



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHYSICAL ABUSE AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF CHILDREN IN JUVENILE SCHOOLS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study aimed to examine the significant relationship between physical abuse and the social behavior of children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Research Methodology: The target population comprised 2,500 children in juvenile schools within Kiambu County. Utilizing Yamane's formula, a sample of 344 children was selected through simple random sampling from various juvenile schools. Data was gathered using questionnaires. A pilot study was conducted with 19 respondents from Kabete Rehabilitation Center, which was excluded from the final analysis. The study employed descriptive statistics (percentages, frequency, mean, and standard deviation) for variable description and inferential statistics, including Pearson Correlation and regression analysis, to examine the nature of the relationship between the variables.

Findings: The study revealed a strong, positive, and significant relationship between physical abuse and social behavior among children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County, Kenya ($r = .856$, $p = 0.000$) at $p < 0.05$. The hypothesis stating there was no significant relationship was rejected, indicating that an increase in physical abuse correlates with decreased social behavior among the children.

Conclusion: The findings highlight the detrimental impact of physical abuse on the social behavior of children in juvenile institutions, emphasizing the urgent need for interventions.

Recommendation: The study recommends that parents and caregivers adopt positive disciplining methods to prevent child abuse. This can be achieved through effective monitoring, reinforcement of positive social behaviors, and prioritizing open communication.

Keywords: *Physical abuse, social behavior, children, juvenile schools, Kiambu County, Kenya.*

INTRODUCTION

Child abuse is a worldwide issue with devastating long-term repercussions (Bacchini & Esposito, 2020) around 3 out of 4 children between 2- 4 years go through physical form of abuse by either their caregivers or parents frequently while in 5 women and 13 men, 1 in each category has undergone physical abuse in their childhood days that is according to the international research. Around 120 young women and under the age of 20 million girls go through some physical abuse on a global scale (World Health Organization, 2021). The report however did not focus on how physical abuse relates to social behaviour. The problem of limited empirical evidence on how physical abuse related to social behaviour poses a problem which may result to policy makers becoming deficient in the policy making process to tame child abuse in the society.

Physical abuse is reported to have affected 15–17-year-olds in South Africa (Burton, Ward, Artz, & Leoschut, 2015). Available data in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) indicate that child abuse is on the rise. As per Meinck, *et al.*, (2016), in SSA prevalence of child abuses was 56.3% for lifetime. Consequently, physical abuse was (18.2%), lifetime emotional abuse 35.5% and lifespan sexual abuse 9%. However, it is not clear how the rise in child abuse in the region has affected the social behavior of the children and more specifically those in juvenile schools (Schulz & Eden, 2016). Understanding influence of child abuse on social behavior of children in juvenile schools is important in helping inform research and policy implications.

Kenya has been experiencing high prevalence of conduct disorder among juvenile offenses (Kenya Crime & Safety Report, 2019). Naomi & Munene (2017) observed that Nairobi Juvenile Court handled the highest juvenile offenses at 45% followed by Shimo la Tewa Mombasa and Shikutsa at 30.4% each. Annual Crime Report (2018) showed that juvenile offenses increased from 7,284 cases in 2017 to 9,618 in 2018 representing 32.04% increase from the previous year. According to Annual Crime Report (2018), juvenile offenses particularly in schools rose from 2.3% in 2017, to 3.2% in 2018. At school, peer approval of peer delinquent behaviour, allegiance or attachment to peers, peer pressure, harsh school disciplines, bullying and peer pressure deviance have been linked to juvenile delinquency among girl students (Naomi & Munene, 2017). Common crimes committed by delinquents in Kenya include disobedience, staying away from school, burglary, abuse, destruction of property, violence against individual or community and sexual offences. These observations were supported by Rwengo (2017) who identified drug abuse, vandalism,

carrying of weapon, rape, examination malpractices, alcohol abuse, school violence, cultism, bullying, truancy and school drop-outs. The studies have just implied that child abuse is related to social behavior hence the need to establish the nature of the relationship.

Kiambu County has been witnessing a rise in offenses committed by juvenile children (KNBS, 2019). Juvenile crime in the county increased from 234 cases in 2019 to 278 cases in 2020, representing a 19.2% rise (Annual Crime Report, 2021). According to the Annual Crime Reports (2018), more than 30 percent of primary school children engage in one or more forms of juvenile criminal activities in Kiambu County. Many behavior rehabilitation centers for juvenile delinquents have been established, with the majority located in Kiambu.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection's report (2020) highlighted significant progress since Kenya's first Violence Against Children Survey in 2010, noting a decrease in physical violence against both female and male youth. However, despite these gains, the survey revealed concerning trends, particularly an increase in physical assault among teenage girls aged 13 to 17 in the previous year. The report did not examine the impact that this rise in physical abuse has on the social behavior of affected children. Given the noted increase in juvenile offenses (Kenya Crime & Safety Report, 2019) and the reported rise in some types of physical assault among teenagers, there are concerns regarding the relationship between child abuse and the social behavior of children in later life. This relationship may be best established among children in juvenile schools.

The 2019 survey on Violence Against Children showed that childhood violence continues to be widespread, affecting almost half of girls and more than half of boys. The most prevalent form of child abuse is physical violence, impacting approximately two out of every five girls and half of all boys. This abuse is primarily perpetrated by caregivers, guardians, and parents. According to the report, nearly half of both boys and girls experienced physical abuse within their families during childhood. Harsh disciplinary practices, including corporal punishment and psychological violence, were found to be common, affecting over half of the girls and four out of every ten boys. Females were almost one in every six victims of sexual violence, while males were less likely to be victims. Children's mental health has been significantly affected by violence (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Kenya, 2020). Despite these revelations about the impact of violence on children's mental health, the effects among delinquents in juvenile schools remain unclear. Therefore, it is crucial to address this gap. Understanding the background

of these children may reveal specific issues that have contributed to changes in their social behaviors, allowing us to address the problem at its root.

Social behavior is a description encompassing all attitudes and behaviors, and deviation from them. Often the concern is on negative social behaviour. The negative social behaviour have negative interpersonal and societal outcomes (Hashmani, & Jonason, 2017). The negative social behavior includes aggressive inclinations, ineffective and disruptive peer relationships, social information processing deficiencies, and delinquent acts (Xie, Bi, Du, Kou & Yang, 2020). Another definition provided by Clark, Vanyukov and Cornelius (2002) describe negative social behaviors as those acts which violate social rules and the basic rights of other people. Clark, Vanyukov and Cornelius (2002) assert that negative social behaviors entail acts having an intention to cause injury to people, damage property and deviations from accepted rules and going against authority such as truancy from school.

The link between child physical abuse and social conduct, is a key and consistent finding in research. Individuals and the community at large are affected by social behavior. Álvarez-García, González-Castro, Núñez, Rodríguez and Cerezo (2019) conducted a study in Asturias (Spain) among 3199 teenagers who were 11-18 years using questionnaires. Descriptive, correlation analysis and then structural equation analysis were conducted on the data. They found that physical abuse was significantly related to negative social behavior, with affected adolescents showing increased aggression, social withdrawal, and difficulty forming positive relationships. However, it remains unclear how this relationship manifests specifically among juvenile children in Kenya's Kiambu County, where reports indicate a rising prevalence of physical abuse (Njendu, 2014; Kioko, 2019).

World over physical abuse during childhood has been linked to criminal behaviours in adulthood. Afifi, Fortier, Sareen, and Taillieu (2019) in a cross-sectional study noted that adult antisocial tendencies were linked to harsh physical punishment and child abuse. This was in corroboration with Jung, Herrenkohl, Lee, Klika, and Skinner (2015). In a study of 356 adults over the age of 30 years from Lehigh University, they concluded that physical abuse only predicted crime that indirectly happen during adulthood through antisocial childhood conduct. This conclusion alludes to the significance of childhood antisocial tendencies in transiting to crime in adulthood. In support of this view, Kerig and Becker (2015) observed that early childhood neglect and maltreatment are associated with antisocial behavior development and crime throughout adolescence and adulthood. In

addition to connecting physical abuse in childhood to crime in adult hood, they associated childhood physical abuse and Juvenile antisocial behaviours which would result to children in delinquent schools. The consistent observation of the juvenile antisocial behaviours as a transitory stage into crime in adulthood suggests it is a critical entry point in preventing crime. By establishing the nature of relationship between the childhood abuse and social behaviors in juvenile schools a clear path into the intervention and hence prevention of the transition into crime in adulthood would be established.

