

PARENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENTS' LEARNING
ACTIVITIES: THE CASE FROM RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS
IN BARISHAL

By

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A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree 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 that 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.

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Ethics Statement

Few ethical concerns were identified in this study. These were confidentiality of the personal information of the participants, consents of the participants, and comfortability of answering questions. To address the issue of confidentiality, the participants were assured that their personal information would not be exposed anywhere. As promised, I did not use any traceable information of the participants publicly. The concern regarding participants' consents was addressed properly. In doing so, I have sent a formal consent letter to the participants where I have explained everything to them such as the purposes and significance of the study. Once they understood, they gave their consent willingly and signed the consent letter. The issue of comfortability was also addressed before undertaking the interview. The participants were told that they will have complete liberty to skip any question that might feel sensitive to them. I would also like to acknowledge that depending on the circumstances, sometimes I had to bring a change in the order of questions. However, the data collected from the interview were recorded and transcribed verbatim to avoid personal biases while interpreting them. Also, I have submitted a comprehensive form for ethical approval and got that approved by Brac University.

Abstract

The major intention of this study was to explore diverse stakeholders' (parents, teachers, and an education officer) perceptions, current practices, as well as the challenges regarding parental involvement. This study was conducted in the rural primary schools located in Barishal, Bangladesh. The qualitative approach was adopted for this study and a total of nine participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that the participants do not have a clear idea about the concept of parental involvement, neither they have any effective practices of parental involvement. Also, this study found the lack of proactive communication, academic incompetency of parents, and absence of a context-specific framework are the major barriers to parental involvement. This study recommends that schools can introduce a wide range of context-specific programs, and policy-makers can formulate a set of specific policies for boosting effective parental involvement.

Keywords: Parental involvement; Bangladesh; primary schools; rural context; parent-teacher relations

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for their support and encouragement.

Acknowledgment

I am immensely grateful to my academic supervisor, Nafisa Anwar, who has always been there to guide, motivate and direct me throughout this journey. Without having her supervision, it would be difficult for me to accomplish this project. Also, I am thankful to my friend Imran who introduced me to one of the headteachers. Besides, I would like to thank all the participants of this study who have willingly spent their time taking part in this study.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	iii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Dedication	vi
Acknowledgment.....	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Figures.....	xi
List of Acronyms	xii
Chapter 1 Introduction and Background	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Topic	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem	3
1.4 Research Questions	3
1.5 Purpose of the Study.....	4
1.6 Significance of the Study	4
Chapter 2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework.....	6
2.1 Parental Involvement.....	6
2.2 The significance of Parental Involvement.....	7
2.3 Parental Involvement and Students’ Success	9

2.4 Ways of Parental Involvement	10
2.4 Challenges of Parental Involvement.....	11
2.6 Conceptual Framework	12
Chapter 3 Methodology	15
3.1 Research Approach.....	15
3.2 Research Site	16
3.3 Research Participants	16
3.4 Sampling Procedure	17
3.5 Data Collection Methods.....	18
3.6 Role of the Researcher	20
3.7 Data Analysis	20
3.8 Ethical Issues and Concerns	21
3.9 Credibility and Rigor.....	22
3.10 Limitations of the study.....	23
Chapter 4 Results	24
4.1 The concept of parental involvement	24
4.1.1 Parents' Views	24
4.1.2 Headteachers' Views	25
4.1.3 AUEO's Views	26
4.2 Reasons behind parental Involvement.....	27
4.2.3 Parents' Remarks	27

4.2.4 Headteachers' Remarks	28
4.2.5 AUEO's Remarks	28
4.3 Parental involvement activities	29
4.3.1 Home-based activates by parents.....	29
4.3.2 School-based Activities by Parents.....	30
4.3.3 Activities by the Headteachers.....	31
4.3.4 Activities by the AUEO	31
4.4 Challenges of Parental Involvement.....	32
4.4.1 Challenges Encountered by Parents.....	32
4.4.2 Headteachers' Remarks	33
4.4.3 The AUEO's view.....	34
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion.....	35
5.1 Discussion	35
5.2 Conclusion.....	38
5.3 Recommendations	39
References.....	42
Appendices.....	50
Appendix 1. Consent Letter.....	50
Appendix B. Interview Guide	51
Appendix C: Transcription.....	54

List of Figures

Figure 1: Walker's et al.'s framework for parental involvement

List of Acronyms

SMC School Management Committee

AUEO Assistant Upazila Education Officer

PTA Parent-Teacher Association

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Whose role is crucial in a child's education- parents' or teachers'? The answer to this question would be both- the family members and school teachers. While a school puts an enormous effort to help students acquire many academic and non-academic skills and knowledge, it alone cannot always ensure students' holistic development under all circumstances. On the other hand, although parents certainly have a deeper level of understanding of children's needs and abilities, they do not always have adequate time, resources, and scopes to provide academic assistance and socialization opportunities. Therefore, both- home and school should work collaboratively to create an optimal and healthy learning space for the pupils where students' development will be accelerated (Epstein, 1995).

In order to create a collaborative culture between parents and teachers, many developed nations have initiated different frameworks, and the outcomes they have received were quite positive. In light of that, the National Education Policy (2010) of Bangladesh has also encouraged the involvement of community members in children's education. In that regard, two frameworks have been employed- Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC). These initiatives have empowered community members to be involved in schools' decision-making and management bodies (Islam & Helal, 2017).

Since parental involvement is already in place for quite a while now, this study explores the current situation of parental involvement, particularly in the context of rural primary schools in Barishal. Specifically, this study looks into the views, practices, and challenges of parents, headteachers (HTs), and an assistant upazila education officer (AUEO) regarding parental

involvement. Two primary schools of a southern district of Bangladesh, Barishal, have been chosen for this study. The results of this research would benefit the readers and practitioners with the findings as well as can contribute to the literature through the generation of new knowledge in the field of parental involvement.

This study consists of five chapters. It begins with an introductory chapter that provides a brief overview of the study including the background of the study, research topic, problem statement, purposes, and significance of this study. In the second chapter, it reviews and compiles relevant literature under different themes, and then builds a conceptual framework at the end. The chapter that comes next to it is the methodology, which deals with how the study has been conducted. The areas covered in this third chapter are- research approach, site, participants, sampling procedures, the technique of data collection, research's positionality, how the data were analyzed, ethical issues and concerns, credibility and rigor, and limitations of the study. The subsequent chapter provides the interpretation of the findings and presents them under four broader themes. Finally, in the fifth chapter, a discussion is presented, a conclusion is drawn, and some recommendations are given.

1.2 Research Topic

The topic of the study is, “Parental involvement in the educational activities of children in rural primary schools”.

The involvement of parents is a significant determinator of children's educational outcomes. Understanding this fact, while developed countries have already become quite successful in involving parents in schooling activities (Besbas & Guyon, 2011); developing countries such as Bangladesh is still encountering some impediments in ensuring parental involvement, particularly in the rural primary schools (Kahn, 2014).

This study, therefore, has selected this topic to understand the views of parents, HTs, and AUEO about parental involvement. It will also look into the current practices of parental involvement in rural primary schools. Finally, this topic will help us know the impediments encountered by the parents as well school staff in effectively getting parents engaged.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Ineffective parental involvement cannot bring the best outcomes for the primary graders. In the rural primary schools in Bangladesh, due to some issues, the current practices of parental involvement are not effective enough to get parents proactively engaged (Khan, 2014; Hasnat, 2016). As a result, many students do not feel comfortable and get engaged in the learning process. Due to the lack of effective parental engagement, teachers cannot be held accountable, and sometimes they do not feel that urge to meet individual student's needs and interests. This situation leaves far-reaching consequences for the overall education system by degrading the quality of education and leaving the nation with a less skilled human resource to tackle the cut-throat challenges in the future. Therefore, it is significant to understand the views, current practices, and challenges of parental involvement so that informed decisions can be made and comprehensive programs can be developed to improve the situation.

