

A Parental Perspective on the Impact of Screen Exposure on Speech Development in Early Childhood

By

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

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BRAC University
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that,

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

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: A Parental Perspective on the Impact of Screen Exposure on Speech Development in Early Childhood

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1. Source of population: Parents having children aged 1-5 years living in Uttara
2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)
 7. Physical risk to the subjects (no)
 8. Social risk (no)
 9. Psychological risk to subjects (no)
 10. discomfort to subjects (no)
 11. Invasion of privacy (no)
3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)
 - a) Nature and purpose of the study (yes)
 - b) Procedures to be followed (yes)
 - c) Physical risk (no)
 - d) Sensitive questions (no)
 - e) Benefits to be derived (yes)
 - f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study (yes)
 - g) Confidential handling of data (yes)
 - h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved (yes)
4. Will Signed verbal consent for be required (yes or no)
 - a) from study participants (yes)
 - b) from parents or guardian (yes)
 - c) Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects? (yes)
5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:
 - a) Proposal (yes)
 - b) Consent Form (yes)
 - c) Questionnaire or interview schedule (yes)

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores parental perspectives on how screen exposure affects speech development in children aged 1 to 5 years in Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Through 2 focus group discussions and 8 personal interviews conducted online with parents the research investigates whose children attend preschool at home or have recently started English medium schooling, parental observations, concerns, and management strategies regarding children's screen use.

The research finding shows that children in the study spent between 2 to 5 hours daily on screens, substantially exceeding WHO and AAP recommended guidelines. Parents identified limited vocabulary, difficulty forming sentences, and the "screen talk" phenomenon (reciting content without functional communication) as primary concerns. The study moreover identifies four thematic patterns: displacement of verbal interaction by passive screen engagement, the "digital babysitter" phenomenon, educational content as a double-edged sword, and cultural/familial influences on screen use. Contributing factors included urban living constraints, parental work schedules, and limited awareness of developmental guidelines. The research highlights a significant gap between parental awareness of screen time risks and their ability to implement effective restrictions, particularly in joint family contexts. These findings underscore the need for culturally tailored interventions addressing the unique challenges faced by Bangladeshi families.

Keywords: screen time; speech development; early childhood; parental perspectives; Bangladesh; English medium preschool; digital media; children 1-5 years

Dedication

To my beloved parents,

Md. Shafiqul Islam and Selina Akther

To my dear father, whose constant encouragement and belief in my potential have been a driving force behind every step of this journey. Your faith in me has shaped my path and strengthened my resolve.

To my loving mother, whose endless support, prayers, and sacrifices have been my anchor through every challenge. Your presence has given me the courage to persevere.

To my dearest husband,

Nawar Asgar

His patience, constant support, and encouragement have been my greatest source of strength. Thank you for standing by me, believing in me, and cheering me on every step of the way.

This work is also dedicated to the children and parents of the world whose hopes, struggles, and resilience continue to inspire change and progress.

Above all, I express my profound gratitude to Almighty Allah for granting me the strength, patience, and wisdom to pursue knowledge and bring this research to fruition.

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To my family, your unwavering love and support have been my foundation. I am especially grateful to my two-year-old niece, whose emerging speech served as a living inspiration. Witnessing her developmental journey made the themes of this study deeply personal and illuminated the importance of understanding early childhood speech development in the digital age.

I am grateful to everyone who supported me along the way. May this modest work spark reflection for others, as so many have illuminated my path.

Table of Content

Declaration.....	i
Approval Page.....	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Purpose of the Study.....	4
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	5
1.5 Research Questions.....	7
1.6 Operational Definition of Terms.....	7
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.1 Theoretical Framework.....	9
2.2 Screen Time Guidelines and Recommendations.....	12
2.3 Screen Exposure and Speech Development: Global Evidence.....	13
2.4 Screen Use Patterns in Bangladeshi Children.....	14
2.5 Parental Mediation and Its Role in Child Development.....	15
2.6 Cultural Context of Child-Rearing in Bangladesh.....	16
2.7 English Medium Education and Screen Exposure.....	17

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	18
3.1 Research Approach and Design.....	18
3.2 Research Site.....	18
3.3 Research Participants.....	18
3.4 Sampling Procedure.....	19
3.5 Data Collection Method.....	20
3.6 Data Analysis.....	20
3.7 Ethical Issues.....	21
3.8 Validity and Reliability.....	22
3.9 Limitations of the Study.....	23
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS & DISCUSSION.....	25
4.1 Results/Findings.....	25
4.2 Discussion of Themes.....	34
4.3 Conclusion.....	42
4.4 Recommendations.....	43
REFERENCES.....	45
Appendix A: Interview Protocol for In-Depth Interviews.....	48
Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Guide.....	51
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form (Bengali).....	54

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

"My son is three and a half years old. He can open my phone, find his favorite 'Baby Shark' video, and even skip ads. But when he wants water, he just points and makes sounds. He doesn't say 'pani' or 'water.' I worry every day." This observation by a mother living in Sector 4, Uttara showcases the main focus of this study by connecting early childhood screen time with speech development on recent metropolitan areas of Bangladesh.

The first five years represent a critical window for speech acquisition, during which children develop neural connections through interaction and responsive communication with caregivers (Nazme & Sultana, 2025). Vygotsky's socio-interactionist theory emphasizes that language development occurs primarily through social interaction with more knowledgeable individuals who provide linguistic scaffolding (Al Baqi & Afiah, 2025). However, the shift to such child's environment has been transformed through the accessibility of affordable smartphones and easy access to internet connections.

Bangladesh has witnessed internet subscriptions cross 130 million, with smartphone penetration reaching unprecedented levels across all socioeconomic strata (Kundu et al., 2024). In Uttara, Dhaka, toddlers as young as 18 months navigate screens with remarkable dexterity. A recent study at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University found that over half of 1-5 years old children spent between 3 to 5 hours daily using mobile screens (Nazme & Sultana, 2025),

substantially exceeding WHO and AAP advice on avoiding screen exposure for toddler under two and no more than one hour for children aged 2-5 (World Health Organization, 2019; Ponti et al., 2017).

Evidence suggests that globally excessive screen time is a suspect associated with speech and language delay. A meta-analysis concluded that screen time increases the risk of language and speech delays in children by approximately 2.67 times (Abida, 2024). In Bangladesh, research found that among children with excessive screen exposure, 17% were identified by parents as having speech delay (Nazme & Sultana, 2025).

Uttara presents a unique context with its concentration of English medium schools and families aspiring to provide early English exposure through screens. Although there is growing quantitative research, a significant gap remains in understanding the real life experiences of Bangladeshi parents, their observations, concerns, and management strategies regarding children's screen use and speech development. This qualitative study addresses this gap through 2 focus group discussions and 8 personal interviews and with parents of children aged 1-5 years attending preschool at home or recently starting English medium schooling.

The findings may inform culturally sensitive guidelines and parent education programs tailored to Bangladeshi families navigating the digital age.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Parents of young children in urban Bangladesh lack the knowledge and ways to manage the screen exposure impact on early childhood speech development.

This problem has emerged from the rapid proliferation of digital devices that has outpaced both research and parental awareness. In Bangladesh, approximately 87% of young children have access to smartphones, with 44% spending more than one hour daily on screens. A study at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University found that among children with neurodevelopmental disorders, isolated speech delay was the most common diagnosis (33%), with one-third of children using screens for 3-5 hours daily. Research examining early childhood development revealed that over half (58.1%) children using mobile screens spent 3-5 hours, with 46.4% exhibiting abnormal speech development including speech regression and self-talking behavior.

