

Safeguarding of 5 to 8 year old children in Primary School premise
in Kaligonj

By

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

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Brac University
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my 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 have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: “Safeguarding of 5 to 8 year old children in Primary School premise in Kaligonj”

Student name: Gloria Gomes

1. Source of population

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

- a) Physical risk to the subjects
- b) Social risk
- c) Psychological risk to subjects
- d) discomfort to subjects
- e) Invasion of privacy

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

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

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

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

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

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

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Executive Summary

Children are delicate in nature. When a child is born in a family, she/he entirely relies on a human support that is his/her mother or caregiver. Children need special care, support and a safe environment which supposed to be positive and stimulating for children's physical, mental, social and emotional development. Home is the safest and secure place for children. However, when children enter in the social environment, school is the place where children spend most of their time after home. Therefore, Children look for the same safety, security and care in the school as home through teachers, peers and friends. This study focused on that situation. Especially, this study discussed and focused on the knowledge, perception, practices of the schools, teachers, and parents regarding children's safeguarding issues in the school premise. This study was qualitative in nature and was guided by the explorative approach. Children's safeguarding is a verse area to explore, consequently children maltreatment is selected to study on as one of the common factors of children's safeguarding. The population of this study was primary school teachers and parents from a rural area of Kaligonj under Gazipur district.

Two Primary school teachers including Head teachers and the 6 parents of the children aged 5 to 8 years were sampled purposively as research participants. Two data collection methods were used in order to achieve the objectives; i) Focus Group Discussion (FGD), ii) In-depth-interview (IDI). After collecting data, it was managed using content analysis method.

Results from the analysis revealed that most of the teachers and parents expressed the need of a safe and secure environment for their children's holistic development. Though they feel the inevitability of safety and security for their children in the school where children will learn and play freely without fear but still they keep emphasizing on to ensure children's education only, children safeguarding issues are quite left out from their attention. They have a minimum knowledge and practices regarding these issues. Moreover, schools haven't developed / implemented or arranged any sort of child safeguarding policy or plan, training or seminar for schools teachers or parents. As a result many teachers do not have enough knowledge how to work on safety and security issues in the school. All of the participants stated only physical punishment in the question of child maltreatment in the school. The other kinds of abuses are remote from their observation and attention. Nevertheless, they are experiencing this sort of matters in their daily experiences. Some of the teachers had only a "Half day program "on children safeguarding issues but haven't taken any necessary steps after program. So the results of this study suggests that GoB and the schools as well should focused on this issue, should take necessary steps to ensure children's safety and security in the school premise.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my Parents Raphael Gomes and Jyostna Rozario, and also to my Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sorrows for their love and relentless support for my journey.

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Gloria Gomes

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List of Acronyms

WHO	World Health Organization
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
WTTSC	Working together to safeguard children
BSAF	Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum
UNCRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child
FGD	Focus group discussion
IDI	In-depth Interview

Chapter I

Introduction & Background

Introduction

Children safeguarding is a relatively new term which extends beyond the definition of “Child Protection.” Children safeguarding is what we tend to do for all children and child protection is what we tend to do for children in danger of great hurt (Hall, 2015). Safeguarding is explained by four components as Protect, Prevent, Safety and Action .Protecting kids from maltreatment; preventing impairment of kid’s health or development; making sure that children are unit growing up in circumstances aligned with the availability of safe and effective care and undertaking that role thus modify those kids to own optimum life probabilities and to enter adulthood with success (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2006: pp34-35). Safeguarding is a vast area to explore. Therefore, this study will focus on one component of children’s safeguarding that is “Protecting Children from Maltreatment.”

Child Maltreatment:

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) defines Child abuse/ maltreatment as "all forms of physical, sexual, emotional maltreatment, neglect or negligent treatment leading to actual or potential damage to the child's health, survival, regulatory offense, development or dignity within the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

One of the study showed that Child maltreatment or abuse takes place everywhere now, whether at homes, in the schools or in workplaces, institutions and even in the public areas. It is also found that among child abuses, sexual abuses are difficult to assess because of the sense of shame they create and the risks children face in reporting them. The main reason for violence against children could be the clash of interest and power between adults and children

in child beating. Parents often hit their children out of anger and frustration, as they have no idea about the adverse impact of physical punishment. Bangladesh is in the top position in the world and physical punishment starts in their homes (Mahajan, 2014).

Data also appeared that among school-going children, 91% reported that it occurs at their schools. Many of teachers trust that physical punishment is the best way to discipline children and they are not aware about the negative impact of physical punishment. About two-thirds of teachers, both male and female, punish students physically. Teachers hit them with a stick or belt or other object; kicking, shaking, or throwing children; scratching, pinching or pulling their hair; and locking or tying them up and twisted their ears are some of the most common examples of physical punishment (UNICEF, 2009).

Sometimes the female students become victim of sexual abuse from their male teachers. The students from rich families find low punishment or find no punishment. A child who is constantly exposed to physical punishment faces a risk of losing his/her self-confidence and self-esteem, and as a result may develop negative personality traits such as being excessively aggressive. Some teachers who are involved with private tuitions punish only those students who do not attend with private tuitions. Physical punishment is slightly more common in primary schools than in madrasas (faith schools) and less common in NGO schools (UNICEF 2009).

Recently the GoB prohibited physical and mental punishment to the children in schools. Among those who were working, one-quarter reported that physical punishment occurs in their workplaces. The employers beat mercilessly the workers in the pretext of stealing or when something is broken carelessly by them. The employers often tortured physically and sexually abuse the child workers (Mohajan, 2012a).

Statement of the Problem

Child abuse/ maltreatment is a global social “illness” which has led to several research studies being done in this area (Mersch, 2011). However, defining, understanding and intervening in child abuse are widely based on the perspectives of adults, social service and health care practitioners, and academics (Chan, Lam & Shae, 2011).

Human beings become a reflected image of the globe within which they develop. If that world is safe, foreseeable, and characterized by relationally and cognitively enhanced opportunities, the kid will grow to be self-moving, thoughtful, and an inventive member of family, community, and society.

The social learning theory proposed by Bandura (1994:71-81) has underpinned this study. Social learning theory is based on the valuable notion that behavior is learned through observation and modeling significant people in one’s life. This theory has significance for the assumptions listed above, since children in rural communities depend largely on the “education” provided by their families when dealing with successes or challenges faced by families. Hence, for children this may translate into dealing with situations as elders do (modelling) (Bandura, 1994).

Since adults in rural communities have greater problems to deal with such as poverty, sickness, natural calamities and resource constraints, it follows logically then that abuse, neglect and gender-based violence may not be given priority in their lives as areas of concern (Perumal & Kasiram, 2009). Rather these may be passed off as difficulties of daily living and therefore, according to social learning theory, children may learn from adults to ignore situations of abuse and neglect (Bandura, 1994).

Children are not safe in anyplace now, not at home, in the school or in the society. Home is the best place for children where they are safe and secure. Child abuse rate whether physical and mental are increasing day by day. Education is central to safeguard children. Every Child

Matters, 2003 (Chief Secretary to the Treasury) has argued that there are several ways in which education is held to be important in safeguarding children; it is central to the 'enjoying and achieving' outcome of *Every Child Matters* and in the longer-term concerns with the economic wellbeing of children.

According to Barach (2017) Bangladeshi children have been victims of both physical and psychological/mental abuse, as well as subjects of neglect, sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking for decades. Abuse is not only prevalent at home, but also faced by children while in school and at workplace (cited in the Journal of International Law, The Need for a Comprehensive National Educational System, Brooklyn).

Child abuse in the country has reached a horrendous level so much so that 13,012 children have fallen prey to different forms of brutal torture in the last five years (Dhaka tribune, Nov 4th, 2017).

