

Use of spanking exacerbates aggressive child behavior

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A mother's affection after she spans her child does little to diminish the negative impact of the act, a new University of Michigan study finds.

"There is a common belief that spanking that occurs in a positive parent-child relationship will not be harmful to children," said Shawna Lee, an assistant professor at the U-M School of Social Work.

"We were able to test that belief in this study. Spanking predicted worse, not better, child behavior over time, regardless of how warm mothers were with their children."

Parents use various practices to elicit positive behaviors for children. Despite numerous studies indicating that spanking increases child aggression, parents still continue to use physical punishment at high rates in hopes to see positive behavior, Lee said.

More than 3,200 white, African American and Hispanic families in major cities participated in the study. Data was collected when children were ages 1, 3 and 5. Mothers disclosed how often spanking occurred and reported children's aggressive behavior and their own warmth toward their [children](#).

The findings, which appear in the recent issue of *Developmental Psychology*, reinforce the importance of adults avoiding the use of spanking.

"Use of [spanking](#) is ineffective, and only further exacerbates aggressive child behaviors," Lee said.

Provided by University of Michigan

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