



# Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh

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**Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for Early Childhood  
Education (ECE) in Bangladesh**

**Bangladeshにおける幼児教育に対する親の社会経済的アスピレーション**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Universally, researchers show evidence that Early Childhood Education (ECE) contributes a lot to all children's cognitive and non-cognitive development in the very early years. Mostly, governments among developed countries subsidize an ample amount of money for children's early education development to generate and enhance human capital. However, among the developing and under-developed countries like Bangladesh, the government still has not ensured all the measures such as access, enrollment, and quality education for early childhood. As a result, early childhood education among the countries is driven by the family, where family socio-economic conditions make a significant transformation to ensure their children in schools at a very early age.

In Bangladesh, parental socio-economic aspirations are the principal driving force for ECE for children aged 3 to 5 years. Parents have to pay for all the direct and indirect school expenses for their children. Among the five types of ECE schooling services, parents do not need to pay school fees only for government schools. The government of Bangladesh has made pre-primary education free for all children aged five years. However, parents with children 3 to 4 years old who would like to enroll their children in the early years, have to pay all the education expenses for their children where the government does not contribute. The direct and indirect cost of education for the early years solely depends on parental socio-economic conditions. As a consequence, children's achievement entirely depends on parental aspirations in the early years, particularly in the early stages of childhood before starting primary school.

This study focuses on parental aspirations with a focus on socio-economic settings based on social justice and rational choice theory for child schooling in Bangladesh. The government policy of Bangladesh is to ensure social justice in education to minimize the inequality among regions and assume to have equal participation. Researchers often pay little consideration to family social conditions, instead mostly focusing on parental economic conditions for school participation at an early age. The distinct features of this study are to focus on parental socio-economic aspirations to consider parental experiences and perceptions of early childhood schooling in Bangladesh. First, in line with the government policy for ECE,

this study developed based on the rational choice theory to explore parental socio-economic aspirations when choosing ECE schools for their children. Second, this study focused on the social justice theory to understand the phenomena of parental socio-economic aspirations in the context of Bangladesh for school enrollment in ECE schools and school readiness of children in the early years.

This study anticipated to investigate the research gaps in line with the previous pieces of literature, with a particular focus on Bangladesh, by exploring the following three key research questions: i) How do parental aspirations influence ECE schooling choice for their children in Bangladesh? ii) How do parental aspirations influence ECE enrollment of children in Bangladesh? iii) How do parental aspirations influence child school readiness for ECE in Bangladesh? The overall objectives of this study are to explore the parental socio-economic aspirations for children's school choice, school enrollment, and school readiness in Bangladesh. This study shows that parental socio-economic aspirations are making changes among children's cognitive and non-cognitive development in participating in ECE schools. Although various government policies and strategies initiated by the government to intensify the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to improve early childhood education in Bangladesh.

This study is significant in four aspects. The first significance of this study is in using the rational choice theory in the context of Bangladesh to investigate the existence of parental actions both in rural and urban areas. This research contributes by placing more emphasis on the information-gathering actions by parents and direct social conditions that aspire parents to choose schools. The second significance of this study is in applying the social justice theory to consider parental aspirations for school enrollment in Bangladesh among regions. The parental social aspirations urge for enrollment, but mostly institutional barriers impede enrollment of children. Irrespective of financial solvency, schools require extended indirect school expenses, which cause non-enrollment, especially in urban areas. The third significance of this study is institutional settings lead to disparities among children in the early years as a fact of diverse curriculum, teacher quality and school environment, and high parental dependency on private tutoring among regions in Bangladesh. The fourth significance of this study is the parental

phenomena of rationality derived from the self-social circumstances. It explains the phenomena of parental aspirations for children with special needs enrollment and readiness in early education in the context of Bangladesh. Additionally, this study reveals that special needs children are mostly either out of school or absent from school despite government policies.

This qualitative study follows the case study methods to explore the parental socio-economic aspirations and the phenomena of ECE initiatives, both in rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh. This study used the theoretical lens of the Rational Choice theory and Social Justice theory to understand the school choice, school enrollment, and school readiness associated with parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh. The theoretical perspectives are highlighted to understand parental aspirations for schooling strategies based on the available school facilities. The data collection methods are a review of documents, visits to schools, classes, and homes, and in-depth interviews. Data are collected from rural and urban areas among the specific five types of schools: public schools, private schools (kindergarten), NGO-based schools, madrasa-based schools (religious), and others (mosque, indigenous, non-formal, etc.). Semi-structured in-depth-interviews with parents of children aged 3 to 5 years both enrolled (n=68) and not enrolled (n=34) in ECE schools and teachers (n=34) as principal participants. The secondary respondents in this study are other concerned stakeholders (n=22) (Ministry, NGOs, INGOs, ECE specialists, education specialists, etc.) who are directly working for the ECE sectors in Bangladesh. Data were collected from a high performing and low performing schools of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh. This study follows the two conventional sampling techniques, namely snowball sampling and purposeful sampling methods.

The results showed that more than one year of ECE of acceptable quality is highly desired for all children irrespective of socio-economic conditions in Bangladesh. This is also necessary for coordination among regions and setting up a reliable management system for the betterment of ECE in Bangladesh. The social system of Bangladesh is a patriarchal one, where fathers hold the ultimate and predominant influence over all kinds of social decisions. School choice for children in ECE habitually represents the parental issues of social justice in the

society, which symbolizes the parental socio-economic aspirations for quality educational awareness for their children. The result shows that parental aspirations for school choice for children are weak, moderate, and strong. Moderate and strong parental aspirations help them choose a school for their children at an early age, whereas weak parental aspirations lead them to delay the school choice for their children. Both rural and urban parents highly consider social issues for their children's school enrollment. In Bangladesh, parents belong to a social class; usually, they have specific preferences and rational choices for their child's education. Parents always have rational actions about the early learning needs of their children among the available range of services based on their socio-economic status. This study finds that in most of the cases, parents do not have any choice for children with special needs.

Parents considering enrolling their children in ECE schools because they believe that children can perform well while having the opportunity to have pre-school experiences before starting formal primary education. The results indicate that, first of all, the social issues of parents affect the enrollment of children in schools. Second, the institutional causes emerge not from enrolling in schools, and as of the last precedence, parents reported financial issues for non-enrollment in ECE schools. In terms of enrollment, this study indicates that a lack of appropriate and available quality schooling motivates parental aspirations for their child schooling in Bangladesh.

The result also shows that parenting time for child school readiness is valuable, and among the regions, most of the time, parents do not have time to prepare their children for schooling. While mothers have little time with their children, fathers' engagement is almost absent to prepare children for schooling. Both in rural and urban areas, parents mostly depend on private tutors to prepare their children for schooling. Parents among the enrolled schools show their concern about the diverse curriculum, and they believe that a diverse curriculum has a significant impact on child school readiness. Additionally, parents indicate teacher quality, high student-teacher ratio, low contact hours as the major factors in poor student performance and school readiness, especially among the lower-income group of parents in terms of a smooth

transition from home to school, continuation and excellent performance of children in school, and self-confidence.

Based on the findings, it is evident that parents are concern about socio-economic rationale in choosing ECE schools for children. Parental aspirations for ECE schooling is explained by the institutional settings in line with the social justice theory. In Bangladesh, parental aspirations depend mostly on social context rather than economic. However, in this study, only the middle-income group of parents raised the issues of indirect school fees while considering ECE schooling for children. In Bangladesh, ECE schools are emerging as a new scholastic division in both rural and urban areas. This study finds that the government policy gap and initiatives to ensure social justice in ECE for all children in Bangladesh. Besides, parents emphasize the deficiencies in the supply of age-appropriate ECE schooling facilities for children. Parents are extremely confused while enrolling their children in schools due to the lack of institutional justice as most of the cases; schools are deciding who could enroll in schools, especially among urban areas. Parental aspirations for school enrollment is impeding because of institutional justice to participate in schools, rather than social justice in the context of Bangladesh.

In Bangladesh, parental aspirations for school choice and enrollment highly depend on school distance because of the apparent danger of sending children to distant schools, especially in urban areas. This finding contradicts with previous studies that show that parental school choice and enrollment depends mostly on school quality. Parents are tremendously disappointed because of indirect school fees, child-teacher ratio, and curriculum as well as teaching methods for ECE schooling. The findings of this study suggest that parents in Bangladesh prefer a common curriculum for better school readiness with more focus on the non-cognitive development of children to ensure justice in ECE. Further, parents are willingly sending their children to ECE schools for the potential development of their children and school readiness, although most of the parents do not (rational) in choosing schools among the urban areas on their particular interest due to school distance, environment, opportunity cost, and social belongings.

This study concludes that age-appropriate enrollment opportunities and common curriculum are essential for ECE schooling in Bangladesh. The government should take initiatives to ensure child schooling based on their age group. The alternative school facilities should get similar facilities (financial compensation, free school fees, and curriculum) to ensure justice and parental rationality for their child schooling. The government should have a specific policy mechanism to meet the requirements for all socio-economic income groups providing facilities to ensure rational choice and justice of parents for their child education.



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS.....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES.....</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES.....</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>xvii</b>
<b>LIST OF TERMINOLOGY .....</b>	<b>xx</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement .....	5
1.3 Research Questions .....	8
1.4 Objectives of the Study .....	9
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	10
1.6 Organization of Dissertation.....	12
<b>CHAPTER 2: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) IN BANGLADESH .....</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	14
2.2 Definitions, and Terminology Usages for ECE in Bangladesh .....	14
2.3 Current Situation of ECE in Bangladesh.....	15
2.4 Historical Development of ECE in Bangladesh.....	16
2.5 Government Policies and Regulations for ECE in Bangladesh.....	18

2.6 Financing for ECE in Bangladesh.....	20
2.6.1 Households Expenditures for ECE in Bangladesh.....	23
2.7 Stakeholders of ECE in Bangladesh.....	24
2.8 Types of ECE Institutions in Bangladesh.....	25
2.9 Number of Schools with ECE Facilities in Bangladesh.....	26
2.10 Enrollment Age and Rate of ECE in Bangladesh .....	28
2.11 Forms of ECE Services in Bangladesh.....	31
2.12 Teachers Qualification for ECE in Bangladesh .....	33
2.13 Chapter Summary.....	34
<b>CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW.....</b>	<b>36</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	36
3.2 Parental Aspirations for School Choice in Early Childhood Education (ECE).....	36
3.3 Parental Aspirations for Enrollment in ECE.....	43
3.4 Parental Aspirations for School Readiness in ECE.....	48
3.5 Chapter Summary.....	54
<b>CHAPTER 4: METHODS .....</b>	<b>55</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	55
4.2 Theoretical Framework .....	55
4.2.1 Social Justice Theory.....	56
4.2.2 Rational Choice Theory.....	58
4.2.3 Parentocracy Theory.....	60
4.3 Conceptual Research Framework .....	64
4.4 Hypotheses.....	66

4.5 Scope of the Study.....	71
4.6 The Case Study Approach .....	71
4.7 Research Design.....	73
4.7.1 Document Reviews .....	74
4.7.2 Semi Structured In-depth Interviews.....	75
4.7.3 Home, School, and Class Observations.....	76
4.8 Sampling Method and Sample Size .....	77
4.8.1 Purposive Sampling.....	77
4.8.2 Snowball Sampling .....	77
4.8.3 Sample Size.....	78
4.8.4 Field Research Duration .....	81
4.8.5 Participants .....	83
4.8.6 Sampling Areas.....	83
4.9 Data Collection Procedure.....	88
4.10 Descriptive Statistics of Collected Sample.....	89
4.11 Data Analysis .....	94
4.12 Validity and Reliability .....	97
4.13 Ethical Consideration .....	97
4.14 Chapter Summary.....	98
<b>CHAPTER 5: RESULTS.....</b>	<b>99</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	99
5.2 Parental Aspirations for School Choice in ECE .....	99
5.2.1 Parental Socio-Economic Factors for School Choice in Bangladesh .....	100
5.2.2 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for Schooling Expenditure .....	106
5.2.3 Parental School Choice for Children with Special Needs .....	114

5.3 Parental Aspirations for Enrollment in ECE.....	122
5.3.1 Parental Decisions for Enrollment in ECE Schools.....	122
5.3.2 Parental Decisions for Non-Enrollment in ECE Schools.....	128
5.4 Parental Aspirations for School Readiness.....	135
5.4.1 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for School Readiness in ECE.....	135
5.4.2 Schooling System and School Readiness in ECE.....	139
5.5 Chapter Summary.....	145
<b>CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>147</b>
6.1 Introduction.....	147
6.2 Discussion.....	147
6.2.1 Parental Aspirations for School Choice in ECE .....	147
6.2.2 Parental Aspirations for Enrollment in ECE .....	155
6.2.3 Parental Aspirations for School Readiness in ECE.....	160
6.3 Limitations of the Study .....	165
6.4 Conclusion .....	166
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>201</b>
Appendix I Interview Protocol Manual.....	201
Appendix Ia: Interview Manual for Parents.....	201
Appendix Ib: Interview Manual for Headteachers and ECE Teachers:.....	202
Appendix Ic: Interview Manual for ECE Stakeholders .....	203
Appendix II: Questionnaires.....	204
Appendix IIa: Questionnaire for Parents with Children Enrolled in ECE Schools.....	205
Appendix IIb: Questionnaire for Parents with Children Not-Enrolled in ECE Schools. .....	211

Appendix IIc: Questionnaire for Head Teacher / ECE Teacher.....	215
Appendix II d: Questionnaire for District/Upozilla Education Office .....	219
Appendix IIe: ECE Specialist Interview (Education Specialist, Researcher and practitioner) .....	223
Appendix II f: Questionnaire for Ministry Officials.....	226
<b>Appendix III: Data Anonymization and Definition of Respondents.....</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>Appendix IV: Data Anonymization Based on School Locations and Types.....</b>	<b>230</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1 Dissertation Chapters Organization .....	13
Table 2.1 Government Key Initiatives for ECE in Bangladesh .....	17
Table 2.2 Recent Government Plans and Actions for ECE in Bangladesh .....	20
Table 2.3 School Types and Annual Expenditures in Bangladesh.....	23
Table 2.4 Stakeholders Mapping for ECE in Bangladesh .....	24
Table 2.5 School Types, Number of Schools and Children’s in Bangladesh .....	27
Table 2.6 Enrollment Rate by Age Group and Regions in Bangladesh .....	31
Table 2.7 Forms of Available ECE Services in Bangladesh.....	32
Table 2.8 Teachers Qualifications for ECE in Bangladesh .....	34
Table 4.1 Types of Qualitative Research Case Study Design.....	72
Table 4.2 Research Design for Data Collection and Sources .....	74
Table 4.3 Data Collection and Sample Size (Principal Participants) .....	79
Table 4.4 Data Collection and Sample Size (Secondary Participants).....	81
Table 4.5 Field Research Duration.....	82
Table 4.6 Types and Number of Schools in Rajshahi District (Urban).....	86
Table 4.7 Types and Number of Schools in Durgapur Upozilla (Rural).....	88
Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics of Collected Sample.....	89
Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics of Children Enrolled in ECE Schools.....	90
Table 4.10 Income Groups and Social Status in Bangladesh .....	91
Table 4.11 Data Analysis and Explanation of Research Components .....	95
Table 5.1 School Choice Decision of Parents for ECE Schooling in Bangladesh.....	101
Table 5.2 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for School Choice.....	102

Table 5.3 Parental Aspirations on Institutional Factors for School Choice.....	104
Table 5.4 Positive and Negative Effects of School Choice .....	105
Table 5.5 Parental Qualifications and School Types in Urban Areas .....	106
Table 5.6 Parental Educational Qualifications and Choice of School in Rural Area.....	107
Table 5.7 Parental Expenditure for School Types and Gender in Urban Areas .....	108
Table 5.8 Parental Expenditures for School Types and Gender in Rural Areas .....	109
Table 5.9 Parental Expenditures Management and Information Seeking Behavior .....	112
Table 5.10 Considerations in Choosing a School.....	113
Table 5.11 Parental Aspirations for Children with Special Needs.....	115
Table 5.12 Dimension of Parental School Choice for Children with Special Needs.....	121
Table 5.13 Parental Aspirations for School Enrollment.....	123
Table 5.14 Urban Parents Consideration for School Enrollment.....	125
Table 5.15 Rural Parents Consideration for School Enrollment.....	126
Table 5.16 School Types and Enrollment Criteria Among Regions.....	127
Table 5.17 Major Causes of Non-Enrollment in ECE Schools.....	129
Table 5.18 Supply and Demand Paradoxes for School Non-Enrollment .....	132
Table 5.19 Issues of Direct and Indirect Expenses for Non-Enrollment.....	134
Table 5.20 Parenting Time for Child School Readiness.....	135
Table 5.21 Parental Occupation and School Readiness.....	137
Table 5.22 Parental Perceptions for School Readiness .....	138
Table 5.23 Types of ECE Schools and Curriculum .....	139
Table 5.24 Teachers Qualification and School Readiness.....	143
Table 5.25 Parent-Teacher Interactions and School Readiness .....	144



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Current Education System and ECE in Bangladesh .....	16
Figure 2.2 Trends of Government Policies for ECE in Bangladesh.....	19
Figure 2.3 Government Expenditure on Primary Education as a Percentage of GDP .....	21
Figure 2.4 Government Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of GDP .....	22
Figure 2.5 Types of ECE Service Providers in Bangladesh .....	26
Figure 2.6 ECE Enrollment Age in Bangladesh .....	28
Figure 2.7 Theoretical Duration of Early Childhood Education (years) .....	29
Figure 2.8 Percentage of Gross Enrollment Ratio in ECE.....	30
Figure 4.1 Social Justice Theory and Parental Participation .....	57
Figure 4.2 Theoretical Context of ECE in Bangladesh .....	58
Figure 4.3 Elements of Rationale Choice and Parental Aspirations .....	59
Figure 4. 4 Parentocracy Theory and Child Schooling.....	61
Figure 4.5 Conceptual Research Framework.....	65
Figure 4.6 ECE School Facilities Among the Divisions of Bangladesh. ....	84
Figure 4.7 Map of Bangladesh.....	85
Figure 4.8 Map of Rajshahi District .....	87
Figure 4.9 School Distance from Children’s Home .....	91
Figure 4.10 Respondent Parents Education Qualifications.....	92
Figure 4.11 Education Qualifications of ECE School Teachers .....	93
Figure 4.12 ECE School Teachers’ Training.....	94
Figure 5.1 Parental Choice and Education Expenses Pattern Among Schools.....	111
Figure 5.2 Pathways of School Enrollment Among Rural and Urban Areas .....	128

Figure 5.3 School Types and Average Class Size in ECE.....	130
Figure 5.4 Parental Aspirations for Non-Enrollment in Rural and Urban Areas.....	131
Figure 5.5 Enrollment Age, Actual Age and Frequency of Age Changes in Rural Areas ....	141
Figure 5.6 Enrollment Age, Actual Age and Frequency of Age Changes in Urban Areas ...	142

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADPEO	Assistant District Primary Education Officer
APSC	Annual Primary School Census
ATEO	Assistant Thana Education Officer
AUEO	Assistant Upazila Education Officer
B. Ed.	Bachelor of Education
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
C-in-Ed	Certificate in Education
CAMPE	Campaign for Popular Education
CCTs	Conditional Cash Transfers
CS	Community School
DFA	Dakar Framework of Action
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
DPED	Diploma in Education
DPEO	District Primary Education Officer
EBM	Ebtedayee Madrashah
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All

ELCDP	Early Learning Child Development Project
Expt.	Experimental School
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GPS	Government Primary School
HOME	Home Observation for the Environment
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
INGOs	International Non-Government Organizations
KG	Kindergarten
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NEP	National Education Policy
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NNPS	Newly Nationalized Primary School
NRNGPS	Non- Registered Non-Government Primary School
PEDP	Primary Education Development Programme
PPE	Pre-Primary Education
PS	Pre-School

PTI	Primary Training Institute
RNGPS	Registered Non-Government Primary School (presently NNPS)
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SMC	School Management Committee
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
STR	Student-Teacher Ratio
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
URC	Upazila Resource Centre
WB	World Bank
WDI	World Development Indicators

## **LIST OF TERMINOLOGY**

In this study, the following terminology used to explain the Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the context of Bangladesh.

### **Early Childhood Education (ECE):**

This study covers the age group of 3-5 years of Children for Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh. In 2010, the government decided for at least one-year pre-primary schooling for all children and introduced through all the government primary schools among the regions. Although there are alternative existing ECE services for the age group 3-5 years, those are providing ECE services in Bangladesh. The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines the ECE should be for all children from age three to five.

### **Parental Aspirations:**

Parental means father, mother, and extended family members who are directly and indirectly involved and responsible for their child's education in the early years. Further, the term aspirations represent a hope, desire, or ambition of achieving something. The term parental aspirations denote that parental expectations for their child education in the early years of childhood.

### **Parents/Households:**

In this study, the term parents and households are used interchangeably and representing the same meaning for a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects of parents. In this study, the term parental refers to both parents and guardians who are directly and indirectly involved and related to their children's ECE Schooling.

**School Readiness:**

In this study, the term school readiness represents the child preparation for schooling in ECE. Most of the children need to be prepared before starting their ECE schools for their success in schools and early learning. School readiness represents the children's eligibility to enter schools irrespective of age, race, gender, and ethnicity. Preparedness is a broad terminology in this study readiness that represents the school preparation of children.

**Children:**

In this study, the children refer to the age group for three to five years. Irrespective of the international standard set by the World Health Organization (WHO), children even underweight, low height, and special needs are consolidated in this study as their theoretical age is three to five.

**Direct Costs:**

The direct cost refers to the expenses of parents ought to bear for their child education, especially for the school fees, learning materials, school uniforms, and school transportation expenses for ECE schooling.

**Indirect Costs:**

The indirect costs refer to the expenses of parents ought to bear for their child education, especially the additional school expenses, donations, school building cost, etc. Further, indirect costs also refer to the opportunity cost of parents labor and child labor for ECE schooling.

**Snowball Sampling:**

Snowball sampling helps to use hard-to-reach sample participants to identify the respondents, which involves selecting samples using recommendations by earlier respondents. In snowball Sampling that has been selected on specific characteristics and actions is asked to make recommendations for other possible respondents or participants. Researchers use snowball sampling when find problems regarding a lack of human resources, high expenses, and population scattering.

**Purposeful Sampling:**

In purposive sampling, sample data are collected from the sample population with a specific purpose to understand the phenomena. The purposeful sampling method is used to reach the sample population concisely and helps to identify cases. Sampling utilizing this technique, participant's knowledge, and enthusiasm are also vital to interconnect involvement and feelings coherently.

**Confirming and Disconfirming of Case:**

Case confirmation is essential in a qualitative study, especially in case study research. Analyzing the data using the categorical coding methods, some of the cases might have emergent findings. Case confirmation depends on the developing ideas, and additional cases add insights values of the purposes for further validation to confirm the meaning of possible new themes.



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Investing in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is considered to be highly profitable for human resource development and the social capital of societies (Bennett & Tayler, 2006). The Dakar Framework for action set several goals, and ECE is one of them for further expansion and development. Recently ECE got high priority and became essential in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Further, ECE indicates the development of children from age three to five, and all directed to children's cognitive and non-cognitive development in the early years (Barnett, 1996). Globally, ECE is the bottommost prioritized funding sectors in the field of education. Among the under-developed and developing country, almost half of the children are not achieving their childhood development potentials because of government priority (UNESCO, 2014). Evans, Myers, and Ilfeld (2000) stated that all the children among societies should receive equal childhood and educational support in the early years for their significant development as a fundamental human right of a citizen.

Similarly, all the children aged 3 to 5 years old should have priority in receiving pre-primary or pre-school for the better preparation for primary schooling, without the excellence ECE schooling, most of the cases children tend to drop out from primary school (MoWCA, 2013). Among the underdeveloped countries, almost 80% of children do not have access to ECE before the children start their basic education in primary school (Bertram, & Pascal, 2002). Due to natural disasters, war, and epidemics, children are not receiving ECE at the early childhood. As a consequence, they are losing futures economic and human potentials and a higher possibility of remaining in poverty for the rest of their life (Brown, 2006). Countries like Bangladesh has faced several natural disasters in the last couple of years. As a result, many of the children are not in schools in the very early years, which indicates the social threats for the society and the community as a whole (Moore, Akhter, & Aboud, 2005).

For lifelong learning, a good starting of early childhood education is essential for children to enhance their development potentials (Li & Wang, 2008). Lack of government focus in the field of ECE assumes a remarkable obstacle for children who are supposed to participate in pre-school or pre-primary. Preferably a comprehensive cognitive and non-cognitive skills development program is essential for children to ensure childhood development for the specific age group in the early years (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004). All the children, irrespective of gender orientation among the societies should have the equal right to get the facilities of ECE as declared in the UN conventions of child rights. Access to quality education ensures the child's rights to protect future social problems for their own country (Heckman & Masterov, 2007). Children having greater facilities and wide access to ECE can have imminent economic and social capabilities to develop potential human capital. The developed countries are always giving priority to the children to prepare potential human resource at the age of their youth, on the other hand, the countries like developing and underdeveloped countries are reversing (Hossain, 2010).

In Bangladesh, parents with ethnic minorities, children with disabilities among rural areas hardly afford the educational expenses and cannot assure access for their children to ECE schooling (UNICEF, 2009). Usually, the government of low and middle-income countries' strategies for financing in ECE habitually cause access barriers to children in schools (Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev, & Yavitz, 2010). Providing more education financing by the governments, stakeholders, donors, and partners for early education, could ensure social justice and close the gap among diverse socially stratified households or parental realities (Grusky, 2011). ECE is not formal basic education in Bangladesh, but for the children under the age of 5 government initiated pre-primary before starting formal primary education and between the ages of 5 to 6 years (Banu, 2012).

Although the government of Bangladesh does not have any specific divisions for ECE, and among the government primary schools ECE is for just children those who are at the age of 5. Some schools have play-groups for children aged 2-3 years, a nursery for children 1-5

years, KG-1 for children 3-5 years, and KG-2 classes for children 3-5 years (Ahuja & Ibrahim, 2004). Some of ECE's objectives are to mentally and physically prepare children for institutional education through play, music, dance, recitation, and painting.

After the independence of Bangladesh, the government paid little attention to ECE schooling for young children (Ahmed, 2007). Nowadays, the alternative types of ECE institutions are evolving in Bangladesh, along with government schools. Bangladesh Education Commission report of 1974 and 1988, led by Kudrat-i-Khuda and Mafizuddin Ahmed, recognized the importance of education for children and strongly recommended its implementation in Bangladesh. The Education Commission recommends establishing nurseries and kindergartens for all children in the city and industrial areas and rural areas, especially those whose parents work outside. The Mafizuddin Commission has recommended the opening of a children's section in all public elementary schools where there is no private enterprise. The National Committee on Education for All (EFA) recognizes the importance of educating young children in achieving the 'Education for All' goal and presents several recommendations for the introduction and development of ECE systems. To formulate a national education policy, the committee advises the appointment of specially trained female teachers to educate children for ECE.

Although all education commissions report recommend ECE to every child, but little steps has been done to that end. However, the Government of Bangladesh recognizes that there must be a separate pre-primary class for children above the age of five (Ahmad et al., 2007). To this end, an attempt has been made to open one children's class in all the government primary schools in 2011. Currently, this work is being done mostly by private organizations/institutions through nursery schools. Thousands of pre-schools were launched privately to meet demand but were not enough to provide access for all children in Bangladesh. Therefore, children often receive early childhood education from parents and elders at home. Children whose parents and other members are not educated remain neglected (Aboud &

Hossain, 2011). However, among the government primary schools, mostly over-aged children are enrolling in the pre-primary class.

Still, the government of Bangladesh could not develop any specific rules for private schools (Ahmed et al., 2007), and It is difficult to estimate how many private schools exist, and the total number of children enrolled. There is a vast number of private schools among the regions in Bangladesh, and most of them are in urban areas. Usually, these schools have been opened for both kindergarten and elementary education without any special facilities. Later, they were converted to secondary schools and in some cases, to colleges. For the children of lower socio-economic conditions, mostly NGOs are working to ensure their access to ECE schools and usually provide free education. In, Bangladesh ECE facilities are provided among all the public, private, and other alternative types of schools. All these classes are conducted without adequately trained teachers or support materials. The school environment and physical facilities of schools are inadequate, especially the private school's kindergarten.

Among the ECE schools, school fees vary depending on the school locations, and school assets and households compensate for the extra fees (Bhatta, 2017). The salary of school teachers is meager, and there is a tendency to frequent teacher changes except for government schools. Usually, the government school provides free of charge for pre-primary education. Private Schools, NGOs offer education services with a nominal payment. In addition, at the beginning of each academic year, government schools receive one-time co-ordination fees or development funds. The government does not have a central controlling authority or institution to prevent such a large amount of school fees in private schools. Lack of the data of child Birth registration and households survey, it is complicated to calculate the exact number of eligible children who are already enrolled or will enroll (Chowdhury, Nath, Choudhury, & Ahmed, 2002). Nonetheless, it is estimated from the World Bank's probable population projection, given that there is 1.12 million children in pre-primary (3-5 years) category in Bangladesh. As no household survey is conducted nationwide since 2010, it is not feasible to calculate an actual number of non-enrolling children in ECE.

In 2008, the National Curriculum and Text Board (NCTB) had prepared a textbook for the pre-primary classes to follow in the government school. All other types of schools follow their own learning guidelines and curriculum for ECE. In collaboration with the Caritas Educational Program, the Institute of Childhood Education (ICE) was established in Dhaka, which identified the contents of the private schools, including the formulation of their aims and objectives, and provided suggestions on appropriate teaching methods for teachers.

In most schools, children are taught formal reading, writing, addition, subtraction, like informal primary grades. Furthermore, regular tests are taken to measure the success rate of children. English is the medium of instruction in some schools. In some schools, children are asked to read Bangla, English, language, environment, mathematics books, and memorize up to ten names. In madrasa and Mosques based schools, additionally, Arabic and religion are taught along with the government curriculum. In 2010, the National Education Policy of Bangladesh was advised to teach children at least two years before starting the formal basic education. Although all education commissions, policies, and committees have emphasized about pre-primary education, it has not yet been fully achieved. Private schools are providing ECE services, but social justice and parental rationality could not be ensured because of social inequality among regions in Bangladesh.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Universally, there are debates on the universality of Early Childhood Education (ECE), and the government should ensure universal access for all children among societies. (Barnett, Brown, Shore, & NIEER, 2004). Many of the countries around the world ECE are supported by government and households as well, where households choose the quality ECE among the available services to develop the child potentials in the early years to generate human capital (Carneiro, & Heckman, 2003). Parents should have the freedom to choose schools for their children to start at earlier as possible; usually, economic impediment and government regulations do not allow parents to choose in the early years (Fitzpatrick, 2008). School

autonomy has both positive and negative effects as full autonomy always restrict the parental right to choose schools for their children, where school decides who could enroll in the respected schools and negative aspects of autonomy create social inequalities among the children (Hanushek, & Woessmann, 2013). The institutional, systematic regulations make a barrier for the parents to choose a school for children, and economic situations cause more inequality among the children (Heckman, 2011). However, positive findings of institutional influences on child development minimize the gap among children, when parents have the ample option to choose ECE among diverse types (Sylva, 1994).

To fill the gap of debates among the researcher on the influence of socio-economic issues on school choice, where parental expenses on early education for children make a significant impact in ECE. The direct expenses incurred among the diverse school types, and socio-economic factors are associated with parental aspirations as the stratified parental choice of early schooling makes more considerable changes among the children in societies.

The issues of ECE school enrollment derive households from mobilizing their participation to ensure justice in societies for their children; parental economic conditions mostly derive them from enrolling in schools (Barnett, & Belfield, 2006). Parent involvement and school responsiveness for children's school enrollment have a positive association with education qualifications, whether they would like to enroll their children in early years or later for early childhood development (Bauch, & Goldring, 1995). However, to enroll children in schools, the school environment is highly considered as a risk factor because of the diverse social class children among the schools in ECE (Cooper, & Farran, 1988). Some of the research also found that without government supports, parents tend to delay enrollment in school to consider their investment for early education and its outcomes (Ducan & Magnuson, 2013). Fuller and Clarke (1994) also reveal that family culture is also essential for school enrollment in the early years as parents had to observe the social realities. Social realities of parents cannot avoid considering for school enrollment. Moreover, Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe (1995) reveal in their research for school enrollment, along with the cultural issues, households also consider

the market demand of education before they enroll in a school where equity in education is seen to be evident among parents. Glasser (2010) shows the rationale of school enrollment, which depends on the rational of parent's realities in societies for child education.

To fill the gap among the debates on school enrollment, this study would like to consider the parental socio-economic aspirations for ECE, where household aspirations help to decide school enrollment because of the government support for children for all ages. The issues of parental decisions for non-enrollment, whether only the economic or social or both, help parents to enroll their children in ECE. In Bangladesh, research shows that many children do not enroll in ECE before they start the formal basic primary schools in 2008 (Nath & Chowdhury, 2009). Conversely, parental socio-economic factors develop an impact on child enrollment in ECE, and parents from lower-income groups hardly buy learning and playing materials for their children. (Aboud, 2006).

Recent studies have shown that around the world, households' economic conditions impact on the school readiness of children as all the expenses are innate by their parents among the rural and urban areas in Bangladesh (Nath and Sylva, 2007). Parents have a broad perception of child schooling that private schools are better than public schools in Bangladesh (Cameron, 2011). The curriculum in ECE is diverse, and many children could not prepare for schooling and face disparities in schools (Opel et al., 2009). Rappaport, Ornoy, and Tenenbaum (1998) reveals that early intervention of parents prepares their children better than those who are late in schools, where the social concern of child education shows the parental demand for school readiness. Further, research shows that the school environment and teacher's qualifications matter for child school readiness and learning and development (Sharif, 2014). The research by Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev, and Yavitz (2010) parents consider school readiness for their children when they understand the benefits of preparing their children in the early years.

To apprehend the research debates of school readiness in ECE, as previous research shows, different aspects of institutional, social, and economic realities of parents to prepare

their children for schooling. As, child school preparations in the early years depend on the social disparities when they enroll in schools (Ahmed, Nath, Hossain & Kalam, 2006). The primary school dropout tendency is higher when children do not enter in any formal ECE schooling (Hossain & Zeitlyn, 2010).

### **1.3 Research Questions**

To explore the parental socio-economic aspirations for Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh in line with the government policy. The ECE policies in Bangladesh were decided primarily in coordination's of the government and non-government national and international organizations. The decisions made by the government of Bangladesh were accepted through various educational administrative management for implementation. However, due to government limitations and inappropriate policy interventions, most parents are playing a vital role in ECE in Bangladesh. Based on the reviewed literature and research gap, the following research questions are developed:

1. How do parental aspirations influence ECE schooling choice for their children in Bangladesh?
  - 1.1 How do parental socio-economic factors limit or support parental school choice in ECE in Bangladesh?
  - 1.2 How do parental socio-economic aspirations assist parents in managing ECE expenditure among regions in Bangladesh?
  - 1.3 How do parental aspirations influence ECE schooling choice for children with special needs?
2. How do parental aspirations influence ECE enrollment of children in Bangladesh?
  - 2.1 How do parents decide whether to enroll their children in ECE school in Bangladesh?



- 2.2 How do parents decide not to enroll their children in ECE school in Bangladesh?
3. How do parental aspirations influence child school readiness for ECE in Bangladesh?
- 3.1 How do parental aspirations affect preparation for school readiness in ECE in Bangladesh?
- 3.2 How does the available ECE schooling lead to disparities and school readiness in Bangladesh?

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The overall objectives of this study are to compare the phenomena of parental aspirations for school choice, enrollment, and readiness of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh. This study will analyze parental experiences and perceptions of early childhood schooling in Bangladesh. Further, this inquiry seeks to promote social justice and rational choice theory that foster parental aspirations for early childhood schooling in Bangladesh. The specific objectives of this study are the following three:

First, this study analyzes parental socio-economic aspirations for school choice among the rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh. This study also analyze the socio-economic factors, which motivate parents to choose school for their children and parental perspectives for ECE school choice in the early years.

Second, this study investigates parental socio-economic aspirations for early childhood education enrollment among the rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh. This study also consider the parental socio-economic aspirations for non-enrollment of their children in ECE schools in the early years.

Third, this study explores parental socio-economic aspirations for child school readiness among the rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh. This study also consider not only the parental socio-economic factors but also the school related factors for

child ECE school readiness in the early years of childhood among the rural and urban areas in Bangladesh. Further, this study explore that the school readiness issues in line with the supply and demand side issues in ECE.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

First, this study reveals the rationale of parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh, linking maximizing parental choice versus maximizing similar available services. Parents of children with special needs shared their struggles are the limited ECE institutional service information, stakeholders, and community cooperation's. This research reveals and turns into realities of parent actions to the options of ECE in Bangladesh. This research contributes by placing more emphasizing on the information gathering actions by parents through rational choice theory for ECE schooling for their children. Irrespective of economic conditions, the social issues are important for parents in the context of ECE in Bangladesh.

Previous studies reveal that government financing limitations and budget impedes the household's choice for early childhood education (Li & Wang, 2008). Further, equal opportunity with quality ECE schooling is feasible through ample government funding for ECE (Hu et al., 2016). In China, due to the government budget, there is a growing number of private schools, and parents tend to pay the high cost for their child's early education (Li et al. 2016). The previous research shows all possible measures taken by the parents for ECE choice rather than parents not choosing or sending their children in ECE.

Second, this study investigates parental socio-economic aspirations for early childhood education enrollment in Bangladesh among regions, that limit the scope of enrollment. Parental capacity to enroll mostly depends on the ability to pay direct and indirect school fees for their children and social factors motivating parents to enroll their children in ECE schools. However, in Bangladesh, the institutional factors arise as the most impediment to the ECE enrollment of children in the early years of schooling. Theoretically, social justice theory is prevailing in the

society, but institutions are mostly impeding the social justice in Bangladesh for child schooling in the early years.

Previous studies show that a burgeoning private early childhood education indicates self-finance or direct parental expenses for their child education (Cai & Feng, 2006). Moreover, with access to information about school quality for enrollment, parents can choose and hold schools accountable for better-quality services (Zhou et al. 2017). Family factors have also been identified as contributing to unequal access to education (Hu, Zhou, Li, & Killingsworth, 2014).

Third, this study examines the reasons for parental socio-economic aspirations for high-quality Early childhood education for their children, where diverse curriculum and highly dependent on private tutoring are impeding school readiness of children among regions in Bangladesh. The school readiness competencies are not only related to the family influences but also institutional issues for ECE in Bangladesh. ECE schools are assumed to provide education and provide school readiness, but most of the children are required to prepare for schooling before participating in ECE schools. Socialization process among the regions and parental social conditions mostly affect child school readiness in Bangladesh.

Previous studies show that teachers' compensations are lower than the primary school teachers; as a result, teachers' quality is degrading (Zhou et al. 2017). In Bangladesh, the upper-income group those are living in urban areas has the tendency to enroll, but the other income group of people do not enroll and prepare for schooling (Nath & Sylva, 2007). Children's disparities among the rural and urban areas indicate the unequal education system in society (Cunha et al., 2005).

Fourth, this study explores and analyses rationality (choice) derived from the self-social circumstances of parental (both father and mother) aspirations. It explains the phenomena of parental aspirations for children with special needs readiness in early education in the context of Bangladesh. Additionally, this study reveals that special needs children are mostly either out of school or absent from school despite government policies for ECE in Bangladesh. Schools

mostly obstruct the enrollment of the children with special needs to ensure the other peer group's school readiness and competencies in the early years of education. Although inclusive education policies are emphasizing, all the children are supposed to learn together to ensure child rights and justice among society for the healthy development of children with special needs.

Previous studies show that the purpose of education is always to predict how an individual will choose how to act, given perceived opportunities as well as their circumstantial preferences and which influence individuals made his or her decision (Hedström & Swedberg, 1996). Parental school choice among the diverse range of school services helps children to be prepared for schooling. The diverse range of choices helps parents the risk of unjust and low school readiness as schools are also accountable to the community as a whole (Gabay-Egozi, Shavit, & Yaish, 2010).

## **1.6 Organization of Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized with six chapters. This chapter lays out the foundation for a critical theoretical framework for discussions, debates, and defines the key concepts and terminologies. It also explains the rationale for the methodology of this study. Chapter one describes the background of this study, including the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, and significance. Chapter two provides a brief historical and informative overview of the development of early childhood education in Bangladesh and situates the growth of ECE in the broader settings of South Asia.

It also presents the country context of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh, including the government policy, financing mechanism, household expenditures for ECE, forms of ECE services, ECE school types, and ECE enrollment rate. Chapter three is a survey of previous research on ECE relevant to this study. Further, chapter four defines the method of this research with an explanation of a specific theoretical framework, conceptual framework, sampling, and data collection procedure. Chapter five explains the result of this study based on

field research in Bangladesh. Finally, chapter six briefly summarizes the implications of this study for the socio-economic aspirations of parents and presents the discussion, limitation, and conclusion of this study. Table 1.1 shows the chapter organization of this dissertation.

**Table 1.1 Dissertation Chapters Organization**

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Title</b>
Chapter One	Introduction
Chapter Two	Country Context
Chapter Three	Literature review
Chapter Four	Method
Chapter Five	Results
Chapter Six	Discussion and Conclusion

Source: Created by Author based on research design

## **CHAPTER 2: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) IN BANGLADESH**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter primarily explains vital Early Childhood Education (ECE) terminology used in the Bangladeshi context and presenting a summary of ECE and its historical development. The summary of the development of history for ECE, parental aspirations, especially family motivation for Early childhood education in different socio-economic contexts, are explained in this study. This chapter describes the government acts, legislation, and existing system of ECE and contemporary government policies and budget to foster ECE development in Bangladesh. Categories of the current ECE schooling system and pathways are described in the context of Bangladeshi for a better understanding of the phenomena of ECE. Finally, household expenditure and motivation for ECE are described and explained.

### **2.2 Definitions, and Terminology Usages for ECE in Bangladesh**

Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh, parents widely believe as a non-formal education service. Since 2013, the Government of Bangladesh includes children from 5 to 6 years old, was incorporated with the formal primary education system. Enrollment in ECE is not compulsory but is presently encouraged by the government. The term 'Early Childhood Education' in Bangladesh is traditionally known as 'baby class', 'Shishu Sreni', 'Junior I', 'Prak-Prathomik', 'Pre-School' and 'Pre-Primary' (Nath & Sylva, 2007). Although various names have been used, they express the meaning of Early childhood education, which is widely used globally.

The National Education Policy (2010) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Bangladesh defines Early childhood education as informal education for children before starting their first formal basic education at the age of 5-6 years old. To ensure all possible measures and a favorable early childhood education environment for children, the government

has introduced pre-primary schooling to prepare children for basic primary education.

Primarily, one-year pre-primary schooling has already been implemented for children over five years old. In 2020, this will be implemented for children aged 4. Private schools have a provision for enrollment in ECE starting at the age of 3 through households' own financing without any subsidies from the government. This study includes all the children aged from 3 to 5 years old irrespective of gender, ethnicity, and race, focusing on government and non-governmental educational institutions and services in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) monitors the ECE system, whereas the Ministry of Education (MoE) monitors the other entire level of education services. For convenience, in this study, the terms 'ECE School', 'Pre-School' and 'Pre-Primary' are used interchangeably for Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh.

### **2.3 Current Situation of ECE in Bangladesh**

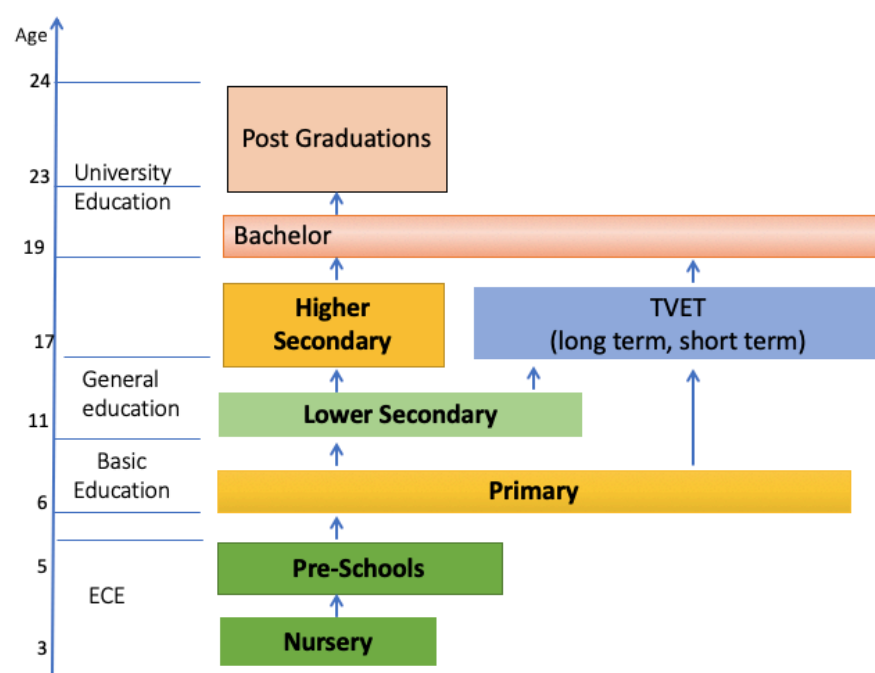
The current education system in Bangladesh was commenced and mostly followed by the British rules and policies developed since 1947. In Bangladesh, the education system is divided into four levels, such as primary education, secondary education, higher secondary, and higher education. The primary education level is free and compulsory for all respective aged children in Bangladesh. The primary education system in Bangladesh is considered to be the basic education for all children. All the government schools among the regions in Bangladesh are receiving the same financial assistance from the government of Bangladesh.

However, the other alternative schools do not receive any kind of government assistance except the national curriculum. In compare with the other countries, the primary education system of Bangladesh is the largest in terms of child enrollment, which is 21.9 million. The overall government expenditures are limited in comparison to other countries in the world. Since 2010, the government of Bangladesh took several initiatives for the advancement and development of ECE in Bangladesh. Although the ECE, in Bangladesh, is not mandatory for all children, due to the lack of capacity to ensure enrollment of all children

aged 3-5 years. The government of Bangladesh has a plan to ensure the enrollment of all children aged four from 2020. However, still, many of the children aged 3 and 4 are mostly out of schools or receiving education in other alternative educational service providers in Bangladesh.

Figure 2.1 shows the ECE education system compare with the entire education system in Bangladesh. The ECE in Bangladesh is not mandatory for all children. Primary education in Bangladesh is compulsory and free for children aged 6-10 years. Further, parents among the regions, especially among the urban areas, the expansion of ECE is minimal due to the government's capacity to ensure enrollment of all children.

**Figure 2.1 Current Education System and ECE in Bangladesh**



Source: Created by Author based on DPE (2016)

## 2.4 Historical Development of ECE in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is recognized to endorse the convention of child rights, also agreed to follow the guide of education for all in 1990 and the Dakar framework in 2000, to ensure early childhood education for all children. Although the government initiatives are very new for the



further development of ECD in Bangladesh, the ECE system in Bangladesh exist in informal and unstructured form for children's. Table 2.1 shows the major government strategies for ECE in Bangladesh from 1972 to 2013.

**Table 2.1 Government Key Initiatives for ECE in Bangladesh**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Initiatives</b>	<b>Issues</b>
1972	Baby classes	Informal baby classes started among government primary schools.
1974	Qudrat-e-Khuda Education Commission	The commission raised the issues of early years recognition for child development and teachers' training for ECE.
1991	NGOs initiatives	ECE started as non-formal schooling.
1995	Bangladesh Shishu Academy	District level ECE initiatives.
1998	PEDP I	Initiative to continues ECE.
2001	ECDP	UNICEF, GoB initiated projects in collaboration with NGOs.
2002	NGOs Actions	Government-approved NGOs to operate ECE in government primary schools.
2008	Operational Framework	The framework launched by the MoPME.
2010	National Education Policy	ECE as the first module and for children 5 years aged before starting primary schooling.
2011	ECE Curriculum	The curriculum was approved by MoPME.
2013	Comprehensive ECD policy	to ensure children development in all domain.

Source: Created by Author based on MoWCA (2013)

To prepare all the children in the early years, the government took several policies and actions to enroll and full access to all children at least one year before they enter primary school. The government, in close cooperation with national and international NGOs, the government, developed the pre-primary education framework for all children. In 2010, under the World

Bank's primary education development program, the pre-primary education framework also approved by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME).

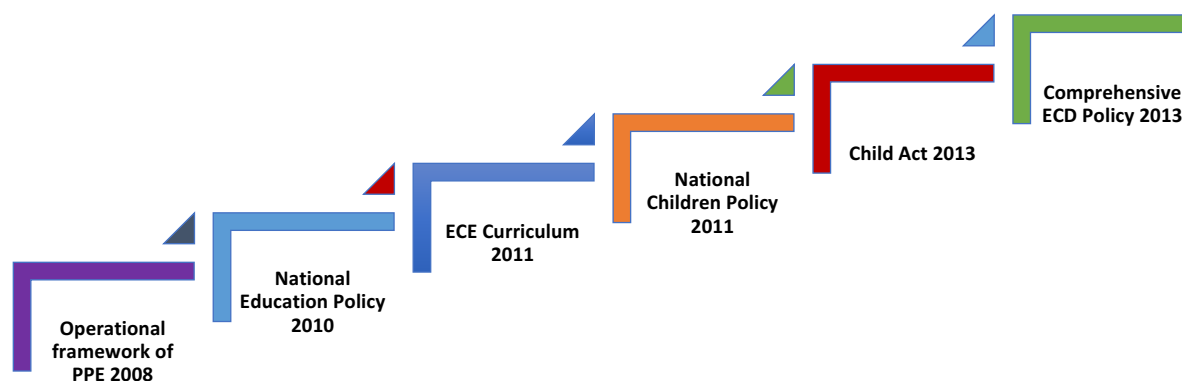
In 2011, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) developed the curriculum for the pre-primary schools, and all the schools, irrespective of services, are supposed to follow the curriculum to teach all the children to reduce the disparities among the regions in Bangladesh. However, due to the government's financial limitations, the pre-primary school curriculum was distributed to teach among the regions of the government school only in Bangladesh.

## **2.5 Government Policies and Regulations for ECE in Bangladesh**

The government is highly committed to all the national and international education policy commitments, along with the Education for All (EFA) initiatives that have directly motivated the government to prepare relevant policies for early childhood education and operational guidelines in Bangladesh. The commitments, strategies, and goals contained in those documents shown in Figure 2.2 have considered in preparing the pre-primary education framework in Bangladesh (MoPME, 2008). The government also approved the comprehensive policy of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in 2013 (MoE, 2017).

In practice, about 70% of primary schools are reported to conduct baby/infant classes (MoPME, 2014). Although the relevant government policy documents emphasize the proper implementation of early childhood education, there is no separate budget allocation for ECE in Bangladesh. It is usually allocated together with primary education or other programs related to child development through the concerned Ministries' budget. However, the main budget is provided through the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) as the principal implementer of early childhood education in Bangladesh.

**Figure 2.2 Trends of Government Policies for ECE in Bangladesh**



Source: Created by Author based on MoPME Data (2017)

Further, the government-specific plans and actions assist the ECE to materialize extensively all over Bangladesh. The plan and actions taken by the government of Bangladesh shown in Table 2.2 which support the full expansion of ECE in Bangladesh, and it is widely accepted the critical plans and actions of the government to ensure ECE for all children irrespective of geographic locations.

The constitution of 1972 was developed to ensure justice for all children and to ensure the fundamental basic needs of children and education is one of them. In line with the constitution of Bangladesh, the government always prioritized any kinds of issues which is directly related to child development and education. However, the first education commission also clearly emphasized the needs and further development of ECE in Bangladesh, and the issues are addressed irrespective of social conditions among the children in Bangladesh. Finally, the Education for All (EFA) and National Policy Actions (NPA) are also considered the emerging issues and challenges for ECE in Bangladesh.

**Table 2.2 Recent Government Plans and Actions for ECE in Bangladesh**

Plans and Actions	Year	Areas
National Education Policy	2010	Emphasize on the pre-primary education in the national education policy
National Children Policy	2011	All the children should have equal opportunity irrespective of race, gender, and ethnicity.
Child Act	2013	Child fundamental rights must be ensured and emphasized on child education.
Comprehensive ECD Policy	2013	The ECD policy mentioned that all children have the facilities of basic needs from birth to eight years old in line with the EFA, NPA, and NFP.

Source: Created by Author based on MoPME (2017)

Note. EFA=Education for All; NPA= National Plan of Action; NFE= Non-Formal Education

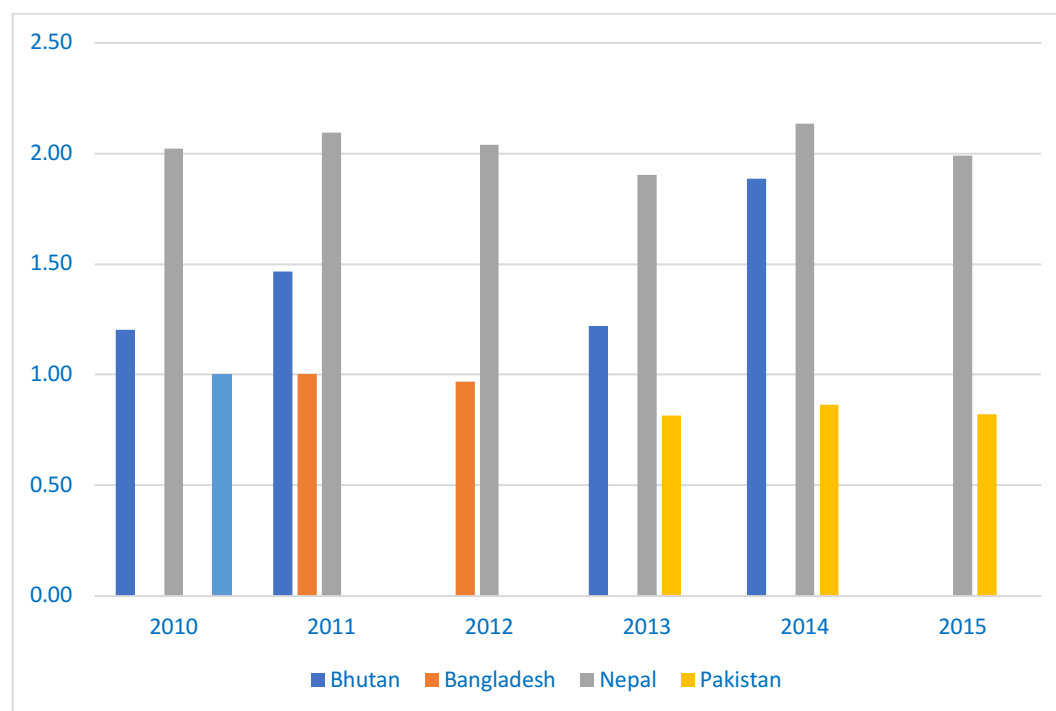
## 2.6 Financing for ECE in Bangladesh

The Government of Bangladesh has no specific budget for Early Childhood Education (ECE). However, the government is providing support through a grant for the ECE among the government schools in Bangladesh each year. The government is providing funds for all public schools through the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME). Usually, the government provides some grants to prepare learning materials for pre-primary classes, and many of the cases the grants are not the same because the amount of grants depends on the number of children enrolled in the specific schools.

Figure 2.3 shows the government expenditure on primary education as a percentage of total GDP, based on the available data it shows that the government expenditure on primary education is less than 1% of the total GDP. Further, in comparison with the other South Asian countries, the government expenditure for primary education is less than the other countries. The figure also shows that the government expenditure for primary education is less than the

other south Asian counterpart. Remarkably, the government of Nepal is spending a lot on primary education as a percentage of GDP, in comparison with the other South Asian countries.

**Figure 2.3 Government Expenditure on Primary Education as a Percentage of GDP**

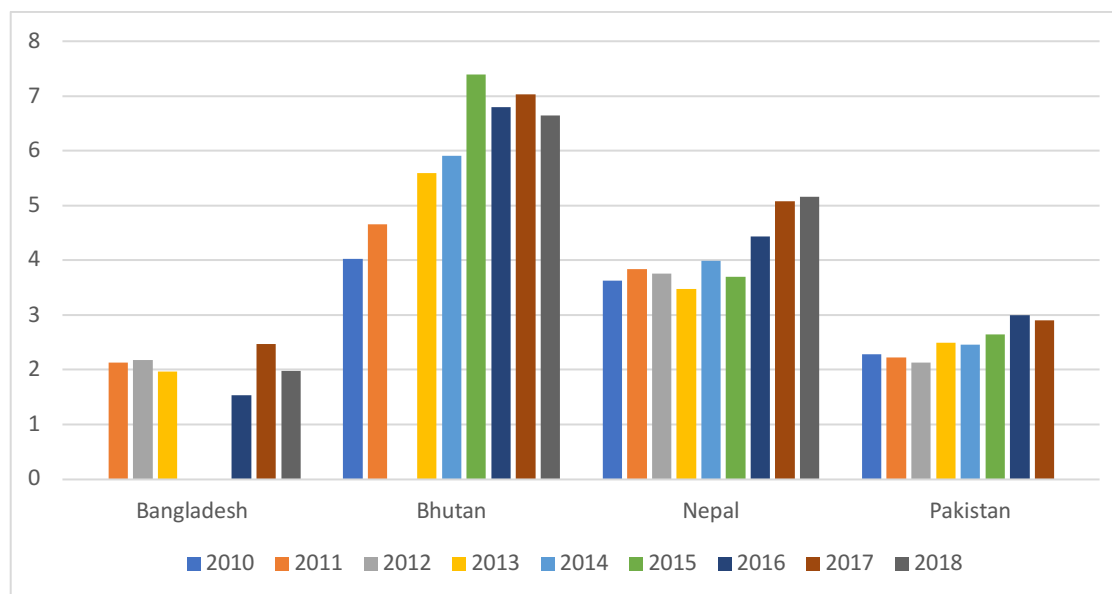


Source: Created by Author based on UNESCO UIS (2019)

Figure 2.4 shows the government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, where the government of Bangladesh is spending less than 2% of total GDP in the whole education sector in Bangladesh. It is noticeable that the other South Asian counterpart is spending more than the government expenditure on education in Bangladesh. Among the countries, the government of Bhutan is spending 7% of GDP on education.

Over the year's data from the figure, it is noticeable that the government of Bhutan is increasing its expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP simultaneously. Finally, from the figure, it is evident that the education sector in Bangladesh is the lowest funded sector in terms of government expenditures in education. Even over time, government expenditure on education is slightly decreasing in Bangladesh.

**Figure 2.4 Government Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of GDP**



Source: Created by Author based on UNESCO UIS (2019)

The government of Bangladesh implementing pre-primary nationwide since 2010. The government expenditure on primary education for children is the US \$ 100 per year, including pre-primary school children. Further, the fast expansion of pre-primary the government of Bangladesh is providing the US \$ 63 for all government primary schools as a grant for teaching and learning materials for children. In 2012-2013, the government spent almost US \$ 12 million for all the government primary schools in Bangladesh, and the grant amount was the US \$ 400 for each school.

In Bangladesh, the government already ensured access for all children aged five years in the pre-primary class, although still there are several issues of the classroom, teachers, and school environment. Presently, almost all government primary schools successfully implemented a one-year pre-primary education despite a severe lack of resources among the regions in Bangladesh. Jahan (2013) mentions that most of the government primary schools are not well organized and the diversity among the pre-primary class with children aged 3 to 6 years. Bangladesh is one of the countries in the world where its primary education quality is in concern, but they started the pre-primary schooling for children in the same schools.

### 2.6.1 Households Expenditures for ECE in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, all the government primary school receives Tk. 5,000 BDT (US \$63) in 2017 to purchase the teaching and learning materials (DPE, 2017). The per-student expenditure in 2015-16 was Tk. 7,173 (BDT) in primary schools for classes one to five (DPE, 2016). Government and households' expenditures for pre-primary school students are shown in Table 2.3.

**Table 2.3 School Types and Annual Expenditures in Bangladesh**

<b>School Types</b>	<b>Expenses in US \$</b>
Public School	100
NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations)	25
Private School (kindergarten)	162
Others	170

Source: Created by Author based on Cameron (2011)

Table 2.3 shows that household expenditure for early childhood education is higher than government expenditures. The high expenditure for early childhood education in Bangladesh is impeding enrollment at an early age because of the direct and indirect expenditure of households. The table also shows that the government expenditures for children among the government primary schools are US \$ 52. However, the educational expenses for households in the US \$ 161. It is evident that the household's expenses are higher than the government expenditure for education.

Most of the parents who are sending their children to private schools had to bear all expenses for their child's schooling, where the parents who enrolled in the private schools do not receive any financial assistance from the government. Due to the limitations of government policy, all the children are not getting financial assistance when the child is not enrolling in

government schools. The other alternative schools in Bangladesh are fee-based, and parents ought to pay for the child's school expenses.

## 2.7 Stakeholders of ECE in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, several ministries are involved in the development of Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the country's Vision 2021. In order to accomplish the achievement in health, education, and all the forms of human capital development, the government of Bangladesh imitated several strategies, especially for the development of all children providing extensive access to ECE. Table 2.4 shows the ECE stakeholders mapping for this study in the context of ECE in Bangladesh, where it shows that among the types of ECE services, several ministries are involved for ECE in Bangladesh.

**Table 2.4 Stakeholders Mapping for ECE in Bangladesh**

School Types	Concern Ministries
Public School	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)
Private School	Ministry of Commerce (MoC) & Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME)
Others (Indigenous, Mosque, Temple)	Ministry of Religious Affairs
NGO based School	Prime Minister's Office
Madrassa (Religious) School	Ministry of Education (MoE)

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Besides, several ministries are also involved with the ECE, as the government of Bangladesh adopted the comprehensive Early Childhood Policy (ECP), and the policy was developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MoWCA). The policy aimed to provide support for all children irrespective of regional locations, gender, and socio-economic



status. Further, MoWCA also implemented National Children's policy to focus more on child rights, social protection from childhood through adolescence.

Bangladesh's ECD sector is disintegrated. The government, NGOs, INGOs, and researchers are working for a more substantial extension of ECE. In 2010 almost eighteen ministries and more than two hundred national and international organizations were working on ECE, ECCE, and ECD, where MOWCA and MoPME are the major government bodies working for child development. Furthermore, several prominent NGOs and INGOs also working, namely, Save the Children, BRAC, Plan-Bangladesh, and Dhaka Ahsania Mission. Some of the international development partners of the government of Bangladesh also contribute to the development of ECE in Bangladesh, namely UNESCO, UNICEF, ADB, JICA, EU, and World Bank.

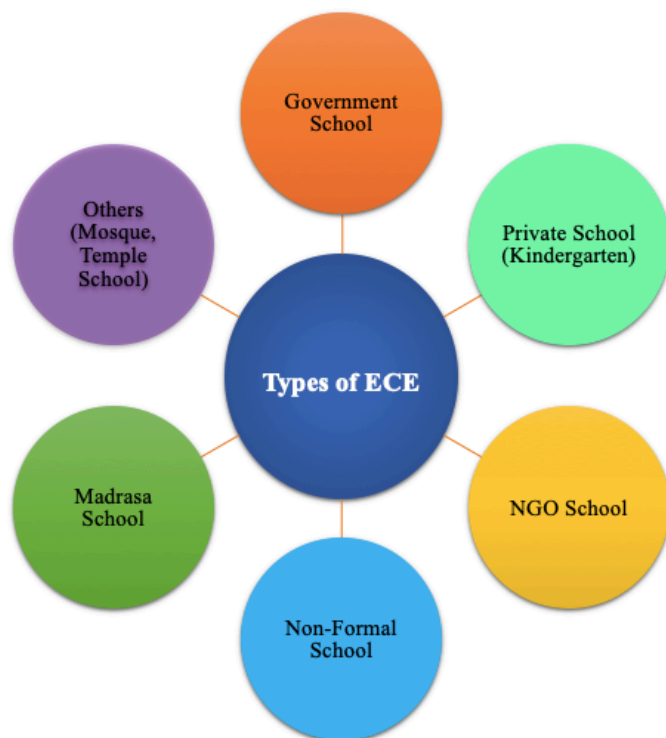
## **2.8 Types of ECE Institutions in Bangladesh**

The Director of Primary Education (DPE) under the Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3) has started Pre-primary education in 2010. In Bangladesh, NGOs also played a vital role in offering pre-primary education for children, especially among rural areas. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs, and the other sectors also providing the ECE services. Although the government prolonged the ECE services through all the government primary schools in Bangladesh but the NGOs and private school service providers are also delivering the ECE services independently or in cooperation with the government of Bangladesh.

Figure 2.5 shows the available services of ECE in Bangladesh. Most of the parents who like to send their children to school; otherwise, they have to depend on the private services as the government has the provision of service facilities only for the children who are five years. On the other hand, private schools provide access facilities for children from 3-5, especially in urban areas. Among rural areas, private schools also have the facilities to enroll children in schools, mostly at the age of 4-5. Parents tend to send their children to the other alternative

schools as the government cannot provide access and enrollment facilities for all the children aged 3-5, especially in public schools.

**Figure 2.5 Types of ECE Service Providers in Bangladesh**



Source: Created by Author based on MoPME (2018)

## **2.9 Number of Schools with ECE Facilities in Bangladesh**

In 2010, the government of Bangladesh started the Pre-Primary education services throughout all the 37000 government primary schools. The government primary school is the largest pre-primary schooling service provider. Following the international standard, the number of teachers and student ration is very high. The government management and high demand for pre-primary among the parents are the main issues for this high enrollment. With this high number of students in one class, quality education is hardly feasible for all children, and as a result, this high number of children are in a learning crisis in the very early years of childhood.

Most of the government schools in Bangladesh are in either a lack of ECE school teachers or a lack of classrooms. Further, the alternative ECE school services are conducting

their class with minimum qualifications to teach the children in ECE schools. Most of the ECE teachers in the alternatives schools they do not have any training to teach the children in ECE classes and especially severe lack of leering and reading materials in Bangladesh.

**Table 2.5 School Types, Number of Schools and Children's in Bangladesh**

Type of Schools	Schools	Percentage (%)	Students	Percentage (%)
<b>Public Schools</b>				
GPS	37,700	35.3	10,564,331	53.9
NNPS/RNGPS	22,632	21.2	4,325,894	22.1
Experimental	56	0.05	11,499	0.06
Total Public	60,388	56.5	14,901,724	76.1
<b>Independent Private Schools</b>				
Kindergartens	14,100	13.2	1,798,500	9.2
NRNGPS	2,799	2.6	443,724	2.3
BRAC schools	9,683	9.1	214,161	1.1
Other NGO schools	2,101	2	212,212	1.1
Primary (High school attached)	1,245	1.2	467,926	2.4
Community schools	1,244	1.2	207,526	1.1
Total independent private	31,172	29.2	3,344,049	17.2
<b>Government-Funded Private Schools</b>				
Ebtedayee madrassas	2,623	2.5	344,120	1.8
Madrassa attached Ebtedayee	5,583	5.2	845,438	4.3
ROSC schools	3,830	3.6	93,993	0.5
Shishu Kallyan schools	112	0.1	11,030	0.06
Total govt. funded private	12,148	11.3	1,294,581	6.7
Total primary schools	106,859		19,584,972	

Source: Created by Author based on MoPME (2015, p.47)

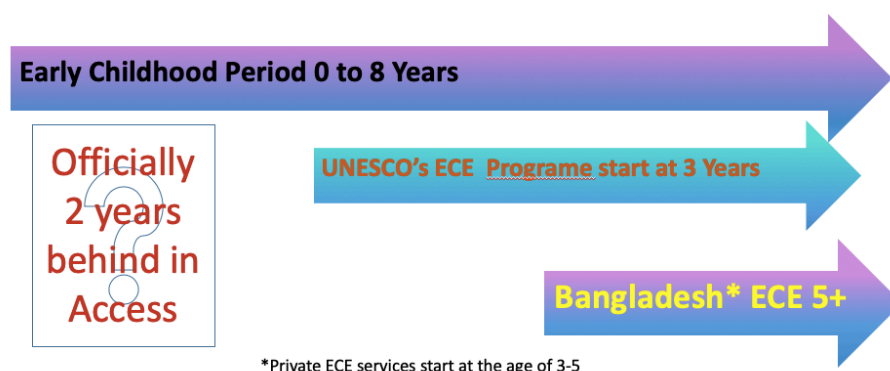
Note. GPS=Government Primary Schools, NNPS= Newly Nationalized Primary Schools, RNGPS=Registered Non-government Primary Schools, NRNGPS= Non-registered non-government Primary Schools, ROSC=Reach out of School Children, BRAC= Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.

Table 2.5 shows that the government of Bangladesh is providing enrollment opportunities among government schools such as GPS, NNPS, RNGPS, and preparatory schools. In total, the government schools could accommodate the children of 56.5%. The private schools are providing the enrollment opportunity for the children of 29.2%, and finally, other government-funded schools can accommodate children of 11.03%. The data also shows that among the NGO schools, BRAC is providing almost 9.2 % of children enrollment opportunity in Bangladesh. Further, the religious schools such as Madrasa and Mosques based schooling are also providing the opportunity to enroll children of 7.7% in ECE among the regions in Bangladesh.

## 2.10 Enrollment Age and Rate of ECE in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, all government schools have ECE facilities, and children aged 5-6 can enroll in Schools. In contrast, private schools with diverse forms and types, all the children from aged 3 to 5, can enroll, which is shown in Figure 2.6. It is clearly noted that in Bangladesh, the children have a clear two years behind in terms of access among the public schools, although the UNESCO suggested schooling for the children at the age of 3-5. The government of Bangladesh has the provision for enrolling children at the age of 5 except the other alternative schools like religious-based schools, NGO-based schools, and private schools are also providing access for all children aged 3-5.

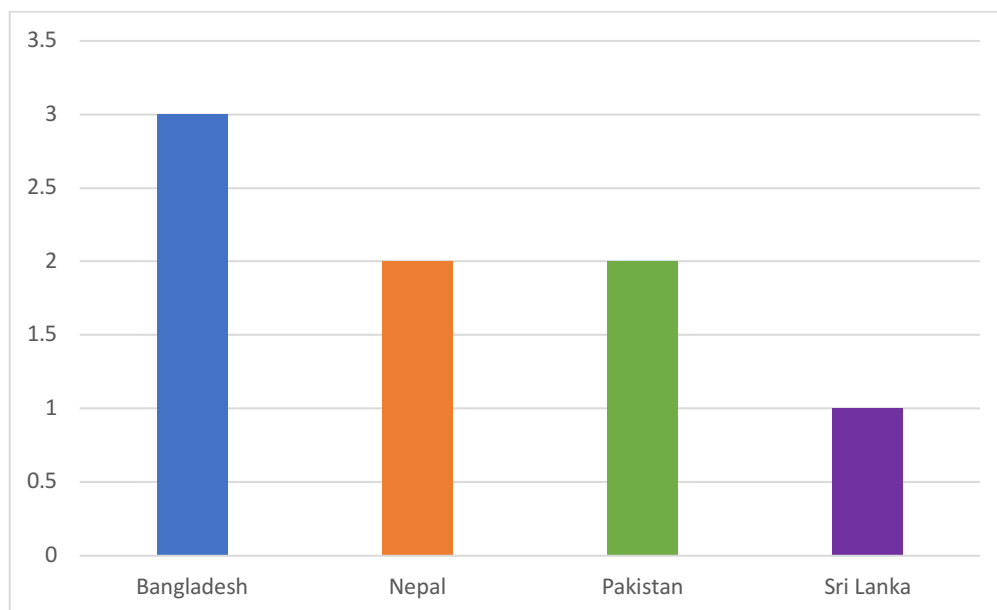
**Figure 2.6 ECE Enrollment Age in Bangladesh**



Source: Created by Author based on UNESCO (2016) and DPE (2017)

Irrespective of enrollment age of children, in Bangladesh, with the expansion of ECE, it is significantly tough to ensure the quality of education for all children. Although the government started providing services for all five years aged children, most of the cases, due to lack of resources, the school could not provide quality services. The government of Bangladesh confirmed the enrollment of all children aged five years, but most of the classes are ranging from 3 to 5 years. Due to the lack of policy implementation and transparency in formulating the universal birth registration system for all in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, many of the NGOs are also involved with the process, the government could not ensure mandatory birth registrations for all children. As a result, a lack of coordination is evident among the implementing stakeholders.

**Figure 2.7 Theoretical Duration of Early Childhood Education (years)**

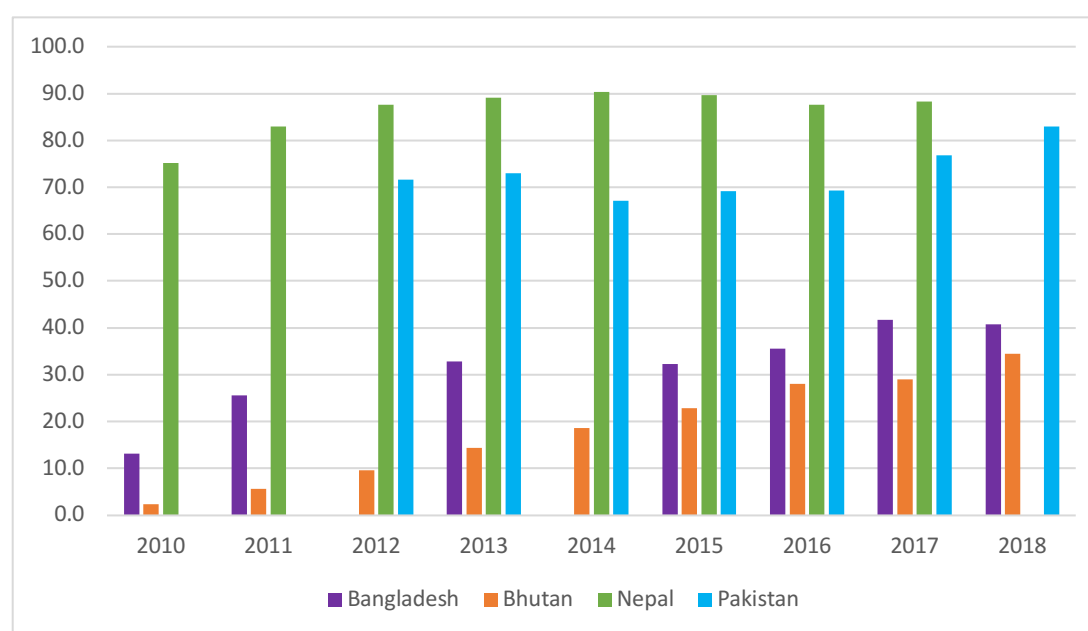


Source: Created by Author based on UNESCO UIS (2019)

Figure 2.7 shows the theoretical duration of ECE in Bangladesh, which is three years. In comparison with the other south Asian countries, the government took several steps to implement for all the age groups of 3 to 5. However, still, the government primary schools are providing ECE education for only the age of 5 years of children among the regions in Bangladesh.

Compared with other South Asian countries, in terms of the gross enrollment rate in 2015, it is evident that Bangladesh is struggling in terms of ECE enrollment of children in schooling. On the other hand, in South Asian counterparts, governments are providing adequate financing for ECE, and the enrollment rate is quite high in comparison with Bangladesh. Most of the South-Asian countries have made remarkable progress in terms of enrollment of children in the ECE. Those countries could prioritize their budget for ECE financing, and they realize the benefits of investing in ECE for all children. However, in compare with the theoretical ages the government of Bangladesh set the theoretical ages 3 years before starting the primary education.

**Figure 2.8 Percentage of Gross Enrollment Ratio in ECE**



Source: Created by Author based on UNESCO UIS (2019)

Figure 2.8 shows the date of gross and net enrollment rate of ECE in Bangladesh from 2010-2018. The data shows that in 2015, the gross enrollment rate was 33 %, the progress of ECE gross enrollment is not remarkable in comparison with the year 2013, which was slightly higher than in 2015. Notable, compare the date over the years since 2010, in Bangladesh, the gross enrollment rate is 12% to 34%, over the nine years only changes 21%, which represents the government's lack of initiatives for the enrollment in ECE in Bangladesh. In 2010, the

government of Bangladesh initiated enrollment of children in the pre-primary schools, but many of the children who are 3-5 years are out of school due to the access barriers. In Bangladesh, the ECE is mostly driven by the private facilities and all the expenses born by the parents.

In 2016, the enrollment rate in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Bangladesh is shown in Table 2.6, where the age group and residence area of children are mentioned. The table shows the date of age-specific enrollment among regions in Bangladesh, where the 4-5 years aged children show the highest enrollment rate, and the enrollment rate among rural and urban areas is 10% difference. However, in the case of 3 years aged children among the rural areas, the tendency of children enrolled in school, which is almost 11%, but among the urban areas, the data shows that only 3% of children were enrolled in 2016. The data also shows that except for the three years aged children in rural areas are highest, but for the other ages, the urban area children are higher than the rural areas.

**Table 2.6 Enrollment Rate by Age Group and Regions in Bangladesh**

Age	Gender (%)		Residence (%)		
	Boys	Girls	Rural	Urban	All
3 years	8.0	10.9	10.6	4.3	9.5
4 years	29.6	28.5	28.6	31.4	29.1
5 years	50.2	54.8	50.3	63.0	52.5
3-5 years	29.7	31.2	29.9	33.4	30.5
4-5 years	39.5	41.2	38.9	47.7	40.4

Source: Created by Author based on Education Watch Pre-school Survey (2016).

### **2.11 Forms of ECE Services in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh since 2010, all the government schools are providing one-year pre-primary schooling facilities for all children aged five years among the regions. Kindergartens under private ownership provide pre-primary education to children on a fee basis, while similar

initiatives undertaken either by the government or NGOs are mostly free of cost. Government provision of primary schools serves the most significant number of children, but the private schools provide diverse types of services for ECE in Bangladesh among the regions.

Table 2.7 shows the forms of available ECE services in Bangladesh, where the public school has the provision of one-year pre-primary schooling facilities for the age of 5 years children both in rural and urban areas. The table also shows that six forms of alternative schooling facilities that exist in Bangladesh, which is mostly facilitated by the private and NGOs and other forms of schooling among rural and urban areas in Bangladesh. However, form 5-7 are showing the ECE facilities for aged 3-5 years and mostly facilitated by private service providers.

**Table 2.7 Forms of Available ECE Services in Bangladesh**

Age	Public	Others (Private, NGOs, etc.)					
	Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Form 5	Form 6	Form 7
Age 3					Nursery	Play Group	Nursery
Age 4			KG 1	Nursery	KG 1	Nursery	KG 1
Age 5	Pre-primary	KG	KG 2	KG	KG 2	KG	KG 2

Source: Created by Author based on Nath & Sylva (2007, p.279).

*Note.* KG=Kindergarten, most of the private schools those are providing ECE services for age group 4 and 5 years, the respected service provider using the term KG1 and KG2 to divide the age group children and the curriculum they followed are different in most of the cases with an exception.

The private schooling service provider used the name alternatively to assure more enrollment for all age groups, for instance, in form 3, 5, and 7 correspondingly used KG 1 and KG 2, where the KG1 and KG2 classes provide different curricula for the respected age groups. In Bangladesh, as the government does not have any specific rules for the private service providers, and they do not have control for the private service providers. The private school



services provider is mostly profit-making educational institutions among the regions in Bangladesh.

## **2.12 Teachers Qualification for ECE in Bangladesh**

The government has changed policy in recruiting government school teachers, which is shown in Table 2.8. The government gives priority to female teachers. As a result, the government of Bangladesh lowers the minimum qualifications of female teachers, which is a Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), although, for the male, the minimum qualifications are a bachelor's degree. Among the schools in Bangladesh, only the government school has specific criteria to recruit the ECE school teachers with specific academic qualification.

All the alternative school's authority set the teachers qualification by themselves and especially among the rural areas they do not maintain any specific criteria to recruit their teachers. In terms of the training, most of the alternative schools do not have specific training for teachers, mostly in-service and pre-service training, to teach in the ECE schools.

Simultaneous, the government also providing training for the newly recruited teachers as pre-service and in-service training for the development of teaching quality among the schools. However, the alternative school service providers have no specific rules for the recruitment of their teachers; most of the cases, it is noted that the teacher's qualifications among the other alternative school services providers vary among the regions. Most of the cases, the teachers of other alternative ECE services provided do not have any training to teach in classes.

**Table 2.8 Teachers Qualifications for ECE in Bangladesh**

School Types	Gender	Minimum Qualifications	Trainings	
			Pre-Service	In-Service
Public School	Male	Bachelor Degree	Diploma in Education (18 Months)	Certificate in Education (1 year) & Two Weeks
	Female	HSC		
Private School	Male	Bachelor	--	--
	Female	HSC	--	--
Others (Mosque, Temple)	Male	HSC	--	--
	Female	--	--	--
NGO based School	Male	Bachelor	--	--
	Female	SSC	--	--
Madrasa (Religious) School	Male	Bachelor	--	--
	Female	HSC	--	--

Source: Created by Author based on field research (2018)

Note. HSC=Higher Secondary Certificate; SSC=Secondary School Certificate.

### 2.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter shows the government initiatives with reference to recent policy changes for the development of ECE in Bangladesh. This chapter also briefly describes the current situation of ECE in Bangladesh, financing for ECE, households expenditures for ECE, existing ECE facilities, types, forms, and stakeholders information. In addition, the recent policy change for the private schools of Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) in fostering ECE development although the government has very limited data on the private school services among the regions in Bangladesh. Furthermore, this chapter shows that there are existing different forms of ECE schools in terms of age specific but diverse school facilities in Bangladesh among rural and urban areas. In Bangladesh, among the rural areas parents have diverse range of school facilities and they could avail based on their needs but rural parents

have specific and limited choice for their child schooling. As the government has a very specific ECE schooling system and parents those wants to send their children are mostly facilitated by the private organizations in Bangladesh.

## **CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The main objectives of this chapter are to present scholastic evidence and outcomes of previous research. This study is directly related to the parental aspirations for early childhood education irrespective of their socio-economic conditions in Bangladesh. First, this chapter provides previous literature about parental aspirations for early childhood educational choice, and globally the researcher finds that the economic conditions and parental academic achievement influence the decisions for early childhood education. Second, this chapter provides the findings of the previous research findings on parental enrollment decisions in early childhood education. Previous research mostly found that the socio-economic situation of households affects the enrollment of children in the early years, although most of the parents do not have sufficient information about the quality of school services. Third, school readiness in early childhood education is vital for children for future educational achievement. Some of the previous research shows that parenting time affects school readiness in the early years, although fathers do not have enough time to prepare their children for schooling in the early years. On the other hand, some studies also reveal that mother's educational qualification directly affects children school readiness.

### **3.2 Parental Aspirations for School Choice in Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

Many of the previous studies on school choice have been fundamentally concerned with parental economic conditions as the main issues and concern for school choice and enrollment in early childhood education. Bhatta (1998) argues that economic constraints and schooling quality are the critical factors of parental motivation for ECE school choice and school enrollment in the early years for fundamental childhood development. Most of the cases, the

researcher asserts that economic constraints are impeding the school choice and enrollment for their children in ECE schooling.

For long-term child development and future benefits in child learning, parents choose schools for their children and to cope up with real-life situations. Early childhood education provides lifelong learning opportunities for children. Parents hardly consider choosing their child's schooling with diverse socio-economic background peer groups. Parental motivations for schooling always make the differences among the children for future development (Adams & Rohacek, 2002).

Parental demand and choice among the available school services mostly depend on the school characteristics. Parents believe that school quality always crucial for child development. Parents intend to choose the quality school for ECE because of education as well as the care needed for their children. The post-socialist countries always try to develop appropriate policies for broader access for all children (Fong & Loshkin, 2000). However, the socialist countries also failed to provide access for all children because of parental economic constraints in ECE school enrollment.

Among the societies, parents with diverse needs children tend to choose those schools that provide fair access and opportunities for all children. Parents never choose those schools where they believe in creating more disparities in their children. The government financing policy mitigates the financial challenges of parents to ensure equity in education (Downes & Stiefel, 2008).

Government financial assistance changes the enrollment development of a country in the early years of childhood. Government funding for the children education closes the disparities among the children. The government mitigates the barriers of children to access schools and choices of parents through financial assistance, particularly for lower-income group parents (Pal & Kingdon, 2010).

In the early years of schooling, the teacher's quality, and school environment are not significant factors. Parental socio-economic characteristics are the main factors for child

education and development. Parents choose the educational facilities in the early years of their child schooling, which is the best fit for their children according to their social orientation (Coleman et al., 1966).

Hossain and Zeitlyn (2010) concluded that the government school funding program does not close the gap of parental school choice for their children. The government funding is making more disparities among the children in the name of financial assistance, where the assistance is only applicable for government school enrollment. This financial assistance limits parental choice among the ECE services.

Government funding programs for the ECE schooling mark easier for parents among the diverge income group to send their children in school. Initiatives by all the concern stakeholders ensure access for all children. Cash transfer programs like the stipend program can be highly effective in improving access and retention in education in particular among the poor (Fiszbein & Schady et al., 2009), as has been the case in Bangladesh.

Parents choose a school for their children; however, the children's development depends on the parenting time with children. Children stay at home longer than school time, and as a result of child development mostly depend on the family socio-economic characteristics. Parenting time with children like reading books and taking children to museums make the differences among the children in the early years. School choice is not essential, whereas the family orientation to prepare children for schooling is important (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002).

Tooley and Dixon (2006) argue that parents have an active choice and preference for ECE for their children, especially private schools, which are not accessible or affordable to the poor income group of parents. Parents with lower-level socio-economic conditions usually choose a religion based early education because of the social class difference among societies, even in the early childhood years of children.

Previous research claims that socio-economic class was one of the significant factors influencing parents' school choice. However, Alam (2019) also notes that "children with

special needs are mostly out of school because of the school environment and the curriculum practiced at schools." Mostly, parents do not have the choice to enroll their children in school because parents depend on the supply side decisions for enrollment.

Qualitative research on educational quality in Pakistan has also shown that education does not necessarily create socio-economic equity and gender equity in classrooms for all the children. However, parental school choice for quality of education is essential for future economic growth, achieving equity, and social justice in education in the early years (Rose & Adelabu, 2007).

Exponents of school choice emphasize the regeneration of government school education services through the formation of privatizations, which increase parental participation, fulfillment, emancipation, and equality among the society, and resulting in improved student achievement in early years of education (Smrerkar & Goldring, 1999). Usually, parents rely on their self-values and their ultimate interest in their children's education. Parents also use their social and professional networks to gather valuable information regarding different ECE schools, although ultimately, school choice opportunity depends on parental capacity to meet the needs of their children.

Some theories suggest that parental school choice produces more competition among schools for student enrollment by offering a diverse school curriculum among children from diverse backgrounds creates more disparities among the children and in society. Parental pressure makes the school more productive in preparing the curriculum, leading to high-quality education for all (Levin, 2002).

Whereas other research also suggests that this type of school choice might create and disrupt the freedom of parents with special needs, values, and specific groups of children. Parents choose an educational institution as a social and fundamental human right of their children based on their lifestyle, religious values, and rational socio-economic thinking. Therefore, parents might be able to choose available schooling for their children based on their preferences.

Hatcher (1998) indicates that parental school choice for children is a complicated issue for economic calculations and the value of education in line with the available education services for the specific communities in the early years. School choice options in the developed countries provide evidence as to higher education qualifications parents and high level of family income directly related to this process for child education. In contrast, the low family income groups hardly have the chance to choose schools for their children. Hatcher also argues that socio-economic situations of lower- and middle-income parents are more anxious about their child education options as attaining specific education qualifications in the early years and the risk of social issues concern for education.

However, Coleman (1998) concluded that in choosing schools, parental social orientation is essential for child education and development. Parents belong to a specific social group in society. Parental strong social interaction with the communities helps them for the school choice decisions making the process. Parental socio-economic realities factor into their choice of schools for their children in early years education.

Greene (2001) argues that not only the economic factors is directly related to school choice decisions, but some unobserved factors also affect it, such as social inequality in society. They are interrelated with parental education qualifications, family direct and indirect earnings, the participation of parents with children's activities, and parental future goals for child schooling in ECE.

Cohn (2013) notes that parental decision making for early education depends on the available services for the early years of education. There is confusion about childhood education services because of a lack of quality service information. Mostly, parents face difficulty distinguishing between low- and high-quality education programs due to disorganized information of available ECE school services. Moreover, there are prejudices about the services and costs of education, identifying their service quality level for children in the early years.



Weber (2011) provides a full explanation behind the scene of parental choice of early childhood education. She shows that family values and beliefs and social networks highly motivate parents to choose educational facilities for their children. Further, parental decisions depend on the types of educational services and financial expenses required, that directly influence the early childhood education choice and decision.

Forry et al. (2013) describe that parents' decision-making processes and priorities depend on the ability to pay for the expenses for early education. However, parental information-gathering techniques mostly depend on social connections, especially for parents from lower-income groups. This reflects that information from family and friends' experiences is the top source for most parents. Another factor is that social network helps to decide the school for children, parents with high-income level discuss with a peer group, but parents with low income discuss with the lower group. As a consequence, the school choice highly depends on parental social orientation in society.

Sandstrom et al. (2012) report that parents indeed depend on informal sources to decide, and sometimes parents struggle to search for alternative options for their children's education. Generally, parents select ECE schools based on related factors such as program quality and convenient logistics facilities.

Parents from lower-income groups usually focus on practical considerations for school choice, such as hours of schooling, the cost for services, and distance from home to school. Regardless of parental preferences, lack of parental time and resources impede the early learning of children among the lower-income groups as parents have to follow strict working times.

Grogan (2011) argues that parental socio-economic status and factors are considered when choosing early education. However, ECE school quality does not matter. In her research, she indicates that higher family income tends to choose high-quality schooling for their children among the services appropriate for them. Additionally, Parents with high-income

levels also consider the tradition of a family when choosing schools, irrespective of school progress, and child development.

Cronin (2013) ascertains on parental choice highly depends on the available information services of schooling for their children. School hours cost for education, social phenomena, and environmental matters for high-income families, but low- and middle-income group parents consider the school in terms of their opportunity cost when choosing early education for their children.

Betts and Loveless (2005) reflect the school choice decision influence mostly by available schools nearby, although quality comes later as consideration of time. Parents choose school among the schools where the peer group enrolled their children. Parents believe that school quality is essential, but there is no specific mechanism to measure the quality of schooling for early childhood. In early childhood school facilities, the school does not measure the student's ability by examinations. As a result, parents believe, according to their peer group actions.

Goldring and Rowley (2006) allege that the information acquiring technique depends on the social group and the society where they belong. Collections of school information depend on parental visits to schools, but most parents do not like to go to school before they decide to enroll that specific school. However, parents tend to change school after child enrollment, especially among the middle- and high-income groups of people. The lower-income group of people once decide or choose they hardly change the school for their children in the early years.

According to Lareau (2002), the high-income group of parents has a fragile social network as they do not feel comfortable discussing the middle- and lower-income groups of parents. On the other hand, parents with lower income group, they tend to contact the school directly to know more about the school facilities and school qualities before they choose or decide the school for their children.

However, parents with a high-level of education qualifications have a diverse network, and they collect school quality information from their peer group and friends. Lower education qualifications parents tend to choose the nearest available services for their children.

Diverse curricula among different ECE settings mostly generate learning inequalities in the early life of childhood among the regions in Bangladesh (Opel, Ameer, & Aboud, 2009). Parents with special needs children are severely anxious for their children when choosing a school for them. Parents are factually confused when and which school would be better for their children (Lee, 2010).

### **3.3 Parental Aspirations for Enrollment in ECE**

Children's cognitive and non-cognitive skills are developed once they enroll in ECE schools. Both domains are usually developed through the early school enrollment, and children who are not enrolling in ECE, there is a remarkable gap among the children from the very early years of their childhood. School enrollment usually ensures child future educational attainment and childhood success (Reynolds et al., 1996).

Further, Sabates et al. (2010) denote when education expenses are lower, then all the children could enroll. Although the direct and indirect costs impede the children's enrollment in school, the government can make the difference to ensure equal opportunity for all children. On the other hand, school enrollment of children reduces the gap and disparities among the children in society. Special needs children also have access to enroll in school as early as possible to ensure inequality in learning opportunities (Ou, 2003).

Engle et al. (2007) show that enrollment of children in a good quality ECE service not only reduces disparities but also develops the cognitive and non-cognitive development in the early years of education to reduce the difference. The school environment mostly assures the active participants of children in school. Children with diverse needs have a chance to develop their childhood potentials through participating in ECE. The government helps through

financing to maintain a pleasant school environment, which is essential for early learning (Burger, 2010).

The traditional family system does not like to intervene in government initiatives as they believe that government intervention might negatively be correlated with the bad school environment and school quality. Parents believe that their active participation in society and they believe in the accountability of the school with the society could enhance the enrollment and development potentials of children (Allen, 1988). Parental involvement has been identified as one of the most critical factors impacting school enrollment and childhood development (Bruns, Filmer, & Patrinos, 2011).

Early years of childhood are treated for children's active participation in schools and to be involved with society as well as the community. School enrollment helps children in understanding their social identity (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). ECE School enrollment helps parents to engage in economic activities and ensures children learning (Sime et al., 2009). Heckman (2008) suggests that the critical components for equal enrollment of children in ECE are: government reducing the inequality among children, minimizing the social issues, and managing the government fund properly to ensure justice for all children.

Härmä (2011) argues that parental preference and school type are far different from their enrollment decisions. This is indicated by school teachers claiming children enrolled in the class may often not be the parents' choice. This research finds that mostly the quality school's enrollment decision comes from the school's authority, not by the parental choice or desires and especially in the urban areas.

The actual age for enrollment in school in the early years is a chronical debate among parents, teachers, and policymakers based on the school starting age policy internationally. Late enrollment at school is universal among countries where there is flexibility. Recently Fortner and Jenkins (2017) estimate the delay entry age, such as children enrolled in school later than the actual age of entry in the USA, is from 2% to 8%. Delay entry age in school is

higher in some Australian states as parents believe that children could perform better if they enrolled at an older age for early education.

Fortner and Jenkins (2018) also argue that socio-economic limitations really attract disadvantaged families for early enrollment because schools may offer attractive opportunities as school meals, which ensures all the children to participate in schools. Special needs children get to benefit from starting school at an early age so that their specific education requirements can be met starting school as early as possible.

Morrow et al. (2012) suggest that by enrolling in school in the early years of childhood, children have the maximum opportunity for absolute academic outcomes in cognitive, non-cognitive, and socio-behavioral development measures. Children who are not enrolling in schools are mostly behind their peer group in the primary school, and the gap among the children also last for lifelong.

Cascio and Schanzenbach (2016) emphasize that enrollment decisions of parents depend on the age of children, maturity, and readiness for school. In most cases, parents delay their enrollment to cope with the peer group. Most of the parents believe that the diverse age group, in the same cases, make knowledge disparities among children. Children lag behind; they failed to compete with the older class peer group, and this gap never comes close. Lag behind children has the tendency to drop out of schools, or they capture negative impressions about schools at the very early age of childhood.

Barnett and Belfield (2006) claim that quality childhood education brings the difference among children. Enrolling in a quality pre-school program, the lower-income group children also a high possibility of ensuring their social identity in society as a successful person. The quality ECE services could reduce the gap among children and create a level playing field for all children.

Heckman et al. (2010) argue that early school enrollment makes high return compare to another educational level. Parents tend to choose the quality ECE for their children, as the measurement of quality is not visible; parents get confused when they decide for their child's

schooling. Parental socio-economic status directs them where to enroll their children to ensure their own identity. Parents are afraid to send their children with diverse social or income group children.

Gormley and Phillips (2005) have initiated that enrolling in a good quality school assures parents not to be lag behind among the societies. Parents with children from lower-income group, they have a minimum level of expectations, and as a result, they get amazed with the minimum level of their child attainment. As a result, school quality makes the differences among the children at an early age.

Bainbridge et al. (2005) discover that parental income level denotes the enrollment of their children. Although the factors of race and mothers' education also create differences among the children. School quality does not matter when a child receives ample parenting time. Even quality school with limited parenting time brings negative impressions in early childhood development. Government school funding does not matter for the ECE as most of the parents do not like to send their children to a government school because of the school environment and presence of the lower income group of people. Finally, ethnic and cultural factors also impact on school enrollment at the early childhood, parents do not send their children in the school when they understand the quality of services among the school.

Weber (2011) finds parental school enrollment decisions influenced by social pressure groups' social networks and their identity in the community. Parents' choice options depend on the available service, but most of the cases, parents do not have ample options to choose among the schools. The unavailability of the services does not make any difference why parents choose that specific school for their children.

Karoly and Gonzalez (2011) state that the social rights of the children are a fact for enrollment in schools. Parental concern about social equality helps or limit the enrolment opportunity in the schools. Some parents tend to go far always from home for quality childhood education. However, the other group of parents prioritized the school distance from home is the main factor for school enrollment.

Parental enrollment decisions also depend on the government school policy and school funding; most of the parents from lower-income groups are highly dependent on the government policy for school enrollment. Parents tend to send their children to a free government school rather than a quality private school. A similar study also denotes that school distance and government policies make the parental difference in school enrollment in the early years of childhood (Adams & McDaniel, 2009).

Valencia et al. (2006) find that in the USA, among the Latino parents tend not to enroll in schools. First, because of ample school resources such as school environment and teachers' quality. Second, specific school information, most of the cases parents do not have ample access to schools and parents do not know what their children are doing in the early ages as most of the pre-school children cannot explain everything by themselves. As a consequence, parents tend to delay their child's school enrollment. Latino Parents delay the enrollment of their children due to the limited information about schooling and the limited resources of school capacity to accommodate all; as a consequence, the enrollment is lower than other developed countries.

Swick (2010) suggests that government policy barriers impede the enrollment of an identical racial child in school. The children tend to have problems with their home, and schooling for homeless children usually do not bring any changes among the child. However, the government policy could not ensure the changes for the children with specific needs in the early years for future development.

Parents with children from the homeless group they do not find any specific outcome of schooling because of their prior experiences. They believe that, however, the child enrolling in school or not, they have to be involved with some income-generating activities. Parents from this income group do not want to send children to school, due to NGOs' initiatives; they send for a while.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) conceptualizes the case of homeless families and their child school enrollment. The parents of the specific group they concern about their home stability,

social pressure, and economic challenges before enrolling their children in schools. Most of the cases, this group of parents send their children to NGO schools or another alternative where they could get support for their livelihood. School enrollment is an issue to represent among their society and values among social relations.

Ansari et al. (2017) argue that parents who enroll their children in private schools and the children have high school readiness. On the other hand, those parents are sending the public-funded school, and they are having a low level of school readiness. Conversely, this study shows that pre-school enrollment has positive consequences of high school readiness among the same peer group of children.

Duncan and Magnuson (2013) argue that the benefits of enrolling and not enrolling in pre-schools. He shows that there is a positive impact on children those are enrolling and not enrolling in the level of cognitive and non-cognitive development. The standard cognitive test score of children make the difference among the children. Further, there are significant factors revealed by the research that the institute-based pre-schooling and community-based pre-school program also makes a difference in child attainment in the early years of schooling.

### **3.4 Parental Aspirations for School Readiness in ECE**

Lack of learning and teaching materials at home impedes child school readiness at an early age. The socio-economic background of parents makes changes the difference among the children for their child school readiness. Parents with high economic conditions tend to prepare their children for schooling. Lower socio-economic situations reduce the potentials of children and obstruct their school readiness (Leseman, 2002).

Disadvantaged children from lower-income groups face difficulties in learning at home, and they always stay behind in comparison with the peer group for school readiness, cognitive and non-cognitive development. Disadvantaged children face severe challenges not only for



the economic conditions of their parents but also for the educational qualifications to make the differences (Stipek & Ryan, 1997).

In the very early age of childhood, low-income family's children do not develop their school potential, participation, and school readiness as they do not attend the ECE schools (Aboud, 2006). Parents with high educational qualifications and handsome financial conditions help their children to be prepared for school at a very early age, especially among urban areas (Nath & Sylva, 2007).

Children with high socio-economic conditions are ahead of their counterparts in terms of school readiness and all domain of childhood development (Evans, 2004). Government investment ensures all the children's participation and proper school readiness for schooling. Most of the parents want to enroll their children, but due to financial limitations, children are not prepared well for schooling (Ben David-Hadar, 2016).

Early childhood program mainly to develop child potential and school readiness, especially for the disadvantaged family children in society. The ECE program reduces the knowledge disparities among the school children for lifelong learning (Barnett & Belfield, 2006). School readiness and success depend on socio-economic status, and children from low-income families are at danger in school learning opportunities (McLoyd, 1998).

Household resources construct children's strength to develop their quality school readiness in the early years of childhood (Barbarin et al., 2008; Obradovic et al., 2010; Ermisch, 2008). Community engagement to ensure social justice for children is essential, and the community could secure the future potentialities of those children and school readiness (Cotton, 2000).

Children with ample school readiness represent their parental involvement in the early years. Parents contribute a lot to school readiness and child development and the differences among the children, mostly parental participation in the early years of childhood. Parental involvement shows among the children, with their parents and parenting activities (Nord et al., 1999).

Parents-child interactions make the children more responsible, and those children prepare better than their counterpart for schooling (Corter et al., 2006). As school-teachers, communications are vital for child and parental aspirations to motivate their child to act appropriately for schooling. Teachers play a crucial role in children to reduce disparities in learning (Fan & Chen, 2001).

Further, some research also indicates that lower-income group children are less motivated to complete the school work, and their parents are less aspiring than others. Mostly parents from the lower-income group are more involved with their household activities rather than child learning. ECE teachers could encourage parents to motivate their children, as children are highly influenced by their parents (Hauser-Cram et al., 2003)

Lusk et al. (2004) argue that parents mostly provide love and affection. Still, they are mostly unconscious of the need for stimulating discussion and composition materials for their children in ECE. Moore, Akhter, and Aboud (2008) show that pre-schools are the most prospective setting for children to provide knowledge essential for intellectual development and school-readiness skills in the early years of childhood.

Teachers play the most vital role in helping children and accommodating all children irrespective of social class in the early years of childhood. Although, teachers do not have ample time to pay proper attention when the class size is big. Mostly, when class size is small, teachers get time to minimize the gap in school readiness for the special needs children (Smagorinsky, Tobin, & Lee, 2019).

Many researchers have documented that unequal educational experiences in the early years of childhood affect school readiness and mostly seem to be out of school, and never attend school with joy (Brown, 2007). Most of the time, family social status affects the children's school readiness effectually. Minimize the gap in children's school readiness; fair social policies foster the social inequalities for child development.

Usually, the intersections of race, class, gender, and disability are evident and further raise ethical questions among teachers and parents. Diversity among the children and some of

the children are more likely to be categorized as special needs, and they receive special treatment due to their social identity, and that hampers the school readiness of the children in early years (Lee, 2017)

Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2004) show that mothers' educational qualifications are highly related to a child's early learning and school readiness. Their specific academic knowledge helps to prepare a child for better outcomes. Developing children is closely associated with the major development of physical, emotional, cognitive, and educational development. Children with educated parents perform better than the lower peer group in terms of parental educational qualifications.

Parental education qualification, especially mothers' education, for child school readiness, is highly acknowledged (Oxford & Lee, 2011). Socio-economic conditions of parents also affect children's school readiness and achievement in the early years of schooling. Some of the studies also emphasize that high socio-economic conditions and school readiness are directly associated with child development.

Parents have concerns about their children's school readiness and reportedly try to delay enrollment for young children, especially boys. They believe that boys develop more slowly than the girls where gender turns out to be an issue for school enrollment and readiness in early childhood education (Mergler & Walker, 2017). Other parents delay their children's schooling to be among the older in a class peer group where they can perform better than their younger peers.

Although some studies find that younger children minimize the gap and compete with their older peers in the same class and in some cases, they failed to reduce the gap. The negative and positive issues focused on parental motivation for enrollment as it is a self-selecting process for delayed admission. Other mechanisms also motivate parents to enroll their children as early as possible.

Bradley and Corwyn (2002) claim parental socio-economic status significantly impact on child school readiness. Parental socio-economic status measures as an indicator of parental

education qualification, income, and occupation. However, the socio-economic status of parents motivates their children to learn. Children from the lower socio-economic background tend to skip schooling where their parents are mostly busy with the income-generating activities. Parents, when working with their other household activities, children's do not learn their all potentials because of the parenting time for child development.

Hackman and Meaney (2011) argue that child development does not only depend on the socio-economic conditions but also the social environment of the children belongs to them. The social identity of children is an essential factor for their brain development in the early years. Parents with higher socio-economic conditions used to help their children to minimize social disparities. Parenting time for the children creates differences when they enroll in schools and compete with their peer group.

Blair and Raver (2012) show that children at a very young age used to develop all the domains together. Financial limitations of the parents used to limit the children learning areas in the early life of their childhood. Government funding could reduce disparities, providing ample funding for all children learning and school readiness. The school environment makes an impact on the child mind the schools should ensure whether the environment is favorable for all children. The better environment always provides the development of children's full potentials.

Heckman et al. (2010) reveal that government intervention is highly required to connect the early intervention and pre-schools for the future development of all children. Children from lower socio-economic groups tend to drop out of school before finishing their primary education. The disadvantage children face severe social challenges in managing their education potential as the human brain develop together in the early years. The children from disadvantaged groups never compete or come closer to their peer group in terms of school readiness or fundamental development.

Sabol and Pianta (2014) highlight that kindergarten entry has a long and short-term impact. Those are enrolling in the private kindergarten, but they are losing something in terms

of school readiness. As school readiness does not mean the cognitive and non-cognitive development but as whole child development, while transiting from home to school and forward. Children with lower school readiness are used to impact in the long run, where they do not have options to recover.

Clements, Sarama, and Germeroth (2016) claim that school readiness and children's learning skills vary among children. Children those who can communicate with their peer group, they have a high chance to read, write, and speak at all domain at the very beginning of their childhood and future potentialities. However, among the classes, there are children who failed to communicate with their peer groups and lag in school readiness.

Dickinson et al. (2012) point out that early vocabulary is a powerful predictor of reading and writing proficiency and is related to a successful school career. Parents' child interactions and actions help children to develop more in vocabulary and school readiness. Family literacy programs seek to enhance children's vocabulary development by training parents' interaction behavior and providing language stimulating activities to be conducted at home. These programs yield only limited effects, probably because they seem to provide insufficient support to parents in changing their interaction behavior at home.

Rowe (2012) reveals that parent-child interaction is considered to be a critical factor in the vocabulary development of pre-school children. Two aspects of parent-child interactions have been found to relate to children's vocabulary development: the amount of high-quality linguistic input and the degree of sensitive responsiveness. Linguistic input is of high quality when parents provide diverse and sophisticated vocabulary, open-ended questions, and decontextualized language beyond the here and now. Children who engage in frequent high-quality interactions with their parents have larger vocabularies and develop vocabulary at a faster rate than children who are involved in fewer and lower quality interactions.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

In summary, the literature on parental roles in early childhood education has been mostly studied based on developed countries' perspectives. Recently, research is being conducted in developing and under-developed countries for the development of the children to ensure equity and equality in education system. Previous researchers show that parental aspirations for early childhood education causes positive impacts on early childhood development and improvement of their children's life-long learning. Parental socio-economic conditions really affect the difference in the early years of educational achievement for their children. Further, Previous research shows that parental income and social status are crucial among regions and to decrease the disparities among the areas in child learning opportunities. Government interventional and investment in the early years of childhood education might return higher than other level of education. Although, many of the developing countries like Bangladesh, the ECE program is mostly private funded. Parents used to pay all the expenses for children's early childhood education.

## **CHAPTER 4: METHODS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides information about the theoretical framework, conceptual framework, hypotheses, scope of this study, research design, and sampling to address the research questions. Further, this chapter also shows how the sample size is selected, designed, and data collected both in rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh. Henceforth, descriptive statistics show the rationale of the field study, types of school and, sampling divisions among rural and urban areas. This chapter also explains the theoretical framework chosen for this research design and research method, which denotes the validity and reliability of this study. In conducting qualitative research, ethical issues are significant, which could affect the respondents, and this chapter provides detailed information about how this study ensures the privacy of the respondents.

### **4.2 Theoretical Framework**

This study focuses on the fundamental understanding of parental aspirations for Early Childhood Education (ECE) based on three prominent theories: Social Justice Theory, Rational Choice Theory and Parentocracy Theory. Recently, these three theories are widely used to contextualize educational phenomena all over the world, especially among underdeveloped countries. The study follows and is theoretically closest to Bray and Thomas (1995) and can be described as a multilevel case analysis and comparative case study by Bartlett and Vavrus (2017).

This study aims to expand the theoretical understanding of early childhood educational factors (Anfara Jr., & Mertz, 2014), which have been added as a new paradigm of parental aspirations in the context of Bangladesh. This research builds on Rawls's Social Justice Theory, Coleman's Rational Choice Theory and Brown's Parentocracy Theory to understand parental

aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh. The theoretical framework, in support of the data analysis, explores the nature and content of parental identified supports and their perceived socio-economic aspirations in school choice, enrollment, and readiness for their children in ECE School in early childhood.

#### **4.2.1 Social Justice Theory**

Rawls (1971) resolves the issues of social justice and explain the debates to reduce the inequality among the societies and ensure the problems of freedom of human and equal right through the socialization process. The theory of Social justice is widely used to explain the phenomena in the field of education. Prominent scholars Fraser (2008) has also provide insightful understanding when examining the education sector as a whole. Fraser identifies the issues of social justice to confirm all the households have a similar scope of participation among the existing education services.

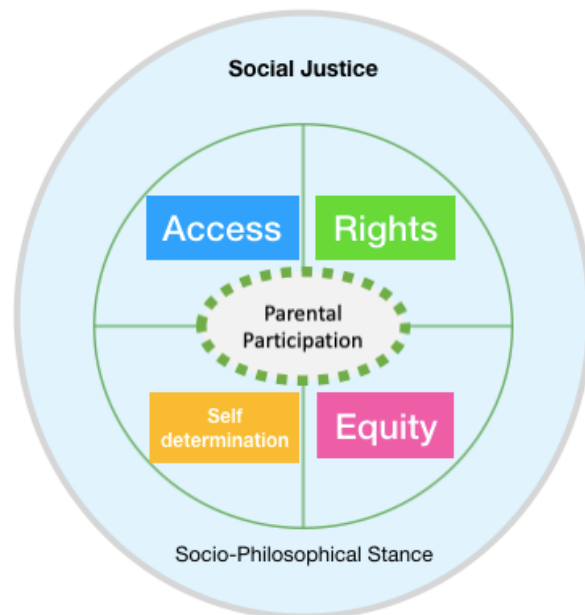
However, the social individualism model represents our societies as a complex phenomenon, where the social and economic status of classification is evident among societies. In this study to explain early childhood education for children, this theory guides the phenomena to describe the social context of Bangladesh as a theoretical framework and a determinant for the research design (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor, & Herber, 2014).

Figure 4.1 shows the relations between social justice and parental participation in the context of the socio and philosophical stance. Among the society, all the parents should have equal rights, equity, access, and self-determinations to participate and share their opinion in a democratic way. In this study, the social justice framework fits in all aspects of the social justice framework to understand parental aspirations. First, as a citizen of a country, parents have the social rights to educate their children to reduce the disparities. Second, equity among society is essential for child education to ensure equal opportunity for their children. Third, the issues of access are crucial irrespective of socio-economic conditions to ensure parental justice to



enroll their children. Finally, the parents decide the schools for their children and they used to send their schools where they believe the future potentials of their children.

**Figure 4.1 Social Justice Theory and Parental Participation**



Source: Created by Author based on Fraser (2008)

Fraser (2008) also believes that development should be guided by focusing on individuals' social identities based on their motivations. She emphasizes individuals' (self) activity, their voice, and the freedom to decide, which highlights people's movement, influence, and freedom in decision making in a democratic setting. Social Justice Theory is an excellent fit to chaperon this study as a framework as below:

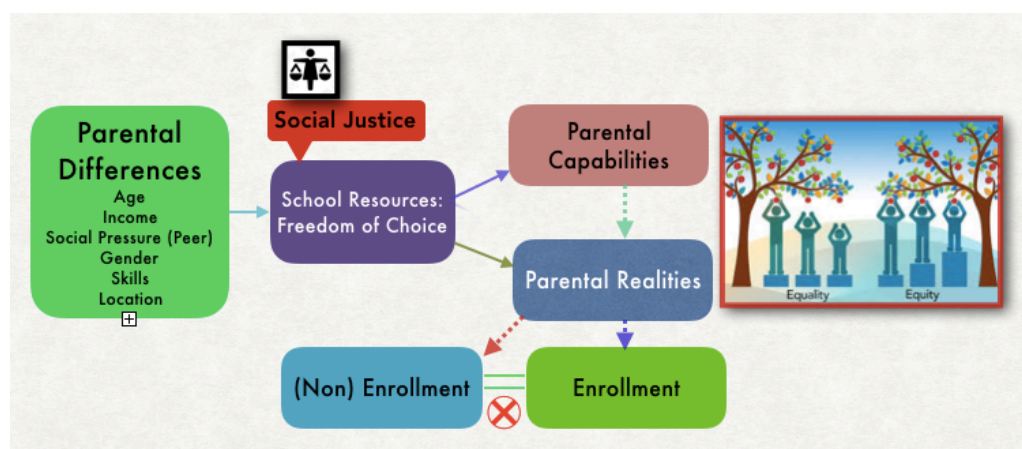
First, parents are a form of ECE participants where justice is associated with importance on freedom, activity, and influence for child education;

Second, education is a basic need of citizens, and parents consider their children's basic needs and specific context they live in for child education; and

Third, parents influence the community and school to ensure equity in education for future child development.

Figure 4.2 shows the theoretical context of social justice in ECE in the context of Bangladesh. Among society, parents are divided into different social groups. However, institutionally based justice is needed to ensure all the parents to send their children in a school, based on the parental socio-economic realities. The government could provide all the parents to participate in ECE, and parents easily could decide for their child's education.

**Figure 4.2 Theoretical Context of ECE in Bangladesh**



Source: Created by Author based on Fraser (2008)

#### 4.2.2 Rational Choice Theory

To explain the Rational Choice theory, Coleman (1988) associated the social actions of a human being with preserving their self-interest in society. Although economic condition signify the rationality of a person to partake in social actions. In this study, the theory guides the parental choice among the available services based on their self-interest and opportunity cost for child schooling. However, success and failure depend on social conditions, which level they belong in society. The choice purpose depends on parental actions, preferences, and opportunities for their child education.

The rational choice theory implies that parents decide to distinct value and preferences for the development and achievement of their children in early education. This study presents a unique standpoint and shows that parents consume a pattern of social consistencies when

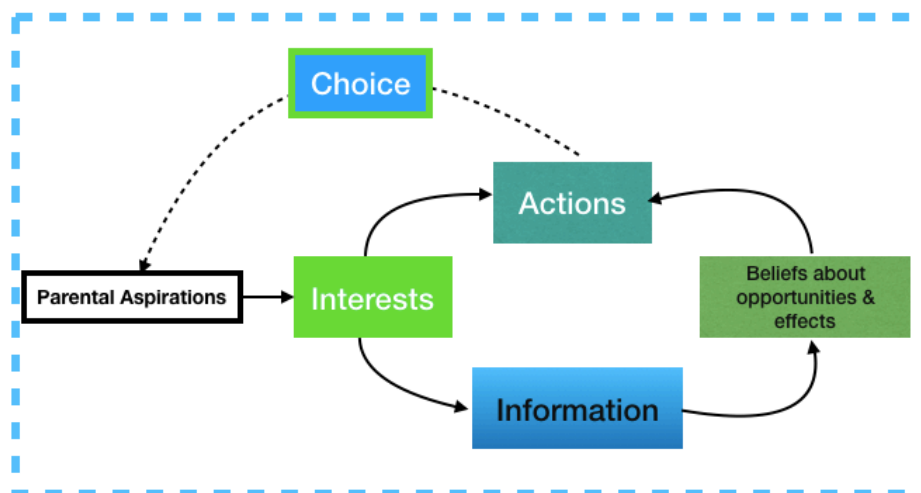
selecting schools for their children. Rational choice theory appraises school choice opportunities for parents, and they try to benefit by making decisions from opportunity cost, educational outcomes, and opportunity for success of children in the early years.

Based on the Rational Choice theory, parents make their decision based on their expectations from schools and teachers. Based on the rational choice theory, to explore parental socio-economic realities, while taking specific action for the school choice. Rational choice as a theoretical framework of this study tries to explore the parental phenomena for school choice based on parental logical thinking, social-values, and social-concerns, which is shown in Figure 4.3. To explore the relationships between parental behavior and schooling facilities, this study describes several points, such as follows:

First, parental choice depends on the self-identity and ideas about the existing school facilities for their children; and

Second, parental perceptions and consequences of school choice based on their current realities in the society.

**Figure 4.3 Elements of Rationale Choice and Parental Aspirations**



Source: Created by Author based on Hedström & Swedberg (1996).

The theoretical framework of this study instigates and guide with a specific lens through Social Justice Theory and Rationale Choice theory in the context of Bangladesh. Based on the

theoretical framework, this study explores to understand parental choice, parental enrollment decisions, and children school readiness as follows:

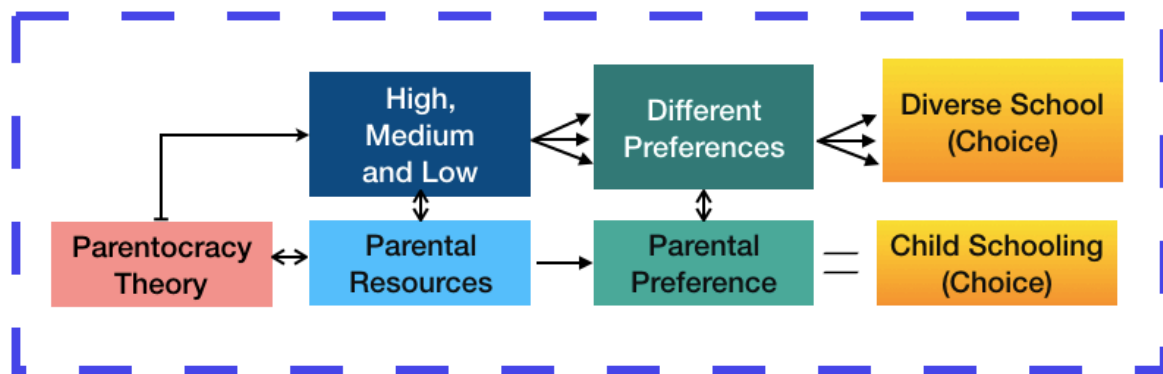
- a) Parents are not concerned about social justice in education, and they never want to enroll their children in an ECE school;
- b) Parents enrolled their children in an ECE school, but they feel that ECE schooling of children is not necessary and their children drop out from the ECE School;
- c) Parents enroll their children in an ECE school, but children do not find any interest. Parents are busy with other household activities; they don't bring their children to school regularly, and as a consequence, their children are not engaged in learning.
- d) Parents have a tendency not to enroll their children in primary education when they do not find any immediate outcome or motivation of learning.
- e) Parents of children with special needs generally repeat the same class for their children.

#### **4.2.3 Parentocracy Theory**

This research also contemplates the prominent schooling theory of Phillip Brown's (1990) the Parentocracy theory where Brown mentions that parental school choice highly depends on parental occupations and economic conditions, where children's academic achievement (efforts) does not make any differences for schooling. Schooling of children highly depends on parental socio-economic conditions rather than children's ability and educational efforts have limited considerations in line with the parentocracy theory (Barrett DeWiele & Edgerton, 2016). Preferences of parents for child schooling have significant contributions among the developed countries especially in the UK, USA, Australia, and New Zealand. The developed western society's emphasis on promoting parental independence, where parental socio-economic conditions make substance change for their child schooling.

The socio-economic background of parents makes significant impacts on child schooling. The high-income group of parents tends to send their children school based on their choice. On the other hand, the low- and middle-income group of parents tend to send their children in schools based on their economic conditions and social facilities. Most of the cases especially among the low- and middle-income groups of parents do not have any specific choice of schools while sending their children to schools.

**Figure 4. 4 Parentocracy Theory and Child Schooling**



Source: Created by Author based on Brown (1990)

Figure 4.4 shows the relations among parental resources, parental preferences on child schooling in the context of the socio-economic stance based on the Parentocracy Theory. The figure shows that the child schooling (choice) depends on the parental resources (socio-economic) are same the choice might be different when parents might have preferences (different) for child schooling (choice). Schooling of the children depends on the parental preferences and resources.

#### 4.2.3.1 Ideology of Parentocracy

Parentocracy used to refer to the rights of parents and parental choice for their child schooling in education. In principle of parentocracy, parents are treated to be consumers and their choice defines the type of education their children will receive. The ‘third wave’ in education is considered with the rise of parentocracy, where parents hold the ultimate power

for their child schooling (Brown, 1990). The ideology of parentocracy implicates under the catchphrase of parental choice, the standard of education and free-market system under the privatization policy of educational institutional. The private schooling system was developed based on the parental demand for better quality education when the traditional schooling system could not satisfy the demand of parents for their child schooling and inevitable for educational changes (Simon, 1985). Privatization of schooling shifts the responsibilities of parents and school itself where the government has less control over schooling and considered as consumer's sovereignty for their child schooling. However, the ideas of parentocracy (choice) emerge as new rights of thoughts as, first, the government could not meet the individual needs; second, the free market system through private schooling system could ensure the individual choice; and finally, to achieve individual needs, freedom is important to compete among the individual for their own economic growth. According to Parentocracy theory, it assumes that all the parents among the societies have a free schooling choice for their children.

#### **4.2.3.2 Ideology of Meritocracy**

The term meritocracy refers that all the children should have an equal chance of success and the success depends on their intellect and talent. Further, the ideology of meritocracy is the contradiction of parentocracy in education settings. Dewey (1916) explains the education facilities like the 'feudal dogma of social predestination' for child schooling. The shift in educational ideology and educational policy reform grounded upon the children's age, children's capacity and children's academic ability for schooling, where schooling of children depends on merit and academic abilities (achievement). Irrespective of the educational reforms (liberal-democratic) in 1944 the opportunity of educational equality has never been achieved with the ideology of meritocracy (Halsey et al., 1980). Young (1961) enlightens that the ideology of the meritocracy system of education where all should have gotten similar opportunities to gain access to jobs based on their academic abilities. However, the meritocracy system emphasized on inequalities must be addressed rather than to ensure equality for all. The

children should have to be educated based on their abilities to survive among the economic constraints, where the state provides facilities for mass schooling. The ideology of meritocracy was treated to be inevitable for the state to legitimate the inequalities among the societies which are found among the advanced capitalist societies. Meritocracy benefits from breaking down the social class barriers to ensure equality of opportunity for children who are distressed and have limited participation due to school fees.

#### **4.2.3.3 Parentocracy Theory and the context of ECE in Bangladesh**

The parentocracy theory is important to explain child schooling, however, due to the socio-economic context of Bangladesh, the theory could not explain all the phenomena of parents for child schooling. First, most of the cases in ECE parents are not highly concerned about their child schooling and mostly depend on the government schooling facilities as parents believe that the government school facilities are better than the other alternatives. Second, limited and specific school facilities for ECE are not age-specific and parents face difficulties in preparing their children for schooling, as a result, a diverse age group of children is enrolling in the same class and schools require the children to be prepared from home before enrolling in schools. Third, ECE is not compulsory education in the context of Bangladesh and parents have less importance, although they would like to send their children to schools due to the available facilities most of the parents cannot send their children to school. Finally, irrespective of socio-economic conditions of parents the social environment is an important factor for children's ECE schooling in Bangladesh. School distance, school time and school facilities are important factors for child schooling rather than parental economic conditions in the context of ECE in Bangladesh.

Among the society, all the parents should have equal rights, equity, access, and self-determinations to participate and democratically share their opinion. In this study, the social justice and rational choice theoretical framework fits in all aspects to understand parental aspirations for early childhood education in Bangladesh. Although there are debates among the theory itself, and highly depends on the context of research and regions. However, the

theoretical framework helps to explain the specific context and phenomena surrounding a society. Theoretical adjustment is highly required in qualitative research because the theory has a chance to be accepted or might be rejected to explain the specific context.

### **4.3 Conceptual Research Framework**

This study is developed based on Social Justice, Rationale Choice and Parentocracy theories to explore parental aspirations for early childhood education, especially parental school choice, school enrollment, and school readiness of ECE in Bangladesh. Based on that, the conceptual framework in Figure 4.5 shows the construction of three research questions in the context of ECE in Bangladesh.

First, the impact of government policy on parental socio-economic aspirations is vital for ECE. Exceptionally, the private school policy is a dominant factor in the case of Bangladesh. In chapter two, this study has already mentioned that due to the age barriers mentioned in the government policy, parents have to depend on other types of school facilities and private school is prominent providing the opportunities of all children to attend school at an early age from 3 to 5 years old.

Second, the figure shows the role of parental aspirations on school choice in ECE for their children, where parents have ample choice and limited choice of school based on the socio-economic conditions of parents.

Finally, in the framework, it shows that parental aspirations on school readiness in ECE, where two issues of children are prominent, such as high-level school readiness and low-level school readiness in ECE schools. Parental aspirations motivate them to prepare their children for schooling. In Bangladesh, children must be prepared before enrolling in schools, and child school readiness undoubtedly depends on parental social aspirations.

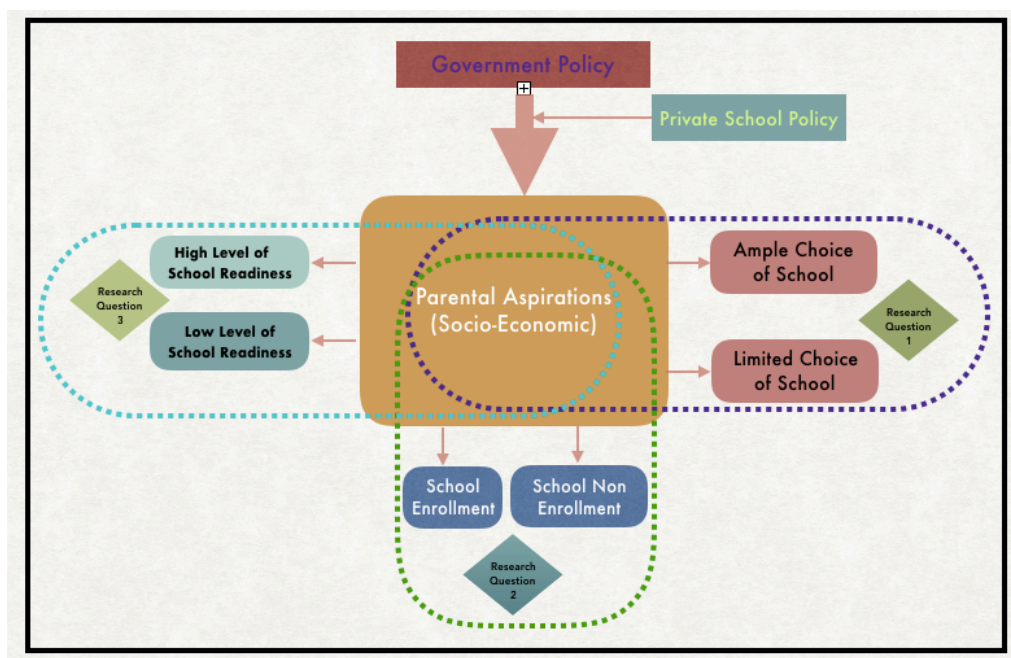
The conceptual research framework in Figure 4.5 shows the structure of the study in preparation and construction of the three key research questions, objectives, and conceptual



research framework shows the initial research ideas of research how to conduct and complete the research based on the previous assumptions adopted for this study (Green, 2014; Imenda, 2014).

The conceptual research framework developed based on government policy intervention in Bangladesh in line with the private school policy. The government of Bangladesh is providing free pre-primary education only for five years of children. As a result, many alternative schools are also providing ECE services for children 3 to 5 years. Due to government funding limitations, parents play a vital role in sending their children to school. Parental school enrollment decisions also depend on parental involvement with their children. Most of the parents who would like to send their children, especially to the private schools, had to prepare their children for ECE schooling. Parents with children who have low-level school readiness and special needs they tend to delay their enrollment for the next year before they start schooling and prepare themselves.

**Figure 4.5 Conceptual Research Framework**



Source: Created by Author based on Zhou et al. (2017) and Hatcher (1998)

Parental socio-economic aspirations make the difference among the children in the early years. Parental socio-economic aspirations help them to choose quality schools among the available education service providers; later, parents decide based on their economic rationality when they decide for school choice and enrollment. Finally, in terms of school readiness, parental social aspirations motivate them to prepare for their child's schooling in Bangladesh.

#### **4.4 Hypotheses**

The hypotheses are constructed based on previous research and in accordance with main and sub-research questions for this study. In answering the main primary three key research questions and seven sub-research questions, the following seven hypotheses are framed and adopted based on the previous research findings:

Research question 1: How do parental aspirations influence support to ECE choice for their children in Bangladesh?

Sub-research question 1.1: How do parental socio-economic factors limit or support parental choice in ECE in Bangladesh?

**Hypothesis 1.1: Parental socio-economic factors limit choice in ECE schools, especially in rural areas, and parents among the lower-income groups are not aware of the timing of school entry in Bangladesh.**

Concerning Hypothesis 1.1, Bhatta (1998) argues that economic constraints and schooling quality are the critical factors of parental motivation for ECE enrollment. The government ensures universal access for all children irrespective of social identity. Poor income group households face severe access problems for children's education in a specific education system (Pal & Kingdon, 2010). Parental demand and choice among the school services mostly depend on the school characteristics. Parents intend to choose the quality

school for ECE because of education as well as the care needed for their children. The post-socialist countries always try to develop appropriate policies for broader access for all children (Fong & Loshkin, 2000). The stipend program can be highly effective in improving access and retention of children in education, in particular among the poor (Fiszbein & Schady et al., 2009).

Sub-Question 1.2: How do parental socio-economic aspirations assist parents in managing ECE expenditure among regions in Bangladesh?

**Hypothesis 1.2: Lower-income group parents have to sacrifice to support school choice and expenses for their children. They hardly manage the education expenses for their children.**

As for Hypothesis 1.2, among the societies, parents with diverse needs children tend to choose those schools that provide fair access and opportunities for all children. Parents never choose those schools where they believe in creating more disparities in their children. The government financing policy mitigates the financial challenges of parents to ensure equity in education (Downes & Stiefel, 2008). Hossain and Zeitlyn (2010) concluded that the government school funding program does not close the gap of parental school choice for their children. The government funding is making more disparities among the children in the name of financial assistance, where the assistance is only applicable for government school enrollment. This financial assistance limits parental choice among the ECE services.

Sub-Question 1.3: How do parental aspirations influence ECE schooling choice for children with special needs?

**Hypothesis 1.3: Parents of Children with special needs also have the right to choose and access to ECE schools, and some are out of school because of the hazardous school environment.**

In terms of Hypothesis 1.3, Parents with children with special needs severely anxious for their children when choosing a school for them. Parents are factually confused when and which school would be better for their children (Lee, 2010). These child-rearing practices signify the degree of parental aspirations in accordance with socio-ethnic identity (Britto & Kohen, 2005; Zhou, Li, Hu & Li, 2017). Tooley and Dixon (2007) argue that parents have a substantial choice and preference for private schools, which are not accessible or affordable to the poor. Parents with lower-level socio-economic conditions usually choose religion-based early education because of the social class difference among societies, even in the early childhood years of children.

Research Question 2: How do parental aspirations influence ECE enrollment of children in Bangladesh?

Sub-Question 2.1: How do parents decide whether to enroll their children in ECE in Bangladesh?

**Hypothesis 2.1: Among the regions, especially in the urban areas, households are free to enroll their children in ECE schools, but for parents in rural areas, ECE schools are limited.**

As shown in Hypothesis 2.1, Sabates et al. (2010) denote when education expenses are lower, than all the children could enroll. Although the direct and indirect costs impede the children's enrollment in school, the government can make the difference to ensure equal opportunity for all children. On the other hand, School enrollment of children reduces the gap and disparities among the children in society. Engle et al. (2007) show that enrollment of children in good quality ECE services not only reduces disparities but also develops the cognitive and no-cognitive development in the early years of education to reduce the difference. The school environment mostly assures the active participants of children in school. Barnett and Belfield (2006) claim that quality childhood education brings the difference among children. Enrolling in a quality pre-school program, the lower-income group children also a

high possibility of ensuring their social identity in society as a successful person. The quality ECE services could reduce the gap among children and create a level playing field for all children.

Sub-Question 2.2: How do parents decide not to enroll their children in ECE school in Bangladesh?

**Hypothesis 2.2: The enrollment pattern mostly depends on the opportunity cost of the households, which indirectly leads to a lower enrollment rate among the regions, especially in rural areas.**

With regards to Hypothesis 2.2, School enrollment of children reduce the gap and disparities among the children in society. Special needs children also have access to enroll in school as early as possible to ensure inequality in learning opportunities (Ou, 2003). Härmä (2009) argues that parents stated preference and school type are far different from their enrollment decisions. This is indicated by school teachers claiming children enrolled in the class may often not be the parents' choice. This research finds that when quality school's enrollment decision comes from the school's authority as the authority decides who can enroll in school and not. The actual age for enrollment in school in the early years is a chronological debate among parents, teachers, and policymakers based on the school starting age policy internationally. Late enrollment at school is common among countries where there is flexibility (Fortner and Jenkins, 2017).

Research Question 3: How do parental aspirations influence child school readiness for ECE in Bangladesh?

Sub-Question 3.1: How do parental aspirations affect preparation for school readiness in ECE in Bangladesh?

**Hypothesis 3.1: Households in rural areas are mostly busy with their daily activities, and parents do not have enough time as well as they are not aware of their children's school readiness.**

As mentioned above, Hypothesis 3.1 is developed based on the previous research evidence and findings, such as Children with high socio-economic conditions are ahead of their counterparts in terms of school readiness and all domain of childhood development (Evans, 2004). Government investment ensures all the children's participation and proper school readiness for schooling. Most of the parents want to enroll their children, but due to financial limitations, children are not prepared well for schooling (Ben David-Hadar, 2016). Many researchers have documented that unequal educational experiences in the early years of childhood affect school readiness (Brown, 2007).

Sub-research question 3.2: How does the available ECE schooling lead to disparities and school readiness in Bangladesh?

**Hypothesis 3.2: A lack of qualified teachers and inadequate teacher training at ECE schools, especially in rural areas, impedes children's school readiness.**

As shown in Hypothesis 3.2, the previous research also shows that teachers play the most vital role in helping children and accommodating all children irrespective of social class in the early years of childhood. Although, teachers do not have ample time to pay proper attention when the class size is big. When class size is small, teachers get time to minimize the gap in school readiness for the special needs children (Smagorinsky, Tobin & Lee, 2019). Further, Lack of learning and teaching materials at home impedes child school readiness. The socio-economic background of parents makes changes in their child's school readiness. Lower socio-economic situations reduce the potentials of children and obstruct their school readiness (Leseman, 2002). Disadvantaged children from lower-income groups face difficulties in

learning at home, and they always stay behind in comparison with the peer group for school readiness, cognitive and non-cognitive development (Stipek & Ryan, 1997).

#### **4.5 Scope of the Study**

As defined in the terminology, ECE in Bangladesh is for children aged from 3 to 5 years. In 2010, the government of Bangladesh introduced a one-year ECE program in all government primary schools for children aged 4-5 before starting primary school grade one. The private schools, INGOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders also initiated ECE for children aged 3-5 years. Presently, ECE in the first level of the national education system though it is not compulsory for all children. ECE in Bangladesh is under the direct regulation and supervision of the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), which is under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME).

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) already published the specific pre-primary curriculum in close cooperation with a national and international counterpart. The ECE curriculum is supposed to cover all primary schools or facilities of ECE, but only the government schools are following the curriculum. Thus, this study will focus on parental aspirations for ECE schooling in Bangladesh, where diverse school types and curriculum are creating disparities among rural and urban areas. It is noticeable that all the rural and urban areas contain all types of schools in Bangladesh.

#### **4.6 The Case Study Approach**

This study is conducted through qualitative research, using the case study approach, which is exploratory in nature. In qualitative research (Michael, 2015), the case study method does not necessitate control of behavior and only spotlights on present incidents. The case study approach is used to examine contemporary events, while the researcher's ethics cannot be influenced. The case study relies on multiple informants and indications, such as direct

observation of the phenomena and interviews of the persons involved with that phenomena in a real-life context (Sharan & Elizabeth, 2015).

Although case studies and chronicles can overlap, multiple sources of evidence such as a review of documents, in-depth interviews, and observations make more reliable and strengthen the research (Ishak & Abu Bakar, 2014). The case study starts with an ample review of the literature and the careful posing of research questions and research objectives. In conducting case studies, the previous research helps to map the research design to answer the research questions. However, case study research is essential to explain a specific phenomenon, which might not be similar to other situations, contexts, or perspectives.

Creswell (2003) points out that the case study approach helps the researcher to investigate more in-depth to understand and investigate real-life and present social phenomena. Researchers use the case study method when the phenomena and context are not undoubtedly distinct within the real-world context. This method helps to explore the core problems of research (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) also mentioned that case study research is theoretically hard, although some researcher thinks this approach as a soft method of research.

**Table 4.1 Types of Qualitative Research Case Study Design**

<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Single-Case</b>	<b>Multiple Case</b>
Holistic Analysis (Single unit)	Type I	Type III
Embedded Analysis (Multiple unit)	Type II	Type IV (This Research)

Source: Created by Author based on Yin (2014).

Case study design could be single or multiple, and analysis might be holistic or embedded, that depend on the phenomena a researcher like to investigate (Yin, 2014). A case study researcher suggests using multiple sources of evidence to explain the research problems. The selection of participants is most important to answer the research question in a case study research (Zucker, 2009). Multiple case study design does not have any specific rules of case



requirements (Small, 2009), but Yin (1994) suggests that 6 to 10 cases are an ample number if the expected results come out to provide convincing support for the preliminary propositions.

This study follows a multiple case study approach for embedded analysis of cases. It aims to shift the lens of looking at quality and equity in early education from a narrowed focus on assessments and monitoring systems to explore the well-being of children and their families as they live and experience the quality of education (Yazan, 2015). Hence, with this research, this study will be able to provide an in-depth understanding of parental socio-economic aspirations to comprehend the phenomena of ECE in the context of Bangladesh both in rural and urban areas.

#### **4.7 Research Design**

Table 4.2 shows the data collection procedure and sources of data for this study. To conduct this study, the researcher used three tools to collect the data, namely, in-depth questionnaire interviews, document review, and observation. The unit of analysis was to focus both supply-side and demand-side issues to compare and analyze the findings as well as the phenomena and context in Bangladesh. This study used the distinctive data sources to understand the research objectives to answer the research questions.

The primary respondent was parents with children who already enrolled and in schools, and those did not enroll in schools for ECE. As a secondary respondent, the research collected data from the school teachers, government, and non-government stakeholders of ECE. Finally, the researcher also observed the school, class, and home to understand the real-life phenomena in the context of ECE in Bangladesh.

**Table 4.2 Research Design for Data Collection and Sources**

<b>Tools</b>	<b>Unit (Analysis)</b>	<b>Sources of Data</b>
In-depth Questionnaire Interviews	Demand side	Parents with children already enrolled in ECE schools. Parents with children do not enroll in ECE School.
	Supply Side	Head Teachers ECE Teachers
	Government Officials	Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Education officials (ECE)
	Specialist	Researcher, University Professor, ECE and Education Specialist
Document Review	Supply Side Stakeholders	Policy Review, Education Law and regulations Policy drafts, policy documents
Observation	Demand Side	Home observations
	Supply Side	School Observation Class Observation

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

#### **4.7.1 Document Reviews**

This study reviews the different government policies for ECE in Bangladesh. The government is trying to reduce disparities and ensure social justice among children in Bangladesh for better child outcomes and lifelong learning. This study reviews the following reports and government policy documents to understand ECE in Bangladesh as follows:

- Implementation plan guidelines of Government and Non-Government organization collaboration for universal Pre-Primary Education (PPE);
- Operational framework of PPE in 2008;
- National Education Policy (NEP) in 2010;
- ECE Curriculum developed in 2011;

- National Children Policy in 2011;
- The Children Act in 2013; and
- Comprehensive Early Childhood Development Policy (CECD) in 2013.

Moreover, this study reviews the recently enacted laws and regulations of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) policy changes and the Government order to execute the fundamental development and education for the children in Bangladesh.

#### **4.7.2 Semi Structured In-depth Interviews**

Interviews are widely practiced as a method of qualitative inquiry data collections, across the field of social sciences and humanities (Yin, 2014). Among the four types of Interviews, such as surveys, internet-oriented, telephonic, and face-to-face interaction, or can be more informal conversations to collect the data from the field as per the research design and nature of the research. Qualitative methods have the potential to provide deep, insightful understanding and knowledge of individuals (Albert & Gabrielle, 2010).

Among the three types, such as unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews, this study follows the semi-structured interview method to collect the data. This study focuses on semi-structured interviews for collecting data. These semi-structured interviews are designed with a set of open-ended questionnaires. The questionnaire interview is commonly used to conduct qualitative research for data collection by the qualitative researcher. However, the unstructured questionnaire interview is widely used in ethnographic research. This study conducts a formal interview with the participants to collect the data for this research purpose as a research tool.

First, a semi-structured in-depth interview questionnaire is designed for government education officials, including the ministry, divisional, district, and sub-district officials. The interview questionnaires are designed for education officers as open-ended to understand the policies in action for all stakeholders, including society, school, parents, and children in

Bangladesh, to what extent the government ensures justice in education for all and to understand the current practices of ECE in Bangladesh.

Second, semi-structured in-depth interview questionnaires are designed to collect data from interviews with ECE teachers and headteachers from all existing types of ECE schools in Bangladesh. In consultation with the government stakeholders, data is collected among the high achieving schools and low achieving schools both in rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh.

Third, semi-structured in-depth interview questionnaires are considered to accumulate information from two groups of parents: one is parents with children already enrolled in school, and the other is parents with children not enrolled in ECE schools, in order to understand parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh.

Finally, semi-structured in-depth interview questions are considered to accumulate information for this study from ECE specialists, researchers, and NGO & INGO officials who are directly related and concern with policymaking and advocacy in the field of ECE in Bangladesh.

#### **4.7.3 Home, School, and Class Observations**

Participants' real-life phenomena are inevitable to observe as part of the data collections to understand their experiences and environment where the participant belongs, which can give more insightful information in case study research (Baxter, & Jack, 2008). This study also makes a home (children and parents activity), school (environment), and class (students and teachers activities) observations to understand the responsibilities among participants and the activities, issues, and problems. However, in the case study research, observations are important to understand the phenomena and actions the participants follow to achieve their goals and objectives.

## **4.8 Sampling Method and Sample Size**

### **4.8.1 Purposive Sampling**

For this study, to acquire the research objectives, the researcher used purposeful sampling for data collections. In purposive sampling, data are usually collected from samples with a specific purpose to understand the phenomena. The purposeful sampling method is useful to reach the sample population concisely to conduct qualitative research. The Purposeful sampling method is helpful in identifying cases who are familiar and proficient with the real-life phenomena. Sampling using this technique, participant's knowledge and enthusiasm are also vital to interconnect involvement and feelings in a coherent manner.

Quinn Patton and Cochran (2007) mention that purposeful sampling is to obtain a maximum distinction sample rather than to identify specific common ground, although the common ground comes out at the time of data analysis. Among the diverse strategies of purposeful sampling, this study also used the maximum variation sampling and key informant interviews. Key informant interviews help understand the miracles for local practices and contexts. Research and experts with specific knowledge can provide details about the existing problems and solutions for specific objectives.

### **4.8.2 Snowball Sampling**

This study uses the snowball sampling method, which helps to use hard-to-reach sample participants. This sampling method involves selecting samples using recommendations by earlier respondents for this study. Samples that have been selected on a certain characteristic are asked to make recommendations for other possible participants. Among diverse data collection methods, usually, researchers consider a part of the population to describe the whole phenomena. Moreover, when researchers find problems regarding a lack of human resources, high expenses, and population scattering, they may choose snowball sampling.

Recently, Kadomatsu (2016) also uses the snowball sampling method for her study on ECE in Bangladesh, which demonstrates challenges in securing samples due to difficulties in

finding respondents, especially in urban areas in Bangladesh. Irrespective of sampling challenges, snowball sampling has been used for this study. Once a respondent agreed to an in-depth interview, he or she was requested to make referrals to other possible respondents in the same region.

#### **4.8.3 Sample Size**

Qualitative research methodologists provide appropriate guidelines while selecting samples, but in principle, sample sizes of qualitative research should be in a manageable fashion to extract substantial data. On the other hand, qualitative research methodologists also advised that the sample sizes must be generous to achieve the saturation point of data as well as theoretical saturation point for research queries. Finally, to meet the research objectives, the researcher must logically design the sample size to answer all the research questions for specific research purposes.

For theoretical justification, a pilot study is conducted, and data analysis is also performed during the initial phase of field research to understand the phenomena for final questionnaire development. In conducting the field research, when no new themes are emerging throughout the study, the author concludes further data collections from the same group.

The study uses a qualitative multiple-case study approach in the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh because it contains the country's average number of ECE school facilities. This research aims to explore the parental socio-economic aspirations for early childhood education in Bangladesh; this study has chosen both rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division. Data are collected from rural and urban areas among the specific five types of schools, such as public schools, private schools (kindergarten), NGO based schools, Madrasa based schools (religious), and others (mosque, indigenous, non-formal Schools). Semi-structured interviews with parents with children aged 3 to 5 years both enrolled and non-enrolled in schools and teachers as

principal participants. The secondary participants in this study are other concerned stakeholders (Ministry, NGO, INGO, ECE specialists, education specialists, etc.).

**Table 4.3 Data Collection and Sample Size (Principal Participants)**

	Location	Area	School Types	No. of Schools & Teachers	No. of parents (NPE)	No. of parents (NPNT)
<b>Rajshahi Division</b>	Rajshahi District	Urban	GPS	5	10	
			Private School (Kindergarten)	5	10	
			NGO School	3	6	17
			Madrasa (Religious)	2	4	
			Others (Mosque, Asroy Indigenous)	2	4	
	Durgapur Upazilla (Sub-District)	Rural	GPS	5	10	
	Private (Kindergarten)		5	10		
	NGO School		3	6	17	
	Madrasa (Religious)		2	4		
	Others (Mosque)		2	4		
<b>Total</b>				<b>34</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>34</b>

Source: Created by Author based on field research

Note. GPS = Government Primary School, NGO = Non-Government Organization School basically run by national and international (Non-Government) Organizations and mostly depended on donor funding.

NPE= is representing the number of parents who already enrolled their children in ECE schools, NPNT=representing the number of parents who did not enroll their children in ECE schools.

Table 4.3 shows first, the principal participants of parents (children already enrolled in schools) total sample size is (n=68) both in rural (n=34) and urban (n=34) areas. Second, the principal participants of parents (children not-enrolled in schools) total sample size is (n=34) both in rural (n=17) and urban (n=17) areas. Third, as secondary participants for this study, the

total sample size is 34 schools, both rural (n=17) and urban (n=17) areas. Finally, for this study, the total school teachers sample size is 34 both rural (n=17) and urban (n=17) areas in the Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh. However, gender parity among the participants was not feasible due to the availability of the respondents. Data are collected through in-depth interviews with parents and school teachers, especially the head teachers and or ECE teachers, home, school, and classroom observations for this study (see Appendix for detail questionnaires).

In consultation with the government stakeholders for this study, data are collected from a high performing and low performing schools of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh. In this study, each school is considered to incorporate all three types of social groups such as low-income group family, middle-income group family, and high-income group family. Further, cases are developed based on the types of school. This study follows the two conventional sampling techniques for qualitative research, namely snowball sampling and purposeful sampling, as mentioned in the method part.

This study focuses on both rural and urban areas in Bangladesh. Among the five existing school types in Bangladesh with some insights into parents, the interviewed parents are not limited to the parents of children who are living with their mother and father, but also a guardian in absence of parents.

Table 4.4 shows the secondary participants' number as the sample size for this study, where the total number of participants is 22. The table shows that there are 5 participants at the central level, including the assistant secretary of different ministries in Bangladesh who are responsible for child development and education. Second, three respondents are specifically the government official who is accountable for ECE in Bangladesh. Third, the table shows that there are 5 participants responsible for the divisional, district, and sub-district levels both in rural and urban areas, and one respondent from the local level administration. Finally, the table shows that there are 8 Education and ECE specialists, both from INGOs, NGOs, and researchers. At the divisional (district) level, interviews are conducted with divisional



education officials responsible for ECE at the selected urban (Rajshahi District) areas and rural (Durgapur Upozilla as sub-district level) areas in Bangladesh.

**Table 4.4 Data Collection and Sample Size (Secondary Participants)**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>No. of Respondents (n=22)</b>	<b>Specialist</b>
Assistant Secretary	5	Ministry (MoPME, MoE, MoWCA, MoHFW, & MoSW) responsible for Child Development and Education
Deputy-Director (DPE)	1	ECE Specialist (MoPME)
Assistant Director	2	Education Specialist (MoPME & MoE)
District Education officer	1	Education Specialist (MoPME)
Assistant District Education Officer	1	Education Specialist (MoPME)
Thana Education Officer (Sub-District)	1	Education Specialist (MoPME)
Assistant Upozilla Education Officer (Sub-District)	2	Education Specialist (MoPME)
UNO Durgapur (Chief Executive Officer of Sub-District)	1	Administration
ECE Specialist (INGOs)	3	ECE Specialist
ECE/Education Specialist (NGOs & Researcher)	5	ECE/Education Specialist

Source: Created by Author based on field research

Note. MoPME - Ministry of Primary & Mass Education; MoE - Ministry of Education (is especially responsible for Secondary and Higher Education Division & Technical and Madrasha Education Division); MoWCA - Ministry of Women & Children Affairs; MoHFW - Ministry of Health & Family Welfare; MoSW - Ministry of Social Welfare.

#### **4.8.4 Field Research Duration**

Table 4.5 shows the entire field research duration for this study; mainly, the field research was conducted in three phases in 2017, 2018, and 2019. The field research was

conducted mostly in the middle or end of the year as the school year. In Bangladesh, the school year starts in early January of each year; such timing was selected to ensure that children spent ample time in school, and parents had a proper understanding of the ECE in Bangladesh.

**Table 4.5 Field Research Duration**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Days</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
First Phase	October 02, 2017 - November 27, 2017	56	Pilot Study and Final Questionnaire Development.
Second Phase	July 06, 2018 - August 26, 2018	51	In-depth study and member checking.
Third Phase	August 14, 2019 - September 13, 2019	30	Stakeholders Analysis, Expert interview and member checking.

Source: Created by Author based on field research in 2017, 2018 & 2019.

During the first phase, a pilot study was conducted in 2017 to test the questionnaires. The pilot field research helps to finalize the questionnaires based on the respondent's response in line with the objectives of this study and to understand the context and phenomena. Based on the pilot field research, the author finalizes the expected total number of samples for this study. Second, a suitable time was decided in 2018 for further field research and necessary adjustment and member checking for an in-depth case study. Finally, the third phase of the field studies was conducted both in rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh, in addition to the stakeholder's analysis, expert interview, and member checking for this study in 2019

For this study, the parents (with children who already enrolled in ECE schools) were selected through purposeful sampling, and parents (with children who do not enroll in ECE schools) were selected through snowball sampling. However, the schools are chosen through purposeful sampling and in consultation with the concerned education officers of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh.

#### **4.8.5 Participants**

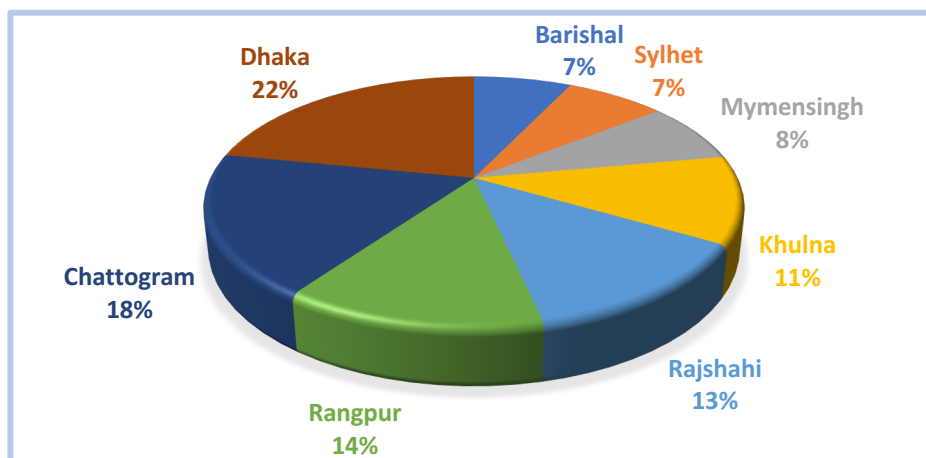
First, the parents are employed for this study who already enrolled their children in school, and second, the parents who do not enroll their children among the five types of schooling facilities in the Rajshahi Division of Bangladesh. Schools that are officially providing ECE schooling facilities for children who are 3 to 5 years old (36 months - 59 months) are the targeted participants of this study. In Bangladesh, the recommended age to enter primary school is age six, and pre-primary is age five, as mentioned in the education policy of 2010 (MoPME, 2017).

In Bangladesh, the present national education policy of 2010 is allowing all parents to advance or postpone their children's entrance by a year, depending on a child's individual development and age mentioned in the birth registration. At school, children over age five are enrolled in a class, although the ECE age is predefined for each class. This study finds that in ECE, there is a more substantial diversity of ages observed in the samples. All selected schools are operated by government, private, NGOs, Madrasa, and other stakeholders, who are specializing in providing early childhood education services.

#### **4.8.6 Sampling Areas**

Bangladesh is divided into eight divisions; all the divisions have the provision of ECE schooling facilities; all children of 3 to 5 years can participate irrespective of their parental socio-economic conditions. Among the divisions, the Rajshahi division was chosen for this study as this division has the country average number of ECE school facilities, especially the government schools.

**Figure 4.6 ECE School Facilities among the Divisions of Bangladesh.**



Source: Created by author based on Annual Primary School Census (2018)

In Figure 4.6 shows the ECE school facilities among the divisions in Bangladesh. The figure shows that the Dhaka division has the highest number of 22%, ECE school facilities and Sylhet and Barisal divisions have the lowest of only 7%, ECE school facilities.

However, the Rajshahi division has the country average number of 13% in Bangladesh. Based on the country average number of ECE facilities the Rajshahi Division was chosen for this field research area in Bangladesh. For the geographic locations of the Rajshahi Division, the map of Bangladesh is shown in Figure 4.6. Presently, among the eight divisions in Bangladesh, The Rajshahi is one of the oldest divisions in Bangladesh.

Further, Under the Rajshahi Division, the Rajshahi district was chosen as urban areas for this study based on the average number of ECE school facilities among Rajshahi divisions in Bangladesh. Under the Rajshahi District, Boalia Thana (central district) is selected and representing urban areas. The Durgapur Upozilla (Sub-district) is selected and representing rural areas for data collections for this study based on the educational facilities available for the children ager three to five.

**Figure 4.7 Map of Bangladesh**



Source: Adopted from wikimedia (2019)

Note. To use Wikimedia Maps service, you are responsible for complying with the OpenStreetMap copyright policy. OpenStreetMap® is open data. It is free to copy, distribute, transmit and adapt, as long as credit OpenStreetMap.

Table 4.6 shows that the total number of schools in Durgapur Upozilla, which is 130 and is the average in the Rajshahi district. Additionally, Paba Upozilla and Boalia Thana have the same number of schools, and the total is 282, but due to Boalia Thana's geographic location, which is in the center of Rajshahi District. In this study, the Boalia Thana is selected to represent the urban area in Rajshahi District.

In the Rajshahi district, most of the cases, the government schools are providing the most extensive ECE facilities irrespective of rural and urban areas. Among the school types, all the sub-districts have the similar facilities of private schooling, except the Boalia Thana and Tanore Upazilla (sub-district) has the most significant number of ECE facilities for children in Rajshahi District of Bangladesh. In terms of the topographical locations, especially Taron Upazilla (Sub-District) is larger than the Boalia Thana in Rajshahi District of Bangladesh.

**Table 4.6 Types and Number of Schools in Rajshahi District (Urban)**

Rajshahi District	Types of Schools					Total
	GPS	Private Schools	NGO School	Mosque/ Temple Based School	Others	
Charghat Upazila	73	22	7	--	--	102
Puthia Upazila	69	17	32	--	--	118
Mohanpur Upazila	71	24	27	--	1	123
Bagha Upazila	74	17	38	--	--	129
Durgapur Upazila	83	20	15	9	3	130
Tanore Upazila	128	14	105	--	1	248
Godagari Upazila	165	40	65	--	9	279
Boalia Thana	60	133	81	--	8	282
Paba Upazila	83	65	129	--	5	282
Bagmara Upazila	218	53	54	--	--	325

Source: Created by Author based on District Education Office (2017)

Note. Upazila is in the Sub-district of a District in a division; Thana represents the center of a district and also the center of sub-districts in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, Thana is used to describe the police station and primarily to serve urban areas.

Figure 4.8 shows the map of the Rajshahi district and all the sub-district, including the field research (rural) area Durgapur Upozilla (Sub-District). Durgapur Upozila is situated 32 km east of the Rajshahi constituency. The topographical location is Bagmara upozila on the north, Puthia upozila on the east and south, Paba upozila on the west. The upozila comprises seven union parishads, and the total number of villages is 123. The present literacy rate of this Upozill is 41%. The rudimentary types of the language are similar to other upazilas, but due to being indigenous people, there is some diversity in this Upozilla. It has very good communication and transportation facilities with Rajshahi city.

**Figure 4.8 Map of Rajshahi District**



Source: Adopted from wikimedia (2019)

Note. To use Wikimedia Maps service, you are responsible for complying with the OpenStreetMap copyright policy. OpenStreetMap® is open data. It is free to copy, distribute, transmit and adapt, as long as credit OpenStreetMap.

Table 4.7 shows the total number of schools along with the different types of ECE services in Durgapur Upozilla. In Durgapur Upozilla, the government's primary school number is 83, which is the largest among the other alternative ECE institutions and facilities. However, total private schools number 22 and NGO schools number 15; all schools have the facilities of ECE. The table also shows that in the Durgapur Upozilla the total number of mosques based ECE facilities is 10.

Due to the data limitations of the Durgapur Upozilla education office, the total number of schools is more than the official data. The education office shows that in this Upozilla only 22 private schools, but during the field research, the researcher found more than 22 private schools facilities. The NGO School are also providing the ECE facilities for the children irrespective of the parental socio-economic conditions of the children but most of the cases the NGO schools are usually providing enrollment opportunities those could not enroll school in time for early learning in the Rajshahi District of Bangladesh.

**Table 4.7 Types and Number of Schools in Durgapur Upozilla (Rural)**

Types	Number	Remarks
GPS	83	
Private Schools (Kindergarten)	22	
NGO Schools	15	BRAC (NGO) for out of school children
Mosque based	10	A project of Ministry of Religion
Temple based	1	A project of Ministry of Religion
Others	2	
Total	133	

Source: Created by Author based on sub-district Education Office in (2017)

Note. GPS=Government Primary School and the average student-teacher ratio (STR) is 1:37.

#### **4.9 Data Collection Procedure**

To conduct this field research, the author applied for permission with a letter of recommendation from Professor Dr. Keiichi Ogawa to the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) in Bangladesh. During the application procedure for the field research, the author had to explain the research objectives and details of the data collection plan. Obtaining approval from the DPE, the author started the pilot field research to test the questionnaires in both rural and urban areas. Additionally, the author had to request permission from the divisional and district office levels to access government schools and had to receive verbal permission from the authority of other school types.

Among the types of schools, mostly the head teacher was interviewed, who recommended some parents for interviews. The target sample size was 2 for each school, and the author had the opportunity to select among the parents. In conducting the interviews, the author briefly introduced the researcher, research objectives, and future implications. After the respondents agreed to be interviewed, all the interviews were conducted during weekdays and



working times, and each interview lasted for 30 minutes. Before each interview, the researcher asked the respondent for permission to record the session.

#### 4.10 Descriptive Statistics of Collected Sample

Table 4.8 shows the descriptive statistics of the collected sample used for this study. The total sample size is 158. The researcher is focused on both supply-side and demand size issues for data and methodological triangulation to understand the context of ECE in Bangladesh. To understand the demand-side factors, the sample size of parents with children who enrolled in ECE school is 68 (n=68), and Parents with children who do not enroll in ECE school are 34(n=34). The demand side respondent sample size is the same in both rural and urban areas in the field research areas.

**Table 4.8 Descriptive Statistics of Collected Sample**

Respondents	Sample Size	Gender		Location		Age range		Experience (Years)	
		Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Min	Max	Min	Max
Parents (E)	68	60%	40%	50%	50%	24	39	--	--
Parents (NE)	34	44%	56%	50%	50%	23	36	--	--
Teachers	34	82%	18%	50%	50%	27	56	3	22
Government Stakeholders	14	91%	9%	21%	79%	34	51	1	15
Specialist	8	25%	75%	0%	100%	31	63	3	25

Source: Created by Author based on data analysis.

*Note.* Parents (E) = is representing the parents those already enrolled their children in ECE Schools; Parents (NE) = is representing the parents those did not enroll their children in ECE schools; Teachers = is representing both headteachers and ECE class teachers; Government Stakeholders = is representing the government personnel those are directly involved with the ECE policy-related issues; Specialist = is representing the personnel those are specialist in the field of ECE and or Education specialist (NGOs and INGOs).

Additionally, to comprehend the supply side issues and stakeholders perspective, the researcher collected data from 34(n=34) school teachers, 14 respondents from government

stakeholders and eight respondents as specialist those are working for NOG or INGO as a specialist of ECE in Bangladesh. For this study, the researcher tried to focus on both central and peripheral government stakeholders' perspectives. All the respondent those are specialist in the field of ECE is from urban areas.

**Table 4.9 Descriptive Statistics of Children Enrolled in ECE Schools**

School Types	School Locations		Child Gender		Child Age	
	Rural	Urban	Boys	Girls	Min	Max
GPS	50%	50%	60%	40%	5	5
Private Schools	50%	50%	60%	40%	3	5
NGO	50%	50%	50%	50%	3	5
Madrasa	50%	50%	75%	25%	3	5
Others (Mosque, Indigenous, etc.)	50%	50%	25%	75%	3	5

Source: Created by Author based on data analysis.

Note. GPS=Government Primary Schools

Table 4.9 shows the descriptive statistics of all children enrolled in ECE schools in both rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh. The research collected 50% of data from both rural and urban areas to understand the phenomena among the respondents. However, the gender balance was not feasible due to the availability of the respondents. This research is focused on children who are 3 to 5 years old, and the researcher collected the data from parents with children 3 to 5 years. Although the researcher collected the data, those are officially 3 to 5 years old, but some of the parents already change their child age to cope with the schooling system.

**Table 4.10 Income Groups and Social Status in Bangladesh**

Income Groups	Daily Income (\$)		Monthly (\$)		Social Status
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	
Lower Income Group	1	4	30	1200	Poor
Middle Income Group	5	50	1201	1500	Middle
Upper Income group	51	200	1501	6000	Upper

Source: Created by Author based on Mujeri (2019).

Table 4.10 shows the data of the income group and social status of respondents in the Rajshahi division in Bangladesh. Among the respondent, although the researcher didn't ask the respondent about their income, most of the respondents replied about their income and social status willingly. As defined by Mujeri (2019), the income distribution and social situation in Bangladesh are shown in Table 4.10, which shows that categorically, there is three income group in Bangladesh and there is a considerable income gap with the upper-income group among the lower- and middle-income group. However, mostly, the direct income does not represent the social status as most of the respondents do not depend only on the direct income, but they also have some indirect income.

**Figure 4.9 School Distance from Children's Home**

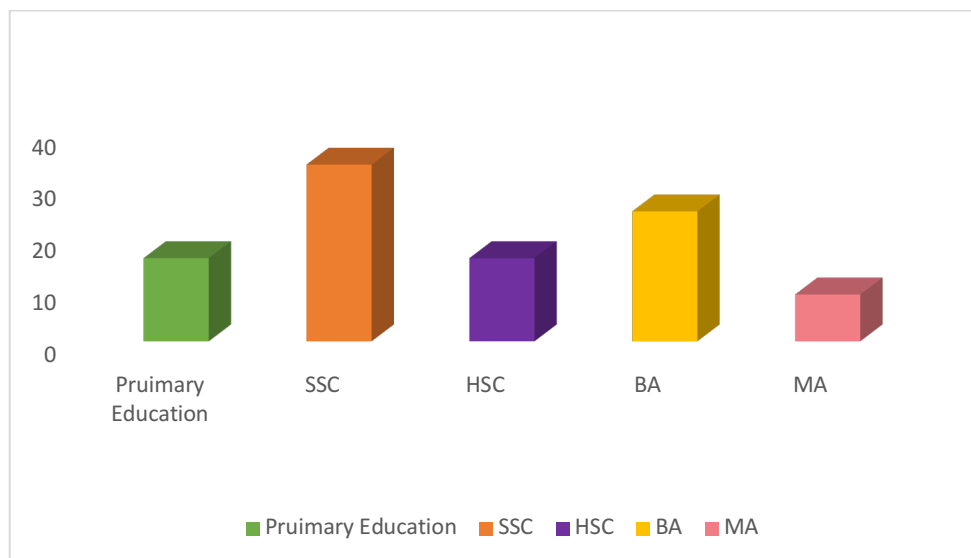


Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Figure 4.9 shows the distance between the children’s home to ECE schools in this study. Among the respondent parents, 32% of children stay within 1 km from the schools, and the respondent considers the school distance as one of the factors for school enrollment. 25% of children stay within 2 km from their schools. Remarkable 15% of children go to school 5 km distance from their home, where parents consider about the quality of school for enrollment.

The availability of school matters for parental aspiration concerning the schooling of their children. Some of the parents choose schools based on their goal of education i.e., for the quality reasons and religious perspectives; usually, parents tend to go far from their home for their child schooling. Parents among the urban areas tend to go far school from their home for their child schooling because they consider the school quality is a matter for their child schooling. The school distance from home to school also is the reason for the availability of private schools close to their homes.

**Figure 4.10 Respondent Parents Education Qualifications**

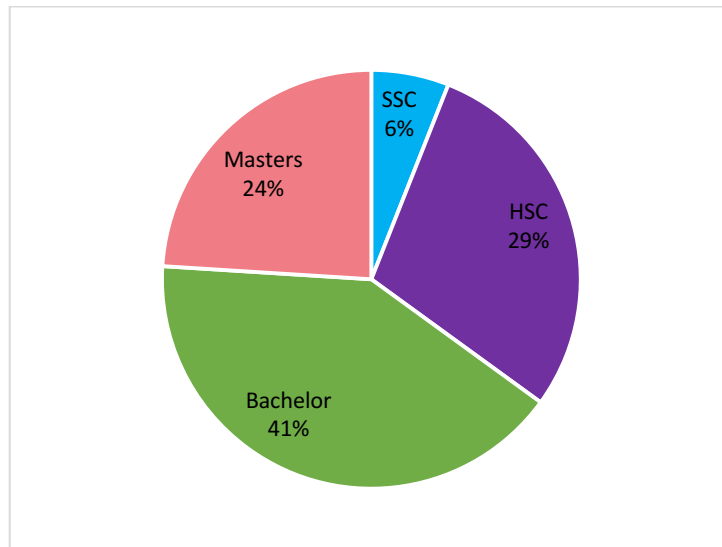


Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Figure 4.10 shows the data of respondents' educational qualifications. First, among the respondents, most of the parents almost 34% of the parent has the Secondary education qualification. Second, 25% of respondent parents have Bachelor level educational

qualifications, and 16% of parents have the primary educational qualifications and mostly among the rural areas. Finally, only 9% of the respondent has master's level educational qualifications. However, the respondent's educational qualifications, parental aspirations for ECE schooling is almost similar among the parents both in rural and urban areas.

**Figure 4.11 Education Qualifications of ECE School Teachers**



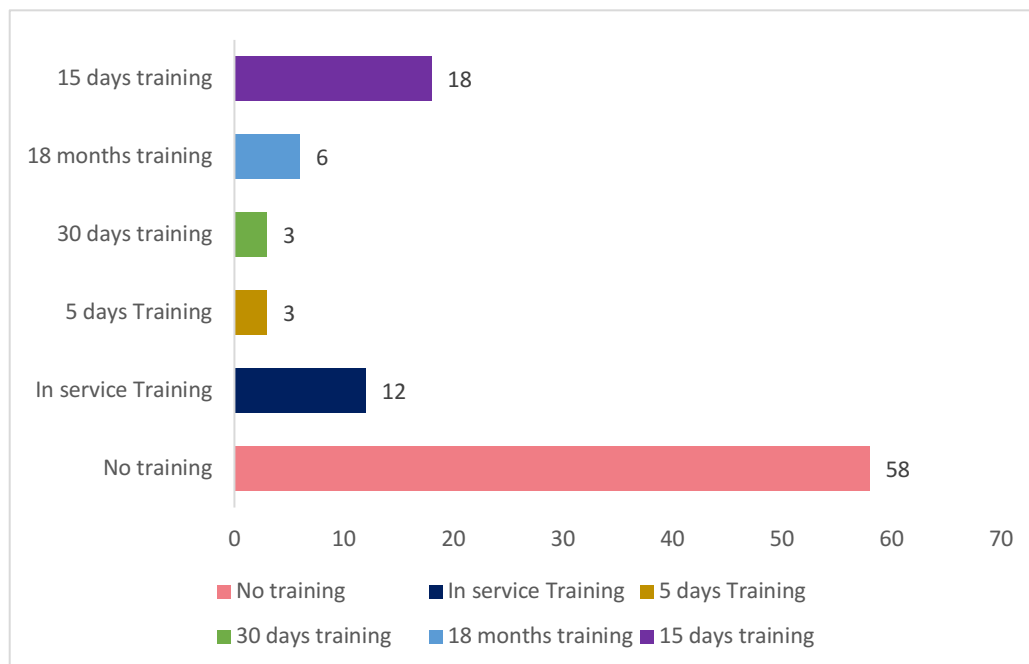
Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Figure 4.11 shows the data of respondents ECE school teachers' education qualifications. In the data, it is evident that a large number of school teachers has Bachelor level education qualifications, and 24% of school teachers have a master's level education qualifications. However, some of the ECE school teachers have the minimum secondary education qualifications. Those teachers who only holds the secondary education qualifications the teachers are teaching either in NGO-based schools and Mosques-based ECE schools.

The data of ECE school teachers training information is shown in Figure 4.12, where almost 58% of teachers did not receive any formal training, but they are teaching in ECE schools both in rural and urban areas. Further, 18% of the teachers only receive 15 days of training, and the teachers are working in government schools both in rural and urban areas. Among the regions in this study, the research found that most of the teachers who are teaching

in ECE schools are not trained to teach the children in ECE schools. Some of the government school teachers have the provision of training, but because of the teacher's shortage, the teacher starts teaching without any training. On the other hand, other types of ECE schools do not have the provision for training their teachers.

**Figure 4.12 ECE School Teachers' Training**



Source: Created by Author based on field research.

#### 4.11 Data Analysis

For this study, transcripts and verbal expressions were used to analyze the data. This study utilized documentation of a voice recorder, field notes, and observations. This study also utilized deductive approaches while analyzing the data by grouping, then finding the similarities and differences; the predefined variable is not clearly identified earlier and more general open-ended questions. To analyze the data for this study, the author paid more considerable attention to theory, themes, characteristics of respondents, and coding.

The findings of this study are based on multiple sources of information, including in-depth interviews with parents and key informant interviews and observations in schools,

classes, and homes. To understand parental aspirations, the data are analyzed based on the categorical coding method (Curtis, Gesler, Smith, & Washburn, 2000), and the development of research results are based on the themes (Durepos, Mills, & Wiebe, 2010).

**Table 4.11 Data Analysis and Explanation of Research Components**

Data Analysis Process	Explanations
Organizing the collected data	To organize the data, data cleaning was an enormous challenge to consolidate for this study.
Categorize the data for analysis	To categorize the data, labeling was essential, and for the categorization, structuring and familiarizing were necessary for this study to understand the phenomena.
Identifying a specific framework.	This study is exploratory research, and research theoretical and conceptual frameworks were essential for the data coding plan for analysis.
Sort the categorized data in a framework	To analyze the date for results, this study tries to identify similarities, create generalizations, extract themes, highlight differences, and identify phenomena among the respondents for final results.

Source: Created by Author based on Yin (2014).

For this study, to understand parental aspirations, data are analyzed in two phases as follows:

First, primary data analysis and review will be concurrent with data collection. This phase is included in data preparation (transcription and translation), data organization, and quick data reviewing and replicating; and

Second, final data analysis takes place after the data collection period is completed. Triangulation of the data is the dominant strategy to increase the trustworthiness of the study; as mentioned, this study uses multiple sources of data. Moreover, the researcher's reflection

on his personal biases throughout the research will be another strategy to increase the trustworthiness of the study.

The data for this study are drawn from semi-structured in-depth interviews, observations, and document analyses. This study follows the procedure mentioned in Table 4.11 to analyze the data. First, organize the collected data for analysis, and this process, the researcher clean the data to categorize in different themes. Second, classifying the data for analysis, where the researcher categorized the data into different thematic development to understand the phenomena and results. Third, the researcher specifies the data into the framework for final analyze in search of the results for this study. Finally, the researcher tries to identify the theme to generalize the result throughout this study and further, extract the theme for the different opinions of respondent and phenomena grounded in the context of ECE in Bangladesh.

Thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2013), as well as constant comparison and case comparison (Yin, 2014), are used to analyze collected data for this study to understand the parental aspirations for school choice, school enrollment, and school readiness in ECE in Bangladesh. The data of this study include and or explain the parental socio-economic factors in the context of Bangladesh. Data were analyzed by interviews, field notes, activities observation of relevant government, and non-governmental stakeholders' opinions and documents. The questions were designed to obtain answers to provocative and interpretative question patterns, which assist in finding the real-life phenomena and answering each of the research questions.

This study used the induction techniques to explore and analyze the qualitative in-depth interviews. The collected data are organized into logical outlines in emerging groups for analysis to understand the phenomena of this study. Direct quotations are used to validate the results and to bear the respondent's knowledge intensely. In addition, the strategy of using



descriptive statistics in qualitative case analysis has been used to provide the noticeable distinction of qualitative results for this case study.

#### **4.12 Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are essential and essential parts to distinguish between worthy and modest research to confirm the trustworthiness of the research results. However, the procedure of qualitative research is not identical, as in quantitative analysis (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative research, to condense the aspects that jeopardize the validity and reliability, prominent qualitative researchers have anticipated diverse approaches to commence a valid and reliable investigation.

The most prominent strategy to ensure validity and reliability of research is triangulation, which uses more than one source of data to study a single phenomenon through data authentication. Triangulation overcomes the researcher's biases to validate the reliability of the study results. Consequently, this study employs triangulation both in data sources and methods to confirm validity and reliability. The data triangulation in this study is comprised of three mechanisms: Document review; Supply-side Stakeholders, and Demand-side stakeholders. Finally, the triangulation of methods is used for this study, which includes key informant sampling, purposeful sampling, and snowball sampling method.

#### **4.13 Ethical Consideration**

In qualitative research, there are four research principles to ensure ethical methods used by the researcher, which are autonomy, nobility, beneficence, and impartiality. For this study, the author has prudently measured the framework, objectives of the research, and the analysis perceptive to ensure ethical research. All the questionnaires are designed to ensure participant privacy free from social consequences.

For this study, the researcher took the questionnaire answer minutes for respondents who did not sessions recorded. Furthermore, the researcher ensured formal consent from all the respondents in explaining the purpose of the study and the confidentiality of their responses. Before the field research, official permission was received from the Directorate of primary education to conduct this field research. Pseudonymization is used to analyze the data and to ensure the respondent's identity for safety issues and to ensure the confidentiality of respondents.

#### **4.14 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discussed in detail the theoretical framework and conceptual research framework based on social justice and rational choice theory. The theoretical framework is developed based on the country context. The theoretical framework explains phenomena in child schooling in Bangladesh based on the previous inquiry. Hypotheses are also framed corresponding to answer the research questions and to address the research gap in line with the problem statement discussed in chapter one. Besides, the research design, sampling method, the data collection procedure is to conduct this case study research are also presented. An alternative but important aspect of qualitative research that is descriptive information of samples has also been provided following specific research methods, especially for this case study approach.

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the results to answer the research questions based on the methodology described in chapter four. To answer all the research questions in a consistence manner, categorical and thematic data analysis were conducted in the analysis process. As a qualitative study, the arrangement of the research results emphasizes a logical order as well as the themes and categories arising during the data analysis process to ensure that all the research questions are adequately answered. In line with the conceptual and theoretical research framework discussed in Chapter 4, this chapter reinforces the explanation of parental aspirations in the context of Bangladesh. Parental aspirations for ECE, which is not mandatory for all children in Bangladesh for their child development, is justified to acknowledge parental motivation as the core driving force for ECE. In this chapter, parental aspirations are shown in different perspectives based on the school type, which helps to understand the phenomena of parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh. Finally, the result is designed logically to address all the research questions for this study.

### **5.2 Parental Aspirations for School Choice in ECE**

Based on the research question, to understand parental aspirations in ECE school choice in Bangladesh in reflecting the available early childhood education services and government policies, a research design was developed which included parents with children aged 3-5 years (for both enrolled and not enrolled in school) in-depth interviews to develop a distinct school choice prototype, which combined hypothetically substantial exploratory variables. The in-depth interviews were guided to ensure the privacy of respondents, especially parents of children who were already enrolled in ECE schools. The first group of parents (n=68) were selected from both rural and urban areas as they have already experienced ECE school choice

for their children. The second group of parents (n=34) were selected as they will enroll their children in ECE school shortly as all the parents of children aged group 3-5 years during the study.

In answering research question 1.1, the author framed the in-depth questionnaire interviews with parents to understand the socio-economic aspirations which influence the ECE school choice, where the central concern of parental choice is more about social issues rather than economic issues. For this study, the author did not directly ask the respondents about their income; however, the author did ask about occupation, education background, education expenses, and age to understand the parental socio-economic factors impacting the school choice. Their answers gave a clear picture of parental socio-economic aspirations for ECE school choice in Bangladesh.

### **5.2.1 Parental Socio-Economic Factors for School Choice in Bangladesh**

School choice for children in ECE habitually represents the parental issues of social justice in the society, which symbolizes the parental socio-economic aspirations for quality educational awareness. The result shows that parental aspirations for school choice for children who are weak, moderate, and strong. Moderate and strong parental aspirations help them choose a school for their children at an early age, whereas weak parental aspirations lead them to delay the school choice for enrollment in school.

The social system of Bangladesh is a patriarchal one, where fathers (men) hold the ultimate and predominant influence over all kinds of social decisions. The result in Table 5.1 shows that 85% of fathers in urban areas choose a school for their children, whereas only 15% of mothers choose a school for their children. The result also shows that fathers have the tendency to choose public, private, and NGO-based schooling for child ECE and mothers have the tendency to choose other types of schooling such as Madrasa and Mosque-based schooling.

Table 5.1 also shows that in rural areas, along with the father and mother, the grandfather also plays a vital role in school choice of child schooling. In rural areas, about 68% of fathers, 12% of grandfathers, and only 21% of mothers choose a school for their child's education. The result shows that the extended family in the rural areas of Bangladesh makes decisions regarding child schooling, whereas nuclear families decide urban areas.

**Table 5.1 School Choice Decision of Parents for ECE Schooling in Bangladesh**

Decision Maker	School Type	School Location	Respondents	Percentage
Father	Private, Public, NGO	Urban	29	85%
Mother	Public, Others		5	15%
Subtotal			34	100%
Father	Public, Private	Rural	23	68%
Grandfather	Private, Madrasa		4	12%
Mother	NGO, Madrasa, Others		7	21%
Subtotal			34	100%

Source: Created by Author based on data coding and analysis.

Some parents reported that:

We decide to send our child to private school as he is four years old and because of the age barrier of government school we do not have an option except to send in the private school.

(PE, 17)

I think daughter does not need to study in the private school as our society does not allow ....and daughters get married early, on the other hand, it is important to send my boy to private school.

(PE, 32)

This Private school is far from our home, but this NGO school timing is very convenient for my wife, we choose this school because of other households works, and she gets ample time to concentrate on works at home.

(PE, 20)

Table 5.2 shows the reason behind the parental aspirations for school choice both in rural and urban areas in Bangladesh for ECE. Among the different types of schools, most parents are concerned about social issues when choosing a school. Out of the nine themes which are categorized in the data analysis, it is evident that social issues are a significant factor for school choice in ECE. However, very few parents expressed concern about economic issues, such as opportunity costs and school fees, as being a reason for school choice in ECE. On the other hand, some parents also talked about institutional factors relating to school choice in ECE for early schooling.

**Table 5.2 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for School Choice**

<b>Basis</b>	<b>Motives</b>	<b>Rural (%)</b>	<b>Urban (%)</b>
Social	Early learning	29	21
	Future anxieties	9	12
	Academic achievement	6	6
	Religious understanding	9	9
Institutional	School distance	6	9
	School competencies and quality	18	9
	School time	6	15
	School curriculum	9	12
Economic	Opportunity cost	6	9
	School fees	3	0

Source: Created by Author based on categorical data coding.

Some parents reported as:

Most of the children are coming from a socially strong background and wealthy whereas the other school environment of public school is not favorable for our child and we decided to send private school..... although we need to teach them at home.

(PE, 38)

We also choose Madrasa (religious school) because one of my friends send his child to that Madrasa. Along with the general education my son also learning religious education, which is very important for future life.

(PE, 24)

Table 5.3 shows that parents had a concern about transportation-related issues for school choice, whereas the parents of rural areas strongly consider the school distance for child enrollment; however, parents hardly think about school transportation facilities or available transportation services. Second, in terms of school-related factors, parents both in urban and rural areas, highly consider the school enrollment age. Instead, many urban parents consider school enrollment criteria and social class of children enrolled in school as necessary when they are making school choice for their children, although parents in rural areas hardly consider the criteria for school choice. The school distance and individual school policies are eventually affecting the urban parents for school choice in ECE. Conversely, parents in rural areas only consider the school distance and school entry age when they choose ECE schools for their children.

**Table 5.3 Parental Aspirations on Institutional Factors for School Choice**

Factors	Measures	Areas	
		Urban	Rural
School Distance	School distance	√	√
	School transportation facilities	√	X
	Availability of transportation	√	X
School Policies	School entry age	√	√
	School enrollment criteria	√	X
	Social class of students at school	√	X

Source: Created by Author based on data coding.

In Bangladesh, only private schools have facilities of school transportation systems, which are mostly paid by the parents and depend on the school distance from home. The government does not have any facilities to provide transportation facilities for children in ECE, and parents do not receive any funding for school transportation services for children. The result shows that school transportation services are a significant factor for parental school choice in ECE.

The perspectives of social justice are essential for parental choice of schooling for their children in the early years, which is directly reflected in line with the education policy of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, the government formulated several education and child-friendly policies to ensure justice in education, especially in ECE. However, the supply of schooling, as stated by parents, is limited due to the issues of quality schooling, especially among urban parents.

Table 5.4, the result shows the position and adverse effects of parental choice for child ECE schooling. Based on the categorial coding approach, the author developed the respondents' (n=68) in-depth interviews into six thematic areas, which shows the total respondents' observations for school choice in line with the social justice and rational choice of parents for child schooling. The result shows that school choice of parents can enhance



children's educational success; however, the choice also results in an educational divergence among children. Most of the parents noted that the positive effects of school choice are comprised of educational success in the early years, awareness development of parents for child education, improvement of the social capital through schooling as children developed new friends starting the school-age in the early years among the social classes. Social justice and school performance are developed through the school choice process as all the parents of children have the possibilities to partake in early education, and the school choice process based on rational choice enables the schools to consider further development of the quality of their services.

**Table 5.4 Positive and Negative Effects of School Choice**

<b>Positive Effects</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>	<b>Negative Effects</b>	<b>Respondents (%)</b>
Educational success	50	Educational discrepancy	40
Awareness development	20	Intensified child discrimination	25
Social capital	10	Inequality of education	17
Social justice of children	10	Social segregation	10
Enhance school performance	10	Child inequality	8

Source: Created by Author based on data coding.

It is interestingly found that parents also consider the adverse effects of school choice as the school choice process increases the possibility of an educational discrepancy, discrimination, inequality of education and inequality among children, and finally, social segregation. The school choice process segregated societies among different groups, which affects child learning in the early years of schooling.

However, the ECE school teacher reported as below

We could not ensure enrollment of all children because of the school capacities, the number of teachers and children. As a result, we choose the students who could enroll in our school.

(EST, 21)

### 5.2.2 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for Schooling Expenditure

To ensure social justice in society, parents should have their own choice for managing their children's early education among regions. Parents have the right for their children to be educated consistently with their socio-economic status (SES). A person's educational attainment, occupation, household income, and other related variables are the consolidations of SES. In a democratic society like Bangladesh, parents belong to a social class; usually, they have specific preferences and rational choices for their child's education. Parents always have rational actions about the early learning needs of their children among the available range of services based on their socio-economic status.

**Table 5.5 Parental Qualifications and School Types in Urban Areas**

<b>Educational Qualifications</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>School Types</b>
Primary Education	6	2	Others, Public
SSC	21	7	NGO, Public, Madrasa, Others
HSC	24	8	Public, NGO, Madrasa, Others
BA	32	11	Public, Private, NGO
MA	18	6	Private, Madrasa
Subtotal	100	34	

Source: Created by Author based on filed research.

*Note.* SSC=Secondary School Certificate; HSC=Higher Secondary School Certificate; BA=Bachelor of Arts; MA=Masters of Arts.

Table 5.5 shows that the results of parental social aspirations i.e., educational qualification play a vital role in managing private school expenses. The result shows that lower educational qualification parents tend to choose religious-based schooling and public school; conversely, urban parents with higher education qualifications tend to enroll their children in private schools in the Rajshahi division of Bangladesh.

**Table 5.6 Parental Educational Qualifications and Choice of School in Rural Area**

<b>Educational Qualifications</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>School Types</b>
Primary Education	24	8	Public, Madrasa, Others
SSC	50	17	NGO, Public, Madrasa, Others
HSC	9	3	Private
BA	18	6	Private, NGO

Source: Created by Author based on filed research

Note. SSC=Secondary School Certificate; HSC=Higher Secondary School Certificate; BA=Bachelor of Arts.

Further, Table 5.6 shows the result of rural areas, where it is also clearly evident that parents with higher educational qualifications choose private schools for their children's education managing. Although a large number of parents with secondary education qualification have the tendency to send their children to NGO, Public, Madrasa and Mosque-based schooling for their children. The results marked that parental educational qualifications have a direct link to managing education expenses for diverse schooling system for children in rural areas; although, one parent with the highest educational qualification sent her children to an NGO-based school, due to the distance from home.

For instance, one parent reported as:

The government school teacher is more qualified than the private schools in our areas. We know some of the teachers who did not get any good jobs, and now they are teaching at private schools, so we choose a public school for our children.

**Table 5.7 Parental Expenditure for School Types and Gender in Urban Areas**

School Types	Direct School Fees in BDT (Monthly)		Indirect Expenses in BDT (Monthly)		Child Gender	
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Male	Female
Public School	0	0	300	600	7	3
Private School	500	1200	800	1800	5	5
Others (Indigenous, Mosque)	50	100	300	500	0	4
NGO based School	50	150	300	800	3	3
Madrassa (Religious)	50	300	300	1000	1	3

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Note. BDT: Bangladeshi Currency; \$ 1 USD = 84.65 BDT

Table 5.7 shows the results of parental expenditures for different ECE schooling in urban areas. In the public school, parents do not need to pay any school fees, but among the other available types of schooling, parents need to pay direct school fees, which is a minimum of BDT 50 and a maximum of BDT 1200 per month. In addition to the direct school fees, parents have relatively high additional indirect education expenses. The result shows that the indirect education expenses are higher than the direct school fees. Among the respondent parents, none of them have any distress about the direct school fees; parents exposed anxiety about the indirect expenses because most of the parents have the indirect expense of private tutoring for children. Parents presented their anxiety about the school quality and method of teaching of private tutoring; almost all the parents expressed concerns about needing to send children to private tutoring in addition to sending children to schools. The gender balance in private schools and Madrassa-based schools is related, although the parents tend to send their daughters to religious-based schooling in urban areas.

For example, one parent reported as:

I really like to send my child to a government school as we also studied and in our understanding government school expenditure is convenient for us and also better for children because the child never feels pressure .....but the private schools give lots of pressure at the very early ages.

(PE, 15)

**Table 5.8 Parental Expenditures for School Types and Gender in Rural Areas**

School Types	Direct School Fees		Indirect Expenses		Child Gender	
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	Male	Female
Public School	0	0	300	500	6	4
Private School	250	400	800	1500	6	4
Others (Mosque, temple)	50	100	300	500	1	3
NGO based School	50	150	500	800	3	3
Madrassa (Religious)	50	50	300	500	3	1

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Table 5.8 shows that parents have to pay different levels of school-related fees in managing their children's schooling for diverse types of schools. Mostly, the direct school fees are similar in comparison with rural areas; however, rural-area parents pay the direct school fees at a minimum of 250 BDT and a maximum of 400 BDT for private school. Rural area parents try to manage education expenditure and tend to enroll their sons in private schools as they believe that boys' education is more important than girls. Some parents that are sending their children to private schools specified about the intellectual development of boys is slower

in comparison with girls; as a consequence, parents in rural areas send their boys to private schools.

For instance, one parent reported about private schooling as:

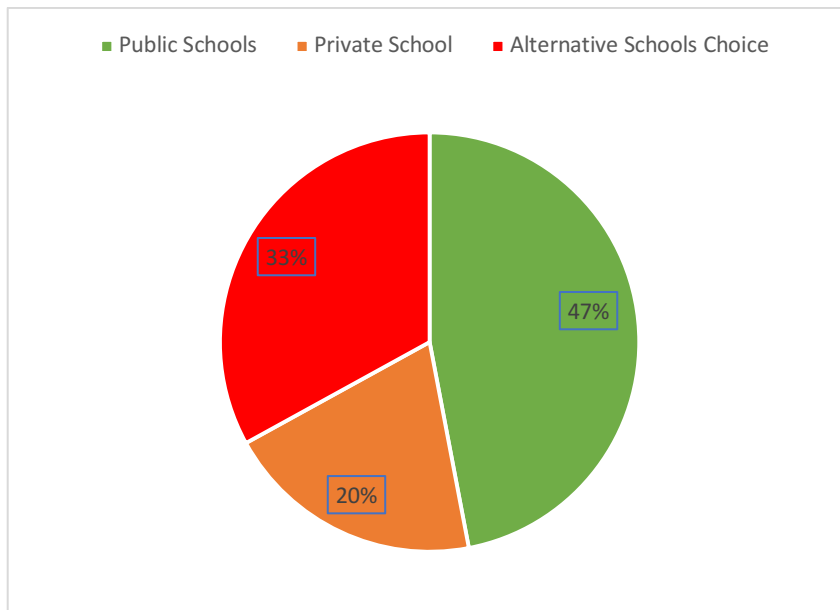
We wanted to send our child to a government school, but they do not enroll because his age was 4, but the private school allows us to enroll. We choose first government school because of distance but later to this private school.....we never think about the money for our child education.

(PE, 47)

Parents are anticipated to manage the education expenditures for their children and choose a school according to their rationality for schooling for their children in Bangladesh. The idea of a right or unfortunate school choice for their children depends on justice in society. In Bangladesh, schools mostly cannot address all the children's full access because of the access related facilities barriers in the early years of schooling due to the available services for specific age groups, which are more suitable for their children. In theory, self-individualism has a significant impact on school choice, which makes the schools more responsive to the parents in managing education expenditures. However, due to the available services and government policy barriers, many of the parents have to choose among alternative schooling.

The result shows that parents hardly have the opportunity to choose on their own among the available types of school for their children. The problems are acute in the urban areas where the schools choose which children can enroll in their schools, and parents seem to be helpless to meet the school requirements for enrollment. Instead, the rural private schools are also playing the same role as the urban private schools, but the other schools among the rural areas have ample access, regardless of age, sex, and ethnic identities.

**Figure 5.1 Parental Choice and Education Expenses Pattern Among Schools**



Source: Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Figure 5.1, the result shows that most of the parents do not have the priority of their school choice possibilities due to the available education services and education expenditures related issues. In most cases, the government public schools seem to be flexible to ensure parental justice to participate and choose schools. However, the public-school policy has a specific age barrier, so most of the parents who choose the government school are fully aware of the school rules and regulations for enrollment, and parents face difficulties in managing the education expenditures due to the indirect fees for child schooling.

On the other hand, choosing a private school, parents have some dilemmas because of the school management authorities' decisions for enrollment in a specific private school. The other alternative schools also seem to be flexible as most of the parents choose this school considering the school time and distance from home. Finally, some of the interviewed parents claimed that they would like to change the schools based on the school performance and their children need as the parents want to change the school because of the school activities and parental satisfaction.

Besides, 10% of parents with high aspirations choose unrecognized private schools for early learning of their children, but later they decide to enroll that provide religious-based curriculum and contents in ECE schools. Only 5% of parents choose other alternative schools as they believe the alternative schools provide special programs for their children, this result shows that parents among the regions have different dilemmas in managing the education expenditures for their children's ECE schooling.

In Table 5.9, the result developed based on thematic coding shows the parental information-seeking behavior among rural and urban areas in Bangladesh. Around 75% of parents in rural areas and only 35% in urban areas choose a school for their children in discussion with their social peer groups, such as friends and other parents that have already enrolled their children in school. During the interviews, it was evident that parents in the urban areas barely depend on social networks in choosing to school for their children. Parents in urban areas have a greater tendency to visit schools and talk with school teachers to choose schools for their children. Rural parents hardly visit schools, only 2%, or talk with school teachers, only 10%, while seeking information about child schooling.

**Table 5.9 Parental Expenditures Management and Information Seeking Behavior**

Parental Behavior	School Locations	
	Rural (%)	Urban (%)
Talk with social peer group	75	35
Talk with School teachers	10	33
Visiting School	2	25
Others (Self-decisions)	13	7
Subtotal	100	100

Source: Source: Created by Author based on thematic data coding.

Further, the results also show that parents in rural areas stated that they chose the school by themselves without asking any information from other sources, where the parental choice



was rational and unguided. The result shows that in public schools, the parental choice does not result in any problems; almost all parents with children aged five years old could enroll, which also applies to the middle-income group of parents.

Table 5.10 shows the results of related considerations for parents in choosing an ECE school in Bangladesh. Parents reported their top five reasons for choosing an ECE school; in rural areas, 35% of parents prioritized school distance as the number one reason for choosing a school, but in the urban areas, 5% of parents reported distance as the last reason for school choice. Further, 40% of urban parents and only 10% of rural parents consider school reputation as the priority in choosing a school. In terms of headteachers' purpose, both rural and urban parents have a similar thought while choosing an ECE school.

**Table 5.10 Considerations in Choosing a School**

<b>Considerations</b>	<b>Urban Areas (%)</b>	<b>Motives Rank</b>	<b>Rural Areas (%)</b>	<b>Motives Rank</b>
School reputation	40	1	10	3
Teachers	25	2	13	4
Headteachers	20	3	20	2
Teaching style & Lesson dimension	10	4	12	5
School distance	5	5	35	1

Source: Created by Author based on data Analysis.

Reconsidering parental motivations in choosing an ECE school, rural and urban parents are inspired by factors inversely. However, school reputation is the core concern for parental aspirations. Parents consider a school looking at the curriculum, teaching method, number of children, and class environment also as factors for choosing schools. Though among the reasons, parents consider the school environment as the family background of the other children in the same class or schools. The social status of the family is considerably highlighted throughout this study.

The result shows that different social groups of parents have different perspectives based on their social issues; however, parents who choose religious schools prioritized more on moral development and education. Instead, parents like to enroll in private schools for better preparation before starting primary school grade one among regions. Parents choose the schools based on their social and economic realities when considering the schooling for their children.

For, example, one school teacher also reported as:

Parental high demand for ECE schooling, in the government schools, we try to enroll all the children. Still, due to the limited resources, we could not accommodate all the children, especially the classrooms. We had to incur some additional expenses for child schooling in the Pre-primary classes.

(EST, 05)

### **5.2.3 Parental School Choice for Children with Special Needs**

These concerns led to distrust in the schooling experience of their children with special needs in Bangladesh, and many parents thought “that keeping their child with special needs at home is safe and that rudimentary literacy and numeracy proficiencies are enough for their future development.” Parental aspirations for children with special needs are allowed to ensure the benefit of schooling opportunity through quality learning opportunities based on their children’s individual needs. Further, parental aspirations help children to perform well while mothers are directly contributing to their children. Parental aspirations help their children to enter school and play a very vital role in lifelong learning.

In answering this research question, this study conveys the deliberations of parental socio-economic aspirations for children with special needs in related issues such as social status, religion, and gender. Additionally, the research also incorporates the child with malnutrition

and physically challenged are also outlined by the term children with special needs. Parental aspirations and ECE are placed in a multilayer debate among the society in Bangladesh.

Table 5.11 shows the data coding for parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh among the rural and urban areas. Based on the data coding, the reasons for parental aspirations (n=34) were categorized under five themes. In rural areas, parents mostly emphasized the school environment; they believe that it is an essential object for ECE schooling. Parents believe that children with special needs are always far behind in comparison with the peer group; they need special care, and a better school environment could ensure their needs. The result also shows that school safety, quality of schooling, and school information for school choice for the children with special needs, but the parents have a little undesirable impression about the value of education, especially among the lower-income group of people.

**Table 5.11 Parental Aspirations for Children with Special Needs**

<b>Causes</b>	<b>Rural (%)</b>	<b>Urban (%)</b>
School environment	40	25
Social safety	20	15
Quality of school	20	25
School information	12	15
Value of education	8	20

Source: Created by Author based on data coding.

The results in Table 5.11 also show that among urban areas, 25% of parents consider the school environment and quality of schools for their children with special needs, whereas 15% of parents in rural areas consider school safety and access to school information as factors for school choice. Further, the value of education among the rural parents seems to be very low, on the other hand, the value of education among the urban parents are considered as a cause for school choice for children with special needs. Although, among the three social groups

(high-middle-low) of households, the knowledge and practices of ECE schooling did not improve among the parents. However, families exposed to the ECE program were more likely to register for the accessible government ECE program. Parents of children with special needs did show modest aspirations and improvements in the cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, and physical development of children. Both indigenous and children with special needs faced severe challenges for enrollment in ECE settings at a very early age.

Parental freedom in choosing a school for their children makes a positive contribution, although, in many of the cases, especially in rural areas, parents of children with special needs do not have the freedom to choose among the ECE services. The government policy failed to address social justice for children's enrollment in ECE settings at a very early age. Mostly, the indirect cost impedes parental aspirations in school choice in Bangladesh among middle-income families and families in rural areas.

Most of the ECE schools have less qualified and untrained teachers, especially private schools with larger class sizes. In addition, parents are not aware of ECE school quality and use friends' recommendations to decide the school for their children. In most cases, parents have a very limited time to contact teachers or schools to find out about quality. In particular, according to the headteachers and ECE teachers, they had limitations on creating an atmosphere of equity and social justice for equal access and better child attainment, especially for children with special needs. This study reflects that parental aspirations for children with special needs mostly depends on the social structure, future job opportunities, and the local community prejudices in choice of ECE schools.

One parent explained:

Where my child who needs special care . . . My child could not concentrate, and the teachers did not show proper care for his educational development. Later we decided not to continue his schooling.

(PNE, 14)

Parents of socio-economically disadvantaged groups face severe challenges to access ECE schools, and especially the lower and middle-income group households' children with special needs have limited opportunities to choose schools from among the available services. Both the urban and rural schools have diverse schooling facilities irrespective of public, private, or others; mostly parents of children with special needs have limited access to pre-school education. Especially in poor rural areas where the services to choose from are limited. Government schools are providing free access where households do not need to pay the tuition fees. Nonetheless, the indirect cost is very high among the households in the rural areas to access in ECE schools. Lack of public management compromises quality, too, as parent's fees alone cannot cover the full cost of providing existing facilities.

Parents send their children to private schools, although the quality is not good and most of the time the teachers are very new and less qualified than at the government schools. Households are not aware of teachers' training and teachers' educational qualifications for the decisions of enrollment. The training in private schools is very limited, and only on the job training is available. Government school ECE teachers have the facility of training for 15 days. However, due to the lack of teachers and daily class schedules, mostly, they could not participate in the training in time before joining a designated school, especially in rural areas.

For example, one parent expressed ECE schooling as:

Schools, especially private ones, mainly focus on daily activities, and most of the time, my child needs to work on homework, and he hardly gets time to play; we feel his pressure while sending him to school.

(PNE, 03)

Mostly rural parents do not enroll their children with special needs at the appropriate ages because of the social standing, access limitations, and the indirect cost for enrollment. Parents in the poor rural areas used to sacrifice a lot to keep their children in school, even

borrowing money for school lunch and pocket money for the children to encourage their children's education. Further, rural parents reduce the consumption of foods and fundamental necessities, and parents want to pay for their children's schooling.

The non-required educational expenditures are assumed to be the cause of the non-enrollment of children with special needs, especially in urban area private schools. Parents decide not to enroll their children with special needs and or indigenous minorities at school at an early age among the lower and middle-income groups in the Rajshahi division of Bangladesh. Mostly, the private and NGO operated schools highly depend on volunteer teachers without formal training or very low educational qualifications to teach them. Households' decisions to enroll and support the child in ECE vary mostly as a result of social obligations (rural areas) and the household's social factors. For instance, one parent shared his thought as:

Sending my child to school, I feel very anxious . . . And always contemplate why I am sending him into difficulties, which may be stressful. Fortunately, I continue to send him school, although I understand that my child cannot compete with his peer group, so I decided not to continue school.

(PNE, 23)

In the rural areas, it was evident that insufficient support of the community and society is a major impediment for school enrollment of children with special needs. ECE has been widely considered critical to the development of children and lifelong learning. In this study, parents felt burdened for children with special needs; they are concerned about enrollment in schools, whereas government support could not minimize the disparities between rural and urban areas.

For example, parents shared their concerns for children with special needs:

Like others, when I decided to enroll my child at school, I had to sacrifice other opportunities. As we believe, at school, children should acquire friendships, quality schooling, and cope up with the school environment. Nevertheless, children with special needs face enormous challenges, and we feel that it may be better not to go to school.

(PNE, 09)

She did not want to send her kids to school and did not want to enroll at school at an early age. She was also concerned whether her child was academically behind, compared to his peer group, and whether her child would not be able to minimize the gap in the future.

(PNE, 17)

Some of the parents indicated that there are few opportunities for educating children with special needs in Bangladesh. Mostly the private schools are always disregarded to provide access for special needs children. Those schools believe that enrollment opportunities for children with special needs could hamper other educational attainments. Because of this, many parents influenced to choose public schools for their children with special needs. This parental aspiration also distorted for mothers' occupations for children with special needs. In this study, only two mothers had a job; the rest of the participants reported not having a job because their child with special needs requires extra care. Several parents of children with special needs indicated that they decided not to work as their children are not like the others, so they needed to devote more time to take care of children.

One parent explained:

I do not work for my children. . . . I am taking him to school every day. . . . parents of children with disabilities should not work as mostly there is nobody to take proper care of my child.

(PNE, 20)

In Bangladesh, diverse social pressure and expectations for children's gender are widely practiced where boys are prioritized more than girls, though the gender parity is close to one. It is noteworthy that due to social pressure, many parents had different aspirations depending on children's gender. The transformation was noticeably evident where many parents with special needs children face incisive pressure to support their daughters, especially among the rural areas in Bangladesh. Several mothers who enrolled their daughters at school at an early age in the rural areas believed that they should start schooling at an early age so that they could arrange their child's marriage as early as possible. Further, I asked about the aspiration for boys, and one parent commented:

A girl can be married at a very early age where boys cannot be. Boys should have a good education and a good job. So, they have to enroll at school at a very early age to prepare for primary schools, whereas girls do not need to.

(PNE, 08)

Most of the school teachers explain in the same way for the schooling of children with special needs. However, one teacher reported as:

We could not ensure the children with special needs because that hamper other schooling and the children those are special needs they need proper care and concentration. Most of the time, we could not concentrate on the individual needs children.

(EST, 31)



**Table 5.12 Dimension of Parental School Choice for Children with Special Needs**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Means of Valuations</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Subjective oriented	Child success	15
	Child school interest	
	Child academic progress	
Social oriented	Cultural orientations	25
	Social issues for development	
	Gender valuation in the society	
	Ethnic identity of the children	
Institutional oriented	School environment	60
	Student teachers Ration	
	Teachers qualification	
	Teacher gender	
	School progress	

Source: Created by Author based on data analysis.

Table 5.12 shows the result, dimension of parental aspirations, where the dimensions are divided into three groups as personal, social, and institutional. Parents with positive educational qualifications significantly a factor for school choice, although many parents are someway in a crisis, and consequently, they are either out of school or are often absent from school for a long time. The parents of children with special needs in both rural and urban areas tend to repeat in the same class when parents believe their children are not able to compete with their peer group.

As a result, all three dimensions affect parental aspirations for children with special needs in Bangladesh. 60% of parents (n=34) believe that institutional orientation is the highest factor for parental aspirations for children with special needs in choosing schools. The result also shows that parents in rural areas are mostly affected by social issues as the parents have

to face the dilemma among public or religious schools when considering schooling for children with special needs.

### **5.3 Parental Aspirations for Enrollment in ECE**

This section presents the results based on data analyses to answer the research questions 2.1 and 2.2 into the extent of parental socio-economic aspirations for enrollment in ECE in Bangladesh. Before conducting the data analysis to understand parental aspirations, the parents were divided into two groups, the first group of parents (n=68) with children who already enrolled in schools and the second group of parents (n=34) with children not enrolled in schools. A semi-structured in-depth questionnaire interview was conducted among parents among rural and urban areas of the Rajshahi Division in Bangladesh.

#### **5.3.1 Parental Decisions for Enrollment in ECE Schools**

Parents considering to enroll their children in ECE schools because they believe that children can perform well while having the opportunity to have pre-school and in-home education experiences before starting formal primary education. Among the respondents (n=68), most parents raised the issues which are significantly related to social issues while considering enrolling their children in schools. Second, the institutional causes emerge for not enrolling in schools, and as of the last precedence, parents reported the financial issues for non-enrollment in ECE schools.

Table 5.13 shows the result of parental considerations while parents decide the school enrollment of their children. First, 50% of parents talked about social issues as the main factors while they decide school enrollment. Parents consider social issues as evocating prospects of child schooling. Further, parents also consider children's school enrollment when their peer group already enrolled in schools. Finally, social pressures from the peer social groups, social status, and gender of the children are also a matter for enrollment in ECE schools. Second, 30% of parents consider institutional issues while determining the ECE school enrollment of their

children, especially school availability, school entry age, and school environment. Finally, 20% of parents consider economic issues as factors for enrollment, and parents consider their income, school fees, and associated expenditures.

**Table 5.13 Parental Aspirations for School Enrollment**

<b>Parental Concern</b>	<b>Apprehension</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Social	Evocative prospect of schooling	50
	Group enrollment	
	Social Pressures	
	Gender issues	
Economic	Social status	20
	Income of parents	
	School Fees	
Institutional	Associate expenditures	30
	School availability	
	School entry age	
	School environment	

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

For example, some of the parents explain their thoughts for ECE school enrollment as follows:

..... sending my child to private school for early learning ....., and frequently teachers changing in comparer to government schools but we send here to maintain our social status.

(PE, 54)

We decided to send our child to this NGO school because it was easy to access, and its annual results are better than other schools. There are no private schools close to our home, and my daughter is not mature to go alone.

(PE, 30)

We decided to send our daughter to this mosque-based school as the custom of our family. The teacher of this school is very supportive, and we do not need to teach her at home.

(PE, 48)

The three major concern areas of parents, based on the region-specific (rural and urban areas) data analysis, are distinctive among the parents. The rural parents and urban parents have different types of phenomena for school enrollment decisions for their children.

Table 5.14 shows urban parents consideration for school enrollment, where 25% of parents reported favorably on the recognized available schools, as most of the schools in Bangladesh, especially private schools, are not recognized by the government and schools are considered to be recognized by the parents based on the annual school performance among the regions. Second, 22% of parents talked about the quality of teaching; most of the cases, it was noted that parents do not have contact with the school teachers. Third, 20% of parents talked about the school environment because it was evident among the urban parents that they highly consider the children's peer group's social background. Finally, parents among the urban areas consider the curriculum, eligibility of enrollment, and school timing as factors for enrollment in school.

**Table 5.14 Urban Parents Consideration for School Enrollment**

<b>Parental Concern</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Recognized available Schools	25
Quality teaching among the available services	22
School environment	20
Curriculum intensity of specific school	13
Eligibility of school enrollment	12
School timing	8

Source: Created by Author based on field research data calculations.

Table 5.15 shows parental consideration for school enrollment among the rural areas, where social issues are significant for parents among the 34 respondents from rural areas. First, out of the 34 respondents, 18 parents made their decisions based on social causes for ECE school enrollment, when the same peer group of parents enrolled their children in school. Second, 17 parents from the rural areas stated that gender was an essential factor for school enrollment, especially for girls as parents felt that the girls needed to go to school as early as possible. Parents among rural areas believe that girls acquire maturity earlier than boys in terms of psychological development. Third, 16 parents reported that the opportunity to enroll children in school gives them the opportunity to focus more on households' work. Although this result does not compile with urban parents as urban parents mention that while they enroll their children in school, they had to spend the whole day at school and could not concentrate on other household activities.

**Table 5.15 Rural Parents Consideration for School Enrollment**

<b>Parental Concern</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Respondent (n=34)</b>
Social causes	Children of same family status already enrolled in schools.	18
Future Development	Family think about future of their children.	9
Importance of education	Teachers explain about child development and motivate parents to enroll children in school.	3
Gender issues	Gender issues is a major concern among parents, especially for girls education.	17
School environment	Good learning environment in school for children and to play in school.	5
Opportunity of schooling	Parents gain more time to concentrate on their household activities.	16

Source: Created by Author based on field research data calculations.

Note. Although the total respondents (n=34) from rural areas. Based on the top two priorities of parents considered while data coding for theme development.

Table 5.16 shows of result for the enrollment criteria of five school types, where it is well-defined that the public schools strictly maintain the requirement of birth registration; however, in urban areas they do not always require the birth registration because the government public schools do not get enough children to enroll their schools. Second, private schools, especially in urban areas, require admission tests for children and parental interviews to enroll children in schools; private schools are flexible to enroll children in their schools. Third, most of the NGO based schools they do not show any enrollment requirement, but parents are the beneficiary of micro-credit. In urban areas, NGO-based schools allow enrollment of all children, and they do not prioritize whether parents of children are a member of the respected NGO or not. Finally, the religious-based schools do not have any specific rules for enrollment in the schools because most of the schools lack students except some specific schools in rural and urban areas.

**Table 5.16 School Types and Enrollment Criteria Among Regions**

<b>Enrollment Criteria</b>	<b>Type of Schools</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Birth Registration	Public Schools	√	√
Admission test and parental Interview	Private Schools	X	√
No specific rules or member of NGO	NGO-Based Schools	√	X
No specific rules	Madrassa-Based Schools	√	√
No specific rules	Others (Mosque, temple, etc.)	√	√

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

For example, one school teacher reported as

Most of the parents who would like to enroll their children in ECE schools; they do not register their child age in time. As a result, we sometimes refused their enrollment, or they were asked to register their childbirth and come with the appropriate papers for admission.

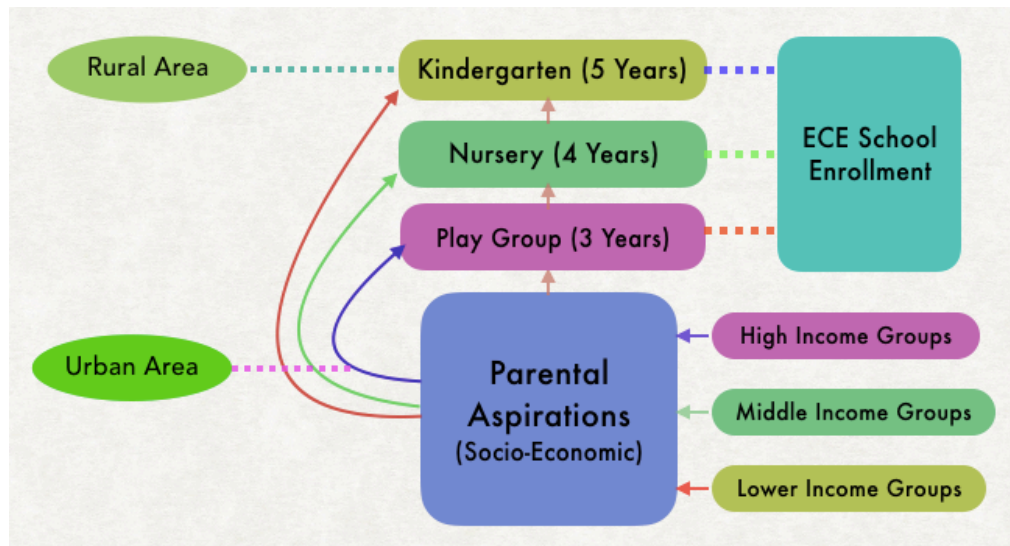
(EST, 14)

In Figure 5.2 shows the pathways of school enrollment among regions. In Bangladesh, parents are distributed into three income groups; however, all the income groups of parents among the urban area parents tend to send their children between the ages of 3 and 4, especially for the upper-income group. Interestingly, most of the middle-income group enroll their children at the age of four, and they mentioned the reasons as indirect school fees and the opportunity cost of schooling. Middle-income parents in the urban areas stated that they had to stay at the schools, and they could not concentrate on other schools because of the social hazard and communication time from home to schools.

Finally, the lower-income group of people enrolls their children at the age of 5 because they mostly believe that their children are not competent enough for schooling, and parents are

very busy with their daily activities and do not have enough time to prepare their children at home because of the households work or income-generating activities. Among the three-income groups, it is evident from the figure that parents try to rationalize their enrollment pattern based on the socio-economic conditions.

**Figure 5.2 Pathways of School Enrollment Among Rural and Urban Areas**



Source: Created by Author based on data analysis.

### 5.3.2 Parental Decisions for Non-Enrollment in ECE Schools

To address research question 2.2, the author conducted an in-depth questionnaire interview with 34 parents, both 17 respondents among rural and urban areas. Conducting in-depth questionnaire interviews, the author used snowball sampling methods to collect the data to understand the parental socio-economic aspirations for non-enrollment in schools.

Table 5.17 shows the parental causes of non-enrollment in schools among regions. First, the result shows that due to the educational institution's related issues, 33% of parents do not enroll their children in schools. Second, 55% of parents raised issues about social drawbacks as the highest reason among the parent's reason not to enroll their children in schools among



the rural and urban areas. Finally, very few, only 12% of parents, extended about the economic problems for non-enrolment. Parents who are not enrolling children in schools because of their financial reasons; but mostly marked the indirect cost for education. Additionally, parents from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds also indicated the social issues, inequality, and social disparities for non-enrollment in both rural and urban areas.

**Table 5.17 Major Causes of Non-Enrollment in ECE Schools**

<b>Parental Drawbacks</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Respondent (%)</b>
Institutional drawbacks	Admission refusal	33
	School is far from home	
	Child afraid of school	
	Class size is large	
Social drawbacks	Too early to start school	55
	Security Concern	
	No use of education	
	Parents are busy	
Economic drawbacks	Child (Girls) assist at home	12
	School fees	
	Scarcity of money	

Source: Created by Author based on in-depth interviews (2017)

Some of the parents explained their child's non-enrollment in schools as follows:

We wanted to enroll our child, but the school did not allow my child, stating that she could not cope up with the peer group. Moreover, both of us are busy to bring and back our daughter from school, and we do not feel safe sending her with grandmother.

(PNE, 22)

The school we would like to enroll our boy is far from our home, so we are waiting and preparing him to enroll in the coming year.

(PNE, 29)

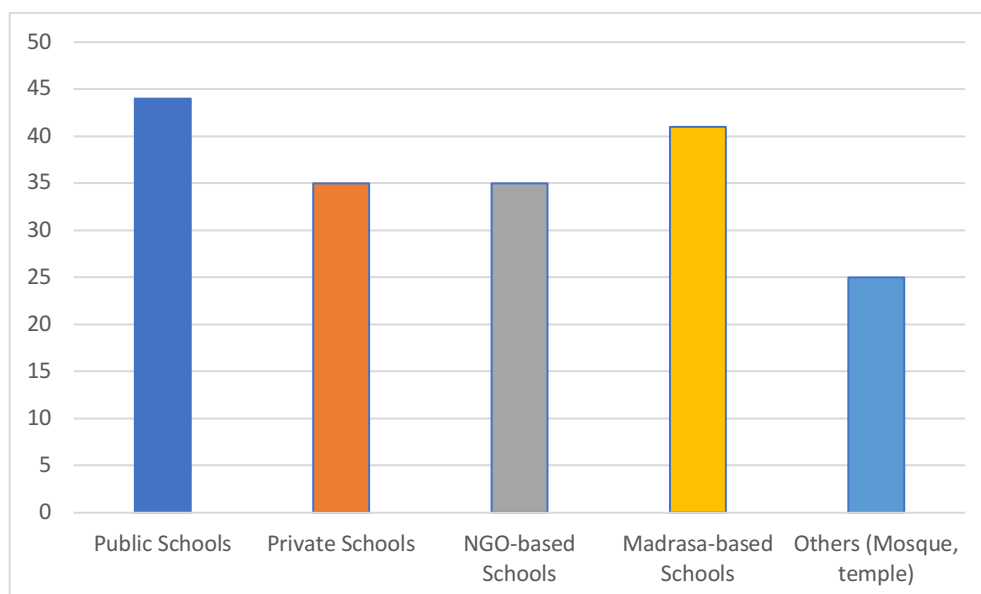
My son enrolled in school, but he does not concentrate in school and is afraid to go to school. We have decided not to send him at this age. Besides, he cannot go to school alone, so I have to accompany him. We are thinking to send him at a later date, but we have not t decided when.

(PNE, 07)

My daughter helps me at home and taking care of my newborn baby. If she goes to school, I could not manage my household work properly. We will send her (not sure) maybe next year in school.

(PNE, 16)

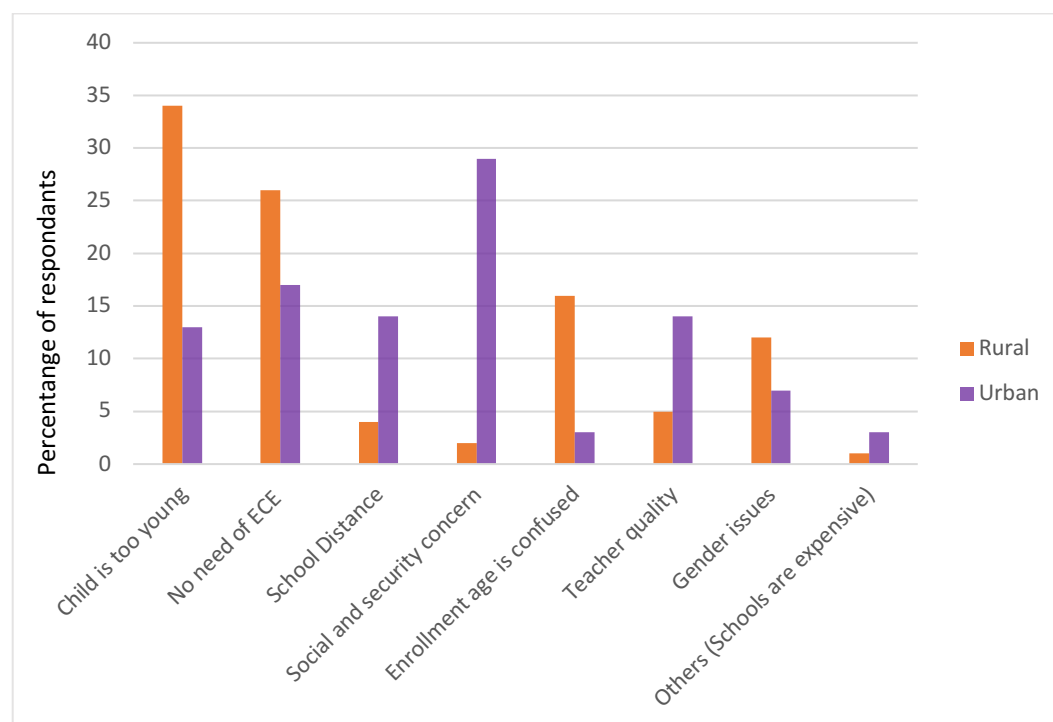
**Figure 5.3 School Types and Average Class Size in ECE**



Source: Created by Author based on field research

Figure 5.3 displays the average class size among the rural and urban areas, where it shows that public schools providing ECE schooling facilities have the average number of children, around 44. Second, the highest number of children enrolled in schools is madrasa-based schooling, and the number is 41. Although, the other alternative, such as mosques-based and temple-based schools, has the lowest number of enrolled children, which is 25. Parents who do not enroll their children in ECE schooling significantly mentioned that class size is another factor for the parents not to enroll their children in schools. Parents believe that when the class size is large, teachers do not have ample time to concentrate on all children in the class in the rural and urban areas.

**Figure 5.4 Parental Aspirations for Non-Enrollment in Rural and Urban Areas**



Source: Created by Author based on data analysis and coding.

In Figure 5.4, the result shows parental socio-economic aspirations for ECE among the rural and urban areas, where 34 of the respondents in rural expressed their anxiety for non-enrollment; however, the social issues such as ‘child is too young’; among the urban areas 13%,

of parents stated for non-enrollment in ECE schools. Second, 26% of parents among the rural areas and 17% of parents believe that it is too early to start schooling for their children, and as a result, they do not like to enroll as there is no necessity of ECE. Third, 4% of respondents from rural and 14% from urban areas are not enrolling in ECE for the reason of distance from home to schools. Fourth, due to the social security concern, parents among the rural and urban areas do not enroll their children in ECE; conversely, this reason is acute among the urban parents as almost 29% of parents stated that due to social and security concerns. Finally, the data coding also shows that economic reasons are not acute for non-enrollment, and most of the reasons are more societal.

One of the parents who did not enroll his child in schools because of the school fees, as mentioned:

We wanted to send our son to school, but when we send him to school, we have to send him for private tutoring as well. The school fees are not a problem, but we need to spend more on private tutoring and other essentials.

(PNE, 28)

**Table 5.18 Supply and Demand Paradoxes for School Non-Enrollment**

<b>Supply Side Aspects</b>	<b>Demand Side Aspects</b>
Age appropriate insufficient supply of schools, classrooms and teachers.	Schools fees especially private schools
School environment	Indirect costs (i.e.: transportation, meals)
Inadequate support for special needs.	Opportunity cost of parents (i.e. middle- and lower-income group)
Low quality of teachers	Low perceived value of education
Curriculum and teaching method	Costly attendance (direct & indirect)

Source: Created by Author based on Field Research (2017, 2018 & 2019).

Table 5.18 shows the results of supply and demand paradoxes for non-enrollment in schools among the rural and urban areas. First, in the data of in-depth interviews with school teachers and the coded data, the result shows that age-appropriate supply of schools is insufficient among regions. Based on the field research, it is clear that in one class, the age diversity is acute, where 3, 4, 5, and 6-years old children are attending in the same class. Second, the school environment is not favorable for children, especially the private school in urban areas, as a cause of the school environment. Third, public school teachers have higher educational qualifications compare with other school teachers.

The result also shows that among the urban areas, the school fees are a concern, especially for the middle-class income group of parents. They stated that a cause for non-enrollment was the direct and indirect school fees, of which indirect school fees were trickier than the direct school fees. Conclusively, in terms of the low perceived value of education, some parents mentioned that they never experienced ECE, and based on their experience, they would like to enroll their children to school in grade one in the primary. In addition to that, they mentioned that they are preparing their children at home. Finally, parents among the middle- and lower-income groups of parents do not enroll their children as they are busy with income-generating activities among rural and urban areas. They mentioned that when they would enroll their children in schools, and they have to spend the whole day at school, to bring a child to school and back their children home. Notably, this tendency is seen mostly among the parents of urban areas.

Table 5.19 shows the results of parental aspirations for non-enrollment in schools is because of direct and indirect expenses for schooling among rural and urban areas. Based on the interviews with schools, teachers, and parents, the result shows that among the rural and urban areas, parents have to pay the direct and indirect school-related expenses for their child's schooling. The table shows that the indirect expenses are much higher than the direct school-related expenses. Parents among urban areas stated their concern about the non-related

education expenses as a donation for enrollment and contribution to the school construction fund for non-enrollment.

**Table 5.19 Issues of Direct and Indirect Expenses for Non-Enrollment**

Expenditure School Expenses		Uniforms, School Equipment and Supplies	Other Expenses
Education (directly related)	Enrollment fees	Uniforms and sports equipment	Living fees
	PTA contributions	Textbooks (mandatory)	School meal fees
	Examination fees	Exercise books	Transportation
	Certification fees	Writing materials	Extra courses
Education (not related)	Donation for enrollment.	Additional textbooks	Extra-curricular activities (Class Party)
	Contribution to school construction fund.	Non-school books	Private tutoring and house-Tutor expenses
		School supplies	
		Learning materials	

Source: Created by Author based on field Research (2017, 2018 & 2019)

Finally, beyond the education expenses, most of the parents noted the issues of private tutoring among rural and urban areas; for example, without private tutoring, better school performance is not possible. Most of the schools provide homework for children, and they need to prepare homework for school, and without the help of a private tutor, children cannot do it. Consequently, parents do not enroll in schools because of these private tutoring trends, especially among the urban areas. Some parents also stated that some private schools indirectly influence them to send their children for private tutoring to private school teachers.

Based on the interviews and data analysis, among the three groups, awareness development for children did not improve relative to the other peer group for those already sending their children to school. Even among the non-enrollment group of children, they are also ready for schooling, but due to the social consequences, children are still out of school.

## 5.4 Parental Aspirations for School Readiness

### 5.4.1 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for School Readiness in ECE

Table 5.20 shows the result of parenting time for children in ECE schools that in rural areas, mothers take care of their children mostly, but in terms of parenting time are highly dependent on private tutoring to prepare their children for schooling. On the other hand, 3% of fathers spend time to prepare their children. In rural areas, a family member usually consists of parents and extended family, and in some cases, only 1% of the rural extended family members spend time to prepare children for school readiness. Although mothers reported that they spend time to prepare their children, on average, four times a week, and the rest of the time, they depend on private tutoring, which is six days a week.

**Table 5.20 Parenting Time for Child School Readiness**

Locations	Types of Parent	Percentage (%)	Average in a Week
Rural	Mother	18	4
	Father	3	1
	Others (Extended Member)	1	1
	Private Tutor	78	6
	Subtotal	100	
Urban	Mother	32	6
	Father	5	2
	Others (Extended Member)	0	0
	Private Tutor	63	5
	Subtotal	100	

Source: Created by Author based of data analysis.

Note. For this calculation the author used the data of parents with children already in schools (n=68)

Additionally, parents among urban areas, especially mothers, spend more time than rural parents, wherein urban areas, it is evident that mother is less involved in other household activities. In urban areas, 32% of mothers spend time to prepare their children for schooling, which is usually six days a week. On the other hand, 5% of fathers spend time to prepare their children for schooling and two days in a week as most fathers are involved with income-generating activities, and fathers do not spend with their children except during holidays. Conversely, a large number of rural parents, likely 63% depending on the private tutor to prepare their children for schooling, and they used to send their children to a private tutor about five days a week. Based on the result, it is evident that there is no involvement of extended family members among urban areas because most of the cases, no extended family members live together.

Some of the parents explained and reported about parenting time as follows:

I teach my son every day, but my husband never has time to help or to prepare the homework for next day schooling.

(PE, 38)

I could not teach because the school do not provide any books to bring in home, but we send our daughter to a private tutor, and the private tutor teach whatever she could.

(PE, 33)

Table 5.21 shows the result related to parental occupation and school readiness among rural and urban areas. Most of the parents among the regions are involved with income-generating activities, and fathers especially do not have time to spend with their children. However, 94% of rural mothers and 89% of urban mothers are homemakers, but still among the mothers in rural areas are somehow involved with some income-generating activities, and they do not have enough time to prepare their children for schooling. On the other hand,



mothers among the urban areas that are housewives usually try to prepare their children, but still, most, almost 63%, are dependent on a private tutor. Dependency on private tutoring is not due to a lack of parental academic qualifications but is due to the diverse curricula among the ECE schools.

**Table 5.21 Parental Occupation and School Readiness**

Areas	Parent	Occupation	Percentage %
Rural	Mother	Housewife	94
		Others (Service)	6
		Service (Private/Public)	12
	Father	Farmer	60
		Business	20
		Others	8
Urban	Mother	Housewife	89
		Others (Services)	11
		Service (Private/Public)	43
	Father	Farmer	7
		Business	35
		Others	15

Source: Created by Author based of data analysis.

For example, one parent reported:

I could not teach because of time limitations. The curricula in the schools are entirely different than we used during our school life, and mostly we have to depend on private tutoring, and my son doesn't want to sit with me for homework.

(PE, 30)

Table 5.22 shows the results of parent perceptions about the cognitive and non-cognitive skills among the regions, where parents mentioned mostly schools provide homework to be done by children at home. In class, the teachers teach following only the rote learning methods, and teachers want students to follow. However, most of the parents in the rural areas mentioned that their children are too young to follow the teachers' instructions. Almost 90% of parents reported that most of the cases in rural areas, the schools provide only cognitive services, and non-cognitive skills only 10% of parents reported among rural areas, that schools do not care about the non-cognitive skills development for children. Nonetheless, urban parents reported that 65% of schools focused on cognitive skills, and almost 35% of schools try to incorporate non-cognitive skills in schools through some extracurricular activities, especially among the private schools in urban areas.

**Table 5.22 Parental Perceptions for School Readiness**

<b>Locations</b>	<b>Cognitive Skills</b>	<b>Non-Cognitive Skills</b>
Rural Areas	90%	10%
Urban Areas	65%	35%

Source: Created by Author based of data analysis.

Where a big number of parents are somehow dependent on private tutoring, but the parental aspirations matter, bringing their children for quality private tutoring. However, school teachers reported that:

We believe that without private tutoring and more parenting time, most of the children could not prepare for school. We cannot take care of all our students because of the high enrollment. They should be prepared themselves from home or through alternative sources.

(EST, 21)

Further, one school teachers reported that

Most of the parents do not take care of their child's education; as a result, the children have the tendency not to come to school regularly. In some cases, the children those are not prepare from home tend to repeat in the same class and blame the school teachers about education quality.

(EST, 19)

#### 5.4.2 Schooling System and School Readiness in ECE

Table 5.23 shows the result of the curriculum, followed by diverse types of schools in the Rajshahi Division, Bangladesh. Among the diverse types of schooling, most schools do not follow the national curriculum created by the government's policy of 2010. It is assumed that all the schools are following the government curricula in addition to their interest, but the private schools, both rural and urban areas, do not follow.

**Table 5.23 Types of ECE Schools and Curriculum**

<b>School Types</b>	<b>Public</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>NGO</b>	<b>Madrassa</b>	<b>Others (Mosque, temple)</b>
	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla	Bangla
	Mathematics	English	English	English	English
	Drawing	Mathematics	Math	Math	Math
		Science	Drawing	Arabic	Arabic
Curriculum		Social Studies			Religion
		Drawing			
		Religion			
		Arabic			
		Computer			
		Word Book			
		General Knowledge			

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Note. Bangla, is the native language in Bangladesh

The table shows the diverse curriculum followed by schools; wherein private schools are providing diverse knowledge for their enrolled children. Parents among the enrolled schools show their concern about the diverse curriculum. The problem of the diverse curriculum has a significant impact on child school readiness when all the children compete in the national examinations in primary grade five. Children in primary schools, especially the children from public schools, always lag behind their counterparts from other alternative types of schools.

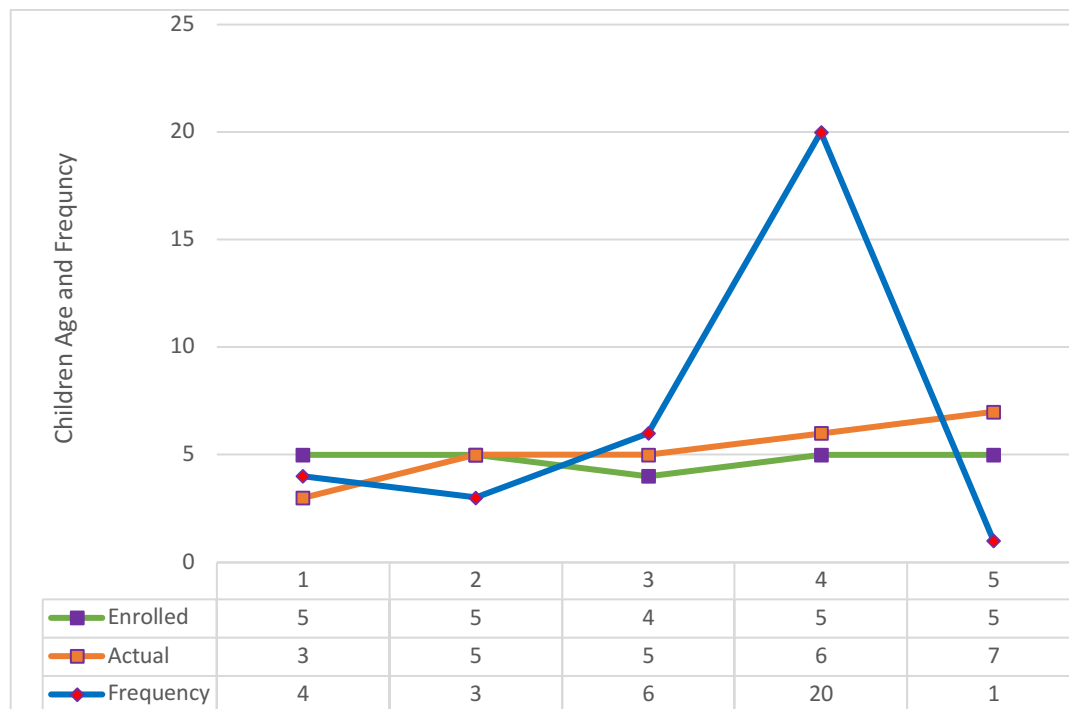
Parents in the urban areas show their concern about the curriculum followed among the schools, and they are always concerned whether they could send their children to the schools, where all the essentials curriculum is provided in their child schools or not. On the other hand, the madrasa and mosques-based schooling also provide the same curriculum in addition to religious education for the enrolled children in their schools. In terms of the curriculum followed, from the very early years of schooling, the children among the diverse school types experienced knowledge disparities, which is seen as a concern among the parents.

One parent reported about the curriculum among the schools:

I teach at home, but my daughter could not complete all the homework, and we decided to hire a private tutor who can teach the subjects her school follows. Simultaneously, when we look for a private tutor, then we also try to know whether the teacher also teacher peer group child or not.

(PE, 37)

**Figure 5.5 Enrollment Age, Actual Age and Frequency of Age Changes in Rural Areas**

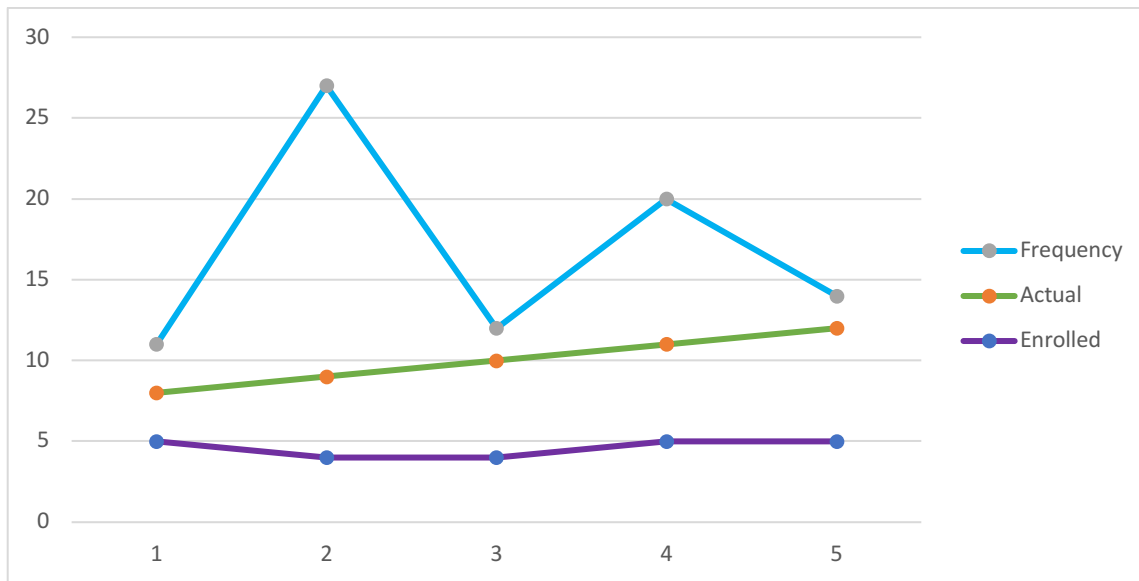


Source: Created by Author based on data analysis.

Figure 5.5 shows the result of the enrollment age of children among the diverse school types. Among the parents, this study finds both negative and positive parental aspirations for children's school enrollment age, and which impacts on other school children, when they compete with their peer group among schools.

The figure shows that most of the parents tend to reduce the age of their children when they believe that their children are not ready for school and or when their children could not compete with the peer group. It is noticeable that some parents increase their children's age because of some social issues (future marriage), and some believe that their children are ready for schooling.

**Figure 5.6 Enrollment Age, Actual Age and Frequency of Age Changes in Urban Areas**



Source: Created by Author based on data analysis.

Figure 5.5 shows the result of children's actual age, school enrollment age, and frequency of changes among the urban areas. It is noticeable that almost all parents decrease their children's age. In most cases, parents change their child's age to compete with peer groups. Second, sometimes, when parents wanted to enroll their children directly to grade one, but the school does not allow the parents in a specific grade, where parents would like to enroll their children, parents tend to decrease their child's age registration for better school readiness.

Some of the parents reported about their concern about age changes and school readiness:

The number of children in my daughter's class is very high, and some of the children are older than my daughter. Over-aged children are performing better than my daughter. Although I reported the issues to school teachers, the school told us that the registration of the children is the same as my daughter and the schools don't have anything to do about this issue.

(PE, 21)

The teachers could hardly concentrate on all children and the age problem among the same class. As you see, some of the children are performing very well, and children who are younger than the peer group cannot perform well. Most of the time teachers concentrate on students who are performing better, where my son could not compete well with his friends in the same class.

(PE, 46)

In the class among the regions, the author found the divers' age group of children enrolled in the same class indirectly impedes the school readiness among the peer group in terms of cognitive and non-cognitive development of children. Besides, regarding this diverse age group of children among the same classes, parents also believe that younger children cannot perform well in schools. The problem of parental age changes frequency is more than for rural parents.

**Table 5.24 Teachers Qualification and School Readiness**

School Types	Education Qualifications	Training/ECE Training
Public	Bachelor or Masters	15 Days
Private	HSC, Bachelors, Masters	No trainings
NGOs	SSC, HSC	5 Days
Madrassa	Bachelor	No trainings
Others	SSC, or minimum education qualifications	No trainings

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

Table 5.24 shows the teacher's qualification among the school types, where it shows the qualifications of public-school teachers are higher than the compared groups. Also, both the public and NGO school teachers receive some training to teach the children at ECE schools, but they did not receive any training at the other types of schools except on job training. Most

of the teachers teach at ECE schools and as a consequence, impedes the children's school readiness among the schools both in rural and urban areas.

Table 5.25 shows the result of parents-teacher interaction for child developmental issues and school readiness among rural and urban areas. Based on the calculations, it is eminent that urban parents interact with school teachers to know more about their child's schooling. Furthermore, this tendency is higher, about 90% of urban area parents, especially among private schools, also 56% of parents among rural areas. However, parental interactions with school teachers in public schools are also high at almost 63% of parents in rural areas, and 57% of parents in urban, interact with school teachers to know more about the schooling of their children.

**Table 5.25 Parent-Teacher Interactions and School Readiness**

School Types	Parent-Teacher interactions (n=68)			
	Frequency in month		Percentage (%)	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Public	1	2	63	57
Private	2	4	56	90
NGOs	3	1	13	22
Madrasa	1	2	34	18
Others	2	3	19	44

Source: Created by Author based on field research.

One parent reported that:

We never meet with teachers to discuss our child schooling or development because most of the time teachers are very busy with other activities and my husband never goes to school as he is a service holder.

(PE, 03)



However, school teachers reported as

Most of the cases the class size is big and mostly in government schools, and we find very little time to concentrate on all the children in the class.

(EST, 04)

In Bangladesh, children (rarely) never sit at home for homework because of parental awareness, education qualifications, lack of learning materials among public schools. Public school children cannot take books home from school per government policy, which impedes school readiness. Further, the private school's children do homework with the assistance of their mother, as the father hardly ever or never help children with homework. The parents hardly spend time to teach, but the dependency on private tutoring created disparities in children's outcomes, especially in rural areas.

The education officials also believe that children from low-income families (aspirations) often fall quickly and progressively behind their more advantaged peers in their readiness for school, and that gap is never closed. Those who are coming from private schools are doing better in comparison with the peer group not enrolled in pre-school earlier. Mostly, the public and private ECE services are not well prepared for better children's educational attainment, especially in rural areas.

## **5.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter shows results grounded on theoretical and conceptual research framework in answering the specific research questions. There are several significant results found throughout this study. The first significant result in applying social justice theory and rational choice theory to understand parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh context implies that irrespective of the social inequality and parental capabilities, although some exceptions. The second significant result is that parents among rural and urban areas have different results,

where the rural parents are more aware than urban parents have the tendency to delay school enrollment of their children in ECE schools because of school environmental concerns, perspectives, financial contribution, and types of parenting at home. Thirdly, school readiness, especially for rural parents, tends to depend mostly on private tutoring due to parental education qualifications, and most parents are busy with household activities.

Finally, this chapter denotes that educational reform must be associated with parental socio-economic conditions to ensure social justice in education in the early years of children and to reduce the gap of inequality and marginalization. The result also emphasizes that the government policy must consider financing for children irrespective of socio-economic status to attain full access of children to the broader goal of Sustainable development Goals (SDGs). It assumes that policy reform can ensure all the children to get similar schooling facilities in the contexts of Bangladesh, as the problems are deeply rooted in parental aspirations for ECE.

## **CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses in consequences of the results in chapter five in line with the hypotheses presented in chapter four and the theoretical framework to understand the context of Bangladesh. Further, this chapter presents education policies and social-cultural dimensions of parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh. Although, qualitative research is not to test the hypothesis but to provide contextual insight into the assumptions in the context of Bangladesh. This chapter will discuss the results in connection with the theoretical framework, not testing the hypothesis. Specifically, this chapter interprets the social justice and rational choice theory in the context of Bangladesh and policy issues on parental aspirations for ECE in Bangladesh. This chapter discusses the parental socio-economic aspirations in the context of Bangladesh and compares the result with the previous research. This chapter will also discuss some evolving and emergent issues from the results. Finally, the limitation of the study and the conclusion.

### **6.2 Discussion**

#### **6.2.1 Parental Aspirations for School Choice in ECE**

##### **6.2.1.1 Parental Socio-Economic Factors for School Choice in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, parental aspirations are influenced by the understanding, manners, principles, and community standards of the social and cultural settings in the context of rational choice and parentocracy among demographic groups.

The result of this study shows that in families, fathers play a vital role in decisions ECE irrespective of socio-economic conditions. The result also shows that fathers have the tendency to choose public, private, and NGO-based schooling for children, and mothers when deciding

schools for children, have the tendency to choose other types of schooling, such as Madrasa and mosque-based schooling. First, among the respondents, it is found that parents, when choosing a school, consider the traditional schooling system, which is public schools for their children, especially in rural areas. Second, the gender of children also plays a vital role when parents choose ECE for their children among the lower- and middle-income groups of people.

This result is consistent in line with hypothesis 1.1, which posits that parental socio-economic factors limit choice in ECE schools, especially in rural areas, and parents among the lower-income groups are not aware of the timing of school entry in Bangladesh. Such results are consistent with previous studies by Bhatta (1998) about economic constraints and schooling quality being the key factors of parental motivation for ECE; by Pal & Kingdon (2010) about parents from lower socio-economic conditions do not have access in schools; and households' abilities and parental preference whether they believe in worth of the expenses for pre-school education (Fong & Loshkin, 2000).

Further, the result shows that parental aspirations for ECE school choice in Bangladesh, where many parents are more concerned about social issues (rationality) as the main reasons, which is consistent alongside the previous findings by Ball (1993 & 2003). It is also evident that social issues (group rationality) are a significant factor for school choice in ECE in Bangladesh. Although previous studies were more focused on economic factors in the core problems for ECE, this study finds that parents are less concern and emphasized on economic issues, such as opportunity costs and school fees, as being a reason for school choice in ECE. In line with the parentocracy, in the context of Bangladesh, parents have less influence based on their economic conditions. On the other hand, Abington and Blankenau (2013) show that some parents also talked about institutional factors relating to school choice in ECE.

As a social concern, the result of this study finds that parents are more concerned about transportation for school choice, whereas the parents of rural areas strongly consider the school distance for child enrollment. In terms of institutional issues, parents both in urban and rural areas highly consider the school enrollment age. The previous study by Barnett and Yarosz

(2007) also found that enrollment criteria and social class of children among schools are important criteria for school choice. Conversely, parents in rural areas only consider the school distance and school entry age when they choose ECE schools for their children.

The perspectives of rational choice and parentocracy are important for parental choice of schooling for their children in the early years, which is directly reflected in the Bangladesh education policy. The government has formulated several education and child-friendly policies to ensure justice in education, especially in ECE, to ensure that all parents participate actively. However, the supply of schooling, as stated by parents, is limited due to the issues of quality schooling, especially among urban parents. The parentocracy does not influence the child schooling among due to the traditional parenting style in Bangladesh.

It is interestingly found that parents also consider the adverse effects of school choice as the school choice process increases the possibility of an educational discrepancy, discrimination, inequality of education and inequality among children, and finally, social segregation. The school choice process segregated the societies among different groups, which affect child learning in the early years of schooling, which was also revealed by the previous research of BenDavid-Hadar (2016).

The result shows that school choice of parents can enhance children's educational success; however, the choice also results in an educational discrepancy in childhood. Many parents noted the positive effects of school choice are comprised of educational success in the early years, awareness development of parents for child education, improvement of the social capital through schooling as children developed new friends starting at school-age in the early years among demographics.

Hyland (2010) and Nieuwenhuis (2011) also argue that school performance is developed through the school choice process as all the parents of children have the opportunity to partake in early education, and the school choice process enables the schools to consider further development of the quality of their services. Even though parents in this study stated social peer anxiety and social concerns to participate the school choice process, which is

consistent with the previous work by Hackman (2005), most of the parents who contributed to this study assumed that limited ECE facilities among the demographics limits parents from actively participating and choosing ECE in Bangladesh.

In the context of Bangladesh, for schooling, parents consider the school facilities such as environment, students number in class as most of the students' in public schools are facing a severe challenge in terms of the teaching and learning materials. Parents consider family traditions when they enroll their children in schools. To some extent, due to social backwardness and religious considerations, the society in Bangladesh does not like girls' schooling. Although presently, the trend change but still many parents do not value the girl's education because of future considerations; they prioritized the boy's education to secure their future. However, religion in Bangladesh profoundly influences parents about girls' education. Most parents in rural areas do not have specific information about class size in pre-schools. Although the parents in this study seems to be parentocratic, however due to the socio-economic settings of Bangladesh most of the parents are more rationale when choosing schools for their children.

Rational choice theory indicates that the social actions of a human being associated with their self-interest and economic conditions to partake in social actions. Mostly parents emphasize the effect of apparent rational cost-benefit calculations and the ability to pay for their child schooling. This research extends the literature in the context of Bangladesh that parental school choice highly depends on the social realities. This study finds that parents do not have the rationale to choose schools for their children, especially when the school quality matters irrespective of parental economic conditions the school authority decides who can enroll in schools and does not depend on parental rationalities.

#### **6.2.1.2 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for Schooling Expenditure**

In Bangladesh, in terms of parental rationale choice theory and parentocracy, this study finds that parents are consistent (rationale) with their socio-economic situations for the

expenses of ECE. Irrespective of economic conditions, parents show high aspirations for their children's education in ECE with exceptions of a middle-income group of people. As a democratic social system in Bangladesh, parents belong to a specific social class and usually have specific preferences and rational choices for early childhood education for their children. In line with the parentocracy theory, parents are spending their own money for ECE schooling for their children, however due to the available services parents does not hold the freedom for their child schooling as parents has to choose among the available services for their children.

Concerning hypothesis 1.2, the findings of this study partially support the assumptions that were more focused on a lower-income group of people in terms of the education expenditures for their children. However, this study finds that the middle-income group of parents are more concerned in choosing ECE schools based on their present economic conditions and rationality of the expenses for their child schooling. Among the three-income groups of parents, only the middle-income group of parents shows concern about the indirect ECE school expenditures for their children.

Although the results are seeming consistent with previous research, where essentials of early childhood education depend on government initiatives, and parents also need to pay for schooling and mostly depend on what extent parents could support for child education (Fong & Loshkin, 2000). The equality of educational focuses on access to the school entrance, and principally for the parents among the lower-income groups in the society (Downes & Stiefel, 2008). The government financing policy mitigates the financial challenges of parents to ensure equity in education to remove the cost barriers to schooling for the poorest (Hossain & Zeitlyn, 2010).

Further, from the perspectives of Reay and Lucey (2000), this study's findings that the middle-income group of parents have rational actions for ECE expenditures based on their socio-economic conditions, while lower-income group parents have to sacrifice to support expenses for ECE, which is also partially seen in the previous work of Tooley and Dixon (2003).

The result shows that lower educational qualification parents tend to choose religious-based schooling and public schools; conversely, parents with higher education qualifications enroll their children in an urban private school in Bangladesh. The previous work by Whitty, Power, and Halpin (1998) also finds similar issues in terms of school expenditures for school choice in ECE, which is consistent with parental educational qualifications.

The result confirms that parents do not need to pay any school fees for public schools but among the other available types of schooling parents need to pay additional indirect education expenses. The result shows that the indirect education expenses are higher than the direct school fees. Among the respondent parents, none of them have any distress about the direct school fees as all the parents are highly motivated to keep their children in schools. Parents exposed anxiety about the indirect expenses; however, parents even send their boys to private schools in rural areas as a consequence of traditional mind set of the parents in Bangladesh. The result of school-related expenditures is also similar to previous studies, although many of the studies were more focused on direct school fees (Zhu, 2009; Tooley & Dixon, 2007; Sikder & Banu, 2018). Although, some of the parents argue that sometimes they do not have a rational choice, and these problems are acute among urban areas where the schools choose which children can enroll in their schools irrespective of the payment capacity of parents. Based on the above statement, it is evident that the parentocracy system in Bangladesh is fragile in compare with the developed capitalist countries.

In the context of Bangladesh, parental aspirations for school expenses is a great difficulty in choosing among the school types, and school choice among the middle-income group of parents are in all-encompassing anxiety. Parents among the lower- and upper-income groups hardly consider expensing for their child's education, especially for the learning and playing materials. Further, parents are busier among the income group with household activities, and they do not decide; rather, they delay the school choice as late as possible. Parents are busier with income-generating activities and sending their children to school might hamper their utmost duties. As a result, parents, especially among the rural areas, also consider



their children's contribution to household activities, and they believe this is important and mandatory for the girls. Parents also show their deep concern about the schooling system, and they feel doubt about the schooling system whether the schools could meet their demand or not.

### **6.2.1.3 Parental School Choice for Children with Special Needs**

In Bangladesh, parental socio-economic aspirations for children with special needs are permissible to ensure the benefit of schooling opportunity through quality learning opportunities based on their needs. Irrespective of the government policies initiatives, the result of this study finds that social justice in ECE is entirely misplaced in the context of Bangladesh, despite social justice theory directing equal participation, with parents being directly involved in the education of any support from government and community or schools for special needs children. Parentocracy, in terms of the schooling for children with special needs are in concerns among the society in Bangladesh irrespective of the parental high economic conditions.

The result shows that parents among rural areas consider the school environment while considering ECE schools; parents believe that they (children with special needs) are always far behind compared with the peer group, and they need special care and a better school environment to ensure their needs. Among the parents, value of education is revealed to be very diminutive because of the supply-side interventions (availability of schools) among the regions. It also shows that school safety, quality of schooling, and school facilities for children, negatively impact parental school choice or parents tends to be absent their children from school for a long time or repeat in the same class.

In line with hypothesis 1.3, parents can choose ECE schools and access to schools, and some are out of school because of the hazardous school environment, which is consistent with previous findings (Sabates, 2010; Engle et al., 2007; Barnett & Belfield, 2006).

The result concerning children with special needs also reveals that, in many cases, parents do not possess the right to choose ECE services for their children. Ensuring parental rationality and address the parentocracy for all children, government policy actions fail to address the needs of parents in ECE settings. Among the ECE schools, teachers are mostly new and not trained and with a high number of children in all classes that do not allow children with special needs in ECE schools. However, in paying school fees even insignificant, this finding is consistent by the previous research of Asim & Kusakabe (2016) and Ahsan & Burnip (2007). Further, the previous study by Lee (2017) also mentioned that the school environment could impact the future development of special needs children when they have the right to enroll in schools.

In Bangladesh, this study shows that urban and rural schools have diverse schooling facilities irrespective of public, private, or others (alternative); mostly, parents of children with special needs have limited access and sometimes no access to pre-school education. Generally, rural parents do not have the right to send their children in school because of social issues, school approach, and expenses for enrollment. In rural areas many parents used to sacrifice a lot for their child education, sometimes they suffer a lot to pay the additional (indirect) education expenses and borrow money from the peer social group, irrespective of parental limitations, they try to encourage their children's education. Further, rural parents reduce the consumption of foods and fundamental necessities for child education expenses. As mentioned by some parents with special needs children, ambiguous school fees among the schools and additional school expenses are the main reasons for not enrolling in schools, especially in urban areas. In line with the parentocracy theory, parents of children with special needs do not have freedom to choose schools for their children, where as parents tend to choose schools based on their social and economic rationality for their child schooling.

The previous study by Lee & Neuharth-Pritchett (2008) also reveals similar findings as the schooling opportunity is minimal for special needs children in rural areas. In addition, this study reveals that private schools are always disregarded to provide access the children with

special needs to schools. Those schools believe that enrollment opportunities for children with special needs could hamper other educational attainments; similar results were also found by Gorard, Fitz & Taylor (2001) about school choice and its impact on peer group children.

Because of the above scenario, many parents choose and decide to enroll in government public schools. Several parents indicated that they do not work to support their children in home, and stay longer with their children with special needs for fundamental childhood development to cope up with the society and decided not to work, they believe to devote more time to take care of their children. Finally, rural area parents with special needs children face incisive social anxiety when the children is a girl in Bangladesh.

The school choice in the urban areas mostly depends on the school authority, and most of the schools allow enrollment of children based on the specific school requirements. As a result, among the rural areas the number of the teacher-student ratio is higher than the urban areas as among the rural areas schools does not restrict children to enroll in schools. Further, ECE specialist also respondent that most of the cases of limited school choice of parents and government capacity to provide opportunities for all impeding the ECE schooling in Bangladesh for the children with special needs.

## **6.2.2 Parental Aspirations for Enrollment in ECE**

### **6.2.2.1 Parental Decisions for Enrollment in Schools**

Parents considering enrolling their children in ECE schools because they believe that children can perform well while having the opportunity to have pre-school and in-home education experiences before starting formal primary education. Most of the parents consider the social issues for school enrollment, and they raised the issues which are significantly related to the social issues while considering enrolling their children in schools. Second, the institutional causes for not enrolling in schools, and as of the last precedence, parents reported the financial issues for non-enrollment in ECE school.

In hypothesis 2.1, especially in urban areas, households are free to enroll their children in ECE schools, but for parents in rural areas, ECE schools are limited. The result proves this hypothesis and implies that social and institutional issues are more significant concerns for school enrollment. The previous research also reveals similar findings, especially the research by Marshall (2011) in rural Guatemala, institutions in which themselves provide significant motivations for parents to enroll in school; Juneja (2010), in her research about Indian schools, institutional openness ensures the diversity of all children in school enrollment; and finally by Heckman, Moon, Pinto, Savelyev, & Yavitz (2010) who show the positive benefits of a pre-school enrollment program, where schools themselves could ensure all institutional challenges for enrollment.

In Bangladesh for ECE schooling, parents consider children's school enrollment when their peer group is already enrolled in schools. However, while social justice in the society is theoretically present, social pressures from the peer social groups, social status, and gender of the children are practically considered to be factors for enrollment in ECE schools. This study reveals that for school enrollment, social and institutional issues are more salient than the economic issues, as most of the respondents have high aspirations to spend the required money for their children.

Further, the result of this study shows that the schools only provide cognitive skills services despite ECE both skills being essential. All the schools use rote learning methods, and parents in this study show greater concern of teaching style and instruction, children mostly could not follow the teacher's instruction, except in some of the private schools in urban areas. In this study, a child's gender was noted as an important factor for school enrollment; parents among regions in Bangladesh send girls to school for two specific reasons; the first is for psychological development, and the second is for social issues regarding gender roles in Bangladesh.

Similar findings by Hamid and Baldauf (2011) show that social issues are important factors for school enrollment and non-enrollment; and findings by Islam, (2010) and Li, Wong,

& Wang (2010) shows that girls in rural areas cannot stay at school a long time because of the social disadvantages, even in the early years.

As focused on previous findings, the result of this study also sheds light on the school enrollment criteria, it pushes parents with children not to participating in schools. Similar enrollment criteria having the same possibilities to choose among the services, but exceptional cases, parents think before they enroll their children in schools based on the future possibilities of schooling for their children. However, parental occupation is essential, especially the mother's occupation, when mothers are also engaged in income-generating activities, they tend to delay their children's school enrollment because of the social concern of being dangerous to send children to school alone. This problem is very acute among urban parents. Among the three significant income group parents, they try to rationalize their enrollment pattern based on their socio-economic conditions.

Further, the school authority incurs some additional school fees for the enrollment of children in ECE schools. The indirect school fees are mostly incurred among the urban areas; and however, among the rural areas, the school tends to collect from the rural parents as well. The additional school fees are mostly the delayed enrollment of the middle-income families both in rural and urban areas for their child schooling. Most of the cases, especially in rural areas, the children who are enrolled in ECE schools are more than six years, and they enter pre-primary because of their parental social conditions in preparing them for schooling at the right time.

Social justice signifies the schooling of children depends on social justice (access, rights, equity, and self-determination) based on parental capabilities and parental realities for child education. However, the social justice theory, which is widely used among the developed countries to explain child enrollment in school but the context of Bangladesh, the theoretical framework could not explain all the phenomena due to the institutional issues in Bangladesh. This study finds that institutional justice is more important to ensure enrollment in schools for all children irrespective of the socio-economic conditions of parents.

### **6.2.2.2 Parental Decisions for Non-Enrollment in Schools**

The results of parental reasons for non-enrollment in schools are the educational institution's related issues, social drawbacks. Finally, economic problems reveal that parents who are not enrolling their children in schools because of diverse social and ethnic backgrounds also indicated social issues, inequality, and social disparities. Additionally, some parents mentioned the indirect costs for education in the early years, impeding the enrollment of children. Institutional issues are also considered for non-enrollment in schools as the class size is more than 40, with some exceptions, where parents do not enroll their children in school.

Hypothesis 2.2 proposed that the enrollment pattern mostly depends on the opportunity cost of the households, which indirectly leads to a lower enrollment rate among the regions, especially in rural areas. This hypothesis is consistent with this result and similar findings revealed by Ou (2003), Härmä (2011); and Fortner & Jenkins (2018) argue that actual age for enrollment in school in early years is a chronic debate among parents, teachers, and policymakers based on the school starting age policy internationally. Further, the previous research also more focused on poverty as a cause for non-enrollment in schools, especially in rural areas where parents failed to choose the appropriate school for their children (Goldring & Hausman, 1999; Kusakabe, 2016; Luke, 2014; Nath, 2007; and Rahman, & Chowdhury, 2007).

This study also shows that supply and demand-side complexity causes non-enrollment in school, in line with the social justice theory that all children should have similar opportunities and access to schools. This result shows that justice in ECE is totally missing where parents have to bear all the expenses for education, the government only provides support for the government primary schools, which is age-specific, and many of the children are not in school because of this institutional enrollment age framework. As a consequence, parental aspirations bring the children to other alternative schools without any support from the government, where poverty is not an issue, except awareness and quality education are

essential for children. The age diversity in the same class, school environment, and teacher's quality are the main parental reasons for non-enrollment in schools among the regions.

The result also shows that indirect school expenses are a concern for parents, especially the middle-income group, as most of the parents choose a school for enrollment based on the rational choice theory. Parents are wholly concerned about where they can enroll and provide all the tuition fees related to school expenditures. However, indirect school fees were costlier than the direct school fees among regions in Bangladesh.

Similar studies reveal that households cannot enroll their children age confusion when to enroll and high education expenses of schools (Marsh, Pekrun, Parker, Murayama, Guo, & Dicke, 2017; Myers, 2000). Further research by Ohara (2013) reveals that the unrecognized school fees directly impact school enrollment, where most of the cases among the school fees seem to be diverse and mostly not recognized by the government (Ritzen., Van Dommelen, & De Vijlder, 1997; Ting, 2007).

Finally, this study shows that irrespective of additional education expenses, most of the ECE schools depend on the low quality of teachers with no professional training to the teacher at the ECE schools. Parental choices and enrollment in ECE schools vary mostly for social obligations, especially in rural areas. Similar findings by Barrera-Osorio and Filmer (2013) and Al-samarrai, Regio, and Bank (2007) and also reveals that mostly education spending for enrollment and equity is essential for enrollment.

In Bangladesh, traditionally due to social class issues, many of the children do not enroll in schools, especially with the low and middle background of families. The result shows that highly educated parents tend to delay the school enrollment of their children due to specific school environmental characteristics and way of teaching. Further, school availability, as desired by parents, are limited to ECE schooling in Bangladesh. Among the rural areas, the schools' starting enrollment age of children is five, however they contempt not to admit those are below the required school-age of the schools.

In Bangladesh, parents in rural areas do not enroll their children in schools because of the future potentialities of being educated. The education quality and local context reality also demotivate parents not to send their children in early childhood; they strongly think and argue that children could start schooling directly from primary grade one as a reason for indirect education expenses, and especially the opportunity costs of rural parents. However, parents with children aged 3-4 believe that they do not mature enough to cope with the school environment; some of the parents believe that due to the diverse social class children, it is dangerous to send their children. Participating in schools, their children might learn anti-social behaviors from their peer groups in school. Parents highly consider the peer groups' socio-economic background when they decide to enroll their children in schools. Most of the cases, when parents enroll their children in schools, especially in urban parents, they tend to stay whole school hours at schools because of the hazardous social issues.

Further, the school teachers also mentioned that due to the birth registration, the schools deny enrollment of the children. In some cases, parents would like to register their child birth when they could enroll in primary school age as some of the parents tend to repeat the schooling of their children. Social justice of children in schools are deceased, in terms of child age, mostly varies among the schools and diverge age group children are enrolling in the same class.

### **6.2.3 Parental Aspirations for School Readiness in ECE**

#### **6.2.3.1 Parental Socio-Economic Aspirations for School Readiness in ECE**

The result in line with research question 3.1, shows that mothers take care of their children, although most of the time, parents are highly dependent on private tutoring to prepare their children for schooling. This study also shows that fathers spend very little time to prepare their children, where fathers are mostly involved with income-generating activities. As a patriarchal society, there is a tendency, especially in urban areas, that extend parental involvement for child school readiness is absent. However, in the rural areas, still, parents live



with extended families and co-operate in decision making for child education such as, taking children from home to school and playing with children with exceptional cases among the rural areas in Bangladesh. Parental occupation is solely related to child school readiness, high dependency on private tutoring is not because of parental academic qualifications, but because of the diverse curricula among the ECE schools in Bangladesh.

Parents reported that due to the diverse curriculum among the school and schools only focused on cognitive skills development through class and homework. Children depend on the family, but due to parenting time, children are mostly lag in school readiness in compare with children with parents who are not actively involved with child education. This scenario is found severe among urban areas in Bangladesh. Further, parents mostly indicate that the diverse age group as an impediment to children's school readiness and active participation in class.

Hypothesis 3.1 proposed as households in rural areas are mostly busy with their daily activities, and parents do not have enough time as well as parents are not conscious about school readiness, which is consistent with the findings. Although, the previous research also supports the hypothesis and the result of this study as middle- and low-income group family children are always in a gap compare with the other per group family children (Evans, 2004; Duncan, Dowsett, Claessens, Magnuson, Huston, Klebanov, & Sexton, 2007), and stakeholders commitment for fundamental development of children depends on ample government financing for children from lower-income families with severe poverty (Ben David-Hadar, 2016). The study by Fantuzzo, Bulotsky-Shearer, Fusco, & McWayne (2005) also shows that preschool classroom behavior depends on the same school-aged children for socio-emotional development and school readiness competencies.

Further, this study also reveals that teachers' qualifications among schools are also impeding parental socio-economic aspirations for school readiness as parents are reluctant, and in most of the cases, parents depend on the school and believe the schools are providing better education and parents do not need to prepare their children for schooling. Although this research reveals that most of the school teachers do not have any formal training to teach

children in ECE schools except for government primary schools, but due to colossal class pressure among government primary schools, some teachers do not have enough time to receive any formal training.

Some of the previous research also found similar findings that unequal educational experiences in the early years of childhood affect school readiness (Brown, 2007; Ansari & Winsler, 2016). Still, the low income ethnic and minority children face severe challenges due to parental social status in society (Britto, & Kohen, 2005; Campbell & Von Stauffenberg, 2008).

In Bangladesh, many of the parents tend to change and reduce their child's actual birth date and enroll them at a later age with lower aged children. Most of the parents are afraid about this age contradiction as a consequence of school readiness, especially urban areas parents know about their children's peer groupage, and they worry that their child cannot compete with the peer group. As a result, children who are in the government primary schools tended to be absent in school. In rural areas, household activities of parents have very minimal time spending and have the tendency to prepare for their children's school readiness. Another cause of school absenteeism in schools is homework, and when parents cannot help in preparing the homework, their children are tended to be absent in school.

Previous research mostly conducted among the developed countries and showed that high socio-economic conditions as a factor for children's school readiness with a strong emphasis on the curriculum of ECE. Further, some of the research shows the children's school readiness highly depend on the parenting time for their children in the early years. This research finds that the connection between parenting time for school readiness is widely ignored in the context of Bangladesh, both rural and urban areas. Moreover, this study finds that children's school readiness is straightforwardly interconnected with private tutoring irrespective of parental rationale choice for their child schooling.

### **6.2.3.2 Schooling System and School Readiness in ECE**

In terms of research question 3.2, the result discusses the implications of parental socio-economic aspiration based on the available schooling system and school readiness in ECE. In most cases, schools do not follow any specific curriculum to teach in ECE school settings. The different types of curriculum followed among the schools, creates knowledge disparities among the children. The result shows that urban children are more advanced than rural groups in Bangladesh. Parents reported their concern about the curriculum followed in the school, and some of the parents also believe that the schools are considering unnecessary curriculum, which is not necessary for the early learning of children's, however, parents face difficulties to prepare their children for schooling as per parental education qualifications.

Hypothesis 3.2 proposed that a lack of qualified teachers and inadequate teacher training at ECE schools, especially in rural areas, impedes children's school readiness. The result partially supports this hypothesis and is consistent with previous findings. In schools, teaching children the quality of the teachers is essential and accommodating all children irrespective of social class (Alderman, Orazem & Paterno, 2001 and Yamashita & Masuyama, 2019). Although teachers do not get ample time to pay proper attention for all children, when class size is large (Mehrotra & Panchamukhi, 2006; Chapman, 2016). The research shows that when class size is small, teachers get time to minimize the gap in school readiness for special needs children (Smagorinsky Tobin & Lee, 2019). Further, the home environment and lack of learning materials are the causes of proper or less school readiness, especially among the lower-income group families (Leseman, 2002; Heyneman, & Stern, 2014). Children from lower-income group families are always in complications of school preparations. They enroll at school without or less preparation, and as a result, they hardly compete with their peer groups in class (Stipek & Ryan, 1997).

The result also shows that enrollment age of children, creates both negative and positive parental aspirations for child school readiness, where most of the parents tend to reduce the age of their children due to timely school preparation and concern about competition among the

peer group. The findings revealed that in terms of the child's gender, especially for girls, parents tend to increase the age for social issues, on the other hand parents tend to reduce the age of their boys which reflects the parental future concern and dependency on boys. Moreover, regarding this diverse age group of children among the same classes, parents also believe that younger children cannot perform well in schools, and this tendency is acute among urban parents.

Finally, the result shows that many parents enroll their children in private schools, where the government schools monitored the strict enrollment criteria of birth registration. Although the previous studies found that teachers' qualifications have a direct impact on school readiness. Private schools are assuming to provide proper school readiness abilities and child development, but this study found that in most cases, private school teachers are less qualified in terms of educational qualifications and training. Lastly, this result shows that the school environment also impedes the school readiness of the children as most of the schools do not have all the facilities which are essential for a better learning environment, and preparations in the hazardous environment impede the child's potential.

The extended result also maintains the previous inquiry of Goldring and Phillip (2008) showed that parental preferences direct their children, whether they are ready or not, and it depends on the social issues of schooling. Besides, Kingdon (1996) also argued that the quality of schooling depends on the perspectives of the child socio-economic orientation for children with rich family socio-economic backgrounds, which is suitable for school readiness. However, Children with more impoverished income group parents lag, and also found similar by Ansari and Winsler (2012).

In Bangladesh, equity in education refers to the ability of the most disadvantaged children to be ready for schooling. In remote rural areas, teacher shortages and irregular attendance have an impact on children's school readiness. Further, reduced contact with parents and teachers, children tend to be irregular in schools and do not prepare for schooling in rural areas. However, from the school teachers' perspectives, teachers also mentioned that parental

awareness is impeding their children's school readiness. In some cases, due to the high number of children and teachers ratio the school teachers could not concentrate on all children.

Government schooling policy is an essential factor in ensuring inclusive education for all children. Teachers play a vital role in helping and accommodating all children irrespective of social class and individual needs for school readiness. In the context of Bangladesh, this study finds that most of the children are lag behind due to diverse curriculum, schooling system, and school environment. In Bangladesh, due to a large number of teacher-student ratios, children's school readiness is highly dependent on parental social aspirations, especially future potentials for their child schooling irrespective of parental economic conditions. Previous studies mostly focused on teachers' quality for children's school readiness, where the child teachers ratio is suggestively small in number.

### **6.3 Limitations of the Study**

The consequences of this research partake to be comprehended in light of some limitations. The first is the sample size of ECE school enrolled parents of children's gender (Male: n=41, Female: n=27) and not enrolled parents of children's gender (Urban female: N=17, Rural Male=10, Female=7). Due to religious, education qualifications, especially in rural areas, many parents, especially mothers, do not want to be interviewed by a stranger, although ECE decisions are mostly made by the mother. On the other hand, for parents of children not enrolled in school, especially in urban areas, all the respondents are female as the father was not available due to professional activities. Fathers' opinions about ECE in urban areas and children not enrolled in school is absent in this study.

The second limitation is concerned with the data of parental income were collected, but the socio-economic status of parents is tough to measure due to not the direct income, but family might have some alternative income opportunities. Further, it easy to know the educational and occupational status of the parent, but sometimes, actual income status could not be obtained because of the personal information security of the respondent unless they want

to share about the income issues. In most cases, the parent of this study shared their average monthly income but did not share their average expenditures.

This study was conducted based on the government, and previous research proclamation that early childhood education can overcome constructive development in the very early years. However, among the South-east Asian countries, comprising Bangladesh, there is a lack of research on ECE. Most research is focused on primary education, and so on. Many studies have explored the effects of ECE schooling in developed countries, but there are few studies on parental socio-economic aspirations for ECE schooling in developing countries. The Bangladeshi government recognizes the importance of ECE based on the evidence of developed countries. Conversely, future studies are necessary to investigate more on the issues of non-enrollment in ECE that directly consider the region's educational philosophy, educational goals, and culture.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This study finds that parents choose schools for child education in connections of family values and specific logic of aspirations in the early years for their children in Bangladesh. Although, there is a lack of specific policy of the government regarding the purposes of children based on their age group. In Bangladesh, school choice is a matter which is directly related to social reasons, and this case study finds that there are no connections to the economic aspirations of parents except for middle-class parents. The common dilemma of school choice is more related to the indirect expenses for education for their children. Middle-class parents, since they need to send their children for private tutoring, question the outcome of sending their children to available services of education.

The ECE policy of government expresses the goal of ensuring social justice among the societies and parents of all the children have the same right to choose and enroll in schools. The reality, however, does not allow parents to choose accordingly. All the schools, except government public schools, only have no fee-based education services, but due to the age-

specific enrollment, and most of the parents, have to wait until the children reach age five as per birth registration. Further, in Bangladesh, parents seem to have highly aspired, and they would like to send their children at the age of 3, 4, and 5, while all the parents who want to enroll and prerequisite to pay all the educational expenses for ECE schooling for their children.

In Bangladesh, the publicly funded schools provide education facilities for children with no fees; the government provides the curriculum, and parents received 50 BDT each month for child schooling. However, the government unable to afford any kind of financial compensation, free school fees and curriculum for children enrolling in alternative schools. The government has a policy for all schools providing ECE facilities, and they should follow the government developed curriculum. Still, the alternative schools do not follow the government rules, and they teach those curricula set by school authorities. In terms of the curricula, the children in Bangladesh have diverse experiences among schools, and the parents find a clear gap once they enroll their children in schools.

The government of Bangladesh wants to ensure justice in education by forming inclusive education for all children, especially at an early age, to reduce the disparities among the children. Unfortunately, among the government schools, children with special needs enrolled, but most of the children are not present at the schools because they do not have a specific curriculum. Schools could also not ensure a special needs friendly school environment; as a result, the children with special needs are absent for a long time, and most of the children tend to repeat the same class starting at a very early age. The alternative schools have facilities but do not enroll the special needs children except the religious schools. The alternative schools usually do not enroll the children with special needs stating that the children are not developed enough to receive school instruction.

In Bangladesh, most schools seem to be less prepared to provide specific programs for ECE, except private schools. Most private schools could not ensure the quality of education due to teacher training and the academic qualifications of teachers. Among private schools, it is evident that teachers are frequently changing, and most of the teachers, especially in rural

areas, are recruited from teachers who could not find any other jobs, which demotivates parental aspirations. Further, this research shows that the frequent changing of teachers, especially in rural areas, also causes of parental aspirations for child ECE schooling.

Among the rural areas in Bangladesh, the schools seem to demonstrate the improvement of children's attainment hardly but are more focused on children's enrollment issues in ECE. The schools barely accommodate parental preferences, especially among public schools. In urban areas, private schools seem to be more accountable and trying to provide quality education, bringing diversity in their curriculum to attract more parents in ECE schools, but private schools show little interest to ensure equity, diversity, and social justice of children in the social context of Bangladesh. In private schools, especially in urban areas, only two social classes of parents enroll their children in the schools based on the school category. It is evident that among the three socio-economic groups of parents are enrolling their children's in the schools based on social status. In rural areas, parents mostly seek information about which types of social class people are enrolling in the school where they would like to enroll their children. Parents in the urban areas seem to be more focused not on school quality or quality of education but which social group of parents exists in those schools.

The results show that parents usually employ a combination of socio-economic consistencies when selecting and deciding enrollment of their children in ECE schools. In most cases, parents do not show interest in education quality as a significant factor for enrollment, whereas social issues were prominent for enrollment among parents. A majority of the parents decide school choice and enrollment depending on the social network, school visit, talking with teachers, and some of the parents, especially in rural areas, consider the headteachers a significant factor for enrollment. Usually, the headteachers, among rural and urban areas, are mostly retired from public schools. The parents among the regions believe that retired headteachers constitute a significant factor for quality ECE schooling for children.

In this study, a small number of parents who do not enroll their children in private school rather than public because the school distance is a factor In ECE, the school distance



seems to be a major factor for parental aspirations in school choice irrespective of the quality of education provided for children. Parental social aspirations affect the school choice in rural areas because parents believe that sending children far from their homes might not be appropriate for their children as they are busy with other household activities. They can watch over their children's' better at a neighborhood school.

This study shows that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds have high aspirations irrespective of their educational and financial limitations. Parents send their children to schools depending on the private tutor as they could not prepare their children at home, especially in rural areas. Parental economic aspirations in rural areas also show that parents sacrifice daily necessities, and even parents depend on microcredit loans from the communities to keep their children in school. Although, there is an apparent lack among parents and understanding about ECE schooling as a result of limited available services. Parents with high aspirations have the choice of other alternative schools as the government fails to ensure the education for all children irrespective of social backgrounds to ensure social justice among parents.

Parents among the lower-income groups are divided into two streams, first those who enroll in private schools or to NGO-based or religious schools. Irrespective of this socio-economic limitation of parents, they still choose schools for their children and keep sending them to ECE schools. Parents do not receive any assistance from the government when they are enrolling their children in alternative schools, and the parents from those groups are choosing the schools based on parental rationale with reasonable tuition fees for their children's ECE schooling.

The public ECE schooling system provides financial assistance and preference of parents for child schooling. The school catchment areas are defined by the government, but there are no obligations for the parents that they have to enroll their children as defined by the school catchment area. Parents, in terms of the specific school catchment area, have the freedom to choose alternative schools for their children to enroll. The alternative schooling

system emerged due to parental preference, not because of the government policies in Bangladesh.

Social Justice ensures parental freedom of school choice rather than to mitigate social inequality, equity in education, and ample opportunities for children for better educational attainment. This study shows for special needs children; mostly, the school resources are not appropriate to address their necessities for schooling in the early years. In this study, as per the rules of government policies, all schools should provide access to all children, irrespective of their needs, but only public schools, NGO based schools, and religious based schools are providing enrollment opportunities, and social justice of children is clearly ignored in the other schools, especially in private schools. Private schools are more concerned about other children, and they provide access to special needs children, then the children from the other groups will withdraw or may not concentrate in class.

In the context of Bangladesh, this research shows that ECE schooling must be of relevance to their local community-oriented, child age-specific, and equally available where parents have equal opportunity to enroll in schools for enhanced child accomplishment. Parental aspirations play a vital role in ECE schooling in rural and urban areas. Children who are 3-5 years old, physically, and mentally sound, should have equal access, but this study shows that due to policy issues this access is violated. In some cases, parental aspirations are imposing the issues to ensure a school's quality, better school environment with operational teaching methods. The teaching methods and different types of the school curriculum, especially among the private schools, demotivate parents' aspirations in ECE schools, as some parents with lower academic qualifications could not prepare their children for schooling and mostly depend on private tutors.

School funding or direct educational expenses could ensure more enrollment opportunities and more parental choice as a tool to enhance ECE services in Bangladesh and facilities to make a measurable change in children's educational attainment and development. Schooling reduces the risk of anti-social behavior and improves achievement. In Bangladesh,

the decisions of parents to send or not send their children to ECE schools mostly depends on parental aspirations, as parents pay all the educational expenses for their children. The government needs to set out a plan to redesign the integration and raise the proportion of budget available for ECE as per the international standard to ensure justice in education to ensure equity among parents for their children's schooling.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a significant contribution to child learning before starting primary school and ensures child school readiness for better childhood development and learning. ECE is beneficial for children before enrollment in formal primary schooling. After completing ECE, children adapt to the school environment and are prepared for formal education from grade one and onward. The government of Bangladesh already have taken several initiatives for broader access for all children and early learning to accomplish the specific objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which envisage the delivery of quality education by 2030. The government of Bangladesh aims to increase enrollment opportunities for each child possible social and economic backgrounds of parents for their children aged 3-5 years.

To understand the schooling of children, the Parentocracy theory is still important to consider not only in Bangladesh but also for the underdeveloped and developing countries as most of the cases the government is providing limited financial assistance to enhance wider access for all children. In Bangladesh, parents are responsible and spending their own money to send their children to schools. However, parental economic conditions do not make any significant impacts on child schooling especially when the quality matters as the school choose who can enroll in schools. Further, schooling for children with special needs is widely ignored in the context of Bangladesh irrespective of parental high socio-economic conditions. This study shows that most of the children with special needs are out of school due to the schooling policies in Bangladesh. Although the parents in Bangladesh are highly concerned to send their children to schools even the institutional facilities are limited and age-specific. Irrespective of high dependency on private tutoring, parents always try to keep a strong influence on their

child's academic preference for ECE schooling. However, parentocracy theory is not broadly applicable in the context of Bangladesh due to school availability, less parental concerns, awareness for ECE schooling and high dependency on school authority. Meritocracy is still the legitimate norms for schooling in Bangladesh. Further, this study shows that meritocracy and parentocracy have been co-existing in the context of Bangladesh and not replacing one another.

This study shows that schools tend to curtail direct fees instead of indirect expenses, which demotivates parental aspirations. The government should have some mechanism to provide support to all parents to send their children to schools, irrespective of school type. School facilities among the various school types should be improved to ensure schooling for all children, especially irrespective of socio-economic and special needs children as well. In visits to schools, it was found that classes were very crowded and teachers had no space to stand to deliver lessons. The provision of ECE school facilities should be more focused on quality rather than the number of children enrolled. Due to enhanced awareness of the benefits of ECE, many parents see the need of child schooling and all the stakeholders are concerned should ensure and provide the needed infrastructure facilities, and quality teachers. This study concludes that school choice, enrollment, and readiness mostly depend on parental aspirations, not on school quality. It is, therefore, necessary for the provision of better school facilities to meet the demand of increasing enrollment in Bangladesh, which will bridge the enrollment gap among regions and parental aspirations. Finally, policymakers and all concerned stakeholders need to make unequivocal goals and objectives to ensure social justice, financial necessities, and an equal curriculum for all children. Therefore, there should be a specific mechanism to meet the requirements of all socio-economic income groups providing parents ample choice for their child schooling.

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## In Bengali Language

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I Interview Protocol Manual

#### Appendix Ia: Interview Manual for Parents

1. The interview is set to occur at school, during pick-up time of children; Introduce interviewer to the interviewee by school teachers;
2. Make sure that no one is around for the privacy of the respondent;
3. Explain the interview as follows:
  - a. Self-introduction of interviewer;
  - b. The objective of this study is to gather information about parental aspirations for early childhood education in Bangladesh;
  - c. This is a part of the doctoral studies and the result of the interview is used only by the interviewer for the sole purpose of research;
  - d. Your name and school name will not be publicized;
  - e. Your opinion will not be reported to any teachers or headteachers;
  - f. If you feel uncomfortable to answer a question, please feel free to let me know; If you have any questions or concern, please kindly let me know;
  - g. If you allow, I would like to record this interview. If you feel uncomfortable, I will not record it and make handwritten notes instead;
  - h. Turn on the recorder if permitted;
  - i. Proceed to the interview with an expected time of 20-30 minutes.

Note: Parents with children not enrolled in ECE Schools, interview will take place at most convenient place, especially at home.

### **Appendix Ib: Interview Manual for Headteachers and ECE Teachers:**

1. The interview is set to occur in the school office room, during school time;
2. Inform and show the approval letter of respected officials for this research;
3. Introduction of the interviewer to interviewee;
4. Make sure that no one is around for the privacy of the respondent;
5. Explain the interview as follows:
  - a. Self-introduction of the interviewer;
  - b. The objectives of this study are to learn about parental aspirations for early childhood education in Bangladesh;
  - c. This is a part of the doctoral studies and the result of the interview is used only by the interviewer for the sole purpose of this research;
  - d. Interviewee name and school name will not be publicized;
  - e. Your opinion will not be reported to anyone for the purpose of evaluating your performance or school's performance;
  - f. If you feel uncomfortable to answer a question, please feel free to let me know;
  - g. If you have any questions, please kindly let me know;
  - h. If you allow, I would like to record this interview. If you feel uncomfortable, I will not record it and make handwritten notes instead;
  - i. Turn on the recorder if permitted;
  - j. Proceed to the interview with an expected time of 20-30 minutes.

### **Appendix Ic: Interview Manual for ECE Stakeholders**

1. The interview is set to appear in the office, during the office hours;
2. Introduction of the interviewer to interviewee or respondent;
3. Make sure that no one is around for the privacy of the respondent;
4. Explain the interview as follows:
  - a. Self-introduction of interviewer;
  - b. The objectives of this research are to acquire information related to parental aspirations for early childhood education in Bangladesh;
  - c. This is a part of the doctoral studies and the result of the interview is used only by the interviewer;
  - d. The name of the interviewee will not be disclosed or publicized;
  - e. Your opinion will not be reported to anyone for any purpose of evaluating your performance or understanding;
  - f. If you feel uncomfortable to answer a question, please feel free to let the interviewer know;
  - g. If you have any questions, please kindly let me know;
  - h. If you allow, I would like to record this interview. If you feel uncomfortable, I will not record it and make handwritten notes instead;
  - i. Turn on the recorder if permitted;
  - j. Proceed to the interview with an expected time of 20-30 minutes.

## **Appendix II: Questionnaires**

The interview questionnaires are follows:

1. Questionnaire for Parents with Children Enrolled in Schools
2. Questionnaire for Parents with Children Not Enrolled in Schools.
3. Questionnaire for Head Teacher/ECE Teacher
4. Questionnaire for District/Upozilla Education Office
5. ECE Specialist Interview (Education Specialist, Researcher and practitioner)
6. Questionnaire for Ministry Officials

## **Appendix IIa: Questionnaire for Parents with Children Enrolled in ECE Schools.**

### **Questionnaire for Parents**

#### **(with Children Enrolled in ECE Schools)**

Dear Parents,

In partially fulfilling my doctoral studies, I am carrying out this interview to gather information on parental aspirations for early childhood education (ECE) in Bangladesh. You are identified as one of the targeted respondents to interview. I would like to ask you to answer my questions below as accurately and honestly as possible. The success of this research depends heavily on the way you answer the questions and how many of the questions you answer. There is no right or wrong answer and your responses will be treated with STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used to enhance the quality of ECE in Bangladesh and to prepare our children for a better future.

#### **Part A (General Information):**

1. Name, Age, Sex:
2. Parental Education Qualification and details:
3. Children School details (Name of school, Type, child gender and school fees):
4. Could you please tell me the ages of the children who are already enrolled in school in your household who are 3 to 5 years old including gender (actual and registered)?
5. Which year and class was your child enrolled in ECE school?
6. What is the total number of members living in your household?
7. What is the average monthly income of your household?

8. Others

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**Part B (School Choice):**

1. Who is the guardian in your household who makes school choice decisions for your children's education?

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2. How did you Choose the ECE schooling for your children?

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3. Which factors (socio-economic) are influential in choosing a school for your children?

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4. What are the effects of school choice for your children in ECE?

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5. What concerns did you have when choosing a school for your children?

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6. How much money do you spend on your children's education (direct and indirect cost)?

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7. Did you find any access problems in ECE schooling for your children (availability, distance, opportunity cost, age, gender, others)?

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**Part B (School Enrollment):**

1. What are the factors that motivated you to enroll your children at an ECE school?

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2. Did you visit the school to talk to the teachers before your child enrolled in school?

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3. How many children are usually in your child's class? Do you consider that class size is a factor for children's school enrollment?

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4. Do you think that a school's offered subjects is a factor for enrollment?

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5. Do you believe the school environment is an issue for children's school enrollment?

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6. How do social class issues motivate you to enroll your child in schooling?

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7. What kind of difficulties do you face to manage the expenses for your children's education or continue schooling?

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**Part C (School Readiness):**

1. How many hours a day does your child receive education from you or at home?



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2. Do you think that the time you are spending is enough for your children's school readiness and better educational attainment?

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3. Is your child homeschooled or tutored, or going to an alternative educational program simultaneously?

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4. What are the ECE materials available at home which help to prepare for schooling?

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5. What are the problems you are facing for your child's school readiness or better educational attainment?

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6. How often do you talk with your child about (his/her) activities at school?

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7. How often do you talk with the school teacher about how (he/she) is doing at schools (with/without) an appointment?

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8. When and how do the teachers contact you about your child's education?

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9. How do you consider the teacher experience and training for better educational attainment and school readiness?

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10. Do you think that the school environment affects children's educational attainment?

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**Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation!**

## **Appendix IIb: Questionnaire for Parents with Children Not-Enrolled in ECE Schools.**

### **Questionnaire for Parents (Children Not-Enrolled in ECE School)**

Dear Parents,

In partially fulfilling my doctoral studies, I am carrying out this interview to gather information on parental aspirations for early childhood education (ECE) in Bangladesh.

You are identified as one of the targeted respondents to interview. I would like to ask you to answer my questions below as accurately and honestly as possible. The success of this research depends heavily on the way you answer the questions and how many of the questions you answer. There is no right or wrong answer and your responses will be treated with STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used to enhance the quality of ECE in Bangladesh and to prepare our children for a better future.

#### **Part A (General):**

1. Name, Age, Sex:
2. Parental Education Qualification and details:
3. Children School details (Name of school, Type, child gender and school fees):
4. Could you please tell the ages of the children in your households who are 3 to 5 years old including gender (actual and registered)?
5. Which year and class was your child enrolled in ECE school?
6. What is the total number of members living in your household?

7. What is the average monthly income of your household?

**Part B (School Choice, Enrollment and School Readiness):**

1. When do you expect your child to start ECE?

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2. Do you find any access barriers for your child to ECE schools?

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3. Why have you decided not to enroll your child in ECE schools?

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4. Do you expect to enroll your child in ECE schools when (he/she) is old enough based on (his/her) birthdate, or will you wait until (he/she) is older?

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5. Why did you decide to wait before enrolling your child in ECE schools?

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6. How much money are you ready to pay for school fees (Direct and indirect cost)?

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7. Which schools would you like to enroll your children in?

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8. How often do you read stories to your child?

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9. How many books/ECE materials does your child have of (his/her) own?

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10. How many hours each day does your child study?

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11. Do you find any barriers to enrolling children in schools?

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12. What are the quality issues for your children's education?

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13. What are the socio-economic conditions that may impact your children's schooling?

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14. What are the economic conditions that may impede your children's schooling?

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**Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation!**

## Appendix IIc: Questionnaire for Head Teacher / ECE Teacher

### Questionnaire for Head Teacher / ECE Teacher

Dear Sir/Madam,

In partially fulfilling my doctoral studies, I am carrying out this interview to gather information on parental aspirations for early childhood education (ECE) in Bangladesh.

You are identified as one of the targeted respondents to interview. I would like to ask you to answer my questions below as accurately and honestly as possible. The success of this research depends heavily on the way you answer the questions and how many of the questions you answer. There is no right or wrong answer and your responses will be treated with STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used to enhance the quality of ECE in Bangladesh and to prepare our children for a better future.

#### Part A (General Information):

Name: .....Designation: .....

Tel/Mob: .....Email: .....

#### Age, Sex, Education Qualification, training and other details:

#### Part B (School Information)

1. Name of school and types (Public, Private, NGO and community or others):
2. What year was this school established?
3. What is the duration of classes for ECE in your school?
4. What is the average number of children in each class/center?

5. What are the types or forms of schooling services provided (Play, Nursery, KG and Prathomic)?
6. What types of curriculum are used for ECE in your schools (Subject, extra-curricular activities, etc.)?
7. Number of students at the schools over the years (changes):

Year	Age Group	2015	2016	2017	2018
Type	ECE (5)				
	ECE (4)				
	ECE (3)				

8. What sort of training do teachers receive for the ECE Program? Special Basic Training .....(Specify the duration in days/months/years)

**Part C (Other Information)**

1. Could you please explain how the parents choose a school among the different types of school services?

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 .....  
 .....

2. Do you think the Children’s age is the most important predictor of enrolment in ECE?

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 .....  
 .....



3. Do you think that the gender of the teacher may impact the enrollment of children?

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4. How may the teacher's quality impact households to decide enrollment in schools?

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5. How might a diverse age group of children impact the parental decision for school enrollment?

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6. When do schools not allow children to enroll in ECE schools?

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7. How do parental education qualifications affect enrollment?

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8. What are the school characteristics that hamper the access of children in school?

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9. What is the overall condition of school facilities (water, electricity, hygiene)?

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10. What are the major reasons for non-enrollment in schools? (Unavailability of a pre-school nearby (distance), Quality of school, parent's unwillingness and parents' ignorance or no awareness about ECE.)

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11. How could schools ensure better educational attainment of children or school readiness for primary schooling?

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12. How do you evaluate the private tutoring tendency for school readiness or educational attainment?

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**Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation!**

**Appendix II: Questionnaire for District/Upozilla Education Office**

**Questionnaire for District/Upozilla Education Officer**

Dear Sir/Madam,

In partially fulfilling my doctoral studies, I am carrying out this interview to gather information on parental aspirations for early childhood education (ECE) in Bangladesh.

You are identified as one of the targeted respondents to interview. I would like to ask you to answer my questions below as accurately and honestly as possible. The success of this research depends heavily on the way you answer the questions and how many of the questions you answer. There is no right or wrong answer and your responses will be treated with STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used to enhance the quality of ECE in Bangladesh and to prepare our children for a better future.

**Part A (General Information):**

Name, Designation, Experience, Training and Contact details:

**Part B (ECE Issues for Schooling):**

1. How many schools exist under this District/Upozilla?

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2. What are the ECE (Pre-Primary) school types among this District/Upozilla?

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3. How many students are enrolled at schools under this District/Upozilla?

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4. What is the average student-teacher ratio (STR) under this District/Upozilla?

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5. What are the socio-economic conditions of households (in terms of income sources) who enroll in public schools?

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6. How are the NGOs or other development organizations working in this area?

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7. What training is offered for ECE school teachers?

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8. Does the district education office monitor all the schools irrespective of type?

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9. What are the initiatives taken for parental awareness?

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10. Why do parents not send their children to school at the age of 3 or 4 though at private schools, they send them very early?

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11. Even though the student-teacher ratio among the private schools is high, are parents sending their children to private schools?

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.....

12. Do you think that the present government policy of ECE enrollment is creating disparities among children?

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13. How do you think that the enrollment plan among households is creating disparities and which might impact lifelong learning?

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14. How do you manage private schooling under this district /Upazilla?

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15. Are there any other issues about school choice, enrollment or readiness?

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**Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation!**

**Appendix IIe: ECE Specialist Interview (Education Specialist, Researcher and practitioner)**

**Specialists Interview**

Dear Sir/Madam,

In partially fulfilling my doctoral studies, I am carrying out this interview to gather information on parental aspirations for early childhood education (ECE) in Bangladesh. You are identified as one of the targeted respondents to interview. I would like to ask you to answer my questions below as accurately and honestly as possible. The success of this research depends heavily on the way you answer the questions and how many of the questions you answer. There is no right or wrong answer and your responses will be treated with STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used to enhance the quality of ECE in Bangladesh and to prepare our children for a better future.

**Part A (General Information):**

Name, Designation, Experience, training and other details:

**Part B (ECE Related):**

1. What is the appropriate age for ECE?

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.....

2. How do you evaluate the enrollment pattern of ECE?

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3. Why is school choice important for children's lifelong learning?

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4. Why does school enrollment rules different in compare with private and public schools?

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5. Do you believe that school readiness highly depends on the parents' socio-economic status?

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6. How can awareness be raised and for the demand of parents and communities for ECE?

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7. How can the problem of the service delivery model for different age groups in ECE be solved?

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8. How can the challenges for social justice and equity in education be incorporated?

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9. Why are gender parities important to address the disparities among children?

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10. ECD, ECCE, and ECE are a multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary enterprise; and how can we coordinate among the stakeholders?

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11. Why are the sources of finance for ECE diverse, and why is there no government specific budget?

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**Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation!**

**Appendix II: Questionnaire for Ministry Officials**

**Questionnaire for Ministry Officials (ECE)**

Dear Sir/Madam,

In partially fulfilling my doctoral studies, I am carrying out this interview to gather information on parental aspirations for early childhood education (ECE) in Bangladesh. You are identified as one of the targeted respondents to interview. I would like to ask you to answer my questions below as accurately and honestly as possible. The success of this research depends heavily on the way you answer the questions and how many of the questions you answer. There is no right or wrong answer and your responses will be treated with STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY. It is hoped that the results of this research can be used to enhance the quality of ECE in Bangladesh and to prepare our children for a better future.

**Part A (General Information):**

Name, Designation, Experience, training and other details:

**Part B (ECE Related):**

1. Do you believe that birth registration is important for ECE enrollment in Bangladesh?

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.....

2. Do you think that ministerial coordination is important for ECE?

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.....

3. To what extent are educational campaigns and awareness developments important for ECE enrollment? (Preparation of schemes relating to Motivation)

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4. Do you think that Socio-economic conditions are an important matter for ECE?

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5. Do you believe that parental awareness is important for ECE in Bangladesh?

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6. To what extent could school management committees play a better role in ECE school enrollment?

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7. How could the parent's teachers association support better child outcomes?

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8. What are the challenges of ECE in Bangladesh?

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9. Why is the school environment and child achievement diverse among regions and schools?

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**Thank you very much for your time and kind cooperation!**

### Appendix III: Data Anonymization and Definition of Respondents

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Anonymization</b>
Parents with children enrolled in Schools	The mother / father of the child / children enrolled in ECE schools.	PE1, PE2, ....., PE68
Parents with children not enrolled in Schools	The mother / father of the child / children not enrolled in ECE schools.	PNE1, PNE2....., PNE34
Head Teachers or ECE Teachers	The interviewed head teachers and ECE teachers of the selected 34 schools in this study.	EST1, EST2,....EST34
Government stakeholders and Officials	The interviewed officials who are in charge or closely work related to ECE or child development at the different Ministries or government education office.	GSO1 , GSO2, .....GSO14
ECE Experts	The interviewed officials who are working or conducting research related to ECE or child development in Bangladesh.	EEX1, EEX2.....EEX8

### Appendix IV: Data Anonymization Based on School Locations and Types

Respondents	Locations	School Types	Anonymization
Parents E	Rural	GPS	PE1, PE2,....., PE10
		Private (Kindergarten)	PE11, PE12,....., PE20
		NGO School	PE21, PE22,....., PE26
		Madrassa (Religious)	PE27, PE28,....., PE30
		Others (Mosque, Temple)	PE31, PE32,....., PE34
	Urban	GPS	PE35, PE36,....., PE44
		Private School (Kindergarten)	PE45, PE46,....., PE54
		NGO School	PE55, PE56,....., PE60
		Madrassa (Religious)	PE61, PE62,....., PE64
		Others (Mosque, Asroy Indigenous)	PE65, PE66,....., PE68
Parents NE	Rural		PNE1, PNE2....., PNE17
	Urban		PNE18, PNE19...,PNE34
Head Teachers or ECE Teachers	Rural		EST1, EST2,.....EST17
	Urban		EST18, EST19,...EST34
Government Stakeholders	Rural		GS01 , GS02, .....GS03
	Urban		GS04 , GS05, .....GS11
ECE Experts	Urban		EEX1, EEX2.....EEX8

Note. Parents E = Parents with children enrolled in ECE Schools; Parents NE = Parents with children not-enrolled in ECE Schools.