Discipline Method (the norm in the school). At the end of four weeks, both groups were given a questionnaire containing ten questions each for both discipline methods (RD and AD). A comparison of the responses within each group and between the groups was carried out. The results of the study suggested that the difference in perceptions of both groups to RD and AD was not statistically significant. There was also an indication that a blend of both discipline methods will benefit American Christian Academy.

Students in secondary schools are still at the age of rapid physical, social, psychological and physiological development. This development is accompanied by a variety of changes. If not well attended to, these changes may lead to discipline issues which can negatively affect students' concentration on academic studies (Gitome, Katola, & Nyabwari, 2013). Findings from the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll indicate that discipline, or the lack thereof, is one of the greatest challenges facing public schools in the United States (Wesley, 2011). In 2011, parts of the report released by The Council of State Government Justice Center in partnership with the Public Policy Research Institute at Texas A&M University stated that about 54 percent of students experienced in-school suspension, which could be as brief as one period or as long as several consecutive days. Thirty-one percent of students experienced out-of-school suspension, which averaged two days per incident. Of all students who were suspended or expelled, 31 percent repeated their grade at least once. In contrast, only 5 percent of students with no disciplinary involvement were held back (The Council of State Government Justice Center, 2011, para. 5). As observed by Seifert and Vornberg in Nakpodia, (2010) "in order for a satisfactory climate to exist within a school, a certain level of discipline must exist" (p. 1).

By extension, therefore, a level of discipline must also exist in the classroom. Canter (1976) established that an assertive teacher has a discipline plan that clearly outlines expectations as well as positive and negative consequences in the classroom. From this view point, it is believed that with positive consequences for well-behaved students, and negative consequences for erring students, teachers will have better class control and management. Considering parts of the Council of State Government Justice Center (2011) report, suffice it to say, that while it may be true that having rules and regulations posted in the class works consistently for some students, it does not work for all students; rather, it causes the supposed "black sheep" students to become

more recalcitrant and eventually to get expelled. Jeffery and Jeffery (2011) stated that “a 10-minute conference will not bring repentance or significant change in the student’s attitude. He or she returns to the classroom bragging that nothing happened, emboldened in his or her rebellion” (p. 27). Kohn (1996) stated that:

having these positive and negative consequences spelt-out in the classroom does not mean students will not misbehave, neither does it mean the students are comfortable with the method since everything including the feelings of students, must be sacrificed to the imperative of obedience. (p. 1)

This means that the continued occurrences of cases of discipline problems need to be tackled by adopting a different disciplinary method that helps the students to understand the importance of building good relationships with students, teachers, and the school; hence, the Restorative Discipline Method. Mirsky (2009) cited that the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) in Bethlehem, PA gathered data—mainly discipline statistics—from approximately 40 schools since 1999 to evaluate the effects of restorative practices; the data indicated that restorative practice implementation increased school safety and decreased discipline problems (p. 1). The report went further giving the example of West Philadelphia High School, which received its first formal training in restorative practices in 2008, and for whom, “suspensions decreased by half from April to December of that year. A year later the school was removed from Pennsylvania’s persistently dangerous schools list, where it had been for six years” (p. 1).

## **Problem**

The concern about discipline problems is not declining, but continues to increase. Numerous studies list discipline among the most serious problems with which teachers must contend and a significant factor in their leaving the profession (Charles, 2002, p. 4). Charles, (2002) cited a report by Shreeve (1993) who indicated that of the surveyed 91 school districts in Washington state between 1984 and 1987, 153 teachers were placed on probation. Sixty-nine percent of that group were then dismissed or else retired or were reassigned to other duties, most of them because of inability to control their classes (p. 6).

Nakpodia (2010), in his study, noted that “the increasing wave of misconduct and its resultant effect showed that students’ misbehavior has become a major problem of educational management” (p. 144). Wesley (2011) also noted that the issue of discipline is not unique to the modern era. Rather, history reveals that parents and teachers have long searched for solutions to students’ misbehavior (p. 5). In addition, Wesley (2011) cited the Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll which report that

discipline, or lack thereof, is one of the greatest challenges facing public schools in the United States. This has a dramatic effect on education with studies showing that fourteen percent or more of public school teachers in the United States leave the profession after their first year, with almost half of beginning teachers exiting within the first five years. Of those drop out, significant proportions do so because of classroom management or discipline problems (p. 5).

Ayoo, in Gitome et al. (2013) reported that in Britain, through the 1986 Education Act and new articles of Government and conditions of employment, a duty was laid on school

administrators to encourage good behavior, promote self-discipline and proper regard for authority, secure acceptable standards of behavior and regulate conduct of students to boost performance in examination. Similarly in India, Vishala, in Gitome et al. (2013) established that students who were not disciplined were helped by guidance and counseling teacher(s) to get rid of their delinquent behavior and learn the proper way of responding to social situations and conditions; in this way, they were able to perform well in examinations. Gitome et al. (2013) also reported that in Botswana, schools studied showed that students' misbehavior cases interfere with the teaching and learning process; the end result being poor performance in examinations. According to Nakpodia, (2010), "the increasing wave of misconduct and its resultant effect showed that students' misbehavior has become a major problem of educational management" (p. 144). Therefore, stakeholders need to go back to the "drawing board" to find better and alternative disciplinary methods that will help reduce out-of-school suspensions and increase the likelihood of students being self-disciplined, considerate, and mindful of their relationships with others and properties in school.

As Einstein said "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing." (Vryhof, 2011, p. 32). Therefore, "Christian school people must pay close attention to what is being modeled." (Vryhof, 2011, p. 32). This close attention is more aptly said by Wesley (2011): "While calling sin by its right name, the teacher must not confuse the sinner with the sin" (p. 10).