Purpose of the study

The study focused on the perception of school authority, teachers and parents on safeguarding issues for children aged between 5 and 8 years of primary School. The purpose of the study was to explore the teachers, parents' understanding of safeguarding in school and find out the support they provided when children were at risk of significant harm.

The child's interests would come first and their dignity must be protected by the people who would come into contact with them.

Significance of the study:

The young children were more sensitive than adults; they needed more attention and protection in their early years. Most of the time they would spend at home and in school. The parents of the children entrusted the care of their children to the school and school was responsible for these children's well-being and protection. "Keeping Children Safe

in Education, 2018” a statutory guidance from the Department for Education in UK provided clear indications that - School should have their own individual safeguarding policy, which should meet the needs of their children in their community, with the particular kinds of issues that might be most important for them. All who came into contact with children would have the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children at home or in the school. Bangladesh however, focused more on child protection than safe safeguarding issues. According to the report of Child Rights Situation analysis 2016, The Government of Bangladesh put more emphasis on Child protection than child safeguarding. Focused on Child labor, Child marriage than physical, verbal, humiliating, and threatening in forms of discipline or punishment

This study would help the schools as well as the nation to know and ensure children safeguarding in school premises. By implementing safeguarding policy and plan in the schools, children could grow up in a safe and secure environment which would help them to develop with their full potential. However, future generations would be more confident and capable to lead the nation.

Therefore, the purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions and practices of teachers, authority and parents regarding children safeguarding in primary school premises under Gazipur is justified at this time in the early childhood development discourse of Bangladesh. Furthermore, it was found that very limited study were conducted to see how much children were safe and secure, how much teachers, parents and school authorities knew about this concept in the government and non-government pre-schools in Bangladesh. This study was expected to produce knowledge to develop further understanding in the areas of preschool policy making, programs development

about child safeguarding, practices, building awareness among teachers and parents in the rural context of Bangladesh.

Research Topic & Research Questions

Research questions:

- What is the perception of parents and teachers on safeguarding issues in school?
- What plans and policies schools have for children's safeguarding?
- If the school has already some kind of policy or plan regarding safe guarding issues, how are they practicing or implementing them?

Objectives:

- To know the perception of parents and teachers about safeguarding issues in school premise.
- To explore the school authorities knowledge and attitude on safeguarding issues in School.

1.6 Operational Definition

Perception: Mckellar (1968) describes perceptions as a supporter of plans and ideas and as a controller of the extent of our thinking and imagining. Perceptions stem from the experiences that we face with our senses and the knowledge we gather from experiences depicted by others. Once we complete this learning process our perceived knowledge shapes our behavior and forms our expectations (as cited in Akhter, 2012, p. 7). It helps to understand how human live, learn, work and perceive their environment (Ingold, 2000). Teachers' perception explains their understanding regarding some practices which they have gathered through knowledge, experiences, culture and beliefs. Pajares (1992) explains that teacher's perception,

beliefs, and expectations help to be an effective teacher (as cited in Chong, 2005). Perception develops through combination of sensory information, experience and knowledge. Teachers' own expectations, needs, unconscious ideas, and conflicts can influence their perception (Merriam Webster, 2012).

Teacher: A teacher is a person who facilitates her students especially in school setting. It is a noble profession. Teacher helps her students to learn, creating maximum opportunities for her children. She creates the class environment irresistible for students to achieve her learning goals. In this study teachers, head teachers and parents who has children 5 to 8 years from two primary schools, were taken as the participants for collecting data.

Importance of Teachers' Perception: "Teachers have a marvelous power in their hands, for they can significantly affect a child's whole life" (Schwartz, 1984). Besides this it has been revealed by many studies that educators' attitudes and knowledge of inclusion affects the type and quality of classroom practices (Kuyini & Desai, 2007).

Chapter II

Literature Review

Exploring through various sources, the researcher came across a limited number of scholarly studies on the area of safeguarding children in the context Bangladesh. Scrutinizing and examining relevant research articles, the following literatures were reviewed to analyze the research topic and for building up the rationale for conducting the current research.

Safeguarding Children

Victoria Adjo Climbié's name was in some way related to the children's safeguarding issues. Victoria Adjo Climbié (1991-2000) was born in Ivory Coast and was tortured and murdered in the hands of her great-aunt on 25th February 2000 in the UK. About 128 injury marks were found on her body after her death (Timeline: Victoria Climbié. BBC News, 2003). Victoria's death was largely accountable for the formation of the "Every Child matters 2006" initiative and the introduction of the "Child Act 2004". "Working together to safeguard children" was kept focused after the death of Victoria Climbié in the society of UK.

Various researches showed that following the tragic death of Victoria, Climbié society became more aware of safeguarding issues (BBC News, Tuesday 28 January 2003). The government inquiry into her death noted that despite the involvement of many agencies "no one had the presence of mind to follow simple procedures" (Laming, 2003) and subsequently made 108 recommendations. The Children's Act (2004) and Every Child Matters agenda (2004) adopted many of these recommendations, and in 2006 the government of UK stipulated the roles and responsibilities of agencies to safeguard children in the publication "Working Together to Safeguard Children (WTTSC)". All agencies working directly with children now had a statutory obligation to have a designated child protection person who

could act as a focal point for child protection concerns. It also allowed families and children to access services that were available to them if they needed any help or support.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) declared, “States Parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse” [UNCRC, Article 19].

Safeguarding children in school premise

Everyday many of children throughout the world are exposed to physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, exploitation, and violence in different settings, including in their homes, schools, communities and work environments.

Research showed that children were at the risk of violence in school premises nowadays. The UN Study on Violence against Children revealed that children worldwide were at the risk of violence in and around the school. The children were at the risk of threats ranging from rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and physical beatings to verbal abuse, bullying, taunting, stereotyping, and other forms of humiliation. However, this study also revealed that teachers, school authorities and peers were also the perpetrators of such abuse. (Manual for child-friendly School, United Nations, and children’s Fund, UNICEF, 2009).

Child Protection, Safeguarding, and Prevent Policy in line with keeping Children Safe in Education 2018, UK mentioned that schools should provide a safe, caring, positive and stimulating environment, which supports the social, physical, and moral development where each child would be free from discrimination or bullying and children could learn and develop happily.

The UNICEF manual for child-friendly school also suggested that the surface environment of a school or learning space, including its community, society were vital to children’s safety, security, and development. So to increase school safety, fences should be built to protect

children from harmful outside influences. It was also necessary, that constant supervision was arranged for all facilities of the school its yard. (Manual for child-friendly School, United Nations, and children's Fund, UNICEF, 2009).

Attig & Hopkins (2006) stated that to build a safe and protective learning environment for children, school needed to deal with more than the obvious issues of physical danger and health risks. According to them, attention should also be given to the children's emotional, psychological and physical well-being, protecting them from verbal and emotional abuse and the trauma of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, ethnic prejudice or pushiness by teachers and peers as suggested in the UNICEF manual for child-friendly school 2009.

This manual for child-friendly school (2009) also mentioned that schools that were child-friendly schools must protect students from the psychological harm that can result from various kinds of punishment perpetrated by peers or by teachers, such as verbal abuse, name-calling and other forms of humiliation. School authorities should also recognize that children could be affected by prejudice and biases that result in isolation and exclusion by their peers. Violence and abuse might occur as a teacher-on-student phenomenon, as with corporal punishment, or as a student-on-student phenomenon or even a student-on-teacher phenomenon. In many instances, the forms of violence might overlap. It is important to understand and recognize these links.

Forms of violence in Schools: Child maltreatment

The World Health Organization (WHO,2013) defined abuse as "all types of physical, emotional abuse sexual harassment, neglect or different exploitation that occur potential hurt to the child's health, survival, and development. The World Health Organization classified four types of child maltreatments: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional (or psychological) abuse, and neglect.

