

Mothers' Perception of Online Schooling for 6-8 Years
Old Children During COVID-19 Pandemic

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

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work as part of completing my degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not comprise materials previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through complete and accurate references.
3. The thesis does not contain factual which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at any other university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all primary sources of support.

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Ethic Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Mothers' perception of online schooling for children of 6-8 years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student name: Sadia Afroz

1. Source of population

Mothers of 6-8 years old children who are participating in online Schooling at urban areas of Dhaka city

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

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

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

- a) Nature and purpose of the study
- b) Procedures to be followed
- c) Physical risk (n/a)
- d) Sensitive questions
- e) Benefits to be derived
- f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study
- g) Confidential handling of data
- h) Compensation and/or treatment where there are risks or privacy is involved

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

- a) from study participants
- b) from mothers or guardian (n/a)
- c) Will precautions be taken to protect the anonymity of subjects?

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

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

Ethical Review Committee:

Authorized by:
(chair/co-chair/other)

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Abstract

Online learning is increasing due to school closures during COVID-19 (Li & Lalani, 2020). The respected Minister of Education in Bangladesh has started to emphasize online learning and have more research on this (The Business Standard, 2020).

Online schooling is a new concept in Bangladesh where mothers are playing a very important role to support the age group of 6-8 years old children. This group of children need constant supports from their mothers to continue with their online schooling, in physical absence of their teachers. The research is a qualitative one, which aimed to find the perceptions of these mothers of this particular age group of children who are participating in online schooling for long. The findings of the research were designed thematically by identifying themes and sub-themes based on the concerns that emerged during the study. Mothers' perceptions were analyzed by thematic analysis under four themes and several sub-themes. Most mothers understands the concept of online schooling, its effectiveness and importance for this special time of pandemic. However, they still face some challenges while supporting in online classes like internet disruption, managing responsibilities etc. The entire research paper has shed light in to different aspects of this online schooling.

It has been seen at the end, further study is needed in larger scale. School authorities and mothers can work together for future smooth happening of online schoolings.

Key Words: Mother; Perception; Online-schooling; 6-8 years age group;

COVID-19

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to two angels of my life, my husband, who instilled in me the virtues of perseverance, commitment and relentlessly encouraged me to strive for excellence and my mother, who is no longer with us. She always wished to see me having a Master's degree but she couldn't be with me till the end of the Journey.

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List of Acronyms

COVID: Corona Virus Disease

ECD: Early Childhood Development

FGD: Focus Group Discussion

IDI: In-depth Interview

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 and Background

Introduction

The coronavirus (COVID-19) is currently one of the most spoken issues in the world. Although the first case of COVID-19 has been reported in China (Islam et al., 2020), it has spread rapidly across the globe. This is named a pandemic by WHO that has impacted almost every sector, most notably the education sector.

As stated by World Economic Forum in 2020, across the world, nearly 1.2 billion children's education is interrupted due to the effect of COVID-19. The immediate effect of COVID-19 was the closure of all educational institutes worldwide. It causes the immediate shifting to online classes by the school, college, and university authorities. Online schooling was an alternative method of schooling before the pandemic; the particular context of the pandemic has forced the educational industry to shift to an online base as a central mood of learning. During this time, almost every country going through lockdown started its learning activities through an online platform (Mulyanti et al., 2020). Within a short time, several online study platforms arrived, which allowed the learners during this pandemic time to continue studying. (Li & Lalani, 2020).

Bangladesh is no different from any other country, had closed down all the educational activities and institutions from March 17, 2020, after confirming the first COVID-19 patient on March 8, 2020 (Islam et al., 2020). In the pandemic era, online schooling has opened new doors to the Bangladeshi educational system, which

created the scope to start using alternative methods to continue with the educational system using online platforms. Although online learning was not unknown to the Bangladeshi educational system, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was in intensive use to minimize educational loss.

To continue the learning process during this closure, the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) started distance learning programs via 'Sangsad TV' and other online platforms like e-konnect, Facebook, and YouTube. The first TV-based broadcasting for online schooling aired on March 29, 2020 (World Bank, 2020). This effort targets economically disadvantaged students. At the same time, the English Medium schools have started taking online classes using Zoom and Google classrooms from late March (Abbas, 2020); they started interactive schooling using these digital platforms where some schools included Sports, Music, and Dance classes as well.

Parents are an essential component of online homeschooling for children aged 6-8 during this exceptional background, as the children need constant support while having their classes. The physical absence of the educators made the parents play the role of being the only support in this home-schooling background (Szente, 2020). The young children need assistance finding books, page numbers, and understanding a concept even though explained online. This process has overburdened a mother with new responsibilities apart from household chores. In many cases, mothers are also doing home office. As a result, mothers have to keep balance in shouldering both responsibilities. For many parents, playing these new roles has added extra workload and created challenges to deal with media resources, limited time, and mastery of technology (Situmorang & Purba, 2020).

A little study has been done exploring mothers' perceptions of online schooling. So, it is essential to focus on the views of parents, who are one of the essential components of this online schooling system (Dong, et al., 2020). Research needs to conduct on this to understand what parents think, as due to the physical absence of the teacher, parents become the major role player in supporting education at home (Szente, 2020). This study will focus on the effects of COVID-19 on mothers. This study tried to explore how mothers have perceived the changes and new responsibilities, whether they have took it positively or negatively. Therefore analysis of the overall perceptions of mothers regarding online schooling factors during COVID -19 was the major purpose of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The outcome of COVID-19 affected the education system worldwide, which caused an unanticipated educational disturbance across the world. As part of the lockdown procedure, all classroom-based activities in educational institutions became closed for a prolonged period. To break the chain of virus transmission, countries around the globe brought exceptional determinations to establish the exercise of "social distancing"; as a consequence of this, many schools have been shut down (Dalton, et al., 2020). UNESCO (2020) reported that worldwide, about 1.5 billion students were affected by educational institutional closure due to the global outbreak of the coronavirus. Even though some countries have reopened their schools by calculating the lower rate of virus cases, most countries have decided to continue with the closure since March 2020.

Like most other countries globally, Bangladesh also stopped face-to-face education throughout the country from March 17, 2020 (The Business Standard, 2020; The

Financial Express, 2020a), which was extended again and again in several steps. The entire period was so long, which never happened in this county (UN, 2020). After the school closure, the Bangladesh Education ministry decided to start distance learning broadcasting at TV channels for classes 6-10 (Dhaka Tribune, 2020; Islam, 2020; Sarkar, 2020). At the same time, Private English Medium schools across the country also initiated online base classes using online platforms like Zoom and Google Meet. However, for children of age 6-8 years, who mostly goes to early years classes till the beginning of primary, this online schooling has become very challenging. Neither they are used to sitting in front of device for long time, nor can they do activities without the support of their teachers. For this particular age group, doing online schooling by sitting at home, added an extra burden to the mothers to support them full time beside their teachers by assisting in opening books, helping in writing or other activities. Most of the families had to consider supporting distant schooling as a full time job, which has caused parents to suffer (Stevens, 2015).

Focusing on the necessity of early year's education helps a child elevate at this age with the attributes of learning and growing. Schooling promotes a child's growth and creates the opportunity to enhance social learning by regular interaction with others. If the learning at this age gets hampered for any adverse situation, it might have a long-term effect. Due to this COVID-19 virus effect, small children got stuck at home for a prolonged period without social interaction. This uncertainty of lockdown created anxiety and concern, disrupting their education, exploration, and opportunity to play (Ramchandani, 2020). It also grew the feeling of anxiety and isolation within the families (WHO, 2020).

This sudden shift to online schooling has put the mothers under pressure as they need to balance among their household chores, (if) work from home, and continuous

support to their children while they do their online classes. It has been observed that parents and other family members have taken over the new role of learning facilitators and coaches in the absence of physical educators (Garbe, et al., 2020).

A study has revealed that the academic burden on parents is heavy. Most families are required to take on the full-time job of supporting distant schooling, which has caused parents to suffer (Stevens, 2015). Another research stated that how parents see online classes are varied. Some parents feel more sincere about it, and some feel burdened (Selwyn et al., 2011). Besides this, parents also became anxious considering their child's excessive use of devices and their social, emotional dilemma as they are away from their friends and physical activities for an extended period. They are also worried as a guardian about the laggings of falling behind in online learning during this pandemic era (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020).

A study done by Bitterly (2020) finds out, parents also struggle with online learning. They face difficulty keeping their children focused on learning, as they tend to bypass the class and get busy with other online activities such as gaming and browsing the internet. The same study also reported that parents are struggling to maintain a daily routine, balancing household responsibilities and teaching, balancing working from home and teaching, etc. Another study conducted in the Chinese context illustrates that the parents are 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).

