

## **The Relationship between Parental Disciplinary Techniques and Adolescents' Aggressive Behavior among Students in Debre Markos Town**

Temesgen Demissie Eijigu

Debre Markos University, Department of Psychology, Debre Markos University,  
Ethiopia

Corresponding Author email: [Temesgen\\_Demissie@dmu.edu.et](mailto:Temesgen_Demissie@dmu.edu.et)

### **Abstract**

*Aggression and its three forms namely physical, verbal and indirect aggression are prevalent among adolescents in schools. This study aimed to examine the relationship between parental disciplinary techniques and adolescents' aggressive behavior among primary school students in Debre Markos Town. The study followed a correlational design by involving 332 participants who were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. Data were collected through a self-report questionnaire and analyzed using percentages and Pearson Product correlation. The results showed that the most commonly used parental disciplinary techniques reported in the home included non-violent discipline, psychological assault, mild physical punishment, and severe physical punishment. The correlational analyses showed that non-violent disciplinary techniques employed by parents at home were significantly negatively correlated with all types of adolescents' aggressive behavior: physical, verbal, and indirect. In contrast, severe or mild physical punishment and psychological assault were significantly positively correlated with all forms of adolescents' aggressive behavior in schools. The study concluded that both mild and severe forms of physical punishment, as well as psychological assault, are linked to higher rates of aggression in adolescents. Therefore, intervention programs should focus on discouraging physical punishment and psychological assault, while promoting non-violent disciplinary techniques for parents. Through these interventions, parents have to be taught about effective, non-violent methods for addressing adolescent misbehavior at home.*

**Keywords:** Adolescent, Aggressive behavior, disciplinary technique, parent

### **Introduction**

Globally, aggressive behavior among students is highly prevalent. A study in Northwest Nigeria demonstrated a high proportion of aggression in the forms of hostility, physical, verbal, and indirect aggression among students in secondary

schools (Bibire et al., 2023). A recent study in Ethiopia reported that three forms of aggression—physical, verbal, and indirect—are prevalent among adolescents in Debre Markos Town (Eijigu, 2024) and among students in secondary schools in Meskan Woreda (Fayso, 2019).

It is debatable if the disciplinary techniques parents use in the home will correct bad behavior or expose adolescents in the school to aggression. Numerous studies have disclosed an association between the techniques of discipline employed by parents and the aggressive behavior of children and adolescents. For instance, Sheehan and Watson's (2008) longitudinal study demonstrated that parents' use of aggressive discipline is associated with aggression during both childhood and adolescence. Similarly, a systematic review by Wiggers and Paas (2022) documented a strong association between parental physical punishment and aggressive behavior in children. Additionally, Thompson et al.'s (2017) study also associated physical discipline to increased reports of physically aggressive behavior in early childhood. Furthermore, seminal studies, including those by Day et al (1994) and McCord et al. (1961/1970) also found that disciplinary techniques involving physical and verbal punishment, as well as psychological assault, were strongly associated with higher levels of aggressive behavior. In contrast, disciplinary methods that involve discussion, reasoning, and explanation were linked to lower levels of aggression. This suggests that poor parental disciplinary practices may contribute to aggressive behaviors in childhood.

However, the relationship between physical punishment and aggression has yielded mixed results. Much available empirical evidence (e.g., Sheehan & Watson, 2008; Thompson et al., 2017; Wiggers & Paas, 2022) revealed that there is a significant positive association between physical punishment and aggression. In contrast, a review made by Kandel (1992) found no statistically significant correlation between the use of physical punishment by parents and aggression in children. The ongoing controversy regarding the connection between physical punishment and aggression underscores the need for further research.

While aggression appears to be a prevalent issue, particularly in Ethiopia, there has been insufficient research on this topic. The high rates of aggression among adolescents call for an investigation into contributing factors. To help address or reduce adolescent aggression, it is essential to examine the role of parental disciplinary techniques.

