

Early Childhood Care and Development: An Investigation into a Day Care Center in Bangladesh

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Abstract All over the world, day care center is one of the recognized institutional settings to ensure early childhood care and development. In Bangladesh day care centers serve as shelter for children while parents engage in their professional responsibilities. In this study, a day care center in Bangladesh was investigated to find out the initiatives implemented to address the issues of early childhood development and parents' perception in this regard. Mixed methods approach was followed for collecting and analyzing data. Required data was collected from the parents of the enrolled children and a teacher of the early childhood development center. Various documents and websites of the day care center, government policies and frameworks were also analyzed to see the real practice and its relationship with the policy guidelines. The findings of the study revealed that the purposes of the parents for enrolling their children in the day care center were fulfilled in a significant level. Parents also expressed their satisfaction about the services in early childhood development through physical, social, emotional, cognitive development and school preparation of the day care center as well. Besides, some parents suggested increasing the service hours in a day so that they can perform their other duties more comfortably. In addition, few parents want to see religious education in the very early stage of their children.

Keywords: *early childhood, education, care and development, day care, bangladesh*

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1. Introduction

In early childhood, human beings need the utmost attention and care and this time is the foundation for all later learning. During this period of their lives, children have not entered the formal education system but they need care and the kinds of activities that will prepare them to succeed in school life [14]. Child's physical growth and change through gradual progression of sequential stages refer to the term *development*. Similarly, development is related with the acquisition of effective activities, maturation of skills, expected behavior and values of the child. Early Childhood Development (ECD) emphasizes the holistic development of the children and includes optimum growth and mental development; therefore, focusing on physical, emotional, social and cognitive development [10]. Likewise, the term *care* is deliberately added by proponents of children's well-being because of the growing recognition that "care and nurturing" have powerful effects on development and learning. It includes promotion of children's healthy growth and development by providing health care, nutrition, interactive stimulation and emotional support [11].

In day care center, children are taken care of people other than their parents for money from the parents, government, community programs or any other funding

organizations. It is specialized program or facility that provides care for children from infants through preschool age. Here, it is easier for teachers and caregivers to focus on facilitating each child's play and learning [21]. This platform ensures early care, stimulation and learning of children [10]. The services of day care center combine childcare with pedagogical work in an activity that takes daylong responsibility for the whole child. The day care centers support parents for performing their responsibilities of upbringing, development and growth of their children appropriately while they work or study. There is a great scope for play and creativity as well as for the child's own exploration. Day care center is to be a fun, secure, learning experience for all the children who attend [11].

Though the care and education of young children are primary responsibilities of parents, the wellbeing of children is also an important concern for the whole society. What is not done properly in the urban areas in the developing countries by the parents, employers, schools, community groups, and the society for children is getting ensured by the service of day care centers [5]. However, choosing and finding high-quality child care is important and may play a key role in a child's health and development. Parents need to consider a variety of factors deciding who should care for their children [20]. Early childhood care through day care centers have become an accepted part of life for many families in the world and its

use is linked with a variety of purposes, national priorities, and policies. For example, in Australia, The Early Years Learning Framework [23] and Guide to the National Quality Standard (2013) are the national policy papers followed for ensuring the quality of the early childhood education and care through child care centers. On the other hand, a universal challenge is to find ways to ensure that children receive high-quality care in all settings and that the care also meets the needs and concerns of family members, employers, caregivers, schools, and society in general [22].

Bangladesh is considered to be one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Rather than being a problem, this increasing number of people can be a tremendous asset through timely investment in the early years of a child [13]. In 1974, Quadrat-e-Khuda Education Commission Report was published. Though this report was written about 30 years ago it is still extremely visionary, very relevant and applicable to Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) even today. Some key features of the Commission Report related to ECCD include: a recognition of early years, from birth to age 5, as a critical stage of human development, the need for day care for children aged 6 months to 3 years of age and kindergarten for children aged 3 to 5, appropriate and relevant teacher training (ranging from child psychology to nursing) on teaching techniques and interaction and management of young children, proposal for establishing a research institute on Early Childhood Education. At present, Comprehensive Early Childhood Development Policy (2013), Operational Framework for Pre-primary Education (2008) and Pre-primary Curriculum (2011) are the important policies and guidelines for implementing early childhood care, learning and development in Bangladesh.

Besides, as per the National Labor Act 2006, there should be a daycare centre for children in an organization where 40 women work. In June 2007, a Non-Government Organization (NGO) conducted a survey on 55 garment factories and found daycare centers only in 15 of them though most of the workers of those factories are women. There are different types of day care services available in Bangladesh. For example, home day care, government managed, NGO operated, factory, commercial and other organization attached and privately run day care center. The government currently runs 32 day care centers across the country. Some NGOs are operating few day care centers for poor women [12]. Some organizations have their own day care for their employees. Moreover, there are very few private day care centers in the big cities of this country. In this situation, Bangladesh has limited capacity and expertise in ECD along with very poor quality of services and learning outcome through day care centers. In Bangladesh, few number of children are availing the day care services because of not knowing the efficacy of day care centers even financially solvent people are callous in this connection in most of the cases [14]. Though, limited formal and informal preschool education exists but adequate importance is not given on the overall cross cutting issues like health, nutrition and other social and behavioral matters but it is still unknown that these issues can be implemented through day care service [26]. Moreover, “even though many people still live in joint families, there has been a shift in childcare

and parents are having trouble leaving their little ones at home” ([18], p.5).

Several researches were done in the field of early childhood care and development in Bangladesh [15,24,25] which mainly provided the information about the status of ECD in Bangladesh and established necessity of ECD program. Besides, a study looked into the guardians attitude towards day care center and the relational effect of day care center on children age [13]. Another research provided the policy makers with ideas of planning program, making implementation strategy, building partnership and identifying the gaps in child development and care and prioritizing day care centers as one of the contributors of early childhood development [1]. On the other hand, “to help working parents cope with their child care situation, many day care facilities have opened in various areas of the capital over the past years. With people growing more aware about proper upbringing of their children, these centers are striving to provide the best care that would meet the demands of modern-day parents” ([18], p.6). However, there is no in-depth study found on day care centers in Bangladesh to find out the operational modes, service providing procedures and its effect on early childhood development of children and the lives of parents. In this situation, the study investigated a day care center in Bangladesh which was established in 2013 and “claims to be an early childhood development center” [18]. The purposes of the study were to know how the day care center is following the national policies and guidelines in the operational strategies of the center and implementing the initiatives for ensuring early childhood development of the enrolled children. Moreover, the research tried to explore the perception of the parents on different relevant components of ECD that need to be addressed by an ideal day care center. The findings of the study may support different day care service providers to ensure better service looking into major concerns of different stakeholders. Similarly, policy makers and guardians may think about further necessary initiatives need to be taken by them for supporting service providers for ensuring standard early childhood care and development through day care centers.

2. Research Questions

- What are the policies, purposes and operational modes of day care center in Bangladesh?
- How does the day care center ensure early childhood development and care?
- What are the influences of the day care center on the lives of the city dwellers?

3. Methodology

Mixed methods approach was followed in this study. Qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions, interview and document analysis. A five point Likert Scale was used for collecting quantitative data. In this Likert Scale there were 34 items under seven categories e.g. purpose of admitting child, reason behind getting service, available facilities, physical development of the child. An Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Center namely ChildCheer was selected purposively as the research site for the study. In Bangladesh, the number of private day care center is very limited comparing with the population and the number of other service providers. ChildCheer is situated at Banasree in Dhaka which is one of the mostly populated areas of the city. Before the establishment of ChildCheer there were two day care centers in this area and after its establishment in 2013 two more day care centers started their operation. However, in 2015, the oldest and the newest day care centers of this area closed their services and the reason behind this decision was not disclosed. In this situation, the

continuation of the service of ChildCheer as a relatively new organization and having a comparatively good number of enrolled children influenced the researchers for selecting the ECD center as the research site. In this study, both father and mother of the children were the research participants as their perceptions and perspectives might differ in different issues. Participation in the study was not mandatory for the parents of the enrolled children. Both open ended questions and Likert Scale were supplied to the parents of all existing children of the center. Total 36 parents responded in the supplied Likert Scale and open-ended questions (Table 1).

Table 1. Sample Likert Scale and Open-ended questions

Likert Scale						
S.L.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1
<i>Physical development</i> In ChildCheer,						
16.	Hygiene of my child is maintained perfectly					
17.	Food taking of my child is ensured properly					
18.	There is appropriate arrangement for sleep					
19.	There are required facilities for play					
20.	Height and weight of my child is monitored regularly					
Open-ended questions						
1.	How the services of this institute impact on your professional, family and/or the life of your child?					
2.	What should be done for improving the quality of the services of this institute and how it can be implemented?					

It was also confirmed to the research participants that their given opinions will not create any negative effect to the services of their children in the organization. All the available documents in the center e.g. curriculum, routine, rules of the center, children enrollment and admission cancellation book, teacher development handbook, monthly modules (teachers' guide), monthly physical development report, weekly learning progress report, website of the organization were analyzed for understanding different aspects of the ECD center. Moreover, to know the perception on different services and facilities one teacher was interviewed among three teachers of the institute. The teacher has four years of teaching experience in BRAC primary school and has been working in ChildCheer from the very beginning of this institute. As the researchers of the study are involved with this organization's planning and operational activities, researchers did not give their personal opinion in any part of this study. Collected data from the parents through qualitative and quantitative tools was analyzed simultaneously under different categories and themes emerged from the data collected through open-ended questions. After that, teacher's interview was conducted and collected data was analyzed according to the relevant themes.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Policy and Purposes of ChildCheer

ChildCheer intends to support urban families for performing their responsibilities of upbringing, growth and development of their children appropriately and to helps parents to work or study as well. The most important purpose of ChildCheer is to provide care to the children in the temporary absence of their parents to enhance the development of the children physically, mentally,

psychologically, emotionally, morally, culturally and socially [7].

Table 2. Purpose of getting admitted in ChildCheer

Statement	Percentage
To feel stress free about the upbringing of my child on day time	90.00
To concentrate on my professional responsibility	89.71
To ensure expected level of socialization of my child	89.14
To make sure of planned physical and emotional development of my child	88.89
To start the educational life of my child in a planned manner	92.22

The above table shows that 90% of parents admitted their children in this day care center to feel stress free about the upbringing of their kids. Besides, 89.71% of the parents considered concentrating on their professional responsibilities fastidiously. Nevertheless, 89.14% of the parents emphasized on ensuring expected level of socialization of their children from this day care. Moreover, 88.89% of the parents gave importance on a planned physical and emotional development of their children through admitting their children in this day care. Most importantly, 92.22% parents enrolled their children in ChildCheer to provide them a planned beginning of educational life.

The stated mission of ChildCheer is

to ensure appropriate developmental opportunities and effective activities for protection, development and participation, these will enable children to meet the goals of early care, stimulation and learning plans.

While talking about the policy of ChildCheer, the teacher told that,

We do not consider 'child' and 'cheer' separately in ChildCheer. We are trying to create an enormous scope for play, games and creativity as well as for the child's own exploration with fun and secure learning

experience for all the children. Thus, in ChildCheer, ‘child’ and ‘cheer’ go together. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)
 In this perspective, this institute took some objectives in operational terms

Firstly, to provide emotional and social care to the enrolled children which enable quality interaction with parents, family members, adults and peers and which will promote positive sustained relationships in later life;

Secondly, to give young children support, security and ensure development of effective social behavior through dealing with in a constructive manner;

Thirdly, to give children experience of an environment in which their culture, spirit, dignity, individuality and age appropriate development are respected and nurtured in a conducive and appropriate manner.

To achieve the objectives ChildCheer has been following Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (2013) and Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education (2008) in its work planning and operation. Moreover, Developmental Checklists Birth to Five (2012) is one of the resource materials for this organization to assess children’s developmental stages.

4.2. Why ‘ChildCheer’ for ECD?

The below figure illustrates parents’ perception for getting service from ChildCheer for their children’s early childhood development. According to 74.29% of parents there is no other organization in their locality to get this type of service. Additionally, it is confessed by the 73.71% of the parents that the reasonable service charge of ChildCheer is the reason of choosing this institute. Most importantly, it is thought by the 85% of the parents that they are getting service from this day care center as it is providing the best quality of services.

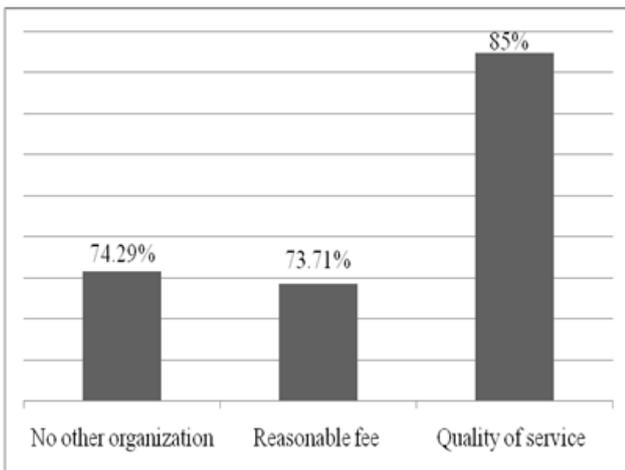


Figure 1. Reasons for getting service from ChildCheer

From the Table 3, it can be said that the admission and monthly fees are varying from day care center to day care center in Bangladesh. Among the private day care centers ChildCheer charges the lowest admission and monthly fee as well. According to 77.78% and 78.29% parents of the children who are getting services from ChildCheer, found the admission and monthly fees are reasonable respectively.

