Parental Perception on School Readiness for 3-5 Years Old Children in Urban Areas

By

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

Brac Institute of Educational Development

Brac University

December, 2021

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: <u>Parental Perception on School Readiness for 3-5 Years Old Children in   Urban Areas.</u>

Student name: <u>Anjuman Nahar</u>

1. Source of population

<u>Parents of 3-5 Years Old Children of English Medium School from Urban Areas of Dhaka City.</u>

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

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

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

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

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

    a)   from study participants (yes)
    b)   from parents or guardian (n/a)
    c)   Will precautions be taken to protect the anonymity of subjects? (yes)

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

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

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Executive Summary

School readiness refers to a child's readiness to make an easy and successful transition to school. Proper school readiness support to ensure children's regular participation in activities that helps children's optimal learning by acquiring developmental skills when they start formal school. This includes the achievement of academic skills as well as physical, mental, language, and socio-emotional skills for young children before starting kindergarten.

Parental perception about school readiness for 3 to 5 years old children and practices parents follow according to their perceptions for children's school readiness was examined in this study keeping the current COVID-19 situations in concern. The challenges parents face and the support they receive in school readiness were investigated. The nature of the study is qualitative.

The research findings are categorized into 3 parts: (i) parental perception about school readiness, (ii) practices parents follow for readiness, and (iii) challenges parents face to make their children ready for school. Most parents are unsure about the concept of school readiness and share their own thoughts and perceptions in different ways. All participants revealed need of positive views of the teachers, community people, and Govt. authority towards school readiness.

Further study is needed. A proper system, guidance, and policies for preschoolers' school readiness should be developed both for parents.

Keywords: School Readiness, Perception, English Medium, Preschoolers, Urban Area and Parents.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all of my colleagues and teachers who had taken steps to continue education for preschool children and had provided their knowledge, time, and energy for the ultimate wellbeing and learning of preschoolers during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am really thankful to them because of their hard-working and responsibilities for children as a teacher. This journey would have remained incomplete without their cooperation and support.

Acknowledgment

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List of Acronyms

ECD   **Early Childhood Development**

ECE   **Early Childhood Education**

ECCD   **Early Childhood Care and Development**

SDG   **Sustainable Development Goals**

MOWCA   **Ministry of Women and Children Affairs**

MOPME   **Ministry of Primary and Mass Education**

UNICEF   **United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund**

UNESCO   **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

Chapter I

Introduction & Background

Introduction

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents." – Buchwald, E. (1994)

Children come under the care of their parents at the very beginning of their life. When a child commences learning process, parental involvement and child-rearing practices based on parental belief, attitude, and knowledge on child development influence the child a lot. Parents are the first who can understand children and nurture them according to their needs. Therefore, children's starting school becomes more exciting both for the children and the parents. It includes "school readiness" which indicates to the readiness of the child itself, abstract readiness of the school the child belongs to, and the readiness of the family and community in order to support optimal early childhood development (Williams & Lerner, 2019).

A child who starts journey to school with appropriate "school readiness" is more likely to succeed in school academic performances (Yoshikawa et al., 2013). On the other hand, children who start their school without proper 'school readiness' are more likely to drop out of school, experience teen pregnancy, or can be enclosed into juveniles (Lopez et al., 2007). In a developing country like Bangladesh, children of some families, especially from poor families might get exposed to poverty, malnutrition, poor health, and unstimulating environments at home which can destructively affect their cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional development. So, the parental perception and knowledge on school readiness for 3-5 years old children of urban areas might be different from that of the parents of rural areas.

Parents' knowledge in ECD, prevailing attitudes in child-rearing practices and engagement with children played a positive role in child's overall development as well as in school readiness (Gadsden et al., 2016). The positive impact of parents' involvement beliefs and practices on children's school readiness have been well documented with qualitative research methodology in the paper. This study attempts to explore the authentic perceptions of parents in preparing their children to enter kindergarten. This study will reveal the parental perception to school readiness for 3-5 years old children from English Medium School in Dhaka City.

Statement of the Problem

The success of children's transition to school is influenced by the parents' individual capabilities, the parent-child relationships, resources, and opportunities they experience at home and in early childhood settings before they start full-time schooling (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Dockett and Perry (2008) stated that children develop and grow with the help of families and communities, rather not living alone isolated. While working with young children, this is something everyone must remember. In order to teach and educate young children and help them develop potentially, one must include both family and community in teaching learning process, according to Bronfenbrenner's model (Smith, 2012).

 A study has shown that parents considered it as their role to convey many of the requisite 'readiness' skills to their children and also notify those skills more generally as life skills e.g., encouraging them, providing opportunities, and ensuring independence for children (Jose et al., 2020). Children's learning outcomes in school may have variations according to parental thoughts and characteristics in different socio-economic backgrounds in our country.

There may lie gaps in parental knowledge about school readiness for children since these are often influenced by different factors e.g., culture, religion, economic background, societal context, etc. According to Nokali et al., (2010), parents are a child's first and best teachers, but many parents want and need support in their role of preparing their children for success in school (as cited in Brotherson et al., 2013, p. 19). If parents and teachers collaborate and communicate with each another about the child and their preparation and success in kindergarten, the child is more likely to have an easier transition (Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2008). Mothers who are able to recall the school engagement and connection of their own parents more positively during child's rearing reported more engagement in academic alteration activities with their own children (Barnett & Taylor, 2009). As parents talk to their children and help them to understand what school will bring, children may know better what to expect from school and teachers when they enter kindergarten (Smith, 2012).

In the current study during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, parents were asked what they had been doing at home to help preparing their children for the transition into kindergarten. Children coming from homes with similar cultural values, behavior expectations, and adult-child interactions are more likely to successfully adapt to the school environment than those who do not (Barbarin et al., 2010). After parents, teachers are the next most influential caregivers who can help children to develop their language, literacy, and communication skill. In this study, parental perception to school readiness, challenges parents are facing related to readiness and the supports they need to prepare their children for school will be explored.

Inequalities in school readiness among children at the start of full-time school have far-reaching consequences for success at school, with achievement gaps widening over time (Taylor et al., 2020). However, without identifying the knowledge gap

among the parents in preparing their children for school, we may not be able to design an effective intervention or educational advocacy program. That is why, it is necessary to explore parental perception to children's school readiness and identify their knowledge gap for child's better development.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study in broader sense is to explore the perceptions and practices of 3-5 years old children's parents on school readiness from English Medium Schools in urban areas. This study intends to explore what parents of children from English medium preschool in Dhaka City are perceiving (in terms of knowledge and practice) regarding school readiness and how parents are accommodating (in terms of challenge and support) into it. The overall purpose of the study is to determine the understandings, attitudes, and practices of the parents towards school readiness for their children's development (e.g., physical, cognitive, language, social and emotional development). Moreover, to understand the gap of parental perception among the parents.

English medium was taken specifically for this study due to the limitation of available online learning in mainstream. Simultaneously, most of the English medium schools in Dhaka city had started their activities for distant learning at their excellence. This study intended to explore English medium preschoolers' parental perception (knowledge and practice) on school readiness for young children and how they were accommodating (challenges and support) themselves into it.

Parent and family interventions targeted at younger ages have great potential to generate cumulative benefits by altering a child's future developmental trajectory (Schweinhart et al., 2005). Parents' knowledge about school readiness and

involvement according to their proper understanding plays a major role in preparing children for a successful entrance into the school (Sheridan et al., 2011). To support the intervention programs for the parents and children regarding early childhood development, it is necessary to know about parental attitudes and practices about school readiness from different statuses. So, this paper will show interest to explore parental knowledge, attitude, and practices related to school readiness for children in broader sense further.

Significance of the study

Existing research has revealed that even after gaining greater understandings of factors contributing to gaps in school readiness, ethnic and social class, discrepancies still exist in children's preparedness to enter school (Campbell & Stauffenberg, 2007). The SDG no. 4 targets to ensure that by 2030 all children regardless gender will have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education equally, so that they are ready for primary education (The Sustainable Developmental Goals Report, 2017). In Bangladesh Comprehensive ECCD Policy Package, 2013, it is stated in section 8 "It is essential to improve the quality of pre-primary classes as well the access should be given to every child" (MOWCA, 2013). So, it has become important to ensure quality pre-primary education for children from all diversities in Bangladesh which is an integral part of school readiness program.

Parental knowledge, perception, and beliefs about the needs of their children regarding their development in five domains and school readiness are typically correlated with parental behavior and attitude to the children (Landry & Smith, 2008). However, in different socio-economic backgrounds, these thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes towards school readiness also influence the child's learning outcome.