Excessive screen exposure is increasingly affecting children's foundational language skills, which are essential for future academic success. It impacts learning by reducing critical verbal interactions between children and caregivers, which play a key role in early language development (Zimmerman et al., 2007; Kirkorian et al., 2009). Studies suggest that screen use during routine activities such as meals and before sleep displaces valuable parent-child interaction time (Pempek et al., 2014). This reduced interaction can limit children's vocabulary development, sentence formation, and functional communication, sometimes resulting in imitative or "screen-based" speech patterns (Madigan et al., 2019).

The issue is further influenced by gaps in parental awareness and practices. Research in Bangladesh and similar contexts indicates that many parents are not fully aware of recommended

screen time guidelines and face challenges in regulating usage (Hossain et al., 2021). Although parents often attempt to control screen exposure, concerns about developmental delays, including speech and communication difficulties, are commonly reported. In urban, English-medium settings, some parents perceive digital content as educational, assuming it supports language learning; however, evidence suggests that passive screen exposure does not effectively promote bilingual or language development without active interaction (Rideout & Robb, 2020).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to explore and understand parental perspectives on how screen exposure affects speech development in children aged 1 to 5 years in Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The study specifically focuses on parents whose children attend preschool at home or have recently started English medium schooling. This investigation aims to describe the patterns of screen exposure among young children, including duration, frequency, content types, and contexts of use as reported by their parents. As indicated through the research it shows that English medium school children have significantly higher mean screen time (5.46 hours) compared to Bangla medium students (Kundu et al., 2024), understanding these patterns within this specific population is particularly relevant.

Furthermore, this research aims to explore parental observations and concerns regarding their children's speech development in relation to screen exposure, including any perceived differences between children who attend preschool at home versus those in English medium schools. The study also seeks to understand the multiple factors that influence parental decisions about allowing or restricting screen time, including cultural, social, economic, and educational

considerations. Moreover, examining these motivations within Uttara's unique context will provide valuable insights into family decision-making processes.

Finally, this study intends to examine the strategies parents employ to manage their children's screen use and address any concerns about speech development, while identifying the cultural and contextual factors specific to the Uttara community. The aim of this research is to provide a rich understanding with contextualization of the screen exposure phenomenon from the perspective of those most intimately involved in children's daily lives. This understanding can inform the development of culturally sensitive guidelines and parent education initiatives that address the real-world challenges faced by Bangladeshi families in urban settings, recognizing that pediatric providers and educators play important roles in guiding caregivers regarding screen viewing for children (Ponti et al., 2017).

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is needed because despite growing concerns about screen exposure among Bangladeshi children, the perspectives of parents themselves remain largely unexplored through qualitative inquiry. While quantitative studies document correlations between screen time and developmental outcomes, they cannot capture how families experience, interpret, and respond to these challenges in their daily lives. Understanding parental perspectives is essential for developing meaningful interventions that address real-world circumstances rather than imposing externally designed solutions. As Karani et al. (2022) emphasized in their scoping review, qualitative research is crucial for understanding the contextual factors that shape children's screen use and its developmental implications.

The results may be used by healthcare providers to develop culturally sensitive screening questions and guidance during well-child visits. Pediatricians and speech therapists working in Dhaka's urban centers can benefit from understanding the specific screen exposure patterns and parental concerns prevalent in their patient populations. Early childhood educators in Uttara's preschools and English medium schools can gain insights into children's home media environments, enabling them to identify those needing additional language stimulation and partner more effectively with families. For parents themselves, the study offers practical ideas and reassurance by sharing how other Bangladeshi families navigate similar challenges in managing screen use while supporting speech development.

At the policy level, the findings may inform public health messaging tailored specifically to the Bangladeshi context. Rather than simply translating Western recommendations, policymakers can draw on this research to create culturally resonant guidance that addresses the unique circumstances of urban Bangladeshi families. A meta-analysis of 28 studies examining screen exposure of 0-3 years old children have found conclusions that early language development is negatively impacted with screen time, while later initiation or co-viewing of screen use were linked positively with child language outcomes (Xie et al., 2024). These nuanced findings highlight the importance of developing context-specific recommendations that consider how Bangladeshi families can implement positive practices like co-viewing within their cultural framework.

This study fills an existing knowledge gap by providing rich, contextualized data on parental perspectives from the Uttara community, contributing to the limited body of qualitative research on screen time and speech development in South Asian contexts. The findings may also inform the adaptation of measurement tools and research protocols for use in Bangladeshi settings,

providing a foundation for future larger-scale investigations. Ultimately, this research serves a broader social purpose by generating knowledge that can support healthy speech development in the digital age, helping the next generation of Bangladeshi children build the foundational language skills essential for academic success and social competence.

1.5 Research Questions

The two research questions of this study are as follows:

1. How do parents of 1 to 5 years old children in Uttara, Dhaka perceive screen exposure impact on their children's speech development?
2. What factors influence parental decisions about allowing or restricting screen time for their young children in the Uttara context?
3. Which strategies are parents using to manage the children's screen use and address concerns about speech development?

1.6 Operational Definition of Terms

Screen Exposure: The time spent by a child using or viewing content on digital devices including smartphones, tablets, computers, laptops, and televisions. This includes both active use (interacting with educational apps) and passive viewing (watching videos).

Screen Time: The duration of screen exposure, measured in hours per day based on parental estimates of their children's typical daily use across all devices.

Speech Development: It is the process through which children develop the ability to produce sounds, words, and sentences to communicate verbally, including expressive language

(producing speech), receptive language (understanding speech), and pragmatic communication (using language appropriately in social contexts).

Parental Perspective: The views, beliefs, attitudes, observations, concerns, and reported practices of parents regarding their children's screen exposure and speech development.

Parental Mediation: Parents use strategies to manage children's screen use, including setting limits, co-viewing, discussing content, selecting educational materials, and providing alternative activities.

English Medium Schooling: Formal educational institutions where the primary language of instruction is English. In this study, this refers to children who have recently started attending such schools at the preschool or kindergarten level.

Speech Delay: The condition of delay in children's speech development through age-expected milestones, understood based on parental reports and observations rather than clinical diagnosis.

Co-Viewing: The practice of parents or caregivers watching or using screens together with children, engaging with content and providing commentary or interaction (Xie et al., 2024).

Digital Content Quality: The nature, educational value, and developmental appropriateness of screen content accessed by children, ranging from high-quality educational programming to purely recreational content.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The relationship between screen exposure and speech development requires a strong theoretical framework that examines and explains how children acquire language and how media usage may eventually influence this process. Moreover this study draws on two complementary theoretical perspectives: Vygotsky's socio-interactionist theory and media displacement theory.

Socio-Interactionist Theory:

The socio-interactionist theory of Lev Vygotsky posits that language development takes place primarily through social interaction between children and more knowledgeable others, such as parents, carers or older siblings. From this perspective, language is actively constructed by meaningful communicative exchanges in social contexts (Vygotsky, 1978). Children learn words, sentence structures, and conversational conventions by participating in back-and-forth exchanges with adults who scaffold their learning by adjusting their language to the child's level and responding to the child's communicative attempts.

The perspective of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) is particularly relevant with the fact that children rather getting more adult guidance can accomplish more than they can independently. A parent who responds to a toddler's pointing gesture by saying "Oh, you want the ball? Here is the red ball" not only helps the child connect gestures, words or intentions but also provides overall linguistic scaffolding. This contingent responsiveness is considered crucial for language learning (Tomasello, 2003).

