

# **Parents' Perception on Social Determinants of Outdoor Play for 4 to 6 Years Old Urban Children**

By

**Mahsheed Noor Nini**  
ID: 20155011

Supervised by  
**Mostak Ahamed Imran**

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  
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## Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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**Student Full Name**  
Student ID

## Approval

The thesis/project titled “Parents’ Perception on Social Determinants of Outdoor Play for 4 to 6 years old Urban Children” submitted by

1. Mahsheed Noor Nini (Student ID: 20155011)

of Fall, 2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2021.

### Examining Committee:

Supervisor:  
(Member)

---

Mostak Ahamed Imran  
Faculty Member, ECD Academic Program  
Brac Institute of Educational Development  
Brac University

Program Coordinator:  
(Member)

---

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

External Expert Examiner:  
(Member)

---

Dr Md Tariqul Islam  
Assistant Professor  
M.Ed Academic Program  
Brac Institute of Educational Development  
Brac University

Departmental Head:  
(Chair)

---

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

## Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Parents' Perception on Social Determinants of Outdoor Play for 4 to 6 years old Urban Children

Student name: Mahsheed Noor Nini

1. Source of population

Parents (both mothers and fathers) having 4 to 6 years old children living in Dhaka city

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

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

### Ethical Review Committee:

Authorized by:  
(chair/co-chair/other)

---

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

## **Executive Summary**

Play is perceived and valued differently across diverse cultures by different groups. Although play is vital to children's development, previous researches indicate that nature of play is changing and outdoor play among children is diminishing. It more accurate for children living in urban areas where open play spaces are scarce. To understand perception of Bangladesh's parents regarding outdoor play, it is essential to identify what they consider important while letting their children play outside home. The present study explored parental perception regarding outdoor play, its benefits, and social determinants of outdoor play for 4 to 6 years old children living in Dhaka city. As it was a qualitative study, data was collected through two different methods: in-depth interview and focus group discussion using an unstructured questionnaire. Total sixteen highly educated participants were selected through purposive sampling technique, where half of them were from middle income background and the other half had high income background based on their income. Data were collected remotely using phone call or zoom platform. After analyzing the descriptive data, it was found that parents had general knowledge about benefits of outdoor play despite their economic background. All parents were equally concerned about children's safety, traffic movement, while letting them play outside, despite their gender. No parents were willing to let children of this age group play alone without adult supervision. Having reliable neighbors to oversee play was seen as positive factor but mixed reactions were found regarding leaving children alone with playmates. Although all of most of the parents had placed both academic study and outdoor play equally important and some placed more importance on the play. Based on the findings, some recommendations were suggested for parents, government and NGOs at the end.

**Keywords:** Outdoor play; Social determinants; Safety; Traffic movement; Gender; Adult supervision; Reliable neighbors; Playmates; Academic study

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this to my sister who encouraged me to enroll in this program and supported me through the whole journey.

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## List of Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DMP	Dhaka Metropolitan Police
DNCC	Dhaka North City Corporation
DSCC	Dhaka North City Corporation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IDI	In-depth Interview
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
UNICEF	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US	United State
WHO	World Health Organization

# Chapter I

## Introduction and Background

### Introduction

Play is one of the most significant and natural part of a child's life. It is universal for all children throughout the world. Many scholars defined play in their own way. One of the first definitions of play which was given by Froebly (1887) saying that, "*play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul*" (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p.7). The most respected definition of play was given by Rubin, Fein and Vandenberg (1983) who viewed play as behavioral dispositions, observable behaviors and as context (Sluss, 2005, p. 8). By dispositions they meant characteristics which includes play being voluntary, symbolic, pleasurable, free of external rules, requires active involvement and focuses on action rather than outcome.

Play may differ from culture to culture but all children enjoy playing. Children are seen to get engrossed in different types of play at different places like- home, street, playground, or even in classroom. It is clear that some plays take place indoor setting and some outside. Outdoor play, which takes place outside home provides rich stimulation for children (Sluss, 2005, p.292). Different types of play (for instance- physical play, socio-dramatic play, games with rules etcetera) can occur outdoor which enrich children's physical and socio-emotional development (Sluss, 2005, p. 292). However, despite the benefits of the outdoor play, parental view of it can be different.

The current research is about parental perception regarding outdoor play of young children aged 4 to 6 years who are living in Dhaka city of Bangladesh. Previous research indicates that the practice of outdoor play and physical activities among children living in urban

city of Bangladesh was always poor (Islam, 2008). Although few studies like one conducted by Salma in 2018 were focused on outdoor play situation and social factors which influence parental decision, but qualitative researches focusing on parental perception regarding importance of outdoor play and children's play behaviors are scarce in Bangladesh.

Play is perceived and valued differently across diverse cultures by different groups of people. For instance- countries like Finland emphasize on children's play and learning by exploring outdoor rather than attending school before age 7 (Henley, Oltermann, Jones, & Giuffrida, 2021). However, people in Bangladesh may not share the same perception. Therefore, parent's perception needs to be understood to identify how they value play and factors which influence their perception. For this purpose, it is important to conduct exploratory qualitative research regarding this issue to improve play condition of children who are living in urban city of Bangladesh. Moreover, play is vital to children's development because it contributes to the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children (Ginsburg, 2007). According to a study by UNICEF (2018), play creates significant learning opportunities across all areas of development. They also mentioned that play-based learning approaches for early and middle childhood can change the educational experience of children within the early primary grades and can reinforce learning motivation and results. For example- by playing hopscotch outdoor in a group, children can strengthen math concepts as it contains number in boxes while building social competence. Hence, the current study may also help to change perspective toward importance of play and its benefit in children's overall educational achievement.

The whole study is divided into four different chapters including introduction and background, literature review, methodology, and result and discussion. In the following chapter one, the section is organized as problem statement, purpose of the research, justification of the

research, research questions and operational definition. In chapter two, the section included literature review which are divided into themes. In chapter three, the section is organized as research approach, research participants, research site, participant selection procedure, data collection method, data analysis, validity and reliability, ethical issues, and limitations of the research. Lastly in chapter four, the section is organized as results, discussions, recommendations and conclusion.

## **Problem Statement**

Despite the known benefits of outdoor playtime, evidence suggests that practice of playing outside has been decreasing over the years among children of western countries (Wang, Ma, Maehashi, & Kim, 2020). For instance, 70% of mothers of the United States (US) played outdoor daily during their childhood whereas only 31% of their children were reported to do so (Clements, 2004). Mothers stated that the reason behind decrease of the frequency of outdoor play were dependence on digital media, and concerns about crime and safety. Decrease in outdoor play among young children is also a problem in Asian countries (Shi, 2017; Shin, 2016). Chances for children to engage with outdoor has continued to decline more during COVID-19 pandemic, as the lockdown and restrictions on the use of public outdoor spaces are imposed in different nations around the world. A study by Eyler, Schmidt, Kepper, Mazzucca, Gilber, and Beck (2021) reported that, 63.7% of US parents reported a decrease in children's physical movement during lockdown. Because of this primary problem, secondary causes behind the problem occur. For instance- the previous study (Eyler et al, 2021) also stated that to parents, social barriers (lack of access to playmates) were the important determinants that had influenced decrease in outdoor activities.

According to Singer, Singer, D'Agostino, and De Long (2009), opportunities for outdoor play are diminishing as a result of fast globalization, technology expansion and urbanization (as cited in Bento & Dias, 2017, pp. 157-160). Ginsburg (2008) mentioned in his study that parent's fear about the possible accidents happening to children also another factor that affect children's frequency of outdoor play (as cited in Bento & Dias, 2017, p. 157-160).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021), an estimated 38.2 million children were overweight whose age were under 5 years. The WHO also stated that overweight and obesity are now on the rise in low- and middle-income nations, particularly in urban areas. They (WHO) stated that the reason behind prevalence of obesity among young children are multiple including decrease in physical activity levels, changes in modes of transportation and increase in urbanization. Moreover, reduction in outdoor play time making children disconnected from the natural world (Bento & Dias, 2017). This results in limited exposure to sunlight which is one of the primary sources of vitamin D (Nair & Maseeh, 2012). Deficiency of this particular vitamin has become common in children (Roh, Kim, Choi, Kim, Cho, Kim, Park, Kim, Chun, Kim, & Kwak, 2016). Respiratory infections, food allergies, and asthma are known to increase with vitamin D deficiency (Searing, & Leung, 2010). Additionally, Yilmaz and Sen (2020) found association between occurrence and management of the COVID-19 and vitamin D in children.

In Bangladesh, outdoor play for urban children has always been a challenge. Migration and population growth have created unplanned and rapid urbanization, to meet housing demand. Children of urban areas have become more inactive day by day (Islam, 2008). A report by WHO (2008) revealed that Bangladesh is far behind in implementing the 'best practice' towards physical activity interventions for young children. In 2003, five children accidentally fell into water tank and died while playing in a house under construction (as cited in Ahmed & Sohail,

2008). There is a very small number of playgrounds in Dhaka compared with demand. In Dhaka city, girls are nearly totally left out from using playground facilities, while boys from high-income families and street children use them from time to time (Ahmed & Sohail, 2008). The study mentioned that the main reasons for their inaccessibility are related to social and environmental factors like- lack of security, and poor maintenance. Another study found that non-availability of open space, pressure of study, and parent's perception on lack of security are considered to be the major obstacles for the children to relish right to play in Dhaka (Salma, 2018).

### **Purpose of the Research**

Before implementing any outdoor play facilities, parents' opinion about letting children play outside is needed to be explored. Parents' perception regarding social factors that influence their decisions and practices related with outdoor play of young children is an unfamiliar territory in context of Bangladesh. The purpose of the current study was to understand parental perception and practice regarding social determinants of outdoor play for 4 to 6 years old urban children. The specific objective of this study was to understand parental attitude and beliefs regarding outdoor play and the social determinants of outdoor play which are- reliability on neighbors (including peer presence), children's safety (concern about traffic safety, rooftop safety), children's gender equity, adult supervision during children's play, importance on academic study. Furthermore, this study aimed to understand parental behaviors and support regarding children's outdoor play.

### **Justification of the Study**

According to Parten (1932), children start to play in groups with their peers at age 4-5.5 years (as cited in Biddle, Garcia-Nevarez, Henderson, & Valero-Kerrick, 2013, p. 270). While playing outside of the house, children are seen to form a group with others and engross in

playing. They do not readily start to play with peers, therefore, understanding of cooperative play (group playing) are not readily developed in them (Kennedy-Behr, Rodger, & Mickan, 2011). Thus, playing outdoor is really crucial in early childhood where there is more possibility of encountering other children. Outdoor play is beneficial for young children as it is one of the main modes for them to build the skills necessary for their social development as well as analytical thinking (Coolahan, Fantuzzo, Mendez, & McDermott, 2000).

According to Mart (2021), young children are dependent on parents or any other adults for most of the activities, which is why access to outdoor areas is naturally controlled by adults. Therefore, before implementing any outdoor play facilities, parent's outlook regarding outdoor play and underlying social factors that influences their thinking needs to be known. In Bangladesh, very limited research has been done about this particular issue. Hence, there is huge knowledge gap. To understand parental perception regarding outdoor play, qualitative research needs to be done where open-ended questions can be asked. The current study allowed the participants to explain without restriction about their view on outdoor play which helped to highlight the existing problem. Apart from this, it will aid in raising awareness through advocacy and also be helpful in developing strategies for implementing National-Women Development Policy-2011, which clearly stated that facilities will be provided for the female children for their safe and quality recreation, and sports practices (MoWCA, 2011). Moreover, it will create a scope for future research and will have important implications for the development of effective intervention programs for young children of Bangladesh. As play creates learning opportunities across all areas of development, UNICEF (2018) mentioned that play-based learning approaches for early childhood can reinforce learning results of children within the early primary grades. This study will contribute to a deeper understanding of parental perception regarding importance



of outdoor play as opposed to academic learning and incorporate those findings into educational settings in a new light.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is parents' perception regarding outdoor play and social determinants of outdoor play for 4 to 6 years old children?
2. How does the parents support outdoor play among children?

