

**EMERGENT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND HOME LITERACY
ENVIRONMENT:
BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF PARENTS HAVING (3-5 YEARS) PRESCHOOL
AGED CHILDREN AT URBAN SLUM CONTEXT**

Submitted by

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

BRAC Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University

30th April, 2023

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material 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.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Emergent Literacy Development and Home Literacy Environment:
Beliefs and practices of parents having (3-5 years) preschool aged children at urban slum context

Student name: Ananta Rahman

1. Source of population

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

n/a

4. Will Signed verbal consent form 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:

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Abstract

The home literacy environment and experiences of preschoolers typically provide the settings for the development of emergent literacy skills that are important for school readiness and later literacy success. Due to variations in home literacy environment, children enter school with different levels of preparedness to benefit from the experiences at school. Despite that parents being the first educator can provide a supportive and enjoyable home literacy environment, understanding of literacy related concepts and activities among parents specifically from low-socio-economic status remain to be clarified. This study aimed to investigate beliefs, tools and practices of parents of 3-5 years children at urban slum settings regarding the development of emergent literacy competence. A total of six parents, specifically mothers of girls, from three slum areas of Dhaka urban took part in in-depth interviews. Additionally, these six households were also observed. The results are discussed in the light of the views of Piaget, Marie Clay, Vygotsky, and Bronfenbrenner. The results show that almost in all instances, parents' emergent literacy beliefs are positively related to the home literacy environment. The results will be used to ensure literacy success for all children of Dhaka urban slums with the long-term goal of achieving gender equality in education.

Key words: Emergent literacy skills, home literacy environment, girls, pre-school, slums.

Dedication

I dedicate my thesis work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my mother and aunt. My brother Rafio and sister Ananya was very understanding and helpful in the whole process.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Introduction: The first few years of a child's life are critical to development, because in this period the foundation of how a child will grow up is built (McCoy et al., 2016). The first three years are the most important period for brain development (Bakken et al., 2017; Haartsen et. Al., 2016; Gilmore et al., 2018). During this early childhood period, the child has developed cognitive, social, psychological and physical aspects (Zhao et al., 2020; Tran et al., 2019). Proper care is needed in this stage to ensure the normal growth of the child. This proper care will have a great influence on the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills, which is crucial to the child's overall development.

Children can be identified as being developmentally on track in the literacy and numeracy domain if they can recognize words, understand numbers and symbols, read characters and so on (Hossain et al., 2021). Many experts report these early skills as the start of a developmental continuum that begins at a young age and continues through school (Canfield et al., 2020).

According to the emergent literacy approach, parents are the first teachers of their children and their offspring need literacy interactions and experiences from birth (Makin & Whitehead, 2004). Whitehead (2007) claims that parents are also most enduring educators. Makin (2007) believes that literacy learning begins at child's home and community, with her family as her first teacher. That's why parent's engagement and home literacy environment are considered having a powerful influence on a child's emergent literacy development. Families teach language their children by being role models and by trying to respond when youngsters try to communicate with them (Fields, Groth & spangler, 2008).

Over the last three decades, researchers have documented the importance of the home environment to children's early literacy and language skills (Altiparmak, 2010). For example, characteristics of the home and family, such as- parents literacy levels and literacy habits, income, parent-child engagement in literacy activities have been found to be connected with children's literacy and language skills. Weigel et al, (2006) examined both the temporary and longitudinal connections between four components of the home environment and multiple indicators of preschool aged children's literacy and language development. Results indicated that parent-child literacy and language activities were positively linked with children's reading interest and print knowledge. It

was also found that parental demographic characteristics were associated with children's expressive and receptive language skills.

Young children learn the functions of early literacy through observing and participating in real life settings where reading and writing are used and construct their understanding of reading and writing through active involvement with various literacy materials (Sulzby & Teale, 1996). Bridges (2013) discussed that there is such a thing as emergent literacy and that it is based on the notion that young children acquire literacy through exposure to reading materials and encouragement to try the reading process themselves. Children who have been exposed to reading activities at home are found to have taken schooling much easier and more meaningful (Bridges, 2013; Hall, 2014). The support and motivation given by their families are very significant contributors of children's literacy learning during kindergarten and elementary grade (Christian, Morrison & Bryant, 1998; Christie, Enz & Vukelich, 2007). It is important for more productive and permanent results for children's later literacy like such as high level of self-confidence in the oral classroom discussions, regular academic achievement at school. When home literacy environment is assessed carefully and conceptualized, its direct influences on children's development in a very long run.

Over the last few decades or so, many educators have radically changed their perception on how children acquire literacy. Research in emergent literacy (Clay, 1966) has shown that many children enter school already possessing considerable literacy knowledge (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). This research suggests that children acquire this early knowledge of literacy by writing notes, letters and so forth along with their parents (Taylor, 1983), labeling their drawings (Ferreiro, 1986), using environmental print to find products in supermarket (Taylor, 1983) or a particular restaurant (Goodman, 1984) and being read regularly by a parent or significant other (Doake, 1981).

Save the children highlights that Emergent literacy encompasses the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a child develops in relation to reading and writing throughout the early childhood period, starting at birth and before the onset of conventional reading and writing instruction (usually at school entry). Very young learners, even as young as a few months old, are already acquiring the skills and tools necessary for reading. Furthermore, like any other developmental process, mastery of emergent literacy skills paves the way for later mastery of more critical literacy skills in primary grades and gradually reading with comprehension. Vocabulary and language,

knowledge of print, phonological awareness, comprehension and letter knowledge considered as important components of early literacy (Mehnaz, 2013). If early experiences with books and reading are fun, enjoyable and exiting for a child, that child is likely to continue to feel that way about reading his entire life.

In Asian countries, family reading and writing education has received relatively little attention (Cheung et al., 2021). Children lag behind their more privileged counterparts on vocabulary and literacy skill. This is partly due to less time given to reading storybooks to children or letting them hear new stories in the preschool years. This is particularly a problem in Bangladesh where books and playing materials are not available in underprivileged slum areas and many parents are not literate themselves. Due to lack of reading and arithmetic skills, 30% first grader children of Bangladesh drop out of school before they acquire practical literacy and arithmetic skills, and many children who stay in school do not learn much (Diazgranados et al., 2016). The reason behind this problem is poor literacy skills. Many preschool programs being implemented by different organizations attempt to address this problem. However available studies show that the results are not very impressive. In this study, I'll try to explore the differences as well as similarities between parents of preschool aged children in terms of their views and practices towards emergent literacy at home settings. Parents from urban slum context, less educational and poor economic background will be compared in terms of their perceptions and frequency rate for home literacy activities that encourage emergent literacy.

Problem Statement: Children will not enter school ready to learn unless they experience with required language and literacy. That's why emergent literacy has tremendous importance and placed high value in a child's life. "Due to variations in home literacy environment, children enter school with different levels of preparedness to benefit from the experiences at school" (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998 cited in Sandra et al., 2022, p.2). Parental less responsiveness, lack of sophisticated communication and less time provided to reading storybooks make children's language and vocabulary skills limited (Opel, Ameer & Aboud, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial for parents to be aware of the significant contribution they can make to their children's learning by creating a stimulating environment around; reading, writing and language as well as by providing a supportive and enjoyable home literacy environment during preschool period. Parental positive

perception towards emergent literacy in this regard is significant and their contribution in fostering a positive start to emergent literacy depends on how parents perceive literacy in their lives.

Although children are starting primary school in greater numbers than ever before, the rate at which children drop out from school remains high in many low- income countries where over half of children who start primary school do not complete the full cycle of education (Lewin and Sabates, 2012). Bangladesh has made impressive progress in raising school enrollment, but the majority of children do not benefit adequately from increased access to school (Diazgranados, S., Borisova, I., & Sarken, T. 2016). Only half of fifth graders are able to pass minimum competencies (Diazgranados, S., Borisova, I., & Sarken, T. 2016). This high dropout rate is a obstacle to universalizing access to primary education in Bangladesh. The study done by USAID in 2004 regarding the reasons of high dropout Bangladesh indicated that in Bangladesh, the relative poverty of literacy supportive resources, parental involvement, availability of children's books & toys all impact school readiness and achievement (USAID, 2004). So, It can be said that, one of the factors of this high dropout rate in Bangladesh is related to early literacy factors. It is necessary to know parental perception to perceive the factors influencing children's literacy activities at home. Without knowing the knowledge gap, we may not be able to design an effective advocacy or intervention program. Parental awareness, engagement and supportive home environment can help to mitigate this problem in Bangladesh.

Purpose of the study: This study intends to learn about parents' beliefs and practices regarding emergent literacy development and home literacy environment. It is the assumption that at the end of the research, the results will indicate that parents demonstrate similarity in their beliefs and practices.

Justification of the study: According to UNICEF (2005) In Bangladesh, where malnutrition is high and parent education low, the need for stimulating material and activities that foster cognitive and language development. In the slums, only 58 percent of people over the age of 12 are literate. Since literacy in parents is a contributing factor to children school enrollment, the lack of education becomes a cycle (Kathleen Egan, 2014). The largely illiterate adult population contributes to the fact that children in the slums are 2.5 times more likely to be excluded from school than the national average, according to the World Bank. Because these children are from poor families, they are also often forced to drop out of school and get a job or take care of younger siblings.

While the government of Bangladesh as well as different national and international agencies have made innovative policy efforts to include rural people in education through alternative education and school building programs, these interventions have not been extended on the same scale to the growing number of urban poor (Cameron, S. (2010). Smita et al. (2020) pointed out only in Dhaka city 2.8 percent of slum children go to school when they reach the school age and children in these areas are the most deprived of education and the dropout rate is also high here. Their precarious work and challenging living conditions make them a particularly vulnerable group. Children have little exposure to books and none to television. Consequently, children have little opportunity to play with complex materials, engage in responsive conversation or access reading and writing materials before entering first grade (Aboud, F.E. 2006). The proportion of children who never enroll in school in the urban sample (15%) is double that of the rural sample and a large proportion of children are silently excluded from education, meaning that they attend infrequently, repeat years of schooling and have poor achievement (Cameron, 2010). Upon completion of primary education, very few children from these slums make the transition to secondary schooling (Cameron, 2010). Most of these children do not value their studies and find school too difficult. Stunting status, maternal education and wealth status were negatively related to children's emergent literacy and numeracy skills development. So, in this research, I'll explore perceptions and practices of Bangladeshi urban slum area's parents towards emergent literacy development of 3-5 years old children. There has been some research focusing on language development, reading techniques and narrative skills among Bangladeshi preschoolers and also the impacts of ECE on language development (Mehnaz, 2013). However, there has been no known study that has been examined on the perception of urban slum parents regarding emergent literacy and home activities to encourage emergent literacy. My study may give a wider platform of further research in understanding the knowledge gap of parents.

Research Objective:

- To explore Bangladeshi parents' perceptions and home literacy practices regarding the development of emergent literacy of their 3-5 years children at urban slum settings.

Research Questions:

1. What are the beliefs and attitudes of parents about emergent literacy development?

Sub-questions:

- a. In which ways parents understand the key aspects of emergent literacy?
 - b. In which ways parents understand the meanings and importance of home literacy environment for acquiring emergent literacy skills?
2. What are the practices of parents regarding emergent literacy development?

The Sub-questions:

- a. What is the nature of physical literacy environment at home?
- b. What is the nature of parent literacy habits?
- c. What is the nature of child's own literacy habits?
- d. What is the nature of parent-child interaction for language and literacy activities?
- e. In which ways quality of home literacy environment for emergent literacy development differ or are similar among families?

Operational Definition:

Parent's belief: Parents' beliefs are "components of a child's culturally structured "developmental niche" that inform parents' caregiving activities and practices" (Harkness, 2006 cited in Buvanewari and Padakannaya. 2017, p. 5).

Physical Literacy Environment: Physical literacy environment is defined as "the availability of literacy resources and space at home" (Curenton and Justice, 2008, cited in Buvanewari and Padakannaya. 2017, p. 4).

Parent Literacy Habits: Parent literacy habit is meant by the parent's personal love for reading (Buvanewari and Padakannaya. 2017, p. 4).

The Child's Own Literacy Habits: The child's own literacy habit is indicated by the child's own interest and literacy motivation to participate in literacy-related activities (Buvanewari and Padakannaya. 2017, p. 4).

Parent-child Interaction for Language and Literacy Activities: Parent-child interaction for language and literacy activities is defined as "the activities intended to foster adult-child

interactions that encourage children's active participation in reading, writing, and language activities" (Jacobs, 2004 cited in Buvanewari and Padakannaya. 2017, p. 5).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section literature review includes information regarding literacy development in children; theoretical research for emergent literacy and emergent literacy approach.

Literacy development:

Literacy is more than just the ability to read and write (Diaz, 2007); it serves many needs and transmits values from generation to generation as well as from culture to culture (Altıparmak, 2010). It enables people to create values to appreciate the world, developing an interactional relationship with the environment and facilitating connections between all the people in the world (Sawyer, 2009). Diaz (2007) considers literacy to be a social practice, a modern view, which sees that the meaning given in oral, written and visual texts are socially built up. Cooper (1997) describes literacy as the ability of individuals to communicate effectively for real life applications, which involves the ability to read and write, speak, listen, view and think.

At birth children begin their literacy learning, if it did not start before, since the studies show that little babies are able to hear to the sounds when they are blooming in the womb. For instance, recent studies have shown that babies respond to the books which are read before birth (Makin & Whitehead, 2004).

Over a child's school age years, the process of literacy development takes several significant stages. The stages look different depending on the child's comprehension level but they generally fall into specific age ranges. The milestones of language and literacy development during early years categorized in three distinctive age periods – (0-3) years old, (3-5) years old and 6 years old. Given that the research is focusing on 3-5 years, we discuss here the milestones of language and literacy development from 3-5 years.

From 3 to 5 years- preschool period:

Between the age of 3 and 5 years old is preschool period, children experience a lot of new things in their lives. Compared with the first three years preschoolers accomplish a lot in a day (Pence & Justice, 2008). In this preschool period children can talk about what they do as they are doing it. While they are playing, they often talk to themselves. By the age of 5 children can acquire almost 80% of the syntactic structures they use as adults (Owens, 1996). There are three significant

emergent literacy components that preschoolers easily achieve, which are- alphabet knowledge, print awareness and phonological awareness (Pence & Justice, 2008). During the preschool years most children recognize some letters especially in their names, understand conversations, purpose and functions of print (Altıparmak, 2010).

Theories on emergent literacy:

There are important theories in the roots of emergent literacy approach. One of the most important contributors, Jean Piaget opened a universally accepted perspective in education and development of children. Piaget's cognitive developmental theory suggests that children actively construct their knowledge as they manipulate and explore their world (Green & Piell, 2002). According to Piaget, as brain develops and children's experiences increase, they move through four stages, each determined by qualitatively distinct ways of thinking (Berk, 2004). Berk (2005) explains that, in the first stage sensorimotor and cognitive development begins with babies use the sense and movements to explore the world. These action patterns change into the symbolic but not logical way of thinking in the preoperational stages between the age of 2 and 7. In the operational stage where thoughts become complex, abstract reasoning system of the adolescents and adults.

Piaget's cognitive developmental theory on language and literacy was criticized by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Vygotsky claimed that development is a social process and this led to literacy development to be taken more seriously by society (Griffith et al, 2008). Saracho and Spodek (1993) indicated that Vygotsky differentiates between natural and cultural development. Language and literacy development are a form of cultural development. Vygotsky believed that cognitive development a result of interaction between people and children learn most effectively by engaging meaningfully with someone who is more experienced.

Wasik (2004) pointed out the similarities of sociocultural theory with another important theory underlying the structure of emergent literacy approach is Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory. Ecological system theory "views the person as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of surrounding environment" (Berk, 2004). Wasik and Herrmann (2004) indicated that Bronfenbrenner's theory provides exceptionally rational theoretical framework for family literacy, which refers to "literacy beliefs and practices among family members and intergenerational transfer of literacy to children".

Marie Clay's emergent literacy theory recognizes a close relationship between the instructional scaffolds used by educators to promote young children's emerging reading, writing and oral language skill (Clay, 1991). Clay extends the value of understanding where an individual child's Zone of proximal development is, so that parents and teachers take advantage of learning spaces to enhance a child's literacy learning. She also recognizes that children construct their learning within the context of their own developmental histories, prior knowledge and previous experiences with complex tasks.

Emergent literacy approach:

The term emergent literacy was risen in New Zealand in 1966 by Marie Clay, a New Zealander educator focused on children's abilities regarding reading and writing before they exposed to formal instructions (Tracey & Morrow, 2007). She argued that the preschool years are significantly important for leaning the concepts and functions of reading and writing which can be addressed to later literacy skills (McLachlan, 2007). After writing her doctoral dissertation regarding emergent literacy in 1966, clay developed an early intervention program, called 'Reading Recovery' aiming to encourage children, especially children with learning difficulties to be able to catch up their peers in terms of learning how to read and write.

Elizabeth Sulzby and William Teale are another two significant contributors to emergent literacy. They conducted several studies both together and independently focusing on different aspects of emergent literacy and relationships of literacy development of children with other factors, especially families.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to give an in-detail explanation of the study design used for this research. This chapter is parted into three subsequent parts. The beginning part has elaborated the methodology employed and thereafter the study location and sample of the participants. In second part narration of the methods of data collection is presented. In third part there is a description of the techniques in which analysis process was done, the ethical considerations as well as the limitations of the study.

Study Design: The design of the exploratory research relates to qualitative study to understand the underlying difference in reasons, opinions, practices, perceptions of urban slum parents. As researcher is interested in collecting information regarding parental perception towards emergent literacy, practices parents do at home, home learning environment urban slum areas parents provide their children's early literacy promotion a qualitative design was employed. Qualitative research is, "the systematic collection, organization and interpretation of textual materials derived from talk or conversation. It is used in the exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context" (Malterud, 2001, 483). In order to find out subject's viewpoint, specifically, mothers, in-depth interview are carried out in flexible way. Questions were open-ended and interviews were conducted as conversation and in natural settings.

Study setting: Study locations are selected as Shantibag, Matijheel, and Wari slum areas of Dhaka City. All these areas represent poor, underprivileged group. As mentioned before all in-depth interviews and home visits were carried out in the participant's homes.

Study sample: Study sample was the mothers having daughters of 3-5 years old. Sample mothers in this study were homemakers as well as working. Those mothers were selected whose daughters are not getting any kind of learning intervention for literacy outside the home environment. Data on age, education, family type, parent's profession and income were also collected. Reason of choosing 3-5 years old children was, in Bangladesh pre-primary education starts from the age five.

Sample Size: There were total 6 participants from the 3 selected slum areas. The opinions of 6 mothers were taken from different households in this study. All the 6 mothers' households were

observed. Thoughtful concentration was given in selecting the mothers who vary in educational level.

Sampling technique: Purposive sample technique was employed to select sample. Households having rich or moderate home literacy environment were purposively selected from low socio-economic status families by both interviewing a key informant and surveying households. Rich/moderate home literacy environment were selected following the number of children's and adults' books/magazines/newspapers in the households, parents' love for personal reading, mothers' (higher) educational level and literacy abilities, mothers of children with typical development who model writing to their children, read to their children, and engage in drawing pictures, signing songs, and telling stories as structured activities and engage in conversation during meal time, changing dress and watching TV as unstructured activities. During surveys, households that demonstrated at least two structured activities and two unstructured activities were selected for the research. Mothers' educational level and having books in the family were also be given priority.

Only mothers who wish to participate were selected for IDIs. In this study 6 mothers were selected for IDI and their homes were selected for observations. Mothers were selected because research shows that “maternal literacy beliefs are positively related to the home literacy environment, and in turn, the emergent literacy skills of children” (Bingham, 2007, cited in Buvanewari and Padakannaya, 2017, p. 5). Additionally, recent research identifies that “what parents are teaching their children and how the teaching process varies based on socially constructed behavior (e.g., gender norms and expectations)” (Porta et. al., 2022, p. 2). Prior research exploring parental educational aspiration and gender inequality of rural children in Bangladesh observes that if factors including parental traditional gender role attitude increases, the likelihood of having parental aspiration of higher education significantly increases only for the case of boys but significantly decreases for the case of girls (Sarker et. al., 2017, p. 134). Hence, mothers of girls were selected to understand the mother-daughter interaction pattern and corresponding teaching process of emergent literacy development. Such understanding contributed to identify measures for supporting emergent literacy development process of girls of pre-school years with the long-term goal of achieving gender equality in education.

Furthermore, low socio-economic status families were selected because prior research addressing children from three socio-economic levels and from infancy to age 3 shows that parents from middle socio-economic strata uses various strategies during language and literacy events at home which results in children having lesser listening/receptive vocabulary from low socio-economic status families compare to children from middle socio-economic status families (Buvaneswari and Padakannaya, 2017, p.3). Because the research intends to help children of pre-school age from slum settings in regard to emergent literacy development, low socio-economic strata was selected. Notably, research has shown that many children come from cultures where storybook reading may not be a common practice but parents support cognitive growth through daily interactions, household responsibilities, and family activities (Buvaneswari and Padakannaya, 2017, p. 5). According to this view, it is possible to learn parents' perception and practices regarding emergent literacy development from low socio-economic strata.

Research Instrument: The following measures were used to collect data:

1. In-depth interview questionnaire (IDI)
2. Observation checklist

Data collection method and procedure: This study incorporated two method of data collection; It used the IDI questionnaire and home observations to gather a broader spectrum of evidence, practices and perspectives to enhance the truth worthiness and credibility of an analysis. During data collection, several tools such as notebooks, laptops, mobile voice recorder and so on were used to document the fieldwork. An extensive guideline to assist the in-depth interview had been made and included in the appendix. In the research permission and necessary approvals was sought from the mothers. The conversation with permission from the participants were recorded and later transcribed, translated for data analysis. Researcher discussed the nature of the research, the procedure, the time duration involved for interview and home observation that would be used and the issues of confidentiality. Researcher herself carried out in-depth interviews and home observations. All the field notes were maintained by the researcher. During the interview clear and semi-structured questions were asked so that participants could answer flexibly in their own words and misleading questions were avoided. The researcher also observed and recorded the non-verbal behaviors and took notes.

IDI questionnaire: The questionnaire is divided into three parts (Appendix-A, Annex 1). The first part includes questions related to demographic profile of the participants such as- mother's educational level, child age, gender, number of children's and adult books/magazines/ newspaper etc. The second part there is In-Depth Interview Questionnaire linked with parental perception about emergent/early literacy, understanding tools and practice (physical environment, parents literacy habits, the child's own literacy habits), parent child interaction for language and literacy activities etc. IDIs were conducted in free time of the participants and each day one in-depth interview was conducted. The length of each interview was 38-45 minutes.

Home observation: For the nature of the study, six home observation were conducted. Mothers who were interviewed also selected for home observations. The main intention of the home observation was to get full understanding about literacy environment along with the activities done by the parents at home and to explore the availability and nature of the literacy related materials used at home. Duration of each observation was maximum four hours. So, each day one home observation was carried out. Researcher note down each and every detail of the physical environment with special reference to the type and amount of early literacy related materials that were also visible.

Data management and analysis: Data was sorted from the beginning of the data collection procedure. In this research data was gathered through IDI interview and home observation. After coming back from the field, notes were reorganized with time and date. Transcription was completed without any delay and put it on paper exactly based on what was heard from the mobile recorder. As data was collected in a text format for the study, researcher used the approach of content analysis as it categorizes verbal or behavioral data for the purpose classification and summarization. In content analysis, researcher examined written documents or transcription of recorded verbal conversations. As it is an exploratory study rather than a confirmatory study, researcher chose content analysis as data analysis technique. Data was directly corresponded with the research and sub-research questions. Themes and issues emerging from data were sorted out then. Subsequently data was sorted in order to identify common themes and pattern. Finally, the data was interpreted and presented.

Validity and Reliability: Researcher took utmost care in conducting the study. As validity is an important issue in qualitative research to defend the accuracy and reliability of the study, several

3	Research Proposal Development																	
4	Tool Development																	
5	Data Collection																	
6	Data Preparation and Analysis																	
7	Report Preparation and Presentation																	

Limitation of the study:

- In this research, we have followed specific concept and method to design the research. The research could also be done using other methods and concepts and following different techniques for data analysis.
- In terms of data collection procedure, only IDI and home observations were conducted. It would be better if one Focused Group Discussion could be done to look at the study from one more standpoint.
- The goal of this qualitative research is to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of some aspects of human experience through the intensive study of emergent literacy and home environment. Selection of three slum areas of Dhaka city as well as only mothers of 3-5 years old girls may limit “analytic generalization and transferability” (Polit & Beck, 2010).
- Within the time limit, it was possible to select six mothers and conduct observations in six households.
- Two of the mothers were losing patience at one point while answering and were making excuses for work. So, the researcher had to struggle to get the appropriate answer to the question.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

A) Understanding Parents' Perception

1. *Understanding emergent literacy*

1.1 *Parents' broad understanding of emergent literacy*

Half of the research participants clearly described the meaning of emergent literacy by mentioning “children’s ability to read and write at a very young age”. Two mothers having 9 years and 5 years education background respectively describe their understanding about emergent literacy by stating:

Being able to read and write at a very young age (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

The ability to read and write from a young age (IDI 6, 10.02.2023).

Similarly, another mother, who has 9 years education, emphasizes on “Children’s ability to recognize letter” (IDI 2, 05.02.2023) to indicate her understanding of emergent literacy. Another research participant who has passed grade 1 and sells tea, correlates poverty and the idea of emergent literacy and informs that lack of access to financial resources leads to lack of understanding regarding emergent literacy. As the participant states,

Where it is very difficult to manage our rice, the thought of reading does not come to our mind (IDI 5, 09.02.2013).

1.2 *Timing for starting to learn literacy skills*

Half of the research participants attempted to specifically describe the timing for starting to learn literacy skills. According to them, the timing includes, when children “start talking”, “learn to comprehend the world around them” and “from age 3”. As a participant states,

Children should be [able to read and write] from the age when they start talking (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

1.3 *Emergent literacy skills*

Two research participants attempted to describe their understanding about the skills that involve emergent literacy. They primarily emphasize on skills related to “children’s ability to read and

write the basic alphabets and understand what people are saying” and “reading, writing, and number recognition” (IDI 1, 04.02.2013; IDI 2, 05.02.2023).

2. Children’s ways of learning early literacy skills

2.1 Approaches to learn early literacy skills

Three research participants described the ways helpful for children to learn early literacy skills. One participant having nine years of education background specifically mentions a) the role of children in the development process of emergent literacy by informing that “At home, children should read books every day” and b) the role of children’s interaction with others in the development process of emergent literacy by highlighting that “if adults read poems or stories, the children will also learn to speak and read”. As the research participant states,

At home, children should be read with books every day, if you read funny poems or stories, the children will also learn to speak and read (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

Two other participants with nine and five years of education backgrounds respectively stress “observation of adults who read” as the approach to learn early literacy. For example,

Children start learning early literacy by observing the adult who loves to read (IDI 2, 05.02.23).

By observing adults and inculcating the habit of reading the alphabet from an early age (IDI 6, 10.02.23).

2.2 Caregiver or adults’ ways of scaffolding children’s learning of emergent literacy skills

Among the three research participants who have attempted to describe caregiver or adults’ ways of scaffolding children’s learning of early literacy skills, one participant points out the ways in which adults can offer support to children’s thinking and learning by “talking about pictures, telling rhymes, and stories”, “doing various fun activities with children”, and “encouraging them reading” (IDI 1, 04.02.23, IDI 2, 05.02.2023, IDI 6, 10.02.2023). As a research participant with nine years of education states:

Adults can offer support by talking about pictures, telling rhymes, stories (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

However, none of them mentions the situations when adults can offer support or how can adults decide the time for offering support.

3. Meaning/aspect of home literacy environment

3.1 (Nature of) literacy related activities at home

According to three research participants, “Talking, singing, playing, reading, writing, and drawing” (IDI 1, 04.02.23, IDI 2, 05.02.2023, IDI 6, 10.02.2023) can be considered as literacy related activities at home.

3.2 Literacy-related materials that home can offer to children to develop children’s emergent literacy skills

According to three research participants, “books; alphabet books; pencils; colors; toys; and household objects such as bowls, cups, pots” (IDI 1, 04.02.23, IDI 2, 05.02.2023, IDI 6, 10.02.2023) can be considered as literacy-related materials that home can offer to children to develop children’s emergent literacy skills.

4. Importance of home literacy environment for acquiring emergent or early literacy knowledge and skills

4.1 Relationship between literacy resources at home and children’s emergent literacy skills development

A research participant mentions that literacy resources at home that are accessible to children influence on children’s emergent literacy skills in the sense that “exposure to literacy resources will generate children’s interest in reading and writing letters”. As the research participant having nine years education background states:

If children are involved with holding books, notebooks, pencils from a young age, then they will develop a fondness for books, will want to read at their own will. Can recognize, speak and write letters very easily (IDI 2, 05.02.2023).

According to this quote, emergent literacy involves “recognize, speak, and write letters” which emphasize on accuracy and correctness aspect of emergent literacy. However, aspect regarding meaning and communication aspect is not evident in this quote.

4.2 Relationship between parents' personal love for reading and children's emergent literacy skills development

A total of four research participants understand that there exist a relationship between parents' personals love for reading and development of children's emergent literacy skills. They explain that parental personal love for reading will “motivate and inspire children towards reading or generate interest among children towards reading” (IDI 1, 04.02.2023; IDI 2, 05.02.2023; IDI 6, 10.02.2023). According to a research participant with 9 years education background,

Children get the most inspiration from their parents. Children also learn if their father or mother has a love for reading (IDI 2, 05.02.2023).

Similarly, another participant stresses on learning by observing as the means for learning readding skills. The research participant with five years education background states her idea as,

Children will want to do what they see their parents doing. So, if parents see them reading, children will also learn by watching them (IDI 4, 08.02.2023).

4.3 Parents' belief about literacy play a role in the development of children's emergent literacy skills?

4.3.1 People responsible for facilitating children's early literacy skills

Research participants belief that “parents and elder siblings” (IDI 2, 05.02.2023; IDI 5, 09.02.2023; IDI 6, 10.02.2023), “both parents and teachers” (IDI 1, 04.02.2023; IDI 4, 08.02.2023), and “teachers” (IDI 3, 07.02.2023) are responsible for facilitating children's early literacy skills (e.g. read or write alphabets, words, or separate sounds in spoken words).

4.3.2 Importance of developing children's confidence and interest in reading in children

Research participants believe that it is important to develop children's confidence and broad interest in reading because such confidence and interest will help them to “keep up with other children” (IDI 1, 04.02.2023), “understand the teacher's teaching better at school” (IDI 3, 07.02.2023), “be confident at school [learning]” (IDI 4, 08.02.2023) , and “perform better in future school” (IDI 6, 10.02.2023). As a research participant with five years educational background states,

It is important for their better future school performance (IDI 6, 10.02.2013).

4.3.3 Reason for doing well at reading words in school

Research participants share their belief regarding why do most children do well at reading words in school. According to them, most children do well at reading words in school because they “practiced alphabets”, “are taught literacy”, “get familiar with alphabet” and “are well prepared to recognize and understand letters, or words” from a “very young age” or “before going to schools” (IDI 1, 04.02.2023; IDI 2, 05.02.2023; IDI 4, 08.02.2023; IDI 6, 10.02.2023).

5. Influence of home literacy environment on school readiness

Two research participants clearly describe the influence of home literacy environment on school readiness by highlighting that home literacy environment enable children to “be involved in learning” (IDI 2, 05.02.2023) and “encourage children in reading, writing, and drawing, consequently, their knowledge of letters develops” (IDI 1, 04.02.2023) which lead to improved school readiness. Regarding this, a research participant with nine years education states her idea as:

If there is a good literature environment at home and children are encouraged in reading, writing, drawing; their knowledge of letters will develop in the future, as a result those children can perform well in school with confidence (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

B) Understanding Parents’ Tools and Practice:

1. Physical (literacy) environment

1.1.1 Availability of literacy resources at home

All participants mention print of different types such as “children’s books, books with pictures, fundamental books, alphabet books, and exercise books” (IDIs 1,2,3,4,5,6) as literacy resources that are available at home. Additionally, objects such as “home-made toys including stone, sticks, clay pots, cooking pots” (IDIs 1 & 4) that teach color, shape, sizes, and names and “pencils” are considered as literacy resources at home. A research participant’s response supports these ideas.

She plays with the home-made toys, like: stone, sticks, clay pots. She also has books with pictures, pencils (IDI 4, 08.02.2013).

Observation data from one household also reveals the availability of play materials at home. According to the data,

In one corner of the room there were small clay pots, marble stones, foam made birds and horse for the girl to play with. The girl was quietly playing with the marble stones and counting softly (Observation 5, 09.02.2023).

1.1.2 Space at home

All the six observed households demonstrate the feature of small houses where children's literacy resources, household utensils, and furniture are accommodated. For example, in one household, "Parents and their 3 years old daughter share a 120 square feet room. There were one Bangla 'Adarsha Lipi' book, one English alphabet book and one number learning book on one side of the bed" (Observation 2, 05.02.2023). In other households, "Books, notebooks, pencils are kept in the bag after reading" (Observation 1, 04.02.2023) and "a sleeping area on one side, some cooking pots, a stove and some alphabets books were seen inside the small tent house where two children with their parents live" (Observation 3, 07.02.2023). Similarly, "another family rents a two-room of 6'/7' with no windows and barely enough space to move. In one corner of the room there were small clay pots, marble stones, foam made birds and horse for the girl to play with" (Observation 5, 09.02.2023) and "in a tiny one room there was a sleeping mattress, on the other side there was a clay stove with a storage shelf. But there was no separate space for the child to read (Observation 6, 10.02.2023).

1.2 Children having number of age-appropriate children's books

All the six research participants mention that their children belonging to 3-5 years have "3 fundamental books (Bangla Adarsha lipi, English alphabets and numerical book)" that support accuracy and correctness aspect of emergent literacy development. Additionally, according to two research participants, their children have "rhyme books, drawing books and one exercise books" (IDI 1, 04.02.2023; IDI 2, 05.02.2023). Observation of three households also reveals the availability of children's literacy resources. According to these observation data sets:

The child is taught sitting on the bed. Books, notebooks, pencils are kept in the bag after reading (Observation # 1, 04.02.2023).

Some alphabets books were seen inside the tent (Observation # 3, 07.02.2023).

There I found two Bangla and English alphabets books and one math number book (Observation # 6, 10.02.2023).

1.3 Resources accessible to children

All the six research participants inform that the above mentioned literacy resources are accessible to their children (IDIs 1,2,3,4,5, & 6).

2. Parents' literacy habits

2.1 Reading for pleasure

Except one research participant who has nine years education background and who “sometimes reads religious books” (IDI 1, 04.02.23), all the research participants mention that their children do not see them reading print materials for pleasure such as books, magazines, newspapers because “household chores and work in public space does not allow time for reading” (IDIs 1, 3, & 5).

3. The child's own literacy habits

3.1 Participation by the child during shared interactions between the parent and the child

3.1.1 Child independently point to or talk about pictures when reading stories

In the interview context, half of the research participants mention that their children “show curiosity towards the pictures” (IDI 3, 27.02.23) and “talk about the pictures” (IDI 6, 10.02.23) when the research participants read stories to these children who are 3 years, 4 years, and 5 years old. Observation data of a household also reveals that the child asks her mother about the pictures of a book. As the data states:

There were one Bangla ‘Adarsha Lipi’ book, one English alphabet book and one number learning book on one side of the bed. Name of various objects, Animals, fruits and flowers are given in the books along with pictures. While reading the child asked her mother about the pictures. There were some outside sticks and rocks in the house to play (Observation # 2, 05.02.2023).

3.1.2 Child asking questions about events during story telling

According to two research participants, their children ask questions about events during story telling. A research participant who has a nine-year education background states the idea relating to her 4 years child as,

She listens to stories with great interest and asks questions about people and events (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

Observation data also revealed similar findings.

While reading the child asked her mother about the pictures (Observation 2, 05.02.2023).

3.2 The child’s own interest and motivation to participate in literacy-related activities

3.2.1 Child asking for books to be read to her

Most parents mention that their children do not request them for books to be read to them, instead they “like to play” (IDI 4). However, one research participant who has completed class 5 informs her 3-year-old child’s interest towards stories and thus indicates her child’s literacy habit as,

She asks me to read stories to her (IDI 6, 10.02.2023).

3.2.2 Child Pretending to read story or rhymes in a book

According to two research participants, their children pretend to read story or rhymes in a book. “Sometimes she tries to read stories by her own” (4 years child, IDI I, 04.02.2023) and “she pretends to read stories” (3 years child, IDI 6, 10.02.2023) support the idea.

3.2.3 Child saying stories or rhymes to herself

According to two research participants, their 4 years and 3 years old children “tries” to say stories or rhymes to herself (IDI 1, 04.02.2023) and “can tell taught rhymes” (IDI 2, 05/02/2023).

3.2.4 Child pretending to write by scribbling on paper

All the research participants mention that their children pretend to write by scribbling on paper. According to them, children “draw pictures” to express themselves. Three research participants’ responses follow this idea as they state,

She draws whatever she wants in a meaningless way (4 years old child, IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

She tries to draw fruits, flowers etc. (3 years old child, IDI 2, 05.02.2023)

If she has notebooks and pencils, tries to draw pictures meaninglessly (5 years old child, IDI 3, 07/02/2023).

3.2.5 Children’s interest in reading signboards

All the research participants mention that their children do not show interest in reading signboards when they go out with them.

4. Parent-child interaction for language and literacy activities

4.1 Singing nursery rhymes and songs

All the research participants mention that they sing “popular Bangla” rhymes and songs to their child. Their responses reveal that the sung rhymes and songs are age-appropriate and follow home language. The most common rhymes and songs are “noton noton payra gulo, bhor holo dor kholo, Ay ayy chad mama” which are often practiced with children during “bed time, bathing, and feeding”. A research participant who has a 5-year education background emphasizes on singing diversified Bengali rhymes to her child by stating:

At bed time, I sing different Bengali rhymes to him (IDI 4, 08.02.2023).

Similarly, another research participant without education stresses on singing popular Bangla rhymes. As she states,

I teach her some of popular bangla rymes, such as- Ayy brishty jhepe, dol dol duluni, ghum parani mashi pishi etc. (IDI 3, 07.02.2023).

The other research participant having 9 years education background specifically mentions the timing of singing song together with her 3 years old child. As she states,

We sing together while bathing and feeding (IDI 2, 05.02.2023).

4.2 Telling stories to the child

Most of the research participants mention that they tell stories to the child. A participant states the timing of telling stories to her four years old child as,

I tell her stories while bathing her, feeding her, and putting her to sleep (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

However, another research participant who has no education background mentions the purpose of telling stories to her daughter which involves “restricting her daughter’s mobility and perhaps thus to ensure safety of her daughter”. As she states,

I tell her ghost stories. So that she gets scared and doesn't go out (IDI 3, 07.02.2023).

According to this quote, parents sometimes tell stories without having adequate understanding of the purpose for telling stories and that may include learning language and literacy through meaning and pleasure.

4.3 Naming and talking pictures in books

Almost all the research participants mention that they name pictures in books and talk about the pictures with their children. Two of them specifically emphasize on “explaining the pictures”. For example, one such research participant having nine years educational background mentions:

I explain her about the picture (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

Besides explaining, another research participant with 5 years education background emphasizes on “asking about the pictures” as part of language and literacy activities. As she mentions,

I ask her about the pictures in the books, explain about it (IDI 6, 10.02.2023).

4.4 Teaching simple verbal manners

All the research participants mention that they do not teach simple verbal manners such as please, sorry, thank you etc.

4.5 Child encouraged to learn alphabets

According to all research participants, their children are encouraged to learn alphabets at home. Everyday, they do so by “showing pictures, reading rhymes and alphabets, reading with the child, repeating readings shown by the teacher, and asking about the letters or pictures.” For example, a mother who has completed a nine-year education, states the way she encourages her child to learn alphabets as:

I encourage him to sit and read regularly by showing pictures of books every day (IDI 1, 04.02.2023).

Similarly, another mother with nine years education background emphasizes on reading rhymes and alphabets to the child and encouraging the child to repeat with the mother. As she states,

Every evening I read to her rhymes and alphabets and she repeats them with me (IDI 2, 05.02.2013).

The other mother with five years education background follows the technique of asking questions and learning through fun to encourage the child to learn alphabets. According to her,

I ask her about the letters or pictures in various fun ways (IDI 6, 10.02.2013).

4.6 Encouraging child to draw pictures

According to the research participants, none of them encourages their children to draw pictures as part of language and literacy activities.

4.7 Giving color pencils, pencils to children to play with

All the research participants mention that their children have pencils, color pencils to play with.

Interestingly, the analysis of all data sets indicates that beliefs and practices emerged from parents' responses and observation evidence are not always common. Moreover, the responses and observations of few parents' (e.g., IDI 1, 2, and 6) were repeatedly evident compared to the responses of other parents (e.g., IDI 3,4, and 5).

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to discuss my observations and learning from the research supported by data and results. This chapter first talks about the issues emerged during the study and provides an analysis of the research evidence with reference to the Piaget, Marie Clay, Vygotsky, and Bronfenbrenner's theory. Secondly this section highlights conclusion and some ideas of future research studies. Lastly, some recommendations are suggested.

The educational background of the six parents, specifically mothers, who have participated in this research ranges between no education and nine years of education. According to the data sets, half of them is involved in public space and half of them solely involved in private space in three areas of Dhaka slum but none of them are involved with any kind of intervention on emergent literacy. All the research participants are the mothers of girls aged between 3 and 5 years. According to observation data, there are at least one Bangla alphabet book, and one English alphabet book, and one number learning book in each household. Names of various objects, animals, fruits, and flowers are given in these books along with pictures. Children play with sticks and rocks, small clay pots, marble stones, and foam made birds and horse. Children are exposed to early letter knowledge by mothers or elder sister or nearby primary school teachers.

The data sets reveal that parents conceptualize the meaning of emergent literacy as children's ability to read and write at a very young age, and children's ability to recognize letters. According to these ideas, parents indicate timing and skills involved in emergent literacy as they describe their understanding of emergent literacy. Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) cited in Sandra et. al., (2022) also indicate the timing aspect as they describe emergent literacy as "a developmental continuum, with its origin early in the life of a child, rather than an all-or-none phenomenon that begins when children start school" (P.2). Similarly, Landry and Smith (2006) mention the timing as, "the development of literacy skills commences prior to formal academic instruction through experiences encountered in the home" (Landry and Smith, 2006 cited in Sandra et. al., 2022, p.2). In line with this understanding of its origin in early life, parents specifically mention three groups of timing such as when children start talking, when children learn to comprehend the world around them, and from age three to describe the timing for starting to learn literacy skills. This data regarding the three groups of timing suggests that parents understand the early life timing for starting early literacy differently.

When discussing skills belonging to emergent literacy, parents discuss skills e.g., ability to read and write the basic alphabets, ability to recognize letters, reading writing and number recognition, and ability to understand what people are saying. Similar to this understanding, Goldsworthy (2003) states that “developmental and interactional relationship between the spoken and written forms of the language can be observed in emergent literacy skills” (Goldsworthy, 2003 cited in Sandra et.al., 2022, p. 2). However, in addition to knowledge of the alphabet, rapid automatic naming of letters and numbers, parents’ responses could also include phonological awareness, automatic naming of objects and colors, writing of the name, concepts about printed material (writing conventions), vocabulary, phonological memory and visual processing (Castro and Barrera, 2019, p. 511). Furthermore, as parents’ mention ability to read and write, their responses could include also include clarification about phonological awareness, vocabulary, skills in writing and reading words as well as reading comprehension. As it is mentioned by xx (2019),

The learning of the written language (emergent and conventional) derives from the interdependent competence of the skills in two domains: “outside-in” and “inside-out”. The first one (outside-in) refers to oral language skills related to the context of reading, in which vocabulary and oral comprehension skills stand out. The second (inside-out) refers to the skills related to the coding domain, which allow the passage of print into sound (decoding) and vice-versa, where the phonological awareness skills and the knowledge of letters stand out. Therefore, reading and writing will mainly depend on the following skills: phonological awareness, writing knowledge (involving knowledge of letters) and oral language (expressive and receptive vocabulary and oral comprehension) (Castro and Barrera, 2019, p. 511).

In regard to children’s ways of learning early literacy skills, parents mention children’s role of reading books on regular basis. This idea partially relates with Piagetian view that suggests that “children are active participants in their own learning” (Landry and Smith 2006, cited in Sandra et. al., p. 2). However, in order to be “active constructor of knowledge, capable of understanding and forming his own concepts about his environment” (ibid), in this case emergent literacy, children also need to engage in “games, songs, and even daily conversation” (ibid). Besides children’s role, parents also inform adults’ role by stating that if adults read funny poems or stories,

children will also learn to speak and read. This idea supports Vygotskian concept that suggests that “young children learn from their interactions with others and that is applicable to emergent literacy skills” (Rogoff 1990 cited in Sandra et. al., p.2). However, approaches to learning emergent literacy skill not only involves learning reading skills but also includes learning writing skills. Previous studies show that children acquire this early knowledge of literacy by writing notes, letters and so forth along with their parents (Taylor, 1983), and labeling their drawings (Ferreiro, 1986).

Marie Clay’s emergent literacy theory recognizes a close relationship between the instructional scaffolds used by educators to promote young children’s emerging reading, writing and oral language skill (Clay, 1991). Clay extends the value of understanding where an individual child’s Zone of proximal development is, so that parents and teachers take advantage of learning spaces to enhance a child’s literacy learning. When discussing children’s ways of learning literacy skills, parents also describe caregiver or adult’s ways of scaffolding children’s learning of emergent literacy skills by stating that adults can offer support to children’s thinking and learning by talking about pictures, telling rhymes, and stories; doing various fun activities with children; and encouraging them reading. According to parents, parents thus can play a significant role as the more experienced/capable partners/others to support children’s thinking and learning. However, there is less emphasis in parents’ responses regarding the notion of children’s learning within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) during daily natural parent-child interactions within the home including talking about pictures, telling rhymes and stories, doing fun activities, and encouraging children reading. In other words, parents’ responses do not illustrate the situations when adults can offer support or how adults can decide the time for offering support.

As parents describe children’s ways of learning literacy skills, they indicate that children start learning early literacy by observing the adult who loves to read. Parents’ such belief relates to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory that refers to “literacy beliefs and practices among family members and intergenerational transfer of literacy to children” (Wasik and Herrmann, 2004).

To describe the aspects of home literacy environment, parents refer the nature of literacy related activities and materials and report that talking, singing, playing, reading, writing, and drawing can

be considered as literacy related activities at home; and books, alphabet books, pencils, colors, toys, and household objects such as bowls, cups, and pots can be considered as literacy-related materials to use by children at home. These ideas are reflected by Payne et al., (1994) and McGinty and Justice (2009) cited in *ibid*, as they mention that home literacy environment refers to “the frequency and nature of literacy-related activities at home, most notably shared parent-child reading, the number of books in the home, the frequency of trips to the library, and the frequency and enjoyment of reading by the primary caregiver ... typically provides the setting for emergent literacy knowledge by exposing children to various print forms and objects such as toys, games, television, recipes, grocery lists, and reading materials which include newspapers, magazines, mail, and storybooks” (p. 2). According to this quote, parents could inform more about shared-parent child reading, the number of books in the home, the frequency of trips to the library, and the frequency and enjoyment of reading by the primary caregiver when they describe literacy related activities at home. They could also reflect more on reading materials including storybooks, newspapers, magazines, mail, grocery list, and television to indicate literacy related materials that home can offer.

Parents in the research context also describe the importance of home literacy environment for acquiring emergent literacy skills by highlighting that literacy resources at home that are accessible to children generate children’s interest in reading and writing letters, develop fondness for books and interest in reading, and help children to recognize, speak, and write letters. Besides accessing literacy resources at home, parents mention that parents’ personal love for reading motivates and inspires children towards reading. Additionally, according to parents, parents’ belief about literacy for example, a) developing children’s confidence and interest in reading help them to keep up with other children, understand the teachers teaching better at school, and perform better in future in schools; and b) children do well at reading words in school because they got familiar with alphabets at home and thus are well prepared to recognize letters or words before going to school; and c) parents and elder siblings, parents and teachers; and teachers are responsible for facilitating children’s development of early literacy skills. Thus, idea such as facilitative mothers can play an active role in reading and teaching to the children is evident in parents believe about emergent literacy. Importantly, all the ideas described here regarding the importance of home literacy environment for acquiring emergent literacy skills are consistent with prior research that suggests that “home literacy environment helps in acquiring literacy knowledge,” specifically, “it provides

children with opportunities at home to observe the literacy activities of family members and also engage in joint reading and writing activities with others at home” (Whitehurst and Lonigan, 1998 cited in *ibid*). Additionally, Parents’ such beliefs relate to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system theory which provides the theoretical framework for family literacy and refers to “literacy beliefs and practices among family members and intergenerational transfer of literacy to children” (Wasik and Herrmann, 2004).

According to parents, home literacy environment improves children’s school readiness by encouraging children in reading, writing, and drawing and consequently, developing children’s knowledge of letters. Thus, parents’ belief indicates that home literacy environment influences children’s school readiness by supporting emergent reading, emergent writing and receptive language i.e. how a child understands language. Research on emergent literacy has supported these ideas by illustrating that “there is a positive relationship between the frequency of home reading and children’s vocabulary, letter-name knowledge, and phonological awareness” (Senechal, 2006 cited in Sandra et al., 2022). Drawn from this quote, parents’ responses could include few other aspects such as the positive relationship between the frequency of home reading and children’s vocabulary learning and phonological awareness.

In addition to parents’ beliefs, parents use of tools and practices regarding children’s emergent literacy development relates to the remaining four dimensions of home literacy environment such as physical (literacy) environment; parent literacy habits, child’s own literacy habits, and parent-child interaction for language and literacy activities. These dimensions are intertwined with the theoretical views of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bronfenbrenner.

The physical (literacy) environment is indicated by the availability of literacy resources, literacy related activities, and space at home (*ibid*). According to parents, age-appropriate literacy materials such as alphabet books in most instances and rhyme and drawing books in few instances, and toys are available at home and accessible to children. Observation data also reveals that books are kept in one side of the bed or in the bag and the play materials are kept in one corner of the room suggesting that the literacy materials are accessible to children. It is widely recognized that “The literacy materials are significant tools for facilitating children’s engagement in literacy activities and parent-child interactions” (*ibid*, p. 4). However, a lot of emphasis on alphabet books reflects the idea that parents view alphabet learning as an integral part of children’s literacy development.

Besides the availability of literacy resources at home, literacy related activities included reading to the child, parents' involvement in the facilitation of learning letters and sounds, and few numbers of books in households. Library visits and parental reading behavior were not evident as literacy related activities. Observation of space of the six households revealed that in general space at home is inadequate for children's emergent literacy development. It was evident in one household that there was no separate space for the child to read.

Despite that the "biggest influence on a child's reading ability and lifelong interest in reading is the parents' personal love for reading" (ibid, p.4), children do not see their parents reading print materials for pleasure, consequently, these children do not find their parents demonstrating the joy of reading. Regarding parents' personal love for reading, prior research indicates that "parents who read frequently are also more likely to read to their children, and that this reading activity may be related to having more books available to themselves and their children in the home...the number of literacy materials in the home also may be mediated by the parents' educational level and intelligence...mothers of children with typical development, who have higher education levels, enjoy reading more, model writing to their children more often, read to their children more often, and more regularly engage in drawing pictures, singing songs, and telling stories with their children" (ibid, P. 4).

Child's own literacy habit which plays a role in the development of emergent literacy skills was understood from both the interview and observation data that suggest that when parents read stories to the children, children show curiosity towards the pictures; talk about the pictures; and listen to stories with great interest and ask questions about people and event. These examples illustrate children's participation in literacy related activities during shared interactions between the parent and the child and thus indicate children's own literacy habits (ibid, 4). Additionally, a range of examples such as child pretends to read story in a book, child tries to say stories and rhymes to herself, and child pretends to write by scribbling/drawing on paper, and child asks for books to be read to her illustrate children's own interest and motivation to participate in literacy-related activities. "Children's such interest and motivation to participate in literacy related activities is closely related to their emergent literacy skills" (ibid, 4). Furthermore, children's such literacy habits also support the views that "the child is an active constructor of knowledge and children learn and discover literacy through their own attempts at reading and writing" (ibid, p. 2).

It is generally argued that “the quality of parent-child interactions during literacy activities remarkably helps in promoting the language and literacy development of children” (ibid, p. 4). In the research context, literacy activities such as singing popular Bangla rhymes and songs at bed time and while bathing and feeding; telling stories to the child while bathing, feeding, and putting the child to sleep; naming and talking pictures in the books specifically explaining pictures to the child and asking the child about the pictures in books; encouraging child to learn alphabets by showing pictures, reading rhymes and alphabets that are repeated by the child, reading with the child, repeating reading shown by the teacher, and asking about the letters or pictures “foster parent-child interactions that encourage children’s active participation in reading, writing, and language activities and in so doing enhance children’s language and print literacy development” (ibid, 4). However, parent-child interaction for language and literacy activities indicates that parents are not engaged in storybook reading and consequently encouraging verbal interactions during story reading; encouraging children to reconstruct read or heard stories that influence girls’ agency; encouraging children to be part of daily conversation including extended discourse, understanding when a child can solve problem independently and when they need to offer support to children during shared book reading and providing new information accordingly. Such interactions regarding shared book reading and involving children in daily conversation are also crucial for developing children’s emergent literacy skills as it is recognized regarding shared book reading, “the quality of parent-child interactions in a shared book reading situation helps in the growth of the children’s vocabulary and the quantity of book exposure helps in the growth of grammatical knowledge” (ibid, p.4).

Importantly, parents’ beliefs and caregiving activities regarding emergent literacy and home literacy environment vary among the selected parents. These variations result in differences in home literacy environment.

Notably, all the results of the research are important for three reasons:

- The results show the ways in which parents’ beliefs, tools and practices are aligned with or deviated from the theories on emergent literacy and prior research supporting early literacy development.
- The results show the ways in which parents’ beliefs are similar to and different from parents’ practices.

- The results also show the ways in which parents demonstrate similarity or differences in their beliefs and practices in regard to emergent literacy development.

Thus, these results regarding parents' beliefs, tools and practices about emergent literacy development and home literacy environment seem important for understanding early literacy development of young children, specifically girls, living in urban slum settings. These data might be used to strengthen parents' capacity to a) develop holistic understanding regarding home literacy environment and emergent literacy development and b) apply such understanding uniformly in order to lay the foundation for literacy success for all children of Dhaka urban slums with the long-term goal of achieving gender equality in education.

The research was framed with the assumption that there is similarity between parents' beliefs, and tools and practices regarding early literacy development of young children. This research supports the assumption in the sense that except parents' personal love for reading, parents demonstrate similarity in their beliefs and tools and practices.

In this research, the girls' own literacy habits indicate that all girls pretend to write by scribbling on paper, however, many of them do not ask for books to be read to them; independently point to or talk about pictures when reading stories; ask questions about event during story telling; pretend to read story or rhymes in a book; say stories or rhymes to themselves; and demonstrate interest in reading signboards. Furthermore, none of the parents encourages girls to draw pictures as part of language and literacy activities. Therefore, further research is needed to explore if there is any relationship between girls' own literacy habits and cultural beliefs, expectations and corresponding gendered socialization that influences girls' socially constructed behavior.

Conclusion

The research concludes by stating that parents' emergent literacy beliefs are positively related to the home literacy environment, in other words, tools and caregiving activities and practices except in case of parents' personal love for reading. In few instances, parents' beliefs regarding emergent literacy and the quality of exposure to early language and literacy activities vary in selected households, leading to differences in the home literacy environment. Importantly, their beliefs and practices are both consistent and inconsistent with theories on emergent literacy and prior research on emergent literacy. If parents had greater understanding about the concepts of emergent literacy and the ways in which home literacy environment promotes early literacy of children of pre-school years, parents' more scaffolding roles could have observed.

The research intended to better understand the beliefs and practices of parents of children, specifically, girls aged pre-school years in urban slum settings. The research has achieved its purpose in the sense that the research results and discussion demonstrate parents' beliefs and practices in greater detail, contribute in knowledge creation, and indicate the need for future intervention.

When doing this research, I have learnt that mothers are more involved in children's emergent literacy development compared to fathers. Hence, fathers' engagement in creating an effective home literacy environment that leads to children's early literacy development would also contribute greatly in early literacy development of young children aged 3-5 years.

Recommendations

Evidence from the study suggested few recommendations. Such as-

1. The board of management of nearby primary schools should organize meeting with slum parents to discuss on the importance of parental involvement in terms of creating conducive home parenting environment, frequent and effective home literacy environment that enhance children's learning with a variety of stimulating resources.
2. Capacity building of mothers of Dhaka slums by higher education institutions to strengthen understanding on emergent literacy, theories of emergent literacy development and the five dimensions of home literacy environment that are related to school readiness, later literacy

success and girls' agency. In addition to concepts, this intervention may introduce a range of literacy resources such as play materials, oral stories, rhymes, and low-cost storybooks (for shared parent-child story book reading) that home can offer in order to promote home environment that are cognitively and linguistically stimulating for girls and that offer girls ample opportunities to learn through interaction and enable them to learn and discover literacy through their own attempts.

3. Model development (comprising of 10 households) in Dhaka slums to support mothers and girls aged 3-5 years by enabling them to access literacy resources including a range of play materials, oral stories, rhymes, storybooks that are age appropriate, relevant to urban context, and gender and inclusion oriented and that are aligned with pre-school curriculum for 4-5 years. The purpose of developing the model is to document effectiveness and to expand the model in other slums located both inside and outside of Dhaka city.
4. Advocacy by non-state actors that supports the idea that the development of literacy skills commences prior to formal academic instruction through learning experiences encountered in the home for greater emphasis between emergent literacy and home literacy environment in policy and for mobilizing support for parents living in slum areas.
5. The ministry of Education should organize meeting or seminar with the help of the head teachers to equip under-privileged slum parents with necessary skills related to appropriate parental involvement practices and children's acquisition of basic literacy capabilities.
6. Future research could explore girls' own literacy habits in greater detail. In this research, the girls' own literacy habits indicate that all girls pretend to write by scribbling on paper, however, many of them do not ask for books to be read to them; independently point to or talk about pictures when reading stories; ask questions about event during story telling; pretend to read story or rhymes in a book; say stories or rhymes to themselves; and demonstrate interest in reading signboards. Furthermore, none of the parents encourages girls to draw pictures as part of language and literacy activities. Therefore, further research is needed to explore if there is any relationship between girls' own literacy habits and cultural beliefs, expectations and corresponding gendered socialization that influences girls' socially constructed behavior.
7. Future research could also examine parental beliefs and practices towards emergent literacy in slums outside Dhaka city, lower middle-class families, and well-privileged settings to

better understand if there are variations in home literacy environment and correspondingly in which ways interventions could be designed to support all children's emergent literacy skills in relation to home literacy environment. In these studies, specifically, home practice regarding emergent literacy including the process of shared reading etc. will be observed in greater detail. During observation, the method of investigation will be aligned with Vygotsky's use of case studies and a naturalistic observation of narrative interactions of parent-child dyads to understand mother-daughter interaction context. These interactions will be video-recorded and transcribed later.

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Appendix A:

Annex 1: In Depth Interview Guideline- English

Research Title: Emergent Literacy Development and Home Literacy Environment:

Beliefs and practices of parents having (3-5 years) preschool aged children at urban slum context.

A) **Demographic information** [survey questions to find households having rich/moderate home literacy environment either by discussing with a key informant or by interviewing mothers and observing households]

1. Child's age:
2. Child's gender (girls):
3. Mothers' educational level:
4. Number of children's and adult books/magazine/newspaper in the h/h (primarily by observation):
5. Everyday interaction pattern between a mother and a child:
 - what are the activities do you do with your child in a day? [Mothers of children with typical development who model writing to their children, read to their children, and engage in drawing pictures, signing songs, and telling stories as structured activities and engage in conversation during meal time, changing dress and watching TV as unstructured activities] (√) mark will be given.

B) In-Depth Interview Questionnaire

1. What do you understand about early letter knowledge?
2. When children start learning literacy skills and if you teach them to read and write from a young age, what ability will be developed in children?
3. How do children start learning early literacy skills?
4. How caregivers or adults offer support children learning of early literacy skills?
5. Why it is important to teach child at home before sending school? What can be the literacy related activities at home?

6. What is the importance of supportive home literacy environment for early literacy development according to you?
7. How many children age- appropriate books do you have at home?
8. Do literacy related activities influence children's literacy or language/letter knowledge? If yes, how?
9. Do parents personal love for reading influence on a child's emergent literacy skills? If yes, how?
10. Who is responsible for teaching your child's early literacy skills? (e.g., read or write alphabets, words or separate sounds in spoken words)?
11. Is it important to develop children's confidence and a broad interest in reading? Why?
12. Why do most children do well read words in school?
13. Does the home literacy environment influence on school readiness? If yes, how?
14. What are the literacy resources (age-appropriate print such as children's books and objects, such as toys that teach color, shape, sizes, names of animals, vehicles, fruits, alphabet books, block etc) do you have at home?
15. Are the resources accessible to your child?
16. Do you read for pleasure?
17. Does your child ask for books to be read to him/her?
18. Does your child independently point to or talk about pictures when you read stories?
19. Do you tell stories to your child?
20. Does your child ask questions about events during story telling?
21. Does your child pretend to read story or rhymes in a book?
22. Does your child try to tell story or rhymes by him or herself?
23. Does your child pretend to write scribbling on paper?
24. What is the duration of your child's engagement during shared interactions between the parent and the child?
25. Does your child show interest in reading signboard when the child goes out with you?
26. Does your child get interest in using computers, mobile phones and other devices for learning?
27. Is your child encouraged to learn alphabet? If yes, how did you do so?
28. Do you teach simple verbal manners?

29. Do you teach nursery rhymes and songs to your child? If yes, which ones?
30. Do you name pictures in the book and talk about the pictures?
31. Do you encourage your child to draw pictures?
32. Do you give color pencils, pencils to your child to play with?
33. Do you sing songs with your child?

C) Observation Checklist

- Availability and accessibility of age-appropriate literacy resources (print and objects) and [a separate] space at home
- The number of books in the household
- Newspaper, magazines, books for pleasure available to parents
 - Child's own literacy habit
- Availability of print forms and objects
- Encouraging children to be active learner
- A child directly or indirectly engages in and exposed to verbal and nonverbal behavior with family members.
- Opportunities to be part of conversations that use extended discourse
- Storybook reading and encouraging verbal interactions in the child during reading
- Exposure to varied vocabulary, letter knowledge and phonological awareness
- Model writing to their children, read to their children, and regularly engage in drawing pictures, singing songs, and telling stories with their children.
- Understanding the child's present level of language and literacy skills, and providing new information accordingly.

Appendix B: Consent Form for Parents

Title of the Thesis: Emergent Literacy Development and Home Literacy Environment: Beliefs and practices of parents having (3-5 years) preschool aged children at urban slum context.

Researcher: Ananta Rahman

Purpose of the research

I am conducting this research as a part of my Master's Degree requirement from the Institute of Educational Development (IED) - BRAC University. The aim of this research is to explore emergent literacy development and home literacy environment: beliefs and practices of parents having (3-5 years) pre-school aged children at urban slum context.

Expectation from you

If you agree, you will be expected to share your perception, views and thoughts on emergent literacy development. This will include parents' understanding about the key aspects of emergent literacy; importance of home literacy environment; nature of physical literacy environment, parents and children's literacy habit, and parent-child interaction for language and literacy activities. The interview may take 60 to 90 minutes, depending upon your response. Additionally, observation of your household and interaction with your daughter of pre-school years for 3-4 hours would be helpful for the research.

Risks and benefits

There is no risk to you for participating in this study; directly or indirectly parents, children, policy makers may be benefited in the future.

Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality

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

Future use of information

Some of the information collected from this study may be kept for future use. However, in such cases information and data supplied to other researchers, will not conflict with or violate the

maintenance of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of information identifying participants in any way.

Right not to participate and withdraw

Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you are the sole authority to decide for and against your participation in this study. Refusal to take part in the study will involve no penalty.

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

Name of the Parents:

Name of the Researcher:

Signature of the Parents:

Signature of the Researcher:

Thank you very much for your cooperation. For any further query, you may contact me. My contact no is, 01872134622, or you can email at <anantarahman32@gmail.com>