Applying this theory to screen exposure raises important questions about whether screens, even educational ones, provide the same quality of linguistic scaffolding as responsive human interaction. Research suggests that the lack of dynamic two-way interaction in screen viewing can limit children's opportunities to practice and improve their speaking skills (Al Baqi & Afiah, 2025). In Bangladesh, traditionally extended families provide rich linguistic environments, and the displacement of these interactions by screens may have particularly significant implications.

Media Displacement Theory:

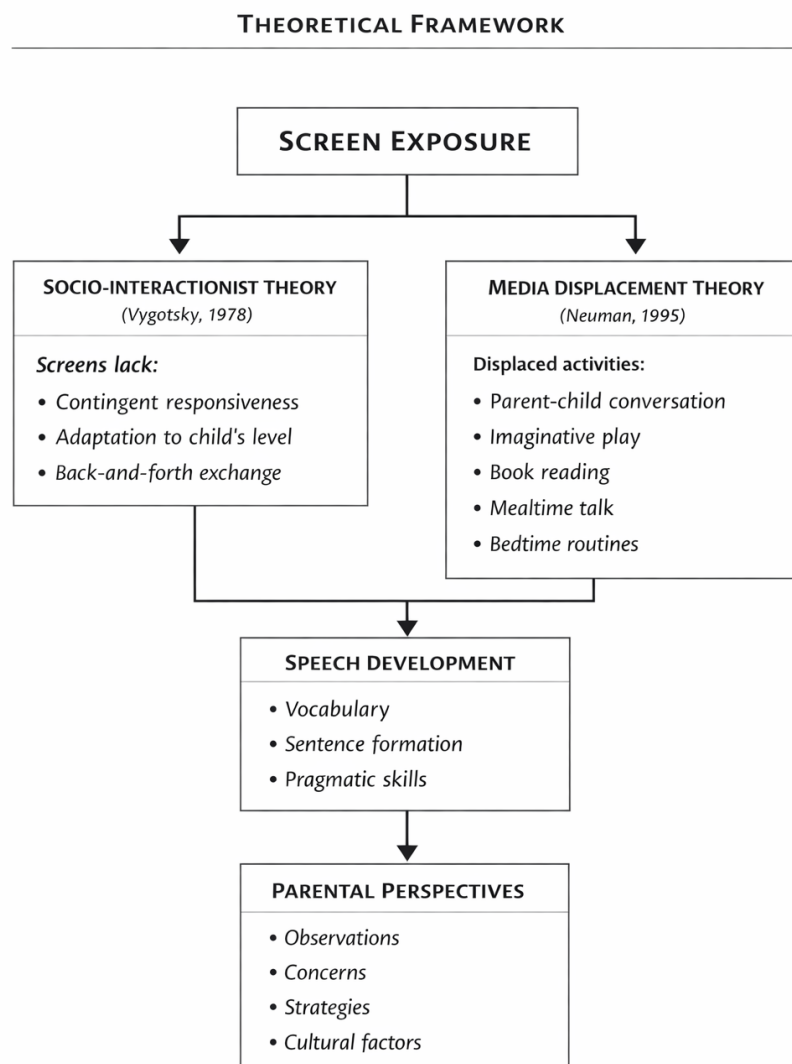
Media displacement theory offers a complementary perspective by suggesting that time spent on screens displaces time that might otherwise be spent on developmentally enriching activities such as talking with parents, engaging in imaginative play, or reading books (Neuman, 1995). In the context of early childhood speech development, displacement theory suggests that excessive screen time may reduce the quantity and quality of verbal interactions between children and caregivers.

A qualitative study comparing toddlers with different gadget use patterns found that those children who had limited gadget use developed age-appropriate speech and required no speech therapy, while those with intensive use showed limited vocabulary and reduced responsiveness (Al Baqi & Afiah, 2025, p. 52). This disparity was closely linked to differences in caregiver interaction, supporting the displacement hypothesis. A study by Christakis et al. (2009) found that for every hour of television viewed per day at age 1, children had a 9% increased risk of language delay by age 3, attributed not to content but to displacement of parent-child interaction.

These two theoretical frameworks together provide a lens for understanding parental perspectives explored in this study. Parents' observations about their children's speech

development, concerns about screen time, and strategies for managing media use can be understood within the context of these theories, which emphasize the fundamental importance of human interaction for language learning.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



2.2 Screen Time Guidelines and Recommendations

The impact of screen time and its concern on child development has prompted major health organizations to issue guidelines for early childhood media use. The World Health Organization (2019) recommends no screen time for children under one year and discourages screen time for children under two. For two to five year old children, WHO recommends a maximum of one hour per day of sedentary screen time, emphasizing that "less is better" (p. 8).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises avoiding digital media use (except video chatting) for children younger than 18 to 24 months. For 2-5 years old children, the AAP recommends limiting screen use to one hour per day of high-quality programming, with parents co-viewing to help children understand what they are seeing (Ponti et al., 2017). The AAP emphasizes that what matters most is both quantity of screen time and also quality of content and context of use.

Despite these clear recommendations, research consistently shows that many children exceed recommended limits. A study of Bangladeshi young children found that 44% spent more than one hour daily on smartphones, exceeding AAP recommendations, while 75.6% of parents were unaware of such guidelines (Bangladeshi Young Children's Smartphone Use, 2025). This awareness gap is significant because parents who do not know recommended limits cannot intentionally align their practices with expert guidance.

In the context of Uttara, Dhaka, where parents often have higher educational backgrounds, one might expect greater awareness of these guidelines. However, preliminary observations suggest that even educated parents may not be familiar with specific recommendations, and cultural beliefs about the educational benefits of screens may override awareness of potential risks.

2.3 Screen Exposure and Speech Development: Global Evidence

A substantial body of research has analysed the relation between screen exposure and speech development in young children. A meta-analysis of 28 studies examining screen exposure in children aged 0-3 years found that screen time was negatively related to early language development, while co-viewing and later initiation of screen use were positively associated with child language outcomes (Xie et al., 2024). The relations between child language and educational program viewing was non-significant, suggesting that content quality alone does not eliminate the risks associated with screen time.

Another meta-analysis focusing specifically on language and speech delays included 12 case-control studies and found that screen time increases the risk of such delays by approximately 2.64 to 2.67 times compared to no screen time (Abida, 2024). Subgroup analyses revealed that the risk was higher for children under 2 years compared to older children, supporting the notion that early exposure may be particularly harmful.

A scoping review by Karani et al. (2022) concluded that "the negative effect of screen time on language development appears to be stronger than the positive effect in total" (p. 5), while noting that influences are affected by multiple factors including age of onset, duration, context, video characteristics, and supervision.

A landmark cohort study by Madigan and colleagues (2019) followed 2,441 children and found that increased screen time at 24 and 36 months was significantly associated with poorer performance on developmental screening tests at 36 and 60 months.

Research has also examined mechanisms underlying these associations. A study using fMRI technology found that high screen exposure was linked to reduced brain activity in regions responsible for language processing, suggesting that "the less children hear real voices, the harder it becomes for their brains to wire for speech" (From "mama" to mute, 2025, para. 4).

Recent research has emphasized that content quality and context matter significantly. A study involving 286 participants found that educational content correlated positively with linguistic scores, while recreational content showed negative associations. Parental mediation emerged as a significant positive predictor, leading researchers to conclude that "associations between digital media use and linguistic performance vary across developmental stages and contextual factors" (Screen Time, Digital Content Quality, and Parental Mediation, 2026, p. 157).

2.4 Screen Use Patterns in Bangladeshi Children

There is rising worry regarding the developmental consequences of screen use among young children in Bangladesh and other similar environments, according to research. According to studies, a large number of kids between the ages of one and five use screens for many hours every day, frequently going above the recommended limits established by agencies such as the World Health Organization (2019). Due to the ubiquitous availability of smartphones in urban households, children are frequently exposed to screens on a daily basis.

