

**PRESCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND PRACTICE OF
GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEARNING IN ENGLISH-MEDIUM
SETTING**

By

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

BRAC Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing a 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 reference.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Ethics Statement

Title of the Thesis Topic: Preschool Teachers' Perception and Practice of Gender Disparities in Learning in English-Medium Settings.

Name of the Student: Decline Kajol Oriana Rozario

1. Source of population: Preschool Teachers who teach children from 3-5.
2. Does the study involve (yes or no)
 - a. Physical risk to the subjects - no
 - b. Social risk - no
 - c. Psychological risk to subjects - no
 - d. Discomfort to subjects - no
 - e. Invasion of privacy - no
3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)
 - a. Nature and purpose of the study - yes
 - b. Procedures to be followed - yes
 - c. Physical risk - n/a
 - d. Sensitive questions - yes
 - e. Benefits to be derived - yes
 - f. Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study - yes
 - g. Confidential handling of data - yes
 - h. Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved - yes
4. Will Signed verbal consent be required (yes or no)
 - a. from the principal of the school - yes
 - b. from the teachers who were interviewed - yes
 - c. from the teachers whose classes were observed - yes
 - d. precautions be taken to protect the anonymity of subjects? - yes
5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:
 - a. Proposal - yes
 - b. Consent Form - yes
 - c. Questionnaire or interview schedule - yes

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines preschool teachers' perceptions of gender differences in learning within English-medium settings, focusing on how these beliefs impact teaching practices and child development. Recognizing Early Childhood Education (ECE) as essential for lifelong learning, this study addresses an important gap by investigating teachers' beliefs that influence their interactions with students.

Through a qualitative approach, involving interviews with five preschool teachers and ten classroom observations, the study explores how teachers' beliefs may shape their responses to boys and girls differently, potentially contributing to or reducing gender disparities in educational outcomes. Key findings reveal that teachers perceive notable developmental differences between boys and girls, especially in language and fine motor skills, where girls are often seen to excel. These perceptions appear to be shaped by both biological factors, like neurological differences, and sociocultural factors, including societal norms around gender roles.

The study emphasizes the need for targeted professional development and policy reforms to help educators recognize and address potential biases. By shedding light on the underlying factors driving gender disparities in early learning, this research seeks to inform policies that foster gender equity within ECE settings, ensuring a more inclusive and balanced educational experience for all children.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education; gender disparities in learning outcomes; preschool teachers; qualitative research; teacher perceptions on gender; educational equity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration	i
Approval	ii
Ethics Statement	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Acronyms	ix
Chapter I: Introduction and Background	1
Introduction	1
Background of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the study	4
Significance and Justification of the study	4
Research Questions	5
Chapter II: Literature Review	7
Chapter III: Methodology	15
Research Approach	15

Research Site	16
Research Participants	17
Sampling Procedure	18
Data Collection Tool	19
Data Collection Methods	21
Data Management and Analysis	23
Validity & Reliability	24
Ethical Issues & Concerns.....	25
Limitations of the Study.....	26
Chapter IV: Results/Findings & Discussion	28
Results/Findings	28
Discussion	34
Conclusion	39
Recommendations	40
Reference	42
Appendices	47
Appendix -1: Research Tools (English)	47
Appendix -2: Translate Research Tools (Bangla)	51
Appendix -3: Consent Form	55

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographic Details of Research Participants	18
Table 2: Data Collection Tool for Each Research Questions.....	21
Table 3: Data Collection Method	22

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Process of Data Management and Analysis	23
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Acronyms

IDI - In-Depth Interview

ECE - Early Childhood Education

ECD - Early Childhood Development

PE - Physical Education

APA - American Psychological Association

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

BANBEIS - Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

In the landscape of early childhood education, understanding the nuances of gender disparities in learning is not merely an academic exercise but a critical inquiry that has profound implications for educational practice and policy. Imagine a preschool classroom where children embark on their educational journeys with the same potential, yet over time, subtle differences begin to emerge. These differences, shaped by societal expectations, biological factors, and educational practices, can influence their learning outcomes and overall development.

Background of the Study

This research focuses on the perceptions of preschool teachers in English-medium settings regarding gender disparities in learning. Located in urban educational settings, this study targets teachers of 3-5-year-old preschoolers. Previous studies, such as those conducted in various global contexts, have highlighted that girls often excel in language and social skills while boys may perform better in spatial reasoning tasks (Halpern, 2000). However, there is limited research specific to the perceptions of ECE teachers regarding these disparities, particularly in the context of Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, significant gender disparities have been noted in educational outcomes, with girls outperforming boys in early academic achievements. This is reflected in both national statistics and international studies (Directorate of Primary Education of Bangladesh, 2014). Yet, the underlying perceptions of educators and their impact on teaching practices remain underexplored. By investigating these perceptions, this study aims to build upon existing research and provide insights into how educational practices can be tailored to foster more equitable

learning environments.

The necessity of this research stems from the observed gender disparities in early educational settings and the potential long-term impacts these disparities can have on children's academic and socioemotional development. By understanding teachers' perceptions, this study seeks to identify biases and develop strategies to mitigate them, ultimately contributing to a more balanced and inclusive educational framework. The results of this research could inform professional development programs, curricular adjustments, and policy interventions aimed at promoting gender equity in early childhood education.

This thesis is organized into several key sections. Chapter One includes the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance and justification of the study, and the research questions. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive literature review, highlighting previous research on gender disparities in education. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, detailing the research approach, participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the findings, implications for practice and policy, and recommendations for future research.

By delving into the perceptions of preschool teachers regarding gender disparities in learning, this study aims to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of early childhood education, fostering more equitable and effective teaching practices for young learners.

Statement of the Problem

Boys in Early Childhood Education Often Score Lower than Girls (Halpern, 2011). In early childhood education, boys frequently score lower than girls or often lag behind girls in key areas

such as socialization, educational approaches, and cognitive development. Anatomical differences in brain structure, such as a thinner corpus callosum in boys (Sousa, 2011), may contribute to this disparity by affecting cognitive integration and language development.

This gender disparity challenges the educational system by creating a gap in academic performance between boys and girls. Boys' higher dropout rates and lower academic achievements indicate a systemic issue that hinders the goal of providing equitable education for all students (World Bank, 2023). Boys' lower performance can lead to disengagement and a lack of motivation, affecting their overall learning process (UNESCO, 2012). This disengagement can perpetuate a cycle of underachievement and decreased participation in educational activities.

In 2023 the American Psychological Association (APA) reported that boys are often less engaged in classroom activities and are less likely to participate actively in both curricular and extracurricular activities. This reduced participation limits their opportunities for holistic development and skill-building. Teachers face difficulties in addressing the diverse learning needs of boys and girls. The pressure to engage boys and ensure their inclusion in early childhood education programs can strain teachers, impacting their ability to provide balanced and effective instruction.

The gender disparity in academic performance can reinforce stereotypes and biases, affecting the overall learning environment (Halpern, 2011). This can lead to a perpetuation of gender biases in education, further disadvantaged boys and undermining efforts to create an inclusive and equitable educational setting. By addressing these issues, the educational system can work towards more inclusive teaching practices that support the learning and development of all students, regardless of gender. This investigation aims to uncover teachers' perceptions and

practices related to gender disparities, ultimately informing strategies to promote gender equity in early childhood education.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore preschool teachers' perceptions of gender differences in learning within an English-medium educational setting. Specifically, the research aims to identify and understand the factors that teachers believe contribute to these differences, such as biological, sociocultural, and educational influences. By investigating these perceptions, the study seeks to uncover how these beliefs shape teachers' interactions with male and female students, ultimately affecting the teaching methods they employ and the educational outcomes for children.

Additionally, this study aims to assess the impact of teachers' perceptions on the overall learning and development of preschool-aged children. By examining the ways in which teachers' beliefs about gender influence their classroom practices, the research intends to highlight potential biases and areas for improvement. The findings from this study are expected to provide valuable insights into the development of more equitable and inclusive teaching strategies, contributing to better educational practices and policies that support gender equality in early childhood education.

Significance and Justification of the Study

The need for this research arises from the persistent gender disparities observed in early childhood education, where boys often score lower than girls in socialization, cognitive development, and language skills. Understanding preschool teachers' perceptions of these

disparities is crucial for developing strategies to address and mitigate them. This study is significant because it sheds light on the underlying beliefs and attitudes of educators that influence their teaching practices and, consequently, the learning outcomes of their students.