### **Research Questions**

Students are priceless assets and most essential elements in education. It is absolutely necessary to direct students to exhibit acceptable attitude and behavior within and outside the

school. In an attempt to achieve an organized and peaceful school environment and maintain law and order, school management specifies rules and regulations to guide the activities of members of the educational organization (Nakpodia, 2010, p 144). In view of the foregoing, it becomes necessary as a Christian school and as Christian educators to uphold and follow the Biblical instruction by addressing the root causes of unacceptable behaviors that lead to suspension and expulsion and thus provide alternative disciplinary actions “if a child is trained up in the right way, even when he is old he will not be turned away from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

This study, therefore, sought to find out the perceptions of students regarding Assertive Discipline (AD) and an alternative discipline method called Restorative Discipline (RD), an offshoot of “restorative justice” commonly used in juvenile and adult corrections and treatment programs. The scope of this study was narrowed down to students’ perceptions regarding two different disciplinary methods; namely, assertive discipline (AD) and restorative discipline (RD) in American Christian Academy, Nigeria. The series of questions in the questionnaire used were drawn up to determine:

- i. The perceptions of students regarding AD and RD within each group and
- ii. The perceptions of students between the groups

These perceptions were tested with the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) that students in the two groups were significantly different in their perceptions within and between AD and RD. The alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is that the two groups were not significantly different in their perceptions within and between AD and RD.

## **Definition of Terms**

When carrying out any academic research work, it is germane that definitions of certain key terms be provided to guide the readers. Unless otherwise stated, all definitions are the author's. For the purpose of this work, the following terms have been defined:

***Assertive Discipline*** is an approach to discipline conceived by Lee Canter that acknowledges a take-charge, assertive approach on the part of the educator. The procedure is basically teacher-oriented and places rule-making under the teacher's authority. Negative consequences, punishment, positive consequences, and rewards are selected for the benefit of the educator as well as the students (Canter & Canter, 1976).

***Behavior*** refers to everything people do, good or bad, right or wrong, helpful or useless, productive or wasteful (Charles, 2002).

***Circle*** is a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems. Circles give people an opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum and equality. The circle process allows people to tell their stories and offer their own perspectives (Wachtel, 2013, p. 7).

***Discipline*** is the practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience ([www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/discipline](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/discipline)).

***Misbehavior*** is a behavior that is inappropriate for the setting or situation in which it occurs and it is done willfully or out of ignorance of what is expected (Charles, 2002, p. 3).

*Restorative Discipline* is a whole-school ethos or culture comprising principles and practices to support peacemaking and solve conflict through healing damaged relationships and making amends where harm has been done while preserving the dignity of everyone involved.

### **Literature Review**

The word discipline means to impart knowledge and skill – to teach. However, it is often equated with punishment and control (“Effective discipline,” 2004, para. 1). Wesley (2011) noted that “for many, punishment and discipline are synonymous” (p. 5). This view is also supported by Kohn (1995) who was of the opinion that “moving away from consequences and rewards isn’t just realistic — it’s the best way to help kids grow into good learners and good people” (p. 2). While Redl and Wattenberg, in Charles (2002) agreed that punishment has a detrimental effect on students’ self-concept and relations with the teacher, they also contended that “punishment is a last resort in dealing with class misbehavior” (p. 19). Skinner, in Charles (2002) conversely, believed that this “last resort,” as mentioned by Redl and Wattenberg, could not extinguish inappropriate behavior (p. 21). The fact that several approaches to resolving disciplinary issues now exist shows that stakeholders are constantly look for ways of curbing the discipline problems of students. Charles (2002) buttressed the fact that discipline problems are on the rise when he wrote that “today, it is a rare school, even in the best neighborhoods that remains free from aggressive, sometimes criminal behavior by its students” (p. 5). Nakpodia (2010) as well reported that the spate of discipline problems in school has been a major concern to parents and those in the school community who suggested that disciplinary strategies be applied by teachers and that rapport be created between students and teachers as a systematic way to solving the problems (p. 149). In essence, effective and positive discipline, as with all



other interventions, aims at pointing out unacceptable behaviors, and letting the child know that the parent loves and supports him or her (“Effective Discipline,” 2004, p. 3).

Charles, (2002) observed that the control tactics of the mid-twentieth century teachers were reflective of the times. However, in the years following the World War II, there was a corresponding change in the society’s views of teaching and classroom discipline (p. 17). Charles (2002) further added that “schools reflect, more than reform, the nature of the society they serve” (p. 4). Charles, (2002) citing Broder’s work stated that “in 1998, President Clinton scolded the motion picture industry for their unending emphasis on violence, maiming, and killing which, he said, leaves teenage children numbed to violence” (p. 5). The removal of this menace will take more than mere posting of rules and regulations in the school’s handbook because discipline problems seems to have become the inherent nature of students in today’s schools.

Suvall (2009) observed that “one of the characteristics of punitive school discipline is zero tolerance policies. Under zero tolerance policies, students are suspended or expelled for a single occurrence of certain specified conduct” (p. 551). In 2006, the American Psychologists Association’s (APA) report on zero tolerance to misbehaviors in schools indicated that “school suspension in general appears to predict higher future rates of misbehavior and suspension among those students who are suspended” (p. 1). In the same report at their summer annual meeting, it was noted that

zero tolerance policies in use throughout U.S. school districts have not been effective in reducing violence or promoting learning in school. Rather, it called for a change in these policies and indicated a need for alternatives, including restorative practices such as restorative justice conferences.” (Grave & Mirsky, 2007, p. 2)

This view was further upheld by the same association when it concluded that

The accumulated evidence points to a clear need for change in how zero tolerance policies are applied and toward the need for a set of alternative practices. These alternatives rely upon a more flexible and commonsense application of school discipline and on a set of prevention practices that have been validated in over 10 years of school violence research. Although further research is necessary to understand how best to implement such alternatives, current evidence clearly suggests that research-based prevention practices hold a great deal more promise than zero tolerance for reaching our shared goals of safe schools and productive learning environments. It is time to make the shifts in policy, practice, and research needed to implement policies that can keep schools safe and preserve the opportunity to learn for all students. (Graves & Mirsky, 2007, p. 2)

Charles, (2002) noted that “in the absence of clear, effective, easily-applied methods of countering misbehavior, beginning teachers usually fall back on what they themselves experienced as students” (p. 9). These experiences are mostly authoritarian approaches. As noted by Charles (2002), “the authoritarian approach to discipline dies hard and this usually makes beginning teachers revert back to it quickly” (p. 9). Wesley (2011) was of the same opinion as Charles when he described authoritarian discipline “as autocratic – demanding, commanding and restrictive” (p. 7). Authoritarian discipline exemplifies the situation of “You obey or I invoke the rule.” Since teachers wish to retain control of the classroom in order to be able to teach effectively, many adopt the Canter’s Assertive Discipline approach. Assertive discipline is an approach that focuses on “maintaining a calm, productive, classroom environment; meeting students’ needs for learning and ensuring that their rights are attended to;

and helping the teacher remain calmly, non-stressfully in charge in the classroom” (Charles, 2002, p. 33).