According to Hess & Shipman (1965), parents who do not think they are important as 'teachers' for their children's early learning but rather handover this role to others e.g., teachers, childcare workers, or to 'fate' are less likely to provide cognitively rich experiences (as cited in Landry & Smith, 2008, p. 95). If parents' perceptions are not revealed, it would be difficult to settle problems like school failure and school cycle incompletion (The State of the World's Children, 2001).

Early literacy development has been placed with a high value in our policy development. Even till now there is little evidence in Bangladesh that has explored educated parents' perceptions towards early literacy as well as school readiness particularly in an urban context (Mehnaz, 2013). In this regard this study has the potential to minimize the gap of limited research in this field by this study.

Another significant contribution of this study will be- it is expected to provide an opportunity to establish what factors in the home environment influence the preparation of children for school entrance as well as parents' perceptions of their roles in this activity. Studies show that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's performance (Fan & Chen, 200l) in both primary and secondary schools (Feinstein & Symons, 1999). According to Barnett (2001), early learning experiences have tremendous importance on child's life as it is linked with fewer grade retention and later adult productivity.

The findings from this study might help the researcher, public health and ECD professional, and policymakers to develop effective programs and policies related to Early Childhood Education. The study approaches to determine how parents are involved in children's school readiness in urban areas. To obtain this target up to mark, it is more needed to explore parental perceptions to early school learning

through proper school readiness practices, especially from families with younger children who were involved in English Medium Preschools as well as distant learning during COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries.

Research Questions

- What do parents of children from English Medium Preschool perceive about school readiness?

- What are the practices parents follow for making their children ready for school?

- What are the challenges being faced by the parents in preparing their children for school?

Operational Definition

School Readiness

The metric of "School Readiness" measures a child's level of being prepared for pre-school through development in five domains e.g., cognitive development, physical development, language development, socio-emotional development (Hagan, Shaw & Duncan, 2008). It is a multidimensional concept that includes a child's physical health and wellbeing, social and emotional competence, achievement of self-regulation, language and cognitive development, communication skills, and general knowledge (Miller & Kehl, 2019).

Age has long been the predominant defining factor for school readiness. Most states deem children eligible for kindergarten if they are five years old by a cutoff date in early fall (Saluja et al., 2000). People define school readiness in different ways and

with different meaning (Meisels, 1999). Sometimes, readiness can be described in terms of age or stage of development for children. Also, many times checklists of readiness skills and knowledge are used to reveal what children should be able to achieve or understand before they start school (Dockett & Perry, 2006).

Perception

According to theorist Mcleod (2018), perception is systemic and mainly focuses on a whole pathway from sensory data to the sensory store and the illustration of what is going on. In other words, perception is a unique way to acknowledge an affair that includes the processing of stimulation and organizing memories and experiences in the process of understanding (Mcdonald & Susan, 2011).

Parental Perception

Parental perception is a measure or index of parental surroundings provided for the children. The child brought up with love and care in the minimal obstructive environment would be able to achieve better adjustment with the sighted world (Lakshmi et al., 2009). The family can shape the social assimilation of the child before a regular school.

English Medium Schools in Dhaka City

In English Medium education system, the schools use English as the primary medium for education, study and teaching. Private English-medium schools are different to Bengali Medium and madrasa branch that were established in 1971 after the Liberation War. Local Private English Medium schools were developed within a short period in the 1980s with the assistance of the Government of Bangladesh (Shamsi,

2020). In Bangladesh, there are lots of English medium schools that follow the British and American Curriculum. They are a bit costly in urban areas.

Preschool Children

The University of Illinois mentioned children of 3 and 4 years as preschoolers. Jeffrey Tarwick Smith (2006) defined preschool age from 2 to 5 years of young children. The Operational Framework of Pre-primary Education Bangladesh has defined the preprimary age from 3 to less than 6 years as the long-term vision, but for the current years, due to resource constrain and to ensure the effective implementation by the government and the experts has kept the target narrowed down to 5 to 6 years (MOPME, 2008). In this study preschool children will be defined as children's age ranging between 3 years to 5 years, in alignment with our government.

Urban Area

According to John R. Weeks in "Population an Introduction to Concepts and Issues"- An urban place can be indicated as a spatial concentration of people whose lives are organized around non-agricultural activities; urban means non-agriculture.

To understand parents' perception about their preparation for children in beginning formal schooling, a number of literatures has been reviewed for this study. It has been noticed that many studies have been done to explore parental perception on school readiness for developing the children's skills and abilities during their early years that help them to adjust with the new environment of the school.

Chapter II

Literature Review

To understand about school readiness, the importance of school readiness, parental perception about it in global and Bangladesh context and the present condition regarding school readiness have been reviewed in this section following the key terms: perception, parental perception, school readiness, English Medium School, preschoolers, and also COVID-19. Chapter II mainly focuses on different aspects that have been perceived by parents on school readiness for early childhood development of 3 to 5 years old children. Different researchers have found several researches globally regarding school readiness over the past few decades.

School Readiness and Importance of School Readiness

School readiness refers to children's level of easy and sufficient learning without emotional complexity (Pekdogan & Akgul, 2016). Many educational experts described child readiness as a holistic approach for assuring a child's lifelong growth and overall development. A child's readiness for school is a holistic approach that figure out child's early learning and development (Ip et al., 2015). School readiness provides not only children's better participation in academic life but also families's immediate environments and societies needed prior knowledge, skills and opportunities for an effective adjustment process (Maxwell & Clifford, 2004). Supporting children's school readiness in educational settings develops creative thinking skills, which improves self-regulation, attaining the objective, self-monitoring skills and achieving information effectively (Bransford et al., 1999). One study additionally indicates that an effective school readiness develops self-regulation, academic achievement, communication skills and peer relationships

(Greenwood, 1991). Starting school and taking preparation for it is an important time for young children, parents, and educators. Taking preparation for starting school can be one of the major challenges both for children and parents. The readiness of a child to start school is not only just about what pre-academic skills (e.g., writing their name, counting, naming colors) the child can and cannot achieve but also it is more multifaceted than that. Readiness includes the child's resources and learning at home, child-care and in preschool settings where the child participates (Baldwin, 2011). All the five domains of children's readiness for school e.g., physical well-being and motor development, emotional well-being and social competencies, approaches to learning, language development, cognition and general knowledge are interrelated and interdependent (Kagan et al., 1995). Children's smooth transition to formal school is important since the child's preparation for starting school can predict their accomplishment and achievement afterward (Majzub, 2012).

Children who are appropriately ready for school are likely to succeed academically and less likely to experience behavioral and emotional problems. They are less likely to be school dropouts (Duncan et al., 2007). With regard to academic readiness skills, children are more likely to succeed in school when they display early forms of literacy skills like rhyming or telling a short story, when they grasp a range of general knowledge facts, and when they can do things like count to 10 or draw simple pictures (Adams, 1990). Additionally, Agenent and DeMan (1989) found that higher intelligence is associated with greater readiness.

However, Carlton and Winsler (1999) have found that assessments only regard academics fail to predict future academic success. Children who are less prepared for school are more likely to become parents at their teenage, engage themselves in criminal activity, and might have an unsuitable job to survive with (Schweinhart,

2003). Readiness constitutes a quantity of components that focus on measuring and predicting children's preacademic skill, ability and behaviors which are the basis for policy development and program decisions (Karen et al., 2000).

Parental Perception to School Readiness

Parents' reliance on school readiness and transitional practices are largely influenced by children's essential qualities and development state (Xia, 2018). According to Piaget's theory, children of 2 to 7 years are in the preoccupation stage. It is the developmental stage of language, memory, and visualization of the children. The Rauche Foundation asserts, "85% of brain development of human being occurs by the age of 5 during childhood" (as cited in Higham, 2013). Parental perception about involvement in developing children's brain as well as cognition is essential to nurture the early years of children, especially from 3 to 5 years. Research shows a common theme that children do better in schools when parents understand the expectations and when they are involved (Lopez & Cole, 1999). Parents might have different expectations from their children, different perception to prepare their children for schooling and follow different practices according to their perception, when children are at their school starting age.

Turnbull (1983) has identified parents to play parental roles e.g., parents as academic decision makers, parents as protectors, parents as educators and parents as supporters before starting children's formal schooling (as cited in Jatav & Bharti, 2018, p. 115). Epstein (1995) proposes a model of parental involvement in children's school readiness which contains 6 dimensions: parenting (supporting, nurturing, rearing the child), school to home and home to school communication, volunteering (providing

assistance at child's school), learning at home (managing, recognizing, rewarding the child), decision making and collaborating with the community.

