

Marital and parental conflict resolution tactics in south-brazilian families
Táticas de resolução de conflitos conjugais e parentais em famílias sul-brasileiras
Tácticas de resolución de conflictos conyugales y parentales en familias sur-brasileñas

Simone Dill Azeredo Bolze¹, ORCID 0000-0002-8715-8913
Beatriz Schmidt², ORCID 0000-0003-2907-2297
Carina Nunes Bossardi³, ORCID 0000-0003-0734-3463
Lauren Beltrão Gomes⁴, ORCID 0000-0002-6708-8081
Marc Bigras⁵, ORCID 0000-0003-3952-7240
Mauro Luís Vieira⁶, ORCID 0000-0003-0541-4133
Maria Aparecida Crepaldi⁷, ORCID 0000-0000-0002-5892-7330

^{1,7}*Laboratório de Família, Saúde e Comunidade, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Brasil*

²*Núcleo de Infância e Família, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. Brasil*

³*Universidade do Vale do Itajaí. Brasil*

⁴*Departamento de Psicologia, Universidade Regional de Blumenau. Brasil*

⁵*Département de Psychologie, Université du Québec à Montréal. Canadá*

⁶*Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas em Desenvolvimento Infantil, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Brasil*

Abstract: The current study aimed at investigating the relationship between marital and parental conflict resolution tactics, as reported by mothers and fathers of families with children aged from 4 to 6 years old. A community-based sample from South Brazil of 300 participants (150 women and 150 men), constituting heterosexual couples, answered the following instruments: Sociodemographic Questionnaire, Revised Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS2) and Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (CTSPC). Through statistical analysis involving a set of MANOVAS, it was found that the combined parental conflict resolution tactics of Non-Violent Discipline, Psychological Aggression and Corporal Punishment successfully differed the groups of mothers and fathers regarding the practices of Negotiation, Psychological Aggression and Physical Violence in marital relationship. The results refer to the spillover effect, indicating that the tension of the couple's conflictive interactions overflows to the parental relationship.

Keywords: marital relations, marital conflict, family relations, parent-child relations, family violence

Resumo: O objetivo do presente estudo foi investigar a relação entre táticas de resolução de conflitos conjugais e parentais, reportadas por mães e pais de famílias com crianças de 4 a 6 anos. Trata-se de uma amostra comunitária de famílias provenientes do sul do Brasil, composta por 300 participantes (150 mulheres e 150 homens), que compunham casais heterossexuais, os quais responderam individualmente aos seguintes instrumentos: Questionário Sociodemográfico, *Revised Conflict Tactics Scales* (CTS2) e *Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales* (CTSPC). Por meio de análises estatísticas que envolveram um conjunto de MANOVAS, constatou-se que as táticas de resolução de conflitos parentais de Disciplina Não Violenta, Agressão Psicológica e Punição Corporal, combinadas, diferiram com êxito os grupos de mães e pais, no que se refere à prática de Negociação, Agressão Psicológica e Violência Física, na relação conjugal. Os resultados remetem ao efeito *spillover*, indicando que a tensão das interações conflitivas conjugais transborda para a relação parental.

Palavras-chave: relações conjugais, conflito conjugal, relações familiares, relações pais-criança, violência na família

Resumen: El objetivo del presente estudio fue investigar la relación entre tácticas de resolución de conflictos conyugales y parentales, reportadas por las madres y por los padres, en familias con niños de 4 a 6 años. Se trata de una muestra comunitária de familias provenientes del sur de Brasil, compuesta por 300 participantes (150 mujeres y 150 hombres), de parejas heterossexuales que respondieron individualmente a los siguientes instrumentos: Cuestionario Sociodemográfico, *Revised Conflict Tactics Scales* (CTS2) y *Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales* (CTSPC). Por medio de análisis estadísticos que involucran un conjunto de MANOVAS, se constató que las tácticas de resolución de conflictos parentales de Disciplina No Violenta, Agresión Psicológica y Punicción Corporal combinadas distinguieron con éxito los grupos de madres y padres, en lo que se refiere a la práctica de Negociación, Agresión Psicológica y

Violencia Física, en la relación conyugal. Los resultados remiten al efecto *spillover*, indicando que la tensión de las interacciones conflictivas de la pareja transborda la relación parental.

