

**Early Literacy Development and School Readiness:
Perceptions and Practices of Parents Having 3-5 Years Old
Children in Dhaka City**

A thesis presented to the
Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University.

Submitted by

Ashfi Mehnaz

Student ID # 11255018



In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.Sc in Early Childhood
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I. Ethical Approval Form

Date: April, 2013

Student name: Ashfi Mehnaz

Title of Thesis Topic: Early Literacy Development and School Readiness: Perceptions and Practices of Parents Having 3-5 Years Old Children in Dhaka City

1. Source of population

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

1. physical risk to the subjects
1. social risk
2. psychological risk to subjects
3. discomfort to subjects
4. invasion of privacy

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1. Nature and purpose of the study
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- ✓ 2. Consent Form
- ✓ 3. Questionnaire or interview schedule

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- ☒ Approved without amendments
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Authorized by:

Name: ERUM MARIAM, Ph.D

Position in Ethical Review Committee:

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Signature:

Erum Marican

Date:

13.11.13

III. THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Name of the Student: Ashfi Mehnaz

Expected Date of Graduation: 30 September, 2013

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Examiner's comments:

Date of Thesis Submission to the Committee:

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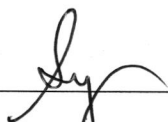
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In my judgment the thesis and the candidate meet recognized academic standards for the degree and is therefore ready to submit her thesis to Thesis Committee.



Signature of the Supervisor

Date:

Details of the Supervisor:

Name: Sakila Yesmin

Designation: Research Associate-III

Workplace: ECD Resource Centre, Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University

Address: House# 113/A, Road# 2, Niketon, Gulsan-1, Dhaka-1212

E-mail: syesmin@bracu.ac.bd

Telephone: 88-02-9881265, Ext-2126

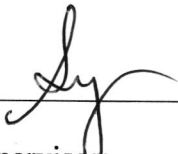
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ashfi', is written over a horizontal line.

Signature of the student:

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*In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Early Childhood
Development from Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University.*

Submitted by

Ashfi Mehnaz

Student ID # 11255018

E-mail: ash_mehnaz@yahoo.com

M.Sc. in Early Childhood Development, Institute of Educational Development,
BRAC University.



National Mentor: Sakila Yesmin, Research Associate-III, ECD Resource Centre (ECDRC),
Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

International Supervisor: Dr. Mainus Sultan, Adjunct Research Faculty, University of
Massachusetts, USA

To My Parents, Sister & Husband

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Executive Summary

Research on early literacy in Bangladesh is mostly concentrated on poorly resourced environments and early literacy practices done by illiterate parents of lower socio-economic communities in rural areas. This study aimed to explore educated parents' perceptions and practices towards early literacy related skills in urban context at home settings. Additionally, it examined the home literacy interventions of 3-5 years old children and their pre-literacy skills in relation to school readiness. Data in this study collected through home observations and in-depth interviews with five mothers and conducted in natural home settings. The questionnaire was pre-tested and translated prior to the actual study.

This study is followed by three main research questions such as, parental perceptions towards early literacy and school readiness, availability of literacy materials and the process of doing literacy activities at home. Qualitative approach and purposive sample technique were employed in doing the study.

Study reveals that educated parents prefer doing informal and unstructured early literacy promotional activities at home settings. They moderately mediate and facilitate early literacy promotional activities along with moderate facilitation of available resources at homes. Parents view home is the main repository for acquiring literacy skills but there lies lack of understanding towards the contributing factors that makes positive home literacy environment. Early reading is viewed as only beneficial for children's academic success and the benefits of early reading associated with other domains (social, emotional, psychosocial etc) are mostly overlooked in parents' responses. Parents are unable to model the behavior of story books reading to their children due to their own literacy habits and knowledge gap, and it works as a reason of conducting less story book reading sessions at home settings. Data suggests that parents seem to be unaware of the fact that shared reading can be a contributing factor to early literacy. Additionally, study reveals that social behavior of schools mostly determines what pre-literacy skills these age group children bring to schools as part of their school readiness. Child's own ability in academic skills is viewed as his/her 'School readiness' and readiness in other domains along with family's readiness is overlooked in parent's responses.

The study highlighted that educated parents have the understanding that their roles and contribution are factors for promoting children's early literacy but they have inadequate understanding and knowledge gap regarding the significance of their involvement in child's literate life. That's why parents moderately scaffold and facilitate early literacy promotional activities and available resources at homes despite having opportunities. If parents were more conscious about the significance of their engagement in children's literate life, they might view 'family readiness' essential for child's 'school readiness.'

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Chapter I- Introduction

Parents have been identified by many as their child's first literacy teacher (Edwards, 2004). By reading with children, parents set the stage for a child's literate life (Zeece, 2005). As literacy development begins at birth and is a continuous life long process, early childhood years are crucial for children's literacy development. Child begins its literacy acquisition at home and obtains all kind of literacy skills and knowledge from there (Purcell-Gates, 1996; Strickland & Taylor, 1989). That's why parental involvement and home are considered having a powerful influence on a child's early literacy development. Young children learn the functions of early literacy through observing and participating in real life settings where reading and writing are used and construct their understanding of reading and writing through active involvement with various literacy materials (Sulzby & Teale, 1996). Children develop early literacy skills when experiences with books and reading are provided. Family is considered as the most powerful and influential authoritative layer to provide children early literacy experiences, such as, interpretation of pictures, handling of books, connecting meanings with printed words etc. Shapiro and Doiron (1987) stated that the major preconditions for literacy are rooted in the home environment and the role of parents, the availability of books, printed materials, the different literacy practices and the manner in which parents engage in literacy practices with their children are the conditions that enable early literacy development to occur.

The term "Early literacy" is based on a new understanding of how children develop reading, writing and language skills and it refers what children know about reading and writing before they actually read and write. It brings out all the experiences children get from conversation, stories (oral and written), books and print (Parlakian, 2003). On the other hand, the term 'school readiness' is an interactive process or set of relationships in which the child, her or his family, the community environment and the school interact in ways that support or fail to support, the child's physical, cognitive and social-emotional development (Boethel, 2004). 'School readiness' is defined by two characteristic features on three dimensions. 'Transition' and 'gaining competencies' are

the characteristics features and the three dimensions are 'ready child', 'ready school' and 'ready family and community' (UNICEF, 2012). All the five domains of children's readiness for school- (a) physical wellbeing and motor development (b) emotional wellbeing and social competencies (c) approaches to learning (d) language development (e) cognition and general knowledge are interrelated and interdependent (Kagan, Moore & Bredekamp, 1995). Early childhood professionals have long recognized the importance of early literacy in preparing children ready for schools.

Approach to learning is considered as a prescribed domain of school readiness which includes children's attitudes towards, and interest in learning. Family can establish an at home learning environment, provide books and other learning materials, reading and telling stories to support children's learning and their motivation to learn (Henderson & Orozco, 2003). All these activities done by parents enhance vocabulary, promote phonological and print awareness, and build letter knowledge. Vocabulary and language, phonological awareness, knowledge of print, comprehension and letter knowledge are considered as important components of early literacy. So, the components of early literacy act as children's readiness indicators for later schoolings and that's why and how early literacy and school readiness is connected.

Early language and literacy has been considered as an important domain for school readiness (Riley & Reedy, 2007) and it is the foundational skill upon which other skills are built (Eke, 2011). Supportive home environment and family involvement are important factors influencing later school achievement in young children. Snow, Barnes, Chandler, Goodman and Hemphill (1991) have shown that children from homes where parents model the uses of literacy and engage children in activities that promote basic understanding about literacy and its uses are better prepared for schools. That's why the link between supportive parental involvement, home literacy environment and children's early literacy development is well established. Children who are read from an early age are more successful at learning to read, write and speak and that early exposures to books, print, storytelling & conversation help them to build a strong foundation of early literacy skills required for school readiness.

Early literacy and school readiness have been taken an increased importance among educators and policy makers to meet Education for All (EFA) goal. According to UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (2012), approximately 250 million children drop out globally before completing primary education. Poorer literacy interaction with parents acts as one of the reasons of this high global dropout (Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani & Merali, 2006). In Bangladesh, research on early literacy is mostly concentrated on poorly resourced environments and literacy practices done by illiterate parents of lower socio-economic communities in rural areas. In this study I tried to explore educated parents perceptions towards early literacy and the literacy practices done by these parents at home settings. My study examined the perceptions and practices of educated Bangladeshi parents in urban context regarding the development of early literacy skills of their 3-5 years children's at home setting. These parents provide books, technology and other printed materials to children and placed high value on education. My study also presents the home literacy interventions this age group (3-5 years) child gets at home and the pre-literacy skills these children bring to schools as a part of their school readiness. Though there are many interrelated factors contribute to early literacy development, I mainly focused on parental perceptions towards early literacy and the materials used and literacy practices done by parents at home setting in urban context.

In the following chapter I, the sections are organized as statement of the problem, justification and significance of the study, operational definition, research topic and research questions.

Statement of the problem:

Literacy has been identified as a key factor in student's academic achievement and considered as a precondition or predictor for reading and school readiness. A child who enters kindergarten with a strong vocabulary, a love of books, and having familiarity with playing with words, has a definite advantage. Research shows that entering school ready to learn can improve the chances of reaching to middle class status by age 40 by about 8 percentage points (Winship, Sawhill & Gold, 2011). Study of Lee & Burks (2002) showed that at least half of the educational achievement gaps between poor and non poor children exist at kindergarten entry. It is also found that children from lower

socioeconomic communities lag behind their counterparts on vocabulary and literacy skills (Evans, 2004). Children will not enter school ready to learn unless child's experiences with language and literacy are limited. The more limited a child's experiences with language and literacy the more likely he or she will have difficulty learning to read. So from the perspective of child's school readiness indicators it is evident that early literacy has tremendous importance and placed a high value.

Parental involvement in child's literacy practices is considered as a more powerful force than any other family background variables (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Parental less responsiveness, lack of sophisticated communication and less time provided to reading storybooks make children's language and vocabulary skills limited (Opel, Ameer & Aboud, 2006). It is less likely that children can extend vocabulary unless parents have books at home or talk to children about pictures (Aboud, 2007). Therefore it is essential for parents to be aware of the significant contribution they can make to their children's learning by providing a stimulating environment around language, reading and writing as well as by providing a supporting home literacy environment during the early years. Parental positive perception towards early literacy in this regard is important as what will be the intensity of parents' contribution in fostering a positive start to early literacy depends on how parents see literacy in their lives.

In Bangladesh gross and net enrollment rate in primary education is 111% and 98.7% respectively in 2011 (DPE, 2012). The total dropout rate in primary is 29.7% with 4.1% of children dropping out from Grade 1, 7.4% from Grade 4 and 11.1% from Grade 5 (DPE, 2012). Out of 100 students admitted to Grade 1 five years earlier 70.3% completed the five primary grades and the percentage of repeaters in grade 1 is 10.7% in 2011 (DPE, 2012). This high dropout rate is a barrier to universalizing access to primary education in Bangladesh. Research done by Arnold, Bartlett, Gowani & Merali (2006) asserted that children who have significantly less interaction with parents enter schools with less vocabulary and thus by having a greater chance of drop out. They also acknowledged that it is important for parents to ensure access to materials, particularly story books in promoting early reading and manipulative in learning numeracy and

problem solving. This research finding also supports the study done by USAID in 2004 regarding the reasons of high dropout in Bangladesh. The report indicated that in Bangladesh, the relative poverty of literacy supportive resources, parental involvement, availability of children's books & toys all impact school readiness and achievement (USAID, 2004). So, it can be said that, one of the reasons of this high dropout rate in Bangladesh is associated with early literacy factors. Parental awareness, involvement and supportive home environment can help to mitigate this problem in Bangladesh.