### **Assertive Discipline**

Canter's assertive model, a classroom discipline approach, is based on the assumptions that teachers have a right to teach and a right to expect students to behave; these goals are, however, achieved by putting in place good class rules of behavior (Charles, 2002). In assertive discipline, teachers are demanding yet treat everyone fairly; the teacher has a discipline plan that clearly outlines expectations as well as positive and negative consequences (Canter & Canter, 1976).

### **Types of teachers in assertive discipline.**

Canter and Canter, (1976) identified the following types of teachers:

- i. Hostile teachers: these teachers operate on a no-nonsense approach in dealing with misbehavior in their classes. The approach may take any of the followings; use of loud commanding tone, stern facial expressions. Unfortunately, the hostile teacher takes away most of the pleasure teachers and students might otherwise enjoy (Charles, 2002, p. 36).
- ii. Nonassertive teachers: these teachers are indifferent and inconsistent in their approach to students' misbehaviors. Their inconsistencies leave the students confused about expectations and enforcement (Charles, 2002, p. 36). Wesley (2011) concluded that “students who experience inconsistent discipline never know what is expected of them. They become convinced that it is senseless to

even try to follow the rules. Perhaps, even more tragically, the adult's inconsistencies provide no moral frame of reference" (p. 8).

- iii. Assertive teachers: they clearly, confidently and consistently express and uphold class expectations. They help students to understand exactly what acceptable and unacceptable behaviors are as well as their consequences. They recognize the students' needs and at the same time help set limits for the students. Their responses provide several benefits and incorporate students' voices (Charles, 2002, p. 36-37).

### **Restorative Discipline**

Sprague (2014) described restorative practice as a method that "holds students accountable for their actions by involving them in face to face encounters with the people they have harmed" (p. 53). Wachtel, in Sharon (2009) stated that "Restorative Practices, rather than meting out punishments, employs a talk-it-out approach to foster dialogue between aggrieved students. Students are taught basic social skills to problem-solving and lower the tension in schools" (p. 2). The restorative discipline method is carried out by bringing together the parties involved in the conflict in a round table discussion usually called "circle time." Thereafter, the offender is asked the following sets of questions:

- i. What happened?
- ii. What were you thinking of at the time?
- iii. What have you thought about since?
- iv. Who has been affected by what you have done?
- v. In what way have they been affected?
- vi. What do you think you need to do to make things right? (p. 1).

The offender responds to these questions in the presence of the aggrieved party who is also given the opportunity to answer the following questions:

- i. What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- ii. What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- iii. What has been the hardest thing for you?
- iv. What do you think needs to happen to make things right? (p. 1).

If the misbehavior happened during teaching, the same sets of questions are asked except that the class sits in a circle where every member of the class including the teacher will express how they were affected by the misbehavior.

Graves and Mirsky (2007) maintained that “instead of zero tolerance and authoritarian punishment, restorative practices place responsibility on the students, using a collaborative response to wrongdoing” (p. 1). This was supported by Sharon (2009) who also maintained that restorative discipline places responsibility on the students themselves rather than relying on zero tolerance and authoritarian control from above. It uses a collaborative response to wrongdoing, which is intended to be supportive, not demeaning. Wachtel, in Adams (2008) maintained further that the “talk-it-out-solution” is effective and its impact is proven (p. 1). This claim was also supported in the report of The International Institute for Restorative Practices Graduate School (2009):

it reported that six schools in the US -West Philadelphia High School, Pottstown High School, Newtown Middle School, Palisades High School, Palisades Middle School, and Springfield Township High School- and four schools in Canada and UK - Kawartha Pine Ridge District, Ontario, Canada, Keewatin-Patricia District, Ontario, Canada, Bessels

Leigh School, Oxfordshire, England, UK, and Hull, England, UK- all had significant declines in students' misbehaviors as a result of practicing restorative discipline (p. 6-31).

Amour (2014) provided several compelling examples which illustrate of how behavior was affected positively in school districts where Restorative Discipline was implemented:

It noted that West Philadelphia High School, called a "persistently dangerous school" for the past six years, reduced violent acts and serious incidents by 52 percent in 2007-2008 and an additional 40 percent in 2008-2009. Students sampled in the Denver Public Schools showed a 30 percent improvement in school attendance and timeliness to school. In San Antonio, Texas, Ed White Middle School in its first year of implementation reduced out-of-school suspensions by 84 percent and in-school suspensions by 30 percent. In the latest Texas Education Agency report, Ed White Middle School received a star of distinction for student progress, ranking in the top 25 percent in the state, and number two when considering middle schools with the same demographics (p. 1).

### **Goals of restorative discipline.**

The key goals of restorative discipline include:

- i. To understand the harm and develop empathy for both the harmed and the harmer.
- ii. To listen and respond to the needs of the person harmed and the person who harmed.
- iii. To encourage accountability and responsibility through personal reflection within a collaborative planning process.
- iv. To reintegrate the harmer (and, if necessary, the harmed) into the community as valuable, contributing members.
- v. To create caring climates to support healthy communities.

vi. To change the system when it contributes to the harm. (p. 7).

Wesley (2011) noted that the crux of discipline is the expression of love shown towards the erring child. He further likened the essence of Christian discipline as “disciple-ing” similar to Jesus’ acceptance of his disciples just the way they were; through example, encouragement and loving corrections he was able to shape them into committed, God-centered persons who in turn, transformed their world (p. 6). Claasen and Claasen (2008) were of the same opinion that “discipline and love are not antagonistic, but a function of each other” (p. 13); therefore, it is a process and the route may not be easy (Wesley, 2011, p. 11)

Discipline simply takes time. It is important that the time spent is productive, changes the way a student responds, and teaches the students whatever he or she needs to learn about being a constructive member in a community. Our experience and the research indicate that, when provided good instruction and restorative discipline, most students do what is positive for themselves and others around them (Claasen & Claasen, 2008, p. 162)

### **Summary**

Bowen (n.d) said,

Basically, school discipline has become lax over the years as our relationships have weakened. Consolidated school systems and mega schools have made the separation between family and school wider than ever. These mega schools have largely ignored the local community. Also, some parents have lost touch with their children for many different reasons. For school discipline to be successful, we need to restore those relationships. Parents and schools need to work together to instill the importance of education into children of all ages. Finding discipline procedures that work is a job for students, parents, and teachers to explore together. In today's society, working together

within the school and community will help teach children that working as a team can effectively solve the problem.