1.4 Research Questions

To explore the issue of this study, the following three main research questions have been constructed-

1. How the concept of parental involvement is perceived by different stakeholders?
2. What are the current practices of parental involvement in the schooling activities of primary school students?
3. What are the challenges of parental involvement in the educational activities of primary graders?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study carries several purposes. One of the purposes is that it aims to generate more understanding about the current conditions of parental involvement in rural primary schools. Besides, it intends to learn how parents, HTs and AUEO frame the concept of parental involvement. Another purpose is to know the activities that parents do at home and in school in order to be involved with children's academic activities, as well as to know the purposes and ways they communicate with teachers. It will also look into what teachers and education officers do regarding parental involvement. In addition, this study intends to understand the roadblocks that parents encounter while getting involved with educational activities both at home and in school. Also, it will try to understand the impediments encountered by the HTs and AUEOs. Finally, this study aims to delineate how parental involvement is being practiced in rural schools.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant for many reasons. Firstly, since no significant study has explored the condition of parental involvement in the context of Bangladeshi rural primary schools; therefore, this study is significant because of its prospects to generate knowledge and contribute to the literature. Another reason why this study is crucial is because of its significance in policy formulation. Due to the inadequacy of academic attention to the area of parental involvement in the rural primary schools' context, policy makers and other education professionals may lack sufficient context-specific knowledge to decide what policies and course of actions would be best for ensuring an effective parental engagement system for this particular context. Thus, this study may help sensitize policy makers, contribute to the formulation of contextualized policies, and develop well-structured programs to make parental involvement more effective. Additionally, the findings of this study can help the practitioners, education professionals, school administrators, and anybody concerned to grow

a deeper level of understanding about the current conditions of parental involvement in rural primary schools, particularly the challenges and attitudes of parents, which can positively impact the practices of parental involvement. Last but not the least, another significant aspect of this study is its ability to bring empathetic understanding and deep insights into how parents living in rural areas are contributing to the education of their children.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

To gain a solid knowledge base about the research topic, a significant volume of literature has been consulted from a variety of different sources- peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government websites, and official documents. The literature encompasses national, regional as well as international studies relevant to this topic. After the compilation and mindful review of the literature, they were organized under different themes in alignment with the research questions. The major themes that emerged from the literature are- 1) defining parental involvement; 2) the significance of parental involvement; 3) parental involvement and students' academic success, 4) ways of parental involvement; and 5) obstacles of parental involvement.

2.1 Parental Involvement

The concept of parental involvement is a relatively vast one. Many researchers have conceptualized parental involvement from a variety of angles. The following section is a compilation of all those conceptions regarding parental involvement.

The concept of parental involvement is not new rather it can be traced back to 1854 when it was proclaimed that “cooperation of parents with teachers in the performance of their duties is essential to the prosperity of schools” (New York Teacher, 1854, as cited in Meyer, 1962). Parents helped select the teachers and participated in different meetings where they discussed issues such as how children's home support and attendance can be boosted (Meyer, 1962). He also found that parents attended the meeting where they discussed how parents-teacher communication can be improved (Meyer, 1962). Literature on parental involvement during the twentieth century revealed that, in western countries, it was mainly focused on how parents can help prepare their children at home so that their children can adapt to the middle-

class culture at school (Gordon, 1977, as cited in Price-Mitchell, 2009). However, lately, researchers have tried to develop a comprehensive definition of parental involvement. In defining parental involvement, Vandergrift and Greene (1992) have put forward two elements- parents' level of supportiveness and activeness. By level of supportiveness, they indicated the extent to which parents are sympathetic and caring to their children, whereas the level of activeness was about the observable activities carried out by the parents. "This combination of the level of commitment and active participation is what makes an involved parent" (Vandergrift & Greene, p. 57). Similarly, Hornby and Lafaele (2011) divided parental involvement into two areas- home-based and school-based involvement. Home-based involvement occurs when parents cooperate with children's academic activities including reading, play, and discussion. For school-based involvement to take place, parents need to proactively engage with different school-led activities, attend meetings, and keep in touch with the teachers. In defining parental involvement, Epstein (1995) put forward a framework consisting of six dimensions: proper parenting practices with the children, communicating with the school teachers timely and proactively, volunteering for schooling activities, helping children learn at home, decision-making for school, and collaboration with the community (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Voorhis, 2010). This model has been endorsed by many scholars to design comprehensive and context-specific programs to boost parental involvement.

Therefore, considering the evidence above, it can be said that parental involvement is a set of activities, both home-based and school-based, that parents perform alone and sometimes collaboratively to get involved with students' education.

2.2 The significance of Parental Involvement

While consulting with the literature, it came out that parental involvement is having paramount importance for everyone concerned. One of the benefits of having parental involvement in schools is that teachers can gain an enormous amount of understanding about

children's family backgrounds since parents spend a substantial amount of time with their children. It can also positively influence students' academic achievements since life outside of school particularly with the parents found to be one of the major contributors to academic outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Parents' time spent with children, support, and behaviors have also been found to have considerable influence on children's academic development as well as in the development in infancy (Hedenbro & Rydelius, 2019; Lamb et al., 2002). Interestingly, another chunk of the literature documented that having parental involvement in place can not only boost students' academic outcomes (Nevski & Siibak, 2016; Pineda et al., 2018); but also, can give parents a deeper level of understanding about the condition of their children as well as of teachers, which eventually can inform teachers to improve their ways of instructions.

In addition to this, parental involvement is significant for the following reasons: it can improve students' academic outcomes (Daniel et al, 2016; Epstein, 2018); improve grades, and attendance rate (Mata et al. 2018); improve students' behaviour at school (LaBahn, 1995); boost students' level of motivation and performance (Silinskas & Kikas, 2019); encourage conversation between parents and children. These can eventually make parents more responsible and careful for understanding and meeting children's needs (Mata et al., 2018); foster mutual respect for both- teachers and parents ((Mata et al., 2018); deepen parents' knowledge and understanding level about teachers' responsibilities and the curriculum of the school (Epstein, 2018); and it also shapes teachers' perspectives about individual student's life circumstances and family background, therefore, teachers grow deep respect for parents' situation and ability (Epstein, 2018). Overall, in the light of the evidence I have presented above, it can be drawn that parental involvement is a significant factor that is not only beneficial for the students but also can benefit other stakeholders concerned- teachers, school administrators, and parents.

2.3 Parental Involvement and Students' Success

Among the many benefits that parental involvement can yield, its contribution to students' academic achievement has always been quite noticeable. Under this theme, a selected body of literature that particularly studied the linkage between students' academic performance and parental involvement has been compiled.

A meta-analysis conducted by Castro et al. (2015) on 37 scholarly works found positive correlations between students' high academic achievement and parental involvement. They also found that the association between students' high academic performance and parental involvement is strong when parents proactively maintain communication with the school, participate in different school events, take care of and support their children's academic activities at home. In 2010, a study conducted in Pakistan also documented similar results for students' academic achievement, which also found the fact that parental involvement can positively boost the self-concept of the pupils (Chohan & Khan, 2010). Similarly, another study found that when parents set some expectations for their children's academic performance, students' academic growth gets accelerated (Fan, 2010). Similarly, when parents get involved with their children, be it academic or non-academic purpose, children grow a strong perception about their cognitive competence, which eventually helps them secure high scores in the standardized tests (Topor et al., 2010). They also found that proper parenting and communication can contribute to improved literacy skills among the children. A study carried out by Schneider and Lee (1990) conducted a study among south Asian students and found a positive correlation between parental involvement and students' academic success. In that study, they found that student's success was linked to the values that they shared with their parents as well as the care and support they received from their parents while at home. Thus, it can be said that the meaningful involvement of and support by parents can have positive impacts on students' academic performances.

2.4 Ways of Parental Involvement

Several recent studies have measured parental involvement using different techniques and parameters. In doing so, they took into consideration the activities that parents do at home and in school, parents' academic competency, family status, as well as the attitude they hold towards children's academic aspects (Grolnick, Ryan & Deci, 1991; Kohl, Lengua & McMahan, 2000).

There are several ways through which parents can get involved in students' educational activities. Parents can either support students at home or in school, depending on their abilities and scopes. Academically competent parents can provide academic supports to their children, while others who are not academically competent enough can maintain proactive communication with schools. Some studies revealed that parents' involvement increased along with children's misbehavior in the classroom (Kasprow, & Fendrich, 1999). Therefore, parents can be regularly kept connected and updated with the behavioural reports of their children. Another study conducted by Izzo et al. (1999) found that if parents maintain an increased amount of contact with the teachers can lower the academic achievement of the students. This is because, according to Izzo et al. (1999), when increased communication takes place between parents and teachers, parents often could ask teachers to fix the behavioral problems of the children. Therefore, schools should take initiatives to foster an increased amount of communication between home and school.