Some studies show the fact that parents' involvement in their children's school activities determine higher grades and better school attendance, more positive attitudes and behaviors, higher graduation rates, and satisfactory enrollment in higher education in future (Hunderson & Berla, 1994). A study of Mehnaz (2013) suggested that families having sophisticated high income prefer to send children in English medium schools and it's most prevalent when both parents share a good educational background and income status, especially when mothers have a quite sound educational background.

Parenting practices such as reading aloud to children, using complex language, responsiveness and warmth in positive interactions are all associated and connected with better developmental outcomes (Bradley, 2002). Even parents who are not readers, their participation and involvement in literacy activities at home can have a significant influence on their children's academic performance. For early literacy development, parents who include literacy to their regular study practices, their children tend to reveal written and spoken literacy from birth (Mehnaz, 2013). Parental reading (e.g., reading aloud with children, telling stories and rhymes) beliefs are strongly associated with different literacy activities that parents are engaged in with their children (Debaryshe, 1985). Sonnenschein (2002) stated that parental positive perceptions and understanding toward literacy are positively related to children's early literacy scores since he found some significant relationship between parents' belief about the importance of learning related activities and the activities they provided at home for their children. Gunn et al., (1995) showed that home literacy environment accounted for a large percent of the variance in child's school

readiness. The reason is that school readiness not only include the readiness of individual child, but also include the school's readiness for children and the capacity of families and communities to provide the necessary opportunities, conditions and supports to optimize children's development and learning (Dockett et al., 2010). A child's understanding and production of oral language, vocabulary knowledge, print awareness, early writing, recognizing letters and numbers, making connection of letters to sounds- all are good predictors of child's reading abilities and school readiness (Mehnaz, 2013).

It is understandable that parental perception regarding what qualifies as preparation for kindergarten school are quite unpredictable when it is known that, what teachers hope from children to know and be able to do can make changes drastically (Smith, 2012). According to the ecological model of children's preparation for school proposed by Emig, Moore & Scarupa (2001), school readiness should include at least the following three aspects: children for readiness, schools for readiness, family and community support for children's readiness (as cited in Xie & Gan, 2017, p.1).

Again, parents may have different perceptions of what qualities or behaviors young children should possess to be prepared for kindergarten entry (Massetti & Bracken, 2010). Some of the skills could include emergent literacy, which would be phonological awareness, print awareness, knowing the alphabet, and beginning to form letters. Parents can boost their children's schooling by responding to school discipline and talking to their child's preschool teacher to find out what they should do at home to assist their children for entering kindergarten (Lahaie, 2008). Diamond et al. (2000) found that parents' kindergarten readiness beliefs included both behavior and academic skills. The study concluded that parents do put more emphasis on a child's academic abilities when considering delaying their child's school entry.

Research of Welch & White (1999) found that parents view academic skills as important for school readiness. Some parents view social skills as important in kindergarten readiness (Kim et al., 2005). These social skills may include sharing, turn taking, follow easy instructions of teachers, better communication, pay attention and self-control. With children coming from diverse preschool, childcare, community and family experiences, social skills are a central aspect of kindergarten readiness (Moore, 2008). Another effective practice parents maintain is scheduled daily routine. Family routines, like bedtime, waking time and activities, and dinner time can help improve children's behavioral and academic qualities (Wildenger et al., 2008).

School Readiness in Global Context

Globally, the first 5 years of a child's life is recognized as a critical period for assisting all children to achieve their developmental potential and overcoming developmental disadvantage through early interventions (Britto et al., 2017). School readiness is the preparedness of children to learn what schools expect or want them to learn (Edwards, 1999).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (1995) describes three prerequisites for universal school readiness. First, addressing the inequities in early life experience so that all children have access to the opportunities that promote school success. Second, recognizing and supporting individual differences among children, including linguistic and cultural differences. Third, establishing reasonable and appropriate expectations of children's capabilities upon school entry.

Readiness assessments are incorporated in description of standards, those are developed by the Florida Department of Education (2008) addressing the following areas:

- Physical health—physical health, knowledge of wellness.

- Approaches to learn and understand—eagerness and curiosity, persistence, creativity and inventiveness, planning and reflection.

- Social and emotional development—self-concept, self-control, relationships with adults, relationships with peers, social problem-solving.

- Language and communication—listening, speaking, vocabulary, sentence and structure, conversation.

- Emergent literacy—emergent reading, emergent writing.

- Cognitive development and general knowledge— mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts.

- Motor development—gross motor development, fine motor development.

Children's targeted preparation in cognition, linguistics, behavior and emotion when entering into the school are notably influenced by the resources and inter relationships those children are exposed to in their vital preschool years (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Graue (1992) concludes that readiness is socially constructed as well as a relative entity dependent on information available to parents, relationships between parents and schools, and child experiences (as cited in Moore, 2008, p. 7).

A noteworthy finding is that parents' beliefs and thoughts about school readiness are influenced by their children's individuality e.g., characteristics and behaviors (Xia, 2018). The success of children's transition to school is influenced by individual capabilities of the parents and the relationships, resources and opportunities they experience at home and in early childhood settings before they start full-time school (UNICEF, 2012). Regular daily routines followed in any home environment contribute stability and predictability to family life that greatly enhance child well-being and health (Wildenger et al., 2008). There might be effective correlation among

children's pre-primary education, emotional environment at home for learning and socio-economic status of the family. Parents' high expectations for future educational attainment are related to children's current school grades and achievements, and their long-term academic attainments (Froiland et al., 2013).

 In a study of Vandivere et al., (2004) that also used Longitudinal Study for The Early Childhood, Kindergarten Class of 1998-99 has assessed inequality in school readiness for preschool children (as cited in Baldwin, 2011, p.10). In their study they found that children in higher socio-economic groups were reported as being more skillful in reading and mathematical tasks as opposed to those in lower socio-economic groups.

Though United Nations have made societal investments on Early Childhood Development, it lacks comprehensive early childhood system. According to Kena et al., (2016), for enrollment in preschools, the US lags behind 28 high income countries with only 54% of 3-4 years of children enrollment in preschools. Majority of these preschoolers are from upper class families (as cited in Peterson et al., 2018, p.2). In Greece, managing children of ages 4-6 years old is even more difficult and challenging for the teachers during COVID-19 pandemic (Foti, 2020). In the context of Asia and Pacific region (consisting of low income and middle-income countries) there are great needs and opportunities for transitional intervention (UNESCO, 2012). In Bhutan, as per the country report of EFA 2000 assessment, there was still no proper ECCD in place except for few nursery in the urban areas, provided by few of the private schools (Dechen & Jena, 2016).

School Readiness in Bangladesh Context

Till now very little is known about parenting perception and practices in Bangladeshi families regarding school readiness. Most of the rural mothers are unaware of the

importance of fostering curiosity and self confidence in a child and rarely provide the opportunities of play and conversation (UNICEF, 2001). Children spend many hours by themselves with few learning materials (Lusk et al., 2004). Although Bangladesh has achieved great progress in primary enrolment rate and reaching on the secondary enrollment rate, early childhood education is still lagging behind alarmingly (Rashid & Akkari, 2020).

The Govt. of Bangladesh stated the suggestion made by The National Education Commission that includes pre-schooling should be provided for children aged four to five years, aiming to raise the quality of education at the primary level (as cited in Nath & Sylva, 2007, p. 278). By participating in pre-primary education children can know about various things with different type of study materials and how to read and write using those and also, they experience communication with children of same age group for the first time (Yasmin & Rumi, 2020). Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (2013) recognized that children who have completed pre-primary education have satisfactory success in primary education and a good opportunity for an easy transition to primary school (as cited in Yasmin & Rumi, 2020, p. 252). In another study, Nath & Chowdhury (2001) have pointed to the requirement for quality pre-school education in Bangladesh where the quality of primary education is still in a volatile situation (as cited in Nath & Sylva, 2007, p. 289). Family's readiness is mostly overlooked in parent's responses. Parent's inadequate perceptions towards the true notion of school readiness needs to be considered attentively (Mehnaz, 2013).

In our country, matter of concern is that, 25 percent of children are revealed with the psycho-social risk factor e.g., poor stimulation, lack of learning opportunities, parental unresponsiveness, and parental inability to understand children behavior (Wallander et al., 2014). As Yasmin & Rumi (2020) mentioned in their study that

parents want their children to be good at learning. They expect that their children will achieve high score in every examination which is actually not possible for all the children. Each child has different skills to learn. Some children are good at drawing, singing, dancing, and sports rather than academic activities.

Government of Bangladesh already has given emphasized upon promoting preschool readiness. Government already have introduced one-year long pre-primary school activities through the government primary education system (Sowad, 2016). There are studies of intervention programs to support school readiness for children in Bangladesh. A six (6) weeks intervention program aimed to foster basic mathematical concepts for 3 to 4 years old children in urban areas of Dhaka city found that caregiver with proper training for child's mathematical skills development can implement an activity-based math program and thus, children can be benefited. Result has indicated a significant gain in math skills of the intervention group and the magnitude of effect was satisfactory (Aboud et al., 2006).

 UNICEF Bangladesh is one of the five countries that steered the 'Getting Ready for School a Child to-Child Approach' project. The steered project was executed in cooperation with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and its output found positive (UNICEF, 2012).

In English Medium Schools of Dhaka City children enroll from Playgroup to A Level. Most of these school switched to online classes during lockdown period. Most of the parents experienced a different situation with their children to prepare them for school.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve any research problem and it may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically (Kothari, 2004). The multi-stepped procedure of research methodology begins with research approach & method, research site, research sample and sampling, sample characteristics, use of data collection tool followed with brief discussion about data collection method, data analysis process and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The purpose of choosing the study as a qualitative one because qualitative research was the best option to carry out the study during the pandemic situation. Qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behavior of participant and it is a function of researcher's insights and impressions (Kothari, 2004). However, a qualitative approach was the most appropriate one for this study since researchers' objective was to explore the perceptions of parents regarding school readiness of their children in order to know their experiences in depth that was only possible via qualitative research.

Research Site

Selected parents were from the areas e.g., Banani, Uttara, ECB Chattar, Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi of Dhaka City. Data was collected from the parents of Urban area those who were continuing their 3-5 years old children's study in English Medium Schools in Dhaka. Dhaka city was selected as research site in this study because it represents the urban area of Bangladesh. Parents of children were

selected from different English Medium School as per the convenience of access and feasibility of the researcher.

Research Participants

For the study, target population was the parents with 3-5 years old children who studies in English Medium schools in Dhaka city. Selected parents belong to upper class, upper-middle class and rich families from Dhaka City. The children of these parents were studying in English Medium Schools in Dhaka.

Sampling Size and Sampling Procedure

The total sample size was 12 parents (father and mother) of children from English Medium Pre-schools of a homogeneous group. For the data collection, sample was selected through purposive sampling technique. The research population for the study was 3-5 years old children's parents of English Medium Preschools. Among the 12 parents, 8 were mothers and 4 were fathers of preschoolers.

Sample Characteristics

Inclusion Criteria:

- Parents of children aged between 3-5 years from English Medium School.

- Parents were from urban areas.

- Parents were selected as per their voluntary participatory role.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Parents from rural areas.

- Parents were excluded from other medium of schools and Madrasa.

- Parents who were not willing to participate or continue at any point in time.

Data Collection Tool

Two different data collection tools were used to conduct the research:

- Thematic In-depth Interview (IDI) Questionnaire

  -Semi structured questionnaire

- Group Discussion Guideline

The approaches of taking two different types of instruments marked up the process of data triangulation and qualified the researcher to accumulate the information into a thoughtful, illustrative, and constructive understanding.

Data Collection Procedure

Since still the whole world is facing a pandemic situation and physical classes for pre-school children have not been started yet in our country, the In-depth interviews (IDI) was taken over the phone with the parents and group discussion was done virtually over Zoom meeting. At the beginning, parents were communicated personally and purposively so that they could give compatible time to be contacted for individual interviews and were asked to email their consent. The sample were selected by the researcher deliberately. Interviews were semi- structural as well as in-depth. Interview was taken using the IDI guideline and group discussion guideline.

For managing group discussion, the researcher developed Group Discussion guideline for the parents of children aged between 3 to 5 years. The researcher conducted two Group Discussion with the parents. Each group consisted of a set of 5 to 6 parents of 3-5 years old children. Whereas, for Thematic In-depth Interview (IDI), 6 parents were taken from the same participants of group discussion. The interviews were conducted over the phone according to each participant's compatibility.

Data collection was accomplished following in-depth thematic semi-structured interviews and group discussions with the participants. Parental perception to school readiness, the knowledge they perceive, the practices they follow, the challenges they face and their supports that they get, all were covered step by step in the interview questionnaire. The researcher did rapport building with the participants to make them comfortable for the interview and group discussion session over phone calls. Then participants were informed about the purpose of the research, were asked to give oral consent and were interviewed one by one according to their convenient time. In the In-depth interview method and group discussion, the main purpose was to explore the perceptions so that narrative data could be collected. Voice recorder of the device through which interview was taken, was used to record data. But for that, the participant's assent was taken orally to record the whole conversation.

Additionally, pilot interview of one parent was taken to check out the validity and identify gaps if there is any in the process and also to discover if the researcher has to make any change in the guidelines. Important and interesting points were written during the interviews and group discussion for the documentation purpose. Documentation of the information of these two procedures were stored digitally using separate recognition numbers even there were exclusive files for two group discussions to organize the data sequentially. Rigorous transcription of interviews & Group Discussions was done.

Data Management and Analysis

Data analysis has multiple stages which yields along with data collection steps. The qualitative study is also defined as descriptive data collection where data are collected in an unorganized manner. The data analysis procedure started as soon as the

interaction started between the participant and the interviewer. A constructive formal procedure was followed by the researcher. The steps are described below:

i) **Debriefing and Transcription:** The data analysis plan was executed after collecting data from the participants with the help of recorded data that was transcribed by the researcher (includes reading and memoing) from every participant of the interview and group discussion. After the transcription, each file was given respective recognition numbers for later convenience. The field notes were also organized by the researcher for further use but in separate files. Back up of files were created to confine the risk of losing data at any point in time.

ii) **Reading, Memoing, and Describing:** Then the researcher read the files rigorously as well as memoed the field notes and transcripts various times to get a clear understanding of the data.

iii) **Categorization:** Data was organized and categorized relevant to the research question multiple times so that the researcher could have true reflection of it. And depending on the categories each participant's answers and reflection were saved into separate category files with separate names.

iv) **Coding Theme and Interpretation:** Then Data from the in-depth interview of each participant and group discussion were categorized separately into themes and sub-themes under the content analysis part. Under the theme of researchers' findings, intuitions and explanations were written in sub themes.

Ethical Issues

Ethical approval was obtained from Brac IED, Brac University. A formal written consent was taken through email from participants. The nature of the research and the significance of their involvement was explained to the participants. The confidentiality of the participants was maintained sincerely. Voluntary participation was required for the research and the participants could withdraw at any time.

Validity & Reliability

Following the research questions and reviewing different literatures in global and Bangladesh context, In-depth Interview questionnaire and group discussion guideline were prepared. The validity of the data collection tools was tested with the expert feedbacks and compatibility of the questions were obtained by piloting the questions for the in-depth interview. The in-depth interview questionnaire was piloted with one preschool child's mother. After reviewing and piloting the tools' changes were made and then was settled up for collecting data. In-depth Interview questions disclosed the demographic information of the preschool children's parents.

Limitations of the Study

It was not possible for the researcher to collect data from rural areas and other mediums of school to conduct the study in broader sense. Data was collected only from parents whose children were studying in English medium schools in Dhaka City. It was not possible to conduct face to face group discussion with the participants because of the pandemic situation.

Chapter IV

Findings & Discussion

Chapter IV has two divisions where the first one describes the findings and the second division highlights on the discussion of the findings that emerged from the collected data. Two instruments; Group discussion and In-depth interviews were taken, which propagated all the depth information on Parental perception about School Readiness of the 3-5 years old children from English Medium School in Dhaka City.

Findings

This section reflects the findings from the participant's answer that have been collected from the primary data. Following content interpretation, themes and sub-themes were first defined and analyzed regarding the 3 research questions by the researcher. The themes were collected through the categorization & coding process following the research questions. Findings that were retrieved from the collected information were organized systematically. Two section of this Chapter contains the participants demographic details, and the results based on understanding, practices, challenges and support of parents regarding school readiness. Hence, findings derived from the data collection tools supported the researcher to answer the research questions and to make a well discussion on it.

Demographic Information

A total of 12 parents were interviewed, where all of the participants were the parents of children from English medium preschool level. 8 of the total participants were female and 4 of the total participants were male. The participant's age ranges from 25 to 40 years. All of the parents were selected from English Medium Preschools of the

urban areas of Dhaka city. Ten participants had the educational background of Post Graduate or Master's and two of the participants were Graduate of different programs from different universities. The participants' academic backgrounds were different and among them one participant had a Master's degree in Child Development. 8 of the parents live in joint family and 4 of the total parents live in nuclear family.

Theme: Parental perception about School Readiness

Parent qualified education can be a positive media for helping parents to feel confident, informed, and supported in their activities and decisions for their children (DeBord et al., 1998). Children who are growing and preparing for starting the school years benefit from parents who are knowledgeable on school readiness and active in helping them to prepare accordingly (Epstein, 2001).

Parental understanding about school readiness

In terms of understanding on school readiness most of the parents could not mention any clear idea about school readiness. Some of them heard this term from their friends, teachers and family members. Most of the parents shared their thoughts that school readiness is child's knowledge about his/her own personal identity for the admission in school. Most of the participants mentioned that they are familiar with the term "School Readiness".

One of the participants mentioned, *"I have heard about school readiness from my child's preschool teacher. To me school readiness is to teach my daughter basic knowledge on personal identity and to teach her rhymes, letters, numerals, name of colors, flowers, fruits, animals and parts of body."* (IDI # 2, 8-11-21)

Only two parents mentioned about school readiness that, it is both the physical and mental preparation of children to start school.

One parent said, *"If my child is physically prepared, he will be able to do all the activities in school. And if my child is mentally prepared, he will be able to play with others, to communicate with teachers and adjust with the classroom environment."* (Group Discussion #2, 12-11-2021)

About School readiness, most of them viewed that school readiness is the preparation for the children to know about the basic information (e.g., child's name, age, father's name, mother's name, number of siblings) for any interview of admission to start formal school. The parents viewed basic learning as reading and writing the Alphabets, numbers and knowing rhymes. Most of the parents focused only on learning as well as early literacy development emphasizing necessity of reading aloud, telling stories, reciting rhymes, counting and writing the numbers and alphabets in preparation for school, rather not knowing and emphasizing the terms of other developmental domains like physical, mental, social and emotional.

Parental perception about importance of school readiness

All participants in In-depth interviews and Group discussions have concluded that proper preparation for school will undoubtedly raise children's interest for learning in school. This will help children to make learning easier in later education period and to gain proper adaptation in school environment.

One of the parents insisted that, *"Preparation for school will undoubtedly rise my child's interest for later learning in school, will motivate him to learn enthusiastically, will make learning easier in future by gaining proper adaptation in a new environment like school."* (IDI# 1, 22-10-2021)

Another parent said, *"School readiness will help my child to learn manners and good behavior. My child will be able to become self-regulate. He will obey his teachers, be*

gentle with friends as well as will be good at learning." (Group discussion#1, 22-10-2021)

Another parent emphasized on learning by declaring the age (3-5 years) as primary stage of learning in school and mentioned that, *"My child will be able to learn through different learning practices without any difficulty in school. He will be able to write the letters, words, numerals properly and pronounce them well. He will build up good qualification as a student."* (Group discussion#1, 22-10-2021)

Most of the participants felt necessity of school readiness for better adjustment in a new learnable environment of the school. Parents believed that learning will be easier for the children if they are prepared mentally, physically and socially.

Parental knowledge about play-based learning and its importance

Most of the parents understand that play-based learning is a learning through entertainment without making the child bore in learning as well as helping to make any lesson easier to the children.

One parent explored that, *"Some puzzle games, word box, science fiction box facilitates children to find out and learn new things e.g., numbers, letters, words, addition, counting in a simple method."* (Group discussion#1, 22-10-2021)

Another parent expressed that, *"I have made my child familiar with school with the help of pretend play e.g., playing with him the role of teachers, students and friends in our home."* (IDI#1, 22-10-2021)

A parent also mentioned that, *"Learning through play helps to eradicate the fear of study, reading and writing. It helps child to seat eagerly to study both in physical and online classroom."* (Group discussion#2, 12-11-2021)

Only one mother stared that, *"I am concern that my child might lose interest in learning during formal school because learning through play-based activities will be less there, compared to activities in preschool."* (Group discussion#1, 22-10-2021)

Many participants of Group discussion#1 were concerned that children might lose interest in learning in formal school as play-based activities will be lesser then. They supported learning through play little because they believed that study pressure will be increased in higher classes and play time for children will be decreased.

Parental perception on role-play for school readiness

Most of the parents, especially mothers expressed that parent have to play a big role in preparing their children for school. They said that it is parents' great responsibility to give attention to their child, to make children understand about how they should stay well-mannered in the school, how they should communicate with and response to their teachers and how they should behave with classmates at school.

One mother expressed that, *"I always try and provide positive views of schools, teachers and classmates to my child. I let him play, go outside, and talk with people for his social development. I always support learning without pressure."* (Group discussion#2, 12-11-2021)

One father mentioned that, *"Mothers have to take responsibility for children's early learning and development. She must take most of the responsibilities for the development of the child and partially the father also."* (IDI#3, 02-11-2021)

Another father expressed that, *"I should be mentally strong that my child is going completely to a new area where he will have friends and teachers. There he will make mistakes. I can give him advice to control his emotion and behavior and teach him manners to follow."* (Group discussion#2, 12-11-2021)

Most of the parents supported talking to their children in positive manner about the school, new learning environment of school, classmates, play activities and other interesting ways to learn in school. They believed that children must have interest to enter new school and they should be mentally prepared to seat in the classroom, follow their teachers' instruction, follow the classroom rules and behave mannerly with the peers.

Parental knowledge about socio-emotional control

All of the participants agreed that their children should have control over their emotion. This will help them to share everything to their parents and teachers. They will be able to solve problem by their own.

In this regard one mother expressed that, *"Control in emotion will help children to share everything to the parents and teachers and they will be able to solve problem by their own."* (IDI#2, 8-11-2021)

A father mentioned that, *"My child must be able to notice her mistakes and learn to correct herself by controlling her emotion. My child should wait for her turn and become patient. She should follow easy instruction."* (IDI# 3, 2-11-2021)

Most parents perceived that child must learn to be self-regulated and control their emotion in different situations to adopt proper adjustment in the school.

Theme: Parents' Practices to School Readiness

Parents' practices for physical development of children

Most of the parents viewed that- since a different pandemic situation was existing, they were having different experience with their children in developing them physically staying at home for maximum period of time. They involved their children

in running, jumping, cycling, biking, dancing, singing, playing cricket and football at their home premises and on terrace. For fine motor development they participated with their children in playing Ludo, Carrom, word puzzle and performed art and craft activities with them.

One of the participants expressed. *"When my child is with her father, they play 'Choyachuyi' at home, they sing song together with musical instruments, they do gardening and water the plants on the terrace. But I do not allow my child to use scissors during crafting because she is not used to it."* (Group discussion#1, 22-10-21)

Another participant mentioned. *"I always try to play games with my child. I also inspire my husband to play hide and seek, throwing ball, puzzle game with our child. I help my child in drawing, coloring, crafting, cutting and pasting."* (Group discussion#2, 12-11-21)

During the lockdown situation most of the parents tried to do physical activities e.g., playing, gardening, singing, drawing and crafting with their children at home rather not taking them outside home for any physical activity. Parents did not prefer to take their children in the playground and park to do physical activities.

Parents' practices for developing self-regulation in children at home

There was mixed response of the participants regarding the practices for developing self-regulation in children at home.

One parent mentioned, *"My child can take food, wear dress, keep his cloths properly, arrange his toys, decorate his own room, use washroom appropriately and keep clean by himself. I allow him to learn by making mistakes. I never scold him for his*

mistakes rather I try to make understand him about any matter." (Group discussion#2, 12-11-21)

Another mother mentioned, *"Actually I am working hard with my child to make him self-dependent and in controlling his emotions in different situations. He does not want to sit during online class. I have to be there with him. I always try to make him understand when he is not able to control his emotion."* (IDI#1, 22-10-21)

One father stared, *"I do not perform any activity with my child for developing his self-regulation. Her mother does everything for him."* (IDI#4, 15-11-2021)

Some parents mentioned that they have to assist their children to achieve self-regulatory skills as part of practicing school readiness for their children. Mothers from Group discussion#1 stated that their children try to follow specific daily routine and maintain regular activities independently which is related to achievement of self-regulatory skills in school readiness.

Parents' practices for early literacy development

Most of the parents mentioned that they are depending on online classes and teachers for the learning of their children. Some parents also mentioned that they are reading books, reciting rhymes, telling stories with their children. Only few mentioned that their children are learning to talk fluently in English, learning to tell stories, learning to count and write the letters from You Tube and other social media.