Physical abuse:

Joan Durrant and Ron Ensom mentioned that most physical abuse was physical punishment "in intent, form, and effect". Corporal punishment involved touch ('smacking', 'slapping', 'spanking') children, with the hand or with a tool – whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. These punishments were coerced upon or students were compelled to take part, as an example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to remain in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced bodily function (for example, laundry children's mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices) (Pinheiro, 2006).

It was mentioned in a school manual that although few countries banned corporal punishment and there were still many countries where corporal punishment was a regular part of schooling (Manual for child-friendly School, United Nations, and children's Fund, UNICEF, 2009).

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse referred to the participation of a child during a sexual act aimed toward the physical gratification or the money profit of the person committing the act. (Shaw, 2000).

Study found that both boys and girls were exposed to different forms of sexual abuses in the school by teachers, school administrators or also by students against female students mentioned in a manual for a child-friendly school (Manual for child-friendly School, United Nations, and children's Fund, UNICEF, 2009).

Psychological/ Emotional abuse/neglect:

In the term of physical/ emotional abuse/ neglect O'Hagan and Oates described that the foundations for good mental health laid down in the emotional development that occurred in infancy and later childhood and appeared to be dependent upon the quality and frequency of

response to an infant or child from a parent or primary caregiver (O'Hagan 1993; Oates 1996).

Some researchers said *“Parents are the one who are responsible for the infant’s emotional development, their emotions, and behaviors. This emotional attitude depends on the formation of the attachment, bond of children and parents. It has been found that this bond develops in the early years of life and closely linked to the behavioral response of the parent and the ongoing cycle of parent-child interaction”* (Adam M. T. and Joe Tucci.1997).

Although, the precise relationship between emotional abuse and other forms of maltreatment is currently not known (National Research Council,1993). Emotional abuse might occur as a distinct form of abuse (e.g. verbal abuse, threats to abandon a child, witnessing domestic violence) (Navarre 1987), or in conjunction with other forms of maltreatment (Herrenkohl, 1990).

Some researchers expressed that severe, early, chronic experiences of abuse and neglect might lead to the profound damage in psychological development that, in turn, set the context for the burial of severe and deadly violence against others (Garbarino, 1999; Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997).

Global Context and the context of Bangladesh on the Features of

Child maltreatment:

Child maltreatment is a global problem now. Child maltreatment or abuse has been defined as when “a person willfully or unreasonably causes a young person to do, any act that is likely to endanger the safety of a child or that causes a child or young person (a) any unnecessary physical pain, suffering or injury; (b) any emotional injury; or (c) any injury to his or her health or development” (Chan, Elliott, Chow, & Thomas, 2002, p. 361). The United Nations (UN) continues that violence is one of the most serious problems affecting children today.

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2013) estimated that about 40 million children below the age of 15 experienced abuse and neglect requiring health and social care. At any given time, about 300,000 child-soldiers, some as young as 8 years, were in armed conflicts in more than 30 countries. In Central and Eastern Europe, 1.5 million children lived in orphanages that provided minimal care. Two million children were exploited through prostitution and pornography (UNICEF, n.d.).

In the United States, reports of child abuse and neglect showed increase by approximately 10% a year since 1976 (Children's Defense Fund, 1999). Although fewer parents were reporting a belief in the use of corporal punishment, a 1995 survey in the United States showed that 5% of parents admitted disciplining their child by hitting the child with an object, kicking the child, beating the child, or threatening the child with a knife or gun. In 2017, the WHO estimated that up to 1 billion minors between the ages of 2 and 17 years of age endured violence, either physical, emotional, or sexual. Sexual abuse (from groping to rape), according to some UNICEF estimates, in 2014 affected over 120 million children representing the highest number of victims. In 2017, the same UN organization reported that in 38 low and middle-income countries, almost 17 million adult women admitted having a forced sexual relationship during their childhood (UNICEF, 2017).

On the global level, it emerged that such violence (whether physical, sexual or emotional) was committed mostly by parents, relatives, spouses of child brides, or teachers. Besides, according to UNICEF data from 2017 regarding 38 countries, out of 10 adolescents who reported forced sexual relations, 9 revealed that they were victims of a person they know or was close to the family (UNICEF, 2017).

In the context of South Asia and Bangladesh, one study showed that in some countries in South Asia, personal laws influenced the nature of rights and legal protection granted to children. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka directly inherited colonial legal mechanisms – systems of personal law that inherently afford varying rights to individuals based on religious or ethnic identity (Panditaratne, D. 2008).

Solotaroff and Pande (2014) write, *“These personal laws reinforce understandings of community and identity, by combining the idea of ‘rights’ with one’s religion. Thus those individuals who do not define themselves within one specific religious identity must identify themselves with one for legal purposes.”*

An Indian study reported that 75.5% and 78.5% of school-going children in Kerala were physically abused during the past year and lifetime respectively. The World Health Organization reveals that while 25–50% of all children were physically abused, 5–10% of boys and 20% of girls were abused sexually worldwide. Similarly, high prevalence rates of Child maltreatment are observed in a suburban community in Punjab, Pakistan (80%) and in Sri Lanka (76%). Further, in Vietnam, 73% of the primary caregivers practiced violent discipline towards their children (Atiqul, Janson, Moniruzzaman, Rahman AKMF, Islam & Mashreky, et al., 2019).

One study also reported that in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Pakistan, these laws had historically been influenced by Sharia, or Islamic law, and were sometimes incompatible with the provisions of international agreements (Choudhury, N. 2007).

However, in Bangladesh, a large number of children are deprived of their basic human rights due to unacceptable health, nutrition, education as well as social conditions. Needless to say that children are exposed to severe forms of sexual, physical and mental abuse at home, in the

workplace, in institutions and other public places as all the other countries of the world. The nature and extent of violence against children is increasing day by day. These include physical torture, rape, homicide and sometimes heinous attacks with acid. Children are also victims of child labor and trafficking, both of which wretched as the most severe form of child exploitation and child abuse in the world today. (Islam & Akhter, 2015)

In the context of Bangladesh, limited study or policy implemented for children safeguarding issues. In the National Children Policy 2010, children safety issue was indirectly related to the issue of child protection.

According to Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF), a total of 4,566 children were subjected to different types of violence in 2018 – 721 more than in 2017. Violence against children shot up by 18.75% in Bangladesh in 2018, leading to the premature death of more than 2,000 children, according to a children's right advocacy group.

Unnatural death of children increased by a shocking 37.66% in 2018 – 2,354 children were killed by violence, compared to 1,710 in 2017. At least 139 children were reported to have been beaten last year – more than double the number of 2017, which was 66. Of them, six were beaten to death, whereas around 812 children were subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation in 2018 – a decline from 894 in 2017.

Analyzing the news reports, the BSAF found that 57 different kinds of violent acts had been committed against children last year (BSAF, Dhaka Tribune, Nov 2019).

The violation of child rights was a common matter in Bangladesh. The children were entitled to basic rights to education, health, protection but most of the children of Bangladesh were deprived of these basic rights (Mohajan, 2014). Since the government of Bangladesh emphasized to fulfill the basic needs of the poor people, child safety-related issues were being deprived of their attention.

In a statistical study on child violence in Bangladesh, it was found that 36 percent of the people earn less than one dollar per day. Poverty, discrimination, and the effects of natural disasters presented grave challenges to children (Odhikar, 2015).

The BSAF also reported that at least 191 children were killed until July 2015, 350 in 2014, 218 in 2013 and 209 in 2012. At least 968 children were killed after brutal torture from 2012 to July 2015. The BSAF also noted in this year, occurrences of murder, kidnap, human trafficking, rape, sexual harassment and violence against children were also on the rise (The Daily Star, 2015).