Christian school administrators and teachers must treat all people, including people of their faiths and cultures, as God's image-bearers (Vryhof, 2011, p. 27). In view of this, conflict resolution and the pursuit of peace must be consciously and deliberately taught and practiced in classrooms and hallways in homes and churches, and in the local community and the wider world (Vryhof, 2011, p. 27). Therefore, in order for a Christian school to help students achieve and maximize their potential and succeed in life, students need to be disciplined; when they are disciplined, it will foster a healthy school environment for all stakeholders. Bowen (n.d.) stated further that

in-school suspensions, time-out and detention have been age-old solutions for troubled students. Yet today, many students don't mind detention, preferring it to going home to an empty or abusive household. Many consider time-out a quiet place to work. Detention lets them socialize after school. And both time-out and detention get them attention (p. 1).

Furthermore, Vryhof, (2011) quoting Archbishop Luwum said "The best way to show a stick is crooked is not to argue about it or to spend time denouncing it, but to lay a straight stick alongside it" (p. 75). Vryhof, (2011) stated further that

Christian schooling should strive not to be rigid, inflexible or set in its ways. It should continually transform itself to adapt to society's demands and new understandings of how students learn, yet it should maintain a fierce allegiance to its reason for existence; educating the young people to joyfully flourish in a way that honors God, helps people, and improves the world (p. 74).



Evidence abounds in the Bible of how God changed his methods in defending the Israelites from Egypt to the promised land (plagues in Egypt, use of hornets, shouts of hallelujah) to the different ways Jesus conducted his mission while on earth (mere commanding the blind to see on one occasion and mixing saliva with mud on another occasion). Therefore, if there is a need for the school to shift its “disciplinary gear” based on the Godly principle of re-aligning the students, then it must do so as an image of God; just as it is written in Isaiah 1:18 “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” Restoration of relationship should be the heart of school discipline.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

This study was performed using three senior school classes at the American Christian Academy (ACA). The participants for this study were students in seventh through ninth grades. These sets of participants were chosen because they all offer chemistry unlike tenth through twelfth grades. Nineteen seventh-grade students formed the experimental group, while the combination of fourteen eighth-grade and thirteen ninth-grade students formed the control group. All participants for this investigation were already previously exposed to the assertive disciplinary method. The experimental group was a fairly objective representation of the students' population of ACA. This was because the ratio of boys (57.78%) to girls (42.22%) in this experimental group was fairly comparable to the ratio of boys (52.19 %) to girls (47.81%) in the current overall enrollment of 24 nationalities at ACA.

## **Materials**

In order to determine the students' perceptions of two disciplinary methods, assertive (AD) and restorative (RD), a questionnaire consisting of 20 questions was administered to the students asking them to rate their perceptions of the two methods on a Likert scale. (See Appendix A). The questionnaire has 10 questions each for both disciplinary methods. All odd numbered questions were for RD, while even numbered questions were for AD. To analyze the questionnaire, a five- point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neither agree nor disagree (N), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) was used by the participants to rate their perceptions. The responses SA, A, N, D and SD were assigned the values 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

## **Procedure**

American Christian Academy officially uses the assertive discipline (AD) method in her classrooms. Therefore, in order to determine the students' perceptions regarding the two disciplinary methods, grade seven students were explicitly exposed to restorative discipline (RD) while grades eight and nine continued to be exposed to assertive discipline. The RD method, its benefits and modus operandi was explained to the grade seven students. Thereafter, they were informed that for four weeks, this new method of discipline (RD) would be used in the Chemistry class. Once in a week the students experiencing the new method met during the "circle time" to respond to wrongdoing, conflicts and problems. The circles time gave students the opportunity to speak and listen to one another in an atmosphere of safety, decorum and equality.

The independent variables in this study were the methods of discipline used while the dependent variables (DV) were be the perceptions of students regarding the two forms of discipline.

