EXPLORING YOUNG BANGLADESHI STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING TO SCHOOL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Declaration

I, hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and affirms that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:

Dated: 10 March 2015

This research project was granted approval by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) from 17 December 2012 to 17 December 2017 (Reference number: CF12/2722 – 2012001487)

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the students who have ever been excluded, rejected and alienated at school. May this research contribute towards social justice and joyful school experiences for students – now and in future.

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Abstract

The present research set out to explore Bangladeshi primary students' sense of belonging to school from their lived experiences. Using phenomenology as the research methodology, psychological concepts and a postcolonial discursive framework; students' sense of school belongingness phenomena via a Bangladeshi cultural, historical and sociopolitical perspectives were examined. The study used both individual and focus group interviews as data collection tools to generate data from grade five primary school students (11-12 years' old) from government primary schools situated in both rural and urban settings in Bangladesh. A total of 13 focus group interviews involving 79 regular students and nine additional individual interviews were conducted with irregular/non-attending students in 13 research schools. The findings of the study showed that students' conceptualisation of sense of belonging was multiple and interrelated, and comprised of: (1) sense of belonging as being loved and cared for by teachers and peers, (2) sense of belonging as being supported by teachers for academic progress, and (3) sense of belonging as a feeling of accomplishment in academic success. Results further indicated three key barriers to students' sense of belonging: teacher-related issues (e.g. corporal punishment), peer-related issues (e.g. bullying), and school resources including both physical and non-physical facilities such as co-curricular activities. The findings suggest that along with teachers and peers being strong influences on students' sense of belonging, school resources are considered by students to either enrich their learning experiences or reduce their inclination to come to school. Postcolonial analysis supported the framing of existing Bangladeshi pedagogical practices as rigid, punitive and examination based, with rote memorisation and teacher-centred instruction as the aspects that troubled students' sense of belonging most. From a

postcolonial perspective, current practices revealed through this research often undermined students' identity as being capable of co-constructing knowledge with their teachers. These understandings have implications for pedagogical and schooling practices in Bangladesh: these practices need to be decolonised in order to free children's cognitive capacity to engage in critical thinking, and have ownership of their learning and initiatives to contribute to knowledge.

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The biggest disease today is not leprosy or tuberculosis but rather the feeling of not belonging.

(Mother Theresa)

Introduction

A growing body of empirical research has indicated that students' sense of school belonging has a direct and significant impact on students' academic engagement, achievement and attendance (Goodenow, 1993b; Uwah, McMahon, & Furlow, 2008; Walton & Cohen, 2011). Students' sense of belonging, their psychological state and academic outcomes are intertwined, regardless of academic levels, grades and the subjects they study (Osterman, 2010; Reilly & Fitzpatrick, 2009). In the school context, this sense of belonging is more than mere enrolment or attendance; it is a social bond among peers, teachers and other school staff (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). This sense of belonging is, according to Goodenow (1993), "the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included and supported by the others in the school social environment" (p. 80). Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggested that this need to belong has biological roots, and the human desire to form and maintain a relationship may have both survival and reproductive benefits. Margalit (2010) argued that a lack of belonging for students can lead to social exclusion and strong negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, hostility, jealousy and withdrawal. Conversely, students with a strong sense of belonging are motivated, engaged, participatory and more likely to learn (Causton-Theoharis & Theoharis, 2008).

The majority of empirical studies conducted in the United States on school belonging focused on quantitative measures to identify relationships between different senses of belonging and their influence on school outcomes (see Adelabu, 2007; Irvin, Meece, Byun, Farmer, & Hutchins, 2011). In contrast, little is known about how students experience a sense of belonging through documentation of insider perspectives, particularly in Bangladeshi cultural contexts.

In Bangladesh, at present, the main priority is to ensure that all primary aged students complete their primary education cycle according to national competencies and standards (Zia-Us-Sabur & Ahmed, 2010). Despite a satisfactory net enrolment of 93.52% in 2010 (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 2011), the primary school completion rate remained proportionately low and slow (50% in 2008 and 21.4% in 2013) (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014) . In addition to high dropout rates, absenteeism, grade repetition and low achievement levels exist in each of the primary grades. High absenteeism has been suggested as a major reason for students not achieving targeted competencies and academic standards (Department of Education, 2009). Together with low contact hours (an average of 500 hours – half that of those in other countries), high absenteeism hinders the achievement of academic standards in schools (Sabates, Hossain, & Lewin, 2013; Ullah, 2013).

Most of the studies and subsequent intervention programmes related to school outcomes increasingly focused on external variables such as poverty, child labour and teacher training (Chowdhury, Chowdhury, Hoque, Ahmad, & Sultana, 2009; Sabates et al., 2013). A number of financial support programmes have been implemented over the past 20 years where parents of poor rural primary school

students receive a monthly stipend or food grain for attending the school (Baulch, 2011; Hossain, 2010). Several other studies show that these programmes initially increased enrolment but eventually failed to retain and enhance attendance, retention and academic attainment (Hossain, 2010; World Bank, 2013). A cross-country review on developing countries, including Bangladesh, shows that financial circumstance, school level factors such as teacher relations, teaching-learning quality, schooling experiences, discrimination and corporate punishments are important contributors to children dropping out of school (Hunt, 2008). While much attention has been paid to financial circumstance, we know very little about how children make meaning of their school experiences, or how their school perceptions are associated with their psychological and social engagement with school.

In this study, I draw from Baumeister's (2012) need to belong theory, Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs and Ryan and Deci's (2000) theory of self-determination to explore primary school students' experiences of school belongingness and aspects linked to their psychological state and academic engagement with school. I employed Dirlik's (1994) third version of postcolonial critique to analyse the context of students' experiences relating to belonging in Bangladesh – a country which has a strong colonial legacy in its educational practice. The methodology of the study is informed by phenomenological approaches to analysis and discusses students' lived experiences in order to bring their voice to the fore. This study presents both regular and irregular primary school students' ways of experiencing belonging in school, identifying several aspects of social and physical environments confronted by students and how their feelings of belonging and positive relationships in school are linked to attendance and engagement in school activities.

Sociocultural and educational context in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, a republic in southern Asia, is located on the Bay of Bengal and mainly surrounded by Indian territory. The country is small in size, less than one-fiftieth the size of Australia, and has almost seven times the population. It is the eighth most populated country in the world with 150 million people (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Bangladesh, as a comparatively new sovereign nation in South Asia, achieved independence in 1971 after a war with Pakistan. Bangladesh is a low income country where one-third of its population live below the poverty line (World Bank, 2015). Around 74 per cent of Bangladeshi people live in rural areas. Though Bangladesh was originally an agricultural country, recent mass development in industrial and service sectors have left only approximately 36 per cent of people engaged in the agricultural sector (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

The formal education system in Bangladesh consists of three levels: primary education (Grades One to grade Five), secondary education (Grades Six to Twelve) and tertiary education offered in universities and higher education institutions. Primary education, which recently included early childhood education, is free and compulsory for age groups from 6 to 11 year olds. Secondary education starts from Grade Six and has three major streams: general education, Madrasa education (religious education) and vocational education. Tertiary education is offered by both public and private universities.

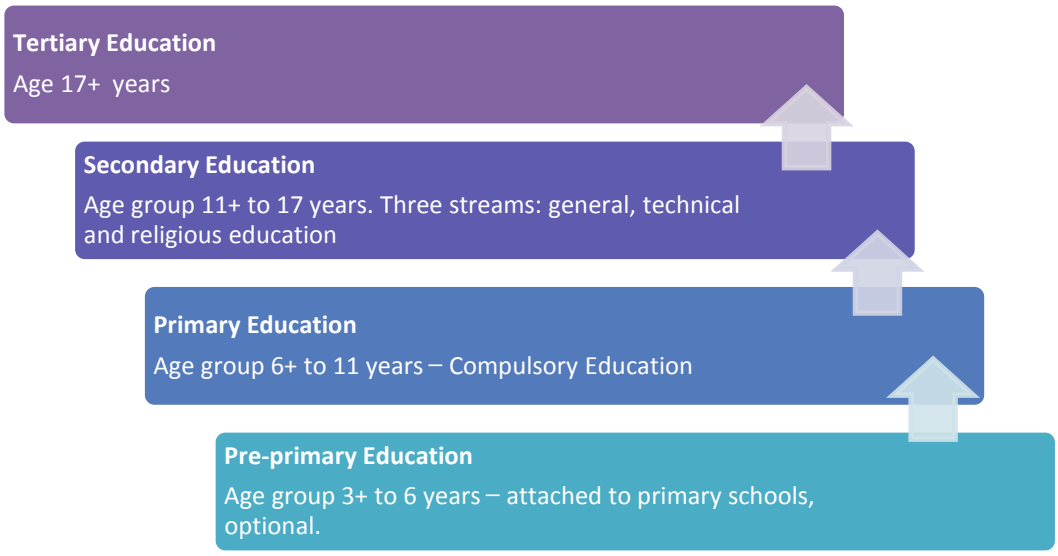


Figure 1.1: Education system of Bangladesh

Education up to secondary level is highly centralised in Bangladesh. Textbooks, examination and administration are controlled by centralised government organisations. Students at all levels can choose the medium of education from Bangla or English. However, government schools usually teach in Bangla, whereas in private institutions English is the usual medium of instruction.

Primary education policies and practice in Bangladesh

Historical development of primary schools

As the focus of this study is primary schools, it is important to provide a brief historical and practice framework of primary schooling. Bangladesh, formerly a part of Bengal, a former province in north-eastern India, gained its liberation from British colonial domination in 1947, at which point it became known as East Pakistan, a province of Pakistan. In 1971 Bangladesh separated from Pakistan through an armed struggle against former West Pakistan and gained final independence. Like other subcontinent nations, Bangladesh was under British control throughout much of the

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and shares a colonial heritage in most of its administration, and legal, political and education systems.

The concept of primary education, as it is understood today in Bangladesh, can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, particularly to 1845 when British rulers in India published a government report known as 'Wood's education Despatch'. The despatch first recommended graded school from primary to university and the concept of education for the masses, bringing indigenous elementary schools under a government education system (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 1987). The despatch recommended higher spending on primary education (S. Khatun, 1992). Though the recommendations were not followed fully, the despatch provided an overall design for the future basic education system for the entire subcontinent.

However, the existing educational practice at that time was predominately theological and philosophical in practice (Rabbi, 2008). Over the centuries, education in Bangladesh has changed along with religious and political changes. The ancient Hindu religion was offered based on a caste system; each caste has different types of basic education and years of schooling. Later Buddhism offered open education for any age and caste, and was consequently much more popular in this region. More than 350 traditional monastic learning centres (known as Viharas) are scattered throughout present day Bangladesh. Among them are the most famous excavated Buddhist sites including Paharpur Vihara, Shalban Vihara and Bikrampur Vihara, which date from the seventh to the ninth century. These centres educated many students with local and overseas teachers (S. Ahmed, 2013). In the twelth century, post Muslim occupation, Islamic education was patronised by Muslim

rulers. It was mostly basic education with a religious tenor. The education was egalitarian in terms of public offerings and extended to higher education in various locations in the subcontinent. However, until the British-Indians introduced a British education style, all three streams of Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist education co-existed in Bangladesh and other parts of the subcontinent (Barua, 2009).

Present primary education system in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has one of the largest primary education systems in the world in terms of number of students and teachers. Around 18 and a half million students are studying in primary schools across Bangladesh, which equals the total population of New South Wales, Victoria , Queensland and South Australia (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). These students are supported by 82,218 teachers across 60,904 school campuses (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). Yet in many private and non-governmental schools, teachers and students are not included in this national school census data. One reason is the complex institutional setup of primary schools. Primary education operates in Bangladesh through formal and non-formal school systems in parallel. At present at least 10 types of primary schools cater for different needs and socioeconomic groups (Directorate of Primary Education, 2013). For instance, religious primary schools known as 'Ebtedayi madrasa' emphasise religious education, and non-formal schools are run by non-government organisations and provide basic education for street children, working children or children who have dropped out of regular schools. Government primary schools generally provide education for the rural population and lower classes in urban settings. Private kindergartens and English medium schools (where the medium of instruction is English) serve upper and middle class families. However, main- stream

primary education is catered for by government schools, which constitutes about 70% of total primary schools in Bangladesh and around 83% of total children enrolled attend these schools (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012).

Mainstream primary education is highly centralised in terms of administration, curriculum and assessment. A separate Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MPME) oversees primary education. Under the MPME, three government organisations – Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), National Curriculum and Text Book Board (NCTB) and Primary Training Institutes (PTIs) control school administration, curriculum and teacher training respectively. The DPE is an executive government institution responsible for all aspects of educational management including budgets, policies, teacher recruitment, infrastructure, supervision and finance for all government primary schools. The DPE coordinates programmes with other support organisations.

National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is responsible for evaluation, development and implementation of curriculum for preschool, primary and secondary education. NCTB determinates a set of general competencies and formulated subject-wise terminal “Essential Learning Continuum (ELC)” to determine what to teach and measure among the learners for a five- year primary education cycle (Dey & Siddiqee, 2012, p. 18). In addition, NCTB centrally publishes and distributes textbooks and teaching learning materials to all the students of pre-primary, primary and secondary school students across the country. In 2014, NCTB published 326 million new text books among 44.4 million students of primary and secondary levels free of cost (Azad, 2015) . It is considered one of the largest

state-owned publishing houses in the world (Ministry of Education, 2015). Books are also published online and available for free download.

Primary Teacher Institutes (PTIs) are the major training and education provider for primary school teachers. Fifty-six PTIs offer a one-year Certificate in Education (C-in-Ed) designed to train teachers in general pedagogy and subject based teaching methods (Moyer, 2014). The National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) affiliates the curriculum and assessment of the programme. However, PTIs cater only for in-service training for teachers employed in government primary schools. There is very limited scope for pre-service training and education in Bangladesh. One public and one private university offer a four-year Bachelor degree on pre-primary and primary education in Bangladesh. In addition to foundation training of C-in-Ed for government primary schools, teachers receive the opportunity for professional development by attending a wide range of professional learning workshops throughout the year. Cluster training, for an example, is a one-day school based workshop for the teachers organised bi-monthly by regional education administrators (Malak, 2014). It was introduced with the expectation that teachers from neighbouring schools alternate meetings at their schools to provide each other with professional and technical support to enhance quality of teaching. The DPE provides topics and resources for these workshops. It is an excellent platform for teachers to share and reflect best practice. Occasional professional development workshops or short courses are also funded by different donor organisations on contemporary issues such as inclusive education.

The Bangladesh school education system comprises examinations with high stakes and the primary sector is not immune from such examinations. Students of all

grades have to sit for several examinations each year. In addition to school based examinations, final year primary education students sit the terminal Primary School Certificate (PSC) examination at the end of grade five (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014). This is a public examination held simultaneously nationwide. The results of PSC are published on official websites and circulated via mobile operator companies by the DPE. By passing the PSC examination, children will advance to the secondary level of education.

Recent policies and programmes in primary education

The commitment of Bangladesh towards primary education is quite strong, at least at policy level. A number of policies and legislation have been produced in favour of primary education since the inception of the country in 1971. A constitutional commitment to the basic education of all children, regardless of any special circumstances, is stated in the Bangladesh Constitution written in 1972. Articles 17 and 28 of the constitution state that education should be ensured for all children without discrimination (Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, 2014). As part of this commitment, all primary schools in war-torn countries were nationalised in 1973 and over 157 thousand teachers and 36 thousand schools came under government funding (Haq & Islam, 2005). The next major primary education reform policy came after the *Primary Education (Compulsory) Act 1990* which introduced compulsory primary education programmes in 68 Upazilas (subdistricts) in 1992 and expanded this programme across the country in 1993(Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, 2010). The Act brought legal responsibility to the Obligatory Primary Education Committee (which consists of local governing body members,

education patrons and school principals) and parents to bring the children of primary age, between six and 10 years, to school (Bangladesh Parliament, 1990). More recently Bangladesh adopted a new education policy in 2010. One of the major reform policies was the extension of primary school from grade five to grade eight , an eight-year primary education (instead of the existing five years), by 2018 (Ministry of Education, 2010). However, the initiatives have not as yet been implemented.

In addition to national policy, Bangladesh is a signatory to, and has ratified, almost all the major international conventions related to primary and basic education, such as Education For All (UNESCO, 1990), the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994), the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) and committed to achieving universal primary education targets of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (Uddin, Ahmed, & Hossain, 2008).

Table 1.1: Major policies and programmes

Major policies and legislation	***Main features***
The Constitution of Bangladesh 1972	**Bangladesh Government is obliged to establish the right of uniform, mass-oriented and universal system free compulsory education for a particular age group for all children**
The Primary Education Act 1990	**Legal responsibility of local governing body member, school principal and parents to bring the children of primary age group between 6 and 10 years to school (Bangladesh Parliament, 1990)**
National Education Policy (NEP) 2010	**Extension of primary school span from grade Five to grade Eight, eight-year primary education by 2018**

Major projects and programmes

Food for Education (FFE) Programme (1993-2002)	**Beneficiary households with free rations of 15 kilograms of wheat or 12 kilograms of rice per month**
Primary Education Stipend Project (2002-2013)	**Disbursed cash BDT 100 per month for one child (about US $1.76) and BDT 125 (US $2.20) per month for more than one child to parents or legal guardians**
Primary Education Development Programme II (2004-2011)	**Included children with special needs, mass teacher training, physical facilities for children with special needs in primary school**
Primary Education Development Programme III (2011-2016)	**Inclusive and equitable education from pre-primary to grade five, improve learning outcomes, participation and completion and reducing disparities**

Bangladesh implements all policies and legislation for primary education through different projects and programmes, not to mention that Bangladesh's primary education financing is predominately sourced from the Bangladesh Government revenue budget and international support (loan or grant). Bangladesh's expenditure on education is comparatively low (e.g. averages between 2.2 to 2.5 % of the gross domestic product (GDP) over 2000-2008). About 90 % of the total education budget is spent on teachers' salaries (World Bank, 2013). Thus, the implementation of most primary education developmental programmes is funded through foreign projects. Most of the programmes are implemented in collaboration with different development partners such as major international organisations, including the World Bank and UNICEF, or foreign overseas development agencies (e.g. United States Agency for International Development, Department for International Development, Japan International Cooperation Agency). At present Bangladesh's primary education development activities are implemented through two major programmes: Primary Education Development Programme III (PEDP III) and Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP).

The PEDP is an umbrella programme and currently running phase III. Over the years these discrete project based approaches were proven to fail in bringing stable long-term achievement in the primary education sector (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). Since 2004, a comprehensive education programme was developed, known as Primary Education Development Programme II (PEDP II), in which all developing partners contribute directly to a consolidated government fund to reimburse expenses of integrated PEDP II (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2013). The programme was one of the longest running and largest in expenditure, requiring a total of US$1.065 billion, which ended in 2011 (World Bank, 2011). The programme contributed to several subsectors including quality improvement, capacity building, incorporating inclusive education policies, teacher training and infrastructure development. The programme has been extended from 2011 to 2016, focusing on a number of issues continuing from PEDP II including quality improvement, learning outcomes, participation and raising primary school completion rates (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012).

Aside from PEDPs, another major initiative fully financed by the Bangladesh Government is educational transfer programmes through cash and food incentives. Through this programme students and parents are provided with cash or food to enhance school enrolment, retention and completion rates in primary education. The first programme launched in 1993 as ‘Food for Education (FFE)’ provided beneficiary households with free rations of 15 kilograms of wheat or 12 kilograms of rice per month. The programme was replaced by the Primary Education Stipend Programme (PESP) in 2002 and extended until 2014, which disbursed cash in Bangladeshi currency BDT 100 per month for one child (about US $1.76) and BDT 125 (US $ 2.2) per month for more than one child to parents or legal guardians. This

is considered one of the longest running education transfer programmes in the world. The programme expended a budget of US$45 million from 2002 to 2008 (Baulch, 2011; Directorate of Primary Education, 2014). One of the qualifying conditions for cash incentives is that students need to meet minimum attendance (85%) in schools (Baulch, 2011). In addition to cash incentive, the government of Bangladesh has been implementing school feeding programme in poverty prone area to increase the enrolment, attendance and to fulfil daily requirement of nutrition of the primary school children (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014). Children are provided with 75 grams of fortified high energy biscuit during school midday meal break.

Another way of enhancing primary education is to introduce pre-primary education. Under the third PEDP, the Bangladesh Government has gradually introduced one-year pre-primary education in all schools and suppled free books to all children. At present, government primary schools provide pre-primary education to the children aged five to six years (Nath, Roy, Rahman, Ahmed, & Chowdhury, 2014). It is expected that pre-primary education will create an atmosphere fostering physical and mental preparation before children enter grade one of formal primary school (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014).

Existing conditions of students and their experiences in primary schools

Despite Bangladesh making huge efforts and investments in education, primary education remains one of the most urgent problems. The key issues for primary education are enrolment, retention, attendance and quality of teaching in primary education.

Enrolment, dropout and retention

Over five million children in Bangladesh are still out of school, which is equivalent to the population of Victoria, Australia (World Bank, 2013). Based on the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics Population Census 2011, it is estimated that 23% of children aged 6-10 years are not going to school (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014). Within the out-of-school group of primary age children, there are two distinct categories: 1. children who have never been to school and 2. children who have dropped out. According to the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, about 16% of children aged 6-14 are out of school and 13% never enrolled or completed grade one (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Despite the success in gross enrolment (increased by 91 percent to 101 percent from 2000 to 2010) and gender equity, schools have failed to keep the children in school till they complete their five year primary school cycle. The overall dropout rate was approximately 29% and the completion rate 70.3% for the years 2005-2011(Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). It is estimated that out of 10 primary students who enter school, only seven complete grade five.

Attendance

School attendance is one of the important issues in government primary schools in Bangladesh. Absenteeism leads to poor academic performance and accelerates the dropout rate. The Annual Primary School Census conducted by the concerned government department relies on administrative information from school registers to show student attendance rate: 86.3 % in 2013 (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014). However, concerns have been raised that reporting based on registers may not be entirely reliable. Few independent studies (Nath & Chowdhury, 2009; Rawle, Al-

Samarrai, Hurrell, & O'Brien, 2006) have taken random samples of schools and counted the number of students in attendance. It is found that the headcount-based attendance rate is generally lower than the register-based attendance rate. It is assumed that schools under-report absenteeism to get incentives, especially to help poor students who may otherwise lose their eligibility for a stipend (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014). It is mentioned earlier that the qualifying conditions for cash incentives requires at least 85% school attendance (Baulch, 2011).

Quality of education

At present ensuring the quality of teaching in primary education is the top most concern in Bangladesh. The Annual School Census (ASC) 2011 reported more than 10% repetition rate for each grade from grades one to four and around 4% in grade five (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). Further, an assessment on primary education shows that only 25% of grade five students master Bangla (mother language) and yet 33% master mathematics competencies (World Bank, 2013). . Asadullah and Chaudhury' study (2013) found a full five-year primary education programme in government primary schools taught less than 10% of students how to solve a simple mathematics problem. The grade high repetition rate and low achievement imply that students fail to achieve adequate learning outcomes of the existing level and are not ready to go to the next grade.

Given the deficiencies in education quality at most schools while placing importance on examinations; this dichotomy leads students to take additional tutoring for academic subjects outside school hours (Manzoor, 2013; Moyer, 2014; Sommers, 2011). Students need to pay additional out-of-pocket expenses to receive private or group tutoring by independent tutors or primary school teachers. Though

government primary school is free and provides free text books, many families cannot afford education or find themselves burdened with additional educational expenditure. Nath (2007) indicates that this provision caters for inequalities in educational opportunity and performance among those who cannot afford education.

Gaps in the Existing Effort

Notwithstanding national commitment and effort, the achievement in primary education is small compared to its programme size. The first initiative sponsored by the Bangladesh Government (i.e. household financial support through cash or food transfer), has been running since 1993 with the expectation that such incentives would offset the cost of student's schooling and compensate families' loss of earnings through children's labour (Baulch, 2011; Hossain, 2010). Several studies show that these programmes initially increased enrolment but eventually failed to retain and enhance attendance, retention and academic attainment of students (Hossain, 2010; Ullah & Perumal, 2012; World Bank, 2013).

Primary school development programmes (PEDP II and PEDP III), running for 10 years, were reported for their high levels of inefficiency (World Bank, 2013). The programmes have brought about an average of 85% of teachers having certificate-in-education programmes till 2011; constructed more than 40 thousand new constructions in schools; and 98% government schools were provided with books at the start of the school year. Yet a number of studies show the lack of quality education remains one of the most significant causes of dropout in Bangladesh (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2013; Hunt, 2008). Other studies identified high absenteeism rates and repetition as precursors to dropping out of school (Hunt, 2008; Sabates et al., 2013)

Most programmes were initiated to mitigate financial and physical constraints on primary education. Available literature produced on primary education is mostly focused on financial circumstances, such as child labour, household income, parental education or teacher education, as being responsible for dropout, absenteeism and poor learning rates in primary schools. Hossain (2010) argued that understanding school absenteeism, solely based on parent's poverty and child labour, is faulty. A study of 5 to 17 year olds showed that 27% dropped out of school and students mentioned they did not want to go to school because they do not find school attractive (Khanam & Ross, 2011). Although the authors suggest school may be perceived as non-attractive to students, they did not explain why 27%, which refers to a significant portion of the sample, experienced schools as such. Whilst school attendance can be maintained by legislative and temporary extrinsic reinforcements, such as money or food, it is debatable whether students' academic engagement can be so easily obtained. According to Appleton and colleagues (2008), students' academic aspirations and social outcomes are eventually determined by the way they perceive and experience their school.

Statement of the problem

The development of schools where all students feel connected to learning remains one of the most critical issues facing Bangladesh's education system. Bangladesh has produced key education policies and legislation to promote inclusive education for all students since 2001 (e.g. National Plan of Action 2003-2015, *Person with Disability Welfare Act 2001*). These policies aim to support effective education and make students feel welcome at school, regardless of their gender, ability, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Despite ongoing initiatives and continued government policies and funding to categorised school-aged population (children with

disabilities, working children, children from poor families and ethnic groups), many Bangladeshi students remain out of school, irregular and disengaged from school learning activities (M. Ahmed et al., 2014; Directorate of Primary Education, 2014).

Recent understandings of student diversity in educational and social science focuses not on discrete concepts of race, gender, disability or socioeconomic status, but rather as "centering on issues of power and language and the lived experience of curriculum and pedagogy" (Moss, 2013, p. 148). A principle measure of inclusion of children from diversified groups is their experience of meaningful participation in school and their sense of belonging (Ainscow & Miles, 2008; Voltz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). The concern here is that students' understanding of belongingness and their emotional and social bonding has not been extensively explored. Limited studies have sought to explore the lived experiences of how and what makes students feel connected to school and how motivated and engaged they are in learning.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to critically explore and analyse issues related to primary school students' sense of belonging in Bangladesh. The study uses a phenomenological qualitative research approach and postcolonial theorising to explore how Bangladeshi students might perceive and experience such belonging. The study aims to explore the meanings ascribed to these experiences for grade five primary students. Based on previous research (Finn, 1989; Goodenow, 1993b; Uwah et al., 2008; Wehlage et al., 1989; You, Ritchey, Furlong, Shochet, & Boman, 2011) and as outlined in the literature review chapters, students' sense of belonging

is generally defined as their perceptions, internalisation and psychological state of drive to connect oneself with their school.

Research questions

The main question underlying this thesis is as follows: What contributes to students' sense of belonging in primary school in Bangladesh? Inherent in this question is two sub-questions:

1. How do Bangladeshi primary school students conceptualise a sense of belonging?
2. What issues are associated with students' sense of belonging in the Bangladeshi context?

Significance of the study

The study explores and analyses students' lived experiences. It aimed to gain an understanding of the essence and meaning of students' psychological and social experiences in school and has brought to light the lived experiences of students in relation to their belongingness to in Bangladeshi schools. The study is significant in terms of theory, policy and practice.

In terms of theory, the use of postcolonial discourse enables the contested spaces of school belonging to be interrogated, critiqued and analysed intersubjectively. In this way, the study has yielded significant insights into school belonging, expanded and contributed to previous research and literature, especially in terms of promoting contextual understanding, particularly in a low, socioeconomic cultural context. In addition, it shows how children, in a country which has a history and educational practice located in colonial legacy, are themselves connected to school.

In terms of policy significance, this study identified issues other than poverty, a feature which is often typically associated in the literature when attempting to understand students' performance, dropout rates and/or low attendance in developing countries. Bangladesh has a centralised education system and any central administrative decision and policies strongly impact the country's massive population of students, teachers and parents. The children's voice at the very centre of this study allows us to understand how students experience their schooling. This provides some policy directions for the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh to implement programmes that enhance educational experiences of all Bangladeshi students.

There are several practical implications of this research. The study itself is a structured document for teachers, administrators, parents, professionals, school management committees and curriculum developers to understand students' needs, and effectively function to increase their attendance and retention as well as engagement in school activities.

Personal motivation

The inspiration for this research is from my professional experience with children in schools in Bangladesh. I am a teacher educator and educational psychologist at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. I have been working as a faculty staff member since 2005 in this institution and have become involved in numerous national and multinational research and project work. As an undergraduate student from 1994 to1999, a master's student in the academic year 1999/2000, having worked as a professional researcher from 2000 to 2002 and later as a professional teacher educator at the university, I have observed numerous policy changes and their impact

on students. Many of these education and policy shifts were random and based on limited research or detailed exploration of students: key actors in educational endeavour. On the other hand, the relevance of educational work brought me in contact with numerous students and teachers in Bangladesh. This experience has given me a deep and generative understanding that students have critical awareness and perspectives of their own learning and school. I find their insights; experiences and feelings toward education are precious resources and an eye-opener for educational reform.

Despite government primary schools employing a great number of government trained teachers who cater for the largest population of students, the wellbeing of students and their connection to schools have been neglected and ignored over time. And despite a comparatively adequate administrative workforce at the local level, schools were left unsupervised. My experience is that students from poor backgrounds with less social connection and weak academic performance are alienated from the school's social environment.

Programmes and subsequent studies on government primary schools seem more interested in producing numbers, rather than getting to the root cause of issues confronting children's schooling in Bangladesh. It seems that all policy and educational efforts so far have done too little to offer solutions to primary education and raise standards and retention.

Primary school is foundational to further learning and thus I believe without understanding students' sense of belonging we will not be able to provide them with the best education. By bringing children's sense of belonging into focus, I decided to investigate this problem for my PhD thesis.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter presents the background leading to the study problem, research questions, purpose and significance. In this chapter, I also gave a brief account of my experience, my positioning and what motivated me to conduct this research. It discusses the sociocultural context of Bangladesh and outlines policy direction of the Bangladesh Government for primary education.

Chapters two and three provide a literature review in two parts, describing the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study and relevant empirical research respectively. Chapter two, in particular, explores the concepts of sense of belonging and postcolonial theory as contextual background. A brief historical development of postcolonial history and theory within an educational context will be discussed. Chapter three presents empirical research organised by a number of foci including: the concept of school belonging, models of school belonging, sense of belonging and students' demographic factors, school factors and school related outcomes.

Chapter Four presents the research philosophy underpinning the research, approach, design and methods used to respond to the research problem and questions as outlined in Chapter One. The chapter contains three main sections: the research philosophy (methodology), research methods and design, or strategies used in data collection and analysis. In this chapter, I present detail explanations and justification for the choice of methodology, methods and design. Ethical considerations and approaches used in data collection and analysis are also presented.

Chapter Five presents results of the data analysis. Inductive thematic analysis of the data across combined focus groups and individual interviews identified five central themes related to participants' sense of belonging. The central issues are teacher behaviours/practices, peer support, academic achievement, school resources and student wellbeing.

Chapter Six explains how the findings respond to the research questions as situated in the existing literature. The discussion will be extended to employing postcolonial theorisation to explore Bangladeshi students' school belongingness from historical, social and cultural perspectives.

Chapter Seven concludes the study. It begins by presenting an overview of the research and briefly revisiting the findings. Based on the findings from and discussion of the study, a number of recommendations are made for enhancing school environments that support effective learning and enhance young Bangladeshi primary school students' sense of belonging to their school. The chapter offers limitations of the research, key contributions to knowledge, and critical/personal reflections and directions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

That is part of the beauty of all literature. You discover that your longings are universal longings, that you're not lonely and isolated from anyone. You belong.

(F. Scott Fitzgerald)

Part One: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The literature review for this thesis is divided into two parts. Part one here in Chapter Two is the theoretical and conceptual framework, and part two in Chapter Three reviews the empirical researches on school belonging and related student demographics, school social relationship and school outcomes.

This part of the chapter provides detailed information on the theoretical framework employed for this study. Theoretical frameworks help to explain, predict and understand phenomena, as well as to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions (Kaunda, 2013). These frameworks permit researchers to move from 'simply describing a phenomenon observed to generalizing about various aspects of that phenomenon' and to 'identify the limits of those generalizations' (Labaree, 2014, para. 6-7).

The present study conducted exploratory research with the aim of exploring two aspects of belongingness. The first aspect focuses on how young Bangladeshi students experience a sense of belonging in school. The second attempts to understand specific practical and cultural issues related to students' sense of belonging in the Bangladeshi school system. These aspects are complex, as they are

embedded in postcolonial cultural practices and require a combination of motivational theories and postcolonial discursive frameworks. This chapter begins with three motivational theories: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943, 1954), the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These are examined to understand the psychological constructs of belonging experiences. This is followed by a postcolonial discursive framework to explore historical, cultural and contextual issues of the belongingness experiences of children in Bangladeshi schools. The use of the postcolonial discursive framework provides useful ways of analysing the relationship-power nexus and identity connected to students' feelings of ownership or sense of belonging in school in Bangladesh, a country that has faced a long period of colonial domination (Miah, 2013).

The conceptual framework in Figure 2.1 of this study is guided by the research literature on students' sense of belonging in school. Existing literature identified two major aspects in relation to such belonging in school: social environment (consists of student–peer relationships and student/teacher/staff relationships) and the learning environment, for example, resources (Cemalcilar, 2010; Mahar, Cobigo, & Stuart, 2013; Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). The present analysis is used as a critical lens to discursively examine how students experience and make meaning of their sense of belonging in school. A critical analysis of belongingness indicates how students' connectedness to school is implicated in their educational success. My first argument is that these aspects mostly emerged from studies conducted in western countries. And therefore a theoretical approach is required to link the school experiences of western students to those of Bangladeshi students. These experiences must be considered from contextual and historical points

of view. My second argument is that school experiences need to be understood from a historical perspective (Gray, 2008). Postcolonial theory is therefore the basis for examining students' experiences of belonging in schools, particularly through the postcolonial lenses of identity, agency and power.

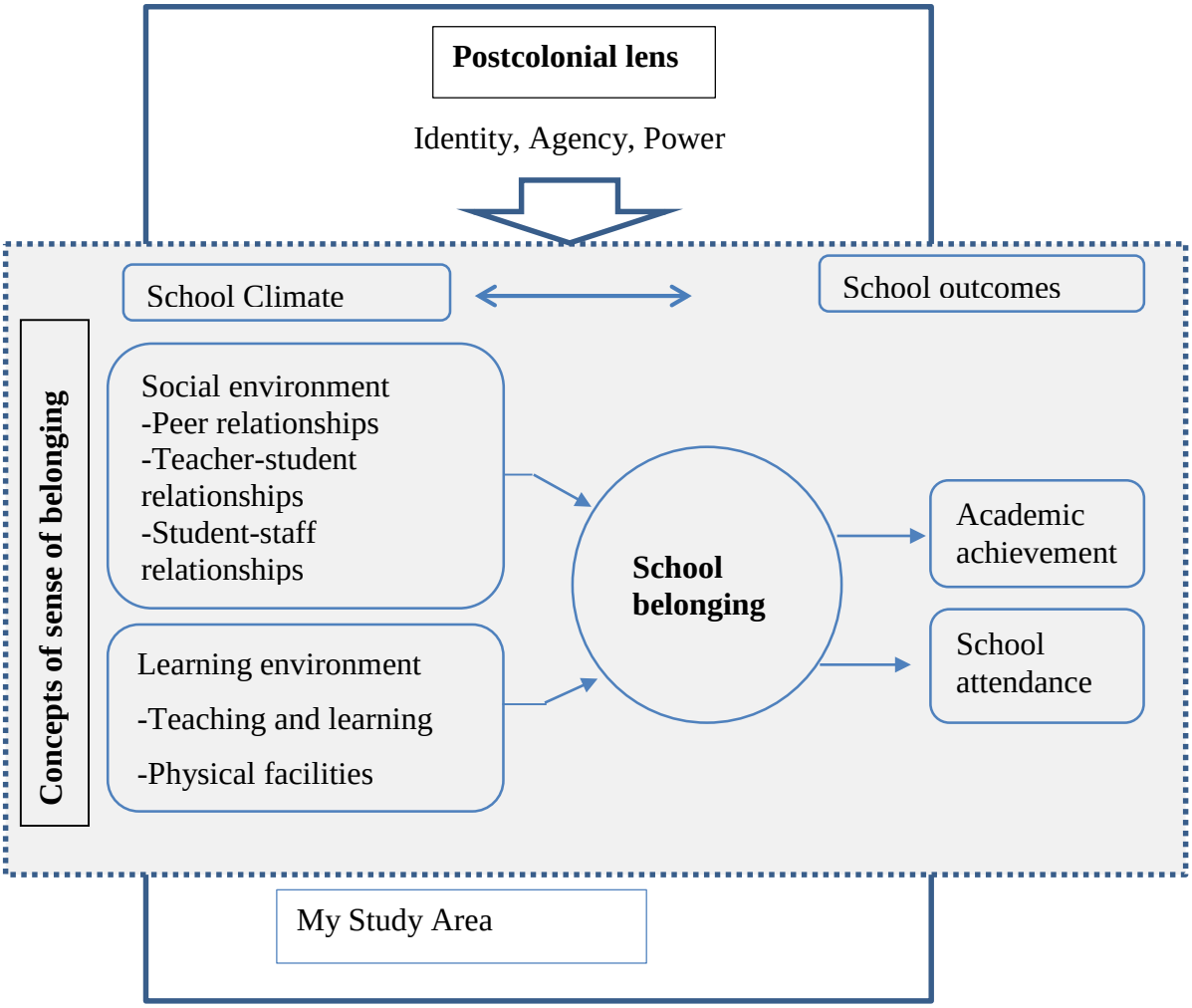


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework

Figure 2.1 illustrates the psychological concept of a sense of belonging described as a complex inter-relationship of school climate (social and learning environment), students' psychological processes (sense of belonging) and behavioural outcomes (achievement, engagement or attendance) in grey shaded

rectangle. In contrast, postcolonial theorisation serves as a backdrop (white square), framing contextual and historical analysis of school practice and students' psychological processes through identity, agency and power.

The conceptual framework here is based on the research literature which discusses different concepts, models and aspects of belongingness, mostly based on western and North American studies. The framework also focuses on colonial experience, as colonialism has impacted the education system, culture and consciousness of the people in Bangladesh; the assumption with this literature is that relational and psychological characteristics of a sense of belonging may have been impacted by a colonial legacy. This second layer of postcolonial discourse helps to clarify the contextual understanding of students' experiences of belonging. By using a postcolonial discursive framework, a new understanding of sense of belonging can be developed with reference to the local, historical context in which students experience their education and construct their identity as learners.

Theoretical origin of sense of belonging

The study of belongingness in school is a recent and growing interest in educational literature, though the need to belong has been a common interest in psychological literature since the mid twentieth century (Bowlby, 1982; Maslow, 1943). Prince and Hadwin (2013) showed that theoretical support for the need to belong comes from a number of different educational perspectives. Belonging has been studied and recognised as an important component in motivation studies (Maslow, 1943; Ryan & Deci, 2000), child development theories (Bowlby, 1982; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), delinquency (Hirschi, 2009) and dropout studies (Finn, 1989; Wehlage et al., 1989). In this research, the concept of belonging is primarily guided by human motivation.

The study is thus underpinned by three theories of motivation: Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Each of these theories will be discussed in reference to understanding these constructs, and their links to and impacts upon human behaviour and mental processes.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

The classical theory of Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs identified belongingness as one of the fundamental driving forces of human motivation. Belonging, from Maslow's perspective, is a psychological "hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, namely, for a place in his [a] group" (Maslow, 1943, p. 381). Maslow's theory of human motivation (1943) posits that all human beings have five basic needs: physiological (hunger, thirst, and sex), safety, love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation. The first three needs are grouped as deficiency and the rest are considered as growth needs. Deficiency needs are basic needs which emerge out of deprivation, while growth needs arise as a desire to grow as an individual. Maslow postulates (1943) that needs are maintained by hierarchy, and that individuals can only progress gradually and fully when the previous order's needs are sufficiently met. As Maslow (1943) puts it,

> And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still 'higher') needs emerge and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency (p. 375).

The need to belong, in Maslow's theory, is positioned as the third need (love and belonging) and is grouped as a deficiency need. Maslow argues that "if both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, then there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs" (Maslow, 1943, p.381). If the need to

belong is not satisfied, one's self-esteem (such as the desire for achievement, reputation or recognition) will not appear to fully function. Recent empirical investigation of Maslow's hypothesis on belongingness in school settings showed that belonging had a positive relationship with students' learning outcomes (Noltemeyer, Bush, Patton, & Bergen, 2012).

Maslow (1943) showed that lack of belonging leads to maladjustment and psychopathology. Both earlier clinical and more recent neurophysiological studies provide evidence that human social attachment is associated with one's biological nature (see Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, & Schaller, 2010). Maslow (1943) further emphasised that the need to belong is mutual, that is, it involves both giving and receiving. Even though it is mutual, Maslow suggested that the environment (teacher, parents, therapist) should provide the child with the opportunity to gratify his or her needs so the 'child can feel unthreatened, autonomous, interested and spontaneous' (Maslow, 1999, p. 67). Maslow's theory contributes to this study by helping to clarify the nature of belonging, and how this is linked to the antecedents and consequences of students' belonging to school.

The need to belong

One of the most significant contemporary theories is the need to belong theory (Baumeister, 2012; Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Baumeister and Leary (1995) hypothesised that the need to belong is the innate and universal motivation among human beings to "form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). Unlike the lack of empirical evaluation in Maslow's theory, Baumeister and Leary (1995) provided a broad assortment of evidence to show that humans have a basic

desire to form social attachments. Baumeister and Leary (1995) consider the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation for forming and maintaining relationships.

Baumeister and Leary's (1995) theory further postulates the desire to have human relationships directed toward another human being. These scholars posit two features of human belonging. First, human beings need to develop pleasant, frequent, and personal interactions with other human beings. Second, these interactions need to be mutual and continuous in a stable environment of affective concern for each other.

The fundamental contribution of the need to belong theory is its extensive assentation of the power of motivation and extent of this motivation (Baumeister, 2012). The theory posits how belonging has a positive effect on an individual's emotion, behaviour, and thought; on the other hand, lack of belonging constitutes different psychosocial effects (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). However, in a more recent study Baumeister (2012) argued that "interactions could be satisfying without being positive, as long as they were not negative" (p.125). The need to belong theory further assumes that gender differences satisfy the need to belong differently. The assumption is that women prefer "close, intimate relationships whereas men are oriented toward larger networks of shallower relationships" (Baumeister, 2012, p. 1).

Self-determination

The most recent and widely studied motivation theory that identified a sense of belonging as one of the core drivers to determinate human behaviour is self-determination. The theory emerged in the 1970s from intrinsic and extrinsic motivation studies that showed that intrinsic motivation played a dominant role in

human behaviour. Later, Ryan and Deci (2000) extended intrinsic motivation and identified three intrinsic needs that drive human motivation: competence, relatedness and autonomy. Competence refers to one's need for action. Autonomy involves one's need to experience an action that is freely chosen and "not imposed by external forces" (Church et al., 2013, p. 508). The third intrinsic driver is relatedness, or a sense of belonging to satisfy the need to feel included and connected to others. Deci and Ryan (2000) claimed these three psychological needs facilitate optimal social functioning and personal wellbeing.

Despite core intrinsic motivation being inherent in nature, the self-determination theory is framed in terms of social and environmental factors. Self-determination theory asserts that intrinsic motivation evolves, and requires supportive conditions to maintain and enhance its inherent propensity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that any social contexts, such as classrooms, clinics, playing fields, or workplaces, in which individual students, patients, athletes, or employees are embedded are responsive to basic psychological needs. They found that contexts supportive to autonomy, competence, and relatedness promote "greater internalization and integration than contexts that thwart satisfaction of these needs" (p. 76).

In an educational sense, self-determination theory postulates that academic autonomy and belongingness contribute independently to student engagement, academic achievement, and psychological adjustment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Their notion of belongingness is an essential "psychological antecedent" for wellbeing and growth (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014, p. 245). The theory predicted that one's non-

relatedness to one's social context may result in poor wellbeing, alienation, and psychopathology (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995).

Self-determination theory postulates that if the social context does not satisfy three basic psychological needs (i.e. relatedness, autonomy, and competence), students will be unmotivated, alienated, and will perform poorly at school (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Self-determination theory explains that "relatedness, the need to feel belongingness and connectedness with others, is centrally important for internalization" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 23), which implies a substantial predictor of students' educational outcomes relevant to literacy and critical thinking (Beachboard, Beachboard, Li, & Adkison, 2011).

Table 2.1: Key concepts of belonging

Theory	Country	Main features
Hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943)	**USA**	**The need to belong could be affected by how preceding needs are met and how it impacts on the higher need of human motivation**
The need to belong theory (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)	**USA**	**An innate drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quality of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships involves two criteria**
Self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000)	**USA**	**The need to feel belongingness and connectedness with others, which is centrally important for internalisation**

These theories guided the present study, focusing on different aspects of the data and provide a framework within which to conduct analysis (Reeves, Albert, Kuper, & Hodges, 2008). It helped the study to gradually unpack the experiences of a sense of belonging. All three theories recognise that human beings innately need to feel belonging in their social environment. Secondly, the experience of belonging is positively related to satisfaction, achievement, and initiation of positive behaviours.

These theories also suggest that a lack of belonging causes a negative emotional and psychological impact on students. The major difference between these theories is aspects of belonging. Maslow positioned a sense of belonging between physiological wellbeing and self-esteem. On the other hand, the need to belong theory explains the specific nature of belonging and its formation as a combination of "frequent interaction" and "persistent caring" (Baumeister, 2012). Self-determination theory provides a connection between a sense of belonging and behavioural outcomes such as achievement and engagement in school. Thus all three theories hold some strong guidelines for understanding belongingness in an educational setting. However, of concern is that the discussed theories derived from a western cultural context do not necessarily relate to the present study conducted in a non-western context in Bangladesh. In the next section postcolonial theory is discussed to incorporate contextual understanding of students' experiences of belonging.

Postcolonial theory: concepts and sense of belonging

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, a postcolonial framing of sense of belonging is important for placing the study in its historical context and examining those school factors that serve to replicate elements of colonial legacy (or otherwise). Postcolonial theory examines the process and impact of European colonisation and the subsequent domination of people in society, their culture, and how this affects them psychologically (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, & Helen Tiffin, 2013). Postcolonial theory is a multiple discourse that consists of reactions to and analysis of cultural and administrative legacy of colonialism (Meeuwisse, Severiens, & Born, 2010). This study applies a postcolonial discursive framework to analyse and discuss experiences of students' sense of belonging at school in Bangladesh. The justification for postcolonial theory is related to the fact that belonging is a

phenomenon of identity and relationship and includes the relational identity of the learner within this social environment. I have argued that Bangladesh, a country colonised for nearly 200 years, still exhibits the practice of colonial cultural relationships and identity norms in its schooling system (Hickling-Hudson, 2011). Postcolonial theorisation "illuminates an individual's lived experiences" and "offers a rich arena to analyse the location of the individual in a past and present social, historical, and cultural context" (Sharma-Brymer, 2009, p. 657).

Postcolonial theory thus provides a theoretical framework to understand the context of relationships in a school's social environment. Before going into detailed application of the theory, a brief history of postcolonial theory is discussed below.

Brief historical overview of postcolonial theory

At the beginning of the 15th century, European colonialism began with the age of discovery of new lands and trade. Though initially colonisation sought "a better life in economic, religious, or political terms", in most cases, colonisation involved ruling people who occupied land and extraction of their resources (R. Young, 2001, p. 20). By the beginning of the First World War, 90% of the world was either controlled or occupied by colonisers (Viruru & Cannella, 2004, p. 10).

Competing with a number of European traders, the East India Company, a British joint-stock company having its own private army, gained political power from the early 17th century in the Indian subcontinent (presently India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh). The company established its effective rule in India after a battle in 1757 in Bengal (now Bangladesh and the west Bengal, a state of India). Over the next 100 years, the company established its rule over the Indian subcontinent. In

1858, the British crown took over from the East India Company and ruled the continent for another 100 years until the continent gained independence in 1947.

During this period, education gradually became a means of colonisation and subjugation of people in the subcontinent (Barua, 2007, p. 63). The British established an educational system of training clerks and workers required for administration and economic profit (S. Khatun, 1992). Indeed, British colonial education practices promoted a system of rote learning and mimicry of British culture. These assimilation practices disconnected students from local sociocultural and ethnic practices in order to fit the natives into their colonial rule (Barua, 2007). The colonial education system adopted British language, literature, and cultural practice. This colonial praxis in education has had a long-term effect on the natives, making them dependent and less self-reliant (Barua, 2007).The long-term colonial experience not only left a colonial attitude of looking to the West for solving problems, but also produced local elites with a similar colonial mentality, where one dominated the other in all aspects of social and civic life.

After the Second World War, most countries gained independence. As such, postcolonial studies emerged as a critique to understand how colonial phenomena impacted previously colonised countries regarding culture, society, and education. Two major theorists, Frantz Fanon and Edward Said, inspired numerous other scholars to establish postcolonial theory as a distinct discourse in academic fields (McLeod, 2010). Their seminal work, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and Said's *Orientalism* (1978), highly influenced postcolonial discourse. As a psychiatrist, Fanon (1952) examined how colonialism characterised the colonised mind as inferior; on the other hand, Said (1978) demonstrated how Western-

produced knowledge legitimised the subjugation of the colonised (cited in McLeod, 2010; Sardar, 2008). Postcolonial theorisation explains how colonisation impacted the consciousness of people, even after liberation in two ways. First, it produced new colonisers or elite power groups within colonised societies who ruled the majority with the "same vocabulary of power" (B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, & H. Tiffin, 2013; Rizvi, Lingard, & Lavia, 2006). Second, it destroyed the identity of colonized people and imposed an identity defined by the coloniser, where the coloniser is superior, civilised, intelligent, and the colonised is considered inferior (McLeod, 2010, p. 24). This form of identification created psychological inferiority in colonised people and invoked a desire in them to be 'white' (Rizvi et al., 2006).

Since the publication of *Orientalism* by Edward Said in 1978, postcolonial theory has secured its place as contemporary discourse. Said theorised that the understanding of 'Orient' has been constructed by westerners, based on western assumptions regarding people from the East, without considering their point of view and knowledge. The Orient was depicted as barbaric, mystic, and inferior. For instance, Lord Macaulay, the first British law member of the Governor-General's Council of India, asserted that "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (Macaulay, 1965, para. 10). In his "Minute on Indian Education" of February 1835, he further wrote:

> It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England (Macaulay, 1965, para. 11).

McLeod (2010) argued, to the contrary that European colonisation , subjugation, and domination established this distorted image of the Orient in the

colonial period through power, knowledge, and a deep rooted legacy of people, society, and culture.

Education and postcolonialism

Colonisation arguably leaves the most direct and long-term effect on education. Rizvi et al. (2006) argues that education has an “ambivalent” relationship with colonialism. On the one hand, education is the subject of postcolonial critique regarding its complicity with Eurocentric discourses and practices. On the other hand, it is only through education that it is possible to reveal and resist colonialism’s continuing hold on our imagination (p.257).

It is argued that the postcolonial approach to education “considers how aspects of education, irrespective of levels of literacy and outcome, affect the learners’ self-awareness and growth” (Sharma-Brymer, 2009, p. 657). Said (1978) also argued that the main issue with colonisation is the act of constructing an image of superiority over others in terms of knowledge. In this way, a postcolonial discursive framework attempts to understand how educational practice imposes restrictions on some students and further disconnects them from their local history, knowledge, and culture. Though education has been and is being used to establish dominant practices; education is the means to liberate people from colonial oppression.

Brief history of primary education in Bangladesh

The present education system in Bangladesh began to evolve in the early 18th century when the British introduced a modern education system in the Indian subcontinent (Tapan, 2007). Though a few remnants of the precolonial education system exist today, mainstream education in Bangladesh maintains colonial British education in terms of administration and pedagogy.

Primary education before the British colonial period was widespread, dating back to the Pala Dynasty until Muslim rule between the 6th to mid-18th century (Rabbi, 2008). Children were taught basic reading, writing, arithmetic, accounting, and some religious literature through primary schools known as “pathsalas” (Adam, 1835). Schooling was closely associated with religious obligations in both the Hindu and Muslim community (S. Khatun, 1992). There were no state controls on education. Schools were run independently by the teachers, with various endowments from the state, local landlords, rich people, scholars, or the village community (Aggarwal, 2007). In 1757, when the British East India Company gained state power over Bengal, local education was in financial crisis and was ignored by the company. Meanwhile, a new stream of education was introduced by the Christian missionaries who came with the coloniser in the subcontinent. However, the aim of this education was Christianisation, which was a part of the colonising project under the East India Company and British imperial rule in India (Debnath, 2011). Both missionaries and British colonisers held a common attitude towards local education, culture and religion (i.e. the West has a superior culture and civilisation, whereas Indian was a primitive and pagan culture) (Dharmaraj, 1990).

This attitude was institutionalised and reflected when the British Empire initially attempted to control education under the *Charter Act of 1813*. Through this Act, the East India Company directed the structure of Indian education. Thomas Babington Macaulay was appointed as the president of the General Committee on Public Instruction, and he advocated (in his infamous minutes, dated February 2, 1835), for a fresh system of education offered in the English language and advocated abandoning state support for education instructed in local academic languages (S. Ali & Farah, 2007). Macaulay insisted that an educational structure for India would, in his words,, "do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay, 1965, para. 34).

The minutes were approved by the British Empire and later led to the formulation of policies that became the foundation of all education programmes in during British colonisation of the Indian subcontinent. Macaulay's "English mind in Indian body policy" succeeded in producing clerks and workers to support British administrative and economic profit (S. Khatun, 1992). The subcontinent was governed in English, and English language skills were the criteria for government posts (Barua, 2007). Education was structured to teach British culture, literature, and language. There was no connection with local culture, tradition, and literature. As Nobel laureate and Bengali poet, Tagor depicted:

> The education we get does not match the lifestyle of ours, the urge for improvement of our home is not there in our books; our literature does not reflect the aspirations for changing the society where we are destined to live. We do not find the faces of our parents, brothers, sisters, and friends in our education, our day-to-day life is never mentioned in our books, our environment including the sky, the world around, the crops, the rivers, etc. is

> not there, then I get almost sanguine that there is no hope for matching of our life and education. The wall between the two will remain. Our shortcomings of life can never be overcome by this (English) education. This education is miles apart from the roots of our life. (cited in Barua, 2007, p. 63)

This educational experience of 200 years deeply influenced the educational system and practices even after independence. In 1947, the British Indian was liberated from colonial domination with a separation based on religion, as India was Hindu and Pakistan was Muslim. India was formed out of the majority Hindu regions of British India. Pakistan was formed of two predominantly Muslim areas, designated East Pakistan and West Pakistan. East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), despite cultural and language differences, was attached to Pakistan, geographically 1,600 miles away. The country was ruled by the dominant West Pakistani establishment. The West Pakistanis ruled the Bangladeshi people in similar colonial fashion, imposing West Pakistani language as the sole national language, patronising Pakistani cultural practices, and continuing economic deprivation. Bangladesh was finally liberated after 24 years in 1971 after a nine-month bloody war. During this period, educational policy was based on Islamic ideology, ignoring local cultural diversity (S. Khatun, 1992).

After liberation as a war-torn country, the government of Bangladesh nationalised primary schools in Bangladesh under the *Primary Schools Act of 1974*. This Act abolished the role of local governmental bodies and involvement of communities in school management (Zia-Us-Sabur & Ahmed, 2010). This centralised management curbed the involvement of the community and locked the school system into a bureaucratic hierarchy, where nobody took responsibility for

large-scale non-enrolment, non-attendance, and dropout rates (M. Ahmed, Ahmed, Khan, & Ahmed, 2007).

Further, many private schools developed for the growing middle class, and English medium schools were created for the rich. After 32 years of independence, Bangladesh today has more than 13 types of primary schools catering to a number of different population groups (Directorate of Primary Education, 2013). Most lower class children and village children attend government primary schools, urban non-government schools serve working class children, middle class children attend private kindergartens, and wealthy children attend private English schools. These schools not only vary in tuition fees, but they also follow different curricula and school practices in terms of philosophical and cultural values. For instance, Ebtedayee or Quami Madrassa provides religion based primary education, while many English medium schools follow the curriculum of the Cambridge International Examinations (Haque & Akter, 2013; Sommers, 2013).

Lenses of postcolonial theory and sense of belonging to school

In this study, I have used postcolonial theory to problematise the concepts of belonging and students' experiences in the school social environment in Bangladesh. Problematising in this sense means a deliberate attempt to disrupt the existing practices within schooling experiences of the students which, I argue, is affected by the colonial legacy of subjugation and domination. In support of this study, postcolonial theory provides a framework which helps to address research questions regarding contextual issues surrounding students' experiences of belonging, believed to be impacted by students' identity, agency, and power in schools in Bangladesh. It is hoped that by questioning and dialoguing with the issues inherent in school

belonging, a new thinking can emerge regarding what might constitute students' experiences of positive schooling in Bangladesh.

There are many versions of postcolonial theory. Dirlik (1994) provided three distinct fields: (1) a literal description of conditions in former colonial societies, (2) a description of global conditions after the colonial period, and (3) a description of a discourse informed by epistemological and psychic orientation. The present study uses the third field of postcolonial theory to understand the contextual experiences of sense of belonging. A number of key ideas have emerged since the first formal postcolonial discourse of Edward Said (1978), which consists of identity, agency, power, voice, and representation for analysing phenomena. The present study is underpinned by these five key ideas, consistent with Dirlik's third lens of postcolonial theorisation for analysing contextual experiences regarding sense of belonging.

The literature on education has indicated that sense of belonging is a feeling of being connected to school (Goodenow, 1993b; Osterman, 2010). It is about developing a relationship with teachers, peers, and staff and being able to feel ownership of the school. From a postcolonial discursive point of view, the crisis in developing positive relationships in school is rooted in an unequal power relationship: voice suppression and lack of agency which push children into continuous subjugation (Robinson & Taylor, 2013; Schweisfurth, 2011).

The exercise of subjugation is not only in social conduct but also through pedagogical practice, where teachers may consider themselves as the sole owners of knowledge and children as having nothing to contribute and should therefore only receive (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011). In schools, students become spectators and

are meant to rote learn (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011; Banu, 2012).This pedagogical and social colonial drill shapes the reciprocal relationships of students and teachers. A postcolonial discursive framework attempts to make sense of how and why children are turned into "colonised bodies" where teachers become their colonisers (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011, p.406; Viruru & Cannella, 2004). A postcolonial framing of schooling does not see relationships as a priority of teachers, but considers children as having unequal rights and no power to express, share, and engage in active schooling experiences.

To place this research in context, Bangladesh had gone through a long period of imperial rule that carried the imperial aftermath of dominance and subjugation in its educational culture and practice (Hickling-Hudson, 2011). A postcolonial thesis provides a useful framework for appreciating the powerful effects of colonialism on students' schooling experiences. Critical areas that postcolonial theory contributes to in this study include discursive concepts of identity, agency, and power (Salifu & Agbenyega, 2013). Each of these areas is discussed below in relation to a sense of belonging.

Framing identity through a postcolonial lens

Identity is a term used to describe a person's identification with a similar group (Buckingham, 2008). A person develops a sense of belonging through collective relationships in terms of nationality, culture, gender, religion, race, socioeconomic class, and so on. Children construct their identity through learning about themselves and forming relationships with people, places, and things around them (Department of Education, 2009). In a postcolonial environment, an educational system developed from a colonial legacy disconnects students from local culture, tradition, and values,

posing a crisis of identity. Children have a strong sense of belonging when they have a strong identity, and feel significant and respected (Department of Education, 2009). The colonial practice of dominance and subjugation in school marginalises students and they form a subordinate identity (Agbenyega, 2008).

Children's experiences with relationships are the foundations for the formation of identity – "who I am", "how I belong", and "what is my influence?" (Department of Education, 2009, p.20). The colonial aftermath continues to give little space to allow children to develop in school as autonomous human individuals. A teacher-centric teaching and learning practice perceives the teacher as the sole agent of knowledge and students only listen to teachers without making any contribution (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011). This educational practice was inherited from the colonial period, where teachers hold great authority to control school social and academic environment. It limits children's voice, choice, and control over understanding, and forming their own relationships and this makes the school environment difficult. Like the colonised body, they have limited space for their own existence, and sense of importance and identity.

Framing agency through a postcolonial lens

Human beings need to "imagine that their lives belong to a sphere of a greater being within which their actions and words matter and make a difference" (Jackson cited in Louw, 2007, p. 15). In postcolonial discursive frameworks, agency is a vital construct to identify the locus of power. Agency refers in postcolonial theory to the "ability of postcolonial subjects" to hold power or take action to resist domination (B. Ashcroft et al., 2013). In a school setting, colonial inherited countries reinstate power dynamics in educational practice by placing teachers as the authority of

power, knowledge, and will of the students (Viruru & Cannella, 2004). Along these lines, as mentioned above, children remain passive, only listening to teachers (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011). The perception of students as having a lack of knowledge legitimates discarding students' voice and authority to control them.

Further, as Shizha (2013) described for Africa, colonial knowledge in the Indian subcontinent was based on subjugation and suppressed local knowledge. Local knowledge and language were viewed as unscientific, uncivilised and superstitious. Macaulay (1965) presented local language as:

> All parties seem to be agreed on one point, that the dialects commonly spoken among the natives of this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information, and are moreover so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some other quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them. (para, 4)

This erroneous perspective of the European educational policy maker was systematically taught to be internalised, and thus the colonised lost their own voice, self-identity, self-confidence, and agency (Shizha, 2013) . In the postcolonial era, students have little say and are not expected to discuss any issues from school programmes to curriculum development.

Providing this scenario in postcolonial regions, empirical studies show that children's emotional engagement and participation in school have a strong impact on students' sense of belonging (Goodenow, 1993b; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Osterman, 2010). Schools where students enjoy agency to initiate participation or raise their voices enable them to enjoy a strong bond with their school. Empirical study shows that giving students the opportunity to speak out promotes "a sense of ownership to school, greater connection to caring adults and to teachers in general"

(Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar, & Warne, 2007, p. 20). A reciprocal exchange of connection contributes to a stronger sense of belonging.

Framing power through a postcolonial lens

Sense of belonging and power intersect at a critical point where power relations, as Fenster (2007) described, "dictate the boundaries of belonging" (p. 253). In order to belong to any sphere, power determines who should be included and excluded (Fenster, 2007). Power, in postcolonial discourse, refers to a similar notion of domination, not only gained physically, but also by a power over the economy, education, and media (B. Ashcroft et al., 2013). Foucault (1988) argued that power in any society cannot be exercised without the production, accumulation, and circulation of knowledge. Hegemonic knowledge convinced colonised subjects that they were far behind, whereas coloniser values, culture, and education were far advanced, which produced an unbalanced power relationship in the psyche of the colonised (B. Ashcroft et al., 2013; Ngũgĩ, 1987; Rizvi et al., 2006). The effects of this power domination determines judgement, condemnation, classification, and experiences of living (Foucault, 1988).

In a school setting, children in postcolonial countries experience the power exercised both from teachers' teaching techniques and knowledge perspectives (Salifu & Agbenyega, 2013). The mindset left from postcolonial practices and attitudes is that knowledge is only identified in texts sourced from the West. Children's experiences and language are not considered knowledge and are subjugated by the power relations of the school system. For example, students or teachers who speak better English are considered more intelligent than others (Ngũgĩ, 1987). Children are considered to receive knowledge at school. They are

therefore considered to be observed, controlled, and directed by more knowledgeable teachers (Viruru & Cannella, 2004).

In sum, Bangladesh, as a postcolonial country, inherited a centralised administration, educational curriculum, and colonial attitudes to educational practice (Debnath, 2011). Students are regarded as objects instead of being considered an important part of the school community (Banu, 2012). Being an object of a school implies that students are regarded as colonised bodies with no voice, agency, or representation to act with intent. A colonial mindset among teachers, parents, administrators, and policy makers often limits openness to expression and acceptance of students' voices (Gupta, 2006). Very few studies present children's direct voices and perspectives on educational literature in Bangladesh, and a postcolonial framework enables the understanding of alternative perspectives by giving a voice to children in this social-culture region (Gupta, 2006). It can be argued that a postcolonial theory of education is about teaching and learning that is framed in constructivism acknowledging the learner in the dynamic and interactive process. The next section explores and discusses constructivist approaches to teaching and learning.

Framing teaching and learning in constructivism

Students' sense of belonging to school can be understood from the ways in which teachers practise pedagogy in classroom. As has been argued in the previous section, in terms of postcolonial theory, teaching practice in which teachers perceive themselves as the sole knowledge givers leads to punitive teacher–student relationships that disconnect students from school. Traditional teaching approaches, where teachers do all the talking, mirrors colonialism and oppression (Dei, 2010b;

Freire, 2005) and is opposite to constructivism. Constructivist learning and educational practice posits that no knowledge is absolute and humans generate knowledge and meaning from interaction with others (N. Johnson & Atwater, 2014; C. H. Liu & Matthews, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). Currently a plethora of research demonstrates that teaching and learning, framed from constructivist perspectives, is a powerful way of helping students feel a sense of belonging and to engage with their learning.

Constructivism is not a single or unified theory, developed and underpinned by a variety of epistemological positions/ orientation. The two major constructive perspectives in education are cognitive constructivism (often with reference to Jean Piaget) and social constructivism (often with reference to Lev Vygotsky) (Sjøberg, 2010). Piaget (1977) postulated that “knowledge precedes neither solely from the experience of objects nor from an innate programming performed in the subject but from successive constructions, the results of the constant development of new structures" (p. v). Piaget (1977) proposed that the mechanism of learning is the process of equilibration, in which cognitive structure assimilates and accommodates to generate new possibilities when it is disturbed, based on human's self-organising tendency. Vygotsky’s social constructivism however views learning as a social process through the dialectic between the individual and society, and social, language and cultural impacts on learning. Vygotsky (1978) postulates:

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals (p. 57).

Both theories reject the idea that knowledge is an identifiable entity with absolute truth value, and suggest learning is not passively received but constructed by individuals or groups making sense of their experiences (Yilmaz, 2008).

Despite the differences among varied constructivist perspectives, constructivism in education as a theory of learning denotes how human beings construct knowledge and meaning. Constructivist learning approach is underpinned by three key principles. First, constructivist learning opposes the idea that students come to the learning process as empty vessels and instead, sees every student as possessing prior knowledge, experiences, and backgrounds that influence how they will receive and interpret new information (Vygotsky, 1978; Walls, 2014). This core idea challenges the colonial, inherited, educational practice where teachers consider themselves as sages, filling novices with knowledge from textbooks. A constructivist perspective of teaching and learning is a dialogical process where both teacher and students learn together and co-construct new knowledge (Wells, 2000). Colonial learning practices focus exclusively on student outcomes, as opposed to constructivist learning, where the process of learning is equally as important as outcomes. Bruner (1966) describes learning as an active process where instructors act as facilitators to encourage students to develop their own hypothesis, make decisions and construct new knowledge based upon their past/ current knowledge. Through high engagement and participation in knowledge construction, students develop a sense of ownership of knowledge and this makes learning meaningful to them (Adams, 2007). In contrast to colonial pedagogical practice, where learning is one way, from teacher to student, constructivist learning is flexible. Each student's abilities and learning styles are taken into consideration during planning and delivery of pedagogy (Adams, 2007; Sjøberg, 2010). Students' experiences, participation, and

opinions, form the source of knowledge and serve to reinforce students' motivation to belong and learn, even when there have been no external forces (e.g. teachers or parents asking them to complete a task).

Second, a constructivist approach to pedagogy conceptualises students as active actors in the learning process, not as passive receivers of packaged knowledge from teachers (Bruner, 1996; Walls, 2014). Students within a constructivist classroom feel free to contribute to what is happening within their classroom, without fear of being punished by teachers, and feel ownership of their learning. This is because both teachers and students see themselves as learners, sharing the power of learning on a mutual basis. This framing of students' position in the learning space establishes students as having rights, with agency and power, to become active participants in the teaching and learning process (Rodriguez, 2013).

Third, a constructivist perspective considers the social and material environment as critically important in the teaching and learning development process (Sjøberg, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). Students' social and cultural realities are recognised as relevant and meaningful to their learning experiences at school (Howard, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). Given that students are not subjected to authoritarian teaching styles in constructivist learning, they often discover they have voice, agency and recognition as active players in the teaching–learning process. Thus a constructivist approach to pedagogy serves as a conceptual tool to decolonise learning and teaching through dialogical practices, recognising students as teachers as well as learners. Dei's (2010a) definition is that "decolonised education is education that brings to the fore questions of power relations among actors and different players in the school system while at the same time upholding the agency,

resistance and local cultural resource knowledges of all learners" (p. 6).This provides students with a fertile ground to form identities as valuable and welcome learners in the school environment where teachers act as facilitators, taking different positions in relation to their students.

Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the literature describing the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. The chapter explores the concepts of sense of belonging and postcolonial discursive lenses. In particular, this review has traced constructs of sense of belonging by discussing the hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), the need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000) theories. A historical development of postcolonial history and theory in the educational context has been discussed. Three postcolonial constructs, including agency, identity, and power, have been elaborated along with their relationship to the belongingness construct. Furthermore, a constructivist approach to pedagogy was discussed to frame teaching and learning to decolonise students' learning practices at school in light of their sense of belonging. The literature has supported these subjects of concern for understanding students' belongingness, as they are still exercised in a colonising way in the educational system of former colonised countries. The next chapter reviews relevant empirical research literature regarding school belonging conducted over the past 20 years in the educational context.

CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

Part Two: Relevant Empirical Research

Introduction

This aim of this chapter is to present a preliminary review of the relevant empirical research literature on school belonging. The review is organised by a number of foci including: the concept of school belonging, student demographics, school social environment and level of school outcomes.

To identify empirical studies in this area, electronic searches were conducted in PsycINFO, ProQuest and ERIC with the following search terms: 'school belonging', 'school connectedness' and 'school membership' in English language options. This search generated hundreds of hits. However, only selected empirical studies were included, on the basis of relevance to what influences students' sense of belonging to school. Papers were excluded when studies were conducted outside the school setting and participants were parents or teachers, not students. The literature and findings were analysed and four different foci including concepts, demographics, factors and outcomes of students' sense of belonging were identified. This chapter presents the literature review based on this analysis.

Concept of school belonging from empirical studies

For over two decades, school belonging has been increasingly studied alongside the growing importance of affective factors associated with teaching and learning practices. Across the literature, a variety of terms are often used synonymously, including school belonging, belongingness (Finn, 1989), school membership

(Goodenow, 1993b; Wehlage et al., 1989), sense of community, school bonding and school connectedness (Uwah et al., 2008). Much of the research literature on students' sense of belonging to school is based on Goodenow's (Goodenow, 1993b) functional definition, as well as his widely used Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale that has measured students' sense of belonging to school.

Goodenow (1993b) defined belonging as students' sense of being accepted, connected, valued and supported by their peers, teachers and other school staff. A number of more recent studies have examined the components used in Goodenow's (1993b) school belongingness concept and measures. The three studies were conducted on participants from three different geographical locations. They include: Hagborg's (1994) study on US white middle and high school students; Cheung and Huis's (2003) study on Chinese primary school students and You, Ritchey, Furlong, Shochet and Boman's (2011) study on Australian high school students. The latter study conducted factor analysis PSSM. Hagborg extracted three factors using principal components analysis and labelled them as belonging, rejection and acceptance. Cheung and Hui conducted principal components analysis on a Chinese translation of PSSM scales' scores and identified constructs belonging and feelings of rejection. The extended study of You et al. (2011) used both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. They identified three core components of the PSSM scale, called caring relationship, acceptance and rejection. Other than quantitative measures, qualitative studies found that students conceptualise 'belonging' in terms of "people, places for activities and interaction, and a place of safety" (Pooley, Breen, Pike, Cohen, & Drew, 2008, p. 94) .

