PARENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS CHILD ABUSE AND ITS PREVENTION

By

Taslima Akter

Student ID: 22255004

A thesis submitted to Brac Institute of Educational Development in the partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Science in Early Childhood Development

Brac Institute of Educational Development

Brac University

October, 2024

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. This thesis is my original work, completed in fulfillment of my degree requirements at Brac University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Students Full Name & Signature:

_____

Taslima Akter

Student ID: 22255004

Approval

The title of the thesis is **"Parents' perception towards Child Abuse and its Prevention."**

Submitted by **Taslima Akter**. Student Id: 22255004

Fall, 2022 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Science in Early Childhood Development on 14th October 2024.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:
(Member)

_____
Areefa Zafar
Senior Program Manager and Faculty Member
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

Program Coordinator:
(Member)

_____
Ferdousi Khanom
Senior Lecturer, ECD Academic Program
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

External Expert Examiner:
(Member)

_____
Nafisa Anwar
Senior Lecturer, M.Ed. Academic Program
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

Departmental Head:
(Chair)

_____
Dr. Erum Mariam
Executive Director
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Parents' Perception towards Child Abuse and its Prevention.

Student name: Taslima Akter

1. Source of population: Parents (mothers and fathers) having children of 6 to 8 years living Dhaka city.

2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)

   a) Physical risk to the subjects (no)
   b) Social risk (no)
   c) Psychological risk to subjects (no)
   d) discomfort to subjects (no)
   e) Invasion of privacy (no)

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)

   a) Nature and purpose of the study (yes)
   b) Procedures to be followed (yes)
   c) Physical risk (N/A)
   d) Sensitive questions (yes)
   e) Benefits to be derived (yes)
   f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study (yes)
   g) Confidential handling of data (yes)
   h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved (N/A)

4. Will Signed verbal consent for be required (yes or no)

   a) from study participants (yes)
   b) from parents or guardian (no)
   c) Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects? (yes)

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

   a) Proposal (yes)
   b) Consent Form (yes)
   c) Questionnaire or interview schedule (yes)

Ethical Review Committee:

Authorized by:
(Chair/co (chair/other)   _____

<div align="center">

Dr. Erum Mariam
Executive Director
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

</div>

Executive Summary

In order to protect children and ensure their safety and wellbeing, parental attitudes and behaviors about child abuse and its prevention are essential. Studies indicate that parents' perceptions of abuse have significant effects on how they provide care for their children and the precautions they take to keep them safe (Farhan & Iqbal, 2024).

It has been found in the studies that although most parents were aware of the dangers of physical abuse, they knew less about emotional abuse and neglect and frequently minimized the long-term psychological effects that these types of abuse could have on children (Jankowiak et al., 2022).

This qualitative study explored parents' perception towards child abuse and its prevention. Data were gathered through In depth Interview (IDI) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) from parents of young children aged 6 to 8 years. The findings also indicate that the majority of parents have an understanding of child abuse. They also understand child abuse prevention is important that prevents a child from any possible abuse. But it has found out that there is still much to do for the parents to practice that can prevent a child from any abuse.

With many recommendations it is important if awareness, training can be provided at all level e.g. community level, school, parents through open dialogue, social, print and other media.

Key Words: Parental perception, Child Abuse, Prevention

Dedication

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to my mother, my husband and my son, whose unwavering love, support and encouragement have been my constant source of strength throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

FGD   Focus Group Discussion

IDI   In-Depth Interview

WHO   World Health Organization

UNICEF   World Health Organization

Chapter I: Introduction & Background

Introduction

Child abuse is a global problem that has a major impact on children's welfare and health. The children's growth and development are greatly impacted by this, since any abuse or neglect whether physical, emotional or mental during this time will have a profound and lasting effect on the child (WHO, 2022).

Child abuse is described as any behavior that endangers a child's life, puts them in danger of experiencing major physical or mental injury, leads them to be sexually assaulted or negatively impacts their development both now and in the future (Save the children, 2020).

Approximately 300 million children globally or three out of four, are abused physically or psychologically by their parents or other caregivers between the ages of two and four. One in thirteen males and one in five females who are adults and who report having experienced sexual abuse as children say it happened between the ages of 0 and 17 (World Health Organization, 2022).

According to a study conducted in Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia and Moldova, 33%, 42%, 18%, and 43% of children, respectively reported abuse. These statistics were correlated with variables such as family size, parental work level and alcohol consumption. Three countries showed a lesser correlation between parental substance use and child abuse, including Moldova. Even with some post-communist advancement, drug misuse, unemployment and financial hardships continue to be major causes of child maltreatment in Eastern Europe (Sebre et al., 2004).

Bangladeshi children experience various sorts of violence and neglect in both public and private settings, as well as inside their own families. In Bangladesh, child marriage is still a common practice. Families are frequently compelled to force their children to work due to acute poverty. They work in vehicle repair shops, construction, road transportation, battery recycling and tobacco industries. Child labor and marriage contribute to long-term health problems, interrupted education and physical and psychological abuse, all of which feed the cycles of inequality and poverty. Both actions violate children's rights and impede their growth and future prospects (Humanium, 2011).

In the current situation, the frequency with which a child's mother and father leave the house to go to work is rising, which results in less time spent with their children. In order to prevent such negative consequences, parents must be properly informed and alert in order to recognize and act upon their child's condition early. To stop negative outcomes, parents must have the necessary knowledge and awareness to recognize abuse early on and take appropriate action (Somasundaram & Preethy, 2020).

Cultural, societal and individual beliefs frequently impact how parents perceive about child abuse (Vachon et. al. 2015).

According to WHO (World Health Organization, 2018), positive, caring connections between caregivers and children lead to the development of early childhood.

Early childhood development can be severely and permanently impacted by child abuse. Because of the rapid growth of their bodies and brains during infancy and early childhood, children are especially sensitive to the consequences of abuse. Children who get responsive, dependable, and predictable care build safe relationships with

their caregivers and use them as a safe basis from which to explore their surroundings (Casper, V. & Theilheimer, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Each child has the right to protection against harmful behaviors, abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence (UNICEF, 2022). According to WHO (World Health Organization) report, globally it is estimated that up to 1 billion children between the ages of 2 and 17 experienced physical, sexual or emotional abuses or neglect in the year prior (World Health Organization, 2022). Every year, almost 600,000 children in the United States are abused according to their national data (National Children's Alliance, 2023). However, millions of children in South Asia are exposed to destructive behaviors and acts of violence, both at home and in the society (UNICEF South Asia, 2023). These experiences can have lifelong, severe effects. Almost nine out of ten children in Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan, who were between the ages of one and fourteen, said their homes had used violent discipline (UNICEF South Asia, 2023). From UNICEF statistic (2023) it has been also found that for many children, violence occurs at the hands of people they trust, such as family members, teachers, neighbors and even other children.

Many of the persons who are supposed to be protecting millions of children in Bangladesh instead subject them to violence, abuse, and exploitation. As part of their family's survival strategy, teenage boys and girls are frequently put to work or married off. Approximately 7% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 are engaged in child labor, and very young children are still working in dangerous jobs (UNICEF, 2021).

Childhood trauma can have a profound effect on a child's neurological development, especially if the trauma is sustained and brought on by abusive or neglectful surroundings (Van Pelt, 2023).

Studies have indicated early trauma for abuse, affects an individual's capacity to effectively control their emotions, resolve conflicts and communicate. Additionally, researcher also found that those who experienced maltreatment as children are more susceptible to psychological distress, including depression. These conditions might eventually cause marital dysfunction as a result of difficulties expressing affection and resolving conflicts in a constructive manner (Cao et al., 2020; Kyranides & Neofytou, 2021; McLaughlin et al., 2020).

Cultural traditions and societal pressures that prioritize family honor and reputation drive parents to force their children into early marriage. Families experiencing financial difficulties may see early marriage as a way to reduce the financial burdens they face (CARE, 2020).

Protecting the wellbeing of children requires parents to be well aware of child abuse and prevention. It has been demonstrated that educating parents about child abuse greatly increases their sense of self-efficacy in recognizing and responding to child abuse (Farrell &Walsh, 2010; Rae McKenizie &Murray, 2010). Addressing the complex interactions of variables at several levels and offering specialized assistance to vulnerable groups are essential to preventing child abuse (Darmstadt, 1990).

Purpose of the Study

The study's goal is to investigate parents' perception about child abuse. The study will also explore what parents' perceive about child abuse prevention. Additionally, the study seeks to identify what are the practices parents do for prevention of child abuse.

Significance and Justification of the Study

The well-being of children and families is greatly impacted by the widespread and upsetting issue of child abuse. Since parental knowledge and behavior directly affect children's safety and protection, research on these topics is essential. To consolidate gains and handle obstacles associated with each stage, nurturing care tailored to children's developmental requirements should continue throughout middle childhood and into adolescence (WHO 2018).