Palabras-clave: relaciones conyugales, conflicto conyugal, relaciones familiares, relaciones padres-niños, violência familiar

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Correspondence: Simone Dill Azeredo Bolze, Trindade. 88040-970. Florianópolis, SC, Brasil. Email: simoneazeredo@yahoo.com.br. Beatriz Schmidt, Rua Ramiro Barcelos, 2600, Sala 111. 90035003. Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil. Email: psi.beatriz@gmail.com. Carina Nunes Bossardi, Rua Uruguai, 458 – Centro. 88302-901. Itajaí, SC, Brasil. Email: carinabossard@yahoo.com.br. Lauren Beltrão Gomes, Rua Antônio da Veiga 140 - Itoupava Seca. 89012-500. Blumenau, SC, Brasil. Email: laurenbeltrao@yahoo.com.br. Marc Bigras, 405 Rue Sainte-Catherine Est, Montréal, QC H2L 2C4, Canadá. Email: bigras.marc@uqam.ca. Mauro Luís Vieira, Trindade. 88040-970. Florianópolis, SC, Brasil. Email: maurolvieira@gmail.com. Maria Aparecida Crepaldi, Trindade. 88040-970. Florianópolis, SC, Brasil. Email: maria.crepaldi@gmail.com.

Introduction

The family consists of the first social niche in which children participate, where they learn rules, ways of relating to others, and ways of resolving conflicts (Feldman, Masalha, & Derdikman-Eiron, 2010). Conflicts are part of human relationships (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996), and the family system is often a favorable context for the emergence of arguments and quarrels due to the daily disagreements that inevitably occur among its members (Goeke-Morey, Cummings, Harold, & Shelton, 2003). Conflicting conjugal interactions within the marital subsystem (couple) can be positive or negative for the parental subsystem (parent-child) and for childhood development, depending on how they are handled and their outcome (Bergman, Cummings, & Warmuth, 2016).

Conflicts, from the perspective of their repercussions for family members, can be classified into two dimensions: destructive and constructive (Bergman et al., 2016; Goeke-Morey et al., 2003). Destructive marital conflicts include tactics involving aggression or violence (with or without the use of objects), verbal and nonverbal hostility (expressing irritation or dissatisfaction through gestures), abrupt withdrawal from the conflict

scene, leaving the spouse alone without resolving the disagreement, threats to the family integrity, and conflicts over child-related issues. Constructive marital conflicts involve successful conflict resolution tactics permeated by compromise, emotional support, physical and verbal affection, apology, and the use of humor in resolving conflictive interactions (Bergman et al., 2016; Coln, Jordan, & Mercer, 2013; Goeke-Morey et al., 2003).

When parents deal with conflicts in a positive way, exhibiting behaviors permeated by the expression of verbal and physical affection, problem solving and support, conflict is seen as constructive and promotes the child's emotional security (Goeke-Morey et al., 2003). However, conflicts involving hostility, anger, and tactics of physical and verbal aggression, using threats and insults, are described as destructive, causing distress and adversely affecting the child's psychological functioning (Goeke-Morey et al., 2003). In addition, the tactics parents use to resolve their marital conflicts directly influence how the child will resolve conflicts with parents, siblings and peers, as they serve as models of social functioning (Gerard, Krishnakumar, & Buehler, 2006) and are linked to the ways in which he/she will negotiate disagreements in

intimate relationships throughout life (Hare, Miga, & Allen, 2009).

One of the ways to understand this relationship between the tactics of solving marital and parental conflicts can be through the theoretical concept of the spillover effect, which proposes that the perception of a positive and quality marital relationship can be associated with a positive and quality parent-child relationship, whereas a negative marital relationship can be associated with a negative relationship between the parents and their children (Erel & Burman, 1995). Thus, conflicts between the couple tend to spillover, since the practices used by them in dealing with their children are influenced by the marital experience, which may result in dysfunction in parent-child interactions (Hameister, Barbosa, & Wagner, 2015).

This spillover of the tense marital climate to the parental relationship can trigger, for example, the use of negative parenting practices and, consequently, lead to problems of internalizing behavior, such as guilt and depression, and externalizing behavior, such as aggression in the child (Coln et al., 2013; Hameister et al., 2015). Negative parental practices may include punitive or inconsistent discipline, disengagement or low parental monitoring, neglect, corporal punishment, and negative or destructive parent-child interactions (Coln et al., 2013; Gerard et al., 2006; Schmidt, Staudt, & Wagner, 2016). It is important to emphasize that marital conflict has an established influence on parental performance, increasing the probability of coercive control attempts and contention in the interactions with the child (Gerard et al., 2006).

In relation to conflictive marital and parental interactions, studies indicate an association between hostility and/or violence in the marital relationship and the use of severe discipline tactics with the child, including psychological aggression and corporal punishment (Bhona, Gebarab, Noto, Vieira, & Lourenço, 2014; Gerard et al., 2006; Liu & Wang, 2015; Reichenheim, Dias, & Moraes, 2006). Destructive marital tactics are also linked to inconsistent discipline practiced

by the mother and the father, characterized for example by incongruous parenting behaviors such as threatening and not punishing or releasing the child from punishment before the predetermined time (McCoy, George, Cummings, & Davies, 2013). In general, the use of destructive tactics in resolving marital conflicts, permeated by hostility, aggression, or avoidance, is related to worse parenting practices and to the compromise of complete childhood development (Coln et al., 2013; Hameister et al., 2015; Marchand-Reilly, 2015).

