

## **Parental disciplinary practices and psychological adjustment of children**

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Disciplining children is considered by many as a key aspect of parenting. The Sinhala version of the Parent-Child Conflict Tactic Scale (CTSPC) was used to determine the disciplinary techniques experienced by a representative sample of 1226 (60.8% girls and 39.2% boys) Sinhala speaking 12-year-olds attending government schools in the Colombo district. The four sub-scales of the CTSPC assess nonviolent discipline, psychological aggression, corporal punishment and physical abuse. The most commonly reported disciplinary technique was nonviolent discipline where 83.6% of children had experienced it at least once in the past year. However, aversive techniques of psychological aggression, corporal punishment and physical abuse was also commonly experienced with 75.4%,

70% and 37.8% respectively, reporting these techniques for the past year. The results also indicated that corporal punishment is moderately but significantly associated with physical abuse. Therefore, corporal punishment is a risk factor for child physical abuse. The Sinhala version of the Personality Assessment Questionnaire was used to assess the personality of a child. It comprises of 42 items, categorized in to seven sub-scales - hostility and aggression, dependence, negative self-esteem, negative self-adequacy, emotional unresponsiveness, emotional instability and negative world view. These seven sub-scales can be combined to give a score indicating the presence or absence of psychological adjustment in a respondent. The results indicated that corporal punishment is moderately but significantly associated with a child's psychological maladjustment. Hence, if Sri Lanka is to initiate policies and programmes to prevent child maltreatment and to promote psychological health in its children, it should educate parents to relinquish aversive disciplinary techniques such as corporal punishment in response to child misbehaviours, and instead, to adopt non-violent disciplinary strategies.

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