The results of this study can be used to inform professional development programs for early childhood educators, helping them to recognize and address gender biases in their teaching methods. By providing evidence-based insights, the study aims to contribute to more equitable teaching practices that support the development of all children, regardless of gender. Furthermore, the findings can guide policymakers in crafting interventions and policies that promote gender equity in early education settings, ensuring that boys and girls have equal opportunities to succeed.

In addition to influencing practice and policy, this research fills a critical gap in the existing literature on gender disparities in early childhood education, particularly within the context of English-medium preschools in Bangladesh. By focusing on teachers' perceptions, the study offers a unique perspective that complements existing research on student performance and educational outcomes. The new information generated will provide a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to gender disparities and help in designing targeted interventions to bridge the gap.

Ultimately, the findings of this study will contribute to the improvement of early childhood education by promoting practices that foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all children. By addressing gender disparities at the foundational stage of education, this research aims to lay the groundwork for more equitable educational outcomes and better prepare children for future academic success.

Research Questions

1. How do preschool educators in an English-medium setting perceive the learning differences

between boys and girls?

2. What are the reasons for these learning differences between boys and girls in pre-schools?

3. What are the implications of preschool teachers' perceptions of gender differences for educational policy and practice?

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary aim of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive review of existing literature related to preschool teachers' perceptions of gender disparities in learning. This chapter will explore various themes, including cognitive and socioemotional development, teachers' perceptions, and factors influencing these disparities. This literature review seeks to synthesize current research findings, theoretical perspectives, and practical considerations surrounding gender disparities in early childhood education. By examining the works of various scholars, academics, and researchers, this chapter will highlight key issues, identify gaps in the existing knowledge, and set the stage for the current study's exploration of teachers' beliefs and their impact on educational practices.

The purpose of this literature review is twofold. First, it aims to provide an overview of research studies that have already been conducted in the field of gender differences in preschool learning. This involves examining relevant books, journal articles, reports, and policy documents, synthesizing and presenting key findings from those studies, and providing a theoretical background for the current research. Second, the review intends to identify the issues and problems that have been discussed by other scholars, thereby providing a contextual foundation for the current study. Understanding what areas have been extensively researched and what gaps remain will help in framing the research questions and objectives more precisely.

The literature reviewed in this chapter encompasses a range of published materials, including empirical studies, theoretical papers, policy reports, and relevant books. The focus is on literature that directly addresses gender differences in preschool education, teachers' perceptions of these differences, and the impact of these perceptions on teaching practices. While some

references to broader educational contexts and general theories on gender and education are included, the primary emphasis is on studies that specifically explore early childhood education settings, particularly within the context of Bangladesh.

Preschool Teachers' Perceptions of Gender Differences in Learning and Development

Cognitive and Social Abilities: Research consistently demonstrates that boys and girls exhibit different developmental trajectories in various cognitive, academic, and socioemotional domains. Upon entering preschool, boys and girls often display similar levels of cognitive abilities and pre-academic skills. However, as they progress through their educational journey, notable differences emerge. Girls tend to excel in language-related tasks, whereas boys often perform better in spatial reasoning and mathematical abilities (Hyde et al., 2008; Lange, Euler, & Zaretsky, 2016).

Girls typically develop language skills earlier and perform better in language-related tasks compared to boys. For instance, Lange, Euler, and Zaretsky (2016) evaluated German children aged 3-6 years and found that girls outperform boys in vocabulary, grammar, speech comprehension, pronunciation, and sentence and word processing. Similarly, Hyde et al. (2008) found significant gender disparities favoring girls in reading and writing.

Research has consistently shown that preschool teachers perceive cognitive and social abilities of boys and girls differently. Teachers often view boys as more physically active and less compliant, while girls are perceived as more verbal and socially adept (Logue & Harvey, 2010; Jones & Myhill, 2004). For instance, teachers tend to rate boys higher in physical and gross motor activities and girls higher in language and fine motor skills (Lange et al., 2016; Logue & Harvey,

2010).

Teachers often perceive cognitive and social abilities differently based on gender, with boys being viewed as more active and less academically inclined, and girls as more compliant and academically capable (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Studies have shown that these perceptions can start as early as preschool and are influenced by societal stereotypes (Francis, 2010). For instance, boys are often seen as better at spatial tasks, while girls are perceived to excel in verbal tasks (Halpern, 2012).

Language and Literacy Skills: Numerous studies have explored gender differences in cognitive abilities, particularly in language and literacy skills. Research consistently shows that girls tend to outperform boys in tasks related to language development, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension. For example, Sousa (2011) and Lange, Euler, and Zaretsky (2016) found that girls exhibit superior language skills, which contribute to their early academic success. This has significant implications for preschool education, where foundational language skills are developed and reinforced.

Mathematical and Spatial Abilities: In contrast to language skills, boys often excel in spatial reasoning and certain aspects of mathematical ability. Halpern (2012) suggests that these differences can be observed as early as preschool, with boys demonstrating stronger skills in spatial tasks and problem-solving. Understanding these cognitive differences is crucial for developing educational practices that cater to the strengths and needs of both genders.

Literacy Skills in Bangladesh: In Bangladesh, similar patterns have been observed. Recent data indicate an increase in female participation and higher completion rates for girls in secondary education (BANBEIS, 2024; World Bank, 2017). A study by Alam (2018) found that girls in

Bangladeshi preschools generally perform better in language and literacy tasks compared to boys. While specific data on preschoolers' academic performance in Bangladesh is limited, these trends suggest that targeted interventions are necessary to support both boys and girls in early childhood education. Ensuring that educational practices are inclusive and equitable from the earliest stages is essential for fostering long-term academic success.

Teachers' Perceptions and Their Influence on Teaching Practices

Teachers' Expectations and Biases: Teachers' biases, whether conscious or unconscious, can significantly impact their expectations and interactions with students (Glock, 2016), particularly boys (Epstein et al., 1998; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman, 2002). Several factors contribute to these perceived differences, including cultural norms, media representations, and teachers' own upbringing and education (Martin & Ruble, 2004). Teachers' perceptions are influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural norms, personal beliefs, and prior experiences (Epstein et al., 1998; Frosh et al., 2002). Socialization processes and societal expectations about gender roles significantly shape these perceptions (Chapman, 2016; Newkirk, 2022). Additionally, teachers' own gender biases and stereotypes can play a crucial role in how they perceive and interact with boys and girls (Brandlistuen et al., 2021; Kumar, 2005). Research has highlighted the role of early childhood education settings in either reinforcing or challenging these gender norms (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2017).

Instructional Strategies: Research has shown that teachers often adapt their instructional strategies based on their perceptions of gender differences. For example, teachers might use more verbal instructions and collaborative activities with girls, while employing more hands-on and independent tasks with boys (Glock, 2016). These differences in instructional strategies can

reinforce existing gender disparities and impact students' engagement and achievement.

Classroom Interactions: Teachers' perceptions of gender differences also influence their interactions with students. Studies have found that teachers tend to give boys more negative feedback and girls more positive feedback, which can affect students' self-esteem and motivation (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009). Additionally, teachers might call on boys more frequently to answer questions or participate in activities, leading to unequal opportunities for engagement and learning (Epstein et al., 1998).

Impact on Student Outcomes: The impact of teachers' perceptions on student outcomes is significant. When teachers hold biased views about boys' and girls' abilities, it can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, where students internalize these perceptions and perform accordingly (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Boys who are perceived as less capable may disengage from academic tasks, while girls who are seen as more capable may excel, perpetuating existing gender disparities in education (Francis, 2010).

Factors Influencing Boys' Lower Performance than Girls in Preschool

Lack of Male Role Models: The scarcity of male teachers in early childhood education can contribute to boys' disengagement from academics (Thompson, 2022; Tobin, 2022). Societal stereotypes and cultural norms often discourage men from pursuing careers in early childhood education, leading to a lack of male role models for young boys. Increasing male representation in early childhood education could provide boys with role models who value academic achievement and challenge traditional gender roles.

Classroom Environment and Teaching Methods: The classroom environment plays a

crucial role in shaping children's learning experiences. Seating arrangements, display materials, and the availability of gender-neutral toys and books can influence how boys and girls engage in classroom activities. Research indicates that boys often dominate certain areas of the classroom, such as the block play area, while girls prefer the reading corner. Ensuring a balanced and inclusive classroom environment can help mitigate these disparities (Chapman, 2016).

