

**INVESTIGATING SRI LANKAN PRESCHOOL TEACHER PERCEPTIONS
TOWARDS DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES: AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR IN SRI
LANKAN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN**

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Findings from the national survey on preschool children have revealed that some preschool teachers practice traditional disciplinary techniques such as corporal punishment, which are not recommended by the Ministry of Education even for formal schools (Wijethunga and Wickramaratne, 2003). Since preschool can be considered the earliest structured institution that young children are exposed to, it is important to identify and investigate preschool teachers' perceptions on disciplinary patterns, which are used to maintain discipline in the class. However, no systematic research has so far been done in this country to investigate this matter.

The aim of this piece of research is to identify preschool teacher perceptions, knowledge and attitudes towards disciplinary practices in relation to aggressive behavior in preschool children.

A survey questionnaire was given to 200 preschool teachers from 14 districts of Sri Lanka in order to investigate their perceptions and practices in relation to aggressive behavior in preschool children. In addition, 22 preschool teachers from varied preschool communities (rural, urban, temple preschool, street community preschool etc.) were interviewed using a pre-designed semi-structured interview schedule.

Results indicate that preschool teachers perceive that extreme negative practices such as corporal punishment and scolding are not appropriate, however, they seem to be unacquainted with tried out good alternative practices to discipline children. Results also indicate that preschool teacher perceptions of creative, good and bad practices do not change due to experience, education or training, indicating that there is a need for a specific training in order to orient preschool teachers towards alternative disciplinary practices.