An increased amount of communication to know parents' beliefs and attitudes towards education can also impact parental involvement. Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, & Bloom, (1993) emphasized the fact that the importance of understanding parents' attitudes in children's education is important because it can influence the conversation between parents and children, which can reshape children's classroom behavior as well as academic performance. With increased communication, parents will be able to know different

techniques and ways to meaningfully get engaged with students' learning activities both at home and in school.

2.4 Challenges of Parental Involvement

The following literature summarizes some of the major impediments of prenatal involvement. While many studies have been conducted to understand the barriers to parental involvement in the context of developed countries, relatively very few studies have been conducted in the context of developing countries such as Bangladesh (Islam, 2018). A study conducted by Hasnat (2016) found that due to the lack of understanding and awareness, many Bangladeshi parents do not consider parental involvement as part of their responsibility, thus, they do not feel comfortable approaching the teachers. Similarly, another study reported that both parents and teachers are not that aware of the importance of parental involvement (Kabir, 2014). Similarly, another study found that parents' pessimistic attitude towards education was a hindrance to parental involvement (Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). Apart from these barriers, parents' low socio-economic status and their negative school experiences were identified as major barriers to parental involvement (LaRocque et al., 2011). One of the major factors that was recurrent in many studies was parents' educational background (Pena, 2000; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Potvin et al., 1999; Crozier, 1999; Baeck, 2010). A study found that parents who held a college degree were more confident in getting involved (Lee & Bowen, 2006); whereas, parents' poor academic attainment was identified as a hindrance for their involvement in students' education (Lee & Bowen, 2006).

Some studies have identified a deficit-attitude among parents who are 'powerless' when the 'educators are powerful', and when they cannot involve with the school traditionally or find that their ways of involvement are relatively different from the dominant group (Crozier, 1998 & 1999; Lareau, 1987; Todd & Higgins, 1988). Societal, demographic, historical, and

political factors could also be roadblocks to effective parental involvement (Hornby & Lafael, 2011).

While looking at the challenges faced by the schools, it was found that the overload of administrative burdens that teachers endure also hamper parental involvement (Kabir, 2014). Apart from school-related issues, Yoder and Lopez (2013) identified an influential and systematic barrier. They found that despite being interested in getting involved with students' learning process, parents find it difficult for being systematically marginalized. For example, Epstein's framework for parental involvement was adopted by many schools. While that approach is a good one for getting parents engaged, it can result in the segregation of some parents from getting into the representative body. Therefore, Pushor and Murphy in 2004 also criticized Epstein's framework by arguing that the embodiment of Epstein's (2005) six dimensions of parental involvement can make parents feel "positioned in subservient and relatively unimportant ways with regards to teaching and learning" (p. 224). Concurring with them, Price-Mitchell also challenged Epstein's model and said that it might not be fit for this 21st century (2009, p. 14).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Sociocultural theories help us understand human behaviours at the macro-level, while psychological analysis can provide us an in-depth understanding of human behaviours at the micro-level (Mishra, 2013). Therefore, this study adopts a psychological model, developed by Walker et. al's (2005), to understand the issue of parental involvement. According to this revised model of parental involvement, there are two types of parental involvement: home-based and school-based (Walker, 2005). They explain three psychological factors that influence parental involvement: a) parents' motivational beliefs, b) parents' perceptions of invitations for involvement from others, and (c) parents' perceived life context. The motivational beliefs are defined by the way parents construct their roles and perceive their

self-efficacy for getting involved in students' learning activities. Parents' perceptions of invitation for involvement from others depend on how they perceive the general and specific invitation by the schools, teachers, and children. Parents' perceived life context is about parents' time, scope, competency, and knowledge.

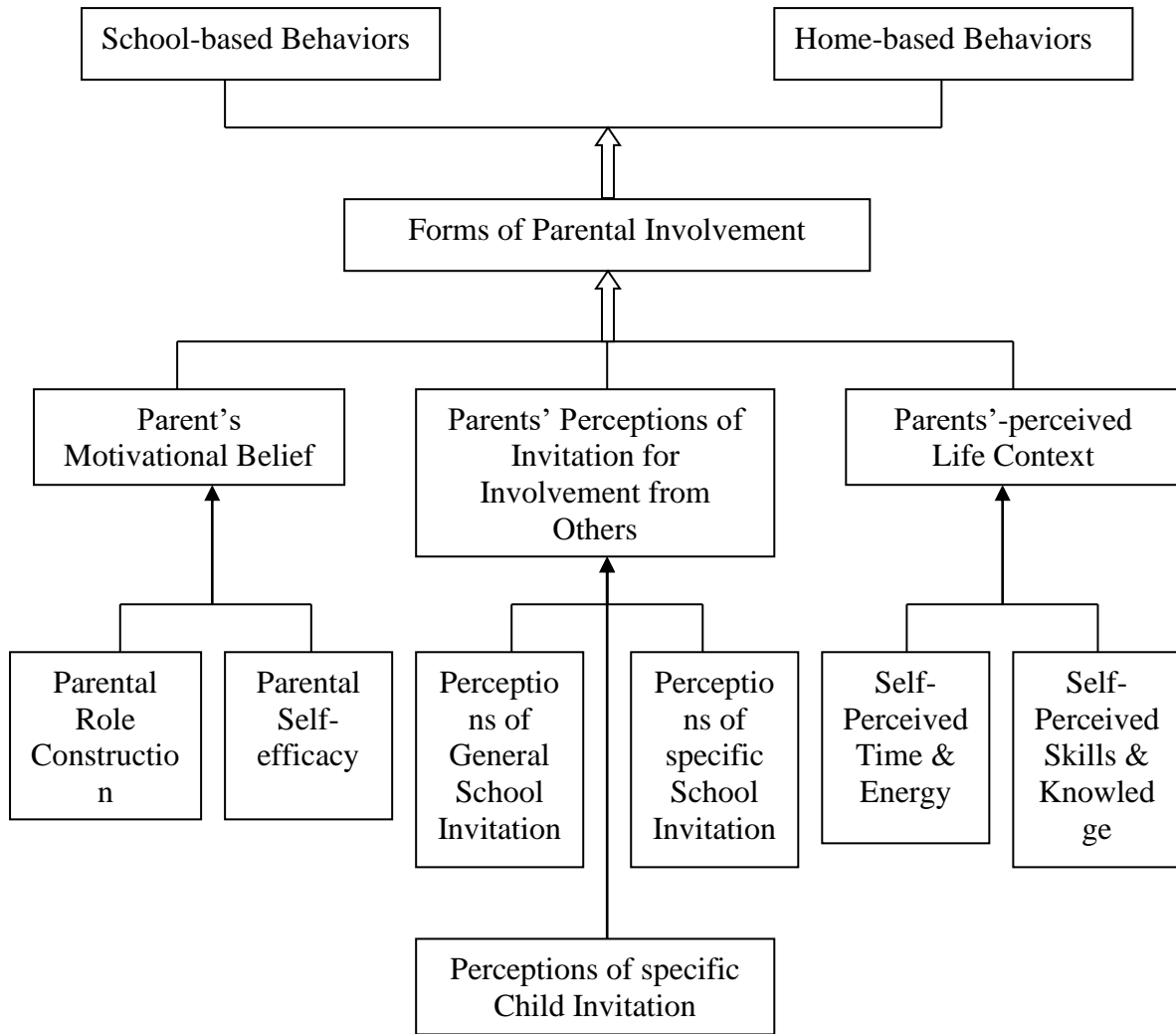


Figure: The framework of the parental involvement process by Walker et. al (2005)

This framework for parental involvement was mainly developed from the research conducted on the privileged parents from the western countries. However, compared with them, rural parents living in Bangladesh have a different socio-economic context. Their values, interests, academic competency, financial situation, and occupation influence the psychological

constructs (at least one), which will eventually have an impact on parental involvement with students. This impact is also supported by the research conducted by (Jeynes, 2003). Hence, we have employed this model to guide our study on parental involvement in the context of rural Bangladesh.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology of this study. It begins with the research approach followed by how the research site and participants were selected. It further elucidates the techniques and tools employed for sampling and data collection. Then, it talks about what roles the researcher has performed and the techniques used for analyzing the data. Subsequently, it discusses the ethical principles that guided the study as well as how the credibility and rigor of this study were established. This chapter ends with a discussion about the limitations of this study.