Boys often struggle in language-based classrooms, which can affect their confidence and academic identity (Newkirk, 2022). Providing balanced, hands-on learning opportunities can better engage boys and cater to diverse learning styles (Katch, Tobin). This section explores effective teaching methods that can support both boys and girls, such as incorporating more physical activities, interactive lessons, and varied instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners.

A study by Alam (2018) in Bangladeshi preschools found that boys were more likely to engage in physical play and less likely to participate in structured academic activities. This difference in engagement can lead to disparities in academic performance, as boys may not receive the same level of instructional support as girls.

Societal Expectations and Gender Norms: Societal expectations and gender norms significantly influence children's behavior and engagement in learning activities. Boys are often expected to be more active and assertive, while girls are encouraged to be nurturing and cooperative. These expectations can shape how boys and girls interact with their peers and teachers, ultimately impacting their learning experiences and academic outcomes (Chapman, 2016).

In Bangladesh, traditional gender norms often dictate that boys should be strong and

independent, while girls should be obedient and diligent. These societal expectations can influence how boys and girls are treated in the classroom and how they perceive their own abilities and roles (Rahman & Sarker, 2019).

Inclusive Teaching Practices: Inclusive teaching practices that cater to diverse learning styles and provide equal opportunities for boys and girls can help address gender disparities in education. For example, incorporating hands-on learning opportunities and reducing reliance on verbal instructions can benefit boys, who often excel in kinesthetic and spatial tasks. Additionally, providing equal encouragement and feedback for all activities, regardless of gender, can promote a more equitable learning environment (Hamel, 2021).

In Bangladesh, implementing inclusive teaching practices can help address the unique needs of boys and girls in early childhood education. For instance, teachers can use a variety of instructional strategies, such as visual aids, group work, and interactive activities, to engage all students and support their learning and development.

Addressing Gender Disparities in Preschool Education

Professional Development and Training: Providing teachers with professional development and training on gender biases and inclusive teaching practices can help address gender disparities in education (Glock, 2016). Training programs should focus on raising awareness of unconscious biases, promoting equitable classroom interactions, and implementing instructional strategies that support all students, regardless of gender.

Policy Interventions: Policy interventions at the school and district levels can also help promote gender equity in early childhood education. Policies that mandate gender-sensitive

curriculum materials, encourage the recruitment of male teachers, and provide support for inclusive teaching practices can create a more equitable learning environment for boys and girls (UNESCO, 2022).

Future Research Directions: Future research should continue to explore the complex interactions between teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, and student outcomes. Longitudinal studies that follow students over time can provide valuable insights into the long-term impact of teachers' biases on academic achievement and socioemotional development. Additionally, research that examines the effectiveness of professional development programs and policy interventions can inform best practices for promoting gender equity in education.

This literature review has provided an overview of the existing research on preschool teachers' perceptions of gender disparities in learning, highlighting the significant impact of these perceptions on instructional practices and student outcomes. Understanding the factors that contribute to gender disparities in education and implementing strategies to address these issues are crucial for creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students. As the current study seeks to explore the perceptions of preschool teachers in Bangladeshi English medium preschools, the insights gained from this literature review will provide a valuable foundation for the research.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This section represents the research methodology to understand the preschool teachers' perception and practice of gender disparities in learning in English-medium settings. This chapter is going to discuss the research approach, research site, research participants, sampling procedure, data collection tool, data collection methods, data management and analysis, validity and reliability, ethical considerations, and study limitations of the study.

Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore preschool teachers' perceptions of gender-based learning disparities. The qualitative approach was selected for its effectiveness in capturing the rich, detailed, and contextual data necessary to understand complex social phenomena, such as teachers' attitudes and practices. Unlike quantitative methods that focus on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, beliefs, and behaviors through methods like interviews and observations.

The choice of a qualitative approach aligned well with the study's objective to gather non-numerical data on how preschool teachers perceived and addressed gender disparities in learning among young children. This approach was particularly suited to this study because it facilitated the collection of nuanced insights into the teachers' perspectives and the social dynamics within the classroom. By using in-depth interviews and classroom observations, the research was able to delve deeply into the specific practices and contextual factors that influenced teachers' views and actions regarding gender disparities in early childhood education.

Moreover, a qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because it provided the flexibility needed to adapt to the participants' responses and the dynamic nature of classroom environments. This adaptability allowed the researcher to explore emerging themes and patterns that may not have been apparent through more rigid methods. Overall, the qualitative research approach was well-suited to achieve the study's goals of understanding and interpreting the complex, subjective experiences of preschool teachers in relation to gender-based learning disparities.

Research Site

For this research, two schools were chosen from Monipuri Para, gate no.1. Having previously worked in one of these schools and being currently employed in the other, I was able to leverage these connections to obtain permission from the authorities to interview teachers and observe classrooms. This prior and current employment made it easier to gain access and facilitated the smooth conduct of the study.

Both schools are located near the Farmgate area in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, offering diverse pedagogical approaches and resources. These preschools are English-medium institutions, providing instruction in English, which is a common feature in urban areas of Dhaka. The schools cater to a diverse student body, reflecting various socio-economic backgrounds, educational philosophies, and cultural contexts. The selected preschools vary in size, with some accommodating a few dozen students. This variety ensured a wide range of perspectives and experiences could be captured, enriching the study's findings. The selection of Dhaka also facilitated access to a wide range of educators with varying levels of experience and training, further enriching the data collected.

Research Participants

The participants in this study were preschool teachers working in English-medium settings in Dhaka, Bangladesh. These teachers were responsible for educating children aged 3-5 years, bringing a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds to the research. The sample aimed to be inclusive of teachers of varying ages, levels of teaching experience, and educational qualifications to ensure a comprehensive understanding of perspectives.

The selection of preschool teachers as participants was crucial for several reasons. Firstly, they were directly involved in the early educational experiences of children and could provide valuable insights into gender-based learning disparities observed in classrooms. Their professional experiences and daily interactions with children positioned them well to discuss both observed behaviors and underlying causes of any disparities. Moreover, their diversity in terms of age, experience, and education allowed for a finer exploration of the topic, as different teachers may have different observations and interpretations of gender dynamics in learning.

For the in-depth interviews, 5 preschool teachers were selected to provide detailed qualitative data. Additionally, to complement the interviews and provide a more holistic view of the classroom dynamics, classroom observations were conducted. These observations took place in 10 different classrooms, each consisting of children aged 3-5 years. This combination of interviews and observations helped to triangulate the data, ensuring that the findings were robust and reflective of the real classroom environment. The selected teachers' insights, combined with direct classroom observations, provided a rich and detailed understanding of the gender-based learning disparities in preschool education in Dhaka.

Table 1 : Demographic Details of Research Participants									
IDI no.	Date	Sex	Age	Education	Class Teacher of	Students Age	Number of Students	Male Students	Female Students
IDI-1	1st July, 2024	Male	35	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Nursery	3-4	20	10	10
IDI-2	1st July, 2024	Female	29	Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education	Kindergarten	4-5	25	13	12
IDI-3	1st July, 2024	Male	34	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Nursery	3-4	20	11	9
IDI-4	2nd July, 2024	Female	28	Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education	Kindergarten	4-5	22	12	10
IDI-5	2nd July, 2024	Female	32	Bachelor's Degree in Education	Nursery	3-4	18	9	9

Sampling Procedure

The targeted population for this study comprised preschool teachers working in English-medium settings in Dhaka, Bangladesh. These teachers educated children aged 3-5 years and had diverse backgrounds in terms of age, teaching experience, and educational qualifications. This diversity was crucial to capturing a wide range of perspectives on gender-based learning disparities in preschool classrooms.

A purposeful sampling technique was employed to select 5 preschool teachers for in-depth interviews. Purposeful sampling is particularly suited to qualitative research as it allows for the selection of participants who can provide rich, detailed information relevant to the research questions. The criteria for selecting these teachers included a minimum of two years of teaching

experience in an English-medium preschool, willingness to participate, and demonstrated interest in the selected topic. This approach ensured that the selected teachers had sufficient experience and interest to provide insightful and meaningful data.

In addition to the interviews, classroom observations were conducted in 10 classrooms of children aged 3-5 years. The classrooms were chosen to reflect a variety of teaching styles, classroom dynamics, and student demographics. Permission was sought from the preschools to conduct these observations, and collaboration with administrators ensured that the process was transparent and respectful of the participants' time and privacy. This combination of interviews and observations enabled a comprehensive understanding of the gender-based learning disparities in preschool education, providing both the teachers' perspectives and direct evidence from classroom interactions.

Data Collection Tool

To comprehensively explore preschool teachers' perceptions of gender-based learning disparities, two primary data collection tools were utilized: a customized interview guideline and a classroom observation guide. Together, these tools provided a comprehensive dataset that combined teachers' personal insights with objective observations of classroom dynamics. This dual approach enhanced the validity and reliability of the study by ensuring that findings were grounded in both reported experiences and observed behaviors.

The interview guideline was designed with 10 open-ended questions to facilitate in-depth discussions with the selected preschool teachers. These questions were structured with the help of expert faculty of BRAC to elicit detailed responses about teachers' experiences, perceptions, and practices related to gender disparities in their classrooms. The open-ended nature of the questions

allowed teachers to express their thoughts freely, providing rich qualitative data that could capture the nuances of their perspectives. Topics covered in the interviews included the teachers' observations of gender-based disparities in student behavior and learning, their strategies for addressing these differences, and any challenges they faced in promoting gender equality in the classroom.

In addition to the interviews, a classroom observation guide was employed to systematically document the interactions and behaviors of children in the selected classrooms. The observation guide included main 4 key criteria and 11 sub-criteria to assess how boys and girls engaged in various learning activities, the types of interactions they had with teachers and peers, and any gender-based patterns that emerged in the classroom environment. By observing 10 classrooms of children aged 3-5 years, the study aimed to gather direct evidence of gender dynamics in early childhood education settings. These observations complemented the interview data by providing real-time insights into the practical implications of teachers' perceptions and strategies.

<i>Table 2: Data Collection Tool for Each Research Questions and Sub-questions</i>			
	Research Questions	Data Collection Tool / Method	Participants / observation
1.	What are preschool teachers' perceptions of gender differences in learning and development?	In-depth Interviews	5 preschool teachers
2.	How do preschool teachers' perceptions of gender differences impact their teaching practices?	In-depth Interviews, Classroom Observations	5 preschool teachers, 10 observations
3.	What are the implications of preschool teachers' perceptions of gender differences for educational policy and practice?	In-depth Interviews	5 preschool teachers

Data Collection Methods

Data for this study was collected through a combination of in-depth interviews and classroom observations. These methods were chosen to gather a comprehensive view of the factors contributing to gender disparities in learning among preschool children, as well as the strategies teachers employed to mitigate these differences.

In-depth interviews: 5 preschool teachers participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Each interview was guided by a set of open-ended questions designed to explore teachers' experiences and views on gender-based learning disparities between girls and boys of preschool age. The interviews were conducted in a private setting within the school premises to ensure confidentiality and comfort, encouraging teachers to share openly and honestly. Each

interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded using a mobile recorder to ensure the complete capture of data.

Classroom Observations: In addition to interviews, the 10 classroom observations that were conducted focused on classrooms with children aged 3-5 years and aimed to document real-time teaching practices and interactions between teachers and students. Each observation captured a variety of teaching moments and interactions between teachers and children. The observations provided contextual data to complement and validate the information gathered from interviews, highlighting perceived gender disparities in the classroom.

The combination of interviews and classroom observations was selected to provide a holistic understanding of the research topic. Interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of teachers' subjective experiences and beliefs, while classroom observations offered objective, real-world evidence of how these beliefs translated into practice.

Table 3 : Data Collection Method			
Method	Participants / Sessions	Description	Duration
In-depth Interviews	5 preschool teachers	Semi-structured interviews guided by open-ended questions to explore teachers' experiences and views on gender-based learning disparities among preschool children. Conducted in a private setting within the school premises to ensure confidentiality and comfort.	60 minutes each
Classroom Observations	10 sessions	Focused on classrooms with children aged 3-5 years. Aimed to document real-time teaching practices and interactions between teachers and students. Provided contextual data to complement and validate interview information.	1 hour each

Data Management and Analysis

In this study, qualitative data were meticulously managed and organized, including observation notes, interview transcripts, and recordings. The data collection instruments and procedures were reviewed by expert faculty members of BRAC University, ensuring their robustness and alignment with the research objectives. Content analysis was employed to identify and interpret recurring themes within the data, ensuring a systematic approach to data analysis. Several steps were followed in this process to ensure a comprehensive and systematic analysis, and the steps here have been depicted gradually—

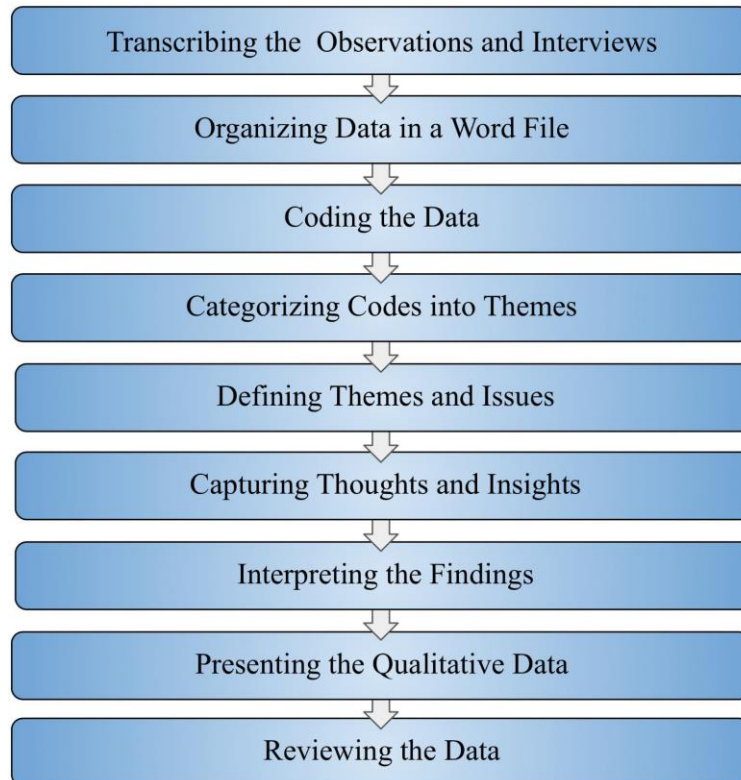


Figure 1: *The Process of Data Management and Analysis*

The analysis process began with transcribing and organizing the collected data based on different methods such as informal conversations, in-depth interviews (IDI), and classroom

observations. Each type of data was categorized into separate files to facilitate easy access and review. Then the categorized data and field notes were reviewed multiple times, highlighting sections directly related to the research questions. This helped in identifying various themes and issues that consistently emerged from the data. During this process, I integrated my personal thoughts and insights to better understand the data's relevance to the research problem, recording these interpretations separately.

To ensure the findings were well-supported, the data were presented by summarizing the main points under each identified theme and including direct citations from the interview transcripts and observation notes. This method provided a rich, detailed account of the study's findings, illustrating the themes with direct quotes from participants and descriptions from classroom observations. The final step involved a thorough review of the summarized data and themes to ensure accuracy and completeness, cross-referencing with the original transcripts and notes to validate the findings. This structured approach to data management and analysis ensured that the study's conclusions were robust and credible, offering a deep understanding of gender disparities in English-medium preschool education in Dhaka.

Validity & Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments used in this study, several steps were taken. First, the interview questions and classroom observation guidelines were carefully crafted to align with the research objectives and themes. These tools were designed to capture comprehensive and relevant data on gender disparities in preschool settings. The guidelines and instruments were reviewed several times by the expert faculty members of BRAC University to ensure their appropriateness and relevance. For instance, certain interview questions

were rephrased to be more open-ended and to encourage detailed responses, ensuring they accurately measured teachers' perceptions and practices.

The study employed data triangulation to enhance validity. By using multiple data sources, such as interviews and classroom observations, the study was able to cross-verify findings and provide a richer, finer understanding of the research questions. The entire research process was conducted under the expert faculty members of BRAC University, who provided guidance and oversight to maintain the integrity of the study, providing a credible foundation for understanding gender disparities in preschool education and ensuring that the findings were both valid and reliable.

Ethical Issues & Concerns

In conducting this research, several ethical issues were carefully considered and addressed to ensure the study adhered to the highest standards of ethical conduct. Prior to data collection, approval was obtained from the appropriate authorities of the faculty members of BRAC, Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. Additionally, verbal consent was taken from all participants, ensuring they fully understood the objectives, purpose, and nature of the study. Participants were assured that their anonymity and the confidentiality of the data collected would be rigorously maintained. This was communicated clearly to ensure that participants were aware that their information would not be disclosed to anyone outside the research team and that their participation was entirely voluntary, with the right to withdraw from the study at any time without providing any justification.

Maintaining the confidentiality of research subjects was a top priority. All data collected were anonymized, and identifiers were removed to protect the identity of the participants. During

the data collection process, researchers were careful to store all data securely and limit access to only those directly involved in the research. To prevent any misuse of the information, the data were used strictly for the purposes outlined in the consent form and the research proposal. Furthermore, it was ensured that participants felt comfortable and respected throughout the study by explaining their rights and the measures taken to protect their privacy.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the precise planning and execution of this study, several limitations need to be acknowledged. One significant limitation of this study was the exclusive focus on English-medium schools. In Bangladesh, Bangla-medium schools are far more prevalent and serve most of the population. This focus on English-medium schools may have overlooked significant differences in teaching practices, resources, and student experiences that exist in Bangla-medium schools. As a result, the findings may not be fully applicable to the broader educational landscape in Bangladesh. Including both English-medium and Bangla-medium schools in the study would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of gender disparities in preschool education across different educational contexts.

Another limitation was the restriction to a single city, Dhaka, for data collection. While focusing on Bangladeshi English-medium preschools provided valuable insights, the findings might not be fully representative of other regions in Bangladesh with different socio-economic contexts and educational infrastructures.

The reliance on classroom observations and in-depth interviews as the primary data collection methods had natural constraints. For example, the presence of the researcher during classroom observations might have influenced teacher and student behavior, potentially leading to

biased observations. Moreover, the time constraints and the busy schedules of preschool teachers limited the depth and frequency of interviews and observations.

Overall, these limitations highlighted areas for future research and indicated that while the study provided important insights into gender disparities in preschool education in English-medium settings in Dhaka, further research with a broader scope and enhanced methodologies was necessary to fully understand the complexities and accuracy of this issue in the wider context of Bangladesh.

Chapter IV: Results & Discussion

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the 'Results', findings appeared from the IDIs and the classroom observations where all the data were categorized into 4 main themes and 10 sub-themes. The "Discussion" section then provides an in-depth analysis of these findings, drawing on responses, observations notes, and the researcher's reflections, and compares them with existing literature. Finally, the chapter concludes with insights and recommendations that are obtained from the study.

Results/ Findings

The qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and classroom observations highlighted 4 significant themes, related to preschool teachers' perceptions and practices of gender disparities in Bangladeshi English-medium preschools.

- I) Understanding gender disparities in learning and developmental domains,
- II) Acknowledging the influence of teachers' perceptions of gender disparities in learning on the teaching process and educational outcomes,
- III) Factors that influence boys' lower performance than girls in preschool, and
- IV) Implications for educational policy and practice.

Theme 1: Understanding Gender Disparities in Learning and Developmental Domains

Cognitive Abilities: Teachers consistently noted differences in cognitive abilities between boys and girls. For instance, one teacher observed, "I have noticed that girls tend to grasp language concepts quicker and more accurately than boys" (IDI#1, 1/07/24). This perception is supported

by observations, as seen in Observation #2, “During literacy activities, girls showed a better understanding of phonics compared to boys” (Observation notes #2).

The cognitive differences also extend to problem-solving abilities. One teacher explained, “Boys are more likely to approach problem-solving tasks with impulsiveness, whereas girls tend to be more thoughtful and deliberate in their approach” (IDI #4, 2/07/24). This distinction was noted during a classroom activity where boys quickly jumped into constructing a tower with blocks, while girls spent more time planning and discussing their approach (Observation notes #5).

Another significant aspect of cognitive abilities is attention span. Teachers reported that boys often have shorter attention spans and need more physical breaks. “Boys tend to get restless quickly and need activities that allow them to move around, whereas girls can focus on seated tasks for longer periods” (IDI#3, 1/07/24). This was evident in Observation #3, where boys frequently left their seats during a story-reading session, while girls remained engaged throughout (Observation notes #3).

Social Abilities: Social abilities were another area where gender differences were evident. Many teachers highlighted that girls are better at social interactions. According to one observation, “During group activities, girls are more likely to communicate and cooperate, whereas boys often prefer individual tasks” (Observation notes #3). One teacher observed, “Girls are generally better at resolving conflicts among peers, showing more empathy and communication skills” (IDI#1, 1/07/24).

The differences in social abilities also influence classroom dynamics. Teachers noted that girls tend to form close-knit groups and engage in collaborative play more often than boys. “In the classroom, girls are more likely to work together on projects and support each other, while boys

often engage in parallel play” (IDI#2, 1/07/24). This was observed during a craft activity where girls shared materials and ideas, while boys worked individually on their creations (Observation notes #2).

Moreover, girls' social skills seem to translate into better classroom behavior. Teachers mentioned that girls are generally more compliant with classroom rules and instructions. “Girls are usually quicker to follow directions and adhere to classroom routines, whereas boys might need more reminders and supervision” (IDI#1, 1/07/24). This was evident in Observation #4, where girls lined up quietly for lunch, while boys needed multiple prompts to stay in line (Observation notes #4).

Theme 2: Acknowledging the Influence of Teachers’ Perceptions of Gender Disparities in Learning on the Teaching Process and Educational Outcomes

Instructional Strategies: Teachers reported modifying their teaching methods based on their perceptions of gender differences. For example, one teacher mentioned, “I often use more visual aids and hands-on activities for boys to keep them engaged, while girls respond better to verbal instructions” (IDI#2, 1/07/24). This is corroborated by an observation, “In a language class, boys were given more opportunities to engage in physical activities like storytelling with actions, whereas girls were encouraged to participate in reading aloud sessions” (Observation notes #3).

These differentiated strategies are not limited to language classes. In math lessons, teachers noted, “I incorporate more physical manipulatives and interactive games for boys to help them grasp abstract concepts, while girls are often given more traditional worksheets and verbal problem-solving tasks” (IDI#4, 2/07/24). This approach was observed in a math class where boys

used blocks to understand addition, while girls worked on written problems (Observation notes #5).

Engagement and Participation: The influence of these perceptions on engagement and participation was evident in various classroom settings. For example, one teacher stated, “In classroom discussions, girls tend to participate more and articulate their thoughts better, which influences my expectations and interaction with them” (IDI#5, 2/07/24). This was evident in Observation #4, where girls were more active in answering questions during circle time, while boys were less engaged (Observation notes #4).

Teachers’ expectations based on gender also shape their interactions with students. One teacher admitted, “I find myself calling on girls more frequently during lessons because I know they are more likely to have thoughtful answers, while I might give boys more time to think or rephrase the question to make it easier” (IDI#1, 1/07/24). This tendency was observed during a science lesson where girls were frequently called upon to explain their reasoning, while boys received more guidance and prompts from the teacher (Observation notes #3).

Educational Outcomes: The differentiated instructional strategies and interactions have significant implications for educational outcomes. Teachers acknowledged that these practices could reinforce existing gender stereotypes and contribute to long-term disparities. “By catering to what we perceive as gender-based strengths and weaknesses, we might be limiting boys' and girls' opportunities to develop a well-rounded skill set” (IDI#1, 1/07/24).

Observation notes revealed that this differentiation might contribute to boys' lower performance in literacy and girls' lower engagement in physical and spatial activities. “During a spelling test, boys struggle more and required additional support, possibly because they had fewer

opportunities to practice literacy skills in engaging ways” (Observation notes #2). Conversely, “In a physical education class, girls were less enthusiastic about participating in team sports, possibly due to less emphasis on these activities in the classroom” (Observation notes #5).

Theme 3: Factors that Influence Boys' Lower Performance than Girls in Preschool

Activity Preferences: One of the significant factors contributing to boys' lower performance compared to girls was their preference for physical activities over academic tasks. Teachers noted, “Boys need more physical activity integrated into their learning to stay focused, which is something we try to accommodate” (Observation notes #5). This preference often led to boys being less engaged in traditional academic activities, which are more sedentary. For example, during a reading session, boys were more likely to fidget and lose focus compared to girls who remained attentive throughout (Observation notes #3).

Teachers also observed that boys' engagement in physical activities often overshadowed their participation in academic tasks. “Boys dominate the playground and are very active during physical education classes, but this energy doesn't always translate into focus during classroom lessons” (IDI#3, 1/07/24). This was evident in Observation #4, where boys were highly engaged in a soccer game but showed less interest in a subsequent reading activity (Observation notes #4).

Attention and Focus: Teachers reported challenges in maintaining boys' attention during tasks that require prolonged focus. “There is a noticeable difference in how boys and girls approach problem-solving tasks. Boys are more impulsive, while girls are more thoughtful and deliberate” (IDI#4, 2/07/24). This difference in attention and focus can lead to disparities in academic

performance. For instance, during a puzzle activity, boys frequently asked for help or moved on to another task before completing the puzzle, while girls showed persistence and attention to detail (Observation notes #2).

Another teacher expressed, “It’s challenging to ensure that both boys and girls are equally engaged, especially with large class sizes and limited resources” (IDI#3, 1/07/24). This sentiment was reflected in Observation #3, where boys required more individualized attention and redirection during a group project, impacting their overall engagement and completion rates (Observation notes #3).

Theme 4: Implications for Educational Practice

Professional Development: The study's findings suggest a need for targeted professional development programs to address teachers' perceptions and biases regarding gender differences. These programs should focus on promoting gender equity by providing strategies for teachers to engage both boys and girls effectively in all types of learning activities. “Professional development should help teachers reflect on their own biases and learn techniques to support both genders equally” (IDI#5, 2/07/24).

Policy Interventions: Policy interventions are essential to ensure that early childhood education promotes gender equity. This could include guidelines on gender-sensitive teaching practices, curriculum adjustments to include diverse learning activities that appeal to both boys and girls, and regular monitoring and evaluation of gender equity in classrooms. “Policies should mandate regular training and support for teachers to implement gender-equitable practices” (IDI#4, 2/07/24).

Future Research: Future research should continue to explore the impact of gender disparities in early childhood education and develop evidence-based strategies to address these issues. This could involve longitudinal studies to track the long-term effects of early gender biases on academic and social outcomes. “Long-term studies could provide valuable insights into how early gender biases affect children's future learning and development” (IDI#2, 1/07/24).

The results of this study highlight significant gender-based disparity in teachers' perceptions and instructional practices in Bangladeshi English-medium preschools. Teachers generally perceive girls to have stronger language and social skills, while boys are seen as excelling in physical activities. These perceptions influence their teaching strategies, leading to differentiated instructional practices that may reinforce existing gender stereotypes. The findings also underscore the challenges teachers face in providing equitable attention and support to all students, which is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine preschool teachers' views on gender disparities in learning and development within Bangladeshi English-medium preschools. This section will highlight the significance of the findings, their alignment with other research outcomes, and comparisons with existing literature across 4 key themes. Additionally, it will discuss my initial assumptions before conducting the study and the extent to which the findings aligned with these expectations.

Theme 1: Understanding Gender Disparities in Learning and Developmental Domains

The findings of this theme highlighted notable gender-based differences in both cognitive

and social developmental domains among preschool children, as perceived by teachers in Bangladeshi English-medium schools. Teachers observed that girls generally outperform boys in language acquisition and phonemic awareness, aligning with research suggesting that girls often develop language skills earlier and more proficiently than boys (Leaper & Friedman, 2007; Sax, 2005). The tendency for boys to engage in problem-solving impulsively, compared to girls' more deliberate approach, resonates with findings by Bjorklund and Kipp (1996), who indicate that gender-related behavioral patterns impact cognitive task approaches, such as planning and persistence. Additionally, the shorter attention spans noted among boys support existing studies that associate higher activity levels and impulsivity with boys, which can impact sustained attention in classroom settings (Voyer & Voyer, 2014).

The observed social skills differences also align with broader research findings. Teachers consistently perceived that girls exhibit stronger social skills, demonstrating empathy and collaborative abilities during group activities, which reflects the well-documented trend of higher relational orientation and communication skills among young girls (Underwood, 2007). This perception of greater compliance among girls is also consistent with research that associates gender differences in self-regulation and behavioral adherence in early childhood, with girls more likely to adhere to structured settings (Else-Quest, Hyde, Goldsmith, & Van Hulle, 2006).

The significance of these findings lies in their potential implications for classroom management and teaching strategies. Understanding these differences can enable educators to tailor learning activities that accommodate boys' need for movement and support girls' collaborative learning style. These findings underscore the importance of gender-responsive teaching approaches that acknowledge and adapt to gender-based developmental variations.

Theme 2: Acknowledging the Influence of Teachers' Perceptions of Gender Disparities in Learning on the Teaching Process and Educational Outcomes

The findings under this theme underscore the critical role teachers' perceptions play in shaping instructional strategies and influencing educational outcomes. Teachers reported adapting their teaching methods based on perceived gender differences, such as using more hands-on activities for boys and verbal instructions for girls. This differentiation aligns with findings from Martin and Ruble (2004), who suggest that teachers often adjust instruction to fit assumed gender preferences, potentially reinforcing stereotypical learning patterns. For example, in language and math classes, boys were encouraged to use physical manipulatives, while girls were given more traditional, verbal tasks, which reflects the gendered expectations seen in other studies (Li, 2020).

Teacher expectations also impacted engagement and participation. Girls were often called upon more frequently during discussions and assigned more reflective tasks, which echoes Eccles and Roeser's (2011) research on how teacher biases can shape student interactions and confidence in academic settings. Teachers' tendency to give boys extra time or simplified prompts might unintentionally reinforce boys' dependency on support rather than independent learning, affecting their long-term engagement in literacy activities.

These differentiated strategies have lasting implications for educational outcomes. By catering to perceived gender strengths, teachers may limit boys' and girls' skill development in diverse areas. This selective encouragement aligns with Sadker and Sadker's (2009) research, which indicates that such biases contribute to disparities in academic achievement and engagement. For instance, the observed lower performance in literacy for boys and reduced enthusiasm in physical activities for girls may stem from teachers' differentiated emphasis, leading

to entrenched gaps in critical skills (Jones, 2012).

Theme 3: Factors that Influence Boys' Lower Performance than Girls in Preschool

The findings on boys' lower academic performance in preschool highlight the impact of activity preferences and attention span differences. Boys' preference for physical activities often limits their engagement with traditional, sedentary academic tasks, affecting their academic focus. This observation is consistent with research by Pellegrini and Smith (1998), which found that boys' high energy levels and inclination for physical play can reduce their participation in structured academic settings. For example, during reading sessions, boys frequently lost focus, while girls were generally attentive. This aligns with Ewing et al. (2015), who argue that preschool environments emphasizing seated tasks may unintentionally hinder boys' learning experiences.

Attention span differences also emerged as a key factor. Teachers noted that boys are often impulsive and need frequent redirection, a pattern that can detract from academic persistence. These findings align with Fiese et al. (2004), who highlight that boys' tendency toward impulsivity and need for movement contribute to lower academic engagement. For instance, in problem-solving activities, boys often required more guidance, impacting their focus and task completion. This challenge is exacerbated by class sizes and limited resources, which make it difficult to meet boys' individual needs, as also discussed in the work of Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2005).

These findings suggest that more dynamic and physically engaging methods could better support boys' learning, potentially minimizing performance disparities.

Theme 4: Implications for Educational Practice

The findings emphasize the need for strategic educational policies and professional development to address gender biases in Bangladeshi preschools. The observed tendency of teachers to favor girls in language and social skills and boys in physical activities reflects an entrenched perception that reinforces gender stereotypes, impacting students' learning experiences. By addressing these biases through policy and practice, schools can promote a more balanced and inclusive learning environment. This aligns with research by UNESCO (2019), which emphasizes that policies promoting gender-sensitive pedagogical approaches can reduce disparities in engagement and performance between boys and girls.

The findings underscored professional development, as it can aid teachers in reflecting on implicit biases and learning techniques to equally engage both genders. This is consistent with the work of Sadker and Zittleman (2009), who found that professional training on gender equity can reduce differential treatment in the classroom, promoting a more balanced approach to engaging boys and girls.

The results of the 4th theme underline the need for ongoing research into gender disparities and the long-term effects of early biases on academic and social development. This aligns with global calls for longitudinal studies to inform early childhood policies and teaching practices (Hyde, 2005). Such research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how gendered practices in preschool influence educational trajectories, informing both local and global educational reforms.

Assumptions: At the outset of this research, the assumption was that teachers' perceptions of gender disparities would significantly influence their teaching practices and the educational outcomes of the students. The findings of the study support this assumption. Another assumption

of the study was that cultural context plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' perceptions was also supported by the findings. The data showed that traditional gender roles and stereotypes are deeply ingrained in the educational practices of Bangladeshi preschools, influencing both teachers and students.

In conclusion, while the issue of gender disparities in education is complex and multifaceted, this study provides valuable insights into how teachers' perceptions and practices contribute to the problem. By building on these findings and continuing to explore innovative solutions, educators and policymakers can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable educational system for all children.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the entirety of this research project, it becomes clear that the study has successfully illuminated the nuances of gender disparities in early childhood education within Bangladeshi English-medium preschools. Through a combination of in-depth interviews and classroom observations, the research has achieved its primary purpose of understanding how preschool teachers perceive and address gender differences in learning and development. The findings reveal that teachers do recognize distinct cognitive and social abilities between boys and girls and often adapt their instructional strategies based on these perceptions. This adaptation, however, sometimes reinforces existing gender stereotypes, highlighting the need for more equitable teaching practices.

The study underscores the importance of addressing these gender-based differences to foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment. By exploring teachers' perceptions and their subsequent impact on teaching practices, the research offers valuable insights into the

challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equity in early childhood education. One of the significant learnings from this study is the critical role that teacher training and professional development play in shaping teachers' attitudes and practices. It becomes evident that targeted interventions and continuous support can help mitigate the biases and stereotypes that influence classroom dynamics.

On a personal level, conducting this study has deepened my understanding of the complexities involved in early childhood education and the subtle ways gender biases can manifest in educational settings. It has reinforced the importance of reflective teaching practices and the need for ongoing professional development to ensure that all children, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to succeed. Moreover, this research has highlighted the necessity for further studies to continue exploring these issues, particularly in different cultural contexts, to develop comprehensive strategies that address gender disparities in education effectively.

In conclusion, this study has provided a detailed examination of preschool teachers' perceptions of gender differences and their impact on teaching practices. While it has achieved its objectives, it also opens up new avenues for future research and policy development aimed at promoting gender equity in early childhood education. The insights gained from this study can inform educational practices and policies, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for young children.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve educational practices, address gender disparities, and inform future research and policy development:

Implement Comprehensive Teacher Training Programs: Develop and provide ongoing professional development workshops focused on gender sensitivity and inclusive teaching strategies to help teachers recognize and mitigate their biases.

Incorporate Gender-Responsive Pedagogy: Encourage the adoption of teaching methods that cater to the diverse needs of both boys and girls, ensuring that all students are equally engaged and supported in their learning processes.

Enhance Classroom Resources and Activities: Introduce a wider variety of learning materials and activities that appeal to different interests and abilities, reducing the emphasis on traditional gender roles and stereotypes in classroom settings.

Promote Reflective Teaching Practices: Encourage teachers to regularly reflect on their teaching methods and student interactions, fostering an awareness of how their perceptions influence classroom dynamics and student outcomes.

Conduct Further Research: Investigate the long-term impacts of gender-sensitive teaching practices on student outcomes and explore similar studies in different cultural contexts to gain a broader understanding of gender disparities in early childhood education.

Policy Development and Implementation: Advocate for policies that support gender equity in education, such as mandatory gender sensitivity training for educators and the integration of gender-responsive pedagogy into national curricula.

By implementing these recommendations, educators and policymakers can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for all preschool children, ensuring that both boys and girls have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive in their early learning experiences.

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APPENDICES

Appendix -1: Research Tools (English)

I) IDI Guideline for Preschool Teachers

Section A: Demographic Information

Name:

Age:

Education:

Class Teacher of:

Students' Age:

Number of Students:

Number of Boy Children:

Number of Girl Children:

Section B: Perceptions and Practice of Learning Differences

1. From your experience, can you share any instances where you might have dealt with gender-related disparities among your preschool students and how do you view this Issue?
2. Do gender disparities in learning influence the learning experiences of preschoolers in your classroom? What do you think?
3. How do you incorporate gender considerations into your lesson planning and teaching practices?
4. What challenges or successes have you experienced in the academic engagement or achievement of children based on your teaching methods or approaches?

Section C: Understanding Reasons for Learning Differences

5. From your experience, what do you believe are the reasons for learning disparities between preschool boys and girls?
6. In your opinion, how do gender norms and societal expectations influence the learning experiences of boys and girls in preschool settings?
7. In your opinion, what role do language and communication play in shaping and reinforcing gender disparities in learning?

Section D: Implications to Reduce Learning Differences

8. How can professional development programs be designed to address teachers' perceptions and biases regarding gender differences?
9. What policy interventions are needed to promote gender equity in early childhood education?
10. How can the findings of this study inform future research on gender disparities in education?

II) Observation Guide for Preschool Classroom

1. Classroom Environment

Seating Arrangement:

- Are boys and girls seated separately or together?
- Are certain areas of the classroom dominated by one gender?
- Is there any gender preference in seating arrangements during group activities?

Display and Materials:

- Are classroom displays (e.g., posters, artwork) representative of both genders?
- Are learning materials (books, toys, equipment) gender-neutral or do they reinforce stereotypes?

2. Teacher-Student Interactions

General Interaction:

- Frequency of teacher interaction with boys vs. girls.
- Types of interactions (positive reinforcement, discipline, encouragement).
- Are teachers calling on boys or girls more frequently to answer questions?

Feedback and Encouragement:

- Differences in the nature of giving feedback to boys and girls (constructive criticism vs. praise).
- Encouragement given for different types of activities (e.g., math vs. art).

Expectations:

- Are there observable differences in teachers' expectations for boys and girls?
- How does the teacher respond to high-achieving boys vs. high-achieving girls?

3. Student-Student Interactions

Group Work:

- Gender composition of groups (mixed or single-gender groups).
- Dynamics within groups (who takes on leadership roles, participation levels).

Social Interactions:

- Observation of any gender-based cliques or exclusion.
- Language used by students towards peers of the same gender vs. opposite gender.

Conflict Resolution:

- Are conflicts between boys and girls resolved differently compared to same-gender conflicts?
- Teacher intervention patterns in conflicts involving different genders.

4. Teaching Practices

Instructional Strategies:

- Are teaching methods inclusive of all learning styles and interests regardless of gender?
- Are examples and contexts used in teaching relatable to both boys and girls?

Activity Distribution:

- Are certain activities (e.g., physical tasks, creative tasks) assigned based on gender?
- Are boys and girls equally encouraged to participate in all types of classroom activities?

Curriculum and Content:

- Is the curriculum content free from gender bias?
- Are historical figures, scientists, authors, etc., from both genders equally represented?

Appendix -2: Translate Research Tools (Bangla)

I) IDI Guideline for Preschool Teachers

বিভাগ A: জনসংখ্যা সংক্রান্ত তথ্য

নাম:

বয়স:

শিক্ষা:

যে ক্লাসের শ্রেণি শিক্ষক:

শিক্ষার্থীদের বয়স:

শিক্ষার্থীদের সংখ্যা :

ছেলে শিক্ষার্থীদের সংখ্যা:

মেয়ে শিক্ষার্থীদের সংখ্যা:

বিভাগ B: শেখার পার্থক্যের উপলব্ধি এবং অনুশীলন

1. আপনার অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে, আপনি কি এমন কোনো দৃষ্টান্ত শেয়ার করতে পারেন যেখানে আপনি আপনার প্রি-স্কুল শিক্ষার্থীদের মধ্যে লিঙ্গ-সম্পর্কিত বৈষম্যের সাথে মোকাবিলা করেছেন এবং আপনি এই বিষয়টিকে কীভাবে দেখেন?
2. আপনার ক্লাসরুমে প্রি-স্কুলের শিশুদের শেখার অভিজ্ঞতায় লিঙ্গ-সম্পর্কিত পার্থক্যগুলি কি কোনো প্রভাব ফেলে বলে আপনি কী মনে করেন?
3. আপনি কীভাবে আপনার পাঠ পরিকল্পনা এবং শিক্ষণ পদ্ধতিতে লিঙ্গ বিবেচনাকে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করেন?
4. আপনার শিক্ষণ পদ্ধতি বা দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির উপর ভিত্তি করে ছেলেমেয়েদের একাডেমিক সম্পৃক্ততা বা অর্জনের ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কি কি চ্যালেঞ্জ বা সাফল্যের সম্মুখীন হয়েছেন?