Bangladesh is becoming more concerned about violence against children because it does not occur in any one area. Children are vulnerable to violence everywhere they go at home, at work, on the streets and in prisons. Everyone should be aware of the warning signs of child abuse and how to file a report for it. By raising public awareness, the government should acknowledge the severity of the issue and enact stricter legislation to safeguard our children's rights (Islam & Akhter 2015).

Early illness, premature birth, and irregularities at birth can damage parent-child bonds and lead to child abuse. It has found that a third of children who experience maltreatment go on to experience long-term problems such emotional and learning difficulties (Darmstadt. 1990).

Neonatal illnesses that force a mother and child to part early might damage connection and raise the possibility of child maltreatment (Hussaini, 2020).

Effective policies and interventions targeted at avoiding child abuse can be developed with understanding on parental practices and knowledge. UNICEF (2021) builds up the 6 strategies for the children who are at risk of abuse and violence. The goal of this strategy, which is centered on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is to create a world free from harmful practices, exploitation, abuse, and violence against children. A larger strategy of UNICEF (2021) is to nurture care over the life course, enable mothers, fathers and other caregivers to embrace positive parenting techniques through community participation and inclusive positive parenting support programs.

Policymakers and practitioners can customize methods to improve parental understanding and encourage excellent parenting habits by identifying gaps and misconceptions by the parenting educating related research topic (Jones & Palikara, 2023).

Given that different professional groups have differing opinions about the success of child abuse prevention initiatives, the findings emphasize the necessity for nuanced policy development in these areas (Davis, N., & Price n.d)

Therefore this study will be helpful to advocate for policy makers to work more on child abuse prevention and more work can be done with the parents.

Research Questions

- ✓ What do parents perceive about child abuse and its prevention?
- ✓ What are the practices parents do for prevention of child abuse?

Operational Definition

Perception: The process through which people select, organize and interpret sensory data to create a meaningful image of the outside world is known as perception (Epstein, 2019).

Child Abuse: Child abuse is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as any combination of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation that harms a child's development, health or dignity, either directly or indirectly (Gonzalez et al., 2023).

Prevention: The action of preventing something from occurring or someone from acting in a certain way (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019).

Chapter II: Literature Review

Child Abuse

Any form of physical and/or emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, impulsive treatment, or commercial or other exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power is considered child abuse or maltreatment (WHO, 2022).Child maltreatment is described as; all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation that results in actual or potential harm to the child's health, development or dignity, by the World Health Organization (Gonzalez et al, 2023).

Types of child abuse

A single incidence or a series of occurrences over time can constitute child abuse. The World Health Organization (WHO) and International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect identified four categories of child maltreatment: neglect, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse and physical abuse and it has also described these abuses as: (Gonzalez et al., 2023).

- ✓ **Physical abuse:** The willful use of physical force against a child that causes harm to their health, survival, development or dignity or that has a high probability of doing so. This includes strikes, blows, kicks, trembling, biting, strangling, scorching, burning, poisoning and choking. Many cases of domestic violence against children are committed with the intention of punishing them.

- ✓ **Sexual abuse:** When an adult or older adolescent mistreats a child for the purpose of stimulating their sexual urges, it is known as child sexual abuse (MedicinePlus, 2017).

- ✓ **Psychological or Emotional abuse:** In 2013, Psychological abuse is defined by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) as verbal or symbolic behaviors by a parent or caregiver that are not accidental and either significantly affect the child's psychological well-being or have a substantial chance of doing so.

- ✓ **Neglect:** children neglect occurs when a parent or other adult who has parental duty fails to give a child with the necessary food, clothes, shelter, medical attention, or supervision to the point where the child's safety or well-being could be compromised. In addition to a lack of attention from those in the child's immediate vicinity, neglect also refers to the failure to provide the necessary resources namely, love, care, and attention for the child to survive (Theoklitou et al., 2012).

Consequences of child abuse on child development

Although child abuse can have immediate negative physically repercussions, it is also closely linked to developmental issues and having several long-term negative impacts on one's physically and mental well-being, as well as a higher likelihood of developing chronic illnesses, engaging in risky health behaviors, and living a shorter life (Dadaj & Cesar, 2020). Here are some significant consequences of child abuse:

Brain development: Early exposure to toxic stress can have a negative impact on the developing brain circuits and hormonal systems, which can result in poorly controlled stress responsive systems that will be either too reactive or slow to shut down when

presented with dangers throughout the rest of one's life. Maltreatment of children, especially emotional abuse and neglect, can seriously and permanently affect brain development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). Delayed intellectual development, particularly in verbal intelligence, has also been observed in children who have been abused or neglected but do not exhibit any signs of neurological disability (Harvard University, n.d).

Physical Health: Abuse or neglect can have either serious or very minor acute physical effects. Physical abuse and physical health are clearly related, but it is also critical to understand that maltreatment of any kind can have long-term physical effects. An increased risk for a variety of long-term future health issues has been associated with maltreatment of children, including; diabetes, lung illness, malnourishment, visual issues, functional constraints and vision problems, heart attack, arthritic back issues, elevated blood pressure, brain injury etc (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2019).

Mental health: Children who have experienced physical or emotional abuse in the past run the risk of having mental health issues or an unstable attachment pattern. Traumatic memories may be blocked out by children. Sometimes, this can result in memory problems and other challenges that extend beyond the abused area of life. Panic, social isolation and emotional numbness are further effects of abuse. Physical reactions can also cause impairments in both mental and physical functions which throw off the body's regular operations (McLean Hospital, 2023).

Social difficulties and Behavioral impacts: A higher propensity for risky behavior has been linked to child abuse, according to studies. Attachment problems can impede the development of positive relationships in the future for infants in foster care whose caregiving is disrupted due to mistreatment (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017). Children who

grow up with abuse or neglect are more prone to exhibit antisocial behaviors as adults, which may result in criminal activity (The National Institute of Justice, 2017).

Parental Perception about Child Abuse

The way that parents view child abuse varies greatly and these perceptions are frequently shaped by societal, cultural and individual variables. Certain parents might minimize emotional abuse or neglect, considering them to be less damaging than physical abuse, while others might find it difficult to identify certain actions, like strict punishment, as abusive. Even though the devastating effects of emotional abuse are equivalent to those of physical abuse, parents frequently fail to completely comprehend the long-term psychological trauma that emotional abuse may impose on children (Vachon et al. 2015).

A study conducted in 2011 by Taylor, Hamvas and Paris found that many parents may not realize the long-term consequences of using physical discipline.

According to research by Gershoff et al. (2021), parents who were physically punished as children were more likely to think it was appropriate to use that same method on their own children, thus perpetuating a cycle of perceived normality.

Recent WHO guidelines (2023) highlight the need for parenting programs that improve parent-child relationships and prevent abuse; therefore these should be looked into further.

Parental Perception towards Child Abuse Prevention

Given that parents are a child's primary caregiver; their level of parental knowledge is thought to be crucial to the growth and welfare of young children. Parenting and children' wellbeing depend on having an established knowledge of child development and child rearing (Bornstein, 2015).

Child abuse frequently happens alongside other forms of family violence, like violence between parents or siblings or in the community. This emphasizes how crucial the home environment and parental behavior are in either causing or preventing abuse (Anderson, 2010).

Ethnographic research, such that conducted by Cherlin et al., demonstrates that victims of abuse often hide their experiences until they have built trust with their caregivers. This implies that parents should establish a setting that is open and trustworthy so that children feel comfortable disclosing abuse (Anderson, 2010).

Effective parenting can lower the likelihood of misuse by addressing mental health issues and supporting substance use recovery (Barth, 2009). By encouraging children's education and goals, opposing negative cultural norms, and standing up for their rights, parents may prevent abuse and child marriage (CARE, 2020).

Maltreatment, exploitation, and the lack of a comprehensive framework for defending the rights of children not in their parents' custody are the primary barriers that Bangladeshi children encounter while attempting to exercise their right to protection. At home, school, and in the workplace, children receive physical punishment. In Bangladesh, the majority of parents and educators think that the best method to keep children in line is to physically punish them. When children get physical punishment, they tend to associate the punishment with humiliation rather than the real physical pain. Parents who are proactive and knowledgeable can establish a secure environment and teach their children about boundaries (Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum n.d).

Parents Practices to Prevent Child Abuse

Effective parenting solutions to avoid child abuse include taking part in programs that teach positive behavior management techniques and providing parents education and support to learn proper disciplinary measures. In addition to enhancing parent-child ties via quality time and honest conversation, stress management and coping techniques assist parents in managing stress in a healthy way (Barth, 2009).