One mother expressed that, *"For reading and writing my child always takes support from teacher during online class. She is learning to write English and Bangla letters, numbers, words, she is learning different shapes, similarities of things from her teacher."* (Group discussion#1, 22-10-2021)

Another mother replied, *"My daughter understands most of the things related to learning from You Tube channels and kid's activity. I think social media has helped her a lot in learning."* (IDI#2, 8-11-2021)

Most of the parents felt that it was difficult to adjust with the distant learning process at the beginning for their children during COVID-19 situation. But for children's learning they were depending on online classes and teachers. On the other hand, for some parents' different social media helped their children more to learn, know and explore.

Parents' practices for socio-emotional development of children

Most of the parents expressed that they try to make understand their child to control their emotion by talking to them in a positive way. Parents think there should be equality between love and rule in controlling children's emotions so that children could have better adjustment socially and emotionally. Few parents replied that they used to scold their children if they cry more, show anger and instability.

One mother expressed that, *"Before taking my child to a new place, I give him idea about that place, people, what we are going to see there, what we are going to do there because that will help him to think and imagine about the new place and environment."* (IDI#5, 15-11-2021)

Another mother said, *"Sometimes I have to scold my child, if she cries more, show anger and instability."* (IDI#1, 22-10-2021)

Most of the parents mentioned that they were not able to practice socio-emotional control skills for children's school readiness during COVID-19 situation in satisfactory manner. Most of the parents expressed that they try to make understand

their child to control their emotion by delivering positive words about different situations.

Parents' practices for school readiness during COVID-19

Most of the mothers are trying to make children understand about new environment in school, teachers and classmates in positive way. Mothers are practicing precaution manner against COVID-19 virus with children outside home so that they can follow this in school too. Mothers made children understand about covering children's mouth when they sneeze, maintain social distance, use mask always and sanitize their hands often when they are at school.

One mother stated, *"I tell my child that he is going to have new teachers, friends, he is going to play new games, learn new and interesting things in school. I tell him that teachers will love and take care of him in school and friends are going to play with him."* (IDI#1, 22-10-2021)

Another mother mentioned, *"Whenever I take my child outside home, I tell him to wear mask, maintain social distance, wash his hands, not to touch anything unnecessarily and cover his mouth when he sneezes."* (IDI#2, 8-11-2021)

Parents were trying to make children understand about COVID-19, the harmful effect of COVID-19 and the necessity to follow the precaution manner against this virus properly in the school.

Theme: Challenges and Support on School Readiness for Parents

Challenges parents face to school readiness

Most of the mothers felt the challenge that children need their father's care, love and quality time because fathers were not providing enough time for their children's

learning and development. On the other hand, few fathers did not face any challenge for the readiness of their children and thought their children were growing and developing by themselves under the supervision of their mothers properly.

One mother stared, *"I feel that my husband's involvement in preparing my child for school is needed. His father can help him to make his hand writing better and teach him to write Bangla alphabets."* (Group discussion#2, 12-11-2021)

One mother mentioned, *"Taking care of two younger children at the same time alone is very difficult for me. I am the only person to do all the household chores, and take care of my family and children. I think my child needs more time from me for the preparation of his school."* (IDI#1, 22-10-21)

Among few mothers one mother expressed, *"Online class is just an eye-wash for me. Teachers shows the way to read, write and learn, but at home I have to struggle a lot regarding my child's reading and writing of my child because learning completely depends on my child's personal interest."* (IDI#2, 08-11-2021)

The study found that during the pandemic it was harder for some mothers to prepare their children for learning and development because children were stuck at home for all the time and attending schools physically was not possible. Parents had to struggle a lot to support in children's mental development. According to the parents, children demanded more care, attention and love from their parents. It became more challenging to handle the situation when fathers' involvement was less, mothers have to take care of their multiple children alone and working mothers went back to their jobs when the COVID-19 situation was flaccid.

Challenges parents face to make their children interested in learning

Most of the parents mentioned that they don't feel it challenging to make their children interested in reading, writing and learning. According to them children were willing to learn, interested to perform in online classes and participate in different play activities at home by themselves.

One father mentioned, "*We don't have to force our child to participate in learning activities at home. She always notices her elder brother performing in learning activities with the teachers during online classes. She is interested to see the pictures of her books and read aloud.*" (IDI#3, 2-11-2021)

On the contrary, one mother opposed, "*Sometimes my son doesn't want to read and write. That time I let him play for some time to make him interested in learning. But sometimes I also have to force him to study and scold him too.*" (IDI#1, 22-10-2021)

Though most of the parents personally did not feel any challenge to make their children interested in learning, they felt that other members of their family could participate in preparing their children for school, other members also could help children to grow interest in learning and in building children's concentration to learn more.

Supports parents receive for school readiness

Most of the parents need the support of their family members in preparing their child for school. Mothers alone cannot help their children in this regard. Only few mothers get the support from other family members of the family.

One mother mentioned, *"My husband and in-laws help and support me a lot in learning process of my child. Sometimes she watches TV news with her father and*

wants to understand the news. Sometimes she wants to know about fashion and

modelling from her aunt." (IDI#2, 8-11-2021)

One mother expressed, *"Sometimes his grandmother feed him, bathed him and gossip*

with him. It is a great support for me. But especially in learning I do not get any

support from anyone rather than his father." (IDI#5, 15-11-2021)

According to the parents, the other family members sometimes help their children to explore the world and different situations. But support from other family members is lacked while preparing children's school readiness that might lessen generate early literacy, numeracy, reading and writing.

The findings of the study revealed that most of the parents perceived children's school readiness as learning, reading, counting, and writing, rather not focusing on other developmental domains. Though parents wanted to support children for school readiness by sending them to school and letting them communicate with teachers, it was not possible due to the pandemic situation. Most of the parents felt the need of their family members' support for the appropriate school readiness of children.

Discussion

This study has added new features in pre-primary education in our country by discovering the perception of parents regarding school readiness for 3 to 5 years old children. The researcher analyzed parental perception on school readiness, practices, challenges and support while the COVID-19 pandemic situation was going on. In this section of the study paper, the researcher is going to analyze the answers that the participants mentioned following the research questions thoroughly by exploring parents' knowledge and thoughts on school readiness for their children from different perceptions and practices. Also, this section provides a brief description about the

challenges parents are being faced and support they get and also their need for preparation regarding school readiness.

Parental perception to school readiness

Parents tend to conceptualize school readiness as a series of academic and social skills. They rated more importance on children's general knowledge of recognizing and writing the letters, numbers, shape, knowing names of different contents e.g., flowers, fruits, animals, fish and knowing their own personal identification e.g., name, father's name, mother's name, age, sibling numbers over social skills. Alike this in another study parents define school readiness in terms of academic abilities e.g., numeracy or alphabetical abilities and achievement of educational qualification (United States Department of Education, 1993). In fact, parents often appreciate academic learning and also believe that literacy and numeracy skills are of great importance in preparing children for entering school (Peters, 2002). On the other hand, in a study by Eisenhart and Graue (1990), parents of preschool children were more concerned about their child's social and emotional development than their achievement of academic skills. This study shows only few parents cited social skills e.g., turn taking, sharing, following instructions, playing with peers, communicating with the teacher, mixing with people outside home as important criteria for children's socio-emotional development in school readiness.

Parents perceived that proper preparation for school will undoubtedly rise children's interest for later learning in school. This will motivate them to learn enthusiastically and gain better academic success in the school. This will also help children to make learning easier in future education period by gaining proper adaptation in new environment of the school with other peers and teachers. Study done by Timperley,

H., and Robinson, V. M. (2002) on school readiness revealed the same types of finding. Study conducted by Diamond et al., (2000) also found that parents placed emphasis on the importance of social, emotional, and academic skills equally in terms of their children being prepared for schools.

This study has seen that most parents supported the play-based learning for the children at home because there were not many opportunities for children to play outside home during a pandemic like COVID-19. Most of the parents used play materials e.g., word puzzle, blocks, Lego to help children learning in easier and interesting manner with less period time. According to the parents, children could learn and know more through playing without involvement or with less involvement of parents during play. Like this in another study it was seen that in parents' expectations, "play" is another recurring theme. Parents valued play-based learning experience for young children in the preschool and perceived that it as an important way to foster children's social abilities (Xia, 2018). On the other hand, social interaction among the child, parent and tool can assist learning process and promotes child's chances of success (Vygotsky, 1978).

