

Psychological, Behavioral and Performance Impact of Corporal Punishment in Somaliland Students

ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the use of CP in Somaliland schools and the psychological and behavioral impact of this practice on students as well as the impact of the practice on the performance of the student.

Methods: This study used a qualitative study design in which a structured questionnaire was used to collect the necessary data regarding the study subject matter, and the data were analyzed via SPSS version 20 (IBM SPSS Corp., Armonk, NY, USA)

Results: This study revealed a shocking prevalence of corporal punishment among Somaliland students. The study also demonstrated a strong link and statistical significance between corporal punishment and the psychological state of the students, as well as a positive relationship between corporal punishment and the behavior of the student. However, regarding the performance of the student, the study failed to find a reasonable statistical significance between this parameter and corporal punishment.

Conclusion: There is a strong correlation between corporal punishment and the adverse psychological effects discussed in this study. The study also revealed a strong relationship between corporal punishment and the possible behavior issues of the pupils. The study highlighted a drawback of corporal punishment and a shift to alternatives among schools in Somaliland. Such alternatives may include positive reinforcement, rewarding good behavior, guidance and counseling, involving parents, time-outs, detentions, suspensions, motivations, recognition and praise tactics, revoking or taking away privileges, use of assignments and additional tasks such as punishment, and many other known methods as alternatives to corporal punishment.

Keywords: Corporal punishment, Children's rights, Somaliland schools.

Abdiwahab Mohamed
SAED¹



¹Department of Education, Hargeisa University,
Hargeisa, Somaliland, Somalia

Sakarie Mustafe HIDIG²



² Department of Surgery, Zhejiang University
School of Medicine, The Fourth Affiliated
Hospital Zhejiang Province, China



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Corresponding author:

Sakarie Mustafe HIDIG

E-mail: hidig2015@icloud.com

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INTRODUCTION

Physical punishment used to inflict pain on an individual with the intention of modifying their behavior is referred to as corporal punishment (CP). Examples of this type of punishment include spanking, smacking, and paddling. Adult carers frequently employ corporal punishment to intentionally harm a child who is acting inappropriately. Corporal punishment is the most prevalent form of child maltreatment worldwide. It is difficult to recognize and usually camouflaged since it happens in homes and other locations where children live, learn, and play. The physical discipline of an estimated one billion children worldwide is administered by their parents, guardians, teachers, or other trusted adults; these adults bear the responsibility of providing for, raising, and teaching these children. These actions consist of physical abuse, such as pinching, slapping, spanking, and hitting.¹ In both families and schools, corporal punishment is widely used throughout the world. Approximately 60% of children between the ages of 2 and 14 years' experience physical punishment on a regular basis.² With more than 86% of children worldwide not having legal protection from corporal punishment, this type of abuse is the most prevalent type of violence against children worldwide (UNICEF 2023). According to a different survey, only 15% of children globally—320 million children—are completely shielded from corporal punishment in all circumstances by the law. A further 27 nations have pledged to amend their legal frameworks, which, if implemented, shield an extra 288 million children from this type of abuse (Save the Children 2024).³ No scientific study has ever demonstrated that corporal punishment has a positive impact on children's behavior or health. Indeed, most child development experts seem to concur that cerebral palsy stunts a child's development. Corporal punishment has several detrimental repercussions, including low self-esteem, misbehavior, anger, and mental health difficulties.⁴ Corporal punishment is prohibited in many African nations, including Kenya, South Africa, and Swaziland. Although most of the evidence in Africa is anecdotal, a number of intriguing studies about its status and influence have emerged. Studies carried out in Kenya have shown that teachers often apply punishment to pupils for offences, such as giving a wrong answer to a question, arriving late, talking to a friend in class, or wearing an unclean uniform. The punishment was often too harsh, resulting in injuries, fractures, tooth loss, and even fatalities.⁵ According to a Populations Communication Africa poll, 60% of children in Kenyan schools received corporal punishment.⁶ Despite the fact that corporal punishment was illegal in Kenya in 2001, there are numerous records of instructors implementing it in the classroom, indicating that measures such as advice and counseling have not improved school discipline as intended.