To explain the relationship between parental disciplinary techniques and adolescent aggressive behavior, social learning theory was employed (Bandura & Walters, 1971; Feldman, 1985; Franzoi, 2000). Adolescents who observe their parents using physical punishment and psychological assault as a form of discipline may imitate these methods to resolve conflicts, leading to increased adolescent aggression. In contrast, when parents employ non-violent discipline methods, their children are more likely to use similar approaches, resolving conflict through reasoning and reducing aggressive behavior. Therefore, this study aims to explore the association between the disciplinary methods employed by parents at home and the aggressive behavior of adolescents in school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Parents often use various disciplinary techniques when their children misbehave. These techniques can range from non-violent methods like reasoning and explanations to psychological and physical punishment. A study conducted by the African Child Policy Forum and Save the Children Sweden (ACPFSCS) in Addis Ababa and the regional states of Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) found that over 70% of adolescents and children experienced psychological punishment, which included shouting (76.7%), insulting (65.5%), and threatening (74.1%). Additionally, the study reported that 74.1% of adolescents faced physical punishments, such as hitting with a stick, hitting on the head (73.3%), slapping (70.3%), pinching (69.1%), and whipping with a belt (63.7%). This data highlights the high prevalence of physical and psychological punishment used at home as techniques for modifying children's and adolescents' misbehavior. Despite a large proportion of adults relying on severe punishment as a primary method of teaching children appropriate behavior, more than 70% of participants in the study indicated that they learned nothing from such punishment. This raises the question: What did they actually learn?

In relation to the prevalence of aggressive behavior in schools, Habtamu (1998) reported that over 50% of respondents in secondary schools in Addis Ababa have engaged in various forms of aggressive behavior. These behaviors include hitting someone with a stick or rock, kicking, shoving, and engaging in physical fights. These research findings suggest that disciplinary techniques involving physical punishment and psychological aggression at home, along with aggressive behaviors such as hitting, kicking, and shoving in schools, are quite common.

The high prevalence of physical punishment and psychological abuse in homes, along with aggressive behaviors exhibited by adolescents in schools, raises questions about

the effectiveness of disciplinary techniques in shaping these aggressive behaviors. As the primary and most significant agents of socialization, families are believed to influence the aggressive behavior of adolescents, particularly in school settings. This perspective assumes that aggressive behavior in adolescents is linked to parents' ineffective disciplinary methods. However, the researcher found a lack of adequate local literature clearly outlining the relationship between parental disciplinary techniques and adolescent aggressive behavior. Previous studies by Seleshi (2000) and Adugna (2005) explored the connection between parenting styles and adolescent misbehavior (including aggression), but their findings did not establish a direct link between specific parental disciplinary techniques and aggressive behaviors in adolescents. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between specific parental disciplinary methods and adolescents' aggressive behavior.

Studying the specific disciplinary techniques used by parents and their association with adolescents' aggressive behavior is essential for identifying which techniques promote aggressive versus non-aggressive behaviors. This study aims to investigate the relationship between parental disciplinary techniques at home and various types of adolescents' aggressive behaviors, namely physical, verbal, and indirect aggression in school settings.

To closely examine this issue, the following key research questions were posed:

1. Which forms of disciplinary techniques are most prevalent among adolescents in Debre Markos Town?
2. What is the relationship between parental disciplinary techniques (including physical punishment, non-violent discipline, and psychological assault) at home and adolescents' aggression at school?

## **Methods**

### **Research Approach and Design**

A quantitative approach was utilized to gather data, allowing for the quantification of opinions from a larger number of respondents on a limited set of questions. The researcher employed correlational design since the study aimed to investigate the relationship between parental disciplinary techniques and adolescents' aggressive behavior.

## **Population**

The target population for this study consisted of seventh and eighth-grade students at government primary schools in Debere Markos town. This location was chosen because aggression is prevalent in the study area (Eijigu, 2024). Seventh and eighth-grade students were selected because they are at the stage of adolescence. Moreover, research indicates that the use of coercive discipline is more prevalent among parents with younger children and tends to decline as children grow older (Day et al., 1994). Therefore, studying these grade levels is more appropriate for observing the effects of coercive discipline compared to higher-grade students.

## **Samples and Sampling Technique**

Using the formula developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the calculated sample size for this study was 346. The total population consisted of 3,210 students from six primary schools: Teklehaimanot, Dibeza, Abema, Endemata, Delbetigle, and Editebeb. A total of 346 students from grade seven and eight were selected using stratified random sampling methods. The stratification criteria were grade level and gender. In grade seven, there were 1,568 students, consisting of 818 males and 750 females. In grade eight, there were 1,642 students, comprising 842 males and 800 females. Participants were selected in proportion to the representation of their respective grade levels and genders. Specifically, from grade seven, 169 students were selected (88 males and 81 females), while from grade eight, 177 students were selected (91 males and 86 females). Each student was assigned a number according to their gender and grade level.

Participants were then randomly selected from each subgroup using a lottery system, resulting in a total of 346 students who were involved in the main study. However, fourteen participants did not complete the questionnaire correctly and were excluded from the analysis. Consequently, the analysis was based on data obtained from 332 respondents who properly filled out the questionnaires.

## **Instruments**

To collect data, two sets of self-report questionnaires were used. The first set consisted of 34 items regarding specific parental disciplinary techniques. The second part included 34 items that measured adolescents' aggressive behaviors, including verbal, physical, and indirect aggression.

### **A. Measures on Parental Disciplinary Techniques**

The items related to parental disciplinary techniques measure the frequency of physical punishment, psychological assault, and non-violent disciplinary methods used by parents or guardians in response to perceived misbehavior in adolescents. According to research findings by Parker and Benson (2004), adolescents' perceptions of their parents' behavior are more valid and predictive of their own behaviors than parental reports. Therefore, the ratings provided by adolescents regarding their parents' disciplinary behaviors were used as measures of these techniques.

The instrument was mainly adapted from sources such as the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scale developed by Straus et al. (1998) and the Dimensions of Discipline Questionnaire developed by Straus and Fauchier (2005-2006). Additionally, other common practices employed by parents in this area were included in the scales.

For this investigation, the disciplinary techniques were classified into four categories: nonviolent discipline, psychological assault, severe physical punishment, and minor physical punishment. The items were developed using a seven-point Likert scale with a reference time frame of one month. The response categories were as follows: once, twice, three to five times, six to ten times, eleven to twenty times, more than twenty times, and did not occur in the last month. The scoring for the scale was determined by adding the midpoints corresponding to the selected response categories. The scoring was assigned as follows: "did not occur" scored 0, "once" scored 1, "twice" scored 2, "three to five times" scored 4, "six to ten times" scored 8, "eleven to twenty times" scored 15, and "more than twenty times" scored 25. This scoring system was based on the recommendations of Straus et al. (1998). To measure the prevalence of the types of disciplinary techniques, dichotomous variables were created. If a parent reported using a given technique one or more times in the previous month, it was scored as 1; if the parent reported not using that technique during the same period, it was scored as 0.

### **B. Measures of Aggressive Behaviors**

The items included in this scale measure various forms of aggressive behaviors among adolescents, specifically verbal, physical, and indirect aggression. The items were mainly adapted from the Direct and Indirect Aggression Scale (DIAS) developed by Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Osterman (1992), as well as Kingery's (1998) Adolescents' Violence Scale, which is referenced in Habtamu's (1998) study on interpersonal violence in secondary schools in Addis Ababa. Additionally, some items were included based on the researcher's own experiences. The instrument asked

participants to indicate whether they had been showing aggressive behaviors (such as insulting, fighting with peers or backbiting) and the frequency of these behaviors within a one-month reference period.

The DIAS scale consists of three sub-scales: physical, verbal, and indirect aggression. Participants respond using a seven-point Likert scale, with the following options: "once," "twice," "three to five times," "six to ten times," "eleven to twenty times," "more than twenty times," and "did not occur in the last month." The method of scoring was similar with items in the parental disciplinary techniques scale.

### **Pilot Testing of the Instrument**

The main objective of the pilot test is to improve the data collection instrument. To achieve this, the instrument was initially formulated in English, translated into Amharic (the local language), and then back-translated by professionals. Comparisons were made between the original English version and the Amharic translation to ensure equivalence in meaning. Four experts from the Department of Psychology at Addis Ababa University evaluated the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items in relation to the study's purpose. Based on their recommendations, several items were modified and rephrased. The Amharic version of the instrument was then pilot tested on a randomly selected sample of 43 students (18 females and 25 males) from grades seven and eight at Delbetigle Primary School in Debere Markos Town. The responses were scored, and the internal consistency of the items across four subscales of parental disciplinary techniques and the reliability of three subscales of the aggressive behavior inventory were computed using Cronbach's alpha. The calculations were done with the assistance of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0 for Windows. The reliability results for the scales were as follows: physical aggression (0.80), verbal aggression (0.83), and indirect aggression (0.92).