Table 3. Fee structure of some day care centers in Bangladesh

S.L.	Name of the institute	Admission fee (BDT)	Monthly fee (BDT)
1.	BRAC Nobodhara, Dhaka	11, 000	5,500
2.	ChildCheer, Dhaka	5,000	4,000
3.	Floret, Chittagong	12, 000	7, 000
4.	Le Petit Care, Dhaka	15,000	6,000
5.	Little steps, Dhaka	20,000	15,000
6.	Sporsho daycare, Dhaka	10,000	6,000
7.	Weelearn, Dhaka	15,000	8,000

Source: personal communication and website of the daycare centers

After establishment in 2013, total 56 children got admitted in ChildCheer. At present, 25 children are getting services from this ECD center. The Figure 2 shows the number of children and their reasons for cancelling admission from ChildCheer. There are several reasons found in the admission cancellation record of the institute. Total 6 mothers canceled the admission of their children as they lost their job. Besides, as the parents of 5 children cannot maintain the schedule of ChildCheer, they cancelled the admission of their children after consultation with the principal of the institute. Among other reasons for admission cancellation were getting admission in the school or special school, mother became pregnant, problem to reach center maintaining long distance from residence, house shifted and went to abroad for family reasons.

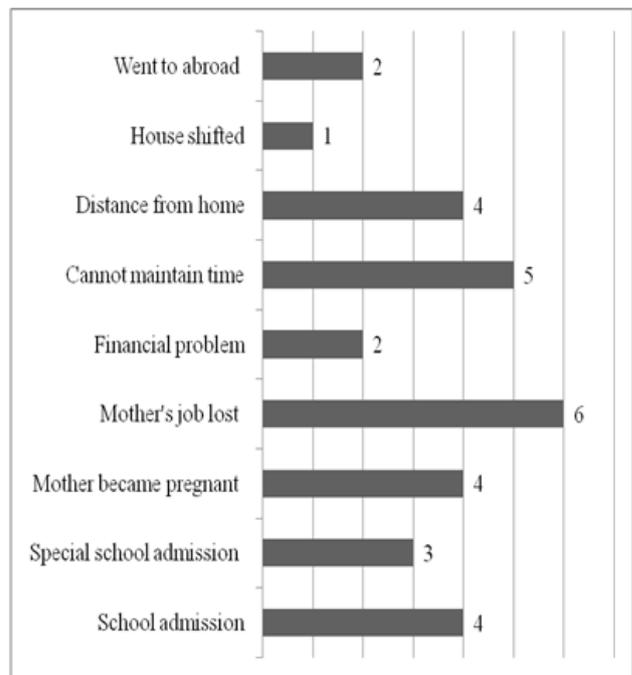


Figure 2. Reason for admission cancellation from ChildCheer

4.3. Rules and Operational Modes

As an early childhood development center, ChildCheer provides two types of services to the children- day care and preschool. ChildCheer follows flexible time schedule where children can attend the program related to their needs. Children, who enrolled for day care service, get services from 8.00 am to 6.30 pm. Besides, preschool children participate in the learning sessions from 9.00 am to 11.45 am. Both day care and preschool is open in the week days (Sunday to Thursday) except government holidays. Moreover, some day care children are taking

special services on Saturday. According to 83.43% parents, the followed time schedule is perfect for them. Besides, one parent opined that, “to improve the quality of the services of this institute, change in the time schedule is needed” (Parent # 30).

Another parent wrote,

As my office hour is up to 6.00 pm and I need to face huge traffic jam to reach the center every day, it will be a great support for me if the closing time extends one hour. I also support getting extra charge for this service. (Parent # 28)

The teacher explained the reason of not being able to extend the service time:

We are providing service from 8.00 am to 6.30 pm in ChildCheer. We also have responsibilities in our families. If we work one hour more, we will not be able to do anything for our personal life. Moreover, sometimes considering the traffic situation, we wait up to 7.00 pm when parents request us over phone. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)

In ChildCheer, preschool is divided into two groups according to the age level of the children. Two years old children get admission in ECD-I and children who are 3-5 years old get admission in ECD-II. In day care, 6 months to 6 years old children are allowed to be enrolled. One parent suggested that, “age level can be increased up to 8/10 years for admitting kids in this institute. So that, children studying nearby schools can avail day care services from here” (Parent # 21). In this regard the teacher told that,

Our followed early childhood development curriculum is designed for 6 months to 5+ aged children. If we allow 6+ aged children, they will not get appropriate curriculum for them in ChildCheer and we will not be able to manage their learning needs within our existing planning. Moreover, as 6+ aged children go to the school, we do not have any time for implementing learning activities for them. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)

Kids admitted for the day care service are also getting free preschool service appropriate for their age level. As the numbers of seat are very limited, getting admission depends on the availability of seat. ChildCheer following ‘first come first serve’ policy for admitting kids.

According to 87.78% of the parents, in this institute security of the children are maintained properly. In this regard, one parent mentioned that, “authority should be more careful about the security of the children” (Parent # 10) but he did not mention the specific issue related with security. While, another parent suggested keeping ChildCheer’s own security guard (Parent # 6). The teacher of ChildCheer described their initiatives for maintaining security of the children,

Firstly, we have a security guard in the main gate of the building and he does not allow any stranger to enter inside the building without permission. Secondly, before visiting the center visitors need to seek permission from the principal over phone. Thirdly, when a visitor visits the center we keep the security guard alert for the visiting period. Finally, guardians are required to sign everyday in the attendance registrar while they put in and take away their children from ChildCheer which ensure secured handover of the children to the right person when they return to their home. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)

To ensure the security of the children parents need to submit a filled in admission form and emergency form which are available in the website and center as well. Moreover, recent photograph of child, mother and father or legal guardian in absence of parents, photocopy of the Birth Certificate of the child and photocopy of National ID card of mother and father or legal guardian in absence of parents are required to be submitted at the time of admission.

4.4. Available Facilities and Workforce for Child Care and Development

According to the website of ChildCheer [7], this institute “has been following a general guideline for administrative systems and procedures, capacity development of the practitioners, physical facilities, age appropriate equipment and resources, safety from the risk of fire, accidents and or other hazards and services and treatment in accordance with kid’s identified needs that outline standard norms and practices”.

ChildCheer is situated in an apartment of a multistoried residential safe and secured building with 1250 square feet space for 16 day care and additional 9 preschool children. According to the Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (2013), a day care center must adhere to a provision of keeping 1.5 square meter indoor play space per child. However, ChildCheer has about 4.5 square meter space per child in the center. In this apartment, there are three learning rooms for Group-0, Group-I and Group-II. Learning rooms are equipped with puzzle mats, learning materials, charts and posters. Regarding the facilities one parent mentioned that, “It would be better for the children if the living space and space for play is little bit bigger” (Parent #19). According to another parent, “it is good for children to play and exercise in the open place; in this institute, these facilities are not adequate. Moreover, children should learn in the field and nature” (Parent # 25). On the other hand, the teacher mentioned that the available space is sufficient for the existing number of children. She described their strategies for the best use of space in ChildCheer.

We have three learning rooms where planned learning activities through play take place for different age level children. These learning rooms are also used as their bedroom at the time of sleep as well. Caregivers arrange moveable beds in the learning rooms before the sleeping time. There is also an open space for the children where they can play as they wish. In the open space, there are some equipments for children’s psychomotor development e.g. slider, seesaw and riding horse. As all of our children maintain discipline wherever they play or learn, this is how they can ensure the best use of available space. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)

Along with other facilities, it has safe drinking water, toilet, bathroom facilities, fire extinguisher and first aid to care for minor injuries and provide primary medicine. Regarding the available learning and decorative materials in the center, the teacher told

The materials that we have in our center are sufficient for children’s learning and play. It would be better for motivating children with new materials and toys if we could arrange new types of materials for them every year. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)

The Figure 3 shows that 61.11% of the parents expressed their positive feelings about the space given each of the children for play, sleep and so on. Alongside these, it is thought by 72.22% of the parents that the decoration of this day care center is up to the mark. According to 86.11% of the parents, the teachers and caregivers working in this institute are qualified, competent and motivated to their work.