In a situation of conflict with the child, corporal punishment, specifically, is used in different countries as a parental practice with the justification of being a disciplinary act (Gershoff et al., 2010; Runyan et al., 2010). In Brazil, in particular, there is a predominance of positive parenting practices in the age range of 24 to 72 months, with negative practices, especially those involving coercion, used as a last resort in situations of greater conflict with the child (Marin, Piccinini, & Tudge, 2011). However, the use of negative practices such as psychological and physical aggression also seems common in bringing up Brazilian children (Peruhype, Halboth, & Alves, 2011; Rocha & Moraes, 2011; Runyan et al., 2010), with differences according to the socioeconomic level, with more punitive and coercive tactics being associated with families from the poorer strata of the population (Carmo & Alvarenga, 2012; Marin, Piccinini, Gonçalves, & Tudge, 2012).

The international literature consistently presents the association between marital conflict and direct and indirect consequences for the child, such as behavioral, emotional and social adjustment difficulties (Coln et al., 2013; Feldman et al., 2010; Gerard et al., 2006; McCoy et al., 2013; Tavassolie, Dudding, Madigan, Thorvardarson, & Winsler, 2016). However, in Brazil, studies that present this association are still scarce, as are those that seek to broaden the knowledge of the variables involved in the complex dynamics of the spillover effect in the family (Hameister et al., 2015). Therefore, it seems to be necessary to investigate the relationship between conflict

resolution tactics in the marital and parental subsystems in the national literature (Bhona et al., 2014; Reichenheim et al., 2006), in particular, studies that contemplate the reports of women and men in this regard (Bhona et al., 2014).

Considering the reverberation of marital interactions in the parenting practices, it was hypothesized that the conflict resolution tactics used by couples are associated with the conflict resolution tactics used by the parents with the child. Thus, the objective of the present study was to investigate the relationship between marital and parental conflict resolution tactics reported by mothers and fathers in families with children aged 4 to 6 years.

Materials and Methods

Participants

The study used a community-based sample (non-clinical), selected by convenience and composed of 300 participants (150 women and 150 men) from southern Brazil, who comprised heterosexual couples. The couples were included whose union occurred in a formal (through civil and/or religious marriage) or informal way (through what in Brazil is legally called a “stable union”) and that had at least one child, biological or not, aged between 4 and 6 years (focal child, about who the parents answered the questionnaires). To be included in the sample, the couples had to have been residing in the same household for a minimum period of six months.

The majority of the participating couples (92%) constituted a nuclear family composed of biological parents of all their children. Of the focal children, 80 were girls (53.3%) and 70 were boys (46.7%). The mean age of the mothers was 33 years ($SD = 6.31$) and that of the fathers was 36 years ($SD = 7.70$). The mean education of the mothers was 12 years ($SD = 4.19$), while that of the fathers was 11 years ($SD = 4.38$). The mean monthly income of the women was R\$1,260.35 ($SD = 1,129.28$) and R\$2,091.00 ($SD = 1,628.14$) of the men. The mean family income was

R\$3,185.54 ($SD = 2,027.13$). Regarding the workload, the majority of women (59.3%) and men (85.3%) reported working activities of 20-40 hours per week (h/w). The mean length of the marital union was 11 years ($SD = 5.37$).

Instruments

In order to investigate aspects such as place and type of residence, ages, family composition, education, profession, income and working hours of the parents, the Sociodemographic Questionnaire was applied. This instrument was developed for the project ‘The intergenerational transmission of violence: The relationship between marital and parental conflict and aggressivity among pairs of children aged from 4 to 6 years old’ (TIV), of which the present study is part.

The conflict resolution tactics were accessed through two instruments: the *Revised Conflict Tactics Scales – CTS2* (Straus et al., 1996) and the *Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales – CTSPC* (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore, & Runyan, 1998), both of which were cross-culturally adapted to Portuguese (Moraes, Hasselmann, & Reichenheim, 2002; Reichenheim & Moraes, 2003). The two questionnaires are scored on eight-point Likert-type response scales that investigate the frequency with which a particular conflict resolution tactic has been used over the previous year. Response options range from 1 (once in the last year) to 6 (more than 20 times in the last year). The respondent can also choose answer 0 (this never happened) or 7 (not in the last year, but this has happened before).

Regarding the CTS2, the Negotiation, Psychological Aggression and Physical Assault scales were used, which, in the present study, obtained Cronbach’s alphas of .82, .71 and .74 for the women (mothers) and .80, .64 and .73, for the men (fathers). Negotiation involves discussion to attempt to resolve a problem or situation of disagreement between the couple, prioritizing dialogue. Psychological Aggression encompasses actions taken to offend or injure the spouse’s identity or self-esteem. Physical Assault

encompasses situations in which one of the members of the couple causes or attempts to harm the other by physical force or by using some kind of instrument that could hurt or cause injury.