বিভাগ C: শেখার পার্থক্যের কারণ বোঝা

5. আপনার অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে, আপনি কি কি কারণকে প্রি-স্কুলের ছেলেমেয়েদের মধ্যে শেখার পার্থক্যের জন্য দায়ী করেন?
6. আপনার মতে, কিভাবে লিঙ্গের নীতি ও সামাজিক প্রত্যাশা প্রি-স্কুলের পরিবেশে ছেলেমেয়েদের শেখার অভিজ্ঞতাকে প্রভাবিত করে?
7. আপনার মতে, শেখার ক্ষেত্রে লিঙ্গ পার্থক্যগুলিকে আকার দিতে ও দূচ করতে ভাষা এবং যোগাযোগ আদান-প্রদান কী ভূমিকা পালন করে?

বিভাগ D: শেখার পার্থক্য হ্রাস করার জন্য করণীয় পদক্ষেপ

8. লিঙ্গ বৈষম্য সম্পর্কে শিক্ষকদের উপলব্ধি এবং পক্ষপাতগুলিকে মোকাবেলা করার জন্য পেশাদার উন্নয়ন প্রোগ্রামগুলি কীভাবে ডিজাইন করা যেতে পারে?
9. প্রারম্ভিক শৈশব শিক্ষায় লিঙ্গ সমতা উন্নীত করার জন্য কোন নীতিগত হস্তক্ষেপ প্রয়োজন?
10. কিভাবে এই গবেষণার ফলাফল শিক্ষায় লিঙ্গ বৈষম্য সম্পর্কে ভবিষ্যতের গবেষণাকে অবহিত করতে পারে?

II) Observation Guide for Preschool Classroom

1. শ্রেণীকক্ষ পরিবেশ

বসার ব্যবস্থা:

- ছেলে মেয়েরা কি আলাদা বা একসাথে বসে?
- শ্রেণীকক্ষের নির্দিষ্ট কিছু এলাকা কি এক লিঙ্গ দ্বারা প্রভাবিত?
- গ্রুপ কার্যক্রম চলাকালীন বসার ব্যবস্থায় কোন লিঙ্গ পছন্দ আছে কি?

প্রদর্শন এবং উপকরণ:

- শ্রেণীকক্ষের প্রদর্শনী (যেমন, পোস্টার, শিল্পকর্ম) উভয় লিঙ্গের প্রতিনিধি?
- শেখার উপকরণ (বই, খেলনা, সরঞ্জাম) কি লিঙ্গ-নিরপেক্ষ বা তারা স্টেরিওটাইপগুলিকে শক্তিশালী করে?

2. শিক্ষক-ছাত্রের মিথস্ক্রিয়া

সাধারণ মিথস্ক্রিয়া:

- ছেলে বনাম মেয়েদের সাথে শিক্ষকের কথোপকথনের ত্রিকোয়েঙ্গি।
- মিথস্ক্রিয়াগুলির প্রকারগুলি (ইতিবাচক শক্তিবৃদ্ধি, শৃঙ্খলা, উত্সাহ) ।
- শিক্ষকরা কি ছেলেদের বা মেয়েদের প্রশ্নের উত্তর দেওয়ার জন্য ঘন ঘন ডাকছেন?

প্রতিক্রিয়া এবং উত্সাহ:

- ছেলে এবং মেয়েদের দেওয়া প্রতিক্রিয়ার প্রকৃতির পার্থক্য (গঠনমূলক সমালোচনা বনাম প্রশংসা) ।
- বিভিন্ন ধরনের কার্যকলাপের জন্য প্রদত্ত উত্সাহ (যেমন, গণিত বনাম শিল্প) ।

প্রত্যাশা:

- ছেলে এবং মেয়েদের জন্য শিক্ষকদের প্রত্যাশার মধ্যে পর্যবেক্ষণযোগ্য পার্থক্য আছে কি?
- শিক্ষক কিভাবে উচ্চ অর্জনকারী ছেলেদের বনাম উচ্চ অর্জনকারী মেয়েদের সাড়া দেন?

3. ছাত্র-ছাত্রের মিথস্ক্রিয়া

দলবদ্ধ কাজ:

- গোষ্ঠীর লিঙ্গ গঠন (মিশ্র বা একক-লিঙ্গ গোষ্ঠী) ।
- গ্রুপের মধ্যে গতিশীলতা (যারা নেতৃত্বের ভূমিকা নেয়, অংশগ্রহণের স্তর) ।

সামাজিক মিথস্ক্রিয়া:

- কোনো লিঙ্গ-ভিত্তিক চক্র বা বর্জনের পর্যবেক্ষণ।

- একই লিঙ্গ বনাম বিপরীত লিঙ্গের সমবয়সীদের প্রতি ছাত্রদের দ্বারা ব্যবহৃত ভাষা।

দ্বন্দ্ব সমাধান:

- একই-লিঙ্গ দ্বন্দ্বের তুলনায় ছেলে এবং মেয়েদের মধ্যে দ্বন্দ্ব কি ভিন্নভাবে সমাধান করা হয়?
- বিভিন্ন লিঙ্গ জড়িত দ্বন্দ্ব শিক্কক হস্তক্ষেপের ধরণ।

4. শিক্ষাদানের অভ্যাস

নির্দেশমূলক কৌশল:

- শিক্ষণ পদ্ধতি কি লিঙ্গ নির্বিশেষে সমস্ত শেখার শৈলী এবং আগ্রহগুলিকে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করে?
- শিক্ষাদানে ব্যবহৃত উদাহরণ এবং প্রসঙ্গ কি ছেলে এবং মেয়ে উভয়ের জন্যই সম্পর্কিত?

কার্যকলাপ বিতরণ:

- নির্দিষ্ট কিছু ক্রিয়াকলাপ (যেমন, শারীরিক কাজ, সৃজনশীল কাজ) কি লিঙ্গের উপর ভিত্তি করে বরাদ্দ করা হয়?
- ছেলে ও মেয়েরা কি সব ধরনের শ্রেণীকক্ষ কার্যক্রমে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য সমানভাবে উৎসাহিত হয়?

পাঠ্যক্রম এবং বিষয়বস্তু:

- পাঠ্যক্রমের বিষয়বস্তু কি লিঙ্গ পক্ষপাত থেকে মুক্ত?

উভয় লিঙ্গ থেকে ঐতিহাসিক ব্যক্তিত্ব, বিজ্ঞানী, লেখক, ইত্যাদি কি সমানভাবে প্রতিনিধিত্ব করা হয়?

Appendix -3: Consent Form

TITLE OF RESEARCH

Preschool Teachers' Perception and Practice of Gender Disparities in Learning in English-Medium Settings.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

This research will be conducted as a part of my master's degree requirements from the Institute of Educational Development- BRAC University, the study aims to understand the preschool teachers' perception and practice of gender disparities in learning in an English-medium setting.

RISKS

No threat will be made to the participants for contributing to the study directly or indirectly. Key informants will be contributing to the study results which will be primarily used as a degree requirement.

BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH

There are no direct benefits for the participants in participating in this study. However, their participation will contribute to the understanding of the preschool teachers' perception and practice of gender disparities in learning in an English-medium setting.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information gathered from the participants during research will remain strictly confidential.

FURTHER USE OF INFORMATION

Some of the information collected from this study may be preserved for further experiments.

However, in such cases, data and information shared with other researchers will not conflict with the maintenance of confidentiality of information.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is up to the participant to decide whether to take part in the study. If the participant decides to be a part of this study, s/he will be required to sign a consent form. After signing the consent form, the participant is still free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship the participant has, if any, with the researcher. If the participant withdraws from the study before the data collection is completed, the data will be returned to participants or destroyed.

Thanks for cooperating in this study.

CONSENT

I understood the aforementioned information and got the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point of the research without giving a reason.

Participant's name & signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: _____