Title: Prevalence of Depressive and Anxiety Symptoms Among Parents of School-Aged Children in Dhaka City During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abastact: Background: The COVID-19 pandemic forced global school closures, requiring families to adapt to remote learning and pro-longed home confinement. Although parental mental health has been widely studied in high-income countries, evidence fromBangladesh is limited, with prior studies mainly focusing on adolescents and university students. This study assessed the preva-lence of depressive and anxiety symptoms among mothers and fathers of school-aged children in selected government residentialcolonies in Dhaka city during the pandemic.Methods: Between March and October 2023, a cross-sectional survey was conducted among 405 parents in Dhaka city usingin-person interviews with a structured questionnaire. Depressive symptoms were measured with the CES-D-10 scale, anxietysymptoms with the GAD-7 scale, and overall mental health with the MHI-5 scale. Chi-square tests and descriptive analyses wereused to examine associations with mental health outcomes.Results: Of 405 parents, 95.8% reported depressive symptoms and 95.9% reported anxiety symptoms, with mothers exhibitingsignificantly higher severity than fathers ($p < 0.05$). Depressive symptoms were significantly associated with higher maternaleducation (OR = 3.75), whereas anxiety symptoms were linked to younger maternal age ($p < 0.01$) and maternal employment($p < 0.05$). Mental health scores declined progressively with increasing anxiety symptoms severity and presence of depressivesymptoms (both $p < 0.001$), indicating a considerable psychological burden following the COVID-19 pandemic period.Conclusion: These findings indicate very high levels of depressive symptoms and anxiety symptoms among parents of school-aged children in selected government residential colonies in Dhaka city, suggesting a considerable psychological burden follow-ing the pandemic period. They underscore the urgent need for targeted, gender-sensitive, and family-centered interventions,including psychosocial support and educational guidance, to mitigate potential long-term consequences for both parents andchildren.

Keywords: anxiety symptoms COVID-19 pandemic depressive symptoms parental mental health school-aged children

https://doi.org/10.1155/mij/3687331Digital Object Identifier (DOI)