

INFLUENCE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Developmental theorist views cognition as a sequential and increasingly complex unfolding of biologically driven abilities. These abilities can be influenced by the environment. There are five basic aspects, or fields, of development. These fields are language, visual-motor tasks, fine motor development, gross motor development, and social behavior. Different theorists have proposed different theories on the development of each field. At varying ages, children sequentially achieve abilities that become increasingly complex. These abilities may be mediated by two central features related to the concept of "executive" functioning. The first is increasing development of "working memory" and the second is the influence of "expertise. Children develop at varying rate. Therefore, the exact age at which children develop skills is not necessarily predictive of their ultimate adult capabilities (i.e. children who begin to read at age 4 years may have similar outcomes as children who begin to read at age 7). Piaget (2001) presumes that the preadolescent begins the process of attaining the formal operational stage of development. At this stage, intelligence is shown through the logical use of symbols related to abstract concepts. There is typically a return to egocentric thinking early in the period, but the abstractions that this type of thought allows eventually move the individual to a much broader perspective and thinking beyond himself or herself. Siegler (1991) suggests that an important ability of people who reach this stage is that they are able to think abstractly about such issues as truth, morality, justice, and the nature of existence and to provide alternative, competing beliefs about these. Thus, cognitive

development becomes a pre-requisite for the acquisition of morality based upon abstract principles. It is important to note that empirical evidence suggests the formal operations stage is not necessarily reached because of physical maturity (Eylon & Lynn, 1988; Renner and others, 1976).

Lazelere (2000) posited that parenting is often considered the most joyful stress because the rewards, memorable moments, and times of sharing and love are often intertwined with expectation, uncertainty, and frustration. It seems that every week there is a new newspaper article or new magazine that accompanies the mass media coverage and thousands of self-help books lining the shelves, all attempting to show parents how to survive the daily challenges encountered while raising a child. The public interest in understanding and implementing the most effective discipline techniques is also shared by many researchers. Yet, despite the immense public interest and extensive scientific research, uncertainty and strong debate continue. One of the most contentious issues within the debate of effective discipline techniques is about the use of corporal punishment (Lazelere, 2000; Gershoff, 2002). Bitensky (2006) defined corporal punishment as "the gratuitous intentional infliction of pain on children's " bodies for the purpose of modifying behaviour". "Spanking" which is defined as "to strike especially on the buttocks with the open hand" (Merriam- Webster Online Dictionary, 2007) is the most common form of corporal punishment (Bitensky, 2006).

The results of a recent meta-analysis on published research and multiple outcomes performed by Gershoff (2002) indicate that, the use of corporal punishment seems to increase immediate compliance. Gershoff (2000) also argued that the use of corporal punishment is also associated with minimal long-term effect on compliance and many negative childhood behaviours and experiences. Specifically, corporal punishment is associated with increased aggression and delinquency, lower levels of mental health and internalization, and an increase in physical abuse of the same child. Furthermore, Gershoff

(2002) identified distal associations including decreased mental health, increased criminal behaviour, increased physical violence with their sexual partner, decreased adult mental health, increased likelihood that they will corporally punish their own children, and increased risk of abusing one's spouse or child. As a result of the growing empirical literature indicating the ineffectiveness and possible negative consequences of corporal punishment, many professional organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1998), the American Medical Association (American Medical Association, 2003), the National Association of Social Workers (National Association of Social Workers, 2006), and the American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (American Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 1998) have publicly denounced its use. Despite increased consistent research findings, and these denouncements, spanking continues to be one of the most commonly implemented means of discipline in Africa (Regalado, Sareen, Inkelas, Wissow, and Halton, 2004). Although past research has indicated that nearly 83% of likely parents support the practice of corporal punishment and intend to corporally punish their children (Graziano and Namaste, 1990), this research was conducted prior to the public statements denouncing its use.

Disciplining a child can be a challenge, but new research suggests that parents may wish to adopt methods other than spanking to manage their child's behaviour. A recent study by Straus (2006) shows that children who are spanked have lower IQs than children who are not spanked (Ajzen, 1991). Straus and colleagues (2006) measured spanking and IQ level in 806 children aged two to four and 704 children aged five to nine. Four years later, children aged two to four who were spanked had IQ scores on average five points lower than children who were not spanked in the same age group. Similarly, children aged five to nine who were spanked had IQ scores 2.8 points lower than children who were not spanked in the same age group. The

researchers also found that the greater the number of times a child was spanked, the slower the development of the child's mental ability.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Parental use of corporal punishment is the single most controversial and emotionally charged topic in parent-child relationships. No other child-rearing topic has elicited as much attention or heated debate as whether parents should engage in the practice. Beginning in the 1st century C.E. and periodically thereafter, educators (e.g., Quintilian), philosophers (e.g., Locke, Plutarch, & Rousseau), and many others have argued against or called for moderation in parental use of corporal punishment (Peisner, 1989). Conflict on corporal punishment is pervasive at multiple levels: Pediatricians hold divergent attitudes; husbands and wives disagree over its use; communities and states dispute it; and even countries debate whether to outlaw the practice. It is evident that a careful, thorough review on corporal punishment and its influence on cognitive development are more than overdue.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of corporal punishment on cognitive development. Other objective include specifically to:

- Evaluate whether differences in sex will influence cognitive development
- Find out whether socio-economic status will influence cognitive development

LIMITATION OF STUDY

This study is limited to just assessing the impact of corporal punishment on a child cognitive development in Ado-Ekiti and the mode of evaluation of such effect is restricted to observations based on Welscher test for adult.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. There will be a significant influence of sex differences on cognitive development.
2. There will be an influence of corporal punishment on cognitive development
3. There will be a significant influence of Socio-economic status on cognitive development.