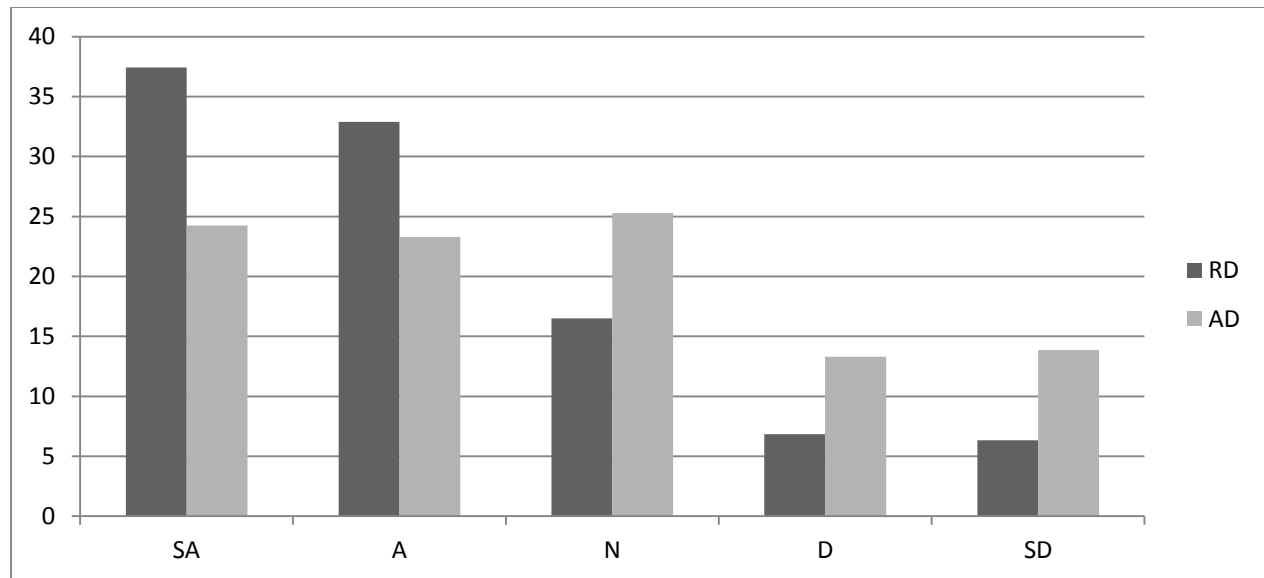
### **Results**

In order to find out the perceptions of students regarding AD and RD within the experimental group, the mean of percentage responses were compared. As evident in Table 1, the average percentages for the responses to both restorative and assertive discipline questions compared showed that while 37.42% of the participants strongly agreed with the RD statements, only 32.89% agreed to the RD statements; the percentages of participants that chose neither agreed nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree were 16.94%, 6.84% and 6.34% respectively. On the other hand, 24.24% of the experimental group participants strongly agreed with the assertive statements; 23.29% agree with the assertive statements while 25.29%, 13.29% and 13.85% chose neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. The paired t test carried out between the average percentages of responses to RD and AD questions at two-tailed analysis gave a p-value of 0.9994 with a t-value of ( $t = 0.0008515$ ) with 4 degrees of freedom. This was considered not significant. In addition, at 95% confidence level with the mean of paired differences being 0.004000; and though the P value of 0.0782 for normality test showed that the data passed the normality test with  $P > 0.05$ , its Correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.7876$ ) showed that the pairing was not significant.

**Table 1***Comparison of Percentage Responses for RD and AD in Experimental Group*

Q.	RD Percent Responses					Q.	AD Percent Responses				
No	SA	A	N	D	SD	No	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	36.84	52.63	5.26	5.26	0.00	2	42.11	21.05	15.79	15.79	5.26
3	11.11	50.0	33.33	0.00	5.56	4	26.67	6.67	26.67	6.67	33.33
5	52.64	36.84	5.26	5.26	0.00	6	52.63	31.58	5.26	10.53	0.00
7	26.32	36.84	31.58	5.26	0.00	8	15.79	36.84	36.84	5.26	5.26
9	68.42	15.79	10.53	5.26	0.00	10	5.26	10.53	36.84	15.79	31.58
11	57.89	26.32	10.53	0.00	5.26	12	31.58	52.63	15.79	0.00	0.00
13	36.84	15.79	42.11	5.26	0.00	14	26.32	26.32	10.53	15.79	21.05
15	26.32	26.32	10.53	15.78	21.05	16	5.26	31.58	26.32	10.53	26.32
17	36.84	21.05	10.53	15.79	15.79	18	0.00	5.26	31.58	47.37	15.79
19	21.05	47.34	5.26	10.53	15.79	20	36.84	10.53	47.37	5.26	0.00
Av.						Av					
%	37.42	32.89	16.49	6.84	6.34	%	24.24	23.29	25.29	13.29	13.85

The comparison of the average percent for the responses to RD and AD questions within the experimental group is shown in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Bar graphs comparing the average percent responses to RD and AD within the experimental group

In order to find out the perceptions of students regarding AD and RD within the control group, the mean of percentage responses were compared. As observed in Table 2, the average percentages for the responses to both restorative and assertive discipline questions compared showed that while 42.77% of the participants strongly agreed with the RD statements, only 27.83% agreed to the RD statements; the percentages of participants that chose neither agreed nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree were 15.88%, 7.10% and 6.39% respectively. On the other hand, 33.27% of the control group participants strongly agreed with the assertive statements; 26.90% agree with the assertive statements while 19.36%, 8.94% and 11.51% chose neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. The paired t test carried out between the average percentages of responses to RD and AD questions at two-tailed analysis also incidentally gave a p-value of 0.9994 with a t-value of ( $t = 0.0007761$ ) with 4 degrees of freedom. This was considered not significant. In addition, at 95% confidence level the mean of

paired differences was  $-0.002000$ ; though the P value is  $>0.1$  the data still passed the normality test at  $P>0.05$ . Its Correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) =  $0.9794$  is significant thus showing that the pairing (or matching) appears to be effective.

**Table 2**

*Comparison of Percentage Responses for RD and AD in Control Group*

Q. No	RD Percent Responses					Q. No	AD Percent Responses				
	SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	51.85	40.74	3.70	3.70	0.00	2	51.85	25.93	18.52	3.70	0.00
3	34.62	38.46	23.07	3.85	0.00	4	14.81	33.33	25.96	11.11	14.81
5	42.31	26.92	19.23	7.69	3.85	6	42.31	34.62	7.69	11.54	3.85
7	46.15	30.77	15.38	0.00	7.69	8	33.33	37.04	25.93	0.00	3.70
9	40.74	37.04	11.11	7.41	3.70	10	25.93	18.52	33.33	3.70	18.52
11	59.26	11.11	11.11	14.81	3.70	12	55.55	22.22	18.52	3.70	0.00
13	29.63	25.93	25.93	7.41	11.11	14	42.31	30.77	19.23	3.85	3.85
15	44.44	29.63	11.11	11.1	3.70	16	22.22	33.33	3.70	22.22	18.52
17	51.85	18.52	7.41	7.41	14.81	18	11.11	14.81	22.22	22.22	29.63
19	26.92	19.23	30.77	7.69	15.38	20	33.33	18.52	18.52	7.41	22.22
Av.%	42.77	27.83	15.88	7.10	6.39	Av %	33.27	26.90	19.36	8.94	11.51

The comparison of the average percent for the responses to RD and AD questions within the control group is shown in Figure 2.

