

EXPLORING STORYTELLING PRACTICES OF URBAN MOTHERS

A Master's Thesis

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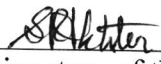
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Dhruboneel Fahmi, my beloved son who is now four and half years. He unfolds before me many aspects of ECD in practice, communicating the points more effectively than a teacher in the classroom can do.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to explore the practice of storytelling by urban mothers in Dhaka city. Two separate groups of participants – mothers in slum and middle class – were selected in Goran area under Khilgaon thana. The particular study explored the nature of storytelling, what the mothers think about it, what kind of stories they tell, whether the practice varies based on different strata of the society, how this is contributing to the mental and language development of the children, and what the children themselves think about it.

The study followed qualitative approach. Focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews with mothers and interviews with children were the methods used for data collection. Two FGDs were conducted with mothers selected from slum areas and middle class separately. Three in-depth interviews with mothers of each group were conducted while three children from each group were interviewed. Since the children interviewed are under age, their guardians were consulted beforehand.

The study findings are organized under four themes according to the research objectives: 1) Prevalence of storytelling as a common practice among urban mothers; 2) Types of stories urban mothers frequently relate to their children and the time they relate; 3) Stories urban mothers relate and their contributions to child's learning and development; and 4) Urban mothers' knowledge on the importance of storytelling to child development.

It is found that urban mothers tell stories to their children but on irregular basis. Only 40% mothers (both slum dwellers and middle-class mothers) tell stories to their children and the practice is much lower for slum mothers (slum mothers- 28.5%

& middle-class mothers- 50%). Nevertheless, mothers tell stories more frequently than any other member in the family.

Folk stories, real life stories, religious stories and childhood stories mostly occupy the list of stories related to children. Data also supports that mothers pick up different kinds of stories based on their background and objectives. Slum mothers and middle class mothers have different choice in selecting folk and real life stories. Both groups of mothers practice oral storytelling, though it is the only means of slum mothers to share stories with their children. Gender consideration in selecting stories is present in both the group of mothers. Children also show their interests towards the gender stereotype stories.

Analysis of the stories shows that the stories mothers select contribute to the children's learning and development, such as mental, language and emotional development. Storybook reading enhances the home literacy environment which is practiced only by a few middle class mothers (3 out of 8). Slum mothers do not practice it at all.

Data supports that mothers have knowledge about the importance of storytelling but do not practice it regularly. The study also found that watching cartoons on television occupy a major portion of time that should be allocated to storytelling. Though mothers are aware about the negative impact of cartoons on children, living in the modern age, they are reluctant to discourage their children from watching TV.

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ACRONYMS

ECD	Early Childhood developmnet
HOME	Home observation for measurement of the environment
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

“After a day’s work, as I go to bed, I share stories with my children. It refreshes both my mind and theirs”, a slum mother said. Meanwhile, a middle class mother said while explaining how a storytelling boosts up imagination power of children—“Storytelling enhances imagination power. Kids start to visualize the whole story and keep on asking questions....They imagine the story as if they can see the whole thing in front of them”. These statements illustrate immense power of storytelling.

Storytelling practice has an ancient history. It is the oldest form of ways to convey an event to listeners using voice, language and gestures (Peck, 1989; Isbell 2002). Comb and Beach (1994) claimed the power of storytelling to be an effective educational tool for all children. The power of a story is essential in helping us shape our view about reality. It was first developed as a medium for passing important historical information through the generations (Lockett & Jones, 2009). Beliefs, traditions and history have been passed to the next generation in all cultures throughout the world by telling stories (Palmer, Leiste, James, & Ellis, 2000).

Traditionally, storytelling has been used with children in many ways. It is conducted by relating fairy tales, folk stories, myths or personal stories from family, friends, teachers or surroundings (Tsitsani et al., 2011; Harkins & Ray, 2004). According to Isbell, Sobol, Lindauer, and Lowrance (2004), storytelling can be done broadly in two ways: firstly, story reading from books aloud to a child, which is a formal style; secondly, telling stories without reading books, an informal style. Both styles are effective for sharing literature with young children and are crucial in a

child's development. However, there are differences in participation in story reading and storytelling. Storytelling has certain free elements and children are encouraged to participate with repetitive phrases. Storytellers have the opportunity to bring variations in the story (Isbell et al., 2004). While telling a story, having eye-contact with the children create a bond and togetherness and a concentration on the story itself. Stories tend to be based on experiential learning, but learning from an experience is not automatic (Wikipedia, 2013). It is the storytellers' unique experience and backgrounds that reflect through stories.

In Bangladesh, mothers play the most important role in childcare and spend significant amount of time with children at home. So, storytelling by the mothers can be an effective medium of learning for the children. Dhaka, the field of the study and the country's capital, is the fastest growing megacity of the world and home to more than 12 million people and undergoing rapid urbanization. The topic of this study was to find out how urban mothers practice storytelling in the city characterized by a large number of people migrating from rural areas in search of livelihood. With migration being one of the crucial forces contributing to rapid urbanization, the city, whose population is projected to reach 20 million by 2020, is increasingly characterized by limited resources and basic services for the citizens (World Bank, 2007).

Slums are located across the city, with much of slum formation taking place on privately owned land (79 percent), and 18 percent on government-owned land. Only 40 percent of household heads among the poor have achieved more than 5 years of schooling, and only 6 percent have had more than 10 years (World Bank, 2007).

Approximately 30 percent of women in poor households work to earn their livelihood while 23 percent in the wealthier households do so. The majority of female workers of slum are employed in two types of jobs – as domestic helps (about 35

percent) and as garments workers (32 percent). Women with an intermediate level of education (class 6 to 10) are more likely to work in the garment sector than to be non-workers. The lowest education levels are highly associated with the probability of being employed as a domestic worker (World Bank, 2007, p. 19).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Storytelling is a learning opportunity which supports children's language, social and psychological development. It can be practiced by literate as well as illiterate parents. However, despite the importance of storytelling, according to Unite for Children, UNICEF (2010) report, in Bangladesh, about 47% parents of children under five provide care such as reading books aloud, telling stories, singing songs, or drawing with their children that supports early learning. Many parents and families, particularly who are poor and marginalized in rural and urban areas have inadequate knowledge of early childhood development and provision of learning opportunities for children (Unite for Children, UNICEF, 2010). Moreover, economics and urbanization have changed the structure of family life and increased the number of working mothers in the work force. More mothers are contributing to their family's financial security –yet making it more difficult for them to meet their children's needs for guidance and nurturing (Bruner, Floyd & Copeman, 2005).

Aboud (2007) discussed in the “*Evaluation of an Early Childhood Parenting Programme in Rural Bangladesh*” that mothers showed positively responsive behaviors towards their children during the HOME (home observation for measurement of the environment) interview. However, their communication with their children during the picture book reading showed little responsiveness to the cognitive and language needs of their children with little verbal elaboration. Most

conversation on the picture task consisted of the mother asking, “What is this?” and the child answering. It is likely that mothers had a low estimation of the language abilities of their children and, so, they talked down to them. Moreover, at least one year in school for the mothers was related to higher knowledge about child development. The HOME scores in the parenting group were higher only when mothers had resources such as either education or household assets. Educated mothers are more likely to better develop children’s receptive vocabulary.

On the other hand, the urban nuclear family structure in Bangladesh that consists of only father, mother and child has limited scope for the children to hear multiple conversations with family members. Therefore, most children are deprived of the opportunity of learning through storytelling which could be provided to them without much cost.

However, the practice of storytelling would make an impact on children only if the stories are meaningful and related in a way that supports different aspects of child development. The stories, the way they are related, the time they are told, the level of interest children show to listen to stories, and the storyteller’s knowledge of the importance of stories in the development and learning of children are important aspects of storytelling.

The problem of this study is to explore whether urban mothers practice storytelling, which is a powerful tool for learning for their children, and, if they do, how they relate stories to them and how they perceive the importance of storytelling to child’s development.

1.3 Significance of the Study

According to Abrahamson (1998), storytelling is a natural part of every body's life and teachers have found it as a good pedagogical tool. It helps children to develop language and cognitive skills. Children learn new words as well as gestures through the storytellers while their mind works imagining people and things. They also learn morals and values from stories. Citing neuro-coupling model, Stephens et al. (2010) states that when listening to a story listener's brain actually comes into sync with the storyteller's brain. Listener can even move ahead of the storyteller at times as they predict what will happen (as cited in Cullen, 2013).

Brain studies reveal that imagination leads to creativity and mastering language and mathematics skills. According to Schiro (2004) during an oral story, listeners are not passive receivers of information but they reconstruct stories for themselves in their minds. Schiro further states that during epic storytelling children (under guidance of their teachers) quickly build unique, powerful mathematical cultures within their classrooms. This could be applied to home situations as well. If parents know how to select impressive stories and relate them appropriately, children will learn many things including mathematics, morals and values.

Relating stories to children has many benefits. It especially improves quality mother-child interactions, develops attachments and thereby makes an impact on the child's language, literacy, and socio-emotional development. It also substitutes television watching, which is discouraged by many researchers. Therefore, the findings of this study would contribute to the knowledge on how storytelling can be used in various ways to promote child development. It has an immense value to ECD and parent education programs. Further storytelling can be used for social justice (Bell 2010). Through storytelling, positive attitudes towards different cultures can be

developed in children and that would discourage many forms of social discriminations prevalent in a society. Findings of this study especially regarding the knowledge of mothers on the importance of storytelling, would be useful for not only to parents, but also to educationists and ECD curriculum developers since it is a powerful pedagogical approach to young children's learning and development.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is storytelling common in child rearing practices among urban mothers in Bangladesh?
2. What are the types of stories urban mothers usually relate to children?
3. Do urban mothers relate stories that are meaningful and supportive in child development?
4. Do urban mothers know the importance of storytelling to their children's development?

Based on the above research questions following objectives were formulated to conduct the study.

1.5 Objectives

The main objective of this research was to identify storytelling practices of urban mothers and explore their knowledge on the influence of storytelling on child development.

The specific objectives are:

1. To identify whether storytelling is common in child rearing practices among urban mothers,
2. To identify types of stories urban mothers frequently relate to their children and the time they relate them,

3. To know whether the stories related by urban mothers are contributory towards child's learning and development, and
4. To explore the knowledge of urban mothers on the importance of storytelling to child development.

1.6 Operational Definitions

The key terms of this study are storytelling practices and urban mothers. The two types of families living in Dhaka city are slum dwellers and non-slum dwellers (middle class). The operational definitions for these two types are also given since they are included in the study.

Storytelling Practices

“Story” is defined as a series of events and “storytelling” as relating the events (Miller, 2010). Storytelling is the conveying of events in words, images and sounds, often by the practice of acting, dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, talking etc. (Wikipedia, 2013). In this study, storytelling practice refers to an activity whereby mothers narrate to their children different events taking place in their surroundings, retell stories passed through generations or invent stories for several objectives on regular basis.

Storytelling is in practice both in formal and informal ways. Formal style of storytelling is reading aloud stories from books to children while informal styles is telling stories without using books (Isbell et al., 2004). Both formal and informal storytelling styles considered as storytelling for this study. It includes folk stories, fairy tales, myths or personalized stories from family, friends or surroundings.

Urban Mothers

This study refers to urban mothers who have preschool age children (3 to 5 years), and live in the metropolitan city of Dhaka. They were from both slum and non-slum (middle class) areas. The term 'non-slum' or 'middle class' mothers refers to those who do not live in slums in Dhaka city. Their families live in other places like apartments and houses and enjoy basic services such as clean water, electricity and sanitation.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The chapter presents related literature reviewed by the researcher. Literature related to the theoretical framework of the study as well as those related to influence of storytelling on child development and storytelling practices of parents are also reviewed and discussed in this chapter.

Theoretical framework of the study

The theoretical framework of this study was mainly derived from theories of child development, and of stories and storytelling.

Lev Vygotsky, the most prominent social-cultural theorist, believed that thinking and learning are highly influenced by language, social interaction and culture. Thus he assigned greater importance to external influences on children's intellectual development. According to him, intellectual development involves connecting language and thinking, and then, language is not merely a mode of expression but also a fundamental tool for constructing knowledge. Vygotsky's theory contains practical ideas for promoting intellectual development by proposing adults, such as parents, scaffolding children's learning – which is using language and other social interactions to guide their thinking (as cited in Trawick-Smith, 2006). Thus Vygotsky's theoretical works support that the use of meaningful interactions with children through storytelling promotes children's intellectual development.

Piaget, the cognitive psychologist, stresses that children, as they mature mentally, pass through four major stages of cognitive development. According to him, preschool age children fall in the pre-operational stages (2 to 7 years). During that

stage, a child can symbolize experience mentally which is facilitated by the language skills. According to Flavell (1977), children's imagination and creativity can be encouraged through play, storytelling and painting (as cited in Simatwa, 2010). Simatwa (2010) suggests that children may be so imaginative that they may fail to distinguish between what is real and what is make believe, a factor that can lead to adjustment problems. This can be overcome by either the teacher encouraging his pupils to tell stories during story time but not during the rest of the day, stressing that while it is wonderful to be able to make up stories, sometimes it is necessary to describe exactly what happens. Parents too can use such measures to develop children's imagination which will eventually promote creativity in them.

According to Bruner (1991), a narrative is an account of events occurring over time. He argues, "We organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on. Narrative is the conventional form, transmitted culturally and constrained by each individual's level of mastery" (p. 4). He further asserts, "Narratives are about people acting in a setting and the happenings that befall must be relevant to their intentional states. When animals or non-agentive objects are cast as narrative protagonists, they must be endowed with intentional states for the purpose, like the Little Red Engine in the children's story" (p.7).

Theories of stories and storytelling

Miller (2010) proposes "theories of story and storytelling" in his paper as titled so. According to him, stories are piece of art, and can serve as a basis of games. He explains four uses of stories—

- giving meaning to life, expressing values, teaching the young, and conveying culture;
- connecting elements in one's own self, experience, and life;
- connecting one to one's (individual and group) past, and to other cultures; and
- giving one a sense of wholeness, that the piece of one's life fit together and add up to something.

Miller (2010) further suggests seven elements of stories: characters; place; time; plot; narrator's point of view; narrator's tone of voice, attitude, style; and theme (meaning, moral, message).

There are mainly three kinds of stories:

- personal experience stories,
- traditional stories, and
- created stories.

Traditional stories include folktales, legend, epic and myths while created stories are often blended with personal experience stories and traditional stories.

Miller presents two tools of storytelling where human traits are projected onto things and animals—personification and anthropomorphism. Through personification, human characteristics and qualities, such as speech, emotions and thoughts are attributed to the things and objects. For example: naming a car. On the other hand, anthropomorphism is attributing human characters and qualities to animals, other nonhuman beings, and natural phenomena (Miller, 2010).

Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph and Smith (1992) presents “storytelling as a theory-building activity”,

Each story is potentially a theory of a set of events that it contains an explanation, which may then be overtly challenged and reworked by co-narrators. Our data suggest that complex theory building through story telling is promoted by (and constitutive of) interlocutors’ family with one another and/or the narrative events. As such, long before children enter a classroom everyday storytelling among familiars constitutes a commonplace medium for socializing perspective taking, critical thinking and other intellectual skills that have been viewed as outcomes of formal schooling (p. 37).

Further to recognizing a story as a theory as suggested above, literature on storytelling revealed a theoretical models of children’s storytelling, Guha, Druin, Montemayor and Chipman, (2006) called Physically Oriented Technology model (SPOT).

Literature Review

Influence of Storytelling on Child Development

“Human knowledge is based on stories and the human brain consists of cognitive machinery necessary to understand, remember, and tell stories” (Wyer, 1995). Researches specify that listening to parents’ storytelling has a significant impact on child development. Because storytelling requires auditory and visual senses of listeners, children can learn to organize their mental representation of a story, recognized structure of language, and express their thoughts (McKeough et al., 2008). Children benefit through storytelling in multiple ways, whether they themselves are narrating stories or listening to it (Lockett & Jones 2009). The benefits include development of oral and written language, acquisition of important facts and bridging

of cultural gaps. Furthermore, through conversation and play, storytelling allows children build social skills in a shared manner by relating their personal experiences with others.

Language and Literacy Development

The distinctive characteristics of storytelling have wonderful technique to foster oral language development and provide a rich home environment for literacy development (Palmer et al., 2000). Young children learn language by actively participating in meaningful experiences through interaction with adults. Storytelling provides a meaningful social context to learn language structure. Adults scaffold children's language learning by providing them an expressive, enjoyable and responsive model through stories (Isbell, 2002). It enhances children's acquisition of storytelling skills, which is an important aspect of language development (Alexander, Harkins & Michel, 1994). The storytellers use gesture, eye contact, body language and adapt the style based on the specific listeners. For that, despite the listeners' language skills, children can understand the stories (Isbell, 2002). Again, children develop critical skills for listening stories and thus assimilate the meaning of language structure. They acquire skills in reading complex stories with improved understanding. Through this, children become confident about their oral language ability, which provokes them to retell the stories or tell new stories. This allows for the expression of language competence and provides opportunity of individual interpretation and creativity (Gonzalez, 2009). Gradually child's progress towards writing their own stories (Peck, 1989). Again, the grammar of the stories can be best learned through frequent exposures to stories (Palmer et al., 2000). According to Speaker, Taylor and Kamen (2004), children can move to advanced stages of language development if they are increasingly exposed to storytelling. Furthermore,

grammar, vocabulary, length of utterance, and sentence formation are boosted up by more and more exposure to storytelling.

Social Emotional Development

Stories mirror human thought as humans think in narrative structures and most often remember facts in story form (Wikipedia, 2013). Facts can be understood as smaller versions of a larger story. Thus storytelling can supplement analytical thinking. Stories help children cope with various kinds of feelings and problems. Story time can be a special caring time with parents that children will remember all their lives (Parenting SA, 2010). On the other hand, the children feel emotionally connected with the stories and the storytellers. It concentrates on mutual relationships between children and adults (Palmer et al., 2000). In that way, it fosters quality interactions and attachment with parents, promoting children's language, social and emotional development.

Cognitive Development

In the process of intellectual development, storytelling remains a key way for cognition, which is enhanced in various specific ways when children are exposed to a variety of stories (Speaker et al., 2004). Storytelling incorporates problem solving and complex thinking at its core, which requires cognitive and linguistic interactive process (Gonzalez, 2009). Through mastering the pattern of stories, children comprehend and understand the language structure better. It promotes their critical thinking. They can connect various situations and context in a meaningful way (Palmer et al., 2000).

Storytelling as an Enjoyment

Children begin to enjoy the warm company of the storyteller, the sound and the rhythm of the voice before understanding words. Whether they are stories to tell, or stories in books they are one of the ways that children learn to enjoy reading (Parenting SA, 2010). Even before 18 months, Children can recognize story characters and start enjoying stories about familiar and beloved friends (Zambo & Hansen, 2007). Stories that have a personal connection to children are often a source of enjoyment for children and are being requested to repeat over and over. Stories that include sound effect or repeated phrases draw attention to the sound of language. Children love to play with or repeat the sound during storytelling and experience the joy of repetitive phrases (Isbell, 2002). This leads to the creation of their own stories and they enjoy sharing it with other kids or grownups (Palmer et al., 2000).

Storytelling and Family Literacy Environment

Storytelling has been recognized as an educational tool throughout the ages (Palmer et al., 2000). Home literacy environment, particularly reading aloud storybooks or joint reading between parents and children have a significant effect on children's storytelling. Furthermore, parental education and parents' knowledge of children's have significant effects on children's storytelling (Marjanovic-Umek, Fekonja-Peklaj & Podlesek, 2012). Fekonja-Peklaj, Marjanovic-Umek, and Kranjc (2010) also argues that maternal education is a significant factor in children's storytelling skills.

Storytelling as a Classroom Teaching Tool

Storytelling offers classroom rich, complex, vivid language which enhances students' language in complexity and in vocabulary. Children often show a strong

desire to read and write following a storytelling session. Children in their own writing often choose a pattern from stories. Storytelling exposes children to different new ideas which serve as tools for conceptualization for constructing meaning in writing (Palmer et al., 2000).

Culture and Storytelling Practices

Oral storytelling provides children opportunity to practice their imagination, effective communication which leads their social literacy and build community in different ways (Berkowitz, 2011). On the other hand, parents' storytelling and story construction vary on the basis of their culture, education and their objectives.

According to Harkins and Ray (2004),

East India mothers told long stories that included more evaluative comments and responses to their child's questions than US mothers. Content and evaluation of character and story action reflected cultural themes of collectivism of India and Individualism of USA.

Storytelling practices of parents

Palmer et al. (2000) in their study in USA presents that storytelling provides an excellent vehicle for promoting and enhancing language and literacy development within families, and it has been recognized as an educational tool throughout the ages. According to Reutzel and Cooter (2000), children learn story grammar best through repeated exposure to stories (as cited in Palmer et al., 2000).

A qualitative study by Tsitsani et al. (2011) about fairy tales in a Greek island suggested that majority of parents choose classic fairy tales concerning children's preferences. Research has suggested that past event stories or personal stories are a choice of mother-child storytelling, though there remains variation among different cultures (Harkins & Ray, 2004).

Harkins and Ray (2004) in their study examined the possible cultural differences within mother-child narratives. The findings indicate that maternal education level influences narrative structure and goals of mother-child storytelling. Clearly, level of mothers' formal education is an important parameter of social class and impacted the goals and styles of storytelling. The mothers with high education asked their children more questions and reported that their goal of storytelling is social relaxation, fostering values and self-direction in their children. In contrast, the goals and styles of storytelling of mothers with less schooling revealed their tendency toward conformity and obedience to authority. However, further research was suggested to determine whether social class is a powerful predictor of parent-child storytelling.

The study of Harkins, Koch and Michel (2001) suggested that listening to maternal storytelling can have an immediate effect on a child's narrative skill. Therefore, maternal storytelling may be an important source for the child's acquisition of narrative skill.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

The particular study followed a qualitative approach, as the focus of the study was to explore and understand the storytelling practices of mothers with their children within their settings. According to Gay and Airasian (2003), qualitative research is interpretive research, which is useful for understanding and answering questions about participants and their contexts. The researcher studies the perspectives of the research participants towards events, beliefs, or practices. Moreover, qualitative research brings out the human meaning of social life as lived and experienced through capturing its social context.

The rationale for choosing a qualitative approach was that it would provide deep insights about the participants' perspectives and practices within their setting and familiar contexts. Therefore, focus group discussions (FGD), in-depth Interviews and interviews were conducted to achieve the objectives of the study.

The FGDs with urban mothers were conducted to identify whether storytelling is common in child rearing practices among urban mothers (1st objective), the types of stories they frequently relate to their children (2nd objective) and the time they relate them, whether they are knowledgeable about contributions stories can make towards the development of their children and the importance of storytelling (3rd and 4th objectives). It is assumed that the participants of the FGDs shared certain characteristics that are relevant to the purpose of the study. Again, by this method, researchers can identify trends in the perceptions and opinions expressed by a certain group (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In-depth interviews were conducted with a small sample of mothers as a means of collection of more reliable data for second, third and fourth objectives. It also gave an opportunity for mothers to divulge their views frankly to the researcher as the interviews were held one on one basis, and in turn the researcher was also able to explore their knowledge and practices more confidentially. In-depth interview is the useful method to inquire issues in a deeper way by discovering how individuals think and feel about a topic and why they hold certain opinions. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006, p.101), “qualitative researchers rely quite extensively on in-depth interviewing” which may be the overall strategy among the several methods.

Interviews (informal conversations with guided questions) with the children of those mothers who participated in the in-depth interviews were conducted to triangulate data and present a valid picture of the study. As Gay and Airasian, (2003) opine, the interview is one of the most commonly used data sources in qualitative research.

This particular qualitative study goes under the theoretical genre of phenomenology as- “phenomenology is the study of participants lived experiences and worldviews. Phenomenology assumes that shared experiences have an effable structure and essence. Interviewing elicits people’s stories about their lives” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

3.2 Research Site

The site of the study was South Goran under Khilgaon Thana of Dhaka. It covered both slum and non-slum areas (apartments/houses).

There are 35 small tin-roofed shanties in the slum of this study, which is stretched over about 8-decimal of privately owned land. The shanties have been built for low-income group families. The families share bathrooms and kitchens and narrow open corridors. With a large number of people chattering, the whole area remains overcrowded round the clock. The families, each having four to seven members, do not afford renting more than one room for the entire family. The rooms do not have proper ventilation and lighting. While their parents are at work, the small kids are left either to their elder siblings or neighbors or unwatched. Some parents send their young children to nearby low-cost private madrasas or schools while some school-age children are not enrolled.

The families of the non-slum dwellers research participants live in the multi-storied apartment houses in the urban areas of South Goran. They are from middle-class income group. The houses have at least two bedrooms with one living and dining space and have proper ventilation and lighting. Each apartment house has its own kitchen, bathroom and toilet. Most of the families are nuclear and the number of household members is in between three to five. For the particular study, only one joint-family was found for interview.

3.3 Research Participants

The participants of the study were the mothers of preschool age children between 3 and 5 years from both middle class and slum families. Though the children fall in the preschool age range, all of them were not admitted in the school during the study period. A purposive sampling technique was followed in selecting the research participants. Considering the context of mothers playing the main role in childcare, the study included mothers as the key research participants. In addition, the researcher

arranged interviews in the form of informal conversations with the children of the respondent mothers upon taking prior permission.

Seven mothers from slum and eight mothers from non-slum are as were selected for two FGDs. Six mothers from the two categories (three from each group) participated in the in-depth interviews. Three children from each of the two categories of mothers who participated in the in-depth interviews were involved in the interviews.

The mother participants of the urban slum for that particular study cannot read and write, and they reported that their husbands are also illiterate. Almost in all the cases, both the spouses were engaged in low-paid works. While the women work as domestics helps, their husbands were mostly rickshaw-pullers, fish sellers or day-laborers. One of the child participants has enrolled at a nearby low-cost Kindergarten school while the rest two, aged around five, have not enrolled.

The mother participants of the urban middle-class group of the study have education ranging from Higher Secondary Certificate to Master degree. All of them were homemakers, excepting one who is associated with a small entrepreneur business on an irregular basis. Their families are financially dependent on their male partners. As the mothers remain at their house, children pass most of their time with their mothers. All the children participants of this group are enrolled at Play Group or Nursery at different local private schools.

3.4 Inclusion Criteria for Sample

The inclusion criteria for selecting participants were the urban preschool children (3 to 5 years) with normal mental development and their mothers. Mothers who had children with mental disability were not considered for the study.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The study used qualitative data collection methods such as focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, and interviews with guided questions for collection of data.

The samples of FGDs, in-depth interviews and interviews are presented in the following table.

Table 1: The Research Participants of FGDs, in-depth interviews and interviews

Method	Slum	Non slum/ middle-class	No. of Participants
FGD	1	1	15
In-depth interview	3	3	6
Interview with children (informal conversations)	3	3	6

Focus Group Discussion

In the study, two FGDs were conducted with two groups of mothers categorized as slum-dwellers and non-slum-dwellers. The researcher chose FGD method because it allows for group interactions among all the members and lets participants give detail opinion on an issue. Rossman and Rallis (2003) present focus group discussion as a form of group interviewing.

The interviewer creates an open environment, asking question that focus closely on one topic (hence its name), to encourage discussion and the expression of differing opinions and point of view. The interaction among the participants is the critical characteristic of this type of interviewing (Rossman and Rallis, 2003, p.193).

In the FGDs, the researcher played the role of the moderator. One note taker was responsible for taking notes during the discussion. Besides, one voice recorder was used for recording the whole session so that no data was missed.

In-depth Interview

Six face to face in-depth interviews with guided questions were conducted with mothers of each group (slum dwellers and non-slum dwellers) with the objective of a deeper understanding of the issue. The guides prepared under themes that cover objectives of the study were used as the instrument for in-depth interviews. However, follow-up probing questions were asked to help promote spontaneous discussions between researcher and interviewees.

“Deeper understandings develop through the dialogue of long, in-depth interviews, as interviewer and participant construct meaning. Interviewing takes you into participants’ worlds, at least as far as they can verbally relate what is in their minds” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Thus, it provides detailed information about personal feeling, perceptions and opinions. The conversations during the in-depth interview allow the researchers to understand how participants view their world. So, in-depth interview method permits the researcher to unfold mothers’ perceptions related to storytelling with their children.

Informed consent form was used to seek permission for taking in-depth interviews. During the interviews, the researcher explained if mothers have any queries. The researcher took notes to record the data. Along with note taking, one voice recorder was used with permission to ensure the detailed, elaborate and quality data.

Interview

Six interviews –three from each category (slum dwellers and non-slum dwellers) were conducted with children of the mothers, who participated in the in-depth interviews, to triangulate data and present a valid picture of the study.

According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), “Whatever the form of interviewing, children may be your participants. Interviewing children is fun and frustrating. Young children are often lively and active; it is unrealistic to expect them to sit face-to-face and engage in a long dialogue with a researcher. Talks can occur, however, during other activities”.

Since the group of children was very young to give interviews, interviews of children aged around five were done in the form of informal conversations purposively. Guided questions formulated under themes to cover the objectives were used during the interview. While conducting the interviews, the researcher kept in her mind the ethical aspects, like child's sensitivity to certain questions. Parents' permission was sought beforehand. In addition, the researcher wrote down field notes and memos that helped her later to analyze and interpret data.

3.6 Development of Research Instruments

Focus group discussion (FGD) guide for mothers and two separate interview guides for mothers and children were the instruments of this study for collecting qualitative data. The guides developed by the researcher were sent to experts for their opinions. The instruments were further refined according to judgments of the experts and piloted with appropriate samples before they were finalized.

The table below presents the structure of the instruments:

Table 2: Structure of the instruments

Instrument	No. of Themes	No. of guiding Questions
FGD Guide	4	20
In-depth Interview Guide	4	20
Interview/Informal Conversation Guide	3	21

3.7 Data Analysis

“The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image”— (Cresswell, 2003, p.190). Therefore, the researcher went through the rigorous process of data analysis to bring out what the data mean.

The researcher analyzed data through transcription, categorization and coding, and the process involved data triangulation through different sources. The data were organized based on the categories and themes. Later, the researcher came up with interpretations and meaning of the data. For that, the researcher first transcribed all the recorded interviews and focus group discussions data very carefully and saved it on computer.

The following are the descriptions of few simple steps that the researcher followed to do the analysis, which was adapted from data analysis and interpretation section of *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* by Creswell (2003):

Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis: Data first categorized according to a different data source. The categories for that were: FGD, in depth interview with mothers and interview with children.

Step 2: Data review: The researcher read the data several times before highlighting and taking notes of those which correspond to the research objectives.

Step 3: Detail analysis with a coding process: The researcher coded the data and organized those into “chunks” based on the actual language that the participants used.

Step 4: Identification of themes: The researcher later used the previous coding to generate patterns and themes which are the major findings for that qualitative study. Researcher reviewed the data several times to get insights.

Step 5: Descriptive presentation: The researcher used a narrative style, the most popular approach to convey the findings by direct citations from the data, and presented the data by summarizing the main points under each theme.

Step 6: Interpretation or meaning: Interpretation is the final step of analysis that came through a systematic analysis presenting the meaning of the results. At that stage, researcher used her own leaning from the findings in comparison with the literature and theories (Creswell, 2003, pp.191-195).

3.8 Role of Researcher

According to Locke et al. (1987), researcher is the primary data collection instrument in a qualitative research. It is necessary to acknowledge the researchers' personal values, assumptions and biases (as cited in Creswell, 2003). The researcher followed qualitative approach and played the main role for communicating with the participants, data collection, taking notes, and analyzing and interpreting data.

The researcher, who completed post-graduation in Statistics, had more than seven years' experience of working as an education professional before enrolling for the MSc in ECD course. She is also a mother of a four and half year-old boy child during the study time which inspired her to study on storytelling with children. The researcher's professional and personal experience helped her to understand the issue more critically. Moreover, the researcher has a middle class social background, which helped her in her conscious effort during data collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

The researcher was also aware to enhance the validity of research. According to Gay and Airasian (2003), qualitative researchers use several strategies to check on and enhance study validity. Some strategies were followed to check researcher biases and improve the validity of the collected data. These are: researcher was aware and checked her own biases; incorporated experts' feedback and did field test to finalize the tools; and spent a reasonable period of time for rapport building and data collection, keeping notes, writing memos, tape recording and transcribing data in details. Moreover, the researcher triangulated data by using different data sources. For example: the study used FGDs and in-depth interviews with mothers and interviews with children.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

The limitation of the study was that it was a small-scale research with a few samples. It only included 15 mothers for FDGs, and three mothers and their children from each of the social groups (middle class and slum) covering a small area of urban Dhaka. As this study is the part of the Master degree thesis, it had time limit as well. Therefore, generalizations of the results from the study may not be possible due to the demographics and length of the study.

3.10 Ethical Issues

The research study followed the principles and guideline that are ethically and morally correct. A letter of introduction was taken to introduce the researcher as a thesis student in MSc. in ECD, IED BRAC University after getting approval for the research proposal. The researcher sought voluntary participation from the research participants and used informed consent letter before starting field work. Before interviewing the children, the researcher asked for permission from their legal guardians detailing all the aspects of the interview. The informed consent letter explained the research topic, purpose and how it was going to maintain the confidentiality of the information. Permission was taken before the use of a tape recorder. The researcher gave them assurance that the data would be used only for research purpose and no specific information such as names of the participants and their addresses would be published. The researcher also ensured the participants that they could withdraw themselves from the study at any time during the interview without giving any reason. In addition, the researcher showed respect to the participants' culture and values.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The focus of the study was to realize the main research objective: identifying storytelling practices by urban mothers and exploring their knowledge of the influence of storytelling on child development. Data collected through FGDs, in-depth interviews with mothers of preschool children, and informal conversations with the children are analyzed and presented in this chapter under the following subheading;

1. Results
2. Discussion

4.1 Results

Results of the study are presented and analyzed under each of the specific objectives stated in the first chapter.

4.1.1 Prevalence of storytelling as a common practice among urban mothers

First objective of the present study was to identify whether storytelling is common in child rearing practices among urban mothers. It was revealed from the FGDs conducted with the middle class and slum dwelling mothers that urban mothers do practice storytelling with their children at their homes. However, a majority of mothers in both categories do not practice storytelling on regular basis. The following table presents information on mothers' practice of storytelling at homes.

Table 4.1: Mothers' practice of storytelling at homes

Sample category	Total Number	Practice of storytelling					
		No. who practiced Regularly	Percentage	No. who practiced Sometimes	Percentage	No. who practiced Occasionally	Percentage
Slum dwelling mothers	07	02	28.6	02	28.6	03	42.8
Middle class mothers	08	04	50.	03	37.5	01	12.5
Total	15	06	40.	05	33.3	04	26.7

Only 40% of the mothers (both slum dwellers and middle-class mothers) said that they tell stories to their children regularly. However, storytelling practice is much lower in slums than the middle class mothers group. In slums, only two out of seven mothers reported that they tell stories to their children regularly whereas a majority (five out of seven) claimed they tell stories either sometimes or occasionally.

On the other hand, about half (four out of eight) of the middle-class mothers said that they practice storytelling with their children very often though the rest do not do it regularly. Only one out of eight said that she occasionally tell stories to her child. The following table presents the overall picture of storytelling practice of urban mothers.

However, during the informal conversation with children, a five-year-old middle class boy child showed strong interest in cartoons than hearing stories from his mother. "I am not a little boy, I am a grown up person. A grown up person doesn't listen to stories and songs", he insisted. When the researcher talked about cartoons, the child showed great interest, adding: "I like 'Ben10. I have bag and watch with

Ben10 picture”. He then eagerly asked the researcher, “Do you have any books on Ben10?” Asked whether he likes to listen stories from storybooks, he replied: “Not much”. When his mother reminded him of the story of ‘Tonatuni’, he nodded his head but did not show much interest about it [Informal conversation # 1 (Middle class child), 18/06/13].

Informal conversations with slum children supported that mothers seldom practice storytelling since they are busy with their work as domestic helps. The conversation with the researcher was like:

Researcher: Do you hear stories from your mother?

Sima: Mother goes to others’ houses for work.

Researcher: Does your mother tell stories when she is at home?

Sima: She is busy in cooking.

Researcher: What does she usually say to you when she is at home?

Sima: She asks me to take bath, take my meals and study.

[Informal conversation # 4 (Slum child), 25/06/13]

Reasons for not telling stories were also given by mothers. Explaining why they don’t tell stories, urban middle class mothers said they are very busy.

“Regardless whether they are service holders or homemakers, mothers are very busy now-a-days. If I start telling stories, I cannot finish my work on time”, a mother said during FGD [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

Likewise, majority (42.6%) of the slum dweller mothers said that they could seldom practice storytelling because they are very busy until noon to afternoon in their works as domestic help at other people’s homes. One mother who participated in the FGD with slum-dwellers said:

We don’t have time after finishing all the works. So, how is it possible to find time to tell stories to the children? We take care of our children, like we talk with them, feed them, and give them bath. However, you know, the idle

talking with children, we cannot do that. We are busy with lots of work and, then busy taking care of the children. Then we go to bed and soon fall asleep [FGD # 2 (Slum mothers), 08/06/13].

Other mothers who participated in the FGD also supported the statement. The statement above shows that the mother views storytelling as ‘idle talk’, and they value feeding, bathing for taking care of their children more.

Watching television cartoons and playing computer games occupy the time of storytelling. Finding their mothers busy, the children love to indulge in other types of activities, like watching television or playing games on computer. During interview, one mother elaborated it:

We avoid telling stories since we are busy in our own works. Therefore, the easy solution is to turn on the television or let them play games on computer so that they won’t disturb us. As a result, children also become interested in watching TV and do not like to listen to stories. Some days ago, I tried to tell my son a story. He said, “Mom, it’s not interesting. Please turn on the TV. Let me watch cartoon”. Truly, we have destroyed the environment though we ourselves enjoyed listening to stories in our childhood [Interview # 1(Middle class mother), 16/06/13].

Frequencies of storytelling

Diverse replies came when mothers were asked how many stories they usually tell to their children. One said, “Two to five a day”. Another one replied: “It depends on the children’s demand. Usually, it is three to four days per week” [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

However, it was revealed during FGDs and interviews with both the groups that mothers tell stories to their children more frequently than the fathers and other family members. The other story tellers are elder siblings and grandparents [FGD

notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13 & FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers) ,08/06/13].

Mothers from both from the slum areas and middle class regretted that they cannot tell stories when their children request for so. “Raised in joint family, I used to demand to hear stories from elders without considering time. But now I rebuke my child if he asks me to tell him a story. I feel sorry and I miss it”, a mother said [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13]. In this regard, one slum mother said during interview:

I feel bad because I cannot give enough time to my children. Had I had money, I could provide my children good environment, housing and food. But I try my best. If I cannot give them time during the day, I try to find time at night[Interview # 4 (Slum mother), 25/06/13].

However, mothers try to compensate it later through some alternatives. One mother said, “I try to make up it later on when I am free. Sometimes, I request his father to tell him stories” [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13]. Mothers also choose alternative time such as- feeding time if they cannot keep requests of their children.

4.1.2 Types of stories urban mothers frequently relate to their children and the time they relate

This was the second objective of the study and FGDs and in-depth interviews were used in collecting data. Both these methods revealed that there is a range of variation in the types of stories mothers select to tell their children. During the FGDs and interviews, mothers cited many examples of stories that they tell their children.

Based on an analysis, of the pattern of the stories mentioned by the mothers during data collection, stories can be divided into two main groups:

1. Stories are originally created by someone else and related by mothers to their children
2. Stories created by mothers to meet their children's curiosity or to get something done or convey a message to the children.

Besides these broad categories, each story cited by mothers belongs to a particular story type. It was found that mothers, despite their background, tell real life stories and stories about childhood to their children. In case of folk stories, mothers from slum and middle class have completely different choice. Fairy tales are the stories told by the middle class mothers. But the slum mothers never told these to their children. Again, for teaching children morality, middle class mothers share Aesop's fables or religious stories while the slum mothers pick up examples mostly from real life. Gender stereotype stories are also evident from both groups of the mothers. Furthermore, cartoon characters and plots are becoming interesting story plots for children particularly in the middle class families.

The following table presents the types of stories urban mothers mostly relate with their children:

Table 4.2: List of stories with examples

Types and Nature of Stories	Examples
Real life stories	• Stories about known persons: immediate family members or neighbors • Stories about what they see in the surroundings. It can be any event, about nature, animals etc.
Stories about childhood	• Children's babyhood • Parents Childhood • Childhood stories of known person
Folk Stories	• Slum: 'Monkeys Fleeing with Clothes', 'Hunchback Old Woman Hidden in a Pumpkin' • Middle class: 'Tonatuni', 'Liar Cowboy', 'Grapes and A Fox', 'The Tiger and the Heron', 'Thirsty Crow', 'A Lion and A Rat'
Fairy tales	• 'Cinderella', 'Tusharkonna', 'Sleeping Princess', 'Mermaid', 'Beauty and Beast'
Moral stories	• Aesop's Fables: 'Liar Cowboy', 'Grapes and A Fox', 'The Tiger and the Heron', 'A Lion and A Rat' • Religious story: Prophet Mohammad, Bayezid Bostami • Real life examples (role models)
Gender-based stories	• Girls: 'Cinderella', 'Tusharkonna', 'Sleeping Princess', 'Mermaid', 'Beauty and Beast' • Female role model as real life example • Boys: 'Superman', 'Batman', Ben10 • Male role model as real life example
Cartoons as interesting story plots for children	▪ Tom & Jerry, Ben10, Bhim, Go Diago go, Mina

Real life stories. Plots of the children's stories mostly come from the real world, i.e. from their surroundings. The children are also fascinated about the surrounding nature. During the FGD with middle-class mothers, one of them explained:

They are curious about different plants like 'lojjaboti' (touch-me-not). My child would ask why the leaves close on human touch. As I explain, she would ask whether those have life like human beings. As I reply in the positive, she would now be surprised and ask, "So, they also eat like us?" [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

During individual interviews, a middle-class mother expressed the same opinions regarding children's interest in real life stories. "My son would ask me for stories about the things which he sees with his own eyes", said one of the mothers [Interview # 1 (Middle class mother), 16/06/13]. While giving examples from her own experience, a mother, who mostly picks up her stories from real life, said how a story was related to the reality of human life:

Seeing a beggar, my son would ask, "Why doesn't he have a leg?" I would tell him that he lost his leg definitely in an accident. He would further say, "Why are they begging?" I would then say they could not study. May be their parents did not afford to send them to school. I explain the reality of human life in different ways [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Interestingly, four participant mothers gave almost the same example—children's curiosity about beggars who have lost their legs. They, however, gave varying explanations to their kids. One middle class mother said Allah punished the man because he did not listen to his mother's advice, thus instilling fear in the mind of the child about the negative consequences of disregarding what parents say.

In the slum, a mother would teach children that it is a misfortune for someone who does not have any leg or hand. A participant mother said during the interview

that she had once asked her son who is the poorest person in the world. “My grandfather”, the child replied. Then the mother told the child that there are other people who are poorer than his grandfather. The child then said, “No. He (grandfather) is crippled. He does not have hands and legs. This is why my grandfather is the poorest person in the world” [Interview # 4 (Slum mother), 25/06/13].

To make her children listen to what she says, a mother invents a story of a mother with two kids. She says:

There were two very naughty kids, they would not study properly or listen to their parents. So, what happens one day? The mother had an accident and had a lot of pain. She had to go to hospital. The kids visited their mom there. The mother slowly got well. Then the children realized that they should pay heed to what their mom says. After listening to this story, my kids become emotional and ask me not to tell them such sad stories. It is then that I change the story [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13].

Asked whether she cites examples of others while asking her son to be a good human being, a slum mother said she encourages her son to be like one of his uncle who graduated from Madrasa. She said:

I tell my son that he will become highly educated like his Aladdin uncle if he studies attentively. My son then says, “Yes, mother. I will be a teacher like Aladdin uncle. I will always wear shoes and have cane stick in my hand. I will study well”. I tell him if he studies well and becomes established in the society, his grandparents and uncles will also honor him. He will earn a lot of money [Interview # 4 (Slum mother), 25/06/13].

Stories about childhood. Childhood stories are the huge natural collection of stories for the children that are told by the mothers. Children’s favor for childhood stories came up repeatedly during conversations with mothers both from the middle class and slum. According to the mothers, childhood stories include children’s own

childhood stories, parents', relatives' and friends' childhood stories and stories about other children they see.

In an interview, one mother elaborated it:

“A major part of the stories I tell to them include stories on their (children) babyhood, my childhood, old days' stories of their relatives and the environment we grew up in. Again, they want to hear about my life when I was in my school or at college hostel. I describe how I have had fun in those days. So, I explain mostly the things about old days. Again, they love to hear stories about their grandparents” [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Children are very curious and love to hear their own babyhood stories. One slum mother narrated:

My children love their babyhood stories. Shihab asks me, “Mom, how big was I? What was I doing?” I answer, “You were very quiet and gentle. You did not make any trouble for me. Asking you to sit down quietly, I would say that crow would take you away if you did not comply, and you would comply immediately. You only used to drink milk when you were a little baby” [Interview # 4 (Slum mother), 25/06/13].

Children love to hear the stories about their parent's childhood too,

My daughter is very interested to hear about my childhood stories. She wants to know what I did when I was a kid of her age. She asks me, “Did you go to school when you are a child? Did you study?” If I rebuke her for not eating then, “Did your mother scold you when you didn't want to eat? How was your grandmother?” She enjoys those types of stories very much [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

Another mother chipped in: “My son is surprised to know that I was once little like him. He is also curious to know whether I had ever been to school like him” [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

The children are also keen to hear stories about other children they know about. “When I go outside with my daughter, she sees little kids of her age with their

parents. Curious, she would ask questions like: who are their parents? where do they live?" [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

Folk stories and fairy tales. Folk tales occupy a share of story storage that the mothers share with their children often, though mothers from slum and those from middle class have different patterns based on their social status and ways of life. Both the sections of mothers tell folk stories to their children but their selection of stories remain different. Middle class mothers choose different types of folk stories, which the slum mothers said they have never heard of. This is also applicable for the stories told by the slum mothers. Though the middle class mothers tell fairytales to their children, none of the participant mothers from the slum area said they share such stories with their kids. Asked whether they tell stories like 'Tonatuni', 'A Liar Cowboy', or 'Thirsty Crow', the slum mothers said during FGD that they did not hear about these stories. "You won't find these stories in the rural areas. We heard about these only after moving to Dhaka" said one of them.

'Thirsty Crow', 'A Lion and A Rat', 'Grapes and A Fox', 'The Tiger and the Heron', 'The Greedy Fox', 'Story of Tonatuni' and 'A Liar Cowboy' are among the most told folk tales in the middle class families. This group of mothers gets these stories in storybooks to teach their children to teach moral lessons.

A slum mother picked up totally a different kind of story while giving example what stories she tells her kid.

Selina from the house next door,
I don't play with her
I'm not in good terms with her
I don't visit her house.
Those whose homes are two-storied
Crows koww on those houses,
Mother, I plead with you
Let me play with my dolls

The dolls have curly hair
I'll decorate it with rose.

[Interview # 6 (Slum mother), 05/07/13].

This is a local tale, woven in the form of a rhyme, one slum mother tells her child. Like other tales, it brings forth the strain prevailing between the people of two separate strata of life.

The other folk tales told in slum areas include the story of 'Monkeys Fleeing with Clothes', 'Hunchback Old Woman Hidden in a Pumpkin' etc [Interview # 4 (Slum mother), 25/06/13 & Interview # 5 (Slum mother), 02/07/13].

"There are other rhyme-stories in our home village" another one of them said during the interview. Asked about example, she sang:

O grandma, when will you go to Dhaka?
On a red Friday.
Wearing a red saree, shining magnificently"
[Interview # 6 (Slum mother), 05/07/13].

When the same participant was asked whether she tells stories of kings and queens, or others like 'Tonatuni' or 'A Tiger and A Heron', she replied: "I don't know these" [Interview # 6 (Slum mother), 05/07/13].

Moral Stories. To give kids moral lessons, mothers mainly tell religious stories and folk tales or pick up examples from real life, sometimes inventing some and blending those with ambience from the surrounding. Middle-class mothers often pick up these stories from books.

During interview, a middle-class mother of two girls picked up one example on how she teach them moral lesson by telling religious stories:

I tell my children stories from books, besides those I share with the kids without book, which I know. I tell them the life story of Prophet Muhammad

and explain it. Again, Maybe they did something wrong. I would tell them a story and make them understand that they had done the wrong. They pick up quickly and remember it for long if we give the message through stories. I tell them that we should not look down upon the poor people. When they shut the door seeing some beggars, I advise them not to do this and say our Prophet had never done this. Again, I refer to the Prophet and say that people should not harm anyone even if the other person harms him first [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13].

Another mother also said she tells religious stories to her daughter and son, instead of fairytales or folk tales, to teach morality. “There are stories in the religion study textbook. I further add with it, the history I know” she said [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Another major character mothers tell their children about is Bayezid Bostami, who is known for his obedience and love for his mother. While discouraging children to tell lies, mothers, especially in the middle class, tell the story of the liar cowboy. “Without just advising them not to tell lies, I tell my daughters that since the cowboy lied many times, no-one paid heed to his cry when the tiger came really” [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13].

Participant mothers from both middle class and slum areas said they pick up stories from their surrounding and families to give real life examples while teaching morality.

Stories according to child's gender. Though many mothers try not to undermine any sex, they put emphasis instinctively on the gender based on whom they are telling the stories to – a son or a daughter. During the FGDs, the mothers said they highlight the male characters as the boys express interests in those characters. It is same in the case of the girls [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13 & FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers), 08/06/13].

Similar tone was evident during the interview with a middle class mother, “My son is not interested in anything that has female characters. He is more attracted by stories which have male characters” [Interview # 1(Middle class mother), 16/06/13]. Most mothers would refer to strong, healthy and well-mannered male characters while giving examples how the boys should look like and behave. “I often tell my son not to cry and be courageous like his father”, said a middle class mother [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

On the other hand, a girl produced a stack of storybooks based on female characters, like Cinderella, Tusharkonna, Sleeping Princess, Mermaid, Beauty and Beast etc, during conversation with the researcher. “I want to be like this. I want to wear this dress and have this long hair”, the girl said pointing to a picture of a beautiful female character in one of her storybooks [Informal conversation # 2 (Middle class child), 20/06/13].

A mother in the slum advises her five-year-old daughter not to be extrovert and physically active. “I tell her, ‘You are a girl. You should not jump and hop too much like others’”, she said during interview. While elaborating, she picked one of her in-laws as example.

My daughter has a grandmother who is very pious. Besides saying her prayers and fasting regularly, she maintains *purdah* so much that none even can see her feet. She does not mix with anyone, only talks about prayers and fasting. I tell her that her grandmother acted as midwife during her birth and she looks much like her grandmother, not me. “If you follow her, you will get as much respect as she gets”, I tell her. I have bought her a *hijab* to cover her head, make her say prayers, recite from the Quran [Interview # 4 (Slum mother), 25/06/13].

The same mother said she tells her son the real life stories of one of the child’s uncles, who is a teacher at a BRAC-run primary school.

Children showed their interest towards the stories that have character of same gender. Nadia from the middle class showed the researcher a stack of storybooks she like most have female prominent characters, such as Cinderella, Tusharkonna, Sleeping Princess, Mermaid, Beauty and Beast etc. On the other hand, when the boy was asked about 'Cinderella', he replied, "Who is Cinderella?"

Cartoons as interesting story plots for children. Now- a-days, cartoons have become interesting story plots for the children, particularly those in the middle class. Even when they are with their mothers, the kids insist on talking about the cartoon characters, and thus the cartoons' stories become the plots of the stories.

One middle class mother, whose son showed disliking towards listening stories from books during informal conversation, said that her son love to listen more about cartoon stories than any book stories or oral stories. "He shares cartoons stories when he is at bed during the night", the mother said [Interview # 1(Middle class mother), 16/06/13].

My daughter is very much interested to talk about the cartoons that she watches on the television. "After watching 'Bhim' on television, she insisted me to talk about those. She is very afraid of skeleton. So, she used to say that if she eats a lot like the way Bhim eats 'Laddo', then her skeleton will not come out[FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

The above is the statement of a middle class mother during FGD.

Children like to hear stories they heard before

Interestingly, children from both the middle-class and those living in slums like to hear stories that they have heard before and express their eagerness to hear same stories again and again, according to the mothers [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13 & FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers) , 08/06/13].

“Though my daughter has heard the story many times before, she keeps requesting me to read the same from storybook again. Sometimes I do not like to repeat it but she loves to hear it over and over” [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13]. Another one said, “My son loves to hear old stories. He listens to the same story five to six times and would later try to tell the story himself” [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Usual storytelling time with the children

Middle-class mothers who tell stories to children choose naptime or sleep time either during day or night to send their children to sleep, though it varies from mothers to mothers. During interviews, one middle-class mother said, “I mostly give time at bedtime during the night” [Interview # 1 (Middle class mother), 16/06/13]. Conversely, another mother said, “I don’t usually tell stories at night because my children go asleep before I go to bed. In the afternoon, they do not like to take nap and ask me to say a story. Then I tell them stories and they fall asleep” [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13].

However, two slum mothers said during FGD that they sometimes tell stories to their children during sleep time at night. One said, smiling, “I tell *Monkey’s Story* to my children at night to send them to sleep” [FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers), 08/06/13].

Mothers also tell their children stories when they feed the kids or take them out. Sometimes when the children insist, mothers have to tell stories at unusual times such as study time or when the mothers are busy in their household works [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13, Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Children both from slum and middle-class reported afternoon and night as the usual time for telling stories. Therefore,

- Naptime during afternoon
- Sleep time at night
- Feeding time and
- In between study time

Can be considered as times mothers usually allocate for storytelling

4.1.3 Stories urban mothers relate and the contributions of these to child's learning and development

The third objective of the study was to identify whether the stories related by urban mothers are contributory towards child's learning and development. The study revealed that a majority of mothers do think of contributions of stories towards child's development when selecting stories.

Following contributions of the stories were identified at the FDGs and interviews when urban mothers' selection of stories was discussed.

Stories

- promote curiosity
- convey good messages
- pass societal norms and values
- help to understand the difference between good and bad
- help to develop a bonding between mother and children
- support children's language and literacy development

- support language development through learning to retell the story
- support children's mental development
- provide joy and happiness

Stories promote curiosity

Very curious about what they see, children ask questions about those. So, the mothers also keep responding to the questions and sometimes make stories to meet their children's curiosity. "Their (children) minds are full of questions. They are very eager to hear, to know and to learn about their surroundings" [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13]. As mothers continue replying to their queries, children feel encouraged to inquire more and mothers have to stretch the stories further.

Stories convey good messages

FDGs revealed that mothers look for conveying good messages through stories. "If I do not share stories that have good messages, how could my child understand what is good and what is bad?" one middle class mother said during FGD.

Stories pass societal norms and values to children

Passing societal norms and values to children is another aspect mothers keep in their minds while selecting stories. Sometimes they select stories according to the gender of the children and explain gender role of the particular character. Both slum and middle class mothers reported during FGDs that they put emphasis on strong male characters while telling stories to their boy child. On the other hand, for girl child, they mostly pick up stories which have soft and well-mannered female characters. In that way, mothers draw the expected social role of their children. They also keep in mind age of the child while selecting stories.

Children understand the difference between good and bad through stories

During FGD, a middle-class mother pointed out that children can identify good and evil from stories.

I tell him stories that show that he doesn't need to help a deceptive or bad element. For example, when I tell him the story of a tiger which tries to kill a heron, its rescuer, my son understands that the heron invited danger for himself by extending help to the tiger. So, he asks me, "Why did the heron rescue the bad tiger?" [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

In a similar tone, a mother said during interview: "When this kind of stories come up, I explain to them that this also happens in our lives. You may do a service for someone but he may want to harm you" [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Like identifying good and evil characters, children also learn values as stories progress. "Hearing about the consequence of the liar cowboy, my kid realizes that he should not tell lies. You don't have to explain this to him" said a middle-class mother.

Children also learn about what to choose and what to leave. For example, when a guardian tells a kid 'Grapes are Sour' story, the latter learn that s/he should not regret for something, which he cannot get. "This is why my son stops whining for chips and say it himself that I didn't buy him it because it is not a quality food", a middle class mother said during FGD.

Storytelling makes bonding between mother and children

Storytelling builds relationship between parents and their children. Stressing the need of telling kids stories, a middle class mother said during interview:

I think the parents should have the practice to tell stories to their children. To me, it is good to pass time with the kids no matter in which way you do this. It is good for the parents as well as the children. It helps them to open up, learn

to talk, assess which is good which not. You will also understand their minds [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13].

Storytelling helps children's language and literacy development

Storytelling promotes children's language and literacy development in many ways.

Mothers from slum pointed out during FGD that telling stories helps kids to learn how to speak, especially those who speak little. One of them said, "Mothers have to talk more with the children who speak little. How can a child learn speaking if his/her mother doesn't speak?" Stressing the need for telling stories to young kids, a slum mother said during FGD that she tries to speak to her child as much as she can knowing that it will help the kid overcome if there is any problem. "My son cannot speak a lot and has started to talk lately. This is why I speak to him as much as I can" [FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers), 08/06/13].

Middle class mothers find storytelling by using books promotes literacy skills more than storytelling without books. Before the children start to learn writing, they learn new words. A mother explained:

A story does not only offer a plot. New words can be learnt. My daughters come to me if they don't understand a word. And then they learn it in the second or third attempts. My older daughter can read fast. It cannot be achieved only by reading textbooks. They learn to read speedily and know about meaning of different words by reading storybooks. It is true that there is no alternative to reading books [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13].

Reading stories from books makes kids interested about reading books themselves. A middle class mother of a five year old boy asserted it as,

Tushar used to follow his two years older sister and would open the books pretending as if he was reading. Though he would not understand everything, he would still hold the books open before his eyes. He would read aloud many hard-to-understand words. He was able to continue reading, though not very fluently, at the age of four and a half. I think his reading of storybooks helped him read fast at an early age. Mothers of many of his classmates say their kids' reading is not so fluent. Early start of reading storybooks helped Tushar learn spellings too. Many times, I notice that he knows the spelling or meaning of many words [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Children learn language through retelling stories

Kids tend to tell stories the way they hear those from their mothers or other family members. Taking cues from stories, children also create similar stories bringing some slight changes to the ones they hear from their mothers and retell those to others. As they grow up, they start inventing and adding something more with the stories and trying to make it as interesting as possible with different gestures and body movements, which proves that they are catching up with the language.

A middle class mother said on this:

My son tells her uncle the 'Tonatuni' story. He tries to tell it the way I did it to him and adds two more things. I don't know where he has found those two things. Later on, he returns to me, very happy, and tells me that he has told the story to his uncle. The two additional things which he added also appear good to hear! [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13]

As he tries to reproduce the story, a kid shares it with as many others as he can and also listens to what others have to share. [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13]

Stories help children's mental development

"Through listening stories, children 'internalize' new ideas and knowledge. They understand these and don't make any 'illogical demand'," a mother from slum noted [Interview # 4 (Slum mother), 25/06/13]. Similarly, another slum mother sees that telling stories keep children's brain active [Interview # 6 (Slum mother),

05/07/13]. One middle class mother stated that when a mother tells her child a story, the kid may comprehend it and learn many things, though he may not express that [Interview # 3 (Middle class mother), 22/06/13].

Storytelling enhances 'imagination power'. Stories create 'curiosity' and answer it, teaching children how to field a question. A middle class mother explained how a storytelling enhances imagination of the children.

Storytelling enhances imagination power. Kids start to visualize the whole story and keep on asking questions. Again, during retelling stories if they find the listeners do not understand, then describe the stories in details. They imagine the story as if they can see the whole thing in front of them [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

Storytelling is a source of joy

Storytelling is a great source of entertainment and joy for both the children and the mothers. "The kids find fun and burst into laughing", said a slum mother who works as a domestic help [Interview # 5 (Slum mother), 02/07/13]. Another mother said, smiling, "I tell *Monkey's Story* to my children at night to send them to sleep. This is the story what I usually say to the little kids...". The other mothers joined her in amusement, saying the story has lots of fun [FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers), 08/06/13].

Another slum mother echoes the same, stressing how much she enjoys telling stories. "After a day's work, I share stories with my kids when I go to bed. It refreshes both their and my mind" [FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers), 08/06/13].

Children learn inappropriate things too from stories

Through stories, children also learn things that their mothers do not want to let them know about, one mother said picking up an example from the story 'Cinderella'.

“Cinderella had an affair with the Prince. I do not want to let my little daughter to know that at her tender age” she added. “Again, I do not like the issue about the wicked mother of ‘Cinderella’. I think this is not good for a kid. I would rather like to share with her the positive aspects of the story, like good behaviour of ‘Cinderella’ and the hard work she does” [Interview # 2 (Middle class mother), 20/06/13].

4.1.4 Urban mothers’ knowledge on the importance of storytelling to child development

Exploring the knowledge of urban mothers on the importance of storytelling to child development was the fourth objective of this study. During FGDs and individual interviews, all mothers agreed that telling stories is very important for children’s development. Both group of mothers have knowledge and were able to mention the importance of storytelling for child development such as language development, mental development and emotional bonding with the mothers while they were asked about it. The story examples mentioned previously under theme three also support that mothers have knowledge on the importance of storytelling.

While mothers were asked, during FGDs and individual interviews, whether they feel that storytelling should be practised at every home, the mothers irrespective of their social background replied in the positive and pointed out the importance of storytelling. One middle-class mother said she found stories as valuable tools for her child’s well being, adding that she was not sure whether other families practise it or not. Mothers also mentioned that children now-a-days are exposed to too many alternatives like watching television cartoons, playing video games on computer etc. for spending time other than hearing stories. However, during FGDs, all of them did

not agree that they themselves would practice storytelling instead of watching television or letting their kids watch it. One middle class mother said during FGD, “It is almost impossible to keep away my child from modern technology, like television and computer. I have to give my child the opportunity to get himself introduced to that” [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

All the FGDs and interview data revealed the following reasons why mothers think practising storytelling with children regularly is important.

- Understanding social context and surroundings
- Learning to determine good and bad
- Moral teaching
- Relationship with mother
- Language learning
- Providing children joy

Though they are aware about the negative impacts of children’s watching TV cartoons and agreed that it is better if the children pass more time listening to stories, mothers said it is not always possible to refrain children from watching TV.

In both slums and middle-class families, young children love to watch television, especially cartoons, more. “My son would only watch cartoons. He likes it more than anything” a mother from slum said during FGD [FGD notes # 2 (Slum mothers), 08/06/13]. While the slum kids have less scope to watch television as all the families do not afford to buy a TV set, the middle-class ones pass a long time watching television on regular basis. “Mothers are very busy whether they are house wife or servicing. As long as my child is busy watching cartoons, he won’t bother me

and I would be able to finish my work on time” [FGD notes # 1 (Middle class mothers), 09/06/13].

Mothers believe that cartoons leave children in an unreal world. Mothers opined that the cartoons influence children to become unrealistic as if they live in the imaginary world. “As if they live in an imaginary world after watching so many cartoons including ‘Doremon’, ‘Tom and Jerry’ etc. He would take my scarf, wrap it around his neck and jump down from the cot posing as Superman or Batman,” said a middle class mother while describing cartoons’ unwanted impact.

Mothers are also concerned about the cultural impacts on children who watch TV cartoons regularly because the plots of almost all the cartoons are based on foreign cultures and languages. So, they think TV cartoons create a cultural conflict.

The cartoons are not related with the culture of our country, so I don’t want to let my son watch TV cartoons. My son tries to speak Hindi while playing with other kids. It is because he has got orientation with Hindi culture through cartoons. Now ‘Dorimon’ has been stopped telecasting, which is a good decision,” one middle class mother said while explaining the cultural dilemma resulting from watching cartoons [Interview # 1(Middle class mother), 16/06/13].

4.2 Discussion

In this section, the researcher discusses results of the research, supported by data collected during FGDs, in-depth interviews of mothers and interviews of children. Since mothers play the main role in taking care of the children, urban mothers of children aged between three and five were chosen as the key research participants. Children of the aforementioned mothers were also involved in informal discussions. Literature reviews on the topic have also been related and incorporated along with research findings.

4.2.1 Storytelling as a regular practice at home

Both the groups of mothers– (slum dwellers and middle class)– practice storytelling but on irregular basis. The very fact that middle class mothers are graduates and housewives, and the slum mothers are not educated and work as domestic helps seems to have a bearing on their storytelling practices. Clearly differentiated by their educational, financial and social status, they showed varying inclinations and behavior while describing their practice of storytelling to their children. The study found that

Between the two groups, middle-class mothers tell stories more frequently (50%) than the slum mothers do (28.5%). Mothers from both the groups said they cannot tell stories to their children the way they expect to do so due to their engagement in other works. The groups however showed varied reasons.

For the slum mothers, two major reasons are their engagement in works outside their homes and their household chores after they return home. To some slum mothers, telling stories to the children is ‘idle talk’. Without attaching much importance on their children’s mental development, they would better put more emphasis on providing ‘visible physical care’ to their children like feeding, bathing or sending the kids to sleep.

On the other hand, some middle-class mothers cited other reasons while explaining why they do not find enough time for storytelling. Though they are homemakers, they say they are busy in different types of works at and outside their homes, this group of mothers also pointed out their kids’ lack of interest to listen stories since they have other pastime activities like watching TV and playing games on computers.

Harkins and Ray (2004) study also backs the possible cultural differences within mother-child narratives. Like their findings, this study also finds that mothers' educational level is an important parameter of social class and impacted the goals and styles of storytelling. More highly educated mothers asked their children more questions to sensitize their mental growth. According to Harkins and Ray (2004), their goal of storytelling is social relaxation, fostering values and self-direction in their children. Goals and styles of storytelling of the comparatively less educated mothers, meanwhile, revealed their tendency toward conformity and obedience.

Mothers, who are in the practice of telling stories said their kids would like to listen to stories mostly during bedtime in the night or during naptime in the day. The other times when storytelling is practiced include feeding time and the time between study periods.

Though the mothers cannot tell stories to their children on a regular basis due to their engagements in some other things, it is the mothers who mostly tell stories to the children in a family. The mothers compensate it by giving time to their children later. Sometimes, children also listen to stories from their fathers or elder siblings.

4.2.2 Stories urban mothers frequently relate

Storytelling practice largely involves the oral storytelling by mothers from both middle-class and the slum dwelling mothers, the study has found. This is conversational and informal talking. A major finding of the study is that it is the lone tool of the slum mothers for sharing stories with their children. The middle-class mother sometimes uses storybooks alongside the oral practice.

Interestingly, while describing any event or giving explanation to their children about something object or incident taking place in their surroundings, mothers term those as stories. This study found that these kinds of ‘stories’ are on the top of the list though folk tales, fairy tales, moral and religious stories occupy a significant chunk of stories shared by the middle-class mothers. Mothers narrate those to their children mainly in the form of conversation and question-answer. Children are very curious to know about their surroundings. Therefore, real life stories, which are mostly personal, are the most spoken stories among all kinds of stories that mothers narrate to satisfy the curious minds of their children.

Choices varied widely when urban mothers picked up examples, basing on their social backgrounds, when asked what kinds of story they tell to their children. The slum mothers cited stories mainly on their personal experience, life struggle and folk pieces which are different from the ones middle-class mothers who mostly pick up folk tales, fairy tales, moral and religious stories.

The slum kids remain mesmerized while listening stories and dreaming of better days earning ‘lots of money’ or becoming a teacher and ‘wearing in shoes with cane stick in hand’. On the other hand, children from the middle-class are mainly exposed to stories that teach social norms and values.

Study by Tsitsani et al. (2011) about fairy tales in a Greek island suggested that majority of parents choose classic fairy tales concerning children’s preferences, which is similar to the statements of the middle-class mothers. But Harkins and Ray (2004) suggested that past event stories or personal stories are a choice of mother-child storytelling though there remains variation among different cultures, which supports findings of this study.

Children love to hear about their own childhood stories very much. Moreover, childhood stories of their siblings, parents, family members and others were also in the list. Children relate their own experiences with other characters of the family.

The study results support that mothers in the slum and middle class pick up different kinds of folk tales, moral and religious stories. Their examples and explanation were also very different based on their expectations from their children. The middle class mothers tell some traditional folk tales and fairy tales which the slum mothers never heard of. Conversely, middle class mothers did not mention about the kind of stories the slum mother choose.

Similarly, Harkins and Ray (2004) in their study suggested that cultural differences and educational level of mothers have impact on style of narratives and goals of storytelling that the researcher mentioned earlier.

One of the interesting finding is that slum mothers talked about some local rhymed poems rooted from their village homes and termed those as stories.

Vries (2008) noted that the use of music in the storytelling sessions was also seen as a way to get children's attention, or focus the children on the stories. Although there was frequently a clear distinction between a story and song in the storytelling sessions, parents and Carers saw music, in particular vocalization- as being embedded in the telling of stories. Carers mentioned that at home music was used in storytelling particularly in relation to singing (Vries, 2008).

Again, slum mothers mostly choose stories from real life and present examples of role models to their children, like 'Aladdin uncle' to teach them moral values and good behavior. Their social status and economic insolvency appear in their stories. On

the other hand, middle class mothers choose religious stories or folk tales to teach children values and morality.

Likewise, Miller, Wiley, Fung and Liang (1997) in their study showed that middle-class Chinese and middle-class European American families use personal storytelling as a medium of socialization for their children aged 2,6 within the family context . The stories occur naturally in which the past experiences of the focal child were narrated. Chinese families were found more likely to use personal storytelling to impart moral and social standards. On the other hand, American families did that more as a resource of entertainment and affirmation. Their study findings indicate that personal storytelling operates as a routine socializing practice in widely different cultures.

Gender consideration in story selection

It was revealed at the FGDs that mothers consciously or sub-consciously keep in their mind the gender of the main characters while selecting stories, though they do not mean any disparity. Mothers put emphasis on the traditional role of each gender while narrating stories to the children. Most mothers of boys emphasize on the strong, healthy and well-mannered male characters. On the other hand, mothers of girl children choose stories that have soft and modest female characters. Mothers stressed that children should be raised according to their gender and, for that, it is important to teach them the ideal gender role.

Children's interest in the characters of the same gender was also noted during the informal conversations with the children. They insist their mothers to choose stories according to their gender. Mothers claimed during FGDs and interviews that they choose such stories for giving preference for the kid's interest.

Transmitting values and culture through storytelling

Children receive lessons on values and culture unconsciously when they listen to stories. The mothers would pick up certain stories, based on the situation, which best teaches what kind of moral values they want their kids to learn.

For example, the story of 'Bayezid Bostami' teaches how to respect mothers and the story of the 'Liar Cowboy' teaches children not to tell lies, the story of Prophet Muhammad's removing the thorns from his way teaches children not to harm anyone even if they do in the first place. After hearing the 'Grapes are Sour' story, young children learn that they should not regret for something that they cannot get.

The beauty of storytelling is that it passes values and culture to the children with ease without making the kids aware that it is a learning process. When children react at different stages of a story and the mothers listen passionately and answer their questions, the kids learn to listen to others and value others' opinions, the mothers think. While hearing stories that have evil characters, children learn about the bad sides of human character through stories.

In the same way, Miller et al. (1997) study findings suggested that personal storytelling operates as a routine socialization practice widely in different cultures focusing on the third year of the life. Chinese families were much more likely than the European American counterparts to tell stories about the child's past transgression. Possible explanation can be Chinese caregiver may be more likely to see the child's past transgressions as didactic resource for conveying rules of appropriate conduct to the child.

The sight of beggars on the streets make many children curious and that is when the mothers from the two groups give varying explanation based on what

message they want to pass on to their children. While the slum mothers tell the kids that it is a blow of fate that people like the crippled beggar are the 'poorest' ones on the earth, the middle-class mothers explain that the man would not have to seek alms from people had he been 'sent to school'. Though the explanation varies, both groups of mothers would explain the poor deserve kindness from others who are in better position in the society. This helps the mothers explain what humanity is and thus to shape children's mind to build their own viewpoints.

Literature showed that children are amused and positively affected by storytelling mostly by talking about their favorite characters. Conversely, children seem to be satisfied or relieved when villain characters are punished. But, in some cases, cruel punishment of bad characters creates feeling of fear to the kids (Tsitsani et al., 2011)

4.2.3 Selection of stories-whether they contribute towards child's learning and development

Storytelling sensitizes children's mental development, mothers believe. To enhance 'imagination power' and sensitize 'curiosity', mothers relate stories to their children in an apt way, according to middle-class mothers. On the other hand, slum mothers opined that storytelling helps kids 'internalize' new knowledge and keep off making 'illogical demands'. Properly related stories are tools for 'entertainment and joy' which also helps the emotional development of the listeners and encourages the kids to open up. In the process, the bonding between mothers and children gets stronger.

Mothers believed that storytelling improves language development and home literacy environment. During FDG and interviews, mothers put emphasis on the

importance of storytelling as homes, where the children first start learning to speak, are the places where their lesson for literacy begins. Mothers from both the slum and the middle class believe that storytelling provides the opportunity to learn new words, spelling, language structures and make the world meaningful.

A positive side of reading stories from books is that it makes kids interested about reading books themselves, according to middle class mothers. Middle class mothers find storytelling using books promotes literacy skills more than storytelling without books. But since the slum mothers, many of whom are illiterate, cannot read, they cannot take advantage of telling stories from books. Some of them regretted this saying that they do not have many books at their shanties.

Research found that both storytelling without book and story reading produce positive gains in oral language development of children. However, children in the story reading group are improved in their language complexity.

The finding goes with Palmer et al. (2000) study in the USA which says that storytelling provides an excellent vehicle for promoting and enhancing language and literacy development within families. Children learn story grammar best through repeated exposure to stories, according to Reutzel and Cooter (2000) (as cited in Palmer et al., 2000).

This study found that children irrespective of their social status like to hear stories which they have heard earlier. This finding is supported by many scholars. As Pearce (1992, p.157) points out that children become more active listeners when they reach 5 years or so because their capacity to create images in the fashion has developed well enough to operate on much less energy. Children want to hear the same story over and over again.

4.2.4 Knowledge of urban mothers on the importance of storytelling to child development.

The study identified that although mothers know that stories are important they are not serious about telling stories.

Data collected during this study shows mothers from both groups have knowledge of how important storytelling is for children's development. They themselves mentioned that they should share stories with their children because it helps the understanding social context and surroundings; learning to determine good and bad; moral teaching; relationship and bonding with mothers; and language learning.

Mothers believe that storytelling plays an important role not only in the language and mental development of the children but also in turning the children's brain active, strengthening the bonding with the kids and fulfilling the emotional needs. Some other positive impacts, like that of social and emotional development of the children, also come along with storytelling. Through the FGDs and informal discussions, it was learnt that many mothers are aware about this. And that is why they try to find out time to pass quality time through telling stories with their children.

Children are captivated by the stories and they expressed their attachment by repeatedly requesting the story. That story attachments were social in two ways: children created relationships with the characters in their favorite stories, and relationship with the caregiver (Alexander, Sapiet, Miller and Hengst, 2001).

Listening to maternal storytelling can have an immediate effect on a child's narrative skill and may be an important source for the child's acquisition of narrative skill, according to Harkins et al. (2001). In this study too mother revealed the knowledge that storytelling enhances language, promotes bonding and mental development.

It was interesting to note that some mothers have the knowledge of negative effects of stories sometimes. As mentioned earlier they believe that some stories give wrong message.

Mothers further added during FGDs and interviews that watching television is a key barrier to storytelling. Since mothers do not have much time to spend with the children, many let their kids pass time watching televisions. While it keeps them busy, the mothers can finish their home chores or other works. Meanwhile, the slum mothers experience a different reality in this regard since they do not have TV sets. Their children like to watch televisions too but have to go somewhere to watch it.

In urban life, television is taking up a big chunk of storytelling time in an indication that the traditional practice of storytelling is on the slide. As children are more inclined to watching cartoons, they would insist on watching TVs or talking about the cartoon characters or plots when their mothers attempt to start a story. Even while going to bed, they kids would appear excited to share with their mothers a episode of cartoons which s/he watched.

While some mothers leave a sigh of relief seeing their kids engaged in something and not bothering them, some expressed their worries that foreign are invading the children' minds through the TV shows. Exposed to long hours of watching television, the kids are open to "unwanted" cultures and live in unreal world

thinking about the imaginary world. Many children would try to behave like hero characters, like Superman and Spiderman, while some would try to talk like Doremon.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study conducted to explore the practice of storytelling by urban mothers in Dhaka city. Data were collected from Mother participants of children aged 3 to 5 years from two different strata of society by two FGDs and three in depth interviews for each group of mothers. In addition, six children of the same mothers (who participated in depth interviews) also took part in the interviews with guided questions following informal conversational style. Since, the researcher did not have any knowledge of any study conducted in Bangladesh in that particular area before, the particular study explored storytelling practice of mothers, types of stories they relate, how storytelling contributes to the child development and mothers knowledge on the importance of storytelling.

The first specific objective of the study was to find out whether storytelling is a common practice among urban mothers. Data presented and discussed in the previous chapter showed that although mothers practiced storytelling it was not practiced as a routine exercise in a majority of homes (see table 4.1). Data also showed that slum dwelling mothers lag behind the middle class mothers in this fruitful exercise that enhance children's learning. It was evident from the remarks of the slum dwelling mothers that they are busy with more demanding work of keeping home fires burning. Therefore, it can be concluded that storytelling practices among urban mothers are not altogether uncommon but not regular or practiced as a routine

task. Another conclusion that can be arrived at is socio economic conditions do affect mothers' storytelling practices.

The present study identified the types of stories urban mothers usually relate to their children and the time they relate them (the second objective). Based on the results discussed previously, it can be concluded that urban mothers narrate different kinds of stories (see table 4.2) to their children depending on their purpose, and the social and educational background. The typical storytelling practice at home is informal and is the oral style of storytelling, which is conversational and informal talking. For slum mothers, it is the only way that they share stories with their children. Some of the middle class mothers use storybooks sometimes. On the contrary, slum mothers never use storybooks, as they do not have formal education. The most frequently related stories are personal stories, such as real life stories, childhood stories or invented stories, depending on the situation. Other stories are folk tales, fairy tales, moral stories, religious stories etc. It was interesting to note that selection of stories by the mothers depended on the children's gender and their interest towards certain stories. Mothers relate those stories often blending with the present situation with an intention to pass a message or teach the kids something. The study revealed that a majority of mothers do not have a regular time for storytelling. They use naptime during afternoon, sleep time at night, feeding time and between study times for telling stories, but it is sleep time and naptime when they tell stories more.

Stories related by urban mothers are contributory towards the children's learning and development (third objective). Mothers explained that storytelling promotes curiosity, convey good message, pass societal norms and values, help them understand the difference between good and bad, help to develop a bonding between

mother and children, support children's language and literacy development, and support children's mental development.

Mothers irrespective of background are found to have knowledge on the importance of storytelling (fourth objective). When asked, they pointed out the importance of storytelling for child development. The reasons the mothers think storytelling is important are: understanding social context and surroundings; learning to determine good and bad; moral teaching; building relationship with mother; and making the child happy. Though mothers are very much aware of it, they cannot stop children from spending a good amount of time in front of television watching cartoons, which takes up the time for sharing stories. The mothers view watching cartoons as an unconstructive act but admitted they have little to do to stop it.

4.4 Recommendations

The study was done on a small urban sample. So, further study is recommended. Nevertheless, the findings of the study have implications in the field of ECD, particularly in the home-based childcare practices where storytelling may have vital role for mother-child interactions. Moreover, the study indicates a pattern of stories that are culturally suitable for children of Bangladesh. The researcher presents here some recommendations based on the findings and learning from the study.

- While designing parenting education program, special attention should be paid to include a component on 'storytelling with children' in the curriculum so that the parents can be made more aware about the positive aspects of sharing stories with their children.

- Children curriculum developers should consider the interests of children, and cultural appropriateness while developing and selecting stories for the text so that children can communicate better.
- Since oral storytelling is practiced most in the urban households irrespective of social status, the ECD professionals, who design programs particularly for slum children, should focus on enhancing their knowledge how to incorporate oral storytelling in the curriculum. They should include real life stories which help children better in relating events taking place around them.
- Though storytelling practice has been found in many families, use of storybooks is not common among the urban mothers. Since it is crucial for improving home literacy environment, special attention should be paid to make parents aware about its merits.

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APPENDICES

Appendix: A

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with Mothers

FGD Schedule

General Information:

Location:

Date:

Duration: 1 hour

Number of Participants: 8 mothers

Background of Participants: (Socioeconomic Condition, Education..)

Rapport Building: Exchange greetings, introduce the researcher, sharing the purpose of FGD, duration for FGD and asking permission for starting the session and taking notes and using the tape recorder.

Guide for Questions

Theme 1: Storytelling as a common practice at homes

1. How do you spend your time with your child when you are free?
2. If you tell stories when you spend time with your child please think and tell me the time you have mostly used for storytelling and why you use that time.
3. If you do not tell stories please tell me the reasons.
4. How many stories do you usually tell your child within a week? Tell me why you tell the same story/ different stories.
5. How do you feel when you could not tell a story for any reason? Would you and your child miss the storytelling time? What would you do to compensate it?
6. Suppose your child reminds you to tell a story and you are busy. What would you do?
7. Describe how you relate stories? (Read a storybook or relate without reading from a book or both, act when relating)

Theme 2: Stories urban mothers frequently relate

1. Tell me the type of stories you relate to your child – (folk stories, fairy tales, ghost, religious, real stories from family and surroundings. If others, please mention).
2. Tell me why you select such stories.
3. When you select stories please tell me whether you consider the child's gender, culture etc. and why. (Please name some stories you think would suit more for girls and vice versa).

Theme 3: Selection of stories-whether they contribute towards child's learning and development

1. Tell me whether you think every story you tell has a good message or good examples for children to learn. Please give reasons why you think so.
2. Can you please describe on what criteria you select stories to relate to your child?
3. Name few stories you relate and tell me how they contribute to the child's learning and development (e.g morals, language, conscience and values etc.).
4. Tell me how you draw your child's attention to these important facts while telling stories.

Theme 4: Mothers' knowledge on the importance of storytelling

1. Do you feel that storytelling is a must in every home and why?
2. If you think so, do you honestly give up watching TV or any other thing that you like to spend story telling with the child?
3. Give five reasons to explain the importance of storytelling.
4. If you do not think so, how would you achieve the things said by others who think it is important?

Do you like to add anything to this discussion on storytelling?

1. Do you believe that storytelling is important for young children? Tell me why you think so.
2. Tell me whether you think every story you know has a good message or examples for children. Can you cite examples from the stories you know?

In-depth interviews with Mothers

Interview Schedule

General Information:

Date:

Location:

Background of Participant:

Socio- economic Condition

Education

Number of Child:

Sex of child:

Age of child:

Rapport Building: Exchange greetings, introduce the researcher, sharing the purpose of Interview, duration for interview and asking permission for starting the session and taking notes and using the tape recorder.

Guide for Questions

Theme 1: Storytelling as a common practice at homes

1. How do you spend your time with your child when you are free?
2. If you tell stories when you spend time with your child please think and tell me the time you have mostly used for storytelling and why you use that time.
3. If you do not tell stories please tell me the reasons.
4. How many stories do you usually tell your child within a week? Tell me why you tell the same story/ different stories.
5. How do you feel when you could not tell a story for any reason? Would you and your child miss the storytelling time? What would you do to compensate it?
6. Suppose your child reminds you to tell a story and you are busy. What would you do?
7. Describe how you relate stories? (Read a storybook or relate without reading from a book or both, act when relating)

Theme 2: Stories urban mothers frequently relate

1. Tell me the type of stories you relate to your child – (folk stories, fairy tales, ghost, religious, real stories from family and surroundings. If others, please mention).
2. Tell me why you select such stories.
3. When you select stories please tell me whether you consider the child's gender, culture etc. and why. (Please name some stories you think would suit more for girls and vice versa).

Theme 3: Selection of stories-whether they contribute towards child's learning and development

1. Tell me whether you think every story you tell has a good message or good examples for children to learn. Please give reasons why you think so.
2. Can you please describe on what criteria you select stories to relate to your child?
3. Name few stories you relate and tell me how they contribute to the child's learning and development (e.g morals, language, conscience and values etc.).
4. Tell me how you draw your child's attention to these important facts while telling stories.

Theme 4: Mothers' knowledge on the importance of storytelling

1. Do you feel that storytelling is a must in every home and why?
2. If you think so, do you honestly give up watching TV or any other thing that you like to spend story telling with the child?
3. Give five reasons to explain the importance of storytelling.
4. If you do not think so, how would you achieve the things said by others who think it is important?

Do you like to add anything to this discussion on storytelling?

1. Do you believe that storytelling is important for young children? Tell me why you think so.
2. Tell me whether you think every story you know has a good message or examples for children. Can you cite examples from the stories you know?

Interviews with children

Interview schedule

General Information:

Location:

Date:

Duration: 1 hour

Background of Participants: (Socioeconomic Condition, mother education, siblings)

Rapport Building: Take permission from parents, exchange greetings, and introduce the researcher. Then give the child some play activity (joining dots, block building). When the child gets friendly and relaxed, say that the researcher would like to talk to him/her.

Guide for Questions

Theme 1: Storytelling as a common practice at homes

1. How do you spend your time with your mother when she is free?
2. Do you like listening to storytelling?
3. Does storytelling take place frequently at your home?
4. Who tells stories to you?
5. Is there a special time for storytelling and, if, so what is the usual time?
6. Usually how many stories does your mother/adult tell you within a week?
7. Do you request your mother/adult to tell a story you like very much over and over again?
8. Do you like to hear a different story many different?
9. If your mother/any adult could not tell a story as usual for any reason would you feel sad?
10. What does your mother do then?
11. Do you ask your mother/adults to tell a story?
12. Does your mother read a storybook or relate without reading from a book, or both?
13. Does she act while relating stories?

Theme 2: Stories urban mothers frequently relate

1. Tell me the type of stories your mother/adult relates to you – (folk stories, fairy tales, ghost, religious, real stories from family and surroundings. If others, please mention).
2. Tell me whether you like these stories.

Theme 3: Selection of stories-whether they contribute towards the child's learning and development

1. If your mother relates stories tell me the name of a story you like very much.
2. Tell me what you learned from that story.
3. Didn't you know it before listening to that story?
4. Do you know a story that tells lying is bad?
5. Do you know a story that tells sharing is good?
6. What else have you learnt from stories?

Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University
Master's Thesis Programme
Early Childhood Development

Consent Form

I am Fahmida Majumder, MSc. student in Early Childhood Development (ECD) at Institute of Educational Development at BRAC University. A research-based Master thesis will have to be submitted to my thesis committee as part of my obtaining the degree. You are invited to participate in a study titled **To Explore the Storytelling Practices of Urban Mothers**. The Purpose of this study is to explore urban mothers' storytelling practices with their children of age 3 to 5 years. The study will explore: how commonly urban mothers practice storytelling, what types of stories they relate with their children and how they relate those stories.

You have been chosen as a possible participant in this study. I will interview you to know your views on the issue, and your experiences about storytelling practice with your child will contribute to the study a lot. Probably, it will take around an hour. There will be no monetary compensation for your participation. There is no identified risk from participating in it.

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality about you and your family. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. The researchers named below will be responsible to ensure the protection of the information.

If you are willing to participate in this research, we would request you to sign this consent form. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Therefore, you may withdraw your participation at any time during the interview or later while the information is analyzed.

If you want to know more about this research or if there is relevant clarification that you may require, please contact the following persons.

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I have read the consent form or my acquaintance read it to me. I completely understand my rights about participation and am willing to participate in this research.

Name (Please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date _____

Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University
Master's Thesis Programme
Early Childhood Development

Consent Form for Children from Parents

I am Fahmida Majumder, MSc. student in Early Childhood Development (ECD) at Institute of Educational Development at BRAC University. A research-based Master thesis will have to be submitted to my thesis committee as part of my obtaining the degree. You are invited to participate in a study titled **To Explore the Storytelling Practices of Urban Mothers**. The Purpose of this study is to explore urban mothers' storytelling practices with their children of age 3 to 5 years. The study will explore: how commonly urban mothers practice storytelling, what types of stories they relate with their children and how they relate those stories.

Your child has been chosen as a possible participant in this study. I will interview your child to know his/ her feelings and experiences on the issue, to be specific the experiences about the storytelling practice. It will contribute to this study a lot. There is no identified risk from participating in it. There is no monetary compensation for your child or you personally for participating in the study. However, researcher will build rapport gradually with your child in a friendly manner and will not ask any questions that may hamper him/her psychologically. It may need several short sessions when your child will be asked questions.

The researcher will maintain the confidentiality about your family. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your child or you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. The researchers named below will be responsible to ensure the protection of the information.

If you agree to let your child participate in this research, we would request you to sign this consent form on behalf of your child. Your child's participation in this research is voluntary. Therefore, s/he may withdraw her/his participation at any time during the interview or later while the information is analyzed.

If you want to know more about this research or if there is relevant clarification that you may require, please contact the following persons.

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I have read the consent form or my acquaintance read it to me. I completely understand my rights about participation and am willing to participate in this research.

Name (Please print): _____ Signature: _____

Date _____

Sample Data Transcription (in Bangla)

প্র: আপনি বাসায় যখন থাকেন তখন বাচ্চাদের সাথে কিভাবে সময় কাটান?

উ: পড়াশুনা করে, গোছল খাওয়া এইসব আরকি, স্কুলে যায়, আসে, খাওয়া দাওয়া করে, বাকি সময় পড়ে-

দেখা যায় খেতে বসলেই গল্প বলা হয়, খায়না তখন গল্প বলি, তারপর কার্টুন দেখে এরপর গোছল করে খায়।

প্রতিদিন একই রকম। গল্প বলি, খাওয়ার সময় বলি, এছাড়া যখন ঘুমের জন্য বিছানায় যায়, আবার দেখা যায় আমি

যখন কাজ করছি তখন বলে মামনি গল্প বলো- তখন বলা হয় না, কিন্তু যখন ফ্রী থাকি তখন বলা হয়, দুপুর

টাইমটাতে। যখন দেখি যে মিথ্যা কথা বলতেছে- তখন গল্প বলে বলি, মামনি মিথ্যা বলো না, মিথ্যা বললে এমন

হয়। আবার অনেক সময় আমার স্কুল, কলেজ-হোস্টেল এসবের কথা শুনতে চায়- এসব বলে বলি কেমন মজা

করেছিলাম। আনন্দের গল্প শুনতে চাইলে সেগুলো বলি। আমার নিজের গল্পগুলো বলি

প্র: রাতে শোয়ার সময় গল্প বলেন? উ: রাতে শোয়ার সময় খুব একটা গল্প বলা হয় না, কারন দেখা যায় ওরা আগেই

ঘুমিয়ে যায়। দুপুরের টাইমে যখন ঘুমাতে চায়না তখন বলে আম্মু গল্প বলো, তখন বলি, তারপর ঘুমায়। দুপুর

টাইমটায় বেশি হয়।

প্র: কোন ধরনের গল্প বলেন সাধারণত? উ: বই থেকে বলি, আবার নিজেও বলি বই থেকে যেগুলো জানি, বলি ছোট

বাচ্চাদেরও যেগুলো বলা যায়- নবীর জীবন কাহিনী ওদেরকে বলি, বোঝাই- বই পড়ে পড়ে- (৩ মি: ২০ সে)

ওর অনেক বই আছে- বই দেখে বলি- আবার কোন পরিস্থিতিতে হয়তো কোন অন্যায় করল, তখন গল্প দিয়ে বলি,

গল্প দিয়ে বললে ওদের মজা হয়, মাথায় ঢুকে, মনে থাকে- ওর বাবাও বলে

প্র: কে বেশি বলে? উ: আমিই বলি- ওর আকা সময় পায়নাতো। পড়াশুনা হতে শুরম করে সবকিছু দেখা যায়

আমাকেই বলতে হয়

প্র: বই কিনে দেন? উ: হ্যাঁ, কিনে দেই, আমার ভাইও কিনে দেয়- বই মেলা থেকে কিনে দেয়। আবার আমিও কিনে

দেই

{নাফিসা তার সব বই বের করে দেখাতে থাকে। গবেষক- অনেক সুন্দর সুন্দর বই আছে তো তোমার}

প্র: (নাফিসাকে) কোন গল্প বেশি ভাল লাগে তোমার? উ: যাদুর পায়েসবাটি- একটি বই নিয়ে পড়ার চেস্টা করে-

‘সাপ ও রাজকুমারী’

প্র: কেন ভালো লাগে তোমার এই গল্পটি? উ: ছবি আছে সেজন্যে

প্র: তোমার রাজকন্যার গল্প ভালো লাগে নাকি রাজপুত্রের গল্প- উ: দুটাই ভালো লাগে

প্র: কখন থেকে আপনি তাকে বই দেখে গল্প বলেন? উ: অনেক ছোট বেলা হতে, বানান করে পড়তে পারে না, আমি

পড়ি ও শোনে

{একটার পর একটা বই দেখিয়ে বলতে থাকে- এটাও মজা লাগে আমার- }

প্র: কেন মজা লাগে তোমার? উ: যাদুর পায়েসের বাটি থাকে (৫ মি: ১৯ সে:)

প্র: এতোড়াগ যা শুনলাম যে- প্রতিদিনই গল্প বলেন- উ: হ্যাঁ, প্রতিদিনই বলা হয়।

প্র: বই পড়ে বেশি বলেন? নাকি এমনি- উ: না, আমি বই পড়ে বেশি বলি না, আমার যেগুলো জানা আছে, তা নিজে থেকে বলি-

প্র: সেটাকি বইএর গল্পই নিজে থেকে বলেন? একটা দুইটা উদাহরণ দেনতো- (নাফিসা পাশ থেকে: আম্মুর কলেজের ব্যাপার)

উ: হ্যাঁ, আমি যখন কলেজে তখনকার গল্প শুনতে চায়, বলি। তারপর বলি যেমন- মিথ্যা কথা বললে কি হয়

প্র: সেটা কি গল্পের মাধ্যমে বলেন নাকি সোজাসুজি বলেন- মিথ্যা কথা বলা ভারো না

উ: না না গল্প দিয়ে বলি- রাখাল মিথ্যা কথা বলছে- পড়ে আবার সত্যি কথা বলছে, তাকে কেই বিশ্বাস করে নাই।

তারপর বাইজিদ বোস্‌আমির কথা বলি। আবার যেমন বলি গরিবদের হিংসা করতে হয় না। অনেক সময় ফকির দেখলে বলে- দেখ ওরা কেমন গরীব, পচাঁ, দড়জা লাগিয়ে দেয়- তখন বলি এমন করতে হয় না, আমাদের নবীতো এমন করতেন না

প্র: (নাফিসাকে) তোমার কোন গল্প বেশি ভালো লাগে? উ: (মা) ও তো কার্টুন দেখতে বেশি ছন্দ করে, তারপরও গল্প শোনে

প্র: কার্টুন কখন কখন দেখ (নাফিসাকে)? উ: (নাফিসা) সিড্ডেলা বেশি ..

উ: (মা): স্পাইডারম্যান ওর ভালো লাগেনা, পকিমিন আবার কি জানি আছে বেনটেন- ছেলেদের জিনিষ পছন্দ করেনা। মেয়েদের গল্প, কার্টুন পছন্দ।

{অনেকগুলো গল্পের বই দেখায় যার প্রধান চরিত্র মেয়ে- সিড্ডেলা, তুষারকন্যা, ঘুমিয়ে পড়া রাজকন্যা, বিউটি এন্ড বিটস্, দেশলাই ওয়ালি } {মেয়ে ছবি দেখিয়ে- এরকম হতে ইচ্ছা করে, পোষাকটা ভালো লাগে}

প্র: বাচ্চা শুনতে চায় কিন্তু ব্যস্ততার কারনে গল্প বলতে না পারলে কেমন লাগে? উ: ব্যস্ত থাকলে বলতে পারিনা, বলি পরে বলব, খারাপ লাগে যখন কাজে ব্যস্ত থাকি

প্র: সেটা কিভাবে পুষিয়ে নেন? উ: অন্য সময় বলি- খাওয়ার সময় বলি

প্র: কিকি ধরনের গল্প বলেন, একটা দুইটা উদাহরণ-

উ: (মনে করে)- যেমন বলি- একদেশে একটা আম্মুর দুইটা বাবু ছিল, অনেক দুস্টামি করত. পড়াশুনা করতো না, কথা শুনতো না মা-বাবার। তখন ওর আম্মুর কি হয়েছে জান? একসিডেন্ট করে অনেক ব্যথা পেয়ে ছিল, ওর আম্মুকে ডাক্তার দেখেছিল, হাসপাতালে ছিল। তারপর ওরা আম্মুকে দেখতে গিয়েছে। আস্তে আস্তে চিকিৎসা করে ভালো হয়ে গেছে। তারপর ওরা বুঝতে পারছে যে মায়ের কথা শুনতে হয়। সে জন্য মার কথা শুনতে হয়, দুস্টামি করতে হয়না (হাসি..) এগুলোই বলি

প্র: এগুলো শুনলে কি বলে ও? উ: বলে, আম্মু কস্টের কথা বইলো না, তোমার অসুস্থ হওয়ার কথা বলো না, কান্না কওে, ইমোশনাল হয়ে পড়ে

তারপর বলি- বেশি দুস্টামি করলে- ওদের মাতো মরে গেছে- ওর বাবা আবেকটি বিয়ে করেছে- সৎ মা তো ওদের ঠিক মত আদর করে না। কান্না শুরু করে- 'এই গল্প বাদ দাও, বাদ দাও। ওর আম্মু ভালো হয়ে যাবে এমন গল্প বলো'। ঐ মুহূর্তে আবার চেন্‌জ করে বলতে হয়- হ্যাঁ, ওর আম্মু ভালো হয়ে গিয়েছে, কস্টের গল্প শুনতে চায় না

প্র: আপনি যখন গল্প বলেন তখন কি শুধু মুখে বলেন, নাকি অঙ্গভঙ্গি করেন? উ: হ্যাঁ, ভয় পেলে কি করতে হয় তা দেখতে চায়। বলে- আম্মু ভয় পেয়ে কেমন করেছে? তখন সেরকম ভঙ্গি করে দেখাই আবার নিজেই নানা ভঙ্গি দেখায়- কুকুর কিভাবে ডাকে (৪.৪৫মি)।

আমি যেটা বলছি সেটা আবার নিজেই বানায়, আমাকে শোনায়, ব্যস্ত থাকলে বলে- আম্মু একটু শোন। একটু শোন, আমি কাজই করি কিন্তু ও বলে যায়। অনেক বড় বড় কবিতা বলে ঘুম পাড়াই যখন অনেক ছোট ছিল

প্র: আপনি বলেছেন যে গল্পগুলো আপনি রিলেট করেন, অধিকাংশ আপনার নিজের গল্প বানিয়ে বলেন। ধর্মীয়: বায়োজিদ বোস্তামি। এছাড়া রম্প কথার গল্প কি রিলেট করেন?

উ: হ্যাঁ করি, সিড্রেলার গল্প বলি। অনেক সময় নিজে কিছু বানাই, আবার বাদ দেই

প্র: সিড্রেলার গল্পটি কি ছিল বলো তো? (নাফিসাকে) উ: নাফিসা বলতে শুরু করে- জুতা খুলে গিয়েছিল

প্র: আপনি ধর্মীয় গল্প বলেন? উ: হ্যাঁ, বলি, বায়োজিদ বোস্তামি। বোঝাই কেই খারাপ করলেও তার খারাপ করতে হয় না। গল্প দিয়ে বললে বোঝে। বলি, নবীর কথা- কেই খারাপ করলেও সে খারাপ করে না

প্র: ওতো বললেন (আগের কথা) মেয়েদের গল্প ভালোবাসে আপনি ওর ছোটবেলায় কি সচেতন বা অবচেতন ভাবে কি এইসব গল্প বলতেন বা এই ধরনের বই কিনে দেওয়াতে আগ্রহী ছিলেন?

উ: না না, হয়তো হ্যাঁ (একটু ভেবে), মেয়েদের গল্প বলব সে রকম না। ওর পছন্দ বলেই বেশি বলা হয়। ওর পছন্দকে মূল্যায়ন করতে গিয়েই বলা হয়

প্র: কিন্তু, আপনি নিজে থেকে যে গল্পগুলো নির্বাচন করা- উ: সেরকম না, একটা বই দিলাম কিছু শিখতে পারলো সেটাই দেই