

# **The Role of Parental Engagement in Supporting Play-based Learning for Pre-primary School Children, age 4-5**

**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/our 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.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## Approval

The thesis/project titled “The Role of Parental Engagement in Supporting Play-based Learning for Pre-primary School Children, age 4-5” submitted by Merina Hasanat (ID: 23155016) of Spring, 2023 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters of Science in Early Childhood Development in April 2025.

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## **Ethics Statement**

Title of Thesis Topic: The Role of Parental Engagement in Supporting Play-based Learning for Pre-primary School Children, age 4-5.

Student name: Merina Hasanat

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

### **Ethical Review Committee:**

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## **Abstract**

Parental involvement in education is very important. However, parents have been observed to be less involved in the education of their children. In our country's context, especially among the lower-middle class and lower-class workforce, parental involvement in their children's education has fallen below the mark. Joyful education is essential in the education of children in the early years because when a child first enters school, a joyful environment is needed in the child's first transition from the home to the school environment. And in that environment, with the presence of parents, the inclusion of child-oriented, attractive plays helps the child achieve the desired learning outcomes.

Using a qualitative methodology, the research incorporates Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with parents and early childhood educators to gain comprehensive insights. Ethical considerations are carefully addressed by ensuring informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and creating an inclusive discussion environment. The study also investigates barriers to parental involvement, such as misconceptions, limited communication with educators, and increased screen time, which may reduce opportunities for physical and imaginative play.

By identifying key factors that shape parental engagement, the research aims to bridge the gap between parental perceptions and the educational benefits of play-based learning. The findings will inform recommendations for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to create a more supportive learning environment. This study contributes to the broader discourse on strengthening parental involvement in play-based learning through evidence-based policies and interventions.

**Keywords:** play-based learning; parental engagement; early childhood education; cognitive development; qualitative research; Bangladesh.

## **Dedication (Optional)**

This research is wholeheartedly dedicated to the children whose curiosity, creativity, and boundless energy inspire the essence of play-based learning. Their natural desire to explore, imagine, and learn through play serves as a reminder of the importance of nurturing holistic development from an early age.

I also dedicate this work to my parents and family, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in the power of education have shaped my academic journey. Their guidance and sacrifices have been the foundation upon which I stand today.

A special dedication goes to the educators and early childhood professionals who tirelessly advocate for play-based learning, despite challenges and misconceptions. Their dedication to fostering meaningful learning experiences for young children is both admirable and essential for the future of education.

Lastly, I extend this dedication to all parents who strive to create nurturing environments for their children's growth and development. Their involvement in early education plays a crucial role in shaping a child's future. May this study serve as a step toward greater awareness, engagement, and collaboration in supporting play-based learning for generations to come.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who contributed to the completion of this study. First and foremost, I extend my deepest appreciation to the parents and early childhood educators (Pre-Primary Teacher of Government Primary School) who participated in this research. Their valuable insights and willingness to share their experiences made this study possible.

I am also grateful to my academic Supervisor and colleagues for their continuous support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the research process. Their constructive feedback and expertise have been instrumental in shaping this study.

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This study would not have been possible without the collective efforts of everyone involved, and I sincerely appreciate their contributions.

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## List of Acronyms

|        |                                                                                                   |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CPD    | Continuous Professional Development                                                               |
| ECCE   | Early Childhood Care and Education                                                                |
| ECC    | Early Childhood Centre                                                                            |
| EFA    | Education for All                                                                                 |
| FGD    | Focus Group Discussion                                                                            |
| GoB    | Government of Bangladesh                                                                          |
| MoPME  | Ministry of Primary and Mass Education                                                            |
| NCTB   | National Curriculum and Textbook Board                                                            |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organization                                                                     |
| PPE    | Pre-primary Education                                                                             |
| ICT    | Information and Communication Technology                                                          |
| IDI    | In-Depth Interview                                                                                |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund                                                                    |
| BBS    | Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics                                                                   |
| PBL    | Play-Based Learning                                                                               |
| PTA    | Parent-Teacher Association                                                                        |
| SDG    | Sustainable Development Goals                                                                     |
| TVET   | Technical and Vocational Education and Training (in case you refer to future education alignment) |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization                                  |
| TVET   | Technical and Vocational Education and Training (in case you refer to future education alignment) |

## **Chapter I: Introduction & Background**

### **Introduction**

Active parental involvement significantly boosts the competencies of play-based learning, a teaching modality increasingly recognized for its vital role in fostering early childhood development (Edwards, 2020). Since young children succeed by innovative learning through play, engaged parents help create environments that nurture cognitive, social, and emotional growth (Miller & Almon, 2009). Through play, children are encouraged to express themselves, experiment, and engage in discovery, which supports their creativity, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills (Nicolopoulou, 2010). However, the success of this educational method relies on both parents and children recognizing the developmental importance of play.

A range of challenges can hinder parents from participating fully in their children's play-based education. Work-related stress and limited time are commonly cited obstacles (Sullivan, 2022). Other contributing factors include a lack of safe play spaces, the effects of natural disasters, limited communication from educators, and a growing dependency on screens and digital games, all of which can restrict opportunities for unstructured play (Bipath, Muthivhi, & Bhoola, 2022). Moreover, the increasing emphasis on academic preparedness often diverts parental focus away from play-based methods toward more formal educational activities (Zosh et al., 2018).

While theoretical support for play-based learning is well-established, many parents may not fully grasp its developmental value. Piaget's child development theories are a constructivist framework, and sociocultural theory of Vygotsky's, emphasize the importance of active learning, social interaction, and contextual experiences in supporting well-rounded growth (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978; Bodrova & Leong, 2015). When applied properly, play-based strategies may encourage children's

problem-solving abilities, self-regulation, creativity, readiness for school, and inventiveness (Fisher et al., 2013). Yet, without sufficient awareness or access to resources, many parents are unable to support these experiences effectively.

Globally, play-based education is increasingly acknowledged as a comprehensive approach to early development (Salkind, 2008). Nevertheless, more attention is needed to understand how parental involvement can support this model sustainably and in alignment with children's rights (Landry et al., 2012). Parents are pivotal in facilitating their children's learning both at home as well as school settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Epstein, 2018). However, gaps in understanding and barriers to implementation continue to limit effective engagement with play-based approaches (Cheng & Stimpson, 2004; Sheridan et al., 2019). When parents realize disconnected from educational approaches, the level of involvement often declines, potentially weakening the overall support network for their children's development.

The digital technology's role in children's play adds a different layer of complexity. While digital tools can offer valuable support to both parents and teachers (Blackwell et al., 2026), excessive screen time may also detract from physical and imaginative play, key components of healthy development (Begum & Rahman, 2022; Richards et al., 2018). Limited interaction between parents and pre-primary teachers further contributes to misunderstandings about the purpose and value of play-based learning (Sultana, 2023).

Therefore, a deeper understanding of how parents perceive and participate in play-based education is essential, both globally and within the context of Bangladesh, to create developmentally appropriate learning environments for pre-primary children.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Across the globe, educational systems are increasingly acknowledging the critical role of play in fostering young learners' development. Yet, there remains considerable variation in how parents perceive and support play-based learning, particularly across different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. In Bangladesh, this disparity is especially pronounced, as the prevailing educational culture places a stronger emphasis on memorization rather than participatory and play-focused learning approaches.

On the other hand, if we compare countries of Finland has integrated play as a key pillar of the first step of young children's education. There, parents and pre-primary teachers work collaboratively to create child-centered educational environments (Uhari et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in many lower-income nations, play is often undervalued or regarded as a secondary activity that detracts from more traditional academic pursuits (Ginsburg, 2007). This limited recognition can prevent children from benefiting fully from play-based pedagogies. Studies from nations such as Japan and the United States show that parental beliefs play a crucial role in shaping early learning environments (Nishida, 2019; Zosh et al., 2018). Parents who appreciate the developmental importance of play are more likely to build meaningful partnerships with educators, which positively influences children's educational experiences.

In the Bangladeshi context, early education largely follows conventional methods, where success is measured by the ability to memorize rather than explore. Zaman and Shah (2021) have documented the challenges many parents face in embracing play-based approaches, attributing this resistance to deeply ingrained cultural norms that equate academic achievement with rigorous, formal learning. Additionally, both economic limitations and lack of awareness further restrict parental engagement in more progressive educational models. As Choudhury et al. (2020) note, many families

simply do not have access to the information or resources needed to understand the need for play in a child's advancement.

