



## Research Article

# Rural Mothers' Awareness and Decision-Making in Preschool Education: Influences, Challenges, and Opportunities in Pabna District, Bangladesh

Md. Eftekhan Mahmud Asik 

Department of Sociology, Government Titumir College, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh

## Article Information

## Abstract

## Article History

Received: 17 January 2026

Revised: 20 February 2026

Accepted: 15 March 2026

Published online: 2 April 2026

## Keywords

Preschool Education

Children

Well-Being

Rural Mother

## Correspondence\*

em.asik261@gmail.com

## ORCID

Md. Eftekhan Mahmud Asik <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6036-0248>

Children in rural areas are comparatively less privileged to get formal preschool education (PSE) facilities, also known as Early Childhood Education (ECE), than the children in urban areas in Bangladesh. This study focused on finding out how socio-economic factors, educational background, and community engagement of rural mothers influence their awareness, perceptions, and decision-making regarding preschool education of their children. Following the qualitative research design, eight key informant interviews (KII) and two focus group discussions (FGD) with five participants in each group were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire. Considering the socio-economic and other factors, Pabna district was chosen as the study area, and 18 rural mothers were purposively selected for the study following the snowball sampling method. Results of this study demonstrate that rural mothers, despite their low formal education, are surprisingly concerned about their children's preschool education. Despite facing a good number of hardships, from economic to social and personal, they allow their children to have preschool education. Findings also indicate that rural mothers' educational backgrounds, their socio-economic standings, mothers' involvement in NGOs and INGOs, and community support significantly helped increase their awareness. This study suggests that public preschool centers need to facilitate interactive and sports-based learning methods and prioritize the establishment of basic amenities for guardians in preschool centers, along with expanded community engagement to foster genuine collaboration among rural mothers.

© 2026 Centre for Research and Innovation (CRI). This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

Ninety percent of youngsters in 40 nations-including sub-Saharan Africa-had a maximum of three children's books in their households in 2022, and 32% of people who grew up with no literacy were 15 years of age in that part of Africa (Dyvik, 2024; UNESCO, 2023). Though the demand to succeed academically rises in tandem with automation and internationalization, driving up goals for K-12 and higher learning, children's abilities and knowledge based on socioeconomic variations produce notable disparities in academic success as well as disproportionately high rates of retention in grades and specialized school placements. This problem is not only realistic, but it also has a direct bearing on intellectual flexibility and human growth. Youngsters who encounter early setbacks in education and struggle to make a healthy transition to school grow up being distracted, unruly, and reclusive. In addition, they become

adolescent parents, participate in reckless behavior, and rely on social aid and welfare schemes. Research on children's education, neurological sciences, and child growth has shown that the initial years of life are a time of rapid developmental progress, highlighting the connection between instruction and the growth of the brain (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). A children's character is shaped and developed over the initial 6 years of their existence, and more than 85% of the brain develops between the ages of 3 and 6. This is a critical time for kids to lay the groundwork for their education and acquire the skills necessary for success in schooling (Khouly, 2021; UNICEF, 2019). So education starts even before a youngster enters a school setting. The education and growth of kids are supported from an early age via their conversations with kind adults in safe, supportive, and engaging settings, considering the context. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) provides a supportive and engaging atmosphere for kids throughout these foundational phases of lifetime education, which benefits youngsters' future growth and achievement.

A quality program for early childhood care and education values each child's unique developmental trajectory and works to maximize their abilities in all domains-intellectual, ethical, interpersonal, psychological, and physical (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, 2022; UNESCO, 2007).

According to UNICEF (2019), preschooling is a crucial part of the development of young children, which encompasses all the laws and initiatives needed to promote children's healthy growth from birth to age eight, which includes security, good health, adequate nutrition, early literacy possibilities, and responsive caregiving. Early childhood learning is therefore considered a period that prepares children for formal education. The goal, structure, and objective of early childhood schools are very different from those of primary classes and institutions. They provide a loving atmosphere by utilizing interactive, child-focused, and engaged learning strategies, which promote integrated learning and essential emotional and social competencies. These programs are designed to assist youngsters in developing healthy sociability, individual capabilities, and capacity for choice while laying a strong foundation for emerging linguistic and arithmetic skills.

In order to promote the growing impact of preprimary activities on primary schooling, consistency between preschool education and primary education is essential. There isn't a single preschool provision approach that can be used everywhere. For preschoolers, group-oriented assistance and care options include in-home, community-oriented, nature-oriented, and more structured center-based settings. Preschool programs housed in centers serve children from 3 years old until they enter first grade. They provide chances for knowledge acquisition and tasks that help children grow their linguistic, social, and enthusiasm skills. While every country must choose its own course, there is a lot of knowledge to be gained by studying other nations' experiences. A country's own experiences are built upon as other people's teachings are drawn upon and modified in high-quality ECCE (UNESCO, 2007). Along with this, a well-designed early childhood education program needs to be welcoming, child-focused, and supportive of all aspects of education and growth, which include interpersonal and mental well-being and mathematical, alphabetical, and emerging linguistic domains. To guarantee consistency and uninterrupted progress in education and growth, it should be in line with existing syllabuses for kids ages 0 to 3, as well as the primary education syllabuses. However, statistics from several nations indicate that although preschool education has expanded, not enough focus has been placed on guaranteeing the standard of programs, and the primary and preschool curricula are only consistent in fifty percent of the nations (UNICEF, 2019).

Early educational initiatives are becoming more and more important for children's growth and preparedness for education in a world where competitiveness between

nations is fierce. It has become a growing understanding that the benefits of early education continue throughout the lives of kids, impacting not only academic performance but also later income, criminal activity, and criminality. Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) improves gender equality, lowers failure rates, and has a beneficial effect on kids adjusting to primary schooling, all of which save money and increase efficiencies for both families and the state (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; UNESCO, 2007). Therefore, it may improve the growth of impoverished kids by offering preschool education in a structured way, and mandatory early childhood schooling is significantly more strongly correlated with involvement in education (Ramey & Ramey, 2004; UNESCO, 2023). Although early childhood schooling is provided to half of all kids under the age of preschool globally, 175 million are not attending school; 78 percent of these children live in nations with lower incomes, and 10 million people continue to be denied this vital early childhood education. Further, pupils who get excellent early childhood learning tend to be more ready to make an adjustment to first grade, even in very different nations and situations. They complete more schooling and are more likely to acquire the abilities that the contemporary workforce needs, such as innovation, adaptability, analytical thinking, and teamwork (UNICEF, 2019). Hence, a more inclusive preschool strategy is required due to the dramatic shifts in society, such as the rise in female work involvement, declining fertility rates, and the growth of impoverishment within households raising children (National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2011).

Being aware of the advantages of high-quality early childhood education for kids, caregivers, and the community as a whole, the majority of OECD nations offer free early childhood education for kids for a minimum of a two-year period prior to starting elementary schooling, and most also offer parental holidays to parents. These nations have concentrated over the previous 20 years on enhancing the caliber and consistency of these facilities (UNESCO, 2007). Public agencies provide subsidized spots in several nations starting at a relatively young age, frequently after the conclusion of compulsory parental leave. This is not proof, however, that there is a sufficient supply of these locations.

In addition, preschool programs have been established in almost all industrialized nations to serve kids younger than the obligatory schooling age (Melhuish, 2013). Though preschooling is not free in half of the nations globally, and it is not mandatory in the other three-quarters. Approximately 180 million pupils dropped out in April of 2020 (UNESCO, 2023). The preschool image of the United States is vibrant and multifaceted, with kids participating in a variety of both government and privately funded institutions (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007). In the United States of America, early childhood education and care (ECEC) got its start as day care centers and infant schools in the 1830s. The provision of ECEC encompasses a range of programs that are sponsored and provided by the government as well as the

corporate sector. These programs include full-day, part-day, and full-school facilities. Head Start, a nationally financed initiative, is an early childhood education initiative mainly for kids with low incomes, ages three to four. It provides assistance in the areas of social wellness, food security, and a broad education. Children ages three to five are usually cared for in full-day, five-day-a-week center-based children' programs. Additionally, some facilities provide care for young children. Numerous kids are cared for at the residence of the caregiver when parental childcare is provided. Group household daycare facilities tend to be officially registered and may accommodate as many as twelve children in the US (Kamerman & Gatenio-Gabel, 2007; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023).

The government of the United Kingdom has placed a strong emphasis on preschool education in recent years. In 2004, it made part-time schools for children a legally required option for children aged 3 to 4; in 2005, it updated the regulatory structure and provided curricular recommendations (Department for Education, 2024). Preschools in the UK are now able to accept kids for three-and-a-half-hour classes each week. For older preschoolers, there are children' clubs, infant schools, and infant sessions available, in addition to day nurseries for kids who are younger. While the majority of infant schools and sessions are run by municipal governments, with the rich using privately owned institutions, children' clubs are run by nonprofit organizations or municipal governments. Preschools are open Monday through Friday with the goal of fostering early years of dialogue and linguistic, mathematical, and color recognition in the kids, and there are roughly 800 preschools that employ the renowned Montessori approach to education (Education in the United Kingdom, 2024; Melhuish, 2013).

In Japan, the majority of young kids attend daycare centers or preschools. It is separate from schooling since preschool has distinctive developmental demands. In Japan, there are two types of early schooling: preschools, which offer three years of childcare for children 3 years old or older, and daycare facilities, which take newborns and kids younger than primary school age while the infrastructural facility and nature of activities are of high quality. With teacher-planned activities and unstructured play periods, the primary goal is to develop children' academic habits and everyday schedules. Teachers cultivate close connections with kids by being relaxed, loving, and kind. The core syllabus emphasizes memorization training, composing Hiragana symbols, reading Chinese characters, and collaborative learning. Tasks are scheduled and rigorously supervised to adhere to preschool regulations (Kaur & Kauts, 2019; National Institute for Educational Policy Research, 2011; Research Center for Child and Adolescent Development and Education, 2004). India places a high priority on cultural customs along with the development of kids as a means of fostering moral principles and interpersonal abilities. In an effort to stop the cross-generational cycle of injustice and encourage lifetime

growth, India approved the National ECCE Policy in 2013. With 1.37 million anganwadi facilities, the Integrated Child Development Services, also known as ICDS, is India's main kindergarten schooling system. Preschool curricula are divided into three sections: procedures, materials, and setting. For kids from conception till they turn six, the National ECCE Guidelines delineate sub-stages that encompass survival, security, protection of surroundings, well-being, food, connection to a mature person, psychosocial stimuli, and initial contact in secure settings (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, 2022; UNICEF India, n.d.).

In Bangladesh, childhood education has been available for more than 60 years, although enrollment was minimal in the early years. Initial schooling was first provided privately, but subsequently, it was integrated into government-sponsored and nonprofit organizations' education programs in both primary and secondary schools. Preschool education had no set syllabus, and institutions were allowed to use resources from local stores to provide early instruction in whatever way they saw fit. Although there are a variety of ways to teach, such as using simple objects, colors, and illustrations, for many, preschooling was dispersed and had limited accessibility. Early childhood education became more accessible with the 2000 introduction of the Worldwide Education for All (EFA) initiative, which was spearheaded by UNESCO. In the year 2013, the Bangladeshi authority progressively introduced a pre-primary grade to all of the country's elementary schools. In Bangladesh, early childhood schooling is not required; therefore, any formal effort to provide child growth through a facility or institution is regarded as preschool education. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) in Bangladesh seeks to establish an environment that supports five-year-old children' overall growth in the areas of language, cognition, aesthetics, psychology, and emotional health (Directorate of Primary Education, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2010; Nath, 2022).

### *B. Literature Review*

It is projected that by 2030, 84 million children will not be able to go to school, and globally, preschool education has been emphasized to minimize the number of these students (United Nations, 2023). A study by Ramey & Ramey (2004) found that well-designed preschool programs can decrease special education placement and grade retention, as well as enhance performance in reading and mathematics in elementary and secondary schools. Previous studies, such as Brinkman *et al.* (2017) and Kagitcibasi *et al.* (2001), have reported that preschool education can increase linguistic and intellectual growth, proficiency in social situations, and behavioral maturity in underprivileged kids, which is supported by Brooks-Gunn (2003). The study of Brooks-Gunn exhibited that center-based programs greatly improve the behavior and academic achievement of vulnerable kids, especially those from lower-class and lower-income households. Similarly, a study in rural Bangladesh highlights that preschoolers scored higher than their peers in

language, communication, visual reasoning, and school readiness, and they scored well in interactive activities aside from intellectual components (Aboud, 2006). Following the recent studies, it can be stated that preschool education is increasingly seen as a middle-class need and that to build a strong authority for a comprehensive preschool strategy that considers disadvantaged children, readily available state resources, accurate data, and links to learning and accomplishment in grades K-12, it must be provided by state and local authorities (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Ramey & Ramey, 2004).

Pre-primary education in Bangladesh is required for children five years of age and older for a year, and visual aids such as imaging, coloring, rhyming, etc. have been used to instruct the preschoolers (Ministry of Education, 2010), and it has extended to include children four years of age and older from 2023 (Rahman, 2023). Moore *et al.* (2008) showed in their study the importance of preschool teaching quality and highlighted that the outcomes of preschoolers vary depending on the quality of preschool education, although they stated that funding for high-quality preschool education would be a challenge for developing countries. It has been reported that socio-economic position, the literacy atmosphere in the home, and the mother's age and negotiation capacity are associated with literacy development in preschoolers, and the literacy atmosphere in the home predicts alphanumeric skills, words, and awareness of phonology beyond socio-economic position (Aram *et al.*, 2013; Burgess, 2005).

While Bracken & Fischel (2008) showed that children's enthusiasm for books and engagement between parents and their kids are strongly connected with early literacy abilities, and mothers' negotiation of writing correlates with all primary education metrics for children, with the exception of vocabulary, after socioeconomic position and literacy atmosphere in the home are taken into account (Aram *et al.*, 2013). In addition, the actions of mothers and kids were also connected to the realm of written language understanding (Edwards, 2014), and mother-child interactions aid in preparing kids from families with limited incomes for schooling (Cristofaro & Tamis-LeMonda, 2012). Moreover, children's behaviors are highly influenced by their parents, and parent-centered schooling has a more sustainable connection with academic achievement compared to schooling in the center (Kagiticbasi *et al.*, 2001; Parameswari, 2018), although parent-centered schooling kids show more behavioral problems (Loeb *et al.*, 2004). In fact, variations between mothers' interacting attentiveness and their children' vocabularies have driven the advancement of language learning (Silvén *et al.*, 2002).

In the past two decades, a number of researchers have assessed maternal awareness about their children, e.g., Buttigieg *et al.* (2012) exhibited that the majority of obese mothers are unaware of health awareness compared to others, and mothers in remote regions are less conscious of their children's dental hygiene (Mohandass *et al.*, 2021), as

well as diagnosing and treating diarrhea (Ghasemi *et al.*, 2013) and understanding the fever situation (Arica *et al.*, 2012). Similarly, 90% of mothers say their kid is active, which is an exaggerated view of their child's physical activity (Hesketh *et al.*, 2013) and a lack of understanding of growth stages and stimulus development (Shrestha *et al.*, 2019). Ateah & Hamelin (2008) showed that bedsharing between newborns and mothers has some genuine hazards, but they do so. Correspondingly, children with epilepsy tend to sleep worse and more inconsistently when their mothers have less information about childhood sleep, although the special child was mostly taken care of by the mother (Rehman, 2019; Tsai *et al.*, 2018). On the contrary, the majority of mothers were aware of the importance of teaching their kids to count and name colors, but not all of them recognized when to begin reading to their kids (Shrestha *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, parents' understanding of nutrition has had a big impact on the situation of child nutrition (Halder & Kejriwal, 2016), and lack of nutrition among babies is mostly caused by mothers' health issues and nutrition ignorance and low level of formal education (Maity *et al.*, 2019; Shahid *et al.*, 2022), particularly in low-income homes. Several studies have documented that the mother's academic attainment and active roles heavily influence the early child's knowledge learning, their academic success, and parents' joint studying views (Barnett & Yarosz, 2007; Curenton & Justice, 2008; Weigel *et al.*, 2006) and parental techniques for comprehending growth spurts and stimulating (Aboud *et al.*, 2013).

Children whose mothers have higher secondary education are 1.39 times more likely to be developmentally on track compared to those whose mothers have no education (Rahman *et al.*, 2023). In addition, having more education can also influence women's views and awareness of the advantages of early childhood education (Cuartas, 2022), and the fear decreases with an enhanced education level (Arica *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, several studies have been suggested to introduce a strategically sound program and income-generating opportunities that can lead to enhanced parental awareness (Curenton & Justice, 2008; Cuartas, 2022; Johny & Babu, 2023; Khouly, 2021; Shahid *et al.*, 2022; Tsai *et al.*, 2018). Rural areas in Bangladesh often face challenges such as limited access to educational facilities, economic constraints, and cultural norms that may influence parental attitudes towards early childhood education. Mothers, as primary caregivers in many households, play a significant role in the educational upbringing of their children. Therefore, examining their awareness, attitudes, and practices regarding preschool education can provide valuable insights into the factors influencing early childhood development in rural settings.

### C. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows

1. To assess the level of awareness among rural mothers regarding preschool education for their children in Bangladesh.

2. To identify the factors influencing rural mothers' awareness and decision-making processes related to preschool education.
3. To explore the perceptions of rural mothers regarding the benefits and challenges of preschool education for their children.

#### D. Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions

1. What is the level of awareness among rural mothers regarding preschool education for their children in Bangladesh?
2. What are the key factors influencing rural mothers' awareness and decision-making processes regarding preschool education?

#### B. Sampling

3. What are the perceived benefits and challenges of preschool education as perceived by rural mothers?

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Study Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the awareness of preschool education among rural mothers in two villages, namely, Bakchidangi and Tarabaria of Pabna district in Bangladesh. Qualitative methods were chosen to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the perspectives, attitudes, and experiences of the participants regarding preschool education for their children.

TABLE I DEMOGRAPHIC TRAITS OF THE PARTICIPANT

Demographic Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Mothers' Age	Mothers' Age	Mothers' Age
<20	4	22.2
20-30	9	50.0
>30	5	27.8
Mothers' Education	Mothers' Education	Mothers' Education
Honour's and Masters	7	38.9
HSC	8	44.4
SSC or below	3	16.7
Mothers' Occupation	Mothers' Occupation	Mothers' Occupation
Home maker	15	83.3
Govt. Employee	1	5.6
NGO/INGO worker	2	11.1
Family Income (monthly in BDT)	Family Income (monthly in BDT)	Family Income (monthly in BDT)
<10000	4	22.2
10000-25000	8	44.4
>25000	6	33.4
Family Income Source	Family Income Source	Family Income Source
Agriculture	9	50.0
Business	4	22.2
Govt. Job	2	11.1
Private Job	3	16.7
Mothers' involvement in NGO/INGO	Mothers' involvement in NGO/INGO	Mothers' involvement in NGO/INGO
Yes	11	61.1
No	7	38.9
Children' Number	Children' Number	Children' Number
Only one	6	33.4
Two	8	44.4
More than two	4	22.2

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

The study utilized purposive sampling to select participants who are representative of the target population. Participants included mothers with children of preschool age (3-6 years old) residing in rural areas of the selected districts. A number of 18 rural mothers who have no formal training on preschool education were selected (10 for FGD and 8 for KII), and efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of socio-economic status, educational background, and geographic location within the district.

### *C. Study Area*

The study location, Pabna, was selected carefully on the basis of several considerations that align with the research objectives and the context of the study area. Pabna district is representative of the rural areas of Bangladesh in terms of socio-economic characteristics, cultural norms, and educational infrastructure. By selecting Pabna, the study aimed to capture a snapshot of the challenges and opportunities faced by rural mothers in accessing preschool education for their children in a typical Bangladeshi rural setting. In addition, Pabna district offers logistical advantages, including ease of access and transportation infrastructure, which facilitates data collection activities such as focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Furthermore, the selected district encompasses a diverse range of rural communities, including agricultural, riverine, and peri-urban areas. This diversity allows for a multifaceted exploration of the awareness and attitudes towards preschool education across different socio-cultural contexts within the district, thereby enriching the depth and breadth of the study findings. Finally, two villages, namely Bakchidangi and Tarabaria, were chosen purposively, considering the smooth and easy communication with the district town and to have the representation of a diversified population.

### *D. Data Collection Methods*

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): 2 FGDs (one from each village) were conducted with groups of 5 mothers to explore their perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to preschool education. FGDs were guided by a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions designed to elicit rich and detailed responses from the participants. Questionnaires were designed in English and then translated into Bengali. Using the Bengali language, the discussion was conducted by the author, and the length of the discussion was 40-50 minutes. The discussions were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Additionally, demographic data were collected.

Key Informant Interviews (KII): 8 key informant interviews (4 from each village) were conducted with mothers, particularly selected for the KII. KII was conducted by the author using a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions. Questionnaires were designed in English and then translated into Bengali. The time period

for each interview was 30-45 minutes and was recorded using a voice recorder after getting their consent. These interviews provided insights into the broader context of preschool education in rural areas and complement the perspectives of the mothers obtained through FGDs. On top of that, particular attention was put on the specific and individual sociocultural lenses that serve to construct meaning with the participants.

### *E. Data Analysis*

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from FGDs and key informant interviews. A thematic approach was used due to the capability of ensuring richness, rigor, and particularly appropriateness of understanding perceptions and experiences (Brown & Stockman, 2013; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). At the very beginning of the analysis, recordings were transcribed in Bengali and then translated into English. The analysis process involved identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns or themes within the data, and the NVivo 14 version was used in this process. Transcripts were coded independently by the researcher to enhance rigor and reliability. Themes were derived iteratively through a process of constant comparison, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion with the supervisor until a consensus was reached.

### *F. Ethical Considerations*

This study adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement in the study, and measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the data. An identification number, such as (1,2,3), was assigned for each respondent in terms of maintaining anonymity. Participants were informed about their volunteer participation and assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without repercussion.

### *G. Limitations*

While qualitative research provides rich and nuanced insights, it may not be generalizable to the broader population. Additionally, the findings of this study may be influenced by factors such as the researcher's own biases and the dynamics of the research context.

## **III. RESULTS**

### *A. Rural Mothers' Awareness Status*

The study's findings show that women in rural regions are highly conscious of the preschool education their children get, and they are also quite familiar with the term "preschool education." A significant portion, more than two-thirds of the mothers, believe that in order for children to acclimate better to primary school, they should be taught some

fundamental alphabetical knowledge, vocabulary, social conventions, and cleanliness skills (i.e., combing hair, cleaning teeth, cutting nails, etc.) before starting school. While asking if the respondent knew about 'preschool education,' she responded 'yes' and expressed:

"...At home, I introduced my children to the alphabet, a few poems, vocabulary, and social norms in both Bengali and English. I also educate them on how to take care of their nails, clean their teeth, and behave with their teachers and seniors. I believe that this knowledge will enable kids to transition to primary school successfully..." (Participant 2: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Although mothers are accustomed to teaching their children at home, they report that it is extremely difficult to find adequate time, particularly during the crop harvesting

season, i.e., in April for Boro rice harvesting and June-July for onion harvest, because the majority of them are homemakers and financially reliant on agriculture. Additionally, they believe that teachers are a better source of information for children than mothers are. Consequently, they also send their children to preschool. One of the respondents stated that-

"...I routinely teach my children both the Bangla and English alphabets, vocabulary, social conventions, and basic cleanliness skills, but the strain of work makes it very difficult to give them the attention they need during harvest season, and I believe that they are more interested in learning from their teachers than from us. In order to improve their learning, I enroll my children in preschool..." (Participant 3: Rural mother, Pabna district).

TABLE II RURAL MOTHERS' AWARENESS STATUS

Sub-Theme	Response Number	Response Sample
Rural Mothers' awareness status	14	"I introduced my children to the alphabet, a few poems, vocabulary, and social norms at home." "Educate them on how to take care of their nails, clean their teeth, and behave with their teachers and seniors." "Believe that this knowledge will enable kids to transition to primary school successfully." "They are more interested in learning from their teachers than from us." "To improve their learning, I enroll my children in preschool."

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

### B. Rural Mothers' Awareness: Influential Factors

Yet, mothers in rural areas are very conscious of the preschool education of their children. However, the majority of factors influencing their awareness were their educational background, family's socioeconomic standing, mothers' involvement in NGO and INGO activities, and community support. While mothers' age, occupation, family income source, and number of children were less influential.

**Mother's Education:** Compared to mothers with higher secondary degrees and secondary degrees, rural mothers holding a bachelor's or master's degree have a higher level of knowledge. Their children's performance allows them to distinguish between government-sponsored and non-government-sponsored preschool initiatives. They also possess superior information about the activities included in preschool education. They were also more knowledgeable and self-assured during the conversation. In addition, they devote more concentration to teaching their children at home.

A participant holding a bachelor's or master's degree stated, "...For my children, I have looked at both non-government preschools (in Bengali, 'KhelarJogot') and government preschools (in Bengali, 'Gono-Shikkha'). A variety of activities are available at the non-government education center (KhelarJogot), including playing, singing, and sketching. As a result, children learn there (KhelarJogot) via play, which promotes greater cognitive development and the

acquisition of fundamental information. While there are many activities available at the government education center (Gono-Shikkha), play-based learning is not one of them. For my children, I thus select non-government centers...." (Participant 11: Rural mother holding a master's degree, Pabna district).

Conversely, mothers with a higher secondary degree possess sound information, but occasionally they find it difficult to distinguish between activities of government-sponsored and non-government-sponsored preschool programs based on their child's performance and to provide a response. Despite this, parents often instruct their children at home and send them to preschool centers.

The mothers, who possess a secondary degree (SSC) or less, possess information regarding preschool education; nonetheless, they were unable to distinguish between children's performance based on their activities in the education center and found it difficult to respond to the question. However, they send their children to an educational facility and teach them at home. A mother possessing SSC or less education expressed: "...I send my children to the 'Gono-Shikkha' center... I don't know how they teach and how effective their teaching is, but my child is learning about poetry recitation, basic numbers, and the alphabet...which he often recites at home..." (Participant 1: Rural mother holding SSC or less education, Pabna district).

TABLE III CHILDREN' ENROLLMENT STATUS ACCORDING TO THEIR FAMILY INCOME

Monthly Family Income(in BDT)	Kids Enrollment Status	Kids Enrollment Status
Monthly Family Income(in BDT)	Govt. Center	Private Center
Up to 25000	27%	73%
10000-25000	47%	53%
Less than 10000	97%	3%

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

Family Socio-Economic Status: Mothers' awareness is also influenced by the family's socioeconomic background. A mother's awareness and her children's admission are greatly influenced by her socioeconomic status, in particular, her capacity to pay for tuition and other expenses. While government education centers (Gonosikkha) offer free services, mothers from better socioeconomic backgrounds—those with family incomes up to BDT 25,000—generally choose private centers for their children because they offer an atmosphere where children may learn via play and hands-on activities. The main issue that differed depending on the socioeconomic status of the family was mothers' concerns about the center's teaching staff and learning environment. A mother belonging to a higher socioeconomic class observed: "I pay the school 200 taka a month in tuition, but I also have additional expenses to pay for, such as keeping up the school's clothing code, buying snacks with tiffin, renting a vehicle, etc. Despite this, I chose a private education center for my children because of their excellent learning atmosphere." (Participant 2: Rural mother with higher socioeconomic status, Pabna district).

In line with the upper category, mothers in the intermediate income range of BDT 10000 to 25000 possess comparable information regarding the quality of the teaching environment and facility. However, they have selected both government and private centers. Even if they have the same level of expertise, there are situations when people cannot

afford a private facility. A mother said: "I am aware that the private center's educational atmosphere and caliber surpass those of the government facility. They offer interactive activities and a high-quality setting, both of which are crucial for children's cognitive development. Nevertheless, the government facility is my choice due to its affordability. The government teaching center is free, but private centers are expensive and difficult for my family to afford." (Participant 4: Rural mother, Pabna district).

On the other hand, low-income mothers are very aware of the need to teach their children, but they are not as attentive to the quality of the learning environment or the center. A major contributing factor to their lack of consciousness is their financial situation. Mothers in financial hardship have opted for the government center (Gonosikkha) due to its financial freedom and flexibility compared to the private one.

Mothers' Involvement in NGOs' and INGOs' Activities: Another important factor influencing mothers' consciousness is their engagement with nongovernmental organizations. Mothers who are affiliated with different NGOs or INGOs, such as BRAC or ASA Bangladesh, have demonstrated a greater level of interest and understanding regarding their children's growth. Additionally, a higher percentage of children than those who are not related to INGO or NGO enroll in preschool.

TABLE IV CHILDREN' ENROLLMENT STATUS ACCORDING TO MOTHER INVOLVEMENT IN INGO/NGO

Mothers Connection with INGO/NGO	Student Enrollment Rate	Student Enrollment Number
Yes	81.8%	9
No	57.1%	4

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

The main driver of increased enrollment was the NGO-managed childcare centers. Compared to the non-associated group, mothers associated with INGO, an NGO, exhibit greater interest in creating a high-quality learning environment at home and at the learning center. Community Support: Another important factor influencing rural mothers' awareness is community support. Several communities, including mothers' peers and the social arrangement, are crucial to mothers' awareness. Results indicate that mothers routinely talk with their friends and neighbors about their children's growth and education with the goal of learning more. Despite their claims that there is an unspoken rivalry among parents over their children's performance at home and in the classroom, they support one another in a variety

of ways, such as by bringing one another to school and even providing financial assistance. A mother said: "Usually, when I chat with my friends, we talk about our children's education, growth, and performance, and vice versa. Even yet, there is an unseen rivalry among us." (Participant 7: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Another mother added, "Yes, there is some unseen rivalry among us, but most of the time we support one another. For example, there are times when I can't bring my kids to school, especially during harvest season, and one of my friends brings my kids along when she goes for her kids. They also assist me when I need it in other ways and monetarily." (Participant 9: Rural mother, Pabna district).

An important element of increasing awareness is social arrangements like Maktab, a religious instruction center located in a mosque. Typically, maktab is taught for free by the mosque administration, which also encourages parents to send their children to learn about Islamic standards and knowledge. The kids are invited to attend the session by being offered incentives like money or other privileges. Their awareness was raised by the mosque authorities'

actions, and they began to send their children there when they turned three. A Muslim mother stated: "The mosque officials call our children to study Arabic and Islamic customs every morning. The Imam (Maktab teacher) spoke with us and gave us updates on the children's development and performance. They provide knowledge that we ought to absorb or heed for the betterment of our children." (Participant 6: Rural mother, Pabna district).

TABLE V COMMUNITY SUPPORT STATUS

Sub-Theme	Response Number	Response Sample
Community Support	7	"We talk about our children's education, growth, and performance with our friends." "Most of the time we support one another. "Mosque officials call our children to study Arabic and Islamic customs every morning."

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

### C. Decision-Making Regarding Preschool Education

Results imply that mothers are more aware of and knowledgeable about their children's education than fathers are. With increased awareness and knowledge, mothers are in a key position to decide on their children's early childhood education. While dads are equally important, they don't always make decisions without first consulting their mothers. Fathers tend to be less observant and knowledgeable since they are often preoccupied with their jobs or other income-generating activities. One of the mothers stated that:

"In my family, I make the decisions about our kids' education; my husband stays outside of the home for work, and he is less connected with our child's schooling." (Participant 13: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Another mother added, "My spouse and I explore our options before making a decision about our child's schooling. After that, he made his choice. Even though he spends the majority of his days outside the house, he values our children's education." (Participant 8: Rural mother, Pabna district).

TABLE VI DECISION-MAKING STATUS

Sub-Theme	Response Number	Response Sample
Decision-Making	8	"I make the decisions about our kids' education." "Husband is busy at work, less connected with our child's schooling." "My spouse and I explore our options before making a decision."

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

### D. Mothers' Perceptions about Benefits and Challenges of Preschool Education

Results demonstrate that preschool education centers are found in four different varieties in rural areas. Preschool began for children at the age of four. Government-sponsored centers include Gono-Shikkha, INGO- or NGO-financed centers, BRAC preschool centers, community-supported centers (Maktab, a children' education center located in a mosque), and privately funded centers ('KhelarJogot'). Rural mothers hold a positive impression about preschool, and they share that preschool centers teach alphabets, words, handwriting, and fundamental math concepts.

Furthermore, they instruct children in basic hygiene, sketching, social and religious conventions, and other skills in a play-based setting, occasionally in a traditional manner. Preschool education is vital, according to mothers, for better cognitive development and efficient child growth. Preschool-enrolled children outperform non-enrolled children in terms of staying ahead of the curve and learning faster. They also show behavioral differences, being more animated and self-assured when playing and engaging in

other activities. A mother said: "Basic vocabulary, alphabet, handwriting, numeracy, basic hygiene, drawing, and other subjects are taught in preschool. This is crucial for children's optimal growth and cognitive progress." (Participant 5: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Another mother shared "There are behavioral differences between children who attend preschool and those who do not. During playing games and other activities, they exhibit increased levels of confidence and activity. Those who attend preschool generally remain ahead in the game and pick up new skills quickly and voluntarily." (Participant 9: Rural mother, Pabna district).

As a result, mothers also routinely teach their children at home the alphabet, vocabulary, poetry, handwriting, social conventions, and basic hygiene, such as brushing their teeth, combing their hair, and clipping their nails. Additionally, community leaders, the Union Parishad Chairman, and other local authorities play a significant role in supporting them in enrolling and completing their children's pre-schooling, as well as ensuring a good learning environment.

They highlighted how the community and local government assisted them in obtaining admission and recommended them for consideration of school fees and other ways. Mothers underlined: "Our local government and community leaders gave us a lot of help in gaining admission and in recommending that school expenses be taken into

consideration. Especially those who are struggling financially and have more than one preschool-age child. They also assist the school administration in maintaining a high-quality learning environment." (Participant 11&17: Rural mother, Pabna district).

TABLE VII MOTHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON PRESCHOOL EDUCATION STATUS

Sub-Theme	Response Number	Response Sample
Mothers' Perceptions	11	"Basic vocabulary, alphabets, handwriting, numeracy, basic hygiene, drawing, and other subjects are taught in preschool," "crucial for children's optimal growth and cognitive progress," "behavioral differences between children who attend preschool and those who do not," and "preschool children remain ahead in the game and pick up new skills quickly and voluntarily."

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

### E. Challenges of Preschool Education

The challenges or barriers faced by rural mothers with regard to their children's preschool education. Cost of Preschooling: For rural families, one of the biggest obstacles is the cost of preschooling. While Gonosikkha, a government-sponsored preschool, and Maktab, a community-supported children' education center housed in a mosque, offer free education, privately funded centers like KhelarJogot and centers financed by INGOs or NGOs are not free at all. Guardians must pay a monthly charge of between 150 and 200 BDT in order to get instruction there. Keeping up with the school's dress code, purchasing snacks for Tiffin, and hiring a vehicle for the kids are additional costs.

One mother said: "In order to receive preschool education from INGOs, NGOs, and privately supported centers, we must pay the school 150-200 taka in tuition each month. Even so, free education is offered via community-supported and government-funded centers. However, we must pay for maintaining the dress code at school, hiring a vehicle, and purchasing books, paper, and other accessories, as well as purchasing snacks for tiffin." (Participant 11: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Another factor influencing the cost of preschool is the distance to the school. In most rural locations, homes and schools are 1.5 to 3 kilometers apart. In cases where this distance is long, mothers must drive their children to school. Mothers must thus budget between 800 and 1500 BDT each month for extra expenses, such as vehicle rent. For mothers from diverse backgrounds and those in economic hardship, covering all the costs can be a challenging task. A mother mentioned: "My son's school is two kilometers away from my house, so I have to take my kids there on a daily basis, which costs money and takes up time. I have to pay 1200 taka a month for additional expenses and the rent on my vehicle. Given that my spouse is a farmer, I find it difficult to afford the money." (Participant 10: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Distance of the School: Preschool distance is another significant obstacle for rural mothers, according to the findings. The typical distance in rural regions is between 1.5

and 3 kilometers from preschool to home. Maktab, a community-supported facility, is conveniently located nearby, yet they just impart religious information and customs. Therefore, rural mothers and children must go far away to receive high-quality preschool education and general (Bangali and English) knowledge. Long-distance travel is another major factor driving up the expense of preschooling. A mother said: "I send my children to private and Maktab schools. In general, they get information about Bengali and English from the private center and religious customs and knowledge from the Maktab. In this instance, even if Maktab is available and remains within a short distance, they still have to go at least 1.5-2 kilometers to get to school. Despite the vast distance I have to travel to get to the private one, my kids attend Maktab alone. The distance traveled and additional expenses are added to the car rental rate. Thus, the primary driver of the increase in preschool expenses is traveling a great distance." (Participant 6: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Mothers must remain at the school from the start of classes to the finish, which is another problem. Traveling vast distances takes time. Every day, a woman devotes three to four hours to her children's early education, which negatively impacts their employment and has some financial implications as well. A mother stated that: "The distance between my house and my children's school is 2 kilometers, and it opens at 9 a.m. and closes at 12 p.m. I must thus travel there every day and be with my children. I leave my house for my children' schooling for about three to five hours each day. Taking such time off greatly hinders our job and has financial implications as well." (Participant 12: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Safety of Children: The study indicates that mothers are particularly concerned about their children's safety and security and that their concerns grow with increasing distance, although they consider the education center a safe place. Children's ages, careless driving, and having no vehicle services from school authorities are the main causes of the safety problems on the roads. Mothers are compelled by their own self-interest to travel and stay with their

children due to their concern for their safety and security. A mother stated: "My children' school is around two kilometers away from my house. Though the school is safe, it is extremely dangerous and difficult for children to travel alone since they are oblivious to road safety and the consequences of reckless driving. One of the main reasons we are concerned is that the school administration does not provide shuttle or vehicle services. I have to accompany my children and remain there until the conclusion of their lesson in order to follow consciousness." (Participant 9: Rural mother, Pabna district).

**Teaching Environment:** While centers supported by INGOs and NGOs and privately financed centers offer children a lively and interactive learning environment, parents have stressed that the number of students exceeds their capacity and have proposed reducing the number of students based on the available classroom space and amenities. However, government-sponsored centers do much worse than other centers and continue to offer instruction using the traditional method, which is less beneficial to children's development than that used by private, non-governmental, and international organizations. Mothers who are struggling financially, and a large portion of mothers from different socioeconomic backgrounds, bring their children to government facilities when they live in remote locations. They highlighted the lack of a lively atmosphere, hands-on learning, and high-quality teachers as the main issues in government centers. "Yes, children can study hands-on and in a playful environment in INGOs, NGOs, and privately sponsored centers, but the number of students attending these programs exceeds their capability. The administration of the school ought to consider it and adjust the number of students enrolled in accordance with their capacity, if necessary. Even with these restrictions, they are still

significantly superior to the government center. (Participant 15 & 16: Rural mother, Pabna district).

Another mother added, "The government center uses a traditional approach to teaching, which is, in my opinion, less successful. But like me, a lot of mothers send their children to the government center due to things like a lack of money, the distance between the school and the house, etc. However, the government-sponsored center lacks a lively setting and hands-on learning opportunities. Furthermore, their lack of qualifications and training as preschool teachers raises concerns about the quality of their instruction. The government should now prioritize the standard of preschool instruction." (Participant 14: Rural mother, Pabna district).

**Lack of Necessary Amenities for Mothers:** One major issue mothers encounter and complain about is the lack of guardian rest spaces. The research found that guardians are required to spend three to four hours a day at the school. The main problems that guardians in preschool education centers confront, however, are a shortage of sitting areas, a lack of hygienic systems, and a lack of drinking water supplies. The government and non-government centers both exhibit deficiencies. A mother said: "Every day, we attend school for three to four hours. However, there are no places for guardians to sit. For mothers who come for their children, even the most basic human necessities-such as a sanitary system and a drinking water supply system-are inaccessible. Even though we can transport drinking water, what about a hygienic system? This situation has been seen in both government and non-government centers. The problems ought to be handled by the authorities." (Participant 12: Rural mother, Pabna district).

TABLE VIII CHALLENGES FOR OBTAINING PRESCHOOL EDUCATION STATUS

S. No.	Sub-Theme	Response Number	Response Sample
1	Cost of Pre-schooling	15	"Privately supported centers-we must pay the school 150-200 taka in tuition each month." "We must pay for the dress code at school, hiring a vehicle, purchasing books, paper, and other accessories, as well as purchasing snacks for tiffin." "To pay 1200 taka a month for additional expenses and the rent on my vehicle"
2	Distance of the School	13	"Maktab is available and remains within a short distance; they still had to go at least 1.5-2 kilometers to get to school." "The distance between my house and my children's school is 2 kilometers." "I must thus travel there every day."
3	Safety of Children	12	"It is extremely dangerous and difficult for children to travel alone since they are oblivious to road safety and the consequences of reckless driving." "School administration does not provide shuttle or vehicle services."
4	Teaching Environment	10	"Number of students attending the school exceeds their capability", "Should adjust the number of students enrolled in accordance with their capacity", "Government-sponsored center lacks a lively setting and hands-on learning opportunities", "Raising concerns about the quality of their instruction."
5	Lack of Necessary Amenities for Mothers	10	"Every day, we attend school for three to four hours." "No places for guardians to sit." "The sanitary system and drinking water supply system are inaccessible."
6	Transportation Problem	8	"School administration has not provided any transportation amenities." "Authorized shuttle or transport services children's attendance and save guardian working hours."

Source: Author's Interview, 2024

Transportation Problem: One of the biggest problems for women living in rural areas is the lack of permitted transportation. The results show that neither governmental nor non-governmental entities offer any kind of transportation service. Mothers can send their children to school alone and feel less worried about their safety when they have authorized transportation. Given that they work primarily in agriculture, mothers can save time and effort in this situation, especially during harvest season, and the service can increase child attendance rates during this hectic period.

A mother said: "The school administration has not provided any transportation amenities. Should the authorities provide shuttle or transport services, our worries regarding children's safety would be lessened, allowing them to enter the school unaccompanied. Furthermore, it is quite difficult to get kids to school during the harvest season, so they have to miss class. Offering them approved transportation not only eases our worries but also improves their attendance while saving us time and work in the meantime." (Participant 18: Rural mother, Pabna district).

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight key areas of awareness among rural mothers regarding their children's preschool education, revealing both proactive engagement and critical gaps. By examining these insights through a critical lens, we can better understand the socio-economic, institutional, and cultural complexities shaping early childhood education in rural contexts.

##### *A. Awareness and the Burden of Informal Teaching*

Rural mothers demonstrate a nuanced understanding of preschool education, extending beyond basic literacy to include fundamental hygiene, social etiquette, and values. This broad awareness aligns with theories emphasizing the role of the family as a primary socializing agent during early childhood. However, there is an underlying tension between the mothers' educational aspirations and their capacity to fulfill them. Despite their willingness to engage in their children's education, the seasonal demands of agricultural work expose a structural limitation within rural households. The irregularity of labor schedules complicates the feasibility of consistent parental involvement, thereby delegating the primary educational responsibility to preschools. This dual burden of agricultural labor and informal education points to a broader pattern of gendered labor divisions that disproportionately impact rural women, a dynamic that remains underexplored in early childhood education discourse.

##### *B. The Influence of Socioeconomic Status and the Persistence of Inequality*

The findings reveal a stark correlation between socioeconomic status and the quality of preschool education accessed by rural families. Families with higher incomes

gravitate towards private and NGO-affiliated centers, where the curriculum incorporates interactive and play-based learning methods—an approach well-documented in educational literature as more effective for cognitive and social development. Meanwhile, lower-income families are constrained to government-sponsored centers that lack such enriching environments. This division perpetuates existing inequalities, as children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are systematically deprived of quality early education, reinforcing cycles of educational disadvantage. These results call into question the efficacy of government policies aimed at equalizing educational opportunities. While government centers (Gono-Shikkha) provide free education, their lack of interactive learning strategies and adequately trained teachers perpetuates disparities between public and private education. This systemic divide suggests the need for re-evaluating government policies, which, despite their intention of inclusivity, inadvertently reproduce educational inequalities through substandard service delivery.

##### *C. Gendered Decision-Making Dynamics*

An important finding from this study is the critical role mothers play in decision-making concerning preschool education. This finding echoes gender-focused research highlighting women's predominance in childcare responsibilities. However, what remains under-acknowledged is the gendered power asymmetry within household decision-making processes. Although mothers are the primary decision-makers, the study also suggests that their choices are often limited by external factors, including financial constraints and socio-cultural expectations. Furthermore, while fathers are present in the decision-making process, their comparative disengagement due to occupational demands reflects an implicit division of responsibilities that warrants further exploration. It is essential to question how this power asymmetry influences the scope of mothers' autonomy in educational decisions and the extent to which paternal involvement could be better integrated to promote co-ownership of early childhood education.

##### *D. Challenges of Access and Quality: A Structural Critique*

The findings expose several structural challenges impeding access to preschool education, including financial burdens, transportation difficulties, and the absence of guardian rest spaces. The issue of distance between home and school raises significant concerns about spatial inequality in rural education. Mothers are compelled to invest substantial time and resources in transporting their children, a burden exacerbated by the absence of institutional transport services. The logistical and financial implications of this distance underscore a critical gap in rural educational planning that remains insufficiently addressed in policy discourse. Furthermore, the lack of guardian rest spaces reflects a broader neglect of the infrastructural needs of rural communities. The absence of basic amenities such as

seating areas, hygienic systems, and drinking water suggests a disregard for the physical and emotional well-being of mothers who are deeply involved in their children's education. This oversight reveals an institutional blindness to the daily lived experiences of rural women, whose unpaid labor and time investment in childcare remain invisible to policymakers and educators alike.

#### *E. Community and Institutional Support: Ambiguities and Limitations*

The role of community support and local leadership emerges as a double-edged sword in this study. While peer networks and community leaders provide valuable assistance, the findings also suggest the presence of an unspoken rivalry among mothers, indicating a complex interplay of competition and cooperation. This nuanced dynamic raises critical questions about the nature of community solidarity in rural contexts and the implications of peer pressure on parental engagement in early childhood education. Similarly, the involvement of religious institutions such as Maktab highlights both the benefits and limitations of community-based learning support. While Maktab centers offer valuable religious instruction, their focus on Islamic teachings to the exclusion of a broader curriculum limits children's exposure to essential early literacy and numeracy skills. This institutional fragmentation reflects broader tensions between traditional and modern educational paradigms in rural contexts, raising questions about how these parallel systems can be better integrated to provide holistic early childhood education.

#### *F. Implications for Policy and Practice*

The findings underscore the urgent need for policy interventions aimed at addressing the structural and systemic barriers faced by rural mothers. The disparity in the quality of education between public and private centers calls for a comprehensive overhaul of government-sponsored preschools, with a focus on adopting interactive and play-based learning methods. Additionally, targeted training programs for preschool teachers in government centers could enhance the quality of early education and mitigate the existing inequalities. The lack of institutional support for guardian rest spaces and transportation services requires immediate attention. Policy initiatives should prioritize the establishment of basic amenities for guardians in preschool centers and the provision of transport services to reduce the financial and logistical burdens on rural families. These interventions would not only improve access to preschool education but also alleviate the hidden costs borne by rural mothers in fulfilling their childcare responsibilities. Finally, community engagement initiatives should be expanded to foster genuine collaboration among mothers while addressing the competitive dynamics that undermine solidarity. Local leaders and policymakers must recognize the value of these community networks and work towards creating supportive environments that empower

rural mothers to make informed decisions about their children's education.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study provides a critical lens through which to examine rural mothers' awareness and engagement in their children's preschool education. The findings highlight both the proactive efforts of rural mothers and the structural constraints that hinder their full participation. By addressing these challenges through targeted policy reforms and community-based interventions, there is potential to create a more equitable and inclusive early childhood education system in rural areas.

#### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

#### **Funding**

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

#### **Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology for Manuscript Preparation**

The authors confirm that no AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation or writing of the manuscript, and no images were altered using AI.

## REFERENCES

- Aboud, F. E. (2006). Evaluation of an early childhood preschool program in rural Bangladesh. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(1), 46-60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.01.008>.
- Aboud, F. E., Singla, D. R., Nahil, M. I., & Borisova, I. (2013). Effectiveness of a parenting program in Bangladesh to address early childhood health, growth and development. *Social Science & Medicine*, 97, 250-258. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2013.06.020>.
- Aram, D., Korat, O., Saiegh-Haddad, E., Arafat, S. H., Khoury, R., & Elhija, J. A. (2013). Early literacy among Arabic-speaking kindergartners: The role of socioeconomic status, home literacy environment and maternal mediation of writing. *Cognitive Development*, 28(3), 193-208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cogdev.2012.10.003>.
- Arica, S. G., Arica, V., Onur, H., Gülbayzar, S., Dağ, H., & Obut, Ö. (2012). Knowledge, attitude and response of mothers about fever in their children. *Emergency Medicine Journal*, 29(12), e4. <https://doi.org/10.1136/emered-2011-200352>.
- Ateah, C. A., & Hamelin, K. J. (2008). Maternal bedsharing practices, experiences, and awareness of risks. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic & Neonatal Nursing*, 37(3), 274-281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1552-6909.2008.00242.x>.
- Barnett, W. S., & Yarosz, D. J. (2007). Who goes to preschool and why does it matter? National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Rutgers University.
- Bracken, S. S., & Fischel, J. E. (2008). Family reading behavior and early literacy skills in preschool children from low-income backgrounds. *Early Education and Development*, 19(1), 45-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280701838835>.
- Brinkman, S. A., Hasan, A., Jung, H., Kinnell, A., & Pradhan, M. (2017). The impact of expanding access to early childhood education services in rural Indonesia. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 35(S1), S305-S335. <https://doi.org/10.1086/691278>.
- Brooks-Gunn, J. (2003). Do you believe in magic? What we can expect from early childhood intervention programs. *Social Policy Report*, 17(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2379-3988.2003.tb00020.x>.
- Brown, N., & Stockman, T. (2013). Examining the use of thematic analysis as a tool for informing design of new family communication technologies. In S. Love, K. Hone, & T. McEwan (Eds.), *Proceedings*

- of the 27th International BCS Human Computer Interaction Conference (pp. 1-6). BCS Learning & Development Ltd.
- Burgess, S. (2005). The preschool home literacy environment provided by teenage mothers. *Early Child Development and Care*, 175(3), 249-258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0300443042000266303>.
- Buttigieg, S. C., Rocchiccioli, J. T., & Ellul, M. L. (2012). Maternal awareness of health promotion, parental and preschool childhood obesity. *Malta Medical Journal*, 24(1).
- Cristofaro, T. N., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2012). Mother-child conversations at 36 months and at pre-kindergarten: Relations to children's school readiness. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 12(1), 68-97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798411416879>.
- Cuartas, J. (2022). The effect of maternal education on parenting and early childhood development: An instrumental variables approach. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 36(2), 280-290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/fam0000886>.
- Curenton, S. M., & Justice, L. M. (2008). Children's preliteracy skills: Influence of mothers' education and beliefs about shared-reading interactions. *Early Education and Development*, 19(2), 261-283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10409280801963939>.
- Department for Education. (2024). Statutory guidance: Early education and childcare. GOV.UK.
- Directorate of Primary Education. (2015). Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3). Government of Bangladesh.
- Dyvik, E. H. (2024). Illiteracy rates by world region 2022. Statista.
- Education in the United Kingdom. (2024). Preschool education in the UK. <https://united-kingdom.education/preschool-education-in-the-uk/>.
- Edwards, C. M. (2014). Maternal literacy practices and toddlers' emergent literacy skills. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 14(1), 53-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798412451590>.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690600500107>.
- Ghasemi, A. A., Talebian, A., Alavi, N. M., & Mousavi, G. A. (2013). Knowledge of mothers in management of diarrhea in under-five children in Kashan, Iran. *Nursing and Midwifery Studies*, 1(3), 158-162. <https://doi.org/10.5812/nms.10393>.
- Halder, S., & Kejriwal, S. (2016). Nutritional awareness of mothers in relation to nutritional status of the preschool children. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186(9), 1366-1377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2015.1094655>.
- Hesketh, K. R., McMinn, A. M., Griffin, S. J., Harvey, N. C., Godfrey, K. M., Inskip, H. M., Cooper, C., & van Sluijs, E. M. F. (2013). Maternal awareness of young children's physical activity. *BMC Public Health*, 13, 924. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-13-924>.
- Johny, J., & Babu, J. (2023). Child-rearing practices and anxiety of parents of children with physical disabilities. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*, 12(1), 34-38.
- Kagitcibasi, C., Sunar, D., & Bekman, S. (2001). Long-term effects of early intervention: Turkish low-income mothers and children. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 22(4), 333-361. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-3973\(01\)00071-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0193-3973(01)00071-5).
- Kammerman, S. B., & Gatenio-Gabel, S. (2007). Early childhood education and care in the United States: An overview of the current policy picture. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 1(1), 23-34. <https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-1-1-23>.
- Kaur, M., & Kauts, A. (2019). Exploration of the early childhood care and education provided in kindergartens in Japan. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*, 8(2), 24-29.
- Khouly, A. E. M. (2021). An awareness program for rural mothers about proper parenting of preschool children. *Multicultural Education*, 7(5). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4774362>.
- Loeb, S., Fuller, B., Kagan, S. L., & Carrol, B. (2004). Child care in poor communities: Early learning effects of type, quality, and stability. *Child Development*, 75(1), 47-65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2004.00653.x>.
- Maity, K., Das, P., & Kumbhakar, S. N. (2019). ICDS and its impact on child health: A study with special reference to West Bengal. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*, 8(2), 16-23.
- Melhuish, E. (2013). Research on early childhood education in the UK. In M. Stamm & D. Edelman (Eds.), *Handbuch frühkindliche Bildungsforschung* (pp. 211-221). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-19066-2\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-19066-2_15).
- Ministry of Education. (2010). National education policy 2010. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- Mohandass, B., Chaudhary, H., Pal, G., & Kaur, S. (2021). Knowledge and practice of rural mothers on oral hygiene for children. *Indian Journal of Continuing Nursing Education*, 22(1), 39. [https://doi.org/10.4103/IJCN.IJCN\\_7\\_20](https://doi.org/10.4103/IJCN.IJCN_7_20).
- Moore, A. C., Akhter, S., & Aboud, F. E. (2008). Evaluating an improved quality preschool program in rural Bangladesh. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 28(2), 118-131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2007.05.003>.
- Nath, S. R. (2022). Capability of preschool education in enhancing primary school competencies in Bangladesh. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 36(1), 14-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2020.1838976>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). Preprimary education enrollment. U.S. Department of Education.
- National Institute for Educational Policy Research. (2011). Preschool education and care in Japan. Government of Japan.
- National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development. (2022). National early childhood care and education (ECCE) curriculum framework. Government of India.
- Parameswari, J. (2018). Perceived parental acceptance, rejection and conflict styles of adults. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*, 7(2), 97-101.
- Rahman, F., Tuli, S. N., Mondal, P., Sultana, S., Hossain, A., Kundu, S., Clara, A. A., & Hossain, A. (2023). Home environment factors associated with early childhood development in rural areas of Bangladesh. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 11, 1209068. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1209068>.
- Rahman, M. (2023, June 2). Importance of pre-primary education in Bangladesh. *The Daily Observer*.
- Ramey, C. T., & Ramey, S. L. (2004). Early learning and school readiness: Can early intervention make a difference? *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 50(4), 471-491. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mpq.2004.0034>.
- Rehman, J. (2019). Problems faced by parents of differently abled children in District Anantnag, Kashmir. *Asian Review of Social Sciences*, 8(2), 66-70.
- Research Center for Child and Adolescent Development and Education. (2004). Early childhood education handbook. Ochanomizu University.
- Shahid, M., Cao, Y., Ahmed, F., Raza, S., Guo, J., Malik, N. I., Rauf, U., Qureshi, M. G., Saheed, R., & Maryam, R. (2022). Does mothers' awareness of health and nutrition matter? *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, 792164. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.792164>.
- Shrestha, M., Ulak, M., Strand, T. A., Kvestad, I., & Hysing, M. (2019). How much do Nepalese mothers know about child development? *Early Child Development and Care*, 189(1), 135-142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2017.1304391>.
- Silvén, M., Niemi, P., & Voeten, M. J. M. (2002). Do maternal interaction and early language predict phonological awareness in 3- to 4-year-olds? *Cognitive Development*, 17(1), 1133-1155. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2014\(02\)00093-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2014(02)00093-X).
- Tsai, S.-Y., Lee, W.-T., Lee, C.-C., Jeng, S.-F., & Weng, W.-C. (2018). Sleep in children with epilepsy: The role of maternal knowledge of childhood sleep. *Sleep*, 41(11). <https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/zsy157>.
- UNESCO. (2007). Strong foundations: Early childhood care and education; EFA global monitoring report 2007. UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2023). Global education monitoring report 2023: Technology in education. <https://doi.org/10.54676/UZQV8501>.
- UNICEF India. (n.d.). Early childhood education for school readiness and to build a foundation for lifelong learning. Retrieved February 16, 2024.
- UNICEF. (2019). A world ready to learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education.
- United Nations. (2023). Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Weigel, D. J., Martin, S. S., & Bennett, K. K. (2006). Mothers' literacy beliefs: Connections with the home literacy environment and preschool children's literacy development. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 6(2), 191-211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468798406066444>.