3.1 Research Approach

In defining the research approach, Creswell and Creswell (2017) said that a research approach is a set of plans and procedures that help carry out a study, and it involves philosophical worldviews of the researcher, research designs, and specified methods. They also put forward three main approaches to educational research - qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approach. The selection of any particular research approach requires careful consideration of the philosophical worldviews of the researcher, relevant research design to that worldviews, and suitable procedures that can help translate the approach into practices.

Since this study wanted to explore the perceptions and practices of parents, headteachers, and an education officer regarding parental involvement, therefore, the researcher opted for interpretivism philosophy as suggested by Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2011). This is because, according to Tanh and Tanh (2015), the philosophical stance of interpretivism is based on the belief that reality is multi-layered and socially constructed by the interactions of people. This philosophical worldview then informed the selection of the qualitative approach for this study. Due to the involvement of a wide range of strategies and philosophies, the

qualitative approach is difficult to define (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). However, according to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the qualitative approach helps the research investigate the unique meaning and complex interpretation that individuals ascribe to their individual and social experiences through the employment of specific methods- observation, in-depth interview, observation, focus group discussion and so on. Therefore, considering the purpose of this study, the qualitative approach appeared most relevant for this study since it helped the researcher find out participants' perceptions, practices, and impediments associated with parental involvement through in-depth interviews.

3.2 Research Site

The site of this study is two government primary schools located in a rural area of Barishal, a district in southern Bangladesh. These schools are administered by the government to facilitate formal primary schooling for more than a thousand students of the catchment area. Run by more than 12 teachers, these schools teach students from grade one to five for completely free. Most of the parents whose children are enrolled in these schools are, by and large, first-generation learners. Most of the parents with primary schooling going children are into physically laborious jobs due to their lack of academic abilities. According to Ferdousi & Dehai (2014), as much as 80 percent of Bangladeshi people are residing in rural areas and those people are relatively poorer and illiterate than their counterparts dwelling in the urban areas. Therefore, the major reason for selecting this rural area is to bring out the voice of this underprivileged community so that the concerned authority can understand the situation better and make context-specific decisions.

3.3 Research Participants

To collect data for this research study, three groups of participants were reached out; parents, headteachers, and an Assistant Upazila Education Officer (AUEO). Among them, a total of

nine participants were finally selected. Six of them were parents, two were headteachers, and an AUEO who was in charge of those two primary schools. Before undertaking the interview, consent was sought from the thana education officer formally. Upon gaining his approval and consent, two rural primary schools were selected which were under his supervision. Then, the headteachers of those two schools were reached out and informed about the purposes of the study. Those headteachers then helped get a list and contact information of the potential parents for the interview. Six parents from that list were selected who met the eligibility criteria to take part in the study. A summary of the stakeholders who provided data for this study is given below:

In total, nine participants took part in this study including six parents, two head teachers, and an assistant thana education officer. Among the parents, five were female and one was male participants. The rest of the participants were all male. Most of the mothers' academic qualification is below primary, except one who passed the matriculation exam. In contrast, the teachers and the AUEO possess a minimum bachelor's degree. In terms of involvement with the school, parents accounted for an average of three years of involvement while headteachers and thana education officers have a minimum of 10 years of involvement in the primary education system. Looking into the data of parents' profession, it can be found that all of the female participants are housewives while the only male participant is a tailor.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

According to Taherdoost (2016), a sample is a certain number of individuals from the population who can provide data for a study. He also mentioned two types of sampling-probability and non-probability. Since qualitative research generally employs non-random sampling (Strydom & Delport, 2011); therefore, this study applied a non-probability sampling technique. Considering the research questions, this study employed the purposive sampling technique. Creswell (2014) and Patton (2014) argued that one of the major reasons

for selecting purposive sampling is that it can yield a deeper level of understanding of the research questions.

The researcher set distinct criteria for all the participants from three different stakeholders- parents, headteachers, and the education officer. The criteria for the parents were: all of them have a child currently enrolled in a primary school, and they have a minimum of three years of involvement with the school. In addition, they are living within the school's catchment area, and are willing to take part in the interview process voluntarily. Likewise, the headteachers also met some criteria to be eligible for the interview. Headteachers who participated in this study have at least five years of professional experience in a head teacher role, and they belong to the school where the study was conducted. Also, they agreed to participate voluntarily. The Thana education officer also met a couple of criteria. The officer has to be in the charge of the selected school and is voluntarily agreed to take part in the interview.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

In alignment with the research approach, the data collection method selected for this study was interview. The major rationale for selecting interview as a data collection method is that the research questions of this study required qualitative data from direct interaction with the participants. Therefore, the researcher concurred with the recommendation provided by Denzin (2010); and Creswell and Creswell (2017), that qualitative data must be collected by interacting with the participants directly. Also, following the suggestion of Creswell and Creswell (2017), the researcher used open-ended questions in order to elicit rich opinions of the participants.

Taking all these scholarly recommendations into account, I have formulated the interview guide using open-ended questions and arranged one-on-one interviews with the participants

of this study. The reason for choosing interviews as a data collection tool was to gain the lived experiences and stories of the participants. (Hennink et al., 2011). It also helped me understand and interpret the opinions of the participants, the context that shapes their stories and experience, and how they define and what attitudes they hold towards a particular situation (Creswell & Poth 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2017; Silverman, 2005).

Among the different types of interviews, a semi-structured interview was employed for this interview. The rationale behind opting for this was that the semi-structured method of data collection is relatively flexible, and it can also guide the exploration of the researcher with some questions (Glasser & Strauss, 2017). Before commencing the interview, I have built rapport with the participants by asking some questions about their feelings, job, and children. Then, all the participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study, the probable time duration of the interview as well as ethical issues such as confidentiality and anonymity. Then, I sought and obtained their due consent for using a tape recorder so that I can do a verbatim transcription of the data. Assurance regarding how long this recording will be kept and when it will be destroyed was also given. Then, a formal consent letter was presented before the participants to be signed by them acknowledging that they are voluntarily participating in this study. Then, I commenced the interview with open-ended questions.

The upsides of using this method of data collection for this study were- a) it gave me full authority over the navigation of the questioning, b) I was able to use probing questions to know something in more details, c) I was able to observe the non-verbal expressions of the participants such as eye-contact, facial-expressions and body-language of the participants (Creswell, 2014; Doody & Nooman, 2013).

3.6 Role of the Researcher

I have two years of teaching experience in a low-income government primary school in a semi-urban area of Bangladesh, which has allowed me to closely observe and understand the current scenario of parental engagement in government primary schools. Due to this positionality, I possess some biases. I commence this study with the perception that parents barely have any formal and effective involvement with the schools, particularly in rural primary schools. Parents do not communicate with the teachers regularly and they cannot effectively engage with their children, let it be at home or school. I also assume that teachers do not go up to the level where parents will be motivated and convinced to attend all the events regularly. After compiling all these biases, I became more mindful and came out of the zone and mindset of a teacher to the position of a researcher. By clarifying my positionality, as a researcher, I intended to be positive rather than detrimental (Lock et al., 2013).

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7 Data Analysis

In the qualitative study, data analysis helps the researcher to interpret the collected data and make sense of the perceptions and experiences of the participants, and then organize those data into findings through which the researcher intends to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2014). Before analyzing the data, concurring with the scholars, the researcher performed three activities- firstly, he transcribed the data verbatim, then, translated the transcribed texts, and finally, the unnecessary identifiers were removed (Denscombe, 2014; Bloomberg & Vlope, 2018).