Social expectations as well as environmental pressures, particularly those emphasizing academic excellence, often discourage families from prioritizing play at home, leading to a disconnect between developmental needs and educational goals (UNICEF, 2019). Unless these societal and structural challenges are addressed, increasing meaningful parental participation in play-based learning will remain a significant hurdle.

A thorough understanding of both international and national perspectives is essential to strengthen parental engagement in play-based education. This dual lens helps identify pathways to improve early childhood development outcomes in Bangladesh and beyond. The increasing reliance on digital media can detract from basic play opportunities, reducing the quality of interactive and imaginative knowledge essential for child development (Richards et al., 2018). In the current context, children show reluctance to play sports that use physical or muscular strength. Children show more interest in using devices to play several online games and watch cartoons. As a result, the child loses the ability to use their thinking creatively to solve problems in any physical game. He cannot show any innovation in the field of play using the five senses. As a result, the child loses the ability to use their critical thinking proficiency to resolve the problems in any physical game. He cannot show any innovation in the field of play using their senses. Additionally, my thesis seeks to generate practical recommendations aimed at policymakers, pre-primary teachers, education stakeholders, and representatives of the local community for strengthening parental attachment in early childhood education for children in pre-primary settings.

### **Purpose of the study**

This research primarily aims to explore the main factors affecting parental engagement in play-based learning for preschool children, along with parents' views on the educational importance of play. In Bangladesh, where conventional teaching methods often emphasize rote learning rather than exploration (Zaman & Shah, 2021), the study investigates the barriers and misunderstandings that limit parents' involvement in play-centered learning approaches. It also aims to analyze the cultural and social dynamics that shape these parental perspectives and how they affect children's overall learning experiences.

By gaining a deeper understanding of these challenges and perceptions, the study aspires to inform policymakers, educators, and community leaders, enabling them to develop more tailored and responsive strategies. Addressing these issues collaboratively can help bridge the divide between conventional education and more innovative, play-oriented methods. Ultimately, the research endeavors to strengthen the role of parental engagement in early childhood education, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable framework for quality pre-primary education in Bangladesh. The main goal of this research is to connect play-based education with parental involvement to increase the sustainability of quality education for pre-primary level children.

### **Significance of the study**

Parents' understanding of play-based learning improves when they recognize play as a meaningful tool for their children's growth, both at home and in educational settings. When parents actively support play, they tend to foster environments that stimulate creativity, exploration, and discovery in their children (Burke, 2013). If the involvement is low, such as not being able to find different materials, not giving time to play, and not actively participating in various activities with the child, the child

does not achieve the desired level of learning, and the child loses interest. Greater awareness of the educational value of enjoyable, play-friendly experiences enables parents to better support their children's developmental progress (Brooker, 2002).

Furthermore, without parental involvement, the gap between home and educational environments widens, and it is not possible to ensure the sustainability of a child's education. Children who engage in play consistently at home are more likely to transfer those experiences to school settings, improving adaptability and social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Parental participation in play-related activities, including sports, not only strengthens emotional bonds but also builds foundational social skills through shared communication and interactions. These shared experiences enhance children's future engagement in both academic and social contexts (Preedy, 2015).

Pyle and Dunn (2012) considered that active participation in play supports skills that are developing intermittently in a child's educational environment, while a changing home environment can also break up this continuity. However, inconsistency in home-based support may interrupt the continuity of learning. To help their children integrate new knowledge effectively, parents must maintain a steady commitment to fostering learning through play. For instance, engaging in cooperative play allows parents to model healthy social behaviors, which helps children develop emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Understanding various forms of play, such as symbolic, constructive, and physical, allows parents to support their children's learning in more targeted ways. Symbolic play stimulates imagination and cognitive flexibility, while constructive play promotes analytical thinking and problem-solving (Berk, 2009). When parents grasp the significance of these play types, they are better equipped to integrate meaningful

play into daily routines (Fisher et al., 2011). Engaging in these activities also helps parents recognize their children's evolving interests and developmental stages, enabling them to offer more personalized support. Research by Hagan et al. (2015) emphasizes the importance of understanding the unique educational value of play in developing creativity and critical thinking.

Communication between teachers and parents is a key factor in maximizing the impact of play learning. As Holloway et al. (2019) suggest, consistent and clear messages from educators can strengthen parental engagement. When schools provide guidance on play strategies and emphasize their developmental importance, they empower parents to contribute effectively to their children's learning. Resources such as training sessions, informational materials, and community support initiatives can enhance parents' confidence and capacity to engage in play-based practices (Wenxin et al., 2020).

Despite the proven benefits, several challenges may hinder parents' involvement in play-focused education. These barriers include demanding work schedules, limited access to resources, and insufficient knowledge of early childhood development (Wang et al., 2016). Mendez et al. (2018) highlight how time constraints often restrict parents' ability to participate in meaningful play experiences with their children.

Cultural beliefs and societal norms also shape parental attitudes toward play. In certain educational settings, the focus on academic success can cause play to be seen as less valuable for learning (Gonzalez-Mena, 2017). As a result, parents may feel pressured to emphasize formal teaching methods instead of encouraging imaginative and exploratory play. Acknowledging these cultural influences is essential for designing interventions and materials that encourage parents to see play as an essential educational tool.

To address these challenges, it is important to offer flexible, accessible opportunities such as workshops, pre-primary orientation sessions, and practical resources that align with parents' needs and schedules. Combining expert knowledge with real-life applications allows parents to manage their responsibilities while supporting their children's holistic development through play (MacNaughton & Williams, 2009). Enhancing parental understanding of play's educational role not only benefits individual children but also encourages a broader cultural shift toward valuing play as a critical component of early learning.

Without integrating equity-focused strategies into play-based education, there is a risk of overlooking practices that may exclude children from marginalized backgrounds. Policymakers and teachers can create a supportive environment to reduce disparities in opinion and create equitable opportunities for all children in determining appropriate and effective play strategies.

### **Research Objectives:**

The central theme of this research is to enhance the insight into how parents engage with the learning by play approach in the natural context of pre-primary education at the Government Primary School. By examining their perspectives, involvement, and the obstacles they encounter, the research intends to offer practical insights for strengthening early childhood learning initiatives.

The specific goals of the research are:

- I. To find parents' perceptions and understanding of play-based learning for pre-primary school children.
- II. To investigate the approaches parents use to support play-based learning at home and school.

- III. To identify the difficulties and limitations parents face in encouraging play-based learning for their children.

To explore potential solutions and strategies parents use to address these challenges.

### **Research Topics:**

#### The Role of Parental Engagement in Supporting Play-based Learning for Pre-primary School Children, age 4-5

Without effective parental involvement, children are at risk of missing out on essential developmental opportunities. Especially in our country, parents from lower-middle-class and low-income families often find it difficult to ensure their children's basic needs, such as education, due to various social barriers. In this case, the child's parents cannot properly fulfill their responsibilities in supporting the child. Therefore, it is important to emphasize the need for improved education systems that prioritize and facilitate parental involvement in education to address this barrier for pre-primary children. In our country, there is a need to identify barriers to engagement and develop actionable recommendations for stakeholders to enhance parental perception in improving play-based, enjoyable learning for pre-primary level children's development

### **Research Questions**

This research seeks to promote the effective integration of play-based learning in Government Primary Schools by examining how parents perceive and support this approach, along with the challenges they encounter in the process. Through an in-depth investigation of how parents perceive and apply play-based learning in the home environment, the research intends to identify effective strategies that can strengthen this educational method within school settings. This inquiry holds

particular importance in highlighting play as a critical factor in fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development among young learners.

The research is guided by the following questions:

- i. What are parents' perceptions and understanding of play-based learning for their preschool children?
- ii. How do parents support and facilitate play-based learning activities at home and school for their pre-primary level children?
- iii. What are parents' key challenges and barriers in promoting play-based learning for their preschool children?

Through an in-depth investigation of how parents perceive and apply play-based learning in the home environment, the research intends to identify effective strategies that can strengthen this educational method within school settings. This inquiry holds particular importance in highlighting play as a critical factor in fostering cognitive, social, and emotional development among fresh learners.

## **Operational Definition**

This research proposal includes definitions of key terms to ensure clarity in understanding the concepts explored. Parental interaction refers to the active role parents play in supporting children's learning through educational play and regular communication with teachers (Hill & Tyson, 2009). To help overcome barriers to involvement, parents are encouraged to implement effective time management strategies, such as setting aside dedicated playtime within their daily routines to promote consistent engagement (Baker et al., 2021).

Engaging with other parents to share ideas and resources, along with developing skills in digital technology, can also enhance parental participation (Fisher et al., 2011). Accessing information and participating in programs focused on play-based learning

can empower parents to cultivate a stimulating home environment that promotes child development (Howard, 2013). Sensitization initiatives and interactive workshops are particularly valuable, as they boost parents' confidence in supporting their children's learning through play (Myers et al., 2017).

Wray (2017) emphasizes the role of community support, such as access to libraries, playgroups, and other child-friendly spaces, in helping parents build strong networks and gain practical ideas. These communal settings also offer children opportunities to engage with peers, fostering play-based experiences in a broader social context.

Furthermore, educational programs for parents can equip teachers with methods to guide families in facilitating play-based activities at home (McCarthy et al., 2021). Training on children's development and learning through play offers practical strategies for parents, helping them integrate learning activities into their everyday lives. Establishing a balanced routine that includes educational play as part of daily responsibilities further promotes consistent and meaningful learning experiences (Lindon, 2019).

**The major terms are operationally specified in this research:**

1. **Parental Engagement:** Mentions the active and meaningful presence of parents in their children's learning journey, including encouraging playful educational activities and maintaining regular contact with teachers to support development (Hill & Tyson, 2009).
2. **Play-Based Learning:** A pedagogical technique that reinforces child-centered, play-based learning events planned to nurture cognitive, social, emotional, and physical advancement in children aged 5-6 (Howard, 2013).

3. **Time Management Strategies:** Refers to the methods parents use to organize and dedicate time within their daily routines to engage with their children in play-based learning activities (Baker et al., 2021).
4. **Community Helps:** Native opportunities such as playgrounds, public libraries, and monitoring that offer guidance, materials, and inspiration to help parents support play-based learning at home (Wray, 2017).
5. **Parental Sensitization Programs:** Inspirational awareness or workshops designed to equip parents with practical knowledge and strategies for implementing play-centered learning with their children at residence (McCarthy et al., 2021).

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

### ***i. Concepts of Play-based learning (PLB)***

Play-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional method that emphasizes play as the central vehicle for children's learning and development. This approach is grounded in the idea that young learners grasp concepts most effectively through enjoyable and interactive experiences. Drawing from Vygotsky's social development theory, play serves as a critical component in fostering children's cognitive growth by allowing them to explore, experiment, and make sense of their surroundings. Active participation from parents plays a crucial role during early childhood, particularly in play-based learning, where creativity and play come together to support foundational development (Ginsburg, 2007).

Play-based learning is a pedagogical modality that conducts play as a preliminary field. According to Burchinal et al. (2016), using such methods and materials in education helps children explore to select appropriate thoughts and achieve proficiency in a context that is both comprehensive and meaningful. Play can be classified into different forms based on its various aspects, including symbolic, constructive, and imaginative play (Bergen, 2002). Symbolic play allows children to craft stories and scenarios, which supports the development of their creativity and cognitive abilities. Through constructive play, children learn to interact with and shape their environment, fostering fine motor skills and spatial reasoning. Imaginative play, on the other hand, offers opportunities for children to experiment with different roles and viewpoints, aiding in the growth of social interaction skills and emotional awareness, according to Miller & Almon (2009). Parents' understanding and acceptance of these forms of play are often shaped by their level of education and

cultural values, which in turn influence how they participate in their children's learning (Holloway et al., 2017).

Even though the advantages of play-based learning are widely acknowledged, many parents do not fully recognize its role in their child's overall development. Miller (2020) found that while most parents have a favorable attitude toward play, they frequently lack the practical knowledge to support play-based educational strategies. This lack of understanding can restrict their involvement in their child's early learning experiences. Hence, equipping parents with the necessary information about the benefits of play in early education is essential to encourage their active participation in promoting learning through play.

## ***ii. Parental engagement***

A nurturing home environment is vital in shaping children's engagement and academic development (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). It acts as the initial setting where children begin to explore and form attitudes toward learning. When parents recognize and appreciate the value of play-based learning (PBL), they are more likely to cultivate a stimulating and supportive atmosphere at home that promotes their child's educational growth. Josh et al. (2018) found that parents who are informed about the educational merits and methods of play are more inclined to take an active role in their child's development, fostering a home that is both nurturing and conducive to learning.

In contrast, limited understanding of the educational importance of play can hinder meaningful parental involvement. Many caregivers may see play as merely recreational, overlooking its potential to support learning. This misconception can result in missed opportunities to enhance their children's cognitive, emotional, and social development through play. To address this gap, awareness-raising programs,

such as parent workshops or orientation sessions, can be highly beneficial. These initiatives can help parents better understand how to support their children's learning through active and purposeful play.

Interactive play, especially when it includes meaningful communication between parents and children, promotes engagement and deepens parent-child relationships. Participating in shared activities strengthens emotional bonds and supports children's intellectual growth (Wang et al., 2018). Activities like imaginative storytelling or role-playing can foster language acquisition and social competence (Burke, 2009). Research also indicates that consistent parental involvement during play not only aids learning but also reinforces cooperation and guidance, which are crucial for achieving developmental goals.

Research by Penn (2019) suggests that the availability of diverse materials and resources within the home can further enhance children's motivation to engage in educational play. A well-resourced and stimulating home setting encourages collaborative learning and exploration, offering children multiple avenues for development (Ginsburg, 2007).

### ***iii. Collaboration Between Parents and Educational Representative***

Collaboration between parents and pre-primary teachers plays a vital role in supporting effective play-based learning (PBL). According to Epstein (2018), when parents and educators work together, it fosters a mutual exchange of knowledge, strategies, and resources that can create a more supportive learning environment both at home and in school. Such cooperation helps ensure that home-based activities align with school learning goals, reinforcing the idea that meaningful learning extends beyond the classroom.

Open and consistent communication forms the backbone of this partnership. Myers et al. (2017) highlight that training programs on play-based learning can equip parents with the tools and understanding they need to actively support their children's learning at home. These programs promote a common understanding of PBL approaches, giving parents the confidence to engage their children in meaningful play that supports educational development. When parents adopt similar practices at home, children experience more continuity in their learning, which can enhance their engagement, creativity, self-confidence, and overall growth.

Furthermore, joint efforts between schools and families can create spaces where parents share their experiences and learn from one another. Establishing such peer networks not only reduces feelings of isolation but also empowers parents to support and promote play-based approaches within their communities. When a broader group of caregivers appreciates the educational value of play, it contributes to a collective effort that benefits all children by nurturing a rich and varied learning culture.

#### ***iv. Barriers to Parental Engagement***

Although play-based learning (PBL) offers numerous developmental advantages, several social and emotional barriers can hinder parents from actively engaging in their children's play activities. One significant challenge is the limited time parents have due to demanding work schedules, which restricts their ability to participate meaningfully in play (Wang et al., 2016). As noted by Mendez et al. (2018), the stress and exhaustion that accompany busy routines often lead parents to favor more structured academic tasks over play, inadvertently minimizing the developmental value of free, unstructured play.

Cultural norms and societal expectations also shape parental perceptions of play. In many communities, there is a strong emphasis on academic achievement and early

school readiness, prompting parents to view traditional learning as more valuable than playful experiences (Gonzalez-Mena, 2017). This often results in a tendency to prioritize rote learning methods over play-based approaches that support children's overall growth.

Additionally, misunderstandings about the educational significance of play contribute to low parental involvement. Some parents may not recognize play as a vital learning tool, which can limit their engagement in supporting such activities (Cheng & Stimpson, 2004). To address these challenges, clear and targeted communication is crucial in helping parents appreciate the educational role of play and encouraging their participation in play-based learning.