Consequently, this is being understood that online learning has become a primary way of learning in this current situation of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Therefore, the significance of the study is to explore the 6-8 years old children's parents' perception

of this online schooling and what challenges they are facing during this lockdown period.

Purpose of the Study

Bangladeshi children have been continuing with online classes for nearly 1.5 years.

This is a long time they got accustomed to this new practice where mothers played a vital role. This research aims to understand what mothers perceived about this change for this entire period and how they have perceived this change during the Pandemic.

Another aim to conduct this research is to understand how well the mothers adopted themselves with this sudden change and whether they took it positively, being flexible and supportive, or negatively by considering it challenging.

Moreover, this study also aims to explore the mothers' support to understand their overall perception to continue their child's online learning, as they are the main component of continuing online schooling for 6-8 years old children.

Significance and Justification of the Study

Learning through online schooling is very popular in foreign countries, and they tend to imply a blended curriculum previously (before COVID) to smoothen the learning process. It eases the hands-on learning process by adding text, video, and sound. In many parts of the world, many schools have been using online learning as part of their regular curriculum. A study revealed that online learning had been promoted widely around the world to conduct education as a substitute for traditional learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dong, et al., 2020)

Although online schooling is popular in other parts of the world, Bangladesh has fallen behind in this trend because of proper infrastructure, budget constraints, and an adequately trained workforce that can deal with online schooling. It has been barely seen the mass level use of online learning in our traditional schooling system before the COVID-19 pandemic. By conducting this research different aspects of this practice, which might increase the repetition of online schooling can be explored.

Online schooling is less practiced in Bangladesh, but COVID time has opened the door to explore this side. However, in May, the English Medium Schools started taking online classes using Zoom and Goole classrooms (Mahmood, 2020). Since this is the new practice, the study has explored how mothers are conversant with this online learning. It is essential to know mothers' perception, which is one of the main components of online children's learning (Dong, et al., 2020). By knowing how mothers perceive the concept of online learning, and based on their experiences, policies can be developed and implemented at the national level. It will help to design our infrastructure accordingly. This will help us move one step forward to the digitalization of Bangladesh. This study also focused on what challenges mothers face to continue with online learning and how it can be managed. Emphasized has also been given to the mothers' expectations from the school management to continue online schooling.

In Bangladesh's educational, developmental history, the new curriculum has included more hands-on activities, creativity, and digitalization, but teachers are not well acquainted with the digital platform. The findings of this research may also ensure Govt.'s positive response to develop policies to train teachers and the development of infrastructure towards more digitalization. At this point the research will logically find out whether online learning can be implied massively in Govt. primary

education, private-sector English medium, and Bangla medium schools or not.

However, if the research outcomes figure out many challenges to implementing these,

there can be possibilities to further research and minimize the cons at its best.

Research Questions

- What are the understandings of parents about online learning?
- How mothers are encountering the experience while ensuring the online classes?
- What kind of supports parents are expecting from the educational institutions while supporting their child's online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Definition of Key Terms

Mother: A female parent of a child is called a mother (Wikipedia, 2020)

Mothers has been considered as primary caregivers in this study who have supported their children in their online learning process. This study has explored mothers' perception of online schooling for 6-8 years old children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Perception: Perception is the idea of how people understand and interpret a piece of information for themselves. Different views or opinions created by a person based on personal experience affect that person (Susuwele-Banda, 2005). According to a philosopher, perception is productive, mainly focusing on a top-down approach from sensory data to the knowledge store and understanding what is going (Mcleod, 2018). A complex concept involving how a person sees the world is called perception. It is a powerful motivating force to take action. (McDonald, 2012) This research had referred how mothers perceive online schooling and their feelings about it.

Online schooling: Online schooling uses digital platforms such as Google classroom, Zoom, and Google meet to teach something. It is the type of instruction that is mediated via the internet. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous, and

various technologies can mediate the process. (Dabbagh & Bannan-Ritland, 2005).

This is the new of learning and playing a vital role in conducting the education currently in COVID – 19.

Online schooling has addressed in this research as the trend in Bangladesh since March 2020 to teach school-going students using digital platforms.

COVID 19: COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for the virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.' The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of the common cold. (WHO, 2020)

6-8 years age group: According to the Marriam-Webstar dictionary online, an age group is a segment of a population of approximately the same age or within a specified range of ages. In the context of this study, the 6-8 years old will fall under the classes from KG- Grade 2. This group is one of our significant components whose mothers are our samples for conducting the research.

Chapter II

Literature Review

To explore mothers' perception of their 6-8 years of online schooling, some essential literature has been reviewed to understand what other scholars have thought about this topic and related themes. This section will mainly focus on different studies that have been done during the COVID-19 pandemic for this new learning method. Systematized literature has been reviewed to get an insight into this topic. After studying the related pieces of literature, it has been categorized into five different themes, which are listed below:

Learning Crisis During Covid-19

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced COVID-19 as a global health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020, and a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020). The infectious diseases Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, has profoundly impacted the global economy. This disastrous occurrence impacted many sectors, as well as the education sector. Several areas are affected worldwide. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many schools and colleges across the globe to remain closed temporarily. Expert assessments by the researchers have expressed uncertainty that getting back to regular teaching is not soon. To stop the chain effect of virus transmission, countries across the globe announced the policy of "social distancing." Many schools have been shut down as part of this policy announcement (Dalton, et al., 2020). This recent pandemic has created the most significant disruption of education arrangements in history (UN, 2020). This school closure has been considered an unparalleled interruption in the

lives of billions of children and adolescents worldwide (Sheen, et al.,2020).

The closure of educational institutions is considered an effective strategy for breaking the transmission chain of the pandemic. However, it negatively affected students' academic lives, including learning interruptions and assessment disruption; it created more severe effects on students from disadvantaged backgrounds (UNESCO, 2020a). As reported by UNESCO (2020b), the worldwide closure of educational institutes adversely impacted over 60% of the world's student population.

Students experienced significant educational interruptions during this time as the pandemic directly influenced their academic functioning (Charles et al., 2020). The closure of school-level educational institutions interrupted the regular flow of academic programs (Jacob et al., 2020). The long-term delay of educational institutions can negatively affect their mental state and academic growth (Chandasiri, 2020). Increased quarantine period resulted in disturbance and deterioration in students' consistency of study habits and work, which eventually increased stress and dysfunctional learning behaviours (Meo et al., 2020). Significant disruptions in students' learning were caused by many internal and public assessments cancellation or delays (Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). To minimize the disruptions in early years and primary level education, a quick shift of many educational institutions to emergency online schooling has been noticed during the COVID-19 situation, which replaced the traditional face-to-face educational system. However, research still figured out that online learning strategies make students uncomfortable and distressed (Al-Tammemi et al., 2020). Students faced challenges in shifting to online lectures, regulating new online assessment methods and workloads, communicating with teachers, and dealing with many online education issues like managing electronic

devices, internet access, high cost of the internet (Owusu-Fordjour et al., 2020).

This long-term school closure has changed that education system deeply, and the most unexpected change of school closure was to force students to continue their education from home (Mcelrath, 2020). At the same time, school dropout became a global concern as a report published by Save The Children (2021) warned that almost 10 million children might never return to school after the pandemic across the globe. This report listed Bangladesh in the 28th position where children are at moderate to high dropout risk.

Online Learning Present Scenario

Most academic institutions, including Bangladesh, have avoided face-to-face instruction because of concerns about the pilotage of viruses. Even during the COVID-19 epidemic in Bangladesh, this study examines higher education students' attitudes about online courses (Sarkar, 2021). UNICEF collaborated with the Bangladesh government to effectively conduct online schooling for underprivileged children through TV, phones, and radio. In addition, from March, the Bangladesh government has started airing pre-recorded lessons for primary and secondary classes on SHANGSHAD TV (Islam, 2020).

Besides Govt. initiatives, the private English Medium schools started taking classes using online platforms and social media like WhatsApp, Facebook, etc. (Abbas, 2020). However, despite having online platforms, around 40% of pre-primary-aged children cannot access online learning due to the lack of resources, challenges, and limitations of young children (UNICEF, 2020). One research has shown that children aged 5-15 have less than 50 percent access to radios, computers, and televisions,

respectively(Ahmed, Rahman, 2021). Another study revealed that some 19% of primary and 25% of secondary school-going children are at risk of learning loss as educational institutions in the country have remained shut since March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Dhaka Tribune, 2021). Another concern related to online schooling is the lack of skilled teachers to continue with online classes and the lack of constant electricity supply, low bandwidth internet, and availability of devices. Besides this, children are also losing interest in education staying at home (BRAC, 2020).

An opposite scenario has also been seen where, due to long-term closure, some of the private kindergartens are shut down as the owners could not cover the cost. The Chairman of Bangladesh Kindergarten School stated that almost 100 schools had been put up for sale, and they estimated the numbers to be around 60,000 kindergartens to face the same situation across Bangladesh (Alamgir, 2020).

English Medium Scenario

English medium refers to an education system where English is used as instruction (Kader & Salam, 2018). There are many English Medium schools in Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka. These schools mainly teach students from Playgroup to A-Levels (Advanced Levels). No sooner was the lockdown declared In Bangladesh, the school closure has started on 18 March 2020 (UNICEF, 2020). Right after the school closure, Bangladesh, Govt. and non-Govt. Educational institutions made a quick movement to shift ~~on~~ based learning using electronic devices (Arefin, 2020). They used different social media platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube (Rafe, 2020). It took time for the teachers to get acquainted with the concept, but they gave continuous support to students by taking classes and giving homework through online platforms

(Shamsi, 2020). Different schools used different platforms; however, they all continued the interactive teaching throughout the period. Some English Medium schools have continued taking online sports, PE, music, and dance classes.

On the other hand, a disagreement was going on between English Medium parents and school authorities regarding the tuition fees, where the parents demanded a 50% waiver on tuition fees (Alamgir, 2020). English Medium Parents Forum played an important role in demanding this policy. The High Court later show caused why English Medium schools are still charging the same tuition fees during COVID-19 (Rahman, 2020). Later, as discussed in Dhaka Tribune (2020), another High Court rule had been published, where it was stated that English Medium schools have to allow students in online classes even if they have not paid tuition fees.

Parent's Perception of Online Learning: Bangladesh and Global

During this worldwide epidemic, millions of parents have been confined to their homes with their children, and they are disquieted about their children's earnings and struggle to keep their children's education on track (Lang, 2020). According to research, parents are concerned about their children lagging in distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Horowitz, 2020). Many parents, instructors, and students are adjusting to a new "normal" and the obstacles that online learning presents (Delgado, 2020). Though most educators believe that parental involvement is vital, little study has been done on its impact in online learning contexts. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), most families must take on the full-time job of supporting distant schooling, which has caused parents to suffer (Stevens, 2015).

Parents are an essential component of online schooling for the age group of 6-8, so they find it challenging to manage everything together. One research found out, how parents see online classes are varied. Some parents feel more sincere about it, and some feel burdened (Selwyn et al., 2011). Another study showed that parents are satisfied with the fact that their children are at least continuing education online; however, they expressed concern about the teachers' expertise in online teaching (Khan, 2021)

Even before parents are forced to become agents of unintentional home-schooling, there are both benefits and risks to consider when planning post-crisis support to close the education gap, as modeled in the World Bank study, which concluded that there would be losses after a pandemic, depending on what kind of models are used to assess possible scenarios (English, 2021). The likelihood of recovery will be determined by the financial resources invested by countries in closing the education gap, policy decisions made, and the extent to which parents are capable of supporting their children throughout this time frame of online classes in able to preserve the existing gaps as small as possible (Rogers & Shwetlena, 2020).

Teachers' Perception about Mothers' Involvement in Online Schooling

Teachers, another vital role player in this online schooling, made online schooling possible throughout the period. The long-term school closure confronted teachers, students, and parents with an entirely new situation (Huber and Helm 2020).

Continued teaching and learning were only possible through alternative means of schooling. Teachers had to use different digital tools and resources to solve problems and implement new approaches to teaching and learning (Eickelmann and Gerick 2020). Their perception left an essential impact on the children (Pajares, 1992).

Teachers play a significant role in encouraging academic strength and are considered role models. (Henry, 2019). Thought it has been seen that some teachers perceive that the online system is helpful as a means for learning (Davis et al., 1989) however they still believe in such critical time, parents have to be more actively engaged in their children's learning programs (Bubb and Jones 2020) Since online learning is mainly based on using different applications and gadgets to deliver a lesson, It has been found that managing children of ages 4-6 years old is often considered more challenging for teachers without any support (Fotii, 2020). It is also reflected from a study that teachers believe when school authority, parents, families, and communities work in hand to hand to support learning, children tend to get higher grades and attend school more regularly (Carolina, 2005). They also consider it is very urgent to restore teacher- parents' partnership so that teachers can update their models and make the parents visualize their teaching approach which will ensure great parent-teacher partnerships (Keyes, C. R., 2000). Teachers also give emphasis on Family-school collaboration which refers to two-way communication; i.e home-school coordination, and joint problem solving between families and educators to make educational decisions for the betterment of supporting student for ultimate success (Garbacz et al., 2019). Teachers also expect from parents to keep the students busy with home based involvement such as homework assistance to achieve a bigger learning success at school (Barger et al., 2019).

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Approach

The approach of the study was qualitative as it involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences of the mothers while supporting their children for online classes. By definition qualitative research can gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2020). This study will try to understand an overall perspective of the mothers' viewpoint regarding online schooling. That's why the qualitative approach has been chosen.

Research Site

The study was conducted in Dhaka city. The participants were mainly located at Uttara.

Research Participants

The study was meant to explore mothers' perceptions of the benefits and the challenges of online learning of 6-8 years old children. In order to explore that, the population of this study were the mothers of 6-8 years old children who read in English medium schools and participated in regular online classes.

Participant Selection Procedure

The selected sample size of 12 mothers represented the whole generation's perception, so the sample has been carefully defined. For conducting this research, the samples was selected purposively by following the given criteria's –

- Mothers who have children aged 6-8 continue doing regular online classes.

- Mothers' minimum education criteria: HSC passed
- Mothers those Who are willing to share their thoughts

Data Collection Method

The researcher conducted 6 In-Depth Interviews (IDI), which took approximately 45-60 minutes each. Also, there was 2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD), ensuring 6 participants in each (Total of 12 participants in 2 different Focus Group discussions). In the Focus group discussions, further research-related questions has been asked to understand their perception, belief, attitude, and opinion on this particular topic of "online schooling."

In the beginning, the researcher introduced herself and explained the study's objectives to the participants. Then, the IDI and FGD sessions has begun with the participants' permission by explaining the ground rules. The interviewer started the interview sessions by asking the participants very general questions like name, age, or educational qualification. The questions were then asked chronologically in the IDI and FDG guidelines in a soft and informal manner. All of the participants allowed to record their conversations however still the researcher took as many as field notes possible to produce digital transcribing. Detailed explanations and clarifications were asked respectfully whenever required.

The researcher carried out the Focus Group Discussion and In-Depth Interviews by herself.

Data Analysis

Data management is the most vital part of qualitative research. Managing and storing the data has to be done carefully, even before collecting the data. On the other hand, data analysis is an ongoing process in Qualitative research, which begins with the first

interactions between the participant and researcher. Data Analysis in Qualitative research is commonly based on an explanatory philosophy that analyzes the collected content of the data (Lewins, Taylor & Gibbs, 2010). In this process of qualitative data analysis, content analysis technique will be mainly used to analyze the data. Here, we have followed a few content analysis techniques for analysing the data. It can be done by following a few steps, such as –

- Transcribing- At this step, the interview were collected as a form of data in the form of recording; Also, as much as possible noted has been taken to record every detail.
- Review the data- At this step, the researcher reviewed the data, again and again, to link them with thematic questions and to understand whether any important points got missed out or not.
- Following the themes- The collected data has been identified and distributed by following the themes and subthemes.
- Capturing thoughts- The raw data was represented in such a way that it created some meaning. Researcher were unbiased while doing this.
- Presenting qualitative data- The data was presented under themes, and direct quotes were used from the interview.

Validity & Reliability of the Research Tool

To ensure the validity of the data collection tool, a self-designed questionnaire was developed and reviewed by one ECD expert. Next the questionnaire and guidelines were revised and modified according to the feedback of the respected supervisor.

After getting her approval the data collection was finalized. The data was collected from two different sources: In-Depth-Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Next,

data were triangulated to ensure the reliability of the findings. Therefore, the interview questionnaire was piloted with mothers of 6-8 years children. After reviewing and piloting the tools, some adjustments were made in tools which were brought accordingly.

Ethical Issues

This detailed study has passed through the BRAC University ethical review committee to get approval following all ethical principles of research and the proposal of the present study. High importance has been given to some ethical concerns while carrying out qualitative research. Participants were informed about the research objectives, required time, and interview procedure. If the participant felt discomfort, she could withdraw herself from the IDI process anytime. If the participant was not willing to disclose her identity, that was supposed to be respected by keeping anonymity at the highest. Participants should stop at any point of the interview if they were not comfortable answering that.

Limitations of the Study

This study has considered 12 mothers perceptions about their childrens' online classes, which we considered to accomplish the study. Therefore, this smaller sample size may be misleading to understand the actual perception of all the mothers concerning online schooling.

Chapter IV

Findings & Discussion

This chapter comprises two sections where; the first section is "findings," which shed light on the analysis of the data collected through two main instruments- Focus Group Discussion and In-depth interviews. These generated detailed information on mothers' perception of online schooling during COVID-19. The second section is the "Discussion," where the analyzed data will be further discussed in light of the literature review and the researcher's understandings. This part will be wrapped up with a conclusion and a few recommendations based on the results and understanding gained from the study.

Findings

The study's findings have been presented regarding the data collected from six In-Depth Interviews and two Focus Group Discussions of six mothers. The findings are focused on the three main objectives of the study, which includes exploring what the understandings of parents about online learning are, what experience and challenges are encountered by the parents' ensuring the online classes, and what are the supports parents are expecting from the educational institutions while supporting their child's online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings were designed thematically by identifying themes and sub-themes based on the concerns that emerged during the study. Mothers' perceptions were analyzed by thematic analysis under four themes and several sub-themes. The following sections will present the results under different thematic headings and subheadings.

Demographic Information

A total of twelve mothers were interviewed for this study. All mothers were selected based on whose children regularly participated in online schooling from almost the pandemic's beginning. The age range of the mothers was between 29-42 years.

Among twelve mothers, two had three children, six had two children, and four had only one child. All the mother's minimum education qualification is graduation. Most participants came from different academic backgrounds; one was a doctor, two were teachers from reputed English Mediums, one mother was an industrial architect, and the rest were homemakers. The age range of the children was between 6 to 8 years. Seven of the children were male, and five were female. The children were from different English-medium schools situated in Dhaka city. During interviews and focus group discussions, all children actively participated in online classes due to school closure due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Theme 1: Mothers' understanding of children's online schooling

This section presents the findings that answer the first research question exploring parents' understandings of online learning. For this, findings are presented under the sections describing the knowledge of mothers regarding online schooling before the COVID-19, their understanding of the effectiveness of online schooling during the pandemic, involvement of children in online classes, mothers' views on using technology in the early years, and its effects and opinion regarding screen time children spent for online schooling. Another point will be discussed under this section, which focuses on the fairness of exams through online classes.

Knowledge of online schooling before the COVID-19

Most respondents confessed that they had very little knowledge about online schooling before the pandemic hit, especially the online platforms like Zoom, Meet – they were ignorant to those. Few of them said they knew online learning as a distant form of learning for adults only; they never imagined it could be a permanent learning mood for school-going children.

At this point, one of their comment is given below:

"Previously, I have heard about online learning; a few of my colleagues did online teaching courses from India. It was not live classes, they used to get assignments and course contents through email, and they used to submit them to their course coordinator in the same way." (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 25-10-2021)

Understanding of the effectiveness of online schooling during the pandemic

Most of the respondents agreed to the fact that online learning was the only savior during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all of them openly expressed that they know physical schooling is way better and convenient for a child to continue learning. However, there is no other way right now than continuing classes using online schooling. Few respondents stated that children should be busy with something rather than getting a total break from education during this pandemic. As one respondent speak out,

"I am happy that my son is in a touch of education than being isolated from the normal structured educational process. It is better now that they do live classes and get instant feedback." (In-Depth Interview # 5, 4-11-2021)

Views on using technology in the early years and its effects

Mothers got divided into two groups during the discussion on this point. Two different types of opinions arose on this point. Half of the mothers believe that this is good for their children to get acquainted with technology early. This skill will be helpful for them in the future. As cited by one mother,

"I appreciate the fact that children are already used to technology at this early age because they will be needing this in future anyways." (In-Depth Interview # 4, 25-10-2021)

In contrast, half of the mothers have expressed their concerns regarding their children's accessibility to technology at this early age. One mother has expressed,

"I always wanted to keep my children away from the internet and other apps as long as possible. However, I am helpless now as this is the requirements of pandemic time." (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 24-10-2021)

These mothers are worried about the negative impacts of technology on their children if they have to continue using these for a long.

Opinion on-screen time children spent for online schooling

All of the mothers' have expressed their concerns on this issue but agreed that there is no other option right now than allowing children to have this justified screen time. As cited by one mother,

"I know this is not good for my daughter, but I cannot keep her out of studies for long. To aid her learning aptitude, I have to bear with this." (In-Depth Interview # 3, 27-10-2021)

Another mother stated,

“My children were never habituated with screen time, I never allowed them to play using mobile or any other devices. However, I am left with no other option now.” (In-Depth Interview # 5, 4-11-2021)

Opinion on exams through online classes

As our age group is between 6-8 years, it covers the grade levels of Kg, Grade 1, and 2. The Kg parents mostly responded that their children did not face any formal exams during this period. As a part of their marking C.W, the children had written the alphabets and small 3/4 letter words, and they instantly shared it with their teachers through Whatsapp. However, parents from grades 1 and 2 have expressed their opinions about exams during this pandemic.

Most of the parents expressed their concerns regarding the fairness of online exams. They have shared, they liked the idea of giving exams through Google forms, although it was a difficult journey for them at the beginning to understand the whole process. Eventually, they all got used to it, but they raised the question of fairness. As expressed by a mother,

“I know few of my daughter's friends who are not very good students, and they are still getting more marks than my daughter. This is because Google form gives them the chance to give exams in isolation and take help from others. This is not fair, and I would say.” (In-Depth Interview # 3, 27-10-2021)

The way out to this, as suggested by one parent,

“Teachers might take the exams verbally by following different slots to understand the actual knowledge within the children. This can be a way to ensure fairness.” (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 25.10.21)

Theme 2: Mothers' experiences while continuing the online schooling for 6-8-year-old children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This section is brought into line with the findings that answer the research question of exploring the mothers' experiences with online schooling for their children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this part will be presented under six sub-themes.

Interactions with peers and their effects

Most of the mother has expressed their anxiety at this fact. They have expressed that if online schooling continues to be prolonged, their children will forget how to interact with their friends. Children cannot interact or play physically with their friends in online classes. Mothers believe this may have a prolonged effect on their children and social structure. They expressed their anxiety on this issue. Expressed by one mother,

“If it continues to go like this, our children will forget how to interact, how to talk and how to make friends.” (In-Depth Interview # 2, 26-10-2021)

However, only one mother has shared that she sees her daughter comfortable online interaction with her friends. She said,

"I can see they are making online interactions nowadays. She added her friends at Whatsapp and continues to chat there throughout the day." (In-Depth Interview # 4, 25-10-2021)

Students and teachers communicate in online schooling.

Mothers were not very convinced about the smooth communication between students and teachers during online classes. They have expressed that the link is often broken due to online buffering. Once stopped by a network problem, the same child barely gets a chance again to ask his question or understand what was being told by the teacher – which rarely happens in physical classes. They also expressed their concern regarding having 28-30 children in an online class that continues for 40 minutes only. They believe it does not ensure adequate time for good student and teacher communication. As one mother opined,

"Children are doing classes but do not understand everything clearly which is being explained by the teachers. We mothers have to give full-time support to make them understand what has been taught. This effort we rarely gave during physical classes, at this grades." (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 25.10.21)

Teaching-learning materials

Most mothers acknowledge that the learning materials used in online schooling are a complete bundle of video clips, pictures, storybooks, and text, making learning attractive and easy to comprehend. In this regard, all the mothers appreciated their respective school teachers for such dedicated effort. They have exhibited a very positive approach in this regard. They shared their views regarding this,

" Previously, I did not know how children learn things at school. Due to online classes, now I can see their learning process. I feel this is very interesting for a child, and I wish if we had the same learning process in our childhood." (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 24-10-2021)

However, a few respondents have expressed that although children have a complete package of learning now, including whiteboard, multimedia, and text, they are still not getting the full-time attention from the teacher they used to get during physical classes. Mothers also expressed their concerns as their children are not receiving the hands-on experiences while learning in online schooling. They are not learning using the real life activity and play based system.

Learning outcomes by using online schooling

Mothers showed diverse opinions regarding their concerns about online learning outcomes. Most parents said they are worried about online schooling's learning outcome since holistic learning is not feasible. 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." (In-Depth Interview # 2, 26- 10- 2021)

Few mothers 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.” (In-Depth Interview # 3, 27-10-2021)

Impacts of online schooling

Mothers showed diverse opinions regarding their concerns about the impact of online schooling on their children. One group of mothers has shared that they have barely seen any negative impact on their children. They expressed, they find their children very happy during and after online classes as they get to see their friends and teachers through this. Expressed by one mother,

"At the beginning of the pandemic, my son became very gloomy when the school was closed. Nevertheless, now, my son waits for his online classes to start. He interacts with his friends, chats through chatbox and enjoys his time most." (In-Depth Interview # 2, 26-10-2021)

In contrast to that opinion, another group of mothers has expressed concern regarding this 4 hours continuous online schooling. They believe this is impacting their children physically and mentally. Their children remain irritated the whole day and have become device addicted which they were never before this online schooling. As explained by one mother,

“The last 1.5 years of online schooling has put glasses on my child’s eyes. It made a permanent harm to him.” (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 25.10.21)

However, all the mothers have also expressed that they had no other choice but to let their children participate in this online schooling. Like one mother has said,

“If I decide that I will not let my child participate in online schooling, this will result in him falling behind compared to his friends when the physical school will open. So we are left with no other choices.” (In-Depth Interview # 6, 28-10-2021)

Feeling about returning to school

Mothers exhibited similar opinions at this point of discussion. Throughout the IDI and FGD sessions, mothers repeatedly emphasized that physical school is way better and effective than online schooling for their children. However, when asked how quickly they want their child to start physical school, they all answered the same: "unless the situation gets better." Like one mother has opined,

“Returning to school is not my choice; when Allah will create the situation better, they will return to school, it has nothing to do with what I want.” (In-Depth Interview # 4, 25-10-2021)

Mothers expressed that online schooling is not preferable; it is just an escape route in this situation, but none of them are so desperate that they will send their child anytime if the physical school starts now. One mother has expressed,

"My child is the most valuable thing in my life. I do not mind him staying out of studies for 2/3 years, but I want him to live without any harm." (In-Depth Interview # 5, 4-11-2021)

During the interview term, some schools have started once a day physical schooling. It has been seen that out of 12 mothers, only three mothers were allowing their children to attend school on that particular day. The rest of them expressed that they will not be sending their children back to school unless they get vaccinated.

Theme 3: Challenges encountered by the mothers ensuring the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic

This section presents the findings on parents' challenges and constraints while continuing online schooling. We have subdivided it into four different parts to understand the challenges more closely when focusing on this issue.

Factor affecting online schooling

While discussing factors that affect online schooling, few mothers have expressed that internet dropout and electricity availability are essential factors. This affects the quality and proper continuation of the class constantly.

They mention that the poor internet connection from either end (teacher or student) makes the child feel sad. Also, children get demotivated when continuous dropouts on the internet line. On the other hand, electricity often goes off without any notice, which hampers the regularity of the class.

Another reason that came out from the discussion is that the children cannot see the teachers face-to-face, so they often feel less connected, which might hamper the learning quality. As expressed by one mother,

"My son started her this new term online based. He never saw few of his teachers. He does not feel connected and tends to listen less with these new set of teachers." (In-Depth Interview # 2, 26-10-2021)

As cited by another mother,

"Initial days of online classes was not comfortable for my child as I never allowed her to use devices earlier." (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 25.10.21)

All of the Mothers, in general, have discussed that the classes should be more colourful and engaging by the teachers to make their children comfortable with online schooling.

Difficulties in keeping the environment comfortable for child's online schooling

Most mothers from nuclear families have expressed that they do not face any significant difficulties while keeping the environment comfortable for their children. They have put their child's sitting table in such a corner of the room where they can attend the classes uninterruptedly. Besides, they made their maids alert regarding the quietness while doing household chores during online schooling. Some mothers shared more details of their preparation, like how they clean and wipe the room the early morning before the class starts, they arrange tables and other study-related accessories close to their child's device, keep a water pot close to them, so that the child does not need to worry about anything. One mother has expressed,

"I moved my dining table inside one bedroom to ensure my daughter can attend classes peacefully. I put a pen stand,

bookshelf, and a water pot for her to make the room look exactly like the classroom.” (In-Depth Interview # 4, 25-10-2021)

A reverse experience also came from another group of mothers who have expressed that ensuring a comfortable environment for online schooling has been difficult for them because they live in a joint family. They find it very difficult to manage a comfortable environment for their children to continue online classes. They expressed that not everyone in the joint family understands the importance of online schooling; they talk, distract the child, and sometimes even guests arrive. So every time, they need to be highly alert to ensure a quiet environment for the child. As shared by one mother,

"My mother-in-law stays with me, and she does not understand the importance of silence during online classes. She keeps on talking loudly, calling maids or sometimes even start talking to my son by not realizing that he is doing his classes." (Focus Group Discussion # 1, 25-10-2021)

Balancing the responsibilities by mothers

The struggle to balance a professional life, household chores, and children's online schooling has been reflected in the discussion of all twelve mothers. Most mothers expressed how difficult it was for them in the initial days to balance everything as their child is young and they need constant support in attending online classes. One mother has stated,

"My child was so small that he did not mean to remain sited in front of a screen to attend classes. I had to sit beside her

constantly for entire 2 hours to carry on the classes." (In-Depth Interview # 6, 28-10- 2021)

Mothers expressed how online schooling has added extra responsibilities to their daily lives, as earlier they only used to drop the child to school and teachers managed the rest. However, they have to help their children in every learning step, from opening the book to finding the page, writing, taking pictures, and submitting HW/CW. Therefore, they often find it challenging to balance work and arrange support for a child's online schooling.

Nevertheless, by 1.5 years, all of the mothers expressed that they are now used to this process. They have learned now how to manage everything together.

Issues regarding network availability

Most of the mothers expressed their concern regarding network issues which play an important constrain in online schooling. Almost all of them shared that they have enhanced their internet connectivity speed during the pandemic to continue with smooth online classes. Two of the respondents shared that they also keep their mobile data up to date to cope with the fiber line dropouts.

However, they still face network dropouts at times. As shared by one mother,

" Sometimes, my child feels left out sitting in front of the class when his line continuously gets frozen. I can feel his sadness."

(In-Depth Interview # 1, 24-10-2021)

Parents also expressed that network dropping occurs from the teacher's end. They all agreed that this is a severe concern where Govt. Should work on.

Theme 4: The kind of support mothers expect from school authorities to continue online schooling.

This part of the findings will shed light on the fourth research question of this study which focuses on the expectations of mothers from the school authority to smoothen their journey with online schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings are presented here under different subheadings.

Expectations from the school authority

Most of the mothers have said that the school authority supports them in every way possible. Regarding getting supports from the school authority, one respondent opined,

"I am pleased with the supports that I am getting from my daughter's school. They are supporting us in every possible way."

(In-Depth Interview # 4, 25-10-2021)

Additionally, some mothers have suggested that schools can add some extra services to parents like providing photocopies of the worksheets, elements for crafts, and copies. As stated by a mother,

'Although my daughter is young, she does not need this support; however, school authorities can provide materials like worksheets to the children of higher classes.'(In-Depth Interview # 6, 28-10-

2021)

The smoothness of communication between teachers and parents

All the parents have agreed that communication is smoother now (during online schooling) than in the past. They all have expressed their happiness that now they can

communicate with the teachers anytime they want through Whatsapp or even during class hours; previously, it was much hassle as they only got this chance during PTM (parents-teachers meeting) or by taking special appointments. As said by one mother,

“Previously I had to wait to see a teacher, to know something or ask something. Now I can ask anything to the teachers instantly.

This is a blessing for me.” (In-Depth Interview # 1, 24-10-2021)

They also expressed that they can now understand how their children are doing in class, the teachers' responses to their understanding, how teachers are taking classes because of the online classes. It was previously impossible to know what was happening in the classes.

One mother has expressed,

"My daughter is very introvert. Because of the online schooling, now I can live to watch how she is doing at class and how she is responding to the teachers." (In-Depth Interview # 4, 25-10-2021)

Preferred (online) schooling time by the parents

The number of mothers who participated in this research is working mothers, and the research tried to figure out whether they prefer a different time like evening schooling for their children or not. Surprisingly even the working mothers also disagree with this. They all preferred the regular timing of school. Few of them expressed that it is tough for them to manage everything together in the morning, like continuing their office work, household chores, and supporting child's online classes. However, they somehow manage it even by taking pressure; some cook at night to lessen the workload in the morning, and some do office work late at night or take help from

mother-in-law or maids. Some have expressed that they are continuing both together in the morning. However, all the mothers have said they want their evening time proper family time.

One mother has specified another reason why she prefers morning time. She said,

"Since there is no school, children, in general, are out of routine now. If the schools also shift to evening, they will wake up late from sleep, and their daily routines will be messed up. I want my children to have a minimum regularity in their life." (Focus Group Discussion # 2, 6-11-2021)

Discussion

This study has added a new dimension to online classes in our country by understanding mothers' perceptions regarding online classes during the COVID-19 situation. This research explored mothers' perception of online classes during the COVID-19 crisis from different perspectives explained as their understanding, experience, challenges, and expectations. This part will put light on the interpretations of the research results in light of the research questions, the researches reflections, and analysis of the study concerning existing literature. This discussion has been presented following the same themes in compliance with the study results.

Mothers' understanding of children's online schooling

All the mothers who participated in our research are well educated. When they were asked about their understanding of online schooling, they responded spontaneously. They shared, before the pandemic, they knew very little about online schooling. By online schooling, the mothers understood one-way learning only using emails or the

internet, which they believed was only suitable for adults. They had very less knowledge about interactive online schooling using different digital platforms and gadgets. During the pandemic period, mothers became well acquainted and knowledgeable about the actual process of online learning which also complements the finding of Li and Lahani (2020) where they have also explained it as a remote learning system using digital platforms through different gadgets.

Mothers understand the importance of interactive online schooling at this crisis moment, which can only ensure social distancing. In a findings by UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (2020), it also reflects that online platforms have been the first to be rolled out to let children continue with their learning most effectively. Though, mothers still believe traditional schooling has more advantages over online schooling. This matches the research findings, which exhibits that face-to-face education has many benefits not found in its online counterpart (Xu and Jaggars, 2016). However, mothers do agree that they do not have any other choice than to accept online schooling at this point. Most mothers considered online learning a temporary solution for this crisis time rather than a substitute for school.

At the same time, mothers are worried about the prolonged screen time required for this purpose. Mothers reported that their children used devices (like mobile and tab/computer) before the pandemic only to play games and watch videos. The same children are now using devices to attend classes for long hours, which increases children's total screen time. Few mothers explained how they face difficulties minimizing the after-effects of long screen time. On the other hand, another group of mothers has shared that they do not find significant differences. Nevertheless, each mother has figured out a way to compensate for this by either cutting the screen time for games or TV or using anti-reflective glasses to ensure justified screen time

required for online schooling.

It can be concluded from the above findings that parents had less knowledge about online schooling earlier; however, by this time, they are well acquainted regarding this system and excited about this. This is similar to the findings of a study conducted by Moore et al. (2011) where they have shared that this is a new paradigm of online learning based on information technology. Mothers now know to take control over it by finding ways to minimize the opposing sides. Also, they acknowledge the importance of online schooling as they fully support it at this time.

Mothers' experiences while continuing the online schooling for 6-8-year-old children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The result has derived based on the study findings, which exhibits the mothers' experiences by going through the journey of supporting their children during this pandemic period.

One of the main concerns that mothers have during this online schooling era is the not as many social interactions their children are having with their peers. Mothers were anxious while expressing that their children could not interact smoothly with their peers because of the extended school closure. It is similar to the findings of a recent study by Garbe et al. (2020), which proposes that parents were equally concerned about children's academic progress and social, emotional development in online learning. All the mothers agreed that social interaction and playing with peers significantly impact children's learning, development, and overall well-being. Since there is no such scope in online classes for these interactions, parents are worried about children's social and emotional development. However, few mothers have expressed that their children now feel better by seeing their friends and teachers online than the previous days of not having school. They have expressed,

their children wait a whole day for the classes to begin, and after classes, and they seem happy and satisfied.

Some mothers still considered a lack of communication with friends as one of the significant shortcomings of virtual learning. Mothers also expressed their concerns that if this situation continues, their children will forget to interact socially and make friends. Mothers' concerns are similar to the findings of a study by Kim (2020), who stated that online learning might not give sufficient or appropriate opportunities to involve young children who need more interactions and hands-on activities to focus and learn than adult learners. However, a smaller group of mothers did agree that their children are still making friends using Whatsapp and interacting there to compensate for their instinct of making and interacting with friends.

Mothers are not very convinced regarding the smooth communication between students and teachers in the online schooling process. One primary concern related to that is the network problem. They stated that smooth communication often gets hindered because of network problems. As there are many students in a class, one child gets very little time to ask her query or converses with the teacher. At the same time, due to lack of time, the teacher also does not explain one single thing several times. Henceforth, for any reason, if the link gets broken or the network fluctuates from any end (teacher or student), the lesson gets lost forever. There is no way left to retain it back once again for the child. For this reason, mothers strongly question the suitability of young children learning online.

Mothers are well convinced with the learning materials used in online classes as these are highly interactive and compliments the audio-visual learning system. However, mothers also cited that online schooling might be excellent in offering audio-visual learning but cannot let the children have a hands-on learning experience as it is

virtual. At this point, to encourage hands-on activities, mothers still prefer traditional schooling over online schooling. Even if we consider Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory, which talks about VAK learning style and suggests that every child learns differently; some learn visually, some kinesthetic learners learn through physical and hands-on activities. As a whole, mothers believe the learning outcome through online schooling is under trial because of the absence of social interaction and hands-on activities. Mothers believe that in the absence of these two elements, holistic learning is not possible in the long run.

While talking about returning to school, mothers believe they do not rush to send their children back to regular physical school unless they are vaccinated or the pandemic ends. They agreed to this as a whole.

Challenges encountered by the mothers ensuring the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic

The absence of physical classes due to pandemics rapidly replaced the significant roles of teachers with parents. Parents were required to support their children in every possible way by helping them open the books, refereeing to different page numbers, making them sit in front of the PC, and doing CW and HW. It was a significant shift of responsibility among the parents at that time. Generally, the pandemic was an extraordinary phenomenon and for which parents were not ready for it; therefore, it came as a challenge to mothers to start supporting their children without any prior experiences. Initially, parents were anxious about adopting this new structure of education; however, gradually, they got acquainted with it. This finding is similar to a study by Selwyn et al. (2011), which states that feelings towards online learning are assorted, some parents feel more associated, and some consider it an additional load.

Almost every mother has shared how internet connectivity and network unavailability

challenge this online schooling process. A study by Situmorang & Purba (2020) also discourses the network issues being a challenge for parents in children's online schooling processes. Slow and interrupted internet connections often cause the children to feel left out in the middle of the class and hinder to continue understanding a concept clearly. All mothers have expressed how they faced the same trouble for this prolonged period.

Another major challenge that came out from the findings is, balancing the responsibilities of the mothers among their roles to support their children, household chores, and professional responsibilities. Initially, their situation was more difficult, but mothers gradually adapted themselves to this 'new normal' situation. A study by Liu et al. (2020) also titles that parents had no other choice but to take on unfamiliar roles and responsibilities in children's online education while experiencing increasing instructional responsibility for their child's learning. Even though mothers were homemakers, they faced difficulties managing time for children's online learning. The reason behind this is that mothers have to stay with the child of this age group throughout online schooling. This finding brings in line with a recent study by Sharma (2020), which suggests that online schooling has presented additional challenges for Indian mothers, and the technicalities of learning tools and ensuring functional devices' availability came as a daily challenge. It caused chronic tension for some mothers. Several mothers have expressed how nicely they have managed this pressure by shifting major office works at evening time or cooking at night. A group of mothers who belong to joint families has expressed their gratitude to their extended family members for their constant support for household chores which allows them some free time to support their children during online schooling.

Another challenge mother's faced was keeping the environment study friendly, calm,

and quiet for the children to continue their online classes. In the initial days of the online classes, mothers prepared to ensure a comfortable situation for the children. All of the mothers believe a comfortable environment can ensure a good learning outcome for the children. It is similar to the findings of Melhuish et al., (2008) and Son & Morrison (2010), which suggest that the home setting plays an essential role in preschool-aged children's learning and development. Despite having this intention, it has been seen that only mothers from nuclear families could have ensured this comfortable situation for their children without much interruption. Mothers from joint families have shared that they still face difficulties in ensuring a calm learning environment for their children, as the extended family members are not that sincere about this issue.

The discussion can be concluded as, starting from the very beginning, parents are still facing challenges to smoothen the process of online schooling. However, they took the challenge positively for the betterment of their children.

The kind of support mothers expect from school authorities to continue online schooling.

Most of the mothers are commonly satisfied with the level of support they are getting from respective school authorities during online schooling. This satisfaction expressed by mothers indicates that school authorities try their best to support the parents during this challenging time. It has also been seen in a study conducted by Garbe et al. (2020), which portrays that a large majority of the parents are satisfied with the amount of support their children are getting from the school during the COVID- 19. In line with this result, recent research by Horowitz & Igielnik (2020) also revealed that 83 % of the parents were equally satisfied by the systemschool is handling the instructions for children. However, the same mothers also suggested,

school authorities still have room for improvement. They believe, since the school cost has now been reduced due to not continuing schooling physically, authorities can now provide worksheets and other supporting documents to parents through home deliveries. Another suggestion that came from the mother's end was to make the classes more engaging by using multimedia and introducing more engaging activities. Besides these, mothers want the classes to be recorded and stored somewhere for future reference and use. Regarding class timing, it has been reflected that all the mothers preferred morning classes to encourage children to stay in a disciplined life. Mothers have conveyed that communication is better with the teacher than previously used to be during physical schools. They had to take appointments earlier from authorities to meet a teacher, which was a lengthy procedure. They expect the same to be continued when the physical school takes place. Mothers appreciated using "Whatsapp" as an instant mood of communication. They want this to be continued during physical classes as well.

Conclusion

This research was aimed to get an insight into the understanding of the mothers' perceptions, experiences, and challenges with online learning for their 6-8 years old children who are participating in online schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been seen, although the system of online schooling was unknown to the mothers initially, they have nicely adopted it gradually. Most mothers agreed it is an approach to a newer version of teaching and learning that brings extra value to the traditional learning system. Based on the study conducted, it can be concluded that a majority of the mothers believe that online schooling is convenient as it makes the learning process more accessible than the traditional learning approach. They also agreed that online learning allows them to understand the learning process much better than ago,

as they can now see and hear the classes directly by sitting next to their children. Their communication with teachers is more accessible now. The absence of regular socializing through physical schooling is one of the major concerns of the mothers, but they have also expressed how it has been aided by ensuring interaction among children via online apps (like WhatsApp) and group discussions. Lastly, most mothers agreed that online learning improves the learning process because by getting sufficient information on the internet, students can have meaningful learning now.

However, there are some challenges faced by mothers in incorporating online learning. Based on the study, the challenges explored are, children still prefer traditional classroom learning situations over online learning, sometimes internet interruptions make it unclear to understand instructions from the teachers' end, and it is hard to have group interactions. Most importantly, it completely occupies the mothers as children need constant assistance to open books, understand something, or do homework. To smoothen the online schooling process, obtaining more gadgets like laptops, printers, scanners has made the process a little difficult for the parents. Overall the practice of online schooling has made a significant impact on our education system, especially as an alternative to traditional classes. As technology evolves, it is assured that there will be even more scope of online schooling in the future. Staying in a touch of education is very important in today's world by any means which is well planned. Using the experiences and considering the challenges gathered from the findings of this study can give students meaningful online learning experiences in the near future.

Recommendation

Indication from the thoughts on the findings and discussion of the present study on mothers' perception of online schooling for 6-8 years old children during the COVID-19 pandemic will conclude with some recommendations to support the mothers of the children who are participating in online classes. Which are as follows:

- School management should include mothers in regular meetings and workshop sessions with their teachers so that mothers may also learn a systematic way to teach their children since mothers play an important role in supporting children during online schooling. Enhancing mothers teaching skills will help a child to learn better.
- Schools may record every day's classes and store at Google drive so that if a mother fails to support the child during class hours, she can always review it from the recorded class again.
- Private schools should train their teachers more intensively in using ICT to improve the class quality and experience. Corporal guidance and support in this regard can be taken from experts from different countries abroad who have been implementing this type online modality for a long in their schools.
- Schools now can afford to support parents in other ways like providing worksheets, craft items, and learning materials by postal service or home delivery service. This is because the authority has less operational cost now compared to past because of the physical school closure.
- Mothers expressed their frustration regarding the internet speed issues. Govt. should put more effort into ensuring improvement in internet service.
- Interactive classes initiated by English medium schools should get more

attention from the policy makers and can be implemented on a large scale for Govt. schools. Govt. owned education sector should adopt this interactive session and English mediums to carry out regular schooling during this pandemic time. Otherwise, a clear difference occurs between the two segments of students within the same country.

- A further study over a large population of mothers can be carried out to get a bigger picture of Bangladeshi context.

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Appendix A

In-depth Interview Questionnaire

Research Title: Mothers' perception of online schooling for children of 6-8 years during COVID-19 Pandemic.

Section A: Demographic Information

Interview Date:		
Start Time:	End Time:	
Name of Respondent:		
Age:	Education:	Profession:
Child's Age and Gender:		No. Of Children:

Section B: Mothers' understanding about children's online schooling

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word "Online schooling"?
2. How much did you know about online schooling before the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Recently many schools in our country started online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic; what is your opinion regarding this online schooling during a pandemic?
4. Can you please share how long your child has been receiving online classes? How often does your child attend online classes? How many hours per day is your child doing online classes?
5. What is your opinion regarding the effectiveness of online schooling on children's learning? Do you think your child will make adequate academic progress through online schooling? Please share your opinion.
6. What is your opinion regarding your child's time sitting in front of the devices for online schooling?
7. What is your opinion regarding the online learning involvement for 6–8-year-olds?
8. What is your opinion on exams taking place online to assess a child's understanding?

Section C: Mothers' experiences while continuing the online schooling for 6-8 years old children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Do you think your child enjoys doing online classes? Why? If not, why?
2. How do you see that children use technologies to keep pace with their studies?
3. What impacts of online schooling have you observed in your child?
4. How do you think online schooling may cater the individualized learning?
5. What is your impression about opportunities for activity lased learning through online schooling?
6. Do you feel the communication is smooth between students and teachers in online schooling?
7. Do you think using virtual books and other materials can ensure good learning?
8. How anxious are you about your child's peer relationships due to physical and social distancing?
9. Do you want to give any advice regarding improved student engagement?
10. What are the risks you think will be there if children continue online schooling? Why is it essential for students to return to classroom-based learning?
11. How soon do you feel comfortable with your child/children returning to school?

Section D: Challenges encountered by the mothers ensuring the online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Do you think any factors affect the online classes? If yes, please share with us the factors.
2. Do you face any difficulty keeping the environment comfortable for your child's online schooling? If yes, please share.
3. Do you face any challenges to support your child with class works/homework?
4. How do you balance your child's online schooling, household chores/office responsibilities? Please share your experiences.
5. What kind of internet access do you have at your home? Did you need to increase the data limit to smoothen your child's online classes?

Section E: What kind of support are mothers expecting from school authorities to continue online schooling?

1. What kind of support are you expecting from school management as a mother?
2. Some schools conduct evening shift online classes for children; do you also prefer that timing? How is this going to help you?
3. Do you feel the communication is smooth between parents and teachers? Are they supportive enough of your needs and concerns? Please share your opinion.

In-depth Interview Questionnaire (Bangla)

Research Title: Mothers' perception on online schooling for 6-8 years old children during COVID-19 Pandemic

Section A: Demographic Information

Interview Date:		
Start Time:	End Time:	
Name of Respondent:		
Age:	Education:	Profession:
Child's Age and Gender:		No. Of Children:

বিভাগ খ : বাচ্চাদের অনলাইন ক্লাসের ব্যাপারে মায়েদের ধারণা।

১. “অনলাইন স্কুলিং” কথাটা শোনা মাত্র আপনার মাথায় কি ধারণা আসে?
২. কোভিড-১৯ এর আগে অনলাইন স্কুলিং এর ব্যাপারে আপনি কতটুকু জানতেন?
৩. কোভিড-১৯ মহামারির সময় আমাদের দেশের অনেক স্কুল অনলাইন ক্লাস শুরু করেছে, মহামারির সময় শুরু হওয়া এই অনলাইন স্কুলিংয়ের ব্যাপারে আপনার মন্তব্য কি?
৪. আপনি কি আমাদের জানাবেন, আপনার শিশু প্রায় কতদিন ধরে অনলাইন ক্লাসে অংশগ্রহন করছে? সপ্তাহে কতদিন সে অনলাইন ক্লাসে অংশগ্রহন করে? প্রতিদিন কত ঘন্টা করে অনলাইন ক্লাস করছে?
৫. আপনার শিশুর অনলাইন ক্লাসে কতটুকু উপকার হচ্ছে বলে আপনি মনে করেন? আপনার কি মনে হয় ওর যথার্থ পড়াশুনা হচ্ছে অনলাইন ক্লাসের মাধ্যমে? আপনার মতামত জানাবেন কি?
৬. আপনার শিশু মোবাইল/ কম্পিউটারের সামনে বসে যেই সময়টা কাটায় তার অনলাইন স্কুলিংয়ের জন্য, এই ব্যাপারে আপনার মন্তব্য কি?
৭. ৬-৮ বছরের শিশুদের এই অনলাইন স্কুলে অংশগ্রহন সমন্ধে আপনার মন্তব্য কি?
৮. একটা শিশু কতটুকু শিখল, তা জানার জন্য অনলাইনের মাধ্যমে যে পরীক্ষায়গুলো নেয়া হচ্ছে, এই ব্যাপারে আপনার মন্তব্য কি?

বিভাগ গ: কোভিড-১৯ মহামারীর সময়, অনলাইন স্কুলিং চলাকালীন সময়ে, ৬-৮ বছরের বাচ্চাদের মায়েদের অভিজ্ঞতা।

১. আপনার কি মনে হয় আপনার শিশু অনলাইন ক্লাস করতে আনন্দ পায়? কেন? যদি না পায়, কেন?
২. শিশুরা যে পড়াশুনার জন্য এই ডিজিটাল পদ্ধতিটি ব্যবহার করছে, আপনি এই বিষয়টিকে কিভাবে দেখছেন?
৩. আপনি কি আপনার শিশুর ক্ষেত্রে অনলাইন স্কুলিংয়ের কোন প্রভাব দেখতে পেয়েছেন?
৪. আপনি কি মনে করেন অনলাইন স্কুলিং প্রত্যেকটা শিশুর নিজস্ব শিখার প্রবনতাকে প্রাধান্য দেয়?
৫. হাতে কলমে শেখার ব্যাপারে অনলাইন স্কুলিং কতটা সুযোগ রাখছে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
৬. আপনার কি মনে হয় ছাত্র এবং শিক্ষিকার মধ্যে যোগাযোগটা অনলাইন স্কুলিংয়ে সৃষ্ট ভাবে হচ্ছে?
৭. আপনার কি মনে হয় ডিজিটাল মাধ্যমে সঠিক শিক্ষা নিশ্চিত করা যাচ্ছে?
৮. সামাজিক দূরত্ব ব্যাপারটা আপনার শিশুর সমবয়সীদের সাথে বন্ধুত্বে যে প্রাভাব বিস্তার করেছে, এইটার ব্যাপারে আপনি কতটুকু উদ্বিগ্ন?
৯. আপনার কি কোন উপদেশ আছে অনলাইন স্কুলিংয়ে শিশুদের আরও কতটা গভীর ভাবে নিযুক্ত করা যায়, এই ব্যাপারে?
১০. শিশুরা যদি দীর্ঘ সময় অনলাইন স্কুলিং চালিয়ে যায়, এতে কি প্রতিবন্ধকতা আছে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
১১. কতটা তাড়াতাড়ি নিয়মিত স্কুল শুরু হলে আপনি খুশী হবেন?

বিভাগ ঘ: অনলাইন ক্লাস নিশ্চিত করার সময় যে মায়েরা যে সব প্রতিকূলতার সম্মুখীন হয়।

১. আপনার কি মনে হয় কোন কারনে অনলাইন ক্লাসগুলো প্রভাবিত হয়? উত্তর যদি হয়, আমাদেরকে বলুন কি কি কারন।
২. অনলাইন ক্লাস চলাকালীন সময়ে সঠিক পরিবেশ নিশ্চিত করতে কি আপনার কোন কষ্ট করতে হয়? যদি হয়, সেটা কি, প্লিজ বলুন।

৩. আপনার শিশুর বাড়ির কাজ/ শ্রেনীর কাজে সাহায্য করতে কি আপনার কোন প্রতিকূলতার সম্মুখীন হতে হয়?

৪. আপনি বাসার কাজ, অফিসের দায়িত্ব, শিশুর অনলাইন ক্লাস- সব একসাথে কিভাবে সামলান? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতা জানাবেন কি ?

৫. আপনার বাসায় কি ধরনের ইন্টারনেট লাইন আছে? আপনার কি অনলাইন ক্লাসের জন্য ডেটা/ইন্টারনেটের ক্ষমতা আলাদা করে বাড়াতে হয়েছে?

বিভাগ গু: মায়েরা অনলাইন স্কুলিং চালিয়ে নেবার জন্য স্কুল ব্যবস্থাপকদের কাছ থেকে যে ধরনের সহযোগীতা আশা করছে।

১. মা হিসাবে স্কুল ব্যবস্থাপকদের কাছে আপনি কি ধরনের সহযোগীতা আশা করছেন?

২. কিছু কিছু স্কুল সন্ধ্যাকালীন অনলাইন স্কুলিং চালু করেছে, আপনিও কি এই সময়টা পছন্দ করছেন? এই সময়টাতে স্কুল হলে, সেটা আপনাকে কিভাবে সাহায্য করবে?

৩. আপনার কি মনে হয় শিক্ষক এবং বাবা-মায়ের মধ্যে যোগাযোগটা সঠিক হচ্ছে? তারা কি আপনার প্রয়োজন এবং উদ্বেগের ব্যাপারে যথার্থ সহযোগীতা করছে? আপনার মতামত জানাবেন কি?

Appendix B

Focus Group Discussion Guideline

Research Title: Mothers' perception on online schooling for 6-8 years old children during COVID-19 Pandemic

Guiding Question:

Introductory Questions:

How are you?

How is everyone at your home?

1. Recently many schools in our country started online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic; what is your opinion regarding this online schooling during a pandemic?
2. What is your opinion regarding the effectiveness of online schooling on children's learning? Do you think your child will make adequate academic progress through online schooling? Please share your opinion.
3. What is your opinion on exams taking place online to assess a child's understanding?
4. What impacts of online schooling have you observed in your child?
5. What are the risks you think will be there if children continue to do online schooling? Why is it essential for students to return to classroom-based learning?
6. How soon do you feel comfortable returning to school with your child/children?
7. Do you face any difficulty keeping the environment comfortable for your child's online schooling? If yes, please share.
8. Do you face any challenges to support your child with class works/homework?
9. How do you balance your child's online schooling, household chores/office responsibilities? Please share your experiences.
10. What kind of support are you expecting from school management as a mother?
11. Some schools conduct evening shift online classes for children; do you also

prefer that timing? How is this going to help you?

Focus Group Discussion Guideline (Bangla)

Research Title: Mothers' perception on online schooling for 6-8 years old children during COVID-19 Pandemic

প্রারম্ভিক প্রশ্ন:

আপনি কেমন আছেন?

আপনার বাসায় সবাই কেমন আছে?

১. কোভিড-১৯ মহামারির সময় আমাদের দেশের অনেক স্কুল অনলাইন ক্লাস শুরু করেছে, মহামারির সময় শুরু হওয়া এই অনলাইন স্কুলিংয়ের ব্যাপারে আপনার মন্তব্য কি?

২. আপনার শিশুর অনলাইন ক্লাসের উপযুক্ততার ব্যাপারে আপনার মন্তব্য কি? আপনার কি মনে হয় ওর যথার্থ পড়াশুনা হচ্ছে অনলাইন ক্লাসের মাধ্যমে? আপনার ধারণা জানাবেন কি?

৩. একটা শিশু কতটুকু শিখল, তা জানার জন্য অনলাইনের মাধ্যমে যে পরীক্ষায়গুলো নেয়া হচ্ছে, এই ব্যাপারে আপনার মন্তব্য কি?

৪. আপনি কি আপনার শিশুর মধ্যে অনলাইন স্কুলিংয়ের কোন প্রভাব দেখতে পেয়েছেন?

৫. শিশুরা যদি দীর্ঘ সময় অনলাইন স্কুলিং চালিয়ে যায়, এতে কি প্রতিবন্ধকতা আছে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

৬. কতটা তাড়াতাড়ি নিয়মিত স্কুল শুরু হলে আপনি খুশী হবেন?

৭. অনলাইন ক্লাস চলাকালীন সময়ে সঠিক পরিবেশ নিশ্চিত করতে কি আপনার কোন কষ্ট করতে হয়? যদি হয়, সেটা কি, প্লিজ বলুন।

৮. আপনার শিশুর বাড়ির কাজ/ শ্রেনীর কাজে সাহায্য করতে কি আপনার কোন প্রতিকূলতার সম্মুখীন হতে হয়?

৯. আপনি বাসার কাজ, অফিসের দায়িত্ব, শিশুর অনলাইন ক্লাস- সব একসাথে কিভাবে সামলান? আপনার অভিজ্ঞতা জানাবেন কি ?

১০. মা হিসাবে স্কুল ব্যবস্থাপকদের কাছে আপনি কি ধরনের সহযোগীতা আশা করছেন?

১১. কিছু কিছু স্কুল সন্ধ্যাকালীন অনলাইন স্কুলিং চালু করেছে, আপনিও কি এই সময়টা পছন্দ করছেন? এই সময়টাতে স্কুল হলে, সেটা আপনাকে কিভাবে সাহায্য করবে?

Appendix C

Consent Form for the Mothers

Title of the Research: Mothers' perception of online schooling for children of 6-8 years during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researcher: Sadia Afroz

Dear Mothers,

I am Sadia Afroz; as part of my master's degree fulfillment from Brac Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University, I am conducting this research to explore mother's perception regarding Online Schooling during Covid-19 situation for 6-8 years old children.

As a mother, their primary caregiver, you will be interviewed to share your experiences and challenges to continue with their online schooling during the COVID-19 situation.

If you agree to participate, I will conduct an In-depth Interview/Focus Group Discussion to know your honest opinion about online schooling. It is going to take 45-60 minutes.

Your participation in the study is charitable. You are the ultimate authority to decide whether you want to participate or not. At any point in this interview, you can withdraw yourself, may hide your identity by keeping yourself anonymous.

If you agree to continue reading all this information, I will be very grateful. You need to sign below to agree to these terms and conditions.

Thanks a lot for your cooperation.

Signature of Investigator

Date:

Signature of Participant

Date: