

**Parents' Perceptions and Practices Related to Children's Self-
Regulation as a Key Component of School Readiness in Urban Dhaka**

By

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

Brac Institute of Educational Development
Brac University
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Parents' Perceptions and Practices Related to Children's Self- Regulation as a Key Component of School Readiness in Urban Dhaka

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1. Source of Population

Parents of children aged 3–6 years residing in urban Dhaka, Bangladesh, whose children were enrolled in Play Group to KG or an equivalent early-years level. Participants were purposively selected based on the inclusion criteria of the study.

2. Does the study involve? (Yes/No)

- a) Physical risk to the subjects — **No**
- b) Social risk — **No**
- c) Psychological risk to subjects — **No**
- d) Discomfort to subjects — **No**
- e) Invasion of privacy — **No**

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about? (Yes/No)

- a) Nature and purpose of the study — **Yes**
- b) Procedures to be followed — **Yes**
- c) Physical risk — **Yes**
- d) Sensitive questions — **Yes**
- e) Benefits to be derived — **Yes**
- f) Right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study — **Yes**
- g) Confidential handling of data — **Yes**
- h) Compensation and/or treatment where risks or privacy are involved — **No / Not Applicable**

4. Will signed/verbal consent be required? (Yes/No)

- a) From study participants — **Yes**
- b) From parents or guardians — **No / Not Applicable**
- c) Will precautions be taken to protect the anonymity of subjects? — **Yes**

5. Documents Submitted to the Committee

- a) Proposal — **Yes**
- b) Consent Form — **Yes**
- c) Questionnaire or Interview Schedule — **Yes — IDI and FGD Guidelines**

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Abstract

School readiness is an important aspect of early childhood development that extends beyond academic preparation and includes children's social, emotional, behavioral, and self-regulatory competencies. This qualitative study explored parents' perceptions and practices regarding children's self-regulation as a component of school readiness in urban Dhaka. Data were collected through four in-depth interviews (IDIs) and one focus group discussion (FGD) with parents of children aged 3–6 years and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that parents perceived school readiness as involving academic preparedness as well as independence, communication, social competence, emotional regulation, and behavioral control. Parents supported children's self-regulation through structured routines, responsive guidance, opportunities for independence, and play-based everyday experiences. However, parents also identified challenges including children's screen use, limited parental time, difficulties managing children's emotions and behavior, limited awareness of self-regulation, and insufficient institutional support. Although many parents were unfamiliar with the formal concept of self-regulation, they demonstrated practical understanding of its importance through their everyday parenting practices. The study suggests that greater parental awareness, stronger parent–school collaboration, and supportive early childhood practices are needed to promote self-regulation as an essential component of school readiness in Bangladesh.

Keywords: School readiness; self-regulation; parenting practices; early childhood; parents; Bangladesh.

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List of Acronyms

IDI In-Depth Interview

FGD Focus Group Discussion

ECD Early Childhood Development

EF Executive Function

BRAC IED BRAC Institute of Educational Development

Glossary

School readiness: The set of cognitive, language, social-emotional, behavioral, physical, and adaptive competencies that enable a child to participate effectively in the expectations and routines of formal schooling.

Self-regulation: A child's developing capacity to manage emotions, behavior, attention, impulses, and responses in ways that are appropriate to a situation or goal.

Executive functions: Interrelated cognitive processes—including inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility—that support goal-directed behavior and contribute to self-regulation.

Co-regulation: The process through which an adult provides external emotional and behavioral support—such as calming, explaining, modeling, prompting, or structuring—while a child is gradually learning to regulate independently.

Parenting practices: The everyday routines, responses, guidance, expectations, modeling, play interactions, and opportunities for independence through which parents influence children's development.

Urban Dhaka: The urban context of Dhaka city in which the study participants lived; specific neighborhood identities are not used in the report to maintain a broader contextual focus and protect participant privacy.

Chapter I: Introduction & Background

Introduction

School readiness is not limited to children's ability to recognize letters, numbers, or complete early academic tasks; rather, it reflects their broader capacity to participate, adapt, and learn successfully within the school environment. It is a multidimensional concept involving cognitive and language development, social-emotional competence, physical well-being, approaches to learning, behavioral adjustment, and independence (UNICEF, 2019; Blair & Raver, 2015). These abilities work together in everyday classroom life. A child may have age-appropriate academic knowledge but still struggles to adjust if the child cannot communicate needs, follow routines, wait, cope with frustration, or interact appropriately with others. Thus, school readiness is not only about what children know before school, but also how prepared they are to manage the experience of being in school.

Within these interconnected areas, self-regulation is a key component because it enables children to manage emotions, behavior, attention, and impulses according to different situations (Raver, 2002; Blair & Raver, 2015). In the classroom, this can be seen when children listen to instructions, wait for turns, stay engaged despite distractions, recover from disappointment, and adjust their behavior to classroom expectations. These abilities are closely linked with executive functions, including inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility (Diamond, 2013). Studies have associated stronger self-regulation with learning-related behaviors, early literacy and mathematics performance, positive peer relationships, and successful school adjustment (Blair & Razza, 2007; McClelland et al., 2007; Denham, 2006). Self-regulation, therefore, does not replace academic readiness; it provides children with the capacity to make effective use of what they know.

Importantly, self-regulation develops gradually through children's everyday relationships and experiences. Vygotsky (1978) explains that children initially rely on guidance from more capable others before gradually internalizing strategies for managing themselves. Research on co-regulation similarly shows that young children often require adult support before they can independently manage difficult emotions and behavior (Lobo & Lunkenheimer, 2020; Lunkenheimer et al., 2023). Parents contribute to this process through emotional responsiveness, consistent guidance, routines, appropriate boundaries, modeling, and opportunities for independence

(Morris et al., 2007; Bernier et al., 2010). Even simple experiences—waiting for something desired, putting away toys, dressing independently, completing a task, sharing, or taking turns during play—can provide meaningful practice in attention, patience, persistence, and emotional control (Whitebread et al., 2009). In this sense, everyday family life becomes an early learning space where children begin practicing the self-management later expected in school.

However, children’s regulatory development is also shaped by their wider social environment. Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological perspective highlights the interconnected influence of family, school, community, and broader social conditions. In Bangladesh, research on early childhood education has substantially addressed access, quality, curriculum, participation, and learning outcomes (Rashid & Akkari, 2020; UNICEF Bangladesh, 2021). Emerging evidence also indicates that school preparation is influenced by parental involvement, socioeconomic circumstances, educational expectations, and parent–school relationships (Alam, 2024). Yet comparatively little is known about how parents in urban Dhaka understand self-regulation as part of school readiness and how they support it through everyday parenting practices.

Therefore, this study explores parents’ perceptions, practices, and challenges regarding children’s self-regulation as a key component of school readiness among children aged 3–6 years in urban Dhaka. Rather than assuming that parents must know the formal term *self-regulation*, the study examines how it appears in everyday parenting through emotional guidance, routines, independence, waiting and sharing, play, and behavioral boundaries. By bringing parents’ lived experiences into the discussion, the study seeks to develop a more contextually grounded understanding of how readiness for school begins within everyday family life, even before a child enters the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

The central problem addressed in this study is that children’s preparation for school can become academically visible while their emotional, behavioral, attentional, and independent functioning remains less explicitly recognized. International evidence shows that self-regulation contributes to children’s ability to participate in classroom routines, sustain learning behavior, manage emotions, cooperate with others, and make use of academic instruction (Blair & Razza, 2007; McClelland et al., 2007; Blair &

Raver, 2015). When school readiness is interpreted mainly through reading, writing, counting, or pre-academic performance, an important part of children's readiness may remain outside the focus of family preparation.

The issue is not that parents are absent from the development of self-regulation. On the contrary, research indicates that self-regulation is shaped through repeated interactions with caregivers, and that responsive guidance, parental sensitivity, routines, and autonomy-supportive practices can strengthen regulatory development (Morris et al., 2007; Bernier et al., 2010; Lobo & Lunkenheimer, 2020). The problem is that these practices may occur without being recognized as part of school readiness. A parent may teach a child to wait, calm down, dress independently, follow a routine, or complete a responsibility without using the term 'self-regulation.' This creates an important distinction between formal knowledge of the concept and practical knowledge expressed through everyday parenting.

In Bangladesh, existing literature has provided important evidence on early childhood access, quality, school preparation, parental aspirations, and learning outcomes (Rashid & Akkari, 2020; Alam, 2024; UNICEF Bangladesh, 2021). However, there remains limited context-specific evidence on how parents understand self-regulation as part of school readiness, how they support its development in daily family life, and what conditions make consistent support difficult. This gap is particularly relevant in urban Dhaka, where working-parent schedules, strong educational expectations, extensive use of digital devices, and varied access to parenting support may intersect with children's everyday development.

Without understanding parents' own perspectives, recommendations about children's self-regulation risk remaining theoretical or school-centered. The present study is therefore necessary because it examines the home-based processes through which readiness is constructed before and alongside school entry. By exploring parents' meanings, practices, and challenges together, the study seeks to produce context-specific evidence that can inform parent education, early childhood practice, home-school collaboration, and future research in Bangladesh.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore parents' perceptions and everyday practices related to children's self-regulation as a key component of school readiness in urban Dhaka. The study seeks to understand how parents perceive school readiness and the role of self-regulation in preparing children aged 3–6 years for the emotional, behavioral, social, and learning demands of school. It also examines how parents support children's developing self-regulation through everyday experiences such as routines, emotional guidance, play, waiting and sharing, responsibilities, and opportunities for independence, as well as the challenges they encounter while providing this support.

By listening closely to parents' experiences, the study aims to uncover both their expressed understanding and the practical knowledge reflected in everyday parenting. Parents may already be helping children develop patience, emotional control, attention, responsibility, and independence without necessarily identifying these practices by the formal term *self-regulation*. Exploring this often-unrecognized contribution is important because children's preparation for school begins long before they enter the classroom and is shaped through ordinary interactions at home. The study therefore seeks to make visible how everyday parenting contributes to the development of the self-regulatory capacities children need to participate, adapt, and learn successfully at school.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it brings attention to an area of school readiness that remains comparatively underexplored in Bangladesh—how parents support children's self-regulation through everyday family experiences. Existing research in Bangladesh has contributed important knowledge about access to early childhood education, quality, socioeconomic influences, curriculum, and learning outcomes (Rashid & Akkari, 2020; Alam, 2024). However, less is known about what happens within the home as children gradually learn to manage emotions, behavior, attention, and independence. By exploring parents' own perceptions and practices, this study adds an important family perspective to the understanding of school readiness.

