

Parents' Perception regarding Arts and Crafts for Children's Learning and Development in Pre-school Years

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

BRAC Institute of Educational Development
BRAC University
December 2022

© [2022]. [Tasnuva Choudhury]
All rights reserved.

Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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

Student's Full Name & Signature:

Tasnuva Choudhury
Student ID # 21155017

Approval

The thesis titled **“Parents’ Perception regarding “Arts and Crafts for Children’s Learning and Development in Pre-school Years”**

submitted by
Tasnuva Choudhury (Student ID # 21155017)

of [Fall,2022], has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science in Early Childhood Development on December, 2022

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:

(Member)

Nashida Ahmed
Sr. Research Associate, ECD Academic Program
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac Univeristy

Program Coordinator:

(Member)

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

External Expert Examiner:

(Member)

Sima Rani Sarker
Lecturer, MEd Academic Program
Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University

Departmental Head:

(Chair)

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

Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: **Parents' Perception regarding Arts and Crafts for Children's Learning and Development in Pre-school Years**

Student name: Tasnuva Choudhury

1. Source of population

Parents of 3-5 years old children in an English Medium School in Dhaka City

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

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

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

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

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

- a) from study participants (yes)
- b) from parents or guardian (yes)

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

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

Ethical Review Committee:

Authorized by:

(chair/co-chair/other)

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

Abstract

Arts and crafts as children's playing activities are central to early learning and early childhood development, and emphasized in the learning outcomes of Pre-primary education (3 to <6 years) and care giver practices by MoPME (2008). This research is about parents' perception regarding arts and crafts for children between 3 and 5 years who are attending an English medium school in Uttara area of Dhaka. Using four interviews and two focus group discussions with sixteen parents, the research shows that a few parents demonstrate deepened understanding and positive beliefs regarding the meanings and features of children's arts and crafts, the role of arts and crafts in children's learning and development, and parents' role in supporting children's engagement in arts and crafts activities. It is; therefore, recommend to design capacity building interventions for the parents of the school and to explore views of parents from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The findings of this research will help the policy makers to expand the caregiver practices for 36 - 60 months, as articulated in MoPME (2008), from 'providing resources' to 'organizing creative home learning environment'; 'being optimistic about each child's potential'; and 'helping children to be intrinsically motivated to engage in process-oriented and minimum instruction based arts and crafts activities that are child-centered and helpful for children's freedom to be creative and independent.

Keywords: Parental Perception, Arts and crafts, learning and development, English Medium, Preschoolers.

Acknowledgement

I am deeply grateful to my great mother, Mrs. Ivy Choudhury, who supported me through the whole journey. My joy knows no bounds in expressing my sincere gratitude to my beloved father, Mr. Tariq Abu Ala. His keen interest, patience, unwavering encouragement and sacrifices were a great help throughout the course of this research work.

My greatest debt is to my supervisor Ms. Nashida I have been extremely privileged to work under the guidance of such outstanding mentor. While I was working on my proposal and on the thesis itself, I understood that a learning process is a constant give and take and the best advisor pushes you to give the best you have. What I have achieved is essentially due to her.

I also thank my course coordinator, Ms. Ferdousi Khanom for her intellectual contribution to my work and for teaching me to do projects with clarity, precision, and thoroughness.

I would like to thank my other distinguished thesis committee members and my honorable faculties, Ashfi Mehnaz, Syeda Sazia Zaman, Sakila Yesmin, and Areefa Zafar, for their tremendously positive and constructive contributions to my study.

I am sincerely grateful to my only sibling, my loving brother, Adeeb Choudhury and friends who love me endlessly. I want to express my gratitude to my aunt Mrs. Shireen Chowdhury for her outstanding support, appreciation, and advice, during the course.

The most credit for the completion of this thesis goes to my three children, Shehdad Ather Ali Khan, Saher Khan and Shahraz Shawkat Ali Khan for making such a positive difference in my life and bringing me the purest joy of all - the joy of parenthood.

Finally, I want to express my deepest love and thanks to my husband, Shahriar Khan.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Executive Summary	v
Acknowledgement	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Acronyms	ix
Chapter I Introduction & Background.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Purpose of the study	4
Significance of the study.....	4
Chapter II Literature Review	8
Chapter III Methodology	17
Research Approach and Design	17
Research Site.....	17
Research Participants	18
Sampling Procedure/Participants Selection Procedure	19
Data Collection Tool.....	19
Data Collection Method and Procedure	19
Data Management and Analysis	20
Validity & Reliability	21

Ethical Issues	21
Limitations of the Study.....	22
Chapter IV Results/Findings& Discussion	23-38
Results/Findings.....	23
Discussion	31
Conclusion	39
Recommendations.....	40
References.....	42
Appendix A.....	44-50

List of Acronyms

ECD: Early Childhood Development

WHO: World Health Organization

IDI: In - Depth Interview

UNICEF: United Nation's International Children's Emergency Fund

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease 2019

MDG: Millennium Development Goal

MOWCA: The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

MoPME: Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

MoE: Ministry of Education

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and Background

Arts and crafts, a strong vehicle for self-expression, embody some of the highest forms of human sense and creativity. Art and crafts have goal and usefulness for early childhood development and 'have always been an integral part of early learning' (McArdle & Wright, 2014). This research is about parents' perception regarding arts and crafts for 3-5 years old children who are attending an English medium school in Uttara area of Dhaka city. Specifically, the research explores parents' perception regarding arts and crafts; the role of arts and crafts in learning and development including healing for children in preschool years; and parents' role in helping children's meaningful engagement in arts and crafts activities that support children's' learning and development.

Prior research conducted in the Meherpur district of Bangladesh in 100 communities reaching 1,856 children ages 3-6 years old describes children's learning and development by addressing home context including household educational environment, stimulation in the home for child development, and school context including conditions for learning. According to this research, factors that support and encourage children's learning within the home include a) presence of reading materials i.e. storybooks or picture books for children; and b) presence of toys in the home i.e. homemade toys, such as stuffed dolls, cars, or other toys made at home; household objects, such as bowls, cups or pots; objects found outside, such as sticks, stones or leaves; drawing or writing materials; toys that teach about colors, sizes or shape; two or three-piece of toys that require hand-eye coordination; puzzles; toys or games that help teach about numbers/counting. Children receive home-based stimulation for their learning and development by participating with household members in activities such as reading books, telling stories, singing songs/lullabies, visiting outside, playing simple games, naming objects, showing or teaching something new, teaching the alphabet or encouraging to learn letters, and playing a counting game or taught numbers. Classroom learning resources such as play and learning materials include pretend play, materials, puzzles, building blocks, puppets/dolls (Spier et al, 2018, pp. 1-31).

Choi et al (2020) has conducted a study that is similar to my research. "Using data from consumer reports, online parenting forums and blog posts, and Google Trends, the authors

explored how some parents have shifted towards cultural and creative enrichment as a resource to occupy their children during governmental stay-at-home directives due to COVID-19 pandemic” (Choi, 2020, p. 715). “The authors found that parents in both US and Korea seemed to encourage their children to engage in creative endeavors as a strategy to occupy their time and attention as well as provide some educational value. To do so, parents have increased their purchase volume/consumption of arts and crafts-related toys and merchandise; and they have also participated in online discussions about activities that parents and children can do together” (ibid, p. 726). Thus, the research emphasizes on parents’ practices regarding engaging children in arts and crafts during COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the research also found that “cultural institutions have expanded their offerings of virtual tours and programs and online resources have offered free creative opportunities for children that may help children develop educational and creative skills” (ibid).

My research is built upon this study in the sense that I am interested to explore the role of creative endeavors such as arts and crafts in children’s learning and development in general and in COVID-19 context in particular. However, my research is also different from this research in several ways. Firstly, I am interested to explore Bangladeshi parents’, specifically mothers’, understanding about children’s arts and crafts; their perception regarding the role of arts and crafts in learning and development for children in pre-school years; and the role of parents in creating a creative home environment, providing necessary resources, and assigning activities, providing instructions and displaying behavior that support children’s engagement in arts and crafts at home. Rather than assume that it is always culturally appropriate for parents to interact with their child in relation to learning something new, it is important to have an understanding of how parents understand children’s learning and development and what they see as their role in supporting learning. Furthermore, I am particularly interested to focus only on parents because “parents’ provisions, interactions and supports influence children’s creative endeavors” (Dockett and Perry, 2009, p. 219) and “parents have an extremely important role in enhancing creativity for their children (Phu, 2019, p. 66). Furthermore, parents play an important role in the early education of children. They are the first educators in their children’s lives. Parents play the pivotal role for children from the yearling years. It is particularly important to explore parents’ perception regarding the benefits of arts and crafts for children during COVID-19 pandemic because it was observed that in the last two years much of the population in Bangladesh turned significantly to the arts solace in times of difficulty in the lockdown and COVID-19 crisis.

The importance of art and crafts is still underplayed in society, and more significance is given to tangible and revenue-generating activities. Despite numerous benefits, the concept of art and crafts as a learning tool for young children seems new to many. Specially, in the context of Bangladesh, parents and other primary caregivers are not familiar with the significant role of art and crafts in a child's early life and their role to support in children's art and craft activities. It is also worth mentioning that art and crafts is given a trivial role in the pre-primary curriculum of the country. The research will provide important insights regarding parents' perception about the concept of arts and crafts, the role of arts and crafts in pre-schoolers' learning and development, and parents' role in supporting pre-schoolers' arts and crafts activities. The result might help improve the policy and practice regarding parenting strategies using arts and crafts for pre-schoolers in Bangladesh.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Parents lack adequate understanding about the meaning of arts and crafts, the role of arts and crafts in children's internal learning process, development, and healing, and how to support children's learning and development at home by children's meaningful engagement in arts and crafts activities including during uncertain and challenging circumstances such as COVID-19 pandemic. Parents, in Bangladesh, often tend to spend less time with their children and resort to electronic gadgets such as mobile phones to keep them occupied and entrained; care immensely for their children's academic success and stress highly on academic achievements of science, math, literature etcetera; occupy with health and nutritional needs; forget to acknowledge the benefits of art and craft for the learning and development of their children in their parental practices; and if they support children's arts and crafts activities, in most cases, they tend to value the product and not the process. They believe that occupying children with mobile phones; caring children's product aspect of arts and crafts, academic success, and nutrition are adequate to stimulate children's overall development and helping them to achieve success in life. However, in this 21st century, skills that are valued in life include "innovation, creative thinking, complex problem solving, imagining what the future holds, and above all, the ability to cope with choice, uncertainty and unknown" (Phu, 2019, p. 63).

Arts and crafts are one of the means to provide "wide-ranging opportunities for children to explore, experiment, and find out, in other words, learning using all their senses, and making arts and crafts have positive influences in all aspects of children's development" (Mayar, 2022, p. 31). In the absence of nurturing children's learning and development by arts and crafts,

“children are being deprived of a) getting full opportunities to be actively involved by exploring and expressing their understanding in a fun way specially during the growing years of preschoolers when spoken language is challenging for them; b) developing creativity or new ideas, processes, products that are imaginative, flexible and successive which are useful in various fields for solving problems” (Mayar, 2022, p. 31); c) developing coping skills in times of crisis situations such as COVID-19 pandemic; and d) attaining developmental domains such as brain development, physical development, cognitive development, language development, and social-emotional development in accordance with the developmental milestones for 3-5 years children. As a result, children of this age tend to attend ‘GoB’s pre-primary education program for 5+ aged children’ (Jewel et al, 2020, p. 845) where ‘arts and crafts are practiced’ (ibid, p. 853) lacking adequate school readiness. Such lacking influences children’s participation and performance in pre-primary education program for 5+ aged children and beyond.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study intends to learn about parents’ perception regarding the meanings of arts and crafts and its features; the role of arts and crafts in learning and development, including settings of childhood adversity such as COVID-19 pandemic, for children in preschool years; and parents’ role in supporting children’s engagement in arts and crafts. The expected result of the study is that parents’ understanding is inadequate in regard to the meanings of arts and crafts and its features that relate to children’s learning and development, the role of arts and crafts as stimulant for learning and development of children in pre-school years, and parents’ role in engaging children in arts and crafts at home.

1.4 Significance and Justification of the Study

It is well recognized that early years of children are most crucial for children’s development (Mcilroy, 2022). During this time, a child experiences fear, and there is issues of attachment and adjustment to new circumstances. It is thus important to provide necessary support and stimulation in children at this vital phase of their learning and development.

Art and craft are considered ‘an integral part of early learning’ (McArdle & Wright, 2014) and the role of arts and crafts for children is vast and by adding experiences with arts and crafts during these early years, parents can support their children learn with fun. However, it is evident that over half of Bangladeshi children grow up with extremely limited scope for

personal growth and stimulation vital for their learning and development (UNICEF, 2014). The question remains, do Bangladeshi parents see arts and crafts as beneficial for children's development? The answer to this holds grave significance because parents are the children's first teachers and their home is their first school. Therefore, it is crucial to know what parents think and how they perceive the meanings of arts and crafts, the role of arts and crafts in children's learning and development and their role in the process of involving children in arts and crafts at home because parents' perception will govern parents' motivation toward exposure to art enrichment of their children.

The study will create knowledge on how parents perceive learning and development of their growing children using arts and crafts. The results of the study might be used by the education institutions to design and implement capacity building courses for the parents of English medium schools aiming at improving parenting practices emphasizing on facilitating early stimulation and care by using arts and crafts to help develop children's learning and development. Additionally, the findings of this research may encourage me and other researchers to conduct similar research a) with the parents of children who are attending NGO operated pre-schools for 3-5 years children aiming at helping children from low socio-economic background to engage in arts and crafts at home; and b) with the parents of children who will eventually attend GoB initiated pre-primary schools for children ages 4+ according to GoB's recent decision and 3+ in future according to MoPME (2008) in order to make decisions regarding the need for capacity building of these parents in areas of engaging children in arts and crafts at home. This needs to note that MoPME (2008) has defined pre-primary education as "the developmental and educational support provided to the child in the age range of 3 to <6 years" (MoPME, 2008, p. 8). According to MoPME (2008), children ages 3 to <6 years "may receive stimulation for learning and development by free drawing" (MoPME, 2008, p. 15) and pre-primary learning outcomes include "Show creativity by making objects, toys/ play materials by self-choice using block, clay, leaf, paper, sticks etc.," (MoPME, 2008, p. 22); therefore, "caregiver practices for the fourth and fifth year (36 to 60 months) should include giving more play materials, such as many smaller blocks, small pieces of cloth, an old bangle, rope, bottle caps, buttons, pictures or books" (MoPME, 2008, p. 40). Thus, arts and crafts have been emphasized for children ages 3 to <6 years by MoPME, 2008. To support children's participation in arts and crafts activities, MoPME recognizes the importance of 'child-friendly atmosphere at home' and states that one of the "specific objectives of an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Pre-Primary Education programme is to create a congenial and

child friendly atmosphere at home ...so that children benefit fully from care and learning activities” (MoPME, 2008, p. 16). Further research, based on my research findings, with parents in GoB pre-primary school context would help GoB to understand parents’ perception regarding arts and crafts and children’s learning and development and the result would support GoB to expand the caregiver practices for the fourth and fifth year (36 to 60 months) from ‘providing resources’ to ‘organizing learning environment and enabling children to generate new ideas and express divergent thoughts’ and thus may influence policy level decision making regarding capacity building of parents addressing children’s engagement in arts and crafts at home. Finally, the results can help to understand parent’s perception which can interest me to study further in the topic.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no study providing insights into what Bangladeshi parents of young children think/know about the meanings of arts and crafts; and how they view arts and crafts activities to support learning and development for children in pre-school years, and their role in creating children’s interests towards arts and crafts. A study conducted in Rohingya settings reveals that arts and crafts were largely useful for adolescent girls to be relaxed during COVID-19 context; consequently, parents have encouraged girls by decorating rooms by the arts and crafts produced by their daughters (Ahmed and Rashid, 2020). Additionally, studies (thesis) that exist focus on current practices and challenges of fine arts and crafts education in primary schools (grades 3-4) of Dhaka City (Shuva, 2021); and comparison of art education practices in Bangladesh for grades six through eight and in the United States (Nova, 2016). These studies thus include primary and secondary school settings when describing arts and crafts related curricular practices and exclude arts and crafts activities in family contexts. Therefore, my research will fill up the existing knowledge gap by focusing on parents’ perception regarding arts and crafts, its role in learning and development for children in pre-school years, and parents’ role in engaging children meaningfully in arts and crafts activities. The study will contribute to improve parenting practices in Bangladesh by demonstrating knowledge about parents’ understanding of children’s arts and crafts.

1.5 Research questions:

Key Research Question 1: To what extent parents conceptualize arts and crafts and the role of arts and crafts in learning and development of children in pre-school years?

Sub-research questions:

- In which ways do parents understand the meanings, forms, and features of arts and crafts?
- In which ways parents explain the relationships between arts and crafts and the learning and development of children in pre-school years?
- In which ways do parents clarify the role of arts and crafts in supporting children in early childhood adversities, specifically, during COVID-19 pandemic?

Key research Question 2: To what extent do parents describe their roles in helping children's meaningful engagement in arts and crafts at home that influence children's learning and development?

Sub-research questions:

- In which ways do parents perceive their role in creating a creative home environment?
- In which ways do parents clarify their roles in providing necessary resources for children's engagement in arts and crafts at home?
- In which ways do parents describe their roles in helping children to generate new ideas when involved in arts and crafts activities?

CHAPTER TWO

2. Literature Review

This chapter covers a review of related literature about art and craft in relation to early childhood and the role of arts and crafts for learning and development of children in pre-school years, and parents' role regarding children's meaningful engagement in arts and crafts activities. The literature encompasses national as well as international studies relevant to this topic. To gain a solid knowledge base about the research topic, a significant volume of literature has been incorporated from a variety of different sources such as journal articles, books, websites, and relevant documents. Following a review of the literature, the chapter has been divided into separate themes, with appropriate sub- themes which are described below.

1. Understanding arts and crafts

1.1 Meanings of arts and crafts (related to early childhood)

“The distinction between what constitute arts and crafts is often blurred” (Bhuiyan, 2018, p. 2). Markowitz (1994) made distinction between art and craft and referred “Art” to drawings, paintings, sculptures, and printmaking (Markowitz, 1994, pp. 55-57). Phu (2019) describes art as, “Art is the use of the imagination to express ideas or feelings, particularly in painting, drawing or sculpture. Arts include the fine and performing arts-painting, sculpting, writing poetry, playing an instrument, singing, dancing, acting, creating mixed media productions, and film-making” (Phu, 2019, p. 64). Bostan (2016) refers “Arts” to “the creative expression of ideas, experiences, and emotions through a wide range of artistic means such as music, performing arts, literature, visual arts, theatre, oratory, dance, painting, crafts, design and so on” (Bostan, 2016, p. 90).

The Term “Craft” means ‘power’ or ‘strength’ (Talwar, 2018, p. 13). “Traditionally, crafts have been understood as human–material interaction mediated by the practice of a person’s skill and material-based knowledge” (Houtilainen et al, 2018, p. 1). Crafts are identified as a source of pleasure and creative self-expression. The holistic craft process is seen as explanatory, inventive and experimental activity in its core nature (ibid). Mayar (2022) relates “craft art” as a child’s activity and shows the interconnectedness between arts and crafts by stating, “Craft art is a child’s activity in producing works of arts. Craft art is an activity that produces works or arts using hands through various art media” (Mayar, 2022, p. 30-31).

Similar to Mayar's (2022) idea of 'craft art as child's activity', Azhima (2019) describes arts and crafts as 'children's' playing activities'. "Art and Craft is playing activities that invite children to make and create an art. Art and craft is someone's effort to create a creation by using hand completed with tools and appropriate materials" (Azhima, 2019, p. 66). "Arts participation in early childhood often includes activities such as music, song, and dance; drama and theatre; and visual arts and crafts" (Menzer, 2015, p. 9).

1.2 Features of arts and crafts as playing activities

"In the early ages of life, participation in visual arts and crafts may occur only to the extent of exploring and playing, rather than creating finished works of art" (Menzer, 2015, p. 6). "Drawing, painting, and other art-making in early ages of life are viewed as a record of what is primarily kinaesthetic experience" (Charleroy, 2012, p. 5). Arts and crafts activities are "simple, direct, and in most cases colourful; encompass a range of utilitarian and decorative media, including cloth, wood, paper, clay, metal and more" (Bhuiyan, 2018, p. 6), and can be done using "no cost materials" such as "paper-towel tubes and other household leftovers" (Bostan, 2016, p. 728). The activities "allow freedom for children to invent their own" (Charleroy, 2012, p. 5); and are open-ended, process-oriented (becomes a constructive process of thinking in action), tool for constructing and sharing meaning, "child-led and encourage children's control of the process; and encourage representations of object, people, places or events (specifically in case of drawing and "children's drawings can be influenced by what others draw or say")" (Dockett & Perry, 2009, pp. 218-220). "The process of learning arts or crafts is partially based on imitating others' activities and partially on building upon one's own experimentation and testing" (Houtilainen et al, 2018, p. 7). "Arts and crafts playing activities have purpose and usefulness obtained from children which are able to develop a whole intelligent inside of the children, provide opportunities for children to do activities that help in children's cognitive and social-emotional development including behaviour in collaboration" (Azhima, 2019, p. 66).

1.3 Arts and Crafts in Bangladesh

Art and craft studies in Bangladesh lack children's perspectives. Bhuiyan (2018) discusses the meanings, categories, and examples of folk arts and crafts in Bangladesh. For the author, "Floor and wall paintings or Nakshi Kantha are included in folk art while the products of potters, carpenters and weavers, as well as articles made of bamboo, cane, shola, conch-shell, ivory, bell-metal are referred to as craft. An earthen pot designed by the painted fish, leaves and other

designs as well as cane mats with designs of trees, birds, mosques etc are a combination of both art and handicraft” (Bhuiyan, 2018, p. 2). “The multifarious world of the folk-arts of Bangladesh is made with designed cake, Patachitra (designed frame), Nakshi Pakha (designed fan), Shital Pati (fancy mats), Nakshi Kantha (embroidered quilt), designed shika, fancy fans, baskets, flower vases of bamboo and reed, folk-ornaments, folk-musical instruments etc.” (ibid, p.5). folk art thus can be divided into a) painting such as alpana, painted pots, masks, wall painting, rickshaw painting, tattooing and other body painting (Mehedi), chalchitra, fancy pots, fancy dolls etc; b) embroidery such as Nakshi Kantha, handkerchiefs, etc.; c) weaving such as Nakshi Shika, Shital Pati (fancy mats), Nakshi Pakha (fancy fans) baskets, flower vases; d) modeling such as dolls and toys, utensils, masks, moulds for making cakes and, sweets, ornaments; and e) engraving such as wooden products, terracotta slabs, metal works (ibid, p. 7).

2. Supporting Children’s Learning and Development by Arts and Crafts

A study explored parents’ perception concerning artistic practices in education is conducted in the context of Romanian people and found that “the effects of involving children in artistic activities are associated with a) skill development i.e. it helped children to learn more easily and become more creative; b) self-knowledge i.e. it helped children to know themselves better, identify personal strengths, and realize what they like to do; c) better socialization i.e. it helped them to make friends, communicate more easily with other people, understand that teamwork is useful, and to be more relaxed; and d) increased confidence i.e. it helped children to have more confidence in themselves and made them feel better in school” (Bostan, 2016, pp. 92-93). Similar to this study, a range of literature show the vital role of arts and crafts in learning and development of young children.

2.1 Art and Crafts as Learning Tool

“The arts have connection among feeling, making, and learning” (Phu, 2019, p. 64). “In the early years, learning in, through and of the arts is particularly important given the ways in which children understand and meaning of the world around them. This is often achieved through the use of signs and symbols and via multiple modes of representation” (Barton, 2015, p. 63). “Through art children have full opportunities to be actively involved by exploring and expressing their understanding in fun ways” (Mayar, 2022, p. 30). “Learning in, about, and through the arts contributes to increased engagement in learning other subject areas” (Phu, 2019, p. 65) such as “literacy, math, and science skills” (Menzer, 2015, p. 7).

2.2 Benefits of Arts and Crafts in Children’s Development

2.2.1 Arts and Crafts for Brain Development and Broader Scope of Attention

Neuroscience suggests that “somatosensory, motor and visual areas – all are activated during making arts or crafts – occupy a large portion of cortical surface. The stimulation of these areas is particularly crucial in childhood, because a lack of stimulation means that they will develop normally, indeed, they are necessary for the brain to develop to its highest level” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p. 4). Importantly, “Touching and forming different materials and surfaces during creative activities gives a rich variety of sensation” (ibid, p.5). Additionally, research found that “the tactile sensations of finger painting facilitate a state of mindfulness by providing experiences of being more aware and present in the current moment and having a broader scope of attention” (ibid, p.5).

2.2.2 Arts and Crafts for Physical Development

Art and crafts influence “physical development through hand-eye coordination and fine motor skills acquisition and refinement” (Barton, 2015, p. 63). “Children can participate in visual arts and crafts, such as playing with building blocks, drawing, painting, or finger painting; and sculpting clay or playing with sand which require gross and fine-motor skills that enable children to construct creative objects” (Menzer, 2015, p. 5). These skills are important because “scribbling (which uses generally gross motor skills) is a precursor to writing and drawing distinct and recognizable objects and letters (which uses fine motor skills)” (ibid, p. 6).

“Children use their hands with a variety of art media in creating craft art. Through art activity, children get opportunities to develop hand skills by using various materials and tools, for instance, folding, cutting, colouring, making crafts, painting, and making crafts using dough. Thus, art activities develop motor skills as a provision for writing skills, coordination of limbs, flexibility, and movement supportive for growth and development” (Mayar, 2022, p. 31-33). Additionally, drawing, specifically, “in prior-to-school is often interrelated as a fine-motor activity that is an important precursor to writing” (Dockett & Perry, 2009, 219). Importantly, “music sessions yield positive outcomes such as making and maintaining eye contact for autistic children between three and five years old” (Menzar, 2015, p. 13).

2.2.3 Arts and Crafts for Cognitive Development

“Research in the past decade have linked arts participation to cognitive growth and academic skills, including the strengthening the long-term memory, and reading ability, writing fluency, and creative thinking skills” (Charleroy, 2012, p. 4). “Craft art, a part of art activities, is a reflection of cognitive development in the sense that the creation of children make in the craft art is a reflection of ideas, imagination, predicting and trying something new, critical thinking skills, problem solving, knowledge and experience. Craft art can provide a very broad opportunity for children to explore; experiment through trialling techniques, methods and materials; find out; and produce a new thing using all of their senses. By doing craft, children can develop imagination, initiative, responsibility, independence, interest, experiences, a sense of beauty; a sense of ownership; cultural awareness, expression, and appreciation; and effective ways of expressing thoughts and knowledge” (Mayar, 2022, pp. 30-33) and “organize thoughts and feelings” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p. 2).

“In early childhood, arts experiences present children with a primary means of communicating their understandings of themselves and their world” (Charleroy, 2012, p. 5). Furthermore, “art is the process of providing children the opportunity to develop creativity and express themselves freely. Children’s freedom in expression is the main key that supports the growth of creativity” (Mayar, 2022, pp. 30-33). Additionally, “Cognitive development is influenced by arts specific language use, exploring and connecting concepts and objects to symbols, making choices over subject matter, different media, materials, and methods to produce art” (Barton, 2015, p. 63). “Problem solving skills are often embedded in arts such as working out what colours or medium to use in visual arts, or deciding what sounds work together in a performance” (Barton, 2015, p. 63). Moreover, a study conducted in the United States shows that “dance activities brought positive effects on creativity of children with disabilities” (Phu, 2019, p. 65).

2.2.4 Arts and Crafts for Language Development

“By engaging in art activities, such as making handy craft, a child can communicate and develop language skills” (Mayar, 2022, p. 31). “In visual arts, children are often very interested in “re-telling” pictorial accounts to peers and adults, especially as their images become more representational fostering children’s communication abilities” (Charleroy, 2012, p. 5). Additionally, “drama, theatre, and story-acting allow children to create fictional spaces where they can role-play and practice communication. The fictional spaces and roles become more

sophisticated and complex as children enter into toddlerhood and preschool age” (Menzer, 2015, p. 5).

2.2.5 Arts and Crafts for Social-emotional Development

“As children play with craft art, they can build their abilities to collaborate and building cooperation, feelings and appreciation” (Mayar, 2022, p. 31). “Some studies have emphasized the social sides of craft making as friendship, sharing, and belonging” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p. 1). “Watching art being produced and discussing the products can enhance personally meaningful dialogue and contribute to social well-being” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p. 2). Arts and crafts influence “social interaction through experiences of sharing resources, assuming different roles in the art making process, and helping others, differentiating one’s work from others, questioning, considering, evaluating, and appreciating the works of others” (Barton, 2015, p. 63). “Art and craft facilitate social activity for many children who are at risk of social isolation” and making arts and crafts is crucial for creating social cohesion (Huotilainen et al, 2018, pp. 1, 8). Art “develops tolerance” (Azhima, 2019, p. 66) and “gives children agency by enabling them to lead” (Walshe et al, 2020, p. 106).

“Art is a way of communicating and expressing feelings and emotions and helping children to control their emotion” (Mayar, 2022, pp. 31-32) and “enabling children to experience joy, beauty, and wonder” (Phu, 2019, p. 65). “The activities of art-making are in some sense, felt to be right, fulfilling, and satisfying” (Phu, 2019, p. 65). Research shows that “Children assigned to a dance group show reductions in shy and anxious behaviour and toddlers in an arts integration program comprised of daily music, creative movement (dance), and visual arts display improvement in positive and negative emotion regulation” (Menzar, 2015, pp. 8-12). Researchers describe the positive well-being effects of crafts by stating crafts “as an intense involvement in any activity within which the child experiences meaningfulness” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p. 1). “Arts and crafts are beneficial for resilience and positive self-concept development (a sense of their own value) among children who have experienced abuse, loss, trauma, and other challenges” (Choi, 2020, p. 727).

2.2.6 Art and Crafts for Healing

“Making arts and crafts is crucial for emotional bonding especially during uncertain and challenging circumstances” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p.8). “Given that the COVID-19 pandemic may traumatise children in a number of ways, increased participation in creative

activities may promote resilience and lead children to better psychosocial health. Research has shown that creative activities in everyday life are positively associated with improved coping strategies for young children especially during adverse childhood experiences such as the recent quarantines and lockdowns” (Choi, 2020, p. 727). “Some researchers regard leisure craft making as the therapeutic exploration of materials, which provides a means of distraction from emotional stress by creating feelings of relaxation and a sense of empowerment” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p. 2).

3. Helpful ways that parents can apply to support children’s engagement in arts and crafts activities at home that facilitate children’s learning and development

3.1 Parents’ role in creating a creative home environment

“Parents can create the home environment in creative ways that encourage children to engage in arts and craft activities. Parents can arrange tools and materials in such ways that can be seen by children and easy to reach for children. Parents can provide a variety of tools around the house, of various colour, function, texture, size, shape, factory made, natural materials, and household appliances. Parents should ensure a comfortable, relaxed, and fun atmosphere when children are creative and need to pay attention to the safety of the art facilities for children” (Mayar, 2022, p. 32). “Parents can cover walls with art and other evidence of creative expression” (Phu, 2019, p. 68).

3.2 Parents can support in providing necessary resources

Parents can provide the key resources i.e. time, space, and materials that children need to engage in arts and crafts activities. “Parents need to spend a specific time to the playing arts and crafts activities (to become facilitator and companionships for organizing craft activities) and communicating with their children, ask them open-ended questions about the materials, process and products, encourage children think in new and different ways; and give children a specific place to do arts and crafts” (Phu, 2019, pp. 66-68). Additionally, “parents can support process-based craft activities that can be done at home, including making sculptures from removable materials or household materials; playing with toy blocks to create a work of arts; drawing or painting tools and materials such as brushes, chicken feathers, cotton buds, leaves, tree branches, threads, banana stems, rocks, shells, crayons, water colours, food colouring, markers, charcoal and paper; making crafts using natural stones, pine seeds, tissue rolls, used cardboard/boxes etc.” (Mayar, 2022, p. 32). Because “touching and forming different materials

during creative activities gives a rich variety of sensory stimulation, it is also important for parents to provide different materials for children to use to enable the sensing of the opposites, such as, heavy and light, soft and hard, warm and cold etc.” (Huotilainen et al, 2018, p. 5). Besides these materials, parents need to realize that even household goods can be used as a toy to promote children’s creativity (Phu, 2019, p. 66).

3.3 Helping children to generate new ideas and express divergent thoughts: Key principles for parents

“Activities given to children must be child-centred and parents need to give children the freedom to be creative. Parents should facilitate art activities of children with minimum instructions. Children need to be encouraged to create their own craft art. For this to happen, parents need to encourage child’s independent work so that children can produce a unique and original work based on their ideas. Parents must pay most attention to the process of crafting art e.g. generating new ideas and expressing divergent thoughts not to the results” (Mayar, 2022, p. 32). Hence, “parents can encourage children to find more than one route to a solution, and more than one solution to a problem and parents should not point out which ideas aren’t possible, and parents should not decide which ideas are best. Parents can allow children to make mistakes and parents can share the mistakes they have made recently so that children get the idea that it is okay to make mistakes. Parents can allow children to develop mastery of creative activities that they are intrinsically motivated to do, rather than trying to motivate children with rewards and incentives” (Phu, 2019, p. 68). To achieve all these, “parents need to be optimistic i.e. believing that every child is potential and that every child is unique person; respectful i.e. parents need to cultivate respective behaviour to children so they can respect to their own craft; and flexible and inspirational i.e. to facilitate children to be able to find new things that are useful” (Mayar, 2022, p. 32). “There is also evidence suggesting that early exposure to arts by visiting art museums motivates children to acquire creative thinking skills and develop new cultural capital” (Choi et al, 2020, p. 722). Parents can provide children such exposure as well.

This needs to note that none of the information presented in this literature review section are from Bangladesh context. Therefore, there is a need for research relating to arts and crafts in the context of Bangladesh addressing learning and development of children ages 3-5 years.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter offers an overview of the research design of this study including research approach and design, research site, research participant, participant selection procedure, data collection tool, data collection method, data analysis, validity and reliability of the research tool, ethical issues, and limitation of the study.

3.1 Research Approach/Design:

The research approach for this study is Qualitative. The positive impact of parents' perception and practices on children's learning and development has been well documented with qualitative research method in the paper. A qualitative research approach was chosen because this study was carried out to collect, analyse and interpret data about parents' perception and insights into parents' feelings and values regarding arts and crafts, the importance of art and crafts for children's learning and development in preschool years, parents' role in engaging children in arts and crafts, and the way children were engaged in arts and crafts During COVID-19 pandemic. To answer the research questions, interviews and group discussions as techniques of data collection were chosen.

3.2 Research Site

This study reveals parents' perception regarding arts and crafts for 3-5 years old children who are attending an English medium school in Uttara area of Dhaka city. The co-education school offers pre-primary education for 3-5 years old children and tends to plan their preschool curriculum using creative and fun activities focusing around all areas of the EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) which includes mathematics, literacy, understanding the world and expressive art and design. The school offers a lot of creative, sensory, messy play, art and crafts activities and role play activities for children's learning and development. However, alignment between home and school in school curriculum implementation seems absent as one parent mentions in a group interview, "*We are happy with what they do at school and they are so young we do not usually give them any additional work at home. On weekends, the children relax and play or we take them to movies, or swimming or tennis and basketball classes*" (FGD

2, 10.10.2022). The school was established in 2019 in Uttara and reopened in April 2022 after the closure due to COVID-19 pandemic.

The reason for selecting urban area was influenced by the difference in child development practice between rural and urban areas. In Bangladesh, in many instances, children from poor families suffer from malnutrition, and are exposed to an un-stimulating environment at home which can adversely affect their cognitive, motor, and socio-emotional development. So, the parental perception regarding Art and Crafts for learning and development of children in preschool years could be different from that of the parents of rural areas.

3.3 Research Participants

In this research, research participants are the parents because parents spend lots of time in nurturing learning and development for children in pre-school years, and thus, parents have special role in engaging children in arts and crafts. Research shows that “mothers’ education has a significant impact on children’s learning” (Phu, 2019, p. 67) and that “parents who have gone beyond a high school education are found to be more involved with their children than those who did not finish high school” (Wikberg, 2013, p. 67). Therefore, in this research, research participants are the mothers of children ages 3-5 years who are mostly graduates and some are post-graduates including MA, MBBS, MBA, LLB etc. who described their understanding and experiences in regard to arts and crafts and its influence on children’s learning and development and their role in the process of making arts and crafts. These parents ages between thirty-eight and thirty-nine years and among these sixteen parents, eight are housewives, one was an ex-teacher of a pre-school involved in extra-curricular activities, one is a home-tutor, one is a doctor, one is a lawyer, one is a banker, one is doing business, and one is a jewellery designer. Additionally, among these sixteen mothers, eleven mothers are the mothers of girl children as research shows “girls are more interested in painting and drawing than boys and that boys spend more time in front of computers making pictures than girls do” (Wikberg, 2013, p. 582). This is to note that of the sixteen mothers, none of the children ages 3-5 years had developmental delays. Furthermore, research shows that “highly educated parents engage in more enriching activities and invest in different pursuits based on their children’s developmental needs and parents from higher socio-economic backgrounds put significantly more effort into managing their children’s personal development and extracurricular activities compared to lower socio-economic background. In other words, parents from high socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to manage children’s time and

provide resources to promote continued learning and creativity building through arts and crafts than parents with lower socio-economic status” (Choi et al, 2020, pp. 722-728). Moreover, during COVID-19 pandemic, mothers from middle income background had the option to work from home and seem to have more interaction with young children at home. In this research, all the mothers are from middle-income background and their children are studying in an English medium pre-school where children from affluent families participate.

3.4 Participant Selection Procedure

In this study, sixteen research participants are chosen for 2 FGDs and 4 in-depth interviews. Purposive sampling technique are applied to select participants who are mothers, educated, from middle-income socio-economic background, mostly the mothers of girls, and parents having at least one child aged between 3 and 5 years. Purposive sampling enabled to reach homogenous participants in regard to similar socio-economic backgrounds. The school was chosen purposively for the easy access of the researcher.

3.5 Data Collection Tool

In-depth interview questionnaire and focus group discussion guideline are used to collect necessary data and information. Both the interview questionnaire and the FGD guideline include 4 sections: section A involves demographic information, section B involves Parents’ understanding regarding the meanings and features of arts and crafts, section C involves Parents’ understanding regarding the role of arts and crafts in learning and development including COVID-19 context for children in pre-school years, and section D involves Helpful ways that parents can apply to support children’s engagement in arts and crafts activities at home.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

4 IDIs were conducted to gain in-depth information from research participants about their understandings and experiences and 2 FGDs were conducted to get more responses within short period of time. The in-depth interviews were conducted between 19th October 2022 and 20th of October 2022 at the convenient times of the parents. Each interview session took around 1 to 1.5 hours. 4 interviews were collected from mothers. In accordance with the key research questions and objectives to know parental perceptions, an open-ended interview questionnaire had been used in these interview sessions. The FGD was conducted on the 22nd September and 10th October 2022 respectively. The discussion lasted for around 60 minutes.

An unstructured questionnaire was used to conduct the two focus group discussions. A total of 6 parents participated in each focused group discussion. The study objectives and purpose were clarified to the research participants by initiating informal discussion before starting the focus group discussions. This discussion made the participants feel free to share their ideas. After this discussion, the participants continued the discussion following the selected questions. Research participants' wishes regarding answering or not-answering questions were honoured during the discussion. At the end of the discussion, the session was wrapped by thanking each participant. In addition to FGDs, a total of four parents were interviewed following an in-depth interview guideline involving open-ended questions. Similar to the process of conducting FGDs, each of these in-depth interviews was started following greetings, and sharing research objectives and purpose; and wrapped up by conveying thanks. According to the principle of qualitative research, both the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussions were conducted in natural settings.

3.6 Data Analysis

All data was analysed following the procure of Content Analysis. Given that in qualitative research, data analysis begins when data collection starts, the researcher started to analyse data as soon as the interviews and FGDs were started to conduct. To analyze data as an ongoing process, the researcher used field notes, memos etc. The following steps were taken to analyse data:



Transcription of data- Data from both audio recording and manually recorded data were transcribed verbatim and double checked for completeness. The copies of the transcripts were then stored safely.

Reviewing data- Several hours were spent for reviewing the transcripts which helped to mark down answers that were related to the research questions. Additionally, the reviews were helpful to figure out new and important dimensions that has emerged from research participants' discussion.

Categorizing data – From the data sets, data were categorized first and then themes and sub-themes were identified. The process of data categorization and theme identification included all notes, ideas, thoughts etc. The researcher then put on paper her own views and understandings she had from reviewing all the collected data. This procedure allowed a deeper understanding of the research issue, and helped present data with expression.

Presenting data – Data were presented with the support of direct quotes of the research participants.

3.7 Validity & Reliability of the Research Tool

The researcher planned to conduct the research with extreme caution.

Because the study is qualitative in nature, in-depth interviews and focused group discussions were taken as the techniques to collect in-depth and extensive detailed information about the perceptions of parents. Two methods were taken into account; one is IDI, and the second is FGD.

To confirm the validity of the research tools, a supervisor reviewed the FGD and In-depth interview tools. According to the supervisor's inputs, the questionnaires were revised. A pilot interview was conducted with the reviewed questionnaires in order to understand whether any change in the draft questionnaire is necessary or not.

When developing the tools, easy and clear language was used and the draft questionnaire was edited according to the results of the pilot. This process ensured that the questionnaire is aligned with the research questions.

3.8 Ethical Issues

Ethical considerations are considered as one of the most important aspects of this research and thus were maintained with greater importance. Oral consent was taken from all the participants before commencing the IDI or FGD. Sufficient information was provided to allow the participants realize the implications and value of their participation in this study. It was ensured that the anonymity of participants remain secured and confidential. They were ensured that the research will be used for study purposes only. The responses of the participants were fully voluntary. Any time of communication in relation to the research were done with honesty and transparency. Moreover, any type of misleading information was avoided by representing

primary data in such way that does not produce biased findings. Furthermore, respect for the dignity of the participants were also prioritised.

3.9 Limitations of the study

Due to limitations in data collection procedure, there might be conditions or influences that the researcher cannot control. Only urban area was targeted and data was collected from only one area of Dhaka city. Moreover, because of time limitation, the study could not capture parents from all socio-economic backgrounds and geographic locations of Bangladesh. Furthermore, according to the study, only mothers were participated, thus there might be some differences of the findings in terms of parent gender. Additionally, this study considered parents' perceptions of one English-medium school, hence, the study could not draw perceptions of parents from a large number of other English medium schools. Finally, I have faced some problems in conducting the first FGD in the scheduled date as few of the respondents did not show up for the meeting. Then I had to reschedule the FGD at another date after taking consent from all the parents.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

In this research, following content analysis, themes and sub-themes were first identified and analyzed regarding the three research questions to produce findings. According to the findings, parents understand drawing and painting by arts and crafts in early childhood. They interpret the process and materials aspects of arts and crafts to describe the features of arts and crafts. Parents' responses regarding benefits of art and craft for children during pre-school years relate to learning tool, brain development, physical development, cognitive development, language development, social-emotional development, and healing during early childhood adversities such as COVID-19 pandemic. They mostly describe their role in creating a creative home environment, providing necessary resources, and generating new ideas.

1. Understanding arts and crafts

1.1 Meanings of arts and crafts (related to early childhood)

When describing meanings of arts and crafts in early childhood, parents emphasize artistic means, benefits, and parents' role in relation to arts and crafts. Three parents highlight drawings and paintings as they describe the meanings of arts and crafts. Examples such as, "*Art is coloring*" (IDI 3, 19.09.2022), "*Arts and crafts involve finger exercise with colors and papers*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022), and "*Art is more like painting such as water painting, gel painting, and finger painting*" (IDI 1, 19.09.2022) illustrate this idea. Besides indicating forms, when describing meanings, parents also highlight the benefits of arts and crafts for young children. One such parent indicates benefit without highlighting any specific advantage such as "*art and craft is beneficial for early years*" (IDI 2, 20.09.2022). Other three parents describe benefits as, arts and crafts are important for "*skills development and mental health development for young children*" (IDI 4, 20.09.2022), "*children's imagination, creativity, hand-eye coordination, mental development, and social development*" (mother of a boy child, FGD 2, 10.10.2022), and "*keeping children very much occupied*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022). Thus, parents relate art and craft to physical growth, cognitive development, and social development. A total of three parents mostly from a FGD context specifically describe the benefits of craft relating to exploration, creativity, new learning, and joy aspects by stating, "*craft is adventurous and brings fun for children*" (FGD 1, 22. 09.2022), and "*craft is beneficial for children's creativity as they create and learn new things*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022). Notably, in regard to creativity, out

of sixteen parents, six parents almost all in FGD settings mentioned ‘creativity’ as one of the benefits of art and craft. Additionally, one parent describes parents’ role in providing resources to children to support their engagement in art and craft by pointing out that “*sometimes parents can cut vegetables and give [the pieces of vegetables] to children to paint on them*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022). This quote also suggests that parents highlight paintings as meanings of art and craft.

In the IDI context, parents discussed concerns regarding age appropriateness of both art and craft for 3-5 years children. For example, according to two parents, “*Craft which is end-product driven and art i.e., copying another person’s painting or drawing an apple that looks like an apple is not appropriate for a 3-5 year old*” (IDI 1, 19.09.2022) and “*Maybe the children of this age do not understand crafts making activities at all*” (IDI 3, 19.09.2022).

1.2 Features of arts and crafts as playing activities

By features of arts and crafts as playing activities, parents interpret the process and materials aspects of arts and crafts. As to process, parents illustrate their ideas such as “*making something; colouring, painting, cutting, pasting, binding, adding some stiff like glitter, pearl, lace*” (IDI 2, 19.09.2022; IDI 3, 19.09.2022; IDI 4, 20.09.2022, FGD 2, 10.10.2022). They specifically mention the names of “resources” needed to accomplish the process such as “*glue, safety scissors, tapes, paper and chart paper, canvas, brush, paint, spray paint, origami, different props, cotton to make Santa-Claus; and different types of materials to put together to make children’s own art work or make their own craft piece*” (IDI 1, 19.09.2022; FGD 1, 22.09.2022, FGD 2, 10.10.2022).

2. Benefits of art and craft for pre-school year children’s learning and development and healing specifically during COVID 19 pandemic

Parents’ responses regarding benefits of art and craft for children during pre-school years relate to learning tool, brain development, physical development, cognitive development, language development, social-emotional development, and healing during early childhood adversities such as COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1 Arts and crafts as learning tool

Four parents out of sixteen describe learning in, about, and through the arts and crafts. A parent explicitly describes learning in and through art and craft as children “*mix color*” and “*join something like two broken pieces of a cardboard box*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022). Additionally, children learn about “*basic life skills*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022); “*sharing, waiting for their turn, mixing color, making different shapes to form a collage, and concepts of shape, color, and size*” (IDI 1, 19.09.2020); and “*trying new ideas and thinking in new ways*” (FGD 2, 10.10.2022). One parent who is the mother of a girl child combines learning through and about art and crafts by stating, “*Art and craft make boring learning fun for children and children can learn better like character in a book, shapes may be*” (IDI 2, 20.09.2022).

2.2 Arts and crafts supporting brain development

Two parents who are the mothers of two boy children reflect on “*brain stimulation and exercise and thus brain development*” as well as “*activation of sensory areas*” as they describe the importance of art and craft. Examples such as “*The brain is working and developing*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022) and “*It improves sensory development*” (FGD 2, 10.10.2022) illustrate the idea.

2.3 Arts and crafts supporting physical development

According to five parents, art and craft support children’s physical development by “*hand-eye coordination*” and motor skills including both “*gross and fine motor skills*” acquisition and development of handwriting skills”. These parents indicate physical development by pointing out “*hand-eye coordination*” (FGD 2, 10.10.2022); and “*gross motor skills development* (FGD 1, 22.09.2022), “*development of gross motor skills and handwriting may be*” (mother of a boy child, FGD 2, 10.10.2022). One parent specifically mentions how construction of creative objects such as craft supports motor skills development by stating, “*There will be fine motor skills development when children stick paper with glue, mold paper tissue to create something*” (IDI 1, 19.09.2020).

2.4 Arts and crafts supporting cognitive development

Three parents linked art and craft participation to cognitive growth by highlighting development of “*Imagination*” as well as “*creativity*” as the activities support to “*try new ideas and new ways of thinking*”. For these parents, art and craft “*improve creativity and facilitate mental growth by providing avenues for trying new ideas, new ways of thinking*” (IDI 3, 19.09.2022; mother of a boy child, FGD 2, 10.10.2022) and “*develop imagination [skills]*” (FGD 2, 10.10.2022).

2.5 Arts and crafts for language development

Three parents describe art-craft-linguistic connections by pointing out that children can learn “*names of colours and shapes*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022; FGD 2, 10.10.2022) and “*understand language when they receive instruction from parents*” (FGD 2, 10.10.2022).

2.6 Arts and crafts for social-emotional development

Three parents emphasize on social “*interaction and sharing with peers*” and “*parents’ participation in art and craft activities with children*” to describe the relationship between arts and crafts and increased social-emotional development. One parent who is the mother of a boy child explicitly mentions that children can develop social skills as they “*interact with other children and share ideas*” (FGD 2, 10.10.2022). Another parent indicates social development by stating that children will “*learn to share in the group*” (IDI 1, 19.09.2020). Similarly, a parent describes only the “*joy experience*” aspect of emotional development by stating, “*My daughter loves it when I do any art and craft activity with her*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022).

2.7 Arts and crafts for healing during early childhood adversities such as COVID 19 Pandemic

According to three parents, making art and craft during early childhood adversities helps in healing by “*distracting them from pain*” (mother of a boy child, FGD 2, 10.10.2022), “*getting relief from stress by drawing*” (mother of a boy child, FGD 1, 22.09.2022) and “*relaxing their mind and keeping them calm*” (mother of a girl child, IDI 3, 19.09.2022). Another parent mentions that “*children sometimes draw happy and sad faces to show their feelings and parents can understand their emotions from those pictures*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022). The two other parents respond differently from these parents by stating, “*for healing, art and craft are not so much helpful*” (IDI 1, 19.09.2022) and “*these children are too young and they do not understand about pain yet*” (FGD 2, 10.10.2022).

Referring to COVID-19 crisis, four parents stated that art and craft was a means of “*effective diversion for the kids who were holed out in their houses*” as it provided an avenue for the child to “*express and experiment with their ideas*” (Mother of a boy child, FGD 2, 10.10.2022) and “*create something from their mind using chart papers and paints*” (IDI 1, 19.09.2020), and “*keep the young ones busy and occupied when parents are busy to manage a lot of chores*” (IDI 4, 20.09.2022; FGD 1, 22.09.2022).

3 Parents' role in engaging children in art and craft during pre-school years

Parents description of helpful ways to support young children's engagement in art and craft at home are stated as follows:

3.1 Parents' role in creating a creative home environment

3.1.1 Parents can ensure a comfortable and safe environment for children

According to seven parents, parents should ensure a comfortable, relax, and fun atmosphere where children are creative and need to pay attention to the safety of the art facilities for children. These parents state that parents, "*can make the activities more stress free, enjoyable, and easy, relax activity and providing a natural set-up*" (IDI 1, 09.09.2022), "*can take photos of children's work and be a part of their fun activities*" (IDI 1, 19.09.2022), "*be tolerant*" (IDI 2, 20.09.2022) and "*show positive attitude all times*" (IDI 3, 19.09.2022); "*should make their children understand the mistakes in a polite manner*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022; FGD 2, 10.10.2022), and "*must ensure that the children do not harm themselves and they are safe*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022).

3.2 Parents' support in providing necessary resources

A total of eight parents mention that parents can provide the key resources i.e. time by stating "*Parents can spend time with the children and also learn their abilities*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022; space by stating "*Parents can have a read area in house where the child can experiment with art and crafts activity*" (IDI 1, 19.09.2022); and materials by stating, "*chart papers mainly large and colourful ones, paints and glue*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022; IDI 2, 20.09.2022), "*colours, sign-pen, and crayons*" (IDI 4, 20.09.2022; IDI 3, 19.09.2022), "*cardboard box, and cereal box*" (mother of a boy child, IDI 1, 19.09.2022) which can be provided "*on time and in sufficient quantity*" (FGD 2, 10.10.2022; IDI 1, 19.09.2022) to engage children in arts and crafts activities.

3.3 Helping children to generate new ideas and express divergent thoughts

3.3.1 Parents support children to engage in child-centered art and craft activities

In the research context, four parents mention that they support children to engage in child-centered activities. As they state, "*I write numbers and make shapes and allow children to*

color them” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022), *“I sometimes use vegetables like potatoes, lady-fingers, start fruits etcetera and cut out shapes and give to the children to colour on them* (mother of a boy child, FGD 1, 22.09.2022), *“Parents can give them chance to make something like cartoon figures or make paper flowers”* (IDI 4, 20.09.2022), and *“Parents can ask them to colour and make crafts”* (IDI 4, 20.09.2022) that *“children enjoy”* (FGD 1, 22.09.2022).

3.3.2 Parents need to give children freedom to be creative and encourage child’s independent work

According to two parents, parents need to give children the freedom to be creative and children need to be encouraged to create their own craft art or children’s independent work. Examples such as *“Children should be free to make or draw or paint”* (mother of a boy child, IDI 1, 19.09.2022) and *“Parents should allow children do whatever they want. Parents should set no boundaries”* (mother of a girl child, IDI 2, 20.09.2022) illustrate the idea. By contrast, another parent’s response supports parents-directed, close-ended arts and crafts activities by stating *“Parents can draw and teach the children to copy and that is how they can give direction”* (FGD 1, 20.09.2022) which could hinder children’s independence and freedom to be creative.

3.3.3 Parents should facilitate art activities with minimum instruction

Regarding instruction, two parents’ responses indicate that parents should facilitate art activities of children with minimum instructions. Examples of three parents’ responses such as *“parents should give them less instruction”* (IDI 1, 19.09.2022), and *“children should be free to do the art and craft activities and they do not need instructions”* (IDI 4, 20.09.2022; FGD 2, 10.10.2022) indicate that children should be encouraged to do art and craft with minimum or no instruction.

3.3.4 Valuing process/result of art and craft

One parent’s response illustrates the idea that parents must pay attention to the process of making arts and crafts. According to the parent who is the mother of a boy child, *“It should be free flowing and not product oriented”* (IDI 1, 19.09.2022). By contrast, five other responses such as *“Do it neatly and correctly”* (IDI 3, 19.09.2022), *“Parents should give the children a second chance to do the work neatly and correctly”* (IDI 4, 20.09.2022), *“Parents can draw and teach the children to copy and that is how they can guide them to correct their drawing”* (FGD 1, 22.09.2022), *“Craft is end-product driven”* (IDI 1, 19.09.2022), and *“Parents can arrange competition games with other preschoolers”* (FGD 2, 10.10.2022) where product is

more valuable than process suggest parents' biasness towards the product-oriented aspect of arts and crafts.

3.3.5 Parents can allow children to make mistakes

Responses of two parents who are the mothers of two boy children illustrate that parents can be flexible and allow children to make mistakes. Examples such as "*There are no mistakes with the art and craft activities. It should be fun and free will activity*" (IDI 1, 19.09.2022), and "*Nothing is right or wrong in art and craft activities. Every time the children come up with something new that is what we should accept as their own creativity*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022) indicate this idea. However, two other responses explicitly support to "*correct children's mistakes*" (IDI 3, 19.09.2022; FGD 1, 22.09.2022).

3.3.6 Parents' support to children's intrinsic motivation to engage in art and craft

According to parents' remarks, parents can support children's intrinsic motivation by being flexible and inspirational. Two parents in a FGD discussed ideas such as "*Parents should not force or push the children to participate in any activity. It should be free-willed*" (FGD 1, 22.09.2022) which indicates that parents can be flexible regarding children's participation in art and craft activity. According to one parent who is the mother of a boy child, parents can be inspirational by allowing children to develop mastery of creative activities and by encouraging children to think new and different ways by "*being supportive and allowing the children create things on their own, and encouraging them to do things differently than shown in the book or YouTube*" (FGD 2, 10.10.2022). For other parents, parents can be inspirational by "*learning new ideas from YouTube channels and teaching children new things in art and craft activities*" (IDI 2, 20.09.2022; FGD 1, 22.09.2022); "*showing parents' creative mind to children*" (IDI 3, 19.09.2022); "*clapping hands, appreciating and praising, and giving children encouragement for good work*" (IDI 1, 19.09.2022; FGD 1, 22.09.2022; FGD 2, 10.10.2022), "*helping the children to do the art and craft activities*" (IDI 4, 20.09.2022); "*drawing or coloring with them, working alongside and engaging other siblings to children confidence, and*" "*making origami with the children but simplified version and mainly easy activities for this age*" (IDI 3, 19.09.2022; FGD 2, 10.10.2022; IDI 2, 20.09.2022); "*being tolerant*" (IDI 2, 20.09.2022) and "*showing positive attitude all times*" (IDI 3, 19.09.2022); "*making the activities more stress free, enjoyable, and easy, relax activity and providing a natural set-up*" (IDI 1, 09.09.2022), "*taking children to art and craft classes, workshops, group meetings with friends, events that are involved in art and craft activities; parks and to nature to show and talk to them about*

birds, trees, and their colors” (IDI 2, 20.09.2022; IDI 4, 20.09.2022; FGD 1, 22.09.2022; FGD 2, 10.10.2022); and “*encouraging the children to participate in art competition*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022).

5.3.7 Parents being optimistic about each child’s potential

In both IDI and FGD contexts, parents were asked the question: In which ways parents can be optimistic? According to the data sets, none of the parents responded to the question.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

In the present research, parents conceptualize arts and crafts as drawing and painting, they recognize the role of arts and crafts in young children's learning and development, and consider that they play an important role in children's engagement in arts and crafts activities. However, data sets indicate that parents' perception regarding children's arts and crafts activities could also be enriched.

According to the data sets, only a few parents describe the meanings of arts and crafts in early childhood by highlighting that arts and crafts require use of hand and materials such as colours and papers. Sometimes they distinguish between arts and crafts and describe their understanding of art relating to artistic means such as drawing and painting. However, in early childhood, besides drawing and painting, arts also include music, song, dance, drama and theatre, and crafts. When describing the meaning of crafts, a very few of them identify craft as a source of exploration and pleasure and beneficial for children's creativity as children create and learn new things. However, it is possible that children can experience these benefits by participating in art activities as well. Furthermore, for these parents, craft is beneficial for children's creativity as children create new things or a product, however, as process crafts making (which can be a means of arts) also support in creative expression of ideas, experiences, and emotions. Additionally, in literature, it is generally argued that in the early ages of life, participation in visual arts and crafts may occur only to the extent of exploring and playing, rather than creating finished works of art.

Besides this idea of creativity, only a few parents perceive that arts i.e. painting or drawing and crafts making are not age appropriate for children of 3-5 years old given that arts require imitating others' painting or drawing something accurately or correctly and craft is end-product driven. These parents' perceptions that suggest that arts and crafts are not age-appropriate for 3-5 years differ largely from the idea of MoPME (2008) that emphasized to introduce free drawing, and making objects using block, clay, leaf, paper, sticks, small pieces of cloth, old bangle, rope, bottle caps, buttons, pictures or books for children ages 3 to <6 years.

By the features of arts and crafts as playing activities, a few parents demonstrate their understanding about features related to process and tools. Regarding process, parents describe that arts and crafts are process-oriented i.e., a process to transfer thinking into action. They also

mention that supporting children to make arts or crafts means helping children to invent their own. Thus, parents' responses can be related to valuing child-led process that encourage children's freedom and control of the process. However, besides supporting child-led process, arts and crafts also include other features such as simple; colourful; open-ended i.e. having no predetermined boundary; kinesthetics experience-oriented; and having the purpose and usefulness related to children's learning and development. Besides mentioning about process of making arts and crafts, few other parents describe features as tools needed for constructing and sharing meanings, however, none of them consider using no or low-cost materials such as household leftovers or other examples of materials stated by MoPME (2008) illustrated in the above paragraph.

Data from a few parents reveals their perception about benefits of art and crafts in children's learning and development. These parents' responses indicate learning in, through, and about art and crafts and illustrate that learning through art and crafts such as by multiple modes of representation when mixing colour and joining two broken pieces of cardboard box makes boring learning fun for children and thus motivates children to learn and increases their engagement in learning other subject areas; helps them to learn literacy better as well as math skills specifically geometric concepts such as shape, and perhaps science as children learn to explore, and support them to become creative by trying new ideas and thinking in new ways.

Concerning the relationship between arts and crafts and brain development, only a few parents mention that arts and crafts provide opportunities for stimulation and exercise of brain and activation of sensory areas that support brain development. However, according to neuroscience, 'somatosensory, motor, and visual areas – all are activated during making arts or crafts – occupy a large portion of cortical surface. The stimulation of these areas is particularly crucial in early childhood to develop brain to its highest level. Furthermore, the tactile sensations of finger painting facilitate a state of mindfulness and a broader scope of attention.

In regard to physical development, less than half of the research participants relate arts and crafts with the two crucial aspects of physical development such as hand-eye coordination, and motor skills acquisition that enable children to construct creative objects specifically by stating that when children stick paper with glue, mould paper tissue to create something; there will be fine motor skills development. These parents have particularly mentioned hand-writing development as one of the benefits of arts and crafts. Such response indicates adequate understanding of parents given that drawing in prior-to-school often interrelated as fine motor

activity that is an important precursor to writing. However, art activities develop motor skills as a provision for writing skills as well as coordination of limbs, flexibility, and movement supportive for growth and development. Moreover, painting, drawing, dance also help develop visual-spatial skills, especially among pre-schoolers.

Only a few parents' ideas reveal that participation in arts and crafts activities facilitate cognitive growth by helping children in the development of a) creative thinking skills by providing avenues for trying new ideas and new ways of thinking, and b) imagination skills. These ideas thus indicate that arts and crafts participation also provides opportunities to initiate, predict, explore and connect concepts; experiment through trialling techniques, methods or materials or trying something new; make choices over subject matter, different media, materials and methods to produce arts and crafts works; communicate understanding, organize and express thoughts and knowledge; and support freedom in expression and development of critical thinking, independence, interest, experience, and problem solving skills such as working out what colours or mediums to use in visual arts or deciding what works. However, cognitive development can also be supported by art specific language use.

As to the art-craft-linguistic connections, only a few parents emphasize that arts and crafts participation helps children to learn new words such as the names of colours and shapes, and understand parents' instruction. Learning new words or vocabulary and understanding instruction are certainly important aspects of language development, however, children's linguistic growth can also be expanded by practicing communication such as by making a fortune telling puppet toy or by fostering children's communication abilities by telling and retelling what children see, hear, and experience when making arts and crafts as well as telling and retelling their pictorial accounts of visual arts to peers and adults, and by participating in drama, theatre, and story-acting.

In the research context, a few parents emphasize on social interaction and sharing with peers, and playing with parents when making arts and crafts to describe the relationship between arts and crafts and increased social-emotional skills development. These parents' responses thus indicate that as children interact with other children and parents for the purpose of making arts and crafts, such interaction can build children's abilities to collaborate and cooperate, assume different roles in the arts and crafts making process, exchange personally meaningful dialogues, make friendship, share ideas and resources, and develop belongingness and tolerance and thus children's social interaction can create social cohesion by helping children who are at risk of

social isolation. However, children's social skills can also be developed during interaction with peers and parents by differentiating one's work from others, questioning, evaluating, and appreciating the works of others, and giving children agency and enabling them to lead. These parents also specifically mention children's experience of joy and happiness that support children's positive emotional development. However, arts and crafts also promote emotional development by the feeling of meaningfulness, fulfilling, satisfying, and to be right; reducing shy and anxious behavior, communicating and expressing feelings and emotions, helping children to regulate both positive and negative emotion, and improving resilience and developing positive self-concept.

In addition to social-emotional development, a few parents mention that making art and craft during early childhood adversities including COVID-19 pandemic helps in children's healings by creating something from their mind using chart papers and paints, expressing and experimenting with their ideas, distracting children from pain, getting relief from stress, and relaxing their mind and keeping them calm, communicating their happy and sad feelings to parents by drawing, and keeping them busy and occupied when parents are busy to manage a lots of chores. Thus, these parents' ideas indicate that children's participation in creative activities in everyday life helps in healing. These creative activities including expressing and experimenting with ideas seem to provide a means of distraction from emotional stress and create a feeling of relaxation and a sense of empowerment. Additionally, as to these parents, children often do not have words for what they are feeling and arts and crafts are the means of expression for these children that enable parents to understand what they are feeling specifically during uncertain and challenging circumstances. Thus, all these ideas that parents have shared in the research context illustrate the ways in which participation in arts and crafts promote resilience and help children to better psychosocial health. However, emotional bonding especially during uncertain and challenging circumstances is also crucial to help children to heal as such bonding can be considered as one of the sources of psychosocial support in emergencies. In the research context, only a few parents inform that arts and crafts are not much helpful for children to heal and children are also young enough to understand emotional pain during crisis situations suggesting that the relationship between increased participation in arts and crafts and decreased experience of psychosocial distress and increased wellbeing of children are unknown to these parents.

When describing parents' role in creating a creative home environment to encourage young children's engagement in art and craft activities, almost half of the parents mention to help

children by making activities stress free, enjoyable, easy, and relax and providing a natural set-up; being positive and tolerant, participating in children's fun activities by taking images of children's arts and crafts products, and ensuring that children are safe. These ideas indicate that parents should ensure a comfortable, relax, fun and safe atmosphere when children are engaged in making arts and crafts. However, parents also may need to ensure ample time to support relax atmosphere where children can express their ideas and thoughts without experiencing stress resulted from time constraints. Additionally, none of the parents clarified other aspects of their roles to create the home environment in creative ways that can include providing a variety of tools around the houses of various color, function, texture, size, shape, natural and factory-made materials, and household appliances which can be seen by children and easy to reach for children; as well as covering walls with art and other evidences of creative expression.

In addition to creating a creative home environment, half of the parents describe parents' role in providing key resources such as, time, space, and materials that children need to engage in arts and crafts activities. In regard to time, these parents indicate to spend time with children to understand children's abilities. In regard to space, they mention to give children a specific place to do arts and crafts. In regard to materials, they emphasize to provide different materials such as papers including large and colourful ones; colours and paints including sign-pen and crayons; glue; and boxes including cardboard box and cereal box. By highlighting cardboard box and cereal box, only a few parents indicate the use of no-cost household goods as arts and crafts tools. However, to encourage children's participation in arts and crafts, parents also need to provide different materials for children to use to enable the sensing of the opposites such as heavy and light, soft and hard, warm and cold in order for sensory stimulation. Additionally, beside materials resources, parents need to provide time resource such as spending a specific time to the playing art and craft activities in order to become facilitator and companionships for organizing craft activities and communicating with their children, ask them open-ended questions about the materials, process, and products and encourage children to think and different ways.

In the research context, few parents also mention to engage children in child-centered arts and crafts activities to encourage children's participation. Only a few parents inform to give children freedom to be creative and children need to be encouraged to create their own craft art or children's independent work, by contrast, only a few parents' response illustrates the idea of close-ended parents-directed art, not open-ended self-directed work. Additionally, only a few parents indicate that parents should facilitate art activities with minimum instruction.

Regarding value of process/result of art and craft, only a few parents emphasize the process-oriented aspect of arts and crafts, by contrast, a few parents' responses indicate that parents value result-oriented, nice and accurate product instead of open-ended, self-directed process-based product. Furthermore, parents who have emphasized to pay attention to the process, did not mention the ways in which parents can encourage children to find more than one route to a solution, and more than one solution to a problem. Nor they explicitly mention parents' role to avoid to mention which ideas aren't possible or to decide which ideas are the best.

Despite that only a few parents mention that parents can be flexible and allow children to make mistakes because arts and crafts should be fun and free-willed activity and that children's ideas should be considered as their creativity, only a few parents also indicate that children are not always allowed to make mistakes. However, none of the responses indicate the ways in which parents can guide children to get them the idea that it is okay to make mistakes. According to all parents' remarks, parents can support children's intrinsic motivation to engage in arts and crafts by being flexible and inspirational. However, among the many responses related to inspiring children, only a few responses explicitly indicate to allow children to develop mastery of creative activities which is one of the crucial aspects to motivate children intrinsically to engage in arts and crafts activities. Finally, in both interview and FGD context, none of the parents' understanding demonstrates the idea that every child is potential and that every child is unique person and respectful and thus every child can respect their own arts and crafts.

All these findings regarding parents' perception seem important for supporting learning and development of children during pre-school years because parents' perception influences parents' practice. The research has presented areas where parents demonstrate adequate understanding and where they need support. Using the findings of the research, parents' capacity could be built further in order for greater benefits of children of these years. Thus, the findings seem to have important implications on promoting learning and development of children in pre-school years.

I have framed the research with the assumption that parents lack adequate understanding to support children's learning and development at home by the use of arts and crafts activities. The research supports this assumption given that many parents did not explain what they understand by arts and crafts, in which ways arts and crafts promote children's learning and development including healing, and in which ways parents can support children. Few parents who have responded to these aspects, many of them show their perceptions inadequate. Besides

this broad assumption of parents' inadequate understanding about children's learning and development, there was a specific assumption i.e., if parents support in children's arts and crafts activities, in most cases, they tend to value the product of arts and crafts, however, 21st century skills value creative thinking, imagination, problem solving, and ability to cope with uncertainty and unknown which relate to the process of arts and crafts. In this research, almost all data regarding imagination, creative thinking, healing, and process aspect of arts and craft indicate only a few parents' responses. For example, one participant who is a housewife and the mother of a boy child mentions that arts and crafts are very important for early childhood for children's imagination, creativity, hand-eye coordination, mental and social development; arts and crafts improve creativity by providing avenues for trying new ideas; provide an avenue for the child to express and experiment with their ideas as well as to get distracted from pain during COVID time; and parents should allow children to create things on their own and encourage them to do things differently than shown in the book or YouTube. Another parent who is also a housewife and the mother of a boy child informs that nothing is right or wrong in art and craft activities. Every time the children come up with something new that is what we should accept as their own creativity; and children get relief from stress by drawing and parents can understand children's emotions as children draw happy and sad faces to show their feelings. The other parent was an ex-teacher and involved with extracurricular activities for pre-schoolers, is currently attending post-graduation course, and is a mother of a boy child who mentions that arts and crafts should be free-flowing and not process oriented, fun and free-will activity; and children should be free to make or draw or paint. Responses of these parents certainly demonstrate a range of interesting ideas; however, these ideas are limited only to these three parents.

This qualitative research presents detailed findings in the field of arts and crafts and young children's learning and development. To the best of my knowledge, there is no empirical research exploring parents' understanding about arts and crafts, the importance of arts and crafts in children's learning and development, parents' role to support children's learning and development by encouraging children to participate in arts and crafts activities to compare to confirm or reject the findings of other studies. However, the analysis of this research suggests that further research is needed to explore the views of parents of children ages 3-5 years who do or do not attend different interventions initiated by government, NGOs, kindergarten schools, Bangla medium private schools, as well as other English medium schools. Additionally, this research has planned to include parents of mostly girls, boys, and children

with delayed development. Further research could also include parents of children who have experienced abuse, loss, trauma, other challenges in early childhood.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

A few parents in this research described their perception about the meanings and features of arts and crafts, the role of arts and crafts in children's learning and development, and the role of parents to encourage children's participation in arts and crafts. Importantly, these parents' responses demonstrate their deepened knowledge, concept, reasoning, insights; and positive beliefs, attitude, and interest towards children's arts and crafts and thus these parents indicate their awareness regarding basics of arts and crafts, the promising possibility of arts and crafts in children's learning and development, and their role to foster children's learning and development by encouraging children to participate in arts and crafts activities. However, shortcomings exist in these parents' understanding in the sense that many of them did not explain what they understand by arts and crafts, in which ways arts and crafts promote children's learning and development, and in which ways parents can support children's participation in arts and crafts to facilitate children's learning and development. Furthermore, a few parents who have responded to these areas, their responses illustrate the need for further refinement of their perceptions they shared in the research context.

The research intended to explore parents' perceptions in regard to their understanding about the meanings and features of arts and crafts in early childhood, the benefits of arts and craft for learning and development of children during pre-school years, and helping ways that parents can adopt to engage children in arts and crafts making activities that promote children's learning and development. The research has contributed greatly in creating knowledge in these areas and highlights the need for capacity building of parents to support greater benefits of young children's learning and development.

By doing this research, I have learnt that both boys and girls can be equally interested in making arts and crafts activities given that parents of boys in this research have shared a lot of interesting ideas and thoughts in regard to children's development, healing, use of household materials as resources, engaging children in child-centered activities, considering arts and crafts as free-flowing, free-willed, and process-oriented, making arts and crafts differently than it is presented in any materials, and consideration of children's effort as their creativity. These parents' perception may emerge from their practices at home related to arts and crafts. Additionally, by doing this research, I have learnt the selected sixteen parents' understanding

and experiences in regard to research questions. My learnings resulted in mapping the gaps in parents understanding and thereby what is needed to help parents to improve their greater familiarity with arts and crafts in relation to early childhood, its benefits for young children's learning and development, and parents' role in promoting children's learning and development by the use of arts and crafts making activities.

Recommendations

- Capacity building courses for both boy and girl children's parents of the English medium school selected for this research need to design and implement drawing examples from the voices of the parents who have participated in this research and addressing contents such as the meanings and features of arts and crafts in early childhood, the importance of arts and crafts for learning and development of children ages 3-5 years, and the helpful ways that parents can offer to promote children's learning and development by the use of arts and crafts activities.

- The analysis of this research suggests that future research is needed:
 - To explore the views of parents of children ages 3-5 years from diverse socio-economic backgrounds who do or do not attend different interventions initiated by educational institutions, government, NGOs, kindergarten schools, Bangla medium private schools, as well as other English medium schools set up in both rural and urban areas of Bangladesh.
 - This research has planned to include parents of girls (mostly), boys, and children with delayed development. Prior research shows that "With vulnerable children in particular, creative arts practice has been shown to support wellbeing" (Walshe et al., 2020, p. 101). Therefore, in addition to girls, boys, and children with delayed development, further research could also include parents of children who have experienced abuse, loss, trauma, neglect, and other challenges in early childhood such as discriminatory practices based on caste, class including poverty and ultra-poor conditions, ethnicity, gender, disability, geographical location including remote and non-remote areas, conflict such as the context of Rohingya children etc.
 - In this research, parents have demonstrated their great interest in engaging their children in arts and crafts by stating, "*my daughter loves it when I do any art*

and craft activity with her” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022), and “*I sometimes use vegetables like potatoes, lady-fingers, star fruits etcetera and cut out shapes and give to the children to colour on them*” (FGD 1, 22.09.2022). Thus, future research could also be designed to explore parents’ practices at home regarding children’s engagement in arts and crafts activities applying the concept ‘parents’ role’ to understand practice.

- Besides exploring parents’ perception, future research could also discover parents’ interests to know more about children’s arts and crafts which would further support inclusion of parents’ voices when designing capacity building courses for parents on children’s arts and crafts activities.
 - Data sets of this research, specifically the section on parents’ role, suggest to design future research in such a way that supports parents’ responses to reach data saturation or informational redundancy that allows the researcher to hear the same comments again and again.
- The findings of this research will be helpful for the policy makers to expand the caregiver practices for the fourth and fifth year (36 to 60 months), as articulated in MoPME (2008), from ‘providing resources’ to ‘organizing learning environment or creating a creative home environment’; ‘being optimistic about each child’s potential’; and ‘helping children to be intrinsically motivated to engage in process-oriented and minimum instruction based arts and crafts activities that are child-centered and that support children’s freedom to be creative and nurture independence’.

References

- Ahmed, N., & Rashid, M. (2020). Adolescent Program in Rohingya Settings: What Works. Unpublished research report. BRAC Institute of Educational Development.
- Azhima, I. (2019). Arts and crafts: fun activities to train early childhood cooperation, *Early Childhood Research Journal*, 2 (2), 64-68.
- Barton, G. (2015). Arts-based educational research in the early years, *International Research in Early Childhood Education*, 6 (1), 62-78.
- Bhuiyan, A. Z. (2018). Folk Arts and Crafts of Bangladesh: Their Uniqueness in 'Naksha' (Design) Motifs.
file:///C:/Users/BRAC%20IED/Desktop/TOPIC_NAME_FOLK_ARTS_AND_CRAFTS_OF_BANGLADESH_THEI.pdf
- Bostan, C-G. (2016). Parents' Perception Concerning Artistic Practices in Education. *Revista Romaneasca pentru Educatie Multidimensionala*, 8(2), 89-96. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/rrem/2016.0802.07>
- Charleroy, A., Frederiksen, J. A.G., Jensen, A., McKenna, S., Thomas, A. (2012). Child development and arts education: a review of current research and best practices. New York: College Board.
- Choi, M., Tessler, H., Kao, G. (2020). Arts and crafts as an educational strategy and coping mechanism for Republic of Korea and United State parents during the COVID-19 pandemic, *International Review of Education*, 66, 715-735.
- Ciolan, L. E. (2013). Play to learn, learn to play. Creating better opportunities for learning in early childhood. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 76, 186-189. Cugmas, Z. (2007). Child's attachment to his/her mother, father and kindergarten teacher. *Early Child Development and Care*, 177(4), 349-368. Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2009). Making meaning: children's perspectives expressed through drawings. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179 (2), 217-232. DOI: 10.1080/030044303802666999 Huotilainen, M., Rankanen, M., Groth, C., Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, P., and Mäkelä, M. (2018). Why our brains love arts and crafts? Implications of creative practices on psycho-physical well-being. *II* (2), 1-18. Jewel, R. M., Drew, S., Nasrin Akter, N., and Chowdhury, Q. K. (2020). Effectiveness of pre-primary teachers training in government primary school Bangladesh. *IJARIE*, 6 (5), 845-860.
- Markowitz, J. S. (1994). The distinction between art and craft. *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 28 (1), 55-70. Mayar, F. (2022). Developing children's creativity through the art of crafts. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 668, 30-33. McArdle, F., Wright, S.K. (2014). First literacies: art, creativity, play, constructive meaning-making. In: Barton, G. (eds) *Literacy in the Arts*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04846-8_2
- Mcilroy. (2022). The importance of Early Childhood Development. <https://empoweredparents.co/importance-of-early-childhood-development/>
- Menzer, M. (2015). The Arts in Early Childhood: Social and Emotional benefits of Arts Participation. A literature Review and Gap Analysis (2000-2015). National Endowment for the Arts: Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts

- MoPME. (2008). Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Dhaka: Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
- Nova, I. N. (2016). A Comparison of Art Education Practices in Bangladesh And in the United States. [Master's thesis]. Georgia State University, eScholarship. doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/8752674>
- Phillios. (2019). Art enhances Brain Function and well-being. <https://www.healing-power-of-art.org/art-and-the-brain/> Phu, M.H. (2019). Developing creativity for children: roles of parents, Conference paper, 64- 69.
- Shuva, D., S. (2021). *A Study of Present Practices and Challenges of Fine Arts and Crafts Education in Primary Schools of Dhaka City*. [Master's thesis] Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. eScholarship: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10361/14943/17357039_BIED.pdf?sequence=1 Spier, E., Vasudevan, S., Kamto, K., Rahman, A., Hossain, N., Nahar, Z., Khondker, H. (2018). Bangladesh Early Years Preschool Program Impact Evaluation Baseline Report for the World Bank Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund. American Institutes for Research: Washington, DC.
- Talwar, Savneet. (2018). *Feminism as practice: Crafting and the politics of art therapy*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326423219_Feminism_as_Practice_Craft_Labor_and_Art_Therapy
- UNICEF. (2014). Children in Bangladesh. Dhaka: UNICEF.
- Walshe, N., Lee, E., and Smith, J. M. (2020). Supporting children's well-being with art in nature: artist pedagogue perceptions, *Research*, 14(1), 98–112.
- Wikberg, S. (2013). Art education-mostly for girls? A gender perspective on the art subject in Swedish Compulsory School. *Education Inquiry*, 4 (3),577-593. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v4i3.22630>

Appendix A:

Annex 1: In Depth Interview Guideline- English

Research Title: Parents' Perception regarding Arts and Crafts for Children's Learning and Development in Pre-school Years

In-Depth Interview Questionnaire

Section A: Demographic Information

Interview Date:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	
Name of Respondent:	
Age:	
Gender:	
Education Level:	
Occupation:	
Child's Age:	
Child's Gender:	
Able/Delayed development:	

Section B: Parents' understanding regarding the meanings and features of arts and crafts

1. What do you understand by arts and crafts? (Specifically in relation to early childhood: 3-5 years)?
2. What are the features of arts and crafts? (Specifically for the early years of life)?

Section C: Parents' understanding regarding the role of arts and crafts in learning and development including COVID-19 context for children in pre-school years

3. In which ways arts and crafts influence learning and development for children in pre-school years? [the following questions can be asked to help research participants to answer if they struggle to answer].
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's learning?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's brain development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's physical development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's cognitive development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's language development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's social-emotional development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's healing?

4. In which ways making arts and crafts support children in uncertain and challenging circumstances, for example, COVID-19 pandemic?

Section D: Helpful ways that parents can apply to support children’s engagement in arts and crafts activities at home

5. What can be parents’ role in supporting arts and crafts of children in pre-school years?
[the following 3 questions can be asked to help the research participants to answer if they struggle to answer]

5.1 What can be parents’ role in creating supportive environment at home?

5.2 What can be parent’s role in providing necessary resources?

5.3 What can be the features of children’s activities, parents’ instructions, and parents behaviour as children are engaged in arts and crafts? [the following questions can be asked to help research participants to answer if they struggle to answer].

5.3.1 What is the nature of arts and crafts activities that parents can assign to children?

5.3.2 What can be the nature of parents’ instruction in children’s arts and crafts activities? Why?

5.3.3 In which ways should parents respond to children’s mistakes?

5.3.4 How can parents motivate children to participate in arts and crafts activities?

5.3.5 In which ways parents can be optimistic, flexible, and inspirational?

Annex 2: In-Depth Interview Questionnaire (Bangla)

বিভাগবি. চারু ও কারুশিল্প (আর্টএন্ডক্র্যাফট) অর্থ এবং বৈশিষ্ট্য সম্পর্কে পিতামাতার ধারণা

১. আপনি আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস সম্পর্কে কি বোঝেন? (বিশেষ করে প্রাথমিক শৈশবকাল অর্থাৎ ৩-৫ বছরের শিশুদের জন্য)?
২. চারু ও কারুশিল্পের বৈশিষ্ট্যগুলি কী কী? (বিশেষ করে এরজন্য জীবনের প্রথম বছর)

বিভাগ সি: আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস এর ভূমিকা সম্পর্কে পিতামাতার ধারণা কি?

৩. কোভিড-১৯ এর প্রেক্ষাপটে শিশুদের আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফট কিভাবে শেখানো যায় এবং এটা শিশুদের উন্নয়নকে কিভাবে সাহায্য করতে পারে ?

আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস কিভাবে শিক্ষাকে প্রভাবিত করে এবং প্রাক-স্কুল শিশুদের উন্নয়নে ভূমিকা রাখতে পারে? [নিম্নলিখিত প্রশ্নগুলি গবেষণা অংশগ্রহণকারীদের জিজ্ঞাসা করা যেতে পারে]

- কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শিশুদের শিক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে সাহায্য করে?
- কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শিশুদের মেধা বিকাশে সাহায্য করে?
- কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শিশুদের শারীরিক বিকাশে সাহায্য করে?
- কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শিশুদের জ্ঞান বিকাশে সাহায্য করে?
- কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শিশুদের ভাষা বিকাশে সাহায্য করে?
- কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শিশুদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশে সাহায্য করে?
- কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শিশুদের স্বাস্থ্য ভাল রাখতে সাহায্য করতে পারে?

৪. কোন উপায়ে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস অনিশ্চিত এবং চ্যালেঞ্জিং পরিস্থিতিতে, **কভিডের মতো মহামারীতে শিশুদের সাহায্য করতে পারে?**

বিভাগ ডি): বাসায় পিতামাতারা কিভাবে আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস শেখার ব্যাপারে শিশুদের সাহায্য করতে পারেন?

৫. প্রাক-স্কুলগুলিতে শিশুদের আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটসকে শেখানোর ব্যাপারে পিতামাতার ভূমিকা কী হতে পারে? [নিম্নলিখিত প্রশ্নগুলি গবেষণা অংশগ্রহণকারীদের জিজ্ঞাসা করা যেতে পারে]

ক) বাড়িতে একটি উপযুক্ত পরিবেশ তৈরিতে পিতামাতার ভূমিকা কী হতে পারে?

খ) প্রয়োজনীয় উপকরণ সংগ্রহের ব্যাপারে পিতামাতার ভূমিকা কী হতে পারে?

গ) বাচ্চাদের আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটসে নিযুক্ত থাকার ক্ষেত্রে বাচ্চাদের কার্যকলাপ কেমন হতে

পারে, পিতামাতার জন্য কি ধরনের নির্দেশাবলী থাকতে পারে, এবং পিতামাতার আচরণ

কেমন হয় উচিত? [গবেষণায় সাহায্য করার জন্য নিম্নলিখিত প্রশ্নগুলি জিজ্ঞাসা করা যেতে পারে]

- * পিতা-মাতা বাচ্চাদের কিধরণের আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটসের কাজে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারেন?
- * শিশুদের আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটসের ক্রিয়াকলাপে পিতামাতার নির্দেশনার প্রকৃতি কী হতে পারে?
- * পিতা-মাতা বাচ্চাদের ভুল ঠিক করে দেয়ার ব্যাপারে কিধরণের আচরণ করা উচিত?
- * কিভাবে অভিভাবকরা শিশুদের আর্ট এন্ড ক্র্যাফটস কার্যক্রমে অংশগ্রহণে অনুপ্রাণিত করতে পারেন?
- * কিভাবে পিতামাতা বা অভিভাবকগণ আশাবাদী, নমনীয় এবং অনুপ্রেরণামূলক হতে পারেন?

Annex 3: Focus Group Discussion guideline - English

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guideline

Research Title: Parents' Perception regarding Arts and Crafts for Children's Learning and Development in Pre-school Years

Demographic Information:

Parent's name :	
Gender :	
Age :	
Educational qualification :	
Occupation :	
Child's name: :	
Child's age: :	
Total number of children :	
Interview date: :	
Interview starting time: :	
Interview ending time: :	

Introductory Questions:

- a. How are you all?
- b. How is everyone at home?

Section B: Parents' understanding regarding the meanings and features of arts and crafts

6. What do you understand by arts and crafts? (Specifically in relation to early childhood: 3-5 years)?
7. What are the features of arts and crafts? (Specifically for the early years of life)?

Section C: Parents' understanding regarding the role of arts and crafts in learning and development including COVID-19 context for children in pre-school years

8. In which ways arts and crafts influence learning and development for children in pre-school years? [The following questions can be asked to help research participants to answer if they struggle to answer].
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's learning?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's brain development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's physical development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's cognitive development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's language development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's social-emotional development?
 - In which ways arts and crafts help in children's healing?
9. In which ways making arts and crafts support children in uncertain and challenging circumstances, for example, COVID-19 pandemic?

Section D: Helpful ways that parents can apply to support children's engagement in arts and crafts activities at home

10. What can be parents' role in supporting arts and crafts of children in pre-school years? [the following 3 questions can be asked to help the research participants to answer if they struggle to answer]
 - a. What can be parents' role in creating supportive environment at home?
 - b. What can be parents' role in providing necessary resources?
 - c. What can be the features of children's activities, parents' instructions, and parents' behaviour as children are engaged in arts and crafts? [the following questions can be asked to help research participants to answer if they struggle to answer].
 - i. what is the nature of arts and crafts activities that parents can assign to children?
 - ii. What can be the nature of parents' instruction in children's arts and crafts activities? Why?
 - iii. In which ways should parents respond to children's mistakes?
 - iv. How can parents motivate children to participate in arts and crafts activities?
 - v. In which ways parents can be optimistic, flexible, and inspirational?

Annex 4: Consent Form for parents (English)

Title of the Thesis Proposal: Parental perception regarding Arts and Crafts for Children's Learning and Development in Pre-school Years

Researcher: Tasnuva Choudhury

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 parents' perception and practice regarding art and crafts for learning and development in pre-school years.

Expectation from you

If you agree, you will be expected to share your perception, views and thoughts on pre-primary education. This will include physical environment, pedagogy and teaching-learning process of pre-primary classes. The interview may take 60 to 90 minutes, depending upon your response.

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, 01730496323, or you can email at chowdhury.tasnuva@gmail.com.