Egeland, Yates, Appleyard, and Van Dulmen (2002) conducted a longitudinal study of children (n=140) from birth to age 12-17 in US. From the findings they concluded that early childhood physical abuse, resulted in preschool alienation, which indicated early start in externalizing issues in elementary school, eventually leading to antisocial behavior in adolescence. The assumption is, in case the antisocial behavior violates the law the youngsters find themselves in juvenile delinquent schools. To test this assumption there is need to shift the focus to children in delinquent schools. Likewise, Al Majali and Alsrehan (2019) in a study of university students aged 18-29 years (n=456) revealed that those who suffered high level of violence at home presented low levels of psychological and social adaptation of less than 20%. Such these violent family dynamics may be pushing many disadvantaged children to delinquent schools where the likelihood of being treated as criminals is high. Establishment of a significant relationship between childhood abuse and social behaviours in children in delinquent schools would help in changing the attitude of the community and caregivers in delinquent schools hence reduced prejudice and stigmatization creating a therapeutic environment for change.

Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To determine the prevalence of childhood physical abuse among children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County Kenya.
- ii. To explore the social behaviours among children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County Kenya.
- iii. To assess the relationship between childhood physical abuse and social behaviours among children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research used correlational research design. In this study the independent variable was selected forms of physical abuse (Slapping, Pinching, Choking, Kicking and Shoving). The dependent variable was social behavior and was contextualized on the lower scale like arrogance, lack of remorse, aggression, violent tendencies and lack of empathy. This research was done in Kiambu County Kenya. The target population was 2500 children in the juvenile schools in Kiambu County. Simple random sampling was utilized to select a sample of 344 children's representatives from selected schools. Structured questionnaires and an interview guide were used in collecting primary data for the study. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, standard deviation and percentages were generated. The study used Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis for the inferential statistics. The findings were presented in graphs, charts and tables for easier interpretation of the findings.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study. They are in accordance with the objectives, as detailed in the subsequent sections below. The following section details the demographic information of the participants.

Demographic information

In this section the demographic information results are presented. The data included gender, number of siblings and parents' status (alive or deceased) respectively. The demographic information was important in assessing demographic characteristics of the population in the sample hence whether the sample was representative or not.

Gender Representation

To confirm gender representation, participants reported on their gender. They were to tick between "Male" and "Female" choices. Results were summarized in figure 1

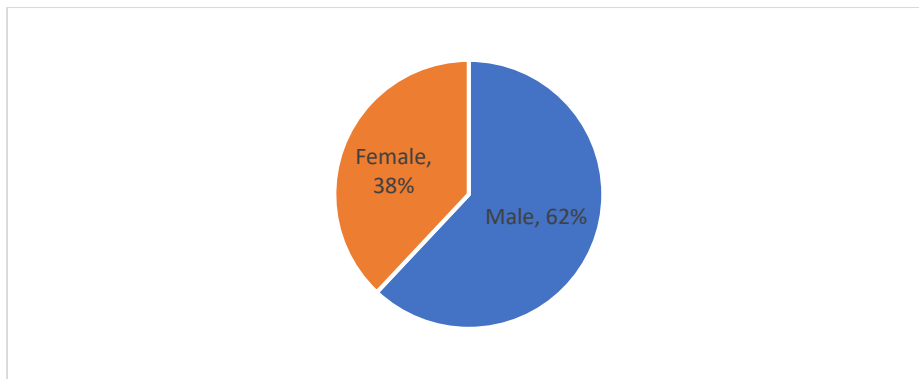


Figure 1: Gender of Respondents

Figure 1 shows that 62% of juveniles in juvenile schools in Kiambu County were males while 38% were females. This implies that male juveniles were more than the female juveniles. This indicates that more boys in the study area have been involved in criminal activities more than girls. This finding suggests that there is a gender disparity in the involvement of juveniles in criminal activities in the study area. It implies that a higher proportion of boys are involved in such activities compared to girls. Doe and Smith (2016) longitudinal study also found that throughout early adolescence, boys consistently exhibited a higher rate of involvement in criminal activities compared to girls. The research followed a diverse sample of juveniles over several years, strengthening the robustness of the findings.