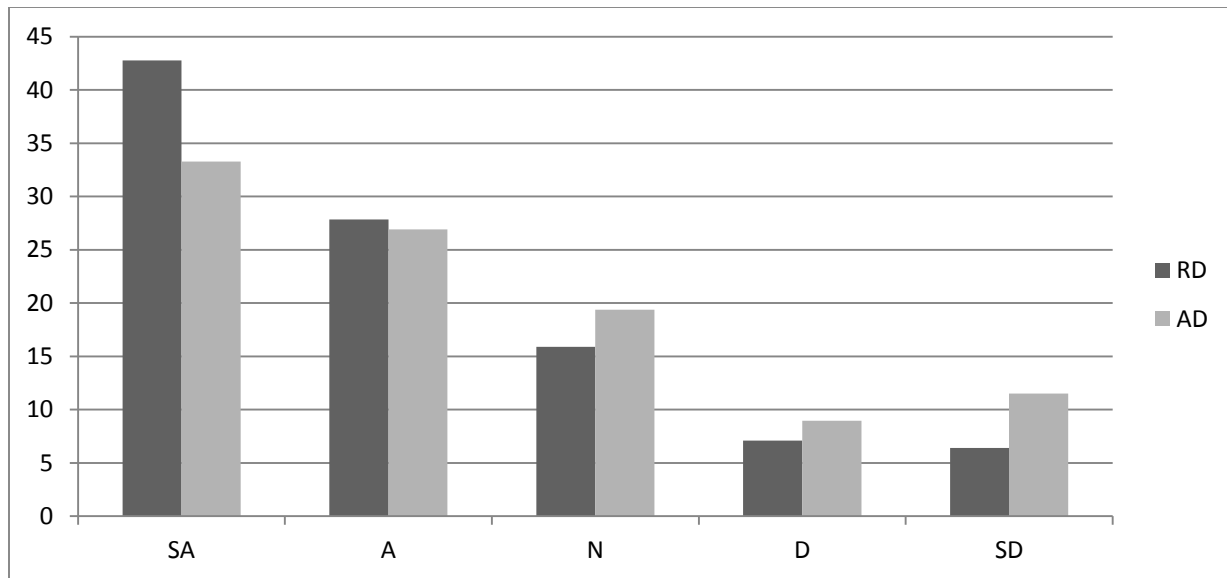


Figure 2 .Bar graphs comparing the percent response to RD and AD within the control group

The comparison of the percent responses to RD questions between the experimental group and control group in Table 3 below shows that 37.43% of the participants in the experimental group strongly agreed with the RD statements compared to the 42.78% of the control group; furthermore, 32.89% of the experimental group chose agree as opposed to 27.84% of the control group; 16.49% of the experimental group neither agreed nor disagreed with the RD statement as compared to 15.88% of the control group; the percent of experimental group participants that chose disagree was 6.84% compared to 7.11% of the control group and finally, 6.35% of the experimental group participants chose strongly disagree compared to 6.39% of the control group. The unpaired t test carried out on the average percentages of responses to RD questions between the two groups at two-tailed analysis gave a p-value of 0.9838 with a t-value of ( $t = 0.02101$ ) with 8 degrees of freedom. This was considered not significant. In addition, at 95% confidence level the mean differences was 0.2000; with  $F = 1.161$  and P value being 0.8883

the difference in the Standard Deviation (SD) of 14.481 and 15.604 for experimental and control group respectively was not significant.

**Table 3**

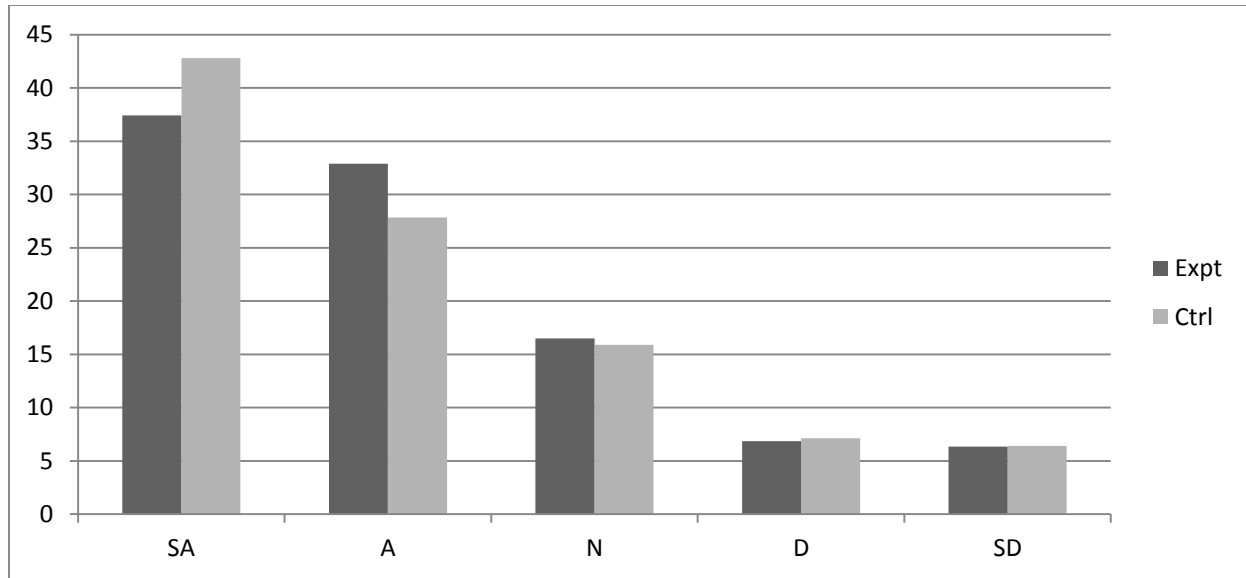
*Comparison of Percentage Responses between Experimental and Control groups for RD*

*Questions*

Q. No	Expt. Group RD Percent Responses					Q. No	Ctrl. Group RD Percent Responses				
	SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	36.84	52.63	5.26	5.26	0.00	1	51.85	40.74	3.70	3.70	0.00
3	11.11	50	33.33	0.00	5.56	3	34.62	38.46	23.07	3.85	0.00
5	52.64	36.84	5.26	5.26	0.00	5	42.31	26.92	19.23	7.69	3.85
7	26.32	36.84	31.58	5.26	0.00	7	46.15	30.77	15.38	0	7.69
9	68.42	15.79	10.53	5.26	0.00	9	40.74	37.04	11.11	7.41	3.70
11	57.89	26.32	10.53	0.00	5.26	11	59.26	11.11	11.11	14.81	3.70
13	36.84	15.79	42.11	5.26	0.00	13	29.63	25.93	25.93	7.41	11.11
15	26.32	26.32	10.53	15.78	21.05	15	44.44	29.63	11.11	11.11	3.70
17	36.84	21.05	10.53	15.79	15.79	17	51.85	18.52	7.41	7.41	14.81
19	21.05	47.34	5.26	10.53	15.79	19	26.92	19.23	30.77	7.69	15.38
Av. %	37.43	32.89	16.49	6.84	6.35	Av. %	42.78	27.84	15.88	7.11	6.39

The comparison of the average percent for the responses to RD questions between experimental and control group is shown in Figure 3.