On the other hand, National children policy 2011 of Bangladesh reflected child protection in its article no 6.7 where it was clearly explained the importance of ensuring child security and safety against all forms of exploitation, violence, mental, physical and sexual abuse. It highlighted on increased public awareness regarding these issues.

It was also satisfying to mention that the child protection program of Bangladesh was working on two critical issues; reducing the potential that children would be trafficked for sex or labor and improve systems that protect children and restore survivors.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Participants

This study included 2 groups of participants: a) Teachers b) Parents.

- a) Teachers: Six teachers were interviewed in this study. Two head teachers and four teachers were interviewed from two primary school. (One head teacher and two teachers' total 3 teachers from each of the school). All of them were female teachers. One of the head teachers was 44 years and another Head teacher was 49 year old. The age range of the other 4 teachers varied between 26 to 45 years. Of 6 teachers, 4 have completed B.Ed., one completed both B.Ed. and M.Ed. and one was studying Bachelor Degree. Teaching experience varied according to the age of the teachers. The older teachers had more years of experience compared to the ones who had the least amount of experience. Four teachers had teaching experience from 10 -16 years. Rests of the two teachers had 3-8 years of experience.
- b) Parents: Total six parents participated in Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Of them, 3 fathers and 3 mothers who had children aged 5 to 8 years were selected for this study. The parent's age range varied between 20 and 35years. Of them, two mothers

and one father completed H.S.C. One mother completed Bachelor Degree and two fathers did not complete S.S.C. All the fathers were having job and all of the mothers were housewife.

Data showed that both teachers and parents did not participate in any kind of children safeguarding or early childhood training/seminar.

Research Site

Study locations were selected from two Bangla Medium Primary School situated in Kaligonj Thana (PS) under Gazipur district. Of the two schools, one was governmental and other was non-governmental primary School. The selected area represented the rural area of Bangladesh. Gazipur was chosen purposively for the convenience of the researcher to collect data from nearby locations from her own home. This area represented middle and lower middle income group. All the in-depth interviews and FGD were conducted in the Schools.

Research Approach

The design of the study was based on the qualitative-exploratory approach. Since the purpose of the study was to explore the knowledge and attitudes of parents and teachers on safeguarding in school premise, it required deriving in-depth knowledge and perception of the study participants

Therefore, a qualitative research approach was suitable to achieve the purpose of this study. Combining the two methods of qualitative research approach, this study was able to collect useful in-depth data to achieve its purpose.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected through two different methods: i) in-depth interviews with the teachers, and ii) focus group discussion (FGD) with parents.

- In-depth Interview with Teachers: In total six interviews were conducted with 6 teachers from two schools. Two teachers and one head teacher total three teachers were selected from each of the schools. Each of the interviews was 50 to 60 minutes long on an average. An open ended interview questionnaire was used for the interviews. Participants were contacted prior to the interview to seek their consent. In administering the interview sessions, each question of the questionnaire was explained in local language or the language suitable for the participants wherever necessary for their better understanding. Interview was recorded with the help of an assistant in cell phone.
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Parents: Only one FGD was conducted with six parents (three fathers and three mothers) in one group. The FGD was conducted using an open ended FGD checklist. FGD was 60 to 75 minutes long on an average. In administering the FDG session, each question of the questionnaire was explained in local language or the language suitable for the participants wherever necessary for their better understanding. It was also recorded with the help of an assistant in cell phone.

Sampling Procedure

The Researcher approached to the Head teachers of two schools and asked for their consent to conduct one FGD in one of the schools and in-depth interviews from two schools. Information sheet and consent form were developed to take prior approval of Head teachers of schools and participants. Prior to beginning of data collection, an appropriate relationship

was established with the teachers and parents of the schools by the researcher in order to obtain permission and conduct the study.

The FGD was conducted with a homogenous group of 6 parents (3 fathers and 3 mothers). It was conducted following FGD guidelines. The entire process of FGD, beginning from meeting the participants and introductory comments to ending the FGD, it took about 60 to 75 minutes. At the beginning of FGD, the purpose of the study was explained to participants first.

The verbal consent was obtained from the participants to record their voice in an audio recorder. All information was recorded with the aid of an audio recorder. Notes also were written by hand. All the in-depth interviews were conducted individually and separately. Each participant was given all the information regarding the purpose of the study and then they gave their consent. In the interviews, various questions were asked and participants were follow up questions to elaborate their answers and thoughts. The interviews were closed by thanking the participants. Data was recorded manually and by audio recording with the participants' consent.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed mainly through content analysis. Data analysis was an ongoing process from the beginning of data collection and reviewing field notes and memoing during data collection. Then the data (from each of the interviews and FGDs) was transcribed verbatim from the field notes and recordings, and stored in a computer.

After that, the transcribed data was reviewed a number of times and progressively following the content analysis technique data was narrowed down into small groups according to the key themes. Then the data collected through in-depth interviews, field notes and FGD were triangulated and categorized thematically according to the main issues/ideas found. Then under each of the themes sub-themes were organized as per need.

Ethical Issues

The main ethical issues considered for this study were:

The purpose of research was shared with the participants and written consent was taken from the school authority for interview and FGD. To maintain confidentiality pseudo names were used for schools and participants of the interview. Access to all information collected through this study was controlled by the researcher alone.

The research proposal was submitted for approval to the Ethical Review Committee (ERC) of BRAC University. Data was only used for research purpose and after data collection it was preserved only for access to the researcher. The participants had the liberty to discontinue from participation in the study any time.

Bias of the researcher was consciously dealt with and objectivity was maintained by strictly following the guideline of the tools developed for this study.

Validity & Reliability

To maintain the validity and reliability of the data, multiple sources and methods were utilized for data collection, for example: in-depth interviews with teachers including head teachers and FGD with parents. Such diversity of the narrative data from various types and data triangulation represented multiple perspectives on the research purpose.

Before finalizing the tools for data collection, all tools were verified with one ECD expert from BRAC University. Having their feedbacks incorporated in the tools, they were applied in a pilot project.

Validity and reliability were maintained in this study by piloting the tools developed for this study prior to using it for data collection. One teacher from a primary school was interviewed to check the reliability of the interview questions. The questions in the FGD checklist were checked by piloting it on a group of three mothers before starting data collection for the study.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study was able to gather in-depth knowledge from multiple sources to achieve its purpose, there were a number of limitations which were worth mentioning. The time for data collection was too short for including a bigger sample into the study. Due to time and resource constrain, researcher had to take small sample size for data collection.

Limitations of the study in terms of sampling, generalization of the study might be limited as it was done only in two primary Schools in a rural area of Gazipur district and the selected areas represented the middle class socio-economic domain. Only rural areas were selected.

Regarding the sample size of the study, limitations were, (a) only 6 parents were selected for FGD and 6 teachers included head teachers selected for IDI. Very limited data were available on Child safeguarding in the context of Bangladesh. Most of the data were based on Child protection which is not directly related on Child safeguarding. This was one of the limitations of this study.

Chapter IV

Results & Discussion

The results section was organized based on the data obtained from the participants collected through In-depth interview (IDI) and FGD respectively. So this chapter was comprised of two sections — the first one contained the demographic details of the participants and the second presented the findings based on the themes and sub-themes emerged from the data.

Results

Demographic Profile of the Participants

Demographic data presented in this study covered age, educational qualification of teachers, parents and experience of the pre-school teachers. The age of the teachers ranged from 26 to 45 years. Of six teachers, four completed B.Ed., one completed M.Ed. and one was studying Bachelor degree. Teaching experience varied according to the age of the teachers. The older teachers had more years of experience compared to the ones who were younger in age. Of six, experience of four teachers ranged from 10 -16 years and other two ranged 3-8 years.