METHODS

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is a survey research and descriptive in nature. The research design covers a wide range of the study on the effect of corporal punishment on cognitive development of children (adolescents).

POPULATION FOR THE STUDY

The population of this study is made of Parents in Ministries, Ado Local Government, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

SAMPLINGS AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

A total of 250 questionnaires were administered to parents spanning across various departments in Ado Local Government, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The Sampling proportion used was the ratio of Yes/No, Agree, Strongly Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree and Undecided; as well as filling the blank spaces and ticking correct options.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

For the purpose of this study, one research instrument was used which is a Questionnaire. The title of the questionnaire is "A questionnaire on the effect of corporal punishment on cognitive development of a child. Weschler adult intelligence scale; this is a measure of intelligence. It is a 9 items scale developed by Tella (2017) with a reliability of .928 and crobach alpha of .731.

Corporal Punishment Scale

This scale was developed by Tella (2017) a pilot survey of 30 pieces which tends to measure attitudes towards corporal punishment. It is an 11 items scale, which was directly scored. It reported a reliability of .904 and validity .781.

Statistical Analysis

Appropriate analysis for this study includes Analysis of Variance and Pearson correlation statistical test.

RESULT

Table 4.1: Independent t-test summary table showing gender differences on cognitive development

Group Statistics

	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.	P
Cognitive development	Male	107	8.5234	3.51102	.339421	1.323	198	.187	>.05
	Female	93	7.8387	3.80586	.39465				

The table above shows that gender differences on cognitive development is not significant. ($t(198) = 1.323$ $P > .05$)

Table 4.2: Independent t-test table showing the influence of corporal punishment on cognitive development

Group Statistics

	Corporal punishment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig.	P
Cognitive development	Mild	102	8.6765	3.77370	.373651	1.871	198	.043	<.05
	Severe	98	7.7143	3.48487	.35203				

The table shows that corporal punishment has an influence on cognitive development. ($t(198) = 1.871$ $P < .05$)

Table 4.3: One analysis of variance showing influence of socio-economic status on cognitive development

ANOVA

Corporal punishment

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.018	2	.009	.036	.964
Within Groups	49.962	197	.254		
Total	49.980	199			

The table above shows that there is no significant influence of socio-economic status on cognitive development. ($F(2,197) = .036$ $P > .05$)

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis one states that there will be a significant influence of sex on cognitive development and it was observed from the study that sex does not have a significant influence on cognitive development ($t(198)=1.323$ $P > .05$). This result was supported by Domjan (2002), he posited that sex differences does not influence cognitive development. Men and woman tends to have similar cognitive capacity and module, their cognitive development is based on internal and external factors which may be likened to environmental and genetic influences. Sometimes, inherited genes from the parents triggered with environment and certain factor has a capacity to influence cognitive development of a child irrespective its gender either male or female.

Hypothesis two states that corporal punishment will significantly influence cognitive development and it was observed from the study that corporal punishment has an influence on cognitive development ($t(198)=1.871$ $P < .05$). This research was supported by Bitensky (2006) in his studies where he described corporal punishment as a module to control and modify behaviour which acts as a functioning tool in defining the cognitive development of a child. Cowan (2002)

posited that family is the first module of socialisation for a child, the first place to justify between right and wrongs. He posited that spanking as the hitting of a child with an open hand on the buttocks or extremities without leaving a bruise or resulting in physical harm has a large role in influencing the cognitive development of a child. Contrary to their studies, Shaw and Braden (1990) argued that recent research has indicated that corporal punishment is associated with a significant increase in detrimental consequences.

Gershoff (2002) also conducted a study to distinguish an association of corporal punishment and various cognitive developments. The results corroborated the association between the use of corporal punishment and child cognitive development problem. Hypothesis three states that there will be a significant effect of Socio-economic status on cognitive development and it was observed from the study that Socio-economic status does not influence cognitive development ($F(2,197)=0.36$ $P > .05$). This result was supported by Dobson (1992), he posted that Socio-economic status does not influence cognitive development. In his study, he concluded that; children cognitive development is not a nature of the class the parent belongs to and certain external factors rather than Socio-economic status may have influences on the cognitive development of a child either positively or negatively.

CONCLUSION

The main conclusion of this study has been demonstrated by the result of this study. It was concluded that corporal punishment either mild or severe has a positive/negative influence on the cognitive development of a child. Also, we can conclude that; sex differences do not influence cognitive development. Conclusion can also be drawn that Socio-economic status does not influence cognitive development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having concluded earlier, this study has proved that corporal punishment influences cognitive development. It is therefore recommended that parents should maintain a stable relationship with their children. Reinforcement should be used instead of severe corporal punishment which is capable of influencing cognitive development of a child negatively.

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