Interventions that assist parents in better understanding their children needs and communicating with them include lay home health visits and perinatal coaching. In order to prevent abuse, social workers are essential in providing training and supervision to community volunteers who will provide continuous support, lessen family isolation and encourage positive parenting (Darmstadt, 1990).

In order to stop child abuse, parents should become knowledgeable about how children develop, set reasonable expectations, participate in positive parenting programs to learn nonabusive disciplining methods, and identify the warning signs of abuse and neglect. It's also essential for parents to reflect on their own behavior, foster open communication within the family, seek support from community services, and develop empathy by understanding their child's point of view. These methods promote healthy child development, lessen the possibility of maltreatment, and foster a loving atmosphere for children (Efe, 2017).

Child abuse in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, neglect as well as physical, emotional and sexual abuse are all forms of child abuse, which is a serious problem. Data released by legal assistance organization Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) shows that 128 children died in Bangladesh in the first three

months of 2023. In the same time frame, 225 other children experienced various kinds of maltreatment and oppression. At least seventy-five of the suppressed children, including boys, had experienced rape (Tayeb, 2023).

Girls are typically more vulnerable to sexual abuse, early marriage, human trafficking and other issues in the home and community. Research indicates that children from low-income families and girls specifically, are more vulnerable to maltreatment during natural catastrophes like floods. According to estimates available, 81% of boys and 70% of girls enroll in primary school (Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum n.d).

From birth, the struggle for children's rights can begin. Millions of children have been deprived of their right to identity when just 56% of children under the age of five have birth registrations. In Bangladesh, there are 102 children's courts, but the juvenile justice system has over 23,000 cases involving minors awaiting trial (UNICEF, 2022).

Poverty is one of the primary causes of child abuse in Bangladesh, while there are other factors as well. However, research indicates that the main contributors to child abuse and exploitation include: unemployment, low awareness, poverty brought on by economic inequality, social stigma, marginalization, gender discrimination, inappropriate application of laws, dissolution of families, network of influential sections etc. The majority of people also have limited knowledge regarding children. They don't provide adequate guidance for children to grow up (Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, n.d).

UNICEF is working with the Bangladeshi government and other partners in three priority areas: Social services system, violence against children, and child-friendly justice system (UNICEF, n.d.).

Governments, non-governmental groups and foreign organizations have been actively advocating for legislation, monitoring mechanisms, and rehabilitation and recovery

programs in Bangladesh in order to stop child abuse, exploitation, and violence, as well as to protect vulnerable children. Save the Children (SC), the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), PIACT Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), the Bangladesh National Women's Lawyers Association (BNWLA) etc has taken several interventions to protect child abuse in Bangladesh (Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum, n.d).

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Approach/ Design

The study was conducted using the qualitative method. Qualitative research seeks to explore the research environment in depth in order to gain a comprehensive picture of how things are, why they are that way and how the participants in the context perceive them. This method works well for summarizing and responding to inquiries about individuals and environments (Gay et al., 2012).

In-depth interviews and Focus group discussions (FGD) were the two distinct data collection procedures that the researcher had selected.

Research Participants

Parents with young children (age 6 to 8 years) were the research participants. Working and non-working both parents were the participants of this thesis.

Research Site

The primary research site was Dhaka, Bangladesh, as it offers a representative urban landscape with a wide range of socioeconomic origins and a high population density. Due to the distinct socio-cultural dynamics, density and varied demographics that characterize metropolitan environments, including Dhaka city, it is imperative that parents from these locations be included in this study. These factors can have a substantial impact on parents' knowledge and actions regarding the prevention of child abuse.

Sampling/ Participant Selection Procedure

The participants were selected purposively sampling. The study included parents who were willing to take part. For the purpose of the study, a homogeneous group of parents were chosen for Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and In-depth interviews (IDI). Parents with young children, both working and non-working living in urban areas were included for this study. Six parents for each FGD were selected and there were two Focus group discussions (FGD) and four parents for In-depth interviews were chosen.

Data Collection Methods

To take part in the in-depth interview and group discussion, the researcher had chosen parents who were homogeneous and had at least one child. Following that, the researcher was draft theme based questionnaires with some open-ended, semi-structured questions on the objectives for use in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The BRAC IED academics experts evaluated both tools.

All participants were asked to provide a convenient time for the researcher to contact them and researcher explained the goal of the in-depth interview and the steps involved in the group discussion. Audio recording were conducted and field notes were taken also to record the data.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed following the Gay, L.R. et al. (2012) qualitative research steps. Data was analyzed to provide answers to the research questions. Data was collected, transcribed and then combined into a single file. In order to examine the data using the content analysis technique, the researcher carefully went over each transcript multiple times to find patterns. Based on such patterns, the data were categorized under various sub-themes.

Afterwards, various themes were used to interpret the data. On the basis of valid and properly evaluated data, a conclusion was reached. Every document was kept in a backup file.

Validity & Reliability

According to the qualitative paradigm, validity and reliability are defined as quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). Within the realism paradigm, which relies on several interpretations of a single reality, Healy and Perry (2000) elucidate the validity and dependability of judgment. They contend that the realism paradigm includes the triangulation of multiple data sources and their interpretations of these various views.

Through a survey of the literature, the researcher determined the main parenting concerns in Bangladesh and chose a research topic appropriately. A triangulation technique was employed to increase validity, integrating data from several sources to create topics and categories for the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Several techniques for gathering and analyzing data may be used in triangulation. The research criterion determines the triangulation techniques used to evaluate a study's validity and reliability (Golafshani, 2003). The information was gathered from multiple sources using a variety of techniques, including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. An ECD specialist from Brac University validated every instrument. The researcher used the tools in a pilot study after refining the design in response to the comments. The reliability of the interview questions was examined using a pilot study of the created In-Depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire. The researcher had so guaranteed the study's validity and dependability.

Limitations of the Study

There were some difficulties that researcher have faced during the data collection. Some parents were not interested to participate whereas they initially agreed. New parents were enlisted later. It took lot of time to find out new participants again.

The parents especially who were working parents were not present full time during the FGD. Some of them gave very short answer to leave early. Additionally, certain respondents could not allocate continuous time for the interviews, requiring the researcher to make multiple visits to their homes to complete the sessions.

Ethical Issues

The study complied with all ethical requirements for research involving human participants specified in the WHO guidelines as well as the Brac University Ethical Review Committee guidelines.

The researcher collected the participants' verbal agreement after providing them with a thorough explanation of the interview and its purpose. The participants then voluntarily participated in the interview. The participation was never forced by the researcher. Participants received confidentiality assurances from the researcher that their information would never be shared and would only be used for study. Participants' confidentiality was strictly preserved. The participants' identities would never be revealed by the researcher. The parents' names were not used in order to preserve the research participants' anonymity. Additionally, the participants were given the assurance that their information would be used honestly and transparently. The participants were respected and the researcher was considerate when collecting information that upset or harmed them.

Chapter IV: Results & Discussions

Results

Four main themes were used to group the findings and some of the themes have sub-themes. Every sub-theme has the detailed that proceeds from the findings of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. A broad and complex perspective of the problem was made clear by the focus group discussion (FGD) and IDI, which provided information on how parents view child abuse.

Demographic Information of the Participant

The study's demographic profile examined the parents' educational background, occupation and age range of both parents and children. Most of the parents are working, while some mothers are homemakers. One mother is an entrepreneur and two fathers are businessmen. They belong from middle class and upper middle class backgrounds.

Among the 16 participants, two mothers have bachelor's degrees and 14 parents have master's degrees. Analysis of the participants' ages revealed that all parents are middle-aged, ranging from 34 to 42 years. Among the parents, three of them have two children and the rest have only one child.

The main objective of this research was to explore the parents' perception about child abuse and its prevention. The age range of the children was between 6 to 8 years.

Theme 1: Parental Perception about Child Abuse

In the in-depth interviews, most of the parents shared their thought about child abuse in a similar way. They demonstrated an understanding of child abuse, noting that it

involves harm to the physical, emotional and mental aspects of the children. A father defined child abuse as

> *"Child abuse refers to the act of causing physical and mental harm to a child. It involves any behavior or action by parents, caregivers, or others that results in injury, trauma or emotional suffering to the child. This can include physical violence, verbal abuse or any other harmful treatment that negatively impacts the child's well-being"* (IDI#1, 13.07.24).

Similarly, a mother identified physical and emotional abuse, stating,

> *"Physical abuse is when someone hurts a child by hitting, beating or using physical force. And in our country teachers, friends or even own parents constantly criticize children. Children emotionally break down for these types of criticism and they feels worthless"* (IDI#2, 20.07.24).

A mother pointed that some people thinks child abuse means only physical abuse and they are not aware of mental and emotional abuse. Another mother echoed these sentiments, noting,

> *"Abuse is not limited to physical harm but includes any action damages a child's sense of safety, self-worth and development and if we should know that children can be hurt by others emotionally and mentally"* (IDI#3, 16.08.24).