The parents' age ranged between 20 to 35years. Of all the parents, two mothers and one father completed H.S.C.; one of the mother completed Bachelor Degree and two of the fathers did not complete S.S.C. Data revealed that both teachers and parents did not have any kind of children safeguarding training. All the fathers were engaged in job and mothers as housewife.

4.1.1. Teachers' Interview and Focus group discussion

4.1.2. Understanding about child safeguarding

Head Teachers, teachers and parents perception on Safeguarding

Summarizing the explanation obtained from teachers and parents, the meaning of children safeguarding in general appeared as such:

“Children safeguarding means a safe environment for children. To create an environment according to the age and capacity of children where children can explore their intelligence, creativity and can develop in their emotional life. To create an environment where there will be no barrier of doing things” (Personal communication: Interview # 1, Date: 28 August 2019)

Some of the teachers included head teachers and mothers mentioned same thing.

According to the parents and teachers:

Children safeguarding means to provide a good environment for children where they will have all the access of food, clothing, quality education, learning about faith and morality.

One of the head teachers said that -

Children safeguarding means to provide for children a good environment where they will have all the access of food, clothing, housing, quality education, learning faith, morality religion and so on” (Personal communication: Interview # 2, Date: 28 August 2019)

Another mother explained safeguarding from a different perspective as:

“The present situation of our country is uncertain now. Children are not safe anywhere now. So I always should be with my child. This is the reason I bring my child every day to the school and come back again to take my child home” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Understanding about Children safeguarding in school

Most of the participants explained children safeguarding in school premise meant to create a child friendly, positive and learning environment. They stated:

It is their responsibility to provide a learning environment where children will be formed with their creativity. They have to create an environment based on the age, health and capacity of each of the students so that the children will be stimulated by a positive and learning environment. ”

One of the head teachers explained about children safeguarding from a different point of view.

She said *“All the students come to us to learn. They are not equal. Some are smart and some are slow learner, some are poor and some are from rich family. We have to teach all of them without any punishment or without comparison.* (Personal communication: Interview 3

Date: 29th August 2019)

Parents then were also asked about what they understand about children's' safeguarding in the school premise. Two fathers out of three replied that children lived in a safe and secure environment at home, so the school environment should be the same as home. According to a father

“children need to be looked after when they play together or take snacks with friends or going to wash room, there always should be someone, can be teacher or staff so that children do not fight with each other, do not harm each other instead learn sharing” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Mothers agreed with him and one of the mothers added with him and said -

“If the school create this situation (environment) they can be relax at home without tension” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Parents are relaxed or stressed

Only the parents were asked this question that whether they were relaxed after sending their children to schools. All the parents answered the same that they could not be relaxed after leaving them in schools. As reasons they mentioned that in front of the school, there was a railway and behind the school there was a pond. Most of the children had to come through this railway road. This was a risk.

Some of them stated that, *“they bring their children in the morning and leave for school for 3 hours, so these three hours they cannot relax”* (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

In connection to the previous question, the parents were asked a follow up question that what did they think that children were always safe in the school or not. All of them expressed the similar opinions regarding this question.

All parents said, *“Children are not safe always in the school and all of them are very worried about the railway road and the pond beside the school”* (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Safe and child friendly Environment

Most of the teachers explained safe and child friendly environment meant an environment where children would get all the access of learning materials which were supportive to explore their creativity and development.

One of the teachers said:

“In a child friendly environment, there should always be a big play ground, all the access of books, play materials, first aids supply, healthy foods and a good communication and easy approach to the parents of the children” (Personal communication: Interview 4 # Date: 28 August 2019).

Two of the teachers including head teacher gave a different opinion regarding this question. According to them, child friendly environment meant a stimulating environment where children were free to live and learn without fear. Where children would learn rules and regulations, morality, honesty, truthfulness, respect for each other and would learn to speak correctly with proper language. The head teacher stated:

“From my own point of view, child friendly environment means a good environment where children are free to live and learn without fear, an environment where children will grow safely physically, mentally” (Personal communication: Interview 5 # Date: 28 August 2019).

Regarding this question most of the parents said that child friendly environment should be such where children would learn by doing and playing, teacher should be always attentive to each of the children.

One of the mothers said, *“We do not understand what is child friendly environment but we want such kind of an environment in the school where my child will be an ideal human, will learn sharing, caring and proper language”* (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Data showed that all of the parents were also worried about the environment around the school. All of them also explained that the environment around the school was not safe and secure for the children. But teachers from that school did not mentioned about this issue. FGD data revealed that there was a railway road and a pond very close to the school.

One of the fathers said, *“We want a wall around the school and teacher always look after each of the child so that they do not go closer to the pond or the road”* (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Risk of an insecure environment

Some of the teachers including head teachers said that if school environment was not safe, if it was uncertain, children’s learning and development would be hampered. They could grow up with an inappropriate or harmful behavior.

Both of the head teachers stated that *“in an insecure environment children will grow up with fear, low self-esteem, and irritation, children can be abused and this can hamper their physical mental development”*.

One of the head teachers said:

“Children’s physical, mental development will be hampered, children will be irritated, will hit and fight with each other. Children will be lonely if our school environment is not safe and secure” (Personal communication: Interview 2 # Date: 29th August 2019).

On the other hand, two of the teachers mentioned about sexual abuse could occur in the school if the school environment was not safe and secure. One of them said:

“Children are being abused everywhere now. If the school cannot provide a child friendly safe and secure environment, children can go through different harassment, will lead them to

develop an insecure feelings. So these insecure, abused and self-centered children will be the future threats and terrorists of our country” (Personal communication: Interview 6 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Child Maltreatment in the school

A question regarding “what do they understand about maltreatment or child abuse in the school”, all the teachers, head teachers and parents mentioned about physical punishment.

All of them said “*physical punishment is a child abuse*”.

However, some of the teachers including head teachers connected physical punishment with mental abuse. One of the head teachers cited:

“Children are mostly abused physically and mentally in the school. So this impacts on dropout rate of the children from the school. Children are abused physically and mentally by the teachers, classmates, friends, office staffs etc.” (Personal communication: Interview 5 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Another teacher added neglect, bullying, partiality with child abuse / maltreatment. According to her:

“Child abuse or maltreat means to harm children, to hit children physically, mentally, sexually which can give a bad or negative feeling to them. Not praising children, neglecting them, doing partiality, bullying are also child abuse”

(Personal communication: Interview 1 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Parents also perceived child abuse /maltreatment as physical abuse. All of them stated as:

Teacher gives physical punishment such as holding ears, beating with ruler, if children do not study or do not do their homework” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019)

Another mother have shared that -

“One day my son was crying after coming back from school, when I asked the reason of crying and he said that the teacher let him put his hands up for a long time as a punishment for the whole class and as result he has pain in his hands” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

All the parents mentioned that when they heard about child abuse in the school, physical punishment came to their mind.

Types of Abuses in the School

Some of the teachers and parents mentioned about 4 types of maltreatment/child abuse in the school. The types of maltreatment or child abuse were mental abuse, negligence, sexual abuse and physical punishment. The common abuse that shared by all of the respondent was physical punishment in the schools.

According to the participants –

Physical punishments are mostly given by the teachers in schools. Such as hitting biting, slapping, holding hear etc. Children also can be physically abused or harm by their classmates because when they play they hit or hurt each other” (Personal communication: Interview 4 # Date: 29th August 2019).

One of teacher stated –

“Children can be abused many ways in the schools. They can be abused physically, mentally. Now physical punishment are less but still children are abused mentally and sexually in the school” (Personal communication: Interview 3 # Date: 29th August 2019).

4.2.1 Policy or plan regarding safeguarding issues

Existing safeguarding policy in the school

All the teachers and head teachers mentioned that they do not have any safeguarding policy, plan or written document in their schools. Two of them stated that

“We do not have any policy, plan or agreements regarding child safeguarding issues in our school”

Some of them also said that though they did not have any policy or plan but they used and followed government ordinances and rules regarding physical punishment. According to a head teacher –

“We do not have any policy, plan or written agreement regarding children safeguarding. There is some general rules given from government where mentioned that children cannot be punished, cannot be mentally tortured by any words or action of a teacher. So we are trying to follow those rules. But we do not have any particular child safeguard plan” (Personal communication: Interview 1 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Another teacher expressed a different opinion regarding this topic. She revealed that –

“We do not have any policy or plan in the school. I know we have a rule that we cannot hit children with stick. But even though we have this rule, still sometimes we hit children with sticks or rulers, otherwise we cannot control class, children do not study well, and for this we use it sometimes”(Personal communication: Interview 5 # Date: 29th August 2019).

All the parents said that they did not know actually about any policy or plan in the school on safe guarding.

They stated: *“We do not know and even do not hear about any policy or plan in the school”* (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Physical abuse and punishment

All the teachers, head teachers and parents named some of the common physical punishment used in past years in the school to control their classrooms.

According to them physical punishments was as *beating with sticks, rulers, kneeling down on the floor or top of the bench and kneeling down looking at the sun, needed to stay extra hour for as a punishment, cleaning latrine, class room etc.*

One question was asked to all the participants that, “Is physical punishment a technique to teach or a form of physical punishment?” Most of the teachers expressed similar opinions that those were a form of child physical abuse, though they were not aware about it.

One of the head teachers said:

“Physical punishment can never be a technique or method to teach. It is a form of child abuse. I do not allow punishment in my school. If something happens in the school or in the classroom, I talk together with the teachers, students and parents in order to solve that problem” (Personal communication: Interview 2 # Date: 29th August 2019).

One of the teachers provided a different opinion regarding this question. According to her, physical punishment was both a technique to teach and a form of child abuse. She cited as *“When teacher uses physical punishment to teach the children and if the outcome is fruitful it can be considered as a technique but when teacher do it out of anger and children get hurt severely, this will be considered as child abuse”*

(Personal communication: Interview 6 # Date: 29th August 2019).

One of the head teachers shared a situation on physical punishment. She mentioned that *“one day she held an ear of a child. This child’s mother was standing far away and seen this scenario. The next day that mother came to the head teacher and was very angry with the head teacher.”*

Most of the parents said the similar things regarding this question. According to them, *“no punishment should be given to any child. The teacher should find other ways or methods to teach children without using punishment”* (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Use of words and Verbal abuse

Only the teachers were asked whether they were aware of that the way they talk or behave with children could be a form of abuse against the children depending on words or behavior they use.

Most of the teachers replied the question that they were aware of that by their words and actions children could be verbally abused. At the same time they also said that it was not possible to always be aware of their verbal words.

One of the teacher shared a situation with an example. She said:

“Yes, I know that the way I talk or behave with children can be mental and verbal abuse. Sometimes I say to the children that you cannot do anything. Sometimes some children come and tell me “Teacher, Can I do this? I answered unconsciously that no you cannot do this work, you are good at nothing .Unconsciously children can be mentally or verbally abused by my words or action” (Personal communication: Interview 5 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Only one teacher said that she knew that by her words children could be abused but she was never aware of it. According to her –

“I understand that the way I talk or use words, children can be neglected or abused but I was not aware about it. To control the class room I have to be hard with the students sometimes” (Personal communication: Interview 3 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Sexual abuse and school initiative

According to all the teachers, sexual abuse meant to hold or touch children with a bad intention, hold children tightly and touch the sensitive parts of the body, make physical relationship with children.

All the teacher expressed their opinions that *“yes, children can be abused sexually in the school, specially the schools which have male teacher for children. All of them said that they did not go through this sort of sexual abuse in their own school.”*

One of them said –

“Children’s sexual abuse in the school means giving bad physical touch to a child. I have never experienced this kind of problem in our school but still I openly talk about this matter with the girls especially with the grown up girls” (Personal communication: Interview 4 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Another teacher shared a story regarding children’s sexual abuse:

“We do not have any male teachers in the school for the children. I want to share a story what I have heard. A little girl was raped in the school. The windows and doors were broken. The girl went in the school and was raped in the classroom by a certain man” (Personal communication: Interview 3 # Date: 29th August 2019).

When the parents were asked particularly about sexual abuse in the school, *“80% of the parents replied that that they did not hear this kind of situation in the school, the other 20% stated that it is only possible when the school has any male teacher”* (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Mental abuse and Neglect

All the participants agreed that when a teacher did not praise children for any good work, ignored them, if a teacher treated children badly because of their family background or financial condition could be considered mental abuse.

One of the teacher described as -

“A child can be mentally abused or neglected by teachers in the classroom. If a child cannot participate well in the classroom and the teacher say bad words to him/ her in the name of

his or her parents in front of all the class, called his/her parents in the class and neglect them in front of their children, this is a type of mental abuse or neglect of children” (Personal communication: Interview5 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Some of the teachers also expressed a different opinion regarding this. One of the teachers stated:

“Children can be mentally abused or can be neglected in the school by the teachers, classmates, by other parents or by her own parents too”

(Personal communication: Interview 6 # Date: 29th August 2019).

Regarding the question on children’s mental/emotional abuse and neglect in the school all the three mothers said:

“Sometimes teachers talk bad about parents’ background in front of the child or children.

So children feel shy, can think that his/ her parents are not good” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

One of the father also mentioned that -

“Teachers should not talk bad about the background of the parents of any children, should not compare with others or do not do any partiality for the rich and the poor children because children can get hurt by this behavior” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Capacity development (Seminar)

Half of the teachers said that they attended a short training for 2/3 hours regarding this issue that they could not beat children and neglect children by words or actions .Unfortunately, did not take any step, program or plan to safe guard children. One of the head teachers said:

“I and some of my teachers went to join training. I have learned from there that any teacher cannot hit children, cannot neglect children by words or actions. But we did not take any

necessary steps yet after that training but following only some oral rules that teachers cannot hit children” (Personal communication: Interview 1# Date: 29th August 2019).

The other half of the teachers said they did not have any kind of awareness program, plan, orientation or seminar regarding this issue. The other head teacher said –

“We did not have any agreement or orientation. We did not arrange any program or seminar for the teachers regarding this issue. We have some rules from the Government that teacher cannot give any physical punishment to any students but sometimes teachers do heat the children” (Personal communication: Interview 5 # Date: 29th August 2019).

The parents were asked whether they participated in any kind of awareness seminar, meeting, training or program regarding children safeguarding. All the parents said together that:

“We have not done any kind of meeting or seminar on children safeguarding issues in the school. We did not talk or hear about it before” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

Experience of any such situation

The parents were asked where they had any experience or their children ever shared any of this abuse after coming back to the school. One of the mother shared an experience that -

“One day her child could not eat rice with the hand due to his hand pain, when asked the reason he answered that teacher bit him in his hands” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

4.3.1 Initiatives of ensuring safeguarding program in School premise

Parents’ collaboration to develop program/ plan/ policy

Then the participants were asked “how they can work to safeguard children in the school premise?”

Two of the head teachers mentioned that they would try to arrange awareness program or seminar together with parents and teachers.

One of the Head teacher stated –

“We can arrange awareness program for teachers and parents in the school and also can send teachers for training about this issue” (Personal communication: Interview 2 # Date: 29th August 2019).

All the teachers mentioned that they would be more aware of child safeguard in the school and would be more aware of their behavior.

They also stated that they could give financial support to the school and give necessary advice and support when it would be needed. One of them said:

“We can provide fund to arrange this kind of program” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

From mothers part one mother said –

“We will participate and also encourage other parents to participate such kind of program” (FGD # Date: 29 August 2019).

