

Abstract

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical stage with variations of its physical, psychological and social development, where adolescents exposed to the society as independent individuals for the first time. Parental monitoring is considered as an essential parenting practice having a combination of parent and adolescent activities and behaviours. Studies have shown that monitoring is affected by many parent, adolescent and family related factors. Also, it is evidenced that better monitored adolescents are less involved with risk behaviours.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to adapt, translate and validate a tool to assess parental monitoring perception and to determine its associated factors and the relationship with the risk behaviours of adolescents (14-16 years) in Sinhala medium government schools and to explore and describe the perception and experiences of parents of adolescents on parental monitoring in Denuwara Education Zone, Kandy District.

Methodology

The study had three components with different study designs. Parental Monitoring Scale, developed by Stattin and Kerr (2000) was culturally adapted, translated to Sinhala language and validated to be used to assess parental monitoring perception of school going adolescents of the age group of 14-16 years in Denuwara Education Zone during the component I of the study. Statistical analyses were carried out to test the construct validity using SPSS version 22 (multi trait scaling analysis, principle component analysis) and LISREL 9.2 (confirmatory factor analysis). The reliability of the tool was assessed using internal consistency and test-retest method.

A school based cross sectional analytical study was conducted in the Denuwara Education Zone the second component. A sample of 1350 school going adolescents aged 14-16 years were recruited applying Multi-staged cluster sampling with probability proportionate to the size method. Level of parental monitoring perception of adolescents and the sources of monitoring were described. The factors associated with the parental monitoring perception of adolescents and the relationship with adolescents' perception of parental monitoring and their involvement of selected

risk behaviours were determined. Information on associated factors and the risk behaviours were assessed using a self-administered questionnaire developed for the study. Statistical analysis was done using SPSS version 22.0.

Third component was a qualitative study done using twelve focus group discussions. One hundred and seventeen parents of school going adolescents were selected from multi-stage stratified sampling method. Parents' perception about their own monitoring practice was explored and their monitoring experiences were shared during the discussions using a semi structured mediator guide questionnaire.

Results

The tool consisted of 23 items following validation. Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed its' original four factor structure with a combination of acceptable fit indices (SRMR of 0.063, CFI <0.9 and RMSEA with 0.061). The reliability assessment gave satisfactory results with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.89. Results of this validation study confirm the fine psychometric properties of the instrument to be utilized.

A high parental monitoring level was reported by 24.9% (95% CI: 22.2-27.0) of adolescents in Sinhala medium government schools of Denuwara education zone. Amongst sources of parental monitoring, parental control showed the highest median level of perception among adolescents (4; IQR 4.2–5) while parental solicitation showed the lowest median value (3.4; IQR 3.2– 4.1) of the three sources of parental monitoring perception of adolescents.

Age (aOR=2.2; 95% CI: 1.7-2.87) and sex (aOR=1.9; 95% CI: 1.53-2.57) of the adolescent, education level (aOR=1.35; 95% CI: 1.02-1.79) and working status of the mother (aOR=2.2; 95% CI: 1.57-3.09) were the socioeconomic factors that showed a statistical significant association with parental monitoring perception of adolescents. Among the family and relationship factors assessed, parental monitoring was significantly associated with living with both parents at home (aOR=0.5; 95% CI: 0.320-0.91), parental trust (aOR=0.6; 95% CI: 0.37-0.92) and having many friends (aOR=3.3; 95% CI: 1.52-7.13). Parent adolescent relationship status, parent adolescent communication, pending free time with parents, relationship status with siblings as well as friends were identified as factors not associated with parental monitoring perception of adolescents when the other significant factors were controlled.

Among the risk behaviours assessed, hitting or threatening someone ($p=0.003$), bullying ($p=0.001$) and hanging out with inappropriate peer groups ($p=0.034$) showed significant association with low level of parental monitoring perception of adolescents. However, use of any substance (alcohol, tobacco and other illicit drugs) did not show a significant association with the perception of parental monitoring of adolescents.

Perception about monitoring their adolescents were expressed by parents under different themes. Most parents understood it as an unintentional act by them and very few understood it as an intentional activity. Parents' perception varies based on their attitudes based on culture and expectations and sex of the adolescent plays a major role for the parents' monitoring perception. Parents identified different strategies of monitoring while accepting that parents' own childhood experiences plays a major role in practicing parental monitoring. Furthermore, they came across few barriers they are facing while practicing monitoring their adolescents to the maximum.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Parental Monitoring Scale (PMS) was a valid and reliable tool to assess parental monitoring perception of school going adolescents (14-16 years) in Sinhala medium government schools. There is a significant lower proportion of the adolescents with a high level of parental monitoring perception and many factors are associated with it. Parental monitoring perception of adolescents significantly associate with their involvement of risk behaviours during adolescence. Future studies recommend to further assessment of parental monitoring concept among different epidemiological profiles, evaluating its causality nature for different adolescent behaviours. Parental monitoring can be introduced in parenting intervention programs targeting quality parenting practices and aiming quality parent adolescent relationships to achieve their adolescent child's wellbeing.

Key words: parental monitoring perception, adolescents, risk behaviours, associated factors