According to a 2012 study that examined these situations, head teachers and school administrators are unprepared to handle indiscipline when corporal punishment is not an option.⁷ This research focuses on exploring the impact of corporal punishment on the psychological well-being, behavior and academic performance of students in Somaliland. According to a 2017 report by Save Children that surveyed 60 primary schools in the country, approximately 85% of the children reported that they had witnessed a child being beaten by a teacher in the previous month, which signifies that the level of corporal punishment in Somaliland is very high.⁸

Efficiency of Corporal Punishment as a Disciplinary Tool

For millennia, parents have employed corporal punishment to alter their children's behavior. The first known instances occurred in the ancient Greek cities of Sparta, Athens, and Troy, where it was applied to degrade and humiliate those who disobeyed social norms. This penalty acted as a clear warning to anyone who would think about doing the same crime.⁹ In the majority of nations, corporal punishment is still often applied in both homes and schools. Nonetheless, it is nearly unanimously denounced, with innumerable studies concurring on its inadequacy, incapacity, and extent of harm and abuse—both physical and psychological—that it causes kids. Elizabeth Gershoff, a psychologist, conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 88 papers to examine the correlation between the use of corporal punishment and 11 child behaviors and experiences. The study, which examined 62 years of data, revealed a strong correlation between corporal punishment and each of the 11 experiences and behaviors. Ten of the correlations were negative, including an increase in antisocial behavior and child violence. While the child's instant cooperation with corporal punishment was the sole positive correlation,^{10,11} it is therefore useless in that it threatens young people's obedience. Corporal punishment is not supported by any strong evidence, nor has it been shown to be a very effective deterrent. Children are also people, and they should be treated with decency, integrity, and respect.^{12,13}

A study conducted by Swan, Laura and Hyojin in 2022 examined the mental health of Somali refugees in relation to the childhood trauma they experienced. This study took a deep look at the effect of trauma related to corporal punishment on the mental health of children. The study concluded that childhood trauma resulting from factors such as corporal punishment or other forms of abuse had a direct impact on the mental health of the children.¹⁴

Idiris, in his study conducted in 2023, investigated the impact of corporal punishment on the academic performance of Somali students, concluding that corporal punishment has an impact on

performance and does not sustain discipline.¹⁵

Corporal Punishment in Somaliland

There is growing opposition to physical punishment in Somaliland due to the establishment of international schools. Nonetheless, it cannot be disputed that physical punishment is often used in Somaliland. It is still the most common kind of discipline that parents and teachers employ to change student behavior. In Somaliland, corporal punishment is commonplace, and children are beaten as early as two or three years of age.¹⁶ Preschool-aged children, usually aged between 4 and 5 years, are enrolled in Madarasa or Qor'an learning institutions. These Qur'an learning institutions employ exclusively traditional methods of education.¹⁷ Madarasa teachers are notorious for overreliance on corporal punishment and for coming up with cruel and unusual ways to punish children for misbehaving or failing in their lessons. These punishments include slapping, hitting with canes, tying children with ropes or belts and even putting ants inside their shirts to bite them.¹⁸ In elementary schools, in comparison with private schools, CP is typically more common in public schools. In Somaliland, children who are already marginalized, those from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, those who have experienced violence at home, and those with special educational requirements are the ones most likely to be subjected to corporal punishment.¹⁹ The Somaliland government said in 2022 that corporal punishment would no longer be used in classrooms; nevertheless, the rule is mostly ignored, and the majority of schools continue to use CP. The use of corporal punishment is encouraged by cultural and religious beliefs that frequently increase children's submissiveness to adults and teachers. Because of the conservative, authoritative, and hierarchical traditions, it is more probable that force will be employed frequently to enforce proper behavior in young people.²⁰

Psychological Impact of Corporal Punishment

Studies have indicated that having children with cerebral palsy in schools can have an adverse effect on their mental well-being and scholastic achievement.²¹ When children are subjected to harsh or excessive punishment in unskilled ways, it can have very negative, dangerous, and long-lasting effects on them. They may imitate their parents' and teachers' methods of discipline, develop strong fears and anxieties, experience learning obstacles, and learn to avoid people, places, and things associated with harsh punishments, which can lead to aggression.²² In regard to a student's social performance, corporal punishment has been connected to antisocial behaviors such as violence, aggression, and hostility toward adults and peers. Youngsters pick up knowledge through behavior modeling and social learning. Thus, by employing corporal punishment,

parents and teachers paradoxically encourage the very behaviors they are attempting to break out of their children. Furthermore, corporal punishment has been linked to several detrimental mental health consequences, including alcoholism, depression, anxiety, and suicide.²³ The term synonyms for psychological aggression in family violence studies include emotional abuse, psychological abuse, and verbal/symbolic aggression.²⁴

