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Marital conflict strategies predict child abuse potential in Dutch families from low socioeconomic backgrounds

Partnerschaftliche Konfliktlösungsmuster bestimmen das Potential zur körperlichen Kindesmisshandlung in niederländischen Familien aus unteren Schichten

Abstract

We examined the association between marital conflict and child abuse potential in $\underline{N}$ = 86 Dutch families from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The percentage of parents who exceeded the upper 5 percent cut-off score on Milner's Child Abuse Potential Inventory was 17%. It was found that lower socioeconomic status, relatively inadequate marital conflict strategies, and fewer marital conflicts predicted higher child abuse potential. In particular physical aggression towards the partner, avoidance of conflicts, and stonewalling contributed to increased child abuse potential. Although more positive marital conflict resolutions were associated with lower child abuse potential, they did not predict abuse potential beyond the contribution of conflict strategies. We suggested that child abuse may be one of many manifestations of difficulties in coping with the conflicts and problems that are intrinsic to close and affective relationships.

Key words: partnership, conflict strategies, child abuse potential, class, parenthood

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag untersucht den Zusammenhang zwischen Partnerschaftskonflikten und dem Potential zur physischen Misshandlung von Eltern aus $\underline{N}$=86 Unterschichtfamilien in den Niederlanden. 17% der Eltern erreichten eine Punktzahl auf Milner's Child Abuse Potential Inventory, die dessen obere 5%-Grenze überschritt. Niedrigerer sozialökonomischer Status, relativ unangemessene eheliche Konfliktstrategien und weniger Ehekonflikte erklärten statistisch ein höheres Misshandlungspotential. Von allen Konfliktstrategien trugen physische Aggression gegenüber dem Partner, Konfliktvermeidung und eisiges Schweigen zur Erklärung des Zusammenhangs bei. Obwohl bessere Konfliktlösungen positiv korrelierten mit geringerem Misshandlungspotential konnten sie die Erklärungskraft der Konfliktstrategien nicht übertrumpfen. Wir gelangten zum Schluss, dass Konfliktverhalten in der Partnerschaft und die Neigung von Eltern zur physischen Misshandlung in derselben Inkompetenz im Umgang in intimen Beziehungen liegen kann.

Schlagworte: Partnerschaft, Konfliktmuster, Kindermisshandlungspotential, Schicht, Elternschaft

Introduction

There is an overwhelming amount of research pointing at an association between marital conflict and child abuse (Cummings, 1997). It has been shown, however, that the effects of marital conflicts on parenting could be mitigated by adequate problem-solving strategies and adaptive conflict resolution (Cummings, 1997; Kerig, 1996). By using adequate conflict strategies – such as cooperation, making the conflict amenable to discussion, speaking openly, and finding resolutions that are acceptable for both parents – aggression within the family can be reduced (Cummings & Davies, 1993). According to Kerig (1996), it is not the number of conflicts within a marriage that makes the real difference, but the problem-solving strategies and the way conflicts are resolved by both partners.

When parents cannot handle their conflicts adequately, there is an increased risk of negative communication, which is likely to have a negative effect also on parenting (Groenendaal & Yperen, 1996). Parents who avoid talking about their problems and fail to solve them, could become even deeper enmeshed in anger and conflict. In such cases conflicts could escalate to the point of fighting (Cummings & Davies, 1993). In general, abusive parents show poor problem-solving abilities in childrearing situations (Azar, Robinson, Hekimian, & Twentyman, 1984). Also, they exhibit increased rates of negative parenting behaviors, such as verbal and physical aggression, and inconsistencies in response to their children (Milner & Dopke, 1997).