The findings may also help make the connection between ordinary parenting and children's developmental readiness more visible. Parents may already be supporting

self-regulation when they maintain routines, help children calm down, encourage waiting and sharing, provide opportunities for independent self-care, or engage children in play, even when they do not recognize these practices as *self-regulation*. Understanding these everyday experiences can help schools and early childhood practitioners provide guidance that builds on parents' existing strengths while supporting areas where they face difficulty. It may also encourage more meaningful home–school communication in which children's emotional regulation, independence, attention, and classroom participation are discussed alongside academic progress.

At a broader level, the study may provide context-specific evidence for parenting programmes, early childhood practices, and initiatives promoting a more holistic understanding of school readiness in Bangladesh. It can also create a foundation for further research involving fathers, families from different socioeconomic and geographical contexts, teachers, and direct observations of parent–child interactions. Ultimately, the significance of this study lies in broadening the question of readiness from whether a child knows enough before entering school to whether the child has developed the capacities needed to participate, adapt, and learn once school begins.

Research Questions

The study was guided by three interrelated research questions. The first addresses parents' understanding of self-regulation within school readiness; the second focuses on what parents do in everyday family life; and the third examines the barriers that affect those practices. Together, the questions move from perception to practice to context.

1. How do parents perceive school readiness and the role of self-regulation in preparing young children for school?
2. How do parents support the development of children's self-regulation through everyday parenting practices in urban Dhaka?
3. What challenges do parents experience in supporting children's self-regulation for school readiness?

Operational Definition

School Readiness:

School readiness refers to a child's capacity to adjust to and participate meaningfully

in the school environment. In this study, readiness includes not only early academic abilities but also communication, social interaction, emotional and behavioral adjustment, attention, and age-appropriate independence (UNICEF, 2019; Blair & Raver, 2015).

Self-Regulation:

Self-regulation refers to children's developing capacity to manage their emotions, attention, impulses, and actions in response to everyday expectations (Raver, 2002). It is reflected in behaviors such as calming after becoming upset, waiting, maintaining attention, following directions, completing activities, and responding appropriately in social situations.

Parental Perceptions:

Parental perceptions refer to the views, beliefs, and expectations parents hold about children's readiness for school, particularly their understanding of the place of self-regulation in children's adjustment to school life.

Parental Practices:

Parental practices refer to the actions parents use in daily family life to foster children's regulatory development. These may occur through routines, guidance during emotional situations, modeling, play, responsibilities, boundary-setting, and opportunities for children to manage age-appropriate tasks independently.

Children Aged 3–6 Years:

This refers to children within the preschool and early-years age range whose parents participated in the study. The children were enrolled in Play Group to KG or an equivalent early-years level.

Urban Dhaka:

Urban Dhaka refers to the urban context of Dhaka, Bangladesh, where the participating families lived. The study considers this setting as the social and educational context of parents' experiences rather than focusing on or comparing particular neighborhoods.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing School Readiness: Beyond Academic Preparation

School readiness is increasingly understood as a multidimensional developmental process rather than a narrow measure of pre-academic competence. Children entering school are expected not only to recognize letters, numbers, and other early concepts, but also to communicate needs, participate in groups, follow routines, manage personal responsibilities, interact with peers and adults, and cope with frustration or change. Blair and Raver (2015) argue that readiness reflects the interaction of cognitive, social-emotional, and regulatory capacities, while longitudinal evidence indicates that early self-regulation is associated with later school engagement, social competence, and academic performance (Robson et al., 2020). This distinction between knowing and participating is important because academic knowledge can be difficult to use consistently when a child cannot remain engaged, remember instructions, wait, or recover from disappointment. School readiness is therefore better understood as preparation for participation in learning, not only preparation for the content of learning.

This broader view also expands the relevance of family life. Once readiness includes communication, independence, emotional adjustment, and behavioral organization, ordinary experiences at home become developmentally meaningful. Helping a child wait, put away belongings, communicate a need, complete a responsibility, or persist with a task may not look like formal teaching, yet these experiences involve capacities that later support classroom participation. The home therefore contributes to readiness through both intentional learning activities and the repeated social and practical experiences through which children learn how to function with expectations and other people (Morris et al., 2007; Bernier et al., 2010).

Self-Regulation as a Core Component of School Readiness

Self-regulation refers to the developing capacity to organize attention, emotion, impulses, and behavior in relation to goals and situational demands. It should not be reduced to quietness, obedience, or compliance. A child who behaves appropriately only under continuous adult control is not demonstrating the same regulatory capacity as a child who can remember an expectation, pause, and adjust with decreasing assistance. Self-regulation becomes visible when children sustain attention despite

distraction, wait for a turn, recover after losing a game, shift from a preferred activity, or modify behavior after receiving new information (Raver, 2002; Blair & Raver, 2015).

Executive functions provide an important cognitive basis for these behaviors. Diamond (2013) identifies inhibitory control, working memory, and cognitive flexibility as core executive functions. Inhibitory control helps children resist an immediate response; working memory allows them to hold information in mind while acting; and cognitive flexibility supports shifting attention or strategy when circumstances change. Blair and Razza (2007) linked aspects of regulation with early mathematics and literacy, while McClelland et al. (2007) associated behavioral regulation with learning-related skills and early academic performance. Xie and Li (2022) further found that self-regulation predicted preschool readiness and mediated relationships between family routines, authoritative parenting, and several readiness outcomes. These findings do not imply that self-regulation replaces language, cognition, or academic learning. Rather, it helps children use those competencies effectively within classroom demands.

Parental Perceptions of School Readiness and Self-Regulation

Parents' perceptions are important because beliefs about readiness can influence what receives emphasis at home. A parent who views readiness mainly through literacy and numeracy may organize preparation differently from one who also values independence, communication, persistence, emotional adjustment, and social participation. An important distinction is therefore needed between parental perception and parental practice. Perception concerns what parents believe school readiness and self-regulation mean; practice concerns how those beliefs are enacted in everyday family life. The two may overlap, but they are not equivalent. Parents may value independence while frequently completing tasks for children because of time pressure, or they may support regulation through routines, play, responsibilities, and emotional guidance without knowing the formal term self-regulation (Alam, 2024; Xie & Li, 2022).

This distinction makes qualitative inquiry especially valuable. Formal terminology does not necessarily capture the full extent of practical developmental knowledge. A parent may never use the term inhibitory control but may explain that a child must learn to wait or avoid taking another child's belongings immediately. Another may not use the term emotion regulation but may describe helping a child calm down before discussing

what happened. Such descriptions allow parental knowledge to be examined through meaning and experience rather than judged only against professional vocabulary (Creswell, 2014).

Parenting, Co-Regulation, and the Development of Independence

Self-regulation develops gradually through repeated relationships and experiences. Morris et al. (2007) describe family emotional climate, parental modeling, and emotion-related parenting as important influences on children's regulation, while Bernier et al. (2010) link supportive and autonomy-promoting parenting with emerging executive functioning. Young children often require external organization before they can manage difficult emotions, delay, or complex tasks independently. Parents may name emotions, set limits, simplify instructions, redirect attention, model responses, or provide reassurance. Through repetition, children can gradually participate more actively in these processes.

The concept of co-regulation helps explain this movement from adult support to child self-regulation. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective proposes that higher psychological processes first occur through interaction before becoming increasingly internalized. Consistent with this view, parent-child co-regulation research shows that adults may temporarily provide calm, language, structure, and prompts that children later begin to use for themselves (Lobo & Lunkenheimer, 2020; Lunkenheimer et al., 2023). Adult support is therefore not necessarily the opposite of independence. When assistance is adjusted to a child's developing capacity, it can become a pathway toward independence. The critical distinction is between doing a task for the child and supporting the child through a task so that responsibility gradually shifts.

Everyday Routines, Responsibilities, and Play

Daily routines create repeated opportunities for regulatory practice because they require children to anticipate sequences, remember expectations, transition between activities, and take increasing responsibility. Dressing, preparing belongings, tidying toys, eating, and following bedtime or school-preparation routines can involve working memory, persistence, sequencing, and emotional control. Xie and Li (2022) found that self-regulation mediated relationships between family routines and dimensions of preschool readiness, suggesting that routines may matter partly because they provide repeated contexts for children to practice regulation. The developmental value of a routine

therefore depends not only on predictability but also on the child's participation within it (Xie & Li, 2022).

Play provides another naturally motivating context for regulation. Pretend play and games can require children to maintain roles, follow rules, wait, cope with losing, negotiate with others, and adapt when the activity changes. Whitebread et al. (2009) and Bodrova and Leong (2007) describe play as a context in which children can practice metacognitive and self-regulatory processes. Play is especially useful because the motivation to regulate often comes from the activity itself: a child waits because the game will continue, follows a shared rule because peers depend on it, or persists because solving the problem is satisfying. Play and readiness should therefore not be treated as competing priorities; play can provide meaningful practice in capacities later required for structured learning.

Emotional Guidance, Modeling, and Supportive Discipline

Children learn regulation not only from what adults tell them but also from observing how adults respond to frustration, mistakes, waiting, and conflict. Morris et al. (2007) emphasize that parental modeling and the emotional climate of the family shape children's emotional development. Emotional guidance may involve acknowledging a child's feeling, helping the child name it, maintaining an appropriate boundary, and discussing what can be done next. Denham (2006) similarly highlights the importance of emotional competence for peer relationships and school adjustment. Regulation should therefore not be interpreted as the absence of emotion; a more developmentally meaningful indicator is whether children are gradually learning how to recover, communicate, and re-engage after emotional difficulty.

This distinction also complicates conventional ideas about discipline. Immediate punishment may stop a behavior without necessarily helping a child understand or manage the emotion and impulse behind it. Supportive discipline combines boundaries with opportunities for the child to participate in regulation. Warmth without clear expectations may provide insufficient structure, while rigid control without responsiveness may limit children's opportunity to internalize strategies. Regulatory development is more likely to be supported when boundaries are understandable, responses are reasonably consistent, and children receive increasing opportunities to manage themselves (Morris et al., 2007; Bernier et al., 2010).

Parenting Under Constraint: Time, Stress, and Digital Media

Knowing which parenting practices are supportive does not guarantee that parents can use them consistently. Employment, commuting, household responsibilities, financial pressure, fatigue, family relationships, and children's individual characteristics all shape everyday interaction. Parents may value patient guidance but respond differently when tired, or value independence but complete a child's task because the family is in a hurry. This difference between preferred practice and actual practice is important because it suggests that inconsistency cannot always be interpreted as lack of knowledge. It may reflect the practical conditions under which parenting occurs (Alam, 2024; Suh et al., 2024).