Impact of Corporal Punishment on Student Performance

Although some studies have shown a correlation between the use of corporal punishment in schools and enhanced instant compliance,²⁵ there is no evidence linking the use of physical punishment to improved social or self-control abilities over time.²⁶ The fact that the same students are repeatedly struck serves as evidence of this. The most significant avoidable cause of psychopathology is abuse during childhood, which accounts for approximately 45% of the population's risk of developing psychiatric illnesses at a young age.²⁷ Social interactions, such as early attachment to educators and caregivers as well as early friendships, contribute to children's cognitive development and growth. Numerous studies have shown that children benefit from verbal discipline techniques such as reasoning and explanation because they foster cognitive growth, whereas physical punishment stunts children's ability to learn and develop cognitively.²⁸ Additionally, there is little evidence to support the claims that corporal punishment enhances classroom behavior, promotes moral character development in kids, or increases pupils' ability to teach teachers or other authority figures.²⁹ Some teachers in Africa who employ physical punishment claim that by doing so, parents and teachers lose control over their students, which has led to the continent's high failure rate since there is a relationship between student accomplishments and discipline.³⁰

Effects of Corporal Punishment on the Behavior of Students

While physical injuries can be treated, emotional and psychological effects can have a large influence on how an individual behaves.³¹ There is strong evidence connecting corporal punishment to a number of harmful emotional and psychological impacts that have a negative impact on children's behavior.³² The negative emotional and psychological effects include deteriorated parent-child trust, aggression toward siblings, sadness and anger, crying, fear, embarrassment, withdrawal, and compliance; bullying and disobedience; poor mental health; a weaker internalization of moral values; antisocial behavior; poor adult adjustment; depression; withdrawal; sleep disturbances; avoidance of school; learning difficulties; loss of self-esteem; and delinquency.³³ Furthermore, research indicates that physical punishment is an unproductive form of discipline because it does not teach kids how to behave differently.³⁴ After receiving physical punishment, children

usually experience resentment, humiliation, and helplessness; nonetheless, they continue to misbehave because they have learned how to avoid being caught.³⁵ A WHO report claimed that CP eventually worsens children's behavior. According to the literature, it also results in aggression, emotional instability, low self-esteem, self-harm, suicide and suicidal thoughts, anxiety disorders, damage to education, and school dropout.³⁶

Research Questions

What is the impact of corporal punishment on the mental health of students in Somaliland?

What is the impact of corporal punishment on the behavior of students in Somaliland?

What is the impact of corporal punishment on the performance of students in Somaliland?

METHODS

Ethics Committee Approval was obtained from local schools. Jiil al Jadiid Primary School, Al Manaar Secondary School, Daar Al Najaah Madarasa (Date: 2024.06.30. No: 2024010199RY). All consent forms were filled by participants.

Within the framework of this extensive study project, a sample dataset of academic records from 32 participants was selected to help make sense of the case in study. The sample was calculated via Slovin's formula ($n = \frac{N}{N + e^2}$) from a population of 35 students. Owing to the complex structure of the data and the considerable size of the dataset, using SPSS made it possible to carry out a detailed and perceptive analysis. This part presents the background information of the respondents who participated in the study. The purpose of presenting the background information was to determine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. This section analyses three main characteristics of the respondents: gender, educational level and the number of parents who care for the young student. The questions in the data collection were leading questions; for example, "I have experienced being slapped by a teacher", to which the respondent will select the level to which he or she agrees with the question from strongly agree all the way to strongly disagree.

RESULTS

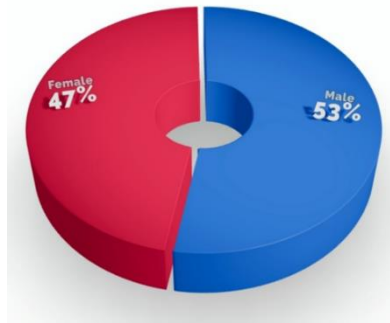


Figure 1. Gender of the respondents

As indicated in Figure 1, the most prevalent gender of the respondents was males, with 17 of the respondents, accounting for 53% of the total sample, being males, whereas 15 respondents, accounting for 47% of the total sample, were females.