Earlier studies, such as Wehlage et al. (1989) and Finn (1989), in a similar context identify a sense of belonging as how students perceived themselves as part of the social environment at school. These findings conclude that such a sense of belonging is widely conceptualised as how students experience social relationships in the school environment. In sum, this sense of belonging is conceptualised as students' perception, internalisation and psychological drive to connect oneself with a school's social environment.

Table 3.1: Major concept of school belonging from empirical research

Reference	Context	Key findings
Goodenow (1993a)	**USA**	**Students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting, and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class**
Wehlage et al. (1989)	**USA**	**Belonging is students' perception that others in the school, especially adults, support them and that they [students] count in the school**
Finn (1989)	**USA**	**Students who identify with school have an internalised conception of belongingness: that they are discernibly part of the school environment and that school constitutes an important part of their own experiences**
Osterman (2010)	**USA**	**Students who feel securely connected to others, having the experience of being worthy of love and respect**

Perception, internalisation and psychological state can be defined in behavioural terms as how students feel about being accepted, included, respected and supported in school or in classroom, and thus includes both individual qualities as well as efforts by the school to create such conditions.

School belonging and student demographics

Three demographic aspects were identified in the search as being related to school belonging, namely, students' gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Socioeconomic status is defined as a parent's level of education, occupation and/or income.

Gender

As can be seen in table 3.2, on the whole, female students have a higher sense of school belonging than their male counterparts (Adelabu, 2007; Goodenow, 1993b; Hagborg, 1994; Newman, Lohman, & Newman, 2007). However, a few studies found no significant gender differences (Cemalcilar, 2010; T. M. Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007). Girls'' sense of school belonging might be explained by their higher capability in interpersonal skills than boys (Bracken & Crain, 1994; Hagborg, 1993). Booker's (2007) qualitative study on African-American students, found that boys had a higher sense of school belonging than girls. As Booker, referring to Mahoney and Cairns' (1997) study explains, African American male students participate more in sporting activities than their white male counterparts. Thus this engagement in extracurricular activities may have helped them become part of the school community. In Booker's aforementioned study, few girls engaged in extracurricular activities compared to male participants who were student athletes. However, these findings are likely to be influenced by the specifics of culture and region. Most of the current studies in this area, for example, were conducted in countries with western cultures (mostly USA, one Australia, and one in Turkey). Little research has examined gender as associated with school belonging in Asia, particularly in the Bangladesh context.

Socioeconomic status

A substantial number of studies have claimed association between students' sense of belonging and their parents' level of education (Goodenow, 1993b; L. S. Johnson, 2009; Newman et al., 2007). It is noteworthy that these findings were derived from correlational statistics which did not explain how parents' higher education enhanced students' sense of belonging. On the contrary, some recent studies on poor rural and low income urban school students across the USA showed that despite poverty, students' sense of school belonging had a positive impact on their academic achievement and educational motivation (Adelabu, 2007; Irvin et al., 2011). One study conducted in Turkey demonstrated no significant difference between students' sense of belonging and socioeconomic status (Cemalcilar, 2010). This might be due to the fact that students in Turkey must attend the neighbourhood school by law and students from a homogenous neighbourhood having a similar socioeconomic status. This homogeneity of participants' backgrounds may result in non-significant correlational relationships. Nevertheless, the dearth of in-depth studies limits an effective interpretation of the relationship between school belonging and students' socio- economic backgrounds.

Table 3.2: Sense of school belonging and student demographics

Reference	Demography	Research design	Participants	Measure	Context	Key findings
Hagborg (1994)	**Gender**	**Survey study**	**Adolescent students N=30, Female =15**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Females significantly higher PSSM scores (F [1, 236] =7.94, p<.005)**
Adelabu (2007)	**Gender SES Ethnicity**	**Survey study**	**Adolescent students N=232, Female=139**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Females higher PSSM associated with positive future perspective and academic achievement** **All participants higher PSSM associated with positive perspective and academic achievement**
Newman, Lohman and Newman (2007)	**Gender SES Ethnicity**	**Survey study**	**Adolescent students N=733, Female=447**	**Sense of peer group belongin -g (GB)**	**USA**	**Girls reported higher peer group belonging than boys. Family education significantly related to students' sense of peer group belonging and group membership. Ethnicity significantly related to group belonging. White students reported higher importance in group membership than African- Americans and other ethnic groups.**
Cemalcilar (2010)	**Gender SES**	**Survey Study**	**Adolescent Students (N=799 Female= 399**	**PSSM (Five items)**	**Turkey**	**No significant differences found in students' sense of school belonging by gender and socioeconomic status**
Freeman, Anderman and Jensen (2007)	**Gender**	**Survey study**	**Adolescent student N=238, Female=162**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Independent sample *t*-tests revealed no statistically significant differences between male and female students' responses to any scale**
Goodenow (1993a)	**Gender SES Ethnicity**	**Survey (scale development studies of PSSM)**	**Early adolescents Study1 N=454, Female=220 Study 2 N=301, Female=130**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Females had higher scores. Suburban students reported stronger sense of school belonging than urban students. Urban schools, ethnic majority have higher sense of school belonging than students from a minor ethnicity (e.g. Hispanic students (75%), reported higher level of school belonging than those**

						from a non-Hispanic background)
Shochet, Smith, Furlong and Homel (2011)	**Gender**	**Survey study**	**Adolescent students N=506, Female=227**	**PSSM**	**Urban context in Australia**	**Females had a higher PSSM score**
Nichols (2008)	**Gender**	**Interview**	**Adolescent students N=45, Female=22**	**PSSM open-ended question -naire**	**USA**	**Female (M=58.50,SD=4.93,n=22) had stronger sense of belonging than boys(M=52.70,SD=9.38, n=23)**
Booker (2007)	**Gender Ethnicity**	**Interview**	**Adolescent students N=13, Female=6**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Males had higher levels of belonging than female African-American students and teachers reported acceptance including celebrating their culture (music, dress), and participation in extracurricular and other school related activities which made them feel more like they belonged to the school**
Irvin, Meece, Byun, Farmer and Hutchins (2011)	**SES**	**Survey study**	**Adolescents N=6247 Female=51.7%**	**PSSM (11 item)**	**USA**	**Despite community poverty, students' schooling experiences, such as positive perceptions of their ability and a sense of school belonging, could be predictive of educational achievement and aspirations for rural youth**
Johnson (2009)	**SES Ethnicity**	**Observation Interview (semi-structured) Survey**	**Adolescent students and teachers Students =10 Teachers =5**	**PSSM**	**Urban context in USA**	**A non-traditional school composed of students of parents having a higher level of education have a higher level of belonging compared to those from parents with less education background. Students reported acceptance and inclusion of diversified instructor and provided a sense of belonging and safety**
Meeuwisse, Severiens and Born (2010)	**Ethnicity**	**Survey study**	**First year university students N=523,**	**Scale developed**	**The Netherlands**	**Ethnic minority students reported good formal relationship with teachers and fellow students linked with their sense of belonging. To the contrary, for the majority of students, informal relationship is positively associated to their sense of belonging to the**

						institution
Singh, Chang, and Dika (2010)	**Ethnicity**	**Survey study**	**Adolescent students N=373, Female=187**	**PSSM (Five items)**	**USA**	**Significant differences found in self-concept and school engagement among different ethnic groups, but no significant difference in school belonging among high school students**
Kuperminc, Darnell and Alvarez-Jimenez (2008)	**Ethnicity**	**Survey study**	**Adolescent students N=328, Female=not mentioned**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**No significant differences found between Latino and non-Latino students on students' sense of belonging. The participants consisted of 77% immigrants predominately from Mexico**

Ethnicity

The relationship between school belonging and ethnicity is not straightforward (see table 3.2). An earlier study found the status that comes with being a member of the majority ethnic group within a school tends to promote a higher sense of belonging (Goodenow, 1993b). For instance, Hispanic students reported a higher sense of belonging when they were in the majority at school, while white students showed a strong sense of belonging when they outnumbered other ethnic students in US schools (Goodenow, 1993b; Newman et al., 2007). However, these findings are in contrast with a study on a sample of immigrant Latino students in United States. Despite being in the majority (Latino students were 77% of the school population), no significant difference in school belonging was reported between Latino and non-Latino students (Kuperminc, Darnell, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2008).

Other than students' ethnicity, several studies found a relationship whereby teachers' ethnicity and how schools responded to ethnicity shaped students' sense of school belonging (Booker, 2007; L. S. Johnson, 2009; Meeuwisse et al., 2010). Two qualitative studies (Booker, 2007; L. S. Johnson, 2009) demonstrated that when schools employed inclusive practices and celebrated different cultural components, a stronger sense of belonging among students from minority groups was found. Most studies examining cultural differences are conducted in the USA. As well, previous research provides little detail or understanding in terms of how minority groups and those whose first language is different from other students, relates to school belonging, especially in younger students.

Sense of school belonging and social aspects

To identify what influences students' sense of belonging to school, the literature review selected 17 empirical (see table 3.3) studies from 2003 to 2014 on the basis of the most relevant. The review identified two most frequently noted aspects associated with students' sense of belonging, which includes their relationship with teachers and with peers.

Student–teacher relationship

The student–teacher relationship appears to be the most influential aspect of the school social environment in terms of students' sense of belonging. The teacher is such a strong, pivotal component in the school social environment that the student's attachment to school, as Libbey (2004) commented, is "often operationalised as their relationship with teachers" (p. 281). The research literature shows that the role of teachers in relation to students' belongingness has two different aspects influencing students' sense of belonging: students' emotional and social bonding with teachers and teachers' academic support to student learning.

The literature consistently shows that teachers' personal and emotional support, including being fair, supportive, friendly, warm and respectful, enhance students' sense of belonging (Anderman, 2003; Hallinan, 2008; Ma, 2003; McMahon, Parnes, Keys, & Viola, 2008). Faircloth (2009) elaborated that students' relationship with their teachers is central to their connection to class, engagement, and success.. She indicated teacher's ability to help their students develop a connection to school, particularly when teachers listen to students, respect their thoughts and care about what they say. This suggests that being friendly, supportive,

warm and respectful contribute significantly to students sharing their ideas with others (Gehlbach, Brinkworth, & Harris, 2012).

Table 3.3: Sense of belonging to school and social and emotional aspects

Reference	Aspects	Research design	Participants	Measure	Context	Key findings
Faircloth (2009)	**Relationship with teachers**	**Survey Open-ended questions**	**Adolescent students N=83**	**-**	**USA**	**Relationship with teacher, peers and classroom activities connecting with their identity (life issues, self, background and ability to make them known) contribute significantly to a sense of belonging.**
Nichols (2008)	**Relationship with teachers/ peers**	**Survey and interviews**	**Adolescent students N=45, 22 girls**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Student–teacher relationship is primary factor influencing school belongingness (e.g. fairness, supportive, pick unfairly or refused to get help). Peer relationship second most influential factor for school belonging (e.g. personal liking, involving fighting or into romantic relationship)**
Pooley et al. (2010)	**Relationship with teachers/ peers/ principal**	**Interviews**	**Primary school students N=46**	**-**	**Australia**	**School belonging conceptualised by participation, influence, integration, fulfilment of needs and a shared emotional connection within school. The people who are central to their experience of school community are their peers, teachers and principal.**
Booker (2007)	**Relationship with teachers/ peers**	**Interviews**	**Adolescent students N=13, Female= 6**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Teachers' warmth and encouragement identified as important to students' engagement in school-related activities.** **Peer acceptance and interaction are important factors to feel they are part of the school.**
Anderman (2003)	**Relationship with teachers Instructional strategy**	**Survey**	**Adolescent students N=618**	**Adopted PSSM**	**USA**	**Higher PSSM associated with teachers' stimulation on adaptive academic and interpersonal context (e.g. encouraging personal effort, make lesson useful, interesting and relevant).** **Teachers' promotion of mutual respect among students prevents decline of sense of belonging.**
Whitlock (2006)	**Instructional strategy**	**Survey and FGI**	**Adolescent students N=350**	**School connected ness scale**	**USA**	**School connectedness strongly affected by opportunities of meaningful input regarding school policies and class material engaged students' interests. Highlights the**

Reference	Aspects	Research design	Participants	Measure	Context	Key findings
						importance of youth – adult exchange in and outside classroom.
Cemalcilar (2010)	**Relationship with teachers/ Peers**	**Survey**	**Adolescent students N=799, Female=50%**	**PSSM**	**Turkey**	**Teacher showed greater role than administrator in influencing students' school attachment. Students satisfaction with peer relationships had a direct effect on their sense of school belonging.**
Meeuwisse, Severiens and Born (2010)	**Relationship with teachers/ peers**	**Survey**	**University students N=523,**	**Students' sense of belonging scales**	**The Netherlands**	**Teacher and peer interactions were antecedents of students' sense of belonging. Ethnic minority students reported formal relationship with teachers and peers linked to higher attachment to their educational programme; on the other hand, general students linked informal relationships with fellow students to their sense of belonging.**
Johnson (2009)	**Relationship with teachers/ peers**	**Observation and interviews**		**PSSM**	**USA**	**Personal and friendly relations with teachers foster students' sense of belonging. Strong peer relations influence students' sense of belonging, thus a relations based environment is more functional than policy and rule driven school system.**
McMahon, Parnes, Keys and Viola (2008)	**Relationship with teachers**	**Survey**	**N=136, Female=49%**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Children with disabilities in mainstream school have higher sense of belonging associated with supportive interaction with teachers, coaches and counsellors.**
Pittman and Richmond (2007)	**Peer relations**	**Survey**	**University students N=266, Female=51%**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Higher PSSM significantly correlated with quality of relationships with peers (r=.54, p<.001).**
Sakiz, Pape and Hoy (2012)	**Teacher relations**	**Survey**	**N=317 Female= 189**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Students who reported higher teacher affective support were likely to report greater sense of belonging.**
Ma (2003)	**Students' self-esteem and**	**Survey**	**Adolescent Students**	**Adapted scale**	**Canada**	**School climate (student, teacher and staff relationships, academic engagement) has higher impact than school**

Reference	Aspects	Research design	Participants	Measure	Context	Key findings
	health School climate		**N=13, 751**			**context (physical facilities) on students' belonging.**
Hallinan (2008)	**Relationship with teachers**	**Survey**	**Adolescent students N=35**		**USA**	**Student's higher perception of teachers' care, respect and praise linked to student's attachment to the school.**
Crouch, Keys, and McMahon (2014)	**Teacher/staff relationships**	**Survey**	**Includes children with disabilities N=133**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Students who experienced more positive and fewer negative social interactions with school staff had more of a sense of school belonging.**

Several other studies show that student-teacher positive relationships equally play a strong role regarding students with disabilities, those with minority backgrounds and transition students in relation to their sense of belonging (Crouch et al., 2014; McMahon et al., 2008; Meeuwisse et al., 2010). Stressful transition that affects school belonging can be mitigated by teachers' support, understanding, and caring attitude towards students (Crouch et al., 2014). However, the type of interaction and/or relationship might be different concerning students' background. For example, Meeuwisse et al. (2010) showed that while informal relationships with teachers foster majority students' sense of belonging, minority students reported formal relationships with their teachers linked to higher attachment to the educational programme. Though their study could not explain this phenomenon, they found that ethnic minority students felt 'at home' in their educational programme if they have good formal relationships with teachers and fellow students. It would appear that students' belongingness is protected and fostered by teachers whom students perceive as reliable, who understand them, and who respect and praise their works as well as teachers who show higher affective support for students, for example, cheering them up when they are sad or worried, and can have fun, laugh, and joke with them (Crouch et al., 2014; Hallinan, 2008; Sakiz et al., 2012).

To the contrary, students' school belonging was lower when students perceived their relationships with teachers and other adults at their school as negative (Crouch et al., 2014). Crouch et al. found that "students who reported that their teachers criticized or disapproved of them, had arguments or fights with them, got on their nerves, and/or got angry or expected too much from them, reported lower school belonging than other students" (Crouch et al., 2014, p. 27).

The other aspect of student-teacher relationships identified in belonging studies is that teachers who made classroom learning interesting and engaged with students in interactional activities promoted students' sense of belonging to school (Booker, 2007; Faircloth, 2009; Pooley et al., 2008). Faircloth (2009) indicated teachers' pedagogical design that emphasised connecting learning activities to students' lives, perspectives, and their sense of what was important to foster students' belonging to school. Osterman reviewed school belonging studies and found that academic support had a direct effect on students' sense of belongingness (Osterman, 2000, 2010) .

Peer relationships

Similar to the importance of student-teacher relationships, peer connectedness has been found to impact students' sense of school belonging (Booker, 2007; Cemalcilar, 2010; Faircloth, 2009; L. S. Johnson, 2009; Nichols, 2008). As can be seen in table 3.3 , studies conducted on high school and university students showed that difficulty with peers leads to being less connected to teaching institutions (Pittman & Richmond, 2007). Conversely, positive peer relationships have been found to be key to a high sense of school belonging (Cemalcilar, 2010; L. S. Johnson, 2009; Nichols, 2008; Pittman & Richmond, 2007). Several studies (Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Nichols, 2008) have examined the characteristics of peer relationships that influence students' sense of school belonging, identifying variables such as personal liking, group relationships and informal relationships between students to be important.

In schools, students maintain different relationship levels with their peers. Peer relationships include general acceptance and rejections by peers, friendship and peer victimisation (Ladd, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Visconti, & Ettekal, 2012).

General peer acceptance refers to “children’s relationships with classmates and the consensual liking or disliking that is directed by the group toward the individual” (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005, p. 62). However, friendship is a distinctly different relationship, with dyadic, intimate and affective ties. Research shows that general peer acceptance played a stronger role than friendship in students’ sense of school belonging (Osterman, 2000). Hamm and Faircloth (2005) argued that peer group acceptance affects students’ perception of inclusion and membership in larger groups, while friendship supports affective adjustment such as the need for security and emotional closeness. Research shows that how one finds oneself in the classroom peer status has more impact than friendships on significantly predicting school perception , engagement, and performance (Osterman, 2000). Friendship may act as a buffer and offer a secure base to experience inclusion and/or exclusion derived from peer group acceptance (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005).

Peer victimisation, in contrast, is a form of relationship where one or more peers consistently are the recipients of peer aggression, dislike and rejection. Children who feel victimised by their peers have significantly negative perceptions of school, poor learning and academic achievement, disengagement and difficulties in psychological adjustment with the school social environment (Ladd et al., 2012). Wormington, Anderson, Schneider, Tomlinson, and Brown’s (2014) study shows that peer victimisation has a direct impact on students’ academic performance and indirectly affects their sense of belonging for a lifetime. Wormington et al. (2014) identified school belonging as an important explanatory and cost-effective intervention mechanism to decrease victimisation rates at school. Studies on several intervention efforts suggest that students’ perception of school belonging can be altered and fostered to prevent such peer victimisation (Oelsner, Lippold, &

Greenberg, 2011; Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999). Hong's study (2008), for example, shows that if students do not feel like a part of the school community, they are less likely to report acts of bullying to the authorities. Students with a low sense of school belonging feel isolated and lonely, which often leads to being victimised or bullied by others.

Interestingly, research consistently shows that youth with lower levels of school belonging are also likely to be involve in bullying and peer aggression (Jun Sung Hong & Espelage, 2012; Skues, Cunningham, & Pokharel, 2005). Research shows (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012) that greater peer attachment with less teacher and general school belonging are also associated with higher school misconduct. Disruptive students who are more likely to be rejected by teachers and peers fail to form a meaningful relationship with their teacher and/or establishpeer acceptance. This makes students turn to other youngsters to fulfil their need for belonging, subsequently forming sub-groups in schools to incite each other to perpetuate deviant behaviour (Baker, 1998; Bendixen, Endresen, & Olweus, 2006; Good & Brophy, 2008). Demanet and Van Houtte (2012) argued that the preventive effect of teacher support and school belonging overshadows the deviance-generating effect of unconventional peer attachment.

School related outcomes and students' sense of belonging

Various studies, albeit mostly from secondary student data, have found positive associations between students' sense of belonging and school related outcomes including academic engagement, achievement, attendance/dropout, school misconduct, school satisfaction and students' wellbeing. This literature review selected empirical studies conducted from 1989 to 2014, which are directly related to

students' belonging (See Table 3.4). Prior studies linked students' sense of school belonging with school dropout or withdrawal from school (Finn, 1989; Wehlage et al., 1989) while later studies (Booker, 2007; Cemalcilar 2010; Meeuwisse et al. 2010) found that students' sense of belongingness is positively associated with academic motivation, engagement and performance. Finn (1989), drawing on frustration, self-esteem and participation-identification model showed how school rejection and involvement accelerate school dropout. If students feel rejected at school, they are more likely to withdraw. Similarly, if students can development both emotional and behavioural involvement with their school, this enhances student attendance. Wehlage et al. (1989) employed Hirschi's (2009) delinquency theory, which showed that emotional attachment, rational commitment, involvement and belief about school legitimacy and efficacy can prevent school dropout.

The most frequently reported outcome associated with sense of belonging is student academic achievement. The majority of studies consistently showed that students who have a higher sense of belonging are most likely to have higher academic achievement (Adelabu, 2007; Goodenow, 1993a; Pittman & Richmond, 2007; Van Ryzin, Gravely, & Roseth, 2009), while a few other studies challenged this claim (Y. Liu & Lu, 2011; Neel & Fuligni, 2013). Liu and Lu (2011) argued that students' achievement is associated with their cognitive abilities. Thus, sense of belonging, as an emotional factor, was less likely to affect students' academic achievement.

Studies consistently show that sense of belonging is associated with students' engagement, school satisfaction and joyful learning experiences (Goodenow, 1993a; Goodenow & Grady, 1993; Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Sakiz et al., 2012; Van Ryzin et

al., 2009). Neel and Fuligni's (2013) study found that belongingness was associated with both intrinsic and utility value of the school. They found that school belonging helped students "enjoy school and appreciate its usefulness, even when they are struggling academically" (p. 689). Sakiz, Pape and Hoy (2012) pointed out that an effective climate within learning environments promoted academic enjoyment, self-efficacy and effort in mathematics learning. They found students who reported a higher sense of belonging in their mathematics classroom were likely to report higher academic enjoyment.

Table 3.4: School related outcomes and students' sense of belonging

Reference	Aspect	Research design	Participants	Measure	Context	Key findings
Wehlage,Rutter, Smith, Lesko, and Fernandez (1989)	**Dropout**	**Case study**	**N=1934**	**-**	**USA**	**School belongingness is a critical factor in school dropout. Sense of school belonging and educational engagement is central to students' outcomes.**
Pittman and Richmond (2007)	**Academic achievement**	**Survey**	**University students N=266, Female=136**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Students with a greater sense of belonging reported better academic performance.**
Adelabu (2007)	**Academic achievement**	**Survey**	**N=232, Female=139**		**USA**	**Students' positive experience of greater sense of school belonging showed better academic achievement than their counterparts with limited sense of school belonging.**
Irvin, Meece, Byun, Farmer and Hutchins (2011)	**Academic achievement**	**Survey**	**N=6247**		**USA**	**Students' sense of school belonging were predictive of educational achievement in poverty prone rural areas.**
Van Ryzin, Gravely and Roseth (2009)	**Engagement achievement**	**Survey**	**N=283,1 Female=36**		**USA**	**Teacher-related belongingness (i.e. teacher support) in school had a positive effect on engagement learning. Both peer- and teacher-related school belongingness raised students' achievement.**
Goodenow (1993a)	**Absenteeism achievement**	**Survey**	**N=755 Female=350**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Academic achievement strongly correlated with their sense of school belonging; behavioural effort (absenteeism and tardiness) shows weak association with sense of school belonging.**
Goodenow (1993b)	**Engagement**	**Survey**	**N=207,1 Female=30**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Higher sense of school belonging promotes higher academic motivation and engagement among students. Cultural differences show**

						stronger association between sense of school belonging and motivation.
Anderman (2003)	**Academic achievement**	**Survey**	**N=618**	**PSSM**	**.**	**School achievement was positively associated with students levels of school belonging.**
McMahon, Parnes, Keys and Viola (2008)	**Dropout academic achievement**	**Survey**	**N=136, Female=67**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**School belonging is associated with students' academic performance, school retention and school satisfaction.**
Sánchez, Colón and Esparza (2005)	**Absenteeism/ attendance**	**Survey**	**N=143, Female=74**		**USA**	**Sense of school belonging significantly predicted academic outcomes including academic motivation, effort, and absenteeism (absenteeism (β= −0.19, p=<.05).**
Sakiz, Pape and Hoy (2012)	**Academic Enjoyment Academic self-efficacy**	**Survey**	**N=317 Female=189**	**PSSM**	**USA**	**Consistent with expectations, students who reported greater sense of belonging within their mathematics classroom were likely to report higher academic enjoyment.**
Demanet and Van Houtte (2012)	**School misconduct**	**Survey**	**Secondary school N=11,872 F=6102**	**PSSM**	**Belgium**	**Higher perceived teacher support and school belonging related to less school misconduct, and higher peer attachment was associated with higher rates of school misconduct.**
Neel and Fuligni (2013)	**Academic motivation Academic enjoyment**	**Survey**	**Adolescent N=572**	**Adapted from Tyler and Degoey (1995)**	**USA**	**Higher school belonging associated with school enjoyment above and beyond their actual level of achievement. School belonging is associated with higher levels of academic motivation. School belonging not associated with achievement as measured by GPA.**
Yuko and Ichiro (2014)	**School satisfaction**	**Survey**	**Primary school N=304 Female=200**	**Adapted from Ishida (2009)**	**Japan**	**School belonging played an important role in school liking in late childhood. School liking and school avoidance were significantly associated with school in general (i.e. school belonging)**

Walton and Cohen (2011)	**Inequalities Mental health Academic improvement**	**Interventional study**	**College freshmen N=92**		**USA**	**Social belonging is a psychological lever where targeted intervention can have greater consequences that lessen inequalities in achievement and health.**
Huynh and Gillen-O'Neel (2013)	**Health /sleep Discrimination**	**Survey**	**360 adolescents (57% female)**	**Adapted from Tyler and Degoey (1995)**	**USA**	**Students who feel a sense of connection and acceptance at school may draw on school belonging as a source of support that protects them from overt forms of discrimination.**
Liu and Lu (2011)	**Academic achievement**	**Survey**	**High school 567 students (306 females)**	**PSSM**	**China**	**These findings challenged the links between sense of school belonging and academic achievement.**
Wormington, Anderson, Schneider, Tomlinson and Brown (2014)	**School truancy, alcohol use**	**Survey**	**Adolescent students N=9629**	**Adapted**		**Significant indirect associations through school belonging were found between school victimisation and academic performance, and school truancy and alcohol use.**
Goldweber, Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2013)	**Bullying**	**Survey**	**High and middle school students N=12763**	**-**	**USA**	**Students with victimisation from bullying feel less belonging. Efforts to reduce school violence and peer victimisation may stem from fostering feelings of belonging.**

Conversely, a lack of sense of belonging is reported to promote school misconduct such as truancy, discrimination, inequalities, and substance use at school (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012; Sánchez, Colón, & Esparza, 2005; Wormington et al., 2014). Sánchez, Colón, and Esparza (2005) indicate that students who do not feel a sense of belonging are more likely to miss school. Wormington et al. (2014) argued that seeing absenteeism through students' sense of belong explains a better mechanism for truancy and provides insights for interventional programmes. They further associated school belongingness with anti-social behaviour such as students' use of alcohol. Similarly, Goldweber, Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2013) indicate that belonging can protect and prevent school bullying practice. Individual bonding is found to be more important than overall school cohesion in contributing to student misconduct in school. However, research findings show that individual bonding with peers, teachers and schools associated with school misconduct than overall school cohesion (Demanet & Van Houtte, 2012).

Several studies found that students' sense of belonging may impact student physical and psychological wellbeing. Walton and Cohen (2011) conducted an intervention study over three years, which provides an experimental, longitudinal demonstration that brief intervention to buttress feelings of social belonging can have significant effects on a wide range of important outcomes including health, and wellbeing of ethnic minority students. Another study conducted by Huynh and Gillen-O'Neel (2013) indicated that school discrimination affects students' sleep quality and hours, particularly among students with ethnic background. Their findings suggest that a sense of belonging may function as a protective factor of discrimination and buffer the negative effect of discrimination on sleep.

A number of studies have examined the mediating role of school belonging in school outcomes in different settings (e.g. rural, urban) as well as different cultural contexts (Goodenow, 1993b; Irvin et al., 2011; Sánchez, Colón & Esparza, 2005). One noteworthy finding is that sense of belonging can mediate differently in a particular culture; for instance, African American students' sense of school belonging had a stronger link with extracurricular activities than academic achievement (Booker, 2007). On the other hand, American Latino students' higher sense of school belonging influenced their school engagement or attendance (Goodenow, 1993b; Sánchez et al., 2005). This could be because the communal culture of Hispanic society may influence Latino students' association with school belonging and school engagement (Goodenow, 1993b). The role of belonging in mediating the effect of peer acceptance with school achievement is not however always simple for African American students. For instance, African American students who demonstrated higher academic achievement were rejected by the same ethnic peers and accused of "showing-off" (Ford & Harris, 1996, p. 1147). Thus, peer acceptance may reflect the students' sense of belonging, but may not necessarily reflect their academic achievement.

Despite an increase in the literature associating school belonging with students' social relationships at school, few discrete studies linked school physical facilities with students' sense of belonging (C. McNeely, 2013; Nichols, 2008). School football or soccer facilities, for example, (Nichols, 2008) indicated that students, especially boys, felt ashamed of their school because of the limited facilities comparing with neighbourhood schools. Cemalcilar (2010) showed that physical facilities (e.g. school building, cleanliness) and support resources (e.g. adequate library and science laboratory) were strongly associated with students'

positive feelings toward their school. He argued that since students spend a major part of the day at school, quality of the school's physical environment influences school satisfaction, in turn fostering a stronger sense of belonging. Building conditions and design reinforce and enhance the social environment of school and foster a sense of belonging to a place (Uline, Tschannen - Moran, & Wolsey, 2009). School design goes beyond durability and flexibility, and includes design features that allow users some measure of control over comfort and other factors such as movement, aesthetics, lighting, flexible and responsive classrooms as well as safety and security.

Conclusion

Review of empirical research shows social relationships (teachers, students, peers and staff), teaching instruction (group work and interactive classes) and specific student demographic variables (sex, ethnicity and socioeconomic status) are linked or associated with students' sense of school belonging. Empirical research is aligned with the current theoretical understanding of sense of belonging, as it is "neither as a purely personal intrapsychic phenomenon nor as entirely the function of the school environment, but rather as arising from the person within a particular school environment" (Goodenow, 1993a, p. 87).

Overall, this literature demonstrates that studies are predominantly located in the western world, particularly the USA. There is lack of empirical research conducted in less developed countries, and in regard to this study, from Bangladesh. In particular, little research is available in regard to how students' sense of belonging is shaped and/or influenced by the cultural context in which students are situated. Most existing research has been of a quantitative nature and explored the relationship

between sense of school belonging and various school social aspects; as such, these studies convey little understanding of how students' experience and perceive a sense of belonging to their school. The present study is a direct response to these limitations.

CHAPTER FOUR
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Researchers often make choices from many methodologies to guide their investigations (Crotty, 2005; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Methodological choices are often based on the research questions, researcher assumptions, and values (R. B. Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Mertens (2015), argue that the "exact nature of the definition of research is influenced by the researcher's theoretical framework" (p. 2). This study seeks to understand how Bangladeshi primary school students experience sense of belonging in their school. This chapter presents the methodology, methods, design, approaches to data collection and data analysis and ethical considerations. The chapter also discusses how the researcher attended to issues of validity and trustworthiness and argues how and why this research is positioned within a phenomenological qualitative paradigm informed by postcolonial theorisation.

Grounding the methodology in theory

As mentioned above, this study is framed in postcolonial theory (see Chapter Two) which posed some of the most far-reaching questions for school belonging. By focusing on subjectivity, identity, power, and knowledge as constructs that are implicated in school belonging, postcolonial theory enables researchers to ask questions about 'who' speaks at school, for 'whom', under 'what' conditions, and to 'what' ends (Afzal-Khan & Seshadri-Crooks, 2000; Bill Ashcroft et al., 2013). These questions require in-depth examination of school cultures, practices and how students have been working in such schools to define and understand themselves as members of the schools' family (Chilisa, 2012). Chilisa (2012) further argues that

dominant school practices (epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies), often become the ‘natural’ or appropriate norms of practice that can exclude others from historically evolved social constructions. Thus postcolonial theory is not used here in the traditional sense of colonisation and its aftermath, but as an attempt to understand school belonging in terms of object–subject relations, class divisions, discourse of classifications and issues associated with powerlessness such as inhibition to develop one’s capacities, lack of decision-making power, and perhaps exposure to disrespectful treatment by the school community (Dei & Opini, 2007; C. Young, 2004)). Postcolonial theorising, as Dei (2000) describes, represents a paradigmatic shift from “universal, simplified definitions of social phenomena which would normally infuse a decontextualised, dehistoricised and essentialised reality” to “the complexity of lived experience” (p. 115).

Considering the above theoretical directions the researcher considers phenomenology, which is a “philosophical approach to the study of experiences”, as the best suited methodology for exploring students’ sense of belonging to school in Bangladesh (J. A. Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2013, p. 11). The following figure shows a graphic representation of the research process (Figure 4.1).

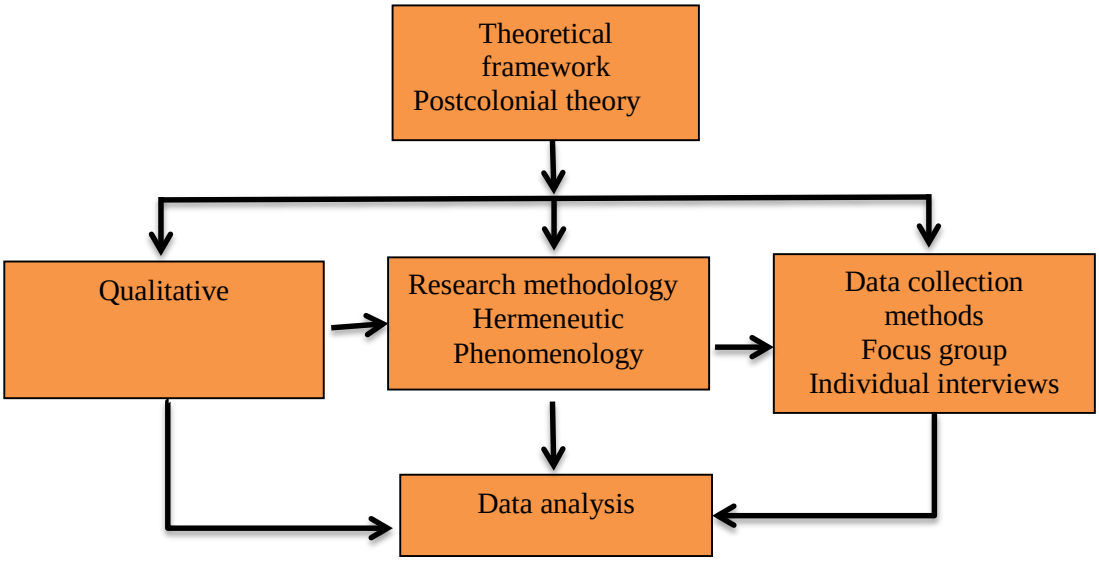


Figure 4.1: Visual flow chart of the study methodology

Phenomenology as a way of knowing

Phenomenology emerged as a philosophical movement in the early 20th century, dedicated to describing the structures of how humans experience and represent consciousness. Husserl, founder of phenomenology, assumed that knowledge cannot be achieved without referring to conscious experiences (Giorgi, 2009). Husserl broke the positivist orientation of knowing and argued for going back to the "things themselves" which meant the experiential content of conscious (Husserl, 2002a, p. 67). He explains that "pure phenomenology draws upon pure reflection exclusively, and in turn pure reflection excludes, as such, every type of external experience and therefore precludes any copositing of objects alien to consciousness" (Husserl, 2002b, p. 129). This means that phenomenology exclusively draws on structure of experiences and how they appear consciously.

The main assumption of phenomenological inquiry is that experiences should be examined in the way they occur and on their own terms. Phenomenology emerged

as a new way to understand human phenomena through direct, conscious experiences rather than empirical quantitative data in positivist research. As Simmons and Benson (2013) simply put it, phenomenology emerged as

> the attempt to make sense–by way of description and analysis–of experiences as they are actually experienced. In this way, phenomenology (as much as possible) tries to offer a first-person account of experiences. Instead of third person accounts offered by positive sciences that depend on data that is often understood as "objective", "neutral", and "repeatable", phenomenology is informed by the evidence of one's own experience. (p. 15)

However, phenomenology is not anti-empirical or anti-positivist, rather it attempts to complement the natural scientific method, particularly in the arena of psychology in terms of how people experience phenomena (Giorgi, 2009).

