

**Parental Perception and Practices to Support Socio-Emotional Development of
Children Aged 3-5 years**

By

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

BRAC Institute of Educational Development

BRAC University

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Parental Perception and Practices to Support Socio-Emotional Development of Children Aged 3-5 years

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

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Abstract

Socio-emotional development is a crucial part of children's holistic growth and development. Considering Bangladeshi young children's inadequate social and emotional development, the study aims to explore the parental perception and practices to support socio-emotional development in preschool-aged children (aged 3-5 years). The qualitative study was done through interviewing and group discussion on twelve urban middle-income parents where insights into their understanding, practices, and challenges to foster socio-emotional development in children have come up. The findings then guided the study to certain recommendations to assist parents in nurturing socio-emotional development through promoting emotional bonding and active engagement in their young children's lives.

Keywords

Socio-emotional development; early childhood; parental perception; practices; preschooler

Dedication

To my ever-loving parents, whose immense support and faith in me have given me the courage to decide my desired ways of life, and my siblings, for whom I persuaded this

Acknowledgment

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to Allah, the Almighty, for enabling a scope for me to pursue what I feel so passionate about. I would like to sincerely thank all the teachers I have come in contact with while pursuing this post-graduate degree in Early Childhood Development at BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. The integrity and ease that they bring to the classes have made me learn the craft of learning truly.

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Additionally, I thank all the parents for their sincere and willing participation in enriching this study.

Lastly, I express my gratitude to all my friends and sisters, who have been a great support throughout the whole process in one way or another. I am incredibly grateful to all of them for how they have always believed in my capabilities; sometimes even more than me. Thanks to all of them for always motivating me and cheering me up. Additionally, I am also grateful to all my peers I have met through this platform and have got real inspirations in life.

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List of Acronyms

ECD Early Childhood Development

FGD Focus Group Discussion

IDI In-Depth Interview

MICS Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

PDT Parent Development Theory

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Chapter 1- Introduction & Background

Introduction

Early childhood is the most crucial phase of children's lives where they experience rapid social, cognitive, physical, emotional, and language development. Wang et al. (2021) found that cognitive flexibility, linked to the ability to understand and regulate emotions, plays a predictive role in the development of emotional understanding. Witkower et al. (2021) add to this by showing that children can recognize bodily expressions of distinct emotions, with the ability to recognize sadness by age 3, fear by age 4-5, and anger by age 6-8. Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory tells us the nature of this understanding will depend on the quality of their interactions with adults, preferably their parents (Taber, 2020).

Children aged 3-5 years are known as preschool-age children. At this age, they start experiencing the world beyond their family and home with their increased eagerness and energy, which ultimately shape their thinking and behavior (Tadesse & Snyder, 2016). Not only do language and cognitive development occur at this stage, but it is also crucial for socio-emotional development, forming attachments, and dealing with stress and challenges (Bruner & Copeman, 2005). Piaget argues that for preschoolers' learning an enriched and stimulating environment is necessary as their thinking is still based on perceptions and actions (TRAWICK-SMITH, 2022).

Recent studies have consistently shown that preschoolers' emotional competence, particularly their ability to express positive emotions, is influenced by their parents' emotional socialization practices (Denham & Bassett, 2019; Zinsser et al., 2021). Positive

parental modeling and responsiveness to children's emotions are key factors in promoting emotional competence (Denham & Bassett, 2019). This emotional competence, in turn, is linked to positive interpersonal relationships in preschool, which can predict gains in emotional knowledge and subsequent academic achievement in kindergarten (Torres et al., 2015)

Development is sequential and follows a defined pathway. Cognitive stimulation, a nurturing environment, and supportive familial interactions are some of the significant elements of children's early development (Walker et al., 2011). Research also found a positive relationship between parental attachment, parenting styles, and approaches to discipline with children's emotional understanding (Guajardo et al., 2009). Quality parental practices can pave the way for developing all domains at an early age. Positive socio-emotional behavior encourages a child to learn new things, be inquisitive, communicate and connect with others, display kindness and empathy, and help them cope with challenges (Ritblatt, S., 2018).

Global studies show the prevalence of inadequate learning and socio-emotional development delay in 3-4-year-old children in low and middle-income countries (Sk et al., 2020). WHO reports Bangladesh as one of the ten countries with the most disadvantaged children who are at great risk of not achieving their cognitive and socio-emotional development milestones (*The Landscape of Early Childhood Education In Bangladesh*, 2020). Multiple factors are responsible for the development of children under 5, among them home environment is a crucial one, which includes the emotional warmth of parents toward children, the availability of learning opportunities, the physical space for play, and general cleanliness (Rahman et al., 2023). Also, family interaction has

been evidenced as one of the key factors for adequate early childhood development (Hossain et al., 2019) along with parental involvement in children's various learning activities (Frongillo et al., 2017). However national empirical research on these factors is lacking in Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2023).

These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to support the socio-emotional development of young children in Bangladesh. Therefore, this study aims to explore the parental understanding of socio-emotional development in early years and their practices to support that in their preschool-aged children (3-5 years) and dig deep into the foundation of those concerning factors like socio-economic status, education, culture, society, environment, etc. in Bangladesh, and wants to contribute in children's overall development by understanding socio-emotional developmental hindrance in preschoolers.

Statement of the Problem

The Lancet from their latest study indicates that around 43% of children under the age of 5 (around 230 million) from low-income and middle-income countries are at risk of not reaching their development potential (Black et al., 2017). MICS(*Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey*, 2019) indicates that in Bangladesh, almost one-third of children between the ages of 3 to 4 years are not on the track of sufficient socio-emotional development and around 70% do not attain the level of literacy that they require at that age.

Aligned with Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory, many studies emphasize the pivotal role of parents among the immediate socializing agents in childhood development

(Onwuegbuzie et al., 2013). Good parenting is a prerequisite for optimal growth & and holistic development in the early years. Attributes like adequate responses to children's physical, educational, psychosocial, and emotional needs are regarded as good parenting skills (Karim & Begum, 2017). A positive home environment and healthy parent-child interaction can pivot children's emotional and motor development immensely (Saccani et al., 2013). Again, playing with toys is positively correlated with children's socio-emotional development if supportive parenting care and practices are involved (Nandy et al., 2020).

Research indicates that despite economic barriers or mental health issues; children whose parents provide a safe and nurturing environment to their children are more school-ready (Nievar et al., 2014). On the other hand, parental malpractices can lead to detrimental effects on children's physical, psychosocial, cognitive, and behavioral development (Karim & Begum, 2017). Exposure to maltreatment from their parents can affect early childhood development significantly (Alam et al., 2022). In a study on the current ECD scenario of children aged 3-4 in Bangladesh, Alam et al found that physical abuse and psychological aggression greatly hinder children's socio-emotional development (Alam et al., 2022). Parental attitude towards spousal violence is also found to be a reason for the hindrance of early childhood development (Kofinti et al., 2022).

MICS (*Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey*, 2019) indicates that in Bangladesh, almost one-third of children between the ages of 3 to 4 years are not on the track of sufficient socio-emotional development. To combat these early childhood challenges, firstly we require data on parental perceptions and understanding of children's development as these are shaped by their culture, society, education, and many other things.

Unfortunately, data on parental practices from under-developed and developing countries like ours are not adequate (Karim & Begum, 2017). Investment in early years has been globally recognized as the most effective means for ensuring holistic child development (*The Landscape of Early Childhood Education In Bangladesh, 2020*). The unavailability of reliable data becomes a hindrance to the way of the government's roadmap to ensure children are on the right track for cognitive, language, socioemotional, and physical development (*The Landscape of Early Childhood Education In Bangladesh, 2020*).

Purpose of the Study

Aligning with the problem statement, the purpose of the study is to explore and understand the perception of parents with children under 3-5 years about their socio-emotional development and their practices to support that. Through this study, we would like to shed light on existing parental practices for preschoolers along with recommendations for ways forward to overcome their perceived challenges in Bangladesh.

Significance & Justification of the Study

Quality parental practices can pave the way for the development of all major domains in children; whereas parental malpractices have been associated with compromising children's health, nutrition, and development (Sanders & Turner, 2018). Social and cultural norms and values always have a precedent role in how individuals behave. On the other hand, where positive and responsive parenting has been associated with promoting children's self-regulation capacities, negative and harsh parenting can have

detrimental effects (Kim & Kochanska, 2012). Therefore, parental beliefs and attitudes toward children's different developmental milestones are not an array of that.

However, the majority of our understanding of child development is derived from Western societies (Rao et al., 2019). For a long time, western models and tools have been used in non-western communities to understand and measure different psycho-social and behavioral aspects without measuring the validity or consequences (Keller, 2018), and their validity is also questionable due to differences in culture and context behavior reports that nine out of ten children in Bangladesh have endured physical punishment or psychological aggression from caregivers, including their parents and teachers (UNICEF, n.d.). Thus, the identification of these malpractices and the timely prevention have become a dire need for our society to ensure children's holistic growth and development. But unfortunately, such data in countries like ours is very scarce and even if there are some, those are heavily dependent on Western tools and measures (Karim & Begum, 2017).

The exploration of parental perception and practices supporting children's socio-emotional development in the early years in Bangladesh is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, understanding the cultural and contextual nuances of parenting in Bangladesh is essential for tailoring interventions and support systems to enhance early childhood development effectively. The results of this study can be utilized to inform educational programs, parenting workshops, and community initiatives aimed at fostering positive socio-emotional outcomes in young children. Furthermore, these findings may play a pivotal role in influencing policy-level decision-making by providing evidence-based insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by parents in supporting socio-

emotional development. Policymakers can use this information to design targeted policies and allocate resources effectively, promoting a holistic approach to early childhood development. The study's contribution lies in bridging existing knowledge gaps regarding the intricacies of parental practices in the Bangladeshi context, providing a foundation for future research and intervention strategies. Ultimately, the results of this research have the potential to significantly contribute to the improvement of Early Childhood Development by offering actionable recommendations to policymakers, educators, and community leaders, fostering a nurturing environment for children's socio-emotional growth in Bangladesh

Research Questions

- ✓ What do parents understand by “socio-emotional development” in children aged 3-5 years?
- ✓ What are the existing practices among parents to support their 3-5 years old children’s socio-emotional development?
- ✓ How can current practices be improved for 3-5 years children’s better socio-emotional development?

Operational Definitions

Socio-emotional Development: The ability to form meaningful and coherent relations with others along with children’s experiences, the channeling of emotions, and ways of expression

Parental Perception: Attributes such as attitudes, beliefs, aspirations, expectations, and values. influenced by previous-acquired knowledge, intellectual ability, cognitive skills, and individual mental set of parents

Parental Practice: Certain responsibilities performed by parents as their specific role in a parent-child dyadic dynamic

Chapter 2- Literature Review

Literature Review

Positive social-emotional behavior encourages a child to learn new skills and build relationships with others (Gharami et al., 2023). The preschool years (3-5) are more critical as some children may enter school without developing basic socio-emotional skills as that's a period of increasing competence and growth (Zinsser et al., 2021). However, no accurate cross-sectional data for Bangladesh is available on the socio-emotional development of preschoolers(Gharami et al., 2023). Following the research questions of the study, a comprehensive literature review has been done below on both global and Bangladeshi contexts.

Socio-emotional Development of Children aged 3-5 years

Socio-emotional development lays the foundation for lifelong emotional well-being and social competence in children. Generally, it means the ability to form meaningful and coherent relations with others along with children's experiences, channeling of emotions, and ways of expression (Cohen et al, 2005). The major areas of children's socio-emotional development are- temperament, attachment, social skills, and emotion regulation (*Virginia Infant and Toddler Specialist Network, 2021*).

Denham et al. (2012) found that children at the age of 3-5 years start engaging in more complex play, forming peer relationships, and contemplating social norms. They also note that children in this age range experience an array of emotions and start navigating those (Denham et al, 2012). Parental care and nurture support them in this stage to navigate those at this stage. Development of emotional regulation and knowledge builds preschoolers' capacity to adapt to social norms and behavior (Maggio et al, 2016).

Cultural practices and social norms are some prominent factors in children's socio-emotional development that shape how they interact and express emotions socially (Halberstadt & Lozada, 2011; Yang & Wang, 2019). Chen et al. (2014) emphasize the consideration of cultural diversity to understand the socio-development of children.

Researchers also note the negative impact of domestic hostility and the mother's functional difficulties. (Gharami et al., 2023) further underscores the role of demographic characteristics such as mother's age, family income, number of siblings, mother's education, occupation, and child's sex in socio-emotional behavior. These findings highlight the importance of a supportive and stimulating environment for healthy socio-emotional development in young children.

Parental perception about Socio-emotional Development of Children aged 3-5 years

Through parents, children feel a connection with the world after birth. Mowder (2005) defines parenting as a social role for a specific group of people, parents, involved in a parent-child dyadic dynamic where they perform certain responsibilities of that role.

According to Kendra Cherry (2018), perception is the sensory experience that involves environmental stimuli and responses to those stimuli. He adds perception not only builds

up our experience but also allows us to act within the environment (Cherry, K, 2018). The interpretation of these stimuli is influenced by previous-acquired knowledge, intellectual ability, cognitive skills, and individual mental set (Cherry, K, 2018).

Thus, we can come to the understanding of the diversification of parental perception regarding their children's development, combining different factors, containing different social and cultural aspects and as a result, very different perceptions.

After birth, the family is the immediate environment where a child starts interacting (Maggi et al, 2010). Children are surrounded by a complex, hierarchal, and multilayered system constituting various physical and social factors, where the family has the most intimate role (Bornstein & Leventhal, 2015; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and their microsystem is comprised of their parents, close family members, teachers, friends, and peer group (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kamenopoulou, 2016; Woolfolk, 2014).

Caregivers, especially parents, remain pivotal in shaping socio-emotional development. Sroufe (2013) emphasizes the significance of attachment and consistent caregiver support during preschool years. Secure attachment fosters exploration and positive social interactions.

The cognitive abilities of the caregivers have also been regarded as one of the factors influencing early stimulation (Pauker et al, 2018), along with parents' physical and psychological health for nurturing care at home (Eisenberg et al, 2010).

Parental care, attentiveness, affection, and flexible parenting style in childhood have been linked to healthy childhood stimulation thoroughly (Black et al, 2016; Knauer et al, 2019).

Uddin et al. (2014) found that perceived parental acceptance, particularly from mothers, was positively correlated with children's psychological adjustment from a study on children from Bangladesh. This was further supported by Alam et al (2021), who identified parental engagement in learning-stimulating activities as crucial for children's social-emotional development. Marinta & Syur'aini (2023) also highlighted the relationship between parenting and social-emotional development in children aged 3-4 years. These studies collectively underscore the importance of parental perception in shaping children's socio-emotional development in Bangladesh.

Role of Parental Practices to support Socio-emotional Development of Children aged 3-5 Years

Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory suggests among the microsystem, parents play the most vital socializing agent role (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A vast body of research establishes the contribution of parenting styles to children's behavior, especially in navigating challenges and developing coping strategies (Gryczkowski et al, 2018; Lan et al, 2022).

Mowder (2005) denotes that in Parent Development Theory (PDT) individuals perceive six main characteristics of parenting- bonding, discipline, education, welfare & protection, responsivity, and sensitivity.

Positive parental practices play a crucial role in supporting the socio-emotional development of children aged 3-5 years. The quality of parental stimulating activities is influenced by parents' education (Duncan et al, 2014; Jeong et al, 2017). Zinsser et al. (2021) found a positive correlation between children's emotional skills and parents'

modeling of, responding to, and instructing about emotions. Mirabile et al. (2018) emphasize the dynamic nature of these practices, which may need to evolve as children develop. (Case-Smith, 2013) highlights the effectiveness of touch-based, relationship-based, joint attention, naturalistic preschool, and instruction-based interventions in promoting social-emotional development in children with disabilities. Okorn et al. (2022) underscore the importance of parental support, structure, and positive discipline in reducing social-emotional difficulties in toddlers and preschoolers.

Studies found socioeconomic status (comprising of household income and conditions) to have a crucial impact on shaping parental stimulation and child development (Hartas, 2014; Maggi et al, 2005), then again parental traits also affect early childhood stimulation disparities (Raviv et al, 2004). Studies show the role of maternal education in effective parenting practices for early childhood development (Dickson et al, 2016), and a positive relationship between maternal age, child gender, and parenting style with children's emotional development at 3-6 years (Asmarawanti et al., 2023).

Parental Practices in Bangladesh's Context for Children's Socio-emotional Development

Parenting practices in Bangladesh are mainly followed by cultural heritage and strong family bonds with few exceptions (Hamadani & Tofail, 2014). They have also highlighted the differences in parenting practices based on urban or rural settings, and joint or single-parent families (Hamadani & Tofail, 2014). Research on the socio-emotional development of children aged 3-5 years in Bangladesh highlights the impact of different socio-demographic factors on familial influence (Alam et al., 2022). The importance of preschool education, the presence of children's books at home, and

parental engagement have been identified as the prominent stimulating factors for children's healthy development (Alam et al., 2022; Islam et al., 2021). On the other hand, poverty and lack of adequate nutritional and developmental knowledge have been found as barriers to early child development in Bangladesh (Hamadani & Tofail, 2014).

According to the *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (2019), a nationwide survey in Bangladesh around 40.1% of children aged 0-5 years fall under the preschool age range (3-5 years), and around 59.8% of them receive 4 or more kinds of early stimulation and learning activities from their family members. The activities include- reading books or looking at pictures, telling stories, singing songs, taking outside home, playing, counting/drawing, and naming alphabets (*Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey*, 2019).

Hamadani & Tofail (2014) found little awareness about early stimulation and parent-child interaction in parents.

The unavailability of adequate data and comprehensive studies to look into Bangladeshi parents' practices to support their children's socio-emotional development, especially in the age range of 3-5 years gives us the scope to carry out this explorative study.

Chapter 3- Research Methodology

Methodology

Research Design:

The research design for this qualitative study was qualitative and was conducted in person. Qualitative research, as described by Debout (2016), and Stiles (2003) is a methodological approach that aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the social world. This method is particularly well-suited for studying human experience and

meaning. Considering the research questions, the study used two research methods- Focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interview (IDI). IDIs provided researchers the opportunity to engage in a detailed and open-ended conversation to explore the parents' perspectives, experiences, and insights on young children's socio-emotional development and the practices they exercise to support those in their children. As IDIs involve a smaller sample size they focus on the quality and depth of information gathered (Johnstone, 2017). The collective nature of focus group discussion fostered dynamic interactions among the participants, providing a holistic understanding of the challenges and the way forward regarding the issue. Two semi-structured questionnaires were followed for the IDIs and FGD. Field notes were taken also by the researcher during IDIs and FGD. Then data from all the sources were triangulated. Triangulation is the process of combining data from various methods to get a comprehensive understanding of a certain phenomenon (Carter et al., 2014). It is also used as a tool to signify the validity of multiple data sources through coherence.

Research Participants:

This study's population was urban parents with children aged between 3 to 5 years. The inclusion criteria were - a. urban parents, b. with children aged between 3 to 5 years, and c. variety in educational and income levels. Gender is not restricted to the study.

Research Site:

Since the study required variations in the socio-demographic status of the participants, the study was conducted on parents with different levels of educational qualifications and income levels in the Mirpur, Dhanmondi, and Mohammadpur areas of Dhaka city. The

participants were from various socio-economic backgrounds from the selected research sites.

Participant Selection Procedure:

The IDIs were conducted with 6 parents (3 mothers and 3 fathers), and the FGD with a different set of 6 parents (3 mothers and 3 fathers) to maintain the homogeneity. The parents were selected from different strata of middle socio-economic backgrounds and with at least one child within the age bracket mentioned. The sampling method was purposive for the study. Participants were sourced according to the researcher's convenience adhering to the inclusion criteria.

Data Collection Method:

Two semi-structured questionnaires were used for data collection of the study along with collecting field notes; both descriptive and reflective as quality research solely depends on quality non-numerical data. The questionnaires had three parts- namely demographic status, understanding of children's socio-emotional development, and their practices to support that.

Based on the research questions, the questionnaires were developed by the researcher and were reviewed by the experts (ECD faculty and supervisor).

Later the questionnaires were piloted with two parents with children aged 3-5 years.

Thus, they were finalized.

Then the researcher selected the parents based on the selection criteria and oral consent was taken.

The purpose and objective of the study were explained.

The researcher collected their phone numbers, convenient times, and necessary information to schedule the interviews

After receiving those, the researcher fixed the interview schedule for IDI and informed them accordingly before visiting.

Data Analysis:

The analysis was done following the thematic analysis process which included the following steps (Creswell, 2012)-

Step 1: Preparing and organize the data

Step 2: Fixing the codes and coding the data

Step 3: Comprehending the findings and forming the themes

Step 4: Representing and reporting the findings

Step 5: Interpreting the meaning of the findings

Step 6: Ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings

Finally, a discussion of the implications of the findings and suggestions for further research will be included in the report.

Validity & Reliability:

The questionnaires were reviewed by both the thesis supervisor and BRAC IED Academic Committee members to confirm the validation. Piloting was done to ensure the

credibility of the tools. After that, the tools were finalized. For reliability, all the field notes along with recorded data were collected and transcribed as soon as possible.

Ethical Issues:

The proposal got approval from the BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. All the participants participated voluntarily, free from any pressure, and with their rights, autonomy, and dignity. No physical, psychosocial, legal, or social harm was done at any point in the study. The participants got the proper information on the purpose, procedure, and storage of data without the threat of inappropriate inducement. They had the full right to withdraw from the study whenever they wanted. Confidentiality was fully maintained regarding the personal information provided by the participants.

Limitation of the Study:

1. Scheduling the FGD with parents from various backgrounds became time-consuming due to differences in their availability and shyness to join a group discussion with unknown parents.
2. Parents' participation in the group discussion needed heavy persuasion since some of them were feeling too shy to talk in front of others.

Chapter 4- Results and Discussion

Results

This chapter is divided into two parts- Findings and Discussion. The first part includes the responses and findings from the IDIs and FGD conducted with the parents. This section aims to overview parental perceptions and their socio-emotional development practices in preschool-aged children.

The next section will discuss the examined data based on the response received from the IDIs and FGD of parents in light of the research questions. This chapter will conclude with a conclusion and some recommendations based on the information and data acquired.

Findings

This section includes the details of the main findings based on the responses from the IDIs and FGD. The responses from the six IDIs, one FGD, and the observed data have been combined, reviewed, and highlighted based on the research questions. Research findings are described in the following paragraphs- divided into three themes and nine sub-themes under them.

Demographic Information

In total, 12 parents of children aged 3-5 years participated in the data collection process. There were 6 IDIs and 1 FGD (with 6 parents) conducted with either fathers or mothers of the children. Half participants were male and the other half were females for both IDI and FGD. The families ranged from the lower middle class in their economic condition from areas like Mirpur, Mohammadpur, and Dhanmondi areas of Dhaka city. Their ages were between 32 to 43 years. There was no educational barrier to the study; though most of them had completed their post-graduation degree. The parents have at least one child within the age range of 3-5 years. Results from the gathered data are shown under various themes and sub-themes below:

Theme:1: Parents' perception of on children's socio-emotional development

One of the major aims of the study is to understand parents' perceptions regarding the socio-emotional development of their preschool-aged children. Keeping that in mind, the

first theme tries to find out that through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with three sub-themes- parents' knowledge of children's socio-emotional development, the importance of fostering that, and the effects of their childhood experience on their children's socio-emotional development.

Sub-theme 1.1: Understanding of Children's socio-emotional Development

Almost all the parents except one answered in the affirmative that they are aware of the term "socio-emotional development" in children and shared what they know about how children change and grow up socially and emotionally over the years. Sharing his knowledge about social development in his son, one parent said, "*By social development - I mean if my son can mingle with other people in society, can talk/communicate with them, can behave gently with others, will not fight with others, and will not harm others. This is all I think actually. Be social, and be engaged with his relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances*" (IDI#5: 04.03.2024)

Another parent said, "*By social development, I understand how children communicate with others in society. Their friends, family members, and people they interact with in their day-to-day life.*" (IDI#6: 06.03.24)

Another parent added, "*How my child socially interacts with people, how she responds when she is asked or being told to do something, like this. Isn't it?*" (FGD#1: 05.03.24)

Only one participant upon asking if she was familiar with the term socio-emotional development replied, "*No, I am not. I have no idea what this is about.*" (IDI#2: 01.03.24)

After a short brief, it was understood that she had an idea about the concept, and was not just familiar with the specific term.

Despite asking about “socio-emotional development”, the received answers were predominantly about social development in children. On emotional development, just one parent said,

“Emotional development is how happy or sad they are. If they occasionally lose their temper if they are being stubborn if they listen to their parents.” (IDI#6: 06.03.24)

Although most of them have not touched the emotional development part, some of them expressed their views on the practices that are not good for children’s well-being. For example, one parent shared, *“We should not pressurize children to do things, it stresses them out.”* (IDI#1: 26.02.24)

Another parent added, *“I never pressure my children to study. When you pressurize them, they become scared of that. I have been under a lot of academic pressure while growing up. So now if she cannot study everything taught in school, I do not pressurize.”* (IDI#2: 01.02.24)

Sub-theme 1.2: Importance of fostering socio-emotional development in children

All the parents acknowledged the importance of fostering socio-emotional development in their preschool-aged children and shared the same view that the earlier children are taught these, the better the outcomes are.

One parent said, *“I think this is the time to start teaching not only this but many things. He now has a very developing brain. He can easily learn things now. If he is taught these after 2-3 years, things won't be the same. The earlier we start teaching, the better the outcomes will be. This is high time he started practicing the social etiquette.”* (IDI#5: 04.03.24)

Among all the children whose parents participated in this study, only two (3 years old) do not attend any type of preschool or early intervention program. Parents whose children attend any type of institutional setting have highly regarded the role of peer and adult communication in the socio-emotional development of their children. As one parent emphasizing the role of school in her daughter's social development said, *"She goes to school; she is in playgroup. People do have various opinions on this. But I have observed, that babies at this stage learn very quickly. Sometimes we may not initiate something, but they pick those very swiftly. As she goes to school now, I have observed she has become more social and now talks with others in a structured way. She can describe incidents beautifully now which was not the case before going to the school. Then her interactions with her friends and elders have improved a lot. She was a bit late in talking. Up to two and half years, she was not talking that much. Naturally, I became a little worried thinking if there was a problem with her speech development. But then she started school, and eventually, those were solved."* (FGD#1: 05.03.24)

Assuming her daughter's social skills were given, one parent interestingly responded, *"According to me, with age the social-emotional skills will be developed. Now she is at such an age that I cannot find any difference with any other kid. I cannot differentiate her from other kids in any way. She is a very regular kid. She is not that stubborn. She is friendly, very social, and a very first catcher. She loves music and dancing. She had never been to a pre-school. However, the school committee decided to put her in the nursery class as they thought she was a little advanced. At first, we were a little worried, but she has coped up well."* (IDI#2: 01.03.24)

Some parents (mainly mothers) also shared their views on the stress on children due to both parents working. One participant said, *“The socio-emotional development starts at this stage. Children with working parents especially working mothers go through a kind of mental stress. When I leave him every day to go to the office, he cries. I have to leave the house sneakily. That stresses him out obviously. But what can we do? We need to go to work daily.”* (IDI#1: 26.02.24)

Another participant added, *“Nowadays children are being raised very differently. And the number of children is deficient in families. In most cases, both parents are working. They do not get to see their parents the whole day. The little they get at the end of the day is not sufficient. But what can one do!”* (FGD#1: 05.03.24)

Sub-theme 1.3: Effects of parents’ childhood experience on the socio-emotional development of their children

Participants shared their views on how their childhood experiences have shaped their parental practices for the socio-emotional development of their children in diverse and constructive ways. Acknowledging the differences in generations and rapid technological changes, they shed light on the role of their childhood on how they perceive socio-emotional development in their children.

Some of the participants shared how they perceive socio-emotional development from their childhood. *“The way we have been brought up, I want my children to be brought up in the same manner; in a very peaceful and violence-free manner. My childhood was very*

calm. Like the cordial bond we have with our parents and other family members. I want the same for them. We used to live in a joint family. Even after being separated, the bonding was always there. My husband and I both want upon seeing our relations with our family members, they pick the same and share the same bond in their lives also. It all starts from the family. Children learn behavior or anything, everything starts from the family.” (IDI#2: 01.03.24)

Another participant shared, “I was brought up in a small town outside Dhaka. My parents did not try to spoon-feed me everything. At a very young age, I left my home to study. Then I had to learn how to manage my life. Of course, other family members supported me. I expect the same from him. Let’s say he goes abroad in the future to study I want him to have the confidence to manage himself well there. That’s how I want him to be more independent. My father has enabled me to go to the market from a young age so that I can learn from life itself. Yes, the context in Dhaka is very different. Yet I try. For example, when I go to get some money from the ATM, I encourage him to push the buttons. So that he at least knows how the machine works.” (FGD#1: 05.03.24)

Most of the participants have shared their views on how the context has changed from their childhood to their children’s childhood. One parent said, “How my parents have raised me has influenced how I perceive parenting but not entirely. The contexts are very different. I have been brought up in a town, my son is being brought up in a city. So, I want that relevancy in him. Mostly I want my son to be a person of his own, who is independent, who is confident, who can think independently.” (IDI#3: 03.03.24)

Another parent added, “No. I was brought up in a village. The environment I was brought up in and the environment my children are being brought up, things are very different. I

don't think it's fair to compare their and my upbringing. I want them to have everything I wished for. But then again, my expectations are also higher from them. Like I said, the world has changed a lot. Technology has progressed even more.” (IDI#5: 04.03.24)

Emphasizing the role of peer play on socio-emotional development and that of today's mobile phone, on the contrary, one parent further said, *“How we were raised, today's children are not being raised like that. I grew up in a village, where I could play with other children. But all they have today are TV and mobile phones, which they are glued to all the time.” (FGD#1: 05.03.24)*

Another participant stated, *“Our childhood was better without mobile phones. We grew up playing, and being independent. But today's children don't do that. They don't mingle with others; they don't go to play. They are at home all the time with phones and to and from school, that's their day.” (IDI#1: 26.02.24)*

The above discussion gives us an image of parental perception of their children's socio-emotional development. We can see the role of their childhood experiences in shaping their understanding of socio-emotional development and its importance.

Theme: 2: Existing parental practices to support the socio-emotional development of the children

This theme focuses on the practices that parents apply to develop their children socially and emotionally. Based on the acquired data the theme has been categorized into three

sub-themes- the role of parents in promoting children's socio-emotional development, their practices to support that, and parental responses to children's expression of emotions

Sub-theme 2.1: Parental role to promote children's socio-emotional development

Participants have shared a very diverse view of their role as parents. Emphasis has been given to developing various socio-emotional skills of children like good behavior, self-discipline, communication, socialization, and practical life skills by the parents broadly.

One parent said, "*As parents, our role is to guide our children, to see if they're learning bad manners or not.*" (IDI#6: 06.03.24)

Her role in developing her daughter's self-discipline, one mother said, "*...now I am her full-time caregiver. And now as I am taking care of her, she is more independent. She has been eating by herself from a very young age, that's how she has practiced. She has been taught to keep things organized and in their places. After finishing her play, now she puts away her toys in their places. She knows these. She is quite independent.*" (IDI#2: 01.03.24)

One parent revealed how she perceives the importance of spending quality time to develop socio-emotional skills in her child, "*As parents, for both father and mother, I think it's vital to give children at least some quality time, to engage in activities/conversations with them. Which my husband and I try to do. I remain with her 24/7. We try to play with her, we converse with her, try to teach her various life lessons through stories.*" (IDI#4: 03.03.24)

Parents again have acknowledged their limitations in their roles due to the modern work lifestyle and the prominent roles of grandparents. One parent said in this regard, "*As*

working parents, our role is very limited, to be honest. Because we keep him with his grandparents. With them, he spends most of the time of his day. We leave for work at 8 AM and come back at 8 PM. The whole time he is with his grandparents. After coming back, we try to give him as much as we can. I don't think that's adequate. Our impact on him is minimal. Rather, the roles of his grandparents are quite prominent in his life.”

(FGD#1: 05.03.24)

Another parent shared, “My son is 3& half years old now, yet we need to give him diapers till now. Somehow, I think that's a limitation on our part. Then he still cannot eat by himself. As a parent, these concern me. We can't give him enough time. If as parents, we could give him some more time, maybe these would be changed by now. The thing is as I said he remains with his grandparents mostly and their time was very different.”

(IDI#3: 03.03.24)

The role of fathers in today's rearing has been highlighted in the data collected. From some participants (both fathers and mothers) we get the idea of fathers' involvement with young children. Like one mother said, *“She is fond of her father. Her father is everything to her. He plays with her, he feeds her. Actually, in this generation, I am noticing the involvement of both fathers and mothers in child-rearing. Earlier fathers used to be so busy that they did not have time for children, let alone involvement in their day-to-day lives. But now that has changed. Fathers are more involved now.”* (IDI#2: 01.03.24)

Another father described his bonding with his son in this way, *“My bonding with my son is quite good. As we are both working parents, we both have certain responsibilities. If his mother is not at home the whole day, it doesn’t affect him at all. I feed him, bathe him, and change his diapers from his birth. He even sleeps with me.”* (IDI#3: 03.03.24)

Lastly, from one parent we get an interesting view of the modern parental role, *“We want to rear them up in our ways. We want to keep everything ready for them even before they tell us that. The smaller number of children is another issue. We had many siblings. We had to do everything on our own. But now there are one or two children in every family. We want them to have all the love and the best things in the world. If they fall once, before looking, we assume they are hurt. We forget to check if they are hurt or not. Sometimes, I think we over-love them.”* (IDI#1: 26.02.24)

Thus, a comprehensive idea of how parents perceive their role in developing their children’s socio-emotional development along with the limitations has been revealed.

Sub-theme 2.2: Practices to foster children’s socio-emotional development

The practices that have been highlighted by parents to foster socio-emotional development in their 3-5-year-olds mainly are- playing, story-telling, and reading storybooks, taking them outside (parks/indoor play areas), and enrolling them into extracurricular /after-school programs, and arranging playdates. Most parents have shared the involvement of both parents in these activities with their children.

One parent stated, *“We have started to take him to a preschool program. They let them do some drawings. Other than this, we take him to nearby parks to mingle with other children. Then we take him to Babu land (an indoor play space).”* (IDI#3:03.03.24)

According to another parent, *“Both of us spend time with them. Like taking them out in the afternoon, or at home sometimes we play with them. Maybe we talk with them for some time.”* (IDI#1:26.02.24)

Another parent shared how they use stories to teach their son behavioral skills, *“We try to tell him stories when he goes to sleep. Those stories are related to things we think are related to him. For example- we make up some characters to teach him something like a boy who does good things, and everybody likes him. Though I am not sure how much he understands, we try to tell him some contextual stories.”* (FGD#1:05.03.24)

On how he tries to develop some social skills in his son, another parent added, *“When we go to our village, he asks me to take him with me to the village market. The market is close to our house. Then I say, “I can take you. But you will have to greet everyone who we meet and will have to ask them how they are, etc.” I want him to mingle with people, talk to them.”* (IDI#5: 04.03.24)

Another participant shared how enrolling their children into various extracurricular activities has helped the children, *“Recently they have started a few extracurricular activities like drawing, karate, and Arabic classes. Since my wife and I both are doctors, enrolling them into these activities has allowed them to mingle with other kids and spend their time other than being hooked on their phones.”* (IDI#6: 06.03.24)

One parent reported how attention is crucial for children’s development, *“After coming back from the office, I try to sit with him to study or listen to his stories. Even if I’m tired,*

I try to listen to his stories attentively and nod from time to time so that he feels good.”
(IDI#5: 04.03.24)

A few parents have acknowledged their limitation of not spending enough time with their children but have also shared some of their other practices, *“I won’t say I play with them. But when I am at home at night, if they are playing, I sit beside them; maybe just scrolling my phone or watching them play, answering their queries.”* (IDI#6: 06.03.24)

Thus, a list of practices by parents in Dhaka city has been compiled to get an idea of their understanding of children’s socio-emotional development.

Sub-theme 2.3: Children’s expression of emotions and parents’ response to them

Almost all the parents of children in the 3-5 years age range have shared how their children have acute preferences and choices along with some strong dislikes.

One of the parents informed, *“When he dislikes something, he generally tells. For example, after bathing he wants to wear his preferred clothes. If he doesn't want to, he will not wear that.”* (IDI#1: 26.02.24)

Most of the parents have shared that their children’s emotions are visible through physical attributes. As one parent said, *“Her feelings are very much visible in her outward expressions. She doesn't even need to tell even.”* (IDI#2: 01.03.24)

Another parent added, *“Sometimes we can tell from his expressions. Sometimes he doesn’t tell anything and is very quiet. Then we understand something has happened to him.”*
(IDI#5: 04.03.24)

While some parents shared how expressive their children are, some other parents also shared how hard it is sometimes to read their children's emotions which we can understand from the two following lines-

"She is very much expressive. Children's expressions are so raw. They cannot hide emotions like elders, you know. Sometimes if we don't like something, we still say we like it. But they are just very pure with their likings and dislikes. She will say "wow" "beautiful" and "Yuck" all the time to express how she sees things." (FGD#1: 05.03.24)

While another parent added, *"My younger one is hard to read. She is not very expressive normally. But she has her ways of thinking or doing things. Kind of stubborn you know. If she disagrees with anything, it's unlikely she would do that."* (FGD#1: 05.03.24)

Upon inquiring if the parents teach their children ways of expressing emotions, almost everyone said other than telling them afterward to express them, they do not do anything else. Only one parent shared how their son expresses his emotions vocally to them like, *"We used to tell him, "Please don't do that or I will be sad". Now he does that. If something upsets him, he will say "Baba, I am sad" "Baba, I am angry now." Then he says "Wow! So amazing. So beautiful"."* (IDI#3: 03.03.24)

None of them commented on whether children are coerced into doing something they are uncomfortable with, for example, passed down to someone unknown to them, or pushed to greet people they have never met before. All of them shared that children get enough time to be comfortable in a new environment first.

A few of them also shared that sometimes they cannot but worry about their children being too social like, *"My child is very social. As a mother sometimes I cannot but worry about her being this social. She makes friends with anybody and everybody. So, I try to*

teach her about boundaries. I try to teach her good touch or bad touch in her age-appropriate language. Like where someone should not touch her and tell me if it happens. I think the earlier we start teaching, that's better.” (IDI#4: 03.03.24)

In summary, parents of children aged 3-5 experience from children's open expressions of their feelings through words, and actions to occasional difficulty in getting their more reserved children. Nonetheless, parents prioritize fostering a supportive environment where their children feel comfortable expressing themselves authentically, while also imparting important lessons on boundaries and safety in social interactions.

Theme: 3: Parental opinions on improving children's socio-emotional development

The study also intended to identify some of the major challenges that parents face while fostering socio-emotional development in their preschool-aged children along with some feasible recommendations to overcome that. Keeping that in mind, this theme has been divided into two sub-themes to address that as- major challenges in fostering socio-emotional development in children, possible supports, and suggestions to improve children's overall socio-emotional development.

Theme 3.1: Major challenges in fostering socio-emotional development in children

One of the major challenges for children's socio-emotional development that has been shared by almost all the participants is the usage of mobile phones and access to the internet. Almost all of them acknowledged the dependency on technology in the present day and the associated challenges it brings.

One of the parents opined, *“According to me, the major challenge is the mobile phone. We cannot but give them access to the phone due to various reasons like communication,*

or education. Like their class contents are given online. And of course, we cannot keep them away from technology in today's world. But it's also worrisome what they consume through social media, like YouTube, and TikTok.” (IDI#6: 06.03.24)

A few parents have also discussed some other challenges associated with the use of mobile phones in the following manner, *“I have noticed children do not give expressions for quite some time. Like when she is watching the iPad, is not talking for quite some time. Then if I ask her or nudge her, then she talks.” (FGD#1: 05.03.24)*

Another parent added, *“Sometimes children start living in the virtual world. I have seen some children who are talking in the same cartoon language they are watching and think they are real. But they are not talking with others in real life.” (FGD#1: 05.03.24)*

Along with this, the other challenges that have been brought up are limited quality time from parents' sides, lack of quality preschool/early intervention centers, and inadequate playing fields/parks/spaces in Dhaka city. (FGD#1: 05.03.24)

One parent said, *“My son (3 & half years old) cannot eat by himself till now. Somehow, I think that's a limitation on our part. We can't give enough time, I think. If as parents, we could give him some more time, maybe these would be changed.” (IDI#3: 03.03.24)*

Indicating inadequate social interactions, one parent said, *“Another problem in my eyes is the inadequate social relations. When I was a kid, I used to play with my neighbors and friends. There were a lot of fields. We could play a lot. That's how we built up the social bonding you know. But our children do not get those.” (IDI#6: 06.03.24)*

A crucial point has been pointed out by a parent, as she said, *“Children of this age have seen the COVID. They had not seen people other than their close family members for around 7-8 months at that time. That hampered their social skills.” (IDI#4: 03.03.24)*

In the case of both working parents, the collected data showed that parents rely on their children's grandparents for childcare. Though it is a great support, but sometimes becomes a little inconvenient for parents, mainly due to differences in perceptions.

(FGD#1: 05.03.24)

On a different note, one parent shared her concern for her daughter in the following manner, *“My main problem is that she is very friendly. Nowadays, we cannot trust everybody. That is my major concern, to be honest.”* (IDI#2: 01.02.24)

From the above discussion, we get an idea of the major challenges faced by parents of preschoolers in Dhaka city in promoting socio-emotional development in their children.

Theme 3.2: Necessary supports, and suggestions to improve children's overall socio-emotional development

Parents have shared their views on how to improve the overall condition of children's socio-emotional development in various ways.

Some parents commented on the necessity of quality preschools. As one parent said, *“It would be great if we had some good preschools to teach children social skills. Today or tomorrow, they will get an education. But I think these social teachings can be very beneficial for them if they are taught from a very early stage.”* (IDI#3: 03.03.24)

In addition to this, another parent added, *“Schools in Dhaka city are only buildings. Those can be 2, 3,5,10 storied. But they are just buildings. A field, park or something like that would be a very good help in that regard to take them outside. There they can play, and talk to others. Which can boost their social development I believe. That's how they*

could also build relations. And the effects of social media also could be minimized I believe.” (IDI#5: 04.03.24)

Most of the parents agreed with the point of the necessity of parks/fields. As another parent added, *“I think parks/fields for children to play can help children’s social development a lot. There they would get to play with other children, meet new people, they learn how to interact.” (IDI#6: 06.03.24)*

One parent has emphasized the active role of parents to take initiative in promoting socio-emotional development in their children by, *“Playdates can be a very good initiative. That cannot be arranged daily, but parents should take the initiative at least once/twice a month. We all are busy. But we should take the initiative to take them outside as much as we can. That helps them with peer-bonding, forming social relations.” (IDI#4: 04.03.24)*

In conclusion, parents emphasized the importance of early social education and the need for quality preschools. They also advocated for outdoor spaces like parks and fields, where children can engage in play and interact with friends, fostering social development. Additionally, parents recognize their active role in facilitating social opportunities to develop socio-emotional skills in their children.

Discussion

This qualitative study explored parental perception of preschool-aged (3-5 years) children’s socio-emotional development and their practices to support that. From the study, we got an idea of parents’ understanding of children’s socio-emotional development and their ways of promoting that. Thus, the study's findings helped us

identify some of the challenges in promoting socio-emotional development in the context of Bangladesh and eventually find some recommendations in the conclusion. Based on the findings, an elaborative thematic discussion has been below on parental perception and practices to support 3-5-year-old children's socio-emotional development.

Theme:1: Parents' perception of on children's socio-emotional development

Sub-theme 1.1: Understanding of children's socio-emotional development

The parental responses reflect a varied comprehension of socio-emotional development, with a focus on social aspects rather than emotional ones. Parents, in general, equate social development with how their children interact with others in society, including peers, family members, and acquaintances. They emphasized communication skills, behavior, and engagement with others as key indicators of social development which suggests a common parental understanding that being socially adept involves effective communication, gentleness, and harmonious interactions with others.

However, irrespective of gender and socioeconomic conditions, it has been seen that the discussion on emotional development is relatively sparse. Only a few parents touch upon emotional aspects such as happiness, sadness, temper, and stubbornness. Emotional development involves recognizing and managing one's emotions, understanding others' feelings, and developing empathy. While some parents mention aspects of emotional well-being, such as not pressuring children or creating a nurturing environment, there is limited depth in the exploration of emotional development compared to social development which coincides with the research findings on Hong Kong-Chinese mothers where it has been found that parents value children's social development more than emotional development as parental goals. (Chan et al., 2009)

Sub-theme 1.2: Importance of fostering socio-emotional development in children

The collected responses give us insights into how parents perceive the importance of fostering socio-emotional development in preschool-aged children. Parents acknowledge the critical role of early intervention in fostering socio-emotional development and recognize the preschool age as a pivotal period when children's brains are highly receptive to learning and acquiring social skills. Studies also show that the preschool years offer the best timing for preventing problems like poor socio-emotional incompetencies, and school readiness problems through early intervention. (Ștefan & Miclea, 2010)

The narratives also highlight the perceived benefits of institutional settings, such as preschool or early intervention programs, in nurturing children's socio-emotional development. Parents whose children attend such programs observe positive changes in their social behaviors, including improved communication skills, enhanced interactions with peers and adults, and greater confidence. Then, again some parents also perceive the social skills as natural; rather than being acquired. This guides us to the complexity of socio-emotional development, which can be influenced by many factors beyond institutional settings, including individual temperament, family dynamics, and exposure to diverse social experiences.(Asmarawanti et al., 2023)

The responses also shed light on the challenges posed by parental work dynamics, particularly for children with working parents. The emotional strain experienced by children with working parents during parental absence during work hours underscores the

importance of creating supportive environments and maintaining open communication channels to address their emotional needs effectively.

Sub-theme 1.3: Effects of parents' childhood experience on the socio-emotional development of their children

This discussion provides insights into how parents' own childhood experiences shape their perceptions and approaches towards fostering socio-emotional development in their children, highlighting the intergenerational differences, familial influences, and the impact of changing societal contexts on parental practices.

Many parents draw upon their upbringing to inform their parenting practices, emphasizing the importance of familial bonds, attachment, and cultural continuity in fostering socio-emotional development. (Von Salisch, 2001) According to Sanders & Turner (2018), perceived optimal parenting is associated with the quality of socio-emotional development from childhood into early adulthood. They express the desire to replicate their positive childhood experiences for their children, recognizing the foundational role of family dynamics in shaping children's behavior and emotional well-being.

Parents also reflect on their experiences of independence and self-reliance gained during their upbringing, particularly in rural or small-town settings. By instilling a sense of autonomy and resourcefulness, parents aim to prepare their children for the challenges of adulthood and promote socio-emotional resilience

Though participants express concerns about the pervasive influence of technology, particularly mobile phones, they acknowledge the contextual differences between their upbringing and that of their children, particularly in urbanized environments

characterized by technological advancements and changing societal norms. They intend to foster independence and confidence within the context of a rapidly evolving and technology-driven world, where traditional forms of play and social interaction may be supplanted by digital devices and virtual connections.

Theme: 2: Existing parental practices to support the socio-emotional development of the children

Sub-theme 2.1: Parental role to promote children's socio-emotional development

A multifaceted perspective on the parental role in fostering children's socio-emotional development has been brought up in this segment, encompassing aspects like guidance, discipline, quality time, involvement, and the challenges posed by modern lifestyles.

Parents recognize their responsibility in guiding children towards positive behavior and self-discipline. They emphasize the importance of modeling appropriate conduct, providing structure in daily routines, teaching children to take care of themselves, and managing tasks independently.

Parents signify the importance of spending quality time with their children and prioritize engaging in meaningful activities and conversations to facilitate learning and bonding.

However, they also acknowledge the limitations of engagement due to their work-life and their consequences on children's socio-emotional development. Despite their efforts to maximize quality time with their children, parents recognize the significant influence of grandparents in shaping children's experiences and relationships.

Increased involvement and engagement of fathers in childcare compared to previous generations has been another observation in this aspect. Fathers are described as active participants in daily caregiving tasks, bonding activities, and emotional support for their

children. This shift represents a departure from traditional gender roles. They have also been seen to acknowledge the tendency to overprotect and indulge children, driven by smaller family sizes and a desire to provide the best for their offspring. However, they also recognize the importance of allowing children to experience challenges and learn from failures, fostering self-reliance and coping skills.

Sub-theme 2.2: Practices to foster children's socio-emotional development

From playing and storytelling to enrolling children in extracurricular activities, we get a range of diverse practices by parents of Dhaka city toward nurturing their children's social and emotional skills.

Play is a crucial component of children's socio-emotional development, providing them with opportunities to learn social skills, cope with challenges, and develop creativity (Barish, 2020), which has been found as a fundamental tool for fostering children's socio-emotional development by parents. By engaging in indoor and outdoor play activities, such as visits to parks or indoor play areas, parents provide opportunities for children to interact with peers, develop social skills, and regulate their emotions. Spending time outdoors is an important predictor of the early development of children. (Ulset et al., 2017)

Storytelling is another practice that is practiced by parents to enhance not only children's language skills but also foster empathy, perspective-taking, and emotional literacy as they engage with diverse characters and plotlines.

Extracurricular programs like drawing, karate, and language classes have come up as ways of broadening their social experience and developing new skills.

Then, the importance of active involvement and quality time spent with their children has been brought up by the participants to promote their socio-emotional development.

Through joint activities, conversations, or simply being present and attentive, parents tend to create nurturing environments that facilitate emotional connection and lay the groundwork for open communication and emotional resilience.

Sub-theme 2.3: Children's expression of emotions and parents' response to them

From acute preferences and strong dislikes to raw and authentic expressions, children aged 3-5 exhibit a wide range of emotions that parents need to navigate. Parents of children of this age range describe their children's acute preferences and strong dislikes as evident markers of their emotional expression. Children exhibit raw and unfiltered emotions, expressing joy, excitement, or displeasure through facial expressions, gestures, and vocalizations.

Parents attune themselves to these cues, recognizing their children's emotional states and responding accordingly to meet their needs and provide support. Then again, some parents find challenges in reading the emotional cues of children who are timid and reserved.

The role of family, particularly in modeling emotions and social interactions, is crucial for children's social-emotional development (Agus Suprijanto et al., 2022). Modeling and verbal encouragement are the tools parents generally teach their children ways of expressing emotions which is supported by verbal prompts and feedback, parents encourage their children to vocalize their feelings, fostering emotional literacy and communication skills

Parents recognize the importance of teaching boundaries and safety measures, particularly in social interactions, and instill lessons on good touch and bad touch, empowering their children to assert boundaries and seek help when needed, thus promoting their safety and well-being. Some parents are also found to be concerned about their children's socialization tendencies, particularly if they exhibit a propensity for being overly social. By fostering supportive environments, teaching boundaries, and encouraging authentic self-expression, parents play a pivotal role in nurturing their children's socio-emotional development and well-being

Theme: 3: Parental opinions on improving children's socio-emotional development

Theme 3.1: Major challenges in fostering socio-emotional development in children

The collected data shed light on the significant challenges faced by parents in Dhaka city when it comes to fostering socio-emotional development in their preschool-aged children.

The major challenges are jotted down into the pervasive influence of technology, particularly mobile phones, and the internet, imitations in quality time from parents, inadequate early intervention centers, and insufficient play spaces. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social interactions further compounds the challenges faced by parents in nurturing their children's socio-emotional development.

Parents express concerns about the negative impact of excessive screen time on their children's communication skills, emotional expression, and social interactions. Children's immersion in the virtual world can lead to a disconnect from reality and hindered expression of emotions.

Many parents find balancing work life and familial responsibilities challenging, resulting in limited quality time spent with their children. Lack of parental involvement can create

hindrances in nurturing emotional intelligence, resilience, and self-regulation in young children.

Then, the scarcity of high-quality early intervention centers and recreational spaces in Dhaka city presents a significant challenge for parents seeking to foster their children's socio-emotional development. Limited outdoor play areas hinder children's opportunities for socialization, peer interaction, and physical activity, which are essential for holistic development.

Some parents expressed their concern that due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the very early years of their lives, social skills development and peer interactions have been hindered for children of this particular age group.

In households where both parents work, grandparents often play a significant role in childcare. While their support is invaluable, differences in parenting styles and perceptions between parents and grandparents can lead to challenges in caregiving practices, potentially impacting children's socio-emotional development.

Sub Theme 3.2: Necessary supports, and suggestions to improve children's overall socio-emotional development

The insights provided by parents underscore the critical importance of creating conducive environments and implementing supportive measures to enhance children's socio-emotional development. Various avenues for improvement have been highlighted, from the necessity of quality preschools to the significance of outdoor spaces and the active role of parents in facilitating social interactions.

Parents emphasize the importance of quality preschools in providing children with essential social skills and emotional learning opportunities from an early age. Early

childhood education programs that prioritize social development alongside academic learning can lay a strong foundation for children's socio-emotional well-being. By integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum, preschools can help children develop empathy, communication skills, and conflict-resolution abilities.

The need for accessible outdoor spaces such as parks and fields is highlighted as crucial for promoting children's social development. These environments offer opportunities for unstructured play, peer interaction, and exploration, which are essential for fostering social skills, creativity, and resilience in children.

Then, parents recognize their active role in facilitating social opportunities for their children and advocate for initiatives such as playdates to promote peer bonding and social interaction. By organizing regular playdates and encouraging children to engage in group activities outside of school, parents can help their children develop social competence, empathy, and cooperation skills. Additionally, fostering a supportive and inclusive social network for children enables them to build meaningful relationships, develop a sense of belonging, and navigate social challenges with confidence.

Some parents expressed concerns about the detrimental effects of excessive screen time and social media on children's socio-emotional development. By promoting outdoor play and face-to-face interactions, parents aim to minimize the negative impact of technology and foster healthy social habits in their children. Additionally, advocating for digital literacy education and responsible media consumption practices can empower children to navigate the digital landscape safely and responsibly while prioritizing real-world connections and interpersonal relationships.

Improving children's overall socio-emotional development requires collaborative efforts from various stakeholders, including parents, educators, policymakers, and community leaders. By working together to prioritize children's social-emotional well-being, communities can create supportive environments that nurture healthy development and resilience in children. Investments in early childhood education, infrastructure for outdoor play, and parent education programs can contribute to building a more inclusive and supportive environment for children to thrive socially and emotionally.

Conclusion

To conclude, understanding parental perceptions and their practices in promoting preschool-aged children's socio-emotional development is crucial in improving the overall condition of early childhood development in the context of Bangladesh where it's reported that around one-third of the 3-4 years children are not developmentally on track for their adequate socio-emotional development (*Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey*, 2019), and where children are at great risk of not achieving their age-appropriate socio-emotional milestones (The Landscape of Early Childhood Education In Bangladesh, 2020). However, parental involvement, home environment, learning opportunities, and scope to play have been considered detrimental factors for children's overall growth and development.

For that reason, it was quite necessary to dig into parents, perceptions on the subject and to know about their existing practices to develop children's socio-emotional development as they are the primary link of children to this world and the source of every childhood necessity and experience. In that regard, this study deduces a positive response from the parents where they are mostly well-aware and conscious about their children's socio-

emotional needs and think differently from their parents' generations, with an alienation towards social development more than the emotional one.

From the parental responses, we got an idea of their daily practices with their children along the lines of – taking them outside to play, storytelling, playing, developing various life and social skills in them; the absence of play places and limitation of quality time from working urban parents have been evident in the path of children's socio-emotional development.

Thus, to address the necessary support and suggestions to improve children's overall socio-emotional development requires a multi-faceted approach that prioritizes early social education, access to outdoor spaces, promotion of social opportunities, and collaborative efforts from parents, educators, and communities. By investing in these initiatives and fostering a culture that values social-emotional learning, societies can empower children to lead fulfilling lives and contribute positively to their communities.

Recommendations:

Based on the literature review, findings, and discussion, this study puts forward the following recommendations to assist parents in nurturing socio-emotional skills in their preschool-aged children.

1. By establishing boundaries for screen use and adhering to them, parents can minimize the detrimental effects of screen time. Parents' modeling healthy use of technology can also benefit young children immensely. At the same time, parents can encourage face-to-face interactions through activities like playdates, family dinners, or engaging in community events.

2. Keeping in mind the challenges of urban working parents, the recommendations for them will be to designate specific family times for emotional bonding and connections through activities like playing or reading together and cooking together on weekends. Parents can seek more work-life balance if possible and utilize weekends and holidays to engage meaningfully with their children to foster emotional closeness.
3. Parents' dire interest and advocacy for socio-emotional learning for their young children can bring changes in mainstream early childhood centers. With regular communication with children's teachers and caregivers, parents can support children's emotional progress and collaborate on strategies to support their development.
4. By collaborating with other parents and making a habit of visiting local parks. Playgrounds, parents can facilitate children's physical growth as well as peer relationships and social skills. Building a network of families with similar values can also broaden children's social circle.
5. Parents can also take the initiative to reach out to the local authorities to develop more outdoor play spaces. Their participation and promotion of workshops/seminars on parenting practices for socio-emotional development can motivate others and thus boost advocacy.

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ANNEX 1

Research Title:

Exploring the parental perception and practices to support the socio-emotional development of children aged 3-5 years in Bangladesh

In-Depth Interview Guideline

Section 1: Background Information

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Education:

Profession:

Residential location:

Monthly income:

Number of children:

Children's age:

Gender of children:

Section 2: Understanding of children's socio-emotional development

- ✓ Are you familiar with the term “socio-emotional development” in children?
- ✓ What do you know about the socio-emotional development of children?
- ✓ Do you think it is important to foster socio-emotional development in your preschool-aged children?
- ✓ Do you think your childhood experience has effects on your socio-emotional development? How has it shaped your parental practices?

Section 3: Practices to support children's socio-emotional development

- ✓ As a parent what is your role to promote socio-emotional development in them?
What are the key things you adhere to foster socio-emotional development in your child?
- ✓ Do you respond immediately and consistently to your children's emotional and physical needs?
- ✓ Do you spend quality time with your children?
- ✓ Do you play with your children and read them storybooks?
- ✓ Can you share a few more examples of engaging activities you think are important to develop socio-emotional skills in your child?
- ✓ Typically, how do your children express their various emotions like happiness, anger, frustration, sadness, and enjoyment? Do you have conversations with them about expressing emotions?
- ✓ Tell me about your children's self-regulation practices (feeding, bedtime, tantrums)
- ✓ Do you feel it's important to teach them about boundaries at this early age?
- ✓ How would you describe your bond to your children?

Section 4: Recommendations to improve children's socio-emotional development

- ✓ What are the major challenges of fostering socio-emotional development in your children according to you?
- ✓ Are there some things you would like to practice with your children but cannot?
Why can't you?
- ✓ What kind of help or support do you think you need as a parent from your family or school to foster socio-emotional development in your child?
- ✓ Do you have any comments or suggestions in this regard?

Focus Group Discussion Guideline

- ✓ Are you familiar with the term “socio-emotional development” in children?
- ✓ What do you know about the socio-emotional development of children?
- ✓ According to you, as parents what should be your role in fostering socio-emotional development in your child?
- ✓ Do you think your childhood experience has effects on your socio-emotional development? How has it shaped your parental practices?
- ✓ Share some practices you believe have been particularly effective in fostering socio-emotional development in your 3-5-year-old children.
- ✓ Provide some examples of how you communicate with your children about emotions and social interactions.
- ✓ What are the major barriers to fostering socio-emotional development in your children according to you?
- ✓ In your opinion, how can existing practices be improved to better support the socio-emotional development of 3-5-year-old children in Bangladesh?
- ✓ Are there specific resources or support systems from family, community, or school, you feel would help to foster socio-emotional development in children?

ইন-ডেপথ ইন্টারভিউ (IDI) নির্দেশিকা:

সেকশন একঃ জনসংখ্যা সংক্রান্ত তথ্য

নাম:

বয়স:

লিঙ্গ:

শিক্ষা:

পেশা:

আবাসস্থল:

মাসিক আয়:

সন্তান সংখ্যা:

বাচ্চাদের বয়স:

শিশুদের লিঙ্গ:

সেকশন দুইঃ শিশুদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশ সম্পর্কে উপলব্ধি

- ✓ আপনি কি শিশুদের "সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশ" শব্দটির সাথে পরিচিত?
- ✓ শিশুদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশ সম্পর্কে আপনি কী জানেন?
- ✓ আপনি কি মনে করেন যে আপনার প্রাক-বিদ্যালয়-বয়স্ক শিশুদের মধ্যে সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশ লালন করা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?
- ✓ আপনি কি মনে করেন আপনার শৈশবের অভিজ্ঞতা আপনার সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের উপর প্রভাব ফেলেছে? পিতা/মাতা হিসেবে আপনার অভ্যাসগুলোকে তা কতটা প্রভাবিত করেছে?

সেকশন তিনঃ শিশুদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশে সহায়ক অনুশীলন

- ✓ একজন অভিভাবক হিসেবে তাদের মধ্যে সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের জন্য আপনার ভূমিকা কী? আপনার সন্তানের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের জন্য আপনি কী কী বিষয়গুলি মেনে চলেন?
- ✓ আপনি কি অবিলম্বে এবং ধারাবাহিকভাবে আপনার সন্তানদের মানসিক এবং শারীরিক চাহিদার প্রতি সাড়া দেন?
- ✓ আপনি কি আপনার সন্তানদের সাথে কোয়ালিটি সময় কাটান?
- ✓ আপনি কি আপনার বাচ্চাদের সাথে খেলেন? তাদের গল্পের বই পড়ে শোনান?
- ✓ আপনি কি সন্তানের মধ্যে সামাজিক-মানসিক দক্ষতা বিকাশের জন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ বলে মনে করেন এমন কিছু কার্যকলাপের আরও কয়েকটি উদাহরণ শেয়ার করতে পারেন?
- ✓ সাধারণত, কিভাবে আপনার সন্তানেরা তাদের আনন্দ, রাগ, হতাশা, দুঃখ এবং আনন্দের মত বিভিন্ন আবেগ প্রকাশ করে? কিভাবে আবেগ প্রকাশ করা যায় এ সম্পর্কে কি তাদের সাথে আপনি কথা বলেন?

- ✓ আপনার সন্তানদের স্ব-নিয়ন্ত্রণ অনুশীলন সম্পর্কে আমাকে বলুন (যেমন খাওয়া, ঘুমানো, ট্যান্ড্রাম)
- ✓ আপনি কি মনে করেন যে এ বয়সে তাদের বাউন্ডারি থাকা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?
- ✓ আপনি কিভাবে আপনার সন্তানদের আপনার বন্ধন বর্ণনা করবেন?

সেকশন চারঃ শিশুদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের জন্য সুপারিশ

- ✓ আপনার মতে আপনার বাচ্চাদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলি কী কী?
- ✓ এমন কিছু কাজ কি আছে যা আপনি আপনার শিশুর সাথে অনুশীলন করতে চান কিন্তু পারেন না? কেন পারেন না?
- ✓ আপনার সন্তানের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশ ঘটাতে আপনার পরিবার বা স্কুল থেকে অভিভাবক হিসেবে আপনার কী ধরনের সাহায্য বা সহায়তা প্রয়োজন বলে আপনি মনে করেন?
- ✓ এই বিষয়ে আপনার কোন মন্তব্য বা পরামর্শ আছে?

ফোকাস গ্রুপ আলোচনা নির্দেশিকা

- ✓ আপনি কি শিশুদের "সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশ" শব্দটির সাথে পরিচিত?
- ✓ শিশুদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশ সম্পর্কে আপনি কী জানেন?
- ✓ আপনার মতে, পিতামাতা হিসাবে আপনার সন্তানের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশে আপনার ভূমিকা কী হওয়া উচিত?
- ✓ আপনি কি মনে করেন আপনার শৈশবের অভিজ্ঞতা আপনার সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের উপর প্রভাব ফেলেছে?
পিতা/মাতা হিসেবে আপনার অভ্যাসগুলোকে তা কতটা প্রভাবিত করেছে?
- ✓ কিছু অভ্যাস শেয়ার করুন যা আপনি বিশ্বাস করেন যে আপনার 3-5 বছর বয়সী বাচ্চাদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের জন্য বিশেষভাবে কার্যকর হয়েছে।
- ✓ আবেগ এবং সামাজিকতা সম্পর্কে আপনি আপনার বাচ্চাদের কি কি শেখান বা জানান তার কিছু উদাহরণ দিন।
- ✓ আপনার মতে আপনার বাচ্চাদের সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশের প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জগুলি কী কী?
- ✓ আপনার মতামত, বাংলাদেশে ৩-৫ বছর বয়সী শিশুদের আর্থ-সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশকে আরও ভালভাবে সমর্থন করার জন্য বিদ্যমান অনুশীলনগুলিকে কীভাবে উন্নত করা যেতে পারে?
- ✓ পরিবার, কমিউনিটি বা স্কুল থেকে কি সহায়তা শিশুদের মধ্যে সামাজিক-মানসিক বিকাশে সাহায্য করবে বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

Annex:2

Voluntary Consent Form

TITLE OF STUDY

Parental Perception and Practices to support Socio-emotional Development of Children aged 3-5 Years in Bangladesh

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study will be conducted as a part of my master's degree requirements from the Institute of Educational Development- BRAC University, the study aims to explore parents' perception and practices to support socio-emotional development in children aged 3-5 years in Bangladesh.

RISKS

No threat will be made to the participants for contributing to the study directly or indirectly. Parents of children from 3-5 years will be contributing to the study results which will be primarily used as a degree requirement.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

There are no direct benefits for you in participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to the understanding of children's socio-emotional development, among ECD educators, researchers, and other stakeholders.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information gathered from the participants during the research will remain strictly confidential.

FURTHER USE OF INFORMATION

Some of the information collected from this study may be preserved for further experiments however in such cases, data and information shared with other researchers, will not conflict with the maintenance of confidentiality of information.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. It is up to the participant to decide whether or not to take part in the study. If the participant decides to be a part of this study, s/he will be required to sign a consent form. After signing the consent form, the participant is still free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship the participant has, if any, with the researcher. If the participant withdraws from the study before the data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

CONSENT

I have read the aforementioned information and had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any point of the research without giving a reason. I understand that I will receive a copy of the consent form.

Participant's Name & signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's signature _____ Date _____