Digital media adds another layer to this context. Research has associated some patterns of device use with regulatory and developmental concerns, while also showing that parents may use media to manage routines or calm children (Danet et al., 2022; Suh et al., 2024). The issue should not be reduced to a simple assumption that all screen use is harmful. Developmentally relevant questions include what function media serves, whether it repeatedly replaces interaction or independent coping, and how consistently boundaries are maintained. If a device becomes the immediate response to boredom, waiting, meals, or distress, children may have fewer opportunities in those moments to practice other strategies. At the same time, advice to families must acknowledge why digital devices become useful within busy urban routines.

Home-School Partnership and Shared Responsibility

School readiness should not place responsibility entirely on the child or parent. Children's regulatory capacities are expressed within classroom relationships, routines, expectations, and teacher support. Family-school engagement can create continuity by helping adults understand how a child functions across settings. Bierman et al. (2023) emphasize family-focused preschool approaches that support social-emotional competence, self-regulation, and transition to formal schooling. Teachers can help parents connect familiar behaviors such as waiting, following instructions, managing disappointment, and organizing belongings with broader developmental concepts, while parents can share strategies and contextual knowledge about the child. Effective partnership is therefore a two-way exchange rather than a model in which schools simply instruct families.

Theoretical Lens: Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provide complementary explanations for the present topic. Vygotsky helps explain how regulatory strategies can develop through social interaction, language, modeling, and scaffolding before becoming increasingly internalized. Bronfenbrenner broadens the analysis by locating parent-child interaction within interconnected systems. School expectations may influence what parents prioritize; employment affects available time; socioeconomic conditions shape access to resources; community environments affect play and services; and cultural expectations influence beliefs about discipline, independence, and achievement.

Used together, the theories prevent two forms of oversimplification. Vygotsky prevents self-regulation from being treated as a fixed child characteristic by emphasizing its social development. Bronfenbrenner prevents parenting from being treated as an isolated cause by showing how family practices are shaped by wider conditions. This combined lens is therefore well suited to a study that moves from parental perceptions to everyday practices and then to the challenges surrounding those practices (Vygotsky, 1978; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

School Readiness and Early Childhood Development in Bangladesh

International findings cannot simply be transferred to Bangladesh without considering local educational, socioeconomic, and family conditions. Bangladesh has expanded attention to early childhood and pre-primary education, while existing research has examined access, quality, learning outcomes, socioeconomic inequality, parental involvement, and home-learning environments (Rashid & Akkari, 2020; UNICEF Bangladesh, 2021). Alam (2024) further demonstrates that school preparation in Bangladesh is connected with parental socioeconomic circumstances and family involvement, reinforcing the importance of examining readiness within children's wider environments rather than through child characteristics alone.

Recent Bangladesh evidence strengthens the case for a multidimensional perspective. Rahman et al. (2023), using national survey data from rural Bangladesh, found that parental participation in activities such as reading and storytelling was associated with early childhood development, alongside socioeconomic and maternal-education differences. Uno and Ogawa (2025), using nationally representative data, found that pre-primary attendance was positively associated with literacy-numeracy and

approaches to learning but was not significantly associated with every readiness domain; they also identified socioeconomic differences in the benefits associated with attendance. These findings are important because they show that access to preschool and academic preparation alone cannot be assumed to produce equivalent development across social-emotional, behavioral, physical, and learning-related domains.

At the same time, much Bangladesh-focused research measures participation, learning outcomes, or observable home-learning activities. These approaches are valuable for identifying patterns but provide less insight into how parents themselves interpret children's emotional control, waiting, independence, persistence, or behavioral adjustment as preparation for school. Urban Dhaka also presents conditions that may shape such practices, including demanding work schedules, educational competition, widespread digital-media access, and variation in family support. Parents' own accounts are therefore necessary for understanding how established developmental ideas are translated into ordinary family life (Alam, 2024; Rahman et al., 2023).

Critical Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature establishes several points with reasonable consistency. School readiness is multidimensional; self-regulation supports children's ability to engage with learning and social demands; regulatory capacities develop gradually through interaction and practice; and parents contribute through routines, emotional guidance, modeling, play, boundaries, responsibilities, and opportunities for independence (Blair & Raver, 2015; Morris et al., 2007; Bernier et al., 2010; Robson et al., 2020). At the same time, these processes are shaped by wider family and educational conditions, making it insufficient to interpret children's regulation or parental practice in isolation.

The remaining gap is more specific than simply stating that little research exists in Bangladesh. International studies explain many developmental mechanisms, and Bangladesh research increasingly documents preschool participation, home-learning environments, socioeconomic influences, and parental involvement. What remains comparatively underexplored is the lived connection between these areas: how parents in urban Dhaka perceive school readiness and the role of self-regulation within it, how those perceptions are translated into everyday parenting practices, and what enables or constrains consistent support. A further gap concerns the relationship between formal and practical parental knowledge. Parents may not use technical terms such as inhibitory control, executive function, or co-regulation, yet may foster related capacities

through waiting, routines, emotional guidance, play, and independent responsibilities (Alam, 2024; Rahman et al., 2023; Uno & Ogawa, 2025).

The present study is positioned within this space. It does not seek to establish again that self-regulation is important or that parents influence development. Instead, it examines how an established developmental concept is understood and enacted within a specific urban Bangladeshi context. This focus allows the study to identify both explicit beliefs and practical knowledge, to examine where parental intentions and practices converge or differ, and to understand how everyday conditions shape parents' ability to support children's self-regulation for school readiness (Blair & Raver, 2015; Alam, 2024).

Chapter III: Methodology

Research Approach and Design

A qualitative research approach was selected because the study sought to understand how parents interpret and experience self-regulation in everyday family life. The research questions ask what parents understand, what they do, and what challenges they face; these are questions of meaning and process rather than frequency or causal effect. Qualitative inquiry was therefore appropriate because it allowed participants to explain school readiness and self-regulation in their own language and to provide examples that would be difficult to capture through fixed-response measures (Creswell, 2014).

A descriptive qualitative design was used because the study aimed to produce a detailed, experience-near account rather than develop a new formal theory or examine the essence of a single lived phenomenon. This design was particularly suitable for an applied ECD study in which the practical content of parents' accounts—routines, responses to behavior, play, independence, and challenges—was central. The design allowed the analysis to remain close to participants' meanings while still identifying recurring themes across individual and group data.

Research Site

The study was conducted in urban Dhaka, Bangladesh. Urban Dhaka was selected because it represents a context in which young children may experience early entry into structured educational settings, strong academic expectations, extensive access to digital media, and family schedules shaped by employment and commuting. These conditions made the setting relevant to the study's focus on everyday support for self-regulation and school readiness.

To maintain confidentiality and to keep the analysis focused on urban family experiences rather than neighborhood comparison, specific area names are not emphasized in the final report. The study does not claim that all families in Dhaka share the same experiences; rather, the urban setting provides the contextual boundary within which participants' accounts are interpreted.

Research Participants

The participants were parents of children aged 3–6 years who were enrolled in Play Group to KG or an equivalent early-years level. Parents were selected because they were the most direct source of information for the study's questions about home routines, emotional guidance, play, independence, and challenges. Their everyday contact with children allowed them to describe both intentional strategies and spontaneous responses to behavior.

The completed dataset included four individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) and one focus group discussion (FGD) with six parents. The four IDI participants were female parents. The FGD included five female parents and one male parent. The inclusion of both individual and group methods made it possible to explore personal experiences in depth and then examine shared or contrasting views within a group discussion.

Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was used to identify parents who had direct experience relevant to the research questions (Patton, 2002). Inclusion criteria were: being a parent of a child aged 3–6 years; having a child enrolled in Play Group to KG or an equivalent early-years level; residing in urban Dhaka; and agreeing voluntarily to participate. The aim was not statistical representation but the selection of participants who could provide information-rich accounts of school preparation and everyday parenting.

Data saturation was considered pragmatically during analysis. Because this was a small descriptive qualitative study with a predetermined scope, saturation was not treated as proof that every possible parental perspective had been captured. Instead, the researcher monitored whether new interviews were continuing to produce substantially new categories relevant to the three research questions. By the final IDIs and FGD, the central patterns—holistic readiness, routines and guided practice, emotional support, independence, screen-related challenges, time pressure, and need for parent guidance—were recurring across accounts. The study therefore reached sufficient thematic repetition for its bounded purpose while acknowledging that a larger and more diverse sample could generate additional perspectives.

Research Tools

Two semi-structured tools were used: an In-Depth Interview (IDI) guideline and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guideline. The tools were developed by mapping the

three research questions against themes identified in the literature. Questions for Research Question 1 explored meanings of school readiness and self-regulation; questions for Research Question 2 examined routines, responses to anger, waiting, sharing, independence, play, and parental modeling; and questions for Research Question 3 explored emotional difficulties, screen use, time constraints, and support needs.

The semi-structured format ensured that the same core areas were discussed while allowing probing when participants raised unexpected or contextually important examples. The language of the questions was kept accessible and non-technical so that participants could respond from experience rather than attempt to reproduce academic definitions. A pilot process and supervisor review were used to improve clarity and alignment before data collection.

Data Collection Method and Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC IED), BRAC University, before data collection. Participants were contacted personally and received information about the purpose of the study, voluntary participation, confidentiality, audio recording, and their right to decline questions or withdraw. Written informed consent was obtained before each session.

All data collection was conducted in person and in Bangla so that participants could express themselves comfortably and naturally. IDI #1 and IDI #2 were conducted on 9 July 2026. IDI #3 and IDI #4 were conducted on 13 July 2026. The focus group discussion was conducted on 18 July 2026 with six parents. The IDIs allowed detailed exploration of individual parenting experiences, while the FGD encouraged participants to compare views, question common assumptions, and identify shared challenges.

With participants' permission, the sessions were audio-recorded. Field notes were taken to record contextual information and notable non-verbal or interactional features. After each session, recordings and notes were organized using participant codes rather than names. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim in Bangla before analysis; quotations selected for the thesis were translated into English while preserving the intended meaning as closely as possible.

Data Management and Analysis

Data were analyzed manually using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. First, the researcher repeatedly read the IDI and FGD transcripts and listened back to recordings where clarification was needed. During familiarization, short analytic notes were made beside sections related to the research questions. Second, initial codes were generated from meaningful units of data rather than from a fixed coding list. Examples of early codes included 'academic readiness,' 'independent self-care,' 'waiting,' 'calming through explanation,' 'counting/distraction,' 'routine discipline,' 'parent modeling,' 'screen at mealtime,' 'work pressure,' and 'lack of awareness.'