Based on the results from the pilot test of the instrument, six items with low item-total correlations, which could reduce the overall reliability of the instrument, were removed. The remaining items were used in the final study with minor modifications. Specifically, one item from the nonviolent discipline scale (sending the adolescent to bed without dinner), two items from the severe physical punishment scale (parents threatened me with a knife or gun, and parents forced me to inhale the smoke of burning chilli pepper), one item from the psychological assault scale (my parents let me misbehave so that I would have to deal with the consequences of my actions), one item from the verbal aggression scale (I get into arguments when students disagree

with me), and one item from the physical aggression scale (scratched someone with my nails) were removed.

### **Procedures of Data Collection**

Primarily, the researcher contacted school administrators and explained to them about the research he was going to conduct and its purpose. After having the consent of administrators, information regarding the total number of students across sex and grade level were collected from the administrators' office. Then, determination of sample respondents for pilot and final study was made. After the completion of pilot testing, the finalized Amharic version of the questionnaire was administered in groups to the selected respondents in their respective schools. Prior to the administration of the questionnaires, the researcher explained the purpose of the questionnaire. He also provided instructions by reading aloud on how to fill in the questionnaire in order to avoid response biases because of poor reading and misunderstanding. Similarly, the researcher told the participants that their answers would be confidential and asked to complete the questionnaire genuinely. They were also informed not to hesitate to ask any question during the administration of the questionnaire. After providing an explanation and instructions, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents following their oral consent, with the researcher was available in close for individual assistance.

### **Methods of Data Analysis**

After collecting the data, various statistical tools were used for analysis. SPSS Version 20.0 was employed to compute statistical data. To estimate the prevalence of parental disciplinary techniques in schools, descriptive statistical methods such as mean, percentage, and standard deviation were utilized. To determine whether a relationship exists between the parental disciplinary techniques used at home and adolescents' aggressive behavior in schools, Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient was used to identify both the magnitude and direction of the relationship. Before running correlation, assumptions were checked and found tenable.

## **Results**

### **Commonly used-Disciplinary Techniques in the Home**

Parents and guardians use various disciplinary techniques to correct adolescent misbehavior, ranging from non-violent methods to severe physical punishment. To identify the most commonly used techniques, each item in the different sub-scale of disciplinary methods was listed, and their frequencies were counted. Subsequently, percentages were calculated to show the proportion of respondents for each item. The results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Percentage of Students who Experienced Various Disciplinary Practices in the Last Month at least Once (N =322).**

No.	Disciplinary Techniques	N	%
A	<b>Nonviolent Discipline</b>	332	100
1	Asked why I did something wrong.	315	94.9
2	Explained why wrong.	313	94.3
3	Taught the desirable and undesirable behavior impact	308	92.8
4	Praised.	308	92.8
5	Demonstrated the right behavior to follow.	306	92.2
6	Given money or other material rewards.	245	73.8
7	Given extra chores as a consequence.	239	72.0
8	Prohibited from playing with peers or watching television.	198	59.6
9	Send away out of the house for certain time.	115	34.6
B	<b>Psychological Assault</b>	328	98.8
10	Shouted, veiled, or screamed.	272	81.9
11	Threatened to hit or spank	259	78
12	Not Paid attention to bad behavior.	210	63.3
13	Made to feel ashamed or guilt	188	56.6
14	Threatened with God or ghosts.	188	56.6
15	Hold back affection.	187	56.3
16	Refused to speak.	177	53.3
17	Called names like stupid or useless	175	52.7
18	Threatened to kick out of the house.	160	48.2
19	Swore or cursed.	157	47.3
C	<b>Mild Physical punishment</b>	312	94.0
20	Pinched.	250	75.3
21	Kneeled down	219	66.0
22	Hit buttocks with bare hand.	186	56.0
23	Slapped on the hand, arm, or leg	166	50.0
24	Pulled hair or twisted ear.	153	46.1
25	Hit buttocks <b>with</b> belt. or slick.	153	46.1
D	<b>Severe physical punishment</b>	239	72.0
26	Slapped on the face, head or ears.	156	47.0
27	Hit on some parts of the <i>body</i> other than the buttock with a belt whip, or a stick.	134	40.4
28	Beat up over and over as hard as possible.	123	37.0
29	Hit with a fist or kicked hard.	111	33.4
30	Threw or knocked down.	111	33.4
31	Tied <b>w i t h</b> rope or electric wire.	95	28.6
32	Grabbed around neck and choked.	85	25.6