Within a broader perspective, there are two manners to explain the relationship between the way parents relate to each other and the way they raise their children. The family can be considered as a nexus of daily interchanges. Each day family members participate in semi-regular patterns of interaction (Larson & Almeida, 1999). Within these interactions, conflicts between family members are normal and expectable. Factors that might increase the possibility of child abuse within the family have been traditionally summarized in three clusters (Baartman, 1996; Belsky, 1993): the family (partnership problems, socioeconomic stress), the parents (traumatic history, personality, unrealistic expectations), and the child (activity / irritability, intellectual disability, age).

When there is a combination of problems within these different levels (for more remote contexts, see Schulze, 2000) stress levels may become dangerous, including child abuse. The parent, in a self-protective stance, may come to blame the child for the difficulties (e.g., poor interpersonal problem solving), labeling the child as 'the problem' (he or she develops a negative attributional bias towards the child). This negative bias, coupled with a more restricted repertoire of parenting skills, can lead the parents either to avoid the contact with the child or to react with abusive verbal and physical control behaviors (Azar, 1997). This is the traditional cascade model of abuse, which occurs as a consequence of experiencing multiple risk factors. This model has led to a variety of preventive intervention projects (Macleod & Nelson, 2000), each targeted at particular risk factors or combination of risk factors.

The mentioned model is supported by arguments derived from conflict theory pertaining to the field of family (Tyrell, 2001). According to this recent approach, family is especially sensible to conflicting interactions as it can be defined as a social system based on the idea to pursue personal happiness. If the expectation of happiness is damaged, dyadic trouble is triggered and tends to expand quickly. Partnership conflict very probably overshadows all aspects of everyday life in a family and here especially the disposition of the parent to interact with his or her child.

Up to now, the underlying assumption about the concept "family" defines it as a close social unit. If we stress the differences between partnership and parenthood, e.g. with respect to love in the context of partnership and love in the context of parenthood, it is only consequent to assume that their differences and the strength of the borders between the two familial subsystems (Schulze, Tyrell & Künzler, 1989) can be the reason for independence of partnership and parenthood. Therefore, we might assume that characteristics of partnership and parenthood vary independently.

In the present study, we examined the evidence that some of the risks cited as separate factors, under separate headings and sometimes separately studied with respect to outcome, may in fact co-occur for reasons other than blind chance. According to empirical evidence and conflict theoretical arguments regarding marital conflict (a partnership characteristic) and child abuse potential (a parent characteristic), the two may in fact be closely related, and could be more adequately conceptualized as indexes of a general inadequacy in coping with close relationships (Lenz , 1990). We test the hypotheses that partners who use more inadequate conflict strategies will show higher child abuse potential as parents, and that parents who as partners arrive at more positive resolutions of their marital conflicts will show lower child abuse potential.

Method

Participants

Participants in this research were $\underline{N}$ = 86 parents – $\underline{n}$ = 70 mothers, and $\underline{n}$ = 16 fathers – with children aged 4 to 10. All children were visiting at least kindergarten and at highest the fourth grade of the secondary school. The families consisted of father, mother and child(ren), and they were living in a low socioeconomic status neighborhood of Amsterdam (for the classification of neighborhoods on an aggregate level see Eijk, 1997). The parents were predominantly Caucasian white (85%). Socioeconomic status was assessed using a combination of the educational and vocational background of both parents, and was computed on the basis of sample-specific factor loadings and standard deviations (Bernstein & Brandis, 1970). Scores lower than 9 refer to a relatively low socioeconomic status, scores between 9 and 11 refer to a middle class socioeconomic background, and scores

between 12 and 16 represent the higher socioeconomic strata. As the mean was $\underline{M} = 5.09$ ($\underline{SD} = 2.28$, Range = 1.18 to 10.95, $\underline{N} = 84$) , this sample clearly can be considered as lower class. The non-response amounted to 40% of all questionnaires handed out to the target group. Systematic deviations of the non-response group compared with the respondents who agreed to participate concerned a high percentage of non-native Dutch speakers with foreign backgrounds who lacked the ability to fill out the questionnaires.