Most of the parents in the focus group showed almost a same conception of the term child abuse. They also mentioned physical, emotional and mental abuse. A mother highlighted the fact that abuse occurs anywhere and is hard to predict, as it can occur in both homes as well as external locations. She mentioned,

"When a child is harmed by an adult or any other child mentally, sexually or physically. Scolding or punishing children without any reason is also abuse. It might happen anywhere or any place.it may occur at school and at friends or relatives house" (FGD# 2, 08.07.2024).

Some of the parents discussed emotional abuse in a focus group discussion. A father defined child abuse highlighting the emotional trauma as,

"Child abuse is hurting a child by emotionally, physically. It occurs when a child experiences harm or neglect. Often, the abuser is someone the child knows. When parents emotionally hurt children, they can't trust their own parents and when they grow up they can't share anything with them" (FGD#1, 30.07.24).

Few parents discussed about the harmful parental practices. It was recognized that comparing children to other people is a kind of emotional abuse. A mother mentioned that, *"Mothers most of the time pressures their children to get high scores in the exams. They compare their children with others and if they get low marks than their friends, their mothers scold them"* (FGD#1, 30.07.24).

Another mother highlighted that comparison is verbal abuse and this type of comparison brings mental pressure on children. She mentioned,

"This comparison is verbal abuse and the mental pressure of being the 1st girl or boy in the class is mental abuse of a child. In the future it will create problems in their development. Parents especially in our country hurt children intentionally or intentionally with their words" (FGD#1, 30.07.24).

Most of the parents shared that these types of behaviors often leave children emotionally upset.

Another mother shared her thoughts on sexual abuse, describing it as an act that violates a child's sense of security and trust. She explained,

> *"Sexual abuse is not just physical harm; it's when someone touches a child inappropriately or makes them feel unsafe. It's a serious violation of a child's body and mind, and the impact can last a lifetime. Unfortunately, in our society, many people avoid talking about this, but we need to recognize that it's a real threat, especially for young girls"* (FGD#2, 08.07.24).

Some of the parents also shared that there are many other ways that children might be abused, including beating them physically, acting aggressively toward them or causing them emotional distress by ignoring them. One father recognized that neglect may delay a child's entire development, making it a serious type of abuse. Another mother added that not fulfilling children's basic need is also accused as abuse.

Theme 2: Parental Perception about Child Abuse Prevention

The purpose of the study was to find out parental perception about child abuse prevention. While asking about parental perception about child abuse prevention, all the parents agreed on the importance of parent's knowledge about child abuse prevention in the in-depth interviews and group discussions.

The results of the in-depth interviews (IDIs) exposed that parents firmly think that preventing child abuse is important since it can cause serious, long-term harm to children. They emphasized that parent's play an important role in protecting their children from abuse and its terrible effects. One father mentioned that if parents have

proper knowledge about abuse and if they are aware, only then they can protect their children from abuse. He highlighted the value of prevention by stating,

> *"Preventing child abuse is crucial because it can have detrimental effects on a child's development. Educated parents can differentiate between appropriate discipline and abusive behavior, allowing them to intervene before damage occurs"* (IDI#1: 13.07.24).

Most of the parents highlighted that in the absence of awareness, parents could unintentionally harm their children by using inappropriate discipline or failing to identify signs of abuse. One mother expressed that sometimes parents abuse their children unintentionally while disciplining them. She gave an example of her neighbor that how a father badly beats his son while teaching school lessons. She strongly supported by saying,

> *"It is crucial for parents to have knowledge about child abuse. Understanding what constitutes abuse helps parents avoid unintentionally harming their children while disciplining them. It also empowers them to recognize the signs of abuse and take timely action"* (IDI# 3: 16.08.24).

This comment highlights the idea that awareness enables parents to differentiate between abuse and discipline, bringing in a safer environment.

Some of the parents showed concern about the long term impacts of abuse. She mentioned that long term impacts of abuse on children can damage mental and emotional well-being. According to a mother,

> *"It is important to stop child abuse because it could have long-term effects on the victims. It could have negative effects on them psychologically or*

emotionally. This can lead to problems in their personal lives later on"

(IDI#4, time: 22.08.24).

Most of the parents underlined in the focus group discussions (FGDs) the crucial significance of stopping child abuse, stressing its potentially disastrous effects on a child's mental, emotional and physical health. A mother echoed this idea by stating, *"Parents should be informed about child abuse. It is essential that they recognize the warning signs. This helps them act fast to protect and support their children"* (FGD#1: 30.07.24). Another father shared in the same conversation that sometimes children may not tell parents about abuse. Parents should actively identify the symptoms of abuse, if parents are well knowledgeable about abuse only then they can take actions. The father made the observation,

> *"Children may not always tell their parents about abuse for a variety of reasons. That's why it is important for parents to know to look for the signs of abuse. Parents should learn to spot these warning signs. This way, they can help their children even the child doesn't speak up"* (FGD#1: 30.07.24).

From the focus group discussions (FGD), it has been found that, almost every parent also agreed, parents' knowledge is important to protect their children from possible abuse. A father added,

> *"People need to be aware of child abuse. This helps parents keep their own children safe. It also teaches them how to treat other children with care. Awareness can protect all children from harm"* (FGD#2, (08.07.24).

Another mother continued in that discussion stating,

> *"Educated parents can teach their children about safety and personal boundaries. This helps children understand how to protect themselves. They learn what is safe and what is not. This knowledge keeps them safer from harm."*

Other parents agreed that when parents are aware of child abuse, it makes their home a safer place for their children. One mother expressed that educated parents will think before doing something extreme with their child while disciplining them which would turn into abusive actions. Children can suffer as a result of parental ignorance and neglect, according to another mother.

Some of the parents identified in focus group discussion (FGD) that both genders face abuse but girls may be more frequently exposed to violence at home or outside. One mother pointed out that in Bangladesh girls experience abuse sexually and boys face physical punishment.

Theme 3: Acts are Done by Parents that Fall under Abuse

In-depth interviews were conducted to identify practices done by parents that can be called abuse. The findings obtained from the in-depth interviews (IDIs) showed an understanding of the ways in which certain actions by parents can be labeled as child abuse. Parents discussed how abuse can appear in a variety of ways and how better awareness could help in preventing it. Parents pointed up a number of behaviors that might be construed as abusing children. These behaviors include emotional, physical and neglectful behaviors and they are frequently the result of severe consequences that goes excessively.

Each and every responder agreed that using physical punishment can be abusive. One father shared how physical abuse might arise when parents release their frustration onto their children. He mentioned,

> *"Parents may feel frustration due to work-related stress, family responsibilities or challenges in managing the child's behavior. They might take out those feelings on their children through physical punishment like, hitting, slapping or beating the child. Unfortunately this can lead to physical harm for the child"* (IDI#1, time: 13.07.24).

Another mother also brought attention to the fact that physical abuse might involve the use of belts or sticks, among other items, saying that parents might hurt their children by hitting, slapping or using objects like belts or sticks to cause harm. She continued that these serious consequences may result in long-term mental trauma for the child as well as physical scars.

In FGDs most of the parents identified that physical punishment might rapidly turn harmful for the children. A mother in group discussion expressed that sometimes parents hit children under the belief that they are disciplining their child. Another father from the same discussion agreed with her by saying that some parents think they are teaching their children but when the punishment involves hitting or using objects, it becomes abusive. He mentioned,

> *"When parents use physical punishment, like hitting, they often believe it's a form of discipline. However, this can easily escalate into abuse. Even if the intention is to correct behavior, the reality is that it can cause real harm, both physically and emotionally. Children who are subjected to such treatment may*

grow up feeling fearful and anxious, which isn't the lesson we want to teach

them" (FGD#2, 08.07.24).

Most of the parents expressed that parental practices like verbal attacks, frequent criticism and humiliation led to the emerging worry of emotional abuse. One mother mentioned that parents can cause emotional harm to their children by using certain behaviors to control or manipulate them. Emotional abuse can occur when parents humiliate their children in front of others, such as scolding them publicly. She said, *"Parents can unintentionally cause emotional harm by using behaviors that control or manipulate their children. For instance, humiliating a child in public like scolding them or making shameful comments can deeply affect their confidence. That child may feel embarrassed publicly"* (IDI#4, 22.08.24).

Few parents shared about the psychological pressure that parents can be done with their children. A mother in group discussion shared that some parents put pressure on children to get success in school. This can make their children feel stressed, anxious or worried. She said,

> *"As a mother, I always want my child to do well in exams, but I realize that*
> *sometimes the pressure I put on him might be too much. I never want to cause*
> *him stress or anxiety, but I understand now that pushing too hard can affect*
> *his well-being. It's important to support him without overwhelming him"*
> FGD#1, 30.07.24).