For the present study, because they were not parameterizable, the scales of the instrument were dichotomized. Accordingly, the participants were separated by sex and divided into groups, according to the frequency of occurrence of each tactic, as follows: a) *Low Negotiation* (occurred from 0 to 5 times during the previous year) and *High Negotiation* (occurred from 6 to more than 20 times during the previous year); b) *Low Psychological Aggression* (occurred from 0 to 5 times during the previous year) and *High Psychological Aggression* (occurred from 6 to more than 20 times during the previous year); and c) *Absence of Physical Assault* (never occurred) and *Presence of Physical Assault* (occurred between 1 and more than 20 times during the previous year).

The CTSPC is composed of the *Nonviolent Discipline*, *Psychological Aggression* and *Physical Assault* scales, with the latter being subdivided into three, each covering acts of different severities, these being *Corporal Punishment*, *Severe Assault (Physical Maltreatment)*, and *Very Severe Assault*. For the present study, the following scales were used: a) *Nonviolent Discipline*: disciplinary practices involving explanations, temporarily leaving the child in a room, deprivation of privilege and substitution of activities; b) *Psychological Aggression*: attitudes such as talking loudly, shouting, screaming, swearing, cursing, threatening, saying that the child will be expelled from home or using derogatory expressions; and (c) *Corporal Punishment*: attitudes such as shaking, slapping the face and various parts of the child's body, pinching and smacking on the buttocks with or without the use of objects. Because the *Corporal Punishment* scale did not present normal distribution, it was necessary to transform it, through a logarithm calculation of base 10¹ - $\log_{10}(x+1)$. In this

study, Cronbach's alphas were, respectively, .71, .55 and .77 for the maternal responses, and .56, .49 and .59 for the paternal responses.

Data Collection Procedures

The collection occurred predominantly in the residences of the families. The application of the instruments was carried out by undergraduate, Master's and PhD Psychology students, who underwent specific training for the data collection. Home visits were previously scheduled and performed by a pair of researchers so that it was possible to interview the mother and the father at the same time in separate rooms so that the responses of one spouse did not interfere with the responses of the other.

Data Analysis Procedures

The results obtained in the study were tabulated and analyzed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)* - version 18.0 software. Descriptive and relational, varied and multivariate analyses were conducted, which included Pearson's correlation analysis, t-test and MANOVAS. The MANOVAS were conducted separately for the mother and father groups and rotated through six models, three for the female groups and three for the male groups. The dependent variables of each group (*Nonviolent Discipline*, *Psychological Aggression* and *Corporal Punishment* in the parent-child relationship) remained constant in all six models. The independent variables (*Negotiation*, *Psychological Aggression* and *Physical Assault* in the marital relationship) followed the criterion of dichotomization previously described. The proportion of each of the dependent variables, within each mother and father group for the independent variables was also calculated. For this, each group was calculated separately and each dependent variable was divided by the sum of this with the other dependent variables.

¹ The transformation was carried out according to formulas developed by the statistician Jean Bégin, from

the Department of Psychology of the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Ethical Procedures

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Subjects of the Federal University of Santa Catarina/Brazil, under authorization No. 520/2009. The participants signed a consent form.

Results

Parent-Child Conflict Resolution Tactics

The conflict-resolution tactics between mother-child and father-child were correlated from a weak to moderate degree (Table 1). Among the correlations of conflict resolution tactics reported by each parent, it was found that the more one parent reported using

Nonviolent Discipline, Psychological Aggression, and Corporal Punishment with the child, the more the other did so as well. It was also noted that the Nonviolent Discipline exercised by the father correlated positively to a moderate degree to the Psychological Aggression and Corporal Punishment practiced by him. The same correlations occurred for the mother. Thus, the more the mother and father reported the use of explanations to the child about what is right and wrong, withdrawal of benefits, substitution of activities and punishments (Nonviolent Discipline), the more both mentioned the use of shouting, cursing and threats (Psychological Assault), as well as physical aggressions such as slapping and spanking (Corporal Punishment).