Procedure

Families were informed through letters sent home with the schoolchildren. While visiting the school of their child, parents were invited to participate. When the answer was positive, parents received an envelope, which included two questionnaires. The parents participated on a voluntary base. Parents who filled out the questionnaires returned them to the teachers.

Measures

Child abuse potential of the parents: The Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAPI; Milner, 1990) is a screening device that measures a person's potential for physical child abuse. Subjects are asked to agree or disagree with statements that have been shown to discriminate between physical abusers and non-abusers (Milner, Charlesworth, Gold & Gold, 1988). The items are related to distress, rigidity, unhappiness, problems with child and self, problems with the family, and problems with others (Milner, 1990). A continuous score was obtained using the scoring protocol of Milner (1990). The cut-off point of 215 on the Abuse scale, indicative of high potential for abuse, was validated by Milner (1990) for screening those at risk for physical child abuse. The validity of this cut-off point has received extensive support (Hall, Sachs & Rayens, 1998). The CAPI was developed from an extensive review of literature on child abuse and neglect (Milner, 1990). Concurrent validity of the CAPI was supported in studies of abusive and non-abusive parents with correct classification rates ranging from 80% to 90% (Hall et al., 1998). Known physical abusers, intrafamilial child sexual abusers, and child neglecting parents scored higher on the Abuse scale than three matched comparison groups, while elevated scores predicted later substantiated physical child abuse, supporting the predictive validity of the scale (ibid., 1998). In previous research, internal consistencies estimates ranged from $\underline{\alpha} = .91$ to $\underline{\alpha} = .96$, whereas a test-retest reliability coefficient of $\underline{r} = .90$ over a 1-week period was found (Milner, 1990).

In the present study, the following scales were used: The Lie scale, the Random Response scale, the Inconsistency scale, and the Abuse scale. The Lie scale included questions to which only one answer is possible (e.g., I always tell the truth). An elevated score on the Lie scale indicated socially desirable answering. A high score on the Inconsistency scale pointed at a response pattern where item-

pairs were answered incongruously. A high score on the Random Response scale indicated that answers probably were given without taking into account the content of the items.

Based on the Lie scale, the Random Response scale and the Inconsistency scale, response distortion indexes were created. The "faking good" index served to identify respondents who read the questions with attention and tried to influence their image positively. The "faking bad" index pointed at respondents who deliberately tried to make themselves look worse than they really were. Item 121 (people can not get along with me) showed no variance, which resulted in removal of this item. Thus, there were 76 items left on the Abuse scale.

In our study, the following internal consistencies, in terms of Cronbach's alpha, were found: Abuse scale α = .93, Lie scale α = .79, Random Response scale α = .11 and Inconsistency scale α = .69. The Cronbach's alpha of the Random Response scale was normatively low. According to Milner (1990), this was considered plausible for the Random Response scale, and thus regarded as acceptable.

The percentage of potential abusers was examined at the most stringent cut-off point, namely an abuse score of 215. In the total sample of the present study (N = 86), 12% of the parents exceeded the cut-off score for abuse potential. However, in the "clean group", which was free from response bias, the percentages of abuse potential amounted to 17% (n=36). Probably due to the small sample of respondents, the distribution of the abuse scores was positively skewed. In this study, we converted the distribution to normal by a quadratic transformation (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

Conflict problem-solving behavior of the partners: The Conflict and Problem-Solving Scales (CPS; Kerig, 1996) were developed to assess major dimensions of parental conflict identified in the literature, their severity and frequency, the content of disagreements, whether or not conflicts are resolved, the perceived effectiveness of partners' problem-solving abilities, and the various conflict strategies partners use in their attempts to resolve conflicts (Kerig, 1996). In the current study, we used the Frequency of Conflicts scale, the Resolution scale, and the Conflict Strategy scales.