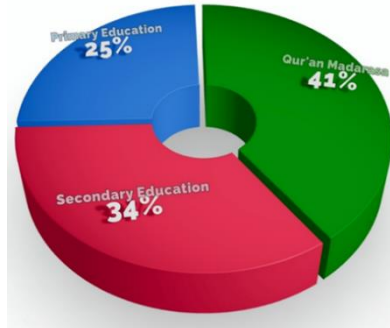


Figure 2. Education level of the respondent

Figure 3 shows the level of education of the respondents from whom the researchers gathered the information; only 8 of them, representing 25% of the total sample, were primary school students, whereas 11 of them, representing 34.4% of the sample, reached the secondary level of education. Finally, only 13 of the respondents, representing 40.6% of the total sample, were students of the Qur'an Madarasa. This implies that most of the respondents (40.6%) were students of the Madarasa, where they study the holy Qur'an.

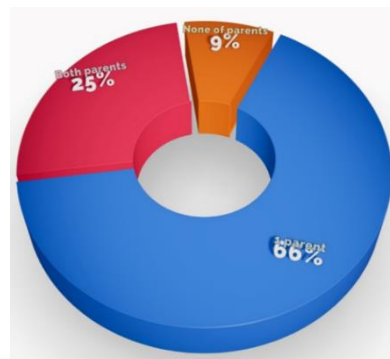


Figure 3. Respondents currently living with their parents

With respect to the number of parents living with and taking care of the students who responded to this research, Figure 3 indicates that 21 students, representing 65.6% of the total sample, were living with one parent. Eight of the students, accounting for 25% of the respondents, were living with both parents. However, only 3 of the students or 9.4% of the total sample did not live with any of their parents. Most of the respondents, 65.6, were living with only one of their parents.

Prevalence of Corporal Punishment among the Students

To explore the prevalence of corporal punishment in Somaliland schools, this extensive study posed a set of statements for the students to respond to in a structured questionnaire. The following statements were posed to the students regarding their level of experience with corporal punishment:

As indicated in Table 1, a combined 30 respondents, who represented an astonishing 93.8%, agreed that having experienced corporal punishments included being hit with objects and instruments to inflict pain or bodily harm to the students. In contrast, 2 combined students, representing 6.2% of the total population, disagreed with the statement, which indicates that they had not experienced corporal punishment in school. This indicates alarming rates of child abuse and excessive punishment in the Somaliland education system. According to

the table, a combined 20 students, which corresponds to 62.5% of the respondents, agreed that they had been slapped by a teacher. A combined of 11 students, representing 34.4% of the respondents, declared that they had not been slapped by a teacher. Whereas 7 students, representing 3.1% of the total sample, responded neutrally, which indicates doubt or uncertainty in Table 1, 50% of the respondents, representing 16 individuals, agreed that they had been locked in a room by teachers as a form of corporal punishment, whereas 43.8%, representing 14 respondents, testified that they had not been locked in a room. Two students, or 6.3% of the respondents, indicated uncertainty in their response. As shown in the table, 26 students, representing 81.3 of the total sample, indicated that they were ordered to perform excessive exercise as a form of punishment. However, 5 students, accounting for 15.6% of the sample, disagreed, indicating that they had not experienced being punished with excessive exercise. Finally, as shown in Table 1, 68.8% of the respondents, which corresponds to 22 students, agreed that they were forced to perform manual labor by teachers as a form of punishment. In contrast, 18.7% of the respondents, representing 6 of the students, disagreed, indicating that they had not been forced to perform manual labor by teachers. Four students, representing 12.5% of the total sample, responded neutrally, indicating uncertainty.