*Figure 3.* Bar graphs comparing average percent responses to RD questions between experimental and control groups

The comparison of the average percent responses to AD questions between the experimental group and control group in Table 4 below shows that 24.24% of the participants in the experimental group strongly agreed with the AD statements compared to the 33.27% of the control group; furthermore, 23.29% of the experimental group agreed as opposed to 26.90% of the control group; 25.29% of the experimental group neither agreed nor disagreed with the AD statements as compared to 19.36% of the control group; the percent of experimental group participants that chose disagree was 13.29% compared to 8.94% of the control group and finally, 13.85% of the experimental group participants strongly disagree with the AD statements compared to 11.51% of the control group. The unpaired t test carried out on the average percentages of responses to AD questions between the two groups at two-tailed analysis gave a p-value of 0.9991 with a t-value of 0.001136 with 8 degrees of freedom. This was considered not significant. At 95% confidence level the mean differences was 0.006000; with F= 2.998 and P

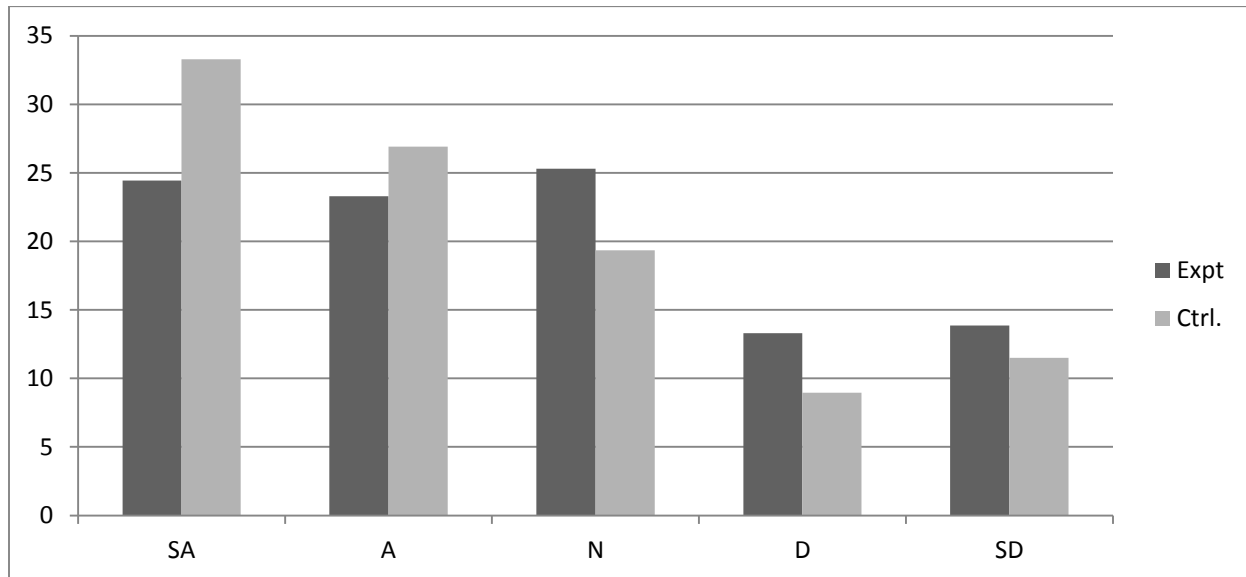
value being 0.3127 the difference in the Standard Deviation (SD) of 5.908 and 10.231 for experimental and control groups respectively was not significant.

**Table 4**

*Comparison of Percentage Responses between Experimental and Control Groups for AD Questions*

Q. No.	Expt. Group AD Percent Responses					Q. No.	Ctrl. Group AD Percent Responses				
	SA	A	N	D	SD		SA	A	N	D	SD
2	42.11	21.05	15.79	15.79	5.26	2	51.85	25.93	18.52	3.70	0.00
4	21.05	5.26	21.05	26.32	26.32	4	14.81	33.33	25.96	11.11	14.81
6	52.63	31.58	5.26	10.53	0.00	6	42.31	34.62	7.69	11.54	3.85
8	15.79	36.84	36.84	5.26	5.26	8	33.33	37.04	25.93	0.00	3.70
10	5.26	10.53	36.84	15.79	31.58	10	25.93	18.52	33.33	3.70	18.52
12	31.58	52.63	15.79	0.00	0.00	12	55.55	22.22	18.52	3.70	0.00
14	26.32	26.32	10.53	15.79	21.05	14	42.31	30.77	19.23	3.85	3.85
16	5.26	31.58	26.32	10.53	26.32	16	22.22	33.33	3.70	22.22	18.52
18	0.00	5.26	31.58	47.37	15.79	18	11.11	14.81	22.22	22.22	29.63
20	36.84	10.53	47.37	5.26	0.00	20	33.33	18.52	18.52	7.41	22.22
Av. %	24.24	23.29	25.29	13.29	13.85	Av. %	33.27	26.90	19.36	8.94	11.51

The comparison of the average percent for the responses to AD questions between experimental and control group is shown in Figure 4.



*Figure 4.* Bar graphs comparing average percent responses to AD questions between experimental and control groups.

A contingency-based Chi Square (Table 5) analysis was carried out on the average percent responses of RD questions between experimental and control groups in order to test for independence and trend between the two groups. However, since Chi Square analysis does not accommodate decimals, the percent figures were rounded-up to the nearest whole number. The Chi Square analysis of independence at degree of freedom = 4 showed a Chi Square value of 0.8548; a p-value of 0.9309, meaning that the row and column variables are not significantly associated. However, the Chi-square for trend = 0.1346 at 1 degree of freedom while the P value is 0.7137. There is not a significant linear trend among the ordered categories.

**Table 5***Rounded-up Percent Responses of RD Questions for Experimental and Control Groups*

Parameter on Likert Scale	Average Percent for all RD Questions	
	Expt. Group	Ctrl. Group
SD	37	43
A	33	28
N	16	16
D	7	7
SD	6	6

A similar test was carried out for the rounded-up percent responses between the two groups for the AD questions. The Chi Square analysis of independence at degree of freedom = 4 showed a Chi Square value of 03.435; a p-value of 0.4878, this show that the row and column variables are not significantly associated. The Chi-square for trend = 2.403 at 1 degree of freedom while the P value is 0.1211. There is not a significant linear trend among the ordered categories.

**Table 6***Rounded-up Percent Responses of AD Questions for Experimental and Control Groups*

Parameter on Likert Scale	Average Percent for all AD Questions	
	Expt. Group	Ctrl. Group
SD	24	33
A	23	27
N	25	19
D	13	9
SD	14	12

A close look at Table 7 revealed that the combination of the strongly agree and agree responses for experimental group showed a mean of 70.51% and for the control group it was

70.36%. The combination of the strongly disagree and disagree responses for experimental group was 47.55% while for the control group, it was 60.18%.