Number of Siblings

Respondents were to report the number of siblings they had. Results were categorized into three categories; less than 5, 5-10 and more than 10. See Figure 2 for the results

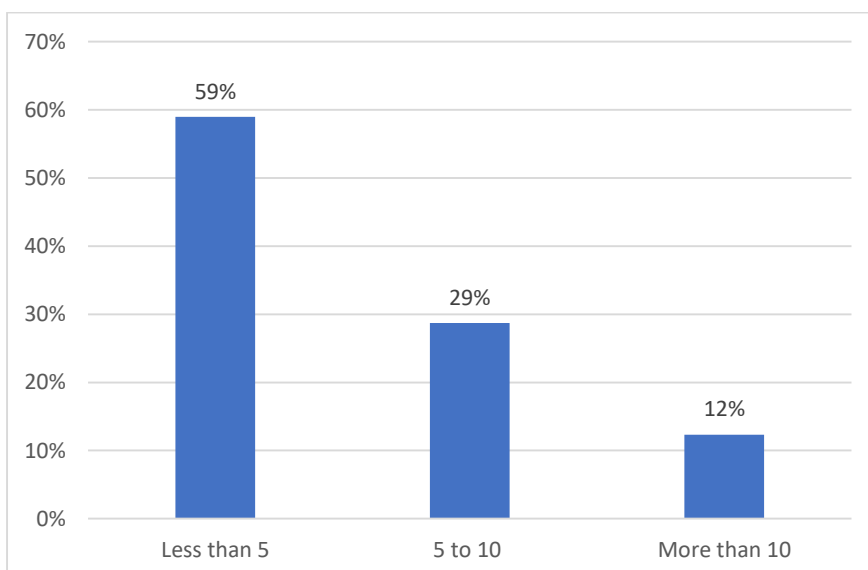


Figure 2: Number of Siblings

Majority of the juvenile delinquents in juvenile schools in Kiambu County (59%) had less than 5 siblings. Only 12% had more than 10 siblings. The finding suggests that family size may indeed be a factor influencing juvenile delinquency. With a fertility rate of 2.9% Kiambu County has more than 50% of households with less than 5 children (KNBS, 2022). This is to imply that number of siblings' characteristic among juvenile delinquents reflects the general population in the County. In this context, it implies that number of siblings may not be associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in delinquent behaviors. This differs from the findings by Leban and Gibson (2020) which showed that adolescents from families with three or more siblings exhibited a higher prevalence of involvement in delinquent activities compared to those from families with one or two siblings.

Parents Status (Alive or Deceased)

Respondents were required to report the status of their parents in terms of alive or deceased. The responses were as shown in Figure 3.

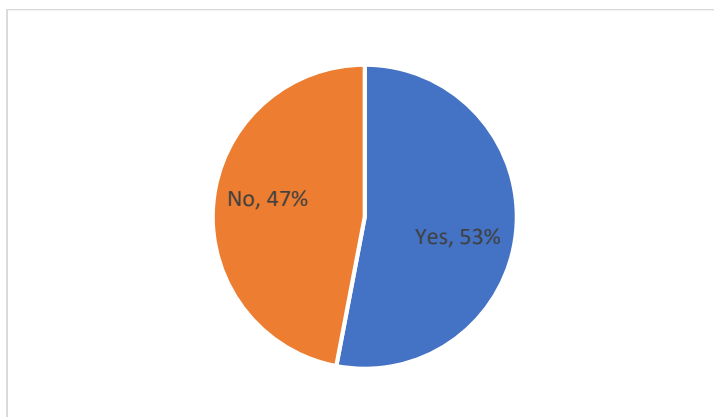


Figure 3: Parents Alive

Figure 3 indicates that 53% of the children in juvenile schools lived with both parents, while 47% indicated that they did not have both parents alive. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census Report, families without both parents rose by an average of 31% annually from 25.2% in 2009 to 38.2% in 2019. With the same growth rate, the families without both parents may be estimated to be over 43.44% in 2023. This ratio tends to agree with our finding. For the 47% of juveniles who do not have both parents alive, there may be implications related to bereavement and coping with parental loss leading to juvenile delinquency. The study by Williams and Brown (2018) in Nigeria showed that adolescents who had lost one or both parents practiced a range of coping mechanisms in

response to their bereavement experience. The use of certain coping strategies, such as avoidance or aggressive behaviors, was associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in delinquent activities. In contrast, adolescents who had access to supportive networks and healthy coping mechanisms were less likely to display delinquency.

Empirical Findings

Under this title results from the study objective were presented. The section starts with results for the dependent variable the social behaviours by juvenile respondents. Then the results for the effects of physical abuse were presented together with inferential analysis for proposed hypothesis of existing relationship between the variables based on research objective.

Physical Abuse among Children in Juvenile Schools

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they had witnessed the stated aspects of physical abuse which included being slapped without reason, being raped by trusted people, being pinched, being kicked, choked, pushed over by adults, assaulting by burning and being beaten without apparent reason. The responses were provided in a 2 Point Likert scale of 1-2 where 1= no and 2 =Yes. The frequency for each response was presented in percentage. Descriptive statistics for physical abuse are summarized below in table 1.

Table 1: Physical Abuse among children in juvenile schools

Aspects of Physical Abuse	No (%)	Yes (%)	Mea n	std dev
Slapping without reason	3.09	96.91	1.97	0.17
Being pinched numerously even for no reason	41.67	58.33	1.58	0.49
Being kicked/hit by people I know, friend and relatives	45.99	54.01	1.54	0.5
Being choked severally by people living around me	36.73	63.27	1.63	0.48
Severally been pushed over by adults' people while walking closer to them	42.90	57.10	1.57	0.5
Being assaulted by burning	45.37	54.63	1.55	0.5
Being beaten without no apparent reason	44.14	55.86	1.56	0.5
Average	37.13	62.87	1.63	0.45

From the findings slapping was the most prevalent aspect of physical abuse with a frequency of 96.91% (M=1.97, SD=0.17), followed by pushing with 63.27% (M=1.63, SD=0.48). The lowest form of abuse was aspect of physical abuse was kicking and hitting with a frequency of 54.01% (M=1.54, SD=0.5). The findings registered a high total mean (M=1.63) and a high percentage of physical abuse among children in juvenile schools at

67.87. The findings indicate high prevalence of physical abuse among the juvenile delinquent children. This implies that over half of the respondents reported instances of physical assault, such as kicking or hitting, by individuals they were acquainted with, including friends and relatives. These percentages shed light on the prevalence of various forms of mistreatment experienced by the respondents. The results align with that of Findings by Rapuj (2020) whose study showed that ruthless beatings were a common past occurrence among juveniles in India.

Social Behaviour among Children in Juvenile Schools

The researcher wanted to find out the social behavior of children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County Kenya. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they engaged in a variety of social behavior on a lower scale. The responses were given on a binary scale 1=yes and 2=No. The descriptive results for social behaviours are summarized in table 2 below

Table 2: Social Behaviours of Children in Selected Juvenile Schools

Aspect of social behavior (lower scale)	Yes (%)	No (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Manipulating or deceiving other children	27.47	72.53	1.74	0.45
Lack remorse	46.30	53.70	1.54	0.5
Low regard for authority	49.38	50.62	1.51	0.5
Less value/respect for others	22.84	77.16	1.77	0.42
Fighting other people because of ease to anger	21.84	78.46	1.78	0.41
No second thought on revenge when hurt	35.68	64.32	1.73	0.5
Average	33.92	66.08	1.67	0.46

From the findings fighting others due to uncontrolled anger scored the highest with 78.46% (M=1.78, SD=0.41). It was followed by lack of respect for others at 77.16% (M=1.77, SD=0.42). Failing to recognize authority had the lowest at 50.62% (M=1.51, SD=0.5). The findings indicate high prevalence of social behavior on lower scale among children in juvenile schools 66.08 (M=1.67, SD=0.46) with very high possibility for fights and disrespect for others.

Relationship between Physical Abuse and Social Behaviour Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis for the study objective was:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between physical abuse and the social behavior of children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County Kenya.

Correlation and regression analysis were used in testing the hypothesis. See Table 3 below for correlation analysis.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis between Physical Abuse and Social Behavior

		Social Behavior
Physical Abuse	Pearson Correlation	.856**
	Sig.	0.000

Table 3 reveals a strong, positive, and significant relationship between physical abuse and the social behavior of children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County, Kenya ($r = .856$, $p = 0.000$) at $p < 0.05$. Consequently, the hypothesis stating that there was no significant relationship between physical abuse and social behavior was rejected. This finding indicates that an increase in physical abuse is associated with lower-scale social behavior among the children. This aligns with the study conducted by Jung, Herrenkohl, Lee, Klika, and Skinner (2015), which indicated that physical abuse predicted criminal behavior among children in early adolescence.

Additionally, regression analysis was performed to further explain the relationship between physical abuse and social behavior. The results regarding the fitness of the regression model used to explain this relationship are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Model Summary for Physical Abuse on Social Behavior

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.856	.732	.698	.4123

The results indicate that physical abuse was adequate for predicting social behavior among children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County Kenya ($R = .732$). This is to mean that 73.2% of social behavior on the lower scale among juveniles is explained by physical abuse. This supports the findings by Kerig and Becker (2015) who found that physical abuse and early childhood maltreatment are associated with antisocial behavior development among children.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients for Physical Abuse

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.975	0.606		3.258	0.00
	Physical Abuse	0.475	0.168	0.234	2.826	0.001

The results of regression analysis in Table 6 showed that physical abuse has a positive and significant relationship between social behavior of children in juvenile schools in Kiambu, County Kenya ($\beta=0.234$, $p=0.001$) at $p<0.05$. This implies that a unit increase in physical abuse would lead to a rise in social behavior on the lower scale by 0.234 units. These results agree with Jung, Herrenkohl, Lee, Klika, and Skinner (2015) who reported a positive and significant between physical abuse and antisocial behavior among juveniles in Pennsylvania.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicated a strong positive and significant relationship between physical abuse and social behavior among children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County Kenya. This association could be influenced by various factors, and revenge may be one plausible explanation. When children experience physical abuse, they may develop feelings of anger, frustration, or a desire to retaliate. These emotions can manifest in their social interactions, leading to aggressive or socially disruptive behavior as a form of revenge. The cycle of abuse and retaliation can perpetuate a pattern where physical abuse becomes linked to lower scale social behavior, creating a positive and significant relationship between the two variables. It is essential to address this cycle by implementing interventions that promote non-violent conflict resolution, provide support for both children and caregivers, and foster a safe and nurturing environment to break this harmful association.

Children who have been physically abused are more prone to displaying aggressive behaviors, such as physical fights, bullying and verbal aggression. Children who experience physical abuse may find themselves manipulating or deceiving other children. The study further concluded that children who experience physical abuse usually find themselves fighting other people because they get easily get angry.

The finding corroborates with Al Majali and Alsrehan (2019) who explored the effects of violence in the family on a child's social and psychological development in UAE and found that children in households are subjected to a high level of physical and psychological abuses. The correlational analysis revealed a strong, positive and significant relationship between physical abuse and social behavior among the children in juvenile schools in Kiambu County Kenya. The regression results, which revealed that physical abuse had a positive and significant relationship with social behaviour, also supported the Pearson's moment correlation analysis results. The above findings agreed with that of Jung, Herrenkohl, Lee, Klika, and Skinner (2015) whose study indicated that physical abuse predicted crime that indirectly happen during adulthood through antisocial childhood conduct. The results are also in line with Kerig and Becker (2015) who found that early childhood physical abuse and maltreatment are associated with antisocial behavior development and crime throughout adolescence and adulthood. Furthermore, the results support that of Afifi, Fortier, Sareen, and Taillieu (2019) whose study in USA established that adult antisocial tendencies were linked to harsh physical punishment and child abuse. Egeland, Yates, Appleyard, and Van Dulmen (2002) also noted that early childhood physical abuse resulted in preschool alienation, which indicated early start externalizing issues in elementary school, eventually leading to negative social behavior in adolescence.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that physical abuse among children in juvenile schools is alarmingly high, with these children frequently experiencing slapping and being pushed by adults in their lives. This increase in physical abuse during childhood is linked to a rise in negative social behaviors in later life, suggesting that children who endure such abuse are more likely to exhibit lower-scale social behaviors, ultimately leading to a higher likelihood of admission into juvenile schools. Additionally, the prevalence of negative social behaviors is notably high among these children, particularly manifested in behaviors such as fighting due to uncontrolled anger, disrespect towards others, and manipulative or deceitful actions. These findings underscore the urgent need to address the cycle of abuse and its impact on social behavior in this vulnerable population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that parents and caregivers can mitigate child abuse by adopting positive disciplinary methods and providing protection and guidance. Effective mitigation

strategies include closely monitoring children's activities, reinforcing positive social behaviors, and prioritizing open communication. Encouraging children to express their feelings and concerns without fear of judgment or punishment is crucial in fostering a supportive environment. This approach not only helps build trust but also cultivates a sense of security, both of which are essential for healthy child development. By implementing these practices, caregivers can significantly reduce the risk of abuse and promote healthier social behaviors among children.

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