Among the frameworks available to perform thematic analysis, this study particularly adopted the one developed by Coffee and Atkinson in 1996. According to that framework, all the data obtained from each interview were categorized under three stages- general,

intermediate, and specific stage. In the general stage, all the similar data were compiled under a general heading. For instance, the activities carried out by parents, headteachers, and the AUEO were compiled under ‘parental involvement in pupils’ learning’. This categorization then helped conduct further segmentation for the next stage. Then, in the secondary stage, the data compiled under the broad domain were segmented further and put under two different subthemes. For instance, based on the similarities, data from ‘parental involvement in pupils’ learning’ were divided into two sub-themes: ‘parental activities at home’ and ‘parental activities at school’. This secondary stage then helped carry a further segmentation for the last stage where data were grouped under a specific category. For instance, one of the sub-themes in the intermediate stage was ‘parental activities at school’, which was segmented into two specific areas- ‘academic activities of parents at school’ and ‘non-academic activities of parents at school’.

The prime rationale of doing such a specific chunk of data was to generate specific codes from the general dataset. However, once all the codes were generated, similar codes were then compiled under a distinct code. Then, the researcher moved on to generate themes like ‘parental involvement activities’.

3.8 Ethical Issues and Concerns

Research ethics should be upheld so that the rights of the participants remain protected and any potential threats can be avoided (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study, therefore, has given prominence to research ethics as humans were involved in the study (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Since ethical issues can surface at any time during the study (Creswell, 2013); the researcher has been quite careful about it from the beginning of this study. Therefore, before undertaking this study, the researcher obtained approval from the MEd Research Ethics Committee of BRAC University. Before undertaking the data collection, the researcher visited the site and communicated with the participants, and

informed them of the purposes of the investigation. Participants were also informed that their participation is voluntary since they cannot be coerced to take part in the interview. By doing this, the ethical aspects were upheld. Plus, as it falls under the researcher's responsibilities to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2014), the researcher did not reveal any personal information of the participants anywhere, instead, participants' pseudonyms were used. Plus, the data were safely stored so that it does not go to the hands of the wrong people.

3.9 Credibility and Rigor

The process involved and the results generated in a qualitative study are assessed by the criteria of trustworthiness (Cope, 2014). One of the criteria of trustworthiness is credibility. According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), credibility means the extent to which the original meaning of participants' data is eventually retained by the researcher. In order to ensure the credibility and rigor of this study, the researcher followed the suggestion of Neuman in which the reported details were shared with the participants so that they can assess and determine the credibility of the reported data (Neuman, 2009). This helped the researcher gain increased accuracy of transcribed data as well as some additional pieces of information about parental involvement.

In addition, this study has demonstrated strong transferability, which is another criterion of trustworthiness. Transferability is about the extent to which the findings of a particular study are generalizable and applicable to a different setting, time, and population (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010). In this study, instead of putting any reflective statement, the researcher provided thick descriptions of the methods, participants, and context so that any prospective researcher can judge the transferability. Besides, this study has strong dependability, which means the results of this study would retain consistency if the study is repeated in the same context and population (Moon et al., 2016). While conducting this study, the researcher kept

his biases in check and restrained his subjectivity to the fullest degree possible. Therefore, if this study is conducted again, it is expected that the results would be the same. Another aspect that has strengthened this study is confirmability, which means the degree to which the results represent what was meant by the participants and are not the subjective interpretation of the researcher (Prion & Adamson, 2014). Before undertaking this study, the researcher identified his own biases and kept them in check throughout the research, which otherwise would have influenced the findings of this research. He also employed member checks strategy and data triangulation as mentioned earlier. These are the steps the researcher of this study has taken to enhance the credibility and rigor of this qualitative study.

3.10 Limitations of the study

Like many other studies, this study also has some limitations as well. One of the limitations is, most of the literature consulted for this study was not based on the context of Bangladesh because relatively few studies have been conducted on parental involvement in Bangladesh in comparison to western countries. Another limitation was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as it did not allow scope for collecting and communicating with people on large scale. If the researcher could have spent a longer time on the site, he would be able to grow a deeper level of understanding about the context of participants' life, work, and culture. In addition, if not all, some participants could assess the perceived status difference between them and the researcher, which could influence the data they have provided in response to the questions asked by the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Doddy & Nooman, 2013).

Chapter 4

Results

The main purpose of this chapter is to present findings obtained from analyzing participant's interview data. The results obtained by analyzing data have been categorized under different themes. The themes presented in this chapter are- a) the concept of parental involvement, b) the reasons behind parental involvement, c) parental activities at home and in school, and d) challenges of parental involvement. These findings provide a comprehensive and rich answer to the research questions of this study.

4.1 The concept of parental involvement

4.1.1 Parents' Views

Parents interviewed in this study did not seem to have a clear idea about the concept of parental involvement. When I asked their understanding of the concept of parental involvement, they got a bit confused and smiled innocently. Their body language revealed that they were feeling shy since they do not know much about it. As S. Kanok (Personal communication, February 26, 2021), one of the parents put it like- "Parental involvement? What to say? Well, I think sitting with children and telling them the importance of education is parental involvement."

However, few parents were able to provide relatively a detailed response to express their understanding of the concept of parental involvement. According to them, the concept of parents' involvement encompasses a range of activities for children's schooling including- a) sitting with the children for their educational activities, b) telling children the significance of education, c) accompanying them to school, d) and giving them private coaching. One of the parents, Sukhi, framed her answer in the following way-

By the concept of parental involvement, I understand that parents have to look after children's education both at home and in school to check how well children are doing their study, how they go to school, how they are performing in private coaching. It also means that we, as a parent, have to be in communication with the private tutor. If needed, parents need to go there physically to check whether or not children are studying properly (Personal communication, February 26, 2021).

Overall, it has come out from the parents' statements that the concept of parental involvement is about sitting with the children at home to help them with their academic activities, taking them to school, giving them private tuition, communicating with the teachers about children's academic performance.

4.1.2 Headteachers' Views

When teachers were asked the same question, they also seemed to be devoid of any precise definition neither did they have that much idea about this concept. Instead of talking about the concept of parental involvement, they kept rambling around the importance of parental involvement. However, after explaining the questions in detail, one of the head teachers managed to put his perceptions on parental involvement in the following way-

Parental involvement is about looking after the children when they are at school. Besides, when a child goes home, it falls under parents' responsibilities to look after children's education at home. Parents should also sit timely with their children to help them out with academic activities. (M. Jahangir, personal communication, February 22, 2021).

However, the headteachers acknowledged the importance of parental involvement and emphasized the point that parents should be more responsible and proactive than teachers

when it comes to parental involvement. The following statement provides a clear picture of that situation-

We, teachers, can work as a pathfinder or mentor but parents should always be there for motivating and taking care of their children. For ensuring quality education, parents should give maximum effort. What we can do is to guide a student for a limited period of time. For example, the first and second graders spend around 2 hours and upper graders spend around 4-5 hours. All we can do in this time is to help and guide the students.” (M. Billah, personal communication, February 23, 2021)

From the above comments of the headteachers, it is found that they do not have a clear view of what parental involvement is, also they believe it is mostly parents’ duty when it comes to parental involvement.

4.1.3 AUEO’s Views

In order to have another stakeholder’s view on the concept of parental involvement, this study interviewed the Assistant Thana Education Officer who was in charge of those two primary schools. In his view, he covered a range of activities that parents do when it comes to their involvement in students’ education. The following extract portrays his view on parental involvement in primary school-

Parental involvement in children’s learning is about ensuring parents’ involvement during the time of students’ admission, taking the child to and from school, timely sit the child to study, and assisting in the homework. In addition, I can say that the process of proper caring and monitoring of parents for children’s learning is called parental involvement. (H. Swapon, personal communication, February 21, 2021)

However, observing his speech delivery and body movement, it appeared to me that he seemed to recite something that he has memorized about parental involvement.

4.2 Reasons behind parental Involvement

Once the parents, teachers, and Thana education officers expressed their views and opinions about the notion of parental involvement, they were then asked to share what they think about why parental involvement is important.

4.2.3 Parents' Remarks

When parents were asked why do they involve (who can) or try to involve (who cannot) with their children's educational activities, one of the most recurrent findings was that they feel a sense of responsibility. Parents seemed to recall the family distress due to either lack of education or no education at all. Therefore, they want to involve with students' learning activities to help their children perform better academically so that they do not encounter the same socio-economic distress that their families are suffering from. This situation can be elucidated better by quoting Maleha's comment on this-

You see, wherever you go, your signature is required to get things processed. So, if I do not equip my children with academic skills, how would they tackle inevitable challenges that they are going to encounter in the future. If they are educated, they will be able to earn and survive better in the future than in the conditions they are in now. (S. Maleha, personal communication, February 25, 2021)

Apart from preparing children academically, another reason was parents' desire to make a good citizen so they can brighten the family impression in the society. In this regard, K. Shukla (Personal communication, February 24, 2021) stressed that,

Yes, it is my duty, a very valuable duty, in fact, my main duty to be involved with students; learning so that I can help my child become a good citizen of the country. I wish him the ability to brighten the faces of everyone around him. Like most of the parents, I want him to be prepared for a bright future.

