

Association between Corporal Punishment in Childhood and Depressive Symptoms among Adolescents

Thesis

Submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Doctorate Degree in Nursing Sciences
(Psychiatric Nursing)

By

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العلاقة بين العقاب البدني في مرحلة الطفولة وأعراض الاكتئاب في مرحلة المراهقة

رسالة مقدمة توطئة للحصول علي درجة الدكتوراه
في علوم التمريض (تمريض الصحة النفسية)

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ABSTRACT

Corporal punishment in school and at home needs more attention from the psychiatric, pediatric and community nurses and doctors in order to avoid its psychological consequences as depressive symptoms and suicidal thoughts. The aim of the study was to investigate the association between depressive symptoms and exposure to corporal punishment during childhood among secondary school students. The study was carried out on 902 secondary school students from three public, private, and, technical schools in Mansoura. Data collection tools included a self-administered questionnaire for personal data and exposure of students to corporal punishment, corporal punishment scale, Arabic version of Beck Depressive symptoms Inventory, and the standardized Suicidal Probability Scale. The study revealed that age ranged from 14 to 19 years, with almost equal sex distribution. 14.6% of students had agreeing opinions towards corporal punishment. All students were exposed to parental corporal punishment, and 71.1% were exposed to corporal punishment at school. Corporal punishment was higher among technical school students at school ($p=0.002$), and from father ($p=0.002$), and mother ($p=0.007$). 42.0% of students had some grade of depression symptoms, 3.5% being severe, with higher rate in technical schools ($p<0.001$). Suicidal tendency was moderate among 61.3% of students, and high among 7.8% of them, with private schools having the highest rate ($p<0.001$). Child age, female sex, rural residence, crowding index, exposure to father punishment, and suicidal tendency score were statistically significant independent positive predictors of depression scores, while abiding to prayers was a negative predictor. For suicidal tendency score, the statistically significant independent positive predictors were male sex, not praying, exposure to mother punishment and the depression score, while student's age was a negative predictor. In conclusion, corporal punishment is highly prevalent at home and in schools. Exposure to such punishment during childhood is associated with a higher risk of depressive symptoms, and also to more suicidal tendencies. The study recommends that there is an urgent need for more education and training in understanding and handling of corporal punishment, and for increasing public awareness about its harmful consequences. The school nurses should conduct applied training programs at schools for parents on how to use alternatives to corporal punishment, and must advocate for the rights of children at school. Longitudinal studies are proposed to investigate the consequences of exposure to corporal punishment, with interventions to alleviate these consequences.

Keywords

Depression, Suicidal tendency, Adolescents

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