Phenomenology is informed by a number of philosophical ideas. They are: 1) realistic phenomenology, which is based on the idea of having essential structures of conscious experiences (B. Smith, 1997); (2) existential and hermeneutic phenomenology, which looks at meaning in the context of lived experience; and 3) transcendental phenomenology also called constitutive phenomenology which takes the intuitive experience of phenomena as its starting point, and tries to extract the essence of what we experience. These ideas demonstrate that each phenomenological approach emphasises a different lens. The differences are mostly based on how lived human experience should be explained, understood and examined. The two major philosophical divisions of phenomenological approaches are transcendental and hermeneutic.

Transcendental phenomenology

Husserl (1970) developed a transcendental phenomenological approach as rigorous human science to investigate how knowledge comes into being and can be distinguished from possible human pre-assumptions and interpretation. However, later Heidegger (1996), promoter of the hermeneutic approach, raised the question as to whether any phenomena can be understood without interpretation. Husserl (1970) developed a phenomenological method which intended to identify core structures and features of human experience. All presuppositions should be put aside, as Husserl called 'bracketing', and instead find a pure essence of psychological phenomena. Giorgi (1997) identified three distinct and interlocking characteristics of transcendental phenomenological enquiry including phenomenological reduction, description, and search for essences. Transcendental phenomenology method aims to get rid of presupposition or preunderstanding: the researcher should explicitly put aside his/her understanding, prior knowledge and beliefs, so that pure conscious experiences can be captured through the research process. For Husserl, the reduction helps the researcher's "groping entrance into this unknown realm of subjective phenomena" (1970, p.161). According to Giorgi (1997), description means "to give linguistic expression to the object of any given act precisely as it appears within that act" (p. 241). Transcendental phenomenological examination thus includes a description of every salient particularity of a given phenomenon, but not interpretation. It is argued that a sufficiently rich description would limit the outside interpretation and include an intrinsic account of such a phenomenon (Giorgi, 1997). Pursuing "essence" refers to an invariant structure or core meaning underlying experiences shared within different lived experiences.

Hermeneutic phenomenology

In contrast to ontological and epistemological beliefs of pure conscious and presuppositionless experiences of transcendental phenomenology, Heidegger argued that "presuppositions are a legitimate part of being and cannot be isolated or bracketed; rather they should be enveloped as integral to the researcher's understanding of self being-in-the-world" (cited in Miles, Chapman, Francis, & Taylor, 2013). Heidegger used the German word '*Dasein*' (being-in-the world), which "tends to understand its own being in terms of that being to which it is essentially, continually, and most closely related–the 'world'" (Heidegger, 1996, p. 14). This ontological focus of *Dasein* in hermeneutic phenomenology emphasises that experiences are shaped by our interactions with the world we live in. In hermeneutic phenomenology, as Heidegger asserted, therefore "the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation" (Heidegger, 2002, p.286).

Gadamer (2013) specified Heidegger's hermeneutic interpretation process in terms of cultural and historical perspectives. He argued that human experiences need to be interpreted from individual prejudgement (preconception) and context. Preconceptions might be wrong or right, yet are produced culturally and historically to make sense of events and people (Whitehead, 2004). Gadamer (2013) asserted:

> A hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see... the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. (p. 316-317)

Gadamer (2013) recognised that both the researcher's and participant's preconception of the phenomena is not only impossible to eliminate but also limits

interpretations of phenomena. Gadamer used the metaphor 'fusion of horizons' which showed how the researcher with his/her own preconception enters the world of participants' lived experiences and makes meaning of these experiences. The present study is informed by Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology and Gadamer's notion of interpretation process (Figure 4.2).

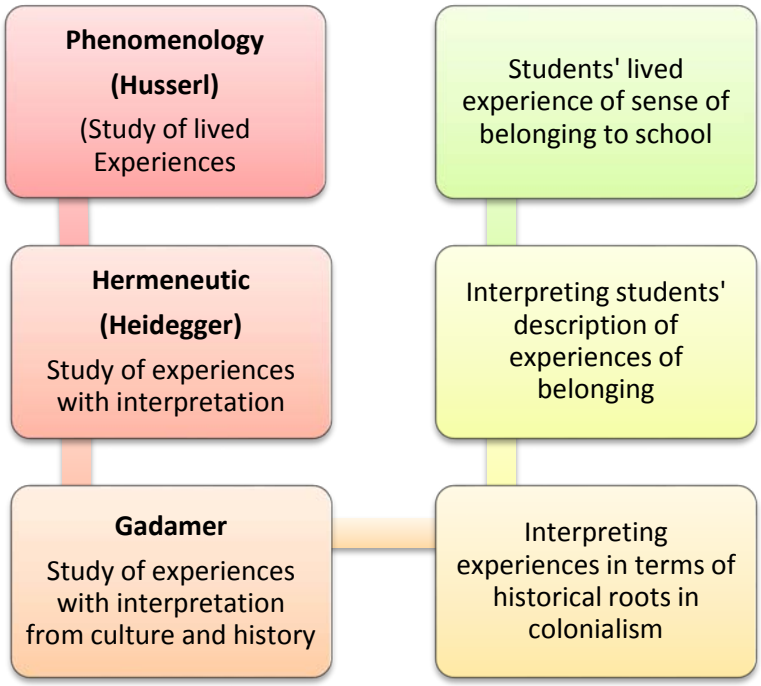


Figure 4.2: Theoretical Journey of the study methodology

Situating this research in hermeneutic phenomenology

From an interpretivist world view, the present research was guided by a hermeneutic version of phenomenological research. A phenomenological approach aims to understand social phenomena and concept from the individual's lived experiences and grasp the very essence of participants' common experiences (Manen, 1990; Patton, 2002).

Hermeneutic phenomenology accepts the framework of phenomenology as ideal, providing that an interpreting perspective is required to obtain the meaning of experiences (Sharma-Brymer & Fox, 2008). Hermeneutics phenomenology assumes

that “humans experience the world through language and that this language provides both understanding and knowledge” (Byrne, 2001, para. 1).

This study aimed to understand how children experience a sense of belonging and to identify a pattern for their experiences in the context of two backdrops: a school’s psychosocial environment and Bangladesh’s historical roots in postcolonial legacy. Thus the experiences of students needed to be interpreted in relation to historical and psychological attributes.

Sense of school belonging is a complex human experience which is neither totally intra-psychic nor solely formed from the school environment, but rather arising from the person within a school context (Goodenow, 1993a). Therefore, contributors to students’ sense of school belonging need to be understood from students’ perceptions and experiences of the schools they attend (or for whatever reason do not attend). A hermeneutic qualitative research approach has the potential to explore the “inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 12).

The study further explored the context of students’ experiences affected by existing colonial educational practice, which required a methodology that supported interpreting experiences from historical and cultural perspectives. Postcolonial discourse deals with how colonial practice remains today and affects present day experiences. Postcolonial theory posits that although the coloniser does not rule physically in the postcolonial period, the legacy continues in former colonised countries. Thus hermeneutic phenomenology is instrumental in examining how human conscious is historically affected (Gadamer, 2013). Gadamer argued that

human consciousness is shaped by its history and culture. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach offers to bring students' lived experiences into the present as well as provide interpretations of how colonial legacy frames students' school experiences today.

Given that the aim of research questions is to understand students' experiences and context, such a methodological stance was considered appropriate for the current study. A hermeneutic phenomenological approach therefore provides the researcher with clear directions that accommodate his/her understanding of students' sense of belonging, gained through their lived experience and historical perspective, to evolve a core meaning and pattern of school belonging, from a Bangladeshi cultural context.

Methods and design

The qualitative data gathering methods employed in this thesis were focus group and in-depth individual interviews with primary school students. Two forms of interview methods were selected based on the purpose of the study and research questions.

Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews are an interactive group interview procedure consisting of between 6 to 12 participants, in order to elicit perceptions, feelings, attitudes and ideas about a specific topic (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Focus group interviews were chosen for the present research on two grounds. First, they were suitable for the exploration of a wide number of issues generated through students' group interaction and 'collective viewpoint' (M. Freeman & Mathison, 2009, p. 103). Second, unequal power relations between young participants and the researcher

can be reduced in focus group interviews, and as such groups provide support from known peers in the group (M. Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Mauthner, 1997). As sense of belonging is a complex construct based on an individual's experience of different events and constructs, focus group interviews are appropriate because of their interactional nature, that can be helpful for students to reflect on their experiences by talking and communicating with each other (J. A. Smith et al., 2013). According to Freeman and Mathison (2009) focus groups can place less pressure on individual children to talk, and instead provide an opportunity for young people to discuss their experiences in a group setting.

In this study, 13 focus group interviews were conducted from the same number of 13schools to identify a range of issues that may influence students' sense of school belonging. These interviews were semi-structured, which means that interview questions were based on a set of preconceived topics and areas, though modified as needed during interview (Lichtman, 2013). Interview questions were based on constructs found in previous literature and on the basis of the research aims for this study to depict participants' experiences of school belonging including dimensions of relationships with peers, teachers, staff and place. Sample questions included (see Appendix A for the full interview schedule): *How do you know others in the school care for students? How do students know an adult in the school respects students? What makes students want to do best at school? What do teachers do to make you want to do your best?* Using a conversational style, probes, rather than leading questions, were employed throughout the interview such as "*Can you give me an example of that*?" and "*Tell me more*".

Individual interviews

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a participant in order to explore his or her perspectives on a particular idea or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Lichtman, 2013). In relation to young people, Freeman and Mathison (2009) claimed that individual interviews "provide a personal space for children or adolescents to voice their thoughts on an issue, share an experience, or reflect on an event" (p.88). Students' sense of belonging is a personal and emotional experience, and individual interviews are appropriate in order to identify their personal perspectives and stories which they may not share in group discussion.

Individual interviews consisted of semi-structured questions (see Appendix B) as for focus group interviews, though with a more personal or individual focus, for instance: *Why might you attend this school? Why might you not attend this school? ; What do you think teachers need to know about you? How do you know others in the school care for you? How do you know an adult in the school respects you? What do you think about your school facilities? What parts of the school make you most comfortable?*

Lichtman (2013) recommends starting with general questions to encourage participants to talk at length, with subsequent questions posed to seek clarity and consideration, for example seeking questions, elaboration and probing (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Sample questions and probes

Open-ended question	Example question	Elaboration	Probing
Tell me what it's like being in school for you?	**Tell me something that happened to you this week that made you .....for this school?**	**Is there anything else you would like to add to what you have already said?**	**Can you tell me some more about that?**

Two interview methods

Two forms of interview methods were selected based on research questions and their distinct data generation capabilities, namely:

1. Types of conversation (generate data from group interaction)
2. To access wider sampling.

Focus group interviews generated data from group of students while interview data produced intense and personal stories. Additionally, focus group interviews were conducted with students who felt comfortable in groups. Individual interviews were offered to students who might not be interested to talk in a group and/or who might feel uncomfortable discussing personal issues associated with school belonging (e.g. reasons for attending school regularly). Therefore, individual interviews elicited individual concerns and issues, while focus group interviews identified experiences across students generally. Details of each of these methods are discussed below.

Participants and sampling

Participants

Grade five students in government primary schools in Bangladesh were selected as study participants because this year level records the highest dropout rate across Bangladeshi schools (Sabates et al., 2013). In addition, grade five is the highest grade in a Bangladesh primary school. It was assumed that given their age, participants from this grade would have a better understanding of the issues pertaining to school belonging, than younger students. Furthermore, government primary schools were the chosen site for recruiting students, as more than 58% of primary school age children in Bangladesh were studying in these schools (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, 2011).

Sampling

The study employed both purposive and maximum variation sampling to explore students' lived experiences from different student groups. Purposive sampling helps the researcher to select individuals, groups, and settings purposefully "that maximize understanding of the phenomenon" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 111). Maximum variation refers to a purposeful sampling type which "requires the largest minimum sample size of any of the purposeful sampling strategies" (Sandelowski, 1995, p. 181). Maximum variation sampling is used when a study purports to include many types of individuals, groups, or settings for particular research to gain a range of complexity of the phenomena under investigation (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). The current study aimed to include participants who had a different language, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status (SES) in order to explore the belongingness phenomena in different contexts in Bangladesh.

Maximum variation sampling was thus employed to collect data from three different socioeconomic and ethnic regions in Bangladesh. And within each region, students were selected from urban, rural, high and low performing schools. Grade five primary school students were recruited from three Bangladeshi districts as follows:

a) Rangamati, Kurigram and Narayangonj were selected purposefully. Each district represents the following selected demographic of students.

   I. Rangamati: Rangamati district is situated in the north east hill track area of Bangladesh. The population consists of Bangalees and different indigenous groups (mostly Marma, Chakma, Mro, Tripura, Khumi and Tanchangya)(Barkat et al., 2009) . Students of this district represent participants who speak a language other than Bangle, the national language.

   II. Kurigram: Kurigram is one of the most flood prone northern districts in Bangladesh with the highest poverty (Kam et al., 2004). Along with lower income, there is a lack of essential public utilities such as transportation, education, health care, general administration and food security, which lowers the district's living standard compared to other regions (Yamagata, 2012) . Participating schools from this district are selected as those with a low socioeconomic status (SES).

   III. Narayangonj*:* Narayangonj is a district located in the centre of the country and close to the capital city. The population of this district represents a mix of many and varied backgrounds.

b) From each of the above selected districts, four government primary schools were selected purposefully. These schools were selected on the

basis of urban, rural, high performing and low performing schools (high and low performing schools were identified based on results from National Terminal Examination results)

c) Across each school, students from grade five were selected for the study. Students were invited to participate on a voluntary basis for focus group interviews.

d) Purposive sampling was employed when conducting individual interviews. Following focus group interviews, selected students were invited to participate in individual interviews. This ensured that other students, who were not involved in focus groups, were also interviewed, if they gave their consent, for instance, those students who were not attending school and who might have been reluctant to participate in a focus group. In other words, I specifically invited students who did not (or could not) attend focus group interviews, to participate in individual interviews. This ensured that a variety of different student voices were elicited.

A total of 88 students from 13 schools participated in this study. Among them, 79 students participated in focus group interviews including 43 females. The number of individual interviews with students having a record of absenteeism, dropout or school failure (failed in the last end-of-year examination) was nine. And four were female. It is noted that individual interviews were not undertaken in all schools (see Table 4.2). Out of 13 participating schools, seven schools provided the student's absenteeism or dropout record. This is further discussed in Chapter One, that is, that government primary schools tend to under-report absenteeism to receive

incentives, in order to maintain eligibility for a stipend (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014).

Table 4.2

Sampling by district and school types

District	Nature of the school		No. of primary schools	No. of focus group interviews (6-7 students)	No. of individual interviews
Narayangonj (General)	Urban	High performing	1	1	
		Low performing	2	2	
	Rural	High performing	1	1	
		Low performing	1	1	1
Rangamati (inhabited by predominantly Indigenous people)	Urban	High performing	1	1	
		Low performing	1	1	1
	Rural	High performing	1	1	
		Low performing	1	1	2
Kurigram (Low socio-economic)	Urban	High performing	1	1	1
		Low performing	1	1	1
	Rural	High performing	1	1	2
		Low performing	1	1	1
Total			13	13 (79 students)	9

Data collection procedure

All data was collected on the school premises before, during or after the mid-meal break. Participants were first invited to participate in focus group interviews. Individual interviews followed.

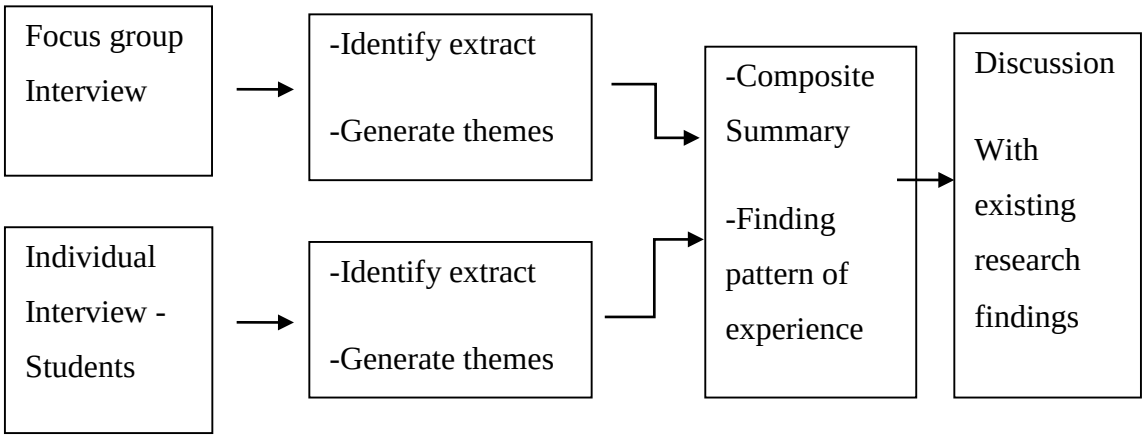


Figure 4.3: Visual flowchart of the research

Focus group interviews

General purpose research topics were explained to fifth grade classes and students were subsequently invited to participate. Interviews were conducted after class time. Each focus group commenced with a short group activity whereby students were invited to develop a school map on a big poster. This group activity served as an icebreaker for participants and helped students to focus. The duration of the average group meeting was approximately 60 to 90 minutes, with up to 10 to 15 minutes being used for informal socialising (Schensul, 1999). All focus group interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants and their parents.

Sticky-notes

Focus group interviews along with oral discussion used sticky notes as a data collection tool. Using sticky notes (e.g. post-its) in focus groups is an innovative approach used in a number of studies (O'hEocha, Wang, & Conboy, 2012; Peterson & Barron, 2007; Ward, Furber, Tierney, & Swallow, 2013). In this study, students were given small, colourful sticky notes and a box of different coloured art pens. Between focus group discussion, students were asked “when do they feel like they belong to school?” Students were given as many sticky notes as needed to answer this question and their choice of art pen. Once students completed their writing on the sticky notes, they were asked to return them to the focus group moderator. Students then resumed focus group discussion on the rest of the semi-structured questions.

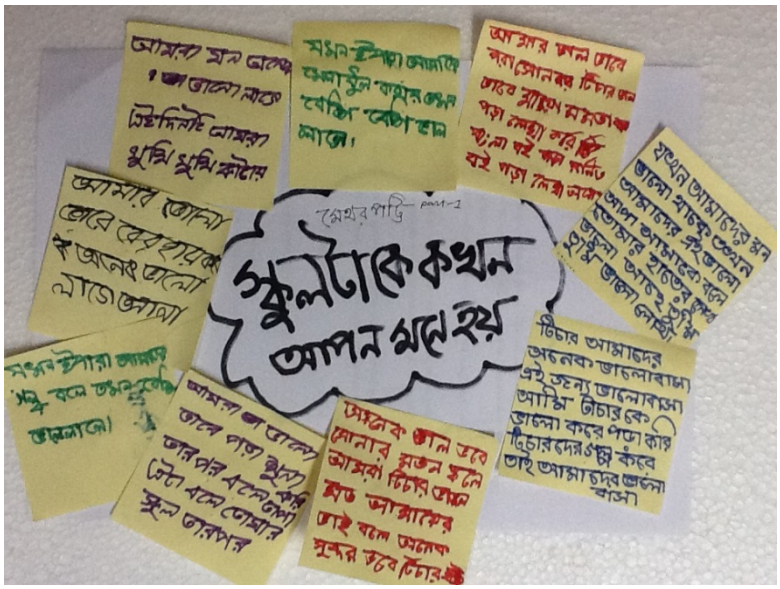


Figure 4.4: Sticky notes participants used during focus group session

Students' experiences of school belonging are assumed to have personal aspects they might not want to share with peers. Hence, sticky notes were initially intended for focus group participants to write about their belongingness to school. In addition to expression, students from ethnic backgrounds who were less comfortable with oral Bangla were found to be fluent when writing on sticky notes. Using sticky notes not only stimulates discussion but gives students time to think, write and structure information (Peterson & Barron, 2007). Participants in this study showed enthusiasm about writing on small, colourful sticky notes with colourful art pens. It brought much participation and liveliness into the discussion and students who were reluctant at first showed interest in writing several notes. Further, sticky notes generate, as Peterson and Barron (2007) noted, "a shared outcome that everybody owns" (p. 144).

Individual interviews

Individual interviews with children require a comfortable location and seating arrangements, as well as a warm, open and friendly environment (M. Freeman & Mathison, 2009). In this study, all individual interviews were conducted in school settings either in the classroom or in the playground at a time convenient for participants. With both parents' and students' permission, individual interview sessions were audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription.

In each of the oral interview sessions, photographs were used to initiate student conversations. Photography has been used to mediate conversations successfully to portray aspects of students' everyday school experiences from their perspectives (Eliadou, 2015; Kaplan, Lewis, & Mumba, 2007). Following initial rapport building, students were given a camera and instructions on how to take a

photo. They were asked to find his/her best and worst spaces at school and photograph them. Students were given up to 30 minutes to photograph these spaces. Once the photos were taken, students were given the opportunity to see the photos on screen and talk about the spaces. The photos were used to prompt conversation.

Rationale for using photographs

Photography has been used in many innovative ways in research. Particularly in educational research, photographs have the potential to elicit students' voices (Kaplan et al., 2007; Moss, Deppeler, Astley, & Pattison, 2007). In this research, photographs were not used as data but in individual interviews for two reasons. First, to get students talking about their feelings and emotions regarding school. Photography is a valuable tool for exploring students' experiences and for supporting them to express their feelings, beliefs and opinions, particularly regarding abstract concepts (Moss et al., 2007). The participants in this study were young and from diverse language groups, having limited verbal communication to express abstract concepts such as sense of belonging. Photographs helped initiate conversation about feelings related to school spaces and places and extended the verbal narration of their belongingness to school.

Second, students who participated in individual interviews included working children with a record of school absenteeism, low achievement and academic failure. These children had often been negatively labelled in light of their absenteeism and /or academic failure. Employing visual methodology enables students' self-knowledge to be opened out and provide a powerful means of engagement (Moss et al., 2007).Providing them with a camera offered the opportunity to take photographs of their choosing, which can have an immediate impact on students.

Pilot study of interview and focus group questions

In order to ensure the interview schedule was culturally sensitive, a set of Bangla questions was sent to a university lecturer, classroom teacher and primary school students to review the questions in terms of the appropriateness of the language for students and schools and the social context. The university lecturers were selected from an education faculty in a Bangladeshi university, whereas students and teachers who were invited to participate came from schools other than those in the intended sample, but from a similar context. Feedback on questions was incorporated accordingly.

Ethical considerations

Research with children involves complex ethical challenges. These challenges include gaining access, obtaining informed consent from parents (and children), maintaining confidentiality, providing protection and the debriefing of young participants (Fargas-Malet, McSherry, Larkin, & Robinson, 2010). As well, power issues between adult researchers and young participants are significant (Gallagher, 2009). Consideration is needed to protect children from potential harm arising from the research process (Lichtman, 2013). These considerations are particularly salient in different cultural settings. Accordingly, the following procedures were put into place.

Access and informed consent

A three-step consent process was employed that included:

1. Contacting the organisation or agency in which the children are situated;
2. Presenting and explaining the project to young students and their parents; and

3. Contacting young students and their parents.

A permission letter was sought from the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) (Appendix E), Bangladesh to allow the researcher to conduct the study in government primary schools. After obtaining permission from the DPE (Appendix D), local education officers were contacted for identifying high and low performance schools based on each primary school's Terminal Examination (a public examination for final year primary school students, conducted all over the country simultaneously at the end of grade five) results. From the list of high and low performing schools, schools were selected randomly from urban and rural locations. A letter explaining the research aims and procedures (Appendix F) was then sent to schools in order to commence field work. After obtaining permission from Headmaster (Appendix G) to access schools, approval letters of Directorate General of DPE and Headmasters were sent to Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) to start the data collection. Once MUHREC approved, data collection procedure were started at schools. It was planned to meet mothers at their monthly meeting (In all Bangladesh Government primary schools mothers' meetings are held every month.) to explain the research purpose and scope (Appendix H). I met with grade five students to explain the research aims and how they might participate (Appendix I). This process not only promoted consent but encouraged participation through familiarisation of the study and the researcher. At the third step, a letter of consent explaining the research purpose and procedures was handed out to each of the parents of the grade five students, so that parents who were interested could send their written consent back to me. Finally, once the students were selected for interviews, an explanatory statement written in Bangla (Appendix I) was read out

and children were asked to provide their oral and written consent before each of the individual and focus group interviews.

Power relationships

Once parental and student consent was obtained, it was made verbally clear (and through the explanatory statement) that participants were free to participate in or withdraw from interviews at any time, and this would not affect their future schooling, or how school staff might treat them.

Debriefing

Talking about school belonging might be quite distressing for some students, especially in the individual interviews. Accordingly, if any student became upset, the interview would be stopped and participants would be debriefed, by listening to them and assuring them that their experiences were normal and common (Stallard & Salter, 2003).

Ethical approval

The current study obtained approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) (see Appendix C). The photos were not retained or used as data because ethics approval had not been obtained.

Transcription and translation of raw data

Translation and transcription are two major components in qualitative research. Particular to cross cultural studies, language translation techniques are especially important in data analysis (Esposito, 2001). Explicit protocols were maintained for transcription and translation as outlined below.

Transcription

Transcription is one of the initial tasks in qualitative research to capture participants' spoken words into written form. It is a powerful *act of representation* of the interview process (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). Given the phenomenological approach, the present study recorded a detailed account of the participants' interviews to understand their lived experiences. As Fairclough (1993) suggested, examining real practice requires analysing real text. In this study all interviews were conducted in Bangla. Each interview was audio-recorded using a digital portable audio recorder. Then, interview audio data were transformed from audio to Bangla transcribed text verbatim. The transcriptions were checked twice, once by the researcher and later, by a group of research assistants who were education graduates with educational research experience. If any disagreements occurred, the original audio was listened to repeatedly to correct the transcript. Bangla transcripts were analysed to generate themes and identify relevant quotes/extracts from participants' interviews.

Translation

The translation followed a literal and conceptual translation process for two different forms of analysed data. Quotes and extracts were translated mostly word for word from Bangla to English (literal translation). On the other hand, key themes and subthemes that emerged were translated into the conceptual equivalent of English text. Conceptual equivalence in research refers to words, ideas, or concepts that have similar meanings in two languages after being translated (Chang, Chau, & Holroyd, 1999). A conceptual equivalence translation emphasised the transfer of the original in-depth meaning of the data regardless of verbal form (Xian, 2008). Xian further explains that translated data taking this approach "should produce a response in a

reader in the targeted culture that is essentially like the response of a reader in the original cultural" (Nida cited in Xian, 2008, p. 233). Thus, the core meaning of participants' experience of belonging can be reflected with this approach and assist in understanding the phenomenon of belongingness. In contrast to conceptual translation, literal translation was chosen to retain as closely as possible participants' words. However, it is not a strict word-for-word translation. Rather it takes the broader definition of literal translation, described as "the close adherence to the surface structures of the source text message both in terms of semantics and syntax" (Munday, 2009, p. 204). This approach allows the reader to see as directly as possible the meaning and forms of the original expression.

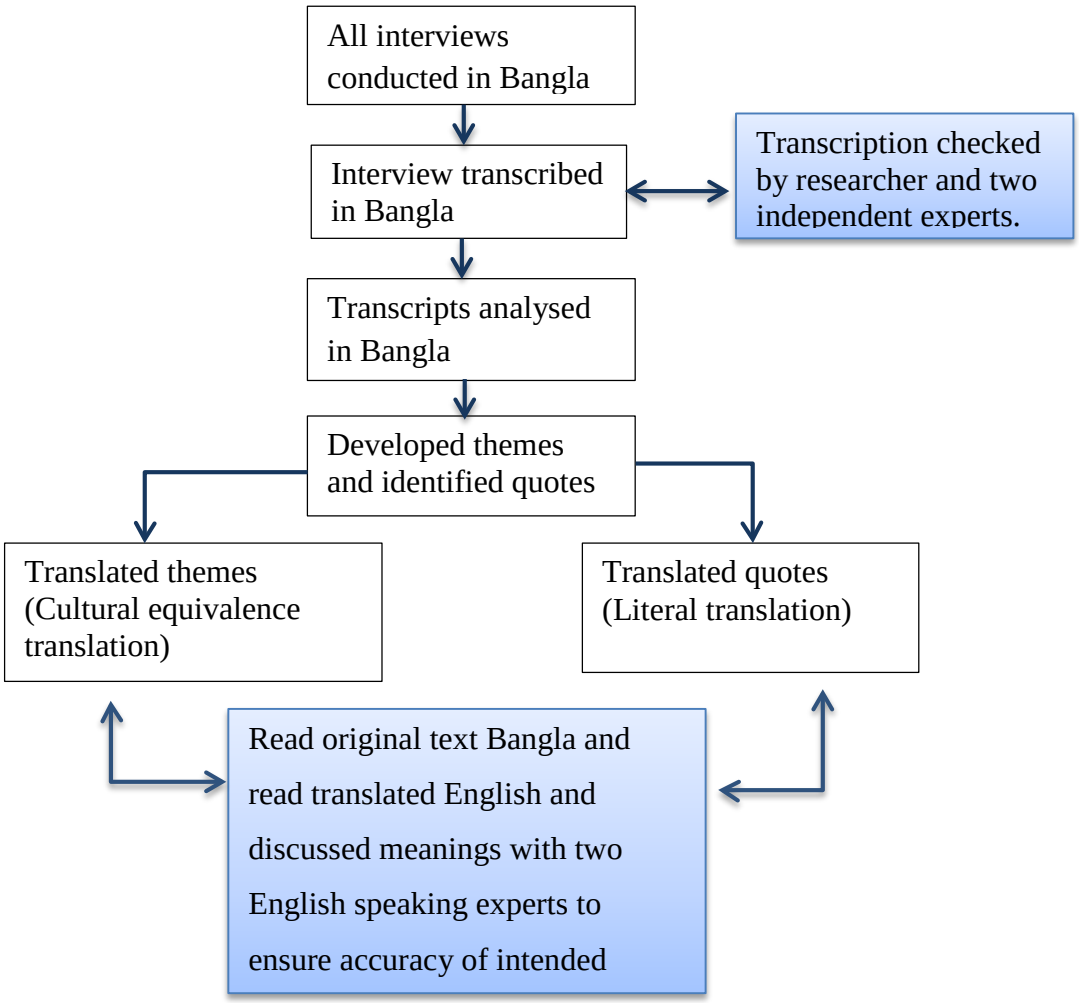
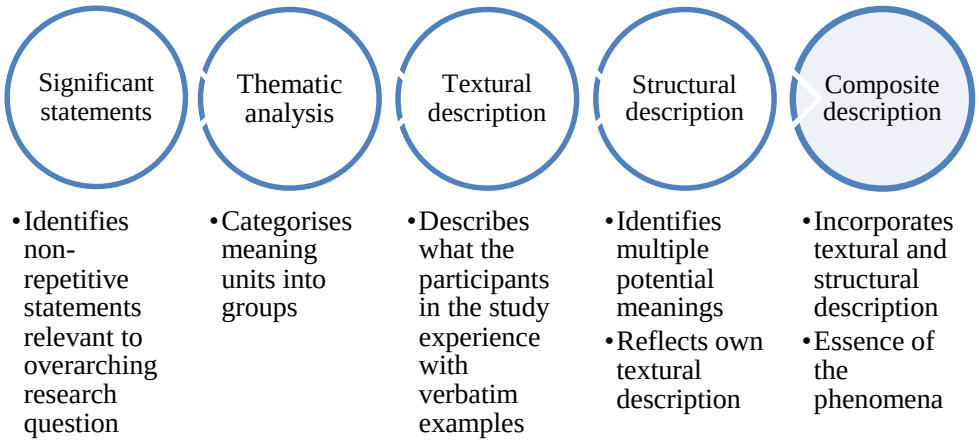


Figure 4.5: Flowchart showing translation and transcription procedures

In order to ensure that translation accurately reflected intended meanings of the participants, a final step in the translation process involved random checking with both supervisors. After initial themes and code development, random quotes in Bangla were selected and read and translated there and then to compare with the translated text. Any differences were discussed to ensure translated quotes reflected the intended meaning and in relation to cultural context and colloquialisms.

Data analysis

Compared to other qualitative research, a phenomenological approach provides more structured analytic focus towards participants' attempts to make sense of their experiences (J. A. Smith et al., 2013). The sole focus of phenomenological analysis is to understand the depth and meaning of participants' lived experiences of phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Several data analysis methods have been developed in cross discipline phenomenological research. Among them Moustakas (1994), Giorgi (2009) and van Manen (Manen, 1990, 2007) are prominent in describing in detail phenomenological data analysis. The present study followed a modified approach from Moustakas (1994) based on the work of Stevick (1971), Colaizzi (1973) and Keen (1975) (See figure 4.6).



Source: Adapted from Moustakas (1994)

Figure 4.6: Steps in data analysis

The five-step analysis procedure is described in detail in Table 4.3. Focus group data were analysed together with data generated from sticky notes. After focus group data analysis, interview data were analysed following the same procedures of step two and three. Both data were incorporated in the textural description of step four.

Table 4.3

Data analysis procedure description

Analysis steps	Procedure description
Step One: Identifying significants statements	**At the onset of each focus group analysis, I repeatedly read the Bangla transcribed text and original audio recordings to immerse myself in the data. The transcript data were first analysed by identifying significant quotes from participants that provided an understanding of how they experienced a sense of belonging to school. Sticky notes were arranged and photographed as a set by individual school (see Figure 4.4). Similar to focus groups, sticky note data were analysed by separating similar themes. In both cases, expressions that were repetitive, unclear and/or not relevant were not included for analysis.**
Step Two: Theme development	**After identifying the significant statements, all statements from each focus group and sticky notes were categorised under a number of themes. For each focus group thematic analysis, the initial categories were sometimes overwhelming in number. To reduce categories to six to eight themes, related topics were grouped into subcategories.** **Each of the focus group interviews was analysed separately, in order to capture maximum experiences of participants. Each of the focus group interview**

	transcripts analysis consisted of relevant quote identification, quote translation, theme and subtheme development and the researcher's field notes. A separate thematic map was also developed for focus group analysis, consisting of all themes with verbatim examples in graphic notes. Thematic maps ware coded with an identification mark, school types, status of urban and rural settings and academic performance so that school features could be easily seen and identified. **After completing interview data analysis for 13 focus groups, all mind maps were analysed together and categorised under broader themes and subcategories.** **Individual interviews were analysed in a similar fashion and merged in results presentation and discussion.**
Step Three: Textural description	**This is the data reporting part, where a description was given of what participants in the study experienced with the phenomena. Here themes and verbatim statements were used to write a thick description of how students experienced sense of belonging in their school. This constituted a large proportion of transcript extract along with analytic interpretation of the text. Thus this provided a sense of what the data looked like and interpretation (J. A. Smith et al., 2013).**
Step Four: Structural description (documented in Chapter Five)	**Structural description reveals how phenomena were experienced in the context and setting (Creswell, 2013). Participants' sense of belonging was analysed within school contexts (high performing, low performing, urban and rural settings) and participants' background (e.g. ethnicity and low socioeconomic background). This described the structure of experiences by identifying multiple potential meanings within the textural description in addition to variations of these meanings (Hays & Singh, 2011). Both focus group and interview data were merged, compared and triangulated to grasp a full understanding of participants' experiences of sense of belonging to school.**
Step Five: (documented in Chapter Six)	**A composite description of the students' experiences of sense of belonging was provided incorporating both textural and structural description via the research question. This culminated in various aspects of the phenomena of sense of belonging to school in Bangladeshi students.**

Trustworthiness

Assessing validity and reliability as applied to quantitative research is different from qualitative research in terms of epistemological understanding and strategy. Qualitative research is based on the philosophical underpinning of multiple perspectives of truth and subjective accounts of experience (Creswell, 2013). Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research is "to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants" (Creswell, 2013, p. 249). The aim of the credibility process is to ensure that participants' experiences

and their meaning are truly represented. The following protocol was followed to ensure trustworthiness of the research data.

Triangulation. In qualitative research, the triangulation process involves corroborating evidence from multiple sources to shed light on a theme or perspective (Creswell, 2013). In this research, both individual and focus group interview data are used to analyse participants' experiences of sense of belonging.

Peer review. Like inter-rater reliability in quantitative research, an external checking of the research process is followed for this study. This process involved two supervisors and two doctoral students. To ensure qualitative validity, random codes and theme checks were employed by the two project supervisors. The process examined whether themes and codes reflected the original Bangla text.

