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# Corporal punishment and physical maltreatment against children: A community study on Chinese parents in Hong Kong

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This study aimed to examine rates and associated factors of parent-to-child corporal punishment and physical maltreatment in Hong Kong Chinese families.

**Method:** Cross-sectional and randomized household interviews were conducted with 1,662 Chinese parents to collect information on demographic characteristics of parents and children, marital satisfaction, perceived social support, evaluation of child problem behaviors, and reactions to conflicts with children. Descriptive statistics, analyses of variances, and logistic regression analyses were conducted.

**Results:** The rates of parent-to-child physical aggression were 57.5% for corporal punishment and 4.5% for physical maltreatment. Mothers as compared to fathers reported higher rates and more frequent use of corporal punishment on their children, but this parental gender effect was insignificant among older parents and those with adolescent children. Boys as compared to girls were more likely to experience higher rates and more frequent parental corporal punishment, especially in middle childhood at aged 5–12. Furthermore, parents perpetrated more frequent physical maltreatment on younger as compared to older children. Results from logistic regression analyses indicated that significant correlates of parental corporal punishment were: children's young age, male gender, and externalizing behaviors as well as parents' young age, non-employment, and marital dissatisfaction. For parent-to-child physical maltreatment, significant correlates were externalizing behaviors of children and parental marital dissatisfaction.

**Conclusions:** Hong Kong Chinese parents commonly used corporal punishment on their children, which was associated with characteristics of children, parents, and family.

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*Keywords:* Chinese parental physical aggression; Chinese corporal punishment; Chinese parental physical maltreatment

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