Theme 4: Parental Practices towards Child Abuse Prevention

Parental approaches to preventing child abuse highlight a number of important findings from the interviews.

Parental Awareness and Knowledge

In order to prevent child abuse, most of the parents agreed that raising their level of education and awareness is essential. A father stated that,

> "*If parents are knowledgeable about child abuse, it can significantly reduce the likelihood of them abusing their own children. Awareness helps parents recognize their own triggers and manage their emotions more effectively"* (IDI#1, time: 13.07.24).

Similarly, another mother said in a group discussion that when parents know how harmful abusive behavior is, they understand why it is important to treat their children with care and love.

Ensuring Child Safety

Most of the parents take proactive measures to protect their children and stop any abuse, according to the in-depth interviews (IDIs). A mother, in IDI 3, emphasized the importance of creating a supportive and open environment at home, stating:

> *"To ensure my child's safety, I focus on creating a supportive and open environment at home. I believe in discipline through understanding and communication rather than punishment. We also talk about personal boundaries, and I've taught my son about the difference between good and bad touch"* (IDI#3, time: 16.08.24).

In the same way, another mother described a hands-on approach by, *"I make sure to know where my daughter is, who she's with, and what kind of activities she's involved in. I also have conversations with her about what's appropriate and what's not, especially when it comes to interactions with adults"* (IDI#4, time: 22.08.24).

A father described how he keeps lines of communication open in order to ensure his children's safety;

> *"I make sure to maintain open communication with my children so they feel comfortable coming to me with any concerns. I also educate them about their rights and what constitutes inappropriate behavior. I monitor their interactions with others, including family members and teach them to trust their instincts if something feel wrong. Additionally, I keep a close watch on their online activities also"* (FGD#1, time: 30.07.24).

Educating Children on Recognize and Report Abuse

Most of the parents from IDIs mentioned that they try to educate their children in different ways about abuse. Two fathers from FGDs mentioned that they don't talk about this issue with their daughter, usually their mother talks about this matter with children at home and also their school teachers sometimes talks about this.

A mother described how she taught her child about abuse saying,

> "*I do educate my son about recognizing and reporting abuse. We have discussed what kinds of behavior are acceptable and what are not, especially regarding physical contact. I've explained that if anyone ever makes him feel uncomfortable or unsafe, he should tell me or another trusted adult immediately"* (IDI#3, 16.08.24),

This education was also emphasized by a mother stating *"I tell her that if anyone makes her uncomfortable, she should come to me immediately. I also explain that she has the right to say 'no' if someone tries to touch her in a way that feels wrong"* (IDI#4, 22.08.24).

Educating children how to identify and report abuse was another common practice discussed in FGD. A mother explained,

> *"Yes, I make it a point to educate my children about what abuse is and how to recognize it. I teach them that their bodies are their own and that no one has the right to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable. I also encourage them to speak up if they ever feel unsafe or if someone does something that feels wrong"*(FGD#1, 30.07.24).

Educating Children About inappropriate Behaviors

A mother mentioned how she explains inappropriate behavior to her child stating,

> *"When discussing inappropriate behavior with my son, I use simple language and examples. I explain that 'good touch' feels safe, like a hug from mom, while 'bad touch' feels wrong or scary. I also emphasize that it's okay to say 'no' to any touch that feels bad"* (IDI#3, 16.08.24). Another mother described a similar method: *"I use simple language. For example, I tell her that no one should touch her private areas except me or her father when helping her and even then, only if necessary"* (IDI#4, 22.08.24).

Few participants in the FGD explained that their children understood what was wrong by using examples and simple language when explaining unacceptable behavior to them. A mother said,

"I use age-appropriate language to explain that certain types of touching or actions are not okay. I tell them that if anyone tries to touch them in places that are normally covered by a swimsuit, they should immediately tell me or another trusted adult" (FGD#1, 30.07.24).

Another father also highlighted the importance of teaching boundaries to the children. He explains that no one whether it's a stranger or someone they know should touch them in a way that makes them uncomfortable or upset.

Challenges in Reporting Abuse

Most of the parents expressed concerns about the difficulties they have in reporting abuse. A participant pointed out societal fears in IDI 1,

"One of the biggest challenges parents face when trying to report suspected child abuse is the fear of social stigma and judgment. In our society, discussing abuse can be taboo, and parents might worry about the repercussions of speaking out" (IDI#3 16.08.24).

Another father also mentioned that one of the biggest challenges is fear. Fear of societal criticism or being blamed. He claimed that there's also a lack of proper reporting channels.

Lack of Community Support and Resources

A mother highlighted the lack of resources within her own community. She said, *"Unfortunately, there aren't many resources or support systems readily available in our community to prevent and address child abuse. Most of the support and education I've received has come from my own efforts and through my child's school"* (IDI#2, 20.07.24). The same challenge was repeated by a father in a group discussion. He

pointed that unfortunately, there is less resources specifically for child abuse prevention in our city. He continued that there are some awareness campaigns from NGOs, but more is needed at the community level.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate parental perception towards child abuse and its prevention. Two distinct approaches, such as in-depth interviews and group discussions, were used to collect data. The findings from the data collection based on the research question and objective were examined in the analysis of the data.

The study's demographic profile shows that the majority of the parents were young and well educated. The research was conducted to the parents who have children aged 6 to 8 years. According to the study most of the parents have the knowledge of child abuse but their practices toward prevention slightly vary from one another.

There are four main themes that show up that are in line with what parents have learned about how to prevent, mitigate and perceive child abuse.

Theme 1: Parental Perception about Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined as an act or neglect on the part of a parent, guardian, or caregiver that causes a child to be sexually abused, die, suffer serious physical or mental harm or be put in imminent danger of suffering serious harm or that adversely affects the child's potential and long-term development (Save the Children's Resource center, n,d).

It was discovered in this study that every parent knew the basic understanding of child abuse and its effects on children. Most parents discussed about the various forms of

child abuse, highlighting the physical, emotional and mental abuse in particular. Only a few parents brought up the topic of sexual abuse.

In cases reported to Children's Protective Services, neglect is the most common problem, followed by physical and sexual abuse. When a child is abused, they frequently endure both physical and sexual abuse. Parents should know about abuse of their children (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2019).

The study found that parental knowledge about abuse is very important to protect their children and their development. While every parent acknowledged the negative effects of physical abuse (beating or hitting), many also emphasized the significance of identifying emotional abuse. For instance, several mothers emphasized that a child's growth and self-esteem might be severely harmed by continual criticism and peer comparison. This realization is important because it implies that although emotional abuse is still common but isn't discussed as much, physical assault is typically the most visible type of abuse. As one mother expressed it, verbal abuse and constant pressure to achieve academically are commonplace practices in Bangladesh, particularly among middle-class families. This study also highlighted that because of the pressures from society, emotional abuse may go unrecognized as damaging, despite the fact that it can have serious long-term impacts on mental health.

The study's findings indicate that another concern, especially for mothers, was sexual abuse. There was fear during the conversation about this type of abuse, as some parents brought up the fact that society avoids talking about it, which makes it more difficult to protect children from harm.

The result of the study also identified that abuse can occur anywhere, whether it be at home, at school or at a relative's house.

Theme 2: Parental Perception about Child Abuse Prevention

The study's parents appear to be aware of child abuse. It was found that parents who participated in the study all agreed on the significance of preventing child abuse and emphasized the vital role that parents play in ensuring the safety of their children.

Regarding health and physical effects, there are potential long-term (such brain damage, hemorrhages and lifelong abnormalities) as well as short-term (like burns, scratches, bruises, and broken bones) effects (Edun, 2015).

The study shows that most of the parents know the long and short term effects of abuse. Parents acknowledged that abuse might have long-term negative impacts on their children's mental health, which could cause problems in their future social and personal lives. Several moms in the IDIs emphasized this point.

It has been found from the study that, many parents acknowledged that they sometimes unintentionally participate in harmful practices themselves, especially when it came to disciplining their children. Parents who shared stories of other families or their own experiences during interviews consistently addressed this issue that sometimes they unintentionally do this harm.

According to Adamovic (2014), the majority of parents believe that physical punishment, such as beating or slapping, is an appropriate kind of child supervision. However, effective discipline requires showing a child appreciation and love instead of using anger or hatred.

The study highlighted that if parents are knowledgeable and more aware, then they can prevent themselves from these parental practices. According to parents, better

knowledge about child abuse not only helps them to avoid abusive behavior and but also empowers them to recognize and respond to signs of abuse.

In this study, parents expressed that, the awareness of prevention among parents reflects a significant shift in parenting style toward proactive parenting, which places a higher priority on creating safe spaces and encouraging open discussion with children.

Theme 3: Acts are done by Parents that fall Under Child Abuse

Parents' acknowledgment that some commonly accepted behaviors, like physical punishment or emotional pressure, might cross the line into abuse. The study results showed that even while parents usually do not intend to harm their children, stress or frustration can cause them to behave in ways that they subsequently realize are abusive.