This study indicated that parents' positive counseling on school readiness for the children was related to children's positive attitude toward school and learning with teachers and peers. In this study most of the parents especially mothers perceived that both father and mother of a family must play an important role in preparing their children for school. Mothers felt that it is parents' great responsibility to pay attention in children's learning, to make children understand about how they should stay mannerly and follow the rules in the school, how they should communicate and response with their teachers' instruction and how they should behave with classmates at school. But few fathers also felt that its only mothers' duty rather than fathers to

generate children's skills that will promote school readiness during pandemic situation. On the other hand, as cited in Landry and Smith (2008), Hess and Shipman (1965) noted that parents might not feel that they play an important role in "teaching" their children the skills that promote school readiness, but rather such actions are best left up to teachers and childcare workers.

In this study parents perceived that child must learn social skills and control their emotion in different situations to adopt proper adjustment in the school. Few parents also recognized that along with their children, parents were also going through a new phase to prepare their children for school emotionally. Another study explained, some social progress includes prosocial behaviors that administer positive peer and teacher relationships (e.g., helping, sharing, taking turns), and self-regulation skills that support the remedial control of aggression (Coolahan et al., 2000). Effective prosocial engagement and self-regulation, in turn, come closely linked with emotional competence (e.g., the ability to recognize, realize and regulate emotions) (Denham & Burton, 2003) and with social problem-solving skills (e.g., the capacity to define problems, establish and consider alternative solutions, and engage in anticipatory planning that considers the consequences of various solutions (Youngstrom et al., 2000).

Parental practices to school readiness

This study showed that for gross motor development parents were involved with their children in running, jumping, cycling, biking, dancing, singing, playing cricket, football and 'Kabadi' at their home premises and on terrace during COVID-19 situation. Parents did not prefer to take their children outside in the playground and park to do physical activities. For fine motor development they participated with their

children in playing Ludo, Carrom, word puzzle and performed art and craft activities with them at home. As parents play with their children, they can help their children to understand simple mathematics e.g., addition and subtraction by talking about how many Legos, blocks, or cars each person has and how that changes as they share and balance the items (Smith, K., 2012).

In this study some parents perceived that they have to assist their children to achieve self-regulatory skills e.g., taking food, wearing cloths, using washroom, arranging toys etc. Some mothers also struggle with their children's emotional control from time to time. Mothers from Group discussion#1 stated that their children try to follow specific daily routine and maintain everyday activities with or without the help of mother or other family members which is part of self-regulatory skills in school readiness. Similar to this, another study showed that, family daily routines and activities, like bedtime, waking time and dinnertime can help promote children's behavioral and academic progress (Wildenger et al., 2008).

Though some fathers are not involved in practices to develop self-regulatory skills with children, all of them expected that their children will be able to do their works independently, they will show well manner in school and they will be responsible to perform independently in the classroom. Also, Xiayoing Xia (2018) found in his study that as for the assumption for children in kindergarten, parents looked for their children to adopt socially to the school environment, display good conducts, be independent and responsible.

Parents felt that though it was difficult for them to adjust with the distant learning process initially for the children during COVID-19 situation, still they are depending on online classes and teachers for the learning of their children. They also felt that the

way teachers are teaching through online classes are effective for their children's early learning with enthusiasm. Besides this most of the mothers are engaged in reading books, reciting rhymes, telling stories with their children. Few mothers also supported that their children are learning to talk fluently in English, learning to tell stories, learning to count and write the letters from You Tube and other social media. Most of the parents follow the pattern of writing the alphabets, letters, and numbers from the teacher during online class and also follow the way how a teacher reads book, recite rhymes and tell stories to their students to teach them at home. Another study mentioned, parents who felt it was important to teach their children alphabet, to teach them how to read, and count numbers, they were also more likely to involve in activities with their children that promoted general knowledge (Baldwin, 2011).

Though parents emphasized more on children's socio-emotional development, they stated that they were not able to take their children outside home and let them communicate with peers and other people because of the pandemic situation. Children had less opportunities for developing socio-emotional skills e.g., sharing, turn taking and following instruction during COVID-19 as they were always at home with their siblings and parents. But in another study, in case of socio-emotional development different result has been found. Parents emphasize less on it, so it is found that they do limited activity to promote the developmental skills (Sowad, 2016).

All the fathers believed that it is necessary every child must have socio-emotional control, but most of them did not practice in any activity with their children in learning to control emotion socially. Rather they mentioned its mothers' duty to make children socially adopted in any situation whereas this required both the parents' participation. On the other hand, another study explained if children unravel less preparedness in emotion regulation, parents show more anxiety about teaching

children to control their emotions in daily life and tend to cite controlling emotions as an important indicator for school readiness (Xiayoing Xia, 2018). Parents can assist their children's learning at school by responding to school rules-regulations and talking to their child's preschool teachers to find out what they should do at home to help equip their children for entering kindergarten (Lahaie, 2008).

This study found most of the parents are providing positive views to children about school to create interest in learning with teachers and peers in school e.g., children know about teachers, friends, classroom, play activities, enjoyable environment in school. Parents are helping their children to wear mask when they go out, maintain social distance outside home, use sanitizer often and cover their mouth when they sneeze. Parents are trying to make children understand about COVID-19 and the necessity to follow the precaution manner against this virus properly in the school. Since during the pandemic most families' target was only to keep the children in the home, now they are trying to convince their children to participate physical class in the school. Parents are working on children's social and emotional development regarding this.

Challenges and support to school readiness

The study found that it is harder for some mothers to prepare their children for learning and development because they have multiple children to take care of. Mothers with job stated that they feel the necessity to provide enough time to their preschool going children as they are going to start a new beginning for formal school in a new unknown environment. Many mothers also faced the challenge to engage the fathers with children's learning during COVID-19 situation. According to them during the lockdown situation although fathers are staying at home, they are not

willing to perform any activity for the children to generate school readiness. Matter of excitement is that no parent faced any mental challenge to develop children's learning process during COVID-19. About its necessity, Tait (1972) thinks that the parent's mental well-being in rearing children and the case of difficulties with which they interpret, the hints that accelerate the socialization process and affect the personal and social development of the child.

Research also proved that home literacy environment accounted for a large percent of the variance in child's school readiness (Gunn et al., 1995). This study found that parents felt the need of sufficient play material, printed material and other learning scope at home that increase the interest of learning among children. Though most of the parents faced challenges to increase interest among children to learn, they agreed that there was no gap between the parent-child relationships at home for children's learning development. Parents perceive that calm and quite environment is necessary for early learning but no one mentioned the presence of literacy materials, artifacts, printed materials, parent-child engagement in literacy activities, parental own literacy habits as the components of quality home learning environment (Mehnaj, 2013).

Though there are challenges parents faced for children's early literacy development, some of them also stated that they receive support from the family members that help children develop physically and socially. But none of them receive any assistance in early learning process of their children. Mothers mentioned, only teachers are the support in child's early literacy development during COVID-19 situation.

Parents of urban areas want to prepare their children well for primary school. Parents are concern about their children's well-adjustment in school with teachers and friends. So many issues were reported in the interviews and group discussions and satisfactory

responses of parental perception regarding school readiness were not seen. Mothers' involvement in proper school readiness practices for children were seen more than the fathers. Parents felt challenges in children's early learning as well as language development.

Conclusion

In the conclusion it could be said that the perception of the respondents was found to be moderately favorable towards school readiness of the children. Though school readiness for 3-5 years old children was considered as wastage of time and money previously, now importance and outcomes of school readiness are highly appreciated by the parents, teachers and community people. The study has found that parents were aware of many stuffs related to education that children should learn and should be able to achieve the developmental skills when they enter kindergarten. But just because parents believed in what should be done with children to prepare them for school does not necessarily mean they practice those things. There were many reasons that contributed to parents not practicing the valuable activities with children. COVID-19 pandemic, lack of family support and availability of early learning materials made the opportunities less for parents to participate with their children learning.

On the basis of the findings of the study, the present study can be beneficial in many ways. The study will be helpful in marking out the areas of parental interests and convenience for quality education during pre-primary age of children. Specially during any pandemic, the study will be favorably disposed to find out the growing concern among parents towards children's learning and developing with distant learning method. The educationists, teachers and educational administrators will be

benefited by knowing the findings of the study. They will be able to know about the attitude of parents towards children's transition to school and also about the factors responsible in their perception development.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic parents should be more active and spend enough quality time to nurture their children for school readiness as there is lack of opportunities to take children outside home. Parents are the main resource to take the initial steps for determining the factors that needed to be prioritize by government, schools and teachers regarding children's school readiness at home. As a nation, facing the pandemic situation it is important to explore the perception, practices, challenges and support for preschool children's parents in order to enact 'school readiness' both in pandemic and non-pandemic situation within short period of time. In reference to the results of this research, I suggest that policy makers of our country must realize the actual present condition, so that they can initiate a supporting policy to bridge the gaps between the existing policies and society's real demands regarding pre-primary education.