This procedure was important in a cross cultural context, where not only words are translated, but also cultural concepts. The literal translation of some themes was at times at odds with the original meaning of the participants' comments. Thus, in consultation with supervisors, themes were developed based on core meanings derived from the Bangla transcript. The themes were translated and in some cases Bangla words or phrases were retained, where there was no equivalent English. Unlike inter-rater reliability, the aim of this mini audit is not to reach a single truth or consensus, but instead, as Smith et al. (2013) describe, "the independent audit allows for the possibility of a number of legitimate accounts and the concern therefore is with how systematically and transparently this particular account has been produced"(p. 183). They further argued that this process "speaks to the particular nature of qualitative inquiry"(p. 183).

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology of the study. The methodology was informed by a hermeneutic phenomenology research approach. The study employed individual and focus group interviews as data collection tools. Participants were selected using maximum variation sampling. The students who participated were grade five children from government primary schools in Bangladesh: in total 88 students (79 for focus group and 9 for individual interviews. The chapter discussed methodological issues such as translation, transcription, trustworthiness and ethics. Data generated from employing this methodology will be presented and analysed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

I had friends at school, but I was never part of a gang and I dreamed of that sense of belonging to a group. You know, where people would call me 'Em' and shout across the bar, 'Em, what are you drinking?' after the show.

(Emily Mortimer)

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis in this study. The data sources include 13 focus groups and nine individual face-to-face interviews. The focus group and individual interview data complemented each other and enriched the findings by providing collective viewpoints and personal voices on sense of school belonging (M. Freeman & Mathison, 2009). Inductive thematic analysis across the combined focus groups and individual interview data identified five main themes related to participants' sense of belonging to school: *teacher behaviour/practice*, *peer support*, *academic achievement*, *school resources* and *student wellbeing*. The interview data is presented according to these themes with selected quotes which represent participants' experiences in terms of belonging to school. The five main themes and subsequent subthemes related to issues of belonging to school are summarised in Figure 5.1 and elaborated further.

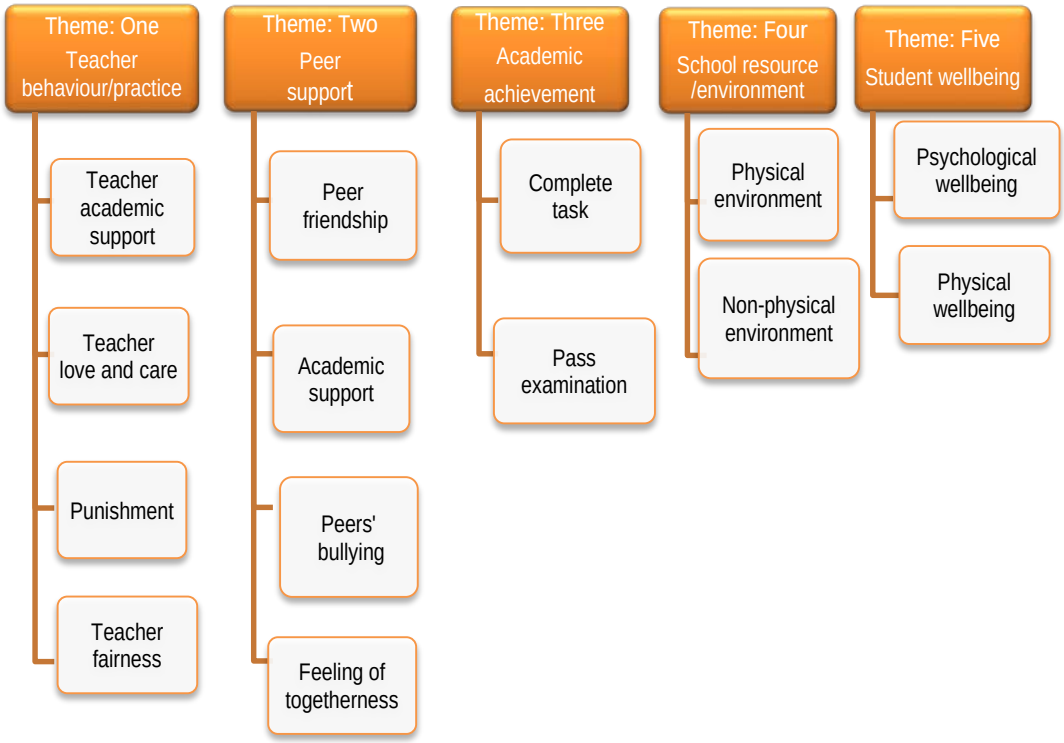


Figure 5.1: Interview data key themes and subthemes

A note on transcription /setting the scene

The current study was guided by a Heideggerian interpretive phenomenological approach, which strives to see the world as participants see it (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). As 'pure' experiences are never accessible (as we witness it after the event), interpretative phenomenological inquiry attempts to capture "close experiences" to understand how particular experiential phenomena have been understood from the perspective of particular people (J. A. Smith et al., 2013). The present study put substantive effort into gaining maximum understanding of students' lived experiences, by honouring the participants' words and original expression in translating their quotes from Bangla to English. In order to do so, the researcher (Bangla first language speaker) has used syntax, vocabulary, inflexion of

the language of the Bangladeshi students and ignored English grammatical rules in some translations. For example, a student's quote on teachers' attendance was translated as he expressed it without modification: "If there were more classes held, I would come to school more, if we would stay more (at school), we would feel good" (F_5LUG).

Several cultural specific practices in Bangladeshi school settings are reflected in students' expressions. In Bangladesh, for example, younger people do not call elderly persons by their name. It is considered disrespectful. For example, the common form of addressing a male teacher is "Sir" and a female teacher is "Madam" (see students' quotes (*F_6SIS*). Students' use of English words, "Sir", "Sirs" (denotes plural) and "Madam" is believed to have derived from colonial education practice when Bangladesh was a former colony of Britain.

Students tend to use collective nouns when talking about their thoughts or behaviours using "We" rather than "I". For instance, when students were individually asked about how he or she felt in regard to belonging or being a part of their school, students typically replied, "when Madams come to class, we feel good, we study well" (F_{11}LUL).

Students sometimes spoke hypothetically about what would have been 'ideal' or 'acceptable', rather than what actually happened in their classrooms. For example, Arif, commented on teachers' academic support, "When teachers explain us everything" and "If (teachers) write [on blackboard] once with examples, then ask us to read and then ask us to write again" (I_{nd}LUH). Arif meant that it would have been 'ideal' if the teacher could provide explanations for every lesson; by writing on the blackboard and providing examples. Students often use euphemistic language to

describe matters related to teachers, using indirect expressions when talking about something negative. It is likely they do this to show respect to teachers.

In presenting the data, I have used codes to denote the data sources as a way of providing clarity (Tables 5.1 and 5.2). In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used for all participants. The school's socioeconomic, academic performance level and urban-rural setting are provided (see Chapter Four for details). Quotes were labelled with four letters. The first letter indicates whether the quote is sourced from a focus group interview (F), or from an individual interview (I). Then three letters describe the school's performance level (H=high or L=Low), geographic location (U=Urban, R=Rural) and socio-culture-economic status (H=Hilly area where students consists of different ethnic groups, G=general (Flat land), L=Low socioeconomic (flood prone areas).

Table 5.1

School codes and keys for focus groups

Focus groups			
School code	Key	School code	Key
F_1HUH	**High achieving Urban school in Hilly district**	**F_8HRG**	**High achieving Rural school in general district**
F_2LUH	**Low achieving Urban school in Hilly district**	**F_9LRG**	**Low achieving Rural school in General district**
F_3HRH	**High achieving Rural school in Hilly district**	**F_{10}HUL**	**High achieving Urban school in Low socioeconomic district**
F_4LRH	**Low achieving Rural School in Hilly district**	**F_{11}LUL**	**Low achieving Urban school in Low socioeconomic district**
F_5LUG	**Low achieving Urban school in General district**	**F_{12}LRL**	**Low achieving Rural school in Low socioeconomic district**
F_6SIS	**Special Interest School (School located a colony where all the students are from a hereditary sweeper family)**	**F_{13}HRL**	**High achieving Rural school in Low socioeconomic district**
F_7HUG	**High achieving Urban school in General district**		

Table 5.2

School codes and keys for individual interviews

Individual interviews			
Participants and school code	Key	Participants and school code	Key
I_{nd}LUH	**Low achieving Urban school in Hilly district**	**I_{nd}LUL**	**Low achieving Urban school in Low socioeconomic district**
I_{nd1}LRH	**Low achieving Rural school in Hilly district**	**I_{nd1}LRL**	**Low achieving Rural school in Low socioeconomic district**
I_{nd2}LRH	**Low achieving Rural school in Hilly district**	**I_{nd2}LRL**	**Low achieving Rural school in Low socioeconomic district**
I_{nd}LRG	**Low achieving Rural school in General district**	**I_{nd}HRL**	**High achieving Rural school in Low socioeconomic district**
I_{nd}HUL	**High achieving Urban school in Low socioeconomic district**		

The final number in each data source code refers to the particular focus group or individual interview. The data source from which the responses came from is labelled focus group (F) and individual interview (I) to justify how the various data sources validate the results.

Table 5.3 presents demographics and highlights key features of each school's total number of students and teachers. This background will provide readers with a context regarding the stories of each student's experience of belongingness in school.

Table 5.3

Demographics and key features of schools

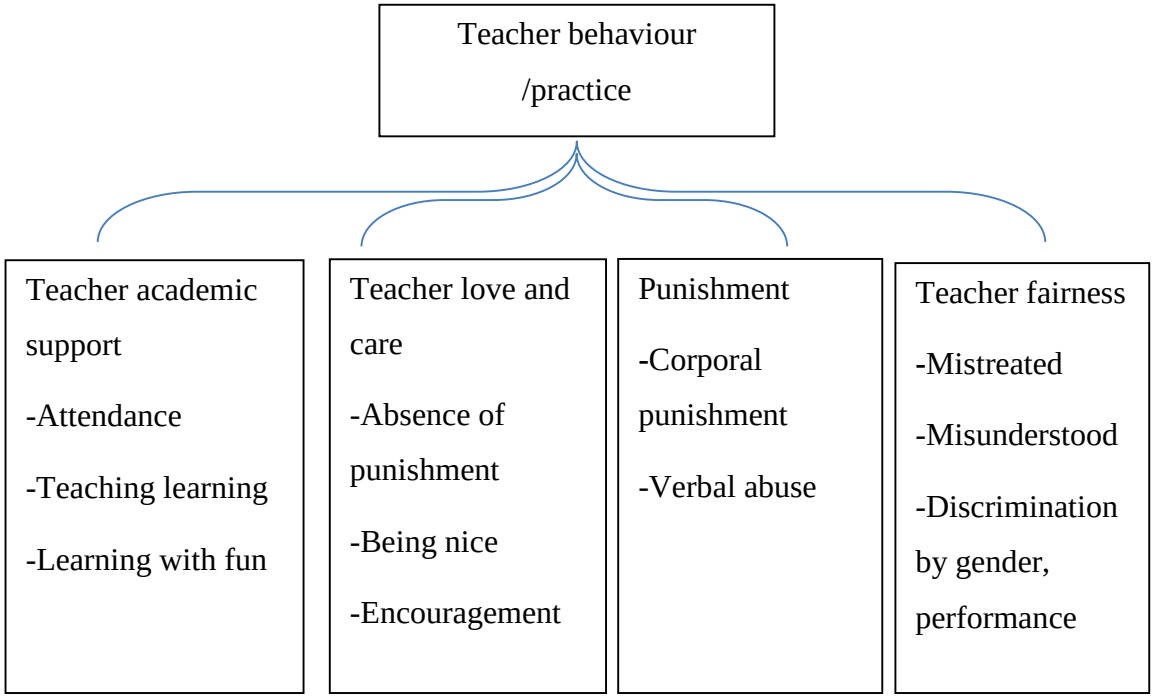
School codes	School diversity	Location	School features	No. students		No. teachers	
				Total	Girls	Total	Female
School 1 F_1HUH	**Hilly areas**	**Urban**	**High performing**	**820**	**437**	**17**	**15**
School 2 F_2LUH		**Urban**	**Low performing**	**388**	**172**	**13**	**11**
School 3 F_3HRH		**Rural**	**High performing**	**94**	**44**	**5**	**3**
School 4 F_4LRH		**Rural**	**Low performing**	**280**	**137**	**10**	**10**
School 5 F_5LUG	**Flat land**	**Urban**	**Low performing**	**958**	**512**	**13**	**13**
School 6 F_6SIS		**Urban,**	**Low performing**	**32**	**18**	**4**	**4**
School 7 F_7HUG		**Urban**	**High performing**	**582**	**319**	**40**	**37**
School 8 F_8HRG		**Rural**	**High performing**	**612**	**290**	**10**	**7**
School 9 F_9LRG		**Rural**	**Low performing**	**357**	**216**	**7**	**6**
School 10 F_{10}HUL	**Low socio-economic**	**Urban**	**High performing**	**586**	**287**	**14**	**10**
School 11 F_{11}LUL	**area**	**Urban**	**Low performing**	**345**	**168**	**7**	**6**
School 12 F_{12}LRL		**Rural**	**Low performing,**	**356**	**179**	**9**	**4**
School 13 F_{13}HRL		**Rural**	**High performing**	**357**	**189**	**8**	**4**

Central themes and subthemes

In the following section the five central themes and associated sub-themes are described: the first central theme relates to students' experiences with their teachers' behaviour and practice.

Theme one: Teachers' behaviour /practice

The first theme describes student belongingness to school in relation to teachers' behaviour and practices. The effect of teachers' interpersonal behaviour and classroom practices on students was amongst the most commonly reported theme, emphasised by students when describing their sense of belonging to schools. As the interview transcript analysis proceeded; six distinguishing teacher behaviours and practices emerged, linked to students' sense of belonging, described in the following sections as subthemes. The subthemes are produced out of the inductive analysis of focus group and individual interviews.



Subtheme: Teachers' academic support

Teachers' academic support (or lack thereof) was the most frequently mentioned aspect of students' sense of belonging to their school. Students perceived teachers' academic support varied by individual student and school. Students mostly described three aspects of teachers' academic support, namely: teachers being in regular

attendance in class, how teachers explain lesson content and how teachers make learning joyful.

Teachers' attendance or being irregular in class: Many students mentioned teachers' absenteeism or not being on time in class in connection to their belongingness to school. In response to the question about when you feel you belong to the school, students' written comments on post-it-notes in focus groups include the following quotes:

When teacher take our class regularly (F_9LRG)

Everyday all classes are held on time (F_{10}HUL)

When Madams come to class, we feel good, we study well (F_{11}LUL)

When teachers take the class in time, then I feel good (F_{13}HRL).

Similarly, in focus group discussion students often related their positive and negative feelings related to teachers' attendance. When students were asked if they ever feel bad at school, some indicated: "When teacher do not come to school" (F_2LUH). Conversely, when students were asked what makes students come to school regularly, students said "if there were more classes held, I would come to school more, if we could stay more (at school), we would feel good" (F_5LUG).

Students from both high and low achieving schools connected teacher absenteeism with their feelings toward school. Madhubi, a student from a high achieving rural school, explained how she felt when teachers did not come to class in the following ways:

Interviewer: Mahdubi, what makes you feel the worst in class?

Madhubi: When Sir [teacher] does not teach us. When they do not take classes, I feel very bad in that time.

Interviewer: Why?

Madhubi: I enjoy the classes very much. But teachers do not take classes. (F_{13}HRL)

Similarly, Soma and Humaira from a low achieving urban school explained:

Interviewer: What make you feel good in class?

Soma: If teacher would take all classes, Bangla, mathematics, English, it would be better… Sometimes classes are not held regularly.

Humaira: [She] means, sometimes some classes are held and some are not. We bring all the books everyday thinking if the class would be held [showing frustration] (F_5LUG)

Interestingly, Riaz, identified by the school as an irregular student, prefer to be punishment by the teacher rather than teacher being absent in his class.:

Interviewer: When do you feel bad in class?

Riaz: When teacher does not come in class.

Interviewer: Any more reason for feeling bad?

Riaz: No.

Interviewer: If teachers scold you for not completing your homework, don't you feel bad for that?

Riaz: No, teachers are here to teach [discipline] us. (I_{nd}HUL)

Tonmoy, another irregular student who failed the last examination, described his negative school feelings when classes were not held regularly:

Tonmoy: Sometimes classes are not held [that's when] I do not feel good.

Interviewer: Why?

Tonmoy: Yes, I do not like only sitting in class. (I_{nd2}LRH)

Students from the special interest school described teachers' absenteeism explicitly with further details. This government school is situated inside a hereditary

sweeper colony. All enrolled students come from families where the parents' occupation ('sweepers') is to clean and sweep the city. Their children, in particular, described several exclusionary schooling experiences they believed resulted from their parents being sweepers. Students explained how they wanted the teacher to come regularly to their class and their feelings when they found teachers were using school contact time for personal work.

> *Alok : We wait for the teacher [in class]; Madam does not come to the class. When we go to (the office room) to call Madam, we see Madam was feeding her daughter, or just standing outside [or] gossiping with other teachers.*
>
> *Neha: [They] stitch bag or quilt Katha [fabric]. (F_6SIS)*

Students expressed strong annoyance when they articulated how they felt when the teacher did needlework while teaching in classroom ("Madams simultaneously do their personal needlework while they are teaching us") (F_6SIS). Again, some students from the special interest school stated that even when they wanted to attend all the scheduled classes, their school time was reduced and finished earlier without tangible explanations:

> *Arun: If we ask teachers why you are finishing the school early, teacher says, "Go away". Then they will give us huge pressure [with lots of homework].*
>
> *Priti: Teachers would give us all tasks at a time [sic] and say "go home".*
>
> *Arun: If they give us little [work] every day, we could study well. They [teacher] ask us to go home early. We tell them we have only three lessons today, what about other lessons?*
>
> *Neha: They say "tomorrow".*
>
> *Arun: They say, "no, no, go home", and [teachers] close the [school] gate. We say "give us time to pack our book" and they tell us "get out quick", "hurry up". (F_6SIS)*

Students' narrative of this special school showed they were aware of other government school times, as they compared how their school time was reduced on a regular basis compared to other government schools outside the sweeper colony:

> *Sibani: Sir, I want to say one thing. Outside in all the schools, teachers come 7 [a.m.] and leave the school 5 [p.m.].*
>
> *Alok : And here [teachers] come 10 a.m. and leave [sic] go back 1 p.m. It was not like this before. (F_6SIS)*

These sentiments demonstrate some evidence of irregularities in school practice as well as lack of monitoring in the sweeper colony schools.

Teaching and learning practices. Students' narratives revealed that the most frequently identified academic support was when teachers made lessons understandable in class. Students recurrently mentioned how their teacher presents the lesson in class in connection to their sense of belonging to the school. Students mentioned that a good learning experience is associated with good feelings about their school or vice versa:

> *When Sirs [teachers] teach our lessons in class, then I feel our school is very beautiful, so I feel like [I] belong [to school]. (F_{11}LUL)*
>
> *When teachers take classes properly. (F_{10}HUL)*
>
> *Madams [teachers] teach us nicely, so I feel good. (F_2LUH)*
>
> *When teachers teach us properly, when teachers give us homework. (F_4LRH)*

In response to the question of how students perceived effective teaching, they mostly identified how clearly teachers explain the lesson to them, as indicated in the following exchanges:

> *Riken: Teacher teaches me the lessons properly.*
>
> *Interviewer: How do you know the teacher is teaching you properly?*

Riken: [Teachers] explain [the lesson to] me.

Arpon: My Didimoni [teacher] teach us nicely, explain the mathematics. (F_3HRH)

Silu: [Teacher] explain the lessons well.

Interviewer: What do you mean [by] can you 'explain further'?

Silu: What we do not understand, [teachers] explain by writing on the board or orally. (F_{10}HUL)

Akber: I like this school very much, because teachers teach us very well.

Interviewer: what do you mean by 'teaching very well?

Akber: When we do not understand anything in the text, teachers make us understand that very well.

Interviewer: How do they make you understand?

Akber: If I do not understand anything in class, I ask the teacher. Teacher then explains that to me. (F_5LUG)

Arif and Akhi, who were both irregular and had failed in the last year's school examination, also mentioned their motivation for school and study, linked to how their teacher makes the lesson more understandable for them in class:

Arif: When teachers explain us [sic] everything.

Interviewer: How do you want your teachers to explain the lesson to you?

Arif: If [teachers] write [on blackboard] once with examples, then ask us to read and then ask us to write again. (I_{nd}LUH)

Interviewer: How would you like your teachers to teach you?

Akhi: If I could not complete a class lesson, teacher teaches the lesson again and again.We say, Madam, I cant do it ,and then Madam explains the task , and after that I feel good. (I_{nd1}LRH)

Again, in terms of effective teaching, students sometimes used teacher's love and care or good behaviour synonymously with having experienced better instructional practices with teachers. Anuska stated:

> *Anuska: Sir, I also like this school, because all the teachers of this school are very good. They all behave with us well.*
>
> *Interviewer: How?*
>
> *Anuska: Sir, if anything we do not understand in the lesson, Sir [teacher] explains us that [sic]. If we make any mistake and ask them, they [teachers] make that right. Besides, if we need something they [teachers] help us.*
>
> *Interviewer: What kind of 'need' are you talking about?*
>
> *Anuska: We give our workbook to teachers; they check our works, whether they are right or wrong? (F_{10}HUL)*

Similarly, Puspo described teachers' academic support as teachers' love and care.

> *Puspo: I also like the school very much.*
>
> *Interviewer: Why?*
>
> *Puspo: Because teachers in this school love all of us very much.*
>
> *Interviewer: How?*
>
> *Puspo: [Teachers] behave well with us, they explain us nice and easy language what we do not understand. (F_{10}HUl)*

Both focus group and individual interview data indicated that teachers' instructional methods were associated with students' positive classroom experiences. Students identified different instructional methods, for example, "discuss that (difficult) part of the text", "explain drawing a picture" (F_2LUH), or "repeat again and again" (F_4LRH,) that makes them feel good about classroom learning. Further, the teacher's writing on the blackboard, or drawing of pictures to illustrate difficult aspects of the content can make their lesson more easily understood:

Dipa: When [we] do not understand anything, if [teacher] would bring us to blackboard and explain [to] us [by writing on the blackboard] it would be better. (F_5LUG)

The data indicated that interactive activities in classroom teaching provided positive classroom experiences. Simple classroom activities such as the freedom to ask questions, the opportunity to write in their notebook or on the blackboard made some students feel better about their school.

Agomoni: I like to study, when teachers explain us any lesson, and then I feel much better. Again, I like when teachers ask us to write something. Then if I make any mistake, teachers ask us to check the mistake and fix it. And I feel good to correct the mistake. (F_{10}HUL)

Akhi, a student from a high performing model school interestingly explained why a teacher should know their students and support low achieving students:

If [teacher] know students' name, [if the teacher] knows students' nature, what activities should be done for his/her brain. Many teachers just give one lecture, bad students [low achieving] feel problem, if teachers explain to them separately, give bad students more explanation [it would be better]. (F_8HRG)

Interestingly, Sara and Agomononi who were previously in different schools, compared their present and previous schools based on how teachers explained class lessons:

Interviewer: Why? What do you like most in this school?

Agomoni: Sir, this school's teaching quality is better [than other school]. Sir, in the previous school, [teachers] only gave task [for homework], and they do not explain the lesson in class. (F_{10}HUL)

Interviewer: Sara, tell me how you feel about this school?

Sara: Sir, I like this school, I like [it] a lot. Because, teachers here explain to students everything. Before starting lesson of any chapter, teachers first explain [summarise] the lesson and then we open the book. Further, teachers mark all the answers [on the textbook] and help students identified the answers from excersise question inside the text book). (F_7HUG)

In addition, students from one of the top performing schools emphasised teachers who prepared them for the *Primary School Terminal Examination* as the best academic support they receive. This is a nationwide public examination in Bangladesh for grade five students. As mentioned earlier, all students are required to sit for this examination after completion of grade five. Although the interview for this study has been taken at the beginning of the year, students identified teachers who prepared them for examination as their best academic supporters:

Tuni: Our teachers teach us intelligently.

Interviewer: What do you mean by 'intelligently'?

Tuni: For example, teachers know how answer should be presented in the examination, and they teach; teachers also know how much we should learn [to prepare for exam].

Huzaifa: Suppose teacher wants to teach us a chapter, teachers go through the whole chapter, read out [aloud] [by teacher or students]. Then, he finds out and helps us marking the most important lines in our textbook that might appear in the examination. He tells us potential multiple choice questions and general question [that] might be in the examination from this particular chapter. Teachers tell us the best ways we can answer the questions. This is why I like this school. (F_7HUG)

And like Huzaifa, other students consistently referred to teachers' academic support and care as how they prepared students for the school terminal examination, or grade five public examinations.

Learning with fun. Students pervasively indicated that learning with fun was connected to how teachers support them academically. Students not only described teacher instructional methods but also identified teachers' body language, such as smiling and showing students a happy face, made them more engaged with classroom activities.

> *Atikur: Sir, I like when teachers make the classes lively with laughter and smile, then I listen attentively to the teacher, I feel good. (F_{13}HRL)*
>
> *Golapi: When Sir gives us to do any lesson [class task], if we cannot do it, then teachers explain the lesson and smile, then we feel happy. (F_{13}HRL)*

Some other students identified lively teaching with happy expressions as opposed to beating or scolding in class made them feel they belonged to their school:

> *Sumi: When teachers always explain/teach lessons with smiling face I like to [attend] school at those times.*
>
> *Interviewer: How do teachers explain lessons with smiling faces?*
>
> *Sumi: When Sir [teacher] does not scold us, Sir gives us various examples during teaching/explaining [the lesson]. (F_{13}HRL)*

Furthermore other students drew on different classroom activities to account for their joyful learning experiences that attracted them to class. They mentioned that reciting, singing, acting, telling jokes and stories made them more engaged and attached to the class and the teacher. Students' post-it-notes include the following examples:

> *When teacher tell us stories then I feel good. (F_{6}SIS)*
>
> *I feel belonged [sic] when teachers read us story books. I feel the school [is my] very own because I feel interesting when I can talk to teachers. (F_{12}LRL)*

In focus groups, students provided a rich discussion about their classroom practices.

Interviewer: What makes you feel the most happy in class, Tuni?

Tuni: English and science are the most interesting classes and we laugh a lot. Because Sabrina Madam takes the English class and she presents English dialogue lessons using drama. And Saiful Sir takes science class. He really can explain everything [lessons] through laughter and fun. (F_7HUG)

Puspo: If any of us is [sic] being inattentive in class, teachers understand that that we do not feel good. Teachers ask us to tell a story or to sing a song. By reciting a poem or singing a song, teachers make us feel good. When we feel good again, they go back to teach the text book. (F_{10}HUL)

Students' interviews showed that their preferred teachers or preferred subject in school is associated with positive learning experiences. They also related better instructional methods to joyful learning experiences:

Interviewer: What subject do you like most?
Dipali: Buddhist religion.
Interviewer: Why?
Dipali: There are stories and Madam teaches us very nicely.
Interviewer: How does Didimoni teach you?
Modonmala: [Didimoni] explains the stories and she explains with laughter. (F_3HRH)

Interviewer: Why do you like the school?
Touhid: I like Madams.
Interviewer: Why do you like Madams?
Touhid: They can explain to us the textbook very well. (F_2LUH)

Interviewer: Who is your favourite teacher?
Ritu: Sushila Madam [teacher's name].

Interviewer: Why do you like her?

Ritu: When we finish our lesson, Madam sings a beautiful song for us.

Aorpon: When we complete our study, she tells us stories. (F_3HRH)

Subtheme: Teacher's love and care

After teachers academic support, teacher's love and care were the most common aspects students described when discussing how they belonged to their school. Students frequently mentioned how teacher's love and care made them feel at home and being part of the school.

When teachers adore us, I feel this is mine. (P_{12}-LRL)

When teacher adore me then I feel the class is mine. (P_6-LUG)

When teachers behave well with us, I feel [I] belong to school. (P_5-LUG)

I like my school very much. Teachers take care of us a lot. I feel I belong at this school. (F_8-HRG)

Interestingly, few irregular students mentioned teacher care and love in their interview sessions. In fact, Jahid (single non-attending student) stated how teachers' conduct towards him influenced his attachment to school. His statement in response to the question about sense of belonging to school was "I would feel like [I] belong when teachers behave nicely, when they [take] care of me" (I_{nd}LUL).

The data showed that students have varied views about teachers' "care" and "love". Students repeatedly used Bangla words such as '*Valobasa*', '*Pochondo kora*', '*Ador kora*' and '*Maya kora*' which equate to English words for love, like, adore and kind in describing teacher's love and care in relation to their sense of belonging. Though students used these words most of the time to symbolise love and care, there are subtle differences. While students mean 'love' and 'like' as teacher's general liking, they use 'adore' and 'kind' to describe a teacher who is nice and kind.

However, students described experiences of teacher love and care in terms of absence of punishment, being nice, encouragement, individual attention and physical closeness. With regard to the absence of corporal punishment the following narratives were significant:

> *Amin: Sir, there are many students in this school; teachers are very good in this school. Teachers love us as their children.*
>
> *Interviewer: How do you know that?*
>
> *Amin: Sir, teachers of this school adore us.*
>
> *Interviewer: How?*
>
> *Amin: Sir, [teachers] never beat us. (F_{10}-HUL)*

> *Soma: Sir loves me medium [sic], when I can perform my class task; [teacher] loves us [me] more.*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you mean by that?*
>
> *Soma: Sir adores us, do not scold, do not beat [us]. [Teacher] says "You will study more, you can do better". (F_{13}HRL)*

> *Shishir: I like [the school] very much. Because it has…Madam [teacher] behaves very well with us.*
>
> *Interviewer: How?*
>
> *Shishir: [Teacher] does not beat us. (F_5-LUG)*

While many students identified an absence of punishment as teachers' love and care, students from one of the high performing schools (a nationally top ranked school) shared their experiences with teachers being supportive personally in their daily school activities. When participants were asked how they knew their teacher loved them, they responded:

Once I lost my notebook and I reported it to my teacher, the teacher gave me 10 taka to buy the book and come back to class. If students' tiffins get spoiled, teachers buy tiffins for us. (F_7-HUG)

Sir [teacher] loves me very much. If I get the lesson done, they love us, if I could not, they don't. Once I realised [that the teacher loved me] when I had headache and teacher gave me money to buy medicine. (F_7-HUG)

Adoration was also expressed by encouragement, individual attention and physical closeness. A few students described teachers' love and care as encouragement through storytelling, advice and kind words.

When the class lesson is completed, teachers tell us stories on something good. Advise us to live like those characters in the stories. Encourage us for good work. (F_8HRG)

Another interesting result is when students mentioned praise including individual attention from the teacher as crucial to their sense of school belonging.

When we come to school neat and clean…teachers say, 'today you look beautiful, everyday come to school like this'. (F_2LUH)

When I feel sick, teachers come to my seat and mark in my text book [so that I know where the answer is]. (F_7HUG)

Few students mentioned teachers' physical closeness as a sign of their love and care.

[Teachers] talk to us nicely. They come to sit next to us. They are very kind to us. (F_6LUG)

[Teacher] puts her hand on my head and teacher says, "study well". (F_5LUG)

Students' narratives that capture teachers' love and care have a motivational effect on students' attendance and engagement in school activities.

> *Teacher loves us [me] like their children, then I feel good to work [class task]. (F_{13}HRL)*

> *Our teachers love us very much, adore us a lot, so we feel to study more hard. (F_8HRG)*

Conversely, students explained how experiencing a teacher's unfavourable behaviour often prompted withdrawal from school.

> *Interviewer: Why they [students] leave [after midday break]?*
>
> *Dina: Sir, they don't feel well, [they complain] that …, teachers behave badly with them, and for this [reason] they leave the school. (F_5LUG)*

Though the above quotes were taken from the regular students in focus groups, I have discussed and presented irregular students' accounts under the punishment subtheme.

Subtheme: Punishment

In contrast to teachers' adoration, some students identified punishment or lack thereof as another key component of school belonging. Students from focus groups and individual interviews mentioned punishment as a highly influential aspect of their schooling experiences. During the initial stage students declined to disclose corporal punishment in their schools. Instead, they mentioned corporal punishment in a different way. For example, in response to initial questions about why they liked their school, many responded with "Teachers adore us, do not beat us" (F_{10}HUL). However, as the interview progressed, students opened up and

described how they experienced punishment in their schools. Students discussed different types of punishment including corporal, verbal and psychological.

Arko: Here, no teacher beats us.

Asma: Hmm mm…, who says [teachers] do not beat us? In your class, [teachers] do not beat us even when you cannot do the home task in class! [Shows surprise]. In our class [teachers] beat us.

Aoji: In English [class] Didimoni [Madam] beats us. [Shared classroom with Arko]

Ujjash: Our mathematics Didimoni [Madam] beats us. (F_1HUH)

Students indicated that corporal punishment existed in most of the schools and constituted a major fear factor in how they experienced school. Students' discussion depicted that corporal punishment is a widespread practice among participating schools. In some cases it generated physical injury, even with female students. Gouri, a female student from a rural school, stated "Sir [teacher] took me and beat me up. My hand got swollen"… I feel very sad" (F_{13}HRL). Many students identified corporal punishment as the worst experience they confronted at school. In response to the question of what made them feel bad in the classroom, many came up with similar replies: "When I am not able to prepare the homework [and] teacher beats me" (I_{nd}LUH). For many students the worst memory at school was the day they were beaten severely. Ruku happened to identify the worst day at school.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a day [when] you felt worst in the school?

Ruku: Yesterday.

Interviewer: What happened yesterday?

Ruku: Teacher beat us up with a cane. [He] beat us all. (F_{13}HRL)

It seems that corporal punishment not only hurt physically but generated a feeling of shame. One participant described a beating experience meted out to him.

Salam: If we perform the class task correctly, [Head teacher] adores us, if not….

Interviewer: If not what?

Salam: (He) beats (us).

Interviewer: How?

Salam: With a scale (usually a wooden or plastic measuring stick).

Interviewer: How do you feel?

Salam: It is shameful to be beaten. (F_{11}LUL)

The fear of being beaten featured prominently in responses. It seems from the data that students perceived that if they fail in a class task, they will be beaten. The fear (or sometimes threat of punishment), prompts them to decide whether they will go to school or not. A girl from an urban school said she did not like to come to school, "When [teacher] threatens us [by] saying "[I] will beat you when you come tomorrow". (F_1-HUH)

Along with corporal punishment, verbal punishment was commonly described in students' unfavourable schooling experiences. Students spoke of the teacher shouting at them, using derogatory words, or calling them by something other than their names in front of class.

I do not like the class when [teachers] ... they call us 'rotten/bad' while still we do the lesson. (P_{12}LRL)

Students' narratives revealed that those who were not regular and unable to complete class tasks were at more risk of getting punished. Students in this group, mostly from low performing schools, talked about corporal punishment in relation to

their belongingness to school. In contrast, students in high performing schools were more outspoken in regard to teachers' verbal criticisms.

> *I want to say a bit [more]. In our math class ....If somebody can't solve the math problem, [teacher] scold us a lot at [the] time, so I feel annoyed. (F_7HUG)*

> *I feel disgusted when teachers criticise [us] harshly and are being very wordy, just for one fault. (F_7HUG)*

According to the students, teachers usually give a chunk of text (poetry, essay or letters (grammar class)) to students to memorise at home. Students who are in the following class recite from the given task. Students who felt overwhelmed by this request often tended to skip school. For example, one student explained, "Sometimes I skipped the school when there were large volumes of homework to memorise, like difficult English sentences. If I cannot memorise it, I do not come to school" (I_{nd}HUL). Other than this inability to prepare for the class task, students who misbehave by quarrelling or fighting with other classmates at school receive physical and verbal punishment.

> *There are [sic] more fighting in our class; he [a student] beats everybody, including girls, [and] Didimoni [Madam] beats him. (F_1HUH)*

Whatever the reasons for punishment, students' narratives demonstrate that punishment, both corporal and verbal, negatively impacted students' interest in attending school, leading to skipping classes and being disengaged with class activities.

> *When teachers beat us, scold us, I don't like to come to school. (F_1-HUH)*

> *When I cannot do my lesson…, when teachers scold me, I do not like to stay at school. (F_1-HUH)*

When teachers do not beat us, I feel [I want] to study more. (F_8-HRG)

While most students with irregular attendance remained silent regarding punishment issues, their regular classmates stated that some children did not attend school for fear of corporal punishment.

Anu: They [students who attend irregularly] fight on [sic] something and get beaten by the teachers. This is why they say they do not like to come to school.

Silu: Sir, teachers beat them a little if they do something naughty.

Puspo: Teachers scold them, first a little then… [beat them]. (F_{10}HUL)

Sometimes students leave the class before it ends or after tiffin period in fear of being punished.

Dina: Sir, they [students who attend irregularly] do don't feel well, [they complain] that some do not talk to them, teachers behave badly with them, and for this they leave the school. (F_5LUG)

Interestingly, while students considered punishment as an unhappy schooling experience, some considered punishment as inevitable in teaching and student discipline.

Dipok: [teacher] do not beat us, only scold us. It is ok to scold us if we do bad things. (F_6LUG)

Hena: If (students) do misbehaviours, [teachers] need to beat the students. (F_{12}LRL)

Even some students with irregular attendance showed similar positive attitudes toward corporal punishment. When asked if they felt bad about being beaten by their teachers, Mira denied this and justified that "teacher has beaten [us] to teach discipline" (I_{nd}HRL).

Subtheme: Teachers' fairness Although not all students from schools mentioned teachers' fairness; those who raised this issue expressed strong views about their schooling experience. Students' accounts of teachers' fairness in relation to belongingness to school revolves around how teachers perceived fair judgement in regard to students' affairs. Examples of students' post-it-note comments in response to belonging to school included: "When teacher love us equally then they are fair" (F_7HUG), and "When teachers do right [equal] justice" (F_9LRG). Students' perceptions of teachers' fairness were both how students were being treated in academic evaluation and school disciplinary measures. Students expressed anger when teachers underappreciated their academic achievements:

> *I do not like the class when [teachers] blame us and beat us even if we can complete the task. They [teachers] call us "rotten and bad" while we are still working on the task. (F_{12}LRL)*

Sara, a student from a top urban school, reiterated similar frustration regarding how she experienced teacher's judgment, without listening to students or blaming the whole class for one student's fault. As Sara explained:

> *Sara: Sir, I want to say something. Mr. X Sir takes our mathematics class. We do not do any wrong, other children did in class task, Sir [teacher] scold us all, said, "You are in grade five, do not know how to solve multiple and division." I don't like this. If somebody cannot solve a mathematics problem, he scolds us all a lot at times; I feel disgusted when teachers criticise harshly and being very wordy (going on and on) just for one fault. (F_7HUG)*
>
> *Interviewer: What should teachers know about you that would be good for you?*
>
> *Sara: He [teacher] unnecessarily and untruly blames us. If teachers would try to listen to us [it] would be better. (F_7HUG)*

In a similar fashion, regarding school disciplinary activities, students identified their anger with teachers who did not let them defend accusations and punished them for no fault. Mubin, a student from a high performing school, argued:

> *If teachers would listen from both sides. Somebody did the guilty [deed], [but the] teacher called my name and said, "Somebody complained against your name, you will get punished". (F7HUG)*

He added:

> *If I am guilty, teacher can tell me what I have done wrong, I can understand, I would feel better [that I have been punished for this wrong deed]. Teachers do not listen to us properly and our complaints carefully. [I] do not like getting punishments without doing any offence. (F_7HUG)*

On the contrary, fair and equal treatment at school provides students with positive feelings about school.

> *Interviewer: Now Sharif, can you tell me how you feel about your school?*
>
> *Sarif: I love this school. ..hmm…then if anybody beat me…, if we complain to Madam, Madam listens to us. If I am guilty, [Madam] gives us punishment, [if not, I will not be punished].*
>
> *Shikha: If somebody beat us, we go to Madam; Madam first listen to all students, and ask them not to beat us and ask to see us as younger brother and sister. This I like very much in this school. (F_9LRG)*

The experiences of another student, Parvez, in terms of teacher fairness showed that teachers sometimes fail to address students' needs in an equitable way. Parvez identified his worst day in school as follows:

> *Interviewer: Can you tell me a day when you felt worst in this school? Parvez, can you tell me your version first?*

> *Parvez: One day I came to school very early. Nobody has come before me at school in [sic] that day. I took the seat in the first row, then a boy came later, asked me to get up and sit behind [him]. I told him "I came earlier, you can sit by me". He insisted I move. I asked Madam; Madam asked me to go behind. That day I get hurt, I felt very sad… . (F_9LRG)*

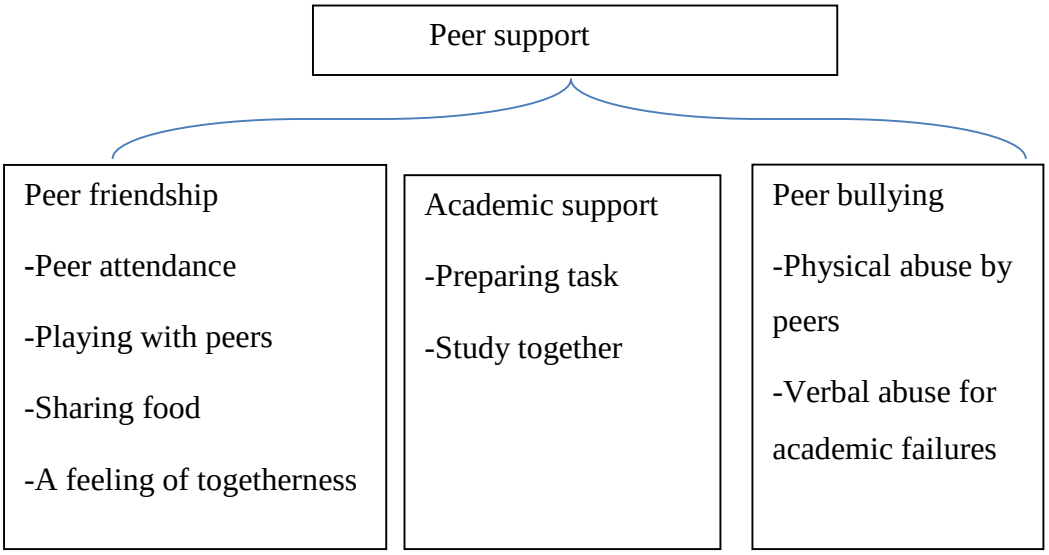
One aspect of unfair treatment reported by students was that teachers typically favoured high achieving students over low achievers. For example, it was reported that an everyday classroom practice was for teachers to call students by numbers that reflected their last grade final examination results. Students with the highest score were referred to as number one, followed by the second highest score, etcetera. Students with numbers one, two and three were said to be *privileged* by their teachers. Participants reported that these students received exemptions from punishment, even when they committed offences.

> *Ratul: I want to say something. When we do something inappropriate in class, class leader wrote our name in the list/ board. If there are students' names from number one or number two, nothing is happened to them, but we, the rest, are given punishment. (F_7HUG)*

Students also mentioned that female students were favoured over boys. Mubin, a student from one of the top ranking schools, described his frustration and anger when he said, "girls are given much exemption in our school." "If girls talk a lot in class time, they were not given punishment and even if they are punished, their punishment is less severe, but if it is boys there will be a lot of punishments" *(F_7HUG).*

Theme two: Peer support

After teacher behaviour/practice, peer support emerged as an important subtheme of the schools' social environment in relation to their sense of belonging. Students from all schools, both in individual interviews and focus groups, mentioned peer relationships as an important aspect of their belongingness experiences. In response to the question of when students feel like they belong to school, companionship and support of peers were cited as the second highest number (34) following teachers' related comments (71). Participants described three distinct topics (subthemes) relating to peer support and attitude in connection to their sense of belonging to school: peer friendship, academic support and peer bullying.



Subtheme: Peer friendship

Friendship emerged as an important aspect of students' daily school experiences. Students indicated friendship mainly with students in the same grade and sometimes with students repeating the grade.

Attendance: Students' narratives reveal they felt like they belonged at school when they had friends around them. Meeting friends is the most desirable aspect of attending school. Students' comments showed how peer friendship is connected to psychological state, attendance and feelings for the school.

> *When friends come to school, I feel better. (F_3HRH)*
>
> *Everybody in the class is like my friends, and I feel them like brother and sisters, then I feel good. This is why I feel good coming to school. (F_{13}HRL)*
>
> *When friends behave well with me, when friends play with me, I feel like belong to school. (F_5LUG).*

In a focus group Agomony and Liton discussed how they expected to meet friends:

> *Agomoni: Sir, I like to come to school, because all are good here, if I stay at home I cannot meet Sir and friends, but if I come to school I can meet them. (F_{10}HUL)*
>
> *Interviewer: How do you like you school?*
>
> *Liton: We have friends. I can play with them. [I] can go many places. We sit together to attend the class. Teachers teach us properly. This is the reason I like this school. (F_{13}HRL)*

Similarly when friends do not attend school or leave early, Humaira and Prapti from two different schools delineated how sad they feel.

> *Interviewer: Humaira, tell me, when do you feel bad at school?*
>
> *Humaira: I feel sad when my friends leave the school. I feel sad thinking that I have to study alone in the school. (F_5LUG)*
>
> *Prapti: When a close friend leaves the school, I feel very sad. I feel somebody very close go away. At this moment, I feel the school very belonged [sic] to me. (F_{10}HUL)*

Playing: Students mostly mentioned chatting and playing as a way of enjoying the company of peers. Playing with peers appeared to be the most

significant event, and specifically how students interacted with peers. The following few examples indicate how playing with peers fostered good feelings for the school:

> *When [I] play with friends, I feel the school belongs to me, for this I feel to come to school more.*
>
> *I feel the school mine most when I play with my friends.*
>
> *When I feel good playing with friends, I feel the school belong to me.*
>
> *When I play with all the friends, I feel good; I feel like I belong to the school in that time.*
>
> *When friends play and hang with me.*

Conversely, being refused access to participating in any games by peers or being unable to play with peers makes them feel bitter about school.

> *Soptoshi: When they play, they do not take me. They take others and tell me that they do not need any more players. (F_{12}LRL)*
>
> *Humaira: Yes, when I asked my friends to play a new game, they do not agree and keep playing what they are playing. Then, I sit alone, I feel sad. (F_{5}LUG)*

Sharing: Along with interaction in games and academic support, students described their peer feelings extended to sharing *tiffin* or snakes with friends. The following quotes show how Ferdousi, Sumon and Tuni found sharing food with friends.

> *Ferdousi: Sir, we share. If one cannot bring tiffin, we share [tiffin].*
>
> *Interviewer: What do you give?*
>
> *Ferdousi: Rice, whatever we bring we share. (F_{11}LUL)*
>
> *Sumon: When they play they take me with them. When they eat anything, they share with me. (F_{12}LRL)*

Tuni: I like this school very much. ….because, during tiffin break, we all have our food by sharing with others. If anybody do not bring, we share. (F$_7$HUG)

***Feeling of togetherness**:* Students' narratives showed that peer relationships were not only limited by selected friends or a group of peers, but also students' desire for a whole-of-school acceptance including participation and success in school activities. A few statements from students commented on post-it-notes.

I feel best when every student in class can do the class task very well. (F$_9$LRG)

Everybody in class is like my friends, and feels like brothers and sisters, and then I feel good. This is why I feel good to come to school.

(When) all the students do anything together. (F$_{10}$HUL)

Everybody in the school remains together, have fun together…When everybody helps everybody. (F$_{10}$HUL)

If we all study together in the school. (F$_2$LUH)

In focus groups students also described a feeling of togetherness associated with their best experiences at school. Akhi and Agomoni commented:

Ankhi: I like most when every student at our class can perform the class task very well. (F$_8$HRG)

Agomoni: When students leave the classroom for picking plums or something else, teachers feel very sad that [students leave the class]. [I] feel bad for this; if everybody was in class, I would feel very good. (F$_{10}$HUL)

Subtheme: Peers and academic support

Students associated peers with study support and encouragement when asked what made them feel like they belonged to school. Students' statement include,

[If] I do not understand lesson. Then if friends help me I feel good.

Friends are helping each other in the examination, everybody helps everybody.

When I study with friends well, I feel belonged to school, I play with friends.

Friends encourage us to study hard, then [I] feel better.

Peer support in studying, preparing for a task or just letting the class know tasks for upcoming classes were revealed as peers caring for their fellow class mates. Roky and Joy provided examples of academic support from peers.

Rocky: We stay together, if I do not understand anything, friends help us. When I do not get any word, friend tells me.

Interviewer: Joy?

Joy: If I cannot do any task, [peers] help me. Help me when I do not know word's pronunciation. If I do not come to school, they let me know the home-work. (F_1HUH)

Subtheme: Peer bullying

In contrast to positive experiences of company and support, students described painful and negative experiences with mates at school. Students confronted beating, teasing and 'ragging' by fellow classmates at school. For some students, these experiences were the worst events in their school life. Beaten by their fellow classmates was mentioned in six out of 13 schools.

Atikur: Sir, I felt one day very sad.

Interviewer: Which day, why?

Atikur: Sir, one day one of my classmates beat me.

Shafiul: Sir one day when I was in grade three, many beat me together. (F_{13}HRL)

Students' comments revealed how some students are bossy over others and how students get beaten by older peers in the same grade.

Shuvo: Sir, there are big boys [in class]. We cannot fight with them.

Interviewer: Why do they beat you?

Shuvo: Sir, without any reason.

Liton: They ask us to bring their notebook. I do not want to bring; for this reason they beat me.

Interviewer: They asked you to bring their notebook?

Liton: Sir, when teacher completes checking our homework, they order us to bring their homework notebook from [teacher's table]. If I do no listen, they scold us or beat us. (F_{12}LRL)

Few female students commented on being bullied and harassed by male students. For some female students, this harassment caused them to leave school.

Asma: There is one in our class who do a lot fighting. He harasses girls, he beats us all. (F_1HUH)

Soma: When boys climb on toilet roof and try to peek though, I feel bad. (F_5LUG)

Dipa: They do not feel good as boys [are] being naughty to them. That's why they leave the school. (F_5LUG)

Interviewer: What do the boys do?

Dipa: Boys make fun of them.

Interviewer: How do they make fun?

Dipa: Boys say, "Girls are bad. Girls bring homework copied from other".

Akhi: Boys do a lot [of teasing]. Sometimes they pull my hair. Sometimes in the morning assembly, when I stand in line, boys do not let me sing national anthem. (P_1LRH)

Students also reacted strongly when they were teased or made fun of for academic failure. Dipa mentioned her worst day at school when she failed to perform a school task:

Dipa: Yes, [I cry] when I cannot perform any class task. Everybody make fun of me, that day I feel crying.

Interviewer: How do they make fun?

Dipa: Suppose, teacher asks me recite poetry, I cannot do [remember] that. Then friends and boys all laugh at me. (F_5LUG)

Primary schools in Bangladesh usually published students' examination results by announcing them openly at school. Students were often bullied because of exam results. Sagor, a student from a low performing rural school, recalled his worst day at school: "When the school result [was] published, [a] few students say, 'you failed', though I did not fail. They make fun of me. I feel very sad." (F_4LRH)

Akhi, who failed in her last grade four final exam, started shedding tears when she shared how she felt at school when classmates made fun of her for her academic performance:

Akhi: I like this school less.

Interviewer: Why?

Akhi: When I come to school, it has been two years in this grade, everybody look at me and say, "two year", "two years' donkey". I feel very bad when they say like these. (P_1LRH)

While female students talked about being bullied, mostly by male students, there were opposite scenarios offered by male students in a top achieving school. The high scorers from this school were mostly female students and their class captain was female. Male students felt they were mistreated by female students.

> *Huzaifa: Sir, I want to say something. When teacher gets busy checking our works, teacher gives responsibility [to] first girls [high scorers] to control the class. It is because; most of the time girls become highest scorers. Sir, I have seen that first girls never pick [to complain] girl's name, always gives boy's name to teacher.*
>
> *Mubin and Joy: Yes sir.*
>
> *Mubin: Sir, first girls behave very roughly with us. One day, one of the girls threatened me. (I feel sad) and I brought my mother to [complain to the school].*
>
> *Mubin: Girls who are very good [high scorer], they are very arrogant. (F_7HUG)*

When I asked female students for their opinion, girls replied that it was not always true but sometimes, first girls "who are captain in class think themselves very great, do not give us any importance, even if I want to talk, they do not" (F_7HUG).

Bullying towards children with a disability was not obvious in students' narratives from any of the schools, except one. However, the single narrative from this high performing urban student reveals how a child with a disability had become a victim of peer mistreatment and hostility at school. In interview a student commented that a student with an intellectual disability was teased and provoked by peers when teachers were not around.

> *Agomoni: Sir, we feel bad when everybody fight, make noises.*
>
> *Interviewer: Who fights?*

Utsab: Fighting. Sir, because of a disabled student.

Agomoni: Sir, he [child with disability] beats everybody.

Interviewer: Does he?

Singdha: There is a disabled boy [in our class], if someone does something [bad] first to him. We all should behave well with him, but many of us do not. Someone goes to him and beats [him] first, and then he goes mad. There are some [students] telling him lies and he makes a fuss.

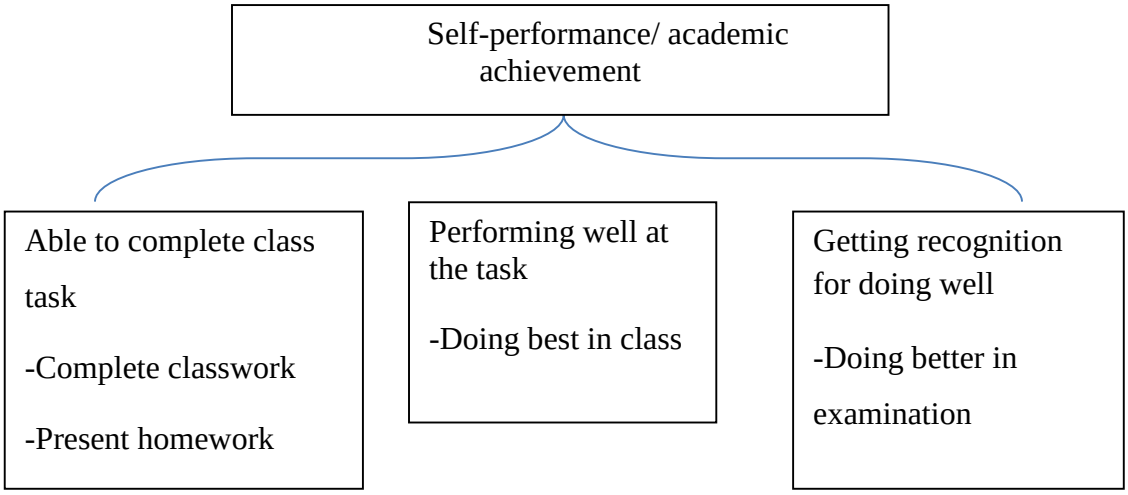
Singdho: Someone tells lie to him. He feels very sad when someone tell him "mad". There are some who tell him "mad" and tell him that others call him "mad". Then he flies into [a] rage and something awful happens.

Agomoni: Boys make noise to him and call him "mad". They chant slogans: "Maruf's skin will be pulled off". (F_{10}HUL)

Students' narratives indicate that those students bullied by others often did not come to school regularly (e.g. "they often do not come to school"; "they do fighting in the school", "teacher beat them") (F_{10}HUL). Students stated that many of them were found "driving Votvoti" [auto rickshaw], "paddling rickshaw", or "working in a shop in the market" during school hours (F_{10}HUL).

Theme three: Self-performance / academic achievement

The third theme emerged as an individual's connection to school. Students primarily indicated academic performance in relation to: a) being capable of completing the class task (“when I can do/ complete the class task everyday”), b) performing well in a classroom tasks (“when I study well”), and c) recognition for doing well (“I do better in the examination”).



Subtheme: Able to complete class task

Students from both high and low performing schools reported that their performance on a classroom task influenced their sense of belonging. On a post-it-note students wrote, “I feel my school most belonged when I can give the class tasks” (F_7HUG); “When teacher gives me any task, and I can show teacher the task done” (F_7HUG). Students described classroom performances which include:

> *When teacher ask me recite from a poem [which was given previously to learn by heart]. (F_5LUG)*
>
> *When teachers ask us to write, I can write. (F_{12} LRL)*
>
> *Sir [teachers] ask us do mathematics, [I] practise at home so that I can do it quickly in class (F_{13}HRL).*

Students indicated “able to do the class task/answer the question from the task” influenced their school attendance. When I asked when students like to come to school, one student replied, “when we study well” (F_6LUG). Conversely, when I asked why some students did not like to come to school, one student replied, “Teacher will ask [students] for the task, [but as they] do not prepare the lesson, so they do not come to school” (F_2LUH).

However, motivations for preparing class tasks varied among students. Several students associated their motivation with being recognised, loved or praised by teacher or peers: “When I can do the class task, teacher say, ‘thank you’ and everybody claps for me” (F_4LRH); “patting on head” (F_5LUG); “when teachers are happy to see our lesson done” (P_7HUG); and “when I can give my lesson and teachers adore me” (P_7HUG). Several others commented that the motivation for doing tasks came from not being mocked or punished in class. Students described their fears: “When I cannot do the class task, everybody make fun of me, I feel [like] crying” (F5-LUG); or “When [we] cannot do the study [class task], [teachers] beat us” (F8-HRG).

Some students experienced belonging to school when they found their academic performance complying with peer performance. When students were asked when they felt they belonged to school, some students responded, “when I study with everybody” (F_{13}HRL); “When I study well with friends together, I feel like I belong” (F_{11}-LUL).

Students reported not only individual but also whole class or whole-of-school academic performance in relation to their sense of belonging to school. Students highlighted combined success in class activities in connecting to a sense of

belonging. When asked when they felt a sense of belonging, one high performing student responded with similar statements:

> *When all the students do anything together, when everybody study attentively. (F_{10}HUL)*
>
> *When everybody study well. (F_{10}HUL)*
>
> *When everybody study with concentration. (F_{10}HUL)*

Students from another top ranking school responded similarly: "I feel best when every student in the class can do the task very well" (P_8HRG), "when teachers tell us story I feel very good, and when all students can perform class task" (P_8HRG); and "[if] we all study together in the school" (P_2LUH). It appeared that students in high performing schools either possess more attachment with their peers and school or had a stronger sense of doing well in the examination.

Subtheme: Performing well in a classroom task

Students' sense of belonging emerged not from their ability to complete a classroom task, but when they were able to "complete the task well" or "study well" (P_{11}-LUL). Students explained: "if [we] are able to perform class task [complete class task, oral or written] every day in class" (F_1HUH). Students described consistent classroom performance in relation to their connection with and attachment to school, "I can give class task every day, for this I feel very good" (P_{11}-LUL) or "when (I) can do the class task in every class" (P_{10}HUL). Other students associated performing best at the class "can perform the most of the tasks" (F_5LUG), "can perform the most [in class]" (F_5LUG) with feeling good about the classroom. On the other hand, students discussed how failing to perform the class task influenced their attachment to school,

"when I cannot do my lesson …I do not like to stay at school" (F_1HUH); "[when I] do not perform the class task, I do not feel good" (F_2LUH).

While some students connected belonging experiences to their classroom recognition through class performance, some others associated personalized feeling of how they feel happy or satisfy about their studying or homework in class or at home with their school belongingness. Students resonated in response to when they feel like they belong to school, including "feeling good to study", "when I feel good to study properly. [I] like the school very much, I feel like belong in the school" (F_4LRH); "when I like studying" (F_9LRG). One student who had failed the last examination mentioned "when my study goes well, I like the school" (ILRG) in relation to her sense of belonging to school. Others elaborated, "when I can understand the lesson well, I feel good" (F_{13}HRL); "when I study more" (ILUH); and "[when] we study hard" (ILUG). Similarly students' narratives revealed that when they did not understand class activities, they did not feel like they belonged to school ("… [When] I can't perform classwork, I feel bad. Because I do not understand anything") (F_5LUG).

Subtheme: Recognition for doing well

Students frequently linked good examination results and scores to a sense of belonging to school. In response to the question of when they feel like they belong to school, students replied on a sticky note, "I feel [I] belong when I do very good result in the examination, I feel very happy" (F_{10}HUL); "when there are good results in the examination" (F_{10}HUL). However, in focus group discussion one student explained how having a good result or just passing the examination brought happiness. Sabina recalled her most memorable day with joy.

> *When I pass all subjects in the examination in the school, when Madams announce the results I feel very happy that I have passed [the examination], [when] many other students fail; when [teacher] let me know, I feel nobody is as happy as me in the world, I stay very happy then. (F_9LRG)*

And sometimes with a specific subject:

> *"[I] was in grade three, when the result [was] announced, I got 91 in mathematics, then I felt very happy" (F_9LRG).*

Students' narratives explained how, similar to classroom performance, examination success was associated with teacher or peer recognition, for example, "when I do good results, everybody adore me" (P_5LUG) or "if results are not good, teacher feels unhappy" (F_5LUG).

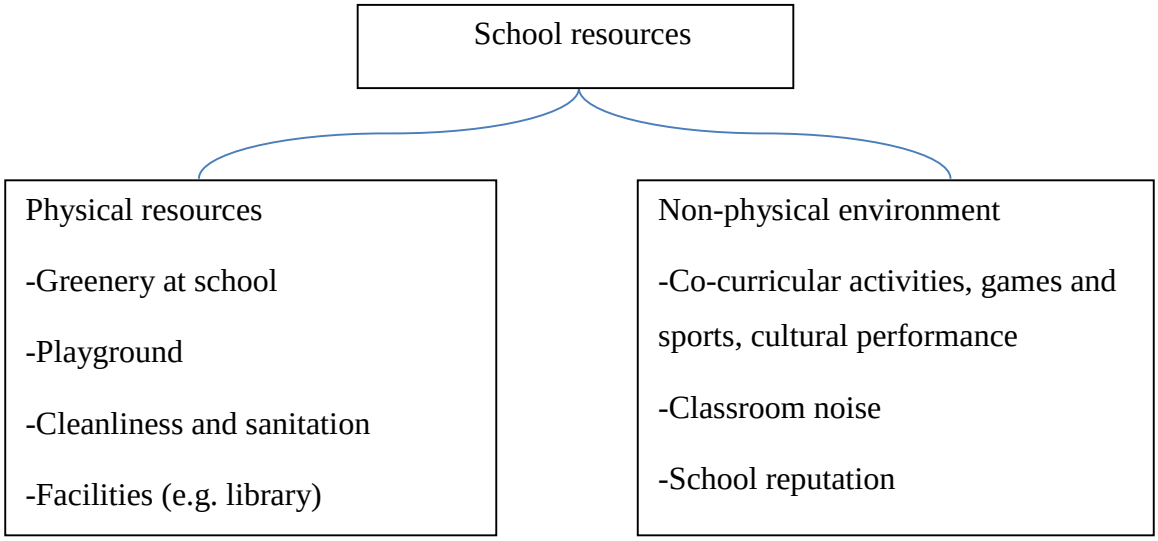
In addition to academic performance, students identified doing well in co-curricular activities in annual sports or performance days as their best days at school. Ankhi depicted her performance in a cultural function at school:

> *In 2011 on Rabindranath Tagor's [a Bengali poet] birthday celebration programme, I was in grade three,…I have got [a] chance to recite 'Dui Bigha' [poetry]. I also got a prize on that day. I feel very good on that day. (F_8HRG)*

Another student recalled his sports achievement as one of the best days: "When I was in grade four, there was a football game at the end of the year, we won the game, I feel very good" (F_9-LRG). It is noteworthy that urban school students linked self-performance/academic achievement to their belongingness more frequently than their rural counterparts. Students from hilly areas mentioned 'self-performance' compared least to other areas in describing their sense of belonging to school.

Theme four: School resources

Along with social relationships in school, school resources emerged as a significant aspect in students' experiences of sense of belonging at school. Students identified both physical and non-physical resources that impacted their attachment with school. Students' described the physical environment of the school including the presence or absence of facilities and aesthetics of the environment. Non-physical features identified included: the school's reputation, co-curricular, games and sports activities.



Subtheme: Physical resources

Greenery at school.. School greenery was one of the students' most frequently mentioned physical resources. Students referred to trees, grass and gardens in relation to their belongingness to school. Students from nine out of 13 schools mentioned gardens and trees when they were describing their good feelings about school. In response to the question of when they feel like they belong to school, students wrote when they "have flower garden" (F_2LUH); "many trees around our school" (F_{13}HRL); or they could plant "flowers in the school" (F_3HRH).

Students' narratives showed that while some of the students like big trees, others like a flower garden at their school. Students linked trees in their schooling experience to having fruit and relaxing in the shade. Ferdousi, a student from an urban school, loved to rest under a tree in summer to get fresh, cool air:

Interviewer: What do you like most in the school?

Ferdousi: Sir, there is a big tree there, I like to [go to] that place.

Together: [pointing] There.

Interviewer: Why?

Ferdousi: Sir, it blooms [with] flowers, leafs[sic], and gives us a lot of air, and that is why I like this. (F_{11}LUL)

Mukti: Yes sir, after class in the tiffin break we take rest under the tree.

A few others expressed their liking for fruit trees grown at their school. For example, when Hazra was asked why she liked their school, she replied: "There are mango trees around our school. This is why I like the school very much". (F_{11}LUL). It is interesting that even though many of these schools are in agricultural based city and rural areas, where plants and trees are available in school surrounds, irrespective of geography students indicated their interest in plants and trees.

However, school initiated gardens were found only in two out of 13 schools. Female students particularly mentioned school gardens in connection to their positive feelings about school. Humaira and Sabina, for example, described how flowers and plants in the garden made them feel better at their school:

Interviewer: What do you like in this school?

Humaira: I like our school garden.

Interviewer: Why?

Humaira: Because there are many kinds of plants in our garden. Flowers bloom. I like flowers very much. (F_5LUG)

Sabina: There are many kinds [of] flower bloom[ing] in the garden. We have many other plans in our school garden. I feel good to look at it. (F_5LUG)

Where there were no gardens or trees in the school premises, students deliberately mentioned "if there were flowering plants around the school" (F_3HRH).

Playground and sense of belonging. School playgrounds were mentioned repeatedly in students' discussion in relation to their sense of belonging to school. Students' narratives showed one of the main attractions for attending school was sports and games activities with friends at school, which I have presented in relation to co-curricular activities that follows in this chapter. Here I have presented how students described their schooling experiences in connection to physical features in the school playground. Students from all 13 schools spoke of games and sports facilities or lack thereof in relation to how they felt about school. Students indicated they feel a sense of belonging to their school because they have "a playground at school" (F_2LUH), or their "school playground is beautiful" (F_6HRH) that makes them "feel [like they want to] come to school" (F_6HRH). Conversely, students who did not have a playground at their school commented, "If there was a playground in the school, [my] heart would feel very good." (F_5SIS). Eleven out of 13 schools were found to have playgrounds on the school premises. For students who have playgrounds they described them as one of the most attractive aspects of their schooling experience.

Sharif: I like this school very much and the most favourite place in the school is our playground. We can play at playground. When we are given playtime

we go to playground and play and come back when bell rings. This is why I like this playground very much. (F_9LRG)

Saima: We have playground and trees at our school, we can play. This is why I like this school. (F_{12}LRL)

Hamida: Sir, I like very much. We have playground in our school. There are rooms and students. I like playing with them. [This is why] I come to school. (F_{12}LUL)

Two schools which did not have playgrounds were single blocks of three-storey buildings. Students from these schools indicated their despair as well as desire for a playground. They spoke of how they felt and experienced not having a playground at school. Students from a high performing urban school expressed themselves as follows:

Mubin: I do not like this school very much, as it does not have playground, we have six periods. After three periods we have a big break but we can't play; we are to sit on the benches all day in school.

Huzaifa: When we finish our lesson, we play without pens, sitting on our seats.

Mubin: When I do not feel good in the classroom, I go to washroom and talk to others.

Tuni: I stand alone [in] the corridor, and like [to] imagine something. (F_7HUG)

Students from a low performing school exchange their views about the absence of a playground in their school.

Priti: Sir, if we had a playground, we can have our food during tiffin period. We can go down to [the playground to] play.

Monica: I can't play on the roof. Sir, if we had a playground…

Priti: Sir, we want to study. But some days we want to play. We ask Madam but Madam does not let us play. Then we play inside the classroom. (F_6SIS)

From students' narratives it is clear that playgrounds strongly influence students' attendance, retention and emotional experiences. Sibani and Pritit discussed why some students did not attend class regularly, and had been playing outside during school hours:

Interviewer: Some of the students do not come to school regularly?

Together: Yes sir, [they] do not feel good at school.

Sibani: They say "we will play; today we do not go to school".

Priti: Sir, here we do not have any playground so that we can play here [at school]. They [irregular students] say that "the time the lesson is given can be spent on playing outside". What is the benefit to go to school? [Teachers] just scold us." (F_6SIS)

Though most of the schools have playgrounds, students mentioned that not all were functional. They identified flooded and dusty playgrounds as non-functional. These non-functional conditions outside influenced some students to remain inside. Students described how they leave school after tiffin break and do not attend afternoon classes, as they can play at school:

Interviewer: Why do other students leave the school [after tiffin period]?

Akber: They leave because they do not feel good anymore.

Interviewer: Why do you think that is the case?

Akber: The playground [is] submerged, full of water, and [they] cannot play. This is why everybody leave the school. (F_5LUG)

Students also displayed frustration about dusty school playgrounds, saying "then when we play, our clothes get very dirty" (F_9LRG).

Cleanliness and sanitation facilities at school. One of the physical facilities mentioned by students from almost all schools was washrooms and toilets. Students in relation to a sense of belonging to school commented:

> *If there were good toilets [clean], if the school looks beautiful, I feel good to learn more. (F_3HRH)*
>
> *If the toilets were clean, sinks were functional, I would like to come to school more. (F_5LUG)*

According to these narratives, even though all schools had toilets and washrooms, most were not popular due to poor hygiene conditions.

> *Humaira: If the toilet is a bit better… Because the way to go [to] toilet is always muddy. I don't like this; the toilet is also not clean.*
>
> *Akber: If there were tiles on the toilet wall or if there is a tap all the time. Many times there is no tap, and no water. And sometimes if there were water, the drain had been blocked and water would remain all over the floor, [so] it does not drain. (F_5LUG)*
>
> *Paharika: Dirty, stinky and flies around (F_3HRH)*

Mostly female students raised their concerns about untidy toilets at school and, in some cases, accused boys of using open space at school to toilet, which made a smelly environment for all. Soikot [a boy] confessed that, "some boys do not follow the rules; they go for other places at school than toilet for [sic]" (F_{10}HUL). When students were asked why some students do not use school toilets, they replied they could not use them because most of the time toilets were kept locked (F_{13}HRL) or restricted to teachers' use ("Teacher do not let us use toilets; Madams only use the toilet") (F_6SIS).

A beautiful, clean school. Students expressed a tidy school and clean classroom were equally important to their feeling of belongingness in school.

Students were cited in post-it-notes in response to the question about when they felt they belonged to school, “If school is beautiful, I feel to go to school. If our room [classrooms] were clean, it would be very good” and conversely “When our classroom looks dirty, I do not like to come to school” (F3HRH).

In group discussion, students identified several features they perceived could make the school beautiful. Akber, from an urban low achieving school, described his school’s wall as having “no colour” and the “whitewash faded out over time” (F_5LUG). Akber added, “if there were beautiful pictures on the wall” and his fellow classmate Alami specified “farmer’s pictures, villages pictures, it would be great”. (F_5LUG)

Students’ narratives showed that a smelly classroom often made them feel uncomfortable. In a focus group, Riel shared how his classroom got dirty and how he felt about it.

> *Riel: When the classroom is dirty. When it is smelly and when smells come from outside. Sometimes dog defecates in classroom and it smells very bad and we feel not good. (F_3HRH)*

Students also described how they felt uncomfortable at school when rubbish was dropped in their school compound. Sabina commented that “people [from outside] dump poultry litter at the back of grade four classroom, it smells all over, we can’t sit in classroom” (F_9LRG). Students from some schools identified that not having a boundary wall around the school caused the school to become dirty and dusty. According to students from a roadside school, schools get “black smoke” *(F_{13}HRL)* and “dust coming [in]to school from the cars” (F_{11}LUL). Sumi described

not only black smoke and dust but also cars “make a lot [of] noise, it disturbs our classes” (F_{13}HRL.)

Library activities. The library facility at school was identified as one of the attractive resources. Students expressed that many of them enjoy reading stories from school library books (“Many of us wish to read story books, I love reading stories”) (F_8HRG). Students’ narratives showed that some schools had library services previously and that teachers “kept the library locked” (F_8HRG). Students in these schools recalled the use of their library as a pleasant memory:

> *Rupa: Previously, every Thursday we can borrow story book from library. (F_5SIS)*
>
> *Yanoor: In my previous school, library was always kept open, if we want to read, we can read. (F_8HRG).*

Students mentioned how they felt frustrated when they were denied access to borrow library books. Arun, a student from a special interest school, talked about his school library facilities with anger and frustration.

> *[I] want [to borrow] story books,[teachers] do not give us.[Books] are kept locked [in cabinet]. [We tell Madam] give us story book. We want to understand what is written in the story. [So] we can explain [to] others. Madams do not let us do these [sic]. (F_5SIS)*

None of the schools had a separate room dedicated to a library space. Schools usually kept the books on bookshelves or in a closed bookcase in the teachers’ or headmasters’ office. In several schools, students could borrow books from the office with the help of teachers.

Subtheme: Non-physical environment

Students related a number of non-physical aspects that influenced their schooling experiences including co-curricular activities, school reputation and classroom noise.

Co-curricular activities – games and sports. Students from all 13 schools spoke of games and sports in relation to their connectedness to school. It was one of the most repeatedly mentioned aspects that attracted students to attend, retain their attendance and have a happy experience at school. Students wrote on post-it-notes "When school has sports, I feel to come to school more" (F5LUG) or "When sports programme [is] in the school" (F2LUH).

It appeared from students' narratives that although eleven out of 13 schools had playgrounds, many students did not participate in sports and had limited, organised sports experiences at school on a regular basis.

> *Yanoor: No Sir [we do not get time to play], we come to school morning and go back to home at evening [after school coaching].*
>
> *Akhi: We do not have time (to play).*
>
> *Yanoor: Sometimes we play at school and sometimes after school break. (F_8HRG)*

Similar voices in other schools mentioned the limited scope in participating in play activities, whereas students had a strong wish to take part in play activities at school. When students were asked what could encourage them to study more, they replied that "many of us wish to participate in games [at school]. All students would then have [a] chance to participate in games" (F_{13}HRL).

While school provided limited scope for play activities, some students who were not attending school on a regular basis "catch birds, play around and fly kites"

(F_8HRG) or "play cricket" (F_{13}HRL) outside school during school hours. Students revealed why they did not like to play at school and this sometimes involved unethical practices like betting outside the school premises:

Interviewer: Why do they not play cricket at school?

Students [together]: Sir, they love playing cricket only.

Ruku: Sir, when we study here [at school] and when we have playtime, we play cricket. (But) they (irregular students) play cricket outside with money and biscuit.

Interviewer: What is playing with money?

Ruku: They play for money (betting money on cricket). (F_{13}HRL)

Individual interviews with irregular students showed that they perceived school playtime as not adequate. Arif, an irregular student, said he might like school more "if there were more time to play" (I_1LUH).

Cultural programmes – fine arts activities. For many students, the best day and best memory were identified as school cultural programmes and performances. From students' narratives, it is evident that few schools had weekly programmes ("every Thursday, we have music performance") (F_{13}HRL), while most of schools organised cultural programmes, class parties and grade five graduation or farewell part annually. According to students, schools celebrated national events such as "Bangla New Year" (F_{13}HRL) and "Victory Day" (F_{11}LUL) through different activities. Students enthusiastically described any cultural events at their school. Raju and Mukti shared their best memories at school on national Victory Day.

Raju: Yes sir, my best day is 16 December every year.

Interviewer: What happens on that day?

Raju: We have lots of fun on 16 December at our school.

Mukti: There are programmes like music, dance and drama performance held at the school. Many students perform in drama show. This is why we feel very good. (F_{11}LUL)

Sumon described the day he most enjoyed at school when the school organised "dance and music performance at the programme for students who have got scholarship [in the primary school terminal examination]" (F_{12}LRL). Saheba, who was registered as a grade five student at school but listed as irregular remembered her best day, when "I alone sang two songs and while everyone sang two others" (I_1LRL) at a farewell function at school.

Students demonstrated excitement and interest when describing their class party, with the support of the class teacher and after the final examination. For a few students, it was the most memorable day for them at school. Students commented they felt very happy "when teachers let us do a class party at school. We decorate our class." (F_5LUG). Shika commented "when we have passed the exam, we asked our teacher that we would like to organise a programme" and "I had a lot fun, I was very happy" (F_9LRG) to attend the party.

Students' comments on post-it-notes showed a strong relationship between school cultural programmes and belongingness to school. Quite a few students mentioned school cultural programmes when they were asked about what made them feel like they belonged to school.

When there are programmes, dance and singing activities. (*F_2LUH)*

I love to see programmes [cultural programme in the school]. I feel the school belonged to me. (F_{13}HRL)

Other than performing arts activities, few students showed an interest in doing school chores. For example, Mubin who was not satisfied with his school

because of not having a playground liked the time the teacher organised students for "classroom cleaning" (F_7HUG). Another student, Tonmoy, in his individual interview described how and why he liked to sweep the school:

> *Tonmoy: …When Madams ask us to sweep the class, then I feel best at school.*
>
> *Interviewer: Why?*
>
> *Tonmoy: To do something for school is good. My mother says that if one works for school, one will do better in study. (I_2LRH)*

In contrast to Tonmoy and Mubin's love of school chores, Alok and Prinka identified school chores as the worst school memory for them. Students from this special interest school described how they felt about sweeping the school building when they had come to school after a bath that morning.

> *Alok: We take bath before coming to school. But still we are asked to clean benches. We are to sweep first floor to fourth floor. We sweep every day.*
>
> *Prinyka: Sir, the day I and he took admission in this school, [the teacher] made us sweep [the school]. (F_6-LUG)*

It seems that when occasional cleaning of the classroom for Mubin and Tonmoy was a pleasant experience, whole-of-school cleaning activities on a regular basis was a disturbing and painful experience for Alok and Prinyka.

Classroom noise. Classroom noise was revealed as one of the most annoying features of students' experiences at school. Students from seven out of 13 schools mentioned classroom noise as one aspect that gave them an uncomfortable time in school. Students referred to classroom noise as noise made by students during class, between classes and during break time. Students repeatedly wrote on post-it-notes: "When nobody makes noise in class, keep silent, less noise in classroom" (F_{10}HUL).

In focus group discussion, students described how they experienced classroom noise and how it was generated.

Interviewer: When do you feel bad in class?

Golapi: When teacher do not take our classes or gives us tiffin break.

Interviewer: Why?

Madhubi: Sir, everybody starts shouting.

Golapi: Sir, tiffin starts, all boys and girls make chaos, and I do not feel good. (F_{13}HRL)

Students' narratives indicated noise was generated "when teacher gives us tiffin break" (F_{13}HRL), "when Madams leave the classroom" (F_{11}LUL) or "When teachers do not take classes" (F_{12}LRL). The noise was made by students when: "boys-girls everybody make chaos" (F_{13}HRL), "students involved fighting… students scream" (F_{12}LRL) or "students get on the bench and keep jumping" (F_4LRH).

The influence of classroom noise makes students uncomfortable. This discomfort was expressed as "I feel very bad" (F_{11}LUL), "I feel very annoyed" (F_8HRG), or "I do not feel good" (F_{13}HRL). A few other students mentioned further implications from classroom noise including Yanoor.

Yanoor: When students do not perform the class task, everybody make a lot of noise. I get headache and feel very bad. (F_8HRG)

Though school noise was described in all schools, it seems to be more pervasive among the schools situated in the low socioeconomic district. And further, boys are found to be noisier than girls.

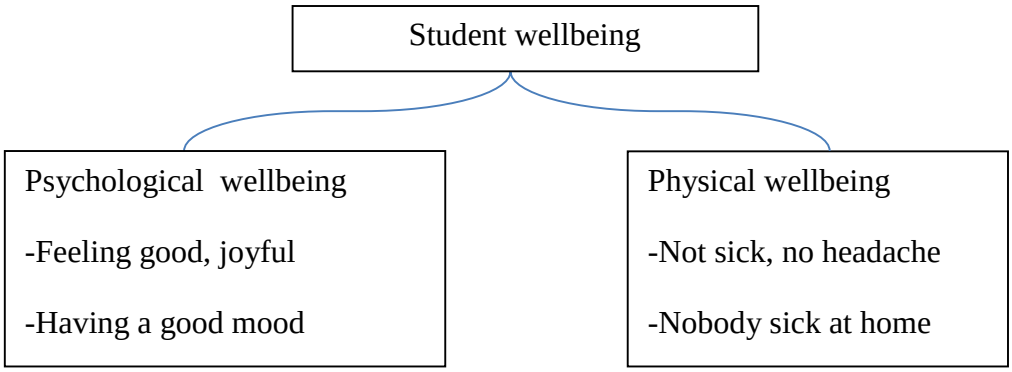
School reputation. Students' narratives showed that they took pride in their school's reputation while indicating positive attitudes toward school. Reputation emerged as one of the strong non-physical school features that students identified in connection with how students perceived school. Roza, Apurna and Soikot mentioned schools' previous public examination success when they described their feelings for their school:

> *Interviewer: How do you feel about this school?*
>
> *Roza: Sir, good. It is a very good school because teachers of this school teach us very good. This school has better teaching compared to other schools. Here, most of the students get GPA 5 in the primary school terminal examination. (F_7HUG)*
>
> *Apurna: Every year many students get scholarship from this school. (F_1HUH)*
>
> *Soikot: Sir, there are many students get scholarship from this school. (F_{10}HUL)*

Students referred to school reputation as "when school performs good results in the examination, school gains fame" (F_{10}HUL). This indicated that school reputation was associated with good performance in the public examination. I mentioned earlier that government primary schools in Bangladesh must participate in the nationwide public examination. Grade five students from each school sit the examination after completing grade five. School reputation counts for how many students pass the examination and get GPA 5. However, students identified that they feel they belong to school "when anybody speaks well about our school" (F_{10}HUL). Interestingly, only high performing students spoke of school reputation in connection to their sense of belonging.

Theme five: student wellbeing

The fifth theme that emerged from the data analysis is concerned with each student's sense of wellbeing. They also discussed their r psychological and physical states in relation to how they felt about their school.



Psychological wellbeing

Psychological wellbeing relates to students' positive and negative emotional state at school. When asked when they feel a sense of belonging to school, students replied with similar words:; "When I feel happy" (F_{12}LRG), "When I feel good" (F_4LRH) or "When I am in good mood " (F_6SIS). For some other students, freedom to express their views in safe environments represents a joyful psychological state that made them feel they belonged to their school. *When we free to talk about our needs we are happy and festive, then I feel happy, I feel belong to school. (F_7HUG)*

When I can hop and jump around the school, I feel good. (F_4LRH)

Conversely, teacher behaviours, such as verbal abuse and punishment, lead to some students experiencing depression, and consequently turned them away from school; as one student commented, "When teachers use abuse me my mind feel bad , I do not like to come to school." (F_1HUH)

In addition, students indicated a wide range of reasons for their happiness or depression at school. Several students described how some events at home made them feel bad at school. Monika and Rupa from a special interest school commented:

> *Monica: There are many chores at home. Mother says, "Complete all the jobs [household chores]." I feel bad [after coming to school].*
>
> *Rupa: When mother scold us [before coming to school]. (F_5SIS)*

Students' description indicated that family chores (fetch water), quarrels with sibling or other family members before the school hours in the morning make them depressed and demotivated in the school activities.

Physical wellbeing

Many students associated being sick with school attendance and belonging. During focus group interviews, students were asked to write on post-it-notes regarding what made them feel they belonged to school. A number of written comments described experiences of illness in relation to school attendance.

> *When I feel sick, I do not like to come to school. (F_1HUH)*
>
> *When there is headache, (I) do not like to come to school. (F_2LUH)*
>
> *When I feel bad in my belly, I do not like to come to school. (F_3HRH)*

It is not clear from the above statements how students linked their feelings of belongingness to illness. Their comments about physical illness appeared to account for their absence from school, suggesting that although they have a strong desire and intention to come to school, physical illness holds them back. In a focus group, Omar identified his worst memory about schooling: "When I was in grade three, then I missed five classes because of ill-health [days], I felt very bad." (F_9LRG).

Students' opinions showed that the most frequent experiences of illness were fever, headaches and abdominal pain. On the one hand, more female students reported headaches, "most of the time, for the migraine problem, I have to skip the school" (F_8HRG); " I have sinus problem, often have headache and fever, can not come to school" (F_8HRG). On the other hand, male students mostly mentioned stomach-aches.

Many of these illnesses were contracted at school. For example, students often skipped the midday meal, causing them to feel unwell at school. Arif, a non-attending student stated, "I feel dizzy and get vertigo" when he "did not bring rice [midday meal]" (P_1HUH). Some other students said " when there is a lot of noise in classroom, I often feel headache, I take leave and go back home" (F_8HRG). Students identified street food sold next to their school premises as one source responsible for their lack of wellbeing. Humaira, for example, commented, "they [boys] always have junk food from outside, for this reason they have stomach-ache" (F_5LUG).

The data presented in this chapter covers a number of themes associated with students sense of belonging to, or disconnection from, school which are multiple, interrelated and complex. This complexity and how to manage it to enhance students' belonginess are discussed and theorised in relation to the research question in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION

The hunger to belong is not merely a desire to be attached to something. It is rather sensing that great transformation and discovery become possible when belonging is sheltered and true.

(John O'Donohue)

Introduction

This phenomenological study explores Bangladeshi primary school students' subjective accounts of their belonging experiences in schools. This chapter discusses the findings in light of the research questions, theory and existing literature. The main research question driving this study is: How do Bangladeshi students experience a sense of belonging in primary school? This main question led to the following research subquestions (RSQ):

1. How do Bangladeshi primary school students conceptualise a sense of belonging?
2. What issues are associated with students' sense of school belonging in the Bangladeshi context?

RSQ1: How do students conceptualise a sense of belonging in primary school?

The first research question was designed to extend the understanding of Bangladeshi primary school students' conceptualisations of a sense of belonging to their school. The findings demonstrated that students' understanding is complex, with concepts that are multilayered and interrelated. Three main conceptualisations of sense of belonging to school emerged from the data analysis: (a) being loved and cared for by teachers and peers, (b) being supported by teachers for academic progress, and (c) a feeling of accomplishment in academic success.

Being loved and cared for by teachers and peers. The findings of the present study have demonstrated that students' positive emotional relationships with teachers and peers appeared to be the strongest aspect in understanding their sense of belonging to school. Most participants, both in focus groups and individual interviews, described needing affection and being cared for by teachers and peers in relation to sense of belonging. This finding appears to buttress the view that sense of belonging is a psychological concept that explains students' connection to social relationships in a group and in the community (Baumeister, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wehlage et al., 1989).

According to Appleton, Christenson, and Furlong (2008), the student–teacher relationship is the strongest aspect of sense of belonging in a school's social environment. The current study results indicate that for these Bangladeshi students, a sense of belonging is being loved and cared for within their schools ("When teachers adore me, I feel the class is mine"). This finding is consistent with previous studies which indicate that teachers' personal and emotional support, for example, being fair, supportive, friendly, warm, and respectful to students, enhances a sense of belonging (Hallinan, 2008; McMahon et al., 2008). Affection provides an emotional bonding to the school's social environment. The current study indicates that sense of belonging relates to teachers' love and care when an individual student encounters kind, encouraging words and equal treatment from teachers.

A focus on the development of student–teacher affective bonding through positive teacher attitudes and personal relationships can assist schools to provide better learning environments for children in Bangladesh. Osterman (2010) argued that teachers have the "strongest and most direct effect on students' psychological

experience" at school (p. 239). The results of this study show that teachers' attitudes toward students influence their academic engagement ("I would have been regular if teachers behaved nicely, when they care for me"). Johnson's (2009) study suggested that strong student–teacher bonds influence students' engagement and assist in creating a safer learning environment. Furthermore, the importance of teachers establishing and maintaining a social and emotional bond with students is vital in terms of students' mental health and academic performance at school (Allen & Bowles, 2012).

Similar to teacher relationships, relationships with peers was found to be another strong aspect of the participants' conceptualisation of belongingness at school. Peer relationships consist of peer acceptance and company and students feeling of belongingness through interactional relationships includes being accepted on sports teams, in group discussions, in meal sharing, and when working on schoolwork with their peers. The interactional relationship is both a general acceptance among peers or within a small group of friends. Students' narratives in focus groups and individual interviews showed that they generally have intimate relationships with a small number of peers. The regular contact of this small peer group affected them emotionally and behaviourally, leading to their understanding of what it means to belong to school ("I feel that I belong when friends come to school, I want to come to school"). This is concurrent with the need to belong hypothesis that considers belonging as an innate and universal need to "form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" with other human beings (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). I would argue that a large contributor to students' belongingness conceptualisation is rooted in peer relationships.

McNeely (2013) claims that while peer relationships may promote group belonging, they do not necessarily always contribute to school belongingness. He cautions that sometimes peer belonging can go in the opposite direction, towards social belonging, depending on one's selection of peers. The present study indicates there were two distinct groups in grade five: one that comprised students who were consistently promoted and the other comprised students who repeated the grade in another year; thus, they were older and physically bigger than their peers. Students in the older group usually tended to dominate their peers. This is made evident in Chapter Five in how most of the students get bullied by their peers. Despite this division among peers in the same grade, peer relationships appeared to be a strong component of a sense of togetherness. As highlighted in Chapter Five, students felt belongingness when they could study, play, have fun, and achieve goals together. Kernan and Loyzaga (2014) note that "belonging and interdependence is articulated in terms of a sense of togetherness and the expression of a common ground" (p. 99). These understandings of such belonging signify the importance of providing young children with opportunities to work together, which is the basis for all social learning (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978).

Various studies (Hill, 2006; Wehlage et al., 1989) show that the nature of these emotional and social relationships with teachers and peers needs to be reciprocal. They suggest that students feel a sense of belonging when they care about what other members of the school think and expect from them. The findings from the present study indicate this reciprocity when students linked their belongingness to school in terms of how they feel about teachers' expectations and feelings about them ("if results are not good, the teacher feels unhappy" or "when teachers are happy to see our lesson done"). Similarly, while students expect love and care from

their teachers and peers, they also showed an emotional bond with their teachers. For example, one student put it succinctly when her favourite teachers moved to another school: “When a teacher goes away from the school, I feel someone very close leaves [the school].” This demonstrates emotional attachment of some students to their favourite teachers and how teacher mobility can temporarily or permanently disconnect students from school. Mahar, Cobigo, and Stuart (2013) see this subjective feeling of value and respect as a sense of belonging. Their review study concluded that the reciprocity of the belonging concept is “built on a foundation of shared experiences, beliefs, or personal characteristics” (p. 1031). Students’ accounts in the present study indicated they experienced this reciprocal bonding with teachers and peers with whom they had shared experiences such as school excursions, classroom singing, meals sharing, gossiping, or performing a class play together. These findings suggest that a feel of togetherness through mutual love and care in a school’s social and emotional environment strongly influence students’ sense of belongingness to school.

Being supported by teachers for academic progress. Students conceptualised belonging in school as teachers caring about their academic progress. Students frequently made statements such as “when teachers take classes,” “when teacher[s] teach us,” or “when teachers explain [to] us” in response to the question of what makes them feel like they belong in school. These findings imply that students experience belongingness not only through teachers’ encouragement or praise, but also through a positive learning experience.

The perceptions of belonging based on students’ perceived academic support, however, varies in two general ways across schools and students. First, students from

urban and high-performing schools mostly considered teachers' academic support as preparing them for public examinations ("[The] teacher tells us potential multiple choice questions that might be on the examination"). Second, students in low-performing and rural schools generally identified academic support as teachers attending and teaching classes regularly at school ("Everyday all classes take place on time"). In high-performing school classrooms, activities are mostly loaded with examination preparation including discussing possible questions on the examination, marking answers in notebooks or textbooks, and testing students' memorised facts. It seems that rote learning, examination based schooling and expectations influence students' perceptions of teacher support. Wallace and Chhuon (2014), however, indicate that students are not only interested in academic learning aims to "pass the class" but also seek to gain an understanding of the content of school subject matter (p. 15). Despite the heavy focus on memorising facts, students in this study showed their desire to learn with understanding which is evident in comments like, "I feel good when I understand [the lesson]." Wallace and Chhuon (2014) argue that providing students with feedback and adapting instruction gives students ownership of the knowledge and a feeling of belonging in the learning environment at school. However, this seems remote from the experiences of Bangladeshi students in this study.

In fact, as students' narratives delineate in Chapter Five, particularly those in low-performing and rural schools in Bangladesh, received limited instructional support from teachers. Students in these schools often endure teachers' perpetual absenteeism, shortened teaching activities, and disorganised lessons (lessons without schedules), which often decrease students motivation to be in school. Leaving students alone without direction and activity makes it seem as if they were given less

care by the school. Chhuon and Wallace's (2014) study of the interpersonal structure of adolescent student–teacher relationships suggests that along with teachers' personal care, "providing instrumental support reflected a sense of professional care for the student's goal[s]" (p. 390).

Despite these differences in students' instructional experiences in high-performing urban schools and low-performing rural schools, one commonality found in terms of students and their belongingness to school is the support provided by teachers in academic progress. However, this finding suggests that teaching in and of itself is not the end of academic support or instructional interaction; teachers in Bangladesh need to provide students with an experience where they can choose, control, challenge, and collaborate in the learning process (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Thus, they can have a feeling of ownership and belonging in their classroom activities and learning.

A feeling of accomplishment in academic success. Despite the suggestions that sense of belonging is related to how students feel accepted, respected, valued, and included in the school social community (Goodenow, 1993b; Ma, 2003; Voelkl, 2012); this study demonstrates that for many students, a feeling of personal accomplishment at school was also important in relation to feeling they belonged in school. This belongingness was found when they recognised themselves as being competent in completing tasks in the classroom or studying well at home ("when I understand the lesson," "able to complete [the] task," and "when I can study completely or memorise the homework"). Students perceived schooling as achieving something academic ("we come to school to study"), and if they can do so, they

recognised themselves as being a part of the school. A recent study shows that individuals feel strong relatedness when they feel competent (Rayburn, 2014).

Together these findings shed a different light on sense of belonging other than an interactional/relational perspective of belonging. Students' interpretation of the sense of belonging as a feeling of accomplishment could be understood to be the result of the educational/pedagogical practice they experienced on a daily basis in primary schools in Bangladesh. It is visible from students' narratives that through everyday classroom engagement, they experience a binary identity at school – either able to perform a task and feeling included or unable to perform and getting punished and rebuked (see Chapter Five). The latter group is considered to be "bad students" by others in class as well as by themselves. Students tend to skip classes or school altogether if they are not prepared for class tasks due to the fear that they will be beaten or rebuked. Thus, academic accomplishment at school determines both physical and mental acceptance at school. Practices like this were found in students' narratives across all participating schools in different forms that described students by academic position (*"*first girl," "second girl") and labelling students as passed or failed by examination. This finding implies that coming to school in Bangladesh is meant to result in achieving academic success. Thus, if they do not achieve it, they are not worthy of being at school.

A plethora of belonging studies, as discussed previously, largely focus on students' achievement and competence as a school outcome of belongingness; for example, a study conducted by Walton, Cohen, Cwir, and Spencer (2012) suggest that students' sense of belonging is positively associated with their academic achievements. Similarly, others indicated belonging to be predictive of school

achievement (Irvin et al., 2011; Ryzin, Gravely, & Roseth, 2009). This study adds to previous research by indicating that a sense of academic achievement or competence is, in and of itself, related to feelings of belongingness to school for Bangladeshi students and this is not necessarily an outcome.

This difference may be explained by considering Bangladeshi educational practice, history, and how Bangladeshi society places expectations on education. School education in Bangladesh is perceived as a combination of teacher-centric instruction and indispensable homework, which is mostly exercised in the form of rote memorisation from textbooks rather than creative, meaningful, emergent writing, reading, or problem solving experiences (Aboud & Hossain, 2011; Ferdowshi & Islam, 2014; Nath & Sylva, 2007). In other words, schooling is considered only in terms of acquiring academic knowledge. In the present study, students frequently mentioned that they come to school “to study,” which reflects that the general expectation of attending school is to learn from textbooks and from teachers. Students are told that academic success is the main goal when attending school. If students could meet the expectations of the school, they belong to school, and vice versa. Students’ interpretation of sense of belonging as a feeling of accomplishment refers to whether they achieve or meet the expectations of schools, teachers and parents. Students’ perceived belongingness, thus, is to achieve academic progress at school.

RSQ2: What issues are associated with students' sense of belonging in the Bangladeshi context?

The barriers and facilitators influencing students' sense of belonging are presented here. As per the discussion of the belonging phenomena for human beings in Chapter Two, the common theoretical proposition is that sense of belonging is an innate quality of being human (Baumeister, 2012; Maslow, 1943; Ryan & Deci, 2000). It implies that all students by nature bind themselves with the school, without any outer force in order to make them feel a sense of belonging within the school social environment. However, while belonging may be a natural process (Baumeister, 2012), several external issues can inhibit students in establishing a strong feeling of belonging. The present study is in line with this traditional theoretical assumption of belonging (Baumeister, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000): that all students, irrespective of their academic performance, gender, ethnicity, and attendance, hold a sense of belonging to their school, but this can vary. Varied experiences of belonging are found to be associated with three inhibiting issues including: 1) teacher related issues 2) peer related issues, and 3) school level resource issues.

Issue one: Teacher related issues

Teacher absenteeism

One of the critical issues that influenced students' sense of belonging is teachers not being regular at school or in the classroom. Students' frequent comments (highlighted in Chapter Five) such as "when teachers take classes regularly," and "when teachers do not come to school" evidence the importance of teacher attendance related to students' attachment to school. Students, including those who

have low academic performance and irregular attendance records, identified teachers' presence and teaching in class as the best reason to like school or come to school. This finding resonates with previous research; for example, Ampiah and Adu-Yeboah's (2009)dropout study shows that teacher absenteeism has also been linked to reduced participation and students skipping school. In addition, a study conducted by Ghuman and Lloyd (2010) indicates that teachers' absenteeism limits students' access by reducing instructional time. When teachers come less frequently to school, it not only limits student interaction leading to less student engagement, but fewer activities and even less organised interaction with peers (Osterman, 2010).

The findings of this study show how teachers' absence left students feeling directionless and purposeless ("I don't like sitting doing nothing"). Hirschi's (2009) control theory posits that involvement or engagement is one of the essential elements of bonding individuals to society. Conversely, if schools fail to involve or engage students, "students drop out psychologically," which is evident "by their passivity and boredom" (Wehlage et al., 1989, p. 118). Recent studies indicate that teacher absenteeism decreases students' attendance, enrolment, and individual attainment (Brown & Arnell, 2012; Duflo, Hanna, & Ryan, 2012). Together with the results of the present study, such research suggests that the absence of teachers leads to limited social interaction and engagement in school and influences students' sense of belonging.

An independent survey reported in a Bangladeshi government report (Directorate of Primary Education, 2013) shows that teacher absenteeism and lateness in government primary schools are 14% and 47% respectively. The report indicates the reason for the high percentage of absenteeism includes both personal

and official matters. Further, since there is no system to provide substitute teachers to cover the regular teachers temporarily, students are often left alone in class. Schools in western countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, have teacher agencies that fill vacant positions when teachers are absent, so students are not left alone in the classroom (Gershenson, 2012). However, in the Bangladeshi situation, this is not the case because there are no such agencies. When a teacher is absent, the classroom is vacant for a time (number of days), the teacher is absent, and this chronically affects children's sense of belonging and achievement.

Further, in this study, as evident in Chapter Five, when teachers do not come to the classroom, there are other negative ramifications for students. Students report feeling ignored, excluded, and are dissatisfied with the school and teachers. This indicates that the absence of teachers creates a chaotic schooling experience and leads students to disengage. The implication of this finding raised the serious question of teachers' attitudes and commitment toward their learners and professions. Osterman (2010) argues that belongingness to school "enable[ing] students to develop as capable and independent learners…convey[s] [a] message of care" (p. 242). As in the discussion on the first research question, sense of belonging is found to be a perception of professional support and care from teachers. This phenomenon explains why teachers' absenteeism is mentioned frequently in students' narratives regarding their belongingness to school.

Instructional practices

Another issue that influences students' sense of belonging is teachers' pedagogical or instructional practices. It appears from students' narratives that along with teachers' irregular attendance, their teaching–learning activities in class affected

their sense of belonging. For example, students frequently commented about the pedagogical practices of teachers ("when teachers teach us properly" or "teachers explain the lesson well") implying that how teachers deliver lessons determines belongingness. Osterman (2010) found similar connections regarding teacher's pedagogical practice and indicated that "instructional strategies that address students' needs for competence and autonomy also enhance students' sense of belonging" (p.242).

The findings of the present study suggest that teaching– learning practice which offered academic competency and provided joyful learning experiences fostered students' sense of belonging. There is evidence to suggest that even students with irregular and low achievement records related their attachment to how teachers taught lessons in class ("Teachers write on the blackboard once with examples, ask us to read, and then ask us to write again"). Teachers who used a variety of teaching approaches and made lessons engaging and understandable enhanced students' sense of belongingness to school. Fitzsimmons (2006) argued that teachers, through explaining lessons, giving examples, checking students' work, and engaging actively in problem solving demonstrate they care about students' success. Conversely, when students experienced teacher instruction as unsupportive and not engaging, they felt "isolated and ignored" (Fitzsimmons, 2006, p. 107). Students' experiences in the special interest schools in this study is an example of how poor teaching can make students disappointed and angry with both the school and its teachers ("Madams [teachers] simultaneously do their personal needlework while they are teaching us"; "If we ask Madam why you are finishing…school early, Madam say, 'go away.' Then they will give us huge pressure [with lots of homework]"). Though this might not be the case in all schools, the abovementioned examples give an idea of how

teachers' negative instructional practices fracture teacher–student relationships. The pervasive use of rote memorisation in instructional practice, found in this study, led to a discouraging and exclusionary school climate. The findings of this study demonstrated that students need to memorise a large amount of information, either from textbooks or other sources (notebooks), and a major part of class tasks involved reciting memorised lessons. This exercise in teaching–learning practice left little scope for students to share their experiences, opinions and to participate constructively in generating new knowledge. Instead, the process of learning is about regurgitation of what teachers' know and instruct. This finding has implications for understanding pedagogical practice in primary schools and it's far reaching effects on students' sense of belonging. Similar to many developing countries, Bangladesh primary education maintains a single focus on increasing school enrolment, with little attention to the question of quality of learning (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2013). Moss (2008) argued that bringing students into school does not necessarily ensure that "enrolment leads to experiences of productive pedagogies and life-long learning relationships" (p. 5). School needs to deliver an educational practice where students can connect socially, intellectually and emotionally.

The findings suggest that pedagogical practice in this study lacks a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. For example, excessive rote learning kept both students and teachers apart from interactional discussion including connecting them to learning materials in meaningful ways. Instead, traditional pedagogies glued students to school curricular content, so they experienced daily packaged knowledge. As students memorised the text marked by the teacher or learnt ready-made answers from commercial notebooks sold in the bookshops, as some students put it, the ("teacher finds out and helps us mark the most important

lines in the textbooks which might appear in the examination"). This gave students little time to think, connect and add to the knowledge they acquired. In this way, students appeared as 'copy machines' and not as producers of knowledge. It can be argued that teaching and learning practices in the participated schools are far from taking a constructivist approach, which considers students as active learners and co-constructors of knowledge based on their past knowledge, interaction and experiences with others (N. Johnson & Atwater, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978). This finding is consistent with earlier studies (Habib, 2008; Z. A. Khatun, 2010) that teachers in primary and secondary schools in Bangladesh have limited familiarisation of constructivism teaching and learning perspectives. However, lack of such a constructivist approach to teaching and learning can impede the progress and abilities of students (Vygotsky, 1978; Walls, 2014). Lack of student participation in knowledge construction makes their learning less meaningful and impedes their sense of ownership of their learning, leading to a minimal sense of belonging to school (Adams, 2007).

Further, rote memorisation-oriented pedagogy particularly challenged students who were not good at memorising classroom lecturers. In this way, students who found the classrooms boring and unchallenging, tended to skip classes when they were not able to memorise the lesson well, for fear of being punished. This is echoed in the following statement: "When there is too much to memorise, like big letters [for English grammar class], I do not go [to] school". An earlier study conducted by Dey and Siddiqee (2012) on excessive memorisation practices in Bangladeshi primary schools referred to a "backwash effect" regarding the student assessment system in primary schools (p. 28). They showed that students in Bangladeshi government primary schools had to participate in primary school

terminal examinations at the end of grade five, which largely required responses based on memorised answers from textbooks. Like most national exams, the terminal exam promotes instructional practice focused on preparing students for the exam and narrowing the curriculum by emphasising factual information (see Howie, 2012; Torrance). This examination-centric pedagogy has had a deleterious effect on students' schooling experiences by requiring instructional practices based solely on test scores, often leading to stigmatisation and marginalisation (Dei, 2010b; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Peters & Oliver, 2009) of those who failed the tests.

Students who received low scores were not only looked upon negatively by their peers or teachers, but they were self-critical. In fact, they perceived themselves as "bad students" and failures ("I feel bad because my friends got promoted and…left me alone in [the] same grade", and "good students do not talk to us"). Students who are labelled and declared "failures" have negative self-esteem and reduced motivation (Park & Ahmed, 2015). These practices further promote absenteeism, disengagement and detachment from school.

Taken together, these findings suggest schools' sole measure of students' success, based on academic performance through rote learning and summative examination, not only fails to provide them with a sense of ownership in learning process, but also excludes those who do not conform to this practice. These findings have implications for how students and knowledge are perceived in existing teaching–learning processes in Bangladesh. It shows that students have nothing to contribute in terms of learning and knowledge, which comes from textbooks, and what is inscribed in teacher cognitive space. This has further implications for pedagogical transformation, where knowledge is seen as socially constructed based

on the experiences of all social actors, students, teachers and other significant actors (e.g. parents' interactions with social and material environments) (von Glasersfeld, 1989; Vygotsky, 1978; Yilmaz, 2008). In this case, classroom teaching and learning procedures must be conceptualised in terms of students' "interests and talent and not from deficits or curriculum materials" (Poplin, 1988, p. 414). This constructive perspective, which views the learner as an active actor in the teaching–learning process, makes students feel a sense of worth and value in the learning process, enhancing their belongingness to school. It has been confirmed repeatedly that "all children are born with remarkable abilities of one form or another" and "examinations are not a true measure of learners' abilities" (Dei, 2010b, p. 12).

The assessment procedure practised in Bangladesh primary schools appeared to limit students' learning to rote memorisation and without due recognition of other potential. Popin (1988) argued that teachers need to emphasise student development, interests and involvement more than student performance on reductionistic sub-skills and sub-processes. Schools need to address assessment procedures to support student learning to the optimal potential of each individual and not to marginalise or categorise them. Assessment procedures that recognise diverse student abilities would foster all aspects of students' capabilities (Dei, 2010b). Once students recognise themselves as valuable and worthwhile members of the school community, they would be more likely to engage in learning processes that make them feel as if they belong to school.

Also, students repeatedly connected joyful learning experiences with belongingness. They indicated their favourite learning experience was when teachers shared a smile or laughed and used humour in the classroom ("I like when teachers

take the classes lively with laughter and smile"). This indicates students' desire for a joyful and happy interaction with the teacher. Students' narratives in Chapter Five show how the best teachers and best lessons (or subjects) at school are linked to having a joyful teaching–learning experience ("When we finish our lesson, Madam sings a beautiful song for us" and "When we complete our study, she [the teacher] tells us stories"). McNeely (2014) explains that when teachers share a laugh or a smile with students, it makes them feel more comfortable and open to learning. He further argues that using humour in the classroom brings enthusiasm, positive feelings, and optimism to the students. These findings imply that when students have happy and joyful experiences in the classroom learning process, they feel more attached to teachers and in turn to the school.

Corporal punishment

Bangladesh's High Court declared all types of corporal punishment in schools illegal and unconstitutional in 2011 (Hasan, 2014). However, in the current study, students' narratives show that corporal punishment is practised pervasively across schools. Punishment, both physical (i.e. beating) and verbal (i.e. name-calling and yelling at students) forms were used by teachers as a means of disciplining students. As highlighted in the Chapter Five, punishment influences students' attitudes and behaviours toward school and generates a feeling of abhorrence towards school ("when teachers beat us, scold us, I don't like to come to school"). Students' perceptions indicate that punishment not only physically hurts, but also reduces their feelings of dignity at school ("it is shameful to be beaten").