## **Operational Definitions**

**Parents-** In this study, biologically related father or mother, stepparent, or legal guardian, will be considered as parents.

**Perception-** According to psychologist Daniel (2011), "*perception is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the presented information or environment*" (as cited in Wikipedia, 2021).

**Outdoor-** The outdoors can be portrayed as an open setting, where it is possible to experience free and energetic movements, and encounter with natural elements.

**Outdoor play-** According to Garvey (1990), "*play is a range of intrinsically motivated activities done for recreational pleasure and enjoyment*" (as cited in Bulgarelli & Bianquin, 2016). Though ambiguity exists in terminology of outdoor play, it can be defined by engaging in playing activities outdoors. Activities engaged in for enjoyments and recreation outside of home. Some common outdoor play activities for 4 to 6 years old children are- climbing, jumping, running, playing with balls, riding bicycle/ tricycles, hopscotch, collecting things from nature, playing with soil, mud etcetera.

**Social determinants-** Social determinants of outdoor play are the factors that influence frequency of children getting engaged in playing activities. In this study, trust in neighbors,

peer/playmate's influence on children, children's gender, children's safety (including- traffic safety, rooftop safety), and adult supervision are considered as social determinants of play.

**Urban-** The Bangladesh Census broadened the defined urban area as any developed areas around an identified central place that have facilities such as paved roads, electricity, gas, water supply, sewerage, and sanitation; that is densely populated; where majority of the population is working in nonagricultural sectors (as cited in Rahman, Mohiuddin, Kafy, Sheel, & Di, 2019). In this study, children living in Dhaka City Corporation area will be considered as “Urban children”.

**Middle class-** According to Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Bangladesh Office (2016), it is more appropriate to identify middle class on basis of income or consumption, relative to the rest of the population. Therefore, different thresholds are used in different context based on area. According to Asian Development Bank (ADB) (as cited in PPRC, 2019), those who spend USD 2 to USD 20 capita per day fall under middle class. Renown economist Dr. Sen (2015) considered the USD 2 to USD 3 threshold for middle income family of Bangladesh (as cited in JICA, 2016).

**Upper class-** Those whose income is above middle-class threshold are considered to be upper income family.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

*“The outdoors is a natural learning and teaching environment for young children and is one in which most children feel settled and capable”* (Bilton, 2010, p. 1). Unsupervised, unstructured outdoor activities lead to cognitive, social, physical, and psychological development in young children (Gray, Gibbons, Larouche, Sandseter, Bienenstock, Brussoni., Chabo, Herrington, Janssen, Pickett, Power, Stanger, Sampson, & Tremblay, 2015). It is one of the main sources of moderate- to robust-intensity physical movement for children (Gray et al., 2015). According to Stephenson (2002), outdoor play is more open than indoor play (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p.293). Thus, outdoor play is able to provide more opportunities for children to engage in child-led play. Children are also able to reflect numerous abilities during outdoor play, which may not be nurtured while playing indoors (Bento & Costa, 2018). Ernst (2008) stated in his study that as outdoor play in less structured venues, children face diverse situation for decision making that stimulate problem solving skills and creativity (as cited in Wallin, 2017). It also encourages different levels of social participation as children can choose to play with a group. Outdoor play also creates a place for transmitting cultural norms through chants, rhymes, ritual used as part of games (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p.294).

Many studies have found that outdoor play in particular, is associated with both physical and mental health benefits (Gill, 2014; Piccininni, Michaelson, Janssen, & Pickett, 2018). A Canadian intervention study found that outdoor play significantly decreases antisocial behavior and an increase in prosocial behavior in children (Brussoni, Ishikawa, Brunelle, & Herrington, 2019). According to McCurdy, Winterbottom, Mehta, Roberts (2010), outdoor exploration also

supports healthy brain development which reinforces decision making skills as well as coping mechanism (as cited in Loebach, Sanches, Jaffe, & Elton-Marshall, 2021).

### **Influences of social determinants on outdoor play through theories**

There are several theories relating to play. However, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is the most relevant one with the current study. It is one of the most known and significant explanations regarding the influence of social environments on human development.

Bronfenbrenner ecological system's framework is used to examine how environmental factors contribute to a child's play. The system includes microsystem, macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and chronosystem. Microsystem are the factors-like child's family, neighbors, educators that influence children's play directly (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p. 21). For instance- parent's mistrust in neighbors affects child's outdoor play pattern. Macrosystem includes child's community's tradition, culture and beliefs (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p. 21). In Bangladesh, children are seen to play outside mostly at afternoon from Asar to Maghrib prayer time which is a cultural tradition. Exosystem consist of existing policies related with children influence children's play (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p. 21-22). According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, CRC (1989) which is an international treaty Bangladesh agreed upon, states in article 31, "***States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts***" (United Nations Human Rights, 2021). Under article 18 of National-Women Development Policy-2011, it is clearly stated that facilities will be provided for the female children for their safe and quality recreation, and sports practices (MoWCA, 2011). Mesosystem refers to interaction between two system (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p.22). For example- due to Covid-19 pandemic government (system-1) was forced to shut down schools (system-2). This

impacts children's play time and social interaction with peers. Chronosystem is the influence of sociocultural factors on individual child's play over time (as cited in Sluss, 2005, p.22). Reduce in outdoor play time due to lockdown can be seen at age four and again at age 6.

### **Parental perception toward outdoor play and its benefits**

Mart's (2021) qualitative study on Turkish parents revealed that most of the parents were favorable toward children's outdoor activities though there were some who harbored negative perspective. One parent who had positive outlook stated that it is a natural part of a childhood and children should spend most of their time outside. The same study (Mart, 2021) also explored parent's knowledge regarding impact of outdoor play. It found that most of the parents knew general developmental aspects of outdoor activities and positive impacts of outdoor play on children. Another study concluded similar findings that parents recognized benefits of natural exposure for their children while playing outdoor (Dumulon-Lauzière, 2016).

Azwanie, Normala, Azlin, Kamal, & Lukman, (2018) found in their research that parents of Malaysia preferred unstructured games because it amplified the development of their children. A study (Hunter, Graves, & Bodensteiner, 2017) conducted in US revealed that parents favored outdoor play for preschoolers as it would lead to child-led experienced play and cultivate their creativity.

### **Parental perception regarding social factors of outdoor play in global context**

#### **Children's safety**

A study by Singer et al. (2009) stated that possible dangers, exchange with strangers and car traffic were the social factors mentioned by parents most frequently for not letting their children play outside (as cited in Bento & Dias, 2017, pp.157-160). Many studies found that parental concern about traffic safety was associated with less time playing outdoors for primary school children (Bringolf-Isler, Grize., Mäder, Ruch, Sennhauser, Braun-Falklander, 2010;

Singer et al, 2009). Furthermore, Lambert, Vlaar, Herrington, Brussoni's (2019) conducted a systematic review where they found lower traffic volumes positively associated with time spent in outdoor play for 6-11 years old children. Clements (2004) study found that 82% of the mothers concerned about crime and safety of children which were the major factors preventing them from permitting their children to play outdoors. The study also found that even though the mothers understood the importance of outdoor play, but their fear of danger was prioritized.

### **Adult supervision and reliability on neighbors including playmates**

As young children are dependent on adults for most of the activities, therefore, access to outdoor areas is naturally controlled by adults (Mart, 2021). According to Sandseter, Kleppe, and Sando (2021), most of the outdoor play in Norway occurred under adult supervision; which resulted in grown-ups controlling what children were permitted to do and where they were allowed to go. A study in US found that more than half of the participants practiced proper guiding behavior during outdoor play (Huynh, Demeter, Burke & Upperman, 2017). The same study also reported that parents were more likely to leave their child unattended if they perceived the play area as safe. Furthermore, a study revealed that over the last decade, unstructured outdoor play is rapidly declining (Staempfli, 2008).

A study stated that outdoor play decreased significantly for those children who lacked playmates and lacked adult supervision (Eyler et al, 2021). Barkley, Salvy, Sanders, Von Carlowitz, and Williamson (2014) studied effect of peer presence on physical activity related play on children under 6 years old. They found that compared to a solo play condition, the presence of a friend increased the frequency of physical play twice more when they are in highly physically active environment (school or outside).

According to research conducted in Canada by Parent, Guhn, Brussoni, Almas, Oberle (2020), parents who had strong trust in neighbors let their children play outdoors in their

neighborhood two times more compared with those who perceived low trust in neighbors.

Witten, Kearns, Carroll, Asiasiga, and Tava'e, (2013) revealed that parents put importance on neighborhood social connections and those who knew less people in the neighborhood, felt unsafe to let children play alone.

### **Gender equity**

A systematic review conducted by Lee (2021) in 29 countries found that girls were usually associated with lower levels of outdoor play. A Canadian study found that girls outdoor play frequency was lower than boys during pandemic and rate of using social media and screen time increased among them (Moore, Faulkner, Rhodes, Brussoni, Chulak-Bozzer, Ferguson, Mitra, O'Reilly, Spence, Vanderloo & Tremblay, 2020). Preschool-aged girls in US had 16% lower odds of being taken outside to play by their parents according to a study (Tandon, Zhou, & Christakis, 2012). Soori and Bhopal's (2002) research stated that parents were more likely to allow boys to play outdoors without adult supervision than girls (as cited in Boxberger, & Reimer, 2019, p.14). One study found that boys were being encouraged by parents more to play outside than girls (Cleland, Timperio, Salmon, Hume, Baur, & Crawford, 2010).

### **Academic study pressure**

Academic burden impact in decreasing frequency of outdoor play among children which becomes clear by the study Shin (2016). According to the research, early childhood educational setting in Korea reduced outdoor play time due to putting more value in academic outcomes. In China, children were burdened with parent's expectation of academic result, which made them put more work in studying rather than playing (Shi, 2017). In Portugal, early childhood education was too indoor activity centric and outside play time was reduced a lot (Bento & Dias, 2017). Hofferth, Sandra, and Sandberg (2009) identified that school, daycare, and extracurricular activities reduced time in unstructured outdoor play among US children.

### **Economic condition of family**

Children from higher earning families were remarkably more likely to play outside regularly than those with lower wages, but only if they were from rural regions. (Parent et al., 2020). A recent study by Perez, Thalken, Ughelu, Knight, and William (2021) revealed that lower income families had less access to outdoor playground during Covid-19 pandemic. As a consequence, those children had fewer chances to be bodily active in outdoor play. However, some research found no association between parental income and physical activities of children (Voss, Hosking, Metcalf, Jeffery, & Wilkin, 2008, Tandon et al., 2012).

### **Parental support and practice regarding outdoor play in global context**

Positive parental support is a strong predictor of outdoor play found by Lee (2021). Research conducted recently in China revealed that parent's motivation influenced children's opportunities for playing outside home (Wang et al., 2020). Moore et al. (2020) found that during COVID-19, frequency of outdoor play, walking and biking were highly associated with parental encouragement and their engagement in healthy movement behaviors. Maatta, Ray, & Roos (2014) in their cross-sectional study also found similar findings that parent's encouragement and involvement can influence children's practice of physical activity. However, researchers showed that parents with busy schedules had less time for supervising outdoor play which resulted in reducing outdoor play time (Veitch, Salmon, & Ball, 2007; Witten et al., 2013).

The WHO (2019) released age specific 24-hours integrated movement guidelines for young children. They recommended that children of age 4 should at least spend 180 minutes (3 hours) in physical play and activity spreading throughout the day. They also suggested that replacing screen time with physical activity could increase health benefit. However, only 12%



Canadian children met the requirement (Moore et al., 2020). For US, half of preschool children were not being taken outside to play daily (Tandon et al., 2012).

### **Research findings in context of Bangladesh**

There are very limited researches has been conducted on outdoor play in context of Bangladesh. Few newspaper articles exist which highlighted current situation of outdoor play facilities in Bangladesh. Recently, it has been brought in light by Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) survey which was mentioned in a newspaper article that among 129 wards in Dhaka city, 37 wards do not have any playground or park for children (Islam, 2021). According to the survey, there are playgrounds and parks in only 16 out of its 54 wards in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has only 7 out of 75 its wards. Out of total, only 42 playgrounds are open to the public. Most of these parks and playgrounds are in poor state. Also, only 7% of the playgrounds are accessible to girls. According to Islam (2021), few of the playgrounds have been renovated while other are in middle of reconstruction. Another study found similar findings that preferences for outdoor play and frequency of the usage of play spaces were significantly lower among girls than boys (Bhuyan, 2019).

A survey, which was mentioned in a newspaper article by Ejaj (2019) stated that playing equipment in most of the playgrounds were unmaintained and unsafe from parent's perspective. Environment of the grounds were also not child friendly. Therefore, parents were forced to allow their children to play either on rooftop or street in front of their house. While letting children play on rooftop or road, parents were still concerned about children's safety. Almost all the parents expressed that they preferred indoor games rather than playing on roads unsupervised. Reckless drivers, child lifters, and manholes without lid made them anxious. Study by Islam (2008, p.183) found significant relationship between independent mobility and genders. Parents

let boys play alone than girls. Age was also significant in predicting independent mobility (Islam, 2008, p.184). As age increased by one year, parents felt safe to let children play without adult supervision. Another study found that shortage of open space, pressure of academic study, and absence of security were considered to be the major obstacles for the children to enjoy right to play in Dhaka (Salma, 2018). According to crime statistics of 2019 in Dhaka city, there were total 334 cases against women and children repression among which 9 and 12 kidnapping cases reported to DMP (Dhaka Metropolitan Police) and Dhaka range accordingly. Compared to Dhaka city, all the other areas had below 100 cases against women and children repression (Bangladesh Police, 2019).

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Approach**

The current study was exploratory qualitative research as the problem of the study had not been thoroughly studied in context of Bangladesh in past. It will help to clarify the exact nature of the problem to be solved and can produce a ground to conduct further research.

#### **Research Participants**

The study participants were mothers and fathers of children aged 4 to 6 years old who lived in different areas of Dhaka city. There was total 16 participants in the study where 8 of them were mothers and other 8 were fathers. They were all highly educated with Honors and Master degree in their respective field. Data was also collected on their age, occupation, family income and family form as in type of family, children's number, age and gender.

#### **Research Site**

As there is a pandemic going on currently, it was not possible to conduct a study in natural setting. Therefore, remote settings were used for safety reasons. Remote platforms like-zoom was used. In some cases when participants did not have access to mentioned online platforms, phone calls were placed where their conversation was recorded. Participants were from different areas of Dhaka city which were- Mirpur, Mirpur DOHS, Adabor, Uttara, and Dhanmondi.

#### **Participant Selection Method**

There was total 16 participants in the study. Participants were selected using purposive sampling technique.

Inclusion criteria:

- ✓ Mothers who had 4 to 6 years old child or children
- ✓ Fathers who had 4 to 6 years old child or children
- ✓ Mothers and fathers who lived in Dhaka
- ✓ For Focus Group Discussion (FGD), mothers and fathers who had internet connection and access to online platform like zoom.

Exclusion criteria:

- ✓ Mothers and fathers who lived outside Dhaka or in rural area
- ✓ Mothers and fathers who had children below age 4 and above age 6
- ✓ For FGD, mothers and fathers who did not have internet access
- ✓ Mothers and fathers who refused to continue at any point of time

## **Data Collection Methods**

The current research used remote In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), and remote focus group discussions (FGDs) to collect the data. The IDI is a technique designed to extract a clear picture of participant's perspective regarding research topic (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). On the other hand, FGD is a data collection method for qualitative research where one or two researchers together with some participants discuss a specific research topic (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). These two particular different methods were used to collect qualitative data because of the Covid-19 situation. As the whole process were done remotely due to pandemic and safety reason, observation of parents and children outdoor play was not a viable option. Remote In-Depth Interview and Focus Group Discussion helped researcher to gain deep understanding regarding parents' way of thinking and their practices which was the primary aim of the current research.

Data collection started after getting approval from Brac IED's experts. After meeting the inclusion criteria, participants were allowed to participate in remote IDIs and FGDs where data were collected through an unstructured questionnaire using an online platform like zoom. Before starting the data collection process, participants' consents were taken verbally and in written form. Interviews were recorded with their permission. Total 6 IDIs and 2 FGDs were conducted where 6 and 10 participants participated respectively through remote platform like zoom and with phone calls. In IDI, there were 3 mothers and 3 fathers, and in FGD, one session had 5 mothers and other session had 5 fathers. All data were recorded digitally. Researcher took reflection notes when necessary. The IDIs took no more than 40 to 50 minutes. The FGDs took 60 to 70 minutes.

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis process began with the beginning of data collection. Researchers' comments and reflections during data collection were also recorded at the same time of recording the data provided by participants. After data collection, all answers given by participants in IDIs and FGDs were transcribed and organized into a single file. During doing the memo, all the key data relevant to research questions were highlighted. Researcher's own reflection notes were rewritten in narrative form. At the middle stage of the data analysis, transcriptions and notes were read several times in order to ensure that no data were overlooked. Then specific patterns were identified and data was categorized into themes and subthemes using google spreadsheet. In qualitative research, thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analyzing interview. It is a tool used to *'identifying, analyzing and documenting trends (themes) within the data'* (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to them, the purpose of using this technique is that *'rigorous thematic approach which can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular*

*research questions.*' All the transcripts were read for missing information or pattern again.

Lastly, the findings of the study were presented descriptively under each theme and subtheme.

### **Validity and Reliability**

In the current research, unstructured questionnaire was used in both IDIs and FGDs to collect information. Validity of the questionnaire was assessed by using triangulation technique. It refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources to develop to understand a phenomena. In this study, IDI and FGD, were used to compare collected data and assess validity. Member checking was done with one research participant. Reliability in qualitative research refers to the stability of responses rather than expecting exact same answers from participants. The questionnaire was reviewed by at least two experts before carrying out the data collection process to ensure reliability and validity of it. Moreover, before starting the research, two pilot tests were carried out to assess reliability and validity of the questionnaires. Minor changes in the questionnaire were done as wording of the questions made participants of the pilot study confused. After correcting it to make it more understandable, it was shown to the supervisor. Later getting approval from him, research was conducted.

### **Ethical Issues**

The participants were provided with appropriate information about the research purpose, and procedure before starting the IDIs and FGDs, in a comprehensible manner as well as without duress or inappropriate inducement. Their consents were taken before the study takes place and they could have withdrawn their responses any time from the research. All participants in this research took part voluntarily, free from any intimidation or unjustified influence, and their rights, dignity and autonomy were respected and properly protected. They were assured that no psychological harm, legal harm, or social harm will occur during the study. Confidentiality was

strictly maintained regarding the personal information provided by the participants and they were assured that no personal information would be leaked outside.

### **Limitation of the Research**

In this study, data was collected only through remote platform, therefore, essence of data collection at natural setting was lost. It also constrained participant selection process as participants who only had access to internet or had phone were chosen. Researcher's observation was constricted in video call meeting as well as many participants were reluctant to do a video call so observation was not possible.

## **Chapter IV Findings & Discussion**

### **Findings**

This chapter is divided into two sections. First section is 'Result', where collected data through two different method such as, parents' in-depth interview, and focus group discussion are presented. The purpose of the current study is to understand parental perception and practice regarding social determinants of outdoor play for 4 to 6 years old urban children. For this, questions were asked to understand parental attitude and beliefs regarding social determinants of outdoor play and later on about parents' supportive behavior regarding children's outdoor play. These data were categorized into 4 main themes and 9 sub-themes. The second section is "Discussion", where the key findings of the current research will be discussed in light of existing literatures and researcher's reflection. This chapter will be concluded with a conclusion and some recommendations based on knowledge gained from the study.

### **Demographic Information**

There was total 6 participants in IDIs where there were equal numbers of mothers and fathers participated. For FGDs, 5 mothers and 5 fathers participated. Mothers age range were from 30 to 37 and fathers were from 35 to 44 years old. Except four of them, rest of the participants lived in a nuclear family. Among 16 participants, 8 of them earn around and over BDT 1,00,000 which indicates they come from high end family according to the income range set by ADB (as cited in PPRC, 2019). Rest of the participants' income range from BDT 50,000 to BDT 75,000. Ten of the participants had girls and six of them had boys within the given age range. Participants were from different areas of Dhaka city. Majority of them were from North City Corporation, from areas like Mirpur, Kallyanpur, Uttara and Adabor. Few of them were from South City Corporation, from Dhanmondi. Among the mothers, only 3 of them were



housewife, 2 of them are doctors and others were involved in different occupations like banker, entrepreneur, teacher. They all were highly educated with honors and master degree in their respective field. Two fathers were dentist and rest of them had different professions like regional sales manager, assistant professor, architect, journalist, IT professional, and teacher. They all had master degree in different subjects. All the demographic information is presented in a table which is attached with annex 5.

### **Theme 1: Parental perception about outdoor play**

#### **Understanding of the term outdoor play**

All the participants had clear concept about outdoor play. They all mentioned about playing outside home, playing in an open space or specifically mentioned about the place. Despite being a mother or father, they all gave clear answer. A mother replied when she was asked about outdoor play, “It is a play outside my house’s gate. It can be on rooftop, or any other place under open sky”. (Personal communication: Interview #5, 14-11-2021).

Some also gave answers with examples about what kinds of games played outside. One mother said, “What I understand by outdoor play is children playing games like- running, football, cricket which involve physical activities at a place where there is sunlight, and under open sky. It is not indoor but outdoor.” (Personal communication: Interview #1, 8-11-2021).

#### **Importance of outdoor play on holistic development and well-being of children**

When participants were asked about importance of outdoor play regarding children’s development and well-being, the answers were more focused on some particular parts of development. Most parents focused on improvement of children’s socialization ability, communication skills and language, physical growth and improvement immunity system. A mother focusing on socialization and language mentioned that,

“In case of my daughter, from very early age like from 6 months, she goes out a lot. Because of her tendency to play and go outdoor is that she can now bond with people very quickly. Plus, she learned to talk pretty quickly too. So, what I think is, by playing indoor, children will not be developed holistically which actually occurs by playing outdoor. It gives opportunity to socialize with other children plus increases their general knowledge.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

Another mother mainly focused on physical growth and immunity system. She said,

“When they play outside during day time, they get exposure to sunlight which decrease the rate of vitamin D deficiency. It is very important now a days due to Covid-19 situation. Second is, they tend to get involve in intense physical activities like running. It leads to calorie burns which makes them hungry and they eat more.” (Personal communication: Interview #1, 8-11-2021).

However, most of the participants did not mention how outdoor play could be beneficial for mental well-being. Only one father and two mothers were able to explain about an existing link between outdoor play and mental well-being. It is to be mentioned that among them, two were health professional (one dentist and one doctor). According to the father,

“It helps children get exposed to sunlight which decreases vitamin D deficiency. It is very important to boost our immunity. Now we know that vitamin D deficiency is linked with depression. Not only vitamin D deficiency, outdoor play itself contributes to mental well-being. It helps children to stay happy. For example- when we were children and it used to rain, we got sad as our outdoor playtime got cancelled because of the rain.” (Personal communication: Interview #2, 9-11-2021).

### **Opinion regarding required outdoor play time for children**

Regarding this, all of the parents gave similar time limit. They all said a time range of at least 1 to 2 hours or a time specified by prayer time. Also, all of them mentioned playing in afternoon when the intensity of sunlight is less. One father said, “In our culture, we see that children play from Asar to Maghrib prayer time. I think this is the right time and amount which is 1 to 1.30 hours.” (Personal communication: Interview #2, 9-11-2021).

## **Theme 2: Parental perception of social determinants**

### **Children’s safety during playing outdoor**

Parents were asked about letting children play on road and rooftop. One thing they all agreed on is that an adult must be present while children play at roof or road. Another point regarding road safety is that all parents mentioned that they felt safer if the road has less traffic movement. One mother reported,

“We do not have a better alternative in our country against playing on road or rooftop. The place where we are staying has a gate at the entrance of the road. Therefore, number of traffic is almost non-existent here. So, this kind of safety measures should be taken. In case of playing on roof, railing should be there but I will not let my child play alone there, it has to be guided.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

Regarding playing on roof, most of them mentioned about height of the boundary. One father said, “In case of rooftop safety, railing’s height should be considered. In some rooftop, there are sitting arrangement. The distance between sitting arrangement and railing should be considered as well.” (Personal communication: Interview #4, 12-11-2021)

There were few parents who did not support playing at roof or road at all. They claimed that it was too unsafe because of traffic, unpredictable accidents, manholes, too many people’s movements as well as hard surface. In a focus group discussion, a father expressed, “I do not

support playing on road or roof at all. Play should be in a place where there is no chance of getting hurt badly. Roof and road, both have hard and rough surface. A child can fall while running and, in this process, can get injured.” (Focus group notes #2, 19-11-2021).

A mother also expressed concern about unprecedented accidents happening while playing on road and roof. According to her,

“I would like to add that neither road or rooftop is an appropriate place to play. Specially road, as anything can drop on head from a building, even if there is no presence of traffic. In case of playing on roof, I pay attention to the surface of the roof that it should not be rough. Because children playing means they will run and jump.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

### **Adult supervision during playing outdoor**

Considering children’s age and current situation of the urban areas, all the parents gave same responses that children’s frequency of play depends on adult’s availability. A mother explained, “As now the rate of robbery and kidnapping has increased, it threatens my child’s safety. Also, there is a concern about maintaining road safety. Therefore, if adults are not available, children cannot play outside.” (Personal communication: Interview #5, 14-11-2021).

Another father gave an answer from different perspective. Although he replied in the same way that letting children play alone is unsafe, he also pointed out the unwillingness of parents giving time to children. He said, “When a parent comes home from office, he also brings tiredness with him, which is actually my case. I want to take rest but my child wants to play more which is normal. Because of my limitation, my child has to play less as I force him to go home sooner.” (Personal communication: Interview #6, 11-11-2021).

When parents were asked about impact of adult supervision on children's outdoor play, two different answers were identified. Some parents thought it would put restriction on children's way of playing as well as thinking. One father responded, "It can be seen that children cannot play many things when an adult is present there to supervise. They cannot play whole heartedly because they feel conscious of the presence of their parents. So, he/ she always stay on alert to avoid to do anything that would make his parents angry." (Personal communication: Interview #2, 9-11-2021).

Other parents thought adult supervision would have positive effect on children's outdoor play. They focused on the point that the guidance would make children's play safer. However, they also insisted on the fact that when supervising their play, interference should be minimum. One mother expressed her thoughts, "Children has to understand that adults are there to keep them safe. And adults should understand that while playing with children, they have to become children themselves. They cannot go there with the mindset of interfering with children's play all the time by putting restriction." (Personal communication: Interview #3, 12-11-2021).

All parents unanimously agreed that children of this age should never play alone outside without presence of an adult. All the fathers and only one mother mentioned some conditions like safe environment, trustworthy neighborhood and playmates, less traffic density, and children's age in which they were willing to let children play without adult supervision. One father said, "If the environment is safe, where everyone knows each other, children know and helps each other in need, or outsiders' presence is less, and traffic density is low, only then it is not necessary for adults to be present." (Personal communication: Interview #2, 9-11-2021).

Except one mother, rest of them were against children playing without any guidance of adult. They expressed their uneasiness about letting children play outdoor alone. One mother said,

“As a guardian, I do not feel safe to let my children play alone. We played alone in our childhood, be it in urban area or rural area at our grandparents’ home. We used to play hours after hours and our parents did not even bother to be tensed. But now, in this society, we do not actually have the faith to do the same.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

### **Reliability on neighborhood including children’s playmates**

When participants were asked if they would let their children play in presence of reliable neighbors, they all answered positively. They all said that if the neighbors were trustworthy and their (neighbors) perspective and priority matched their (participants) own, they would feel reassured. While asking this, a father replied,

“It depends on how much the neighbors think like us. For example, when I was young, my parents knew all of our neighbors well. So, they knew when and with whom we played with. Like this, if I know my child’s neighborhood’s playmates and their parents well, I have no problem letting my child play alone with them.” (Personal communication: Interview #4, 12-11-2021).

However, while answering the question of letting children play alone with their neighborhood playmates alone, mixed answers were identified. Some parents were willing to allow it if the environment was safe and they trusted the playmates. One mother said in response to this question, “It depends on trust. If I observe that my child does not have any problem while playing with other and I know the children with whom he/she is playing, then I have no issue with it.” (Personal communication: Interview #5, 14-11-2021).

Some parents were willing to let children play with other children if security were to be ensured by community. It is to be mentioned that, this perception was shared by fathers of both in-depth interview and focus group discussion. If a citation of a father is to be mentioned, “I will let my child play alone with peers if their security is ensured by community. Because it is hard to monitor children personally all the time. Therefore, a community should take the responsibility to ensure children’s outdoor play.” (Focus group notes #2, 19-11-2021).

Lastly, some parents, who are all mothers (participated in focus group discussion and one in in-depth interview), were unwilling to let children play alone with their playmates without any adult guidance at all. One mother said, “Whenever I open the newspaper or see the news in mobile phone, I cannot bring myself to let them play alone. I know this is not a good practice to always monitor them, but the situation and environment does not allow us to do the right thing.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

### **Perception regarding age of children’s playmates and their gender**

Regarding children’s playmates’ age, all the parents gave similar answer that rather than other children’s age, it is more about their compatibility and behavior. One mother mentioned, “It does not fully depend on children’s age. Many children mature early. On the other hand, there are some children who have not developed according to their chronological age. While playing, children’s mentality has to match with each other.” (Personal communication: Interview #3, 12-11-2021).

When opinion was asked of parents about playing with opposite gender children, they all voiced that it was not a problem at all for this age group. One father expressed, “Children should play with children of all gender. Not only in early age but also when they get older. If they start

to play without any discrimination from early age, it will be a good influence in future.”

(Personal communication: Interview #6, 11-11-2021).

### **Children’s gender**

There were two types of answers identified when parents were asked about if frequency of children’s outdoor play depended on their gender. Some said that girls’ participation in outdoor play is less than boys. One father explained the situation by saying,

“Even though gender should not be an issue here, but it has become an unfortunate fact now. As I worked in media, I know the horrific situations. It is normal for parents of girls to be scared to let them play outside. Issues of kidnapping, raping and other crimes affect negatively here.” (Personal communication: Interview #6, 11-11-2021).

Other parents expressed that the threat is equal to boys and girls. One mother said, “I would like to include that in terms of outdoor play, threat is equal to boys and girls despite their gender. So, I do not think frequency of outdoor play does depend on child’s gender.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

### **Academic study importance and pressure**

According to some parents, both academic study and outdoor play were non-comparable as they thought both of these had their own purpose and benefits. One father said, “Academic study and outdoor play are important from different perspective and they are non-comparable. Academic study will be important for future as it will bring a degree. On the other hand, outdoor play will teach children about outside world and build skills like socialization which cannot be learned through reading and writing.” (Focus group notes #2, 19-11-2021).

Others think that, for this age group, outdoor play is more important than academic study. One mother mentioned, “Academic study can be progressed at some point in life but if children



do not play outside with others and participate in this type of social event, they will be left behind and delay would occur in communication skills.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

When parents were asked if academic study has any impact on frequency of playing outdoor, they all said yes. One father replied, “Now a days, schools create too much pressure on children that parents are not willing to let children play that much outside. It is common to see teachers now come home to teach children at afternoon which is their playtime.” (Personal communication: Interview #2, 9-11-2021).

### **Theme 3: Parental practice about supporting outdoor play**

As for all the parents, they said that they try to support their children’s outdoor play by accompanying them while playing. Whenever children asked for help, they tried to help them. One father cited, “I usually try to create an environment where he feels comfortable to play. I also accompany him when he wants to ride cycle on the road. I motivate him to explore and do things alone which helps him to be more independent.” (Personal communication: Interview #4, 12-11-2021).

Some parent’s opinion regarding minimum interreference during play contradicted their practice. For instance, even though a participant voiced that it would restrict and lower the quality of play, he himself restricted his daughter's play. “When I accompany my daughter while she is biking or running, I continuously tell her to ride slowly or not to run so fast.” (Personal communication: Interview #2, 9-11-2021)

Out of 16 participants, 9 of them let their children play on both rooftop and road, 5 children play on road or play space near their house and only 2 of the children play only on roof. Children playing every day outdoor be it on roof, road or at both of the places for at least 60 minutes are 7. In these cases, safety of the play spaces was ensured and adult guidance were

present. One mother said, “I let her play alone with neighborhood children. They can be younger or older but in both case an adult is present there. She plays every day for at least 1 to 2 hours from Asar to Maghrib prayer.” (Focus group notes #1, 20-11-2021).

There were other parents who let their children play less than 4 times a week for 20 to 40 minutes. Those who could not let children play daily were mostly those who could not manage their time. One mother explained, “In my case, I usually try to take her to rooftop 3 to 4 days a week for 30 to 40 minutes. But it is not constant, because on some day, I have pressure from my work place or I fall asleep after eating lunch.” (Personal communication: Interview #1, 8-11-2021).

#### **Theme 4: Parents’ demand of playground**

After finishing the interview, all the parents were asked about their comment regarding outdoor play. They all expressed the need of a play space and open field in community. One mother said that, “There should be a playground for each area and a safe environment should be maintained for road safety. Even if it is a small playground, it does not matter, where at least 10 to 15 children can play, it will be enough.” (Personal communication: Interview #1, 8-11-2021).

#### **Discussion**

The purpose of the current study was to understand parental perception and practice regarding social determinants of outdoor play for 4 to 6 years old urban children. One of the specific aims was to find out parents’ perception regarding outdoor play itself. The findings showed that all the participants had clear idea about outdoor play. Some of them even provided examples to clear their concepts. They provided information regarding benefits of outdoor play on children’s development where most of the parents focused on physical, social and language aspects. Parents who were health professionals presented in-depth knowledge about benefits of

outdoor play on holistic development and mental well-being of children. Therefore, based on the findings, it can be said that parental understanding, and perception regarding outdoor play may not depend on their age, gender or socio-economic status. However, it may depend on educational qualification because those who had previous educational knowledge regarding health and development can naturally associate a concrete relationship between play and development. Similar results can be found in a study conducted by Mart (2021) who also explored parent's knowledge regarding impact of outdoor play. He found that most of the parents knew general developmental aspects of outdoor activities and positive impacts of outdoor play on children. Furthermore, some researchers found no association between parental income and physical activities of children (Voss, et al., 2008, & Tandon et al., 2012) which support the result of this study.

All the participants perceived that for this particular age group, one to two hours of outdoor playing is enough. This indicated that all the parents were unaware of the required physical play time set by WHO (2019). They recommended that children of age 4 should at least spend 180 minutes (3 hours) in physical play and activity spreading throughout the day. As for why all parents of the current study were unaware of this may be because there are no specific policy or guideline developed by Bangladesh government based on WHO guideline which can parents follow, nor there is any advocacy regarding this particular issue.

The study's another aim was to understand parental perception toward social determinants of outdoor play for 4 to 6 years old urban children. Social determinants were children's safety, adult's presence, reliability on neighbors and children's playmates, children's gender, and academic pressure. From the findings, it is clear that mixed reactions were found regarding letting children play on road and rooftop. Few parents did not support playing at roads

and rooftop at all for safety issues. Their main concern was about traffic, unpredictable accidents, manholes, meeting with strangers. This finding coincides with previous study by Ejaj (2019) where it was stated that urban parents of Bangladesh were anxious about reckless drivers, child lifters, and manholes without lid. It is also consistent with earlier global findings such as study by Singer et al. (2009) and Clements (2004). The current study also found that parents perceived less traffic as a positive sign to let children play on road more. This result is supported by Lambert, Vlaar, Herrington, Brussoni's (2019) systematic review where they found lower traffic volumes positively associated with time spent in outdoor play. About rooftop, the present research found that most parents stated boundary heights of roof as main safety issue. Parents who did not support playing on rooftop at all also mentioned about hard surface of roof which could endanger children's safety as they can get hurt if they fall hard. No local or global data were found regarding parent's perception of rooftop safety. However, a survey by Rajuk in Bangladesh revealed that among 129 wards in Dhaka city, 37 wards do not have any playground or park for children (Islam, 2021). In absence of accessible and available playgrounds, parents are forced to let children play on either roof or road as they have no better option despite being worried about safety issue.

The research found that the parents did not feel safe to let children of this age group play without any adult supervision in the current unsafe environment of urban areas. They also expressed that children's outdoor play depended on the availability of adults because of this particular reason. These findings coincide with previous researches. Research conducted by Mart (2021) also concluded that access to outdoor areas were controlled by adults during outdoor play. As for the reason behind urban parents feeling unsafe, it may be because of the high crime rate in

city compared to other regions. According to Bangladesh police's crime statistics of 2019, crime rate in Dhaka city were higher than rural areas (Bangladesh Police, 2019).

Mixed answers were identified regarding playing under adult's guidance. Some parents thought it would restrict children's play and jeopardized their play quality, while others thought of it as a positive factor if the supervision remained less invasive. Research findings of Sandseter et al. (2021) and Huynh et al., (2017) found similar findings where Norwegian and US parents control and supervise children's outdoor play. On the other hand, Azwanie et al. (2018) found in their research that parents of Malaysia preferred unstructured games which also coincides with the present study.

Even though parents were divided in their opinion regarding adult supervision's influence on children's play, the current research found that all the participants were unwilling to let children of this age group play without any adult guidance because of the current unsafe environment of urban areas. This result is consistent with the study of Staempfli (2008) which stated that unstructured outdoor play is rapidly declining over the last decade. All the fathers were willing to let children play unsupervised with some conditions like safe environment, trustworthy neighborhood and playmates, less traffic density. However, all the mothers except one, were against children playing without adult supervision because of safety issue. Mothers' perception in the current study are similar to Clement's (2004) research where he found that 82% of the mothers prevented children from play outdoors because of crime and safety issues. Meanwhile, fathers' view of the present research agrees with previous study (Huynh et al., 2017) which reported that parents were more likely to leave their child unattended at a safe playing environment. To determine a reason behind mothers and fathers different view regarding this particular issue, more qualitative and quantitative researches need to be conducted. Interaction

between different variables, different parenting style based on gender as well as influence of macrosystem may be able to explain this result.

The current study found that having reliable neighbors is reassuring for parents and they would let children play outside in their presence. This finding is similar to research findings of Parent et al. (2020) where they found that parents' strong trust in neighbors led to children playing outdoor two times more compared with those who perceived low trust in neighbors.

Mixed responses were identified regarding letting children play alone with their playmates in this research. Some were willing to let children play alone with playmates. Fathers were also willing to do so if community took the responsibility of ensuring safety. Meanwhile, most of the mothers expressed unwillingness to their children play alone with peers because of safety issue. Mothers' reluctance perspective is again because of unsafe environment. This result reflects previous finding of Salma's (2018) research where the researcher found that lack of security is one of the major obstacles for the children to enjoy right to play in Dhaka. Again, as to why mothers and fathers expressed different opinion may be known if more researches were conducted focusing on different parenting style based on gender. Regarding playmates' age, parents expressed that what matters more was their compatibility and behavior. The reason behind this perspective may be because playmates' ability to socialize with their children is more important than their age to parents. This study also found that for this particular age group, parents felt that gender of the playmates do not matter. Most studies in the field of outdoor play have mostly focused on frequency of outdoor depending on presence of peers (Eyler et al, 2021; Barkley et al., 2014). Such approaches, however, have failed to address parental perspective on playmates' age and gender.

Mixed reactions were delivered by parents of the study about gender influence on children's frequency of playing outdoor. Some expressed girls played less than boys outside. This reaction and findings of previous researchers (Islam, 2008; Lee, 2021) are alike. Others thought safety threats were equal to both genders, so no influence of gender existed. Although extensive researches have been carried out on outdoor play focusing on gender influence, no single study exists where contradictory result is found. The reason behind this inconsistency may lay behind parents being more conscious of current crime affairs because of easily accessible information with help of social media. Raise of crime may be the main issue here. Due to the approach of this study, results cannot be generalized. Therefore, future researches should explore "why" parents think differently now than before regarding outdoor play frequency based on children's gender. This will allow researchers to understand the factors that indirectly influence outdoor playtime.

All the participants of this research expressed that frequency of outdoor play was diminishing because of academic pressure and extracurricular activities. This finding coincides with preceding researches in Korea, US, Portugal (Shin, 2016; Hofferth et al. 2009; Bento & Dias, 2017). Although most of the parents of the present study had placed both academic study and outdoor play equally important and some placed more importance on the play. No preexisting local data were found to support this result.

The participants of this research supported their children's outdoor play by accompanying and motivating them. Parents who could not let children play more than 4 times a week were mostly those who could not manage their time and accompany them. Less than half of the parents let their children play more than five times a week for forty minutes to over an hour. These parents either accompanied children themselves or they let other family members or

neighbors supervised the outdoor play. This finding is consistent with past researches like study by Lee (2021) and Moore et al. (2020) where they identified that parents' involvement resulted in healthy outdoor movement. Meanwhile, Witten et al., (2013) revealed that children of busy scheduled parents played outside less which is also similar with the current result. Another practice which was found in this study that parents tend to interrupt and control children's play regardless their perception regarding minimum interference. This particular practice coincides with the practice of Norwegian parents where they controlled children's movement during outdoor play (Sandseter et al., 2021). As to why parents interfere despite their different perspective may have to do with their insecurity regarding letting children play roughly or facing danger while letting them roam freely. Practice of letting children play outdoor daily for 180 minutes according to the guideline of WHO (2018) could not be identified among the participants of present study. As Moore et al., (2020) found that only 12% Canadian children met the requirement, children of Bangladesh also seem to fall behind to meet the WHO requirements as well. This may be because lack of adults' presence to guide children's outdoor play and lack of safety ensured playground. In this study, majority of the parents let children play both on roads and rooftops as there were no playgrounds near housing area. This result is alike Ejaj's (2019) study where it was revealed that children played on road and roof as parents did not find any other alternative. Participants of the present research emphasized on the need of a play space and open field in community.

## **Conclusion**

The current study and previous literature suggest that children benefit from regular engagement in playful activity in outdoor spaces. This research focused on urban parental view on children's outdoor play and social factors that influence the activity. It explored their



perspective as well as practices. The study revealed that urban parents support children's outdoor activities, however, despite their understanding the positive effect of play, they are not able to let children play without worrying because of scarcity of safe play zone at community level. Moreover, most of the play are adult supervised, controlled and not meeting the requirement set by WHO (2018).

There is no denying that outdoor play is beneficial giving opportunities to be social, develop sense of self-efficacy, ensure well-being, and make connections in the world, and increase all-round physical competency. These benefits seem to be heightened when adults are supportive of children's adequate risk-taking challenges, and do not restrict children's outdoor activity unless their safety is threatened. Based on the current research findings, these can be used to promote child health and play if effective strategies are to be followed. It is important to note that while developing policies and implementing any program, benefits and risks of outdoor play may vary across different cultures, and population groups. Therefore, special consideration needs to be given to different contexts and conditions in which children are born, live, and play.

## **Recommendation**

The study indicates that children are not meeting the required outdoor playtime set by WHO (2018). It also highlights that there are not enough accessible play areas at different areas of Dhaka city, forcing parents to let children play on road or roof which can be unsafe. Moreover, parents are concern about safety issue which is leading to less outdoor play time and more adult supervised play, despite knowing the disadvantages of guided play. Based on the findings, some recommendations are given below.

- Children's play needs to be balanced between indoor and outdoor activity. For greater benefits, parents should engage in play to the degree it is adequate and necessary. They need to balance between work and time spent with children.
- Advocacy regarding importance of unstructured outdoor play should be done extensively. Awareness program regarding play right of children and safety measures can be arranged in a yearly basis.
- Media is a powerful medium to circulate information. By using it properly, there should be a continuous effort to advocate about existing national policy and international agreement about children's right to play. It should be recognized and respected by all.
- Government and policy makers should make a guideline for required physical activity including outdoor play following the guideline of WHO.
- As most of the parents do not allow children to play outside freely for safety issues, government officials as well as private organizations, NGOs should provide safer environment and playing areas/parks.
- Construction developers should abide by law and policies while constructing building and roads to ensure safety and leaving enough space for play.
- Fast and effective enforcement of law regarding crimes which are threatening children's safety can assure parents of maintaining safe environment. It may also mitigate increase rate of crime indirectly.
- For school, play based curriculum for preschoolers needs to be followed. Seminar or meeting can be arranged to advocate importance of outdoor play time for both parents and teachers.

- More qualitative and quantitative research should be carried out to understand the issue thoroughly.

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## Annex 1

**Demographic Information Table**

<b>Details</b>	<b>IDI</b>	<b>FGD</b>
Participant number	3 mothers, 3 fathers	5 mothers, 5 fathers
Age range	Mothers 30 to 37, Fathers 35 to 37	Mothers 32 to 37 Fathers 35 to 44
Income range	BDT 50,000 to 90,000	BDT 50,000 to 1,25,000
Living area	Mirpur & Adabar	Mirpur, Kallyanpur, Uttara, Dhanmondi
Occupation	Teacher, Dentist, Doctor, Journalist, Entrepreneur	Banker, Doctor, Dentist, Housewife, Architect, Sales Manager, Assistant professor
Educational degree	All post-graduated	All post-graduated
Children gender	2 girls and 4 boys	8 girls and 2 boys
Total children	10 girls and 6 boys	

## Annex 2 In-dept Interview (IDI) Questionnaire

### Section A

**Title:** Parents' Perception on social determinants of outdoor play

Demographic Information							
Date:			Start Time:		End Time:		
Name of participant	Age	Gender	Educational Qualification	Occupation	Number of Children	Gender of Children	Age of Children
1.							

### Section B

- **Broader Theme: Parents' knowledge and perception about the term outdoor play**
  1. What do you understand by outdoor play?
  2. Is outdoor play important for children?
    - a) If yes, why?
    - b) If no, why not?
  3. How do you think outdoor play effects children's holistic development and well-being?
  4. In your opinion, how often should a child play outside home?