The experiences of young children and the levels of engagement in literacy practices with parents appear to vary as home backgrounds and environments differ in families. In Bangladesh, like many other developing countries, parents are the main caregivers of children under three years old. But, the issue of concern is that less than 50 percent of parents under five children provide love and care that support early learning such as reading books, telling stories, singing songs etc (UNICEF, 2010). This finding also supplemented the study done by Save the Children in 2009. That study showed that Bangladesh has ranked 57 out of a 100 countries in how young children below 5 years of age are prepared to succeed in schools. I have come across educated parents in my life who have the ability to send children in schools on time and children are exposed to written and oral ingredients to literacy at their homes. But there are children coming from such socio-economic background experience a lack of interest in literacy activities. Many of these children do not show literacy behavior at appropriate level of their age. This made me to question, what are the factors associated with such kind of perceived lack of engagement in reading behavior despite having resources and opportunities at home. Does there lie any gaps in parental knowledge or involvement or gaps existed in parental perceptions or in the literacy activities done at home and in its processes? Knowing parental perception is important in this regard. Without knowing parental perceptions we may not be able to understand the factors influencing these children's literacy activities at home. Without identifying the knowledge gap that might exists in perceptions or in practices or may be in patterns of activities, we may not be able to design an effective intervention or advocacy program.

Justification of the study:

It is evident that the foundation for literacy and school success is laid during the early years of life. During this time, young children develop the skills and attitudes that will help them to be successful. Through their daily experiences, children meet opportunities to develop oral language skills, gain understanding about written language, practice their emerging literacy skills and refine their cognitive and social abilities. Children obtain those readiness skills at home (Purcell-Gates, 1996), child care programs (Bryant, Burchinal, Lau & Sparling, 1994; Dickinson & Smith, 1994) and other community settings (Kuby & Aldridge, 2004). Parents are the first and most enduring educators of their children and play a significant role in their children's life through interactions and by giving feedback to support their curiosity of literacy (Copeland & Edwards, 1990). As nothing can be truer than that I have chosen mothers as they are the primary care givers of children for my study.

There are great numbers of studies around the world regarding the perceptions, practices, beliefs of parents as well as home literacy activities done by parents in the western contexts. But, in Bangladesh little is known on parental perceptions towards early literacy development of children's at home due to limited research on this aspect. Knowing Parental perceptions and practices on early literacy may shed light on the types of literacy related activities parents engage in with their pre-school age children and hence our knowledge about what type of pre-literacy skills young children bring to schools. Without knowing the perceptions of parents we may not be able to understand where the knowledge gap exists and will not be able to design an effective intervention or advocacy program. That's why the purpose of my study is to explore the perceptions and practices of Bangladeshi parents at urban context regarding the development of early literacy skills of their 3-5 years children at home settings. My study may give a wider platform of further research in understanding the knowledge gap of educated parents in this regard.

Children are born ready to learn and cultivate 85 percent of their intellect, personality and skills by age five. The human brain develops more rapidly between birth

and age five than during any other subsequent period. This is the time when the brain begins to maximize efficiency by determining which connections to keep and which to eliminate. Early literacy skills begin to develop in the first 5 years of life and children prepare to read long before they enter schools. We know that child's likelihood for success in the first grade depends on how much he/she learned about reading and writing before entering school. So, the early the intervention occurs, the better it's for the children to thrive and flourish. This is one of the reasons of choosing 3-5 years to understand and explore the kind of literacy interventions these age group children get at home and the pre-literacy skills these young children bring to schools.

According to UNICEF (2010), in Bangladesh about 7 percent of total population are preschool age (3-5 years old) children and about 47.45 percent of under 5 years old stay at home where family members are engaged in activities that promote learning and school readiness, e.g. reading books, telling stories, singing songs, playing with children, taking children outside home. Nationally 22.9 percent of children aged 3-5 years attended early childhood education and in urban area, it is 25.2 percent (UNICEF, 2010). Statistics indicates that still there are many children not attending pre-schools in urban areas and family is the only place for these children to get literacy interventions. Though playgroup can improve school readiness, unfortunately early learning opportunities for young children are not widely available in Bangladesh. So, it is quite appropriate to think that the immediate environment of children under 5 years of age are their homes. Thus by, it is important to understand the home settings of 3-5 years old children's for their early literacy promotion.

Pre-primary education in Bangladesh focuses on children between 5-6 years old and for that parents generally begin to provide literacy interventions at homes along with admitting children pre-schools after five years. But when children are at the age of below five and don't get any literacy intervention apart from home settings, parental own perceptions and practices place a high value in shaping children's early literacy. This is another justification of choosing 3-5 years old children's parental perceptions and practices.

Significance of the study:

Early literacy development has placed a high value in our policy paper. Even if there is little evidence in Bangladesh that has examined or explored educated parents' perceptions towards early literacy particularly in urban context. In this regard one of the significant contributions of this study will be in minimizing the gaps of limited research in this field. Findings of the study will also be helpful in showing the directions of further research in this particular area. This study findings can also be used in designing effective intervention programs for educated parents and based on research findings advocacy activities can also be organized.

Another significant contribution of this study will be it is anticipated to provide an opportunity to establish what factors in the home environment influence early literacy as well as parent's perceptions of their roles in this activity. Findings of the study also anticipate shedding light regarding the pre-literacy skills children bring to schools from homes. Furthermore, educated parents can use the study findings to examine their perceptions on early literacy development as well as can prepare literacy related activities for their children at home.

Objectives:

The key objective is to explore parental perceptions towards the development of early literacy skills of their 3-5 years old children at home settings for future school readiness. The study will also explore,

- (a) the materials used at home to enhance early literacy and
- (b) the practices done by parents at home for promoting early literacy

Research questions:

Research question 1: *What are the perceptions of parents regarding early literacy skills and school readiness?*

Sub research questions 1(a), 1(b) & 1(c)

- (a) What is the understanding of parents regarding “reading readiness” and “school readiness”?
- (b) What do parents think about the importance of early literacy for school readiness?
- (c) What do parents think about the importance of home literacy environment for early literacy development?

Research question 2: *What are the materials used by parents at home to promote early literacy skills?*

Sub research questions 2(a)

- (a) What is the process involved in terms of uses of materials at home?

Research question 3: *What are the practices/ activities done by parents at home to promote early literacy skills?*

Sub research questions 3(a)

- (a) How are the activities organized by parents?

Definition of terms:

Early literacy: Early literacy is based on a new understanding of how children develop reading, writing and language skills. Early literacy behavior represents early reading and writing behavior, skills and attitudes exhibited by young children. Developing literacy skills begins at birth and these skills improve through everyday loving interactions-sharing books, telling stories, singing songs, naming objects, drawing etc. In this study researcher focus only on children’s early reading behaviors and activities done by parents as reading is more connected with phonological awareness, vocabulary, letter and sound

knowledge, print convention, listening comprehension, communication and oral language development more over writing.

Parent: One who begets, gives birth to, or nurtures and raises a child; a father or mother. In this study mothers are considered as parents.

Parents' perceptions: Parents' perceptions are defined as parents' thoughts regarding home literacy activities in terms of how importantly they attach to them for their children's literacy development (Nebrig, 2007). In the study, only mothers' perceptions are considered.

Home literacy environment: Home literacy environment refers to the environment which is accessible to achieve desirable literacy events and engagement. Home literacy activities refer to the activities that children participate at home (Cheng, 2003).

Readiness for school: Readiness means different things to different people. It is sometimes described in terms of age or stage development. On the other hand, sometimes definition of readiness emphasized social and emotional aspects (Dockett & Perry, 2001). According to Dockett & Perry (2001), definition of readiness is influenced by family, community and social expectations as well as by children's attributes. The National Education Goals panels (1997) identify three components of school readiness:

1. Children's readiness for school- enabling them to participate in classroom and learning experiences.
2. Schools' readiness for children- schools responding to the children enrolled.
3. Family and community supports and services that contribute to children's readiness-promoting family and community environments that support learning.

These elements indicate that children's characteristics are one, but not the only factor to be considered in discussion of readiness. In this study researcher focus on child's school readiness in terms of his/her early literacy skills on reading and family's readiness regarding the development of early literacy skills of his/her child for future school readiness.

Chapter II- Literature Review

This chapter contains the review of related literature which aims to provide an overview of literature relating to early literacy perspectives and practices. The first part of this chapter is focused on age wise development of early literacy skills of children and the components of early literacy. Thereafter, I provide previous studies focusing on the importance of families for the promotion of early literacy, parental perceptions towards early literacy and how it is attached to the activities parents do at home, home literacy environment and its importance on early literacy development and school readiness. I conclude this chapter by reviewing related studies done in Bangladesh.

Looking at definitions of literacy is a complex task. According to Barton (1994), it is impossible to talk about literacy in one specific way. Similarly, Cairney (1995) argues that literacy is not a single unitary skill. He defined it as a social practice which has many specific manifestations. In his book *Pathway to literacy*, Cairney (1995) stated that there are many different definitions of literacy, each having a particular purpose and context in which they can be used. There are various types of literacy such as functional, cultural, multicultural, information, traditional literacy, critical literacy so on. So giving a general definition of literacy is impractical as each literacy program has its own interpretation which is relevant to the articulated objectives and specific context (Aronstam, 2005).

In the UNESCO Education Sector Position Paper (2006), literacy is described as the capability to identify, comprehend, interpret communicate, compute and written materials related with different contexts. According to UNESCO (2006), literacy is not just the ability to read and write a short, simple statement on everyday life. It's the ability to engage in all activities where literacy is required for effective functioning in group and community and also for enabling him/her to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for own and community's development.

Developing literacy skills begins at birth and this skill improve through everyday loving interactions- such as sharing books, telling stories, singing songs etc. Research suggests that the quality of parent- child interactions is important for children's development of literacy (Saracho, 1997). In every culture infants follow almost the same sequence of language and literacy development. The newborn infants are capable of discriminate voices from other noise. By two months, children can absorb the sounds and rhythms of language around them, recognize and respond to their parents' voices, make a variety of sounds like 'coos' and gurgles. By four months, they respond to people and things by making sounds, are curious about themselves and other things, like to look, read and touch things, are ready to begin looking at books. By six months, they begin to use repetitive sounds like 'ma', 'ba', like more active and bouncing rhymes, like to hold things of different sizes, colors, texture etc. By the end of one year, they like stories about themselves and their immediate world, like rhythmic stories that hold their attention, like books with simple pictures and short sentences. Children increase their language related abilities dramatically during the first two years of life. Children are expected to comprehend word meaning, learn new words every day, like to sing songs, start to combine words into simple sentences, learn about their own feelings, like sharing storybooks with people, make up words for things, can understand several words in context by the end of second year. At the age of three, children can understand and use describing words, combine words in short sentences, learn the letters of the alphabet, like books and stories and can turn the pages by themselves etc. Throughout the period of 18 months and 3 years, children develop rapidly not only cognitively and physically but also in terms of literacy skills (Makin & Whitehead, 2004). It is significantly important to be exposed to early literacy experiences for children below three years of age as these first three years of life are period of incredible growth in all areas of a child's development.

Between the ages of 3 and 5 which is a preschool period, children experience many remarkable 'firsts' in their lives. At the age of four, children learn more letters, words and sounds, like making up words, enjoy repetition, like having people read to them or tell them stories, like having people change their voices when telling stories, like doing things that help them to write, begin to understand and empathize with others. Preschoolers easily achieve three significant emergent literacy components, which are

alphabet knowledge, print awareness and phonological awareness (Pence & Justice, 2008). During the pre-school years most children recognize some letters especially in their names, show interest to the environmental prints and sings, begin to imitate the letters (Chaney, 1994 as cited in Pence & Justice, 2008). Knowing the names of letters of the alphabet is the best predictor of beginning reading achievement (Adams, 1990). Children gain an understanding of conversation through the experience with print (Gunn, Simmons & Kameenui, 1995). Young children learn the uses of print in their lives as they observe adults read, make lists, and make use of literacy as they go about their everyday lives (Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004). The third emergent literacy component-phonological awareness is the ability to auditory recognizes and manipulates sounds in words (Wasik & Bond, 2001). Phonological awareness begins early with rhyming games and chants, often on a parent's knee. Listening and speaking provide children with a sense of words and sentences; build sensitivity to the sound system so that children can acquire phonological awareness and phonics (Strickland & Schickedanz, 2004). Storybook reading provides an opportunity for children to hear sounds in words within the context of a connected text- is a way to promote phonological awareness. By the end of year five, children play and invent with words, develop their own identity, learn to tell a story from beginning to end, may learn to read longer stories. Preschoolers enjoy listening and discussing storybooks (Morrow, 2005) which is a sign of advanced emotional development.

Families are important layer to influence on children's literacy development (Owocki, 2001). By introducing books early to children, parents actually give children an advantage over their peers throughout primary school (Wade & Moore, 2000). Studies show that parental involvement in their children's learning positively affects the child's performance (Fan & Chen, 2001) in both primary and secondary schools (Feinstein & Symons, 1999). Parental engagement in learning leads to higher academic achievement, greater cognitive competence, greater problem-solving skills, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance and fewer behavioral problems at school (Melhuish, Phan, Sylva, Sammons et al., 2001). According to Barnett (2002), early learning experiences have tremendous importance on child's life as it is linked with fewer grade retention and later adult productivity. There are strong correlation between parental reading with

children and children's later success with literacy (Chomsky, 1972 as cited in Eke, 2011, p 13). The amount of talk and the guidance style that parents use with their children has been related to later language and cognitive development (Hart & Risley, 1995). The more parents believe that children learn literacy in a more holistic way, the more they encourage literacy activities as a way to help their children learn to read and write (Lynch, Anderson, Anderson & Shapiro 2006). Parents, who are aware of the importance of print, use every printed material to highlight the use of print in their daily lives (Morrow, 2007). Seven types of home literacy related activities such as frequency reading, going to library, playing with numbers, painting and drawing, being taught numbers/ songs/poems/ rhymes have significant positive effects on unexpected achievement. Children enjoy having picture books read to them because they are charmed by the delightful characters, warm and beautiful illustration. When children enjoy the sound of written language, children learn about starting at the front of a book, turning pages, noticing print characters and realizing that print convey meaning (Eke, 2011). Although very young children cannot actually read the books, they can look at the pictures. So, it is important to have books readily available to children. When the same book is read over and over, the child eventually becomes familiar with written language and gains confidence in reading and these are important building blocks for literacy development (Eke, 2011).

Parental involvement in child's literacy practices is considered as a most powerful force (Flouri & Buchanan, 2004). Parents need to know that a child's capacity for learning is not determined at birth and there is a great deal they can do about it. Parenting practices such as reading to children, using complex language, responsiveness and warmth in interactions are all associated with better developmental outcomes (Bradley, 2002). Even parents who are not readers, their participation in literacy activities at home can have an impact on their children's academic performance. Parents who include literacy to their daily practices, their children tend to expose written and spoken literacy from birth. Evidence suggests that children coming from homes where parents model the use of literacy and engage in literacy promoting activities are better prepared for schools (McNaught, 2007). According to Snow (1998), families who support and believe in their children's ability to learn are actually promoting children's school readiness. Parent-child

pairs who view reading as fun, encourage questions and humor while reading, their children are more fluent in reading and positive about reading (Lancy, 1994). Parental reading beliefs are strongly associated with the types of literacy activities parents engage in with their children (Debaryshe, 1985). Sonnenschein (2002) stated that parental positive perceptions toward literacy are positively related to children's early literacy scores as he found a significant relationship between parents' belief about the importance of learning related activities for young children and the activities they provided at home for their children.

Apart from parent's role and perception children's home literacy experiences are important for early school success. Home provides the earliest learning environment for developing vocabulary (Hart & Risley, 1995) and providing exposure to print and letter (Lonigan & Whitehurst, 1998). Study showed that exposure to less common, more sophisticated vocabulary at homes relates directly to children's vocabulary acquisition (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). The nature of parent- child engagement in literacy activities, parental perceptions about literacy, parents' own literacy practices- are all the related aspects of home learning environment needed for early literacy to occur (Foy & Mann, 2003) that ultimately help children prepare for schools. Particular features of the home environment such as presence of literacy artifacts (such as newspapers, children's books, paper and pencil), experiences (such as checking the schedule in the TV guide), events (such as seeing adults reading and writing in a variety of situations) and interactions (such as bedtime story reading) have been found to be positively related to the early emergence of literacy (Kastler, Roser & Hoffman, 1987). A supportive home environment begins with positive parental attitude towards reading place high value on literacy (Kennedy & Trong, 2006). Reading aloud and storytelling had been found to be an intricate component of home literacy environment. Study has found out that children show less interest in reading when mothers tend to read less with children, those children become less excited during reading and have lower vocabulary skills. Children who have a rich language environment (through oral input or book reading) at home are expected to develop vocabulary, which in turn stimulates growth in phonological representations (Metsala & Wally, 1998).

Gunn, Simmons & Kameenui (1995) showed that home literacy environment accounted for a large percent of the variance in child's school readiness. The reason is that school readiness not only include the readiness of individual child, but also include the school's readiness for children and the capacity of families and communities to provide the necessary opportunities, conditions and supports to optimize children's development and learning (Dockett, Perry & Kearney, 2010). All the home literacy experiences provided by parents have a powerful impact on responding and constructing children's knowledge of print, facilitate and promote literacy development (Cheng, 2003). That's why there are connections between literacy activities done by parents and children's success in schools (Leseman & Jong, 1998). A child understanding and production of oral language, vocabulary knowledge, print awareness, early writing, recognizing letters and numbers, making connection of letters to sounds- all are good predictors of child's reading abilities and school readiness.

Early language and literacy has been considered as an important domain for school readiness (Riley & Reedy, 2007). There are many activities that parents can undertake with young children that have a positive effect on their literacy development and promote school readiness. These include reading with children, teaching them songs and nursery rhymes, playing with letters and numbers, taking children on excursions, creating regular opportunities for them to play with their friends and other children. Many children enter kindergarten having limitations in their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development-which is an issue of concern. School readiness refers the readiness of the individual child, the school's readiness for children and the ability of the family and community to support optimal early child development. Concept of 'School readiness' has been organized into five main domains: (a) physical well-being or health and physical development, (b) emotional maturity or social and emotional development, (c) social confidence, sometimes referred to as approaches to learning, (d) language richness or communication, and (e) thinking and general knowledge (Pianta, Wynn, 2002). Each of these domains are essential parts of the overall school readiness of a child and are influenced by multiple factors. Several fundamental misconceptions are prevalent with school readiness, which serve mostly to keep children out of school, rather than

ensuring that children will be ready and capable when they reach kindergarten. These misconceptions are as follows: (1) School is the only place for learning (2) Readiness is a specific condition within each child (3) Readiness can be measured easily (4) Readiness depends on time and some children need a little more maturation (5) Children are ready to learn when they can sit quietly at a desk and listen (6) Children who are not ready do not belong in schools (Willer & Bredekamp, 1990).

Little is known about parenting practices in Bangladeshi families regarding early literacy development. Most of the rural mothers are unaware of the importance of fostering curiosity and self confidence in a child and rarely provide the opportunities of play and conversation (UNICEF, 2001). Children spend many hours by themselves with few materials (Lusk, Hashemi & Haq, 2004). There are studies of intervention programs done in Bangladesh. A six (6) weeks intervention program aimed to foster basic mathematical concepts for 3 to 4 years old children in urban areas of Dhaka city found that with appropriate training caregivers can implement an activity based math program and children will benefit. Result indicated a significant gains in math skills of the intervention group and the effect size was greater than 1.0 (Opel, Camellia & Aboud, 2006). Another nine (9) month's intervention study aimed to benefit 5 years rural Bangladeshi children in their school readiness math skills and reasoning found that intervention students generally doubled their test scores, while control group remained at the pre-test level (Opel, Zaman, Khanom & Aboud, 2008). Opel, Ammer & Aboud (2006) found that, a four (4) week dialogic reading intervention increased vocabulary score from 26% to 54% in rural Bangladesh.

Chapter III- Methodology

The purpose of the chapter is to provide a brief overview of the research design used for the study. This chapter is divided into three subsequent parts. The first part has described the methodology employed and thereafter the site and sample of participants. Description of the methods of data collection was presented in the second part. The third section provides a description of the ways in which the analysis process was undertaken, the ethical considerations as well as the limitations of the study.

Research approach and study design

To explore parental perceptions towards early literacy and the literacy activities conducted by parents at home, qualitative approach was followed. As researcher was interested in obtaining information regarding parental perceptions towards early literacy, activities parents do at home, home learning environment educated parents provide their children's early literacy promotion qualitative design was employed. As qualitative research means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedure or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1991, p.17)-it seemed most appropriate therefore to employ a qualitative approach to the research. One of the aims of my study was to find out the view points of research subjects (parents) towards early literacy instead of objectivity and generalization-which is also a reason of designing qualitative study. According to Polit & Beck (2010), the goal of most qualitative studies is not to generalize because the focus is on the local, the personal, and the subject. To fulfillment the requirement of the study in-depth interviews and observations were conducted.

In order to find out subjects (mothers) points of view, understanding, meaning making in-depth interview was carried out in a flexible way. Questions were open ended and interviews were conducted as conversation and in natural settings. The reason of choosing participants natural setting was as qualitative research emphasize on studying people in their natural settings. Ravele (1997, p.63) states that, "data is usually collected through sustained contact with people in the settings where they spend time".

Since, this study was interested in knowing the responses of parents and as qualitative research concentrates on the opinions, feelings and experiences of individuals, it seemed appropriate to use in-depth interview. Participants were selected using certain criteria and not by choice, which is also a feature of qualitative approach employed in this study.

Research site

Study locations were selected as Mohammadpur, Kalabagan , Dhanmondi area of Dhaka city. All the areas represent middle class and upper middle class income group. All in-depth interviews and home observations were conducted in the participants' homes as mentioned earlier.

Study Sample

Study sample was the mothers having children of 3-5 years old. Sample mothers in the study were homemakers as well as working. Those mothers were selected whose children are not getting any kind of learning intervention for literacy (such as enrolled in day care centers or any learning centers) outside the home environment. Home is the only place for the children to get literacy interventions. Data on age, education, family type and income of families were also collected. Reason of choosing this age group was, in Bangladesh pre primary starts from the age of five. So it was quite rational to think that home is the only immediate environment for children to learn before age five.

Sample size

There were a total of five participants took part in the whole process. All the five mothers were asked for in-depth interview and home observation. Thoughtful attention was given in choosing educated mothers who vary in educational background and economic status. These five mothers were not chosen randomly but were selected to fulfill the criteria that researcher was looking for.

Sampling technique

Purposive sample technique was employed to select sample. Mothers who had willingness to participate were selected in the study. In the study 5 mothers were selected for In-depth Interview (IDI) and their homes were selected for home observations. The following diagram (Figure 1) represents sampling procedure.

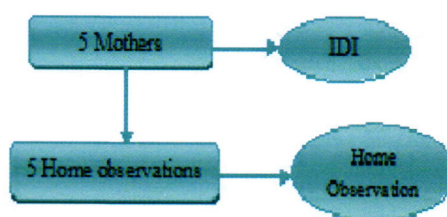


Figure 1: Flow chart of Sampling

Research Instruments

The following measures were used to collect data:

- (a) In-depth interview questionnaire (IDI)
- (b) Observation checklist

Data Collection procedure

In the study permission was sought from parents. After the finalization of five families, I telephoned parents requesting the opportunity to interview them in their home environment. Researcher discussed the time involved for interview and home observation, the nature of the research, the procedure that would be used and the issues of confidentiality. Researcher herself conducted in-depth interviews and home observations. All the field notes were maintained by the researcher.

(a) In-depth interview (IDI)

The purpose of in-depth interview was to explore the parental perceptions and home literacy activities done by mothers at home as well as the process of the activities done. I choose the interview method for data collection as it is a two-way process where the researcher can be involved in the discussion with the interviewees and also gets the

opportunity to clarify any points of confusion instantly as they rise. In this regard Robson (1993, p.228) states "An interview is the best tool to use in conducting a research of a small-scale inquiry. The interview is the flexible and adaptable way of findings things out. It is a kind of conversation with a purpose." Another reason of preferring interview was interview increases the answering rate and have more control over validity and reliability. In this regard Kitwood (1977, as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.282) maintains that, "the main purpose of using an interview in research is that it is believed that in an interpersonal encounter people are more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, than they would in a less human situation." To ensure validity human element e.g. transactions between interviewer and participants seems to be necessary.

Five (5) in-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher herself with selected mothers at their homes and in convenient time. Those mothers were selected who wanted to participate voluntarily. During the in-depth interview clear and open ended questions were asked so that participants could answer flexibly in their own words and sensitive and misleading questions were avoided. Questions were semi-structured. All interviews were conversational according to the feature of in-depth interview in qualitative approach. The responses were recorded with audiotape and written notes (field notes). For ease of process and to capture data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes, researcher decided to use the tape recorder. The researcher observed and recorded the non- verbal behaviors of the respondents and took notes. Researcher's views and feelings were recorded immediately after the interview. All journal and analytical memo without delay were maintained.

Written consent from each participant was taken before the interview. Researcher introduced herself and talked about the study at the beginning of the interview. Rapport with participants was built and participants talked freely and openly. Participants were treated as experts and researcher addressed all questions listed in the interview guideline. Asked follow up questions in order to elicit participants' complete knowledge and experience related to the research topic. Researcher observed and documented participants' nonverbal behavior and contextual aspects of the interview as part of her field notes. At the wrap up session, researcher thanked participants for their time and sharing.

For the study, a semi structured guideline for the researcher was developed to conduct In-depth- interviews (IDIs). Questionnaire for IDI was developed and thereafter reviewed by five (5) experts. Translation, back translation and synthesis were also done. Questionnaire was modified and edited several times on the basis of feedback received from experts. Then it was thoroughly tested three times in the field before finalization.

The questionnaire contains two sections (Appendix- 2). The first section includes questions related to demographic profile of the participants such as name, age, academic qualification, family income, observed child's age and name etc. The second section includes eighteen (18) questions related with parental perceptions, literacy activities parents do at home, parental own literacy habits, components of home literacy environment according to parents, availability of resources at home, the process of literacy activities done at home, importance of early literacy and school readiness, and importance of home environment for the development of early literacy. Researcher administered the Bangle version of the questionnaire (Appendix-3) in the study.

The in-depth interview was scheduled in participants' residences as it was comfortable for them. IDI's were conducted in the weekend and as well as the free time of the participants and each day one in-depth interview was conducted. The length of each interview was 45 to 60 minutes.

(b) Home observation

For the nature of the study, five (5) home observations were conducted. Mothers who were interviewed were also selected for home observations. The purpose of the home observation was to understand the literacy practices along with the process and activities done by the parents at home and to explore the availability and nature of literacy related materials used at home. Home observation took place in the participant's home. Duration of each observation was maximum three hours. So, each day one home observation was conducted. The observation process was participatory. Researcher wrote down the details of the physical environment with special reference to the type and amount of early literacy related materials that were also visible. According to Baker (1988, p.241), "note-taking is a backbone of collecting field data."

Researcher was aware of the fact that the impression she gathered in doing home observation were subjective in nature and validity of the data could be affected. Information was gathered on the availability of different types of materials at home, positioning of materials at home, activities organized by process and the ways activities were conducted by the researcher. Researcher used a home observation guideline (Appendix-4) for ease of process and wrote down the detailed notes within one (1) day of field observation.

Data management and analysis

Data was managed from the starting of the data collection procedure. In this study data was collected through in-depth interview and home observation. Every day after coming back from field, field notes were reorganized with date and time. Transcription was done without delay and put it on paper exactly based on what was heard from the tape recorder. The entire transcript was organized and then reviewed again. Any discrepancy was solved to maintain accuracy.

There are number of procedures used by qualitative researchers to analyze their data. As data was collected as text (written documents and transcriptions of recorded verbal communications) for the study, researcher used the approach of content analysis as it categorizes verbal or behavioral data for the purpose of classification and summarization. In content analysis, researchers examine written documents or transcriptions of recorded verbal communications. Holsti (1969) defines content analysis as a technique that makes inferences systematically and objectively by identifying special characteristics of messages. Another reason of preferring content analysis in the study was it can be employed to virtually examine any type of communication. This approach involves coding and classifying data with an aim of making sense of the collected data and to highlight the important messages, features or findings. Code, issues and themes generated from data were not predetermined in the study. As it is an exploratory study rather than a confirmatory study, I chose content analysis as data analysis technique.

At the very beginning of data analysis, all research questions and methods were reviewed again. All the transcriptions and field notes were read to get initial sense of data. Then data was organized based on different category (In-depth interview, observation). Thereafter, data was corresponded directly with the research and sub research questions. Themes and issues emerging from data were sorted out then. Afterwards, data was coded in order to identify common patterns and themes. Finally the data was interpreted and presented.

Role as a researcher:

Qualitative approach view researcher as an instrument of research who conduct research with populations of which they are also member (Kanuha, 2000). In qualitative study researcher shares an identity, language and experiential base with the study participants (Asselin, 2003). This complete membership role gives researcher a certain amount of legitimacy and/or stigma (Adler & Adler, 1987). This insider role allows researcher to be completely accepted by the participants. So the participants become more open with the researcher which helps to gather more in-depth data.

For the study, researcher performed a role of observer, moderator and conductor as well as the role of a participant in the study unlike the role of an objective observer in case of quantitative study. A mutually respected interviewer-participant dynamics was created so that participant felt open and comfortable and shared more experiences. (McMilian, 2000) implies that the interpretive researcher's role is involved, trusting, intense and close to the participants. Researcher's perspective on the issue kept invisible to avoid the risk that participants would modify their responses to please researcher instead of describing their own perspectives. In this regard, McMillan (2000) also states that in qualitative approach researcher has a neutral role where he or she remains detached, uninvolved, and distant.

In qualitative research the worry of subjectivity arises-which is not peculiar. For that researchers are affected by observer bias. Observer bias refers to invalid information that results from the perspective the researcher brings to the study. Researcher's

professional, gender and cultural identity, attitude, opinion, misperceptions on the part of the interviewer all can generate such bias. I was aware of the fact and took special care in formulating questions so that the meaning would clear. Researcher was constantly confronted her own opinion and prejudice with the data and tried to minimize the effects of personal biases on the findings by conscientiously recording her thoughts, feelings and reactions about what she observed. I gradually increased my participation and entered into the settings to lessen the observer effect.

Validity and reliability:

Researcher took utmost care in conducting the study. As validity is an issue in qualitative research to defend the accuracy and credibility of the study, several strategies were maintained to ensure validity of this study. To ensure credibility, prolonged participation (almost 3 hours) in the study site was done to overcome distortion. Peer debriefing was also done with mentor. Member checking was conducted with one research participant. Researcher read out some data from the transcript to check accuracy and meaning with the selected participant. In order to ensure transferability, detailed descriptive data was collected. Appropriate method and techniques were maintained based on the research objectives and questions and questionnaire for in-depth interview along with the translated version and observation checklist were checked and reviewed by five experts. For conformability, data was collected using multiple sources e.g. in-depth interview and home observation to obtain a more complete picture and to cross check information. For conformability and reflexivity practice, reflective journal was also kept.

Reliability of the study was maintained by formulating the questionnaire clearly. Easy and clear language was used, checked and reviewed by experts and based on their feedback, in-depth-interview questionnaire was edited several times. Quite physical settings were ensured at the time of data collection. Field testing was also conducted with three mothers to test the interview questionnaire before the actual data collection.

Ethical issue:

All ethical issues related to research involving human subjects addressed according to the Ethical approval committee of IED, BRAC University. The prospective participants were given free opportunity to receive summary information of the study including purpose in writing before giving consent and taking part of the interview. Confidentiality of the participants was strictly maintained and no name of the respondents was analyzed. The ethical issue considered the following things:

Voluntary participation: Participants were agreed to participate in this study voluntarily.

Informed consent: Participants of the study were informed about the procedure and risks involved in participating of the study and based on that information, participants made an independent voluntary decision to give their consent to participate.

Confidentiality, anonymity: During this study the researcher gave assurance to the participants that identifying information obtained about them would not be released to anyone outside the study. The researcher also gave assurance to the participants that no one, not even the researcher would be able to link data to a specific individual. In order to protect the anonymity of research participants, no name of mothers, children are given.

Timeline of the study:

The study carried out for a total period of nine (9) months. Preparatory phase lasted for 4 months which included finalization of thesis proposal, proposal presentation and feedback incorporation. Data collection and analysis was done in next 3 months. The last two months were needed for report writing and finalization.

The study plan was given below:

Activity	Year 2013								
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
Research proposal finalization									
Research proposal approval									
Preparatory task									
Data collection									
Data management & analysis									
Report writing									

Limitation of the study:

Limitations of the study in terms of sampling are (a) generalization of the study might be limited as it was done only in three areas of Dhaka city and the selected areas represent middle and upper class socio-economic domain, (b) Only the mothers were participated. So there might be less generalization of the findings in terms of gender of parents, (c) Only urban areas were selected.

Regarding the sample size of the study limitations are, (a) only 5 mothers were selected and interviewed (b) only 5 home observations were conducted, (c) IDI and home observations sample were not representative. Researcher faced challenges in finding educated mothers who are not sending children schools and in any other forms of day care or pre-schools at the age above four.

Limitations of the study in terms of data collection procedure are only IDI and home observations were conducted. It would be better if one FGD could be done to look at the study from one more standpoint.

It would be better if member validation with two more participants could be done. Due to the time constraint of the researcher it could not be done. Another limitation researcher wants to mention is, as research in this regard is limited in Bangladesh especially when educated parents are concerned and involved, researcher was unable to check her analysis and interpretation with other researches done in Bangladesh in order to establish a referential adequacy.

Chapter IV- Results

The purpose of the chapter is to present the results and findings emerged from data. Data in the chapter is presented maintaining alignment with the two instruments used in the study. Data was first assembled from in-depth-interview questionnaire and then from the observation conducted at homes. Data took the form of thematic approach identifying and analyzing emerging themes and subthemes. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section comprised of three main themes and sixteen subthemes emerged in the study. Findings of the study are presented in the second section.

Demographic profiles of mothers and children:

Demographic profile in the study examined the age range of mothers and children, educational qualification of parents and their socio-economic condition.

The age range of mothers was between 26-42 years of age. Information on age of mothers shows that there were young as well as older mothers participated in the study. Three of the mothers have two children, one participant has only one child and another has four children. Educational qualification levels of mothers were from undergraduate to M.B.A. Most of the participants' educational qualification was satisfactory and among them one mother completed degree in Arabic line.

Most of the mothers were home makers, one is a senior banker and another one has her own business. Two of the mothers aspire to send children in Bangla medium schools whereas the rest three want to admit children in English medium schools. Fathers' professional qualifications included senior management position in reputed Bank, owner of readymade garment industry and the rest three works in garment industry. In two families, fathers are the only source of family income.

Parental educational qualification empowered the families in terms of income and enables three of the participants to own their own homes and cars, and these parents want to admit children in English medium schools. Despite of the differences in socio-economic condition, all of the mothers started teaching to their children at home moderately. In the study researcher did not assume that educated parents only understand

the importance of reading to their children, but tried to explore parental perceptions of early literacy practices in home settings.

Age range of the children was between 3 years to 4 years 5 months. Three of them were male and two were female. No one has attended any learning centre and preschools yet.

Theme 1: Parental perception towards early literacy and school readiness

Preferable age of children for school admission:

Mothers who wanted to send children in English medium schools are in the process of completing next year's admission procedure. Regarding this way one participant viewed the reason of sending children early at school and narrated,

I think in this age children enjoy school most and if we start early he will develop the habit of going school easily. That's why in such small age we are going to admit him schools for next year. We don't expect that he will learn many things. But the habit of going schools hopefully develops.

One participant aspiring to admit child in Bangla mediums school and she wanted to do that after 4 years. One mother wants to send her daughter in Madrasa (Islamic school) and according to her, "Now a day parent sends children schools from three and half year. In that case, we are late in admitting her. But I think after four (4) years is good for sending children schools."

Parents aspiring to send children in English medium schools want to start a little bit early as there lies many grades before standard I. Regarding this one mother opined,

We are not teaching her many things. Just few alphabets, rhymes, color names. Admission test does not require many things. She just needed to be smart, smiley, friendly, not to be afraid of seeing unknown one. Good schools just see whether she is capable to adjust with the new environment or not.

Parents interested to admit children in reputed Bengali medium schools emphasize learning academic things more due to the tougher competition in admission procedure and for the heavy loads of admission syllabus. These particular parents want to send children schools a little bit later, preferably after four and half years.

Time spent on reading to children by mothers:

Most of the mothers mentioned that their involvement is more than their spouses in doing literacy practices with their children at home. Only one mother who is aspiring to send her daughter in Madrasa commented her husband's involvement is quite good in this regard. This result suggests that whether mothers are homemakers or working they still seem to be the primary care giver of their children at homes and appear to be the one responsible for conducting literacy practices.

All mothers reported that they don't have any fixed time to read with children. Reported time spent on reading with children is not more than 30 minutes and it's not done as a daily basis. Despite of being house maker or working women, mothers prefer to read with children in the evening and data from in-depth interview do not suggest that homemakers' mothers spend more time in literacy activities than that of working mothers particularly for this age group children. In this regard one mother said, "I don't have any fixed time. I used to teach through play. But mainly I do that in the evening." Another mother referred, "My child is learning when playing, talking. Watching TV she is learning the names of animal. So I don't think there is any fixed time of teaching her."

The above excerpts from the interviews also demonstrate that mothers' perceptions of literacy moments are not only recognized as formal reading sessions but most of them emphasize on informal sessions for literacy development as well.

Mothers experiences and reactions noticing children reading:

Most of the mothers cited that they love to see children reading although they do not feel like to read with them every day due to time constraint and tiredness. Mothers usually become surprised to see children learning new things without their involvement. Participants have mentioned that children learn many things from elder siblings, neighborhood children and from maid as well. Regarding this mothers consider their second born is quite lucky as they got elder siblings. One of the participants notified, "I feel astonished to see how a three plus kid can count 1-10. I knew that he could count up to 3. But suddenly he started counting up to 5. I did not teach him. May be he has learnt from the surroundings." Another particioant shared her feelings this way, "I feel good.

She makes things funny. Feels good when she says right even wrong sometimes. ” One mother shared her experience in this way, “One day, while we were traveling at car, she was telling alphabets with my elder one correctly. Usually she did not do that. I felt good that day.”

It appears that involvement of eldest children and the surroundings play a vital role in developing and enhancing early literacy according to parents. It has also appeared that unstructured and unsupervised literacy moments and activities done by parents and other caregivers are also factors contributing to the development of early literacy at home settings.

Reported literacy habits of parents:

Almost all mothers specified that they don't have the habit of reading books now. From home observation it was found that most of the parents do not have books even magazine for themselves, except newspaper. Participants who are homemaker acknowledged that due to the shortage of time they do not read books now a day. Even they do not buy books and magazines for themselves. This might imply that, these children do not appear to see reading sessions taking places by parents for themselves in the home environment. Contrary to one mother who works in a bank narrated,

We both try to buy books for both of the kids. My husband loves to read. We have books of many writers at home. My elder daughter inherited this habit. Already she has finished reading more than hundred books. Hopefully, the younger one (observed child) will also get the habit.

She also mentioned,

I love to read book. But due to my busy schedule I cannot read story books now a day. What I do is to buy every issue of Stardust (Magazine related to Bollywood films) and Shanonda (Indian Bangla magazine) and read them at car, sometimes at home. My husband always read Readers Digest at car.

This excerpt might imply that reading habit does not necessarily depend on availability of time and there are parents who are modeling reading behavior to children amidst of busy schedule and it might depends on parental perceptions of considering this practice as a part of literacy development for their children.

Almost all mothers have visited book fair in their University life. Except the one, who wants to send daughter in Madrasa have not visited book fair so far. Three mothers have not brought their children in book fair yet. According to one of them, "We have not brought our elder son (11 years old) in book fair yet." Other hand the banker mother replied, "Every year, we go to book fair. Buy books for us and my elder daughter. My elder daughter buys book from fair. My younger one (observed one, 3 years) have not visited yet."

Above cited excerpts imply that own reading habit of parents influences the value parents place on books and other printed materials at homes.

Mothers reported role for children's early literacy development:

Most of the mothers reported that they haven't yet started doing many things for their children's early literacy development. What they meant by saying this is, though mothers have started teaching moderately at home, it's not being a routine yet. According to one of the participants, "Still I have not started doing many things. But as she will go to pre-school from next year, I have a plan of starting things slowly from now. But as I have told you earlier, my elder daughter is teaching her alphabets." She also referred "Intentionally I tell my elder daughter to play Puzzle with my younger daughter (observed one). This is good. Puzzle develops brain."

According to one mother she tells story at the time of feeding and another mother mention, "I routinely make it sure that my elder son reads in the evening every day. That might be a motivating thing for the younger one (observed child)."

Most of the mothers mentioned that they read out story books to their children very little. The most common explanation for this lack of frequency in reading story book is the shortage of time of parents. Almost all of the mothers having elder children mention that their elder children are playing a vital role in promoting their younger ones early literacy. This might also imply that with the second or third born children parents are not as much involved in literacy practices as they once were with the first born. Various factors can be attributed for that, but time constraints seem to be the most prevalent.

According to mothers what children should learn at home for school admission:

According to most of the mothers children need to learn alphabets, few rhymes and little counting, names of colors, animals at home before going to school. Parents who want to send children in English medium school indicated that children at least need to know few English alphabets, colors, animals' names and few rhymes. Bangla alphabet is tougher for them at this age. They also shared some interesting thing like as now a day's school authority interview parents more than children. Parental educational background (both father and mother) and socio-economic status, family background also play a vital role in admitting children in reputed English medium schools. According to one of them, "I think she should know alphabets, some rhymes and counting. It's enough for her now. Reputed schools actually interview us more than children. I had the experience when I admitted my elder one at school." This excerpt implies how school's social behavior actually influences parents' attitude and behavior.

Mother who wants to admit children in Bangla medium school mentioned that getting admission in a reputed Bangla medium school is going tougher day by day as it requires oral and written admission test. She said, "He needs to identify alphabet properly. It's required to identify alphabet at 4 plus. I am thinking of practicing him hand writing after few days." Mother who wants admits child in Madrasa shared her view in this way, "She needs to know Arabic alphabets and Suras. She needs to know rhymes, counting as well. I am thinking of a house tutor. "

Above mention excerpts showed the difference in parental perceptions on what children should know at home for school admission based on the social behaviors of different streams schools. What kind of pre-literacy skills children bring to schools depend on the stream (Bangla/ English/Madrasa) children are going to be admitted and on the social behaviors of schools as well.

Parents understanding on how children of this age learn to read:

All of the mothers acknowledged that children of this age learn by playing and singing, and playing is advantageous for this age group. According to one participant, "I think this process is good. They are very small children. If you scold them they will feel pressurized and will not learn. Learning by singing or playing is better process." Few of them reported that children learn by observing elder siblings and parents. In this regard one mother said, "They can learn from seeing their older siblings to read. In that case parents do not have to work that much harder." Another mother shared her understanding in this way,

He plays cricket with his elder brother at roof. They need to count to maintain scores. By playing cricket he is learning to count. Not only this, he plays with other neighbor children who are older than him (observed child). From them he is learning how to fly helicopters. I think, learning by playing is what he learns by playing.

Above excerpts refer that parents perceptions on how children of this particular age learn to read do not focus on formal reading activities rather it placed importance on the informal settings and time spent on doing activities through play.

Parental perceptions on reading children early at home:

Almost all mothers mention that children should know few basic things from homes as this learning will help them to cope with schools easily. One mother shared the reason by saying, "For the primary preparation of him, I have started teaching him at home." Another mother mentioned the reason this way, "Actually children should starts learning from here (home). It is the right time for learning. I feel I should start some basic things from now. These are the reasons. Nothing new." Mother who wants to send children in Bangla medium school replied "It's the time of learning; He also wants to learn many things. It's his need also. So I think, as a mother I should fulfill some of his needs as well."

From the information above, it appears to create the perception of mothers that literacy learning does not take place only in the formal environment of schools, as parents see homes as an important factor for developing literacy skills.

Benefits of early reading according to mothers:

Mothers have the understanding that starting reading early at home is beneficial and important for children's literacy development. Most of the mothers reported that starting early at home is beneficial as it will be helpful for the children to manage the load of new things, new learning and also will be helpful for them to cope with the new environment. One mother specified the reason this way, "He will be mentally less pressurized and will enjoy school much. If he practices at home, he can take the load at school. Suddenly he will not fall into something which is unknown." Another mother mentioned, "If he starts learning early, it will make him to understand things easily at school. I think, understanding things easily are the main reason for me to teach him early at home."

According to most of the parents benefits of early reading were mostly associated with academic benefit of early reading. The neurological, psychological and linguistic benefits of early readings were totally missing in mothers' responses.

Importance of home environment and its impact on early literacy:

Positive impact of quality home environment on children's early literacy development is quoted by almost all mothers. According to all participants calm and quiet environment is necessary for early learning but no one stated the presence of literacy materials, artifacts, printed materials around are the components of quality home learning environment. Parents did not mention the presence of materials at home, activities parents do at home, parental engagement, and frequency of parental engagement as the components of quality home environment. Most of the mothers think that as children start learning from home and gets the first motivation of learning there, home environment obviously has an importance on learning. Only the Banker mother has mentioned that having literature books around is a component of quality home environment. What she replied is, "Home environment is important. My child is noticing so many books at home. When child sees parents to read, it definitely motivates her to read. Naturally it will grow to her also." Another participant pointed out, "Calm and quiet environment is obviously needed. But at my house, environment is not quiet. I think to make him able to learn,

calm and quite environment is necessary.” According to another mother, “I make sure to switch off TV and get him out from any distraction, so that he can concentrate in reading.”

Above excerpts refer that most of the parental perceptions on quality home environment focuses on calm and quite environment of home rather than the presence or absence of literacy artifacts, literacy activities done at home, parental literacy habits etc.

Importance of early literacy for school readiness:

Early literacy is important for preparing children for schools according to almost all the mothers. But most of the mothers’ answers were related with the academic readiness of children, not with the emotional or social readiness of children for schools. One of the mothers reported, “If she learns at home, it will help her at school. So teaching early home is important for school readiness.” Only one mother has highlighted things beyond academic readiness and replied,

What I feel is, when a child will go to school, he has to adjust with the new environment. He has given new things to learn. His home environment is familiar to him. But when he will go to a new environment he has to adjust with that first. New environment, adjustment, learning- all will be difficult for him at a time. So If I can make him learn few things, he has to adjust with rest of the things. Then it will be little bit comfortable for him.

One mother has replied quite an interesting thing. According to her, “Early literacy is not important for school going. It is the age of learning. As he wants to learn something, know more things, invent new things, I am teaching him. He has the interest to learn. It’s not only preparing him for schools.”

According to most of the mothers the main purpose of early literacy acquisition is for school success. Most of the mothers view early literacy as an essential part of their children’s school readiness in terms of academic aspect. No mothers replied that, lack of early literacy skills can restrain children’s from making positive social relationship with peers at schools or poorer literacy skills can make their children less self confident and dependent at schools.

Mothers' perception regarding "early literacy" and "reading readiness":

Most of the mothers view early literacy is important for school preparation in terms of academic readiness. One mother said, "I think early literacy is base. This is the time of start learning." Same thing is replied by another one and according to her "starting to learn early is early learning." One mother has answered quite well. She mentioned, "I have heard the term before. I think it is the preoperational period to make them able to go for the next stage. I feel like it's the early stage of reading properly." Most of the mothers view early literacy is the preparation period of formal learning or reading.

Most of the mothers are not familiar with the term "reading readiness", though they have the understanding that before reading fluently, children passes through several stages and this stage make them a fluent reader in future. One mother replied, "I think the term refers what I do at home earlier to make him able to read. I am teaching him at home. For him, it's his reading readiness."

Above excerpt refers that educated parents appear to have the perception that reading will just not happen naturally and it requires parental involvement.

Mothers' understanding on the term "School readiness":

Almost all the mothers view the concept of school readiness is related with child's own ability in academic domain. No one replied that along with academic readiness, physical, cognitive, emotional and social readiness of children is also necessary for his/her school readiness. One of the mothers said, "I think, it's what she needs to know before going to school." Only one mother emphasized importance of children's mental preparation for school readiness. But she did not mention the importance of proper academic, physical, cognitive development for school readiness. According to her, "I think, it's the ability of the children to tolerate the pressure of formal schooling"

According to most of the mothers, child's academic ability or his/her individual readiness is crucial factor for school readiness. They did not mention the readiness of families, communities and schools as the components of school readiness. Only one

mother replied differently and according to her, “It’s the preparation of my child as well as my preparation. My preparation is also important.”

Almost all the parents lack in perception regarding the true notion of “school readiness”. Though all parents see home as the primary source of literacy learning at this particular age, most of them do not mention parental readiness as a component of school readiness.

Theme 2: Materials available at home for promoting early literacy

Materials used at home for the development of early literacy:

Most of the participants shared that they have rhymes book, books for counting, alphabet and drawing books at home. No one reported the presence of picture illustrated story books. Mothers have reported that they have books containing names of flowers, animals, fruits or etc. One mother replied that it’s not mandatory to have many books as children of this age usually tear up the books after few days of buying. According to her, it’s better to teach children by using real objects.

One mother mentioned, “He has alphabets book. I give him a white sheet and tell him to make circles there.” From the home observation, presence of clay dough is also found in one house. This particular mother used I-pad as a literacy material by downloading software of rhymes, alphabets and counting. According to her,

He does not have any alphabet book. He has color books. He uses my I-pad. I have downloaded many things there. He even draws in the pad. Alphabet songs are there. He loves red color. He draws in the I-pad using red color most.

Regarding the use of clay dough this mother also replied, “He loves making things with clay dough. Once he made flower and moon with the dough while reciting the rhyme Kodom Tolay Ke.”

Most of the participants confirmed that they choose book for their children. Children’s participation in choosing their books is minimal. Only one mother replied that except for one time, until now she has always bought books taking her son with him. According to her, “I give importance to his preference. I have given him the freedom to

choose his own materials.” Most of the mothers reported that they place materials within the reach of the children which are also observed during home observation. One mother stated, “I keep all his books, color pencils near to him. Not out of his reach.”

Majority of the mothers shared that sometimes children organize the materials and sometimes not. Children are not that much used to organize things by themselves at this age. One mother answered, “Sometimes he organizes sometimes does not. But if I say him to organize things, he does that.”

From home observation it was found that most of the educated parents do not buy books frequently for their children. Regardless of income ability, families provide resources in the home moderately and all the parents know that their roles are important but due to time constraint and inadequate perceptions towards the true benefit of early reading and the benefits associated from their quality involvement in children’s literacy moments parents moderately facilitate and mediate the literacy materials available at homes.

Theme 3: Activities to promote early literacy

Types of literacy activities done by parents at home:

Mothers usually recite rhymes, tell stories at the time of feeding and bed time, and teach children alphabets, counting. Apart from that children learn the names of animals, colors, flowers from parents and elder siblings. One mother has mentioned, “I do tell her rhymes. When we go outside, I try to teach her names of flowers, animals and colors.”

Mothers generally tell children the story of king and queen as well as Disney stories. One thing is observed that mothers generally tell male children power puff or superhero based stories. Regarding this one mother shared her experience in this way, “My child like Disney stories most. He loves to watch power angel. In telling him story, I make sure his role in the tale lies as a hero. Otherwise, he does not want to listen story.”

It has been found that reading picture illustrated story books or reading aloud are not in the list of literacy activities commonly done by parents. Reading by illustrating picture books or shared reading is not the common types of activities mother and children

do together. Going to book fair or library are also not common types of literacy activities done by parents.

Process of activities done by parents at home:

▪ Story telling sessions:

Most of the mother narrated that they usually tell children stories at bed and feeding time for diverting their concentration from other things. It was found that storytelling sessions are not most of the time conducted keeping early literacy development in mind. Parents usually do it to make children finish food early or to make them sleep. That's why the process of telling story is nothing special.

▪ Alphabet learning and writing activity:

Most of the mothers replied that they have started teaching alphabets at homes. Children have alphabets books at home and parents use the picture associated with the alphabets to teach children alphabets. One parent reported to teach children alphabets without using any books. This particular mother uses the empty packets of toys as a literacy material. She describes the pictures of toys drawn in the packets and the written alphabets to children. It implies that this parent view alphabet learning is important for his child's early literacy development. According to this mother, "As I have told earlier, he has already torn up all the books he got. Few pages are left only. So, I don't use the book now days."

Except one mother, most of the mother mentioned that they have not started teaching children how to write alphabets. What the children now doing is scribbling. One mother narrated, "Sometimes I give him blank sheet and write alphabets and tell him to see that. Tell him like see I have written your name here. Then he started making scribble as long as he wants". Regarding the process of teaching alphabets one mother shared the process in this way, "I have started teaching him Bangla alphabet by using matra. He can now understand what a matra is. Regarding English alphabet, I make dots so that he can write easily by jointing dots. He feels easy to write using dot method."

- Using real objects:

Only one mother has replied that she makes her child learn by observing real materials. She shared that as children tear up books easily, it's better to teach them using real objects. According to her, "There is a cat in our apartment complex. I made him observe the cat. Now he knows what a cat is and how it looks like. He even can make the sounds of cat."

- Making elders siblings seat for study:

Mothers having elder children indicated that younger one learns many things from the elder one. Noticing elder one study works as a motivational factor for the younger one. In this regard one of the participants shared her view in this way, "What I did and still do is to make my other children to seat in the dining room everyday for study. He automatically comes to read by himself seeing his elder siblings reading. It's my technique to make him read"

- Counting and other learning activities at home:

Almost all mother confirmed that already children can count a few, although they have not taught them all the numbers. Surrounding plays a big role in teaching children counting and children learn to count very fast. One mother said, "I did not teach her that way. He is learning to count by climbing stairs." The same thing is true for teaching children the names of animals, colors etc. Mothers not only use the books, but also use clothing of children to teach name of colors and animals.

- Use of picture illustrated story books at home:

Most of the mothers mentioned that they do not use picture illustrated story books to read aloud stories with children. From home observation it is also found out that there are lack of picture illustrated story books and big books for children at home. Only one mother who use picture illustrated story book as early literacy materials shared her opinion such as, "After open up book, she asks questions like ..aita ki, oita ki.... She can pick up pictures and things by herself if it's easy. We tell her if she finds it difficult." In

telling and sharing stories this particular mother even changes her voice and asks frequent questions. By this way she is actually scaffolding her child's early learning.

- *Learning through play:*

Almost all the participants remarked to teach children through play. As playing is advantageous and sharpens the brain, all the mothers prefer to teach using this process. A young mother replied, "When I sing, he learns to sing the song. He watches cartoon in TV, plays with my younger one, I think by all those he is learning. Learning by enjoying is same as learning by playing." Another mother also said, "By playing with his elder brother he is learning to count." Data suggested that almost all mothers prefer children to play for learning. But due to time constraint and inadequate perceptions toward the benefit of parental involvement in early learning practices with children parents moderately mediate and scaffold children's play.

Key findings:

A thorough review of the result suggested the following key findings:

- In moderate resourced homes where parents are educated they provide alphabet, rhymes and counting books for children. Due to time constraints, work pressure and having inadequate perceptions regarding the significance of their involvement in children's early literacy, parents moderately mediate and facilitate available resources at home. Parents also moderately scaffold the literacy activities with children at homes.
- What pre-literacy skills children bring to schools depends on the streams (English/Bangle/Arabic) they are going to be admitted and the social behaviors of schools as well. Parents want to send children in reputed English medium schools do not emphasize learning many things for academic skills as most of the times parental income, educational qualification and higher socio-economic background play a major role in admitting children in reputed and prestigious English medium schools more than children's own ability and knowledge on academic contents. Contrary, in case of admitting in reputed Bangla medium schools, child's own ability and knowledge play a vital role more than his/her family background and social status. That sometimes creates pressure on parent and child and make parents emphasize in developing more academic knowledge in those early years.
- Parental perceptions of literacy moments are not only recognized as formal reading sessions. Parents prefer doing informal literacy activities mostly through play. Unstructured and unsupervised activities done by parents or other care givers are also factors contributing to the development of early literacy at home settings.
- Parental own reading habits influence the value parents place on books and other printed materials at homes. Due to parental own literacy habits, they are inadequately able to model the behavior of story books reading to their children. That might also be a reason of parental modest involvement in conducting story book reading sessions with children. Though reading picture illustrated story

books have huge importance in children's early literacy development, parental inadequate awareness and practice in this particular aspect is observed.

- Educated parents view home as the main repository of early learning. They have the perception that early literacy learning does not take place only in the formal environment of schools. Does not matter how much or less importance schools give on learning academic skills at the early ages, parents prefer to start teaching at least few things such as few alphabets, rhymes, little counting at homes before admitting children in schools.
- The benefit of early literacy is viewed from the perspective of academic success at schools according to most of the educated parents. Social, emotional & psychological benefit of early reading is mostly overlooked in parents' responses.
- Parents have the awareness that a quality home environment is essential for early literacy promotion. But, they have inadequate knowledge on what are the contributing factors that make a home ideal for literacy learning. Most of the educated parents picture calm and quiet environment as fundamental components of home literacy environment. Parental facilitation and scaffolding with children , presence of literacy materials, parental own literacy habits, story book reading session are overlooked in parents responses on what makes a home ideal for early literacy acquisition.

Chapter V-Discussion & Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine parental perceptions towards early literacy development of children at home settings. This chapter first discusses the issues emerged during the study and provides an analysis of the research evidence with reference to the literature review in chapter two. Secondly, this section presents conclusion and some ideas of future research studies. Lastly, some recommendations are suggested.

The demographic profile in the study indicates that most of the parents are well educated. Both parents educational qualification empowered the families in terms of income and assets. The study shows that irrespective of mothers' professional identity (working or home maker) they are the primary care givers of children in the family. Mother's involvement with children in literacy practices are more than that of their spouses. Eldest siblings, surroundings children's involvement are also factors contributing to the development of early literacy at home settings.

Current findings suggests that families having sophisticated high income prefer to send children in English medium schools and it's most prevalent when both parents share a good educational background and income status, especially when mothers have a quite sound educational background. From the interview it would appear that these types of parents prefer sending children schools early (between 3 plus years to 4 years). Parental educational qualification, income status, family background, moreover their socio-economic background contribute a lot in admitting children reputed English medium schools more than child's own educational ability. Reputed English medium schools require children who know fewer animal, fruits, flowers and alphabets name etc. They do not require children to learn many things for a pre-school admission. On the other hand, data appears that child's own knowledge and ability based on his/her academic performance are the crucial factors more than parental socio-economic background in getting admission in reputed Bangla medium schools. That's why these particular parents prefer sending children schools after four and half years and make children to learn alphabets names, counting correctly. Even these parents prefer children to learn how to write alphabets and similar things. It's interesting to note that despite the difference in

income status of parents, there lies no significant differences regarding the availability and quality of literacy materials at homes.

Irrespective of mothers' employment status, time constraint is a vital factor. Current findings suggest that parents are aware of the fact that literacy practices should be started at home. Does not matter what school requires (knowing more or less things) educated parents consider home as the first repository of learning and prefer children to learn at least few things from home before school entry. At homes parents sing, tell rhymes and let children play for learning. Parents have the urge to spend more quality times with children, but time constraint prevents them from giving time to their children's literacy events. From home observation it was also found that a child was drawing by herself all alone and mother kept busy in doing household works. If parents were more conscious about the significant benefit of their involvement in children's early learning that starts from homes, more parental interactions could have observed. Parents needed to be more aware regarding the importance and necessity of their involvement in children's literate life during early years.

From home observation and interview it would appear that parents accept the fact that children of this age learn through play and educated parents give children the opportunity to play at homes with surrounding children and elder siblings. It reflects that educated parents' perceptions on how children of this particular age learn to read do not only focus on formal reading activities rather it placed a high importance on the informal settings and time spent on doing activities through play. Researchers such as Cochran Smith (1983) argue that literacy events should not be seen in isolated forms but as connected units that are able to meet the needs of individuals for their own social purpose and destination. Parents are aware of the importance of informal literacy activities but the matter of concern is, this awareness does not alter the level of interaction between parents and their children to bring about more guided informal literacy activities and sessions at home. Parents modestly scaffolds and mediate the informal literacy activities take place at homes.

Contributions of elder siblings and the surrounding are also considered as a component of children's literacy development as per data. It pictures that unstructured and unsupervised literacy moments and activities by siblings (playing cricket, puzzles etc) are also factors contributing to the development of early literacy at home settings.

From the information gathered parents' view the benefit of early reading is only associated with academic success. According to participants most of the benefit of early reading are a) It will be helpful for the children to learn fast at schools and (b) they will not feel pressurized at schools. Parents view early literacy is important for school success in terms of academic achievement. The neurological, psychological and linguistic benefits of early readings were totally overlooked in mothers' responses. Parents' responses do not reflect their perceptions that reading helps to develop brains, early reading imparts a love of learning, leads to higher grades in future, improves attention spans and better concentration, promotes self confidence and independence, ignites creativity and imagination, better literacy experiences increase child's social status and self image and so on. Even parents responses do not indicate their awareness that early reading improved linguistic skills, better spelling and more articulate oral communications. Parents might see their roles more importantly as the providers of children's early literacy if they could feel the huge lifelong benefit of early reading.

The term 'school readiness' implies the readiness of individual child in academic aspect according to most of the educated parents. Apart from academic readiness parents do not mention physical, emotional, social, linguistic, cognitive readiness for school entry. Family's readiness is mostly overlooked in parent's responses. Parent's inadequate perceptions towards the true notion of school readiness needs to consider attentively. Unless parents and schools understand and perceive the true notion of school readiness they will keep pressurizing children.

Parents have the consciousness that in order to excel learning home environment is important. Research also proved that home literacy environment accounted for a large percent of the variance in child's school readiness (Gunn, Simmons & Kameenui, 1995). Parents perceive calm and quiet environment is necessary for early learning but no one mentioned the presence of literacy materials, artifacts, printed materials, parent-child

engagement in literacy activities, parental own literacy habits are the components of quality home learning environment. As children start learning from home and gets the first motivation of learning from home, according to most of the parent's home environment has an importance on learning. But parents have inadequate knowledge on what are the contributing factors that make a home ideal for literacy learning.

Shapiro and Doiron (1987) believe that, the home is an ideal environment for providing enriching literacy experiences and opportunities for young children to gather information and assist in their learning. Vygotsky (1978) gave emphasize on the mediating role of the parent in young children's literacy development. Most of the homes in this study are moderately rich in literacy materials. Educated parents in this study appear to be providing moderate amount of literacy materials in the home environment but modest mediation and scaffolding seem to happen most of the times. I wanted to quote something from the field notes I maintained,

Zihan(pseudo name) scribbled something in a paper and showed his mother. His mother asked what he made. He replied that he drew his mother. His mother praised his work and Zihan went back to scribbling again. Noticing that I told Zihan to draw me. He scribbled and showed his work to me. I then asked him, where were my eyes, nose and hair. Didn't you draw those? I told him to look at the face and draw again. He again started scribbling something and shared that those were my eyes, nose and hair in the picture.

Parents need to perceive the idea that whatever the literacy materials are proper scaffolding and mediation is essential. Vygotsky stress that there needs to be interaction with the tool if it is to become a learning experience. Social interaction among the child, parent and tool can assist learning process and promotes child's chances of success (Vygotsky, 1978).

In analyzing the findings in chapter four it is evident that the modeling of reading by parents does not take place in most of the home environment due to parents own literacy habits of reading less for themselves. Smith (1986) shares the opinion that children need opportunities to observe literacy practices in order to make sense of literacy in their personal lives. That's why it's important for children to view their parents

interacting with books. However, in this study this appears not to be happening for parental poor own literacy habits.

Parents tell rhymes, sing songs, teach alphabets, counting, animals, flowers and fruits names at homes. They also share stories with children but not keeping literacy promotion in minds most of the times. Most of the times story telling is done at the time of feeding and bed time to make children finish food early or to make them sleep early. It reflects that parents do not view story telling as an activity of early literacy development the way they view alphabet or counting as an integral part of children's literacy development. Parental involvement in shared reading session and illustration of picture associated story books is minimal. Data suggests that parents seem to be unaware of the fact that shared reading can be a contributing factor to early literacy development of their children. Teale (1981) claims that shared book reading experiences are an important way for young children to become literate. He believed that through this process children learn to assimilate and adapt information as a result of print awareness that is established early in life. He advocates shared book reading sessions in the home environment as an effective way to orientate children to the functions and uses of literacy. Storybook reading provides an opportunity for children to hear sounds in words within the context of a connected text- is a way to promote phonological awareness. Reading to young children helps to develop imagination, creativity, vocabulary and early literacy skills. Children who are read to on a regular basis and who have books in the home are more likely to enjoy books and to read on their own. Though children enjoy having picture books read to them and charmed by the warm and beautiful illustration, this activity is not getting priority by parents. Another matter of concern is, though parents share stories with children at bed and feeding time, it is not being done keeping literacy in mind and on daily basis. Family reading to young children is critically important for school readiness. One of the emerging indicators of family's readiness of school readiness is set as percentage of children ages between 3 to 5 who were read to by a family member every day in the past week (National school readiness indicators initiative, 2005). In order to maintain a proper literacy behaviors children need repeated experiences and occasions to engage in literacy events in the home environment.

Conclusion:

The study found that the roles and perceptions of educated parents in early literacy development in moderately well resource environments are not same with the findings done in under resourced settings and with illiterate parents.

In moderately resourced environment parents prefer formal, informal, and unstructured early literacy promotional activities for their children. Parents moderately mediate and facilitate these activities. There lie many more opportunities to arrange more literacy activities with the available resources at homes. If parents were more knowledgeable regarding the components of early literacy (print and phonological awareness, comprehension, and vocabulary and letter knowledge) and how these components promote child's early literacy, parents more mediating roles could have observed.

The same finding is also true for resources available at homes. Parents moderately facilitate the available resources at homes. Absence of big books, picture illustrated story books reflects parents' knowledge gap in that aspects and they do not read with children regularly. Early literacy will not emerge as a matter of course and it requires parental involvement in reading and sharing story books-parents needs to properly realize the fact.

Parents believe that home is the main repository for acquiring literacy skills and that's why home environment has importance. Parents have inadequate knowledge towards which factors contribute a healthy positive home literacy environment. Child's own readiness in academic domain is only considered for school readiness. Readiness in other domains and the concept of 'ready family' are overlooked in parents' response.

What is highlighted in this study is educated parents have the understanding that their roles and contribution are factors for promoting children's early literacy but what is missing is, educated parents have inadequate understanding regarding the true and significant benefit of early literacy apart from academic success. Parents view early literacy is the former stage of formal learning and have the perception that reading will just not start automatically and requires parental involvement. Even if, these parents moderately scaffold and facilitate early literacy promotional activities and available

resources at homes despite having opportunities. It implies that despite having the knowledge that their roles are important, parents have inadequate perceptions of the significance of their role in children's early literacy acquisition. If parents were more conscious about the significance of their involvement in children's literate life, they might have responded 'family's readiness' as a component of child's "School Readiness."

Further research:

Bangladesh has developed Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development policy framework, where early child education is recognized as a key concept. In the comprehensive ECCD policy parent/ caregiver's knowledge and skills are mentioned as guiding principles. Even if, early literacy development has placed a high value in our policy papers, there is little evidence in Bangladesh that has examined or explored the perceptions of parents on early literacy development. It is recommended that further research be undertaken in the following areas to improve the context specific knowledge of Bangladesh in the specific field. Such as,

- Fathers' perception towards early literacy in both urban and rural context can be explored
- Parental perceptions towards early literacy in well resourced settings can be examined
- Parent's perception towards "school readiness" is also a great area of study. Teachers' as well as schools' perception towards school readiness can also be studied.
- Parents' perceptions towards early literacy can be investigated in rural context.
- Parent's perception regarding 'storytelling' and its processes is extremely a good area to cover.

Recommendation:

Evidence from the study suggested few recommendations. Such as,

- Parents need to be actively engage in all literacy related activities done at home and need to scaffold and mediate the literacy processes effectively. Production of a video or CD that illustrates the benefits of literacy related activities done at home involving parents can be of great help.
- Parents need to gather knowledge on different types of literacy promotional activities that can be done and facilitated at home. Keeping the benefit of storytelling in mind workshops for parents can be organized. Documentary can be produced and advocacy can be done. Parent-professional linkage can be made through workshop and parenting session.
- Let's read initiative for parents and children can be launched. Through this initiative parents will be influenced to read for themselves and get support and guidance of necessary age wise books for children.
- Workshop can be arranged for parents and schools aiming to emphasize social, emotional readiness of children for school readiness. Thus by parents and schools can also be aware of their readiness factors.

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Annex 1:**Voluntary Consent Form for mothers**

Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRAC University has taken a research initiative as part of Master's course in early childhood development in your area. The research will focus on your perception of early literacy development for your children. The aim of the current study is to explore parental perceptions for promoting early literacy skill and school readiness. This study will be conducted by the researcher, an M.Sc student, as a part of her MS thesis. If you want to take part please sign the form below after you read [or listen to] this form telling you what the study is about. Your participation is totally voluntary, and you may change your mind and withdraw at any time before and during the study. If you agree to participate, we will ask you some questions for information on the issues mentioned above. It will take approximately an hour and a half to complete the discussion/interview that will follow according to the process/questioner. We are also asking for the permission of your home visit that will take almost four hours, if you agree.

We will maintain your privacy and confidentiality about any information (sensitive information). Your child and your family members' names will not be written on any of the material, and only the researchers will have access to your information. All materials with your information in it will be stored in a safe, locked location. The researchers named below will be responsible to ensure the protection of the information.

The research will not benefit you personally. The information you provide will however, have significant contribution in learning and improving IED's development programs and may benefit you in the long run.

If you are willing to participate in this research or disclose information about yourself, we would request you to sign (or finger print) this consent form.

If you want to know more about this research and/or your participation rights, or if there is pertinent clarification that you may require, please contact the following persons.

Dr. Nishat Fatima Rahman

Academic Coordinator,

Masters program in ECD

ECDRC, IED, BRACU

House-113, Road- 2/A, Niketon

Gulshan-1, Dhaka 1212

Phone: 9881265, Ext: 2126

Ashfi Mehnaz

Principal Investigator and student, MSc in ECD

Institute of Educational Development (IED)
BRACU

House-113, Road- 2/A, Niketon,

Gulshan-1, Dhaka 1212

Phone: 9881265, Ext: 2111, Mobile: 01912676831

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

Name (Please print): _____ Signature: _____

Address and contact no: _____ Date _____

Annex: 2**In-depth interview questionnaires for mothers**

Mother's name:

Mother's age:

Mother's educational qualification:

Mother's occupation:

Child's name:

Date of birth:

Age:

Interview date:

Interview starts time:

Interview ends time:

Family type: Single/Joint

Family income:

Questionnaire

1. How do you think your child learns to read and write?
2. Why have you started teaching him/her at home before sending school? / Why have you not waited until he/she joined school/day care/ pre-school?
3. What are the materials you are using at home to help him learn?
4. Describe the process of materials use at home?
5. How does your child interact with books, prints or other materials at home?
Describe your experience. / How does your child respond while he/she sees literacy materials around him/her?
6. What kind of reading and writing activities take place at your home?
7. How do you organize these literacy activities at home?
8. How much time generally do you engage/spend with your child every day for his/her reading and writing development?
9. How does your child respond in the literacy activity session?
10. According to you, what are the benefits of early reading and writing?
11. What is your view on early literacy? Please explain.
12. What is the role you are playing for your child's early literacy development?
13. What do you mean by supportive home literacy environment?
14. What type of home environment do you maintain to help your child learn?
15. What is the importance of home literacy environment for early literacy development according to you?

16. How do you think a positive home learning environment can help your child to get ready/ prepare for school?
17. What do you mean by “reading readiness” & ‘school readiness’? Please explain.
18. Why do you think early literacy is important for school readiness?

Annex: 3

মায়েদের সাথে সাক্ষাৎকারের প্রশ্নাবলী

মায়ের নাম: _____ মায়ের বয়স: _____
মায়ের শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা: _____ মায়ের পেশা: _____
শিশুর নাম: _____ শিশুর জন্ম তারিখ: _____ শিশুর বয়স: _____
সাক্ষাৎকারের তারিখ: _____ সাক্ষাৎকার শুরু করার সময়: _____ সাক্ষাৎকার শেষের সময়: _____
পরিবারের ধরণ: একক/ যৌথ _____ পরিবারের মাসিক আয়: _____

প্রশ্নাবলী :

১. আপনার সন্তান কিভাবে পড়তে ও লিখতে শেখে বলে আপনি মনে করেন ?
২. স্কুলে ভর্তি করানোর আগেই শিশুকে আপনি বাড়িতে শেখানো শুরু করলেন কেন ?/ স্কুল/ প্রি-স্কুল/ ডে-কেয়ার ভর্তি করা পর্যন্ত অপেক্ষা না করার কারণ কি?
৩. সন্তানকে শেখার উপযোগী করার জন্য বর্তমানে বাড়িতে আপনি কি কি উপকরণ ব্যবহার করছেন ?
৪. বাড়িতে উপকরণ ব্যবহারের প্রক্রিয়া কি? বর্ণনা করুন।
৫. আপনার সন্তানকে যখন কোন বই ও অন্যান্য প্রিন্ট উপকরণ দেওয়া হয়, তখন সে কেমন প্রতিক্রিয়া দেখায়? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতা বলুন। / চারপাশের পড়া-লেখার উপকরণ দেখলে আপনার সন্তান কেমন সাড়া দেয় ?
৬. কি কি ধরনের পড়া ও লেখার কাজ আপনার বাড়িতে করা হয়ে থাকে ?
৭. বাড়িতে কিভাবে আপনি এ ধরনের কাজের ব্যবস্থা করে থাকেন ?
৮. সন্তানের পড়া ও লেখার বিকাশের জন্য প্রতিদিন আপনি কত সময় ব্যয় করে থাকেন ?
৯. পড়া ও লেখার কাজের সময় আপনার সন্তান কেমন সাড়া দেয় ?
১০. আপনার মতে প্রাক-পঠন ও লিখনের সুফল গুলো কী কী ?
১১. পারস্পরিক সাক্ষরতা বলতে আপনি কি বোঝেন ? দয়া করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।
১২. আপনার সন্তানের পারস্পরিক সাক্ষরতা বিকাশের জন্য আপনি কি ধরনের ভূমিকা পালন করছেন ?
১৩. শিখনের জন্য সহায়ক বাড়ির পরিবেশ বলতে আপনি কি বোঝেন ?
১৪. সন্তানের শিখনের জন্য কি ধরনের বাড়ির পরিবেশ আপনি বজায় রাখেন ?
১৫. পারস্পরিক সাক্ষরতার জন্য সহায়ক বাড়ির পরিবেশ কেন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
১৬. শিখন সহায়ক বাড়ির পরিবেশ কিভাবে আপনার সন্তানকে বিদ্যালয়ে যাওয়ার জন্য প্রস্তুত করতে সাহায্য করে বলে আপনি মনে করেন ?
১৭. “পড়তে শেখার প্রস্তুতি” ও “বিদ্যালয়ের জন্য প্রস্তুতি” বলতে আপনি কি বোঝেন। দয়া করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।
১৮. পারস্পরিক সাক্ষরতা, বিদ্যালয়ের পূর্ব প্রস্তুতির জন্য কেন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

Annex: 4**Home observation check list**

1. Physical environment of the house
2. Types of materials (e.g. printing materials-books, magazine)
3. Number of different types/kinds of materials (materials for reading, drawing, writing, picture books etc)
4. Positioning of literacy related resources
5. Process involved in terms of uses of materials.
6. Types of literacy related activities done at home where parent-child both are engaged(shared reading, picture illustration, telling stories, rhyming/ singing, playing with toys, counting)
7. Types of literacy related activities done at home where child is engaged only (e.g. drawing, scribbling, playing with books, blocks of alphabet etc)
8. Nature of activities organized by parents and the responses of children in activities
9. Duration of mother's engagement.

Note:

Annex: 5**Part of transcript of in-depth interview**

সাক্ষাৎকার প্রদানকারী: মা (I)

সাক্ষাৎকার গ্রহনকারী: গবেষক(R)

সাক্ষাৎকারের তারিখ: ০৭.০৭.২০১৩

R: আপনি বাসায় বাচ্চাকে কি কি পড়ান?

I: বাসায় colours, rhymes, animals name, A, B, C, D পড়াই।

R: ও তো পরের বছর থেকে স্কুলে যাবে। এগুলোতো স্কুলেই শিখতে পারতো। স্কুলে যেত তারপর শিখতে পারতো। তো আপনি কেন বাসায় আগে পড়ানো শুরু করলেন? কোন কারণ আছে?

I: আ...কারণটা হচ্ছে আসলে বাচ্চাদের লার্নিং এইজ টাতো শুরু হয় এখন থেকে। আর লার্নিং এর ভালো সময় এটাই। আর আমার মনে হয় কিছু বেসিক জিনিস এখনই শুরু করলে ভালো হয়। আর কোন কারণ নেই।

R: A, B, C, D কি আপনিই শিখিয়েছেন?

I: হ্যা। আবার ওর বড় বোন আছে, তার কাছ থেকেও শিখেছে।

R: কাউন্টিং কিভাবে শিখিয়েছেন?

I: মুখে মুখে শিখিয়েছি। আবার শুনে শুনেও শিখেছে। এই যেমন, বুয়াকে বললাম দুধ বানিয়ে আনো তিন দাগ পর্যন্ত। ওখান থেকে কিছু শিখলো আবার সিড়িতে উঠার সময় কাউন্ট করতে করতে উঠলো। এভাবে শিখেছে আরকি...

R: এইযে আগে যে ও শিখছে, তার কি কোনো বেনিফিট আছে বলে আপনার মনে হয়?

I: হ্যা, অবশ্যইতো। ওর বেইজ ভালো হচ্ছে।

Annex: 6**Part of field note of home observation****Physical environment of the house:**

The house is about 1200 sft having three small bedrooms. One is for the parents and another is for the participant's sister and her husband. The third bedroom is for the observed child. The family is extremely Islamic minded, who think educating female child too much is not necessary and they prefer to maintain Purdah. Mother passed Degree in Islamic line. Father works in a buying house and the participant is a house maker. The house is very calm and quiet and Surah and ayats were hanging from walls. There were no pictures of anything else in the house. In the child's room there was not many things. Few rhymes and colours books were there. Books were placed in reach of the child.