4.2.4 Headteachers' Remarks

When asked the headteachers the same question, their reasons behind parental involvement were different from those of parents. They also confessed that primarily they carry out activities related to parental involvement in order to improve the academic performance of the students. Another reason is compliance with official obligations. Since teachers are required to invite parents and arrange some assemblies routinely, they simply do it for the sake of doing it. This is because, given the additional administrative workload along with teaching, it is really difficult for them to be fully invested in parental involvement activities. In this regard, M. Billah said that,

As per official directives, I arrange different activities to conduct parental engagement, although most of the time it gets quite difficult for me to converse with all the parents one by one and understand their individual needs given the excessive administrative workloads that we have to bear along with regular teaching-related activities. (Personal communication, February 23, 2021).

4.2.5 AUEO's Remarks

When the assistant Thana education officer was asked about why he carries out his duties regarding parents' involvement, he named some of the parental involvement-related activities and said that it falls under his responsibility to monitor whether or not schools are implementing them properly. It seemed, like the headteachers, the education officer also performs his duties just because they are bound to report to the senior authorities about parental engagement.

4.3 Parental involvement activities

4.3.1 Home-based activities by parents

From the interview data of the parents, it came out that most of the parents consider that getting involved in their children's learning activities falls under their duties. From the study, it has been found that most of those activities are carried out by the mothers since the father goes out for work. The statement of a male participant reflects the scenario best, "Although I have the interest, I cannot always help my children with their education. His mother mainly, therefore, takes care of his academic activities both at home and in the school" (S. Sumon, personal communication, February 23, 2021).

It came out from the conversations with parents that the activities they do to be involved in students' learning are contingent upon several factors including, but not just confined to, parents' academic competency, financial situation, and other family constraints. However, irrespective of their situations, mothers try their level best to get involved in students' learning activities.

At home, they carry out a range of activities as part of their involvement activities. The common activity that most parents do at home is that they sit with their children in the morning and evening to help children with their academic activities. Some parents who are not academically competent enough to teach children any particular content spend their time sitting with their children. During that time together, they mainly check the handwritings of their children and whether or not the contents are memorized verbatim. One of the parent's statements in this regard was like- "At home, I actively monitor whether or not my children are maintaining the study hours. Sometimes, I check their handwriting and how much they memorized the contents." (S. Maleha, personal communication, February 25, 2021)

On the other hand, the activities administered by educated mothers for their children were different than those of illiterate mothers. It has been found that educated mothers help their children with some academic contents. During the time spent with the children at home, they check the topics that their children covered in school and in private tuition, help with some of the academic contents in Math and English, and keep constantly pushing their children to study harder so that they can cut a good score in the exams. Besides, regardless of academic competency, mothers tend to hire a private tutor for their children throughout the academic year. However, sometimes, it becomes difficult for the family with financial constraints to hire a private tutor. In that case, they ask their older offspring to take care of their younger siblings. The following excerpt from the interview of S. Susmita (personal communication, February 22, 2021) portrays the situation clearly, “I get him on the table, teach him as much as I can. Besides, I tell his younger sister who studies in the higher grade to help him with academic contents”

4.3.2 School-based Activities by Parents

However, apart from the academic involvement at home, some parents participate in different events hosted by the school. They take part in the meetings organized for forming the School Management Committee (SMC), Parent-Teacher Association (PTA), yard assembly, and mothers’ assembly. Also, whenever they get an invitation from school, particularly during the time of result publications, they visit schools and listen to the pieces of advice that teachers give them for helping children at home. As said by one of the participants, ‘Sometimes, teachers send the message to me through my children to attend parents’ meeting after the exams.’” (S. Maleha, personal communication, February 25, 2021)

Also, parents who have barely been to school for attending any formal event meet the teachers outside of school and request them to take extra care of their children. The following parent’s statement quite covers this scenario-

Sometimes teachers send invitations to me through my children to join different meetings. I cannot join as the time does not match with mine and the agenda does not feel that significant to me. But whenever I meet any teacher outside of school, I talk to them about my children's academic performance and I request them to take care of my child while they are at school. (S. Susmita, personal communication, February 22, 2021)

4.3.3 Activities by the Headteachers

In order to get parents involved effectively, the headteachers carry out some activities including- a) sending invitations to parents, b) organize a monthly meeting with mothers, c) holding yard assembly, d) meeting parents' informally outside of school, e) providing guidance and updates to parents. They also acknowledged the fact that while they understand that parent's involvement is a crucial factor for students' academic success, it is not always possible for them to involve all parents meaningfully. As M. Billah (personal communication, February 23, 2021) remarked, "we do a range of activities for parental involvement. We send them letters and oral invitations via students and organize some sessions where we tell parents what to do to help their children with their home-based education."

4.3.4 Activities by the AUEO

In response to the question regarding the activities for parental involvement, the assistant thana education officer remarked that he does not have that much opportunity to meet parents frequently. Whenever he meets some parents while visiting a school, he usually tells parents about the importance of education and how parents can be of help for children's learning at home. Apart from that, he looks after the documentations regarding parental involvement. He remarked, "When I visit a school and meet some parents and tell them how they can help their children. Also, I ask teachers and check the documents regarding parental involvement." (H. Swapon, personal communication, February 21, 2021).

4.4 Challenges of Parental Involvement

4.4.1 Challenges Encountered by Parents

The data revealed that parents in rural primary schools face some struggles while involving with children's academic activities both at home and in school. Parents seemed confident in explaining the barriers they encountered. One of the major roadblocks that many parents face is the lack of time. Since the male counterparts go out to work in the daytime, mothers do all the household chores which makes it difficult for them to manage a dedicated time for their children as well as for school. A parent in this regard said,

My husband stays in Dhaka. I am alone here to look after all my children. The major constraint that I encounter is time. Since I have to manage all the household chores, it becomes tough to manage time to provide adequate support to my children at home.

(S. Kanok, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

Apart from this barrier, parents also shared that they are not academically competent enough to provide subject-based supports to their children. In such circumstances, parents with sound financial conditions tend to seek help from private tutors. Whereas, financially unable parents cannot even afford a private tutor for their children. One of the participant's statements reflects this situation,

There are certainly some challenges that I encounter. I am not fully capable of supporting my child with all the academic activities at home; therefore, I have to hire private tutors but it is tough to afford them with my limited income. (K. Shukla, personal communication, February 24, 2021)

However, for not being academically competent and financially solvent, parents lack confidence which makes it difficult for them to get actively involved in different events organized by the school. One of the parents said,

I do not feel that confident as I am not educated; therefore, I feel shy to ask any questions to the teachers even though sometimes I have some concerns for my children. But when I meet the teachers outside the school, I share my concern and exchange information about my children's academic status". (S. Kanok, personal communication, February 27, 2021)

Beside these challenges, they pointed out another issue which is about communication between the school and parents. Sometimes, teachers send the invitation asking parents' participation in different meetings and events through children. Other times, teachers come to visit students' homes in person and then let the parents know about different events. Parents shared that, no matter how much they are communicated, they find it difficult to fathom the importance of such school-led meetings. Therefore, many parents do not find that urge to proactively participate in such meetings. In this regard, S. Madobi (personal communication, February 26, 2021) said- "Sometimes I receive invitations from my children but I think this is just a routine work by the teachers with no practical concern."

4.4.2 Headteachers' Remarks

This apathy of parents to respond to the invitations was also resonated with one of the headteachers' views when he was asked to share the challenges he faces as a school administrator. M. Hawlader (personal communication, February 27, 2021) shared,

I do not get 100% parents during the meeting. The percentage I get is between 70 and 80. Of those who are present, I see either father or mother but not both of them. However, among the remaining 20%, neither father nor mother shows up despite being invited. I think this is mainly due to their insolvency.

According to another headteacher, one of the major challenges he faces while getting parents involved is that parents are not that proactive in terms of communication. They said that this

happens because of parents' limited education and poor financial condition. The following excerpt of a head teacher resonates with this scenario-

“Most of the parents in this village are needy. Therefore, they remain busy with work which makes it tough for them to take care of children’s learning as well as to communicate with us”. (M. Jahangir, personal communication, February 22, 2021).

4.4.3 The AUEO’s view

However, when the same question was asked to the assistant Thana education officer, he thinks that apart from parent’s less educational qualification and poor financial condition, geographic location is another major barrier for the parents to come to school and interact with the teachers regularly. He remarked,

“Parents are not competent enough to support their children with academic duties. Also, many parents have to cross a river by boat to come to school, which makes it sometimes difficult to join all the school-led events.” (H. Swapon, personal communication, February 21, 2021).

While probing further about how did he come to know about these problems, he revealed that “I came to know about it interacting with the teachers and visiting the site where parents live, I came to know about it.” (H. Swapon, personal communication, February 21, 2021).

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion followed by key findings and recommendations. The first section of this chapter will present a rich and thick discussion about the findings comparing with the relevant literature. The main focus of the discussion section would be to present the observations and learnings of the researcher from the findings of this study. Then, in the second section, it will draw a conclusion where some reflective remarks will be made based on the findings and discussion of this chapter. Finally, the last section of this chapter will suggest some recommendations based on the findings of this study.

5.1 Discussion

As the findings of this study suggest, parents interviewed in this study provided a different notion about parental involvement than the definitions suggested by many researchers. For Example, according to the definition of Epstein (1995), parental involvement includes activities where parents are meaningfully involved with students learning activities both at home and in school, voluntarily and systematically. However, parents of this study view parental involvement as mainly a range of home-based activities that parents do in order to help students with their academic activities. Parents do not seem to consider or care much about the fact that they have rights and scopes to undertake a role in the school as part of their involvement process.

Similar to parents, neither the headteachers nor the education officer could depict a clear picture of parental involvement, and their opinions were quite similar to that of parents' view. Thus, the notion of parental involvement, according to the results of this study, is that parental involvement is mainly the duties of mothers, and the activities are mainly home-

based. The activities that parents do at home are what Epstein (1995) called ‘parenting’ and ‘learning at home’. Therefore, it can be said that activities around parental involvement in rural primary schools do not cover all six dimensions of parental involvement as suggested by Epstein in 1995.

Study results documented that the reason behind parents’ involvement is to prepare children academically so that they can manage a decent job in the future. Parents do not consider other associated benefits (i.e., social and psychological) that they could yield by being involved with students learning activities. This situation reveals that parents are not that aware of how their time and assistance can contribute to the holistic growth of their children.

Although the National Education Policy 2010 of Bangladesh has given much emphasis on the involvement of parents in children’s schooling activities, parents living in a rural area in Bangladesh are not yet actively engaged in students’ learning. The findings of this study, therefore, indicate a gap between expectations and reality when it comes to parental involvement in rural primary schools. Some major underlying issues were found behind this gap, which can be framed as ‘individual parent and family factors’, according to (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). For example, parents’ academic incompetency, lack of confidence, unawareness of the importance of their involvement, ineffective communication, low expectation, financial burdens are some of the factors that fall under this category.

In addition to this, Hornby and Lafefe argued that parents’ views and perceptions about their involvement in education play a crucial role in determining the extent to which they will be involved in students’ learning. However, the results of this study also suggest that parents, teachers, and an AUEO do not seem to have a clear view of parental involvement.

Another area that stands out in the results is parents’ low expectations. As suggested by the results, parents set relatively low expectations for children’s academic success. Parents even

do not know all the academic credentials of their children. It is expected that parents will be regularly informed by the school regarding their children's performance and progress, however, this study suggests that there is a lack of communication from both sides, which sometimes make it difficult for parents to have a complete picture of their children's academic information and progress. As a result, they cannot set realistic expectations and cannot provide need-based support to their children. In regards to communication, the findings of this study are providing a similar connotation with the results of another study conducted by Hasnat (2016). However, based on the findings of this study, it can be substantiated that parent with primary school-going children do not have high expectations from their children, while research claim that having expectations are positively associated with better schooling outcomes of the children (Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013; Wilder, 2014).

Therefore, considering the circumstances of parents into consideration, the school should tailor its messages in a way that would help parents understand the importance of their involvement in different academic and non-academic activities both at home and school.

The findings of this study also suggest that there is a lack of proactive communication between home and school. It is found that in order to enhance the relationship between both parties, strong communication is important to maintain. Ashdown (2010) suggested that there are multiple ways teachers can adopt to communicate, but the findings of this study reveal two aspects about communication that are in practice. One is that the communication between parents and teachers is limited to a certain degree, and the most employed way through which teachers communicate with parents is via children. It is important to keep in mind that unless parents understand the real importance of their involvement, they will not give their cent percent to be engaged effectively.

Many contemporary studies claimed that parents' attitudes and ways of involvement can have a significant influence on students' academic performance (Oundo, Poipoi, & Were, 2014). The findings of this study suggest that many parents do not consider their involvement in students' learning activities as an important element. However, this does not mean that they are unwilling to be involved in the future if they are given proper knowledge about the importance, necessity, and framework of parental involvement in children's education.

5.2 Conclusion

This study has explored how parents, teachers, and an education officer view parental involvement, the current practices of parental involvement in rural primary school, and what are the major barriers to parental involvement. Based on the entire study, the following section puts forward some reflective remarks of the researcher.

A robust and effective education system requires many factors in place, including the active involvement of parents. Therefore, school administrators and education officers need to appreciate the community and home settings of their students. As a token of that acknowledgment, the government of Bangladesh has undertaken some initiatives such as PTA and SMC to empower parents to partake in some active roles in students' schooling. The results of this study, however, report that rural parents are not meaningfully involved in students' education, let it be at home or in school. The views of parents, headteachers, and the education officer regarding parental involvement are not aligned. They did not seem to have a sound understanding nor were they quite aware of what parents' involvement is and how beneficial it could be for student's holistic growth. Apart from lack of awareness, parents' low competency and ineffective communication are also identified as major roadblocks of parental involvement. Thus, to improve the efficacy level of parental involvement, the aforementioned issues need to be addressed.

Besides, in order to develop an effective and comprehensive program for enhancing parental involvement, policymakers need to consider the context, particularly the empirical realities of rural areas. This is because, parents living in rural areas are relatively less concerned about educational issues than their counterparts living in urban areas (Ali, 2011). By investigating parents' perceptions and lived realities, policymakers will be able to encourage teachers to enhance their communication with parents to minimize the existing communication gap.

Teachers should be provided with a framework to help parents understand the significance of parental involvement. If this can be ensured, teachers will be able to take school-specific actions for parental involvement instead of following any general framework. Wikely et al. (2015) pointed out that most of the theories and frameworks regarding parental involvement come from western countries, particularly Europe. Therefore, he stressed that instead of following a widely accepted framework for parental involvement in every context; each school should customize the framework and build its strategies to involve parents in a more meaningful way.

5.3 Recommendations

- A comprehensive and context-specific framework should be developed to involve parents effectively. One of the aims of the framework should be to increase the awareness of parents and other stakeholders regarding the importance of parental involvement.
- A database can be developed, which can help track the situation of parental involvement and take necessary actions.
- Additionally, rural primary schools can organize parents' family fun days, Parents' Day, and phone calls. Many urban and private schools have already initiated these

activities (Kabir, 2014). However, just the introduction of these activities will not work alone therefore, regular follow-up is needed for qualitative improvement.

- A special day can solely be dedicated to parents only. Parents will share their achievements and struggles so that everyone can be benefited by exchanging information they need.
- Strategic Phone calls can be another way to strengthen the relationship between parents and teachers. Teachers can create a chart and follow a template to guide their conversation for maximum efficacy.

