

# Social Participation of Children with Communication Disability: An Observation from Bangladesh

Kudrat-E-Khuda Arif<sup>1</sup>, S. M. Iftekhar Alam<sup>2</sup>, Suma Begum<sup>3</sup>, Md. Shahoriar Ahmed<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>MGDS (JU), Clinical Therapist, Speech and language therapy Department, Centre for the rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP), Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

<sup>2</sup>MGDS (JU), Physiotherapist, CIVIC- Trail (CRP), Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

<sup>3</sup>MS (RU), Occupational therapist & Centre Manager Afsar Hussain-CRP, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

<sup>4</sup>MPH (ASA University), Project Coordinator-BPA-Towards Global Health (HI), Savar, Dhaka-Bangladesh.

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** In Bangladesh disability is the most common challenging issue in this country and communication impairment is common in all types of childhood disability. **Objective:** This study aims to find out the social participation of children with communication disability. **Methodology:** This is a cross sectional quantitative study design where researcher uses convenient sampling technique. **Result:** About 54.50% (30) child's participation in communication with other children and adults at home was somewhat limited, among 60% (33) child's participation was very limited in communicating with other children and adults in the Neighborhood and Community and about 56.4% (31) participation was somewhat limited in communicating with other children and adults at school. Among the participants 47.3% (26) children found in the age range of 8-10 years. **Conclusion:** The mean trends consistently show that children with communication disability take part in a variety of activities but with less intensity and restricted social and environment contexts when compared with their typically-developing peers. Parents placed importance on communication and its influence on children's independence, behavior and relationships. It will be more effective when rehabilitation professional work with communication disability children to remove their disability through ensuring the participation with playmates, in school, in environment and social.

**Keyword:** - Social participation, Communication disability, Bangladesh.

## Background:

Communication is important for human life. Through communication human connect with the world and give meaning to his/her lives. For good communication skills language skills are vital phenomenon. Language skills are important in establishing and maintaining successful social relationships (Gottman, 1983 as cited in Fujiki, Brinton & Todd, 1996). Human beings are social creatures who generally seek to connect and create relationships with others. The ability to communicate in some form is vital to achieve such connections and relationships. However, individuals are not all born with this ability, nor do they all acquire the necessary components of communication through development (Brown, Hess, & Back, 2010). Bangladesh is a developing country in the world. Disability is the most common challenging issue in this country. A survey on prevalence of disability from 1994 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics shows a rate of 10.62 disabilities per 1000 peoples. Action Aid-Bangladesh (1993) and Social Assistance and Rehabilitation for the Physically Vulnerable (SARPV) put the percent of PWDs (People with disabilities) at 8.8% of the total population and among children under 18 it was 6.2% (The Danish Bilharziasis Laboratory for the World Bank, 2004). Bangladesh Protibandhi Kalayan Samiti records 7.8%, while in another survey Action Aid Bangladesh (1996) records 14.04% people suffered from a form of impairment. On the other hand, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) surveys in 1982, 1986 and 1998 estimated a national prevalence rate of disability

at 0.64%, 0.5% and 1.60% respectively. The WHO's global estimate predicts approximately 10% of all people have a disability of one kind or another (Titumir & Hossain, 2005). According to UN/WHO statistics (2004), the total number of disabled Bangladesh children, age's birth to ten is 3,153,886, or 7.7% of the population of that age (Ackerman, Thormann & Huq, 2005). A Nationwide survey under NSSO 2002 in India showed a prevalence rate of 1.77% disabilities among all age groups (National Sample Survey Organization 2001-2002 as cited in Nair et al., 2009). In a house to house survey of 3560 children 0–6 years of age at Delhi, disability was identified in 6.8% of those assessed (Chopra, Verma & Seetharaman, 1999). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated in 2005 that 150 million children globally live with a disability. The 2004 World Bank situational analysis of disability in Bangladesh estimates a child disability prevalence in the country of 6% based on available estimates and figures (Mactaggart, & Murthy, 2013). So disability is the most common challenging issue in Bangladesh.

Methodology:

### **Study Design:**

This is a cross sectional survey and quantitative in nature where researcher use convenient sampling technique. The investigator chose the design in quantitative research method because in this way investigator was able to use a large number of participants and collected data within targeted time (Hicks, 2000). For collecting data the researcher used structure check list- Children & Adolescent Scale of Participation (CASP) (Annexure 1B) & demographic information chart (Annexure 1A). Gary Bedell, Ph.D., OTR, FAOTA is the primary author of the Child and Adolescent Scale of Participation (CASP). The Child and Adolescent Scale of Participation (CASP) measures the extent to which children participate in home, school, and community activities compared to children of the same age as reported by family caregivers (Bedell, 2004). It is used for 5 years to older age children and adolescent with different disability or ABI (Acquired Brain Injury). For easy understanding of the participants the researcher converted the check list from English to Bengali.

### **Study Place:**

In this study 2 schools and 2 different institutions selected that are located in and around Savar & Dhaka city in Bangladesh. These schools were "William and Marie Taylor Inclusive School, CRP, Savar", "Smiling Children Special School (SCSS)" Gulshan-1, "Beautiful Mind" Uttara, "AlokitoShishu" (A Treatment Based School for Autism & Other Special Needs Children), Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Where children with autism, Cerebral Palsy and other developmental disabilities receive treatment and academic learning. These schools were selected to collect the information because of convenience for the investigator.

### **Participants:**

Study populations were all parents (father/ mother) of children with communication disability in Bangladesh. The investigator selected 55 participants in this study as sample.

### **Communication Disability:**

A communication disorder/disability is impairment in the ability to receive, send, process and comprehend concepts or verbal, nonverbal and graphic symbol systems. A communication disorder may be evident in the processes of hearing, language, and/or speech. A communication disorder may range in severity from mild to profound. It may be developmental or acquired. Individuals may demonstrate one or any combination of communication disorders. A communication disorder may result in a primary disability or it may be secondary to other disabilities (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1993).

### **Analysis**

After managing data properly, it was analyzed in the Statistical Package of Social Science 16 version.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researchers were duly concern regarding the ethical aspects of the study and formal permission was taken from the Bangladesh Health professions Institute (BHPI) of CRP, Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh, for conducting this study.

All information was kept secured. Confidentiality of the person and the information was maintained and observed throughout the study.

### Results:

Table 1: Demographic Information of Children (%)

Traits	Frequency	Percent (%)
Age		
5-7years	22	40.0%
8-10 years	26	47.3%
11-13 years	7	12.7%
Gender		
Male	35	63.6%
Female	20	36.4%
Types of Disability		
Cerebral palsy	14	25.5%
Autism	33	60.0%
Down syndrome	6	10.9%
Others(Epilepsy)	2	3.6%

A total of 55 children most of them were male 64% (35) and 36% (20) were females. Among the 55 children 40% (22) children were found in the age range of 5-7 years, 47.3% (26) children found in the age range of 8-10 years, and 12.7% (7) found in the age range of 11-13 years. 25.5% (14) children have Cerebral palsy (CP), 60% (33) children have Autism, 10.90% (6) have Down-syndrome and 3.6% (2) have Epilepsy.

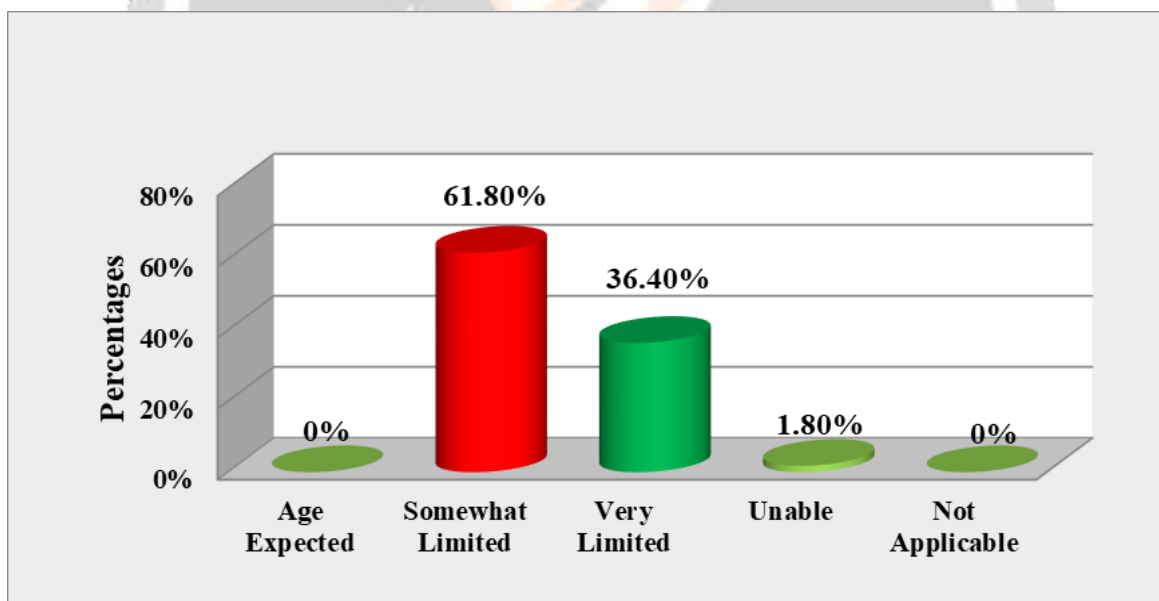


Figure 1: Social, Play or Leisure Activities with Family Members at Home

In this study investigator found that 61.8% (34) children's participation in social, play or leisure activities with family members at home was somewhat limited, 36.4% (20) child's participation was very limited, 1.8% (1) child's participation was unable to participate and no child was found in age expected and not applicable level.

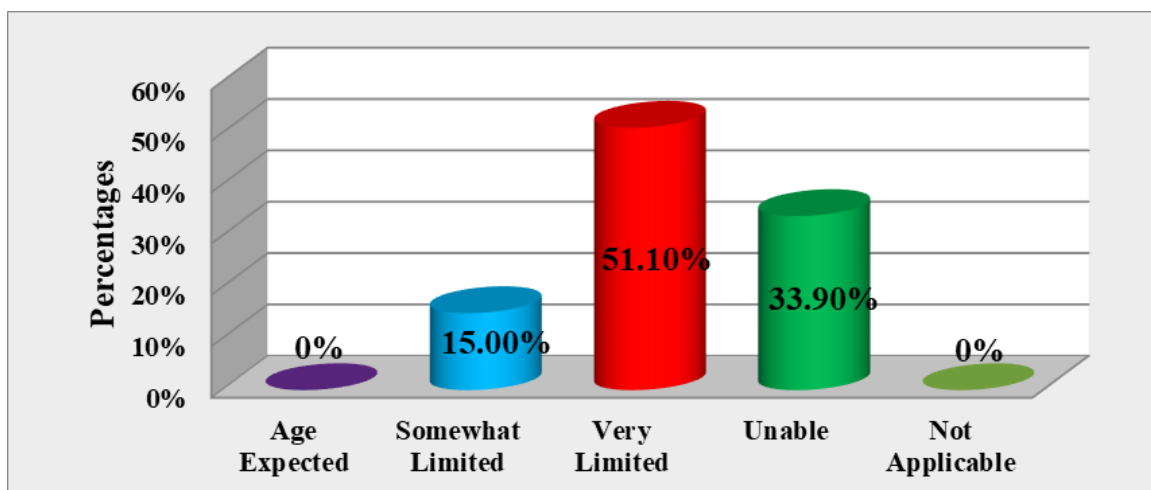


Figure 2: Social, Play or Leisure Activities with Friends at Home

In this study investigator found that 15% (9) children’s participation in social, play or leisure activities with friends at home was somewhat limited, 51.10% (28) child’s participation was very limited, 33.9% (18) children were unable to participate and no one found in age expected and not applicable level.

Table 2: Participation in Home (n %)

Traits	Frequency	Percent (%)	
Participate in Family Chores, Responsibilities and Decisions at Home	Age expected	0	0%
	Somewhat limited	21	38.2%
	Very limited	31	56.4%
	Unable	3	5.5%
Participate in Self-care Activities at Home	Age expected	2	3.6%
	Somewhat limited	19	34.5%
	Very limited	29	52.7%
	Unable	5	9.1%
Moving About in and Around the Home	Age expected	3	5.5%
	Somewhat limited	28	50.9%
	Very limited	22	40%
	Unable	2	3.6%
Participate in Communication with Other Children and Adults at Home.	Age expected	0	0%
	Somewhat limited	30	54.5%
	Very limited	21	38.2%
	Unable	4	7.3%

About 38.2% (21) children’s participation in family chores, responsibilities and decisions at home was somewhat limited and 56.4% (31) child’s participation was very limited, 34.5% (19) somewhat limited to Participate in Self-care Activities at Home and 52.7% (29) very limited. 50.90% (28) child’s participation was somewhat limited to Moving About in and Around the Home and 40% (22) child’s participation was very limited. About 54.50% (30) child’s participation in Communication with other children and adults at home was somewhat limited and 38.20% (21) child’s participation was very limited.

Table 3: Participation in Community and Neighborhood n (%)

Traits		Frequency	Percent (%)
Participate in Social, Play or Leisure Activities with Friends in the Neighborhood and Community	Age expected	1	1.8%
	Somewhat limited	11	20%
	Very limited	34	61.8%
	Unable	9	16.4%
Structured Events and Activities in the Neighborhood and Community	Age expected	0	0%
	Somewhat limited	8	14.5%
	Very limited	35	63.6%
	Unable	12	21.8%
Moving Around the Neighborhood and Community	Age expected	1	1.8%
	Somewhat limited	12	21.8%
	Very limited	29	52.7%
	Unable	13	23.6%
Communicating with Other Children and Adults in the Neighborhood and Community	Age expected	0	0%
	Somewhat limited	13	23.6%
	Very limited	33	60%
	Unable	9	16.4 %

Among 61.80% (34) child's participation was very limited and 16.40% (9) child was unable to participate in social, play, or leisure activities with friends in the neighborhood and community. 63.60% (35) child's participation was very limited where 21.80% (12) child was unable to participate in the neighborhood and community. Among 52.70% (29) child's participation was very limited and 23.60 % (13) child was unable to moving around in neighborhood and community. 23.60% (13) children's communication was somewhat limited, 60% (33) child's participation was very limited in communicating with other children and adults in the Neighborhood and Community.

Table 4: Participation in School n (%)

Traits		Frequency	Percent (%)
Educational Activities with Other Children in Classroom at School	Age expected	1	1.8%
	Somewhat limited	36	65.5%
	Very limited	16	29.1%
	Unable	2	3.6%
Social, Play and Recreational Activities with Other Children at School	Age expected	0	0%
	Somewhat limited	26	47.3%
	Very limited	29	52.7%
	Unable	0	0%
Moving Around at School	Age expected	2	3.6%
	Somewhat limited	26	47.3%
	Very limited	26	47.3%
	Unable	1	1.8%
Using educational materials and equipment in classroom	Age expected	4	7.3%
	Somewhat limited	20	36.4%
	Very limited	29	52.7%
	Unable	2	3.6%
Communicating with Other Children and Adults at School	Age expected	0	0%
	Somewhat limited	31	56.4%
	Very limited	19	34.5%
	Unable	5	9.1%

Among 65.50% (36) participation was somewhat limited, 29.10% (16) child's participation was very limited in Educational Activities with Other Children in Classroom at School. In the other hand among 47.30% (26) children's participation was somewhat limited and 52.70% (29) child's participation was very limited in social Play and Recreational Activities with Other Children at School. Among 47.30% (26) child's participation was somewhat limited, 47.30% (26) child's participate was very limited in moving Around at School. 36.40% (20) child's participation was somewhat limited, 52.70% (29) child's participation was very limited using educational materials and equipment in classroom. About 56.4% (31) participation was somewhat limited, 34.5% (19) child's participation was very limited in communicating with other children and adults at school

### **Discussion:**

Participation in daily life is crucial to psychological, emotional and physical skills development and is also a primary goal of rehabilitation following children with communication disability. In this study among 55 children with communication disability most of them were male 64% (35) and 36% (20) were females. Among them 60% (33) children had Autism, 25.5% (14) had Cerebral palsy (CP), 10.90% (6) had Down-syndrome and 3.6% (2) had Epilepsy. The findings of the present study showed that 61.8% children's participation in social, play or leisure activities with family members at home was somewhat limited and 36.4% children's participation was very limited. But 51.1% children's participation in social, play or leisure activities with friends at home was very limited & 15% child's participation was somewhat limited. 33.9% (18) children were unable to participate in social, play or leisure activities with friends at home. 0% children were found in age expected level. Children participation with family members was better than with friends in social, play or leisure activities. Similar result found in Bedell & Dumas (2004) study. Children with disability have restricted participated in social, play or leisure activities with family members and friends at home (Jarus, Gelberg, & Yeger (2011). The findings of the present study showed that 56.4% children's participation was very limited and 38.2% children's participation was somewhat limited in family chores, responsibilities and decisions at home. Most of the children participation level was very limited in those activities. No child was found in age expected level. Children with communication disability showed limited participation in family chores activities, responsibilities and decisions at home. Their participation is restricted than typical developmental child. Burbidge, (2008) investigated that disable children participate less in decision making at home and their participation in household tasks is more restricted than typically developed children. Children with cerebral palsy participation in decision at home are severely restricted (Arnaud et al., 2008).

The present study findings showed that participate of children with communication disability in Self-care activities at home was restricted. Most of the children's (34.5%) participation was somewhat limited, 52.7% children's participation was very limited, 9.1% children were unable to participate and only 3.6% children participation were age expected. Bedell & Dumas (2004) found that 55% children with communication impairment participation were very limited in self-care activities. In the previous research found that children with specific language impairment has sever difficulties in self-care skills (Fujiki, Brinton & Todd, 1996). The findings of the present study showed that participation in moving about in and around the home 50.90% children's participation was somewhat limited, 40% children's participation was very limited but 5.5% children's participation was age expected. Moving around the community 21.80% children participation were somewhat limited, 52.70% (29) children's participation was very limited and 1.80% children's participation was age expected, moving around at school 47.30% children's participation was somewhat limited. Galvin, Froude & McAleer (2010) found that children with disability were restricted moving about in and around the home (25%). Children with communication disability were restricted moving about in and around the home, community and school.

The findings of the present study showed that 54.50% children's participation was somewhat limited in Communication with family members at home, 38.20% children's participation was very limited and 7.30% children were unable to communicate. 23.60% children's communication with children and adult in community was somewhat limited, 60% children's communication was very limited and 16.40 % children were unable to communicate. 56.40% children's participation was somewhat limited in communication with other children and adults at school, 34.50% children's participation was very limited and 9.10% children were unable to communicate. And no child was found in age expected level in communication at home, community and school environment. Investigator found that children with communication disability have restricted participation in communication. Voorman et al. (2010) found that 45% children with CP had restriction in social functioning, 74% children with CP had restriction in communication with other children and adult in home and community. A recent study by Thirumanickam, Raghavendra & Olsson (2011) has shown that children with the compounding issues of communication difficulties had lower participation compared to children with just physical disabilities and children with complex communication needs may lack the social communicative competence to interact with peers. In the

present study found that, 63.60% children's participation was very limited in structured events and activities in the community and 14.50% children's participation was somewhat limited. 61.80% children's participation was very limited in social, play or leisure activities with friends in the community. 52.70% children's participation was very limited in social, play and recreational activities with other children at school. Galvin, Froude & McAleer (2010) found that, 75% children with disability participation was somewhat – very limited in structured events and activities in the community and 70% children's participation in social, play or leisure activities with friends in the community and school environment was very restricted. This findings show that children with communication disability participation are restricted with friends in play or leisure activities. Their participation is more restricted than same age typical children. Solish, Perry & Minnes (2010) found that the children with disabilities were participating in significantly fewer social activities with peers, as well as experiencing substantially fewer mutual friendships than the TD (typically developed) children.

The findings of present study showed that the majority of children who had sustained communication disability experienced participation restrictions in one or more typical activities at home, school or in the community. And this finding may reflect the fact that children with communication disability often require more assistance to participate in leisure activities, self-care activities, cannot be left alone safely, or perhaps that parents and teacher of these children were accessing more respite services and in-home /school supports.

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest.

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## CONCLUSIONS

The mean trends consistently show that children with communication disability take part in a variety of activities but with less intensity and restricted social and environment contexts when compared with their typically-developing peers. It is imperative that rehabilitation staff work with children with communication disability and those who are their communication partners in all of their environments in order to reduce participation restrictions.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

	<p><i>Kudrat-E-Khuda Arif</i></p> <p><sup>1</sup>MGDS (JU), Clinical Therapist, Speech and language therapy Department, Centre for the rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh.</p> <p>Email: arif.khan59454@gmail.com</p>
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	<p><i>S. M. Iftekhar Alam</i></p> <p><sup>2</sup> MGDS (JU), Physiotherapist, CIVIC- Trail (CRP), Savar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Email: ifte5690@gmail.com</p>
	<p><i>Suma Begum</i></p> <p><sup>3</sup>MS (RU) Occupational therapist &amp; Centre Manager, Afsar Hussain-CRP,Rajshahi Email: begum.suma@yahoo.com</p>
	<p><i>Md. Shahoriar Ahmed</i></p> <p><sup>4</sup>MPH (ASA University), Project Coordinator-BPA-Towards Global Health (HI), Savar, Dhaka-Bangladesh. Email: physio.shahoriar@gmail.com</p>

