

# PARENTS' PERCEPTION REGARDING ONLINE LEARNING FOR PRE-SCHOOLERS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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

Brac Institute of Educational Development  
Brac University  
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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

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

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## **Approval**

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## **Ethics Statement**

Title of Thesis Topic: Parents' Perception regarding Online Learning for  
Pre-schoolers during COVID-19 Pandemic

Student name: Nabila Islam

1. Source of population: Parents with 3-5 years old children studying in different English medium schools in Dhaka city
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 -yes
  - d) Sensitive questions -yes
  - e) Benefits to be derived -yes
  - f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study -yes
  - g) Confidential handling of data -yes
  - h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved -  
yes
4. Will Signed verbal consent for be required (yes or no)
  - a) from study participants -yes
  - b) from parents or guardian -n/a
  - 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

### **Ethical Review Committee:**

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## **Executive Summary**

In March 2020, nationwide school closure was announced to reduce the spread of novel Coronavirus. Like other countries in the world, a rapid rise of online learning has been observed in Bangladesh in the replacement of traditional face to face learning which caused extra responsibility on parents. This study intended to know parents' perceptions regarding online learning during this pandemic. Parents with 3-5 years old children studying in different English medium schools in Dhaka city were interviewed. Content analysis technique was conducted to analyze parental responses. The results indicate that parents understand and acknowledge the importance of online learning to support the continuity of children's learning process. In general, parents were satisfied with the level of support provided by the school committees but as online learning is a new system so parents described facing challenges with balancing responsibilities, network accessibility, adjustment with online learning, and learning outcomes. The study recommends the need for a larger-scale research for better understanding and evidence. Recommendations from the study further suggest the need for orientations and workshops for parents, capacity development of teachers, and systematic changes at the government level for long-term solutions.

**Keywords:** Online learning, Parents, Perception, Pre-schooler, COVID-19

## **Dedication**

*This thesis is dedicated to my parents, husband, and little son.*

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## **List of Acronyms**

**COVID:** Corona Virus Disease

**ECD:** Early Childhood Development

**GD:** Group Discussion

**IDI:** In-depth Interview

**MoPME:** Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

**MoE:** Ministry of Education

**NGO:** Non-governmental Organization

**UNESCO:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNICEF:** United Nations Children's Fund

**UN:** United Nation

**US:** United States

**WHO:** World Health Organization

# **Chapter I**

## **Introduction & Background**

### **Introduction**

The COVID-19 has outspread all over the world and caused the majority of countries to announce the temporary closure of schools (UNESCO, 2020). At present, around 1.6 billion children and youth are out of school in 188 countries, which represents over 91.3% of the total enrolled learners (UN, 2020). This pandemic is distressing the opportunities for young children to learn, play, and grow holistically. According to Szente (2020), “children’s lives got turned upside down as they could no longer engage in their typical daily routines amid the COVID-19 disaster.” Due to this pandemic, at least 40 million children across the world have missed out on early childhood education in their crucial pre-school years as the COVID-19 has shut the childcare centers and early learning facilities (UNICEF, 2020).

In this uncertain situation, to support the continuity of learning, the regime of online learning has arisen worldwide where teaching is conducted remotely by using digital platforms (Li & Lalani, 2020). Like other countries in the world, Bangladesh Government has taken a number of initiatives to facilitate remote learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support the continuity of learning for school level children; currently, a state-run television channel is broadcasting the learning contents for pre-primary and primary graded children and also in collaboration with government, development sectors and NGO entities are also working to facilitate remote learning contents to reach a maximum number of students (Ministry of Primary & Mass Education and Ministry of Education, 2020). A few days after the nationwide school closure, many private schools had turned to online learning as a

solution to the learning disruption of the children. Presently in Dhaka city, several educational institutions including pre-schools have launched online classes for young children; mostly English-medium and English-version schools are conducting online classes on a limited scale due to the continuation of the coronavirus lockdown in Bangladesh (Sultana, 2020).

Being the primary caregivers, parents play a significant role in the process of children's learning and development and this online learning regime has given additional responsibilities to the parents. Since the educator is not present physically to monitor, parents/caregivers become the ones who are placed in an emergency home-schooling role (Szente, 2020). As parents are required to play an active role in guiding their children to study online in the home environment, for some parents, taking on these new roles may add extra workload and several challenges might be there in online learning such as limitations in media resources, limited time, mastery of technology (Situmorang & Purba, 2020).

Online learning has been promoted widely around the world to work as a substitute for traditional learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dong, et al., 2020). Since attending school in person is not an option at this time, thus online learning is serving as an alternative for children's learning although there remains a debate among experts regarding it; some scholars argue that young children should not be exposed to technologies for learning and some claim it to be advantageous (Clements & Sarama, 2003). However, all these arguments merely reflect the perspectives of scholars and educators, but it is also important to know the views of parents who are one of the most important stakeholders in children's learning process (Dong, et al., 2020). There has been little exploration of the perspectives of parents' who are the primary caregivers of the children; especially, a scarcity of studies has been observed

in the context of Bangladesh. Concerning this, this study intended to explore the understanding, beliefs & attitudes of parents towards online learning, and also gain an insight into their experiences, challenges, and felt needs regarding their pre-school aged children's online learning regime during this COVID era.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The global outburst of COVID-19 has radically changed almost every aspect of life including education, and Bangladesh has not been an exception to these changes. The government of Bangladesh has declared school closure in the middle of March, to reduce the spread of Coronavirus (Zaman, 2020). This time the schools are closed for the longest period that has ever happened in past (UN, 2020). To minimize the learning gaps due to school closure, an abrupt shift has occurred from traditional to virtual learning systems which is a new thing to adopt for both the parents and the children. As Fontanesi, et al. (2020) suggest, this adoption can be challenging for some parents, and also there can be several other stressors for them to deal with, such as concerns about the economic and physical condition of the family, concerns about children's social isolation from peers and teachers, and also about the management, duration, and outcomes of homeschooling.

Early years are the foundation of human life, so the process of children's learning, playing and development in the early years should not get disrupted because of the pandemic or any other adverse situation. Due to this lockdown, children are confined at home for a long period without any social contact or interaction. This uncertainty and anxiety is a real concern, with disruptions to children's education as well as to their time with friends, for exploration and play (Ramchandani, 2020). This can also cause children to feel isolated, anxious, bored, and they may feel fear, and grief over the effect of the virus on their families (WHO, 2020).

At present, worldwide more than half a billion children (Cohen & Kupferschmidt, 2020) have been enforced to become virtual-school learners as they shelter in their homes, while parents, siblings, and other family members have taken on the new role of learning facilitators, pseudo-teachers, and coaches (Garbe, et al., 2020). Many parents were not prepared for this abrupt transition and they many find difficulties to cope up with this. In an online learning system, parents need to take on the role of a teacher for their children (Loehrke & Zaiets, 2020) which may have offered new opportunities and unexpected challenges to the young children and their parents. According to a recent study by Bitterly (2020), parents are facing several challenges with online learning such as keeping their children focused on schoolwork (instead of other online activities), establishing a daily routine, balancing household responsibilities and teaching, balancing working from home and teaching, and so on. A recent study conducted in the Chinese context illustrates that, the parents inclined to resist and reject online learning for the shortcomings of online learning, young children's inadequate self-regulation, and their lack of time and professional knowledge in supporting children's online learning (Dong, et al., 2020).

As the studies suggest that online learning has become an integral part of children's learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hence, there is significance to have a better understanding of Bangladeshi parents' beliefs, attitudes, challenges, and felt needs regarding children's online learning during this lockdown period.

## **Operational Definition**

**Online Learning:** According to Wikipedia (2020), online learning is a process in which virtual classes are offered over the internet, it is the newest development in distance education that began in the mid-1990s with the spread of the internet and the World Wide Web.

**Parents:** A father or mother; one who begets, gives birth to or nurtures and raises a child (Marriam-Webstar dictionary online, n.d.). According to Wikipedia (2020), ‘a parent is the caretaker of a child.’ In this study, both the fathers and mothers will be considered as ‘parents.’

**Pre-schoolers:** a child who is not old enough to go to a formal school (Cambridge English Dictionary online, n.d.). Children who are no longer babies but are not yet old enough to go to school are sometimes referred to as preschoolers (Collins Dictionary online, n.d.). In this study, 3-5 years old children are denoted as ‘pre-schoolers’.

**Perceptions:** Insight or intuition gained by perceiving (Collins Dictionary online, n.d.). Perception is a multifaceted concept that involves the way one sees the world and a powerful driving force for action (McDonald, 2012). It is "an individual's or group's unique way of viewing a phenomenon that involves the processing of stimuli and incorporates memories and experiences in the process of understanding" (McDonald, 2012). Parents' perceptions are defined as parents' thoughts regarding online learning for their children. In this study, perceptions of both the fathers' and mothers' perceptions will be considered.

**COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic, also known as the Coronavirus pandemic, is an ongoing pandemic of Coronavirus disease 2019. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (Wikipedia, 2020).

## **Purpose of the Study**

The key purpose of this study is to gather the information reflecting the perceptions of the parents of 3-5 years old children's online learning and how parents support their pre-school aged children's early learning by using virtual medium due to the school closure because of COVID -19 pandemic. This study intended to know what parents' understandings are about this online learning system and also how they perceive it for their young children's learning.

As Erdogan et al. (2019) assert, 'since parents' beliefs and attitudes about the role and the potential of online learning for young children can influence the quality and quantity of online learning, opportunities, and learning experiences children receive at home'' (as cited in Dong, et al., 2020, p.1), therefore, there was an effort to understand the attitudes and beliefs of parents around this system.

Furthermore, it was tried to know what parents' experiences are with this new learning system. Since, the concept of 'online learning' is new in Bangladesh, so it was assumed that there could be some challenges faced by the parents to adopt and support their preschool-aged children's early learning by using digital platforms.

Besides that, this study had also given efforts to identify the factors that are influencing the quality of learning and also parents' self-identified needs to support children's online classes.

## **Significance of the Study**

Reviews on existing literature suggest that the importance of online learning for children during this pandemic has been recognized worldwide to support the continuity of children's learning process. Therefore, there is a requirement to shed light on this ongoing, unprecedented issue. However, as already mentioned there has



been very little exploration of the field of parents' perceptions regarding online learning for their 3-5 years old children.

This study was different because the age of pre-school children is 3-5 years and at this age, children may face problems in accessing technology for an extensive period.

Therefore, it is necessary to investigate in detail that how should be the implementations of online learning in pre-schools during this pandemic period so that it can help in providing solutions to online learning that can be carried out in the future during any emergent situations like COVID-19. Consequently, this can be a significant study on the evidence of what parents are thinking of this new system and what challenges they are facing to adopt it to support children's online learning in the context of Bangladesh.

This study analyzed the experiences, struggles, and felt needs of the parents in an online environment which could yield helpful data and guide the policymakers and the program designers in making interventions and policies in the future.

Moreover, the generated information of this study sheds light on the current scenario of how parents perceive this new concept 'online learning' for their pre-school aged children which may help the concerned stakeholders and authorities to work on the betterment of the knowledge, attitude, and practices of parents to support their children's online learning during COVID-19 situation. It also generated information on the gaps and obstructions that subsist in the online learning system which can support future advocacy.

Additionally, this study can help other researchers to develop research questions and this can be a background for a larger-scale study in the Bangladeshi context to gain an understanding of the school closure impacts on parents of pre-school aged children.

This study can also be a source of information for Early Childhood Development practitioners if they want to provide any intervention for the parents to facilitate their 3-5 years old children's online learning during emergencies.

## **Research Topic & Research Questions**

### **Research Topic**

Parents' Perception regarding Online Learning for Pre-schoolers during COVID-19 Pandemic.

This study tried to explore the perceptions of parents regarding online learning for their pre-school (3-5) aged children studying in English medium schools in Dhaka city. The focus was on parents' understanding, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, challenges, and their felt needs regarding the online learning system which is not largely explored. But parents' understanding, belief, and attitude play a significant role in the quality and outcome of children's online learning.

Therefore, exploring parents' perceptions, experiences and challenges will contribute to improving the online learning quality during any emergencies like this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the understandings of parents about online learning?
2. What are parents' beliefs and attitudes towards online learning for their pre-schoolers during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What are parents' experiences and challenges encountered by them with online classes of their children during COVID-19?
4. What are the needs felt by the parents regarding online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic?

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

To get an insight into this topic, relevant literature has been reviewed. This section will highlight the literature on different aspects of children's online learning during this COVID-19 pandemic.

#### ***Online Learning: A Panacea for Children's Learning Crisis during the COVID-19 Pandemic***

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020, and a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). To halt the virus transmission and cease the burden on health systems, countries around the globe brought unprecedented efforts to establish the practice of "social distancing"; therefore, many schools have been shut down (Dalton, et al., 2020). This pandemic has created the largest interruption of education systems in history (UN, 2020). This school closure is an unparalleled disruption in the lives of billions of children and adolescents worldwide (Sheen, et al., 2020).

Several studies have demonstrated how the school closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has created a learning crisis among the children. The COVID Policy Report by UN (2020) states that children possess the highest risk of being amongst the major victims of any unfavorable condition; therefore, this pandemic is certainly distressing young children's physical and psychological well-being opportunities for playing, early learning, and other recreational activities. Since the schools are closed now, this school closure has far-reaching adverse effects on children's well-being through disruption of their health care, nutrition, security, education, and overall mental health

(Uddin, 2020). According to a recent UN (2020) report, children are being affected in various ways due to these lockdown measures, such as lack of access to regular classrooms, limited opportunities for socializing, restricted recreation facilities of outdoor play, and so on. Even though shifting learning to an online format has now become part of many educational systems around the globe, the closure of educational institutions due to preventive measures against the spread of COVID-19 has affected the education, well-being, and functioning of all parties involved and benefiting from educational systems in the world (Duraku & Hoxha, 2020). This lockdown has undeniably affected many children's physical attendance at schools and made online learning an emergent substitute to sustain the continuity of learning and play at home (Early Childhood Australia, 2020).

Online learning has developed as a new paradigm in the education system during the lockdown (Britstar, 2020). In this pandemic situation, to support children's learning at home, several countries worldwide are carrying out online curricula and distance learning options for children to ensure continuity and help parents and teachers access remote education services during the quarantine (UNICEF, 2020). Educational institutions worldwide are using the available technical resources to create online learning material for learners of all academic fields (Kaur, 2020). A recent report by UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (2020) suggests that online platforms have been the first to be rolled out to enable children to continue learning and are the most effective learning modality in getting some form of learning up and running.

This school closure has changed that education system intensely, and the most salient change of school closure was to force students to continue their education from home (Mcelrath, 2020). As Hicks (2020) suggests, during the pandemic, there has been documented a sharp increase in searches for learning resources as schools closed in

response to the COVID-19, nationwide search intensity had roughly doubled relative to baseline.

***Present Scenario of Online Learning for Children: Global and Bangladesh Context***

Online learning is the acquirement of knowledge that takes place through electronic technologies and media (Tamm, 2019). According to Cojocariu, et al. (2014), "as most of the terms (online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-mediated learning, blended learning, etcetera) have in common the capability to use a computer connected to a network that offers the option to learn from anywhere, anytime, in any rhythm, with any means."

A study reveals that from May 28 to June 2, when many schools were generally in session, 80% of people living with children reported the children were using online resources (Mcelrath, 2020). According to UNICEF (2020), more than 90 percent of the countries embraced digital or broadcast remote learning policies, but only 60 percent was for pre-primary education. This data also suggests that online platforms are the most used means by the governments to provide education while schools remain closed, with 83 percent of countries using this method. However, this allowed for potentially reaching only about a quarter of schoolchildren worldwide, and worldwide, 31 percent of school children (463 million) cannot be reached by the broadcast and internet-based remote learning policies either due to the lack of necessary technological assets at home, or because the adopted policies did not target them. Policies that provide remote learning opportunities at the pre-primary level are vital; recent estimates find that each dollar spent in increasing enrollment in pre-primary education returns \$9 in benefits to society in the form of reduced repetition, and dropout rates in primary and secondary school, and also better lifetime earnings for individuals (UNICEF, 2020).

The government of Bangladesh declared the closure of educational institutions on March 17, 2020, and they are still closed; therefore, about 3.7 million students and more than a million teachers are staying at home (Ahmed, 2020). In response to COVID-19, the government has taken the initiative to launch the Sangsad TV Live Class named, "Ghore bose Shikhi" for pre-primary and primary classes (MoPME & MoE, 2020). While government efforts to reach students appear to become fruitful regarding urban areas, but poor internet connections and a paucity of digital devices continue to deny many rural students to get access to such programs (Rafe, 2020). Several NGOs and private sectors also have taken initiatives to facilitate children's online learning. BRAC education program has taken initiatives to broadcast primary and secondary school classes on TV and pilot remote learning through basic phones for students in BRAC schools (Chowdhury, Islam, & Saltmarsh, 2020). JAAGO Foundation has launched a Digital School project with the idea of taking online classes for children to reduce the learning gap caused by COVID-19 (JAAGO, 2020). Some kindergarten schools situated in Dhaka city are also taking online classes for children of primary and pre-primary grades.

### ***Scholars' and Educators Views about Online Learning in Early Years***

In the context of the ever-increasing presence of information communication technologies (ICT) in young children's living and educational environments, early childhood education policies and curriculum have started to emphasize the importance of integrating ICT into early childhood practices and provide guidelines for the use of ICT in ECE settings (Dong, 2016). As Ager (2020) suggests, today's young children are growing up in a world where technology is used persistently and it has become a norm. During the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, virtual education activities have become more predominant than ever (Gaudreau, 2020). According to Kim (2020),

some researchers and educators believe that the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT) in preschool education is necessary and that it can support both the teachers' and children's development.

Nonetheless, there are mixed opinions among various scholars and educators regarding children's using technologies to learn online. Some authors have shared the view that computer/ICT use is not suitable for young children's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development, which has been replaced by the idea that, when used correctly, ICT can be an advantageous tool for supporting young children's learning and development (Bolstad, 2004). Few scholars also claim that technologies positively affect children's performance across developmental domains, particularly on social development (Hsin et al., 2014). According to Steinholf (2016), online learning positively impacts children since children develop improved hand-eye coordination and also motor skills, which helps them form clearer mental images, and enhance their problem solving capacities.

Another study claims that the effectiveness of online learning varies amongst age groups, and for younger children, a structured environment is required because they get easily distracted, and it may not give sufficient or appropriate opportunities to involve young children who need more interactions and hands-on activities to focus and learn compared to adult learners (Li & Lalani, 2020). A study by (Yen et al., 2009) warns about children using smartphones and says that excessive use of smartphones has been related with passive aggression, unprotected, socially incompatibility, addiction, and anxiety (as cited in Mustafigu, 2018).

Researches on the internet's possible effects on early literacy activities have explored whether the internet offers intentional and unintentional learning opportunities, and

the effect of the internet on early literacy is still not wholly understood (Coiro, et al., 2008). Few scholars are concerned about some severe online learning problems, such as social isolation, lack of interactivity and participation, delayed or insubstantial amount of feedback (Khurana, 2016). However, several scholars believe that parents should be cautious in modeling a proper technology use while also striking a balance between technology usage and other activities (Mustafaoglu et al., 2018). As Emilson and Folkesson (2006) argue, teachers and children's interactions are crucial in early years' education. It has been shown that young pre-schoolers can become active participants in their learning (as cited in Palmer, 2015).

According to a recent study, during this lockdown children's technology usage has been increased by 500% (Lang, 2020). Some studies discussed the possible side effect of using technologies in long run. A study conducted in the U.S suggests that there is a probability that a prolonged battle against the COVID-19 virus may lead to an increase in the incidence of Myopia by shaping long term behavioral changes conducive for the onset and progression of Myopia, it may be intuitive to link digital device usage to the increased time spent indoors and on near work, thus conferring an increased risk of myopia onset and progression in children (Wong, et al., 2020). This study also reveals that increased electronic device usage may negatively impact children's physical well-being. Another study by Pagani et al. (2010) states that the excessive use of technology in the early years is related to cognitive, language, and social/emotional delays in community-based researches. Palmer (2015) also argues that, spending long time on the computer from an early age can adversely affect children's academic success due to low concentration, lack of attention, disorganization, undeveloped language skills and creativity in young children. Scholars have suggested that concern should also be paid to the cognitive and



emotional effects that these technologies have on children's development (Brown, 2011).

### ***The Scenario of English Medium Schools in Bangladesh***

In Bangladesh, both govt. and non-govt. educational institutions moved their classes online, encouraging students to attend lectures via electronic devices (Arefin, 2020).

Learners in Bangladesh have relied on their families more than the internet and television broadcasts as a source of educational support (Asadullah, 2020).

Bangladesh's private schools quickly implemented online learning methods at the onset of the lockdown, offering lectures delivered via social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube (Rafe, 2020). Many English-medium schools in Bangladesh have started teaching their students online after the Bengali-medium schools began teaching students through TV and using social media. Several schools, including Sunnydale School in the capital, Golgotha English Medium School (James), South Point school have started teaching using social media like Facebook, Messenger, Whatsapp etcetera and the teachers are teaching and giving homework through video calls, and they said the students were enjoying it (Choudhury & Islam, 2020).

### ***Parents Perceptions of Online Learning: Global & Bangladesh Context***

Millions of parents have spent months largely confined at their homes with their children (Lang, 2020) and they are worried about their children's learning and struggling to keep their children's education on track during this global pandemic (UNICEF, 2020). A study shows that parents are worried about their children falling behind in online learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020).

Many parents, teachers, and students are trying to adjust to a new "routine" and the challenges involved in online learning (Delgado, 2020). Though the educational community largely considers parental engagement is important, little research has examined its effect in online learning environments (Steven & Borup, 2015).

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), most families have to take on the full-time role of supporting remote education; that is why shouldering the responsibilities resulted in struggles for parents.

Hollingworth et al. (2011) reveal that parental background and parents' own experiences with and attitudes towards digital media inform how parents mediate their children's digital media use (as cited in Livingstone et al., 2015, p. 11). The studies suggest that feelings towards online learning among parents for their young children are diverse, some parents feel more connected to their child's schoolwork, and some see it as an additional burden (Selwyn et al., 2011). There have been found diversity in parents' attitude towards children using technology as well. According to a recent study, parents reported being anxious about screen time impacts, 71% of parents said they are somewhat concerned their child might ever spend too much time in front of screens, and 31% of parents were very concerned about this (Pew Research Center, 2020). In contrast, another survey suggests that 81% of parents said the benefits of online learning outweigh concerns over screen time, and 84% believed that technology helps their children to be more self-sufficient (The Pearson and Connections Academy Parent Pulse Report, 2020).

This pandemic was sudden and unanticipated, and parents were not prepared for this shift, so they would find problems in balancing their work, home, and teaching duties to their children (Garbe, et al., 2020). Parents must take on new and unfamiliar roles,

and responsibilities as their children participate in online education while experiencing increasing instructional responsibility for their child's learning (Liu, et al., 2010). According to Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares (2009), sometimes parents struggle with understanding the role they should play in their children's online learning (as cited in Garbe, et al., 2020, p. 46). Parents who are not accustomed to using technology will be an obstacle and a challenge to teach their children to learn at home. It becomes challenging for working parents because working parents are left with virtually no time for their other full-time careers as teaching, caring for, and spending time with their children becomes a full-time job (Azuara, 2020).

According to a recent study, online learning has presented additional challenges for Indian mothers and the technicalities of learning tools and ensuring functional devices' availability came as a daily challenge is causing anxiety for some mothers (Sharma, 2020). A study by Sorensen (2012) revealed that, the most challenging aspects of online learning for parents are keeping their children on schedule while completing their coursework as the former and interactions with the child's online teachers as the latter. A recent study conducted in an English medium school situated in Dhaka city depicts that, even though there are few challenges that parents are facing with online learning, most of the parents claim that their children are enjoying their "new normal" and find the online classes playful and interactive (Hirji, 2020).

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

The chapter provides a brief overview of the research design used for the study.

#### **Research Participants**

In qualitative research, participants are selected who best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study (Sargeant, 2012). Since in this study, the perception of parents regarding online learning for their 3-5 years old children from English-medium schools was explored, therefore, parents of preschool-aged children from English-medium schools were the research participants of this study.

The study population in this research was the parents of the 3-5 years old children from English-medium schools in Dhaka city who are receiving online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sample size of this study was a group of eight parents (six mothers and two fathers) with at least one child aged between 3-5 years studying in different English medium schools in Dhaka city and the children were receiving online classes due to the school closure. There was a mix of working and non-working parents.

#### **Research Site**

The study was conducted in Dhaka city. The participants were from Kalabagan, Dhanmondi, Niketan, and Mohammadpur area in Dhaka metropolitan.

## **Research Approach**

The approach of this study was qualitative as the understanding of the perception and practices of parents in terms of supporting the pre-schoolers' online class is the focal point here. As per the definition of qualitative research, it is a process of gathering an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that shape such behavior through observation and subjective experience (Gay et al., 2012). This study tried to obtain a deep, reflective, and holistic understanding of the experiences of parents with the online learning system for their preschool-aged children emphasizing the participants' viewpoints.

When the study is about human behavior or social trends it is rather difficult to measure and express the data in quantifiable terms that researchers do in the quantitative study (Hancock, Ockieford, & Windridge, 2007). Therefore, the qualitative approach opted for this study.

## **Data Collection Methods**

Data collection was conducted by using different two tools, in-depth interviews (IDI) and group discussion guidelines. The data was collected over the phone considering the safety and movement restrictions due to the COVID situation. There were 4 in-depth interviews and 2 group discussions. Each group discussion consisted of three (3) participants.

The appointments for conducting the IDI and group discussions were fixed earlier for each participant as per the participants' convenient time. Each of them was explained with details about the process of IDI and group discussions. Interviews were semi-structured and in-depth. The IDI and group discussions began with some informal questions to make the participants comfortable so that they can share their experiences with ease.

Participant's age, socio-economic background information such as their educational background, their professions were collected through in-depth interviews, and group discussions. The data were recorded on an audio recorder and the important points were noted down manually. And finally, there was a wrap-up session by thanking the participants for their time, responses, and co-operation. The duration of each IDI and group discussions were approximately 45-60 minutes.

There were detailed-oriented, clarification, and elaboration probes to comprehend the real scenario as much as possible. Based on the research questions, a rich, extensive, and detailed description of each data were collected.

### **Sampling Procedure**

In this study, the 'purposive sampling' method was used to enroll the participants of this study. Purposive sampling is a widely used method in the field of qualitative research, which involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about experience with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

The objective of this study is very specific, therefore, to attain that objective there will be some specific criterion to guide the sample selection - the parents must have children between 3-5 years old, the children must be from English medium schools located in Dhaka city and presently receiving online classes due to the school closure caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative Data Analysis is usually based on an interpretive philosophy that analyzes the collected content of the data (Lewins, Taylor & Gibbs, 2010). In this continuous

process of qualitative data analysis of this study, content analysis technique was followed in analyzing the data.

Right after collecting the data, notes, and transcripts of each interview and group discussions were written down manually. The transcriptions had been read repeatedly to reflect. The accumulated data was organized and labeled with the respective participant's name/code, numbers, and the dates of conduction of the IDI and Group Discussions.

The themes were classified based on the participants' collective perceptions and experiences relevant to the issues being explored in the study. In this thematic categorization under each theme, there were participants' insights, thoughts, and opinions. Then from the interpretation of the data and based on those identified themes, there was a summarization of the thematic findings. Next, the information was triangulated from data derived from the participant for confirmation.

### **Ethical Issues**

The ethical principles were strictly followed in this study. At first, the proposal of this research was submitted for ethical approval from BRAC University ethical review committee. Before conducting the study, each participant was provided with the necessary information and explanation regarding the IDI and group discussion process which enabled them to make an informed decision as to whether they would take part in the study or not.

Respondents' verbal consents were taken and their voluntary participation was ensured. They were informed that they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without any condition. The participants were assured that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained firmly and their identity would not be disclosed and the provided information will not be used anywhere else other than this study.

Instead of real names, participant's pseudo names were used to represent each data. Besides that, participants were also assured that their provided information would be cited accurately without any kind of manipulation or alteration.

### **Validity & Reliability**

Reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality of research which indicate how well a method or technique measures something (Middleton, 2020). To ensure validity and reliability, the IDI questionnaire and group discussion guidelines were reviewed by the ECD experts before administering the study.

After receiving their approval, the questionnaire and guidelines were revised and incorporated with their feedback, and finalized for data collection. The content validity was assured through the opinions of the ECD specialists. Moreover, data was collected from two different sources: in-depth-interviews and group discussions and then the data were triangulated to ensure the reliability of the study. Moreover, piloting of the data collection tools was conducted to ensure validity, reliability, consistency and understandability. After piloting, some corrections were required and some changes in the tools were brought accordingly.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation, group discussions and IDI were not possible to conduct in person. And also, the observation of parental practices was not feasible. Another limitation to consider is that parents' perceptions of a few English-medium school children in Dhaka city were considered in this study, hence, it may not be possible to capture a bigger scenario.

As the sample size of the study contained a limited number of participants, therefore, it may not be applicable to generalize over the larger population. Besides that,



perceptions of an equal number of fathers and mothers were not possible to bring together. Nevertheless, these limitations did not influence the findings of the researcher and the research questions were answered.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results & Discussion**

This chapter presents the results and discussions that appeared from the data collected from the group discussions and in-depth-interviews on parents' perceptions regarding online for their pre-school-aged children. The findings were formed in thematic approaches identifying and analyzing various themes and sub-themes. The demographic profiles of the participants are presented at the beginning of this chapter. There are five main themes and several sub-themes underneath, categorized based on the research questions of the study. First, the results were gathered on parents' understanding of their pre-school children's online learning. Next, the results were gathered on parents' beliefs and attitudes towards the online learning system. Subsequently, the results were amassed on their experiences, and the challenges the parents encounter with this new system. Finally, parents shared their felt needs, followed by some suggestions to improve online learning quality. This section also presents the discussion, and conclusion followed by a few recommendations based on the results.

#### **Results**

The results of the study have been presented regarding the data gathered from four in-depth interviews and two group discussions of six mothers and two fathers. The findings are focused on the four research questions of the study, including exploring parents' understanding of their 3-5 years old children's online learning during COVID-19, their beliefs and attitude around this system, their experiences and felt needs in this regard. The findings were formed thematically by identifying themes and sub-themes based on the issues that emerged during the study. Parents'

perceptions were analyzed by thematic analysis under five themes and several sub-themes. In the following sections, the results are presented under different thematic headings and subheadings underneath.

### **Demographic Information**

A total of eight (N=8) parents were interviewed where six (6) were mothers and two (2) were fathers of 3-5 years old children. The age range of the parents was between 28-40 years. Among eight parents, three of the parents had two children, and the rest five parents had only one child. The educational qualification levels of the parents were post-graduation to post-doctorate. All the mothers who participated in the study were homemakers. The fathers' qualifications included a barrister working at a private law firm, and another father was a teacher in a reputed private university. The age range of the children was 3 years and 10 months to 5 years. Three of the children were male, and five were female. The children were from different English-medium schools located in Dhaka city. During the time of interviews and group discussions, all of their children were receiving online classes due to school closure due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Parents understanding of online learning before and during the COVID-19 pandemic**

This section presents the findings that answer the first research question of exploring parents' understanding. The findings presented under the themes describe parents' understanding of online learning before and during the pandemic, and also the importance of it during this pandemic period as per parents' opinions.

#### ***Knowledge about online learning before the pandemic***

Almost all the respondents seemed to be well acquainted with the term 'online learning.' Few of them explained online learning as a way of conducting classes on

online platforms by using digital devices such as laptops, desktops, mobile phones, tablets, etcetera. Except for one, the rest were familiar with online or digital learning even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Few of them informed that they knew about online learning considering a mode of adult education that is not intended for young children. In this regard, one of their responses is given below:

*“Previously, I had heard about online learning, such as online courses or distance learning, but I thought those were meant for the adults. I never imagined that someday even our children would attend classes by using a computer or mobile.” (IDI#2, 17-10-2020)*

#### ***Understanding of the importance of online learning during the pandemic***

Almost all the respondents had quite an explicit idea about online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. They acknowledged the importance of online learning during this period to support children's learning process. They stated that as the children are being deprived of attending physical schools, there is no other way other than continuing classes using online platforms. However, parents had diverse opinions about the online learning system during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the importance of online learning, one of their responses was,

*“As everything is closed due to COVID-19, including the schools, and there is no way to attend school physically, so I have positively accepted online learning as an alternative way for children’s learning. For example, my child is in playgroup, if his learning disrupts at this time that may hamper his studies in the future.”(Group discussion# 1, 16-10-2020)*

Almost all the respondents agreed that online class had become necessary in this COVID crisis; few respondents stated that it's better than keeping the study at a halt. As one respondent opined, *“considering the situation, online learning is better than*

*not learning at all, at least my child's education is continuing rather being completely stopped.*'' (IDI#2, 17-10-2020)

### **Parents' beliefs and attitudes towards online learning for their pre-schoolers during the COVID-19 pandemic**

This section presents the findings that serve the second research question of this study: parents' beliefs and attitudes towards different aspects of online learning. The data shows that most parents had relatively fewer positive beliefs and attitudes towards online education for their preschool-aged children. They explained their concerns regarding online learning, such as; the harmful effects of using devices for young children, lacking social interactions with peers, less opportunity for individualized learning, and they also shared their views about the materials used in the online classrooms.

#### ***Views on using technologies in the early years***

The majority of the parents expressed their concerns about children using technologies in the early years to attend classes. They informed that their children participate in online classes five times a week. Few of them shared that they were experiencing several adverse effects of using devices on their children. Most of them said that the devices used in online classes are not appropriate for this age; in contrast to this, one respondent discoursed that using a laptop to attend classes is okay for children. Few of the respondents strongly believed that their children were spending too much time online and facing some physical, emotional, and behavioural issues. Other than eye health, few respondents expressed their concerns about other health issues such as body and neck pain for not maintaining the right posture while sitting for online classes.

*“One of the negative effects of online learning is the little child has to keep staring at the screen for a long period and as there is no scope for movement so it may hamper the posture of the child's body. My child sometimes complains about back pain or shoulder pain.”* (Group discussion#2, 25-10-2020)

Few parents opined that online learning is detrimental to children's physical as well as mental health. As one respondent said,

*“I don't think online learning is suitable for a five years old child; it's stressful for her physical and mental health. But if we don't let them use devices, there is no other way they can attend the classes.”* (IDI#3, 21-10-2020)

Some respondents noticed their children being too addicted to devices, which is concerning to them. Few respondents were worried about children's eye health because of staring at the screen for too long. One respondent said that she is facing many difficulties with her child, who had a speech delay. She cited, *“since my child had a speech delay, his doctor prohibited screen time for him. So children with this sort of problem, which is quite common nowadays, should not use devices at all”* (IDI#2, 17-10-2020)

Interestingly, from two in-depth-interviews, different opinions have been observed. The respondents argued that, so far they did not notice any adverse effects of using technologies on their children and they are not facing any difficulties. One of their opinions were,

*“To be honest, I did not find anything negative about online learning. Online classes are for a short period. It is good that they are using technology for good. At least children are getting the fact that technology can serve*

*educational purposes as well, and it's not only for recreation.*'' (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)

However, few respondents had a neutral attitude towards children using technologies.

For example, one parent said that

*''Other than the pandemic situation using technologies is not ideal for children. But we need to keep in mind that the situation is not normal, so using technologies would be the best option''.* (IDI#2, 17-1-2020)

### ***Interactions with peers***

Most of the parents expressed their concerns regarding their children's lack of social interactions with peers. As in online classes, they are not able to interact and play with fellow children. The data indicate that parents believe that traditional schools were better than online classes. Few parents informed that their children are eagerly waiting for their school to re-open and meet their peers. In this regard, one respondent said, *'' actually, my child misses her friends as it is long since she met them. She keeps asking me when she will be able to attend schools''* (IDI#3, 21-10-2020) While another respondent commented, *''my child is missing playing and sharing his tiffin in school.*'' (IDI#1, 15-10-2020)

Some respondents stated that children learn moral standards, ethical values, and social skills through social interaction. In online classes, it is not imaginable to learn those skills. One respondent opined that

*''It's a very negative thing in online classes that children are not getting a chance to interact with peers and teachers like before; this may hamper their relationship with others and damage their social skills''.* (IDI#3, 21, 10-2020)

Few respondents considered lack of social interaction as one of the most significant shortcomings of the virtual learning system. In this regard, one parent cited that,

*‘I think the biggest challenge of online learning is children's lack of social interaction. Children need more face to face interaction than virtual interaction, such as playing with peers. Children learn from their environment more than they learn from books.’ (IDI#4, 24-10-2020)*

Some respondents described general concerns about children's social and emotional development due to fewer interactions with peers. They expressed their concerns about children's social development and worried about the consequence in the future; they said that this might leave long-term impacts on children's social and emotional behaviour. One of them reflected on this,

*‘At this age, children have the capabilities to make a friend, and this should be nurtured. But in online classes, there is no scope to make friends or being social. I don't know the consequences, whether my child will be unsocial in the future. I don't know, but this is very bad.’ (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)*

Another respondent who had a child in which speech delay expressed her concerns,

*‘This is impacting negatively. First of all, the child's interaction skill is diminishing. My child's therapist asked me to keep my child busy in different activities and interact with other children so that he can learn from them.’ (IDI#2, 17-10-2020)*

### ***Learning outcomes***

Parents showed diverse opinions regarding their concerns about the learning outcomes of online learning. Most parents said they are worried about online learning's learning outcome since children's holistic learning is not feasible here. Parents depicted their concerns regarding online learning in various ways; most parents are concerned as their children do not learn social skills in online learning. Some of the responses are mentioned below:



*“There are more aspects of educations like physical play or social interaction skills, which is an essential part of education that is not being fulfilled. So I am concerned that my child was not learning these in online classes. As my child had a speech delay, so I believe if he could interact with others in school, I believe his development would have been much better.” (IDI#2, 17-10-2020)*

Few parents said online learning is suitable only for this uncertain situation; they will be concerned if it continues for a long time. One of the parents said, *“If online learning is for a short time, I have no objection, but if it stays for a long time, it will bring negative outcomes”.* (IDI#3, 21-10-2020)

### **Parents’ experiences with online learning for their pre-schoolers during the COVID-19 pandemic**

This section is aligned with the findings that answer the third research question of exploring the parents' experiences with online learning for their preschool-aged children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here the parents shared their experiences about engaging in children's online classes, and their practices to support children’s learning. Also, parents discussed the practices of the teachers in online classrooms.

#### ***Effectiveness of online learning in pre-school years***

The majority of the respondents said that online learning is not effective to fulfill children's individualized needs like face-to-face learning systems. They have discussed four distinct limitations as the barriers to effective online learning; limitation in time, limitation in technology, lack of hands-on experiences, no scope for individualized teaching and learning. Parents opined about the effectiveness of online learning inversely. Few parents considered online learning as an effective way for preschool-aged children. One of them cited that,

*“Yes, it is somewhat effective. But I don't know if it will remain effective in the long-term for such young children. Maybe some days later we will get to know. It would be more effective if both the teacher and students co-operate with each other.” (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)*

However, few parents discoursed that online learning is partially effective and may not have full effectiveness in children's learning at pre-school age. Their opinions drawn from the Group discussions are as followed:

*“Children at this age do not learn just by reading books; they also learn from their peers and surroundings. So I cannot say that online learning is fully effective or ineffective, it is 30 to 40% effective, could have been 100% effective, if there were a chance for hands-on experiences.” (Group Discussion#2, 25-10-2020)*

Few respondents reflected that children's holistic learning is not possible in the online learning environment as there are no scopes for on-hand experiences like a physical school setting. One of their opinions regarding this was,

*“In online learning, children know and learn various things at home, but all-rounded learning is not being possible as they are not getting the chance of practical experiences. So yes, they are somewhat deprived.” (IDI#3, 21-10-2020)*

However, the data from the group discussions indicated that two parents had different opinions in this regard. They said that as teachers try to pay attention to children's individualized needs, individualized learning is possible. One of them said,

*“I have observed some children are not staying focused and getting distracted repeatedly or doing something else during the class. The teachers*

*notice each detail, and by mentioning their names, teachers asking them to concentrate.” (Group discussion#2, 25-10-2020)*

The majority of the respondents discoursed that online learning could be a short-term solution, but cannot be much effective in the long run and cannot be an alternative for the mainstream education system. They consider the suitability of online learning is only for this unprecedented COVID-19 era. As some of them stated,

*“This cannot be a substitute for the mainstream education. It can just complement mainstream education. It can be there as a complementary tool, not as the main feature.” (IDI# 4, 24-10-2020)*

*‘If online learning is for a short time, I am okay with it. But if it continues to be longer, I would be concerned for my child; it may bring negative results.’ (IDI#3, 21-10-2020)*

Few respondents said that online learning could not serve as an alternative for the traditional schools because it doesn’t allow children to learn the social norms and values and other social skills like playing, sharing with peers, etcetera. One respondent cited that, *‘in schools, children learn social values; they learn the value of friendships and other skills missing in online classes.’ (IDI#3, 21-10-2020)*

However, most respondents agreed that online learning is serving to continue the learning process when the schools remain closed for the pandemic. One parent’s views regarding it are given below:

*“It’s better to attend online classes rather totally being detached from studies. They are attending online classes; there, they follow a routine that would not be possible otherwise”. (GD#2, 25-10-2020)*

### ***Parents' engagement in children's online classes***

Almost all the mothers informed that they need to keep sitting beside their children when they attend the online classes to supervise and monitor children's learning, while the fathers informed that they cannot attend child's online classes because of their work schedule. Some parents stated that since children have a short attention span, they need to sit with them to get distracted by anything. Some parents said that they enjoyed it, and this could be an excellent chance to create a better bonding between the parents and children and make their relationship friendlier. As one parent stated,

*''If I stay with my child in the online class, she becomes more attentive. When she does not understand any instructions, I help her. This can create a friendly relationship with mother and child.''* (IDI#3, 21-10-2020)

One respondent shared that initially, she used to sit with her child, but later, the child was able to operate by herself and attending the classes without the help of her parents,

*''Initially, I used to sit for 40 mins, but now she understands the fact that it's time to study, so she does it by herself. But when I used to sit with her, I enjoyed it as it was a new thing for me. But now, we are taking it normally.''* (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)

### ***Ensuring the home environment for effective online learning***

About ensuring a suitable home atmosphere to support children's online classes, almost every respondent informed that they had to make a special arrangement for their children's online classes. Most of them said that they did not have to buy any new devices; few parents said they bought new devices. Earlier, when they heard that online classes would take place instead of regular classes, they had taken preparations

like keeping a separate room for a child's online class; ensure a quiet and calm environment, making the settings like school, etcetera. Respondents had different options about decorating their home setting to support their children's classes. Few of them said that they made a small library and created a school-like environment to feel like a school.

*“ I turned my computer table into a reading table for my child. I tried to create a study environment. I made a small library as well. I think there should be a school like feeling, and the environment should be like school.”*

(Group discussion#1, 16-10-2020)

According to another respondent, *“I kept a fixed place for the classes and arranged the settings like school. I never change the place.”* (Group discussion#1, 16-10-2020)

Almost all the parents firmly stated that children must be provided with a quiet room without any disturbance or sound to continue online classes as young children tend to get distracted easily. They shared their opinions in this regard.

*“When the pandemic started, I first discontinued my child's online learning, but as it was getting long and there is no certainty of school being re-open, therefore, I decided to let my child attend online classes. I arranged a room where there are lots of lights and air, and my child gets a feeling of the school.”* (Group Discussion# 2, 25-10-2020)

Most of the respondents said they have made sure that they have taken measures to ensure internet connectivity doesn't disrupt the classes. As one of them stated, *“All the time, I had to make sure that my internet connection doesn't get disrupted. And of course, the place should be quiet so that she can concentrate.”* (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)

### ***Role of the teachers in online classes***

The majority of the respondents accepted that the teachers are working efficiently to keep them focused and ensure active engagement in online classes. Still, sometimes they feel difficulties keeping children focused throughout the class period. Most of them believed that as the system is new to everyone, teachers are still playing active roles and giving their utmost efforts to bring the best from the children. In this regard, one respondent opined that,

*“ I have noticed that earlier teachers would face problems, but now they are doing it quite efficiently. They are trying to balance everything. Initially, the teachers used to make groups of 20-25 students, but now they have reduced it to 7 or 8. Collaborating with the guardians, they are trying to keep the children engaged in the online classes.”* )GD#1,16-10-2020 (

Few parents also informed that they appreciate the teachers' strategies to hold the children's attention and make the classes more interactive and playful.

Some respondents said encouraging children's learning teachers followed various teaching tactics like telling fascinating stories, reciting rhymes, showing children attractive toys, and keeping children busy in different activities not to feel monotonous. In this regard, a respondent stated, *"I am quite pleased with my kid's school teachers. They are doing their best, and my child remains engaged through the class period."* (IDI#1, 16-10-2020 )

Few respondents commented in such a way, which may indicate that online learning has its limitations for teaching. One of them said,

*“There are some weaknesses or limitations in the online platform itself, and teachers cannot do much about it. But I think if teachers remain a little more*

*cautious, they can individually respond to the children so that children can feel better. (Group discussion #2, 25-10-2020)*

Few parents mentioned that even teachers are giving their best, but still few issues remain unsolved which might act as a barrier to children's learning,

*‘‘I cannot say that teachers are 100% successful in this case.*

*Sometimes they are doing it nicely, but sometimes they cannot depend on the administration of that school or that individual teacher's experiences or technical awareness.’’ (IDI#4, 24-10-2020)*

### ***Opinions about learning materials used in the online classes***

The majority of parents acknowledged that the learning materials provided in the online classes, such as video clips, pictures, storybooks are attractive, easy to comprehend, age-appropriate, and effective for young learners. Half of the parents seem to have quite a positive approach in this regard. They shared their views regarding this,

*‘‘ They are learning ABCD through YouTube videos and slides as well.*

*Sometimes they learn counting by seeing cartoon characters as well. So all over, I must say the learning materials they use are quite good.’’ (Group discussion#1, 16-10-2020)*

*‘‘In my child's school, the classes take place by using Zoom, and they use the whiteboard to teach. Sometimes they share screen to show YouTube videos. And of course, it is quite effective, as in online classes setup cannot be like regular school but as they share screen to show interesting videos.’’ (Group discussion#2, 25-10-2020)*

However, few respondents stated that materials are the same as before, so they were neutral about it. One respondent thinks that there is a need to modify the materials; he

focuses on using more visual content rather than texts, making it easier for children to comprehend.

*‘‘It would be better if textbooks were re-designed or instead of textbooks the contents could have been PowerPoints or something like that. Also, the contents of the book can be pictorial. We can give educational messages by telling stories as well that would have been more interesting.’’ (IDI#4, 24-10-2020)*

### **Challenges encountered by the parents to support children’s online learning**

This section presents the findings regarding the challenges and constraints parents encounter with online learning, which act as barriers to support children's learning process. In this section, parents shared their opinions regarding various challenges they encounter with the online learning system such as; adjust to online learning, limitations in network accessibility, balance other works, and children's online learning.

#### ***Adjustment with online learning***

While talking about various challenging respondents who had been facing online classes, most parents mentioned that they had faced few troubles in adopting the online learning system as a replacement for the physical classroom. A few of them said that they were initially concerned about whether the child will adjust to this new system. Besides that, parents discussed the challenges they face, such as internet connectivity, keeping children focused on classes; some were concerned about the lack of teacher-student relationships. Regarding this one of their responses was, *‘‘earlier, I was worried. I observed that teachers and children both were facing problems but gradually everything is being better.’’ (Group discussion#1, 16-10-2020).*



### ***Network accessibility***

The majority of the respondents talked about network issues as a significant challenge in online learning. Some of them said the classes largely depend on internet connectivity. Few of them said that they are facing challenges to keep children focused throughout the class; when the net connection gets disrupted, children also do not want to stay in classes. One parent stated, “ *sometimes, my child doesn't want to sit in for online classes due to poor network connection. That is the main challenge.*” (Group discussion#2, 25-10-2020)

Few of the respondents talked about staying attentive throughout the classes; they said that if any internet interruption takes place in between the classes, it becomes quite challenging to regain that momentum as children cannot stay focused for long.

In contrast, one parent said that she was not struggling with any such challenges in online classes. Her opinion regarding this was, “ *I am not facing any challenges as such. But definitely, physical classes are far better where children could get a little more time. But online classes, the time is too limited.*” (Group discussion#2, 25-10-2020)

### ***Balancing responsibilities***

The struggle to find a balance between other chores and children's online learning was reported by all six mothers. For most of the mothers, online learning presented a struggle to balance responsibilities. Some of them said online learning had given them additional responsibilities; therefore, they often find it challenging to balance work and time for children's online learning. The parents expressed concern for various responsibilities competing for the limited time. They shared their experiences regarding this,

*“In the beginning, when online classes were introduced, I was worried as I*

*need to spend time regularly, what's going to happen? Initially, I felt like a burden, but gradually I got used to this 'new normal situation.'"* (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)

*"It has given extra responsibility as when I used to take my child to school I would get a break for 2 hours, and that was my only break time in 24 hours. It was like my own time or 'me time. "* (IDI#2, 17-10-2020)

On the contrary, both the fathers said they are busy, so children's mothers usually stay there when their children attend online classes. But they try to help their children complete homework and talk to children about what they learned and listen to their online classes' experiences. Most parents also acknowledge that it gives added responsibilities to the parents. Regarding this one father said,

*"In online classes, we have to take the entire responsibilities on our shoulders. The parents need to be more engaged here. As parents have other responsibilities, so sometimes it brings them frustration. We also need to monitor the child all the time when she used technology."* (IDI#4, 24-10-2020)

Few respondents shared their views about balancing responsibilities between their work and children's online learning. They shared how they balance other works and children's online learning. Regarding this, one mother responded that,

*"A housewife needs to work 24 hours and need to take care of their children all the time. We do not have any diversion of mind either; being in the same routine gets frustrating for us."* (IDI #2, 17-10-2020)

## **The needs felt by the parents regarding online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic**

This segment answers the fourth research question of this study of understanding the needs felt by the parents regarding online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parents expressed their expectations from the school committee, and have given their suggestions on improving the quality of online learning. Findings are organized under different headings below.

### ***Expectations from the school committee***

Most parents said that they are satisfied with the supports they are getting from their children's school committee. They said that the school committee is supporting every way possible in this circumstance. Regarding getting supports from the school committee, one respondent opined,

*“They (school committee) have already provided use more or less all the facilities that we could have expected. In the beginning, the group size was large. After getting our opinions, they have made small groups. So I do not have anything else to expect; they are co-operating.”* (IDI 2#17-10-2020)

Furthermore, few respondents expressed the various needs felt by them in online classes. The majority of them talked about improving the network facilities, besides that had defined some other issues which they think would be beneficial if been provided,

*“It would be great if the school committee could arrange a weekly special class with 3-4 children each week, just to understand what the children need. This way, they could make friends and talk to the teachers. In class, it's not possible to be attentive to every child, so if they could create a social ground, it would be nice.”* (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)

### ***Suggestions to improve the quality of online learning***

Almost all the respondents had few suggestions to improve the quality of online learning. A few of them suggested assigning more homework and adding more creative activities. One of their responses was,

*“Creative activities should increase cause it helps in children’s development as they are at beginner’s level; such as cutting paper in different shapes to make letters and other things, this kind of activity should increase. And I think teachers should finish everything within their time limit.”* (Group discussion#1, 16-10-2020)

Some respondents talked about bringing changes in the classroom environment, including more physical activities, and following some strategies to enhance children’s concentration. In this regard, one of them said,

*“Some physical movements and fun activities can be added so that children don’t have to sit for too long. It would also be great if there were less parental involvement as the whole time I need to sit with my child.”* (Group discussion#2, 25-10-2020)

Few suggested adding more engaging and interactive activities through video to capture children’s attention:

*“I think there should be an interactive session with the teachers if there is an option. But I want the duration gets longer because children will not be able to attend for long. If there were any chance of making it more interactive, it would be better if children would get a chance to interact with other children, it would be better.”* (IDI#1, 16-10-2020)

Furthermore, most parents suggested making the class size smaller so that children get better scopes to interact with teachers to make online classes more effective. One

respondent suggested. *'the class size needs to be smaller. Teachers should change their teaching approaches to make online learning more effective.'* (IDI#4, 24-10-2020).

## **Discussion**

This segment presents the interpretations of the study results in light of the research questions, the researcher's reflections and also provides an analysis of the study with reference evidence to the existing literature. The discussion has been presented under different themes in compliance with the results of this study.

### **Parents understanding of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The parents' demographic profiles suggest that almost all the participants were well educated and quite concerned about their children's education. When parents were asked about their understanding of online learning, they responded that online learning is a remote learning system where teaching and learning are undertaken on digital platforms by using devices like computers, laptops, desktops, tablets, etcetera. This finding is consistent with an existing study done by Li and Lalani (2020), which states that online learning is whereby teaching and learning is conducted remotely and on digital platforms. It is worth mentioning that parents knew about online learning even before the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, most of them thought it was a mode of adult education, not projected for young children. But as per the demand of changing situations, all of them acknowledged the importance of online learning during this critical period when there is no option for attending school physically. It seems that parents may have considered the safety of their children as a priority and appreciated the school closure strategy. But at the same time, they were concerned about maintaining the continuity of their children's learning too; therefore, they recognized the necessity of online education during this unprecedented situation.

Some parents appreciated this online learning regime as it took the responsibility to maintain continuity and prevent educational disruption. In line with these findings, the report by UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (2020) reveals that online platforms have been the first to be rolled out to enable children to continue learning and are the most effective learning modality.

It can be concluded from the above findings that the parents had adequate knowledge and explicit understanding of online learning, and they acknowledged the necessity of online learning during this COVID-19 pandemic period.

### **Parents' beliefs and attitudes towards online learning for their pre-schoolers during the COVID-19 pandemic**

This study found that most of the parents were concerned about their children using technologies at such an early age. The children participate in online classes five days a week, for several hours by using electronic devices like laptops, mobile phones, and tablets. Parents reflected that these gadgets were not appropriate for 3-5 years old children to use for a long time at a stretch. Parents reported that before the pandemic, children used devices to play games and watch videos, as now they use devices to attend classes as also, hence there has been a rise in children's total screen time. This finding is consistent with a recent survey of 3,000 parents, which found that children's screen time has increased by 500% amidst the pandemic (Areeza, 2020).

As parents expressed concerns about their children spending a long time in front of the screen, which is aligned with recent research by Pew Research Center (2020), parents reported being anxious about screen time impacts, 71% of parents said they are somewhat concerned about their child might ever spend too much time in front of screens, and 31% of parents were very concerned about this. The American Academy of Pediatrics also discourages long-time media use for children and suggests limiting

screen time to a maximum of one hour for 2-5 years old children (Mayo Clinic, 2019). Parents shared various adverse effects of using devices which they were experiencing in their children. They reported facing several physical, emotional, and behavioral issues because of using devices for too long. Most of the parents had a shared concern about the vision problem of children because of using digital devices. They also expressed their concerns about decreased physical activities during COVID-19. This study in compliance with recent research by Wong, et al. (2020), which states, increased digital screen time and limited outdoor activities were found to be associated with the onset and progression of Myopia; it could possibly be aggravated during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Parents also stated that their children miss out on the opportunities of physical activities as they are confined at home for a long time. This finding is consistent with a recent study by Xian, Zhang & Kuwahara (2020) found a substantial decrease in physical activities and an increase in screen time during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding is also similar to another study by Moore, et al. (2020) conducted in Canada, which provides evidence of immediate collateral consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak, demonstrating adverse impacts on children's movements and play behaviors.

It is observed in the study that maximum parents hold a comparatively negative attitude towards their children's use of devices at a young age. As parents' involvement plays a significant role in children's online learning, therefore, their negative attitude towards it may influence on the quality of online learning.

However, some parents viewed technology usage positively which is consistent with a survey by The Pearson and Connections Academy Parent Pulse Report (2020), which suggests 81% of parents said the benefits of online learning outweigh concerns over

screen time, and 84% believed that technology helps their children to be more self-sufficient.

Parents were anxious that their children could not interact with their peers because of school closures. They agreed that social interaction and playing with peers greatly influence children's learning, development, and overall well-being. Parents believed that children learn essential social skills such as sharing from interaction with other children. Since there is no such scope in online classes, parents are worried about children's social and emotional development. Even though children in online classes get to see their peers by video calls, but certainly they cannot meet, play or interact like traditional classrooms.

It is said that young children learn through play, and in online classes, there is no scopes for physical play. Some parents considered lack of communication with peers as one of the significant shortcomings of virtual learning. They believe that it is impacting children's social and emotional development. Parents' concern is quite reasonable here as in COVID situation, there is no way to communicate and play with other children in person. Parents also expressed their worries about learning outcomes in the future. A recent study by Garbe, et al. (2020) suggests that parents were concerned about children's academic progress and social, emotional development in online learning. In the present study, it is noteworthy that parents critiqued online learning as there is no social-emotional development scope, but they were not much concerned about children's academic progress. This could mean that as the children were very young, so parents were more concerned about their social-emotional development than their academic progress. This finding is also contrasted with another study by Horowitz & Igielnik (2020) which reveals that parents are worried about their children falling behind in online learning.



## **Parents' experiences with online learning for their pre-schoolers during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The result can be derived based on the study findings that parents had varied opinions about online learning effectiveness for their pre-school aged children. Few parents defined online learning as an effective way for their children's learning. Still, the majority of them expressed that online learning is partially effective for children at this age. Most of the parents considered online learning as a temporary solution rather than a substitute for school. Parents reflected that in online learning, children's holistic development is not possible as children do not have the opportunities to have hands-on learning experiences as they would get in their traditional school settings. Besides that, online learning does not allow children to learn the social norms and values and other social skills like playing, sharing with peers, etcetera. A study by Kim (2020) also states that online learning may not give sufficient or appropriate opportunities to involve young children who need more interactions and hands-on activities to focus and learn compared to adult learners.

Parents also expressed their qualms on online learning efficacy if they run for a more extended period. All of the parents preferred traditional schools to virtual learning, and they agreed that online education could not be as effective as conventional school. This finding suggests similarities with a recent survey by Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (2020), according to that more than 50 percent of the youth referred to online classes taken by their educational institutions as "slightly effective" and "not that effective" due to the lack of interaction between teachers and students, lack of learning materials and teachers' inability to conduct classes online.

Parents also cited that online learning is not effective to fulfill individual learner's needs. Parents have mentioned several different reasons for online learning not being

able to accomplish individual learners' needs, time and technology constraints, lack of hands-on experiences, and teachers' inability to pay attention to every child. We cannot deny the fact that compared to the conventional school setting, virtual learning has some shortcomings. For example, there are no scopes for children to learn and play collaboratively with peers in the online class. Teachers cannot supervise and pay attention to every child's individual needs, and children become deprived of on-hand experiences. Here if we consider Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory, every child has their individual intelligence, and VAK learning style suggests that every child learns differently; some learn visually, some are auditory and kinesthetic learners. It may become difficult to address every child's learning capabilities and style and facilitate individual teaching in virtual classrooms.

When the pandemic started, parents had to take some preparation to support children's online classes. Parents reported having sufficient devices for their children to attend online classes. They have organized a separate room and created a school-like environment so that children can have a feeling of the school. Parents also ensured sufficient lighting in the room so that children do not face difficulties to follow the class instructions. Parents mentioned the importance of a quiet and calm place to conduct classes as young children can easily get distracted by noise and other commotions. Parents tried to facilitate the children with a suitable home environment to continue online classes efficiently. Some parents reported creating a library for their children. This finding shows that parents tried to ensure a suitable home environment to support their young children's online learning. They have given sufficient equipment so that children can attend the classes without any difficulties. Studies by Melhuish et al., (2008) and Son & Morrison (2010) also suggest that the

home environment plays an important role in preschool-aged children's learning and development.

To ensure the effectiveness of online learning and create the classes interactive and joyful for young learners, teachers need to be skillful. Parents acknowledged the efforts and constant supports provided by the teachers in online classes. Young children require continued interaction with their teachers. According to parents' statements, it is evident that teachers were trying to reach every child and encourage them to interact in the class. Teachers tried to create a positive learning environment using various teaching strategies for the children's meaningful learning experiences. Since online learning a new system for the teachers as well, therefore, some might find it problematic. However, even after providing all the efforts, there remain some problems and constraints in conducting online classes. Limitations like lack of time or technical issues sometimes may hinder them from performing their teaching procedures like traditional classroom environments. Studies conducted by Korkmaz & Toraman (2020), and Fauzi & Khusuma (2020) also suggest that the teachers face problems such as internet connection problems, lack of educator-student interaction, planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning. Online learning helps teachers in the COVID-19 pandemic period but felt ineffective; even 80% of teachers are dissatisfied with online learning (Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020).

However, a small number of parents suggested teachers need to be trained to enhance their teaching skills. This finding is consistent with The Pearson and Connections Academy Parents Pulse Report (2020), which suggests that 88% feel that their child's teachers are doing a good job and supporting students, while 81% of parents believe teachers need more training in online teaching.

### **Challenges encountered by the parents to support children's online learning**

When the school closure was announced, and the physical classroom was replaced with the virtual classroom, it was a sudden tremor for both parents and the children. Children lost opportunities for playing and interacting with their teachers and peers. Initially, parents were worried about adopting this new system, but gradually, they were tried to get attuned with it. As the pandemic was an unprecedented phenomenon and parents were not ready for it, therefore, this worry may stem from their readiness level as they had to embrace this system within a very short period without any prior experiences. Besides, parents described having few more challenges with online learning. Almost every parent shared the concerns with network issues. A study by Situmorang & Purba (2020) also discusses the network issues being a challenge for parents in children's online learning processes. Moreover, young children have a short attention span, so when the network connection disrupts, it becomes hard for the parents to maintain children's attention. The duration of online classes is also quite long; therefore, it becomes difficult for the parents to keep them focused for an extended period.

As per the parents' opinions, online learning has added more responsibilities to parents' shoulders. The abrupt shift from conventional learning to online learning was so sudden that parents found difficulties balancing their work, household chores, and supervise children's online learning. Initially, their situation was more problematic, but gradually they tried to get adapted with this 'new normal' situation. However, they still were faced with struggles to balance their responsibilities. A study by Liu et al. (2020) also claims that parents must take on new and unfamiliar roles and responsibilities in children's online education while experiencing increasing instructional responsibility for their child's learning.

It is worthy to mention that there is a difference between the opinions of mothers and fathers in the type of engagement in children's online classes. The mothers expressed that online learning added an extra workload, and they were struggling to balance household works and children's online education. Even though mothers were homemakers, they had difficulties in managing time for children's online learning. The reason behind this could be mothers have to stay with the child throughout the time. On the contrary, fathers do not sit with their children while attending classes, but they also supervise children's homework and give technological support, and like mothers they also agree that online learning has given extra responsibilities. This could mean that as children are very young, they are dependent on their mothers for their every need; therefore, mothers need to play a more active role in children's learning process than the fathers. This finding aligns with a recent study by Sharma (2020) which suggests that online learning has presented additional challenges for Indian mothers and the technicalities of learning tools and ensuring functional devices' availability came as a daily challenge is causing anxiety for some mothers. The study results indicate that parents are aware of the importance of dedicating time to children's online classes.

When mothers were asked whether they enjoy participating in children's online classes, varied answers were found. Some mothers said they enjoy it and it creates the parent-child relationship friendlier but some mothers said that they cannot enjoy it much as they have the stress of other works as well. This finding is consistent with a study by Selwyn et al. (2011) which states that feelings towards online learning are diverse, some parents feel more connected and some consider it as an additional burden.

## **The needs felt by the parents regarding online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic**

Parents were generally satisfied with the level of support provided by the school committees to conduct online classes. This may indicate that schools were able to help parents in terms of resources for online learning. This finding is aligned with a recent survey by Garbe, et al. (2020), which depicts that a large majority of the parents were satisfied with the amount of support their child's school provided during the COVID-19 closure. In line with this result, recent research by Horowitz & Igielnik (2020) also revealed that 83 % of the parents were fairly satisfied with the manner their children's school has been handling instruction during the closures.

Nevertheless, parents had a few suggestions to improve the quality of learning in online classes. Parents felt that teachers should assign with children more homework and lessen their classwork. Parents think that the teachers should provide more creative activities, which they believe could help build children's imagination and make the classes more interesting. Parents suggested adding various creative fine motor activities like paper crafts, which may enhance children's creativity, hand-eye coordination, endurance, and concentration. This way, children can learn in a playful atmosphere, which is crucial for their holistic development. Keeping in mind the adverse effects of technology, parents discouraged extending the classes for too long. This finding is dissimilar with a survey by LocalCircles (2020) conducted in India, where 70% of parents feel that their children need to spend more time with online classes than they already do. Parents also believed that there should be more physical activities in online classes that require movements since children are confined at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so their movements have become restricted. If teachers can arrange some exercises or physical play by demonstrating them, they

may enjoy their activity level, and their activity level may increase. As per NHS guidelines (2019) for children's physical activities, pre-schoolers should be doing a variety of physical activities spread throughout the day, and children under 5 should not be inactive for long period which harmful for their health and development.

Another suggestion by the parents was making the classes more engaging by using various interesting video clips and making the classes more play-based and interactive in order to keep the children focused.

Pre-school aged children should be encouraged to play, move around, hear sounds, see, touch, and explore their surroundings to learn and experience new things. They should be provided with various stimulating learning materials in the verbal, visual and palpable form to maintain their attention throughout the class. In online classes, teachers can show such interactive, age-appropriate videos, and other visual content to make the learning experiences meaningful and didactic at the same time. Even though parents acknowledged that teachers are giving their best efforts, but few parents mentioned improved training and orientation for the teachers to handle preschool-aged children's online learning. Parents suggested keeping the group size smaller so that teachers can pay attention to each child in a short period of time. This finding is aligned with a study by Sheridan et al.(2009) which points out that, two factors affect learning in pre-school which are group size and preschool teachers competence (as cited in Williams et al., 2015, p. 96).

## **Conclusion**

This qualitative study intended to have a thorough understanding of the parents' perceptions, experiences, and challenges with online learning for their 3-5 years old children during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was found that parents had an explicit

understanding on their children's online learning and they acknowledged its importance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Children's online learning is a new concept for most of the parents, before the pandemic, they considered it as a mode of adult education. Most of the parents were concerned about the adverse effects of technologies which they believe to be harmful to children's physical and socio-emotional development.

It was found in the study that both the fathers and mothers had quite similar understanding, beliefs, and attitudes towards online learning; however, there have been found little dissimilarity in their experiences with children's online learning. Moreover, it was also observed that parents were worried about the lack of communication with peers and teachers, which they believe is a barrier to develop children's social skills. It was also found that parents had qualms about the full effectiveness of online learning, and almost all of them considered it as partially effective.

Furthermore, parents faced problems like limitations in network accessibility, balancing between other works and monitoring children's online learning. They believe that the school committees should take steps about network issues, add some physical activities to keep the children active, and take strategies to keep the classes more playful and interactive. Parents also mentioned that even though teachers are trying but there can be training for the teachers to achieve more improved outcomes. The above discussion implies that despite having a proper understanding about the importance of online learning during this emergent situation, sometimes parents are experiencing several challenges with this system which are acting as obstacles for the quality of learning. These issues need to be addressed carefully so that parents can support their children's online learning with convenience and flexibility.



## **Recommendation**

Evidence from the reflections on the findings and discussion of the present study on parents' perceptions regarding online learning during COVID-19, the study has come up with few recommendations which are as follows:

- School-parents collaboration can be strengthened in order to provide appropriate guidance to parents on effective practices for supporting their children's online learning.
- Parents' orientation and workshops can be provided to support enabling the transition to online learning during any emergent situation.
- Sometimes parents cannot attend children's online classes because of their busy work schedule during the daytime; therefore, school committees should bring the flexibility of their class schedule so that parents can manage time for online classes as per their convenience.
- Capacity development of the teachers can be ensured by providing ICT based training focusing on pre-school aged children's online-based interactive curriculum to make the classes more play-based and engaging for the children.
- The government should address the systematic changes and rethink the strategies to scale up short term strategies to longer-term solutions.
- Similar studies over the larger population could provide a bigger picture of online learning for pre-school-aged children in the Bangladeshi perspective.

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## Appendix A

### In-depth Interview Questionnaire

**Research Topic:** Parents' Perception regarding Online Learning for Pre-schoolers during COVID-19 Pandemic.

#### Section A: Demographic Information

Interview Date:	
Start Time:	End Time:
Name of Respondent:	
Age:	Gender:
Education:	
Child's Age:	

#### Section B: Parents' understanding of children's online learning

1. As your child is participating in online classes what is your opinion about online learning?
2. How much did you know about online learning before the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Recently many schools in our country started online class due to the COVID-19 pandemic, what is your opinion regarding this online learning during a pandemic?
4. Do you think online classes will be an effective way of learning for pre-schoolers during this pandemic? If yes, could you please explain how?
5. What is the importance of online learning when attending physical school is not feasible due to Covid-19 school closure?

6. Can you please share for how long your child has been receiving online classes? How often does your child attend online classes? (Like, how many hours per day?)
7. With which device your child attends online classes? Do you think this is appropriate for a preschooler? Please share your opinion.

**Section C: Parents' beliefs and attitudes towards online learning for pre-schoolers during Covid-19 pandemic**

1. Could you please share your views about children using technologies to learn at this preschool age?
1. According to you, to what extent it supports children's continuity of learning? Does it effectively act as an alternative to physical class? If yes, please explain/ if not, why?
2. In your opinion, does online learning have any negative impacts on children? If yes, what are they?
3. Do you think that online classes can meet a child's unique/individualized needs? Why and why not? Could you please elaborate?
4. Do you think online classes can be interactive? Please explain.
5. Do you think the teachers can ensure children's active engagement in online classes? If yes, please explain how? If not, why not?
6. According to you what roles teachers play to ensure effective online classes for pre-schoolers?
7. What is your opinion about teaching-learning materials used for online classes?
8. Does your child get enough chances to interact and communicate with their peers?
9. How do you perceive the fact that children do not have opportunities to play and interact with peers in online classes?

**Section D: Experiences and Challenges faced by parents with online classes of their children during COVID-19.**

1. What kind of preparation did you take to facilitate online learning for your children?

2. What kind of home environment need to be ensured for effective online classes for your preschooler? Can you please explain?
3. Could you please share your experiences with online learning with your child? Do you think your child is enjoying online classes? If yes, how? If not, why not?
4. What do you do to support your child's learning process online? Please explain.
5. How well your child has adopted online learning? How do you support them if they face any difficulty to cope up with it?
6. Do you think this online learning has given you added responsibilities? If yes, please explain how?
7. How do you balance between your other works (home and office) and children's online learning?
8. Do you feel concerned about the learning outcomes of your child in online learning? Do you face any problem/challenge to keep your child engaged/focused in online classes?
9. Do you face any particular challenge to ensure your children's online learning classes? If yes, what are they? How these challenges are influencing the learning quality?

**Section E: The needs felt by the parents regarding online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

1. According to you, what facilities would help to achieve better learning outcomes for preschool-aged children's online learning?
2. What do you think as a parent what types of support you need to ensure effective online classes?
3. Do you expect any kind of support from school management? If yes, what are those?
4. Do you have any suggestions to improve the quality of online learning to support children's learning?



## **Appendix B**

### **Group Discussion Guidelines**

**Research Topic:** Parents' Perception regarding Online Learning for Pre-schoolers during COVID-19 Pandemic.

#### **Guiding Questions:**

1. As your child is participating in an online class, what is your opinion about 'online learning'? Could you please explain it?
2. What is the importance of online learning when attending physical school is not feasible due to Covid-19 school closure?
3. Do you think online classes will be an effective way of learning for pre-schoolers during this pandemic? If yes, could you please explain how?
4. In your opinion, does online learning have any negative impacts on children? If yes, what are they?
5. Do you think the teachers can ensure children's engagement in online classes? If yes, please explain how? If not, why not?
6. According to you what roles teachers play to ensure effective online classes for pre-schoolers?
7. What is your opinion about teaching-learning materials used for online classes?
8. How do you perceive the fact that children do not have opportunities to play and interact with peers in online classes?
9. What kind of preparation did you take to facilitate online learning for your children?
10. What kind of home environment need to be ensured for effective online classes for your preschooler? Could you please explain?
11. Do you face any particular challenge to ensure your children's online learning classes? If yes, what are they? And how these challenges are influencing the learning quality?
12. According to you, what facilities would help to achieve better learning outcomes for preschool-aged children's online learning?
13. Do you have any suggestions to improve the quality of online learning to support children's learning?

## **Appendix C**

### **Consent Form for the Participants**

**Title of the Research:** Parents' Perception regarding Online Learning for Pre-schoolers during COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Researcher:** Nabila Islam

#### **Purpose of the research**

I am conducting this research as a part of my Master's Degree requirement from the BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. This research aims to explore parents' perceptions regarding online learning for their preschool-aged children during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

#### **Expectation from you**

If you agree, you will be expected to share information regarding your perceptions of online learning for your child during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as your opinions, feelings, expectations on this issue. Keeping in mind the COVID situation, the In-depth interview and Group Discussions will be conducted over the phone. Each interview and group discussion may take 45 to 60 minutes, depending upon your response.

#### **Risks and benefits**

There is no risk to you for participating in this study; directly or indirectly parents, children, policymakers may be benefited in the future if any national policy or intervention program incorporates your perception about pre-school aged children's online learning.

**Privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality**

All information collected from you will remain strictly confidential. I would be happy to answer any of your queries about the study and you are welcome to contact me.

**Future use of information**

Some of the information collected from this study may be kept for future use.

However, in such cases information and data supplied to other researchers will not conflict with or violate the maintenance of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of information identifying participants in any way.

**Right not to participate and withdraw**

Your and your child's participation in the study is voluntary, and you are the sole authority to decide for and against your participation in this study. Refusal to take part in the study will involve no penalty.

If you agree to my proposal of participating in my study, please indicate that by giving your verbal consent before starting the interview.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. For any further queries, you may contact me. My contact no is, 01738301326, or you can email me at [nabilapreema15@gmail.com](mailto:nabilapreema15@gmail.com)