Table 1: Respondents' experience with corporal punishment

| Statement | Strongly agree | % | Agree | % | Neutral | % | Disagree | % | Strongly disagree | % |
|--|----------------|------|-------|------|---------|------|----------|------|-------------------|------|
| I have experienced being hit by a teacher with a belt, cane or other instrument | 22 | 68.8 | 8 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3.1 | 1 | 3.1 |
| I have experienced being slapped by a teacher | 10 | 31.2 | 10 | 31.2 | 1 | 3.1 | 7 | 21.9 | 4 | 12.5 |
| I have experienced getting locked in a room by a teacher | 10 | 31.2 | 6 | 18.8 | 2 | 6.2 | 7 | 21.9 | 7 | 21.9 |
| I have been ordered to do an excessive exercise for a long period of time by a teacher | 15 | 46.9 | 11 | 34.4 | 1 | .3.1 | 4 | 12.5 | 1 | 3.1 |
| I have been ordered by a teacher to do manual labor | 16 | 50 | 6 | 18.8 | 4 | 12.5 | 5 | 15.6 | 1 | 3.1 |

Table 2: The impact of corporal punishment on the psychological condition of Students

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 13.779 | 4.922 | | 2.799 | .009 |
| | CP | .710 | .442 | .282 | 1.608 | .118 |

a. Dependent Variable: Psychological state

Table 3: The impact of corporal punishment on the Behavior of Students

| Coefficients ^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 8.828 | 3.825 | | 2.308 | .028 |
| | CP | .825 | .343 | .402 | 2.402 | .023 |

a. Dependent Variable: Behavior

Table 4: The impact of corporal punishment on the Performance of Students

| Coefficients ^a | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 11.065 | 2.566 | | 4.312 | .000 |
| | CP | .272 | .230 | .211 | 1.182 | .246 |

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

DISCUSSION

According to this study, there is a discernible effect of corporal punishment on children's mental health. Students often have negative psychological consequences as a result of how they experience and understand the effects of corporal punishment. While there was a clear correlation between corporal punishment and mental stability, it was not as strong as was initially thought. This result was consistent with a Harvard study that demonstrated the negative effects of corporal punishment on anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.³⁷

Additionally, the study revealed that physical punishment has a large effect on students' behavior. According to the data, it frequently encourages the very behavior that educators are trying to stop. This result was consistent with that of the American Academy of Pediatrics, who reported that children who receive corporal punishment exhibit more troublesome behavior.³⁸

This study contrasts with numerous other studies concerning the degree to which corporal punishment affects a student's academic performance. However, this study revealed that there was a moderate effect of corporal punishment on pupils' performance. Although it has an impact on academic performance, it has less of an impact than does students'

behavior and psychological health. Some research appears to indicate that the impact of physical punishment on pupils' performance is more pronounced and could impede their progress.³⁹

This research offers a unique perspective on the impact of corporal punishment and makes a marked contribution by emphasizing the variability of the students' experiences and perceptions of corporal punishment, highlighting that not all students are affected in the same way. This nuanced approach is less common in broader studies that often generalize the effect across larger populations.

1. The impact of corporal punishment on the psychological well-being of students

The first objective of the study was to study the impact of corporal punishment on the psychological well-being of students. This was important to study, as it represented one of the dependent variables of the study. The analysis of the data suggests that there was tremendous variation in the experiences and the perceived impacts of corporal punishment on their mental stability and psychological well-being.

The model includes an intercept (constant) and one predictor variable, "CP." The dependent coefficients: The unstandardized coefficients represent the change in the dependent variable (PS) associated with a one-unit change in the predictor variable (CP).

The coefficient for the constant (intercept) is 13.779. The coefficient for "CP" is 0.710. Standardized Coefficients (Beta): The standardized coefficient (Beta) indicates the relative importance of each predictor variable. For "CP," the beta value is 0.282, suggesting a moderate positive effect on the dependent variable. Statistical Significance: The t values and associated p values (Sig.) indicate whether the coefficients are statistically significant. The constant (intercept) is significant ($p = 0.009$), whereas "CP" is not ($p = 0.118$). Overall, this analysis suggests that there is a strong relationship between corporal punishment and the adverse psychological state of students and that coefficient analysis based on these variables can be useful in predicting the adverse psychological effects experienced by students who experience corporal punishment.

2. The impact of corporal punishment on the behavior of students

The second objective of the study was to study the impact of corporal punishment on the behavior of students. This was important to study, as it represented one of the dependent variables of the study. This vital importance is often linked with the behavior of the student by their teachers, parents and carers. In addition to poor behavior usually being the major cause of corporal punishment against students, this variable is one of the most sensitive and important variables in the study.