All the participants mentioned that they are willing to partake any kind of child safeguard program organize by the school and ready to provide any kind of support regarding children safeguarding issues in the school premise.

Discussion

This research attempted to explore the perceptions and practices of school authority, teachers and parents in regards to safeguarding children in primary school premise. For this research data were collected through one-on-one face to face interviews and focus group discussion and analyzed based on the research questions and objectives.

Perception of Teachers and school authority regarding safeguarding children in school

Data revealed that most of the respondents understood that children safe-guarding was to ensure a safe and secure environment where they would have all the access to food, clothing, and education and overall a positive and supportive environment which would meet all the basic needs of children.

Some research showed that Children should have the basic rights to education, balance diet, health and nutrition, protection, participation, recreation, safe water, sanitation and hygiene, after unfortunately these rights of children were violated in Bangladesh. The rights of children were violated due to poverty, ignorance, lack of social consciousness and discrimination. The majority of children were deprived of food, shelter, adequate sanitation, information, and education (Mahajon, 2014).

So, it was clear that although children should have the rights and have all to access of basic needs due to poverty it was not fulfilled yet. Since our country kept focusing on to fulfill the basic needs of the people in need, children's safeguarding was quite another additional issue for the government and for the country as well.

Data showed that most of the participants had minimum knowledge about the significance of children's safeguarding in school or out of the school. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child stated that the child should have the opportunity of growing up and developing in an environment that was as healthy and safe as possible (UNCRC, 1989) but result revealed that teachers had an understanding about it but they were not aware about it, not taking any necessary steps if they would have any kind of issues concerning child maltreatment in the school.

From data it appeared that teachers had the maximum knowledge about children's maltreatment in the school. During the in-depth interviews, most of the participants somehow mentioned about three types of abuse in the school. Most of them described about or gave examples about physical punishment, mental abuse and negligence. It seemed that both

teachers and parents were uncomfortable to talk about children's sexual abuse in the school. All of them mentioned that they did not have any experience regarding sexual abuse in the school. Some of them pointed out that it could happen only if the school had any male teachers. So it was clear that they had inadequate knowledge about sexual abuse in the school or it could be that they felt uncomfortable to share about this issue.

Most of the teachers stated child maltreatment/child abuse as giving physical punishment and they also mentioned that physical punishment had an effect on mental development of children. However, it was shared that children were also neglected by teacher's unconscious words or actions.

Findings also revealed that some of the teachers did punish children, neglect them by their words, after actions but they were not aware or did not have enough knowledge about it that this was a form of child maltreatment/ child abuse which could have a negative effect on children's lifelong development. Carol E. stated in a clinical forum on child maltreatment that *Violence can have severe implications for children's development even when it does not lead to obvious physical injury or death. Violence affects children's health, their ability to learn, and even their willingness to go to school. Much violence toward children is hidden. Children may fear reporting the abuse, or both the abuser and child may see nothing wrong with the violence, viewing it as justifiable punishment* (Carol E. *Clinical Forum Child Maltreatment: A Global Issue*, 2007).

However, none of the schools have any policy/program/plan regarding children safeguarding issues. Teachers are not receiving any child safeguard related training in the school. Although some teachers from one of the school participated of a half day training regarding children safeguarding issues, no necessary steps were taken after this seminar.

But it is important for the teachers and parents as well to receive training, to participate seminar and program so that they can be aware of any relevant child protection procedures,

will be able to recognize indicators of child maltreatment/abuse in the school and can take necessary steps to protect children from maltreatment.

Perception of parents regarding children safeguarding

From FGD, data suggested that parents were much aware about the environment around the school. Concerning children safeguarding in school or out of the school, parents perceived that it was very important to ensure a safe and secure environment around children so that children would develop in their full potential without any danger, abuse or fear.

According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2003) “Every child has the right to grow up in a healthy environment - to live, learn and play in healthy places. Acting to safeguard children’s environments can save millions of lives, reduce disease and provide a safer, healthier world for our children’s future”

Regarding the point of child maltreatment in the school, it was shared by most of the respondents that children needed a child friendly environment where they would have all the access to learning materials, playground, and friendly relation with teachers and children without any physical punishment, after punishment barrier and fear. When the teachers do hit children and do not have clear understanding, children are more vulnerable in such situation- they will be more abused. It can hamper children’s cognitive, socio-emotional, psychological overall holistic development. Children can grow up with low self-esteem, fear, depression, anxiety and different sort of behavioral problem.

During FGD it was revealed from parents sharing that only few children shared about any sort of punishment to their parents. Data also suggested that out of six only one mother gave an example of physical punishment shared by her child. Though children were facing different maltreatment / abuse in the school but since main focus was to ensure “Education for All”, this kind of issues were not paid attention properly. At the same time, due to poverty and social structure, children rarely had opportunities to express themselves (Mahajan,2014).

In addition to that, data indicated that some of the parents knew about physical punishment and verbal abuse in the school from their children, but they were sometimes afraid to speak out about it thinking that if they would complain, there might be risks of his/her children to be victim of more punishment by the teachers. So most of the time, parents would just avoid and kept quiet about this sort of issues in the school. However it can have negative effect on children. Children may lose interests in education, can drop out or run way from school.

Data reported that parents wanted teachers to find out some methods to teach children without any punishment. Parents were more focused on physical punishment. They would also share about teachers words which were neglectful for children. But their main focus was on physical punishment. They were avoidant of the outcomes of the mental and sexual abuse for a child's development. They were uncomfortable to speak about sexual abuse in the school. Parents and teachers as well perceived that children could be abused in the school if only the school would have any male teacher. They were lack of knowledge that children could be sexually harassed by any of the teachers or persons in the school or out of the school by the way persons touch or act with children. Coercing involved physical contact for example, rape or oral sex, non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. (Ahsania Mission, 2014).

During face-to-face interviews and FGD, most of the respondents agreed upon this concept of appreciating children intensely. All of them stated that children liked to be praised and it helped them to develop as confident

Policy and practices regarding Children safeguarding in the school

Findings from two schools showed that none of the school had any rule, regulation, plan, policy or program particularly on safeguarding children. Schools had only some oral or combined rules that teachers were not allowed to punish children or neglect by any words or actions. But it was shared by teachers and parents that some of the teachers did punish their children, neglect them by bad words about children's family background or about parents. It was happening in the school because of the lack of proper rules, regulations and awareness of school authority, teachers and parents regarding this issue. Therefore, the GoB should plan or develop proper policy/ program to ensure children safeguarding in the school and should have a monitoring process to check things are implementing properly or not. School should have also its own monitoring system

Data also revealed that most of the teachers did not have any training, seminar or early childhood knowledge. Teachers from one of the schools mentioned that they had a half day program regarding children safeguarding issues in the school and it was arranged by the Catholic Church.

However, no plan or necessary steps was taken after this program. All of them shared that they had some oral rules, did not have any strict rule or did not arrange any kind of program or seminar for teachers and parents regarding children's safeguarding in the school.

But children were still severely punished by the teachers even for minor issues (ProthomAlo, 24th September, 2019. p. 3).

Although there is a policy for physical abuse due to lack of monitoring from the government teachers are physically and psychologically abuse children. So detailed policy plan for children's mal treatment should be developed and implementation should be strictly monitored so that no children can be maltreated by anybody, - no teacher and no parents

Conclusion

Bangladesh is a developing densely populated country with populations about 160 million and many people are still less educated. In Bangladesh child maltreatment or abuses are a matter of grave concern and common issue for the family, parents, teachers, society and for the country.