### Section C

- **Broader Theme: Parents' perception of social determinants**
  - I. Children's safety
    1. How do you think children's outdoor play depends on road safety in front of their house?
    2. In your opinion, what type of rooftop safety should be maintained when letting a child play?
  - II. Adult supervision and reliability on neighborhood (including playmates)

1. Do you think children's outdoor play frequency depends on availability of adult supervision?
    - a) If yes, how do you think adult supervision impact children's outdoor play?
  2. When do you think it is safe to let children play outside without adult supervision?
  3. Would you let your children play outside alone if you have reliable neighbors?
    - a) If yes, why?
    - b) If no, why not?
  4. Would you let your children play alone outside in presence of neighborhood children?
    - a) If yes, why?
    - b) If no, why not?
  5. Do you think children's outdoor play depends on their playmate's age?
    - a) If yes, how does playmate's age impacts it?
  6. How do you feel about children playing with opposite gender playmates?
- III. Children's gender
1. Do you think children's gender has any impact on children's frequency of outdoor play?
    - a) If yes, how do you think it impacts?
    - b) If no, why do you think so?
  2. Would you feel comfortable to let girl child play alone outdoor?
    - a) If no, why do you feel that?
    - b) If no, in what conditions would you let girl child play outside?
- IV. Academic importance
1. Do you think academic study impacts children's frequency of outdoor play?
    - a) If yes, how do you think it impacts?
  2. How much do you think outdoor play is important compared to academic study?

### Section D

- **Broader Theme: Practice about supporting outdoor play**

1. How do you support your children when they want to play outside?
2. How often do you let your children play outdoor?
3. Where do you let your children play outside?

4. Do you let your children play without adult supervision outside?
  - a) If yes, in what condition do you do so?
5. Do you have any last comments regarding children's outdoor play?

## Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questionnaire

### Section E

**Title:** Parents' Perception on social determinants of outdoor play

Demographic Information							
Date:			Start Time:		End Time:		
Name of participant	Age	Gender	Educational Qualification	Occupation	Number of Children	Gender of Children	Age of Children
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							

### Section F

1. How do you think outdoor play effects children's holistic development and well-being?
2. How much do you think outdoor play is important compared to academic study?
3. When do you think it is safe to let children play outside without adult supervision? (For example- presence of playmates and neighbors, children's age etc.).
4. Would you let your children play alone outside in presence of neighborhood children? Why do you think this way? (Ask for explanation).
5. Would you let your children play outside alone if you have reliable neighbors? Why do you think this way? (Ask for explanation).

6. Do you think children's gender has any impact on children's frequency of outdoor play? (Ask for explanation).
7. What type of safety should be maintained when letting a child play on rooftop or road?
8. How do you support your children when they want to play outside?

## Annex 3

## সাক্ষাতকারের প্রশ্নমালা

## বিভাগ ক

শিরোনাম: শিশুর বাহিরে খেলার সামাজিক নির্ধারকের প্রতি মা ও বাবার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি

ডেমোগ্রাফিক তথ্য							
তারিখ:			শুরুর সময়:		শেষ সময়:		
মা/বাবার নাম	বয়স	লিঙ্গ	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	পেশা	সন্তান সংখ্যা	সন্তানের লিঙ্গ	সন্তানের বয়স
১)							

## বিভাগ খ

• বিষয়: ঘরের বাহিরে খেলা নিয়ে অভিভাবকদের জ্ঞান ও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি

১) আউটডোর প্লে বা 'ঘরের বাহিরে খেলা' বলতে আপনি কী বোঝেন?

২) ঘরের বাহিরে খেলা কি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?

ক) যদি 'হ্যাঁ' আপনার উত্তর হয়, কেন?

খ) যদি 'না' হয়, কেন নয়?

৩) ঘরের বাহিরে খেলা শিশুদের পরিপূর্ণ বিকাশ (ডেভেলপমেন্ট) ও ভালো থাকায় কীভাবে প্রভাব ফেলতে পারে বলে মনে করেন?

৪) আপনার মতে একটি শিশুর কতটুকু সময় ঘরের বাহিরে খেলা উচিত?

## বিভাগ গ

• বিষয়: শিশুদের বাহিরে খেলার সামাজিক নির্ধারক নিয়ে  
অভিভাবকদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি

v. শিশুদের নিরাপত্তা

১) বাসার সামনের রাস্তায় শিশুর খেলা রাস্তার নিরাপত্তা (রোড সেইফটির) উপর কীভাবে নির্ভর করে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?



২) আপনার মতে, ছাদে কোন শিশুকে খেলাধুলার সুযোগ দিলে কেমন ধরনের নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা উচিত?

VI. বড়দের উপস্থিতি এবং প্রতিবেশি ও খেলার সাথীদের উপর নির্ভরযোগ্যতা

১) আপনি কি মনে করেন শিশুদের ঘরের বাহিরে খেলার পরিমাণ বড়দের উপস্থিতির উপর নির্ভর করে?

ক) যদি উত্তর হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে বড়দের উপস্থিতি কীভাবে শিশুদের বাহিরে খেলার উপর প্রভাব ফেলে বলে মনে করেন?

২) বড়দের উপস্থিতি ছাড়া কখন শিশুদের বাহিরে খেলতে যাওয়া নিরাপদ বলে মনে করেন?

৩) নির্ভরযোগ্য প্রতিবেশি থাকলে আপনি কি আপনার শিশুকে বাসার বাহিরে খেলতে অনুমতি দেবেন?

ক) যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কেন?

খ) যদি না হয়, কেন?

৪) আপনি কি আপনার শিশুকে বাহিরে একা খেলতে অনুমতি দিবেন যদি পাড়া-প্রতিবেশিতে শিশুর খেলার সঙ্গী থাকে?

ক) যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, কেন?

খ) যদি না হয়, কেন নয়?

৫) আপনি কি মনে করেন শিশুদের বাহিরে খেলা তাদের খেলার সঙ্গীর বয়সের উপর নির্ভর করে?

ক) যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কীভাবে খেলার সঙ্গীর বয়স শিশুর বাহিরে খেলাকে প্রভাবিত করে?

৬) বিপরীত লিঙ্গের শিশুদের সঙ্গে বাহিরে খেলার বিষয়ে আপনি কী ভাবেন?

VII. শিশুর লিঙ্গ

১) আপনি কি মনে করেন শিশুর লিঙ্গ বাহিরে খেলার পরিমাণের ক্ষেত্রে কোন প্রভাব ফেলে?

ক) যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কীভাবে এটা প্রভাব ফেলে?

খ) যদি না হয়, কেন?

২) আপনি কি মেয়ে শিশুকে বাহিরে একা খেলতে দিতে স্বাচ্ছন্দ্যবোধ করবেন?

ক) যদি না হয় তবে কেন এমন মনে করেন?

খ) যদি না হয়, তবে কোন পরিবেশে আপনি আপনার মেয়েকে বাহিরে খেলতে অনুমতি দিবেন?

VIII. প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক পড়াশুনার গুরুত্ব

১) আপনি কি মনে করেন শিশুর প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক পড়াশুনা বাহিরে খেলার পরিমাণের উপর কোন প্রভাব ফেলে?

খ) যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, কীভাবে এটি প্রভাব ফেলে?

২) প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক পড়াশোনার পাশাপাশি বাহিরে খেলাধুলা শিশুর জন্য কতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে মনে করেন?

## বিভাগ ঘ

### • বিষয়: শিশুদের বাহিরে খেলার ক্ষেত্রে অভিভাবকদের আচরণ

১) আপনার শিশু বাহিরে খেলতে গেলে আপনি কীভাবে সহযোগিতা করেন?

২) আপনি কত সময় পর পর আপনার শিশুকে বাহিরে খেলতে পাঠান?

৩) কোথায় আপনার শিশুকে খেলতে পাঠান?

৪) আপনি কি আপনার শিশুকে কোন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক মানুষের উপস্থিতি ছাড়া ঘরের বাহিরে খেলার অনুমতি দেন?

ক) যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তাহলে কোন ক্ষেত্রে আপনি এমন করেন?

৫) আপনার কি শেষ কোন মন্তব্য আছে শিশুর বাহিরে খেলা নিয়ে?

## গুরুপ আলোচনার প্রশ্নমালা

### বিভাগ গু

শিরোনাম: শিশুর বাহিরে খেলার সামাজিক নির্ধারকের প্রতি মা ও বাবার দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি

ডেমোগ্রাফিক তথ্য							
তারিখ:			শুরুর সময়:		শেষ সময়:		
মা/বাবার নাম	বয়স	লিঙ্গ	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা	পেশা	সন্তান সংখ্যা	সন্তানের লিঙ্গ	সন্তানের বয়স
১)							
২)							
৩)							
৪)							
৫)							

### বিভাগ চ

- ১) ঘরের বাহিরে খেলা শিশুদের পরিপূর্ণ বিকাশে (ডেভেলপমেন্ট) ও ভালো থাকায় কীভাবে প্রভাব ফেলতে পারে?
- ২) প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক পড়াশোনার পাশাপাশি বাহিরে খেলাধুলা শিশুর জন্য কতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে মনে করেন?
- ৩) বড়দের উপস্থিতি ছাড়া কখন/ কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে শিশুদের বাহিরে খেলতে যাওয়া নিরাপদ বলে মনে করেন? (যেমন- খেলার সাথী, প্রতিবেশির উপস্থিতি, শিশুর বয়স ইত্যাদি)
- ৪) আপনি কি আপনার শিশুকে বাহিরে একা খেলতে অনুমতি দিবেন যদি পাড়া-প্রতিবেশিতে শিশুর খেলার সঙ্গী থাকে? কেন এমনটি মনে করেন?
- ৫) নির্ভরযোগ্য প্রতিবেশি থাকলে আপনি কি আপনার শিশুকে বাসার বাহিরে খেলতে অনুমতি দেবেন? কেন এমনটি মনে করেন?
- ৬) শিশুর লিঙ্গের (জেন্ডার) সাথে বাহিরে খেলার কি কোন সম্পর্ক আছে?

৭) ছাদে বা রাস্তায় কোন শিশুকে খেলাধুলার সুযোগ দিলে কেমন ধরনের নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা প্রয়োজন?

৮) আপনার শিশু বাইরে খেলতে গেলে আপনি কীভাবে সহযোগিতা করেন?

**Annex 4**  
**BRAC University**  
**Bangladesh**  
**Institute of Educational Department**



**Sample Participant Consent Form**

**Purpose:**

The current study is a part of thesis research, required for Master's Degree in Early Childhood Development from Institute of Educational Department of Brac University, under the supervision of Mostak Ahamed Imran sir.

The purpose of this study is to understand parental perception and practice regarding social determinants of outdoor play for 4 to 6 years old urban children.

**Procedure:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to some questions about your knowledge, beliefs, views, attitude and practices regarding outdoor play. This interview may take 40 to 60 minutes depending on your answers. With your permission, I will record the entire interview.

**Benefits/Risks to Participant:**

There is no risk to you for participating in this study.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study, Confidentiality, and Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any point during the interview. You may also stop at any time and ask the researcher to repeat any questions you do not understand. Your name will never be revealed publicly, and to your responses on the questionnaires; instead, a number will be used for identification purposes. The data will be accessible only to the researcher and the supervisor working on the research.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions, you may contact the researcher at 01959700335 or [mahsheed06@gmail.com](mailto:mahsheed06@gmail.com).

**Statement of Consent:**

If you agree to participate in the study, please indicate that by putting your signature, and date in the specified space below.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher: Mahsheed Noor Nini Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Annex 5**

### **Transcript of IDI**

#### **Participant 1**

**Me:** Hello apu, how are you?

**Participant:** I am fine alhamdulillah. How are you?

**Me:** I am fine also. Are all your family members well?

**Participant:** Yes alhamdulillah.

**Me:** Stay safe apu. So apu, today I am actually going to interview you for my thesis as I am at the end of my masters. My research is about outdoor play of children and I want to know about parent's perception regarding this, so I am going to ask you a series of questions regarding the topic. The information I will get from this interview will only be used for research purpose and confidentiality will be maintained. I need to record this interview. Can I have your permission to do and record the interview?

**Participant:** Yes.

**Me:** Great. What is your age?

**Participant:** I am 30 years old.

**Me:** What was your last educational degree?

**Participant:** I did BSc in EEE from Ashanullah University.

**Me:** What is your current occupation?

**Participant:** I am a Mathematics Teacher at Juvenile English Medium School.

**Me:** How many children do you have?

**Participant:** I have 1 girl who is 4.5 years old.

**Me:** Nice. I will now ask question related with outdoor play. What do you understand by outdoor play?

**Participant:** What I understand by outdoor play is children playing games like- running, football, cricket which involve physical activities at a place where there is sunlight, and under open sky. It is not indoor but outdoor. It can be out at field, or rooftop, not being in stuck inside 4 walls.

**Me:** Is outdoor play important for children?

**Participant:** Yes, to me it is very important. If children do not play, be it mental or physical growth, neither of them will be developed correctly. Because when playing outside, a child will not play alone but with his/her playmates. So outdoor play's impact on children seems different

compared to indoor play to me. Actually, for past 2 years due to covid pandemic, my child has played indoor games with play stations. I think playing inside becomes monotonous at some point and children get bored. Because the play materials remain same in case of indoor play. However, in terms of outdoor play, children tend to make up their own rules, or their playmates and places change from time to time. This is why I think outdoor play is more important compared to indoor play.

**Me:** How do you think outdoor play effects children's holistic development and well-being?

**Participant:** First of all, the most important fact to me is, when they play outside during day time, they get exposure to sunlight which decrease the rate of vitamin D deficiency. It is very important now a days due to Covid-19 situation. Second is, they tend to get involve in intense physical activities like running. It leads to calorie burns which makes them hungry and they eat more. As for mental growth, I think while playing outside, it gives opportunity to increase their creativity like I said before. If they get bored, children can make up their own games. I have seen this in my child. She invents new rules and games which I have never seen before. Also, they learn to assess their surroundings. For instance, when they play in a field, they learn not to put their legs in a hole or puddle of water by themselves. (*Researcher note:* participant mixed up between cognitive development with mental well-being in this case. Either she does not have knowledge regarding the relation between mental well-being with outdoor play or she did not feel to mention it throughout the whole interview).

**Me:** Next question is in your opinion, how often should a child play outside home?

**Participant:** It think it should be minimum 2 hours. But I cannot give this much time to my child. I usually stay for half an hour and take her to the rooftop in the afternoon. I cannot bring her to play on road as there is always the presence of traffic, so that's not an environment to play. Also, there is no playground or field nearby. By maintaining precaution, I think children should play daily for 2 hours.

**Me:** You mentioned about road safety which is actually my next question. How do you think children's outdoor play depends on road safety in front of their house?

**Participant:** It totally depends on road safety. Not all the drivers are sensible. Some drivers drive so fast and recklessly that they do not care about children playing on the road, so there is a possibility of road accidents happening. In case of my daughter, when I used to bring her on the road in front of my house for cycling, she would get interrupted by traffic often, so she would lose

her interest. I do not feel safe about letting my child play on road. If a road has few traffic access and more suitable for walking, we have some these type of roads in our area actually, then it is alright to let children play on road.

**Me:** In your opinion, what type of rooftop safety should be maintained when letting a child play?

**Participant:** One and only safety is railing. It has to be strong. Another issue which many of us ignore is the stairs which leads to the rooftop. My child got in a big accident when she tried to climb the stairs. The grill alongside the stairs sometimes have huge gap, so children can fall down through it. It happened to my daughter. Therefore, it is a big issue, as children will climb the stairs by themselves, stairs should be safe for them. Tiles should be smooth, not sharp so when children fall down, big accidents will not happen in stairs. It is same for rooftop surface. If the floor is rough, children will get hurt badly.

**Me:** Do you think children's outdoor play frequency depends on availability of adult supervision?

**Participant:** Now a days, parents do not allow their children to play alone outside. In this case, parents' time management is very important. Because, adults have work during day time. Even home-makers have heavy workload at home, so they cannot give time to their children. Hence, frequency of children's outdoor play is totally dependent on availability of adults. I am talking about 4 to 7 years old children, for this age group, parents will never let them play alone. Be it on road or playground, I will supervise their play. So, it is important to manage time from our side. Another thing I would like to mention is that during Covid-19 pandemic, it can be seen that many parents are interrupting child's play by sanitizing their hands and feet. This is quite irritating. When we let them play outside, it means they will come home dirty. If we restrict their movements by saying do not do this or touch this, it will hamper their play.

**Me:** Actually, this was my next question that how do you think adult supervision impact children's outdoor play? As you have already gave an answer to it, I will move on to the next question. When do you think it is safe to let children play outside without adult supervision?

**Participant:** Hmm, for a girl in context of our country, it is never safe to play outdoor alone. For a boy, I do not know when it is safe, I think when they are 13 to 14 years old. In that age group, no one could cause harm to them. Girls also become independent by this age but even then, they prefer to stay indoor as they are more habituated to this type of environment and also, they do not feel safe.

**Me:** Would you let your children play outside alone if you have reliable neighbors?



**Participant:** Yes, I will. But in this case, I need to know about my neighbor and have a long relationship with them. I will assess my neighbors by seeing how they behave with my children. My child's preference also matters, whether she feels comfortable and safe or not in presence of them. We tend to ignore children's opinion in this case. Like when they say that uncle or aunt scolded her, we brush them off by saying it is nothing. But in my case, I need to understand what they mean and listen to them.

**Me:** Would you let your children play alone outside in presence of neighborhood children?

**Participant:** I will, but after a certain age as I mentioned previously. Before turning 12 or 13 years old, I will stay with her and observe her play. Truth to be told, I do not feel safe otherwise.

**Me:** Do you think children's outdoor play depends on their playmate's age?

**Participant:** I think rather than age, it depends on if my child is comfortable with her playmate or not. Sometimes it can be seen that many kids are aggressive and have hitting tendency. So, it depends on playmates behavior, if they are safe or not to be played with.

**Me:** How do you feel about children playing with opposite gender playmates?

**Participant:** Personally, I do not care my child's playmates' gender. As I mentioned before, I only look for behavior of other children. For example, I discourage playing with those kids with whom my daughter does not feel comfortable with. In those cases, she never takes the initiative as other child hurt her or bullied her at some point during the play. In this case, I am selective. I never force my child to mingle with those whom she does not bond with. I allow her to play with children whom she prefers, despite being a girl or a boy.

**Me:** As you have mentioned previously that gender has impact on children's frequency of outdoor play. You told me boys will go out and play more than girls after certain age. How do you think it impacts?

**Participant:** It is nothing but safety issue. If I stayed in a country where there was no issue regarding safety of my child, or there was no fear of being raped or physically abused, in those cases, I would have let my daughter play alone way before. However, in context of our country, I have seen the situation with my own eyes from childhood. Here boys or girls no one is safe alone during childhood.

**Me:** You have already told me that you do not feel comfortable to let your girl play alone before. In that case, in what conditions would you let girl child play outside?

**Participant:** In a community, where there will be familiar faces, and security will be insured. For instance, there will be CCTV installed so that parents can later check if any occurrence happens. Also, there will be guard and boundary, I am talking about this type of community, where my child will be safe and secure. There will be no fear of her being lost or kidnapped. Place where I have no control over beyond the boundary, a place where I cannot know what happened to my daughter, I will be unable to let her play alone in those kinds of areas.

**Me:** Do you think academic study impacts children's frequency of outdoor play?

**Participant:** For this age group, I do not think academic study impacts the rate of playing outdoor too much.

**Me:** How much do you think outdoor play is important compared to academic study?

**Participant:** Beside academic study, a child has to stay fit physically. If I say about myself, I am not very physically fit. I cannot do heavy physical work; I easily get tired. When a child play outside, he/she gets exposed to sunlight. By playing, body fat gets burned and their stamina gets increased. Therefore, outdoor play is important to stay healthy which is not possible through doing academic study.

**Me:** How do you support your children when they want to play outside?

**Participant:** Due to pandemic, we had to be indoor to ensure safety. Before, my child used to play outdoor a lot. But now, she feels insecure to do so. When I accompany her, she feels safe and secured. If I move away from her, she usually comes to find me and stops playing which did not happened before. So, I support her by staying by her side. Another thing is, I usually do not oppose to her doing any activities, if it is not too much of a bad one. Like if she wants to pick a flower from a plant, I tell her not to do it by explaining to her. However, activities like touching soil, seeing how a leaf floats in water, I do not oppose these kinds of things.

**Me:** Apu you mentioned that you let your child play for half an hour daily. How often do you let her play outdoor weekly?

**Participant:** Honestly, I cannot do it every day. On weekend, her father stays at home. He brings her to road to do cycling. In my case, I usually try to take her to rooftop 3 to 4 days a week. But it is not constant, because on some day, I have pressure from my work place or I fall asleep after eating lunch. Despite all the obstacles, I try to take her to play outside at least 3 days.

**Me:** We have come to the end of our interview. Do you have any last comments regarding children's outdoor play?

**Participant:** We parents have to give time to our child. I feel guilty when I cannot take her out to play. A child gets bored when he/she sees that her parents are busy with their phone. And painting or drawing at home, activities like this gets monotonous to them after a while. So, I will say that, parents have the responsibility to give children time and take them outside for a little portion of a day. I know it is not possible for all parents to do so. In that case, other guardians of child (if there is any), can take them outside. Another thing is, there should be a playground for each area and a safe environment should be maintained for road safety. Even if it is a small playground, it does not matter, where at least 10 to 15 children can play, it will be enough. But there should be playing field to each area. Then, no child needs to play on road, where there is a fear or headache of safety issue.

**Me:** Thank you so much apu for giving me time.

### **Focus Group Notes 1**

**Moderator:** Hello everyone, how are you?

**Participant 1:** I am fine alhamdulillah. How are you?

**Participant 2:** I am also doing well. How are you?

**Moderator:** I am fine also. If we wait for few more minutes, I think other participants will join too. (After 5 minutes) Okay now that everyone has joined, I would like to start by saying few things about why we are gathered here today.

**Participants:** Sure.

**Moderator:** As I am at the end of my masters, I am doing my thesis now. My research is about outdoor play of children and I want to know about parent's perception regarding this, so I am going to ask you all a series of questions regarding the topic. The information I will get from this interview will only be used for research purpose and confidentiality will be maintained. I would like to request you that during the discussion, please try not to interrupt others while they are talking. I need to record this group discussion. Can I have all of your permission to do so?

**Participants:** Yes.

**Moderator:** Great. If you could please mention your age, last educational degree, job, your children's age and gender one by one please.

**Participant 1:** I am Z and have 2 children, one daughter who is in class 4 and other one is in pre-school aged 4.5 years old. My latest degree was MSc in Chemistry in 2011 from Titumir College. And I am a housewife 37 years old.

**Participant 2:** I am S and my age is 33. I am a doctor. I am currently doing my Masters in Public Health which is also at thesis part just like you. I have one daughter who is 4 years old.

