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Rural Parents' Engagement in Secondary Schools: Current Practices, Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

This study explores the influences of parental socio-economic status on their engagement practices in rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. This study took place in a specific context where the majority of parents lacked literacy and faced financial constraints. This reality hindered their ability to provide adequate support for their children's education. A qualitative case study research has been chosen to carry out the research. The data has been collected using group discussion, semi-structured interviews and observation from five rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. The findings of this study revealed that parental engagement initiatives related to the annual programs of schools resulted in limited practice of one-to-one communication with parents. The lack of parental literacy, poverty, and being the first generation to receive schooling were identified as fundamental factors that hindered regular and overall engagement initiatives. Furthermore, there is limited opportunity for both parents and teachers to actively participate in the schooling system. In this regard, this study emphasized the importance of place and suggested contextually formed initiatives for further improvement of parental engagement.

Introduction

The government of Bangladesh undertakes different educational development initiatives in secondary education, which is a continuous process in Bangladesh with strong commitment. The overall goal is to improve the schooling system in order to offer quality education to students (Ministry of Education, 2015). In line with this notion, the government offers a number of educational projects with various components. Across all these project components, the role of parents and their engagement is considered as important. As per the implementation approach government of Bangladesh introduced the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) in every school in 1996, and in recent times government has allocated funds for running the PTA with the slogan of *assisting education; teachers are at school and parents are at home* (Secondary Education Quality Access and Enhancement Project [SEQAEP], 2014).

It is nevertheless a new concept in Bangladesh education to implement, and there are a limited number of research studies that have been conducted in this particular area of education, which is causing difficulties in engaging parents in it (Hasnat, 2016; Hasnat, 2017), and parental involvement in school define only very few activities

(Kabir & Akter, 2014). As a result of that in practice, it appears that policy is often only a paper exercise (Islam, 2017). The contextual reality of Bangladesh is also creating difficulties in engaging parents with various steps for educational changes and the government faces various challenges to offer educational initiatives in implementing with densely populated and limited resources country with high illiteracy and poverty (Hasnat, 2017). A study conducted by Downey (2002) found that parents who came from disadvantaged backgrounds were less able to participate in the education of their children thus resulting in poorer educational outcomes for students from these families. Also, there is a disparity between rural and urban contexts where policy implementation is dominated by urban interest where parents are more educated and financially solvent compared to rural contexts (Hasnat & Greenwood, 2021; Amin, 2017). So, the government is struggling to implement policy initiatives in a well-planned and effective way all over the country. Parents, who are literate and in high socio-economic conditions, are expected to be more conscious and aware of their children's education than parents from illiteracy and low socio-economic backgrounds (Hasnat, 2017). It has also been found in other studies (McNeal, 2001; Sui-Chu & Willims, 1996) that parental engagement depends on parents' socioeconomic backgrounds. Parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to engage their children than parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Taking this notion into consideration, parents with illiteracy and low socio-economic backgrounds from Bangladesh demand more attention and exploration of their understanding of their engagement with their children's education and need to address the challenges of how to implement and adapt them to their educational aspirations and policies in rural areas. A study by Yamamoto and Sonnenschein (2016) highlighted the similar importance of paying attention to parental neighborhoods, communities, or countries as these factors can influence parental access to academic socialization or block the processes altogether. Jones and Prinz (2005) found that parents' involvement with their children depended on their socioeconomic situation and the characteristics of their neighbourhood as well as the degree of parental self-efficacy in which they resided. According to their research, there are differences in parenting practices depending on the socioeconomic background of a parent.

Although there is a limited amount of research about schooling in the rural context of Bangladesh, there are a few studies that have been conducted. Moreover, there is little research that examines how rural parents are engaging in their children's schooling, or how they don't engage in it, on a regular basis. There is a gap in the literature that needs to be filled, and this study seeks to fill that gap. The research is likely to have potential implications not only for Bangladesh but also for other countries having similar contextual realities.

Context and Aim of This Study

Keeping in mind, parents' engagement as a concept and current practices, this study aims to reconnoiter engagement practices, understandings and experiences of parents and teachers in a rural context in Bangladesh. The importance of place is fundamental to this study. It is because of an emphasis on the importance of place, as local practices are shaped by cultural, social and economic conditions. Also, policies are made in government offices but it depends on the place and whether they will be implemented or not. There are barriers associated with the context and to overcome them. So, it is important to make a plan that is relevant and acceptable in the

context. Greenwood (2016) emphasized the importance of place in research and described the place as a determinant of historical and current discourses that impact the meaning of life and practices. In a similar tone, Sobe and Kowalczyk (2012) also averred to give close attention throughout the research process to recognize power and knowledge relationships in practice.

The rural context in Bangladesh is a presentation of the number of parental illiteracies, poverty and less concern for their children's education (Ali, 2011). Based on the situation, this study also intends to see the relationship between parental socioeconomic statuses in the rural context in Bangladesh. This study took place in a flood-affected zone, where the total population is about 3.6 million with a 46.8% illiteracy rate and they mostly live at a subsistence level. People from this area are living with their traditional Bengali values where respect for elders, respect for teachers and differing male-female responsibilities are commonly visible, and that is important for family and communal responsibilities. This is a representation of the rurality in nature all over Bangladesh in terms of the demographic nature, living standard of the parents, and nature of the school practice. Parents from this area mostly engage with their daily earnings, such as small business, agriculture-based daily labor, rickshaw pulling, and so on. They mostly stay outside of home and mothers are usually housewives and become busy with their work at home. Over 100 million people live in similar rural conditions in Bangladesh (Hasnat, 2017). The key reason for this study to emphasize the context is to keep the individuality of the place which is unique on its own considering the parents and teachers of the participants of this study have their own lifestyles and beliefs. Reference is not used here not to allow readers to identify the exact area.

Literature Review

Parental engagement is considered a vital component of effective school initiatives that are repeatedly highlighted by researchers, practitioners, and policymakers (Epstein, 1987). Governments of many countries are acknowledging its importance in various ways (Hornby, 2011). Different stakeholders, similarly, documented that parental engagement has an impact on students' academic achievement as well as essential steps in educational reform initiatives (Wilder, 2014). Parents can engage themselves with their children's education in different ways according to their ability and need. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) described involvement from their conceptual and empirical study in the following terms:

Home-based behaviours (e.g., helping with homework), school-based activities (e.g., attending school events), or parent-teacher communication (e.g., talking with the teacher about homework), parental involvement has been positively linked to indicators of student achievement, including teacher ratings of student competence, student grades, and achievement test scores (p. 105).

However, research shows that parents in various contexts have different types of barriers to engagement in their children's education, such as parental low literacy, lack of time due to work commitments, and parental lack of confidence (O'Hehir and Savelsberg, 2014; Bower and Griffin, 2011). In Florida, Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2003) from their study identified some issues that worked as obstacles to parental engagement:

Parents who lack the desire and confidence to become involved, educators who lack the desire to encourage parent involvement, teachers' preconceptions surrounding parental culpability, home-school scheduling conflicts, conflicting beliefs about the ways parents should be involved, vagueness surrounding the changing role of parent involvement during students' adolescent years, and lack of teacher preparation and administrative support (p. 85).

Similarly, Bartel (2010) found parents' time, knowledge, and skills also affected their engagement. Normally, parents want to engage them in their children's education but for many reasons, they are unable to engage. Seymour (2005) found that many parents in Portland USA wanted to be involved in school-related programs but did not have the education, skills and lack of educational understanding to be involved themselves. Also, parents who are struggling to meet everyday family needs and working daily basis to survive cannot engage them missing their one-day income. Similarly, parental inflexible work schedules and limited staff in the school do not allow them to communicate and ensure parental participation in school functions. Parental educational capital and socioeconomic status have an influence on engaging themselves in their children's education. Cardona, Watkins and Noble (2009) claimed that highly educated parents show more interest in engaging themselves in children's education than those parents who do not have formal education. After examining five articles, Yamamoto and Sonnenschein (2016) found parental ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status have influences on engagement and concluded that cultural and socioeconomic position have an influence on parental belief and engagement practice.

Other studies, (Radu, 2011; McNeal, 2001; Sui-Chu & Willims, 1996) found that parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to engage efficiently in school activities than parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. However, Radu (2011) argued that schools can play a vital role in mobilizing the parental community to create change by bringing more parents into school activities and overcoming socioeconomic factors. Both Hess, Teti, Hussey-Gardner (2004) and Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli (2001) identified that parental belief in their ability to engage and contribute to their children's education influences students' willingness and inspires them to higher educational ambition. In another study, Wang, Deng and Yang (2016) claimed that parents' belief in engaging themselves in their children's education is affected by their economic position and educational level. Considering various aspects, Hornby (2011) and Hornby and Lafael (2011) identified four influencing factors that have an impact on parental involvement in their children's schooling. Firstly, describes *individual parent and family factors* that include parental beliefs about their involvement, views on the invitation process, and respect from teachers and surroundings; then *child factors*, including students' age, behavior and learning difficulties; *parent-teacher factors*, different types of initiatives to improve parents-teachers relationship both from school and parents; and lastly, *societal factors* included political, economic, societal, and cultural issues.

Initiatives for Further Improvement of the Engagement Process

Various initiatives through research projects have focused on overcoming the existing situation of parental engagement. Hornby and Witte (2010) identified irregularities in school practice from their improvement school

initiatives project in New Zealand though there were some good practices. They pointed out some weaknesses and described them as follows:

Lack of written school policies on parental involvement; minimal use of home visits; limited ideas to involve diverse parents; minimal parent education organized by the school; minimal focus on parent support; the ad hoc nature of the organization of parental involvement; minimal focus on involving parents of children with special needs; and limited training for teachers on working with parents (p. 775).

Considering the situation, they argued for the need for teacher training programs both pre-service and in-service periods addressing the parental engagement process and suggested conducting further research to develop a model of best practice addressing the people-centered parental engagement process.

Encouraging isolated parental engagement in Southern California, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) took four years of initiatives and formed a platform for the parents to share their rights and exchange their experiences and found development of awareness of their children's education. By integrating parents in their children's education, Webster-Stratton (1997) recommended setting up parental training programs to minimise parental separation and strengthen supportive arrangements for the parents in their children's education. Mapp and Hong (2010) from their parents mentoring program with Principals, Teachers, the District Leadership team and other school staff emphasized frequent communication between parents and teachers to shift school-centric communication to parent-centric. Bartel (2010) emphasized the importance of a welcoming environment in the school for the parents and value parental lives and help them to improve their capacity to engage them with their children's education. Gonzalez-DeHass and Willems (2003) emphasized teacher engagement initiatives focusing on parental socio-economic status and cultural differences. Moreover, parental engagement practice has various types of contrast, such as urban and rural, literate and illiterate, and parental attitudes (Kabir and Akter, 2014; Amin, 2017). Darling and Steinberg (1993) emphasized that parenting style and parental practice are conceptualized in a context that needs to address on parental socialization process. Taylor, Clayton & Rowley (2004) described a conceptual model of the process of academic socialization that includes parental experience in school, parenting behavior and school-related cognition, where they described socialization as a broad umbrella of parental socioeconomic and cultural context.

Research Questions

1. How does parental socioeconomic status influence their attitudes towards engagement practice in the school?
2. What are the factors that underlie parental engagement with current practice?
3. How do current practices guide to improve parental engagement?

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to understand the effect of parental illiteracy, poverty, and their awareness of their children's education in their engagement process with the teachers, and the possibilities of engagement in such a

situation. Then it investigated the socio-economic situation that plays an important role in shaping the nature of engagement and community factors that indicated blocks in engagement and further possibilities of engagement. Keeping that in mind, this study focused on exploring the existing practices that happening in terms of parental engagement with schools in rural areas.

The overall investigating approach of this study was a qualitative case study, which is contextually bounded and particularly concerned with exploring details of experiences and looking at how and why. More precisely, Yin (2003, p. 13) described a case study as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident”. In exploring and describing the existing situation of parent-school engagement in the rural context of Bangladesh it is important to probe deeply into the context and for doing that a qualitative case study approach is well suited. In Case Study research, both Yin (2003) and Farquhar (2012) suggested that how and why questions are the most important to answer. The nature of this study is an emergent research design and followed a grounded approach that responded to what I found in the field, which needs to be flexible and open to new data, new issues, and new conceptual lenses (Robson, 2011; Hasse- Biber & Leavy, 2008).

Parents and teachers were selected as participants in this study from five secondary schools. In collecting data, we used a range of methods, that included group discussions, semi-structured interviews, observation of school and village activities, and review of documents and government policy documents. That allowed us to explore different viewpoints and gather in-depth data within the context. All participants were asked to read the consent form and signed for their agreement. They were assured that their pseudonyms would be used rather than real names and only used their data for study and further publication.

Findings

Parent's Engagement in Practice

At the beginning of data collection with parents and teachers, this study found their concern about parent's engagement, which reflects the importance of engagement in their context. They acknowledge that students of those families in which parents are communicating with the school are doing well and changing their attitudes to learning. However, the number of such families is very limited which is easy to count on finger. In the rural context of Bangladesh, it is a rare practice for parents to visit schools, meet with the teachers and seek advice for their children's difficulties and improvement.

In a similar way, it is not a regular practice the school is inviting parents and communicating with them. Schools only arrange parent meetings at the beginning of the year, when results are published. A few annual functions are taking place in the context where schools are inviting parents on different occasions. For example, a different national program that by policy school is bound to celebrate in their way in school premises where the school invites parents, and besides that annual sports day, farewell programs of SSC examinees, yearly and half yearly result announcement day in school calendar year. However, in response to the parents in those invitations, teachers are disappointed. As Emdad, one assistant teacher was sharing,

Though inviting parents is not our regular practice and inviting them very frequently, parents do not attend whenever we invite them on any occasion. They always pay their importance to their daily work than our invitation.

In a similar way, another assistant teacher, Edris stated that:

A very small number of parents joined us at the time of the result announcement day, and attendance of parents at that time was a maximum of five percent on average. The most painful and disappointing part of this invitation process is parents do not inform us if they cannot attend and their reason for inability to attend.

Shahana, another assistant teacher, particularly pointed out the reason why parents do not come during the result announcement day. She noted that parents are scared about the progress of their children's performance as they are not well concerned. She was describing that:

Parents are not updated with their children's education and do not know how they will face the situation. For that reason, parents' confidence level does not allow them to attend the result announcement day and face the situation.

Evolved Underneath Reality

When we were receiving complaints from parents that they were not responding to invitations from teachers, we started exploring the reason why parents were not coming from parents. Initially, the invitation process from the school emerged as a factor and it is evident that the school sent their invitation message to the parents through the students, and parents seem they are not happy with the invitation from their children. At the same time, students do not convey the invitation message to their parents. Also, teachers do not have their follow-up whether that invitation reached the parents or not. Maya, one parent was sharing that:

Till today, I have not received any invitation for a parents' meeting or assembly, but my daughter is here and studying for four years. I would definitely join if I got an invitation letter. I am interested.

In a similar way, Bilkis stated that:

I was not informed anything about the result card; I didn't see anything like this from my son. So, I can't comment on this matter. I will ask my son today and will find out the reason behind this, I need to know.

In further discussion with the parents, another reason that was revealed is why parents do not respond to school invitations. Most parents in rural areas are living in poverty and struggle every day to survive their daily lives and keep themselves busy with work. One day earning seems important to them maintaining the whole family where most of them are the only earning members of the family and do not want to attend school programs missing

income for a day. That reflects the importance of their engagement with their job rather than attending school programs. Emdad was sharing his understanding by saying:

Parents in this area are mostly engaged with daily basis income and they do not want to attend our school programs or activities missing one day's income. It is very hard for them not to be in their job for one day as they are dependent on their job.

Lal Mia, a parent, expressed a similar reason why he could not respond to school invitations and chose to work. He was sharing that:

I am the only earning member of my family, and I do not have any other asset than this house indicating the one small room of his house). So, how can I attend school functions without joining my work? I can't miss my one-day income.

Programs Are Not Parent-Focused

On top of the parental poverty and busy schedule, parents expressed the aimless discussion in the school programs that they observed before when they attended. A few of them described those programs as highly politicized, where they do not get any message than a political story of achievement. This reason why parents choose to go to work rather than attend school functions comparing the importance. Torab, a parent, described why he does not attend school invitation. He said:

To be honest, I didn't get any constructive discussion from school programs that I attended before. The people who attended as chief guests, mostly political figures did not address our needs, and no information they shared in that discussion that I can implement in our children's education. Comparing such programs I prefer to go for my work than join there.

A further discussion takes place with the teachers aiming to explore more in detail parents' claim of aimless discussion and politicised programs. A similar response was found from the teachers, where they agreed with the aimless agenda and demanded more attention to the agenda with more focus on parents to attract them to attend school programs. Minhaj stated that:

You will not get any agenda or planned discussion in our school programs. Sometimes, I had a chance to deliver a speech to the parents, but I failed to share any planned speech addressing problems related to our students and parents. Also, parents hardly can get something new and helpful for them. I think we need to prepare our agenda and do our homework prior to organizing any program and provide proper guidelines to the parents mentioning their role in their children's education.

At the same time, teachers acknowledge the importance of political people's involvement in the development process of school, where school development depends on political personnel concerns. In some cases, schools

wanted to utilize the opportunity to invite political people and benefit from them in the school improvement process, as politicians have the capacity to allocate funds for school improvement from government funds. Didar Hossain, a head teacher, justified the reason why he invited politicians to his school programs in this way,

To run our school smoothly we need government support and funds. Local political authority is the authority to play a vital role in distributing different government support. They are holding that power and we need our support to create our school fund. By inviting different school programs we take the opportunity to seek funds from them. Otherwise, they will not consider our school at the time of fund distribution.

In a similar way, Iftekhhar Zaman, a head teacher, shared his reason why he involves politicians in his school activities in this way:

Political personnel are the most influential in this area in any aspect. We cannot run our school without keeping a very good relationship with them. Our school fund is not rich enough to run our school and take different development initiatives. Inviting them in our school programs we try to keep our school in their good book.

These themes emerged from the interview with both parents and teachers that show the current practices of the invitation process, and political influences and also reflect the limited opportunities and expectations of sharing, that preventing further initiatives and perpetuating reduction gap between both parties. These emerged themes also found in both national and international literature, influenced me to see underneath the reality of the context of the engagement process. Then we started to look at the data more in-depth and found the connection with the concept of social discourses. Our lenses through the concept discourses then started to explore how the things of teachers and parents could be considered as discourses that had become habits and ways of creating perceived reality.

Influences of Parental Social Status

Most Bangladeshi parents are not conscious of the education system, school activities, and children's learning in schools, and there is limited contact between parents and schools. Parental illiteracy and first-generation children's schooling appeared as influential factors in the overall engagement process, where schooling is a fairly new experience for the majority of the parents in this rural region. As a result of that most of the parents are staying behind the schooling system and have no idea of what actually happens in the school, and for that reason parents do not consider attending school programs as their role. Julhash, a parent, described his sense of separation from school programs:

We are very general people and trying to survive with our daily life and living hand to mouth. We do not know about our role in joining school programs. I think it is a program for both teachers and students, it's better to celebrate their program in their own way without our interruption.

In a similar way, Lal Mia stated:

The environment of the school is different than the place where I work. I can't maintain a school environment which is why I prefer to be in the field rather than joining a school program.

Teachers also perceived a similar reason why parents avoid school programs. Javed, a teacher, showed his feeling of distress when he said:

Based on parental social and educational background, they do not consider school activities or their participation as their matter and they are not able to do that. Because of strong inability in their mind, they do not want to participate whenever we invite them to join different school activities, and it is very hard for us to convince them.

Parental educational experience also has an impact on supporting their children's education. Emdad nicely pointed out and described that:

Because of their illiteracy, they feel good to see their children going to school and continuing education. They do not care about their children's learning because of that. Proudly they share that my son is attending school and at least they are learning something and will not be illiterate like me.

Parental happiness to see their children attending school keep them relaxed and prefer to focus on their earning only rather than focusing on their support and attending school invitation. Lal Mia has articulated his happiness. He uttered:

As a parent, my role is to send my son to school, and he is attending school. I think he is learning from there. So, I do not know what else I can do for his schooling.

Parental socio-economic status in society makes them vulnerable compared to the teachers and that makes teachers status complicated, and parents-teacher relationship within the society. On the one hand, parents have respect for the teachers and they hold a respected position in society. That positioning creates different perceptions for the parents, as Lal Mia was explaining that:

Teachers are the *Shikkha Guru* in our society. They are well concerned about education and by profession, they are teaching in our society and teaching my son. On the other hand, professionally I am completely opposed to playing any role. That is why I do not feel comfortable talking with them if I do any wrong.

Lal Mia's words show respect for the teachers, which is expected, and they well deserved by the parents. However, it reflected that respect appears to create distance between parents and teachers and not allow them to work together. Though, they are living in the same area, and maybe neighbours have an invisible gap between them.

On the other hand, parents see teachers as someone who belongs to the community and who is expected to look after their children. Keeping that in mind, parents try to differentiate roles between teachers and parents, where they consider sending their children to school as their role and taking care of their children's education as the teachers' role. Mojid, a parent, shares a similar apprehension:

He is my nephew (mentioning one teacher's name) working as a teacher where my children are studying. He knows very well about my son, better than me about education, nothing new to inform him. He is very reliable to me. So, we hardly discuss my children's education whenever we meet.

A similar experience that echoed by the teachers, that they receive from the parents when they have opportunities to know about the reason why parents do not attend the school program. Minhaj shared what he experienced from the parents' conversation:

Sir, you all are our people from our community and taking care of my son. I know all of you are looking after my children's education. So, better not to include me in school matters as I am not well concerned.

Another teacher, Javed was sharing his experience that he experienced from the parents, he mentioned one of the parent's experiences. He said:

You all are our people in the school and highly knowledgeable than us. Is there anything that I can contribute? So, please take care of my children's education.

Initiatives to Change the Current Situation

Both teachers acknowledged that parents and teachers such types of relationships and positions in the community creating a gap and blocking the overall engagement process.

Most of the teachers expect existing changes for parental engagement and expressed their opinion on why they want to change in current practice. Emdad shared that:

We need to work on improving the current situation because parental illiteracy creates a huge problem in our engagement process. The most difficult point of dealing with illiterate parents is whether they listen to the teacher one hundred percent or zero.

Improving current engagement practice Javed shared that:

At least we need to provide very basic knowledge about parental roles and that can be formal or informal, where most of the parents will get an understanding about their role and communication approach with the teachers.

Similarly, parents shared their apathy in their lack of knowledge in the communication process with the teachers in their engagement process and expressed the importance of improving knowledge for areas where they can engage. Lal Mia shared that:

We are not informed well about the area where we can engage. It would be great if a teacher could tell us about our role in the engagement process so that we can contribute.

Another parent, Torab expressed that:

Suddenly they (teachers) invite us and want to know about our children's activities, but we can't share anything. It would be good for us if they could make aware us and give us specific instructions so that we can keep updated sharing with them.

Discussion

The overarching findings revealed from the above-discussed data that there were limited opportunities for rural parents to engage with schools, and as a concept, parent's engagement is limited only in annual school celebrations of national days, farewell and a few of yearly result announcements. As Hamunyela (2008) reported, the implementation of plans for parent involvement in rural contexts is challenging and a majority of schools organize functions for parental involvement that are more focused on non-academic activities rather than academic ones, and therefore, parents have a greater chance of getting involved. Rural context in Bangladesh, however, parents do not show their interest and attend such celebrations when they receive invitations from teachers. The choices that parents make are a reflection of their ideas about schools and teachers as well as their attitudes about them (Wilder, 2014). Teachers described their difficulties in getting parents into different programs when they invited parents to their school. A study by Jeynes (2007) posited that parental style and expectations played a very important role in the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement; both of these factors were more significant than household rules and the involvement of parents at school events. Teachers showed their disappointment in their talking about parental detachments from school programs and they continued with making a judgment that most parents were disinterested in their children's schooling and unaware of their children's schooling activities without taking any further follow-up steps to encourage parents. As a result of that, teachers failed to reach parents' voices for why they do not attend school programs, and for that reason, they stayed with their current situation.

Agreeing with teachers' claim, parents denoted why they did not attend or respond to school programs. Parents also shared some of the reasons for not attending the school programs. Parents contended the overall process of invitation to take part in the programs in their rural context. At the same time, parents missed influential and constructive agendas in the school programs. These reasons demotivated them to attend school programs and engage them in their children's schooling. Along with these issues, parental hardship with their poverty and illiteracy created a bigger concealed block in their curiosity to engage and communicate with the teachers.

In addition to this, the underlying reality revealed from this study for not being engaged and avoiding school programs is parental illiteracy. Parental illiteracy makes it impossible for them to help with their homework and judge a child's progress, and for that reason, they are embarrassed about their lack of knowledge. The discourse of social inferiority with the teachers exposed from this study shapes the parental engagement process and day by day creates distance between parents and teachers. Downey (2002) indicates that parental involvement in various school programs was a way for parents to show their children that they valued their education and that these messages have a positive impact on the academic performance of their children. Also, daily living is a means of priority in this rural context, and spend the whole day earning capital for daily needs and do not get enough time to respond to school invitations. Most parents are dependent on their daily work and do not want to miss one day's income for attending school invitations. Parental availability and suitable time seem difficult to get but need to pay more attention from the teachers' perspective for parental engagement.

Examining the overall situation, participants from this study repeatedly suggested excellent communication can minimise the blocks and improve their engagement practices, and can contribute to their children's schooling. Parental regular communication and monitoring with the school can keep school performance up to date. At the same time, this study suggests that parental and teachers' expectations and capacity should be recognized as a significant part of their education part within their context, considering participants' socio-economic status, their understanding and beliefs, the influence of their culture, way of life, and current practices in their daily life.

It is also evident that parents in the rural context is struggling to find suitable way of their engagement and are not aware of their role as parent. This is not because parents are not willing to be engaged but because parental illiteracy and poverty are strong factors preventing parental engagement. In addition to that, there may be other contextual factors in rural Bangladesh that may include historical and colonial factors (Hasnat, 2016). Teachers in this context are not playing their role and are not taking any further initiatives to aware parents and prepare them for engagement. However, it is evident that parents are leaving all their roles because of their lifelong practice of not being engaged with their children's education which created an invisible wall that they are struggling to find an appropriate approach to be engaged. Practice creates social anxiety between them and blocks that are not engaged in their children's education. As a result of that parents in this rural context are paying more attention and scaring about their role as a parent and communication process. These problems are mostly similar to the factors "individual parent and family factors" and "societal factors" that Hornby and Lafaele (2011) found in their study. Overcoming the situation, both parents and teachers shared their opinions to find an appropriate approach to be more engaged, and the concept of parental academic socialization can play an important role in further improvement of this situation. Hasnat (2017) described some contextual approaches and suggested introducing, for example, home visits, and yard meetings, utilizing people gathering places, such as the weekly market, and Imam in the Jumma prayer time. Hasnat further claimed that parental illiteracy cannot be a barrier to their engagement because they are confidently fulfilling their family needs and engaged in various activities where they are successful. Similarly, findings from this study suggested utilizing their strength from their daily experiences and offering to introduce the term literacy in a way where parents' socialization will be addressed. In the engagement initiatives, we propose arranging individual or group meetings to break down the shyness of parents and gain their confidence by acknowledging parental responsibility as part of the engagement initiatives.

Since this is one of the preliminary studies in Bangladesh, it is necessary to conduct more research in order to get a comprehensive understanding of how this phenomenon works. Because there were no students and community voices as they were not part of this study. Though, we focused on their issues as well through the eyes of parents and teachers. Therefore, we recommend that researchers conduct qualitative studies in which students, community members, and administrators are included. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students can be observed in parent meetings as well as their involvement in order to analyze potential communication barriers in greater detail. The researcher can consider a number of detailed case studies of parental engagement in rural and urban settings, or they can evaluate the impact of parental engagement on rural student retention to carry out further research.

Conclusion

Meaningful participation is one of the key conditions for parental engagement is missing in the rural context in Bangladesh. Schools need to introduce a new constructive one-to-one approach to engage parents than the annual function-based school invitation process. Both policymakers and school authorities need to come forward to create space for the parents to be more involved in introducing parental academic socialization considering improving parental belief, and awareness, and such an approach where parents can consider themselves as part of the educational system and their importance in their children's education. Parents mostly consider them vulnerable and do not think they can do something, thus school authorities need to highlight the parental strength that they are playing in their daily life and how they appropriate path to playing their role and can contribute. A realistic approach within the community is important to build a strong belief among parents.

The parental socialization approach needs to be based on the problems that each school is facing from their day-to-day experiences. Introducing the parental socialization approach with school, a grounded study can take place involving parents and teachers to identify their basic requirements for engagement and areas that need to improve. Hasnat (2017) suggested a model to improve parental engagement in the rural context, and that approach can be introduced with the flexibility to modify it as per contextual needs. So, it is important to improve current involvement practices in order to bring up an environment where parents and teachers will be able to work together to develop an engagement practice that is collaborative and respectful. In conclusion, this study highlighted the importance of place and that is based on parental socio-economic status, belief, understanding, cultural influences, current practices, and everyday life. We believe schools have great potential, but collaboration among parents and teachers can only be achieved if relationships are built on respect, which will come through dialogue rather than one-sided expectations, as well as ensuring a welcoming environment for both parties. Therefore, we contend that modifications to engagement initiatives should be firmly rooted in an appreciation for the local context, expectations, and readiness for change, as well as local expertise.

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