This study explored parents' experiences and perceptions for school readiness based on interviews and group discussions. It is a small qualitative study that cannot be generalized to other parents. Research with larger number of parents from different socio-economic status, culture, religion and ethnicity can be done in future. Further studies also can be done only with the fathers to investigate their perception on school readiness to have better understanding in broader sense.

Recommendations

The research expects to understand current perception of preschoolers' parents regarding school readiness of children, keeping pandemic situation in consideration. From the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- Further research needed to be addressed in broader perception including all medium of schools from both urban and rural areas for better research outcome.
- Parenting Programs for children's school readiness need to be established by GO and NGO where both the parents' participation is necessary in overall development related activities for children.
- School readiness related awareness programs need to be broadcast in television and radios that will illustrate the beneficial activities done at home involving parents.
- Advocacy need to be provided in local and national level to make people aware that development for children in early age is important both in pandemic and non-pandemic situation.
- Initiatives need to be taken for revising early childhood education related policy document to improve school readiness related activities.
- Coordination and collaboration among teachers, parents and community people need to be developed that will generate necessity of early childhood education among people.

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Annex 1

In-depth Interview Questionnaire

Research Title: Parental Perception on School readiness for 3-5 Years Old Children in Urban Areas

Date:

Start time: End time: _____

Section A: Demographic information

1(a) Parent's name:	2(a) Child's name (optional):
1(b) Age:	2(b) Age:
1(c) Sex:	2(c) Sex:

Address: Phone No.

2. Location:

3. Marital status:

Married   Divorced   Unmarried
                          Widow/Widower

4. Education level:

SSC   HSC   Graduation   Masters   Others (specify) -----
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5. Occupation:

Service   Business   Self-employed   Home-make   Others
(specify) --------

6. Number of children:

7. (a) Child's age while attending pre- school: _____years_____ months

8. Type of family:

Nuclear   Extended/Joint   Others (specify)
_____

Section B: Parental perception on school readiness

1. (a) What do you understand by 'School Readiness' or 'preparation for school' for children?

   (b) Did you hear about this term before? From where did you know about school readiness?

2. According to you, what are the benefits of 'School Readiness' for children?

3. (a) How do you think your child's development occurs?

   (b) Which areas of development should be given priority to prepare children for school (physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, language)? Share your opinion.

4. Which skills and abilities should 3-5 years old children pursue to start formal schooling? Please say something about it.

5. What types of preparation a parent should take before starting child's formal schooling? Share something about it.

6. Do you think that learning through play is important for your child? How do you think paly-based learning is important for your child? Share your opinion about it.

7. (a) What type of physical development do your child should have at this age? How this development will help your child at school? Please share.

   (b) Do you think that early-literacy and language, early numeracy is important for your child? How do you think this will help your child? Please say something about it.

8. (a) What types of socio-emotional control/Self-regulation do your child should have at this age? What do you think about it? Please elaborate.

   (b) Do you think that you should make your child understand about sharing, turn taking, follow simple directions and rules? Why?

9. Who do you think can play roles of school readiness for your child?

10. What parental role can you play as a parent during COVID-19 pandemic? Please explain.

Section C: Parents' practices to school readiness

11. How did you prepare your child for school readiness during COVID-19 situation?

12. How do you help your child to perform movement activities e.g., walking, jumping, running, balancing etc.? Please share your experience on it.

13. What types of play materials do you provide to your child? Name some play materials. How do you help them to play with these materials? Share your experience.

14. How do you support your child to hold pencils, cut with scissors, grab and throw balls, color and paste for their motor development?

15. How do you help your child to explore new environment and participate in new opportunity? Please elaborate.

16. What kind of reading and writing activities take place at your home with your child? Please elaborate.

17. How do you cooperate with your child in their recognizing and learning new letters, words, numbers etc.?

18. How do you make your child understand about different colors, shapes, similar things etc.? Please share.

19. How do you support your child to communicate their thoughts, needs and feelings in a way others understand?

20. How do you help your child to adjust his/her feelings in a new setting e.g., playground, friend's house, school etc.?

21. Does your child know how to control emotions e.g., anger, sadness, anxiety etc.? How do you cooperate with your child in managing their emotions?

22. How did you make your child familiar with school routine and classrooms rules during online class?

23. How did you manage your child to feel positive about school and made him/her comfortable with online classes?

24. How do you manage to meet curiosity/queries of your child? How do you show response to them?

25. Do you think that it is important to keep a positive/supportive home learning environment to prepare your child for school?

Section D: Challenges and supports

26. Do you find it difficult to prepare your child for formal school? What aspects are causing you hardship to this? Share your opinion.

27. How do you show response to your child when they do not cooperate with any activity related to school readiness? How do you convince them to perform the activities?

28. Do you receive any support from your other family members in preparing your child for schooling? What type of support do you get? Share your opinion.

Annex 2

Group Discussion Guideline with Parents

Research Title: Parental Perception on School readiness for 3-5 Years Old Children in Urban Areas

Venue: Online Platform (ZOOM Meeting)

Session Duration: 60-90 minutes

Total Participants:

Male: Female:

Date:

A. Parental Perception on School Readiness

1. What is your understanding on 'school readiness' or 'preparation for school' of children?

2. (a) Is it necessary to provide readiness for starting formal school of children in early years (3-5 years)?
   (b) Why is it necessary to provide preparation for starting formal school for children according to you?

3. What type of preparation do you think parents should take before sending their children to formal school?

4. Which areas of development should be given priority to prepare children for school (physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, language)? Please share.

5. Do you think that learning through play is important for your child? How do you think paly-based learning is important for your child? Share your opinion about it.

6. What parental role you can play as a parent during COVID-19 pandemic to prepare your child for school? Please explain.

B. Parents' Practices to School Readiness

7. Do you prefer performing physical activities with your child? Why do you prefer these activities?
   - Walking, running, balancing, jumping, playing hide and seek etc.

- Playing any type of game (throwing balls, puzzle game etc.)
- Encouraging drawing, scribbling, cutting, dancing, singing, glowing etc.

8. Do you make your child realize about the rules of social context and self-regulation? e.g.,
   - Making understand about turn taking, sharing and following daily activities
   - Provide children enough time to discuss and resolve any problem before parental intervention
   - Encourage to control emotion and feelings

9. Do you give opportunities to your child to perform the activities mentioned below and why?
   - Trial and error learning
   - Taking outside home e.g., park, shops, fairs. Hospitals etc.
   - Practice self-regulation e.g., self-control, socialization, toilet training, taking food by child itself etc.
   - Engage children to maintain daily routine at home

10. How do you manage to meet curiosity/queries of your child? How do you show response to them?

C. Challenges face by the parents

11. Did you face any problem, after getting your child admission into school? What type of problems did you face? How did you resolve it?

12. What type of challenges do you face in performing activities with your child related to school? e.g.,
    - Doing homework
    - Reciting rhyme, story-telling, reading books etc.
    - Recognizing number, counting, simple addition etc.

Annex 3

Consent Form for the Parents

Title of the Research: Parental Perception on School Readiness for 3-5 Years Old Children in Urban Areas.
Principal Investigator: Anjuman Nahar

Dear Parent

Purpose of the research
I am conducting this research as a part of my Master's Degree requirement from the Institute of Educational Development (IED) - Brac University in order to explore perception of parents on school readiness in early years (3-5 years).

Expectation from you
If you agree, you will be expected to share your feelings, views, experiences and expectations in detail about your perception on school readiness for 3-5 years of children. The in-depth interview may take 3 to 5 days, depending upon your response and availability.

Risks and benefits
There is no risk to you for participating in this study; directly or indirectly parents and children of 3-5 years may be benefited in future if any intervention program incorporates your perception and considers your perception on school readiness in early years (3-5 years).

Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality
All information collected from you will remain strictly confidential. I would be happy to answer any of your queries about the study and you are welcome to contact me.

Future use of information
Some of the information collected from this study may be kept for future use. However, in such cases information and data supplied to other researchers, will not conflict with or violate the maintenance of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of information identifying participants in any way.

Right not to participate and withdraw
Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you are the sole authority to decide for and against your participation in this study. Refusal to take part in the study will involve no penalty.

If you agree to my proposal of participating in my study, please indicate that by putting your signature in the specified space below.
Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Signature of Investigator	Signature of Participant
Date:	Date: