Abstract

Introduction: Child discipline, while intended to instill appropriate behavior, often manifests as violent practices in low- and middle-income countries, including Bangladesh. Maternal exposure to violence, attitude towards intimate partner violence (IPV), and disciplinary beliefs serve as key determinants of physical disciplinary practices. These dynamics illustrate how exposure to violence in adulthood can shape parenting behaviors, highlighting the urgency of addressing cultural attitudes that sustain harsh physical discipline.

Materials and methods: This study analyzed nationally representative cross-sectional data from the 2019 Bangladesh Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) which included 30044 mother-child (children aged between 2 and 14 years) pairs. Physical disciplinary practice is analyzed as an ordered outcome, considering maternal experience of physical violence as the primary exposure along with their attitudes toward IPV and disciplinary beliefs as mediators. This study used ordinal logistic regression within a structural equation modeling framework and bootstrapping technique to analyze indirect associations, providing robust inference that accounts for sampling variability and accommodates binary mediators.

Results: Mothers exposed to violence had significantly higher odds of physically disciplining their children (odds ratio, OR=1.77 and 95% confidence interval, CI=[1.60, 1.95]). Three mediators significantly increased the odds of adopting harsh physical disciplinary practice by 2% through maternal positive attitudes toward IPV, by 51% through their disciplinary beliefs, and by 6% through their overall life satisfaction. The total association indicated that maternal exposure to violence nearly tripled the odds (OR = 2.89 and 95% CI= [2.52, 3.31]) of physical disciplinary practices.

Conclusion: This study suggested that supportive environment for children can be fostered by reducing violence against women, promoting mothers' life satisfaction, and reshaping women's perceptions of spousal abuse and disciplinary beliefs.