

## Exploring the impact of parental communication on the academic achievement of children studying in non-formal primary schools in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

*This study aims to identify the influence of parental communication on their children's academic achievement in non-formal primary schools in Bangladesh. Numerous studies have investigated the relationship between parents' active participation and their children's academic achievement in formal education settings. There is limited research on how parental communication influences their children's academic performance studying in non-formal schools, focusing on schools in underserved areas. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected from 20 students, 20 parents, and two grade four teachers from two non-formal schools in two districts of Bangladesh, Dhaka and Chattogram. Semi-structured interview questionnaires are used to collect in-depth data from the participants. However, a small amount of quantitative data has also been collected and analyzed to meet the requirements of the study. Thematic data was used to analyze and present the data. The study found a positive correlation between parental communication and their children's academic achievement. Notably, the study found that even parents with low income and less educational degrees who maintain regular communication with school and teachers significantly enhance their children's motivation and academic activities. The research also uncovers barriers such as parental time constraints and a lack of awareness about educational support strategies. Furthermore, the study recommends policy interventions and community-based initiatives to increase and emphasize parental communication in improving academic achievement in underserved communities. By understanding the role of parental communication in promoting children's academic success in non-formal settings, the study can provide insights into the design and implementation of effective educational programs and policies for this population.*

### Keywords

*Parental involvement; academic achievement; parental communication; non-formal education; non-formal primary school*



## I. Introduction

Parental engagement has always been a key tool for their child's educational success (Lie et al., 2023). The involvement of parents can significantly influence the academic activities of their children. This influence is particularly true for non-formal school children who may not be able to attend formal schools or have dropped out. Carron & Carr-Hill (1991) claimed that non-formal education initiatives are frequently employed to impart knowledge to children who cannot enroll in formal educational institutions. In this regard, Yasunaga (2014) said that this kind of education is becoming increasingly popular in many areas of the world as a

method of giving education to children who do not have access to formal education. In such cases, parents play an even more crucial role, as these children often receive little or no support for their academic activities from sources outside of their families and schools. According to Epstein (2001), effective communication between the school and the home can be achieved through various methods, such as seminars, PTA meetings, student work folders, handbooks, report card pickups, notes, emails, newsletters, phone calls, and website and effective communication with the school can assist parents by increasing their awareness of school regulations, procedures, and activities, allowing them to provide greater support in the educational experience.

Numerous studies have explored the impact of active parental communication with schools on students' success, participation, motivation, and engagement in academic activities (Amin et al., 2021). However, no research has been done on the non-formal school children depicted as the study's objective. This study aims to identify some gaps by addressing how the parents of non-formal school children communicate with their children's school and whether it is making any difference in their children's academic achievement at school. Therefore, this study explores the impact of parent-teacher communication, discusses academic needs with teachers and parents, and provides updates about the child's performance at school.

This study is significant in a country like Bangladesh, as non-formal education plays a vital role in ensuring education for all and bringing all the children who dropped out of formal education into education because of various circumstances like poverty, illiteracy, etc. The findings of this study will help school administration engage the parents to be aware of all initiatives the school takes. Besides, students and parents will also realize the necessity of active communication on children's academic achievements.

## **II. Review of Literature**

In Bangladesh, non-formal primary education (NFPE) is working in parallel with formal education to ensure primary education for all the children of this country. Formal education cannot meet the educational demands of the masses living in this country. In this regard, Britto, Oketch, & Weisner (2014) found in their study that in many developing countries like Bangladesh, non-formal primary education programs have been established to provide elementary education for children unable to attend formal school.

According to Morrissey et al. (2014), Children from lower-income families frequently begin school later than their counterparts from more affluent families. Poverty incidents, depth, length, and timing impact a child's educational success, as do community features and social networks. Eccles (2005) said that parents are responsible for teaching and guiding children in academic activities. Additionally, Dowd et al. (2017) found that one of the factors that can affect the educational achievement of children studying in non-formal primary schools is the effective communication among all the stakeholders.

According to Epstein (1995), Communication is sharing thoughts and emotions with others (p. 68). To define parental Communication as influencing a child's learning, Epstein (2009) mentioned that Communication is a school-to-home and home-to-school information exchange process. According to Epstein (2001), effective communication between the school and the home can be achieved through various methods, such as seminars, PTA meetings, student work folders, handbooks, report card pickups, notes, emails, newsletters, phone calls, and websites. Students can benefit from their parents being informed about their academic

progress in specific subjects and skills. When parents participate in the communication process, they become more aware of the steps needed to maintain or enhance their children's grades (Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Effective Communication with the school can assist parents by increasing their awareness of the school.

Parents, teachers, and decision-makers widely discuss the relationship between schools and students' families (McDermott, 2008). A child's academic success is influenced not only by school and the availability of facilities and infrastructure but also by family and societal participation (Kaufman, n.d.).

This study is guided by Epstein's Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model (1995), which emphasizes the interconnected roles of families, schools, and communities in supporting student learning. Among the model's six types of involvement, this research focuses specifically on the communication component, which is defined as the two-way exchange of information between parents and educators regarding student progress and expectations.

### **III. Research Method**

The study takes a qualitative approach. A small amount of quantitative data has been used to understand the research objective better. This study population comprised 20 students in class four in non-formal primary schools, their parents, and two teachers. In this research, two non-formal primary schools of Dhaka and Chattogram were sampled using stratified sampling. One school was in a railway migratory area of Chattogram, and the other was in a slum area of Dhaka city. A heterogeneous sample was selected to get diverse data. They are specified using a convenient sampling method. First-hand data is collected by the researcher for this study. This study conducted semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data from the participants. A standardized interview technique was followed to ensure accuracy in all participant responses. All interviews were in-person for deeper insights and more comprehensive participant data. While conducting the interviews, notes were taken, which were subsequently recorded for data transcription and additional analysis. Overall, the data collection procedures aimed to collect detailed and accurate information about the experiences and perspectives of the students, parents, and teachers. The collected data was analyzed using the thematic data analysis process. Ethical considerations were followed throughout the study, such as obtaining informed consent from each participant before collecting data through interviews. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and how their data would be used. The researcher also ensured confidentiality and anonymity and maintained the privacy and dignity of participants. To protect participants' confidentiality, all names have been replaced with codes. For example, "DNFSS" refers to students from Dhaka-based non-formal primary schools, while "CNFSS" indicates students from Chattogram-based non-formal primary schools. Similarly, DNFSP and CNFSP refer to Dhaka-based non-formal primary schools' parents and Chattogram-based non-formal primary schools' parents. Lastly, DNFST refers to Dhaka-based non-formal primary school teachers, and CNFST refers to Chattogram-based non-formal primary school teachers.

#### IV. Result and Discssion

The following pages provide demographic information on parents, including the age of participants, the nature of the family, the working status of parents, occupational information, and the monthly income of students' families.

**Table 1:** Demographic information of parents

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Subcategories</i>	<i>Number of parents</i>
Region	Dhaka	10
	Chattogram	10
Age	Below 25	1
	25-29	4
	30-34	5
	35-39	6
	40-4	1
	Above 45	3
Nature of Family	Single	16
	Joint	4
Education Level	Illiterate	7
	Primary	12
	Secondary	0
	Higher Secondary	1
	Others	0
Working Status	Works outside	16
	Doesn't work outside	4
Occupation	Housekeeper	9
	Garment worker	2
	Hawker	2
	Mason	1
	Student	1
	Rickshaw puller	1
Family income	Below 5000	0
	5000-10000	2
	10000-15000	6
	Above 15000	12

According to the data, most parents are between the ages of 35 and 39, with the fewest parents being under 25 and between 40 and 44. This information can help understand the parent population's demographics and potential differences in life experiences, parenting styles, and priorities across different age groups.

According to the chart, 16 pupils live in single-family homes, while four reside in joint-family homes. This information can help understand the social and cultural context of the students, as well as potential differences in living conditions, family dynamics, and support systems. In single families, some students live with their father and mother as well as several students living in single families live with single parents because of their father's second marriage or death. These cases will be discussed in the interview data-finding sections.

Based on the information given, we can see that 16 parents work outside. The households in this dataset may be primarily supported by the income these working caregivers earn. On the other hand, four parents who do not work outside may have more time to spend with their children.

Out of the sixteen parents, nine are housekeepers. This number suggests that most parents have a housekeeping profession, which may indicate that it is a common occupation among this group of people. Two parents are garment workers, and two are hawkers. It suggests that a small proportion of parents have these professions. Only one parent is a mason, a student, and a rickshaw puller, which indicates that very few parents have these occupations. Overall, the pie chart shows that most parents work low-skilled jobs, with housekeeping being the most common occupation.

Twelve parents have a family income above 15,000, which suggests that many parents have a relatively high income level. Six parents have an income in the range of 10,000-15,000, which indicates that some parents have a moderate income level. Finally, only two parents have an income in the range of 5,000-10,000, which suggests that there are very few parents with a low-income level. Another thing to mention here is that some families don't have any fixed income, so it varies from month to month; as it depends on the amount of work they get to do every month.

Tables 2 and 3 show the final exam results of two non-formal school students, along with scores and positions, to discuss academic success and identify the connection of parental communication to academic performance, which is the objective of this study.

**Table 2: Final Exam Results of Dhaka Region students**

Name of Participants	Bengali	English	Math	Science	BGS	Religion	Total	Position
(DNFSS-1)	82	92	67	74	72	85	472	9th
(DNFSS-2)	79	93	52	93	83	82	482	6th
(DNFSS-3)	85	88	64	91	78	87	493	3rd
(DNFSS-4)	22	40	37	24	54	28	205	F
(DNFSS-5)	75	93	77	90	73	84	492	4th
(DNFSS-6)	62	78	65	69	55	65	394	18th
(DNFSS-7)	75	81	88	75	75	86	480	7th
(DNFSS-8)	43	61	70	47	51	55	327	27th
(DNFSS-9)	90	85	65	82	66	82	480	8th
(DNFSS-10)	79	86	52	67	66	84	434	15th

**Table 3: Final Exam Results of Chattogram Region students**

Name of Participants	Bengali	English	Math	Science	BGS	Religion	Total	Position
(CNFSS-1)	62	77	76	47	80	85	427	9 <sup>th</sup>
(CNFSS-2)	92	89	72	83	78	86	500	1 <sup>st</sup>
(CNFSS-3)	75	78	54	81	68	77	433	7th
(CNFSS-4)	55	64	58	42	54	82	355	17th
(CNFSS-5)	57	39	67	71	73	84	391	13th
(CNFSS-6)	53	87	56	82	64	74	416	8th

(CNFSS-7)	37	29	49	57	38	73	283	F
(CNFSS-8)	90	85	65	82	66	82	470	3rd
(CNFSS-9)	62	78	65	69	55	65	394	12th
(CNFSS-10)	43	61	70	47	51	55	327	19th

#### 4.1 Parental Communication and School Engagement

The results showed that regular communication between parents and teachers greatly influences students' academic success in non-formal primary schools. Teachers highlighted that parents can more effectively support learning at home when they remain updated on their children's progress. To facilitate this, schools arrange parent-teacher meetings approximately every one and a half months, typically on Fridays or public holidays, to accommodate working parents' schedules (CNFST).

Parents acknowledged the importance of these meetings and expressed a strong willingness to attend, even if it meant taking leave from work or adjusting personal commitments (CNFSP-7, CNFSP-3). Several parents reported that the school's closeness to their houses simplified attendance procedures and minimized logistical obstacles. However, students stated that because of duties like caring for younger siblings at home, parents, especially mothers, frequently found it difficult to attend meetings. One student noted that their mother cannot leave home to attend meetings (CNFSS-8). Four out of ten students in Chattogram shared that their parents frequently miss meetings due to childcare obligations.

#### 4.2 Parental Communication and Meeting Attendance

There is a clear correlation between parental communication and their engagement in school meetings. As shown in Table 4, parents with basic education (Class 4–5 and above) were more likely to attend parent-teacher meetings. In contrast, those without formal education were often absent from these interactions.

**Table 4:** Status of parents' attendance in meetings at school

<i>Students</i>	<i>Final Exam Rank</i>	<i>Attending Parent-Teacher Meetings</i>
(DNFSS-3)	3rd	Yes
(DNFSS-5)	4th	Yes
(DNFSS-4)	F	No
(DNFSS-8)	27th	Yes
(CNFSS-2)	1st	Yes
(CNFSS-8)	3rd	Yes
(CNFSS-7)	F	No
(CNFSS-10)	19th	No

The table illustrates that students whose parents regularly attended meetings and had some educational background performed better in the final exams. For instance, students ranked 1st, 3rd, and 4th all had educated parents who were present at meetings. In contrast, students whose parents were illiterate and did not attend meetings either failed or performed poorly.

#### 4.3 Discussing Academic Needs with Teachers

While schools provided structured opportunities for communication through meetings, meaningful academic dialogue between parents and teachers appeared limited. Teachers reported that although parents attend group meetings, they rarely initiate conversations about specific academic concerns. One teacher expressed disappointment that parents seldom communicate about their children's learning difficulties (CNFST).

Some parents disagreed, claiming that they use meetings to talk to teachers about their child's academic struggles and even to request advice, particularly in cases where they do not have a formal education (CNFSP-8). The fact that this parent's child placed third on the final exam indicates that sharing academic concerns will have a good effect. However, another parent stated that they felt awkward bringing up such topics in group settings, which discouraged more conversation (DNFSP-4). The fact that the child of this parent did not pass the test makes it possible that a lack of communication about academic expectations contributed to poorer marks.

These results demonstrate the significance of setting up parent-teacher conferences and providing a forum for one-on-one conversations, particularly for parents who lack experience or confidence. Another parent, however, claimed that they felt uncomfortable discussing such subjects in public, discouraging further discussion (DNFSP-4). The test result of this parent's child suggests that inadequate communication on academic expectations may cause poor results. These results emphasize how crucial it is to plan parent-teacher meetings and provide an opportunity for one-on-one conversations, particularly for parents who lack experience or confidence. For students' academic growth to be supported, home and school activities must be coordinated through effective two-way communication, both dialogic and informational.

#### 4.5 Collaborating with the community

Data from parents, students, and teachers indicate varying perceptions of how actively parents collaborate with the broader school community to support their children's academic development. Many parents understand the importance of staying connected with the community, especially when their work responsibilities limit the time they devote to their children. Some parents reported communicating regularly with their child's classmates and occasionally with other parents to stay updated on schoolwork and behavior. One parent (CNFSP-4) shared that they became familiar with their child's friends through conversations at home and interactions when those children came over to play. During such visits, the parent casually asked about assignments and class activities.

Students generally confirmed that their parents know their friends, mainly due to frequent home visits and informal playtime. However, students noted that their parents typically do not interact with other parents. For example, a student (CNFSS-8) mentioned that his mother asked about friends' health and school performance when they visited, but was not in contact with their friends' parents.

Teachers reported a significant gap between parents and the broader school community despite this informal interaction. According to teacher interviews, most parents do not show initiative beyond attending scheduled meetings, and some are inconsistent. As one teacher (DNFST) noted, many parents are so preoccupied with work and household responsibilities that expecting them to collaborate with others in the community seems unrealistic. The following Table shows that collaboration with other students and parents is limited.

**Table 5:** Collaboration with other students and parents

<i>Students</i>	<i>Final Exam Rank</i>	<i>Parents' collaboration with other classmates</i>	<i>Parents' collaboration with other guardians</i>
(DNFSS-3)	3rd	Yes	Yes
(DNFSS-5)	4th	Yes	No
(DNFSS-4)	F	No	No
(DNFSS-8)	27th	No	No

CNFSS-2	1ST	Yes	Yes
CNFSS-8	3rd	Yes	No
CNFSS-7	F	No	No
CNFSS-10	19th	Yes	No

The table indicates that parents who actively collaborated with their child's classmates and other parents had children who ranked higher in final exams. For example, students ranked 1st and 3rd (CNFSS-2, DNFSS-3) with parents who engaged with peers and guardians. In contrast, students whose parents were less engaged, particularly those who were illiterate, showed lower academic outcomes or failed to pass. While students and some parents perceive a degree of informal collaboration, teachers observed that structured or purposeful engagement with the broader school community is rare. This disconnect points to a need for parents to be more aware of the value of broader community collaboration in enhancing academic outcomes.

## V. Conclusion

This study explored the impact of parental communication on the academic achievement of children studying in non-formal primary schools in Bangladesh. According to the findings, even though many parents understand how important it is to keep up with their child's education, they frequently find it difficult to do so due to a variety of personal and structural obstacles, including workload, a lack of education, a lack of confidence, and language barriers.

According to the findings, children of parents who participate in parent-teacher meetings and discuss academic issues with teachers typically do better academically. However, it was also noted that many parents, frequently due to poor educational backgrounds or language barriers, lack the self-assurance or awareness to start such a conversation. According to teachers, most parents only interact with teachers during regular meetings. This restricts the opportunity for mutual support of the child's education. Teachers reported that most parents communicate only during scheduled meetings, with little engagement beyond that, which limits opportunities for collaborative support for the child's learning.

Additionally, the study found that parents are unaware of collaborating with other parents or children in the community. They are keeping themselves absent from school decision-making, which eventually hampers their children's academic success.

Schools should consider using systematic tactics to increase parents' confidence and capacity to handle these issues. These strategies include organizing parent orientation sessions to enhance awareness of the significance of school-community collaboration, providing professional development for educators on effective communication methods, cultivating a more inviting atmosphere, and encouraging parents to articulate their opinions and concerns.

Future studies may explore sustainable strategies to enhance parental involvement and assess the enduring impacts of enhanced communication practices on children's academic performance in non-formal educational institutions. Establishing a supportive and collaborative culture among parents, educators, and the wider community is crucial for improving children's educational experiences and achievements in non-formal schools.

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