**Table 7**

*Combination of (SA+A) and (SD+D) for RD and AD Questions*

Q. No	Restorative Discipline Percent Responses				Q. No.	Assertive Discipline Percent Responses			
	Expt.	Ctrl.	Expt.	Ctrl.		Expt.	Ctrl.	Expt.	Ctrl.
	SA + A	SA + A	SD + D	SD + D		SA + A	SA + A	SD + D	SD + D
1	89.47	92.59	5.26	3.70	2	63.16	77.78	21.05	3.70
3	61.11	73.26	5.26	3.85	4	33.34	48.14	52.64	25.92
5	89.48	69.23	5.26	11.54	6	84.21	76.93	10.53	15.39
7	63.16	76.92	5.26	7.69	8	52.63	70.37	10.52	3.70
9	84.21	77.78	5.26	11.11	10	15.79	44.45	47.37	22.22
11	84.21	70.37	5.26	18.51	12	84.21	77.77	0.00	3.70
13	52.63	55.56	5.26	18.52	14	52.64	73.08	36.84	7.70
15	52.64	71.37	31.58	22.22	16	36.84	55.55	36.85	40.74
17	57.89	70.37	36.83	23.07	18	5.26	25.92	63.16	51.85
19	70.32	46.15	26.32	13.50	20	47.37	51.85	5.26	29.63

## **Discussion**

### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of students regarding Restorative Discipline (RD) and Assertive Discipline (AD). The researcher administered a questionnaire consisting of twenty questions; each discipline method had ten questions each.

### **Summary of Findings**

In American Christian Academy, Ibadan, Nigeria (ACA) the practice of assertive discipline is the norm; a situation where rules are put in place to correct students' misbehaviors such as tardiness, side-talking, lateness, bullying and, but not limited to, swearing. The researcher observed that in recent years more students are booked leading to serving detentions. In some cases, some students have had to serve an in-house suspension. Noting what the research illustrates about the failure of "zero tolerance," this researcher, therefore, found it necessary to find out if an alternative discipline method can be put in place to help students. Moreover, as a Christian school that wished to promote the image and loving attributes of God, there is a need to find out the perceptions of ACA students regarding discipline methods. Having a good understanding of students' beliefs regarding discipline will eventually help the school to formulate a more effective discipline method that will move and promote peaceful co-existence within the school on all fronts: student-student, student-teacher and teacher-parent relationships and by extension, the community.

### **Implications**

Based on the data generated and the statistical analysis carried out on the data, the implications that can be reached are that the two groups were not significantly different in their perceptions within and between AD and RD; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected while the

alternative hypothesis is upheld. In view of this outcome, it is suggested that American Christian Academy officially adopt a blend of restorative and assertive discipline. Although statistically, on one hand, there was no significant association between the responses of the experimental and control groups regarding both RD and AD questions, neither was there an indication that showed any trend. However, a close look the combination of percent responses showed that slightly more than seventy percent of both groups chose strongly agree to agree -- even for the control group that was not exposed to the RD method. With the report of The International Institute for Restorative Practices Graduate School (2009), that cited the positive outcomes of using RD method, it is hoped that if ACA and other schools will consciously try to implement RD, eventually schools will be a safer learning abode.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations in this study was the fact that students in grades ten through twelve were exempted from the study – senior school is comprised of grades seven to twelve - since not all students in these classes offer Chemistry. A second limitation was the short period of time (four week) in which the experimental group was explicitly exposed to the RD method; a longer exposure, possibly a whole semester might have had effects on the students.

Thirdly, even though the researcher took time to explain the nature of RD and how the method works to the students, the localization of the study to Chemistry classes alone might show some biasness since students' attitudes differ with different subjects owing to different level of difficulty. In addition, students' preferences for different subjects could not be ascertained. Fourthly, the study might be affected because of the localization of the study to American Christian Academy a school with a crop of students with different discipline and cultural background. Since different cultural groups that make up the ACA community would

have different views as to what discipline should be, students from these different cultural groups will most definitely have upbringings that may actually conflict with the new method being introduced. However, this study was limited in this case because the cultural backgrounds of the students was not considered in assigning students into experimental and control groups.



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**APPENDIX A****Discipline Perception Questionnaire**

Directions: Please read the followings 20 questions carefully and place a tick in the column that best fit your answer from the scale below. SA=Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither Agree nor Disagree, D = Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

		SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	Children will behave better in class if they feel that their needs are respected and affirmed.					
2.	Children will behave better in class if they are aware of the consequences of their negative behavior.					
3.	Preserving the personal self-respect of a student helps the student to behave properly.					
4.	"Name-dropping" or call-out and recording students' misbehavior deeds will help students to behave properly in class.					
5.	Sharing other peoples' viewpoints create an atmosphere of respect for others.					
6.	Students must always concede to the teacher's legal demands in the contexts of his/her classroom rules and regulations.					
7.	Commitment to resolving individual differences helps to reestablish relationships.					
8.	A teacher's ability to stand his/her ground consistently concerning what should be done in the class will help discipline the students.					
9.	Giving students the opportunity to make things right through discussions when things go wrong will promote good and healthy school community.					
10.	Invoking the penalty for any offence in the class/school will make students' behavior in the better.					
11.	Focusing on and encouraging students' strengths rather than accepting their underperformances will help motivate students to be of good behavior.					
12.	Teachers will have success with majority of students if they are conscious of students' needs and explain the basis of the instructions given.					
13.	A positive and non-punitive discipline measure will help to cater for various individual background and characters.					
14.	Misbehaviors in classrooms would reduce if teachers teach acceptable behaviors to students through modeling, explanation and practice.					

15.	Making amends for a wrong deed leads to positive relationships with friends and teachers.					
16.	If privileges are taken from students who consistently misbehave, eventually discipline problems will decrease.					
17.	Issues of misbehavior and disrespect are better resolved when all parties involved discuss the matter openly in a friendly manner					
18.	Cases of misbehavior and disrespect should be referred to the principal/disciplinary committee.					
19.	Students who misbehave or are found guilty of misbehavior such as any form of bullying (physical or cyber) should be re-educated on the effects of their actions on the victims and others.					
20.	Students who are found guilty of misbehavior such as any form of bullying (physical or cyber) should be sanctioned according to the school's code of conduct.					