Bangladeshi children are deprived from basic rights to education, balance diet, health and nutrition, protection, participation, recreation, safe water, sanitation, and hygiene. The rights of children are violated due to poverty, ignorance, lack of social consciousness and discrimination. The laws and policies regarding child labor, physical punishment, violence against girls, sexual exploitation, imprisonment of children with adults, trafficking, child marriage, and other aspects of child protection are routinely violated. In most cases, people are not aware of the laws and take these violence as common matters.

The GoB and the national and international NGOs have taken various steps, such as free primary education, cash transfer for children, nutrition, registration of birth etc. to save the children. Educating girls achieve a multiplicity of benefits, including marriages in matured age, reduced fertility rates, decreased infant and maternal mortality, improved health and nutritional status, and greater participation of women in political and economic decisions.

Now The GoB have to keep focus on child safety issues in the school or out of the school. The GoB have to be more concern about developing policy or plan for the schools of Bangladesh so that all the children may learn in a safe , secure and child friendly environment which will be accommodating to grow with their full potential.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion, this study would propose a number of recommendations:

- Further research should be done regarding safeguarding children. Since this topic emerged as serious issue in our country, many people were not aware and know about this issue. It drew attention of the people since a large number of children were abused/maltreated physically and sexually in the schools appeared through newspapers and other social media. Very limited programs or policies were taken up by and for schools yet. So it is necessary to conduct more research regarding this issue.
- Another issue was revealed from FGD about the environment around the school. One of the schools' parents seemed worried about the railway station and a pond next to the school. It was really an issue of concerns for children safety. Data suggested that further study should be done regarding this issue.
- Workshop can be arranged for parents and teachers in the school aiming to emphasize on children safety and security issues in the school so that they will be aware of their own behavior and will be able to identify abused children and can take necessary steps on it.
- Teachers' capacity should be developed in such a way that it would bring changes in knowledge, understanding, behavior and practices of teachers to ensure a child friendly safe environment in the school.
- Parents need to be actively engage in all children safeguarding related activities, seminar or program done in the school.

- The GoB should plan or develop proper policy/ program to ensure children safeguarding in the school and should have a monitoring process to check things are implementing properly or not. School should have also its own monitoring system.

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Appendix A.

Interview questionnaire for teachers

**Title: Safeguarding of 5 to 8 year old children in Primary School premise
in Kaligonj**

General Information

Date: _____

Start Time: _____

End Time: _____

Name: _____

Age: _____

Educational Background: _____

Training: _____ Experience in teaching (in months): _____

Marital Status: _____

Name of School: _____

Teachers Interview questionnaires

Teachers' perception

1. What do you understand about Children safeguarding?

Sub Q a). What is your opinion about Children safeguarding in School Premise?

2. What do you understand about Child friendly environment in the school? Describe

Sub Q a) Can you tell me what kind of harm or impairment could be occur if children do not have a child friendly environment?

3. Do you think that children are always safe and secure in the school? Why do you think that?

Sub Q a) what can happen if the school environment is not child friendly?

4. What do you understand about child abuse?

Sub Q: a). When you hear this word "Child Abuse" in the school premise which kind of abuse immediately comes to your mind?

Sub Q: b). How a child can be abused in the school? Describe some of the area where children can be abuse or neglect.

5. “Children can be abused physically, sexually, emotionally and can be neglected in the school” what is your opinion regarding this statement?

6. What do you understand about Children sexual abuse in the school?

Sub Q: a) Do you think that children can be sexually abuse in the school? If so, how children can be sexually abuse in the school? Do you have any experience regarding this issue?

7. What do you understand about mental abuse and neglect in the school?

Sub Q: a) Have you ever heard or experience this situation in the school or the other school?

Practices

1. In the past what is types of punishment usually teacher used to give to the students in order to control the classroom?

Sub Q: a) Do think that physical punishment is a method or technique to teach or it is also a form of child abuse? What is your opinion?

2. Have you experienced any of this situation ever in the school? If so how did you respond it?

Sub Q: a) Are you aware that children can be mental and verbally abused or can be neglected by the way teacher talk talks or behave?

3. Do you think that it is important for and teachers’ parents to know and gain some knowledge about children safeguarding issues? If so, why?

Policy/plan /agreements

1. Did you see any policy or plans or written agreement about safeguarding issues in the school? If so how it is working?

Sub Q: a) If not, Do you think that it is necessary to develop a plan or procedures regarding children’s safeguarding issues in the schools? If so, how and why?

2. Do you have any training, seminar or program about children safeguarding issues? If so how do you practicing it in the school?

Sub Q: a) Do you think that the people who come into contact with children should have to have at least a training or minimum knowledge about this issues? Why do you think that?

3. How the school, your children and the country as well will be benefited if the school develops children's safeguarding policy or plan?

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guideline

For Parents

**Title: Safeguarding of 5 to 8 year old children in Primary School
premise in Kaligonj**

Date: _____

Time: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Place: _____

Profile of participants: i) Sex:

ii) Children's age:

iii) Socio-economic background:

iv) Age group:

v) Educational background:

Participant list:

1. Name: _____; Age: ____; Number of children: _____;
Occupation: _____, Education: _____
2. Name: _____; Age: ____; Number of children: _____;
Occupation: _____, Education: _____
3. Name: _____; Age: ____; Number of children: _____;
Occupation: _____, Education: _____
4. Name: _____; Age: ____; Number of children: _____;
Occupation: _____, Education: _____
5. Name: _____; Age: ____; Number of children: _____;
Occupation: _____, Education: _____
6. Name: _____; Age: ____; Number of children: _____;
Occupation: _____, Education: _____

FGD Questions:

Parents' perception

1. What do you understand about Children safeguarding?

Sub Q a). What is your opinion about Children safeguarding in School Premise?

2. What do you understand about Child friendly environment in the school? Describe

Sub Q a) Can you tell me what kind of harm or impairment could be occur if children do not have a child friendly environment?

b) Can you relax after sending your child for school? Give me your opinion.

3. Do you think that children are always safe and secure in the school? Why do you think that?

Sub Q a) what can happen if the school environment is not child friendly?

4. What do you understand about child abuse?

Sub Q: a). When you hear this word “Child Abuse” in the school premise which kind of abuse immediately comes to your mind?

Sub Q: b). How a child can be abused in the school? Describe some of the area where children can be abuse or neglect.

5. “Children can be abused physically, sexually, emotionally and can be neglected in the school” what is your opinion regarding this statement?

6. What do you understand about Children sexual abuse in the school?

Sub Q: a) Do you think that children can be sexually abuse in the school? If so, how children can be sexually abuse in the school? Do you have any experience regarding this issue?

7. What do you understand about mental abuse and neglect in the school?

Sub Q: a) Have you ever heard or experience this situation in the school or the other school?

Practices

1. In the past what is types of punishment usually teacher used to give to the students in order to control the classroom?

Sub Q: a) Do think that physical punishment is a method or technique to teach or it is also a form of child abuse? What is your opinion?

2. Have you experienced any of this situation ever in the school? If so how did you respond it?

Sub Q: a) Are you aware that children can be mental and verbally abused or can be neglected by the way teacher talk talks or behave?

3. Do you think that it is important for and teachers' parents to know and gain some knowledge about children safeguarding issues? If so, why?

Policy/plan /agreements

1. Did you see any policy or plans or written agreement about safeguarding issues in the school? If so how it is working?

Sub Q: a) If not, Do you think that it is necessary to develop a plan or procedures regarding children's safeguarding issues in the schools? If so, how and why?

2. Do you have any training, seminar or program about children safeguarding issues? If so how do you practicing it in the school?

Sub Q: a) Do you think that the people who come into contact with children should have to have at least a training or minimum knowledge about this issues? Why do you think that?

3. How can you support the school to develop or implement, to arrange program or seminar regarding children safeguarding in the school premise?