A number of parents admitted in the study that physical punishment, such beating or slapping, is a common discipline tactic that can become abusive. In this research, it has been found that one father's observation, which demonstrated a deep knowledge of this problem, focused on how parents often release their frustrations on children because they are too stressed out about work or family obligations. This indicates an increasing understanding of the possible negative effects of physical punishment, even in a setting where it may have been more common in earlier times.

From this research, it is clear that parents are aware of the harm that emotional abuse can do to a child's self-esteem and mental health when they worry about behaviors like public humiliation, continual criticism and comparison to other children. This acknowledgement draws attention to the emotional complexity of abuse and the

unintentional emotional damage that can result from some deeply embedded cultural behaviors, such as demanding academic standards.

The negative consequences of child abuse on academic achievement have been well-documented in numerous circumstances. According to Randolph & Thompson (2017) and Vachon et al. (2015), children who are abused are more likely to have poorer academic achievement, higher absenteeism rates and a higher chance of dropping out of school.

According to parents' views on this issue, in order to assist they strike a balance between their emotional wellbeing and their children's expectations, they need more support and direction on positive parenting approaches.

Theme 4: Parental Practices towards Child Abuse prevention

Geographical and social barriers do not apply to the widespread problem of child abuse. It covers a range of maltreatment behaviors, like as neglect, mental and physical abuse, and sexual abuse (World Health Organization, 2020).

The study outlined the several steps parents take to protect their children from abuse and the majority of parents highlighted the value of awareness and education in avoiding negative parental practices. As one father pointed out that being aware of child abuse and understanding its negative effects on children encourages parents to be more careful in their interactions with them.

The study emphasized that protecting children from harm is the primary concern for parents. A number of parents commented about taking preventative actions including keeping lines of communication open, creating supportive environments at home and teaching their children about personal boundaries. One mother gave an example of

how she raises her child to feel secure by communicating and understanding instead of punishing them. Fathers also shared their roles in ensuring child safety through open communication and teaching children about rights.

In this study, an important practice shared by most parents was the education of children on how to recognize and report abuse. In both the FGDs and the interviews, parents emphasized how they try to help their children understand personal safety by having conversations with them about what behavior is acceptable and wrong. It was observed that, while some fathers assigned their children's mother to educate them on these delicate subjects, mothers frequently assumed this role. This allocation of responsibilities could be a sign of cultural norms that view it as the mother's role to bring up delicate subjects like abuse.

In addition to teaching children about abuse, parents discussed about how they deal with inappropriate behavior in general. This study pointed one frequent practice for discussing sensitive topics to young children is to use clear, age-appropriate language. Parents can ensure that their children understand the seriousness of concepts like bodily autonomy and inappropriate touching without overburdening them by simplifying difficult issues. Some parents in the interviews described how they prioritize communication and trust with their children, teaching them about personal boundaries, good touch vs. bad touch and the importance of reporting any inappropriate behavior. The research found that both father and mother shared these practices.

The research study found out that there are a number of obstacles that parents face when reporting child abuse, even with their best efforts in our country. In both the interviews and the focus group discussions, societal fears and stigma emerged

frequently. Parents expressed worries about the possible consequences of reporting abuse. Parents shared that in our country parents who suspect child abuse, they usually don't go to report because they afraid of the criticism and judgment of the society. This demonstrates the cultural taboos around addressing abuse, which seriously impede efforts to address the problem in the community.

The study emphasized that parents also mentioned how difficult it is for them to report abuse because there aren't enough routes for reporting or support networks. This study also highlighted the parents thought that even while they understand how important it is to take action, many parents feel helpless to do so in the absence of clear channels for reporting and a supporting framework to address these concerns.

Conclusion

How parents interact with their children is influenced by their level of parenting education (Vale-Dias & Nobre-Lima, 2018).

The majority of parents in this study were found to be highly educated and generally aware of the risks associated with abuse of children. It was also observed that some parents still need more knowledge to improve their understanding. Moreover, the study revealed that while many parents are aware of child abuse, they often do not take sufficient precautionary measures to prevent it. Parents need to be more aware of child abuse, in order to protect their children from potential harm from others as well as to stop abusive behaviors toward their own children.

The results of this study highlight the significance of parental involvement and awareness in preventing child abuse. It was found through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions that parents are generally aware of what constitutes child abuse and all of its symptoms, which include emotional, mental, and physical harm. However, the research also showed that parents still had misconceptions about sexual abuse, which is still a sensitive and rarely spoken topic. This suggests that even when there has been improvement, more work has to be done to remove the stigma associated with specific abuses and encourage open conversations, particularly with sexual assault.

The research objective was to explore parental perception and practices towards child abuse and prevention, effectively accomplished. It gave insightful information about how parents perceive various types of abuse and the difficulties they have in reporting it. One of the most significant findings is that even when parents are aware of the negative consequences of child abuse, many of them still find it difficult to

differentiate between positive discipline and harmful behavior. In addition, it is challenging for parents to report suspected abuse or seek support due to societal fears and a lack of community resources.

Parents can help to establish safer and more supportive environments for their children by speaking up about this sensitive issue. It is essential to increase awareness, promote education and encourage open conversation among families and communities in order to achieve effective prevention. This may establish circumstances where children feel secure and parents have the responsibility to ensure that them safe.

Recommendations

A few recommendations were provided by the study's evidence. Such as,

- ❖ Numerous population studies can be conducted in the future on parental perception towards child abuse and parental perception and practices towards child abuse prevention in Bangladesh.

- ❖ Encourage fathers to take an equal role in teaching their children about safety and boundaries and to actively engage in conversations on abuse prevention.

- ❖ More local community support systems should establish for families, including counseling services, parenting workshops and peer support groups.

- ❖ Local groups, schools and religious institutions should more encourage to get involve in preventing child abuse and spreading awareness about it.

- ❖ Develop child abuse prevention measures that take into account the particular vulnerabilities that boys and girls confront. Reduce the hazards that girls specifically experience, like sexual abuse and the risks that boys specifically face, like physical punishment.

- ❖ Provide parents access to long-term support services so they may carry on practicing healthy parenting and protecting against abuse. This might involve educational resources, support groups and follow-up counseling.

- ❖ It is important that school staff, including teachers, receive training on how to spot abuse symptoms and work with parents to provide a safe atmosphere for children.

- ❖ Raising awareness of child abuse and how to prevent it can be greatly aided by social, print and other media.

❖ In order to prevent child abuse, the issue needs to be addressed at the policy
   level and national guidelines need to be established so that all parents are aware
   of it.

❖ Promoting open dialogue, awareness and community support can help establish
   a safer environment for children and enable parents to better prevent and
   address abuse.

References

Adamovic B., 2014 April 8, Physical child abuse – the importance of breaking the silence, Abuse and Violence, retrieved from; https://www.kidsfirstcommunity.com/physical-child-abuse-the-importance-of-breakingthe-silence

American Academy of Pediatrics. (2019). Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5. 7th Edition. https://healthychildren.org/English/safetyprevention/at-home/Pages/What-to-Know-about-Child-Abuse.asp

Anderson, (2010, June). Conflict, Power and Violence. National Council on Family Relations, 72 (3), 726-742, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40732505 Barth, (2009). Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect with Parent Tarining: Evidence and Opportunities. Princeton University, 19(2), (95-118). https://www.jstor.org/stable/27795049

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), (n.d.). Child Abuse & Exploitation in Bangladesh. https://bsafchild.net/ Bornstein, M. H. (2015). Children's Parents. Handbook of Child Psychology and Developmental Science, 1–78. Doi:10.1002/9781118963418.childpsy 403

Cambridge Dictionary. (2019, September 25). PREVENTION | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. Cambridge.org. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/prevention

Cao, H., Zhou, N., & Leerkes, E. M. (2020). Childhood emotional maltreatment and couple functioning among women across transition to parenthood: A process model.Journal of Family Psychology, 34(8), 991-1003. https://10.1037/fam0000662

CARE. (2020). Understanding the Root Causes of Child Marriage. JSTORE. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep54844

Casper, V. & Theilheimer, R. (2010) Early Childhood Education: Learning Together. New York: McGraw Hill.

Child Abuse Laws State-by-State (n.d). FindLaws https://www.findlaw.com/family/childabuse/child-abuse-laws-state-by-state.html

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (April, 2019). Child Abuse and Neglect https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/definitions-child-abuse-and-neglect/

Creswell, J. W. & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. Theory into Practice, 39(3), 124-131.

Darmstadt. (1990, November). Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention. Oxford
     Journals. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23715952

Davis, N., & Price (n.d). Attitudes toward Child Abuse preventions. Journal of the
     Arizona. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40022783

Digital, S. (n.d.). Definitions of Child Abuse and Possible Indicators of Harm. Save
     the Children's Resource Centre.
     https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/SAMPLE+DRAFT_Definitions
     +of+Child+Abuse+and+Possible+indicators.doc/

Dodaj, A & Sesar, k (January 30, 2020), Consequences of Child Abuse and Neglect,
     University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
     https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339973670_Consequences_of_Chil
     d_Abuse_and_Neglect

Donald Black (1 February 2014). DSM-5® Guidebook: The Essential Companion to
     the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.
     American Psychiatric Pub. P. 423. ISBN 978-1-58562-465-2.

Doyle, C., & Cicchetti, D. (2017). From the cradle to the grave: The effect of adverse
     caregiving environments on attachment and relationships throughout the
     lifespan. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 24(2), 203–217. Doi:
     10.1111/cpsp.12192

Efe (2017, July). Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect. Akdeniz University.
     https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323206713_Preventing_child_abuse
     _and_neglect

Epstein, W. (2019). Perception. In Encyclopædia Britannica.
     https://www.britannica.com/topic/perception

Farhan, D. S., & Iqbal, D. S. (2024). ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE OF PREVENTIVE
     EDUCATION BUILDING FROM CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE - AN
     INTERVENTION FOR PARENTS TO HELP CHILDREN. PAKISTAN
     ISLAMICUS (an International Journal of Islamic & Social Sciences), 4(01),
     180–199.http://www.pakistanislamicus.com/index.php/home/article/view/105

Farrell, A. & Walsh, K. (2010). Working together for Toby: Early childhood student
     teachers engaging in collaborative problem-based learning around child
     abuse and neglect. Australasian Journal of Early Childhood, 35 (4),53-62.

Gay, L. R., Mills, G.E., & Airasian, P. (2012). Educational Research Competencies
     for Analysis and Applications (10th ed.). pearson Education, inc.

Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2021). Spanking and child outcomes: Old
     controversies and new meta-analyses. Journal of Family Psychology, 35(7),
     1093-1101.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative
Research. The Qualitative Report, 8(4), 597-606. Retrieved from
https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol8/iss4/6

Gonzalez et al., (2023, July 4). Child Abuse and Neglect. StatPearls Publishing.
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK459146/#:~:text=The%20World%2
0Health%20Organization%20(WHO,abuse%3A%20neglect%2C%20physical
%20abuse%2C

Guastaferro, K., Abuchaibe, V., McCormick, K. V., Arushee Bhoja, Abourjaily, E.,
Melchior, M., Grayson, C., Welikson, P., Dan, C., & Zeleke, M. B. (2024).
Adapting a selective parent-focused child sexual abuse prevention curriculum
for a universal audience: A pilot study. PloS One, 19(5), e0302982–
e0302982. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0302982

Harvard University (n.d). Stress and Resilience: How Toxic Stress Affects Us, and
What We Can Do About.
https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/stress-and-resilience-howtoxic-
stress-affects-us-and-what-we-can-do-about-it/

Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability
of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. Qualitative Market
Research, 3(3), 118-126.

Humanium (2011). Children of Bangladesh. Humanium.
https://www.humanium.org/en/bangladesh/

Hussaini. (2020). Parental Socioeconomic Status and Child Abuse in Gombe
Metropolis. Gombe Journals
https://www.academia.edu/105850139/Parental_socioeconomic_status_and_c
hild_abuse?sm=b

IRIS WHO (n.d.). Iris.who.int. https://iris.who.int/

Islam & Akhter (2015) Child Abuse in Bangladesh. Ibrahim Medical College,
Shahbag, Dhaka,
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/302485836_Child_abuse_in_Bangla
desh

Jankowiak, M., Schmidt, H., & Roer, K. (2022). Cultural factors influencing parental
recognition of child abuse. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 53(1), 75
91.

Jones & Palikara, (2023, July 6). How do parents and school staff conceptualize
parental engagement: A primary school case study. University of Warwick.
https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2023.990204/full

McLean Hospital. (2023a, August 18). Understanding the Mental Effects of Child Abuse. McLean Hospital. Www.mcleanhospital.org. https://www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/effects-child-abuse

Medline Plus. (2017, July 26). Child sexual abuse. U.S. National Library of Medicine. https://medlineplus.gov/childsexualabuse.html

National Children's Alliance. (2023). National statistics on child abuse. https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/media-room/national-statistics-on-child-abuse/

National Institute of Justice. (2017, October 11). Pathways between Child Maltreatment and Adult Criminal Involvement. National Institute of Justice. https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/pathways-between-child-maltreatment-and-adult-criminalinvolvemen

Randolph, K. P., & Thompson, H. (2017). Experiencing child abuse and neglect: Mental health issues of racial/ethnic minority adults involved in the child welfare system. In M. Kufeldt & B. McKenzie (Eds.), Child welfare: Connecting research, policy, and practice (pp. 175-192). Wilfrid Laurier University Press

Save the Children's Resource Center. (n.d). Defination of Child Abuse and Possible Indicators of harm. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/SAMPLE+DRAFT_Definitions +of+Child+Abuse+and+Possible+indicators.doc/

Sebre, S., Sprugevica, I., Novotni, A., Bonevski, D., Pakalniskiene, V., Popescu, D., Turchina, T., Friedrich, W., & Lewis, O. (2004). Cross-cultural comparisons of childreported emotional and physical abuse: rates, risk factors and psychosocial symptoms. Child Abuse & Neglect, 28(1), 113–127. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2003.06.004

Smith, M., Evans, L., & Peterson, J. (2021). Child abuse prevention: Parental strategies for reducing risk. Child and Family Review, 48(4), 415-430.

Somasundaram, S., & Preethy, N. (2020). Awareness of child abuse and neglect among working parents in Chennai, India: A knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey. Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care, 9(2), 602. https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpc.jfmpc_1106_19

Tayeb, T. (2023, April 27). Bangladesh's persistent child abuse woes. The Daily Star. https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/views/closer-look/news/bangladeshs-persistent childabuse-woes-3304891

Taylor, C. A., Hamvas, L., & Paris, R. (2011). Perceived Instrumentality and Normativeness of Corporal Punishment Use among Black Mothers. Journal of Marriage and Family, 73(5), 1033-1047

Theoklitou, D., Kabitsis, N., & Kabitsi, A.(2012). Physical and emotional abuse of primary school children by teachers. Child Abuse & Neglect, 36(1), 64–70. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.05.007

UNICEF (2022). Child Protection. Www.unicef.org. https://www.unicef.org/child-protection

UNICEF South Asia. (n.d.). Child Protection. Www.unicef.org. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-wedo/childprotection#:~:text=In%20South%20Asia%2C%20too%20many

UNICEF, n.d. Child Protection . Www.unicef.org. https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/childprotection#:~:text=Millions%20of%20children%20in%20Bangladesh

UNICEF. (2021, July) Child Protection Strategy. https://www.unicef.org/media/104416/file/Child-Protection-Strategy-2021.pdf

Vachon, D. D., Krueger, R. F., Rogosch, F. A., & Cicchetti, D. (2015). Assessment of the harmful psychiatric and behavioral effects of different forms of child maltreatment. JAMA Psychiatry, 72(11), 1135–1142. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2015.179

Van pelt (2023, July). The Long-Term Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect on Communication and Conflict Management within the Military Marriage. Liberty University. https://core.ac.uk/reader/588304961

WHO. (2018). Nurturing care. Www.who.int. https://www.who.int/teams/maternal-newbornchild-adolescent-health-and-ageing/child-health/nurturing-care

World Health Organization and International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (2006). Preventing child maltreatment: a guide to taking action and generating evidence. Geneva, Switzerland. ISBN 978-92-4-159436-3

World Health Organization. (2018). NURTURING CARE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORT OF. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272603/9789241514064-eng.pdf

World Health Organization. (2022). Violence against children. Who.int; World Health Organization: WHO. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-againstchildren

World Health Organization. (2022, September 19). Child maltreatment. World Health Organization; World Health Organization: WHO. https://www.who.int/newsroom/factsheets/detail/child-maltreatment

Appendix A

Participants Demographic Information:

IDI:

Participant SL	Age	Academic Qualification	Profession	Children	Sex
1	41	MSc	Banker	1 Girl (8 years)	Male
2	36	MSc	Teacher	1 Girl(6.5 years, Boy 7.5 years)	Female
3	35	MSc	Housewife	1 Boy (6 years)	Female
4	36	MSc	Banker	1 Girl (7 years)	Female

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) 1:

Participant SL	Age	Academic Qualification	Profession	Children	Sex
1	36	MSc	Teacher	1 Girl (6 years)	Female
2	42	MSc	Businessman	1 (Girl (8 years)	Male
3	34	MSc	Housewife	1 Girl (6 years)	Female
4	36	BSc	Entrepreneur	1 Boy (6.5 years) 1 Girl (8 years)	Female
5	43	MSc	Service Holder	1 Boy (7 years)	Male
6	36	BSc	Housewife	1 Boy (7.5 years)	Female

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) 2:

Participant SL	Age	Academic Qualification	Profession	Children	Sex
1	39	MSc	Banker	1 Girl (6.5 years)	Female
2	41	MSc	Banker	2 Girls (6 & 8.5 years)	Male
3	39	MSc	Housewife	1 Boy (8 years)	Female
4	40	MSc	Banker	Boy (8 years)	Male
5	36	MSc	Teacher	Girl (8 years)	Female
6	34	BSc	Housewife	2 Boys (3.5 & 7 years)	Female

Appendix B

Questionnaire:

IDI:

Theme 1: Parental Perception about Child Abuse

1. What do you understand by child abuse?
2. Do you think it is important for parents to have knowledge about child abuse? If yes, why?
3. In your opinion, what are some potential emotional or psychological effects that children might have as a result of abuse or maltreatment?
4. From your perspective, how one might experience abuse during childhood affect a child's social relationships and interactions with others?
5. In what ways do you believe that abuse or maltreatment in childhood could influence a child's academic performance and educational outcomes? What would be the future impact on a child due to abuse?
6. What signs or symptoms would make you suspect that a child is being abused?

Theme 2: Parental perception about child abuse prevention

1. Do you think it is important to prevent child abuse? Why?
2. Do you think boys and girls are equally at risk of abuse? Why or why not?

Theme 3: Acts are done by parents that fall under child abuse

1. Do you think a child can be abused by the parents? If yes, How?
2. In your opinion what abuses could be done by parents?
3. Do you think parents' knowledge can prevent a child from possible abuse from her/his own parents? How?

Theme 4: Parental practices towards child abuse prevention

1. What steps do you take to ensure the safety of your children and prevent from potential abuse?
2. Do you educate your children about recognizing and reporting abuse?
3. How do you describe inappropriate behavior and give examples in a way that your children can easily understand?
4. What challenges do parents usually face in our city when trying to report suspected child abuse?
5. What resources or support is available in your community to prevent and address child abuse?
6. How can community better support parents in preventing child abuse?
7. What can be done to improve this awareness? What initiatives or programs would you find helpful?

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

1. What do you understand by child abuse?
2. Do you think it is important for parents to have knowledge about child abuse? If yes, why?
3. Do you think it is important to prevent child abuse? Why?
4. In your opinion, what are some potential emotional or psychological effects that children might experience as a result of abuse or maltreatment?
5. From your perspective, how one might experience abuse during childhood affect a child's social relationships and interactions with others?
6. In what ways do you believe that abuse or maltreatment in childhood could influence a child's academic performance and educational outcomes? What would be the future impact on a child due to abuse?
7. What signs or symptoms would make you suspect that a child is being abused?
8. Do you think boys and girls are equally at risk of abuse? Why or why not?
9. Do you think a child can be abused by the parents? If yes, How?
10. Do you think parent's knowledge can prevent a child from possible abuse from her/his own parents? Why?
11. What steps do you take to ensure the safety of your children and prevent from potential abuse?

12. Do you educate your children about recognizing and reporting abuse?

13. How do you describe inappropriate behavior and give examples in a way that your children can easily understand?

14. How can community better support parents in preventing child abuse?

15. What can be done to improve this awareness? What initiatives or programs would you find helpful?

Appendix C: Bangla Questionnaire

IDI (In-depth Interview)

Theme 1: Parental Perception about Child Abuse

১. শিশু নির্যাতন বলতে আপনি কী বোঝেন?

২. আপনি কি মনে করেন পিতামাতার শিশু নির্যাতন সম্পর্কে জ্ঞান থাকা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ? যদি হ্যাঁ, কেন?

৩. আপনার মতে, শিশু নির্যাতনের কারনে শিশুদের উপর কি ধরণের মানসিক বা মনোস্তাত্তিক প্রভাব পড়তে পারে?

৪. আপনার দৃষ্টিকোণ থেকে, শৈশবকালে নির্যাতনের কারনে কীভাবে একটি শিশুর সামাজিক সম্পর্ক এবং অন্যদের সাথে পারস্পরিক প্রতিক্রিয়ায় প্রভাবিত করে?

৫. আপনার মতে, শৈশবকালে নির্যাতন বা দুর্ব্যবহারের কারনে একটি শিশুর একাডেমিক কর্মক্ষমতা এবং শিক্ষাগত ফলাফলকে কিভাবে প্রভাবিত করতে পারে?

৬. কোন লক্ষণ বা উপসর্গগুলি আপনাকে সন্দেহ করবে যে একটি শিশু নির্যাতিত হচ্ছে?

Theme 2: Parental perception about child abuse prevention

১. আপনি কি মনে করেন শিশু নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধ করা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ? কেন?

২. আপনি কি মনে করেন ছেলে এবং মেয়ে সমানভাবে নির্যাতনের ঝুঁকিতে রয়েছে? কেন অথবা কেন নয়?

Theme 3: Acts are done by parents that fall under child abuse

১. আপনি কি মনে করেন একটি শিশু পিতামাতার দ্বারা নির্যাতিত হতে পারে? যদি হ্যাঁ, কিভাবে?

২. আপনার মতে অভিভাবকদের দ্বারা কীভাবে নির্যাতিত হতে পারে?

Theme 4: Parental practices towards child abuse prevention

১. আপনি কি মনে করেন যে, পিতামাতার জ্ঞান একটি শিশুকে তার নিজের পিতামাতার কাছ থেকে সম্ভাব্য নির্যাতন থেকে বিরত রাখতে পারে? কীভাবে?

২. আপনি কি কখনও এমন পরিস্থিতির সম্মুখীন হয়েছেন যেখানে আপনি শিশু নির্যাতনের সন্দেহ করেছেন? যদি হ্যাঁ, কিভাবে আপনি এটা সামলেছেন?

৩. আপনার সন্তানদের নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করতে এবং সম্ভাব্য নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধ করতে আপনি কী পদক্ষেপ নেন?

৪. আপনি কি আপনার শিশুকে, শিশু নির্যাতন কি এবং কিভাবে তা জানাতে হয় , সেই সম্পর্কে শিক্ষা দিয়ে থাকেন?

৫. আপনি কীভাবে অনুপযুক্ত আচরণ বর্ণনা করেন এবং এমনভাবে উদাহরণ দেন যাতে আপনার সন্তানরা সহজেই বুঝতে পারে?

৬. শিশু নির্যাতনের প্রতিবেদন করার চেষ্টা করার সময় আমাদের শহরে অভিভাবকরা সাধারণত কোন চ্যালেঞ্জের মুখোমুখি হন?

৭. শিশু নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধ ও মোকাবেলার জন্য আপনার কমিউনিটিতে কোন সংস্থান বা সহায়তা পাওয়া যায়?

৮. শিশু নির্যাতন প্রতিরোধে সমাজ কীভাবে অভিভাবকদের আরও ভালোভাবে সহায়তা করতে পারে?

৯. এই সচেতনতা বৃদ্ধি করার জন্য কি করা যেতে পারে? কোন উদ্যোগ বা কর্মসূচী আপনি সহায়ক বলে মনে করবেন?

Appendix D

Consent Form

Voluntary Consent Form for Parents

Brac Institute of Educational Development, Brac University

Title of the Thesis Proposal: Parental Perception and Practices towards Child Abuse and Prevention.

Researcher: Taslima Akter

The research's objective: I'm a researcher from the Brac Institute of Educational Development at Brac University, and I'm looking into how parents perceive and deal with child abuse and how they prevent it.

Reason of selecting parents: I have selected the parents because they are the primary caregivers.

Expectation from you: You will be asked to share your knowledge, thoughts and ideas regarding child abuse and preventative measures if you provide your agreement to participate. As a respondent you may give signature on the consent paper.

Risks and benefits: You can join in this study without any risk. If policy makers and educators consider the findings, the child could potentially benefit in the future, either directly or indirectly.

Privacy, anonymity & confident: Every piece of information we gather from you, will be kept completely private. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to reach out to me, I would be pleased to assist you. My mobile number is 01673021211, email address: taslima1011@gmail.com.

Future use of information: It is possible that some of the data collected for this study will be kept for future use; in such cases, sharing data and information with other researchers won't violate or compromise the confidentiality, privacy or anonymity of the participants.

Right not to participate &withdraw: Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have complete control over it. If you decide not to engage in the study, there are

no repercussions. To confirm that you accept my invitation to participate in my study, please sign here or leave your left thumb impression in the space provided below.

I sincerely appreciate your cooperation.

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Signature of Participant

Date: Date: