

Middle-Class Parents' Perceptions of Early Childhood Education
for Children Aged 3 to 5 Years in Dhaka, Bangladesh

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

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Middle-Class Parents' Perceptions of Early Childhood Education for Children Aged 3 to 5 Years in Dhaka, Bangladesh

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1. Source of population

Middleclass parents of 3 to 5 years aged children living in urban Dhaka

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

- a) Physical risk to the subjects (no)
- b) Social risk(no)
- c) Psychological risk to subjects (no)
- d) discomfort to subjects (no)
- e) Invasion of privacy (no)

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)

- a) Nature and purpose of the study (yes)
- b) Procedures to be followed (yes)
- c) Physical risk (no)
- d) Sensitive questions (no)
- e) Benefits to be derived (no)
- f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study (yes)
- g) Confidential handling of data (yes)
- h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved (no)

4. Will Signed verbal consent for be required (yes or no)

- a) from study participants (yes)
- b) from parents or guardian (yes)
- c) Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects? (yes)

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

- a) Proposal (yes)
- b) Consent Form (yes)
- c) Questionnaire or interview schedule (yes)

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Abstract

This study investigates the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of middle-class parents in Dhaka, Bangladesh, concerning early childhood education (ECE) for children aged 3 to 5 years. Employing a qualitative approach, the research draws on findings from two focus group discussions—one comprising mothers and the other fathers of preschool-aged children not yet enrolled in school—and six in-depth interviews with mothers. The analysis reveals that both mothers and fathers commonly value home-based, informal modes of early learning, emphasizing the importance of family involvement, play, and natural development over formal school enrollment at an early age. Parents express concerns regarding academic pressure, child readiness, safety, affordability, and the quality of available preschool options. Financial limitations and social expectations also shape their hesitancy toward early enrollment, with a widespread belief that structured education should ideally commence around age five. The study highlights that differentiated parental experiences and roles further nuance perspectives on early education, as revealed through individual interviews with mothers. These findings underscore challenges rooted in the educational system, including diverse levels of children's preparedness upon entering formal schooling and the complex demands faced by educators. The research calls for targeted policy and community interventions to enhance awareness, improve accessibility, and ensure the affordability and quality of ECE provision. By providing new insight into both maternal and paternal viewpoints within Dhaka's urban, middle-class context, this work contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of barriers and opportunities for children's participation in early childhood education in Bangladesh.

Key words: Early childhood education (ECE); Middle-class parents; Perceptions and beliefs; Enrollment hesitancy

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my beloved father, whose love, guidance, and prayers continue to inspire me. Though he is no longer with me, his support and encouragement have shaped who I am and made this achievement possible.

Acknowledgement

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Form
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
PPRC	Policy Research Institute (Bangladesh)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
FGD	Focus Group Discussion

Chapter I: Introduction & Background

1.1. Introduction

As a mother of three teenagers, my journey into early childhood development has been deeply personal. I completed my first master's degree in economics but chose not to pursue a professional career then. Instead, I dedicated myself to raising my children, believing that my presence and guidance at home were the most valuable gifts I could offer them.

When my eldest son turned four, I began teaching him at home. Around the same time, a close neighbour and friend, whose son was of the same age, decided to enrol her child in school. I remember how passionately I tried to convince her that sending a four-year-old to school was unnecessary. "We are educated mothers," I told her, "We are their first and best teachers — why waste money on early schooling?" She agreed with me, but her husband insisted otherwise, and she admitted her child to school while I chose to wait.

A year later, I enrolled my son at the age of five. From his very first day, he cried. And he kept crying every day, until he turned seven. I stood outside his classroom for years, trying to comfort him, trying to understand what was going wrong. Today, he is 18, and still, he looks back on school with a sense of discomfort. I often ask myself: What did I miss? What went wrong?

Only after 18 years of marriage did I return to my academic life and enrol in the master's program in Early Childhood and Development at BRAC IED. It was like a door to a world of unknown knowledge had opened before me. Everything I thought I understood about early education began to shift. I realized how little I knew back then, and how different my choices might have been if I had this knowledge earlier.

Today, as a pre-primary teacher, I work with children aged 4 to 5 and regularly interact with their parents. I see the same questions, confusion, and perceptions I once had. This made me deeply curious: What do parents really think about early childhood education? What shapes their decisions? This personal journey—from a mother who misunderstood early education to a student and teacher seeking answers—inspired me to choose this thesis topic.

ECE provides the initial base that supports a child's overall development and educational path. During the first eight years of life, children go through an essential phase where their thinking, feelings, and social interactions start to develop. Engaging in playful, hands-on experiences during this stage helps nurture curiosity, imagination, and essential life habits. High-quality early education supports school readiness and encourages emotional resilience and a love for learning. Research indicates that children who receive strong early learning support often do better academically, communicate more effectively with peers, and have greater chances of continuing their education. (*Why Early Childhood Education and Care Matter*, 2024)

A child's brain is highly receptive in the early years, absorbing information rapidly from their surroundings, quickly soaking up new things they see, hear, and feel. As explained by VeryWellMind, this is a time when children grow and learn very fast, not just in thinking, but also in their feelings and physical abilities. This period helps build a strong base for future learning. (Cherry, 2024)

That is why early childhood education and the teachers who guide it are so important. These programs give young children a fun and safe place to learn and grow. Children who participate in good early education programs gain important skills and knowledge that help them succeed in school and later in life. One of the main benefits of early childhood education is that it helps

children prepare for kindergarten. Many programs include activities that involve problem-solving, which helps kids learn how to think critically and make decisions.

Good early education also inspires children to explore the world around them, helping them become more curious about learning. Activities like pretend play — for example, acting like a doctor or a chef — encourage creativity and help children grow their imagination. (American Public University, 2023)

Heckman highlights that investing in early childhood development reaps the greatest rewards when done as early as feasible. (Heckman, 2013.) He contends that starting at age three or four may be too late. According to his research, the most effective interventions occur between the ages of infancy and five, laying the groundwork for better future results. This demonstrates that early childhood education is not only beneficial but also necessary, particularly for ensuring that children from underprivileged households reach their full potential. (Dakota, 2024)

Early childhood care and education (ECCE), which includes birth to age 8, is critical because it supports key time in brain development. High-quality ECCE helps build a strong base for a child's health, nutrition, learning, emotional growth, and future success in life and work. Research shows that making pre-primary education compulsory by law can help improve children's early development. (UNESCO, 2024)

Access to quality early childhood education plays a crucial role in promoting social equity and giving children a strong developmental foundation. While the demand for childcare and pre-primary education programs continues to grow globally, universal and free access to these services remains limited, particularly in low- and lower-middle-income nations such as Bangladesh. (*Early Childhood Education*, 2019). This lack of accessibility tends to affect disadvantaged families disproportionately. However, even among urban middle-class families,

Inconsistencies in awareness and access can influence children's early learning experiences. Studies indicate that involvement in early learning programs increases the likelihood of children reaching key developmental goals. (Ulferts et al., 2019) Despite this, global enrollment in one year of structured learning before primary school has declined, dropping from 75% in 2020 to 72% in 2022 (UNESCO, 2024), underscoring the ongoing challenges in ensuring universal early learning opportunities.

Reflecting on my journey and professional insights, I recognize that understanding parental perspectives on early childhood education is essential and timely. Parents are the primary architects of their children's early learning experiences, yet a complex interplay of social, cultural, and economic influences shapes their beliefs and decisions. This study explores how parents conceptualise early childhood education, what factors guide their educational choices, and how these perceptions ultimately influence their children's school readiness. By examining these questions, I hope to contribute meaningful knowledge that can bridge understanding between educators and families, ultimately strengthening the foundation for each child's educational journey.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

According to Bahagia et al. (2022), several factors influence parents' decisions regarding their children's education. Their research findings suggest that parents' perceptions of education significantly influence their decision to continue their children's education. Economic conditions also play a crucial role, as education involves financial costs, and parents with limited income must carefully consider whether they can afford to keep their children enrolled. Nonetheless, many low-income parents still prioritize education despite financial challenges. (Bahagia Bahagia et al., 2022)

Governments invest heavily in early childhood education in many developed countries to build and strengthen human capital. Although the government in developing countries like Bangladesh has introduced early childhood education from age four, families continue to play a predominant role in children's early development and learning. A family's socioeconomic status plays a key role in how children move from home to school and often influences the decision to start their education at a very young age. (Md Jahangir Alam, 2021)

Although Early Childhood Education (ECE) opportunities are growing in Bangladesh, there remains a significant lack of understanding regarding parents' perspectives—especially how social and economic factors influence their views. This lack of insight makes it harder to design effective and inclusive ECE initiatives, particularly for low-income families who encounter specific obstacles to educational involvement. Bridging this gap is essential for developing culturally appropriate and responsive programs that meet the diverse needs of families and promote equitable access to quality early learning. Gaining a clearer picture of parental attitudes is therefore vital to strengthening early education policies and service delivery in Bangladesh.

Therefore, this study aims to explore and understand the perceptions of middle-class parents in Dhaka regarding early childhood education. By focusing on this group, the research seeks to fill a critical gap in current literature and provide insights that can inform more inclusive and effective educational policies. Understanding how middle-class families view ECE, including the challenges they face and the values they place on early learning, will assist in creating more suitable plans and educational efforts that foster the early development of children in Bangladesh.

1.3. Purpose of the study

This paper intends to investigate the perceptions of middle-class parents in Dhaka, Bangladesh, focusing on early childhood education (ECE) for children between the ages of 3 to 5, given its vital impact on the mental, emotional, and social growth of young learner, understanding how parents view its importance, benefits, and challenges is essential for shaping more responsive and inclusive educational policies. Although the Government of Bangladesh has introduced initiatives such as the *Pre-Primary Education Policy 2010* and the *National Education Policy 2010*, which emphasize the importance of one year of pre-primary education starting at age four, regardless of the quality or design of an early childhood education program, its effectiveness and long-term impact depend heavily on active family involvement and strong collaboration between parents and educators. Without this partnership, the desired outcomes of early education are unlikely to be fully realised (Fatih DERELİ & Tuğba Türk, 2023). Focusing specifically on middle-class families, who often fall between the extremes of wealth and poverty, this study aims to uncover how financial stability, educational background, and cultural beliefs influence parental decision-making about early learning.