## **Chapter III: Methodology**

### **Research Approach and Design**

This research employed a qualitative approach to investigate how parents perceive, experience, and support play-based learning for their pre-primary children. By using qualitative methods, the study was able to capture detailed and in-depth insights into the topic. The research design included one Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and four In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), which facilitated the discovery of findings from a deep and comprehensive exploration of parental involvement in play-based education. This approach was ideal for investigating complex social dynamics, allowing researchers to examine participants' gaps in related concepts, thoughts, feelings, experiences, and challenges. FGDs were carried out using a moderator guide, and in-depth interviews were conducted employing a tailored open-ended questionnaire.

### **Research Site**

The study involved a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with eight parents, four fathers and four mothers, whose children, aged between 4 and 5 years, were enrolled in the pre-primary section of Karatitola Government Model Primary School, located near the Korail Slum in Dhaka City. Additionally, 4 parents (2 fathers and 2 mothers) were interviewed for individual in-depth interviews (IDI) at Ujan Boyra Government Primary School in Horirampur in Manikganj. These locations offered a range of perspectives from parents of preschool children enrolled in government primary schools.

### **Research Participants**

This balanced gender representation contributed to a well-rounded examination of the research topic. The data collection process included one face-to-face Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with eight parents, along with four purposively selected In-Depth

Interviews (IDIs). This combined method aimed to gather insights from 12 participants, blending shared dialogue with individual experiences to enhance the depth of the qualitative findings. Participants were intentionally chosen to reflect a variety of viewpoints. The study focused on parents of pre-primary children aged 4 to 5 years, residing in Korail Basti in Dhaka City and Horirampur in Manikganj. Emphasis was placed on selecting parents from lower-middle and middle socio-economic and educational backgrounds to ensure a diverse and balanced sample.

### **Sampling Procedure/Participants Selection Procedure**

Purposive sampling was employed to capture a broad range of social and geographical perspectives among participants. The study targeted parents of pre-primary children aged 4 to 5 years, specifically from Korail Basti in Dhaka City and Horirampur in Manikganj. To ensure demographic balance, the research focused on individuals from lower-middle and middle socio-economic and educational backgrounds.

### **Data Collection Method and Procedure**

As part of this qualitative study examining parental perceptions, data were gathered using both Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). To steer the FGDs effectively and ensure comprehensive coverage of key topics, a structured moderator guide featuring open-ended questions was prepared. One FGD involving eight parents was carried out to promote interactive dialogue and the exchange of shared experiences among participants. The session took place in a neutral and comfortable setting in the school classroom, selected to foster open communication. With participants' consent, the discussion had been audio-recorded and supplemented by handwritten notes to ensure the accuracy of the data for subsequent transcription and analysis. The FGD session lasted for approximately 60 minutes.

The IDIs were conducted in person, using a specially developed, easy-to-explain questionnaire designed to explore each parent's thoughts and strategies in supporting play-based learning at home. The initial draft of the questionnaire had been shared with expert reviewers, whose feedback was incorporated into a revised and standardized version of the tool. This refined questionnaire had then served as the basis for conducting the IDIs. The interviews were carried out in an environment that ensured participants felt comfortable and safe sharing their experiences. Similar to the FGDs, the In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) were audio-recorded with the participants' permission to ensure precise transcription and facilitate thorough analysis of the data.

### **Data Management and Analysis**

Data from both the FGD and IDIs were audio-recorded with the consent of participants, then transcribed, translated from Bengali to English, and analyzed using content analysis methods. The analysis involved several key steps:

**Familiarization:** Transcriptions of the FGD were developed in narrative form, followed by multiple readings to gain a clear understanding of the data and to grasp the overall patterns and insights.

**Coding in Excel Sheet:** Significant phrases and ideas were identified, categorized, and systematically coded using an Excel spreadsheet.

**Theme Development:** Significant phrases and ideas were identified, categorized, and systematically coded using an Excel spreadsheet.

**Interpretation:** The roles of parents in facilitating play-based learning have been interpreted, along with the identification of common barriers, strategies employed to overcome these challenges, and the depth of personal motives in individualized narratives.

**Final Reporting:** The results collected from the research have been compiled and recorded in a detailed report. While parental engagement plays a vital role in children's education, the research revealed that such involvement remains limited. This is particularly evident among lower and lower-middle-income families in the country, where parents are often less engaged in their children's educational journey. Joyful learning experiences are especially important during early childhood, as they ease the transition from home to school. A welcoming, play-based environment, supported by active parental presence and engaging, child-friendly activities, can significantly enhance learning outcomes during these formative years. And in that environment, with the presence of parents, the inclusion of child-oriented, attractive games helps the child achieve the desired level of learning outcomes. The report highlights the critical role of parents in supporting both play and learning, outlines the obstacles they encounter, explores the strategies they use to overcome these challenges, and explains how their involvement contributes to positive educational outcomes for young children.

### **Validity**

Validity refers to the credibility and trustworthiness of research outcomes. In this study, the tools and methods, namely the FGD moderator guide and IDI questionnaire, were thoughtfully developed and reviewed by subject experts to ensure they thoroughly addressed all key elements related to parental involvement in play-based learning. To enhance the reliability of the findings, a combination of Focus Group Discussions and In-Depth Interviews was employed, allowing for data triangulation and cross-verification.

Following data collection, feedback was sought from selected participants to confirm that their views had been accurately captured and interpreted. The research prioritized

collecting rich, detailed accounts from parents, providing deep insights into their thoughts and experiences. Throughout the process, care was taken to present the data objectively, reduce potential biases, and uphold neutrality in both the collection and interpretation of information.

### **Reliability**

Reliability in research refers to the harmony and trustworthiness of the findings. To maintain reliability in this study, a structured moderator guide and a pre-tested questionnaire were employed to ensure uniformity in data collection. With participants' consent, all FGDs and IDIs were audio-recorded and later transcribed, ensuring that the information was accurately captured using the developed tools. Multiple researchers also reviewed the coding process to ensure consistent theme identification and minimize subjectivity. At each stage of the research process, including data collection, coding, and analysis, detailed records were maintained to support replication in comparable contexts. Before the main data collection, the questionnaire was trialed with a small group of parents to detect and address any unclear or inconsistent items.

### **Ethical Issues**

While conducting research, it is essential to consider ethical methods that will complement the research and help achieve the desired results. Research tools were used to obtain consent from participants in advance, ensure confidentiality, and ensure their complete freedom to withdraw their statements at any time. When providing information to participants, their personal identification information was preserved, excluding their names, and was accessible only to authorized individuals. To support respectful engagement across diverse cultural backgrounds, I fostered an inclusive and considerate atmosphere during both the focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-

depth interviews (IDIs). As part of my preparation, I conducted a risk assessment and focused on creating a safe and comfortable space where participants felt encouraged to share their perspectives openly. Upholding transparency and integrity were central to the research process, including an acknowledgment of potential biases. Every effort was made to prevent harm and ensure that participants had a positive experience, which contributed to a deeper understanding of play-based learning. Additionally, the research proposal was submitted to the Ethics Review Board at BRAC University for approval, confirming adherence to the institution's ethical guidelines and the protection of participants' rights throughout the study.

## **Research Limitations**

Although this study was thoughtfully designed, it faced certain limitations that could influence the results:

### ***1. Limited scope and Generalization***

This research concentrates on a specific group, parents from the Korail Slum in Dhaka and Horirampur in Manikganj, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to parents from other socio-economic or regional contexts.

### ***2. Restricted Sample Size***

The research involves a small number of participants: 8 parents in focus group discussions and 4 in in-depth interviews, drawn from two different geographic and socio-economic settings. Although this allows for a deep understanding of individual experiences, the sample may not reflect the wider parent population.

### ***3. Potential for Subjective Interpretation***

Given the qualitative nature of the study, the data is shaped by individual stories, which may be affected by the participants' personal views, emotions, and cultural influences. This could lead to a degree of subjectivity in the findings.

### ***4. Risk of Socially Desirable Responses***

Parents might respond in ways they think are socially appropriate instead of expressing their true views, especially when talking about their involvement in their children's educational activities.

### ***5. Potential Researcher Bias***

Efforts were made to maintain objectivity and emotional neutrality during the interpretation of participants' narratives. To minimize potential bias, strategies such as triangulation and peer debriefing were employed.

### ***6. Language and Communication Challenges***

Differences in language use or communication styles may have affected the clarity of responses. Some participants may have expressed views they thought were expected, especially regarding their role in their children's learning, rather than their true opinions.

### ***7. Time Limitations***

Coordinating the availability of all participants for focus group discussions proved to be difficult. Additionally, the qualitative approach required considerable time for conducting interviews, transcribing, translating, and analyzing data, which limited the opportunity for follow-up discussions to clarify or expand on responses.

### ***8. Ethical and Emotional Considerations***

Topics related to parenting and play-based learning can be emotionally sensitive, and some participants may have felt hesitant to speak freely. To address this, a supportive and non-judgmental environment was maintained throughout the research process. Despite these challenges, the study's credibility and value were strengthened through careful planning, transparent data collection procedures, and thorough analysis.

## **Chapter IV: Results/Findings & Discussion**

### **Results**

#### **iv. Findings of the FGD**

This section highlights the collective acknowledgment of play-based learning as a valuable approach for educating children aged 4 to 5. In government-operated pre-primary institutions, this method emphasizes interactive and hands-on experiences designed to foster children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Nevertheless, how play-based learning is perceived, understood, and implemented can differ across communities, especially in densely populated, low-income settings like Dhaka's Korail slum.

During the study, I visited the pre-primary division of Karatitola Government Model Primary School and engaged with eight parents (four fathers and four mothers). The focus was on exploring their views on play-based learning, the role of play at home and in school in enhancing their children's development, the obstacles they encounter, and the strategies they employ to address these challenges.

The insights gathered through the FGD revealed meaningful perspectives and experiences from the parents involved. These findings offer a deeper understanding of the factors that shape parental involvement in play-based learning and point to areas where additional resources or interventions could support early childhood education in similar socio-economic contexts.

#### **Parental Awareness and Interpretation of Play-Based Learning**

A key aim of the study was to examine how parents living in the Korail slum perceive and interpret the concept of play-based learning. Most of the parents understood play as a significant aspect of their children's daily activities. However, their opinions varied regarding the educational value of play.

A mother shares her experiences and highlights that play-based learning is an exceptional method for enhancing children's competency. She emphasizes that *"play engages children in learning and makes them interested in school. Since these children live below the poverty line, they do not have the opportunity to play at home. Additionally, they are deprived of education and such ideas. As a result, they often spend their time at home playing games they have learned from school with their friends, which encourages social interaction and inspires them to create new games."*

Moreover, a mother mentioned, *"When children engage in fun and meaningful activities at school, such as singing songs to remember numbers or playing with household items to explore different shapes and colors, their interest in learning increases."*

A mother who mentioned their involvement in classroom activities alongside their children at government primary schools. At first, two parents perceived play and learning as distinct and unrelated concepts. A father noted that *"structured teaching methods, such as memorization and formal instruction, appeared more effective for academic success. He questioned how a child would balance studying if they played both at home and school."*

The mothers, however, shared their viewpoints, highlighting that due to their limited time with their children, they prioritized ensuring their children could enjoy themselves. They pointed out a widespread misunderstanding that *"play is purely recreational and not a valuable learning tool."* Gradually, as parents noticed how their children were engaging at school, some started to understand the importance of play in supporting social growth.

While discussing their children's experiences, parents reflected on how their children participated in various learning activities within the school setting. Some described

their children's excitement when coming home with a new game that taught letters or numbers. Some parents observed that their children became more confident in interacting with peers, showing noticeable progress in communication skills. These observations strengthened parents' understanding of the positive impact play-based learning has on their children's overall development.

#### Parental Involvement in Supporting Play-Based Learning at Home

Parents play a vital role in extending play-based learning beyond the school environment. One mother reflected on her experience, noting, *"At school, children played with their parents, which made them more interested. Not only the children but also the mothers felt comfortable joining in, even setting aside their other tasks to participate in children's play at school."*

Mothers who incorporated play into daily routines, such as telling stories, reciting rhymes, or playing simple counting games, reported feeling a sense of joy while also enhancing their children's educational experiences. In contrast, fathers acknowledged the value of spending quality time with their children but faced obstacles, including demanding work schedules and a lack of suitable play areas at home. Many also expressed uncertainties about which activities would be most beneficial for their child's growth and learning.

#### Fathers' Activities in Encouraging Outdoor Play

Fathers played a part in promoting their children's involvement in outdoor play. A father explained that, *"They stay out of the house during the day for various tasks. Because of this, they cannot be involved in activities like playing with the child or taking care of him."* In contrast, a mother remarked that children feel especially happy when their father joins in as a playmate. Another father shared that he occasionally took his children to nearby open areas where they could run, jump, and engage with

other kids. While these outings were mostly unstructured, fathers recognized the value of physical play in enhancing their children's motor development, social interaction, and overall well-being.

#### Barriers to Supporting Play-Based Learning

Although parents made efforts to encourage play-based learning, they faced various challenges that hindered their ability to fully support it. A father expressed regret and said, *"Due to the language we speak, there is a tendency for regionalism in children's language. At the same time, due to our educational disabilities, we cannot read children's books, especially English, mathematics, and sometimes even Bengali language books. Due to which we cannot help the child read properly and practice speaking."* Due to a lack of experience and educational knowledge in determining appropriate educational toys and materials for children, parents often do not understand which materials are related to which topics. Parents often rely on everyday household items, like bottle caps for counting, sticks for constructing shapes, and pieces of cloth for recognizing colors, when selecting play materials. However, they are not always clear about the educational concepts these activities are meant to teach. While the more advanced materials used in schools are seen as more effective in helping children grasp fundamental concepts that might otherwise be difficult to learn, many parents emphasized the need for clearer guidance and structured support to better facilitate learning at home.

#### Ensuring Regular Engagement in Play-based Activities

Some parents noted difficulties in consistently engaging their children in play-based activities. Demanding work schedules made it hard for both mothers and fathers to dedicate regular time to play, with fathers often away from home for extended

periods. Consequently, the responsibility for supporting play-based learning frequently rested more on the mothers.

#### Obstacles in Supporting Play-Based Education at Home

The research identified a range of difficulties that parents face in their efforts to effectively implement play-based learning within the home environment. Fathers, in particular, have expressed concerns that children playing in the classroom waste valuable learning time. However, another father observed his daughter engaging in activities such as reciting rhymes, poems, English nursery rhymes, and math-related games she had learned from her teacher at school.

One mother mentioned she doesn't always have time to play with her children. Sometimes her child asks him to go to school like other mothers who regularly visit and participate in play activities with children in school. Some mothers mentioned that inability to visit regularly limited their involvement and understanding of classroom activities because they cannot attend school regularly, and their children struggle to fully replicate what they learned in class once they return home. Another mother shared, “*Some children forget essential lessons through play, resulting in a learning gap compared to mothers who actively engage at school.*”

Additionally, even when children are at home, parents often cannot dedicate time to play with them. Mothers specifically highlight the issue of limited living space, which prevents their children from having a designated play area. There is no nearby space available for children to play, either. Additionally, safety concerns arise due to overcrowding, negative influences from some local children, and occurrences of unsuitable behavior in the neighborhood have created an unsafe atmosphere, preventing children from playing freely with their peers. Therefore, the lack of a safe environment and adequate play spaces poses a significant challenge.

Furthermore, financial constraints make it difficult for parents to purchase toys or play materials. There are limited opportunities to create homemade toys at home, and even when attempted, there is a risk of them getting damaged or broken.

Additionally, a father clearly expresses his concern, stating, "*We have limited education.*" This presents a major challenge in a child's learning process. Parents struggle to provide meaningful academic support to their children, as they cannot assist with studies, teach lessons, or guide their learning effectively. As a result, children may lose interest in education due to the lack of parental involvement and support.

#### Lack of Time for Play-Based Learning

One of the key challenges identified was the lack of time, especially for fathers. Many fathers held demanding jobs that kept them away from home for most of the day, leaving them with little chance to participate in their children's play-based learning. While mothers were generally more involved in daily caregiving and learning activities, they too struggled to balance their domestic duties with time for educational play. Several mothers shared that they wished to dedicate more time to supporting their children's learning but were constrained by household responsibilities and other commitments.

#### Scarcity of Safe and Spacious Play Areas

In the densely populated Korail slum, children faced challenges finding adequate and secure spaces for physical play. Parents expressed concerns about the shortage of safe, open areas, which limited their children's ability to play freely outdoors. While some families promoted indoor play, cramped living conditions restricted movement and hindered engagement in physically active games.

#### Cultural Beliefs and School Practices

Certain parents, particularly fathers, held conventional views that prioritized structured academic learning over play-based approaches. They often equated formal instruction with greater academic achievement, which occasionally led to uncertainty or disagreement when schools promoted learning through play. This contrast created confusion about the most effective way for children to learn.

Furthermore, some parents observed that schools continued to rely heavily on traditional teaching methods, making it harder for them to grasp and apply play-based learning techniques at home. They expressed the need for better communication with teachers to align home-based learning with school expectations.

### **Findings from in-depth Interviews (IDI)**

Parental engagement plays a vital role in early childhood education, especially in supporting play-based learning, which fosters cognitive, social, and emotional development. This study focuses on how parents contribute to play-based learning for pre-primary children attending Ujan Boyra Government Primary School in Horirampur, Manikganj. In-depth interviews were conducted with four parents, two mothers and two fathers, to explore their perceptions, methods of support, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to promote play-based learning within the home environment.

#### **1. Parents' Views and Awareness of Play-Based Learning**

The interviewed parents showed differing levels of awareness about play-based learning. One father and one mother linked it to organized classroom activities designed to encourage active participation, while the other two considered it more as unstructured, spontaneous play. Despite these differences, all four parents acknowledged the value of play in supporting cognitive growth, social skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities. One mother shared her thoughts, "*I believe*

*play-based learning helps my child develop communication skills. She learns to express herself and interact with others."*

A father said, *"Play-based learning is essential because it makes learning enjoyable. When my child plays with blocks or puzzles, he learns counting and shapes without feeling pressured."*

### 1. Parental Involvement in Play-Based Learning at Home

All four parents integrated play into their children's daily routines, though their approaches differed. Mothers often engaged in activities such as storytelling, drawing, and imaginative play, while fathers tended to emphasize outdoor experiences like running and playing games with balls. One mother highlighted the value of guided play, stating, *"I encourage my child to play with educational toys like puzzles and picture cards to improve problem-solving skills."*

In contrast, a father shared, *"I take my child to the park to play with other kids. It helps with teamwork and social skills."* These insights indicate that although all parents supported play-based learning, their strategies varied depending on their perspectives and the resources available to them.

### 3. Obstacles to Supporting Play-Based Learning

Parents faced a range of difficulties in encouraging play-based learning at home, including:

**Limited Time:** Fathers often found it challenging to participate in play due to demanding work schedules.

**Insufficient Resources:** Two parents noted that they lacked access to suitable educational toys or materials.

**Cultural Beliefs:** Some parents prioritized academic learning over play, which affected their involvement in playful learning.

**Restricted Space:** Families living in smaller homes struggled to allocate space specifically for play.

One mother shared her frustration, saying, *"I want to engage my child in more play activities, but due to financial constraints, I cannot always buy toys or materials."*

#### 4. Approaches to enrich Play-Based Learning

Despite facing various obstacles, parents employed different methods to support their children's play-based learning:

**Using Common Household Items:** Mothers made use of everyday materials, like kitchen tools, for imaginative play, such as pretend cooking.

**Encouraging Peer Interaction:** Fathers allowed their children to join neighborhood playgroups or visit nearby playgrounds to socialize and play.

**Encouraging with Teachers:** Two mothers stressed the value of communicating with teachers to understand school-based play activities and adapt them for home use.

One father noted, *"I ask my child's teacher about classroom activities and try to replicate them at home with available resources."*

#### 5. Parents' Engagement with Teachers

The extent of parental interaction with pre-primary educators differed among participants. Some parents maintained regular communication with teachers to better understand and support play-based learning approaches. However, others experienced a sense of disconnection, often due to busy schedules or the absence of consistent parent-teacher interactions. As one mother observed, *"Teachers sometimes share play ideas during meetings, but I wish there were more workshops to guide us."*

#### 6. Impact of Parental Involvement on Child Development

Parents unanimously recognized that their active participation in play had a beneficial impact on their children's growth. They reported noticeable progress in several areas:

**Social Interactions:** Children became more communicative and cooperative with others.

**Cognitive Development:** Improvements were seen in creativity and problem-solving abilities.

**Emotional Well-Being:** Children were better able to express their feelings and emotions.

As one father reflected, *"When I play with my child, I see his confidence grow. It strengthens our bond and makes learning enjoyable for him."*

#### Summary of Findings with Visual Representation

The chart below illustrates key insights gathered from parents regarding the outcomes of their involvement in play-based learning:

| Key Areas                        | Mother-1                           | Mother-2                        | Mother-3                                     | Mother-4                                             |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Awareness of Play-based Learning | Moderate                           | Strong                          | Moderate                                     | Strong                                               |
| Home support Practices           | Storytelling, Creative Drawing     | Pretend Scenarios, Puzzle Games | Physical Activities, Outdoor Sports          | Building Blocks Games, Running exercises             |
| Challenges Encountered           | Limited Learning related Resources | Traditional Beliefs             | Shortage of Time                             | Inadequate Space for Child's Play                    |
| Coping Strategies                | Responding to Household Items      | Consulting with Teachers        | Allowing Peer Interaction Playgroups         | Actively engaging in Child's play                    |
| Engagement with Teachers         | Fair                               | Frequent and involved           | Minimal Communication                        | Occasional Interaction                               |
| Noted Child Development          | Social Skills & Emotional Growth   | Cognitive & Social              | Cognitive Improvement and Social Interaction | Physical Activity, increased Confidence & Expression |

The study reveals that parents in Horirampur, Manikganj, understand the value of play-based learning, yet encounter challenges such as limited time, cultural norms, and a lack of resources. Despite these difficulties, they employ innovative methods to foster their children's growth. Enhancing communication between parents and teachers and making learning materials more accessible could improve play-based education at home. Organizing parent workshops and providing affordable educational resources could further support early childhood learning.

## **Discussion**

This study examined the perceptions, support strategies, and challenges faced by parents in low-income urban (Korail slum, Dhaka) and rural (Horirampur, Manikganj) settings regarding play-based learning (PBL) in pre-primary education. The insights gathered from focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) highlight diverse perceptions and practices of PBL, influenced by socio-economic constraints, cultural norms, and institutional support.

### **Parental Understanding and Value of Play-Based Learning**

Parents across both locations acknowledged the significance of play in early childhood development, although their understanding of its role, and impact varied in depth. The majority of mothers recognized that play fosters children's enthusiasm for learning and supports their social development, reflecting existing research that highlights play as a fundamental medium for early childhood education (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). In contrast, some fathers, especially in the urban areas, initially perceived play and learning as distinct activities, with traditional views favoring rote learning and formal instruction. This reflects findings by Lancy (2017), who notes that in many low-income settings, play is often undervalued compared to structured academic instruction.

However, the positive experiences shared by parents, such as children showing enthusiasm for school, improved communication skills, and increased creativity, suggest a shift toward appreciating the educational potential of play. This aligns with research indicating that when parents observe tangible benefits from PBL, such as improved language or motor skills, they are more likely to support its integration (Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2009).

### **Support Strategies and Gendered Roles in Play**

Parental support for PBL at home differed by gender. Mothers were more involved in indoor educational activities like storytelling, singing, and counting games, whereas fathers contributed primarily through outdoor activities when time and resources permitted. These patterns resonate with findings from O'Gorman and Ailwood (2012), who observed that mothers in low-resource settings often take a more active role in early childhood learning due to proximity and caregiving responsibilities.

Despite time constraints, many mothers reported adapting school-taught plays using household items, such as bottle caps or utensils. This resourcefulness aligns with the idea of "funds of knowledge" "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992), where families draw on existing resources and cultural practices to support learning. However, fathers often felt less equipped to contribute meaningfully, often due to job responsibilities and limited awareness of suitable play-based approaches. This disparity suggests the need for inclusive programs that empower both parents with practical knowledge and resources to support PBL at home.

### **Challenges in Implementing Play-Based Learning**

Both urban and rural parents identified multiple barriers to supporting PBL, including time constraints, limited financial resources, lack of appropriate play materials, and

inadequate space. These challenges are consistent with global research on the difficulties of promoting PBL in economically disadvantaged communities (UNICEF, 2018). In Korail, for instance, cramped living conditions and unsafe neighborhood environments severely restricted outdoor play, echoing findings by Ginsburg (2007) on how urban poverty can limit children's opportunities for unstructured play.

Another significant challenge was the inconsistency between home and school practices. Some parents, especially fathers, expressed confusion about the value of play in academic success. This gap reflects the disconnect often found between formal educational policy and community perceptions, particularly in contexts where traditional academic success is highly valued (Hedges et al., 2011).

Furthermore, the educational background of parents emerged as a constraint. One father pointed out that limited literacy skills made it difficult for him to participate in or reinforce educational activities at home. This reflects how educational disadvantages can carry over from one generation to the next, emphasizing the critical role of improving parental education to create supportive early learning environments (Sylva et al., 2004).

### **Strategies to Enhance Parental Engagement**

Despite facing various challenges, the study highlighted a range of strategies that parents used to foster their children's development. Utilizing everyday items creatively for educational play was a common approach, particularly in the Korail slum. This practice aligns with the principle of play as a flexible and resource-light pedagogical tool, especially effective in low-income settings (Wood, 2014).

Parents also reported the value of community-based play, where children engaged with peers in shared public spaces. These informal settings supported social

development and teamwork, which are key outcomes of PBL (Fisher et al., 2011). However, such opportunities were more accessible in rural areas like Horirampur, where safety and space were relatively better than in the urban slum. This could involve community-based educational programs designed to raise awareness about the importance of play, workshops tailored to teaching parents how to incorporate play into daily routines, and the provision of necessary resources (Penny et al., 2021).

Another key strategy was parental collaboration with teachers. Some parents made deliberate efforts to communicate with school staff, seeking guidance on implementing classroom-based play at home. These findings emphasize the importance of home-school partnerships in sustaining PBL, echoing Epstein's (2001) model of family-school-community involvement as essential to child development. However, inconsistencies in communication and the absence of structured workshops or training for parents were noted, suggesting an institutional gap in engaging families effectively.

### **Cultural Perceptions and the Need for Awareness**

Cultural beliefs about education also influenced the implementation of PBL. Some parents, particularly fathers, believed that academic rigor and discipline were essential for success, viewing play as a distraction. This tension between traditional educational expectations and contemporary pedagogical approaches is well documented in early childhood research (Rogoff, 2003).

Changing these perceptions requires not only parental education but also systemic advocacy and capacity-building among educators. Training teachers to engage families, demonstrate the learning value of play, and integrate culturally relevant play-based activities could bridge this divide (Weisberg et al., 2016). Moreover,

community-level sensitization campaigns could help reshape societal views on play as a legitimate and effective learning approach.

### **Implications of Policy and Practice**

The results of this study suggest several important considerations for policy and practice. First, early childhood programs in government schools should include components specifically designed to support parental engagement, particularly in low-income areas. This might involve regular parent-teacher workshops, take-home play materials, or mobile-based guidance for at-home learning.

Second, policies must recognize the structural constraints faced by families, such as lack of space, safety concerns, and financial hardship, and provide contextualized support. This could include creating safe community play zones or distributing low-cost learning kits, initiatives supported by international frameworks on early childhood development (UNESCO, 2020).

Incorporating culturally relevant play activities into pre-primary education can enhance parental engagement by aligning learning with local games and cultural traditions, providing various ways for parents to participate (Akter, M., & Sarma, H., 2018). Integrating such activities into the curriculum and textbooks would allow parents to better connect with their children's educational journey, potentially leading to better academic results. This approach will create a child-friendly environment for children's education.

Finally, the research highlights the need to include both mothers and fathers in early education discourse. Encouraging father involvement, through flexible work policies or weekend programs, can help balance caregiving responsibilities and promote shared in children learning.

In conclusion, parental involvement in play-based learning is influenced by a combination of socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors. Although parents in both urban and rural low-income areas acknowledge the importance of play, their capacity to support it is limited by a lack of resources, time constraints, and traditional views on education. Nevertheless, through focused support, effective communication, and community-driven initiatives, it is possible to strengthen parental engagement and improve the quality of early childhood education in these communities. Future interventions should prioritize family-centered approaches that empower all caregivers, foster collaboration with schools, and contextualize play-based learning within the lived realities of disadvantaged communities.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored how parents in both urban slum (Korail, Dhaka) and rural (Horirampur, Manikganj) settings perceive and support play-based learning (PBL) for their pre-primary children. The findings revealed that while parents generally value play in early learning, their understanding of its educational role varies. Mothers, in particular, demonstrated a stronger grasp of how play supports cognitive and social development, while some fathers viewed it as separate from academic learning. Despite these variations, numerous parents observed improvements in their children's behavior, interaction skills, and eagerness to attend school, further affirming their belief in the value of play-based learning.

Parental support strategies were shaped by gender roles, time availability, and access to resources. Mothers were more actively involved in daily learning activities, often using household items to support play, while fathers engaged more during weekends or outdoor activities. Nevertheless, both urban and rural parents encountered notable obstacles, including cramped living conditions, financial hardships, insufficient access

to learning materials, and, at times, a lack of clear knowledge on how to effectively facilitate play-based learning. These barriers were more pronounced in the urban setting due to overcrowding and safety concerns, while rural parents faced issues like poor school communication and low literacy levels.

The study highlights the need for increased institutional support to guide and empower parents, especially fathers, in promoting play-based learning. Strengthening parent-teacher collaboration, providing low-cost learning resources, and raising awareness about the benefits of play can create a more enabling environment for early childhood development. Future policies should consider the contextual realities of families in low-income communities and adopt inclusive, family-centered strategies to support holistic learning through play.

### **Recommendations**

Drawing from the study's findings, several strategies can be suggested to enhance parental involvement in play-based learning for pre-primary children in under-resourced urban and rural settings.

#### **Increase Parental Knowledge and Engagement:**

It is essential to raise awareness among parents about the importance of play in early childhood education. Schools and the local community representatives should organize regular workshops, orientations, and interactive sessions to help parents understand how play contributes to cognitive, emotional, and social development. Moreover, ensure Father Awareness Campaigns and flexible engagement, such as weekend play sessions or father-child school events. Increase the scope for involving mothers in classroom play activities and develop playing accessories to concentrate the children. These sessions can also offer practical ideas for integrating play into daily routines using low-cost or no-cost materials.

**Enhance Parent-Teacher Communication:**

A more robust partnership between parents and teachers is crucial to maintain continuity in children's learning experiences, both at school and at home. Teachers should be encouraged to share regular updates, activity suggestions, and simple strategies parents can use at home. Creating structured opportunities for dialogue, such as parent meetings or mobile messaging groups, can bridge communication gaps and align learning goals. Children's positive attitudes, which have changed after applying the PBL method, such as enthusiasm for school, improved communication skills, and increased creativity and learning, would be shared by parents

**Support Father's Involvement:**

Efforts should be made to encourage more active participation from fathers in their children's learning and play activities. Awareness campaigns and flexible engagement opportunities, such as weekend play sessions or father-child school events, can help shift cultural perceptions and make fathers feel more confident and involved in supporting play-based education.

**Address Resource and Space Limitations:**

To overcome barriers such as a lack of toys or safe play spaces, local authorities and NGOs can collaborate with schools to provide shared resources and create child-friendly community spaces. Programs such as toy-sharing centers, portable play kits, or organized community play spaces can provide children with safe and stimulating opportunities for play regardless of their household resources.

**Policy and Program Development:**

Policymakers should prioritize parental involvement in early childhood education frameworks, particularly within underserved communities. At least 2 Trained Pre-primary teachers can be a patron to parents to encourage more involvement. Programs

that promote inclusive, play-based learning should be integrated into national education strategies, with funding and training opportunities directed toward teachers, caregivers, and community leaders to promote sustainable impact.

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## Appendix A.

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## **Data Collection Tool**

### **Question of Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**

#### **Appendix-1**

##### **Moderator Guide**

- ❖ Brief welcome and Introduction to the research
- ❖ Explain the purpose of the research
- ❖ To provide reassurance of confidentiality and the voluntary nature of participation

##### **Opening Question-**

1. How do you define play-based learning in your own words?
2. Can you share an experience of your children learning through play at school?

##### **Understanding and Perception-**

3. What benefits do you believe play-based learning offers to pre-primary school children?
4. How do you perceive the role of play in your child's development?

##### **Parental engagement-**

5. How do you engage with your child's play activities at home and in the classroom?
6. What play activities do you find most beneficial for your child's learning?

##### **Barriers and Challenges-**

7. What challenges do you face in facilitating play-based learning at home?
8. Have you encountered any misconceptions about play-based learning in the classroom? If so, can you discuss it in detail?

##### **Support and Resources-**

9. What facilities do you believe would help encourage children's play-based learning at home?
10. How important do you think communication with your child's teachers is in understanding and implementing play-based learning methods?

##### **Closing Question-**

11. What strategies have you found effective in overcoming existing challenges when promoting play-based learning in pre-primary classrooms?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss regarding play-based learning and your role as a parent?

## **Questionnaire of In-Depth Interviews (IDI)**

- Thank the participant for giving time.
- Explain the purpose of the interview and emphasize confidentiality.

### **Background Information-**

1. Can you please tell me about your family structure?
2. How old is your child, and in which Government primary School are he/she attend?

### **Understanding of Play-based learning-**

3. How do you define play-based learning of pre-primary classroom children?
4. Why do you think play is important for your 4-5 years old children to support classroom activities?

### **Engagement in Play-**

5. How do you incorporate play into the daily routine for your children's mental and physical development?
6. As a mother of pre-primary children in school, share 2 feelings expressed by your participation in classroom activities.
7. Can you describe a specific play activity that you do with your child and what effect it has on the children's behavior?

### **Challenges Faced-**

8. What are the main challenges you face during implementing play-based learning at home?
9. In your opinion, how does play influence your children's learning to develop social and cultural norms?

### **Finding solutions-**

10. What strategies do you use to enhance your child's play experiences at school?

11. How do you find out about new play ideas or resources?

**Support from Educators-**

12. How connected do you feel with your child's pre-primary teachers regarding play-based learning practices?

13. What type of support or information do you need from teachers to facilitate play-based learning more effectively?

**Closing Question-**

14. In what ways do you believe your engagement in play-based learning influences your child's overall development? Why do you believe?

15. Do you have any additional comments or insights that could help understand the role of parents in supporting play-based learning in pre-primary classes in Government Primary Schools?

আলোচনার প্রশ্ন (FGD)

পরিশিষ্ট-1

মডারেটর গাইড

- সংক্ষিপ্ত স্বাগত এবং গবেষণার ভূমিকা উপস্থাপন
- গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য ব্যাখ্যা করা হবে
- গোপনীয়তার নিশ্চয়তা প্রদান এবং অংশগ্রহনকারীদের অংশগ্রহণে সহায়তা প্রদান করা হবে

**সূচনা প্রশ্ন-**

১. খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা বলতে কী জানেন আপনার নিজের ভাষায় বলুন?
২. আপনি কি বিদ্যালয়ে আপনার বাচ্চাদের খেলার মাধ্যমে শেখার একটি অভিজ্ঞতা শেয়ার করতে পারেন?

**বোধগম্যতা এবং উপলব্ধি-**

৩. প্রাক-প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের শিশুদের জন্য খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষার সুবিধাগুলো কী কী বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

৪. আপনার সন্তানের বিকাশে খেলার ভূমিকা রয়েছে কিনা তা আপনি কীভাবে উপলব্ধি করেন?

**পিতামাতার সম্পৃক্ততা-**

৫. বাড়ীতে এবং বিদ্যালয়ে আপনি কোন উপায়ে আপনার সন্তানের খেলার কার্যক্রমের সাথে সম্পৃক্ত হন?

৬. কোন ধরনের খেলার ক্রিয়া কলাপ আপনার সম্ভাব্য শেখার জন্য সবচেয়ে সহায়ক বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

**বাধা এবং চ্যালেঞ্জ-**

৭. বাড়ীতে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা পরিচালনায় আপনি কোন চ্যালেঞ্জগুলোর সম্মুখীন হন?

৪. আপনি কি শ্রেণীকক্ষে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শেখার বিষয়ে কোন ভুল ধারণার সম্মুখীন হয়েছেন? যদি হয়ে থাকেন আপনি তা বিস্তারিত আলোচনা করতে পারেন?

#### **সহায়তা এবং সম্পদ-**

৯. কোন সুবিধাসমূহ বাড়ীতে শিশুর খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাকে উৎসাহিত করতে সাহায্য করবে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

১০. খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষার পদ্ধতিগুলো বোঝার এবং প্রয়োগ করার ক্ষেত্রে আপনার সন্তানের প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষকদের সাথে যোগাযোগ কতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

#### **সমাপনী প্রশ্ন-**

১১. প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শ্রেনীতে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা চালু করার জন্য বিদ্যমান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলি কাটিয়ে উঠতে আপনি কোন কৌশলগুলি কার্যকর বলে মনে করেন?

১২. একজন অভিভাবক হিসেবে প্লে-বেজড শিক্ষায় আপনার ভূমিকা সম্পর্কে আপনি কি নতুন কিছু যোগ করতে বা আলোচনা করতে চান?

### **বাংলা সংস্করণ**

#### **পরিশিষ্ট-২**

গভীর সাক্ষাতকারের প্রশ্নাবলী (IDI)

- সময় দেওয়ার জন্য অংশগ্রহণকারীকে ধন্যবাদ প্রদান।
- সাক্ষাৎকারের উদ্দেশ্য ব্যাখ্যা করা এবং গোপনীয়তার বিষয় নিশ্চিত করা।

#### **প্রাথমিক তথ্য-**

১. আপনি কি আমাকে আপনার পরিবারের গঠন সম্পর্কে বলবেন?
২. আপনার সন্তানের বয়স কত, এবং তারা কোন সরকারি প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের প্রি-প্রাইমারি শ্রেণিতে ভর্তি হয়েছে?

### **খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা সম্পর্কে ধারণা-**

3. আপনি প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শ্রেণীকক্ষের শিশুদের খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা বলতে কি বোঝেন?
4. কেন আপনি মনে করেন যে আপনার ৪-৫ বছর বয়সী শিশুদের জন্য শ্রেণি কার্যক্রমের সহায়তায় খেলা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?

### **খেলায় সম্পৃক্ততা-**

5. আপনি কীভাবে আপনার সন্তানের মানসিক ও শারীরিক উন্নয়নে দৈনন্দিন রুটিনে খেলাকে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করবেন?
6. বিদ্যালয়ে প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিশুর মা হিসেবে আপনার অংশগ্রহণ শিশুর প্রকাশিত ২টি অনুভূতি/লক্ষণ উপস্থাপন করুন?
7. আপনি কি একটি নির্দিষ্ট খেলার কার্যকলাপ বর্ণনা করতে পারেন যা আপনি আপনার সন্তানের সাথে করেন এবং শিশুর আচরণে এর প্রভাব কি?

### **চ্যালেঞ্জসমূহ-**

8. বাড়ীতে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষা চালু করার ক্ষেত্রে আপনি কোন প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলির সম্মুখীন হন?
9. আপনার মতে, আপনার সন্তানের শিক্ষায় খেলা কীভাবে সামাজিক ও সাংস্কৃতিক নিয়মাবলী অনুসরণে প্রভাবিত করে?

### **সমাধান খোঁজা-**

10. বিদ্যালয়ে আপনার সন্তানের খেলার অভিজ্ঞতা বৃদ্ধি করতে আপনি কোন কৌশলগুলি সহায়ক বলে মনে করেন?
11. আপনি কিভাবে নতুন খেলার ধারণা খুঁজে পাবেন?

### **শিক্ষাবিদদের থেকে সহায়তা-**

12. খেলা-ভিত্তিক শেখার অনুশীলনের বিষয়ে আপনি আপনার সন্তানের প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষকদের সাথে কতটা সংযুক্ত বোধ করেন?
13. খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাকে আরও কার্যকরভাবে সহজতর করার জন্য আপনি শিক্ষকদের কাছ থেকে কী ধরনের সহায়তা চান?

### **সমাপনী প্রশ্ন-**

14. খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষায় আপনার অংশগ্রহণ আপনার সন্তানের সামগ্রিক বিকাশকে প্রভাবিত করে তা কী আপনি বিশ্বাস করেন? কেন বিশ্বাস করেন?
15. আপনার কি কোনো অতিরিক্ত মন্তব্য আছে যা সরকারি প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শ্রেণীতে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষার সমর্থনে পিতামাতার ভূমিকা বুঝতে সাহায্য করতে পারে?