The Frequency of Conflicts scale is a rating of the number of times parents engage in minor and major conflicts in a year on a 6-point scale. Scores for minor and major conflicts are summed with different weights, resulting in a total score for frequency of conflicts. The Resolution scale purports to measure "the emotional tone of the aftermath of problem-solving attempts". The Resolution scale (13 items) represents the degree to which positive or negative affect dominates the resolution of conflicts. Higher scores on the Resolution scale indicate that parents arrive at more positive conflict resolutions. With respect to the Conflict Strategy scales, parents respond to 44 tactics derived from the literature on marital and interpersonal conflicts. Each tactic is rated two times: one time for the self and a second time for the partner. Some examples of tactics are: "Trying to reason with my partner; Crying; Expressing thoughts and feelings openly". The 44 tactics form six factors. The first factor, Verbal Aggression, includes items in-

volving yelling, accusing, insulting, and so forth. The second factor involves items reflecting threatening or inflicting harm, and is labeled Physical Aggression. The third factor, labeled Avoidance, involves items as trying to ignore the problem, leaving the scene, and giving in to the other person to escape argument. The fourth factor is termed Stonewalling, because it reflects partners who have reached an impasse in their attempts to end their quarrels. The fifth factor, involving items such as trying to reason with the other person, talking about the issue, and expressing thoughts and feelings, is termed Cooperation. The final factor, Child Involvement, consists of items that describe parental arguments in the presence of the children, who are made subject of the argument.

In the present study, internal consistencies for the six Conflict Strategy scales ranged from $\alpha = .63$ to $\alpha = .82$ (see Table 1). After combining the scores for self and other (the partner of the respondent) – based on correlations between $\underline{r} = .51$ and $\underline{r} = .93$, $\underline{p} < .001$ – we conducted a principal components analysis on the Conflict Strategy scales. We found a one-dimensional solution, with an explained variance of 62%, with factor loading ranging from .66 (avoidance) to .86 (stonewalling). The standardized alpha was $\alpha = .88$. A total score for inadequate conflict strategies was computed by summing the six standardized strategy scales, after having reversed the standardized score for cooperation. The standardized alpha for the Resolution scale was $\alpha = .86$. Frequency of conflicts was a combination of the incidence of minor and major conflicts. The correlation between minor and major conflicts was $\underline{r} = .70$, $\underline{p} < .001$.

Response bias: According to the standard procedure of the CAPI-manual (Milner, 1990), a large number of respondents, n = 50, exceeded cut-off points on one or more response distortion indexes. This extremely high number suggests that the response distortion indexes may not be appropriate for our Dutch sample. What is susceptible for response distortion might differ between cultures. The respondents with elevated response distortion scores were not eliminated from the database. In order to avoid unacceptable subject loss and to retain statistical power in a valid way, we used the following procedure. Firstly, the sample was purified from the respondents who exceeded the cut-off points on the "faking bad" and/or "random response" indexes. Secondly, the respondents who exceeded the cut-off score on the "faking good" index were set apart from the respondents who could be considered as free from response distortion. Thus, two groups were created, the "faking good group" and the "clean group". Table 2 shows that the "faking good group" reported less child abuse potential, less inadequate conflict strategies, fewer conflicts and more positive conflict resolution than the "clean group", which indicates that the "faking good group" was biased towards giving an overall favorable self-presentation. Thirdly, scores on the scales for abuse potential, conflict strategies, frequency of conflicts and conflict resolution were separately standardized within the "clean group" and the "faking good group". Finally, the z-scores were merged into four new unbiased variables to be used in regression analyses. The correlations between the unbiased variables and the original variables ranged from r (62) = .87 for conflict strategies to r (76) = .94 for abuse potential. As a further check on the integrity of the data after this procedure, we re-

peated the regression analyses for the total group separately within the clean and faking good groups. As these analyses produced comparable results, they are not reported here.