Table 1

Paternal and Maternal Pearson's Correlation Coefficients between the Relationships of the Scales of the CTSPC

Scales of the CTSPC	1	2	3	4	5	6
Father						
1. Nonviolent Discipline	--					
2. Psychological Aggression	.48**	--				
3. Corporal Punishment	.48**	.55**	--			
Mother						
4. Nonviolent Discipline	.25**	.15	.17*	--		
5. Psychological Aggression	.06	.24**	.12	.49**	--	
6. Corporal Punishment	.17*	.35**	.35**	.48**	.69**	--

Note. Father ($n = 150$). Mother ($n = 150$). * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Regarding the general maternal and paternal means in the dimensions of the CTSPC (Table 2), it was identified that Nonviolent Discipline was the conflict resolution tactic most commonly referred to by the mother (between 52% and 60%) and by the father (between 50% and 65%). The result of the t-test for paired samples indicated that the mother, on average, tended to practice more Nonviolent Discipline than the father, with this difference being statistically significant, $t(149) = 2.31$, $p < .05$. Likewise, the mother also reported that she practiced, on average, more

Corporal Punishment than the father, with this difference also being significant, $t(149) = -3.23$, $p < .01$. There was no significant difference between the means of the mothers and fathers for the Psychological Aggression tactic, $t(149) = -1.90$; $p = .06$. The values correspond to the mean frequency of occurrence of each tactic practiced by the parents, during the previous year, with Nonviolent Discipline occurring from 10 to 20 times, Psychological Aggression from 5 to 10 times and Corporal Punishment from 2 to 5 times, for both the mothers and the fathers.

Table 2
Paternal and Maternal Means and Standard Deviations of the Scales of the Parental Conflict Resolution Tactics (CTSPC) as a Function of Marital Conflict Resolution Tactics (CTS2)

Marital Conflict Resolution Tactics (CTS2) Groups	<i>n</i>	Parental Conflict Resolution Tactics (CTSPC)					
		Nonviolent Discipline		Psychological Aggression		Corporal Punishment	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Father							
Physical assault							
Absence	112	10.53	5.14	4.69	3.56	1.71	1.74
Presence	38	11.28	6.69	7.04	4.63	3.94	3.41
Psychological aggression							
Low	131	10.52	5.17	4.81	3.79	2.08	2.28
High	19	12.09	7.81	8.56	3.77	3.63	3.29
Negotiation							
Low	34	8.03	4.61	3.42	3.05	1.51	2.10
High	116	11.51	5.59	5.83	4.06	2.50	2.53
Total	150	10.72	5.56	5.28	3.98	2.27	2.47
Mother							
Physical assault							
Absence	109	11.70	6.91	5.34	3.86	2.67	3.13
Presence	41	13.38	6.19	7.91	3.63	5.41	5.06
Psychological aggression							
Low	111	11.20	6.75	5.01	3.60	2.47	2.70
High	39	14.90	6.03	8.98	3.46	6.14	5.41
Negotiation							
Low	25	8.29	6.43	4.32	3.49	1.89	1.80
High	125	12.93	6.57	6.39	3.97	3.73	4.17
Total	150	12.16	6.75	6.04	3.96	3.42	3.93

Note. *n*: number of individuals; *M*: mean; *SD*: standard deviation; Low Psychological Aggression and Low Negotiation were considered for a frequency of occurrence of 0 to 5 times during the previous year and High Psychological Aggression and High Negotiation were considered for a frequency of occurrence of 6 to more than 20 times during the previous year.

Parents-Child Conflict Resolution Tactics According to the Use of the Negotiation Tactic in the Marital Relationship

The majority of the couples reported a high use of Negotiation in the marital relationship (83% of the women and 77% of the men, with a frequency of occurrence from 6 to more than 20 times during the previous year). The results of Pillai's trace test of the MANOVA were significant for the groups of mothers, $V = .07$, $F(3,146) = 3.83$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, and fathers, $V = .09$, $F(3,146) = 4.85$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, in relation to the Negotiation tactic in the marital relationship (Table 3). The univariate analysis indicated that the largest

dimension of the effect occurred in the Nonviolent Discipline tactic, in which the result was $F(1,148) = 10.49$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, and $F(1,148) = 10.98$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, respectively, for the mother and father groups. Therefore, the results suggest that the mothers and fathers that reported a high frequency of Negotiation, in an attempt to solve problems or disagreements in the marital relationship, also reported a greater use of actions such as explanations, temporary isolation of the child in a room of the house, deprivation of privileges and substitution of activities in the parental relationship.

Table 3

Multivariate and Univariate Analysis of the Variance of the CTSPC Scales as a Function of the CTS2 Scales in the Marital Relationship

Scales of the CTS2	Multivariate <i>F</i> (3, 146)	Univariate		
		Nonviolent Discipline <i>F</i> (1, 148)	Psychological Aggression <i>F</i> (1, 148)	Corporal Punishment <i>F</i> (1, 148)
Negotiation				
Groups of Fathers	4.85**	10.98**	10.22**	5.31*
Groups of Mothers	3.83*	10.49**	5.85*	3.26
Psychological Aggression				
Groups of Fathers	5.63**	1.33	16.25***	4.91*
Groups of Mothers	12.13***	9.19**	35.93***	20.56***
Physical Assault				
Groups of Fathers	8.21***	.51	10.52**	19.18***
Groups of Mothers	5.92**	1.87	13.74***	14.66***