Adolescents' report regarding discipline practices are summarized in Table 1. Each of the four different categories of discipline practice was followed by the behaviors included within the category and corresponding frequencies. The entire sample reported that their parents or guardians engaged in at least one of the ten disciplinary tactics in the nonviolent discipline scale. The most frequently used techniques for modifying misbehavior was asking why something wrong was committed, explaining why it was wrong, praising when they show the right behavior and demonstrating the right behavior to follow. The next most common forms of discipline, experienced by 98.8 % of the sample were psychological assault primarily shouting, threatening to hit and not paying attention to the misbehavior of adolescents. Ninety-four and seventy-two percent of the study participants reported that mild and severe physical punishments respectively, were used by parents and guardians to correct their misbehavior. The highest frequency behavior in the mild physical punishment category was pinching. Seventy-five percent of parents/guardians had used this form of discipline in the last month. On the other hand, forty-seven percent of the parents/guardians had used one of the severe physical punishment categories that are slapping the face, head, or ears in the last month.

***The Relationship between Parental Disciplinary Techniques and Adolescents' Aggressive Behavior***

The primary objective of this study was to examine the relationship between parental disciplinary techniques used at home and the aggressive behaviors exhibited by adolescents in schools. To achieve this goal, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated, and the results are presented in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Inter-correlations among Disciplinary Techniques and Aggression (N=332)**

No.	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Nonviolent Discipline	1	.002	.029	.134	.182	.138	.151
2	Psychological Assault		1	.597	.607	.536	.54	.545
3	Mild Physical punishment			1	.688	.503	.499	.500
4	Severe Physical punishment				1	.705	.562	.68
5	Physical Aggression					1	.741	.824
6	Verbal Aggression						1	.770
7	Indirect Aggression							1

Note: \* $p < .05$ , two-tailed test; \*\* $p < .01$ , two-tailed test

As shown in Table 2, there was statistically significant relationship between nonviolent discipline and physical aggression ( $r = -.182, p < .01$ ), nonviolent discipline and verbal aggression ( $r = -.138, p < .05$ ), nonviolent discipline and indirect aggression ( $r = -.151, p < .01$ ). Even though the relationship was found was weak, the negative correlation imply that students experiencing higher frequency of nonviolent discipline in the home were more likely to commit lower aggressive actions {physical, verbal and indirect) in the school than those experiencing lower frequency of nonviolent discipline in the home,

In contrast, psychological assault had significant relationship with physical aggression ( $r = .536, p < .01$ ); verbal aggression ( $t = .541, p < .01$ ); and indirect aggression ( $r = .545, p < .01$ ). This strong and positive relationship demonstrates that adolescents who were frequently threatened psychologically by their parents in the home were more likely to be involved in aggressive actions within the school than adolescents who were not or rarely threatened in the home.

Moreover, mild physical punishment also had statistically significant association with physical aggression ( $r = .503, p < .01$ ); verbal aggression ( $r = .499, p < .01$ ); and indirect aggression ( $r = .500, p < .01$ ). It was also found that severe physical punishment had significant relationship with physical aggression ( $r = .705, p < .01$ ); verbal aggression ( $r = .562, p < .01$ ); and Indirect aggression ( $r = .683, p < .01$ ).

The correlation results indicated that students who were frequently punished physically (mild or severe) by their parents in the home were more likely to be involved in aggressive actions within the school compound than students who were not or rarely punished physically.

On the other hand, parental disciplinary techniques such as psychological assault, mild and severe physical punishment were significantly associated among each other. This means that adolescents experiencing some form of disciplinary techniques would also tend to have other forms of disciplinary techniques as well. Similarly, forms of aggressive behaviors, namely physical, verbal and indirect aggression were strongly correlated among each other. This indicates that adolescents who took part in one form of aggression are more likely to engage in other forms of aggression.

In contrast, severe physical punishment was inversely related to non-violent discipline. This shows that adolescents who experienced non-violent discipline were less likely to experience severe physical punishment.

## Discussion

The results of the survey showed that the entire sample of adolescents had experienced at least one episode of the ten disciplinary tactics in the nonviolent discipline scale. The most frequently used techniques from nonviolent discipline strategies for modifying misbehavior was asking why something wrong was committed, explaining why it was wrong, praising when they show the right behavior and demonstrating the right behavior to follow. In line with this study, Institute de la statistique Quebec (2004) reported that adults living in the household had used non-violent child-rearing strategies. A study in 60 low and middle-income countries reported that verbal reasoning was used by 80% of caregivers (Ward et al., 2023). Similarly, a survey conducted in five villages of India by Hunter et al. (1999) found that 95% of the mothers used some mode of nonviolent discipline with their children, primarily explaining why a behavior was wrong.