The dependent variable for this model is BH. The B values represent the estimated coefficients for the intercept and CP variables, with their respective standard errors indicating the variability of these estimates. The t values are used to test the null hypothesis that the coefficient is equal to zero (no effect). The significance values (Sig.) indicate the probability of observing such a t value if the null hypothesis is true. In this case, both the intercept and CP have p values less than .05, suggesting that they are statistically significant predictors of BH. The standardized coefficient (Beta) for CP shows the relative importance of this predictor in the model. In summary, this analysis indicates that there is a clear and strong relationship between corporal punishment and the behavior of students. The results support the idea that corporal punishment adversely affects the behavior of students and reinforces undesirable behaviors and actions, which are often the same behaviors that teachers are trying to eradicate first.

3. The impact of corporal punishment on the performance of students

The second objective of the study was to study the impact of corporal punishment on the behavior of students. This was important to study, as it represented one of the dependent variables of the study.

The model includes a constant (intercept) and one independent variable (CP). The dependent variable is labeled "PP." Coefficients: Constant (B): The estimated intercept value is 11.065. CP (B): The coefficient for the independent variable "CP" is 0.272. Standardized Coefficients: The standardized coefficient (Beta) for "CP" is 0.211. This indicates the strength and direction of the relationship between "CP" and the dependent variable "PP." Hypothesis testing: the t value for "CP" is 1.182, and the associated p value is 0.246. Since the p value is greater than the common significance level (such as 0.05), we fail to reject the null hypothesis. In other words, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that "CP" significantly predicts "PP." In summary, the analysis suggests that there is no strong relationship or statistical significance between corporal punishment and students' academic performance. The analysis suggests that corporal punishment does not succeed in predicting the performance of the student.

Recommendation

The study suggests that Somaliland implements the Child Rights Protection Act, which forbids all forms of abuse, including corporal punishment, as well as public awareness campaigns to inform parents, educators, and the community about the harmful effects of corporal punishment and the benefits of positive discipline methods.

The study also suggests that educational and training programs be implemented nationwide for educators to teach them nonviolent, alternative forms of discipline. Additionally, workshops should be held for parents to teach them positive parenting techniques and the value of creating a safe, nurturing environment for their children.

To address any psychological effects and support the well-being of students who have experienced corporal punishment, school-based interventions should be implemented to support positive behavior programs that reward and recognize good behavior instead of punishing it. The report suggests that long-term research should be conducted to monitor modifications to disciplinary procedures and their outcomes. This can aid in comprehending the effects of treatments over the long run. This study suggests that future research should focus on cultural sensitivity, acknowledging and honoring the cultural context in which corporal punishment is used. Recognizing the social and historical context of its application and how Somaliland children are impacted by it.

A great deal of exploration is owed to alternative disciplinary methods, especially how well an alternate method of discipline could fit into the social and cultural environment of Somaliland and which methods can be culturally acceptable and effective in improving the behavior and performance of Somaliland students

without having any side effects on their mental and physical wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

Corporal punishment is excessively prevalent in Somaliland, as indicated by the data in this study; the reliance of teachers on this form of child abuse to conduct their lessons and to keep their students in line is staggering. According to the data, there is a strong correlation between corporal punishment and the adverse psychological effects discussed in the study. The study also revealed a strong relationship between corporal punishment and the possible behavior issues of the pupils. A reliance on corporal punishment and reliance on alternatives will produce a more nurturing and safe learning environment, which will be indicative of the psychological health of the students as well as producing noticeably fewer attitude problems in the students and reducing misbehavior indicators such as fighting in school and experiencing classroom disruption. Finally, the study explored the relationship between corporal punishment and the performance of the student. The study failed to prove a strong

and statistically significant relationship. These findings indicate possible limitations to the study due to the sample size.

Abbreviations

CP Corporal Punishment
UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO World Health Organization

Ethics Committee Approval: Approval was obtained from local schools. Jiil al Jadiid Primary School, Al Manaar Secondary School, Daar Al Najaah Madarasa (Date: 2024.06.30. No: 2024010199RY)

Informed Consent: All consent forms were filled by participants

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Author Contributions: Concept - AMS;SMH Design - AMS;SMH; Supervision - AMS;SMH; Resources - AMS;SMH; Materials - AMS;SMH; Data Collection and/or Processing - AMS;SMH; Analysis and/or Interpretation - AMS;SMH; Literature Search - AMS;SMH; Writing Manuscript - AMS;SMH; Critical Review - AMS;SMH; Other – AMS;SMH

Conflict of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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