Note. The multivariate results (*F*) were generated from Pillai's trace test. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Proportionally, Nonviolent Discipline was the most used conflict resolution tactic with the child, regardless of whether the groups reported low Negotiation (55% of the women and 66% of the men) or high Negotiation (58% and 61% of men) in the marital relationship. However, it should be highlighted that men who reported low Negotiation with their spouses, more frequently cited the use of Nonviolent Discipline with the child (66%). On the contrary, in relation to the women's responses, the percentage of Nonviolent Discipline was higher for the group that mentioned high Negotiation with the spouse (58%). However, in spite of having also referred to Nonviolent Discipline in greater proportions, the mothers also reported the practice of Psychological Aggression and Corporal Punishment, which together corresponded to 42% of the tactics used by the women in the low Negotiation group and 45% in the high Negotiation group. Accordingly, it was identified that almost half of the maternal conflict resolution tactics involved verbal and symbolic acts, with the aim of causing psychological pain or fear in the child, or smacking on the buttocks with or without use of objects, shaking, pinching and slaps to the face, hands, arms or legs.

Parents-Child Conflict Resolution Tactics According to the Use of the Psychological Aggression Tactic in the Marital Relationship

Low Psychological Aggression (occurring 1 to 5 times during the previous year) was reported by 74% of the women and 87% of the men. However, the frequency of the occurrence of Psychological Aggression perpetrated in the marital relationship from 6 times to more than 20 times during the previous year was reported by 26% of the female participants and 13% of the male participants. The multivariate analysis, evidenced by Pillai's trace test, was significant for the groups of mothers, $V = .20$, $F(3,146) = 12.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$, and fathers, $V = .10$, $F(3,146) = 5.63$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$, who used Psychological Aggression in the marriage (Table 3). The univariate analysis showed that the largest dimension of the effect also occurred in the Psychological Aggression tactic with the child, with $F(1,148) = 35.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .200$, for the groups of mothers, and $F(1,148) = 16.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .009$, for the fathers. This indicates that attitudes of one spouse aiming to harm another's self-esteem and/or identity through insults and curses are associated with parental practices involving talking loudly, shouting, screaming, swearing, cursing, making threats, threatening to expel the child from home, and directing derogatory expressions toward the child.

When comparing the groups of mothers and fathers that expressed low and high Psychological Aggression in the marital relationship, it was verified that, once again, Nonviolent Discipline was the most used conflict resolution tactic in their relationship with the child, independent of the group to which they belonged (61% of the women and 65% of the men in the low Psychological Aggression group, and 52% of the women and 50% of the men in the high Psychological Aggression group). However, the proportion calculation also indicated that the mother and father groups that reported using high Psychological Aggression with the spouse also presented this type of attitude with the child, representing 30% (mothers) and 37% (fathers) of the total tactics used with the child. It was also noted that, of the couples that reported practicing high Psychological Aggression in the marital relationship, the use of Psychological Aggression and Corporal Punishment together represented 48% and 50% of the conflict resolution tactics used by the mothers and the fathers, respectively.

*Parents-Child Conflict Resolution Tactics
According to the Use of the Physical Assault
Tactic in the Marital Relationship*

The majority of the women (73%) and men (75%) said they had not committed any Physical Assault against their spouse during the previous year. However, some female (27%) and male (25%) participants reported having committed at least 1 act of physical aggression against the partner within the period. The MANOVA result, obtained through Pillai's trace test, indicated that the dependent variables together differentiated the groups of mothers, $V = .11$, $F(3, 146) = 5.92$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$ and father, $V = .14$, $F(3, 146) = 8.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .78$, who perpetrated Physical Assault in the marital relationship. The univariate analyses showed that the greatest dimension of the effect occurred in the Corporal Punishment tactic with the child (Table 3), in which the results for the groups of mothers were $F(1, 148) = 14.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .09$, and the groups of fathers, $F(1, 148) =$

19.18, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .67$. Therefore, behaviors such as spanking the child's buttocks with or without objects, shaking, slapping, or pinching can be associated with parents who used physical force against their spouse aiming to harm them, such as pushing, pulling hair, beating, punching and/or kicking, among others.

The results of the proportion calculations indicated that Nonviolent Discipline was the most used parental tactic, both by the group that exercised Physical Assault in the relationship with the spouse (52% for the mothers and 52% for the fathers) and by the one that did not (60% for the mothers and 65% for the fathers). However, almost half (48%) of the women and men who reported the perpetration of Physical Assault in the marital relationship reported using Psychological Aggression or Corporal Punishment, with the latter covering 17% of the total reported behaviors, both by the mothers and by the fathers. In this way, the groups of mothers and fathers that reported some Physical Assault with their partner also used more aggressive tactics with the child, compared to the nonaggressive groups.

In summary, the results indicated that the combined dependent variables successfully differentiated the mother and father groups, regarding Physical Assault, Psychological Aggression and Negotiation tactics in the marital relationship. Even controlling the variables sex of the child (female or male), monthly income, educational level in years and weekly workload in hours (up to 20h/w or up to 40h/w or more) of the mothers and fathers, it was verified that the effects of the groups of conflict resolution tactics in the marital relationship remained significant regarding the three dependent variables (Nonviolent Discipline, Psychological Aggression, and Corporal Punishment).

Discussion

It is considered that the main result of the present study is that couples that use Negotiation, Psychological Aggression and Physical Assault tactics more frequently in the

marital relationship practice, respectively, more Nonviolent Discipline, Psychological Aggression and Corporal Punishment in their relationship with the child. Therefore, with regard to conflict resolution tactics, the results suggest that the emotional climate that emerges from the marital conflicts overflows and affects the parental relationship, corroborating the idea of the spillover effect (Erel & Burman, 1995) and the findings of other related studies (Coln et al., 2013; Gerard et al., 2006; Grasso et al., 2016; Hameister et al., 2015).

It is emphasized that the Nonviolent Discipline was the conflict resolution tactic most used by the mothers and the fathers with the child, a fact understood as positive, since it was the most constructive tactic among those that were evaluated. This result confirms what has already been indicated by other studies (Peruhype et al., 2011; Rocha & Moraes, 2011; Runyan et al., 2010), that positive parenting practices tend to prevail over negatives practices (Marin et al. 2011), in particular, in the age range that this study investigated. However, Nonviolent Discipline positively correlated with the use of Psychological Aggression and Corporal Punishment. This result was also described by the authors of the CTSPC at the time of its validation, who explained that parents tend to use multiple tactics to control the child's behavior and that corporal punishment, for example, is a socially accepted practice for this purpose (Straus et al., 1998). Thus, despite the preponderance of Nonviolent Discipline, it is understood that there is a mixture of parenting practices in relation to the tactics of conflict resolution with the child. Thus, it is possible to hypothesize that when nonviolent discipline attempts do not have the desired effect, parents use other tactics that involve psychological aggression and corporal punishment, as highlighted by other studies (Peruhype et al., 2011; Rocha & Moraes, 2011).

In the same way, the results showed that the means of Nonviolent Discipline in the parental relationship were greater for the father and mother groups that were characterized by a greater use of Physical Assault,

Psychological Aggression and Negotiation in the marital relationship. It is thought that Nonviolent Discipline is understood as a constructive tactic; however, when overused, it may indicate the excess of control that the parents exercise over the child. In addition, social desirability in this scale should be particularly considered, since its items offer parents the opportunity to show how well they exercise socially appropriate tactics in situations of child disobedience (Straus et al., 1998). With regard to the association between greater marital Negotiation and an increase in Nonviolent Discipline, it is possible that couples who have the need to negotiate the disagreements of the marital relationship frequently or with greater intensity may involve the children in the conflict, directly or indirectly, which can cause them to act in a way that demands the imposition of greater discipline than in the children of couples who refer to more harmonious coexistence.

When comparing the perpetration of each conflict resolution tactic with the child, by gender of the parent, the results showed that the mother practiced more Nonviolent Discipline, Psychological Aggression and Corporal Punishment on average with the children than the father, with the difference being statistically significant for Nonviolent Discipline and Corporal Punishment. Regarding this aspect, it has been identified that, in Brazil, women are still the ones that are mainly responsible for household chores and child care (Borsa & Nunes, 2011; Jablonski, 2010). Thus, it is possible that because they are closer to the child for more time, due to the need to manage everyday decisions, mothers perform more general parenting practices and more frequently experience conflicting situations with the child.

It is relevant to highlight the use of corporal punishment as a tactic of conflict resolution with the child, exercised predominantly by the mother, and also referred to by the father as a strategy used. Other Brazilian studies focusing on violence and child abuse indicate that the mother is the main aggressor, although the father is also identified

as a perpetrator of physical abuse (Nunes & Sales, 2016; Rocha & Moraes, 2011), corroborating the justification that this is because mothers are the ones primarily responsible for the care of their children.

The use of Physical Assault in the marital relationship, although it was little reported, was associated with the use of the Corporal Punishment tactic in the resolution of conflicts with the child. This result is in line with other studies that show an association between marital hostility and severe or punitive discipline (Liu & Wang, 2015; Marchand-Reilly, 2015), including those that used the CTS2 and CTPSC instruments, highlighting the co-occurrence of violence in the marital and parental interactions (Bhona et al., 2014; Grasso et al., 2016; Reichenheim et al., 2006).

Psychological Aggression, the second most commonly conflict resolution tactic used with the child, was also associated with tactics used in the marital relationship involving depreciative behavior such as insults, humiliation, criticism, cursing, and threats. This result is in line with other studies that identify Psychological Aggression as the most prevalent type of destructive conflict resolution tactic between couples (Bolze, Schmidt, Crepaldi, & Vieira, 2013) and between parents and children (Carmo & Alvarenga, 2012), as well as the association of its use in the two family subsystems (Grasso et al., 2016). This highlights the possible naturalization of psychological violence in marital relationships (Razera, Mosmann, & Falcke, 2016), which generates non-recognition of this as a dysfunctional and/or destructive conflict resolution tactic in the interactions within the marital or parental subsystems. This data deserves special attention, since high levels of psychological aggression between couple are associated with externalizing and internalizing problems in children (Pendry, Carr, Papp, & Antles, 2013), and difficulties in school adjustment (McCoy et al., 2013), highlighting the need to develop preventive strategies for the problem (Bhona et al., 2014).

The use of conflict resolution tactics involving negative parenting practices,

particularly coercive ones, has been associated with childhood behavioral problems, especially externalization problems (Marin et al., 2012). Peruhype et al. (2011) highlighted that violence against children is socially interpreted as a routine and banal practice, which constitutes an acceptable instrument of discipline. These results corroborate data from the report of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2014), which indicates that in half of the countries of which data were available more than 80% of children between the ages of 2 and 14 years were subjected to violent discipline. The report also emphasizes that parents and caregivers that use physical punishment or psychological aggression as a way to correct children's behavioral problems are violating the children's human rights. Despite the studies that show its consequences for childhood development, corporal punishment is used by parents of various cultures around the world (Runyan et al., 2010), a fact that should be emphasized in order to develop intervention and prevention strategies.

Conclusions

The present study shows that the conflict resolution tactics used by the marital dyad are related to the tactics used by the mother and father with the child. It is emphasized that destructive marital tactics were associated with destructive parental tactics. This result refers to the spillover effect, in the sense that the tension of the conflictive interactions of the couple reverberates or overflows, affecting the way the parents deal with the child in a situation of conflict or disagreement and vice versa.

Accordingly, considering the mutual influence between the marital and parental subsystems in the maintenance of destructive family dynamics, this study is relevant as it demonstrates the occurrence of this process, even in community-based (non-clinical) samples. From the application point of view, these findings offer support for the practice of psychologists and other professionals that care for families (e.g. in health, social care and

education contexts), helping them to construct and strengthen alternative conflict resolution tactics, aiming to disrupt the dysfunctional cycle related to raising the children, for the prevention of emotional and behavioral problems. Therefore, it is suggested that intervention or psychoeducational programs are developed that will help the family group to develop constructive conflict resolution tactics to promote the healthy development of all involved. It is recommended that conflictive couples are helped to make changes through the improvement of communication and self-monitoring of emotions to minimize the spillover effect on their children and to develop constructive marital conflict resolution tactics to prevent the emergence of adjustment problems.

One of the limitations of the present study was that the sample was selected by convenience and not randomly. Accordingly, it is understood that the findings obtained in this study cannot be inferred for the general population and only indicate a trend of results, demonstrating a need to perform the research with a probabilistic sample. In addition, the sample was not composed of couples that were characterized by the experience of intense marital conflict or by a history of domestic violence. In this case, it is possible that Nonviolent Discipline would be indicated as the most used tactic for resolving conflicts with the child. In addition, it is also recognized that Cronbach's alphas were low in relation to certain scales. Regarding this aspect, it is understood that this occurred because some issues were very intimate or dealt with practices of severe violence, a fact that may have inhibited the respondents or were not consistent with their experiences. Another limitation of the study was that, because it was part of a larger project, it did not have the application of a questionnaire that investigated parenting practices, which could have evaluated more comprehensively the use of positive and negative practices in raising the children and not just the tactics of resolving conflicts with the child. It is also suggested that future studies seek to investigate, in addition to the relationship between marital

and parental conflict resolution tactics, the impact of the reverberation of these variables on the behavior, social skills and academic performance of the child.

Considering the complexity involved in marital and parental relationships, it is suggested that future studies can broaden the phenomenon through a multi-method approach, which includes longitudinal designs and the investigation of variables such as family dynamics, personality characteristics of each individual of the family system, marital quality and satisfaction, as well as intergenerational and contextual factors.

Author participation:

a) Planning and design of the work; b) Data collection; c) Analysis and interpretation of data; d) Writing the manuscript; e) Critical review of the manuscript.
S.D.A.B. contribuiu em a,b,c,d,e; B.S. em b,c,e;
C.N.B. em b,c,e; L.B.G. em b,c, e; M.B. em a,b,c, e;
M.L.V. em a,c,e; M.A.C. em a,c,e.

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