The other most common forms of discipline, experienced by 98.8% of the sample were psychological assault primarily shouting, threatening to hit and not paying attention to the misbehavior of adolescents. Consistent with this result, Institute de la statistique Quebec (2004) reported that a large majority (80%) reported that at least one episode of psychological assault is used against children. In a survey conducted in 60 low- and middle-income countries, 66% of caregivers reported using shouting (Ward et al., 2023). Straus and Field (2003) stated that for teenagers using one or more forms of psychological assault during the previous 12 months was in the 90% range. Ninety-four and seventy-two percent of the study participants reported that mild and severe physical punishments respectively were used by parents and guardians to correct their misbehavior. The highest frequent behavior in the mild physical punishment category was pinching. Seventy-five percent of parents/guardians had used this form of discipline in the last month. On the other hand, forty-seven percent of the parents/guardians had used one of the severe physical punishment categories that are slapping the face, head or ears in the last month. The study was consistent with Seleshi (2001) who reported that in Ediget Besira Elementary and Junior School, physical punishment was the most frequent measures taken by teachers in disciplining students.

The findings of the present study provided strong support for the association between parental disciplinary techniques and adolescents' different types of aggressive behavior: physical, verbal, and indirect. This finding is consistent with studies such as Deme (1997); Gershoff et al. (2010); Hetherington and Parke (1993). For example, an international study in six countries reported that using physical punishment, expressing

displeasure, yelling or scolding were all linked to aggressive behavior in children (Gershoff et al., 2010).

The relationship of each disciplinary technique with three measures of adolescent aggressive behavior is discussed in brief as follows. To begin with, non-violent disciplinary techniques were significantly and negatively correlated with all of the three measures of aggressive behavior. The results of the correlation imply that adolescents frequently disciplined with nonviolent techniques in the home tend to commit less aggressive actions in the school than adolescents who are disciplined by such techniques rarely. It is understandable from this result that frequently using non-violent techniques in disciplining children has important association with the development of desirable behavior. This finding is found to be consistent with other similar studies. For instance, Hart et al. (1992) reported that disciplining children with explanation and reasoning is linked with greater self-control, enhanced communication skills, positive social interactions and pro-social behavior with peers. Similarly, on the effectiveness of non-violent disciplinary techniques, Day et al. (1994) suggest that parents who employed discipline styles such as discussion and reasoning are less likely to raise children with conduct problems like aggression than parents who employed discipline styles such as physical and verbal punishment.

Next, the findings of the present study demonstrated that the relationship between mild physical punishment and aggression was significantly and positively associated with all kinds of aggression: physical, verbal and indirect even at 0.01 level of significance. It was also found that severe physical punishment had positive and significant relationship with physical aggression ( $r=.705$ ,  $p<.01$ ); verbal aggression ( $r=.562$ ,  $p<.01$ ); and indirect aggression ( $r=.683$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The correlation result indicated that adolescents who were exposed to frequent physical punishment (severe or mild) tend to commit more aggressive actions on their classmates or peers in the school than adolescents exposed to no or minimal physical punishment in the home. That is "no or low" on frequency of use of physical punishment is associated with less aggression in adolescents than high on frequency of use of physical punishment. These results are consistent with various studies (Cohen, 1971; Kandel, 1992; Ward et al., 2023; Wiggers & Paas, 2022; Thompson et al., 2017). For instance, Thompson et al. (2017) demonstrated a correlation between physical discipline and higher rates of reported physically aggressive behaviours in early childhood. Additionally, according to a systematic review on the relationship between severe physical punishment and externalising behaviours, children who get severe physical punishment are more likely to exhibit aggression, antisocial behaviour, and other behavioural problems (Wiggers

& Paas, 2022). In line with social learning theory, parental aggression towards children is likely to be associated with high child aggression (Ward et al., 2023). Early literature reviews made by Cohen (1971) and Kandel (1992) also found that high amounts of punishment at home were significantly associated with aggression in school.

The findings of the present study also revealed that there was statistically significant positive relationship between psychological assaults and all types of aggressive behavior: physical, verbal and indirect. Significantly positive relationship found demonstrates that students who were frequently threatened by their parents in the home were more likely to be involved in aggressive actions within the school compound than students who were rarely threatened psychologically.

This study shows similar results to the studies conducted by Day et al. (1994) and Olweus (1980, cited in Day et al., 1994). The study conducted by Day et al. (1994) results also showed that parents whose discipline style is characterized as aversive and coercive such as physical and verbal punishment are more likely to raise children with aggression and other problem behaviors than parents whose discipline style is mainly relied on reasoning, explanation, and discussion. The study done by Olweus (1980 cited in Day et al, 1994), using path analysis, found that both mothers' and fathers' use of physical punishment and strong affective threats was directly related to aggression in adolescent boys. Similarly, McCord et al. (1961/1970) conducted a study on familial correlates of aggression in non-delinquent male children. They found consistent results with this study. That is, parental discipline practices in the form of physical punishment, frequent use of threats and verbal frightening, constant, unfavorable comments on the boy's worth were strongly associated with a high level of aggressive behavior.

To sum up, this study suggests that parents/guardians, who frequently employed coercive techniques like physical punishment and psychological assault in ways to correct their adolescents' wrongdoings, tend to have adolescents who are more likely to display high instances of aggressive behavior. Therefore, parental practices can reduce or intensify aggressive behavior among adolescents. Adolescents are less likely to act out aggressively when their parents use more effective disciplinary techniques like reasoning, depriving some privileges, praising, teaching the right behavior, etc., than those who rely on hostile techniques such as physical punishment and psychological assault.

Various empirical studies at both national and global levels have focused on the association between parenting styles and adolescent aggression. However, this study

is among the first to associate disciplinary techniques employed by parents at home with aggression in the school. This study insight into how parental physical punishment and psychological assault in the home as disciplinary techniques can influence the development of adolescent aggressive behavior in the school. Additionally, the study examines how non-violent disciplinary techniques used by parents at home in reducing adolescent aggression. The finding of the study has theoretical significance in confirming social learning theory. Practically, these findings will encourage parents to avoid using physical punishment and psychological assault while promoting parents to use non-violent disciplinary techniques when resolving misbehaviors at home. Furthermore, these findings can serve as evidence to support the proper implementation of the convention on the Rights of the child, which has been signed by Ethiopian Government and is considered part of Ethiopian law.

Despite these contributions, this study has a number of limitations. First, the correlational nature of the study does not establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the variables. So, future research would benefit from employing experimental or longitudinal research designs. Second, the study focused on seventh and eighth grade students in Debre Markos Town, making it difficult to generalize findings to other grade levels or adolescents from different Woredas. Hence, including a variety of grade levels from different Woredas would enhance generalizability. It is also important that future studies consider the formativeness of physical and psychological punishment as moderators, as community perceptions can influence outcomes.

## **Conclusion**

The commonly used disciplinary techniques employed by parents/guardians were non-violent discipline, followed by psychological assault, mild physical punishment and severe physical punishment.

The findings of the study indicated that non-violent discipline techniques employed by parents in the home were significantly negatively correlated with all kinds of adolescents' aggressive behavior in the school while physical punishment (severe/mild) and psychological assault were significantly positively associated with adolescents' physical, verbal and indirect aggressive behavior in the schools. From this finding one can conclude that parents' way of disciplining their adolescents either promotes or retards adolescents' aggressive behavior. If parents are using non-violent disciplinary techniques frequently, they are more likely to promote desirable behavior and retard aggressive behavior. In contrast, if parents are using mild or severe physical

punishment and psychological assault frequently, they are more likely to promote aggressive behavior.

### Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Parents, guardians and the society at large have to understand that adolescents' aggressive behavior is strongly associated with how parents discipline their children. Hence, parents and the public at large have to be taught, and made aware of about the non-violent disciplinary techniques which were found effective in handling adolescents' misbehaviors and about using physical punishment and psychological assault as disciplinary techniques of adolescents are the violation of their rights.
2. The schools and concerned organizations on children and adolescents have to design training and awareness-raising programs to enable adolescents get adequate skills in resolving interpersonal disagreements/problems peacefully.
3. The parents should not back up their adolescent children's manifested aggressive behaviors in the school at the time of consultation with home-room teachers or the concerned body in the school. Rather, all have to work for modifying aggressive behavior shown. Hence, there should be very close relationship between the schools and parents/guardians.
4. A study that would involve different contexts of disciplinary practices like parent-adolescent warmth, mode of administration, peer influence and measuring aggressive behaviors through peer rating and other techniques is recommended.

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