Overall, parental involvement is a crucial element for improving students' learning experience, particularly in the time of this COVID-19 pandemic when all of the students in rural primary schools are staying at home and are mostly dependent on parents' academic assistance. In such a situation, if parents are well equipped with the necessary training and empowered with tools to support their children at home, parents would feel more confident in getting involved in students' learning activities, which could eventually minimize the learning gaps and give students a better learning experience.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Consent Letter

প্রিয় অংশগ্রহণকারী,

আমি, সৈকত বিশ্বাস, পড়াশুনা করছি ‘শিক্ষায় নেতৃত্ব এবং বিদ্যালয় উন্নয়ন’ বিষয়ে, ব্র্যাক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে। এই বিষয়ে শিক্ষায় স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রির পাওয়ার জন্য আমি বর্তমানে একটি গবেষণা করছি, যা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে অনুমোদিত।

আমার গবেষণার বিষয়, “ বাচ্চাদের পরালেখায় বাবা-মায়ের সম্পৃক্ততাঃ গ্রামীণ বাংলাদেশের সরকারী প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের চিত্র।”

এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণের পূর্বে নিম্নলিখিত ব্যাপারে আপনার দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করছি-

- আপনি সেচ্ছায় এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ করছেন।
- আপনার ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য সম্পূর্ণভাবে গোপন রাখা হবে।
- তথ্য বিশ্লেষণের জন্য আপনার কথাগুলো রেকর্ড করা হবে।
- আপনি যেকোনো সময় আপনার দেওয়া তথ্যগুলো তুলে নিতে পারবেন।

উপরলিখিত কোনো ব্যাপারে আপনার কোনো জিজ্ঞাসা থাকলে তা করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হইল।

সবকিছু বিবেচনা করে যদি আপনি এখন সাক্ষাত্কার দেওয়ার জন্য রাজী হন, তাহলে নীচের ফাঁকা ঘরে সাক্ষর করুন।

আগ্রিম ধন্যবাদ।

অংশগ্রহণকারী সাক্ষর ও তারিখ

Appendix B. Interview Guide

FOR PARENTS:

1. What do you know about the concept of 'parental involvement' in students' learning activities?

(বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার সাথে পিতা-মাতার সম্পৃক্ততার বলতে আপনি কি বোঝেন?)

2. How can you be involved in students' learning activities?

(আপনি কি কি উপায়ে বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার ব্যাপারে সাথে যুক্ত থাকেন?)

3. Do you consider your involvement in children's learning as a part of your duty?

Why?

(বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার সাথে যুক্ত থাকাটা কি আপনি দায়িত্ব হিসেবে দেখেন? কেন?)

4. What are the responsibilities you carry out for your children's schooling activities (at home and in school)?

(বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার ব্যাপারে আপনি বাসায় এবং বিদ্যালয়ে কি কি কাজ করেন)

5. Why do you carry out these duties?

(আপনি কেন এই কাজগুলি বা দায়িত্বগুলো পালন করেন?)

6. How can these duties benefit your children?

(এই কাজগুলি আপনার বাচ্চাকে কিভাবে সাহায্য করতে পারে?)

7. Do you feel confident in getting involved in children's activities?

(বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার ব্যাপারে এইসব কাজ করার ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি আত্মবিশ্বাসী)

8. What are the barriers you face to be involved in children's learning activities?

(কি কি সমস্যার কারণে আপনি ঠিকভাবে বাচ্চার পড়ালেখায় সাহায্য করতে পারেন না) (বাসায় এবং বিদ্যালয়ে)

FOR HTs:

1. What do you understand by the concept of parental involvement?
(‘বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার সাথে পিতা-মাতার সম্পৃক্ততার’ ধারণা বলতে আপনি কি বোঝেন?)
2. How do you see the importance of parental involvement?
(বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার সাথে পিতা-মাতার সম্পৃক্ততার বলতে গুরুত্ব কি কি?)
3. How frequent does parents communicate with you?
(বাবা-মায়েরা আপনাদের সাথে কখন কখন যোগাযোগ করে?)
4. What are the purposes of their visit?
(কি কি কারণে তারা যোগাযোগ করে বা বিদ্যালয়ে আসে?)
5. What challenges do parents face while involving with students’ learning activities?
(বাচ্চাদের পড়ালেখায় সম্পৃক্ত হতে গিয়ে বাবা-মায়েরে কি কি সমস্যার মুখমুখি হয়?)
6. What are the activities school do to help parents get engaged?
(আপনার বিদ্যালয় বাবা-মায়দের সম্পৃক্ত হওয়ার ব্যাপারে কি কি কাজ করে)
7. What challenges do you face in ensuring parental involvement?
(বাবা-মায়ের বিদ্যালয়ে সম্পৃক্ত করতে গিয়ে আপনি কি কি বাঁধার সম্মুখীন হন)

FOR AUEO

1. What do you understand by the concept of parental involvement?
(‘বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার সাথে পিতা-মাতার সম্পৃক্ততার’ ধারণা বলতে আপনি কি বোঝেন?)
2. How do you see the importance of parental involvement?
(বাচ্চার পড়ালেখার সাথে পিতা-মাতার সম্পৃক্ততার বলতে গুরুত্ব কি কি?)
3. What activities do you do in order to ensure parental engagement?
(আপনার বিদ্যালয় বাবা-মায়দের সম্পৃক্ত হওয়ার ব্যাপারে আপনি কি কি কাজ করেন)
4. Do you face any problem in ensuring parental involvement?
(বাবা-মায়দের বিদ্যালয়ে সম্পৃক্ত করতে গিয়ে আপনি কি কি বাঁধার সম্মুখীন হন)
5. What are the challenges do you think the headteachers encounter while ensuring parental involvement?
(বাবা-মায়দের বিদ্যালয়ে সম্পৃক্ত করতে গিয়ে আপনার অধিনস্ত প্রধান শিক্ষকেরা কি কি বাঁধার সম্মুখীন হন)
6. How do you address them?
(আপনি কিভাবে সেগুলার সমাধান করেন?)
7. What are the challenges do you think parents encounter while involving with the school? আপনি কি মনে করেন, বাবা-মায়েরা কি কি সমস্যার মুখমুখি হয় যখন তারা স্কুলের বিভিন্ন কাজের সাথে সম্পৃক্ত হতে যায়)

Appendix C: Transcription

Interviewer: So, I see that at home your elder offsprings and you both give time for his academic purposes. Also, you managed a private tutor. Okay so what are the activities you do at school? Do you do anything at school?

Participant: During the time of examination, teachers call us and go there then. Then, we talk to the teachers. We are poor people and we get less value from them. So I try to talk to the teachers so that they can have a better understanding about my context as well as pay extra care to my child.

Interviewer: *why do you carry out all these duties?*

Participant: *I do all these for the betterment and prosperity. If he can study well, the chances of getting a good job is higher. My husband does not have a reputation. If my child can earn name and fame, it will eventually bring reputation to his parents as well as to the family.*

Interviewer: *How these duties can benefit your children?*

Participant: If the child does his study will, in future he will get a good job and will help parents.

Interviewer: So, it means that the child will be academically benefited. This is one of the benefits, right?

Participant: Yes.

Interviewer: *Do you feel confident enough to get involved in all these activities?*

Participant: No, I am not that confident. We are little educated which has made it difficult for us to help students with this tough academic content. I cannot teach my children anything but still I hope to help him by sitting beside him regularly. I cannot do much, but still try to go to school and talk to the teachers, give a private tutor. I cannot even give much money and request teachers to help my child by taking my context into consideration. I tell teachers that we are poor people, we cannot afford all the academic expenses but still I request you to look after my child.

Interviewer: *What are the barriers you face to be involved in children's academic activities?*

Participant: The amount the child's father earns is insufficient for me and thus, I have to do something outside to help back up the family finance. By doing that, I cannot give much attention to the children. I even cannot teach the child. We both have to work to earn money. \

Interviewer: I see there is a financial barrier.

Participant: Yes, financial problem.

Interviewer: *What problems do you face at school when you are invited to join different programs and activities?*

Participant: I cannot always go there. As a result, a communication gap arises. When they (teachers) invite us, maybe we have a different professional commitment right at that time. Moreover, we are poor people thus, so we receive relatively less care and value.

Interviewer: *How does teachers communicate and call you?*

Participant: they tell my child to convey the message, tell us in-person when we meet somewhere outside the school hours, and sometimes for emergencies they even come to my house.

Interviewer: Thank you for your participation.

Participant: Thank you too.