Understanding the Mediating Role of Corporal Punishment in the Association Between Maternal Stress, Efficacy, Co-Parenting and Children's Adjustment Difficulties Among Arab Mothers

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The Study’s Goals

- To examine the direct effect of Arab mothers' use of corporal punishment on children's adjustment difficulties.
- To explore whether corporal punishment serves as a mediating factor in the relationship between children’s adjustment difficulties and various maternal characteristics, and marital relationships factors.
The Arab Population in Israel

- Palestinian Arabs in Israel form an ethnic and national minority group. Today the Arab minority consists of 17% of the total Israeli population.
- There are many differences between Arabs and Jews in Israel with regard to:
  - Socio-economic status
  - Socio-political status
  - Socio-cultural status
Corporal Punishment

- Negative effects of corporal punishment on social, behavioral and emotional child outcomes
- Corporal punishment is a common disciplinary method among parents
- Arab Mothers are much more likely than Jewish mothers to use corporal punishment (e.g., Khoury-Kassabri & Straus, 2011).
- Few empirical studies have been conducted to enable us to understand the mechanism behind Arab mothers’ use of corporal punishment and its effects on child adjustment.
Theoretical Background: Family Systems Theory

- It suggests viewing the individual within the context of his or her larger family system, rather than focusing exclusively on the child-parent relationship (Cox & Paley, 1997).

- This study makes use of that theory by examining the effects of multiple levels of family systems such as mothers and children, the dynamic transaction of other family subsystems such as marital relationships, and their influence on children's behavior and adjustment difficulties.
Methods

- This study is part of a large survey of discipline methods used by Arab kindergarten teachers and mothers.
- The overall sample was designed to represent kindergarten classes in the northern and central parts of Israel where the majority of the Arab population lives.
- A stratified probability sample was used; the stratum was based on the locality SES index as reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics.
- 2,447 Mothers whose children attend 131 kindergartens participated in the study.
- The anonymously filled out structured, self-report questionnaires.
Measures

Child adjustment difficulties. were assessed by a total difficulties measure derived from the parents’ version of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997).

- Parents' likelihood of using corporal punishment. Was measured using the Dimensions of Discipline Inventory (DDI; form; Straus & Fauchier, 2007).

- Maternal self-efficacy to discipline and set limits. we used the Self-Efficacy for Parenting Tasks Index—Toddler Scale (SEPTI -TS) (Coleman & Karraker, 1997) to assess this domain.

- Maternal stress. was based on the Occupational Stress Item (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978) which we adapted to measure mothers' stress relating to parenting roles.

- Marital relationship quality. For spousal support we used the Measurement of Social Support (Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). A scale was developed to measure the two co-parenting factors: 1. Parental agreement on discipline matters and 2. Mother’s perception of the division of child-related labor.
Mother’s Likelihood of using Corporal Punishment

- About one in five mothers reported being very likely to grab a child (19.2%) or hit the child on the hand or buttocks (18.5%) to stop the child misbehaving.

- Fewer mothers were likely to pinch or pull their child’s ear (6.6%) or slap their child on the face (5.0%). Slightly more than half of mothers (53.4%) said they were not at all likely to slap their children and 38.8% indicated that they were not at all likely to pinch or pull the child’s ear to stop him or her from misbehaving.
Maternal stress → .043 → Corporal Punishment
Division of labor → .067 → Corporal Punishment
Parental disagreement → .115 → Corporal Punishment
Spousal support → -.045 → Corporal Punishment
Efficacy to Discipline → -.306 → Corporal Punishment
Gender → -.042 → Corporal Punishment
SES → -.028 → Corporal Punishment

NFI = .92, TLI = .93, CFI = .94, and RMSEA = .046, $X^2 = 2135.59$, $df = 348$, $p < .001$. 
Discussion and Implications

- Our results emphasize the need to observe children's development within the context of their family systems and to consider the mutual influences of different subsystems such as marital relationships and mother-child interactions.

- *Maternal Efficacy and Stress*

- Co-parenting and its important effects on family functioning.

- Husbands emotional support and adjustment difficulties.

- Spill over theory and husband’s support.

- Marital relations and the Arab family.

- Children’s adjustment problems might most effectively be addressed with a holistic approach.