Screens are widely used as tools to control children's behaviour or keep them interested during meals, before bed, or when parents are busy. Particularly in urban, educated homes, research

indicates that parents frequently use gadgets for amusement, soothing kids, or alleged educational goals (Kabir et al., 2022; Rahman & Jahan, 2021).

2.5 Parental Mediation and Its Role in Child Development

Researchers have identified several types: active mediation (discussing content), restrictive mediation (setting limits), co-viewing (watching together), and technical mediation (using parental controls) (Valkenburg et al., 1999).

A recent study found that parental mediation was a significant positive predictor of children's linguistic performance, suggesting that parental involvement can partially buffer negative associations of screen time with language development (Screen Time, Digital Content Quality, and Parental Mediation, 2026). The study emphasized that "discussions with families may benefit from focusing not only on screen time quantity, but also digital content quality and parental involvement" (p. 157).

A systematic review found that parental mediation was associated with improved language outcomes, reduced aggressive behavior, and better academic performance (Duch et al., 2013). Active mediation appeared more beneficial than restrictive mediation alone, as it helped children process media content.

Despite potential benefits, several barriers may limit mediation. Working parents with limited time may struggle to co-view consistently. In joint family systems, multiple caregivers may have different approaches, creating inconsistency. A study from Indonesia noted that "the lack of dynamic two-way interaction, which usually occurs in face-to-face conversations, can limit children's opportunities to practice and improve their speaking skills" (Al Baqi & Afiah, 2025, p.

55).

In the Uttara context, where many parents are professionals with demanding jobs, time constraints may be particularly acute. Additionally, presence of domestic helpers who may use screens as management tools can complicate mediation efforts.

2.6 Cultural Context of Child-Rearing in Bangladesh

Understanding parental perspectives requires attention to the broader cultural context. Bangladeshi families in urban areas like Uttara often maintain elements of joint or extended family systems. Grandparents frequently participate in child-rearing, and domestic helpers are common in middle-class households (Kundu et al., 2024). This distributed caregiving means multiple adults influence children's daily experiences, including screen exposure.

Uttara residents typically live in apartments with limited space for physical play. Outdoor play is restricted by safety concerns, traffic, and pollution. These constraints mean children have fewer alternatives to screen-based entertainment than those in rural areas. As one opinion piece noted, "In today's world, avoiding screens is difficult" (From "mama" to mute, 2025, para. 2).

Bangladeshi parents place high value on education as a pathway to social mobility. In Uttara, educational aspirations are particularly high, influencing screen-related decisions. Many parents provide screens for "learning purposes" (62.3%), believing educational apps give children academic advantages, particularly in English (Bangladeshi Young Children's Smartphone Use, 2025). Access to pediatric care and developmental screening is improving but remains uneven. While Uttara has private hospitals and child development centers, speech therapy services may be expensive with long waiting lists. This means parents who observe speech delays may not have ready access to professional assessment.

2.7 English Medium Education and Screen Exposure

The focus on parents whose children attend preschool at home or have recently started English medium schooling requires attention to literature on bilingual language development and its relationship to screen exposure.

Children exposed to two languages from an early age typically follow similar developmental trajectories to monolingual children, though they may show differences in vocabulary size in each language when measured separately (Paradis et al., 2021). Bilingualism itself does not cause language delay; total vocabulary across both languages is typically comparable to monolingual peers. However, parents unfamiliar with bilingual development may mistakenly attribute typical patterns to delay.

Research on screen media and bilingual development is limited. A study by Dore et al. (2020) found that bilingual toddlers who watched educational programming in both languages showed vocabulary gains, but only when parents co-viewed and engaged with content. Passive viewing alone did not produce significant learning.

For children in English medium settings, concerns arise about the quality of English language input from screens. Unlike interactive conversation with teachers or parents, screen content cannot adapt to a child's level, respond to communicative attempts, or provide contingent feedback necessary for language learning (Paradis et al., 2021). Parents who choose English medium education often have high expectations for children's English development, leading them to seek English-language screen content as a supplement. However, if they attribute speech delays to normal bilingual acquisition, they may delay seeking help when screen-related issues arise. This study explores how parents in Uttara navigate these complex issues.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The qualitative approach was particularly well-suited to this study because it allows participants to express their perspectives in their own words, captures the complexity and nuance of family life and decision-making, provides contextual understanding that quantitative surveys cannot offer, and respects the cultural context by allowing for culturally appropriate data collection.

This study is suitable for investigating a modern phenomenon of screen time and speech development in the actual setting of Bangladeshi households in Uttara, Dhaka. It works especially well for answering "what" and "how" queries on parenting experiences. The method keeps the fundamental phenomenon of interest front and center while enabling detailed, comprehensive descriptions of several cases.

3.2 Research Site

The research and study took place in Uttara, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Uttara is a planned residential area located in the northern part of Dhaka city, consisting of several sectors with a mix of middle-class and upper-middle-class families. The sectors include 1,3,4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 representing different socioeconomic profiles and access to educational facilities.

3.3 Research Participants

The research participants for this study were 15 parents of children aged 1 to 5 years living in Uttara, Dhaka. Among them, 12 were mothers and 3 were fathers, reflecting the reality that

mothers in Bangladesh are often primary caregivers and more involved in daily decisions about children's activities. Occupationally, participants included homemakers, private sector service holders, business owners, and teachers.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

The study selected participants through a purpose sample usually used for qualitative research to select individuals who have relevant experience and can provide rich information about the phenomenon under study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling was appropriate because the study required participants who met specific criteria related to child age, screen access, and educational context.

The sampling process involved several steps. First, initial participants were identified through community contacts, including parents in the researcher's social network, local parenting groups on Facebook, and recommendations from preschools in Uttara. Second, potential participants were contacted by phone or messaging apps and screened for eligibility based on inclusion criteria. Third, from eligible parents, participants were selected to ensure variation on key dimensions: child age, child gender, type of child education, parental education, and family structure. Finally, snowball sampling was used as initial participants were asked to refer to other eligible parents they knew in the Uttara community, expanding the reach of recruitment.

The sample size of 15 participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, the point at which additional data collection yields no new insights. This sample size is consistent with recommendations for qualitative studies and similar to sample sizes in comparable research (Al Baqi & Afiah, 2025).

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Two primary data collection methods were: in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Eight in-depth interviews were conducted individually via Zoom or WhatsApp video call, based on participant preference. Interviews lasted between 45 to 75 minutes and were conducted in Bengali or English based on participant preference. A semi-structured interview guide was used, containing open-ended questions about children's screen use patterns, parental observations of speech development, concerns about screen time, strategies for managing media use, and cultural factors influencing decisions. The guide was pilot-tested with two parents and refined for clarity, cultural appropriateness, and flow before final use.

Two focus group discussions were conducted, each with 4 participants. One FGD included parents of children in English medium preschools, and the other included parents of children receiving preschool at home. Each FGD lasted approximately 90 minutes and was conducted via Zoom. The researcher facilitated discussion using a separate FGD guide designed to stimulate group interaction around shared experiences, social norms, and parenting challenges related to screen use and speech development.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis following the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). This structured approach ensured the qualitative data were analyzed transparently.

All audio recordings were transcribed word-for-word in the original language during the initial step of becoming familiar with the data. Bengali transcripts were then carefully translated into English, making sure to preserve cultural nuances, subtleties, and meaning. Key sections were back-translated to verify accuracy. The transcripts were read several times to gain a solid understanding, and initial ideas were noted in memos.

Themes were defined, and its essence and scope were determined. Sub-themes were identified where appropriate. Finally producing the report, themes were woven into a coherent narrative with illustrative quotes, connecting back to research questions and literature.

3.7 Ethical Issues

The BRAC Institute of Educational Development's ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects were followed in the conduct of this study and guided by the APA Ethics Code. Several ethical considerations guided the research process.

Prior to the start of data collection, each participant gave their informed consent. The study's objectives, methods, dangers, advantages, confidentiality safeguards, and participants' freedom to withdraw at any moment were all explained in detail to the participants. Written consent was collected electronically, and information was given in either Bengali or English, depending on choice. Participants were reassured that there would be no consequences if they choose to leave the study at any time, and consent was presented as ongoing.

Confidentiality of participants was ensured at all stages of the research process. Participants were assured that their identities would be protected. Pseudonyms are used in all reports, and

identifying details such as specific sector or child's school name are modified or omitted. Audio recordings and transcripts are stored securely with password protection accessible only to the research team. Moreover, special attention was paid to the ethical implications of online data collection. Participants were advised to choose private locations for interviews, and the researcher ensured that recording and data transmission were secure. Participants were reminded of the limitations of online communication regarding confidentiality.

The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Thesis Committee of the Master of Science in Early Childhood Development program at BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

The idea of trustworthiness is used in qualitative research to address validity and reliability. Several techniques were used in accordance with Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba (1985) to guarantee the validity and accuracy of this investigation. Regular interaction with the data and study setting preserved credibility and promoted a deeper comprehension. Five participants were given access to preliminary results as part of the member checking process to ensure that their opinions were fairly represented. Peer debriefing with the supervisor also improved interpretations and lessened prejudice.

In order to guarantee transferability, thorough participant and context descriptions were given so that results could be used in comparable contexts. Maintaining a transparent record of research decisions and steps allowed others to follow the process and preserve reliability. Keeping a journal to consider the researcher's role was another way to practise reflexivity. By using verbatim quotes from participants and recognising any opposing viewpoints, confirmability was

ensured. In order to improve clarity and cultural relevance prior to the main study, a pilot test of the data collection instruments was conducted with two parents.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, as a qualitative study with 15 participants from specific sectors of Uttara, findings cannot be statistically generalized to all Bangladeshi parents or even all parents in Uttara. However, the study offers analytical generalizability through rich description that enables readers to assess applicability to other contexts.

Second, sampling bias may be present as participants who agreed to participate may differ from those who declined. Parents who were more concerned about screen time, more available, or more comfortable with online communication may have been overrepresented, potentially influencing findings.

Third, self-report bias is a limitation. Parental reports of screen time and speech development are subjective and may be influenced by social desirability, memory limitations, or differing expectations about typical development. No objective measures such as direct observation or professional assessment were used.

Fourth, conducting IDIs and FGDs online rather than in person may have affected the depth of rapport and the observation of non-verbal cues was limited with technical issues (e.g., connectivity and audio quality) occasionally interrupted interviews.

Fifth, language and translation pose limitations. Interviews conducted primarily in Bengali and translated to English may have lost some nuances, despite careful efforts to preserve meaning through back-translation and consultation with native speakers.

Sixth, the study's single-city focus in Uttara means that experiences of parents in other areas of Dhaka or in rural Bangladesh may differ significantly. Finally, the cross-sectional design captures perspectives at one moment rather than tracking changes over time, limiting understanding of developmental trajectories.

Chapter 4

4.1 Results and Discussions

4.1.1 Screen Time Patterns Among Children

All 15 parents reported that their children used screens daily, with considerable variation in estimated duration. Based on parental estimates, children's daily screen time ranged from approximately 1.5 to 5 hours. Table 1 presents the distribution of screen time among the children in this study.

Table 1: Children's Daily Screen Usage Pattern

Screen Time (hours/day)	Number of Children (N=15)
Fewer than 2 hours	3
2 to 3 hours	5
3 to 4 hours	4
More than 4 hours	3

Farzana, mother of a 3-year-old boy attending English medium preschool, described her son's screen use: *"From morning, after breakfast, he wants the phone. He watches rhymes on YouTube for maybe two hours. Then after school, when he comes home, another hour or two. In the evening, if I'm cooking, I give it to him again. Total, maybe 4 to 5 hours. I know it's too much, but what can I do? He has online classes also for his school."* (In-depth Interview #3, 16.01.26)

Parents of children receiving preschool at home reported similar or higher screen times, often citing the use of educational apps and videos as part of home learning.

4.1.2 Content Types Accessed by Children

Parents reported that children accessed various types of content, predominantly through YouTube and streaming platforms. Table 2 summarizes the content categories reported by parents. Most children accessed multiple content types. Notably, even when parents intended educational use, recreational content often dominated. As one mother explained:

"I downloaded many English learning apps for him: alphabets, numbers, phonics. But he always wants to watch cartoons instead. He cries if I don't put in Cocomelon. So finally, I gave up. Now it's mostly cartoons with some education mixed in." (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 2, 15.01.26)

Parents of children in English medium schools were particularly likely to report using English-language content, believing it would support their child's school learning.

4.1.3 Contexts of Screen Use

Consistent with previous research (Nazme & Sultana, 2025), screen use occurred in specific contexts, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Contexts of Screen Use

Context	Number of Parents Reporting (N=15)
During meals	13
During parental work/housework	12
Before sleep	11
During travel/car journeys	9
While waiting (doctors, etc.)	8
During online classes	5

Nasrin, mother of a 1.5-year-old, explained the meal-time pattern:

"If I don't give phone, he won't eat. He just runs away, plays with toys, refuses to open his mouth. At least with a phone, he sits in one place watching rhymes and I can feed him properly. I know it's bad, but what is the alternative? He needs to eat." (In-depth Interview #5, 16.01.26)

Tania, mother of a 2.5-year-old in English medium preschool, described bedtime screen use:

"She watches rhymes in bed until she falls asleep. It's become a habit now. If I try to take the phone away, she cries and can't sleep. The doctor said no screens before sleep, but I don't know how to stop." (Focus Group Discussion #2, Participant 1, 15.01.26)

4.1.4 Parental Observations of Speech Development

Parents reported varied observations regarding their children's speech development, with concerns expressed by the majority. Of the 15 parents, 12 expressed concerns about some aspect of their child's speech development. Table 5 summarizes the concerns reported.

Table 5: Parent-Reported Speech Development Concerns

Concern	Number of Parents (N=15)
Limited vocabulary compared to peers	10
Difficulty forming sentences	8
Child understands but doesn't speak	7
Unclear pronunciation	6

Prefers gestures over words	6
Repeats screen dialogues but doesn't communicate	5
Mixing Bengali and English in confusing ways	4
No concerns	3

Note: Parents could report multiple concerns.

Roksana, mother of a 3.5-year-old boy in English medium preschool, expressed typical concerns:

"My son is three and a half, but he doesn't speak like other children his age. He says 'amma' and 'abba,' some English words like 'car,' 'ball,' 'no' things he hears on the phone. But he should be making sentences by now, no? My neighbor's daughter, who is the same age, talks so much in both Bengali and English. I worry something is wrong." (In-depth Interview #2, 16.01.26)

4.1.5 The "Screen Talk" Phenomenon

An interesting pattern emerged across multiple interviews: parents described children who could recite screen content verbatim but struggled with functional, communicative speech.