1.4. Significance of the study

Early childhood education supports the overall growth of young children by nurturing their emotional, social, and ethical development, along with introducing them to foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy. Through engaging activities like collaborative tasks, creative play, and art-based learning, it also enhances language abilities, encourages cooperation, stimulates independent thinking, and builds a sense of responsibility and problem-solving skills. (Billah & Billah, 2008)

When families are actively involved in their children's educational journey, it strengthens the learning experience and nurtures a child's curiosity and motivation to learn. Parents can demonstrate important life skills—like effective communication, responsible decision-making, and creative problem-solving, which are key components of early learning. Moreover, the attitudes and beliefs held by parents about education strongly shape how children perceive school and influence their self-esteem and enthusiasm for learning. Gaining insights into parental perspectives on preschool education allows teachers and policymakers to refine early learning programs. Considering families' concerns and aspirations enables early education providers to tailor their services, leading to more meaningful and effective learning experiences for young children. (Qadiri & Manhas, 2009)

In this context, Exploring the views of urban middle-income families, perceive and support ECE is increasingly important. Bangladesh's middle class, estimated at 37 to 40 million people, is expected to reach 33% of the population by 2030. As this group expands, their demand for quality education and public services is also rising. Traditionally defined by social and cultural markers, the middle class is now more economically identified, valuing education, meritocracy, and upward mobility. Their preferences are shaping educational expectations and increasing pressure on institutions to deliver quality over mere access. (31st anniversary issue-I, 2025)

This research seeks meaningful insights to help educators, policymakers, and early education providers design programs more aligned with middle-class families' expectations and realities. By capturing their voices and experiences, The study will help to gain a better understanding of how ECE is valued and approached in Bangladesh's expanding and prominent socioeconomic group.

1.5. Research Questions

1. How do middle-class parents of 3— 5-year-old children in Dhaka perceive the role of early childhood education (ECE) in their children's overall development?
2. What factors influence middle-class parents' decisions in choosing early childhood education programs for their children aged 3–5 years?

1.6. Operational Definition

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

For this study, ECE refers to any organized educational program (including formal preschools, kindergartens, and playgroups) designed for children aged 3–5 years in Dhaka, aimed at supporting their cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development before entering primary school.

Middle-class Parents

For this research, *middle-class parents* are defined as those residing in Dhaka city whose monthly household income falls within Tk 41,000 to Tk 100,000, as identified by the Policy Research Institute (PPRC) ("Middle Income People Growing," 2021). Within this income level, families' capacity to cover necessities—like basic living costs, healthcare, and schooling—is influenced, though financial barriers remain for private education and major spending.

School Readiness

For children between 3 and 5 years old, school readiness is characterized by having the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social capacities required to adapt successfully to formal schooling. This includes abilities such as following simple instructions, basic self-care, social interaction with peers, and foundational language and numeracy skills.

Parental Perception

Parental perception in this study refers to how parents subjectively understand, interpret, and evaluate the importance, benefits, and risks of ECE for their children aged 3–5, including influences from culture, social norms, prior experiences, and anticipated outcomes.

Play-Based Learning

Play-based learning is operationalized as any educational approach within ECE centers where children learn through self-directed, enjoyable, and unstructured play activities, guided by teachers to foster development in cognitive, social, language, emotional, and physical domains—rather than through formal lessons or academic drills.

LMICs (Low- and Middle-Income Countries):

LMICs are nations classified by the World Bank based on gross national income (GNI) per capita. As of 2024, countries with GNI per capita below \$13,936 are considered LMICs, further categorized into low-income ($\leq$ \$1,135), lower-middle-income (\$1,136–\$4,495), and upper-middle-income (\$4,496–\$13,935) groups (World Bank, 2024; Our World in Data, 2025).

Chapter II: Literature Review

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial foundation for lifelong learning and development. This literature review examines existing research related to ECE, focusing on how middle-class parents perceive early education and how various socioeconomic factors influence their decisions. The discussion highlights both global insights and Bangladesh's specific context, providing a comprehensive understanding of the factors that shape ECE access and quality. Additionally, it identifies existing research gaps that provide the rationale for the present study.

2.1 Early Childhood Development in Global Context

Globally, the quality of early education significantly impacts children's cognitive, emotional, and social growth. In many developed countries, structured early learning environments supported by government policies ensure equitable access to quality preschool education. Parental decision-making around preschool enrollment often depends on various factors, including the quality of teaching, accessibility, affordability, and extracurricular offerings (Kale et al., 2023). Research consistently shows that Socioeconomic status (SES) has a major impact on whether children can attend and benefit from Early Childhood Education (ECE).

As noted by UNESCO (2024), numerous lower- and middle-income nations still encounter major difficulties in providing widespread availability of early childhood learning. Millions of early-age children remain insufficiently ready to begin official education or build essential abilities required for continuous learning throughout life. A key contributor to this gap is the inequality in early learning experiences within the home environment. Children from higher-income families are more likely to benefit from early stimulation and responsive caregiving, while those from lower-income households often lack adequate supervision and may be subjected to harsh disciplinary practices. Additionally, access to essential learning materials such as books and toys remains limited among economically disadvantaged families. While

much of the global discourse tends to focus on the extremes of poverty and wealth, UNESCO emphasizes the importance of understanding how the expanding middle class perceives and supports early childhood education, as this group encounters distinct challenges and makes decisions that significantly shape children's school readiness and early learning outcomes. Recognizing the urgent need to improve early childhood development, numerous global efforts have reaffirmed the critical importance of early learning. Across various regions, a series of declarations have underscored the need to invest in and prioritize early education as a foundational right for all children. In Asia and the Pacific, declarations such as the Putrajaya Declaration (2016), the Pasifika Call to Action on Early Childhood Development (2017), the Kathmandu Statement of Action (2018), and the Ha Noi Call to Action (2019) have emphasized early learning as a key policy priority. Similarly, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Buenos Aires Declarations I (2017) and II (2022) reinforced regional commitments to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), specifically ensuring the right to education beginning in early childhood. These global initiatives underscore a shared recognition that top-notch early learning programs involve not just individual growth but also fairness and participation. —especially relevant in countries like Bangladesh, where diverse socioeconomic groups, including the urban middle class, play a vital role in shaping early learning outcomes through their perceptions and choices (UNESCO, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified educational disparities globally, particularly affecting nations with low to moderate income levels. According to a joint estimate by the World Bank and partner organisations, the percentage of 10-year-olds not able to read and comprehend a basic passage rose dramatically from 57% in 2019 to 70% in 2022 (World Bank et al., 2022). This stark increase has drawn international attention to what is now widely termed the “global learning crisis.” If current trends continue, it is projected that by 2030, more than 300 million children, roughly 37% of the global child population, will fail to achieve even the minimum

reading proficiency (UNESCO-UIS, 2022). These figures highlight the urgent need to strengthen foundational learning, beginning in early childhood, to prevent long-term educational setbacks and inequities (UNESCO, 2022).

In response to this growing crisis, the Global Coalition for Foundational Learning was established in 2022 to unite stakeholders committed to improving foundational learning for all children. ActionAid Bangladesh emphasizes the importance of early childhood development by supporting children's education and holistic growth through various capacity-building programs. These initiatives focus on enhancing cognitive skills, creativity, and socio-emotional development by providing child-friendly learning environments, such as Child Spaces, where children engage in educational, artistic, and recreational activities. By collaborating with educational institutions and training facilitators, ActionAid Bangladesh ensures the delivery of interactive and play-based learning, which contributes to children's preparedness for formal schooling and overall well-being (ActionAid Bangladesh, 2019).

2.2. Early Childhood Education in the context of Bangladesh

Bangladesh has made notable progress in expanding access to pre-primary education. Following the *Pre-Primary Education Operational Framework (2015)* and the *National Education Policy (2010)*, the government mandated at least one year of pre-primary education (PPE) before formal school enrollment. In January 2023, this was expanded to a two-year PPE program implemented across thousands of government schools (Ahmed & Zubayer, 2024). As a result of initiatives like the Pre-Primary Education Operational Framework (2015), National Education Policy (2010), and the government's Primary Education Development Programme, the gross enrollment rate (GER) in PPE increased from 24.7% in 2011 to 40.3% in 2017. Public schools now account for around half of the total number of registered children, while NGOs support approximately one-fourth, helping to reach underserved communities.

Despite these developments, Bangladesh still lags its regional peers, such as Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan, regarding ECE enrollment (Ahmed & Zubayer, 2024). These disparities are concerning, particularly as Bangladesh aims to graduate from LDC status and meet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In Bangladesh, early childhood education (ECE) has seen significant growth, with increasing pre-primary enrollment supported by government, private, and NGO initiatives. However, research highlights persistent challenges such as the lack of consistent, disaggregated data specifically on children aged 3 to 5 years, who are the primary focus of early childhood care and development (ECCD) policies (Rashid & Akkari, 2020). Additionally, there is considerable variation in teacher qualifications, availability of teaching materials, and pedagogical practices, which raises concerns about the quality of early childhood programs. While better quality ECE has been positively linked to improved school readiness and primary school achievement, there remains a need for clearer definitions and consistent implementation of quality standards. The World Bank (2017) also reports challenges including uneven access and socio-economic disparities that affect enrollment, particularly between urban and rural areas, as well as gaps in infrastructure and program quality. These findings underscore the ongoing need for targeted research on parental perceptions and enrollment barriers among middle-class families in urban centres like Dhaka.

Recent data from the Annual Primary School Census (2023) shows that total enrollment in pre-primary education in Bangladesh reached approximately 3.5 million children, with girls consistently enrolled at a slightly higher rate than boys. This indicates continued attention to girls' participation in early education (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2023).