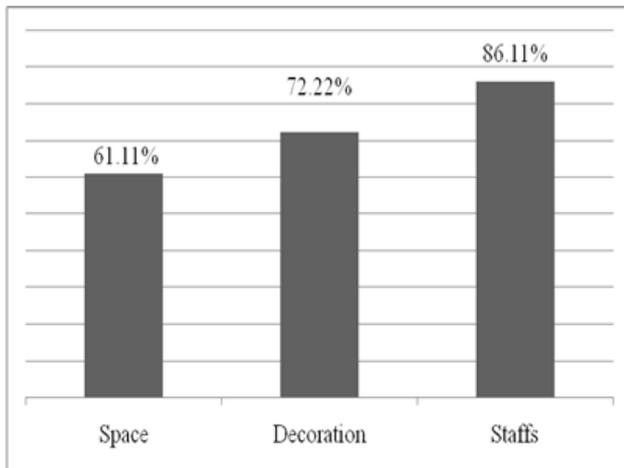


Figure 3. Available facilities in ChildCheer

In ChildCheer, one principal, three teachers and two assistant caregivers are working for the mentioned number of children. Two doctors and one nutritionist are always available over phone. Two parents suggested increasing the number of teachers in the center. In the Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education (2008), it is mentioned that, “number of children in each center or class: ideally, there should be no more than 20-30 children in each class with preferably two teachers/facilitators” (p. 25). Besides, in ChildCheer, one teacher and one assistant are working for maximum ten children in a learning room. All the teachers working in ChildCheer have teaching experience in BRAC Primary school from two to five years. In this organization, teachers and caregivers get need based in-house training and support for their professional development. After the recruitment, they have been provided a ‘Staff Development’ handbook. Here, they get the basic knowledge on the behavioral guidelines for teachers and caregivers, early childhood development issues, teachers’ role to the children, caregivers’ role and responsibility and detail instructions for conducting different learning sessions. Moreover, staffs working in ChildCheer get different in-house professional development training on different issues. Besides, they get the opportunity to learn different skills of teaching and child care from the principal and other colleagues while working in the organization.

4.5. Physical Development of the Children

The nutritionist working with ChildCheer has developed three Daily Food Charts for three different age level children i.e. 6 months to 12 months, 1 year to 3 years and 3 to 6 years old. At the time of admission, the authority of the organization distributes the charts to the parents according to the age level of their child. Similarly, parents also get a format of Daily Health Plan from ChildCheer. Everyday parents provide required snacks

and foods for their children of this day care. Caregivers keep those in freeze or in good condition maintaining hygiene and quality. In the Daily Health Plan format, parents are requested to write the items that their child will take in a day for four times. In this format, there are also three sections for writing instruction for medicine, bath and other instruction if any for the caregivers. In the daily routine of ChildCheer, most of the time is allocated for physical development of the children. For example, breakfast, physical exercise, snacks, bath, lunch, sleep and so on. Every week days, all children get involved in light physical exercise under the instruction of the teacher before engaging in planned learning activities. In the learning sessions, all of the contents are delivered through different planned activities which ensure children’s physical development as well. In this regard the teacher mentioned,

After involving in activity based learning for a long time and having bath, children become hungry and they enjoy their time while they take their food in a group. Like other issues, caregivers ensure taking medicine by the children provided by the parents. After a sound sleep for two hours, children become fresh and involved in play as they wish. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)

In ChildCheer, to see the physical development of the children in the first week of every month teachers keep records of height and weight of them. If there is any significant issue observed in the height and/or weight, principal sits with the respective parents and discusses for necessary initiatives.

Table 4. Initiatives taken for physical development in ChildCheer

Statement	Percentage
Hygiene is maintained perfectly	88.33
Food taking is ensured properly	90.00
Appropriate arrangement for sleep	91.52
Required facilities for play	71.11
Height and weight is monitored regularly	73.53

The above table demonstrates that hygiene of the children is strictly maintained in this day care center according to 88.33% of the parents. In addition, it is thought by 90% of the parents that feeding the child is properly maintained on time by the caregivers in this institute. According to 91.52% of the parents, this organization ensured an appropriate arrangement for sleep for the children. Moreover, 71.11% of the parents opined that there are required facilities for play in ChildCheer. Besides these, the regular monitoring of weight and height of children in this organization is done according to 73.53% of the parents.

4.6. Social Development

The demand of institutional care for babies is increasing at an alarming rate because the socialization of children is deteriorating. “One reason behind this is that many grandparents nowadays don’t wish to help with the upbringing of their grandkids, or they themselves may still be working. In many cases, the grandparents and other relatives live far away” ([18], p.5). Under the circumstances, babies are socializing through peer group interaction in ChildCheer. They learn important skills such as sharing and making friends. To ensure social and emotional development of the children ChildCheer

arranges different activities and events. Each day children start their day with greetings and sharing some of their personal issues with their friends. There is a provision of singing national anthem everyday which also supports their socialization process. Moreover, all of the learning activities are participatory in ChildCheer that ensure proper socialization opportunities to the children which is also agreed by 86.67% of the parents. In this aspect, one parent wrote, "Received service from ChildCheer made my child more socialized. Now, she is talking more and her enthusiasm for different activities developed from the previous days" (Parent # 18). Furthermore, children take their food in a group and they share their learning materials while they learn and play. According to 87.78% of the parents, children express their interest to participate in different activities as there are diverse planned activities in ChildCheer. Moreover, 87.22% of the parents found that these planned activities promote children's expected emotional development. Besides, ChildCheer has a provision for celebrating birthday of the children and observing different national days which creates an environment for them to find them in a welcoming society. About 89.44% of the parents support that, these types of celebration promote children's socialization process. On the other hand, in ChildCheer, there is no television or any other electronic media for the entertainment of the children. This is because, it found some children whose language, emotional and social development are not up to the required level comparing with their age for the negative impact of watching television. Few of them get admission according to the prescription of physicians for their language and social development in this institute. Buysse, Wesley, Bryant and Gardner [6] also told that, parents are advised by a professional to enroll their child in child care centers because this environment promotes their child's development in all respect. Here, they get the inclusive environment for their required development and socialization. As teachers are concern about their needs, they give extra attention to children's needs. Thus, other children take delay developed children cordially in their learning and other activities. ChildCheer has a provision for consultation with parents of all children especially for

the delay developed children. Few of the parents admitted their children in special schools (Figure 2) after the consultation with the principal of ChildCheer.

4.7. Early Childhood Learning and School Preparation

In ChildCheer, early childhood learning and school preparation is implementing through dividing children into three groups to address their actual learning needs according to their age level. In January 2016, only two children are found in ECD-0 (6months to 23 months old) while, nine children were enrolled in ECD-I (2years to 35 months old) and ten children were in ECD-II (3 to 5 years old) and the rest of the children (4 out of 25) are getting after school day care services. This institute has its own curriculum for the mentioned groups which is adapted from the Early Childhood Development Resource Centre (2008) and Pre-primary Curriculum (2011). As the Early Childhood Development and Pre-primary curriculums developed by BRAC University (2008) and NCTB [19] have no content area on English Language, ChildCheer adapted this area in its curriculum recognizing the needs of the further formal education. On the other hand, some parents want to see Arabic and Religious education in the curriculum of ChildCheer (Parent # 2, 3 and 13). In this regard, the teacher told that,

We do not have any Arabic content area in our curriculum as it requires more learning and assessment time. Moreover, this is not required for all people from different religion in our society. However, we have the planned activities for practicing general accepted social norms. For example, children practice expressing greetings to others, drinking water sitting on a chair, taking food in the name of creator and so on. (Teacher, 15.01.2016)

Most of the learning materials of ChildCheer were collected from the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University and local markets. Some of the teaching learning materials were developed by the staffs of ChildCheer. Moreover, Bijoy Shishu Shikkha [4] is one of the sources of learning materials of the institute.

Table 5. Learning area covered in ChildCheer for different groups

ECD-0	ECD-I	ECD-II	
Child Development Through Play	Bengali Rhymes	Bengali Rhymes	
	Bengali Story telling	Bengali Story telling	
	English Rhymes	Reading: Bengali	
	English Story telling	Writing: Bengali	
	Song	English Rhymes	
	Play in Circle	English Story telling	
	Work in small group	Reading: English	
	Drawing	Writing: English	
	Pre-mathematics	Song	
	Child Development Through Play	Drawing	
		Play with Mathematics	
		Group play	
		Child Development Through Play	

In the daily routine, children are involved in different planned learning activities from 9.00 am to 11.45 am which ensure them a quality school readiness program. All the content areas mentioned in the Table 5 are covered in the weekly routine. However, these weekly routine cover more contents than the contents mentioned in the weekly

session plan of Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education (2008). In ChildCheer, there are 4 weekly routines for each group in every month of a year. Similarly, for facilitating planned learning activities teachers are being provided monthly module (Teachers' Guide) for each group. Along with the age appropriate,

safe, attractive and colorful toys and learning materials children get relevant worksheet from the institute for practicing writing, reading and drawing in every month. Furthermore, ChildCheer promotes physical/gross motor, fine motor, social, emotional, self-help, language development, creative arts and cognitive domains for

children’s development by engaging in different joyful and participatory learning activities. These mentioned domains are similar to the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) mentioned in the Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (2013).

Table 6. Early childhood learning support and preparation for admission in the school

Statement	Percentage
Followed curriculum is perfect for the age level and developmental needs of child	88.33
Planned activities play the required role for the language development of the child	88.33
Followed contents ensure the cognitive development of the child	84.44
Planned activities develop interest in child of doing different activities by his/her own	88.33
Followed daily and weekly routine ensure real learning and prepare for school	85.56

The Table 6 illustrates that according to 88.33% of the parents, the followed curriculum in ChildCheer is perfect for the age level and developmental needs of children. Similarly, it is thought by 88.33% of the parents that the planned activities of ChildCheer have significant impact for the language development of the children. According to 84.44% of the parents, followed contents in this early childhood development center are ensuring cognitive development of the children. Moreover, 88.33% of the parents found that the planned activities of this institute are developing children’s interest for doing different activities independently. Most importantly, 85.56% of the parents think that strictly followed daily and weekly routine in ChildCheer are ensuring real learning of their children and preparing them for school admission.

To know the individual learning progress and required feedback teachers are maintaining a weekly structured assessment format. In this format, each of the learning contents is assessed against a preset learning outcome in two different criteria- participation and achievement. there is a three point scale to specify the exact situation of a child for each of the criteria. Teachers can also provide their comments on the individual weekly learning progress reports of the children. Though, preschool completion certificate is not mandatory to get school admission in Bangladesh, ChildCheer has a provision of providing preschool completion certificate after successful completion of a learning cycle in the ECD program if parents want.

4.8. Influences of the Day Care Center on the Lives

From the qualitative data, it revealed that the parents are acknowledging the positive influence of the ECD center in their professional, personal and on children’s life. Mother of a 21 month old kid, who is taking day care service for her child for last 17 months from ChildCheer wrote about the development of her child:

My friends and family members are surprised observing the language skills and capacity of doing different activities in an organized manner of my son. His friendly attitude is also surprising which he has learnt from this institute. (Parent # 10)

Another parent who is a doctor and getting day care service for her daughter for 2 years and 6 months opined that,

I am getting adequate support from the day care center for doing my professional work without any tension for my daughter. Though, my child is passing huge time

staying away from family members, in ChildCheer, her upbringing is going in a planned manner with some other children. Her education, psychological, emotional, physical care and language development are happening in a right process. (Parent #3)

The Figure 4, demonstrates that 90.91% of the parents are in relief in respect of their children’s upbringing at day time because of the service of ChildCheer. Similarly, 86.67% of the parents can now put their full concentration on their profession. Besides, 87.78% of the parents think that the service of the early childhood development center making their children more socialized than before and can communicate with the people with need basis.

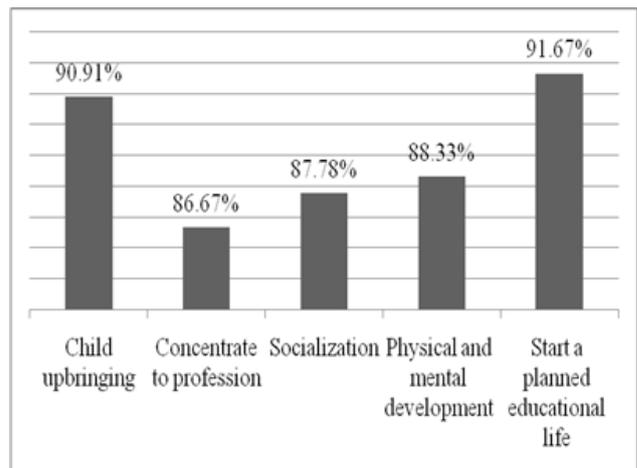


Figure 4. Benefits after getting service from ChildCheer

In addition, it is thought by 88.33% of the parents that physical and mental development of their children is happening in a planned manner because of the service of the day care center. Moreover, 91.67% of the parents found their children are getting a planned starting of educational life at ChildCheer.

5. Conclusion

As an early childhood development center, ChildCheer is addressing different issues of child care and development significantly according to the provided information by the parents. However, this institute should find out a strategy consulting with the teachers and caregivers to extend its service time for the children’s care and development. So that, parents may feel more comfort picking their children while returning from their work place. Moreover, only extending the service time of the

institute may not positively impact the child's development. In addition to this, the institute must design developmental activities for the extended hours. Though, ChildCheer has a provision of need based consultation with parents individually, this institute should arrange parents meeting after few months within an academic year. These meetings may support both parents and the authority of ChildCheer to discuss and share followed curriculum, routine, children's learning progress, height and weight development and required initiatives for child development from both parties and so on. Moreover, this institute should share information with parents regarding its available resources and their use for facilitating children's development. Most importantly, ChildCheer should take proper initiatives to ensure the expectation of the parents about open space for play and religious education. Finally, this institute should provide evidence based information regarding their available facilities and services to the parents. So that, the gap between parents and the authority of this organization will be minimized that can ensure expected early childhood development to the children.

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