"He can sing entire Cocomelon songs 'Wheels on the Bus,' 'Baby Shark,' all perfectly in English. But if he wants milk, he'll pull my hand to the kitchen and point instead of saying 'doodh' or 'milk.' It's like he memorized from phone but doesn't understand that words are for communicating needs." (In-depth Interview #7, 16.01.26)

This phenomenon aligns with findings from qualitative research in Indonesia, where researchers observed that children with high gadget exposure showed limited vocabulary and poor responsiveness despite mimicry of screen content (Al Baqi & Afiah, 2025).

Another mother described her 4-year-old daughter:

"She can recite entire dialogues from her favorite cartoons in English! But when I ask her a simple question like 'What did you do in school today?' she just looks at me blankly or says 'I don't know.' She can repeat but she can't converse." (Focus Group Discussion #2, Participant 3, 15.01.26)

4.1.6 Comparing Children in Different Educational Settings

Parents of children in English medium schools expressed concerns about bilingual language development and whether screen time was helping or hindering.

"In his school, they speak only English. Teachers say they speak English at home also. But my Bengali is not so good, and my husband's English is not so good. So we put English cartoons, thinking it will help. But now he speaks a mixed language that nobody understands, some Bengali, some English, some cartoon words. Is this normal?" (In-depth Interview #4, 16.02.24)

Parents of children receiving preschool at home expressed concerns about social communication:

“Since he doesn’t go to school, he only talks to his grandma and me. When relatives come, he gets shy, hides and doesn’t speak. With a phone however, he is comfortable, but with people he is extremely shy. It is worrying about his social skills development.” (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 3, 15.01.26)

4.1.7 Parental Awareness of Screen Time Risks

All the parents have expressed awareness that excessive screen time could be very harmful though this awareness varied in ways.

Table 6: Parental Awareness of Screen Time Guidelines

Awareness Level	Number of Parents (N=15)
Aware of specific time limits (e.g., 1 hour)	2
Aware that too much screen is "bad" but no specific limits	10
No awareness of any guidelines or risks	3

Only two parents were able to explain particular WHO or AAP recommendations, and they had learnt about them via parenting forums on social media rather than from medical professionals.

“I read on a Facebook group that for Bangladeshi moms WHO says no phone for under 2 years and one hour maximum for 2-5 years. I tried to follow, but it seems impossible. My son was already addicted by them.” (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 1, 15.01.26)

4.1.8 Reasons for Allowing Screen Time

Parents gave a variety of justifications for permitting screen time, which included both perceived advantages and actual necessities. These reasons are summarised in Table 7.

Table 7: Reasons for Allowing Screen Time

Reason	Number of Parents (N=15)
To keep child occupied while parent works	13
To facilitate feeding	12
To stop crying/calm child	11

For educational purposes (especially English)	10
Because child demands it/cries without it	9
To have peaceful time/rest	8
During online classes (required)	5

These reasons closely align with quantitative findings from previous (Bangladeshi Young Children’s Smartphone Use, 2025), confirming that screens serve multiple practical functions for families.

“In our Uttara building both parents work and mostly are busy. Mothers are alone with child. Earlier there would be people around like dadi, chachi, cousins. But here, we are alone and so phone becomes the babysitter. It’s sad but true.” (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 4, 15.01.26)

“I have to leave early morning for work. I have targets to meet. My 3 years old also needs attention. I give him the phone. Well it’s the only way I can work. I know its harmful, but I need to keep my job. Bangladesh’s economy depends on people like me working, but nobody thinks about what happens to our children.” (In-depth Interview #8, 16.01.26)

4.1.9 Guilt and Conflict

Many parents are guilty and have expressed it about their children's screen use, combined with a sense of being trapped by circumstances.

"Every day, I feel guilty. I feel like a bad mother when I see him on the phone for hours on end. I'm tired, though. Working from home all day, cleaning, and cooking. I'm too tired to play with him, teach him, or converse with him. Using a phone is simpler. But at night, I can't sleep because I'm worried about ruining his future. Is he ever going to talk clearly?" (Focus Group Discussion #2, Participant 4, 15.01.26)

Through these emotional dimensions along with guilt and conflict the parents experience emerged powerfully across both IDIs and FGDs which are rarely captured in quantitative research.

4.2 Discussion

The discussion organizes various important insights into four major themes that emerged from the analysis, connecting them to theoretical frameworks.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Displacement of Verbal Interaction

The first major theme, consistent with media displacement theory (Neuman, 1995), concerns how screen time displaces opportunities for the verbal interactions that are fundamental to language development. In this study, parents vividly described how the use of screens have replaced conversations in their households. One of the mother's description is listed down.

“Earlier, when I cooked, my daughter would sit in the kitchen with me, talking, even asking ‘what are you making?’, helping me pretend-cook with her little play pots. Now she sits in the living room with the phone and the whole place is quiet. She doesn’t even talk much. (Focus Group Discussion #2, Participant 3, 15.01.26)

Thus, this displacement is direct and hours are spent with screens rather than conversations. The other opportunity displacement fostered the interaction in the kitchen, dining table and before sleep which are rather screen-filled and silent. Then also comes the interaction displacement in which parents and children are although physically together but screen may absorb attention that would otherwise go to mutual engagement.

These findings align with the socio-interactionist framework (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that language develops through socially contingent interactions. Hence, when such reduction in interactions happen whether in quantity or quality the natural process of language acquisition may be disrupted. Research from Indonesia similarly found that "children with limited gadget use developed age-appropriate speech, used spontaneous verbal expressions, and required no speech therapy," while intensive users showed limited vocabulary and reduced responsiveness (Al Baqi & Afiah, 2025, p. 52).

The displacement theme also connects to neurological evidence suggesting that "the less children hear real voices, the harder it becomes for their brains to wire for speech" (From "mama" to mute, 2025, para. 4). Parents' observations of children who could recite screen content but not engage in conversational speech the "screen talk" phenomenon illustrate this disconnect between passive exposure and active communication.

"We put English cartoons thinking it will help his English. But when we try to talk to him in English, he doesn't respond. He only repeats what the cartoon says. It's like he's learning to

recite, not to communicate." (In-depth Interview #4, 16.01.26)

The distinction between language exposure and interaction is a distinction central to Vygotsky's theory but often overlooked by the parents who are seeking to support their children's bilingual development through screen..

4.2.2 Theme 2: The Digital Babysitter Phenomenon

The second major theme concerns the use of screens as a tool for managing children in the context of busy urban lives, which might be called the "digital babysitter." This theme emerged both consistently across IDIs and FGDs and was persistent for working mothers and those with multiple demands on their time.

"The phone is like a third hand for me. Without it I cannot manage housework, cooking and child all alone at my house in Uttara. My husband works for more than 10 hours, comes home late. We have no help, no grandmother or aunt. The only solution to me is giving access to phone to my child." (In-depth Interview #2, 16.01.26)

Decline of extended family support nowadays has made nuclear families stand out and women's workforce participation increased. Mothers have less assistance with childcare. In Uttara, many families are migrants from other districts, living without support of extended family.

"In my village, my son would have his grandmother, his aunts, cousins, always someone to talk to, to play with. Here in Uttara, its just me and him in this small apartment. Of course he gets more access to phones. What else can he do?" (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 1, 15.01.26)

Small apartments and safety concerns limits children's opportunities for independent play or outdoor activities. However, unlike previous generations who could play on green fields and streets, today's urban children are largely confined to indoor spaces.

“I actually can’t let him play outside. The roads are dangerous and there’s no park nearby. I worry about abusing or kidnapping of my child as there are so many bad people around, so he stays inside our small flat. What else to give him apart from phone?.” (In-depth Interview #5, 16.01.26)

Smartphones are ubiquitous. They are now quite affordable and accessible. The free contents on YouTube and low cost data plans in Bangladesh telecom industries makes screen-based content the most obtainable options for many families.

Both IDIs and FGDs included working mothers who described the choices and decisions they face.

“I work at a garment buying house company. I have many deadlines. When I am working from home, my daughter needs attention. If I don’t give phone, she pulls my laptop, cries and shows tantrums and eventually disturbing my work calls. So phone is the only way I can do my tasks and keep her occupied. People do judge but they don’t understand the need.” (In-depth Interview #8, 16.01.26)

Previous research has documented the practical reasons parents give for screen use: 65% for entertainment, 42.9% to keep children calm, 37.7% to facilitate feeding (Bangladeshi Young Children's Smartphone Use, 2025). This study on the other hand extends these quantitative findings by revealing the emotional context of guilt, sense of having no alternatives, and the conflict between knowing screens may be harmful and needing them to function as of all.

The digital babysitter phenomenon raises important questions about intervention. Parents advised to simply “reduce screen time” without addressing the underlying needs that screens fulfill child entertainment, calming, feeding, enabling parental productivity is unlikely to be effective. Thus, interventions must offer practical alternatives.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Educational Content as blessing and a curse

The third theme concerns most parents' and their beliefs about educational content and how these beliefs shape the screen usage decisions. Many parents in this study have expressed that they provide screen primarily for educational purposes and mostly to learn English language.

“I thought the english rhymes learning would help him in overall learning of english words, and prepare for school better. He did learn and can count till 20 in english and can even say the alphabets and recognize most common colors. But then he also learned to demand the phone constantly with showing tantrums when not given or taken away. So is it a good thing or bad? (Focus Group Discussion #2, Participant 1, 15.01.26)

The intricacy of the problem is reflected in this ambivalence, the idea that screens have both advantages and threats. According to research, when properly created and utilised with parental mediation, instructional materials can promote vocabulary expansion (Linebarger & Walker, 2005). However, the association between watching educational programs and children's language was shown to be non-significant in the meta-analysis by Xie and colleagues (2024), indicating that educational content by itself does not ensure favourable results.

Most parents in this study described a pattern where educational intentions gradually fade and get displaced to recreational use, as children's preferences for entertainment content overwhelmed parents' ability to enforce the educational content viewing.

I started with educational apps and videos only. But then he founds cartoons on YouTube, and now he only wants those cartoons and watches on repeat and not the educational ones. They are just unused but there.” (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 2, 15.01.26)

This pattern suggests that even when parents do start with good intentions, addictive qualities of screen content and children's demands can lead to the goal displacement.

The both sided nature of educational content also relates to the phenomenon of children memorizing screen material without developing functional communicational skills. As one mother noted:

He knows most if not all the english nursery rhymes, and can sing them perfectly. But he can't tell me in Bengali or even in English phrases if his stomach hurts. What use is knowing rhymes if he can't tell me his pain? (In-depth Interview #7, 16.01.26)

This observations highlights the distinction between rote memorization and genuine communicative competence, a distinction that parents may not fully appreciate when they take joy in their children's ability to recite screen content.

The subject resonated for few parents with their children studying in english medium schools.

"Whenever there are online classes the school says use these apps or these particular videos. They make us feel that if we dont give screen time, our child might fall behind in academics. So we give feeling we're doing the right thing. But then we see feat about speech delay. Its' actually confusing. (Focus Group Discussion #2, Participant 2, 15.01.26)

Recent research emphasizes that "rather than screen time as alone factor, digital content quality and parental mediation are also associated with differences in communicative performances" (Screen Time, Digital Content Quality, and Parental Mediation, 2026, p. 157). The research findings suggests that in the Bangladeshi context, even when content quality is as of adequate, the lack of parental mediation (due to mainly time constraints, multiple demands or even limited awareness) may limit the potential benefits while leaving children exposed to high risks.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Cultural and Familial Influences on Screen Use

The fourth major theme concerns how familial and cultural factors shape screen use patterns and parental responses in the Uttara context. Various dimensions of Bangladeshi family life emerged

as particular influences.

Even when families live in nuclear arrangements in Uttara, the influence of joint family dynamics of extended family remains strong through phone calls, visits and cultural expectations.

“I try to limit the usage of phone, but my mother-in-law whenever visiting us for a long time gives it to him. She says, ‘Let him enjoy, he’s just a child. You were also strict with studies, look how you turned out not being so strict about it now. ‘She doesn’t understand the depth of how things have actually changed with time.’” (In-depth Interview #6, 16.01.26)

This dynamic with grandparents or other relatives may undermine parental screen limits and so adds complexity at managing children’s media use. It also points to the need for family level rather than just parent-level interventions.

Parents frequently compare their children with others considering social comparison and norms. These comparisons thus shaped their perceptions of what was normal or acceptable.

“At our building in Sector 7, Uttara almost all children use phones. When they play together, they don’t play like we played, they rather sit together watch phones and each bring up their own devices. So I think, maybe this is the normal now. Maybe I’m worrying too much about speech.” (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 3, 15.01.26)

The normalization of screens using the perception that “everyone does it” may reduce parental motivation to limit screens, even when they have underlying concerns.

Though this study includes three fathers, gendered patterns in screen management emerged clearly. Mothers who are the primary bearer of responsibility for childcare in most Bangladeshi families also bore the primary given burden of managing screen time and the associated guilt.

“My husband says, ‘Why do you give him so much phone and screen? Control him’ But he’s

actually not here during the day. He leaves for work at around 8 am and returns after 9 pm. He doesn't see the real difficulties I face throughout the day. When he is at home on weekends, he plays with our child for few minutes and then goes on his own phone for either work or entertainment. There is no help for me overall." (Focus Group Discussion #2, Participant 4, 15.01.26)

While this study focuses on middle-class families in Uttara, variations in socioeconomic status are influencing screen use patterns. Families with more resources have access to alternative paid activities, domestic help that can reduce screen reliance and larger overall living spaces.

"If I had money for my daughter to go to a good play school, to buy her more toys, to take her to the park and not give phone instead. But we live inna small flat and with income constraints I cannot afford those things. Phone is her only entertainment and its free of regular costs." (Focus Group Discussion #1, Participant 4, 15.01.26)

Educational aspirations and the english medium schooling contexts brings to a unique aspect of this study. The focus in families with children in such english medium education or rececieving preschool at home, particularly around english language learning, emerged a powerful influence on screen use decision.

"In our country Bangladesh today, English is everything. For a good paying job, for university and for status you need to know English. If screens can help my child learn English, perhaps the benefits are greater than the risks? I honest don't know but I have to try." (In-depth Interview #3, 16.01.26)

This perspective that screens may be a necessary tool for social mobility complicates the simple message of "reduce screen time." Even so for many parents, screen represent hope for their children;s future, although worry cribbles about immediate developmental concerns.

4.3 Conclusion

Amid 8 IDI's and 2 FGD's with 15 parents, the research was thorough and revealed complex, nuanced understandings of how screens are woven into the fabric of family life and how parents perceive the relationship between screen use and their children's developing speech. Several key conclusions emerge from this study. Screen exposure among young children in Uttara is extensive with 80% of children exceeding WHO and AAP recommended limits. On the other hand, parents observe and worry about speech development in the context of screen use, with the majority expressing concerns about limited vocabulary, difficulty in forming sentences, and the "screen talk" phenomenon. Moreover, parents are not ignorant of screen time risks but face significant practical and structural constraints that limit their ability to reduce screen use. The displacement of verbal interaction by screens emerges as a central mechanism linking screen exposure to speech development concerns. Most importantly, family and cultural factors such as family dynamics, social norms, gender roles, socioeconomic constraints and educational aspirations profoundly shape screen use patterns. Overall there is a significant gap between parental awareness of general risks and knowledge of specific guidelines or developmental milestones with parents expediting guilt and conflict with their children's overall screen usage.