Third, codes expressing similar ideas were clustered into broader categories. For example, dressing, opening lunch boxes, managing belongings, and using the washroom independently were grouped under guided independence; hugging, explaining, counting, and redirecting were grouped under co-regulatory emotional guidance. Fourth, candidate themes were reviewed against all transcripts to check whether they represented multiple pieces of evidence and whether important differences were being lost. Fifth, themes and subthemes were refined and named to reflect their central meaning. Finally, the themes were organized under the three research questions and supported with representative quotations.

Coding was conducted manually; no qualitative analysis software was used. An audit trail was maintained through transcripts, field notes, coding notes, category lists, and records of theme revisions. This process was intended to make the movement from raw participant statements to the final thematic structure transparent and traceable.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was strengthened by collecting both individual and focus group data. The IDIs provided personal accounts that participants might not raise in a group, while the FGD allowed the researcher to examine whether issues identified individually were recognized, contested, or elaborated by other parents. The interview guidelines were reviewed by the supervisor and piloted to improve clarity before formal data collection.

Transferability was supported through clear description of the urban context, participant inclusion criteria, children's age range, methods, and the limits of the sample. Rather than claiming that the findings represent all Bangladeshi parents, the study provides sufficient contextual detail for readers to judge whether the findings may be relevant to similar urban early childhood settings.

Dependability was supported by using a consistent semi-structured guide across IDIs, following the same consent and recording procedures, documenting interview dates, and maintaining records of coding and theme development. Confirmability was strengthened by retaining audio recordings, verbatim transcripts, field notes, and analytic notes and by using participants' direct quotations to demonstrate the basis for key interpretations. Where participants expressed different views, those differences were retained rather than forcing uniformity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from BRAC IED before data collection. Participation was voluntary. Parents were informed about the study purpose, procedures, approximate duration, use of audio recording, confidentiality, and their right to refuse any question or withdraw without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained before each IDI and the FGD.

Confidentiality was maintained at three stages. During transcription, names and identifying details were replaced with codes such as IDI #1 or FGD Participant #1. During storage, audio files, transcripts, and notes were kept in password-protected digital storage accessible only for academic research purposes. During reporting, quotations were presented with method-and-date source labels rather than names, and neighborhood or other identifying details were omitted where they were not analytically necessary. These steps allowed participants' voices to remain visible without exposing their identities.

The researcher also remained aware of positionality and interpretive bias. Because qualitative analysis involves judgment, theme development was repeatedly checked against the original transcripts and participant quotations. Interpretations were written to distinguish what participants directly reported from the researcher's analysis of the wider meaning of those reports.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations. First, the sample was small and purposively selected within urban Dhaka; findings are therefore not statistically generalizable to all parents in Bangladesh. Second, all four IDI participants were mothers, while only one father participated in the FGD. Fathers' individual experiences are therefore underrepresented. Third, the study relied on parents' self-reported practices, which may be influenced by memory, social desirability, or the wish to present parenting in a positive way.

The study also did not include direct observation of parent-child interaction or independent measurement of children's self-regulation. As a result, it examines parents' perceptions and reported practices rather than verifying the frequency or effectiveness of those practices. Finally, the research focused on parents and did not include teachers' or children's perspectives. These limitations narrow the claims that can be made, but they do not remove the value of the study as an in-depth account of how urban parents understand and negotiate self-regulation in everyday family life.

Chapter IV: Results/Findings & Discussion

Results/Findings

The findings are based on four in-depth interviews and one focus group discussion with parents of children aged 3–6 years in urban Dhaka. The themes were generated through repeated reading, manual coding, comparison across participants, and refinement against the three research questions. In accordance with the BRAC IED qualitative reporting guideline, the results section presents descriptive findings and representative participant quotations; interpretation in relation to wider literature is developed more fully in the Discussion section.

Three major themes were identified from participants' accounts. Theme 1 concerns how parents described school readiness and self-regulation. Theme 2 examines the everyday practices parents reported using to support self-regulation, including routines, co-regulation, guided independence, play, and modeling. Theme 3 focuses on the conditions parents said made these practices difficult to sustain, including stress, digital media, limited time, conceptual awareness, and institutional support.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Participant	Method	Gender	Age	Occupation	Child age	Child gender	Date
IDI #1	IDI	Female	39	Working mother	5	Male	9 July 2026
IDI #2	IDI	Female	25	Working mother	5	Male	9 July 2026
IDI #3	IDI	Female	37	Homemaker	3	Female	13 July 2026
IDI #4	IDI	Female	33	Working mother	4	Male	13 July 2026
FGD #1	FGD	5 female, 1 male	—	Parents	3–6	—	18 July 2026

Research Question 1: How do parents perceive school readiness and the role of self-regulation in preparing young children for school?

Theme 1: Parents Understand School Readiness as Functional Participation, Not Academic Knowledge Alone

Sub-theme 1.1: Readiness includes independence, communication, and social participation

Across the four IDIs, parents consistently described school readiness in terms that extended beyond knowing letters and numbers. Academic knowledge was considered useful, but parents repeatedly returned to whether a child could function within the

practical and social routines of school. Communication, independent self-care, following instructions, remaining in class without a parent, and interacting with peers were described as indicators that a child was prepared to manage the school environment.

One parent described readiness as a combination of social, emotional, communicative, independent, and physical capacities rather than as a single academic threshold.

“School readiness means children develop social and emotional communication, independence, and physical skills. If they are not taught these things, they will not understand many situations. School is important because children gradually develop these abilities there.”

(Personal communication: IDI #1, 9 July 2026)

A second parent located readiness in practical self-care and communication, emphasizing the child’s ability to function without continuous adult assistance.

“Children should know how to communicate, eat by themselves, use the washroom independently, and understand basic instructions before starting school.”

(Personal communication: IDI #2, 9 July 2026)

Emotional preparation for separation also appeared in the data. IDI #3 described readiness partly as the child’s ability to remain in school without becoming overwhelmed by separation from parents.

“Children need preparation before school so they do not become frightened or cry continuously. They should understand that they can stay without their parents for some time and communicate their needs confidently.”

(Personal communication: IDI #3, 13 July 2026)

Taken together, these accounts indicate that parents evaluated readiness largely through whether they believed a child could participate in everyday school life. Opening lunch boxes, drinking water, dressing, using the washroom, listening, standing in a queue, and asking for help were described by participants as important practical abilities for managing the school day with greater confidence.

Sub-theme 1.2: Parents recognize self-regulation through behavior before they know the terminology

A striking pattern was that parents could describe self-regulation in practical terms even when they were not always familiar with the formal concept. Their examples

centered on controlling crying, anger, shouting, fighting, impatience, and immediate reactions. The language was experiential rather than technical.

IDI #1 defined the idea through emotional control.

“Self-regulation means the ability to control oneself. When children become upset or angry, they gradually learn to manage those emotions instead of reacting immediately.”

(Personal communication: IDI #1, 9 July 2026)

IDI #4 emphasized regulation in peer interaction, where the child is expected to pause rather than respond immediately with aggression.

“When another child behaves badly, my child should control himself instead of immediately fighting or shouting.”

(Personal communication: IDI #4, 13 July 2026)

The FGD made the gap between practical understanding and formal terminology more visible. Participants noted that many parents recognize desirable behaviors but do not necessarily connect those behaviors with the concept of self-regulation.

“Many parents still do not understand that self-regulation is actually part of school readiness. They expect schools to teach everything after admission.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 5, 18 July 2026)

These accounts suggest a difference between knowing the behavior and knowing the label. Parents often described behaviors they associated with a regulated child even when they were less familiar with the academic vocabulary of self-regulation.

Sub-theme 1.3: A tension remains between holistic readiness and academic expectations

Although the IDI participants described readiness broadly, the FGD revealed a perceived tension in the wider parenting culture. Participants felt that many parents still prioritize reading, writing, and numbers because these are visible signs of early achievement and are often associated with admission and school performance.

“Most parents think school readiness means children should learn reading and writing before admission because they want children to perform well academically.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 1, 18 July 2026)

“Academic learning is important, but children also need to know how to follow instructions, wait patiently, communicate properly, and manage themselves inside the classroom.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 3, 18 July 2026)

Participants did not reject academic preparation. Rather, their accounts reflected an unresolved balance: they valued academic knowledge while also believing that difficulties with emotions, communication, or routines could make school adjustment harder.

Research Question 2: How do parents support the development of children's self-regulation through everyday parenting practices in urban Dhaka?

Theme 2: Parents Describe Supporting Self-Regulation Through Everyday Co-Regulation, Guided Independence, and Repeated Practice

Sub-theme 2.1: Parents use routines as repeated practice in self-management

Parents did not describe self-regulation as something they taught in a separate lesson. Instead, it was embedded in the organization of the day. Morning preparation, meals, school attendance, study, play, and sleep were used to create predictable expectations. Parents linked these routines with discipline, time awareness, responsibility, and children gradually knowing what to do without repeated reminders.

“School timing, meal timing, study timing, sleep timing—we try to maintain everything regularly so that my child learns discipline and follows routines properly.”

(Personal communication: IDI #1, 9 July 2026)

“My child wakes up on time, eats breakfast, goes to school, comes home, rests, studies, and plays at fixed times. We try to maintain the same routine every day.”

(Personal communication: IDI #2, 9 July 2026)

Parents' descriptions suggest that routines were valued not only for convenience but also as a way of gradually encouraging responsibility. They believed that repetition gave children a familiar structure in which attention, sequencing, and behavioral control could be practiced.

Sub-theme 2.2: Parents describe co-regulating emotions before expecting independent control

The strongest practice-related finding concerned what parents did when children were already upset. Rather than describing only correction or punishment, most parents described some form of co-regulation: asking what happened, comforting the child, explaining, counting, telling a story, redirecting attention, or waiting until the child was

calm enough to discuss the situation. The adult was therefore acting as an external regulator during moments when the child could not yet regulate alone.

“When my child becomes upset, I first ask why he is angry. Then I comfort him and explain the situation so that he gradually learns to control himself.”

(Personal communication: IDI #1, 9 July 2026)

“Instead of shouting, I try to understand why my child is angry. If the anger is unnecessary, I explain calmly why that behavior is not appropriate.”

(Personal communication: IDI #2, 9 July 2026)

“I hug my child, count together, tell stories from my own childhood, and try to divert attention instead of letting the situation become worse.”

(Personal communication: IDI #4, 13 July 2026)

Across these accounts, parents described calming as a sequence rather than a single strategy. They reported first trying to reduce emotional intensity and then using explanation, redirection, counting, stories, or comfort before expecting the child to respond more independently.

