

PARENTS' PERCEPTION IN CHILD READINESS FOR SCHOOL IN PRE- PRIMARY EDUCATION IN URBAN AREA

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ABSTRACT

Every family has its own background, cultural beliefs and expectations. Understanding why parents become involved in their child's pre-school education or do not is crucial in strengthening the relationship between parental involvement and child readiness. Home is the first social context providing the base for children to understand the world. It is where learning begins. Children learn cultural conceptions of everyday contact with their parents and experience at home. The present study focuses on parental role in their child readiness and to investigate how parents are associated with their child's physical, cognitive and linguistic preparation before their formal schooling. This study has applied a qualitative research methodology with parents and teachers from pre-primary classes of ten government primary schools in Bangladesh. The results also demonstrate the enabling factors that influence or enhance the current role of parents in their child's readiness in the home environment. A case study design was adopted to investigate the phenomenon deeply. This paper attempts to explore through its findings whether parents are aware about their child readiness and how they provide the necessary family support to prepare their child competent physically and cognitively before sending them to pre-school.

Keywords: Parents' Perception, Child Readiness, School, Pre-Primary, Education, Urban Area

INTRODUCTION

Parents are the first educator of their children who are uniquely motivated to promote their children's wellbeing and development (Reese et al, 2010). The period from birth to the age of 6 is a critical phase for brain development which is influenced by the external environment and therefore the best time for learning (The Education Bureau, Hong Kong, 2006). If provided a safe and accepting environment with abundant sensory stimulation in early childhood, children may have positive brain development which is helpful to their future learning. Numerous studies on learning theory have shown that children learn by gradually constructing knowledge with the assistance of adults (The Education Bureau, Hong Kong, 2006). The study explores parental involvement in child readiness for pre-primary education in the home environment. Parental involvement in the home is significantly more effective than parental involvement in the school (Desforges and Abouchar, 2003). Therefore, this study discusses home support for a child's educational progress to pre-schooling. This study asserts that how parents interact with their children is more important in predicting child academic outcomes than the extent to which they are involved in school. However, in this study, parental involvement on the school site is not discussed in detail. Parents are likely to get involved in their child's education to the extent that they see it as part of their role or 'job' as it were. International bodies such as Organization for Economic Coordination and Development (OECD) and UNICEF characterise the involvement of parents in young children's education as a fundamental right and obligation (Kernan, 2012).

Families are the key setting where children's characters are shaped. The development of a child's personality, self-image, values and attitudes are highly influenced by their parents and other family members. Therefore, the family is an important pillar of children's development and its participation is essential for the success of early childhood education.

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY:

Parents perception and the family environment are the core principles of the national curriculum for pre-primary education in Bangladesh. As pre-primary education is the first phase of the education system, so, parents have a lot of responsibilities to prepare their child for pre-primary education on or before their child's attaining the age of five. It is necessary to consider three areas of readiness for pre-primary education which are: the readiness of the child, the readiness of the family and the readiness of school. This study will help the researcher in his professional role by enriching his knowledge of the engagement of parents in supporting their child's readiness for school. In this perspective and according to researcher's professional experience it is assumed that this study will underpin parental awareness to prepare their child for a good start, easy access and sustainable primary education.

AIM OF THE STUDY:

Pre-primary education plays a vital role in ensuring timely enrolment in schools and also contributes to better learning for the children in subsequent years. It is a given that parents are the first teacher of their children's language and literacy development prior to formal schooling (Reese et al, 2010). In this way, this qualitative research aims to explore the current involvement of parents in their child's readiness and to investigate how parents foster their children's physical and mental preparation before they enter into grade one of formal primary schooling.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

This research also intends to identify the factors that enhance the current role of parents in their children's readiness for school. Analysing such parental involvement in their child readiness for mainstreaming also informs policy recommendations for the government of Bangladesh. The rationale and aim discussed above has identified the following research questions. These are:

1. What factors are associated with parents' involvement in their child's readiness for entry into pre-primary school?
2. What factors enable parents to prepare their children for pre-primary school?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the Reggio Emilia approach, multiple perspectives of children learning are used. All children of preschool age are valued for their innate potential and ability (Thronton and Brunton, 2015). Teachers provide interesting resources and scenarios for the children using conversations and discussions and acting as a memory bank for them. Each week, they allocate a few times for meetings with families that give an opportunity to create relationships between children, their families and themselves. Parents are actively involved in the development and management of early education in Reggio. Parental involvement is the heart of the pedagogical experience in this approach. The development of children's learning, creativity and imagination - is the core theme of the Reggio Approach (Vecchi, 2004). Fawcett and Watson (2016) also indicate that the Reggio approach connects parents and the community.

Children have to be able to communicate their needs and ideas by understanding the world around them. Parental involvement guides children to make sense of their physical world and to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment (EYFS, 2014). The EYFS (2017) states that children want to know the similarities and differences between themselves and other children as well as people. In this way, they know the communities and traditions of different families. Beauchamp (2016) states that the parental involvement is viewed as the opportunity for child in understanding the world. Children are very curious about different elements of their own environment and observe how environments differ from one another. They also closely observe the animals and plants surrounding them and want to know the changes that occur. Children recognise the technologies which are used at home and school and helps them understand the world. A study found that technology used in home and early childhood settings is still dominated by the computer and internet, television and DVD player (Aubrey and Dahl, 2014). They safely use a variety of materials and tools, experimenting with colour, design, and texture in order to explore and understand the world.

Parental involvement is more important and effective in early childhood than at other developmental stages of a child (Konstantina and Adefunke, 2017). UNICEF defines it as a fundamental right and obligation for young children's education (Kernan, 2012). Parental engagement is an active participation in learning and

supportive relationship foster children's learning at home as well as at school. Wolfendale (1983) pointed out parental involvement for their children's education as a client and not as partners. Over time this changed. On the other hand, according to Curtis (1998) consideration, parental involvement means the involvement of a parent to their children's education as a partner not client. Nye et al (2006) emphasised the importance of the active engagement of parents with their children outside the school for enhancing academic performance. Fumoto (2011) states that for child readiness, teachers need to establish positive and personal relationships with each child's family for better understanding of child's individual needs, interests and abilities that related to family's goals, expectations and childrearing practice. It provides a correlation between home and school. Respectful listening and sharing of information between parents and practitioners improves practice and supports the child development. Family and community supported pre-primary education is successful for transition to formal primary education. Nonworking mothers of children with special needs exhibited higher parental involvement (Bilgisi, 2014) Mothers' awareness of their children's education and development enables their children to start school ready to continue learning (Buyusktaskapu and Samur, 2010).

The literature on early education indicates that children under 6 years learn through play: oral play, imaginative play and experience (O'Connor and August, 2014). Kernon (2012) lists the components that influence parents' contribution to child readiness for school as: parent-child relationship, practitioner-child relationship, child-child relationship and parent-practitioner relationship, thus recognising the elements that together create a learning partnership. Separate analysis for the Sutton Trust, Sammons, Toth and Sylva (2015) showed that there is lasting impact of pre-school for the young people who were classed as 'high achievers' at the end of primary school. The important factors that associate parents for their child readiness are mentioned here with reviewing different literatures.

In many research studies, parental involvement is indicated as good parenting that provides a good foundation of skills, values, attitudes and self-concept of children. It also supports reading to children, encouragement and help with homework as well. Another study by the same author indicates that parental involvement has a powerful impact on the attainment and children's adjustment to education. The full support of parents can maximise their children's potential in school. Parental values and aspirations modelled in the home, can enforce the shape of pupils' achievement and adjustment (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Reed and Murphy (2012) acknowledge that the benefit on children's well-being come to light when practitioners and families work as an effective team. Sammons et al. (2015) showed that positive parenting experiences, especially a more stimulating home learning environment, young children were helped to promote better long-term outcomes.

Readiness encompasses an aggregation of components that focus on measuring and predicting children's pre-academic skill and behaviours which are the basis for placement and policy and programme decisions (Karen et al, 2000). Al-Hasan and Lansford (2009) describe child readiness as a multidimensional construct that refers to preparing a child physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially and behaviourally. It has long term outcomes for a child's school completion as well as academic achievement. However, so many education specialists define child readiness as an integrated and holistic approach for securing a child's lifelong growth and development. A child's readiness is a holistic approach that considers learning and child development (Ip et al, 2015).

The Montessori Approach is based on unique nature of each individual and refers to a child-centred approach that based on the child's freedom to learn within a favourable environment. In this approach, observation is the main assessment tool that reveals the innate quality of a child (Isaacs, 2012). Teachers are the facilitators of children's learning. They ensure the learning environment and necessary tools for all aspects of their development. The parent-child relationship is important to support the maturation of a child in Montessori education. Parents are closely involved to understand the aim of the pedagogy so that they can support the holistic development of their offspring. Parents provide their child's full independence at home as s/he enjoys it at school. Sometimes, Montessori schools offer parents an education program to make them familiar with this approach. Parents should give time to their child both for school planning and family routines as it makes them self-reliant. Parents also provide information about home activities to the school authority in order to contribute to a smooth learning journey for the child. Therefore, in this approach, parents and teachers play an important role in preparing a suitable environment creating a calm, polite and respectful atmosphere.

In England, the recent early year's education curriculum was introduced step by step from 1996 to 2000. In 2014, a revised mandatory statutory framework was established for all early year's providers (EYFS, 2014). Pre-primary education in England is named as the "Early Years Foundation Stage" and is for the children of age up to 5 years. This framework is slightly amended in 2017 (EYFS, 2017). Actually, the EYFS is a stage which combines the learning, development and care of the child but the early year's education runs for the children of age 3 to 5 (EYFS, 2014). Good parenting is important for high quality early learning between birth to age five. So, partnership working between parents and practitioners is one of the key component of

EYFS. There is a provision to assign a key person for each child to engage and support parents in guiding the children's development at home. In the assessment process of EYFS, parents are an important source of information for pre-primary education providers or practitioners.

In Wales, pre-primary education is named as the Foundation Phase which is a statutory framework curriculum for children aged 3 to 7 years old (Thomas and Lewis, 2016). This framework was first introduced in 2008 as nursery for the children of 3 to 4 years old and fully extended in 2011 to Year 2 for children of 6 to 7 years old. Bruce (2011a) mentions that education specialist Rudolf Steiner believed the child developmental age is three to seven years. This curriculum allows children to engage in practical, real-life and problem-solving tasks that develops their creativity and imagination (Thomas and Lewis, 2016). Howard, Miles and Gealy (2009) state that play is the central feature of this Foundation Phase framework. The School Effectiveness Framework (SEF) suggests that parental involvement in school is important for a child's well-being and influences children's learning and development (Wales Government, 2013b). Morrison, Gutman and Feinstein (2008) found in their study that greater parental involvement tends to more positive well-being for the child. It is believed that parental engagement in home has more impact on children's learning outcome than parental involvement in school (Thomas and Lewis, 2016; Harris and Goodhall, 2007). Estyn report (2012a) indicates that fostering a close relationship between home and school produces more impact on a learner's well-being.

In Bangladesh, pre-primary education was inaugurated very recently. It is a serious concern of the government of Bangladesh to ensure the success of primary education. Children are required to enrol in formal primary education through pre-primary exposure (DPE, 2015). Pre-primary education has a significant role in reducing drop out and grade repetition. For proper implementation and co-ordination, the government of Bangladesh has taken appropriate initiatives to bring all categories of pre-schooling under one structure. Therefore, the government of Bangladesh has prepared and approved an "Operational Framework for Pre-primary education" in 2008 and it was introduced as a trial basis from 2010. From 2014, pre-primary education was introduced all over the country for about 1.95 million children with a standardized curriculum (DPE, 2015). According to the National Education Policy (2010), the Bangladeshi government introduced one-year pre-primary education for the children aged 5 to 6 years (Aker, 2013). The total number of 93,247 primary schools divided into eight categories provide pre-primary education in Bangladesh (DPE, 2015). The Operational Framework for pre-primary education aimed to provide all necessary care and education to young children for their development through physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional growth (MoPME, 2008). The government of Bangladesh is strongly committed both under national and international agreement to achieve Education for All (EFA) that leads to the implementation of pre-primary education (MoPME, 2008). Education for All (Jomtein, 1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) relate to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The Millennium Development Goals (2000) adopted by the United Nations are the international regulations that emphasize both the rights of children and the obligations of the state, society and the international community (MoPME, 2008). On the other hand, the key national documents like Constitution of Bangladesh (1972), National Children's Policy (1994), Poverty Reduction Strategy (2005-08), National Programme of Action for Children (2004-09) and Second National Programme of Action for Education for All (2005-09) are important for Bangladesh's commitment our concern to pre-primary education. All these national and international commitments, strategies, documents and goals prompted the government of Bangladesh to prepare "the Operational Framework for Pre-primary Education 2008" (MoPME, 2008). However, the National Education Policy (2010) is the legal framework for pre-primary education in Bangladesh (DPE, 2015). The National Education Policy (2010) includes Pre-Primary Education as the first component of Primary Education that recognizes pre-primary education as an integral part of primary education and the government is now committed to introduce one-year of pre-primary schooling through the government primary education system (MoPME, 2013). The World Education Forum at the Dakar Education Conference (2000) sets as its first goal a requirement for pre-primary education, an aim that was supported by UNESCO (Shahjamal and Nath, 2008). The UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) states as its third indicator "Ensure effective learning for all children and youth for life and livelihood". This strategy also strengthens the demand for pre-primary education in Bangladesh. Family involvement is one of the core principles for preparing the national curriculum for pre-primary education in Bangladesh (Aktar, 2013). Haque, et al (2013) state that development of the child begins first from family and mostly depends on parents.

To form positive relationships and develop respect for others in a family, children build confidence in their own abilities (EYFS, 2014). Self-confidence and self-awareness are important elements for personal development. Liking and disliking new activities in a familiar group makes a child more confident and self-aware. Parental support for choosing such activities in the family develop a child's personality. Family involvement helps children's personal development by sharing thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology. Self-confidence allows

children to interact with peers and teachers to develop relationships that helps children to ask and answer questions. Children can participate in lessons and express their ideas that improve their personal development (Kotaman, 2014).

Fawcett and Watson (2016) recognise the Reggio Emilia approach as a collaborative approach of creative learning that is the heart of early years and primary education. Moullin et al (2014) mention in their Sutton Trust study that the emotional well-being and resilience of children depend on the bonding with their or other adult that secures the children's better educational life. Cognitive comes from the word 'cognition'. Cognition involves a number of skills and attributes, such as memory, the quality of abstract, problem solving, logical thinking and reasoning. Therefore, cognitive development indicates the development of conceptual knowledge and understanding (Johnston and Halocha, 2010). Children develop their own ideas and create some strategies for doing this (EYFS, 2014). Developing and sharing ideas and thinking can accelerate children's cognitive development. Family involvement can help this activity strongly for preschool children. Kamii and Keto (2006) describe cognitive development through promoting opportunities to interact with novel and stimulating materials such as books, blocks, toys, water, sand, puzzles and the like. Buell et al (2012) support family involvement in children's cognitive development by the way as family provides the opportunity for children to interact with objects and individuals who help children learn how the world works.

Play is an important activity for children's physical development. It is essential for building children's confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems and relate to others (EYFS, 2014). Play based activities meet children's emerging needs and fosters their positive interaction that helps to prepare them for more formal learning through in primary school. The physical development of a child includes factors such as a child's health, motor skills, and coordination (Kamii and Kato, 2006). Healthy food and community resources allow children to develop physical skills. Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement (EYFS, 2014). Physical development helps children to handle equipment and tools effectively such as supporting them holding pencils for writing. If children's fine motor skills are not sufficiently effective to use pencil, parents / teachers / practitioners must work to develop those skills for writing (Kotaman, 2014). The family is the place where a child wants to start mark making or writing first. Physical exercise and healthy diet are important for children's good health that has positive impact on children's early education. So, parents provide these to keep their child healthy, safe and ready for pre-school.

The EYFS (2014) framework states that it is important for children to manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs successfully, including dressing and going to toilet independently. Toileting is a self-care skill. Kotaman (2014) mentions that children have to acquire toilet education before coming to preschool. Usually, a mother assists child on hygiene after toileting at home.

In Sutton Trust Report, Moulin et al (2014) state parenting as the most important drivers of social inequalities that enhances in cognitive development before school. Socialization is a process which begins at birth and by the age of three to four, children will have learned many skills from parents, siblings and other adults of a family. Johnston and Halocha (2010:114) state that, "Rousseau believed that human is born free and good, but influenced by society, its conventions and through the process of socialization so that children are constrained by the rules of society and develop inhibitions, vices and ideas during childhood." The socialization of a child starts at home and will give an opportunity to argue and learn so much about the world of the preschool. Parents viewed preschool as an important place for children not only to learn but also to interact with other children as well as adults. Further, the researcher mentions that children will be left out socially if they do not go to preschool. Preschools promote social development by providing children with an opportunity to play and work in a group of peers, learning to respect the rights of others and solve disputes peacefully. Summons et al (cited in Johnston and Halocha, 2010) claim that formal preschool experience for young children has a positive effect on children's social development. The High / Scope preschool programme has shown an improved social development in good home-school liaison (Johnston and Halocha, 2010). According to Bronfenbrenners ecological system theory, the child is the centre of a series of four interconnecting social systems (Johnston and Halocha, 2010; Mukherji, 2014). The first system 'microsystem' starts the influence of child's social development and the second system 'mesosystem' relates the child with family and local community for social support (Underdown, 2007). Children learn social comparisons from his/her family that leads them to further self-understanding and self-regulation. Therefore, young children behave with their peers with mutual respect and cooperation, share feelings, problems and experiences in preschool. After all, socialization makes them competent with conflict resolution, caring for others, cultural awareness as well as affection to others. Social and Emotional Development is strengthened by developing good relationships with peers, caregivers, and teachers. This area contributes to children's willingness to develop friendships and relationships with peers and teachers in the school setting.

Educational research shows that school is mainly concerned with academic progress but behaviour comes mostly from family for young children. Behaviour is an ability to organize situation expectation, including obeying rules, following senior's direction and participation in activities in a compliant and co-operative manner (Ladd et al., 2000). Experience of family helps children to develop a positive sense of themselves and understand appropriate behaviour in groups (EYFS, 2014). Children work as a part of group or class by following some rules. Appropriate behaviour helps them to adjust their work in different situations.

The literature on early years' education (pre-primary) is growing, but research in parental involvement in this area is still relatively limited. In the field of pre-primary education in Bangladesh numerous studies have been undertaken but none of these has focused on parental involvement issues. Many researchers concentrate on different areas of pre-primary education. Banu (2014) explores teachers' beliefs and perceptions of the quality of pre-primary education in Bangladesh and argues for change to support the holistic development of children. Azam and Halim (2016) worked to investigate the sustainability of pre-primary education in Bangladesh. Aboud (2006) claims that pre-school children perform better in different aspects compared with children who do not attend pre-school. In another research study, Aboud (2007) suggested that to promote physical and mental development of children, parenting education should focus on parents stimulating children's interest in learning. Nath (2006) explores the increased participation in preschool education in Bangladesh. MoPME (2013) published a report about pre-primary education that claims that early childhood development provides a strong foundation for successful education. Opel et al (2009) worked on the intervention of dialogic reading for developing expressive vocabulary in Bangladeshi rural pre-schoolers. Islam et al (2016) mention that institutional day care centres serve as a shelter for the children of the parents who are engaged in professional responsibilities. Zahar and Khondker (2017) remarked that in recent years Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in providing pre-primary education for its young children. Aktar (2013) focuses on the recent development of the preschool system in Bangladesh with the support of different development partners and government collaboration. Haque et al (2013) mention the assurance of a smooth transition from pre-primary to primary education to lay the foundation of lifelong learning. So, this research study addresses a gap in the studies already conducted. Parental involvement in child readiness is a timely issue that will help the early year's educators and researchers.

METHODOLOGY

Research area:

The research area was selected as primary schools of Sirajgonj City area in Sirajgonj district in Bangladesh. In order to avoid the influence of researcher's professional role. Data collection was carried out in ten government primary schools.

Participants:

Of the ten pre-primary teachers, nine were female and one was a male teacher. For the questionnaires, 97 parents were involved where 83 were female and 14 were male.

Sampling:

In this study, ten parents were selected to interview as a sample of the wider community. Most of the parents interviewed were female as they tend to pick the children up from school and the research had more opportunity to speak to them. Ninety-seven guardians were supplied a questionnaire to collect information relating to the research questions. This is a representative sample for the purpose of qualitative data collection for addressing the research question.

Research instrument: Method

In this qualitative research study, the following data collecting tools were used

1. Structured interview and 2. Questionnaire.

Structured Interview:

The interviewees in this study were selected through homogenous purposive sampling of parents and pre-primary teachers. The interviews were conducted one-to-one with ten parents structured questions. During the interview, audio recording was used for an accurate record of the conversation. To collect uniform information from different respondents, structured interviews were conducted.

Questionnaire:

In this study, there were 28 questions in this questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed among 120 parents of ten different primary schools. From each school, ten or fewer parents of pre-primary children participated in this research study and totally 97 participants submit their answer sheet. Among all the respondents, 83 were female (mothers) and 14 were male (fathers).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of parents:

A total of ninety-seven completed questionnaires were received from the parents and guardians of pre-primary children from ten different schools in the same geographical location. The majority of the participants, eighty-six percent (86%) were mothers and fourteen percent (14%) were fathers. No other category of guardian participated in the questionnaire.

Parents' educational qualification:

The participants were asked in the questionnaire to state their highest level of educational qualification. A checklist of possible answers was provided for the response. The responses were shown in the figure 1 below:

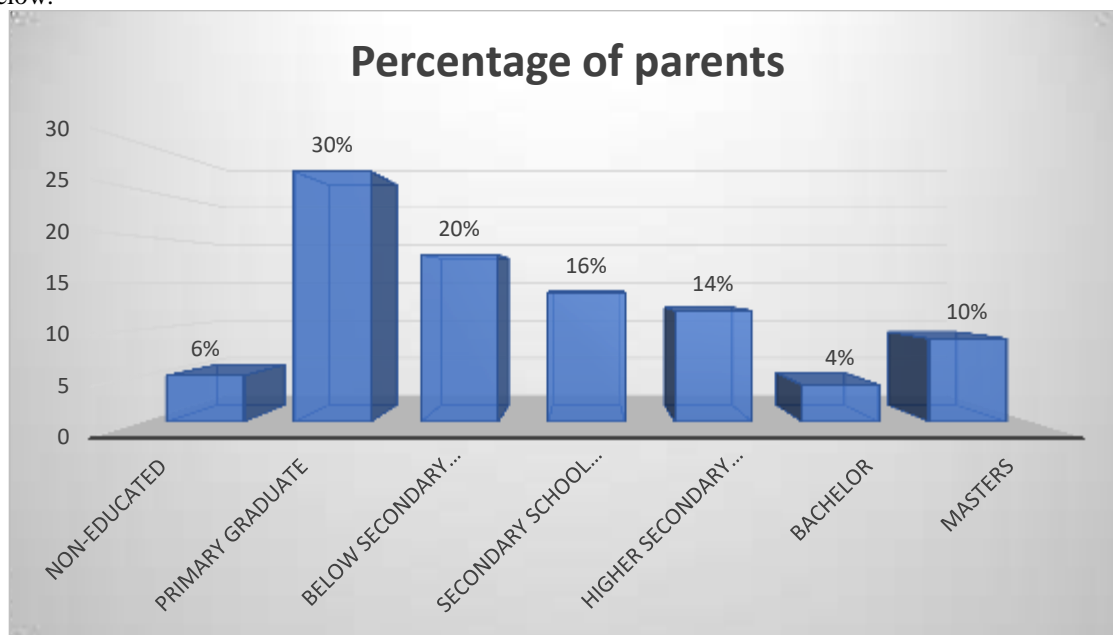


Figure 1: Educational qualification of participants

Thus, more than half of the participants were educated to primary level at best, beside this, 16% were secondary level and 14% were higher secondary level. On the other hand, 14% of participants had upper-level educational background where 4% had a bachelor degree, and 10% had an advanced graduate degree.

Family size:

The number of children in the family was considered for the preparation of their child's early care and education activities. The participants were asked to specify the number of children they have. The data are shown in the table 1 below:

No. of child per family	No. of family	% of sample
One	30	32%
Two	38	41%
Three	21	23%
Four	4	4%
Five or more	0	0

Table 1: Number of family considering their child number

The table illustrates that family having two children are the highest number (41%) of the total respondents. Families with one child amount to 32% of the sample and families with three children is 23% of total participant respectively. Only 4% of families have four children. No families had five or more children.

Coding:

In this study, the data were analysed systematically by the process of sorting and cleaning, organising, coding, establishing themes and interpreting findings. Hence, coding enabled the researcher to identify similar information and group it into themes. The following relevant themes were emerged from the data.

These are: personal development, cognitive development, physical development, independence, approach to learning: communication and language, socialization, behaviour, socio-economic status of families, parent to parent sharing, family routine, developing and understanding of the world.

Presentation of data:

Response rate:

A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed to the participants who were asked to complete it in their own time and return it to the head teacher of the respective government primary school. Among these, a total 97 completed questionnaires were received by the researcher. So, the response rate is 80.8% which indicates the good involvement of the respondents.

According to the findings, the results are discussed in the following section under the themes that emerged from the data.

Research question 1:

What factors are associated with parents’ involvement in their child’s readiness for entry into pre-primary school?

In response to the above question, data were collected through two sources: questionnaires and interviews. The identified themes are discussed simultaneously in the section below, in order to answer the research questions.

Personal development:

It is clear that personal development is an important factor that helps a child to be self-confident as well as improving self-awareness about the environment where s/he is brought up. Family plays an important role in sharing their child’s thinking and feelings towards others. The respondents’ statements demonstrate that play has an important role in a child’s personal development and family contribute considerably to this.

Cognitive development:

The researcher asked the participants whether they take part in playing with their child or not. Two-thirds of the respondents (67%) said that they were positively involved in play with their child at home or outside the home. Play creates more opportunities to speak with child which recognises the parental support and involvement in enriching language that leads to a child’s cognitive skills. They also provide some play-based materials for their child, like- building blocks, toys, puzzles and other play materials including electronic devices.

Physical development:

The respondents were asked in the questionnaire about the importance of play. The participants answered the question mentioning eight different areas. The participants offered the following responses by their own choice. The responses are shown in the figure 2 below:

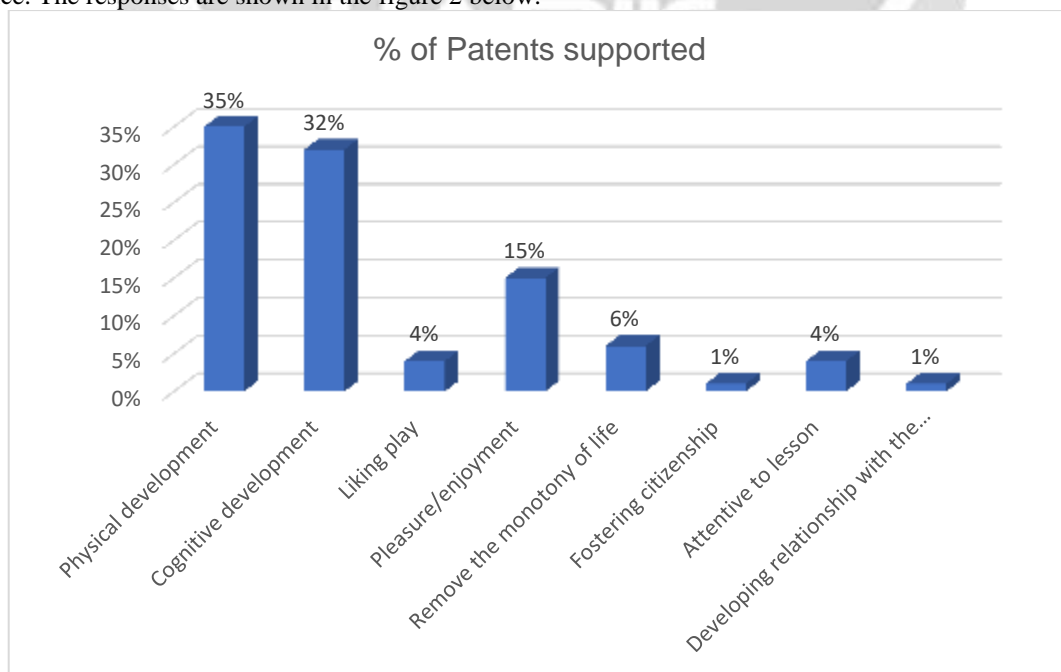


Figure 2: Parents responses to the activity of play considering its importance

The maximum number of participants (35%) indicate the importance of play for the physical development of the young child. Beside this, a similar number of participants (32%) emphasise that play is important for child's cognitive development. Cognitive development is related to the development of the brain. Playing in a warm and secure environment with parents enhances a child's physical development supports brain development. As a result, physical development has an impact on language, numeracy and creativity. A suitable environment for physical development contributes to motor development. The EYFS (2014) clearly identifies physical development as a prime area for children's learning and development. Indoor and outdoor physical activity encourage bone and muscle fibre development. The factors influencing a child's physical development and well-being are: nutrition, emotional health, the structure of the family and the structure of the communities

Communication and language:

The participants were asked about the support for their child's education at home. In this case, data show that the mother had the prime role. More than half (54%) answered that the mother was involved the main parent in their child's education at home, whereas, only 5% of fathers take part. This information indicates that many children do not get enough chance to mix and talk with his/her father at home and that hampers the proper development of communication and language for a child.

The participants were asked in the questionnaire about the supply of reading materials for their young child. Almost same portion (87%) of participants claimed to provide different types of reading materials for their child. They also demonstrated different ideas about the benefit of books.

Parents bought rhyme books, story books, poetry books, picture books, word charts etc. for their child. Children use these learning materials at home with the help of adult members of the family.

Developing understanding the world:

In response to three different questions, the participants' opinion was counted and is listed in the table 2 below:

Sl. no	Providing activities	Response		Response	
		Yes	%	No	%
1	Children's activities outside the home	88	96%	4	4%
2	Family provides electronic devices for child	50	57%	37	43%
3	Buy books for child to read at home	84	87%	13	13%

Table 2: Family response providing facility for understanding the world.

The findings show that almost all the participants (96%) believed that going outside from home is important for the development of understanding the world of the young child. However, surprisingly, only 4% participants disagreed. From the responses, it is suggested that the environment also mediates the learning of young children. When children go out with their parents they develop understanding of families, peers, friends, nature, society as well as the world. Children also develop their understanding about the world from books. From the findings, more than three-quarters (87%) of participants buy different types of books for their child to read at home. They try to read these books and recognise so many familiar materials that they see and use in the everyday life. They enhance their learning with real observation and participation. Regarding electronic devices, data show that more than half of the participants (57%) give an opportunity to their child to utilise mobile phones, laptops, tablets, electronic toys etc. In the current climate of rapid technological change, young children are very likely to own electronic devices and toys. Television, the most widespread of technologies allow them to explore the openness of the world. In another question, participants were asked about the benefit of books.

Behaviour:

Parents want to prepare their child well. They want that their child to be polite and gentle with others in school. Children's first friendships established during the pre-school year are important. Sometimes, children are very restless, they do not follow the instructions of their teachers or other adults. They may try to move to and fro in the classroom and disturb other children. As mentioned in the literature review, behaviour includes obeying rules, following adults' direction and participation in activities; parents can take a strong initiative for their child's learning of courtesy. A Child's good behaviour creates a good learning environment in the school that results in readiness for pre-schooling and learning.

Independence:

Although many issues were reported in the interviews related to child readiness, child's independence was an important factor. In the face to face interviews, parents were asked how they prepare their child for going to pre-primary school. They suggested different ideas about the preparation of their child.

In another question from the teachers' interview, they were asked whether their students can dress independently or not. They mentioned different level of independence which depend on their preparation. In another question, teachers were asked about the students' toileting.

Socialisation:

In the interviews related to the child preparation for pre-primary class, parents mention some statements about their child's socialisation.

When parents take their children to family events, celebration and cultural events this helps develop the child's social and cultural awareness. Children learn to speak in a familiar group about their ideas, and use the resources they need for their chosen activities. When people listen to them, ask their opinions, and involve them in decision-making process, children feel socially competent.

Research question 2: What factors enable parents to prepare their children for pre-primary school?

To answer the above research question, data were collected in using two different methods, questionnaires and interviews. Interviews were arranged for parents and teachers. The extent and form of parental engagement in early learning is strongly influenced by a family's socioeconomic condition, parents' level of education, parent to parent sharing, parental occupation, family structure etc.

Family's socioeconomic condition:

Socioeconomic conditions impact positively on parental involvement and aspiration that mediates the child's achievement. Parents with moderate incomes were more closely involved in their children's attainment than those parents with low income levels. An educated parent is more likely to earn more money and therefore expose the child to experiences that will enable him to learn and develop as well. Moreover, scholars argue that the physical environment and the learning experiences in the home are related to the level of family income.

Parents' level of education:

The participants were asked in the questionnaire to state their highest level of educational qualification. A checklist of possible answers was provided for the response.

The responses were shown in the table 3 below:

Qualification	No. of parents		Percentage of sample	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Non-educated	0	5	0	6%
Primary graduate	1	26	1%	30%
Below secondary education	0	18	0	20%
Secondary school certificate	5	9	6%	10%
Higher secondary certificate	3	9	3%	10%
Bachelor	2	2	2%	2%
Masters	3	6	3%	7%
Total	14	75	15%	85%

Table 3: Participants (father and mother) level of Education

The table shows that among eighty-nine respondents, the majority of the participants, seventy-five respondents (85%) were mothers and fourteen respondents (15%) were fathers. More than half of the parents were educated to primary level at best, beside this, 16% attained secondary level education and 13% higher secondary level. On the other hand, 14% of participants had an upper-level educational background where 4% had a bachelor degree, and 10% had an advanced graduate degree. It is remarkable that except one, all the fathers were secondary level at best where 5% were graduates or held an upper level degree whereas 9% mothers were graduates or held an upper level degree.

Parent to parent sharing:

The data collected from questionnaires relating to parent to parent sharing during their discussion about their child's activities are shown in the table 4 below:

Type of work	No. of parents	%
Play or work with own child	6	6%
Play or work with other's child	2	2%
Talk with teacher about own child's education	37	39%
Talk with another guardian about child's education	33	34%
Help teacher in teaching-learning process	3	3%
Socialising with other guardian/adults	16	16%

Others	0	0
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Table 4: Number of parents in doing different work while they stay at school

When parents attended school together, they wanted to be informed about their child's progress. The data show that about three-quarters of the respondents discussed their children's education between themselves or with teachers. 16% of participants were engaged in socialising with other parents when they get together.

In the parent's interview, participants were asked what advice s/he would provide to another parent seeking information about his/her child's readiness

Family structure:

Family structure indicates family size, marital status, and the extent of influence of father or mothers' involvement at home and school. The number of children in the family was considered significant for the preparation of their child's early care and education activities. In the questionnaire, the participants were asked to specify the number of children they have. The data are shown in the table 5 below:

No. of child per family	No. of family	% of sample
One	30	32%
Two	38	41%
Three	21	23%
Four	4	4%
Five or more	0	0

Table 5: Number of parents considering their children number

Data illustrates that families having two children are the highest number (41%) of the total respondents. Families with one child amount to 32% of the sample and three children is 23% of total participant respectively. Only 4% of families have four children. No families had five or more children.

In another questionnaire, the participants were asked about the person who supports the child's education at home. The participants' responses are shown in the following table 6:

Type of supportive person	No. of person	% of sample
Father	5	5%
Mother	50	54%
Brother	4	4%
Sister	7	8%
Both father and mother	22	24%
House tutor or others	5	5%

Table 6: Type of persons who support children at home

The findings indicate that more than half of the support for a child's education at home was provided by the mother. What is surprising is that only 5% of fathers provided support which was unexpected. However, the level of involvement by fathers may be higher, as some respondents indicated that father and mother both share responsibility. About one-quarter of participants mentioned that both father and mother support their child's education at home. In some cases, brothers, sisters as well as house tutors or other persons look after child's education too.

Family is constituted with the involvement of parents, partners of parents, step parents, grandparents, carers and key adults in a child's life, siblings, step siblings and extended family members who have a close relationship with the child. Findings show that among these persons, the mother takes the prime role for their child's readiness for pre-schooling.

Findings show that about three-quarters of the participants with one or two children were able to prepare their child for pre-school education. On further analysis, data indicate that only 5% of fathers were engaged in their young child's education at home.

CONCLUSION**The key findings of the study:**

From the findings of this research study, parental involvement correlates with important factors for child readiness. Parental direct interaction with a child can create a close relationship with a young child that encourages self-confidence, self-awareness and self-care which helps to build the child's personal development. Cognitive activity aims at learning the fundamental qualities of reality. Children discover this quality by observing the outside world and experiencing various situations. Painting, dancing, expressive movement and fairy tales contributes to their understanding of the situations and enhances a child's cognitive development. Physical development contributes to a child's motor development and fine motor control and also leads to self-esteem, psychological well-being and moral and social development. Making personal sense and expressing an attitude to a situation helps a child to be well behaved. Good behaviour can help a child to resolve potential conflict with peers. Parental engagement in a child's activities can help to prepare a

child to develop positive attitude to, and interest in others. Taking care of personal hygiene, dressing, and cleanliness, looking after teaching materials, the rules of classroom and school helps a child to be self-sufficient and independent. The self-expression of a child's feelings and thoughts is developed by creating adequate speaking opportunities that enhance a child's communication and linguistic skill. Reading and writing contributes to indicate of literacy including phonological awareness. Parental involvement engages them in writing letters, instructions, factual descriptions and stories that enhance their literacy learning. Real observation by going out with parents or adult family members and participation in family events, celebrations and cultural events help a child understand nature, people and communities as well as the world. The present convention in most families was that mothers were responsible for young children's educational progress whereas usually fathers were only involved with older children's decision-making process about their next stage of education. Fathers were less likely than mothers to be involved in educational activities or to attend events. So, fathers' involvements create a positive impact in young child's education. A Child's development occurs within a system of relationships involving children, family and society. Children develop their social perspective-taking skills during play in mixed age groups that enable them to adjust their social behaviour.

Implication of the findings:

In many developing countries like Bangladesh, a small number of children can avail themselves of such opportunities. This situation contributes to children's first entry into formal schooling and leads to a reduction in the high rates of grade repetition. The findings of this study suggest that interventions linked to child readiness for pre-school education enhances children's learning performance in core curriculum areas like language and literacy and ongoing transition to formal schooling. In the beginning of the school year, parental involvement should emphasise building children's self-esteem, engaging them in tasks and instruction at appropriate levels of pace and content. Such programs are linked to the official curriculum and act as a bridge between children's pre-school experience and the formal class one curriculum. Many factors including crowded classrooms, direct school educational costs, teacher shortage and distance to school hinder the journey into pre-primary education. Parental involvement for child readiness at home may prepare them for their smooth transition into of formal education. Another important policy implication from this study is to help bridge the gap in the provision of pre-school opportunities, especially in societies where the prevalence of pre-primary education is still extremely low.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Parent perception in pre-school education should be encouraged through the teacher's home visits or community-based training.
- Schools should organise community workshops that provide open discussion on the importance of pre-primary education, thus promoting the active role of community members in the development of pre-school education. Local administrative authorities, district and sub-district (Upazilla) level officials should continue to monitor pre-school education at school level to ensure the planning, development and implementation of quality pre-primary education.
- Parents should be supported by schools to prepare their child to be self-sufficient and independent for so that they flourish in the new school environment.
- Parents and adult family members should be supported by schools to talk with, listen and pay attention to young children. They should give enough opportunities to ask 'wh' questions than 'yes' or 'no' questions that can improve the expression of the child's feelings and thoughts.
- Schools should establish the numbers of children aged 4- 5 years in the school catchment area at the start of every calendar year. They should arrange a parents' meeting about early years' education every two months in order to provide support for child readiness for the next pre-primary cohort.

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