Results

The results are reported in two sections, and are based on all subjects for whom valid data were available ($62 \leq N \leq 86$). In the first section, we perform preliminary analyses to examine the associations between all predictor variables, and between the predictor variables and the dependent variable. In the second section, employing hierarchical multiple regression analysis, we test the hypotheses that partners who use more inadequate conflict strategies will show higher child abuse potential as parent, and that partners who arrive at more positive marital conflict resolutions will show lower child abuse potential as parent.

Correlations between predictors, and between predictors and dependent variable

Table 3 presents the correlations between sex of the subject, socioeconomic status, conflict strategies and resolution, frequency of conflicts, interactions between conflict strategies, resolutions and frequency of conflicts, and abuse potential. The first thing to notice is, that the interaction terms were all significantly correlated, with correlations ranging from $r = .63$ to $r = .74$, $p < .001$. Also, conflict strategies and resolution as well as frequency of conflicts correlated significantly with the interaction terms, with correlations between $r = .22$ and $r = .55$, $p < .05$. Next, more inadequate conflict strategies were associated with less positive conflict resolutions ($r = -.66$, $p < 001$) and more conflicts ($r = .37$, $p < .01$). More positive conflict resolutions were associated with fewer conflicts ($r = -.27$, $p < .05$). Whereas higher socioeconomic status ($r = -.26$, $p < .01$) and more positive conflict resolutions ($r = -.52$, $p < .001$) were related to lower child abuse potential, more inadequate conflict strategies were associated with higher child abuse potential ($r = .56$, $p < .001$).

Effects on child abuse potential

Predictors that did not significantly correlate with child abuse potential were excluded from further multivariate regression analyses. Despite the absence of a bivariate association for frequency of conflicts, we decided to add frequency of conflicts at a later step in the regression analysis, because of the possibility of a suppressor effect.

In order to explore the associations between conflict strategies, resolutions, frequency of conflicts and child abuse potential, we performed hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Table 4). The analysis was carried out on $62 \leq N \leq 86$, using pairwise deletion of missing values. The independent variables were entered in 3 hierarchical steps, beginning with the socioeconomic background of the parents, followed by conflict strategies and conflict resolutions, and finally by frequency of conflicts.

We found a significant regression equation, $F(3,58) = 15.00$, $p < .001$. The (cumulative) R^2 indicates the total amount of variance accounted for by the variables in the equation, and the beta coefficients show the association of each variable with the dependent variable, controlling for the other predictor(s). Three variables accounted for 44% of the variance in child abuse potential. Lower socioeconomic status predicted increased child abuse potential, accounting for 7% of the variance. More inadequate conflict strategies predicted higher child abuse potential, adding 27% to the variance accounted for. Finally, fewer conflicts predicted greater child abuse potential, adding another 10% to the variance accounted for.

Forcing conflict resolutions on the second step, and conflict strategies on the third step in the regression analysis yielded different results, with conflict resolution adding 23% to the variance accounted for, conflict strategies 8%, and frequency of conflicts again 10%, $F(4,57) = 13.14$, $p < .001$. These results indicate that more positive conflict resolutions predicted lower child abuse potential, but not after controlling for the influence of conflict strategies. On the other hand, conflict strategies still predicted abuse potential beyond the significant contribution of conflict resolutions.

In a post-hoc analysis we computed partial correlation coefficients – controlling for socioeconomic status and the three response distortion scales – in order to investigate which conflict strategies would contribute most to the overall effect. After Bonferroni correction for multiple tests, more physical aggression, avoidance of conflicts, and stonewalling were associated with higher child abuse potential, with partial correlations of $r(64) = .30.$, $r(65) = .38$, and $r(65) = .31$, respectively, $p < .008$.

Discussion

We examined the association between marital conflicts and child abuse potential in $N = 86$ Dutch families from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Parents completed measures of marital conflict strategies and resolutions, frequency of minor and major conflicts, and child abuse potential. The percentage of parents who exceeded the upper 5 percent cut-off score on Milner's Child Abuse Potential Inventory was 17%, which was relatively high in comparison to a group of higher SES respondents we included in another study (3%; Buijs, 2001). In our present study we found that lower socioeconomic status, relatively inadequate marital conflict strategies, and a lower frequency of marital conflicts predicted higher

child abuse potential. In particular, physical aggression towards the partner, avoidance of conflicts, and stonewalling contributed to higher child abuse potential. Although more positive conflict resolutions were associated with lower child abuse potential, resolutions did not predict abuse potential beyond the contribution of conflict strategies.

Poverty and a low income appear to be related to both child abuse and neglect (Belsky, 1993). Hetherington and Parke (1993) reported that child maltreatment is most likely to occur in economically deprived, poorly educated families. However, Spinetta (1978) reported that the great majority of deprived families of relatively low socioeconomic status does not abuse their children. In the present study, we found a significant association between lower socioeconomic status and higher child abuse potential. This is remarkable, as the participants of our study formed a relatively homogeneous group with respect to their socioeconomic background. Therefore, it appears that especially families from a very low socioeconomic background are at increased risk for child abuse. This is also indicated by the high percentage of scores above the cut-off point for being at risk for child abuse and needing preventive services. We stress, however, that we have no indication whether child abuse actually occurred within any of the 17% of families in our sample scoring above the cut-off point on the Child Abuse Potential Inventory.

Azar et al. (1984) found that maltreating mothers elaborated less on solutions in their marital conflicts and used fewer content categories in their solutions. Hansen, Pallotta Tishelman, Conaway, & MacMillan (1987) studied abusive and neglectful parents in comparison with normative groups, and found that child physical abusers had more interpersonal problems and both fewer and less effective solutions. In the present study, more positive conflict resolutions were correlated with lower child abuse potential.

In a study by Oldershaw, Walters and Hall (1986), abusive parents reported using more punitive strategies, less adaptive reasoning strategies, and less of the various positively oriented strategies than non-abusive mothers. Azar et al. (1984) demonstrated that abusive mothers and neglectful mothers showed poorer problem-solving skills. The present study underlines that inadequate conflict strategies – especially physical aggression, avoidance of conflicts and stonewalling – were associated with increased child abuse potential. As fewer marital conflicts proved to be associated with higher child abuse potential, it appears that potential child abusers tend to avoid marital conflicts as a primary strategy. If this strategy fails, physical aggression could be a secondary strategy.

As wife assault may be seen as an extreme expression of partner conflicts, Dutton's trimodal grouping of wife batterers helps us interpreting our results. Dutton (1998) points at the existence of three types of perpetrators. Besides the avoiding, overcontrolled type, he describes two undercontrolled types (general violent and cyclical). Our study suggests that the concurrence of child abuse risk potential and inadequate conflict strategies may be accounted for by the overcontrolled, avoiding personality. What about the undercontrollers? They were not detected in our study and the reasons why that should be so are unclear. In our sample the CAPI and the CPS seem to be especially successful in detecting the avoid-

ing, silent type of abuser who up to a certain level cumulates his/her proclivity to use physical abuse before it is being realized. Further research has to shed a light on this. Perhaps for the undercontrollers a cumulative risk model indeed is more adequate. In all, the outcomes of this study suggest that for a rather intimidating group of parents – who use avoidance, stonewalling, and aggressive conflict strategies, and who are prone to be abusive in close relationships – marital and child rearing problems may be two sides of the same coin. We suggest that preventive interventions that focus only on situational factors may not be enough. It may be necessary to address the interpersonal skills and beliefs of these parents. Furthermore, these interventions, for example empathy training (Feschbach, 1989; Wiehe, 1997), need not be limited to empathy training with respect to the children, but may be more productive when broadened by addressing a parent's general ineptitude to deal with close personal relationships.

The current study has some limitations. First, our sample was rather small, which limits the generalizability of the results. A second limitation involves the high percentage of non-response. However, it is not clear if and how this may bias the conclusions of the current study. A third limitation involves the large percentage of parents who were faking good answers on instruments measuring marital conflict and abuse. We tackled this problem by devising a standardization method that statistically controlled for the influence of the faking good response bias. The results of this method are promising, and may merit application in other situations where respondents may vary in their tendency to present themselves in a different light.

In sum, we conclude that more inadequate conflict strategies predict higher child abuse potential in Dutch families from relatively low socioeconomic backgrounds, where 17% of the target children appear to be at increased risk for child abuse. We suggest that parents who are more prone to abuse their children may have greater difficulties in coping with the conflicts and problems that are intrinsic to close and affective relationships.

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Attachment

Table 1: Measures

Scales	Measure	Alpha 1	Alpha 2	Alpha 3	r	Items	N
Strategy	CPS			.88		6	71
Cooperation	CPS	.74	.80		.51	6	71
Avoidance/Capitulation	CPS	.82	.63		.56	10	71
Stonewalling	CPS	.63	.64		.69	7	71
Verbal aggression	CPS	.81	.83		.80	8	70
Physical aggression	CPS	.67	.78		.51	7	70
Child involvement	CPS	.79	.74		.93	5	69
Resolution	CPS			.86		13	74
Conflict	CPS				.70	2	85
Abuse	CAPI	.93				76	85
Lie scale	CAPI	.79				18	85
Random Response scale	CAPI	.11				18	85
Inconsistence scale	CAPI	.69				40	85

Note 1: alpha 1 = alpha respondent
Note 2: alpha 2 = alpha partner
Note 3: alpha 3 = standardized alpha for overall Strategy and an alpha for Resolution
Note 4: r = correlation between respondents and partner
Note 5: the Conflict scale included two variables which resulted in a correlation (.70, p < .001)
Note 6: the alpha of the Random Response scale (.11) was accepted by Milner (1990)

Table 2: Means, and standard deviations for the faking good and clean group

	faking good			clean				
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	t	df
Strategies	-.39	.53	37	.30	.81	25	-3.74**	37.86
Resolution	1.09	.61	37	.58	.80	28	2.93**	63
Conflict	4.10	2.28	44	6.12	3.71	33	-2.77*	49.70
Abuse	7.30	3.31	44	9.76	3.74	32	-3.03*	74

Note 1: * p < .01 ** p < .001
Note 2: concerning the t-values, equal variances are not assumed for strategies and conflict

Table 3: Correlations between predictors, and between predictors and dependent
        variable

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Sex of the respondent	1.00								
2. Socioeconomic status	-.02	1.00							
3. Conflict strategies	-.15	-.17	1.00						
4. Conflict resolution	.15	.15	-.66***	1.00					
5. Frequency of conflicts	-.13	.17	.37**	-.27*	1.00				
6. Strategies×Conflict	-.09	.14	.53***	-.42***	.42***	1.00			
7. Resolution×Conflict	.09	-.09	-.44***	.55***	-.22*	-.74***	1.00		
8. Strategies×Resolution	.04	.02	-.48***	.51***	-.22*	-.69***	.63***	1.00	
9. Child abuse potential	-.10	-.26*	.56***	-.52***	-.11	.10	-.10	-.18	1.00

Note 1: $62 \leq N \leq 86$
Note 2: * p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p < .001

Table 4: Hierarchical multiple regression analysis on child abuse potential

Variables	R	R2	R2CH	FCh	β	τ
Socioeconomic Status	.26	.07	.07	4.43*	-.09	-.88
Conflict strategies	.59	.34	.27	24.48**	.67	6.12***
Frequency of conflicts	.66	.44	.10	9.79**	-.34	-3.13**

Note 1: $62 \leq N \leq 86$
Note 2: * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001
Note 3: Regression Equation F (3,58) = 15.00, p < .001

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