Sub-theme 2.3: Parents use guided independence as everyday readiness practice

Parents also created opportunities for children to manage age-appropriate tasks without immediate adult intervention. Dressing, drinking water, changing clothes, opening lunch boxes, using the washroom, cleaning up toys, and organizing belongings were repeatedly described. These tasks required children to remember steps, persist, tolerate small frustrations, and complete actions independently.

“My child dresses independently, drinks water by herself, changes clothes after school, and gradually learns to manage small tasks alone.”

(Personal communication: IDI #3, 13 July 2026)

“Children learn self-control by doing everyday activities themselves—opening their lunch box, using the washroom independently, cleaning up toys, and following routines.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 2, 18 July 2026)

Parents therefore connected practical independence with self-regulation in their own accounts rather than treating the two as separate areas. They perceived the child’s ability to manage personal needs as relevant to functioning with less adult assistance at school.

Sub-theme 2.4: Parents use real situations to practice waiting, sharing, and boundaries

Parents deliberately used moments of wanting, waiting, sharing, and responsibility as opportunities to practice self-control. The emphasis was on repeated experience rather than verbal advice alone. Some parents delayed giving requested objects immediately, required a child to complete one activity before beginning another, and encouraged children to respect others' belongings.

"If my child wants something immediately, I do not give it right away. I ask him to wait. We also teach sharing with siblings and cousins, and we make sure unfinished tasks are completed before starting another activity."

(Personal communication: IDI #1, 9 July 2026)

"Everything cannot be given instantly. I encourage my child to wait patiently, share toys, and complete one task before moving to another."

(Personal communication: IDI #2, 9 July 2026)

"I teach my child not to touch other children's toys without permission and to offer food to others before eating. I also encourage my child to keep personal belongings organized after playing."

(Personal communication: IDI #4, 13 July 2026)

Participants connected regulation with social and moral expectations such as permission, consideration for others, completing responsibilities, and delaying immediate wants. These were reported as everyday situations in which children were encouraged to practice self-control.

Sub-theme 2.5: Parents view play as an opportunity to practice attention, patience, and rule-following

Parents described play as more than entertainment. Board games, mind games, drawing, pretend play, kitchen sets, puzzles, and shared activities were valued because they required children to focus, wait, take turns, follow rules, solve problems, and tolerate outcomes that were not always preferred.

"My child plays mind games, fishing games, UNO, Monopoly, kitchen sets, and pretend play. These games improve patience, attention, and self-control."

(Personal communication: IDI #1, 9 July 2026)

“Mind games, pretend play, emotion games, and sharing activities teach children patience and responsibility much better than only telling them what to do.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 4, 18 July 2026)

Parents described play activities as useful because the activities themselves involved waiting, remembering rules, negotiating roles, persisting, and responding to other players. These accounts show how participants perceived play as a practical context for regulatory practice.

Sub-theme 2.6: Parents perceive their own behavior as part of children’s regulatory learning

Participants repeatedly described parents as role models. They believed that children observe how adults speak, react, organize routines, and handle frustration. This placed responsibility on both mothers and fathers and suggested that self-regulation is learned partly through observation of adult behavior.

“Parents have the biggest responsibility because children spend most of their time with us. If we do not teach them, who will?”

(Personal communication: IDI #2, 9 July 2026)

“Both mothers and fathers are important role models. Children copy what they see us doing every day.”

(Personal communication: IDI #4, 13 July 2026)

This perception becomes especially relevant alongside Theme 3, where parents also acknowledged losing patience. Participants’ accounts therefore show both sides of modeling: they believed children learn from adult behavior while also recognizing that adults do not always respond as they intend.

Research Question 3: What challenges do parents experience in supporting children’s self-regulation for school readiness?

Theme 3: Parents Report Stress, Time, Digital Media, and Limited Support as Barriers to Consistent Practice

Sub-theme 3.1: Children’s dysregulation can trigger parental dysregulation

Parents described anger, shouting, aggression, refusal, and repeated non-compliance as moments when supportive strategies were hardest to maintain. Several parents acknowledged that they sometimes scolded, raised their voice, or lost patience.

These accounts show that supporting a child's self-regulation places regulatory demands on the parent as well.

"Sometimes I also become angry and scold my child when behavior becomes difficult to manage."

(Personal communication: IDI #3, 13 July 2026)

"There are times when I become tired, lose my patience, and raise my voice, although later I try to calm myself before handling the situation."

(Personal communication: IDI #4, 13 July 2026)

Parents' accounts suggest that the challenge was not simply a lack of knowledge. Several described knowing how they preferred to respond but finding it difficult to remain consistent when tired or emotionally activated.

Sub-theme 3.2: Screen use becomes part of emotion and behavior management

Digital devices emerged as a recurring challenge, particularly when children expected screens during meals or became upset when access was limited. Parents attempted to establish rules, but resistance made screen use an ongoing negotiation rather than a one-time household decision.

"Sometimes children become addicted to mobile phones. That is why we try to set fixed times for screen use."

(Personal communication: IDI #1, 9 July 2026)

"My child often refuses to eat without watching a screen. Sometimes my child copies behaviors seen on the screen and even tries to emotionally blackmail us when we refuse."

(Personal communication: IDI #2, 9 July 2026)

Not all parents reported the same level of difficulty. IDI #4 described fewer screen-related problems after establishing a clear limit, indicating a perceived difference in how families experienced this challenge.

"My child watches Bengali rhymes for only about thirty minutes, so screen time has not become a major problem for us."

(Personal communication: IDI #4, 13 July 2026)

Sub-theme 3.3: Time scarcity reduces consistency even when parents know what they want to do

The FGD highlighted limited time as a structural challenge for working parents. Participants described understanding children's needs but struggling to provide

sustained interaction during weekdays. The issue was therefore not only the quantity of time but the consistency with which routines, emotional coaching, and guided practice could be maintained.

“Nowadays most parents are working. We hardly get enough quality time with our children except on weekends.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 3, 18 July 2026)

“Parents understand what children need, but because of work pressure they cannot always practice these things regularly at home.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 5, 18 July 2026)

Participants described a gap between intention and consistency. They reported valuing responsive interaction and independence while sometimes relying on faster solutions when time and energy were limited.

Sub-theme 3.4: Practical knowledge is stronger than formal conceptual awareness

Although parents demonstrated practical understanding through their examples, some reported that the term ‘self-regulation’ was unfamiliar before contact with schools or other parents. This conceptual gap may limit how intentionally parents connect everyday practices with school readiness.

“I learned about many of these ideas from other parents and through school. Before that I did not really know what self-regulation meant.”

(Personal communication: IDI #3, 13 July 2026)

“Most parents think school readiness means reading, writing, and learning numbers. They rarely think about self-regulation.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 1, 18 July 2026)

These accounts suggest that some parents may engage in practices related to self-regulation even when they cannot formally name or explain the concept. In participants’ descriptions, practical behavior sometimes preceded familiarity with professional terminology.

Sub-theme 3.5: Parents want schools to act as partners, not only as places of instruction

Parents repeatedly asked for guidance from schools and early childhood professionals. They wanted parenting sessions, clearer communication about children’s behavioral and emotional development, and practical strategies that could be used at

home. Some also raised access to affordable preschool and daycare as a broader support issue.

“Teachers should guide parents more so that we understand how to develop self-regulation at home.”

(Personal communication: IDI #2, 9 July 2026)

“There should be more parenting sessions in schools because parents also need to learn how to develop children's self-regulation.”

(Focus group notes #1, Participant 2, 18 July 2026)

This request positions school readiness as a shared responsibility. Parents did not describe self-regulation as something families should manage alone; they expected schools to help translate developmental concepts into practical guidance for home.

Discussion

Parents understand readiness through participation and functioning

The first major finding is that parents' understanding of readiness was broader than a purely academic model. Participants referred to literacy and numeracy, but their strongest examples concerned whether a child could communicate, separate from parents, use the washroom, open a lunch box, sit, wait, follow rules, and manage emotions. This resembles multidimensional frameworks of school readiness (UNICEF, 2019; Blair & Raver, 2015), but the contribution of the present study lies in how those domains were translated into concrete urban family expectations. Parents did not speak in developmental-domain language; they spoke in situations.

This distinction is analytically important. Formal frameworks separate cognitive, social-emotional, behavioral, and adaptive domains for conceptual clarity, whereas parents experienced them as interconnected. Opening a lunch box was simultaneously an independence task, a problem-solving task, and a behavioral expectation. Waiting in line involved inhibition, social awareness, and adaptation to group rules. The findings therefore suggest that parents' practical model of readiness may be more integrated than the categories used in research instruments.

The Bangladesh-specific literature helps explain why academic readiness still remained prominent. Alam (2024) found that school preparation in Bangladesh is shaped by parental socioeconomic status, parental involvement, private tutoring, and the relationship between parents and early education settings. In a context where

admission, performance, and visible academic progress carry strong value, parents may understandably use letters, numbers, and writing as concrete evidence that preparation is taking place. The present study does not show a simple opposition between academic and holistic readiness; it shows parents trying to hold both at once.

A distinctive finding: parents often know the practice before they know the term

One of the clearest context-specific contributions of this study is the gap between formal vocabulary and practical understanding. Several parents could describe calming, waiting, turn-taking, emotional control, and independent responsibility but were less familiar with the term self-regulation itself. In other words, the practice often preceded the vocabulary. This finding adds nuance to the claim that parents need ‘awareness.’ A parent may lack the academic label while already engaging in developmentally relevant behavior.

This distinction matters for programme design. Awareness initiatives that begin from the assumption that parents know nothing may overlook existing strengths. A more useful approach would identify familiar practices—helping a child wait, involving a child in routines, talking through anger, allowing independent self-care—and then connect those practices to the concept of self-regulation. Such an approach respects parents’ experiential knowledge while strengthening conceptual understanding.

This finding also helps interpret the FGD perception that some parents expect schools to teach self-regulation after admission. If self-regulation is not recognized as a component of readiness, families may see behavioral and emotional regulation as a school responsibility rather than something that develops before and across the transition. The study therefore identifies a home-school translation gap: the behavior is visible, but its developmental meaning is not always shared.

Theme 2 reveals co-regulation rather than simple discipline

The second research question generated the richest contribution of the study. Parents did not merely describe ‘discipline.’ They described a sequence of co-regulatory practices: asking why the child was upset, hugging, counting, telling stories, redirecting attention, allowing time to calm, and then explaining. This sequence closely resembles recent co-regulation literature, which emphasizes that young children often require external support to manage emotional arousal before independent regulation is possible (Lobo & Lunkenheimer, 2020; Lunkenheimer et al., 2023).

The present findings add contextual depth to that literature. Co-regulation in these families was not presented as a formal parenting programme; it was improvised through culturally familiar and personally meaningful strategies. Counting together, drawing on stories from a parent's own childhood, comforting physically, and using explanation after calming are examples of how general regulatory principles are translated into household practice. The originality of the finding is therefore not the discovery that co-regulation exists, but the documentation of how it is enacted and understood by urban Bangladeshi parents preparing young children for school.

This finding also clarifies why 'responsive guidance' should not be reduced to permissiveness. Parents continued to set limits and expectations. They delayed desired objects, required children to finish tasks, set boundaries around others' belongings, and expected responsibility. The difference was that structure and emotional support often operated together. This combination is consistent with research linking autonomy-supportive and sensitive parenting with executive functioning (Bernier et al., 2010), yet the present data show how structure is embedded in very small decisions across the day.

Everyday independence functions as a rehearsal for school

A second distinctive contribution within Theme 2 is the way parents connected self-regulation with practical independence. Tasks such as opening a lunch box, changing clothes, using the washroom, organizing belongings, and cleaning up toys were described as school preparation. These activities are rarely dramatic, but they require children to remember sequences, persist through difficulty, inhibit the impulse to seek immediate adult help, and tolerate small frustrations. The home was therefore functioning as an informal rehearsal space for school.

This finding extends the literature by drawing attention to the overlap between adaptive independence and self-regulation. Research often measures executive function or behavioral regulation through structured tasks, while parents observe regulation through whether a child can carry out daily responsibilities. For practice, this suggests that parent education about self-regulation can become more concrete when linked to age-appropriate independence rather than only to emotional control.

The finding is also compatible with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of guided participation: adults initially structure and support a task, then reduce assistance as the child becomes more capable. In the participants' accounts, independence was not equated with leaving the child alone; it involved giving the child an opportunity to try before the adult intervened.

Self-regulation is embedded in moral and social routines

Another context-specific pattern was the way regulation was connected with social expectations such as asking permission before touching another child's toy, offering food to others, sharing, waiting, and completing responsibilities. These practices show that parents were not separating emotional self-control from social conduct. Regulation was understood partly as learning how to behave appropriately with other people.

This is consistent with the broader idea that self-regulation supports social participation, but it adds a culturally meaningful layer to the present study. The behaviors parents prioritized reflect family expectations about respect, consideration, and responsibility. Such practices may become especially relevant in classrooms where children must share materials, wait for collective routines, and navigate peer boundaries.

Play is valued when it requires the child to regulate

Parents' discussion of play also adds depth to Theme 2. They tended to value activities that required active participation—mind games, UNO, Monopoly, pretend play, drawing, kitchen sets, puzzles, and sharing games—because these naturally required waiting, attention, rule-following, persistence, and cooperation. This supports literature on play and self-regulation (Whitebread et al., 2009; Bodrova & Leong, 2007), but the important point in the present study is that parents recognized the regulatory demands of play even when they did not use educational terminology.

The findings therefore suggest a useful distinction between play as 'free time' and play as a context for self-management. This does not mean play should be turned into formal instruction. Rather, its value may lie precisely in the fact that children practice regulation in a meaningful activity where rules, roles, and consequences matter to them.

The most important challenge is the gap between intention and consistency

The third theme complicates any simple conclusion that parents either support or fail to support self-regulation. Participants frequently knew how they wanted to respond—calmly, consistently, and supportively—but admitted that tiredness, anger, work pressure, or repeated child resistance sometimes led to shouting or scolding. The central tension in the data was therefore not between caring and uncaring parents; it was between intention and consistency.

Recent work on parent self-regulation helps explain this pattern. Lunkenheimer et al. (2023) argue that effective discipline and co-regulation depend partly on the adult's capacity to regulate in the moment. The present findings support this relational view. A

child's dysregulation can increase the parent's arousal, and the parent's reaction can then shape the child's next response. This reciprocal process means that programmes focused only on 'how to control children's behavior' may miss the parent's own emotional demands.

For this reason, parent support should include realistic strategies for difficult moments, not only ideal practices. Participants' own accounts suggest that awareness is insufficient when parents are exhausted or time-pressured. Feasible strategies must fit the actual ecology of family life.

Screen use emerges as a regulatory negotiation, not only an exposure problem

The screen-related findings are particularly relevant to recent literature. Parents described devices being requested during meals, children becoming upset when devices were removed, and the need to set fixed limits. This pattern resembles the emerging concept of regulatory media use, where screens are used to calm, occupy, or manage children in demanding moments (Suh et al., 2024). Danet et al. (2022) similarly found that preschool children with weaker executive functioning were more likely to receive devices for calming, highlighting the possibility that child difficulty and parental device use influence each other.

The present study adds a contextual interpretation: screen use was intertwined with parental time, convenience, emotional demands, and consistency of household rules. This makes screen use less useful to interpret as an isolated parental choice. For some families, a device can become a quick regulatory tool when the parent has limited time or the child resists eating or waiting. The more distinctive finding is therefore the interaction among screen expectations, parent fatigue, and child regulation rather than screen time alone.

IDI #4 provides an important contrast because clear limits were associated with fewer reported difficulties. While the study cannot establish cause, this within-sample difference suggests that predictable boundaries may matter. Future research could examine how screen rules, parent stress, and child regulation interact over time in Bangladeshi families.

Urban context and institutional support shape what parents can sustain

Participants' accounts of limited time and requests for school guidance support Bronfenbrenner's (1979) argument that development is shaped beyond the parent-child dyad. Working schedules, availability of early childhood services, school communication, and social expectations influence the opportunities parents can create

at home. Alam (2024) likewise emphasizes parental involvement and parent-school communication in Bangladesh's school-preparation context. The present study extends this issue from general involvement to the specific content of self-regulation.

Parents wanted schools to provide parenting sessions and guidance rather than treating readiness as a one-directional transfer of responsibility. This suggests that home-school collaboration may be especially effective when it uses shared language for emotional regulation, independence, attention, and routines. A school that reports only academic progress may unintentionally reinforce the idea that readiness is academic; a school that communicates about waiting, self-care, peer interaction, and emotional recovery can help make the broader developmental picture visible.

Context-specific contributions of the present study

The findings do not justify claiming that routines, co-regulation, autonomy, play, or screen-related challenges have never been identified before; all have precedents in international literature. The contribution of this study is more precise. It shows how these processes are assembled in the everyday school-preparation practices of a small group of urban Bangladeshi parents and identifies several patterns that are less visible in existing Bangladesh-focused literature.

First, the study identifies a tacit-explicit knowledge gap: parents often practiced self-regulation support before knowing the formal term. Second, it shows that parents conceptualized functional independence—lunch boxes, washroom use, dressing, belongings—as part of regulatory readiness for school. Third, it documents co-regulation through locally ordinary strategies such as hugging, counting, storytelling, explanation, and redirection. Fourth, it shows that social regulation was embedded in culturally meaningful expectations around permission, sharing, respect, and responsibility. Fifth, it identifies an urban regulatory ecology in which child behavior, parental stress, work schedules, screen use, academic expectations, and school support interact rather than operate as separate barriers.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that self-regulation in urban Dhaka is best understood not as a skill taught in isolation but as something negotiated across the rhythm of everyday family life. This is the study's strongest analytical contribution: it shifts attention from whether parents 'teach self-regulation' to how regulation is already being built, interrupted, and interpreted through ordinary interactions.

From parental control to shared regulation: a developmental reading of the findings

The findings suggest that the most useful way to interpret parents' practices is not through a simple contrast between strict and permissive parenting, but through the developmental process of co-regulation. Parents repeatedly described moments in which the child could not yet manage an emotion, delay a desire, or complete a responsibility independently. In those moments, the adult supplied part of the regulatory structure: asking what had happened, offering reassurance, setting a limit, counting backwards, redirecting attention, or breaking a task into manageable steps. Over time, parents expected the child to take over more of this work. This pattern is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) account of guided participation and with Morris et al. (2007), who emphasize the role of family emotional processes in the development of regulation. It also gives a more precise interpretation to the parents' own language. What sometimes appeared in the interviews as 'teaching discipline' often involved a sequence of adult support, child practice, and gradual transfer of responsibility.

This interpretation is especially important for school readiness. A classroom requires children to regulate themselves in the temporary absence of one-to-one parental support. The home practices described by participants can therefore be understood as preparation for that transfer. When a parent asks a child to wait before receiving something, finish one activity before beginning another, or calm down before discussing a problem, the immediate goal may be household cooperation; developmentally, however, the child is also practicing delay, persistence, and emotional recovery. The distinctive contribution of the present data is that these processes were embedded in ordinary family life rather than presented as formal self-regulation exercises. This suggests that parent education in Bangladesh may be more effective when it begins by naming and strengthening practices families already use instead of introducing self-regulation as an unfamiliar technical concept.

Backward counting and emotional coaching as concrete co-regulation strategies

One particularly revealing example came from the parent who described calming a child through backward counting, physical reassurance, and stories. This account is analytically valuable because it shows that parents were not only attempting to stop undesirable behavior; some were actively helping children move from emotional arousal toward a state in which they could listen, reflect, and respond. Denham (2006) identifies emotion regulation as central to social-emotional competence and school adjustment, while Diamond (2013) explains that inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility are needed when children must interrupt an immediate response and choose

a more appropriate one. The parent's strategy illustrates these processes in an everyday form. Counting creates a brief pause, reassurance reduces emotional intensity, and conversation gives the child language through which the event can later be understood. This finding also complicates the assumption that self-regulation is an entirely child-driven capacity. The data show that regulation can initially be interpersonal before becoming increasingly internal. A young child who needs an adult's voice, touch, sequence, or reminder to calm down is not necessarily failing to self-regulate; the child may be participating in the developmental process through which regulatory strategies are learned. At the same time, parents acknowledged that they themselves sometimes became tired, angry, or inconsistent. The same interviews therefore reveal both sides of co-regulation: children depend on adults for regulatory support, while the quality of that support depends partly on adults' own capacity to remain regulated. This reciprocal pattern helps explain why parenting advice that focuses only on correcting children may be insufficient. Supporting children's school readiness may also require helping parents develop realistic strategies for managing their own reactions during difficult moments.

Independence as a bridge between home routines and classroom participation

A further finding that deserves emphasis is parents' repeated connection between school readiness and practical independence. Opening a lunch box, dressing, drinking water, using the washroom, changing clothes, organizing belongings, and completing small responsibilities were not described as peripheral life skills. Parents treated them as evidence that a child could function in a setting where an adult would not immediately do everything for the child. This provides an important bridge between adaptive functioning and self-regulation. Independence requires the child to remember a sequence, tolerate small frustrations, persist when a task is not immediately easy, and monitor what needs to be done. In this sense, everyday self-care tasks can exercise several of the same regulatory processes that later support classroom learning.

The finding is compatible with Diamond's (2013) description of executive functions and with Vygotsky's (1978) account of the gradual transfer of responsibility from adult to child. Yet the present study adds contextual meaning by showing how parents themselves recognize school readiness through functional competence. Their examples were concrete rather than theoretical: a ready child should be able to manage personal needs, communicate when help is required, and take responsibility for belongings. This suggests that a locally meaningful discussion of school readiness may need to connect abstract developmental terms with the practical situations parents already use to judge

readiness. It also challenges an overly academic model of preparation. A child who can recite letters or numbers but cannot manage ordinary classroom routines may still require substantial adult support. The data therefore support a conception of readiness in which independence is not separate from learning; it is part of the infrastructure that allows learning to occur.

Waiting, sharing, permission and responsibility: the social meaning of regulation

Parents' accounts also show that self-regulation was embedded in moral and relational expectations. Waiting for a desired object, sharing food or toys, asking permission before touching another child's belongings, offering something to others, standing in a queue, and respecting classroom rules were repeatedly used as examples of appropriate development. These behaviors involve impulse control, but they also communicate a child's relationship to other people. The regulatory act is therefore social: the child inhibits an immediate desire because another person, a shared rule, or a group expectation must also be considered. This interpretation aligns with Denham's (2006) emphasis on social-emotional competence and with McClelland et al. (2007), who connect behavioral regulation with successful participation in learning environments. What is particularly useful in the present study is the way these behaviors appear within parents' everyday value systems. Participants did not separate 'executive function' from courtesy, responsibility, cooperation, or respect. Their descriptions suggest that self-regulation is experienced through culturally meaningful expectations about how a child should behave with family members, peers, and adults. This does not mean that all social compliance should be equated with healthy self-regulation. Rather, it indicates that regulatory skills become visible to parents through socially recognizable behavior. For early childhood programmes, this distinction matters. Messages about self-regulation may be more understandable when linked to familiar situations—waiting for a turn, managing disappointment, asking before taking, or completing a responsibility—while still emphasizing that the goal is not unquestioning obedience but the child's growing ability to understand situations, manage impulses, and participate constructively with others.

Play as a naturally occurring practice space for self-regulation

The findings further indicate that parents valued play most strongly when they could see children exercising patience, attention, turn-taking, imagination, or problem-solving. Board games, mind games, pretend play, drawing, kitchen-set play, and shared activities were described as ways children learned to wait, follow rules, remain focused,

and negotiate with others. Whitebread et al. (2009) similarly identify play as an important context for developing metacognitive and self-regulatory processes, while Bodrova and Leong (2007) emphasize the regulatory demands created by mature pretend play. The present findings bring these ideas into the everyday language of parents in urban Dhaka. Parents were not describing a formal intervention; they were noticing that some forms of play naturally required the child to control immediate impulses in order to remain part of the activity.

This is important because it provides an alternative to the assumption that school preparation must become increasingly academic as school entry approaches. The regulatory value of play lies partly in the fact that children are motivated to remain engaged. A child may wait for a turn in a game because continuing the game matters to the child; may remain in an agreed pretend role because the shared story depends on it; or may persist with a puzzle because completion is satisfying. These are authentic demands for regulation rather than adult-created drills. The study therefore supports a stronger practical argument for play-based preparation: play can provide repeated opportunities to practice the very capacities—attention, inhibition, flexibility, cooperation, and persistence—that children need in classrooms. This interpretation also strengthens the recommendation that parents and schools should not treat play and readiness as competing priorities.

Screen use as a family regulation problem rather than a child-only problem

Screen use emerged as one of the most immediate challenges in parents' accounts, but the data suggest that it should not be interpreted only as a question of how many minutes a child spends with a device. Parents described screens becoming connected with eating, calming, entertainment, resistance, and negotiation. In some families, removing a device triggered distress or stubbornness; in another, clearer limits were associated with fewer reported difficulties. These accounts point to a broader regulatory issue: digital media can become part of the interaction through which adults and children manage boredom, transitions, meals, and emotional discomfort. The challenge is therefore relational and routine-based as well as technological.

This interpretation is useful because it avoids placing the entire responsibility on the child. When parents are tired, busy, or under time pressure, screens may provide immediate practical relief even when parents would prefer different routines. Later, the child's expectation of access can make limit-setting more difficult, creating a cycle in which parental convenience and child demand reinforce one another. The present study

cannot establish causal effects of screen exposure, and its qualitative design does not allow comparison of developmental outcomes by screen duration. Its contribution is instead to show how parents experience screen use within the daily work of regulation. For intervention, this implies that simply telling families to reduce screen time may be inadequate. Parents may need workable alternatives for meals, transitions, waiting periods, and moments of emotional escalation, together with predictable boundaries that can be sustained within real family schedules.

Parental time pressure and the consistency gap

Across the findings, a recurring tension appeared between what parents believed they should do and what they could sustain consistently. Participants valued calm explanation, routines, independence, and limited screen use, yet they also described work pressure, fatigue, frustration, and occasions when they raised their voices or responded differently from their preferred approach. This gap between intention and consistency is a significant finding because self-regulation develops through repeated experience. A strategy that is understood intellectually may still be difficult to apply when adults are rushed, emotionally depleted, or managing competing responsibilities. Morris et al. (2007) note that family emotional climate and parental responses are important pathways through which children develop regulation; Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective further reminds us that those responses are shaped by conditions beyond the immediate parent-child interaction.

For urban Dhaka families, this means that discussions of parenting practice should take context seriously. Working schedules, commuting demands, household responsibilities, educational expectations, and access to support may all influence the time and emotional resources available for patient guidance. The findings therefore resist an individual-blame interpretation. Parents were not simply reporting a lack of knowledge; many could describe appropriate strategies but found consistency difficult under pressure. This distinction is important for programme design. Short, feasible practices that fit into existing routines may be more sustainable than idealized recommendations requiring extensive additional time. It also supports the need for stronger home-school partnership, because schools can reinforce common strategies and reduce the expectation that families must independently translate developmental theory into everyday practice.

What is new in this study: a context-specific synthesis rather than a claim of universal novelty

The originality of this study lies not in claiming that routines, play, responsive parenting, screen-related challenges, or self-regulation have never been studied before. Each has an established international literature. The contribution is the way these elements come together in parents' accounts within urban Dhaka. First, the findings reveal a tacit-explicit knowledge gap: parents often demonstrated practical understanding of self-regulation before possessing the formal term. Second, parents located regulation in highly ordinary acts of independence—managing lunch boxes, clothing, belongings, waiting, sharing, and completing tasks—showing how school readiness is rehearsed through daily family functioning. Third, emotional guidance was frequently described as co-regulation: parents attempted to lend children calm, language, structure, and time until the child could recover. Fourth, regulatory behavior was interpreted through social values such as permission, responsibility, sharing, and respect, giving the concept a relational and culturally situated meaning.

Fifth, the study shows that parents' practices are constrained by a consistency gap. Parents may know the response they prefer but struggle to sustain it when work pressure, fatigue, difficult behavior, or digital-device negotiations intensify. Finally, participants' repeated requests for guidance indicate that school readiness is experienced as a shared developmental responsibility, even when communication between home and school may still be dominated by academic concerns. Taken together, these findings suggest that self-regulation in urban Dhaka is neither simply an internal child trait nor merely a parenting technique. It is produced through repeated negotiations among the child's developing capacities, parental expectations and emotions, household routines, play opportunities, digital environments, and school-related demands. This synthesis is the study's strongest contribution: it makes visible the everyday ecology through which readiness is built before a child enters or fully adjusts to formal schooling.

Conclusion

This study explored how parents in urban Dhaka understand and support children's self-regulation as a key component of school readiness. The findings show that parents viewed readiness as more than academic knowledge. They emphasized communication, independence, social participation, emotional control, attention, and the ability to function within classroom routines. Although some parents were unfamiliar with the formal term self-regulation, they recognized its practical meaning through behaviors such as waiting, calming, listening, sharing, following expectations, and managing personal responsibilities.

The study also shows that self-regulation was not treated as a separate lesson in the home. It was built through the everyday architecture of family life: predictable routines, emotional co-regulation, guided independence, delayed gratification, boundaries, play, and adult modeling. In many cases, parents were already using developmentally meaningful strategies before they could name the concept. The home therefore emerged as an important rehearsal space in which children practice the forms of self-management later required in school.

At the same time, parents' ability to provide consistent support was constrained by their own emotional fatigue, work schedules, children's difficult behavior, screen-related negotiations, limited conceptual awareness, and insufficient guidance from schools. These findings make it clear that responsibility cannot be placed on parents alone. Children's self-regulation develops within a wider ecology of family resources, school expectations, early childhood services, and social conditions.

The central implication for early childhood education in Bangladesh is that preparing a child for school should mean preparing the child to participate—not only to perform. Academic knowledge remains important, but its value is strengthened when children can manage themselves, communicate, persist, cooperate, and recover from frustration. Positioning self-regulation alongside literacy and numeracy in parent education, preschool practice, and home-school communication can therefore contribute to a more holistic and realistic understanding of school readiness.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are directly derived from the study findings and are ordered by priority and feasibility in the urban Bangladeshi context.

- Priority 1 – Parent guidance through schools: Early childhood settings should provide short, practical parent sessions on self-regulation, emotional coaching, routines, independence, and age-appropriate expectations. Participants specifically requested guidance from teachers and reported limited familiarity with the concept of self-regulation.
- Priority 2 – Make home-school communication developmental, not only academic: Teachers should communicate with parents about children’s attention, emotional recovery, independence, peer interaction, and ability to follow routines alongside literacy and numeracy progress. Shared language can help families understand how everyday behavior relates to school readiness.
- Priority 3 – Build on ordinary family routines: Parent education should emphasize feasible practices already present in family life—waiting, cleaning up, dressing, opening lunch boxes, organizing belongings, following routines, and completing simple responsibilities—rather than presenting self-regulation as an additional academic lesson.
- Priority 4 – Promote co-regulation and parent self-regulation: Parenting support should include strategies for difficult moments, such as pausing, naming emotions, calming before explaining, counting, redirecting, and reflecting after the child is calm. Because parents reported losing patience, guidance should address the adult’s regulation as well as the child’s behavior.
- Priority 5 – Address screen use within the realities of family life: Families should be supported to establish predictable screen boundaries and develop realistic alternatives for meals, waiting, and busy periods. Guidance should acknowledge that screen use is often connected with parent time and stress rather than treating it only as a rule-breaking issue.
- Priority 6 – Strengthen play-based opportunities for regulation: Homes and preschools should provide activities that naturally require turn-taking, role negotiation, rule-following, persistence, and problem-solving, including pretend play, puzzles, drawing, board games, storytelling, and cooperative play.
- Priority 7 – Policy and programme implication: Parenting education and social-emotional development should be more visible within early childhood programmes

and teacher development initiatives. Policy messages on school readiness should explicitly include self-regulation and adaptive independence alongside early academic skills.

- Priority 8 – Future research: Future studies should include fathers more substantially, compare urban, peri-urban, and rural contexts, include teacher and child perspectives, and combine interviews with direct observation or standardized measures of self-regulation. Longitudinal or mixed-methods research could examine whether the everyday practices identified here predict later classroom adjustment.

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Appendices

Fieldwork dates: IDI #1 and IDI #2 – 9 July 2026; IDI #3 and IDI #4 – 13 July 2026; FGD #1 – 18 July 2026.

Appendix–1

In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guideline for Parents

Title:

Parents' Perceptions and Practices Related to Children's Self-Regulation as a Key Component of School Readiness in Urban Dhaka

General Information

Date: _____

Start Time: _____ **End Time:** _____

Participant's Name: _____

Gender: _____ **Age:** _____

Education: _____

Profession: _____

Child's Age: _____ **Child's Gender:** _____

Guided Questions for IDI

Research Question 1

How do parents perceive school readiness and the role of self-regulation in preparing young children for school?

- a) What do you understand by “school readiness” for young children?
- b) In your opinion, what skills should a child have before starting school?
- c) What do you understand by children's self-regulation? Please explain in your own words.
- d) How important do you think self-regulation is for children's learning and classroom adjustment? Why?
- e) In your opinion, what happens when children struggle to control their emotions or behavior in the classroom?

Research Question 2

How do parents support the development of children's self-regulation through everyday parenting practices in urban Dhaka?

- a) What kinds of daily routines do you maintain for your child at home?

- b) How do you respond when your child becomes angry, upset, or impatient?
- c) How do you help your child develop habits such as waiting, sharing, listening, or completing tasks?
- d) What activities or games does your child usually engage in at home? How do these activities help your child learn patience, attention, or self-control?
- e) Do you think parents play an important role in developing children's self-regulation? Why or why not?

Research Question 3

What challenges do parents face in supporting self-regulation among young children?

- a) What difficulties do you face while helping your child manage behavior or emotions?
- b) Are there any challenges related to screen time, mobile devices, or technology use?
- c) In your opinion, what kind of support do parents need to better help children develop self-regulation skills?
- d) Do you have any suggestions for improving children's self-regulation and school readiness in the urban context of Dhaka?

Appendix-2

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guideline for Parents

Title:

Parents' Perceptions and Practices Related to Children's Self-Regulation as a Key Component of School Readiness in Urban Dhaka

Date: _____

Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Number of Participants: _____

Place: _____

Moderator: _____

FGD Guideline Questions

1. What do parents usually understand by school readiness for young children?
2. Why do you think self-regulation is important for children before entering school?
3. What kinds of everyday activities help children learn self-control, patience, and responsibility?
4. How do parents usually teach children to follow instructions and manage emotions at home?
5. What challenges do urban parents face in supporting children's behavioral development and self-regulation?
6. What suggestions would you give to improve children's self-regulation and readiness for school in urban Dhaka?

পরিশিষ্ট-১

অভিভাবকদের জন্য গভীর সাক্ষাৎকার (In-Depth Interview-IDI) নির্দেশিকা

শিরোনাম:

ঢাকার নগর অঞ্চলে স্কুল প্রস্তুতির একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উপাদান হিসেবে শিশুদের নিজের আচরণ ও আবেগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ (Self-Regulation) সম্পর্কিত অভিভাবকদের ধারণা ও চর্চা

সাধারণ তথ্য

তারিখ: _____

শুরুর সময়: _____ শেষ সময়: _____

অংশগ্রহণকারীর নাম: _____

লিঙ্গ: _____ বয়স: _____

শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা: _____

পেশা: _____

শিশুর বয়স: _____ শিশুর লিঙ্গ: _____

সাক্ষাৎকারের নির্দেশনামূলক প্রশ্নসমূহ

গবেষণা প্রশ্ন-১

অভিভাবকেরা স্কুল প্রস্তুতি (School Readiness) এবং শিশুদের স্কুলের জন্য প্রস্তুত করার ক্ষেত্রে স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণের (Self-Regulation) ভূমিকা কীভাবে উপলব্ধি করেন??

ক) ছোট শিশুদের জন্য “স্কুল প্রস্তুতি” বলতে আপনি কী বোঝেন?

খ) আপনার মতে, স্কুলে ভর্তি হওয়ার আগে একটি শিশুর কী ধরনের দক্ষতা থাকা প্রয়োজন?

গ) শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ (Self-Regulation) বলতে আপনি কী বোঝেন? নিজের ভাষায় ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

ঘ) আপনি কি মনে করেন স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ শিশুদের শেখা ও শ্রেণিকক্ষে মানিয়ে নেওয়ার জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ? কেন?

ঙ) আপনার মতে, যদি একটি শিশু নিজের আবেগ বা আচরণ নিয়ন্ত্রণ করতে না পারে, তাহলে শ্রেণিকক্ষে কী ধরনের সমস্যা হতে পারে?

গবেষণা প্রশ্ন-২

ঢাকার নগর প্রেক্ষাপটে অভিভাবকেরা দৈনন্দিন অভিভাবকত্বের চর্চার মাধ্যমে শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণের বিকাশকে কীভাবে সহায়তা করেন?

ক) আপনি আপনার শিশুর জন্য কী ধরনের দৈনন্দিন রুটিন অনুসরণ করেন?

খ) আপনার শিশু রাগান্বিত, বিরক্ত বা অস্থির হলে আপনি কীভাবে পরিস্থিতি সামলান?

গ) আপনি কীভাবে আপনার শিশুকে অপেক্ষা করা, ভাগাভাগি করা, মনোযোগ দিয়ে শোনা বা কাজ সম্পন্ন করার অভ্যাস গড়ে তুলতে সাহায্য করেন?

ঘ) আপনার শিশু বাসায় কী ধরনের খেলাধুলা বা কার্যক্রমে অংশ নেয়? এসব কীভাবে ধৈর্য, মনোযোগ বা আত্মনিয়ন্ত্রণ শেখাতে সাহায্য করে?

ঙ) আপনি কি মনে করেন শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ বিকাশে অভিভাবকদের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রয়েছে? কেন বা কেন নয়?

গবেষণা প্রশ্ন-৩

ছোট শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ গড়ে তুলতে অভিভাবকরা কী ধরনের চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হন?

ক) আপনার শিশুর আচরণ বা আবেগ নিয়ন্ত্রণে সহায়তা করতে গিয়ে আপনি কী ধরনের সমস্যার সম্মুখীন হন?

খ) মোবাইল ফোন, স্ক্রিন টাইম বা প্রযুক্তি ব্যবহারের ক্ষেত্রে কোনো চ্যালেঞ্জ আছে কি?

গ) আপনার মতে, শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ বিকাশে সহায়তা করার জন্য অভিভাবকদের কী ধরনের সহযোগিতা প্রয়োজন?

ঘ) নগর ঢাকার প্রেক্ষাপটে শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও স্কুল প্রস্তুতি উন্নয়নের জন্য আপনার কোনো পরামর্শ আছে কি?

পরিশিষ্ট-২

অভিভাবকদের জন্য ফোকাস গ্রুপ ডিসকাশন (FGD) নির্দেশিকা

শিরোনাম:

ঢাকার নগর অঞ্চলে স্কুল প্রস্তুতির একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উপাদান হিসেবে শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ (Self-Regulation) সম্পর্কিত অভিভাবকদের ধারণা ও চর্চা

তারিখ: _____

শুরুর সময়: _____ শেষ সময়: _____

অংশগ্রহণকারীর সংখ্যা: _____

স্থান: _____

মডারেটরের নাম: _____

FGD নির্দেশনামূলক প্রশ্নসমূহ

১। ছোট শিশুদের স্কুল প্রস্তুতি সম্পর্কে অভিভাবকরা সাধারণত কী ধারণা পোষণ করেন?

২। আপনার মতে, স্কুলে যাওয়ার আগে শিশুদের জন্য স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ কেন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?

৩। কোন ধরনের দৈনন্দিন কার্যক্রম শিশুদের আত্মনিয়ন্ত্রণ, ধৈর্য ও দায়িত্ববোধ শেখাতে সাহায্য করে?

৪। অভিভাবকরা সাধারণত কীভাবে শিশুদের নির্দেশনা অনুসরণ ও আবেগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ শেখান?

৫। শিশুদের আচরণগত বিকাশ ও স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণে সহায়তা করতে গিয়ে নগর এলাকার অভিভাবকরা কী ধরনের চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হন?

৬। নগর ঢাকার প্রেক্ষাপটে শিশুদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ ও স্কুল প্রস্তুতি উন্নয়নের জন্য আপনার কী ধরনের পরামর্শ রয়েছে?

2.52. Consent Form

Consent Form for the Participants

Parents' Perceptions and Practices Related to Children's Self-Regulation as a Key Component of School Readiness in Urban Dhaka

I am Israt Zahan Mim, an MSc student of Early Childhood Development (ECD) at BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC IED), BRAC University. As part of my academic thesis, I am conducting a research study titled “*Parents' Perceptions and Practices Related to Children's Self-Regulation as a Key Component of School Readiness in Urban Dhaka*”

The purpose of this study is to explore parents' understanding and everyday practices related to children's self-regulation and school readiness during the early years. The study will help develop a better understanding of how parents support children in managing behavior, emotions, attention, and independence before entering formal schooling.

Risks and Benefits of Participating in Research

There is no major risk involved in participating in this study. Participation will require only some of your valuable time for the interview/discussion. Although there may not be any direct benefit to you, the findings of this study may contribute to a better understanding of children's self-regulation and school readiness in the context of Bangladesh and may support future research and early childhood development practices.

Compensation

You will not receive any financial or other compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality

All information provided by you will be kept confidential. Your name and identity will not be disclosed in any report, publication, or presentation related to this research. Codes or pseudonyms will be used to ensure privacy and anonymity.

Future Use of Information

The collected information may be used for future academic purposes or shared with other researchers while maintaining complete confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without facing any negative consequences. If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign in the space provided below.

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____