Through centering parental voices and experiences from the Uttara community, it provides rich understanding that complements and extends quantitative findings. Also personally conducting this research has deepened my appreciation for the complex challenges that Bangladeshi parents face in navigating their children's media use while managing the societal pressure of urban life. The genuine desire to do what is best for their children and these human dimensions cannot be captured in statistics alone.

All in all this study affirms what parents themselves have expressed. The desires to do what is best for their children, the guilt and conflict they experience around the screen useage, and the genuine difficulties they face innavigating the digital age while managing the demands and standards of modern urban life.

4.4 Recommendations

It is vital for families and parents to replace passive screen viewing with active and collaborative participation including co-viewing and raising knowledge of developmental milestones through easily accessible information. Moreoever, creating alternative techniques for common screen use promotes healthier routines and setting even more better screen-free time and zones can help maintain meaningful family engagements. It is also crucial for upholding consistent methods such as involving extended family members and realising that screen-based English learning cannot take place of interactive language use is also a key.

Even early childhood educators should engage parents though nonjudgemental, suppotitive, communcational and create language rich learning environments while reconsidering reliance on screen based tasks and also identify children who may need additional support. Along with this healthcare providers can also strengthen early interventions by incorporating screen time discussions into routine paediatric care with providing culturally appropriate guidance and sharing information ond developmental milestones.

Moreover, to successfully assists families in bangladeshi context, legislators and publibe health professionals should also create such screen time standards that are unique to the culture and also at the same time have appropriate awareness efforts. Supportive environments, such as secure public play areas can also be promoting healthy alternatives to screen time. For early

intervention and detection it is also crucial to improve health surveillance systems to increase access to speech therapy services. In order to gain a better understanding of casual links the interventions and their efficacy along with significance of environmental factors, such as bilingual development, it is needed to give priority to longitudinal and mixed-method studies. Through training, resource development, and community-based projects, organisations such as BRAC Institute of Educational Development can assist these endeavours.

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Appendices

Appendix A: In-Depth Interviews

Participants Demographic Information

Interview date:

Name: Age:

Educational qualification: Occupation: Family Income.....

Total number of children/ children:..... Child/Children's age:

Study Title: A Parental Perspective on the Impact of Screen Exposure on Speech Development in Early Childhood

Researcher: Naziat Islam Shupti, BRAC University

Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. I'm interested in learning about your experiences with your child's use of screens like smartphones, tablets, or television, and your thoughts about how this might relate to your child's speech development. There are no right or wrong answers, I just want to understand your perspective. With your permission, I'll record our conversation so I can remember everything accurately. Everything you say will be kept confidential, and your name will not appear in any reports. The interview will take about 45-60 minutes.

Background Information:

1. Tell me a little about your family, yourself, your child, who lives in your home.
2. What is a typical day like for you and your child?
3. Tell me about your child's education. Do they attend preschool, or do you do preschool activities at home?

Screen Use Patterns:

4. Does your child use screens like smartphones, tablets, or television? What kinds of screens?
5. On a typical day, how much time would you say your child spends with screens?
6. What does your child usually watch or do on screens? (Probe: specific apps, channels, content Bengali, English, or both?)
7. When during the day does your child usually use screens? (Probe: meals, bedtime, while you work, during travel)
8. What are the reasons you give your child a screen? (Probe: educational, entertainment, keep busy, calm down, facilitate feeding)

Speech Development Observations:

9. Tell me about your child's speech. How does your child communicate with you?
10. What kinds of words or sentences does your child use? In which languages?
11. Have you noticed anything about your child's speech that concerns you or that seems different from other children the same age?
12. Has anyone else family members, doctors, teachers commented on your child's speech?

Connections and Concerns:

13. Do you see any connection between your child's screen use and their speech? Can you give me examples?
14. Have you ever worried that screen time might be affecting your child's speech development?

15. Have you talked with anyone about your concerns? (Probe: doctors, family, friends, teachers)
16. Have you tried to change or limit your child's screen use? What happened? What was easy or difficult?

Cultural and Contextual Factors:

17. How do other family members, spouse, parents, in-laws feel about your child's screen use?
18. What do other parents you know in Uttara do about screen time for their children?
19. What makes it easier or harder to manage your child's screen use in your current living situation?
20. For families with English medium schooling: How does your child's school approach screen time? Do they recommend apps or online resources?
21. What would help you feel more confident about managing your child's screen time and supporting their speech development?

Closing:

22. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your child's screen use or speech development?
23. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you so much for your time and for sharing your experiences. Your insights are very valuable for this research.

Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Study Title: A Parental Perspective on the Impact of Screen Exposure on Speech Development in Early Childhood

Researcher: Naziat Islam Shupti, BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University

Introduction:

Welcome, and thank you all for joining this focus group discussion. I'm Naziat Islam Shupti, a Master's student at BRAC IED. Today we'll be talking about children's screen use and speech development specifically, your experiences as parents in Uttara.

This discussion will last about 90 minutes. There are no right or wrong answers. I'm interested in hearing about your experiences, opinions, and the different perspectives in this group. Please feel free to respond to each other's comments as well as to my questions.

With your permission, I'll record our discussion so I can remember everything accurately. Everything said here is confidential please don't share others' comments outside this group. Everyone will remain anonymous in any reports.

Let's go around and briefly introduce ourselves, your name, your child's age, and whether they attend preschool or do home-based learning.

Warm-Up Question (10 minutes): Let's start by sharing: What does a typical day look like for you and your child? How do screens fit into your daily routine?

Screen Use Patterns (20 minutes):

1. What kinds of screen content do your children enjoy most? (Bengali rhymes, English cartoons, educational apps, etc.)
2. When and where do your children typically use screens? (Mealtimes, bedtime, while parents work, etc.)
3. For those with children in English medium schools: How does school influence your decisions about screen time and content?

Speech Development Observations (20 minutes):

4. What have you observed about your children's speech development? Any concerns or surprises?
5. Have you noticed any connection between screen use and how your child speaks? Any examples?
6. How do you know if your child's speech is developing normally? Where do you get information about milestones?

Parental Challenges and Strategies (20 minutes):

12. What are the biggest challenges you face in managing your child's screen time?
13. What strategies have you tried to limit or manage screen use? What worked, what didn't?
14. How do other family members (spouse, grandparents) approach screen time? Is it consistent?

Cultural Context (15 minutes):

10. How is raising children in Uttara different from how you were raised? How does this affect screen use?

11. What do other parents in your building or neighborhood do? Do you feel pressure about screen time?

12. For those using English content: What are your hopes and concerns about English learning through screens?

Closing (5 minutes):

13. If you could design the perfect support for parents around screen time and speech development, what would it look like?

14. Any final thoughts or something we haven't discussed that you think is important?

Thank you all so much for your time and for sharing your experiences. Your insights are incredibly valuable.

Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please check one:

☐ I agree to audio recording of the interview/discussion.

☐ I do not agree to audio recording.

Appendix C

Consent Form

I, _____, hereby grant interviewer Naziat Islam Shupti permission to use my answers in an academic study report.

I am aware that the study "Parental Perspective on the Impact of Screen Exposure on Speech Development in Early Childhood" is being conducted for scholarly purposes.

Additionally, I am aware that these researcher hereinafter referred to as Naziat Islam Shupti will keep my answers to the questionnaire anonymous.

By signing below, I hereby grant permission:

Signature: _____

Date: _____