**Participant 3:** I am X and am 36 years old housewife. I have 2 children, one daughter who is 6 years old and one son who is only 3 months old. My latest degree was MBA in Management in 2016 from Dhaka University.

**Participant 4:** Hello, my name is M and my age is 33. I am currently Deputy Director of Bangladesh Bank. My latest degree was MA in Public Policy from Melbourne University in 2019. I have 1 son who is 6 years old.

**Participant 5:** My name is L and I am a 35 years old housewife. My latest degree was MA in Statistics from Dhaka University. I have 2 children also. Both are sons where one is 7.5 years old and other one is 4 years.

**Moderator:** Okay. Without any further ado, I am going to ask you the first question regarding outdoor play. How do you think outdoor play effects children's holistic development and well-being?

**Participant 3:** Okay apu I will start. In case of my daughter, from very early age like from 6 months, she goes out a lot. I mean when I go to my parents' house, she goes out with my father to market and plays with rice and lentils, calculator and everything. Our home is at elephant road, so she used to go to every shop there. Also, she goes to play at park like Romna park whenever she visits her grandparents' house. Even now, in every chance she gets, she wants to go out and play. Because of her tendency to play and go outdoor is that she can now bond with people very quickly. Plus, she learned to talk pretty quickly too. If she would have stayed at home, she would watch TV or mobile frequently. As she did not, she never developed any screen time addiction. From tender age, she is outgoing. So, what I think is, by playing indoor, children will not be developed holistically which actually occurs by playing outdoor. It gives opportunity to socialize with other children plus increases their general knowledge.

**Moderator:** Okay thank you apu. Do any of apu wants to add anything?

**Participant 1:** Yes apu, in case of my daughters, as we do not have any playground near our house, they play on the road in front of our house. Every day, in a particular time, which is from Asar to

Magrib, they play outside. They play badminton, football or do cycling. Each child should be given this opportunity. We also played in our childhood more than the children of now. There is no space for playing as there are no playgrounds, even in the school, there is no space to play. It is necessary to play outside for children as it impacts their mental development greatly. (*Researcher note*: She mostly talked about her daughters and answer were not relevant).

**Participant 5**: I would like to say that play itself is important for children and outdoor play is more important. While playing indoor, they are stuck inside 4 walls but outdoor play different. It changes scenario. They get close with nature which impacts their mental well-being. Because it gives joy to a child when he/she interact with it. They also get to know other people, see different things. Children are always curious about knowing the unknown. Inside home, it gets monotonous for them but while playing outdoor, they can explore and comes to face something new.

**Moderator**: Next question is how much do you think outdoor play is important compared to academic study?

**Participant 2**: Okay I would like to add. Academic study is learning through writing and reading which is two dimensional. And outdoor is the real world. If I give an example of my daughter, she saw a picture of a bus in a book. However, by reading it, she will not realize the size of the bus, or how does it move and what kind of sound it makes. Therefore, what they learn and gain through academic study, its whole applied knowledge exists outside. When they will go outside and see, they will understand how much a bus is bigger than her. Academic study and outdoor play should not be compared as two of these are both equally important. Children learn through both medium.

**Moderator**: I can see participant M has raised her hand. Please apu go ahead.

**Participant 4**: Yes, what S apu (participant 2) said, I completely agree with her. What I think is that while playing outdoor or going outside, they can pick things up spontaneously. By academic study, we understand learning in school by doing homework. They learn through this process alright but they catch things faster when they see it outside. It stays in their memory for longer time.

**Moderator**: Okay we will go to the next question. When do you think it is safe to let children play outside without adult supervision?

**Participant 5**: I think never.

**Participant 1**: Yes me too. Specially in current situation.

**Participant 5:** Yes, current social environment and situation makes it very unsafe. Be it a boy or girl child.

**Participant 1:** Yes. As a guardian, I do not feel safe to let my children play alone. We played alone in our childhood, be it in urban area or rural area at our grandparents' home. We used to play hours after hours and our parents did not even bother to be tensed. But now, in this society, we do not actually have the faith to do the same. Without any adult guardian's presence, we do not feel safe to let children play alone.

**Moderator:** Okay, do all the rest of the apus feel the same?

**Participant 2:** Yes.

**Participant 3:** Yes, I agree.

**Participant 4:** Yes.

**Moderator:** Would you let your children play alone outside in presence of neighborhood children?

**Participant 1:** By playmates, they will stay whenever a child plays outside but as I have said previously, in this current environment, I do not feel safe. Whenever I open the newspaper or see the news in mobile phone, I cannot bring myself to let them play alone. I know this is not a good practice to always monitor them, but the situation and environment does not allow us to do the right thing.

**Moderator:** S apu do you want to say anything?

**Participant 2:** I do not want to answer this question on basis of situation in Bangladesh only. Outdoor play or any play for children under 5 should be guided. Because it is not only about strangers harming a child, but there are many other risk factors too. There could be hole in a place. So play should be guided by an adult, it can be anyone like parents or caregiver. Although there are less playgrounds in Bangladesh, there are many indoor play stations at different places where children can play with different rides. So, if we think like this, not only in Bangladesh, but also worldwide, play should be guided. I will not be interfering by saying you should play like this and that, but it should be under observation. (*Researcher note:* Participant 5 was nodding her head in agreement while participant 2 was saying it).

**Moderator:** Do anyone want to add anything? (After waiting for 5 seconds). Okay then moving on to the next question. Would you let your children play outside alone if you have reliable neighbors?

**Participant 2:** Yes. It is an incident that happened in the morning today (laughing). My neighbor have 2 kids and I let my daughter to go outside play with them alone in presence of the neighbor. My mother strongly opposed to this saying that I should not have done this, I should be present. But to me, my neighbors seemed reliable enough. To get hurt while playing, it can also happen at my place. So I think it should be allowed to let children play with others if there is an adult present to supervise the play. What happens when I allow her to play in absence of me is that, my daughter does things which she normally does not do. We have a tendency of being overbearing, we do not want to miss any moments of our children. But I want her to be independent, be able to manage things when I am not there. If I am present, I will interfere when I will see there is a problem in sharing suppose. Then she will not learn how to manage this kind of situation. But in absence of me she will somehow manage or try to manage. So, if there is anyone reliable there to guide the play, then I will absolutely allow her play outside alone.

**Moderator:** Z apu, maybe you tried to say something?

**Participant 1:** Yes. We live in a kind of joint family as we are living in the same apartment building. So, from time to time, my daughters go to their house and play outside with them. It should be allowed, this kind of thing. If they are being monitored all the time, they will get irritated at some point. If a reliable adult is present, then it can be allowed.

**Moderator:** M apu and X apu, do you want to add anything?

**Participant 4:** I will also allow to play in presence of trusted adult. Whenever I went out to study or work, I would leave my son in hands of licensed caregiver, it can be my neighbor also. In this case, I do not have any trust issues. I am talking about when I stayed at Australia. If this type of service is available in Bangladesh, it would have been wonderful. In case of my son, I want him to play alone with other children, but he is not very good at social communication. In my area, children play badminton at afternoon, I want him to go there. But he is shy so he does not want to go. Which brings me to the first and second questions you asked. I have said that, academic study can be progressed at some point in life but if children do not play outside with others and participate in this type of social event, they will be left behind and delay would occur in communication skills.

**Participant 3:** My daughter plays with my neighbor's boy who is one year younger than her every day outside. They just wait for each other to wake up in the morning. They are reliable and I seldom go to check on them to see whether there is any problem or not.

**Moderator:** Do you think children's gender has any impact on children's outdoor play?



**Participant 5:** Relation between children's gender and outdoor play should not exist but society creates it sadly. After a certain age, because of our culture and religion, it can be seen that adults do not permit boys or girls to play with each other. But from early childhood, it should be taught that gender does not matter between friends.

**Participant 2:** I would like to include that in terms of outdoor play, threat is equal to boys and girls despite their gender. So, I do not think frequency of outdoor play does depend on child's gender.

**Moderator:** What type of safety should be maintained when letting a child play on rooftop or road?

**Participant 5:** I do not allow to play on road. When playing on roof, the railing should be at least above the head height.

**Participant 1:** Traffic should be less and a guardian should be present while letting them play on road. In case of rooftop, railing safety should be ensured.

**Participant 4:** We do not have a better alternative in our country against playing on road or rooftop. The place where we are staying has a gate at the entrance of the road. Therefore, number of traffic is almost non-existent here. So, this kind of safety measures should be taken. If there was any better alternative like, there is a field beside our house or our suburb has a small playground, I would have felt safer. In case of playing on roof, railing should be there but I will not let my child play alone there, it has to be guided.

**Participant 3:** Traffic density should be less if I want to let my child play on road. Roof seems more safer to me.

**Participant 2:** I would like to add that neither road or rooftop is an appropriate place to play. Specially road, as anything can drop on head from a building, even if there is no presence of traffic. In case of playing on roof, I pay attention to the surface of the roof that it should not be rough. Because children playing means they will run and jump. Surface of the roof are rarely made of tiles, but mostly with bricks or cements. So, I make sure my daughter wears full pants, so she would get less hurt even if she falls. Previously, I made her wear knee guard but when she regained more balance over her own body, I stopped it. Railing safety is another issue. Another thing is, usually there are many flower pots and plants on rooftop. As this is Dengue season, precaution should be maintained that they do not come back home with mosquito bite and fall ill. Again, what they are playing at the roof is an issue to be concerned about. Playing with ball should not be



allowed. Ball is a thing that children have a tendency to chase after it. It can result in an accident, as they can fall from roof while trying to catch it. Games played on roof should be different, so playing material should be sorted out carefully. It should involve less movement.

**Moderator:** We have come to our last question. How do you support your children when they want to play outside?

**Participant 5:** I support them by staying with them when they play outside. Truth to be told, my children do not get that much of opportunity to play outside. They play in the house maximum time. They usually play on roof as it has smooth surface and the railing is high. I let them play there. Besides this, the congested play corners that some restaurants have, I sometimes go there and let them play with ball. Weekly they play outside 3 to 4 days. I cannot give much time to them.

**Participant 2:** We have rooftop and yard in front of our house. So, she plays there. On weekend, she goes to her neighbor's home to play. Usually, I try to visit with my child to playground or park like Chandrima Udyan at least once a month, but this practice stopped due to covid. Now she plays at home, roof and in the yard every day, though I will not consider it as outside as it is part of our home. I play passive role when she plays outdoor. I let her take the decision. I just observe how she participate in play. When she asks for help, then I interfere. Otherwise, I refrain from giving her direction. Aside from this, I support her by maintaining precautions and providing water, handkerchief.

**Participant 1:** I stay by her side. My daughter likes to ride cycle so at that time, I stay with her. We have kittens at our garage, so that time I stay with her. I let her play alone with neighborhood children. They can be younger or older but in both case an adult is present there. She plays every day for at least 2 hours from Asar to Maghrib prayer.

**Participant 4:** My child plays on the roof almost every day. He cannot play badminton but wants us (his parents) to play, which he enjoys a lot. We play to entertain him. I try to arrange a short trip on weekend. It is not about play all the time. As I try to expose him to social events, I take him to market also. We go to park at Mirpur DOHS at least once or twice a week. I try to play a passive role also when he plays, but maximum time it is not possible as my child is not social. He is more comfortable with his parents. It is difficult for him to approach stranger children. Moreover, he does not have playmates who are in same age range. Even his cousins are much older than him, so he feels more comfortable playing with us.

**Participant 3:** Whenever my daughter goes out, I dress her up appropriately as per season. As she has dust allergies, I instruct her beforehand not to go play in soil or dust. The frequency of her playing outdoor is not constant. In some week, she plays 2 to 3 days outside, in others, outdoor play does not happen at all.

**Moderator:** Okay thank you so much to all of you for your time.