Despite increased enrollment, research based on nationally representative surveys reveals that only about one in five children aged 3 to 4 attend an early childhood education program. Children who do not attend ECE show significantly lower developmental outcomes measured

by the Early Childhood Development Index (ECDI), especially in literacy and numeracy skills, learning, and socio-emotional development (Islam et al., 2024). These findings highlight that attendance in quality ECE programs markedly improves readiness for formal schooling and overall child development.

Additionally, disparities remain between urban and rural areas, as well as among different socioeconomic groups, underscoring the importance of equitable access to quality ECE services (World Bank, 2017). Closing these gaps is critical for Bangladesh's goal of advancing child development aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.3. Parental Factors Influencing ECE Enrollment

Parental characteristics, especially education and economic status, play a decisive role in ECE decisions. Multiple studies underscore that mothers' education strongly influences children's preschool enrollment. Educated mothers are more likely to understand the value of early education and create nurturing home environments that foster learning. These advantages include better parenting practices, more effective teacher communication, and higher engagement in school-related activities (Ahmed & Zubayer, 2024; Yostiana Bella Ulfa & Djamaluddin, 2023).

Alam and Ogawa (2023) conducted a qualitative study exploring parental aspirations for children's ECE enrollment in Bangladesh. Their findings indicate that parents' socio-economic status, educational background, and perceptions of school quality significantly influence enrollment decisions. Middle-class parents prioritize schools with strong reputations and quality services, viewing ECE as a pathway to social recognition and upward mobility. (Md. Jahangir Alam & Ogawa, 2023)

Fathers' education also plays a role, though its impact is generally less significant. Employment patterns also matter. Working mothers are more inclined to enrol their children in preschool for care and developmental support. At the same time, fathers' employment, particularly

demanding jobs, may reduce their direct involvement in their children's education (Auliya & Fauziah, 2020). Socioeconomic status is another critical determinant. Economically advantaged families are more capable of financing a private preschool, choose better facilities, and ensure transport and other logistical support (Kale et al., 2023). In contrast, families experiencing food insecurity often prioritise immediate survival over educational planning (Ulfa & Djamaluddin, 2023).

2.4. Parental Perceptions and Involvement

Parental understanding of early childhood development varies widely. While some recognise the importance of early cognitive and emotional development, others mistakenly believe formal education begins only at age five. These misconceptions can affect children's school readiness and long-term learning outcomes (Auliya & Fauziah, 2020).

Moreover, many parents perceive their primary role as logistical, dropping off and picking up their children from school, rather than as partners in the learning process. Although they attend Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs) and school events, their participation in daily educational activities remains limited. This highlights the need to strengthen school-family partnerships and raise awareness about the value of active parental involvement in the early years (Auliya & Fauziah, 2020).

Parental involvement in early childhood education (ECE) in Bangladesh is influenced by cultural views and family roles. Many parents in Dhaka are cautious and may not fully understand how important their involvement is for their child's learning. Some ECE centers have tried to help by offering workshops for parents and allowing them to watch their children's activities through CCTV, which helps build trust (Källebo, 2020). Lack of awareness among parents about early childhood care and learning can cause delays in children's development, especially in skills like speaking and socializing, which can affect how ready they are for school (Sikder, 2018, as cited in Fleeer & van Oers, 2018). When parents and schools work together,

children show better growth in many areas (Källebo, 2020). However, reasons like busy schedules, limited resources, and traditional beliefs about education often stop parents from being more involved (Kabir & Akter, 2014; Choloman, 2025). To improve children's early learning experiences in urban middle-class families, it is important to overcome these barriers and encourage active participation from parents.

While current literature offers interesting insights regarding the link between parental characteristics and ECE participation, limited research specifically explores middle-class parents' perceptions of ECE in Bangladesh. Most studies focus either on low-income or rural populations or structural policy evaluations. This inquiry intends to respond to this gap by examining how middle-class families in urban Dhaka view early childhood education and how their socioeconomic conditions shape those views. This exploration will contribute to more inclusive, equitable policy planning and program development for early learners in Bangladesh.

2.5. Comparative Perspectives – ECE Perceptions in Other LMICs

Research from various low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) reveals that parental perceptions of early childhood education (ECE) share several similarities across contexts—particularly regarding concerns over affordability, academic pressure, and the value of informal learning at home (Devercelli et al., 2020; Ahin & Shin, 2013).

Affordability consistently emerges as a significant barrier for families in LMICs. For example, studies indicate that in countries like Nigeria, India, and Indonesia, many parents struggle with the high costs of ECE, especially where private provision dominates or public subsidies are limited (World Bank, 2019; Ahin & Shin, 2013). These financial constraints often lead families either to delay formal enrollment or to prioritize home-based, informal early learning as a practical alternative until children are older or families' circumstances change (Devercelli et al., 2020).

Academic pressure is another recurring theme. In India and several other LMICs, parents express apprehension about the early introduction of academic drills and formal assessments in ECE settings (Sun et al., 2022). This concern can result in delayed enrollment, as parents favor environments that prioritize play, social-emotional development, and readiness over premature academic achievement. Many value holistic growth, fearing that excessive academic pressure may undermine children's enthusiasm for learning and socio-emotional well-being (Frempong, 2019).

Further, informal or home-based early learning remains a culturally and economically significant strategy. Parents in countries such as Nepal, Nigeria, and Ghana often place considerable trust in family-led learning—emphasizing traditions, moral education, language, and practical life skills prior to entering formal school (Frempong, 2019; Ahin & Shin, 2013). This trust is reinforced where there is skepticism about the quality of local ECE centers, particularly concerning teacher qualifications, class sizes, and the social environment (World Bank, 2019).

Despite cross-national similarities, studies also reveal that cultural expectations and community norms distinctly shape parental priorities. While some parents value social skills and autonomy, others emphasize social cohesion, moral upbringing, or readiness for group learning, underscoring the need for policy responses that are contextually sensitive and family-centred (Devercelli et al., 2020).

The reviewed literature demonstrates that early childhood education (ECE) is a pivotal foundation for lifelong learning, with quality early experiences strongly shaping children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Globally, disparities in access and quality persist, particularly in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh, where socioeconomic factors critically influence enrollment and participation. In Bangladesh, despite policy efforts and increasing pre-primary enrollment, challenges remain, including uneven

access, quality concerns, and socioeconomic disparities—especially among urban middle-class families. Parental characteristics, perceptions, and involvement play a decisive role in shaping children’s early learning experiences, with education level, economic status, and cultural views influencing ECE decisions and engagement. Comparative evidence from other LMICs echoes similar concerns regarding affordability, academic pressure, and the role of informal home learning, highlighting the need for context-sensitive, family-centered approaches.

However, current research offers limited insights into the perceptions and decision-making of urban middle-class parents in Bangladesh, a group that increasingly shapes early education outcomes. Addressing this gap is essential for developing inclusive policies and practices that ensure equitable access to quality ECE, making the perspectives of this population a critical focus of the present study.

Chapter III: Methodology

The methodology chapter outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analytical procedures employed in this study to explore middle-class parents' perceptions of early childhood education in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing focus group discussions and in-depth interviews to gather rich, contextual insights from both mothers and fathers of children aged 3 to 5 years. The chapter details the participant selection, data collection process, and thematic analysis techniques used to interpret the findings, ensuring the research is rigorous, ethical, and aligned with the study’s objectives.

3.1. Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative exploratory approach to analyzing middle-class parents' opinions and experiences with early childhood education. An exploratory qualitative design was particularly well-suited for a topic that had not yet been extensively researched and where the aim was to understand participants' meanings and interpretations in their own words (Creswell, 2014). The research employed in-depth interviews (IDI) and Focus group

discussions to capture the beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of this specific socioeconomic group. By focusing exclusively on middle-class families, the study aimed to explore the unique factors influencing their perceptions of ECE, including affordability, accessibility, and perceived value. This approach allowed rich, detailed insights into how middle-income parents in Dhaka viewed and engaged with early education.

3.2. Research Site

This study was conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh, focusing on middle-class families whose children aged 3–5 was not enrolled in early learning or preschool initiatives. The research took place in neighborhoods predominantly inhabited by middle-class households, where ECE services were generally available but varied in accessibility, quality, and cost. These settings provided valuable context to explore the reasons behind non-enrollment, as well as parents' beliefs, awareness, and attitudes toward ECE. Information was gathered through interviews and group discussions conducted at the residences of participants and local community venues, ensuring a comfortable and familiar environment that supported open and honest dialogue.

3.3. Research Participants

This study focused exclusively on middle-class families in Dhaka, with children aged three to five. For this research, the middle class in Bangladesh was defined primarily by monthly household income, which significantly influences various aspects of life, including health and education. According to PPRC Chairman Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman, individuals with a monthly per capita income between Tk 41,000 and Tk 100,000 fall within the middle-income group in Bangladesh ("Middle income people growing," 2021).

The sample included a total of 17 participants: six in-depth interviews with middle-class parents in Dhaka whose children aged 3 to 5 were not yet enrolled in any early childhood education

(ECE) program. In addition, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted, one with six participants and another with five participants. Participants were selected to ensure diversity in their educational backgrounds and family circumstances, thereby capturing a wide range of perceptions and decision-making factors. The goal was to gather rich, detailed insights into how these parents understood early childhood education, what beliefs and concerns influenced their decisions, and what barriers may have prevented them from enrolling their children.

This sample was particularly relevant because middle-class families often navigate complex choices. While they may have more options available than low-income families, they can still face financial constraints, limited awareness, or conflicting priorities that influence their decision-making. Understanding the reasons behind their non-enrollment offered valuable insights into broader challenges and missed opportunities in ECE uptake. These findings aim to inform policies and strategies that can increase awareness, access, and enrollment in early learning programs across diverse socioeconomic groups.

3.4. Participants Selection Procedure

A qualitative design was adopted in this study, using a small and targeted sample to gain deeper insights into parents' perceptions. A total of six participants were selected for in-depth interviews. These participants were middle-class parents residing in Dhaka, Bangladesh, with children aged 3 to 5 years.

The sampling method used was purposive sampling, which is appropriate for qualitative research where participants are chosen based on specific criteria relevant to the study. The selection criteria included:

- Belonging to middle-income households, with monthly earnings between Tk 41,000 and Tk 100,000.
- Having at least one child aged 3 to 5 years who was not currently enrolled in any

early childhood education (ECE) program.

- Having a minimum educational qualification of a bachelor's degree (graduation level).

This selection approach ensured that participants possessed the educational background and awareness needed to reflect meaningfully on early childhood education, even if they had not yet engaged with formal ECE systems. Their insights were valuable in uncovering the reasons behind non-enrollment, perceptions of ECE, and the broader social and economic factors influencing decision-making within the urban middle-class context.

3.5. Data Collection Tool

This study used two main research tools: individual in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), to collect rich and meaningful data. The goal of in-depth interviewing was to gather comprehensive insights into participants' viewpoints, lived experiences, emotions, and the personal significance they attached to early childhood education (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020).

The in-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format, which included guiding questions but allowed flexibility for the interviewer to explore participants' thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences in more depth. This approach was particularly suitable for understanding individual perspectives and decision-making processes related to early childhood education (ECE).

In addition to the in-depth interviews, two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted to enrich the data through group interaction and collective reflection. FGD is a valuable qualitative research method that facilitates the collection of a range of perspectives on a given topic. In this approach, participants engaged in guided conversations that promoted open and interactive dialogue. This setting encouraged individuals to express their experiences, opinions, and attitudes more freely, often revealing insights shaped by social and cultural dynamics (ContentKeeper Content Filtering, 2025). Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted. One FGD consisted of six middle-class parents residing in Dhaka with children aged between 3 and 5 years, while the other included five parents. These parents were selected based on characteristics relevant to the study, including at least a graduate-level educational background and household income levels typical of the urban middle class in Bangladesh.

Together, these two tools provided a well-rounded understanding of how middle-class parents in Dhaka perceived and made decisions about early childhood education.

3.6. Data Collection Method and Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face, along with focus group discussions, to gather data. To obtain richer and more balanced insights, the FGDs—each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes—were conducted separately with mothers and fathers.

FGD1:Mothers’Group

This discussion included six mothers from middle-income households who had children aged 3 to 5 years and who were not currently enrolled in any early childhood education (ECE) program. As primary caregivers, mothers played a vital role in shaping early learning opportunities for their children at home. This focus group explored their caregiving practices, emotional concerns, and beliefs about early childhood education. The discussion aimed to understand why these mothers had not enrolled their children in formal ECE settings, what factors influenced their decisions, and how they perceived the role and value of early learning in their children’s development.

FGD2:Fathers’Group

This focus group consisted of five fathers from middle-income households with children aged 3 to 5 years who were not enrolled in any early childhood education (ECE) program. Fathers often played a significant role in making decisions about school enrollment, financial planning, and long-term educational goals. This discussion explored their understanding of early childhood education, perceptions of its importance for their children’s future, and the reasons behind their decision not to pursue ECE at this stage. It also examined practical, cultural, and financial factors that shaped their perspectives and choices.

Interview

The in-depth interviews lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. All sessions were conducted in the language participants were most comfortable with—typically Bangla—to promote understanding and ease of communication. Data collection took place at convenient and neutral locations, such as participants' residences or nearby communal facilities, creating a comfortable environment for open and honest dialogue. With participants' informed consent, all sessions were audio-recorded. Field notes were also gathered to capture nonverbal cues and environmental observations.

3.7. Data Management and Analysis

Procedure: Once data collection was completed, all recorded audio was transcribed verbatim in the language chosen by the participants (such as Bangla) and translated into English when necessary for further analysis. On-site notes and transcripts were evaluated together to capture meaning within the specific context and to enrich the data. To maintain privacy, all data was stored in encrypted, password-protected electronic formats.

Analysis:

The responses were analysed thematically with an emphasis on reflexivity method commonly applied in qualitative studies to detect and explain meaningful patterns in the data. Thematic analysis is recognised for being a "user-friendly, adaptable, and increasingly favoured approach" to examining qualitative data, reflecting its ease of use and versatility across various research contexts (Squires, 2023). The analysis process began with a thorough reading of all interviews and focus group transcripts to develop familiarity with the content. The data was then systematically coded, and meaningful segments of the text were labelled to highlight key ideas or recurring perceptions.

These individual codes were later clustered into broader themes that reflected shared topics, concerns, or beliefs among participants. Once the themes were developed, they were carefully examined to identify patterns, similarities, and differences—particularly in relation to the study’s main objectives.

The final findings provided in-depth insights into parents’ views and experiences regarding early childhood education, shedding light on their levels of knowledge, expectations from ECE programs, and the barriers they faced in accessing or selecting appropriate early learning opportunities for their children.

Several measures were taken to ensure the trustworthiness and accuracy of the data collected in this study. First, the interview questions were reviewed by experts in early childhood education, who assessed their clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study’s aims. Two pilot interviews were then conducted with parents meeting the study’s criteria to test the effectiveness of the questions. Based on feedback from these pilot sessions, the final interview guide was refined. Additionally, triangulation was employed to enhance the study’s reliability—this involved cross-checking interview responses with observations made during home or community visits to confirm that the findings were consistent and supported by multiple sources of data.

3.8. Credibility & Rigor

The credibility and rigor of the interview and focus group discussion guidelines were reviewed by experts at BRAC University’s Institute of Educational Development. Additionally, a field test was conducted to ensure the research tools’ validity.

3.9. Ethical Issues

This investigation adhered to the highest standards of ethical integrity to ensure the protection and welfare of all participants. Before participating, individuals were provided with a clear

explanation of the research objectives, methods, and any potential risks, using their preferred language to ensure full understanding. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed written consent was obtained from all participants. They were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time without facing any negative consequences.

Privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained. Personal identifiers and individual responses were kept confidential, and participants had the right to skip any question or end the interview or discussion at any stage.

The study aimed to explore how middle-class parents in Bangladesh perceive early childhood education for their children aged 3 to 5 years. It sought to understand the importance parents placed on early education, their expectations for their children's development, and the challenges they faced in accessing or choosing preschool services. By examining their lived experiences and decision-making processes, the study identified key factors influencing parental attitudes toward ECE. The findings aimed to inform policymakers, educators, and program developers, contributing to the development of more responsive and effective early childhood education initiatives that align with the needs of families and support Bangladesh's efforts toward ensuring quality early learning opportunities for all children.

3.10. Limitations of the Study

This study was conducted with a small, focused group of participants, following formal qualitative research procedures. However, several limitations were encountered. One focus group discussion with fathers included only five participants instead of the intended six, due to difficulties in reaching out to the final member. Additionally, scheduling interviews and discussions proved to be occasionally challenging due to participants' limited availability. Some participants also appeared hesitant to express sensitive or critical views, which may have influenced the depth of certain responses.

Chapter IV: Results/Findings & Discussion

This chapter is divided into two main parts. The first part, titled *Findings*, presents the data gathered through various methods, including in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The second part, *Discussion*, interprets and analyzes the collected data about existing literature and the researcher's reflections. The chapter ends with a summary, followed by recommendations based on the study's findings.

4.1. Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of the study, based on data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with middle-class parents in Dhaka, Bangladesh, who have children aged 3 to 5 years and are not currently enrolled in any early childhood education (ECE) program.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and decision-making factors that influence middle-class parents' views on early childhood education. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and ideas within the data. Four main themes emerged from the analysis, each reflecting the most frequently mentioned and significant issues raised by participants.

4.1.1 Demographic information

Table 1: In-depth Interview mother's Demographic Details:

participant	age	Educational Background	Age of the targeted child	Number of children	occupation	Child's gender	Access to ECE in the area (yes/no)
#1	36	masters	4 years	2	Housewife	F	Yes

#2	25	graduate	3.5 years	2	Housewife	F	Yes
#3	40	graduate	3.5 years	2	Service	M	Yes
#4	29	masters	4 years	2	Teacher	M	Yes
#5	42	masters	4.5 years	2	Housewife	M	Yes
#6	38	masters	4years	2	Housewife	M	Yes

Table 2: Focus Group Discussion Father's Demographic Details: (24 June 2025)

Participant Code	age	Educational Background	occupation	Number of children	Area of residence	Targeted Child's age
F1	35	Masters	Engineer	2	Mohammodpur	4.5 years
F2	37	MBA	Banker	2	Jatrabari	4 years
F3	38	MBA	Service	2	Mirpur	3.5 years
F4	40	Masters	Service	2	Mirpur	4.5 years
F5	3	Masters	Lecturer	1	Azimpur	4 years

Table 3: Focus Group Discussion Mother's Demographic Details: (27 June 2025)

Participant Code	age	Educational Background	occupation	Number of children	Area of residence	Targeted Child's age
M1	30	Masters	lecturer	2	Mohammodpur	4.5 years
M2	35	MBA	Banker	2	Mohammodpur	4 years
M3	38	Masters	Teacher	2	Mirpur	3.5 years

M4	40	Masters	Teacher	2	Jatrabari	4.5 years
M5	39	Masters	Housewife	2	Tejga	4 years
M6	42	masters	Housewife	3	Gabtoli	4 years

4.1.2 Theme # 1: Perceptions of Ideal ECE and Child Readiness:

Parents shared varied understandings of early childhood education and school readiness.

Many viewed learning as beginning at birth, shaped by family interactions rather than formal academics. They emphasized natural, gradual development over early academic pressure.

Parents’ Views on Home-Based Nurturing and the Role of Formal Schooling in ECE

Parents held diverse views on ECE. Many, especially in joint families, saw it as beginning at home through daily interactions with family members, promoting social and moral development without formal schooling. One mother stated, “ECE happens every day, with parents, grandparents... there is no need to send the child out this early” (Idi #2, Date: 21 June 2025).

In contrast, parents in urban nuclear families, particularly those with working parents, viewed formal ECE as essential for structured learning and socialisation. As one mother explained, “When they go to an institution at this age for such activities, they learn to interact with others. Their fear of socializing goes away” (Idi #1, Date: 20 June 2025). However, despite the felt necessity to send the children in ECE centres, some fathers can't accept it at heart and criticized. One father expressed, “People are outsourcing parenting. This is not how it should be” (FGD # F5, Date: 24 June 2025).

These views reflect how family structure and values shape perceptions of ECE.

Perceptions of the Ideal Age for Formal School Enrolment:

Many parents agreed that formal academic learning should start no earlier than age five, as younger children are still developing emotionally and cognitively and benefit more from play and exploration. One mother shared, “At 3 or 4, they’re still babies... too young to handle books and pressure”. (Idi #4, Date: 23 June 2025).

Early enrolment was often seen as driven by social pressure rather than children’s needs, causing some parents to feel guilty yet conform. However, a few parents believed early schooling helps prepare children socially and academically, especially when home environments lack stimulation. One father stated that, “I believe children learn social validation through this. That is, they begin to understand how their behavior affects others. For example, they learn that when they do something good, the teacher gives them a star in their notebook, and they receive validation from it. This encourages them to repeat actions that please others.”(FGD # F5, Date:24 June,2025).

Emphasis on Play-Based and Academic Learning

Parents across backgrounds strongly favored a play-based, pressure-free approach to early childhood education, seeing it as vital for emotional well-being and fostering a positive attitude toward learning. said one mother, “Learning should be fun — not something they’re afraid of,” (FGD # M5, Date: 7 June 2025).

They expressed concern about schools that introduce formal academics too early, fearing it causes stress, trauma, and a loss of interest in learning. “It can become traumatic. My child would cry before school because of all the pressure,” shared a father (FGD # F3, Date: 24 June 2025).

Parents preferred environments encouraging creativity and joyful engagement over rigid academics, believing play-based learning supports emotional security and curiosity.

Role of Home Environment and Parental Care

Many parents, especially in joint families or with homemaker spouses, felt confident that early learning happens best at home. They saw the home as an active place for socialization, moral development, and learning through daily interactions.

“Our child learns so much from us — from daily routines, stories, how we speak and behave,” said one father (FGD # F1, Date: 24 June 2025).

Grandparents, siblings, and extended family members create a rich environment where children naturally absorb values, manners, and emotional skills.

“We don’t need a school for these early years — she learns everything from her grandparents and cousins,” shared a mother (Idi # 5, Date: 25 June 2025).

Parents emphasized teaching respect, patience, and social etiquette at home as essential foundations that schools can’t always provide. Many believed that close family care and everyday experiences foster better development than formal ECE.

Cultural Expectations of Caregiving in Early Childhood

A recurring theme in the fathers’ focus group discussions was the belief that early childhood education can be effectively conducted at home rather than in formal institutions. Many fathers expressed that mothers, by spending quality time with their children, can provide the necessary emotional, social, and even basic cognitive support. Activities such as playing together indoors or taking children to the park were considered sufficient for development.

One father stated:

“I think a mother is enough to teach a three- or four-year-old child. If she spends quality time with her kid, the child can learn everything needed at this age. There is no need to send them to school so early.” (FGD # F1, Date: 24 June 2025).

This perspective reflects a strong reliance on home-based nurturing and highlights a gender-stereotypical expectation that mothers are the primary providers of care and education in

their early years.

4.1.3 Theme # 2: Financial Accessibility as a Primary Barrier

The cost of ECE, particularly quality ECE, emerged as a significant deterrent for many families, especially those in middle-income groups. Parents repeatedly highlighted tuition and admission fees as major challenges, with concerns becoming even more pressing for families with multiple children. Added to this were worries about long-term affordability in the face of economic uncertainty, particularly in the post-COVID-19 period. Together, these factors shaped how parents made schooling decisions, often forcing them to compromise on quality or delay enrolment despite their aspirations for their children.

High Cost of Quality ECE

Many parents highlighted tuition and admission fees as a major barrier to accessing quality early education. Schools with play-based, nurturing approaches were often too expensive.

“Good schools are there, but they’re just too expensive for us,” said one father (FGD # F1, Date: 24 June 2025).

“It’s beyond what I can afford — even if I want the best for my child,” added a mother (Idi #6, Date: 28 June 2025).

Parents often had to choose more affordable schools that didn’t meet their expectations. For families with multiple children, costs were even harder to manage.

“With two kids, we just can’t afford the kind of school we really want,” shared a mother (Idi #1, Date: 20 June 2025).

Some considered delaying enrollment or moving to cheaper areas to afford quality education.

“We’ve thought about moving to a cheaper area just for the school fees,” one father admitted (FGD # F1, Date: 24 June 2025).

Impact of Economic Uncertainty

Post-COVID economic instability has made parents more cautious about school

affordability. Many prioritize schools can afford long-term over those perceived as higher quality. “We didn’t choose the English medium school because the fees keep rising,” explained one parent (FGD # F2, Date: 24 June 2025).

This often leads to compromising quality for financial stability.

4.1.4 Theme # 3: Quality and Appropriateness Concerns Regarding Available ECE Options

Beyond cost, parents expressed deep-seated concerns about the suitability and overall quality of available ECE programmes. Many worried about the excessive academic pressure placed on very young children, the lack of play-based and child-friendly teaching methods, and issues related to teacher capacity and high student–teacher ratios. Concerns also extended to the wider school environment, including peer influence and classroom culture, as well as the limited availability of schools that align with parents’ preferred approaches. These issues together shaped parents’ confidence in ECE and often influenced their decisions to delay or avoid early enrolment.

Concerns About Academic Pressure in Early Childhood

Many parents criticized the heavy academic pressure in ECE centres, especially Bengali medium ones, where formal lessons, homework, and exams start as early as age three.

“They’re too small for books and exams — it’s not right,” said one father (FGD # M4, Date: 27 June 2025).

Parents worry that this pressure can cause children to lose interest in learning or suffer emotionally later on. Some noted this pressure often stems from parents’ desire to see measurable progress despite the risks.

Gaps in Play-Based Teaching and Teacher Quality

Although parents favor play-based, pressure-free learning, many find schools still use traditional academic methods unsuitable for young children.

“They say it’s play-based, but it’s all writing and books,” one parent remarked (FGD # M4,

Date: 27 June 2025).

Even trained teachers often struggle to implement child-friendly approaches, resulting in less engaging classrooms.

Parents also doubt teacher dedication and worry about high student-teacher ratios, especially in government schools.

“One teacher can’t manage so many kids — how will they focus on each child?” a father questioned (FGD # F4, Date: 24 June 2025).

“They lack time and patience to truly understand the child,” added another (Idi # 4, Date: 23 June 2025).

Concerns About School Environment and Peer Influence

Some parents expressed worries about the social environment in certain schools, particularly government ones or those serving underprivileged children. They feared negative influences on their child’s behaviour and language.

“Children pick up bad habits from others — we don’t know what they’re learning there,” said one father (FGD # F5, Date: 24 June 2025). Another parent emphasized, “This is a crucial age. If we’re not sure what’s going on in school, how can we trust the process?” (FGD # F3, Date: 24 June 2025).

Limited Access to Preferred Schooling Options

Many parents struggled to find nearby schools offering the play-based, low-pressure learning they desired. While such schools exist, they are often either too costly or unavailable locally.

“We want a school that focuses on playful learning, not pressure — but there’s none close to us,” shared one mother (FGD # F2, Date: 24 June 2025).

Another added, “Even if we find a good one, it’s either far away or we simply can’t afford it” (Idi #6, Date: 28 June 2025).

4.1.5 Theme # 4: Influence of Social Factors and Personal Beliefs on Enrolment Decisions

Beyond financial constraints and concerns about quality, parents' decisions regarding early childhood education were strongly shaped by social norms, peer expectations, and deeply held personal beliefs. Many reported feeling pressure from relatives, neighbours, and even their own children to enrol early, while others resisted such expectations, trusting in home-based learning. Parents' convictions about the sufficiency of the home environment, the importance of holistic development, and the child's readiness also played a key role in determining the timing and type of ECE they chose.

Influence of Social Pressure and Peer Comparison

Many parents felt pressured to enroll their children early because "everyone else's children are going to school." This pressure often came from relatives, neighbors, or even the children themselves. One father stated,

"People keep asking, 'Why isn't your child in school yet?' It feels like we're lagging," (FGD # F1, Date: 24 June 2025).

"My child sees other kids with bags and uniforms and asks, 'When will I go?'" shared a mother (Idi #3, Date: 22 June 2025).

However, some parents resisted this pressure, trusting home-based learning instead.

"I know people talk, but I believe my child is learning well at home," said a parent (FGD # F2, Date: 24 June 2025).

Confidence in Home-Based Early Learning

Many parents, particularly homemakers, expressed strong confidence in their ability to teach their children at home, believing it provides all necessary early development.

"We are capable enough to teach our child everything needed at this age," said a mother (FGD # M5, Date: 27 June 2025).

Concerns about early academic pressure also led families to delay or avoid formal preschool.

“Why send them so early when they’re learning just fine at home?” shared another parent (Idi # 5, Date: 25 June 2025).

Emphasis on Holistic Development at Home

Parents prioritize teaching religious values, manners, and life skills at home before formal schooling.

“We focus on teaching good behaviour and respect within the family first,” explained one mother (Idi # 5, Date: 25 June 2025).

They believe developing maturity and social skills in a comfortable home setting prepares children for school and helps avoid adjustment issues.

“It’s better if they develop these qualities at home before facing the outside world,” noted one mother. (Idi # 6, Date: 28 June 2025).

Some parents wait for their child’s interest before enrolling them.

“I will send my child when they ask for it, not before,” said one mother. (Idi # 1, Date: 20 June 2025).

4.2. Discussion

This chapter interprets and reflects on the key findings of the study in relation to research objectives and existing literature. The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions and decision-making processes of middle-class parents in Dhaka regarding early childhood education (ECE) for children aged 3 to 5 years.

Theme # 1: Perceptions of Ideal ECE and Child Readiness

The findings show that middle-class parents in Dhaka have varied ideas about early childhood education and when children should start school. Many parents, especially in joint family settings, believe early learning mainly happens at home through daily contact with

family members like parents and grandparents. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasizes the family as the primary environment for early development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Some parents worry that formal schooling could weaken the vital role of family in nurturing children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

Most parents agree formal schooling should begin around age five, as younger children are still developing emotionally and cognitively. This reflects research showing play and exploration are more beneficial than formal academics during early childhood (Ginsburg, 2007). Social pressure can sometimes lead parents to enroll children earlier, despite reservations, mirroring findings on parental decision-making influenced by community norms (Lareau, 2011).

Parents strongly prefer play-based, pressure-free learning environments, wanting education to be enjoyable and not stressful. This is consistent with global early education frameworks that emphasize play for holistic development and emotional well-being (UNICEF, 2019). Too much academic focus too early, they fear, can lead to anxiety and disengagement, concerns also noted in studies of early academic stress (Sylva et al., 2010).

The home environment and parental care are seen as essential for early development, with extended family members playing an important role in teaching social skills, values, and behaviors. This supports evidence that responsive caregiving and quality interactions at home drive social and emotional development in young children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

The findings from the fathers' focus group reveal a recurring belief that early childhood education (ECE) can be adequately provided at home, with mothers playing the central role in this process. Fathers commonly expressed the view that when mothers spend meaningful and quality time with their young children, they can offer essential emotional, social, and cognitive support necessary for early development. Activities such as playing indoors, engaging in

storytelling, or taking children to parks and outdoor spaces were perceived as sufficient to promote learning, social interaction, and emotional growth. This perspective reflects a broader cultural expectation that early childhood development is primarily the responsibility of mothers, which aligns with prevalent gender norms and stereotypes in caregiving. Fathers' emphasis on home-based nurturing underscores the belief that institutional ECE programs are not always necessary for children at this age, particularly when the home environment provides attentive and structured support. Such views highlight how gendered expectations influence perceptions of childrearing responsibilities and the role of formal education in the early years, suggesting that societal norms continue to shape parental attitudes toward early learning and care (Fawcett Society, 2019).

Theme # 2: Financial Accessibility as a Primary Barrier

The data reveal that financial constraints are a central and recurring obstacle for middle-class parents in Dhaka when it comes to accessing quality early childhood education (ECE). This finding directly addresses my second research question: *What factors influence middle-class parents' decisions in choosing ECE programs for their children aged 3–5 years?*

Parents repeatedly identified high tuition and admission fees as key deterrents, especially for programs that offer play-based, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate approaches. For many, “good” or reputable schools simply fall outside their financial reach, regardless of their desire to provide the best possible start for their children. These findings echo patterns seen in international research, where cost has been shown to be a primary barrier to accessing quality ECE, even among supposedly “middle-class” families (Naudeau et al., 2011). The challenge is compounded for families with multiple children, often resulting in difficult compromises on school quality, delayed enrollment, or the need to consider relocation solely for educational affordability.

Some parents even contemplate significant life changes, such as moving to areas where

schooling is more affordable, underlining the depth of their concern.

The lasting economic impacts of COVID-19 have heightened parental caution. Many are anxious about committing to schools whose fees might escalate beyond their capacity in the future—a rational response to an unpredictable economic environment. As a result, families often settle for schools that guarantee long-term affordability, even if these do not meet their expectations for quality, approach, or reputation. This compromise is a clear manifestation of how broader socioeconomic instability shapes educational aspirations and choices (Engle et al., 2011).

Balancing cost and quality, parents tend to “play it safe,” prioritizing what is feasible over what is ideal. This not only affects immediate educational experiences for their children but may also entrench social disparities in access to high-quality early learning environments.

In summary, financial barriers play a decisive role in shaping parents’ choices and attitudes toward ECE. These economic considerations often outweigh even strong parental aspirations for optimal learning and development environments, reflecting a persistent gap between what is desired and what is possible for many families.

Theme # 3: Quality and Appropriateness Concerns Regarding Available ECE Options

The findings reveal that, for middle-class parents in Dhaka, concerns about the quality and appropriateness of early childhood education programs go well beyond financial affordability. These worries greatly influence both their perceptions of ECE's value (Research Question 1) and their choices about where—and whether—to enroll their young children (Research Question 2).

Many parents are troubled by the early introduction of formal academics, homework, and exams in ECE centers, particularly in Bengali medium schools. Parents feel that exposing 3- or 4-year-olds to this type of pressure is developmentally inappropriate and risks making

children anxious, discouraged, or emotionally withdrawn. This aligns with research suggesting that early academic stress can undermine a child’s curiosity and well-being (Sylva et al., 2010; Ginsburg, 2007). At the same time, some parents noted that both schools and families may push for “visible progress,” which can unintentionally contribute to the pressure.

Though most parents desire play-based, joyful learning, many feel that actual classroom practices still rely on traditional book-based methods. Some schools claim to be “play-based,” but focus heavily on writing and rote learning, leaving parents disappointed and children disengaged. Even teachers with formal training sometimes lack the time, support, or commitment to use child-friendly, interactive approaches in overcrowded classrooms. Concerns about insufficient teacher attention, high student-teacher ratios, and limited patience are especially common with government schools, confirming global evidence that smaller class sizes and attentive educators are critical for high-quality ECE (UNICEF, 2019).

Parents also worry about the broader school environment, particularly in less-resourced or government-run facilities. They’re concerned about negative peer influences—such as children picking up undesirable language or behaviors from classmates—during these sensitive early years. This highlights a lack of trust not only in academic quality, but in schools’ ability to safeguard social and moral development.

Even parents who are clear about wanting play-based, nurturing schooling for their children report that these types of programs are often not locally available or are priced beyond reach. The lack of accessible, affordable, high-quality ECE options means parents are frequently forced to choose between proximity, price, and their ideals for their child’s early learning pattern also noted in studies of ECE access in urban South Asia (Naudeau et al., 2011).

In summary, concerns about academic pressure, the gap between stated and real play-based learning, doubts about teacher quality, peer influences, and limited local options all combine

to make parents deeply cautious about enrolling their young children in available ECE programs. Their experiences suggest an urgent need for policy and practice reforms that ensure early education in Dhaka is not just accessible and affordable, but truly developmentally appropriate, engaging, and nurturing.

Theme # 4: Influence of Social Factors and Personal Beliefs on Enrolment Decisions

Many parents described experiencing social pressure and peer comparison as a significant factor driving early enrolment decisions. Relatives, neighbors, and even the children themselves create expectations that “everyone’s child is going to school,” leading some parents to feel compelled to conform to these norms to avoid being seen as “lagging behind” in their community. This social influence aligns with prior research highlighting how enrollment decisions are embedded within complex social networks and community expectations (Lareau, 2011; Fernandez & Bruderlein, 2000).

Nevertheless, a substantial number of parents resisted this normative pressure, expressing strong confidence in the capacity of home-based early learning. Homemaker parents, in particular, articulated trust in their role as primary educators during these formative years, believing that such an environment provides comprehensive developmental support, including social and moral growth. This reliance on home care reflects cultural values emphasizing family responsibility and reflects findings from ecological and socio-cultural models of child development where the family microsystem is central (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The preference for home-based nurturing is further reinforced by concerns about the potential harms of early academic pressure in formal settings, motivating some families to delay enrolment until they perceive their child is ready. Parents emphasize that early life at home is not just about academic preparation but holistic development—teaching religious values, manners, respect, and life skills—in a familiar, supportive environment. This approach

resonates with research underscoring the importance of culturally grounded child-rearing practices that prioritize moral and social maturity prior to formal schooling (Rogoff, 2003). Moreover, some parents prefer a child-led approach to enrolment, waiting for their child to express interest in attending school before initiating formal education. This stance respects the child's agency and readiness, avoiding premature separation or exposure to school environments perceived as potentially stressful or unsuitable.

In essence, decisions about early school enrolment are negotiated between societal expectations and deeply held personal and cultural beliefs about child development and readiness. These findings highlight how social norms exert a powerful but not deterministic influence; parental agency remains significant, especially for those valuing home-based nurturing.

For policy and program design, this suggests that efforts to increase ECE participation need to consider not only economic barriers and quality concerns but also social dynamics and parental values. Engagement strategies that respect and integrate family roles, cultural priorities, and gradual readiness could build greater trust and acceptance of formal early education.

4.3. Conclusion

This study explored how middle-class parents in Dhaka perceive early childhood education (ECE) for their 3 to 5-year-old children. The findings reveal that parents' decisions are shaped by a mix of cultural values, economic limitations, family roles, and social expectations. Many parents prefer natural, home-based learning during the early years and express concern over exposing children to formal academic settings too early.

Concerning affordability and the quality of available ECE programs were central. Parents often delay enrollment due to high costs, a lack of trust in school environments, and the belief that home offers a better foundation for early development. Emotional well-being, readiness, and access to play-based learning were especially important to many.

Social norms also play a significant role, with parents often navigating peer pressure while staying true to their belief in child-led readiness. Mothers and fathers emphasized their responsibility in shaping their children's early growth, often feeling that family support systems can meet those needs better than structured preschool environments.

Considering these insights, any effort to expand ECE in urban Bangladesh must consider parents' priorities, financial realities, and cultural values. Responsive policies should improve access, reduce costs, promote play-based approaches, and involve parents meaningfully to build greater trust and engagement with early education.

4.4. Recommendations

From the results of this research, several practical suggestions can be proposed to improve early childhood education (ECE) access and quality for middle-class families in Dhaka. These suggestions aim to address the key challenges and concerns identified by parents, such as affordability, curriculum appropriateness, and parental engagement. By implementing these

recommendations, policymakers, educators, and program developers can better support families and promote meaningful early learning experiences for young children.

Provide Financial Support and Fee Flexibility for Quality ECE

Introduce targeted subsidies or flexible payment plans in government and private ECE centers to make quality education—especially play-based and nurturing programs—financially accessible for middle-class families, including those with more than one child and families impacted by economic uncertainties.

Promote Authentic Play-Based and Age-Appropriate Curriculum

Establish clear policies and monitoring to ensure that early childhood education (ages 3–5) remains focused on play, creativity, and emotional well-being, not early academics or formal assessments. Support schools in actualizing play-based methods so children can learn with joy and minimal pressure.

Invest in Teacher Training and Better Teacher-Child Ratios

Ensure ECE teachers receive regular, practical training in child-friendly pedagogy and classroom management. Recruit more qualified educators where possible so classrooms are smaller, enabling more personalized attention and stronger teacher-child connections.

Strengthening Home-School Collaboration and Parental Guidance

Encourage regular, two-way communication between schools and families. Offer workshops and resources that respect parents' cultural values and empower them to support play, social learning, and good behavior at home, making the transition to formal education smoother for children.

Build Awareness to Counter Social Pressure and Normalize Diverse Choices

Lead public awareness campaigns to reassure families that waiting for a child’s readiness and prioritizing home-based early learning are valid choices—not signs of negligence. Foster local support groups where parents can share experiences and reduce anxiety about community expectations.

Ensure Accessible, Safe, and Inclusive ECE Centers Near Homes

Expand government or community-run ECE centers providing safe, inclusive, and play-focused environments within residential neighborhoods. Regularly monitor quality, teacher conduct, and peer environments, addressing parent concerns about negative influences and safeguarding children’s holistic development.

By prioritising these six recommendations, policymakers and education leaders can better support middle-class families in Dhaka in accessing and trusting early childhood education, ensuring that children’s learning begins in a way that is affordable, appropriate, and truly beneficial for their future.

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Appendix A.

Interview questions

IDI guidelines

Demographic Information

Participant Code	Gender
Age	Education
Number of children	Age of the target child
Area of residence	Access to ECE in the area (yes/ no)
Occupation	Household income

Interview guide:

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your family?

Probe: How do you spend the whole day with your child?

Probe: Who usually takes care of the child during the day?

2. What does the term “early childhood education” mean to you?

Probe: Have you heard about any ECE programs in your area?

Probe: What do you think are the main goals of ECE?

3. Where did you learn about ECE (if at all)?

Probe: Social media, neighbours, TV, internet?

4. What are your thoughts on sending young children (ages 3–5) to school or an ECE center?

Probe: What do you think children gain from it?

Probe: Any concerns or doubts about it?

5. What do you think are the advantages or disadvantages of ECE for your child?

6. Have you considered enrolling your child in an ECE program? Why or why not?

Probe: Was it ever a serious option? Why was the decision made the way it was?

7. What factors influenced your decision not to enroll your child in an early education program?

Probe: Financial reasons? Trust? Quality concerns? Cultural beliefs?

8. Do you feel that ECE is necessary or optional for your child's future learning?

Probe: At what age do you think a child should start formal education?

9. Are there ECE centers in your neighbourhood? How do you view their quality and accessibility?

Probe: Too expensive? Not suitable? Far from home?

10. Have other parents in your community influenced your views on ECE in any way?

Probe: What do relatives, neighbours, or friends think about early education?

11. Do you plan to send your child to preschool or any educational institution soon?

Probe: What would make you change your mind about ECE?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share about your thoughts or experiences with early childhood education?

Closing Section

“Thank you very much for your time and for sharing your thoughts and experiences with me today. Your insights are extremely valuable for this research. I want to reassure you that everything you’ve said will be kept strictly confidential and used only for academic purposes.

সাক্ষাৎকার নির্দেশিকা(Interview Guide)

ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য (Demographic Information)

অংশগ্রহণকারীর কোড:

লিঙ্গ:

বয়স:

শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:

সন্তান সংখ্যা:

যে সন্তানের সম্পর্কে আলোচনা হচ্ছে, তার বয়স:

বসবাসের এলাকা:

এলাকায় শিশুদের প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা কেন্দ্র আছে কি না (হ্যাঁ/না):

পেশা:

পরিবারের মাসিক আয়:

সাক্ষাৎকার প্রশ্নাবলি

১. আপনি এবং আপনার পরিবারের সম্পর্কে একটু বলবেন?

— প্রশ্ন: আপনি সাধারণত আপনার সন্তানের সাথে কীভাবে সময় কাটান?

— প্রশ্ন: দৈনন্দিন সাধারণত কে আপনার শিশুর দেখাশোনা করেন?

২. আপনার কাছে "শিশুর প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা" বলতে কী বোঝায়?

— প্রশ্ন: আপনি কি আপনার এলাকায় কোনো প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা প্রোগ্রামের কথা শুনেছেন?

— প্রশ্ন: আপনি মনে করেন এই শিক্ষার প্রধান লক্ষ্য কী?

৩. আপনি কোথা থেকে প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা সম্পর্কে শুনেছেন?

— প্রশ্ন: সামাজিক মাধ্যম, প্রতিবেশী, টেলিভিশন, ইন্টারনেট ইত্যাদি?

৪. আপনি মনে করেন কেন ৩-৫ বছরের শিশুদের স্কুল বা শিক্ষা কেন্দ্রে যাওয়া উচিত?

— প্রশ্ন: এই বয়সী শিশুরা কী শিখতে পারে বা কী উপকার পেতে পারে বলে মনে করেন?

— প্রশ্ন: এ বিষয়ে আপনার কোনো দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি বা সংশয় আছে কি?

৫. আপনি মনে করেন প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষার আপনার সন্তানের জন্য কী উপকার ও কী ক্ষতি হতে পারে?

৬. আপনি কি কখনো আপনার শিশুকে এই ধরনের প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা প্রোগ্রামে ভর্তির কথা ভেবেছেন? কেন বা কেন নয়?

— প্রশ্ন: এটি কি আপনার কাছে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সিদ্ধান্ত মনে হয়? কেন এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছেন বা নেননি?

৭. যদি আপনি ভর্তির কথা না ভেবে থাকেন, তাহলে তার কারণ কী?

— প্রশ্ন: আর্থিক সমস্যা? নিরাপত্তার অভাব? শিক্ষার মান নিয়ে চিন্তা? সংস্কৃতি বা সমাজের প্রভাব?

৮. আপনি কি মনে করেন এই শিক্ষা আপনার সন্তানের ভবিষ্যতের জন্য কোনোভাবে উপকারী বা অপ্রয়োজনীয়?

— প্রশ্ন: আপনার মতে, শিশুর কত বছর বয়সে স্কুল শুরু করা উচিত?

৯. আপনার এলাকায় কি এই ধরনের শিক্ষা কেন্দ্র আছে? আপনি সেগুলোর মান ও সুবিধা সম্পর্কে কী ভাবেন?

— প্রশ্ন: খুব খরচবহুল? নিরাপদ কি না? বাসা থেকে দূরত্ব কেমন?

১০. আপনার এলাকার অন্য অভিভাবকেরা কি আপনাকে এই বিষয়ে কোনোভাবে প্রভাবিত করেন?

— প্রশ্ন: আত্মীয়, প্রতিবেশী বা বন্ধুরা প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা সম্পর্কে কী বলেন?

১১. আপনি কি ভবিষ্যতে আপনার শিশুকে কোনো প্রাক-প্রাথমিক বা শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে ভর্তি করার পরিকল্পনা করেছেন?

— প্রশ্ন: কী হলে আপনি আপনার সিদ্ধান্ত পরিবর্তন করবেন?

১২. এই বিষয়ে আপনার কোনো অতিরিক্ত মন্তব্য বা অভিজ্ঞতা শেয়ার করতে চান কি?

সমাপ্তি অংশ (Closing Section)

“আপনাকে অনেক ধন্যবাদ আপনার সময় এবং মূল্যবান চিন্তা ও অভিজ্ঞতা শেয়ার করার জন্য। আপনার মতামত এই গবেষণার জন্য অত্যন্ত

গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। আমি নিশ্চিত করতে চাই, আপনি যা বলেছেন তা গোপন রাখা হবে এবং শুধুমাত্র একাডেমিক উদ্দেশ্যে ব্যবহার করা হবে।”

Research tool: FGD guideline

Demographic Information

Participant Code	age	education	occupation	Number of children	Area of residence	Child's age

Introduction Script

“Thank you for joining this group discussion. We’re here to better understand how fathers like you think about early childhood education (ECE) for children. There are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share your honest thoughts. Everything shared here will be confidential and only used for academic research.”

1. General Understanding

- What comes to your mind when you hear “Early Childhood Education”?
- In your opinion, what is the ideal age for a child to start any kind of education?
- What is your perception about preschool education?

2. Beliefs and Perceptions about Benefits and Relevance

- What benefits, if there are any, do you think ECE provides for children?
- Do you believe ECE helps children perform better later in school?
- How do you think ECE supports children’s emotional, social, or mental development?

3. Reasons for Not Enrolling Children in ECE

- Can you share why you have not enrolled your child in any early education program?
- Was it a conscious decision, or did it happen due to circumstances?
- Have you ever thought about sending your child to an early education program, but then decided not to? If yes, what made you change your decision?

4. Barriers Faced (Financial, Cultural, Availability, etc.)

- Are there any financial limitations that prevent enrollment in ECE?

- Are there any personal, family, or social influences that play a role in your decision about early education for your child?
- Is there any issue with the availability or quality of nearby preschools?

5. Attitudes Toward NGO or Private ECE Institutions

- Would you prefer government-supported options? Why or why not?
- Have you heard about NGO-run or private early education programs in your area? If so, what have you heard or what do you know about them?"
- What would make you feel more confident enrolling your child in such programs?

Closing Script

“Thank you all for sharing your views. Your thoughts are extremely valuable and will help in understanding how middle-class families perceive early education. Your voices will inform future programs and policies to make ECE more accessible and meaningful.

গবেষণা উপকরণ: ফোকাস গ্রুপ নির্দেশিকা (Interview Guide)

ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য (Demographic Information)

- অংশগ্রহণকারীর কোড
- বয়স
- শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা
- পেশা
- সন্তানের সংখ্যা
- বসবাসের এলাকা
- সন্তানের বয়স

ভূমিকা (Introduction Script)

“আমাদের এই আলোচনায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ। আমরা জানতে চাই বাবারা কীভাবে শিশুদের প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা (Early Childhood Education – ECE) সম্পর্কে ভাবেন। এখানে কোনো সঠিক বা ভুল উত্তর নেই। আপনি আপনার নিজের কথা খোলাখুলিভাবে বলতে পারেন। আপনার পরিচয় গোপন রাখা হবে এবং শুধুমাত্র গবেষণার কাজে ব্যবহার করা হবে।”

১. সাধারণ ধারণা (General Understanding)

- “শিশুর প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা” কথাটি শুনলে আপনার মনে কী আসে?
- আপনার মতে, শিশুরা কত বছর বয়সে শিক্ষা শুরু করা উচিত?
- আপনি প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষার গুরুত্ব কীভাবে দেখেন?

২. উপকারিতা ও প্রাসঙ্গিকতা সম্পর্কে বিশ্বাস (Beliefs and Perceptions about Benefits and Relevance)

- আপনার মতে, শিশুরা ECE থেকে কী ধরনের উপকার পায়?

- আপনি কি বিশ্বাস করেন ECE ভবিষ্যতে স্কুলে ভালো করতে সাহায্য করে?

- আপনি কীভাবে মনে করেন ECE শিশুর জ্ঞানীয়, সামাজিক বা আবেগগত বিকাশে ভূমিকা রাখে?

৩. সন্তানকে ECE-তে না পাঠানোর কারণ (Reasons for Not Enrolling Children in ECE)

- আপনি কেন আপনার সন্তানকে প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা প্রোগ্রামে ভর্তি করেননি?

- এটি কি আপনার ব্যক্তিগত সিদ্ধান্ত, নাকি পারিবারিক/সামাজিক প্রভাবের কারণে হয়েছে?

- কখনো কি ভেবেছেন ভর্তি করবেন, কিন্তু করেননি? কেন?

৪. প্রতিবন্ধকতা ও সীমাবদ্ধতা (Barriers Faced – অর্থনৈতিক, সাংস্কৃতিক, সচেতনতার অভাব)

- অর্থনৈতিক কারণে কি আপনার সন্তানকে ECE-তে পাঠাতে পারেননি?

- পরিবার বা সমাজের কারো মতামত কি এই সিদ্ধান্তকে প্রভাবিত করেছে?

- আপনার এলাকায় কি প্রাক-প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা কেন্দ্র আছে? থাকলে সেগুলো সম্পর্কে আপনার মতামত কী?

৫. এনজিও ও বেসরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রতি দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি (Attitudes Toward NGO or Private ECE Institutions)

- আপনি কি সরকার পরিচালিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে বিশ্বাস করেন? কেন?

- আপনি কি এনজিও বা প্রাইভেট প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা প্রোগ্রামের কথা শুনেছেন? শুনে থাকলে কী ধারণা করেছেন?

- কোন শর্তে আপনি আপনার সন্তানকে এ ধরনের প্রতিষ্ঠানে পাঠাতে আগ্রহী হবেন?

সমাপ্তি বক্তব্য (Closing Script)

“আপনার মতামত ও অভিজ্ঞতা শেয়ার করার জন্য অনেক ধন্যবাদ। আপনার মতামত আমাদের জন্য অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ এবং এটি আমাদের

বুঝতে সাহায্য করবে কীভাবে বিভিন্ন পরিবার প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষাকে দেখে। ভবিষ্যতের প্রোগ্রাম ও নীতি নির্ধারণে আপনার মতামত মূল্যবান

ভূমিকা রাখবে, যাতে ECE আরও কার্যকর ও সবার জন্য সহজপ্রাপ্য হয়।”

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title of the Thesis Proposal: Middle-Class Parents' Perceptions of Early Childhood Education for Children Aged 3 to 5 Years in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Researcher

Khorshed Jahan

Purpose of the Research:

This research is being conducted as part of the requirement for the master's degree in early childhood development at the Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRAC University. The aim of this study is to explore parents' understanding, perceptions, and practices regarding early childhood education (ECE) for children between the ages of 3 to 5 years in the context of Bangladesh.

What is Expected from You:

If you agree to participate, you will be invited to take part in an individual interview and/or a focus group discussion (FGD). You will be asked to share your views, experiences, and expectations regarding early childhood education, including what you consider important for your child's early learning, development, and school readiness. The interview or discussion will take around 60 to 90 minutes, depending on your responses.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no known risks associated with your participation in this study. While there may be no direct benefit to you, your insights will help contribute to a better understanding of how Bangladeshi parents view early childhood education. This knowledge may assist educators, institutions, and policymakers in developing more effective, inclusive, and supportive ECE programs.

Privacy, Anonymity, and Confidentiality:

All the information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. Your name or any personal identifiers will not appear in the final report or any published materials. The data will only be used for academic and research purposes.

Future Use of Information:

Some information from this research may be used in future academic work. However, any such use will maintain complete anonymity and confidentiality, and will not reveal your identity in any way.

Right to Decline or Withdraw:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the right to refuse or withdraw from study at any time, without giving any reason and without facing any consequences.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign in the space below.

Name of the Parent/Guardian: _____

Signature of the Parent/Guardian: _____

Name of the Researcher: Khorshed Jahan

Signature of the Researcher: _____

Thank you very much for your valuable time and cooperation.

If you have any questions or would like more information, feel free to contact me:

Phone: [01788290792]

Email: [khorshed.jahan18@gmail.com]

অনুমোদিত থিসিস বিষয়:

ঢাকা শহরের মধ্যবিত্ত পরিবারের অভিভাবকদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি: ৩ থেকে ৫ বছর বয়সী শিশুদের প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষার প্রসঙ্গে

গবেষক:

[খোরশেদ জাহান]

গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য:

এই গবেষণাটি ব্র্যাক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ইনস্টিটিউট অব এডুকেশন ডেভেলপমেন্ট (IED)-এর “প্রারম্ভিক শিশু উন্নয়ন” বিষয়ক স্টাডির অংশ। গবেষণার মূল উদ্দেশ্য হলো ৩ থেকে ৫ বছর বয়সী শিশুদের প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা (ECE) বিষয়ে বাংলাদেশের মধ্যবিত্ত পরিবারের অভিভাবকদের জ্ঞান, ধারণা এবং অভ্যাস বিশ্লেষণ করা।

ডেটা সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি:

এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য স্বেচ্ছাসেবক অনুমোদন নেওয়া হয়েছে। তথ্য সংগ্রহের জন্য একক সাক্ষাৎকার এবং/বা ফোকাস গ্রুপ ডিসকাশন (FGD) ব্যবহার করা হয়েছে।

গবেষণা উদ্দেশ্য:

এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণকারীদের অভিজ্ঞতা, মতামত এবং প্রতিক্রিয়া বিশ্লেষণ করা হবে, যাতে ভবিষ্যতে শিশুদের প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা, নৈতিকতা এবং ক্ষমতা বৃদ্ধির প্রস্তুতি সম্পর্কে সম্যক ধারণা পাওয়া যায়। সাক্ষাৎকার বা আলোচনা প্রায় ৬০ মিনিট থেকে ৯০ মিনিটের মধ্যে সম্পন্ন হতো।

ঝুঁকি ও গ্রহণযোগ্যতা:

এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণকারীর কোনো ঝুঁকি নেই। তবে এর মাধ্যমে অংশগ্রহণকারীর তাৎক্ষণিক ব্যক্তিগত অভিমত প্রকাশিত হবে, যা গবেষণার বৃহত্তর উদ্দেশ্যের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা রাখবে। এই জ্ঞান শিশুদের প্রারম্ভিক শিক্ষা প্রোগ্রাম, প্রতিষ্ঠান ও নীতিনির্ধারকদের সহায়তা করতে সক্ষম হবে।

গোপনীয়তা ও তথ্য সংরক্ষণ:

অংশগ্রহণকারীর প্রদত্ত সব তথ্য সম্পূর্ণ গোপনীয়ভাবে সংরক্ষণ করা হবে। অংশগ্রহণকারীর নাম বা পরিচয় সম্পর্কিত ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য গবেষণার চূড়ান্ত প্রতিবেদনে প্রকাশ করা হবে না। সংগৃহীত তথ্য শুধুমাত্র একাডেমিক গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্যে ব্যবহার করা হবে।

তথ্য ভবিষ্যতে ব্যবস্থাপনা:

এই গবেষণার মাধ্যমে প্রাপ্ত তথ্য ভবিষ্যতে একাডেমিক কাজে ব্যবহৃত হবে। কোনো পরিস্থিতিতেই অংশগ্রহণকারীর ব্যক্তিগত তথ্য প্রকাশ করা হবে না এবং তথ্য নিরাপদে সংরক্ষিত থাকবে।

অংশগ্রহণ প্রত্যাখ্যান বা প্রত্যাহারের অধিকার:

এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণ সম্পূর্ণ স্বেচ্ছাসেবী। অংশগ্রহণকারীরা যে কোনো সময়, কোনো কারণ উল্লেখ না করেই, অংশগ্রহণ থেকে বিরত থাকতে বা প্রত্যাহার করতে পারেন। অংশগ্রহণ না করা বা প্রত্যাহারের ফলে কোনো প্রভাব পড়বে না।

অনুমোদন স্বাক্ষর:

অংশগ্রহণকারীর নাম: _____

অংশগ্রহণকারীর স্বাক্ষর: _____

গবেষক নাম: খোরশেদ জাহান

গবেষক স্বাক্ষর: _____

আমার সম্মতি এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য স্বেচ্ছাসেবীভাবে প্রদান করা হলো।

যদি আমার কোনো প্রশ্ন থাকে বা আমি গবেষণা সম্পর্কে আরও জানতে চাই, আমি নিম্নলিখিত মাধ্যমে যোগাযোগ করতে পারি:

ফোন: 01788290792

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