Further, harsh verbal discipline, like physical punishment, appeared equally in the narratives in this study. Findings highlighted in Chapter Five show that

teachers' verbal aggression – such as yelling, name-calling or using insults – produced annoyance, disgust, and negative attitudes among students toward the teacher, the class and self ("I do not like the class when the teacher calls us 'rotten'"; "When teacher scolds us a lot at a time, I feel annoyed"). It appears that despite students being young, they were sensitive to a teacher's hurtful words. Ney's (1987) study explained that as young children are very fragile and vulnerable, verbal punishment could generate a negative perception of self and an unhappy view of the world. A study conducted by Vissing, Straus, Gelles, and Harrop (1991) showed that verbal abuse could have a stronger impact than physical punishment on a child's social competence, such as making friends, and results in misbehaviour or disciplinary problems at school or at home.

Students with irregular attendance or those who were defiant regarding school disciplinary tactics were more prone to punishment, which further prevented them from turning up at school ("They [students with irregular attendance] fight on [sic] something and get beaten by the teacher. This is why they say they do not like to come to school"). Baker (1998) posits that if students experience harsh disciplinary treatment and perceive the disciplinary process as threatening, they will respond with more violent behaviour. Baker argued that this process was a "vicious cycle" where teachers "alienate students and students respond in ways that encourage their further alienation" (p. 35). However, students with irregular attendance and low performing records, who were more prone to getting punished than their regular peers, were reluctant to talk about their own punishment experiences. This may be the case because being punished is a shameful issue.

As the discussion of the first research question indicates, sense of belonging is conceptualised as teacher love and care for students; therefore, a violent interaction with the teacher acts in opposition to such an experience. As evident in Chapter Five, many students defined teacher love and care as ("when they do not beat us.") Baker (1998) suggests that a school's failure to provide students with meaningful social contexts creates this violence problem. This is particularly visible among students with irregular attendance or low performance records, who were found to have a weak socio-emotional relationship with their peers and teachers ("they complain that nobody talk[s] to them, teachers behave badly with them, and this is why they leave the school"). These findings are in line with a previous study that suggests that when a school fails to connect with students, particularly those who are at-risk, it promotes further "alienation and distancing" (Baker, 1998, p. 36).

Interestingly, although students frequently mentioned corporal punishment as a painful and discouraging experience, several including students with low performance and irregular attendance records, opined that corporal punishment in class was essential to discipline students ("If [the] teacher beat[s] us, we can become disciplined"). This perception, which contradicts other students' narratives, reflects the general perception of many teachers and parents that corporal punishment is an efficacious technique for training and discipline (Rahman, 2014). This perception holds corporal punishment as a "long, unchallenged culturally approved disciplining measure" despite the ban in educational institutions in Bangladesh (Mohiuddin, Khatun, & Al-Kamal, 2012, p. 40). However, a review of studies on physical punishment as a disciplinary measure found that corporal punishment had "limited effectiveness" and "potential deleterious side effect[s]" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1998, p. 723). Exposure to corporal punishment puts children at severe

risk of mental health problems, physical injuries, and even death (Evans, Davies, & DiLillo, 2008; Lansford et al., 2014). Furthermore, corporal punishment exposes children to harsh punitive environments and these students perform significantly worse in areas of cognitive functioning (e.g. memory, reasoning, and problem solving) compared to their counterparts who had not been punished in this way (Talwar, Carlson, & Lee, 2011).

Although studies show an emerging consciousness among parents, guardians and social change agents against corporal punishment in school systems in Bangladesh, such consciousness is still "latent, disjointed, minimalist, and inactive due to lack of platforms for airing collective voices" (Mohiuddin et al., 2012, p. 40). Students' apparent self-contradictory perceptions on corporal punishment, revealed in this study, indicate that teachers, parents, and students themselves have limited awareness of alternatives to corporal punishment. A study conducted in Pakistan by Ali, Mirza, and Rauf (2013), which has a similar socioeconomic and cultural context, showed that 14-day training on the negative impact of physical punishment on children and alternatives to corporal punishment brought significant attitudinal success among the teachers. The findings of the present study thus suggest that along with large-scale media promotion and the imposition of legal prohibition, schools needs to promote alternative methods of classroom management in order to end corporal punishment practice, and to provide a safe and welcoming school environment.

Issues of fairness

Perceived fairness was one of the issues **s**tudents raised spontaneously with explicit and strong emotions in relation to their sense of belonging to school in this study.

Students felt they belonged to school when they found that teachers were equal to them ("When teacher[s] love us equally then they are fair"). An earlier study conducted by Ma (Ma, 2003) with over 12,000 students in Canadian schools showed that if students perceive school disciplinary rules as unfair, they develop a negative sense of belonging, even though their school disciplinary climate may not necessarily have been negative.

Several negative practices affected students' sense of belonging to school including: perceived unfairness as being underappreciated for their achievements; being punished or accused without having a chance to defend themselves against the allegations; and perceiving a teacher as being partial or biased towards any particular student or group of students. Teachers often rebuked students regardless of their involvement in a negative situation, which would offend and frustrate those students who were not responsible ("If somebody cannot solve a mathematics problem, he [the teacher] scolds us all a lot…I feel disgusted"). Similarly, when teachers do not listen to students carefully and do not provide them with an opportunity to explain what happened, the innocent student may be unjustly punished. For the student, this unfair experience and treatment may have a distressing and long-term effect on them ("[The] teacher can tell me what I have done [wrong], I can understand, I would feel better. Teachers do not listen to us properly and our complaints carefully. [I] do not like getting punishments without doing any crime").

Further, findings from this research suggest that students perceived that teachers behaved differently with high- and low-achieving students. For example, students perceived that high-achieving students receive less punishment ("If there are students' names from [group] number one or number two, nothing…happen[s] to

them, but…the rest are given punishment”). A study conducted by Brophy and Kher (1986) found a serious implication regarding teachers’ discriminating expectations of their students: if students internalise these expectations from teachers and respond with continued low effort and achievement, this will increase alienation from the school. Cooper and Cefai’s (2013) study indicates that students who display significant behavioural problems refer to teachers as being unfair towards them. In the present study, although irregular students shared little of their own experiences of perceived unfairness during individual interviews; however, regular students in their focus group mentioned that irregular and low achieving students were punished more often in comparison to high-achieving peers, resulting in further skipping of classes and school (“they get punished often, they say that is why they do not like to come to school”). Further, a previous study showed that negative emotions produced by perceived injustice can contribute to delinquent behaviour in students (Rebellon, Manasse, Van Gundy, & Cohn, 2012). The findings of this study indicate that unfair or unjust punishment or accusation by peers and teachers produced a negative emotional state, such as sadness and anger, in students (“That day I get hurt, I felt very sad, I feel disgusted, I do not like the class”), which implies that perceived injustice and unfairness produce an emotional detachment from the class and teachers.

Issue two: Peer related issues

Bullying and rejection

The first research question, discussed earlier in this chapter, showed that relationships with peers are an important aspect in conceptualising sense of belonging in school. One aspect of these relationships is peer bullying. Students' narratives show they might have ups and downs in their relationships, but they can be friends again. However, bullying, as students perceived in this study, not only humiliates them momentarily, but also leaves behind the worst memories of school ("One day when I was in grade three, many students beat me together"). The findings of this study suggest that students experience all three types of bullying – physical, verbal, and emotional or relational – at school.

Students from half of the schools were found to be victims of physical bullying at school. Surprisingly, although the students participating in this study were in the most senior grade at school, some were beaten by their peers in the same grade ("There is one in our class who do a lot of fighting in class. He harasses girls, he beats us all"). It appears from the findings of this study that students who are comparatively larger physically and older tend to bully the younger students in their own class ("When teacher complete checking our homework, they order us to bring their homework notebook from teacher's table. If I do not listen, they scold us or beat us"). These findings suggest that each grade consists of students from different groups who are placed together ("There are big boys in class"). This trend is due to the high level of grade repetition practised in government primary schools in Bangladesh. Government reports show that the repetition rates are high (10-12%) and have not changed much over the years (2005-2011), although it was claimed that

there was a sharp drop to 6.9% in 2014. If students do not pass the annual examinations in any grade, they have to repeat the grade, which makes some students older than their peers in the same grade (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014).

Evidence from the data in this study has shown that verbal bullying, which consists of teasing, name-calling, and taunting, in government primary schools was pervasive. Verbal bullying, particularly targeting females, and low-performing and weak students left devastating emotional scars ("Everybody look at me and say, 'two year,' 'two years' donkey.' I feel very bad when they say [things] like this"). Verbal bullying not only hurts physically but also defiles students' dignity and may damage their self-esteem.

In addition to verbal harassment, emotional bullying, which consists of embarrassment, humiliation, and social exclusion were reportedly linked to students' sense of belonging. Although grade five students are very young, negative sexual student actions, such as inappropriate behaviour or uninvited touching, seem to be directed towards female students ("When boys climb on [the] toilet roof and try to peek though, I feel bad; sometimes they pull my hair…"). This finding suggests that poor and insecure school sanitation management may be responsible for female students dealing with inappropriate behavioural experiences at school. However, it is evident from students' experiences that the consequences of gender offences are that Bangladeshi girls feel insecure and low in status in the school and in some cases even stop coming to school ("They do not feel good as boys [are] naughty to them. That's why they leave the school"). Similarly, students with disabilities are found to be severely bullied by fellow classmates. Although a few students expressed

sympathy for their peers with a disability, a group of students teased one child continuously, and this indicates that children might have little understanding of children with special needs. Nowicki, Brown, and Stepien (2014) found that peers' inappropriate attitudes and behaviours included excluding students with disabilities from the school social environment.

Peer bullying appeared as mutually exclusive concerning both students who bully and those being bullied. As discussed above, younger, weaker, and female students are victims of bullying, which makes them feel threatened, alienated, and even prevents them from attending school. On the other hand, in this study, students who were bullying were found to be grade repeaters, have irregular attendance, or frequently receive punishments by the teacher and were also excluded from their schools' social and learning environment ("They do fighting in the school, teacher beat them, and this is why they do not like to come to school"). This concurs with a study conducted by Demanet and Van Houtte (2012) in which students having a high sense of teacher support and school belonging exhibited less school misconduct. This finding can be explained from the school-as-community perspective (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995), which posits that students who feel a part of a caring school community and have supportive relationships with teachers, tend to adapt to and work towards the school's norms and values. In the present study, it is clear that school practices – particularly tough disciplinary measures, constant labelling of "pass" or "fail" and "bad" or "good," and less opportunity and recognition of other skills and abilities – make some students outcasts in regular school activities. This is particularly true of disruptive students because teachers react more harshly towards them (Good & Brophy, 2008). Furthermore, Demanet and Van Houtte (2012) emphasised individual bonding in

association with school misconduct – if students have a high sense of teacher support and school belonging, they will be less likely to engage in school misconduct.

Taken together, these findings have important implications for class management strategy. According to Osterman (2010), teachers affect students' sense of belonging indirectly through their influence on the nature of peer relationships in class. Nowicki, Brown, and Stepien **(**2014**)** advocate proactive social skills for all children in order to develop positive and supportive social environments at school. They further recommend school communities to ensure that all children feel valued and welcome at school. Evidence from student narratives in this study has shown that teachers' stigmatisation for low-performing students and perceived bias or favouritism for high-achieving students promote class bullying such as name-calling. It appears that teachers' frequent absenteeism and reduced engagement in class management allow students enough time for bullying each other in class.

Issue three: School resources and facilities

Games and sports were some of the major attractions at school. However, students' narratives suggest that they experienced limited sports activities including regular, organised sports activities and related sports equipment and gear. In fact, several schools did not even have playgrounds. For example, students' frustrations over schools having no playground or sports programme are illustrated in how they get bored and become disinterested in their school's daily routine of academic work ("I do not like this school very much, as it does not have [a] playground. We have six periods, and after three periods we have a big break but we can't play; we are to sit on the benches all day in school"). Further, many students who were from a school with a playground associated their belongingness to their sports opportunities at

school (“I like this school very much and the most favourite place in the school is our playground”).This finding indicates that games and sports plays a vital role in connecting students with school. This can be explained from Mahoney’s (2014) study, drawing on earlier psychological findings that as children tend to affiliate with people who are alike, co-curricular activities give students an opportunity to form relationships based on a common interest, which, in turn, fosters students’ sense of belonging. Another study by Walseth (2006) on Norwegian Muslim immigrant women illustrated that sports act as social support for students by working together towards a common goal, sharing common emotions and interests, and developing identity through role playing on sports teams. The findings of this study showed that a lack of sports activities not only disinterested a few students in the school, but also turned some of them away physically from the school (“The playground was submerged, full of water, and [they] cannot play. This is why everybody leaves the school). Taken together, the findings suggest that games and sports strongly influence students’ attachment to school.

Apart from sports, students described performing and fine arts activities, such as music, dance, drama, arts and crafts, in relation to their sense of belonging. For many students in this study, the most memorable and enjoyable school days were when they had school cultural performance programmes such as singing, dancing, or class parties (“I love to see programmes [cultural programmes] in the school’ and “I feel the school belonged to me”). As student narratives in Chapter Five would indicate, co-curricular activities appear to be an inspirational feature in feeling togetherness and ownership of the school. Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, and Zarrett (2009), drawing on several studies, show that students’ engagement in arts activities enhanced their initiative and interpersonal skills, attainment , developed their

identities, provided encouragement and reduced dropout, which lead to further attachment to school.

Conversely, lack of recreational facilities had an adverse effect on students' sense of belonging. Schools had limited sports and co-curricular activities, except a few programmes organised on national celebrated days. Students played freely by themselves during the midday meal time. As students from all schools highlighted co-curricular activities in describing their sense of belonging, this indicates the importance of sports and co-curricular activities in connection to belongingness. This may be explained as a result of sharing common, joyful experiences and interacting with each other physically, mentally, and emotionally. These interactions within co-curricular activities have the potential to contribute to our understanding of interactions between diverse individuals and play a role in promoting engagement that leads to learning (Lundberg, 2014). Furthermore, a study by Cross, Lester, and Barnes (2014) suggests that co-curricular activities can play an essential role in purposefully building positive peer-to-peer and student–teacher relationships.

Interestingly, students in this study appreciated being involved in a few other activities, such as sweeping the classroom together with other students, as a joyful experience and as a break from academic work ("When Madam asked us to sweep the class, then I feel best at school"). However, findings here simultaneously showed that employing students in serious school cleaning on a daily basis might backfire in the sense of students' school belonging. Evidence shows how students felt anger and frustration when they were forced to clean the whole school on a daily basis during school hours ("We are to sweep first floor to fourth floor. We sweep every day"). This imposed engagement was not only distressing and laborious work for the

students, but they also identified teachers as being hostile towards them as a result. The findings of this study showed that although students wanted to pay to hire cleaning services for the school, teachers refused, and kept students cleaning the school. Although the present study did not have the scope to hear from teachers, it would be a discriminatory practice if students were engaged in cleaning at school just because their parents clean professionally. These special feature schools are government schools entitled to be maintained as any other school. If it is only because students are from a sweeper cast, the school and teachers can in no way expect students to sweep the school, particularly against their will during school hours, when they should be studying ("We take a bath before coming to school. But still we are asked to clean benches"). Students' expressions showed how this imposed engagement by teachers produced deleterious attitudinal effects on teachers and eventually the whole school ("What is the benefit of going to school? [Teachers] just scold us").

Library facilities

Reading stories from books in the school library was one of the sources of entertainment/recreation for students at school ("many of us wish to read story books, I love reading stories"). However, the findings of this study showed both fascination and frustration on the part of students with their school library facilities ("there are a lot of story books [in the staff room], but [teachers] do not let us read"). These findings can be explained regarding existing school library facilities in government primary schools. First, there is no formal school library in Bangladesh. Recently, some non-government organisations supported a few hundred primary schools in Bangladesh in developing their library facilities (see Plan, 2014; Room to

Read Bangladesh, 2014). However, this is not adequate since there are more than 106,000 primary schools (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014) in Bangladesh. Second, findings of the present study show that although several schools had books for the students, students were often denied access to them ("We want to borrow story books, teachers do not give us. Books are kept locked in closed bookshelves [in the staffroom]"). Although there is no separate library, schools get some recreational and supplementary reading books from different organisations including government, non-government, and international organisations (M. A. Islam, 2002; Munshi, 2005). However, as schools are short of rooms and teachers, many schools do not organise library facilities for the students and leave the books piled up in the headmaster's room, kept under lock and key (M. A. Islam, 2002).

Further, public library access is limited in most of rural Bangladesh, particularly for primary school children (S. Islam & Ahmed, 2012). For many students, schools are the only source of books for recreational reading. Taken together, these findings provide an explanation for why students found school library opportunities as recreational activities at school and why denying them this opportunity made them feel depressed. However, studies from other countries showed that school libraries not only provide students with the joy of reading but also develop positive reading attitudes and enhanced achievement (Greenwood, Creaser, & Maynard, 2008; New York Comprehensive Center, 2011). Schools in Bangladesh need to recognise the importance of school library programmes and introduce at least a designated weekly library lesson/time for students, so they can be issued with books to take home. A weekly library lesson can offer students an opportunity to retell their story reading to their peers and encourage their reading habits. The lesson can engage students in library organisation activities such as

sorting and tidying the books. This feature of actively involving students in the workings of a library could afford students further ownership at school (Greenwood et al., 2008).

Essential physical facilities

The findings of this study suggest that on one hand, a beautiful and clean school could foster students' belongingness to school; on the other hand, deplorable school sanitation facilities could negatively influence students' sense of belonging to school. Students often associate school greenery (especially fruit trees) with a positive attitude towards school ("There are mango trees around our school. This is why I like the school very much"), suggests that students feel comfortable and relaxed at school with trees and gardens. Similarly, a clean and beautiful school is found to inspire students to come to school ("If the school is beautiful, I feel [like I want] to go to school. If our rooms [classrooms] were clean, it would be very good").

Conversely, lack of access to water and proper sanitation facilities generated negative and uncomfortable schooling experiences among students. Most of the schools had an inadequate number of toilets and many of them were often found to be unclean and unusable with insufficient water availability ("Many times there is no tap, and no water. And sometimes if there were water, the drain had been blocked and water would remain all over the floor"). According to a government report, 17% of schools do not have any toilet facilities. Further, although this report claims that 85% of government schools have at least one functioning toilet (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014), one is sceptical of these findings, especially given the number of students that use school toilets, , even if they were functional. The results of this study revealed that students were not using the toilets, as they are kept locked

or restricted to teachers' use only ("Teacher do not let us use…the toilets; Madams only use the toilet"). Many students, particularly male students, go outside for urinating and defecating during class breaks. This practice makes the school grounds further unhygienic, smelly, and unattractive to others.

In regard to female students, deplorable sanitation facilities cause further implications for their schooling experiences. The findings of this study showed that female students not only spoke more about clean sanitation facilities, but also talked about privacy issues regarding school toilets ("When boys climb on the toilet roof and try to peek through, I feel bad"). Although according to a Bangladesh government report, 68% of government primary schools have separate toilets for girls (Directorate of Primary Education, 2014); the findings of this study showed that many of the separate toilets were unable to attract females students because they were smelly, unclean, and lacked privacy ("Dirty, stinky and flies around").

A cross-country review study conducted by Jasper, Le, and Bartram (2012) catalogued three major outcomes related to school water and sanitation issues including health outcomes (e.g. diarrhoea, dehydration, and urinary tract infections), cognitive outcomes (e.g. mental performance, shame, and discomfort using the toilet), and educational outcomes (e.g. academic performance and absenteeism). The findings of the present study indicate that due to both sanitary and privacy reasons, students, particularly female students, suppressed toilet needs. This practice for students who spent a long time in school under these conditions – over eight hours a day in Bangladeshi government primary schools – could prevent them from achieving optimal cognitive functioning as well as maintaining their health. Even though the present study did not have the scope to measure the impact of sanitation

facilities on students' physical conditions; students repeatedly mentioned health issues like abdominal aches, headaches, and fatigue that may have been linked to inadequate drinking water and use of sanitation. This is unfortunate, given that an earlier study shows that students with good health have more of a chance to participate in academia, sports, and social activities in school, than students with poor health and, consequently, have a stronger sense of belonging (Ma, 2003).

Other earlier studies on belonging and wellbeing indicate a reciprocal relationship between these two constructs. For example, on the one hand, studies show belonging as a fundamental need, and the absence of belongingness causes social isolation and loneliness, which affects not only psychological functioning but also weakens students' immune functions and leads to health hazards (Walton & Cohen, 2011). The core elements of psychological wellbeing include positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Students' narratives, discussed in Chapter Four, delineate that sense of belonging is about experiencing a happy and joyful mental state ("festive and enthusiastic"). When students have positive emotions like being cheerful, glad, and joyful at school, they feel like they belong to the school. As discussed earlier, students relate their positive feelings of wellbeing to having friends, individual achievements, and having successful relationships with teachers, which reaffirms the contribution of all of these aspects to fostering a sense of belonging.

School facilities discussed above is one of the important findings of this study, as a limited number of previous studies (C. McNeely, 2013; Nichols, 2008) explored school physical resources linked to students' belongingness. School classrooms, cafeteria, and playground are related to a student's sense of pride in

being a part of a particular school, fostering a sense of belonging. Non-physical resources include a school climate that is calm, orderly classrooms and extended field trip programmes (C. McNeely, 2013). Very few studies have underscored school resources linked to students' belongingness to school, perhaps because most of the studies conducted were in western developed countries, where schools are regularly equipped with basic physical resources such as playgrounds, water supplies, electricity, and student toilet facilities. A qualitative study conducted by Pooley et al. (2008) indicated that students' conceptualisation of school community as a function of the school refers to facilities within the school, such as canteen and library, and school community works together to provide these facilities. In this study, several schools were not only able to provide essential facilities (e.g. washrooms) but in many cases, facilities were inaccessible to students (e.g. locked washroom, books locked in cabinet).

According to Butterworth (2000), a "sense of community emerges from the common symbols people use to designate their sense of belonging to and shared membership in a particular physical territory" (p. iii). School is composed of a social environment within a particular physical place. The connection between attachment to place and sense of belonging involves individual's personal experience, and feelings of comfort and security (Rivlin, 1987). Borzooeian (2014) noted that the more physical spaces in schools are compatible with children's behaviour, "the more successful they will be to feel place attachment" (p. 34). School spaces and buildings are imbued with meaning and resonance as they symbolise students' emotions, experiences and events at school (Butterworth, 2000). This is a significance finding, particularly in light of Bangladeshi primary school students who experience limited physical facilities and suffer lack of essential built-in environment support at school.

Making sense of the findings through postcolonial theory

The essence of the discussion in this section is to theorise the findings based on the discussion of the first and second research questions, which simultaneously displayed two distinct patterns of students experiencing a sense of belonging to school: 1) the universal aspects of the belonging phenomena of social relationship dynamics; and 2) within the universal pattern, if a contextual educational practice (disciplinary measures, pedagogical practices, individual wellbeing, and school physical facilities) influenced students' sense of belonging. The purpose of this section is to take a theoretical stance, and discuss these contextual aspects from cultural and historical perspectives, which are considered legacies of colonial practices and principles.

Postcolonial discursive theses examine the impact and continuing legacy of colonial orientation on colonised land, people, and culture (McLeod, 2010). Framed from this perspective, I employed the postcolonial discursive lenses of identity, agency, and power, as these issues are closely related to the student's schooling experiences and belongingness to school. Since belongingness is largely constructed through social interaction and experience, it is contextually, historically, and culturally specific. Therefore, in primary schools, children's identity, agency, and power must be looked upon from within the context in which the educational practice is taking place (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011). This internal critique and analysis is important for understanding internal issues and to give children a foundation to understand their schooling experiences.

Identity and belonging are mutually related. Children develop identity as a sense of who they are, and this identity is shaped by how they understand themselves

and their relationship with their community (Department of Education, 2009; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2009). As shown in the literature review, colonial education practices impose the coloniser's knowledge and learning onto colonised people, undermining indigenous knowledge and taking away natives' identity and voice. In the post-colonial era, colonial educational practices, power-relations, domination, and control are exercised through pedagogical techniques. This is where the teacher, as coloniser, rules the students, as colonised (Agbenyega, 2008). Evidence from this study suggests how textbook-based pedagogical practice, overemphasis on examinations, and teacher-centred instructional practices present teachers as the sole authority on knowledge, challenging students' identities in school.

First, evidence from the data in this study suggests that a prescribed textbook-based classroom teaching–learning approach directed students to only memorise portions of the textbook, marked by teachers, or what teachers have formulated ("He [the teacher] finds out and helps us marking the most important lines in our textbook that might appear in the examination. He tells us potential multiple choice questions and general questions that might be in the examination"). This textbook-based learning and rote memorisation leaves little room for students to contribute and connect with their experiential knowledge. This way of learning mirrors what Lord Curzon identified: that rote memorisation is the great fault of the Asian subcontinent education system and that "knowledge is cultivated by the memory instead of the mind, and that aids to the memory are mistaken for implements of the mind" (Curzon cited in Seth, 2007). Seth (2007) reiterated that in the colonial period, locals perceived imposed western education as a means of gaining material success (e.g. jobs), and did not see it as a key to the fulfilment of

nonmaterial desires and goals. By supressing students' ideas or excluding their contribution to what is going on in their classrooms, education failed to connect with and appreciate individual student's creativity, native knowledge, emotions, and values in the educational system. Thus, students had no real understanding of and appreciation for the value of acquiring education in instrumental terms (Seth, 2007).

The findings of this study indicated that education practice did not change much over a century, and students continue to be 'copy machines' and do not have a sense of ownership over their knowledge. It appears from the findings of the present study that although schools offer education in students' mother tongue, pedagogical practice has little space for discussion, participation, and the connection of students' experiential knowledge to the classroom learning process. This practice, as Adjei (2010) refers to it, involves the amputation of learners' cultural knowledge and experiences in learning. The implication for school and classroom practice is that these pedagogical practices have to be decolonised through recognising and reconnecting with locally produced knowledge, sourced from cultural history, students' local surroundings, and everyday lived experiences and interactions (Dei, 2014; Dei & Opini, 2007).

Second, results from this study also suggest that students have to take regular examinations and class assessments, which mostly assess students' rote learning and led students to further categorisation and exclusion at school. Examples of this include such things as students who comply with rote learning practice being identified as "good students" and those who did not as "bad students." In effect, a "good student" gets rewarded by being given class responsibilities and exempted from punishment. Categorising practices like this and others (e.g. open

announcement of examination results) based on academic achievement made low-achieving students labelled and alienated. Students' with low examination scores were ignored and suppressed by the teacher. And even peers challenged these students in their identification with school and a sense of belongingness to school ("[those] who are captains in class think themselves very great, do not give us any importance; even if I want to talk, they do not"; "If there are students' names from number one or number two, nothing…happens to them, but…the rest are given punishment").

Further, identity in the school social environment is pejorative and students are perceived as receivers of packaged knowledge and the teachers as knowledge givers. This relationship, together with pervasive rote memorisation practices in schools, leaves little scope to co-construct knowledge. In this way, the teacher remains the sole authority of knowledge, and students are subjected to memorising and listening to what the teachers and textbooks say. This situation has also been documented elsewhere. For example, using a Ghanaian case study, Dei and Opini (2007) showed how, through power dominance, the colonial practice of creating hierarchies is maintained in schooling practice by constructing dominant images as the norm for students. In this study, it appears that having high scores on examinations is the sole criteria in being a successful student, and the rest are marginalised. Dei and Opini (2007) identified that schools need to provide students with "experiential understanding and appreciation of otherness" (p. 485). They further suggest that programmes like art, music, and different clubs might help people recognise and understand various identity differences among students. Other than the relational and school-level construct of sense of belonging, the present study identifies students' conceptualisations of belongingness as a sense of

accomplishment. This finding appears to support the view that "construction[s] of belonging are not only externally imposed but are internalized" (Carolissen, 2012, p. 635). Carolissen (2012), drawing from Fanon's work, argued that identity, which is always related to belonging, is fluid and thus changes over time.

The postcolonial construct of *agency* within the colonial discursive framework, discussed earlier in the literature review chapter, refers to the ability of subjects to hold onto power or act to resist domination or to determine their situation (B. Ashcroft et al., 2013). The findings of this study suggest that students were not allowed to have any say on their own educational practice and, rather, were suppressed if they protested any malpractice ("If we ask [the] teacher why you are finishing…school early, [the] teacher [would say] 'go away'"). Evidence from the present study suggests that, as discussed earlier, overemphasis on rote learning and teacher-centred pedagogical practice left little scope for the students to express their views or to participate in discussion. It appears that schools are designed to devote no space, time, and/or pedagogy to students' initiatives or participation, as it is not considered valuable.

Bernasconi (2004) noticed a significant finding extracted from Fanon's work: that injustice arises from lack of agency. In the present study, one of the few but strongly exposed experiences of perceived unfairness, discussed in regard to the second research question, often resulted from suppressing student voices. Evidence from the findings of this study has shown that teachers' passing of judgement, without giving students a chance to defend themselves, leads to students being punished or accused mistakenly or provides a feeling of injustice ("Teachers do not listen to us properly and our complaints carefully. [I] do not like getting punishments

without doing any offence”). It appears that the opportunity to speak up for oneself has a stronger link to belongingness over punishment (“I love this school [because], Madam listens to us, if I am guilty, [Madam] gives us punishment”).

Lack of agency in school practice has not only undermined the student–teacher relationship but has also generated a negative attitude towards school. Students from special interest schools, as an example in this study, declined to sweep the school on a daily basis during their school hours, and requested that the teacher hire a professional cleaner. In response, the teacher rejected the students’ suggestion and compelled them to continue their school cleaning jobs. Students’ narratives suggest that these phenomena not only produced a negative attitude towards teachers and the school but also generated frustration with their school experience. Postcolonial theorisation examines the relationship between authority figures and students and how this manifests in practice. It looks at how students are positioned and valued. From the postcolonial perspective, a teacher who values students cannot ignore them or fail to recognise them without apparent reasons.

Colonial pedagogy is symbolic of brutality towards students. It is where teachers consider themselves the most powerful – the boss or master – and treat children how they like. The power dynamic refers to the way in which the teacher uses power over children. For example, in evidence from the present study, the teacher terrorises the students with corporal punishment and defiling words or screaming at them. The results of the present study repeatedly showed how teachers employ the constructed identity of authority over knowledge, and the provision of punishment was reserved as an absolute power over students in school practice. On the other hand, suppressing students’ voices, identities, and agency further

undermines students' power in student–teacher relationships and, in some cases, led to student's being submissive in response to wrong institutional practice ("If students do misbehaviours, [the] teacher needs to beat [them]").

The findings of the study show that the teaching practices of schools were hegemonic, that is, children were silenced by teacher authority. Agbenyega (2009) described it as mirroring colonisation in a new formation. Although colonial masters exited long ago, the mindset remains in the classroom, in which teachers do not allow children to talk or move about freely. Teachers control children's knowledge and activities, and 'push' them to complete the tasks demanded of them. This imposing relationship of teacher over children in schools can be explained as "simply a novice receiving knowledge from a higher authority" (Agbenyega & Deku, 2011, p. 16). By and large, applying postcolonial theory enabled the uncovering of a seemingly contested educational space where individuals within that space struggle for power and recognition.

Teachers handing down prescribed curriculum materials, whereby the students have no opportunity to contribute to their development, significantly affects the students' autonomy over their academic performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). From a postcolonial perspective, excluding students from the learning process can be likened to ascribing excessive power and a dominant position to teachers. The oppressive power relationships in the educational system in Bangladesh replicate a servant–master relationship. This is an example of colonisation where the freedom of choice to set up classrooms and select teaching content or materials has no place. Instead, students follow rules and instructions from teachers. In this way, the students consider themselves to be subservient to teachers.

The use of postcolonial theory has extended the understanding of how sense of school belonging starts and progresses from the physical to nonphysical: the inner self to the outer context. Framed from within a postcolonial perspective, this study opens a space to discursively investigate how the school relationship and educational practices structure students' experiences of schooling, particularly the vitally important sense of belonging in school. By exploring power, identity, and agency in relationships and educational practices through such theorisation, one can confront the existing mindset and establish a case for transforming school practices by disengaging colonial practices and embracing a fresh consciousness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to deconstruct the context-sensitive nature of student–teacher relationships and educational exercises that emerged as issues related to students' sense of belonging. In doing so, I used a postcolonial backdrop to bring together cultural and historical discourse that shaped both social and educational school practices. From the overall discussion, it can be concluded that in Bangladesh, the power relationships and oppressive educational practices influence students' connection to school, situated in a colonial epistemology. However, colonial epistemology does not solely refer to foreign or alien powers but to any imposition or domination (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). In this respect, the educational context, pedagogy, assessment, regulations, and curriculum of primary education are rooted in colonial perspectives, in which students' identity, agency, and power are submerged in schools' coercive authority. Thus, a postcolonial discursive perspective provides consciousness to challenge actions, shake old practices and give birth to new attitudes (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2011). This

refreshing awareness can help reconstruct educational practice so students have the identity, agency, and ownership to belong in school.

CHAPTER SEVEN
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

We are driven by five genetic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun.

(William Glasser)

Introduction

This final chapter presents a concise conclusion for the study. It begins by presenting an overview of the research and briefly revisiting the findings. Based on the findings and discussion, a number of key recommendations are made for enhancing school environments that support effective learning and enhance young Bangladeshi primary school students' sense of belonging to their school. The chapter offers limitations of the research, key contributions to knowledge, critical personal reflections and directions for further research.

Overview of the research

The purpose of this study was to explore how Bangladeshi students experience sense of belonging in primary school. Most previous studies on school belonging focus on relationships among students' sense of belonging and school outcomes such as academic achievement, attendance, engagement, school satisfaction and students' wellbeing (mostly based on a pre-constructed scale and with North American students). A limited number of studies have examined how students experience belonging at school and from their own point of view (particularly from the population of South Asia). The present research thus attempts to explore students' understanding of sense of belonging from their lived experiences, employing phenomenology as its research methodology. Theorised from a postcolonial

discursive framework, the study examined school phenomena via a Bangladeshi cultural, historical and social context. The study used both individual and focus group interviews as data collection tools. The participants were grade five primary school students from government primary schools situated in both rural and urban settings in Bangladesh. A total number of 13 focus group interviews involving 79 students from 13 schools participated in the study. Along with the focus group, nine additional individual interviews were conducted with irregular /non-attending students (registered for grade five) in participating schools.

Summary of findings

Two primary research questions informed the fieldwork and data collection: 1) How do Bangladeshi primary school students conceptualise a sense of belonging? 2) What issues are associated with students' sense of school belonging in the Bangladeshi context? An inductive thematic data analysis of interview and focus group data generated from fieldwork indicated the following key findings.

The first research question discovered that Bangladeshi primary school students' understanding of sense of belonging at school is complex, including concepts that are multi-layered and interrelated. Three main conceptualisations of sense of belonging at school emerged from the data analysis: (1) being loved and cared for by teachers and peers, (2) being supported by teachers for academic progress and (3) a feeling of accomplishment in academic success. These understandings of sense of belonging among Bangladeshi students shed light on some additional aspects other than the social relationships of school belongingness that some previous studies focused on (Baumeister, 2012; Goodenow, 1993b). The findings of the present study showed that sense of belonging is not limited to

students' social relationships, but it extends to include how students identify themselves in school activities in terms of academic achievement. For example, in Bangladeshi primary classrooms, students take class tests and exams on a regular basis; the marks the students obtain are ranked and read out to all children, so they know their positions in the ranking. This often leads to shaming of underperforming students, which negatively affects their sense of belonging at school. Thus, students' mention of academic achievement as augmenting their sense of belonging can be understood from this punitive and colonial practice. It is therefore not surprising that when students perceive themselves as belonging at school, it is in the form of being loved and cared for by teachers and peers, including support to excel academically, to avoid being shamed by teachers and fellow students. It can be concluded that students' perceptions of how they are part of the school is through being able to engage in and perform daily school activities to a satisfactory level and avoid punitive retributions from teachers.

The second research question showed there are key issues that serve as barriers to students' sense of belonging at school in Bangladesh. The issues are derived from three key components: teachers, peers and school resources. First, teacher-related issues include frequent absenteeism, uninteresting and non-engaging instructional practices, corporal punishment and unfair treatment of students. These often serve to inhibit students' sense of belonging. Second, peer-related issues consist of peer bullying and rejection, which impede their feelings of belongingness at school. Third, school resources include both physical facilities, such as washroom, drinking water and libraries, and non-physical features such as co-curricular activities. The study reaffirmed that teachers and peers are strong influences on students' sense of belonging. The findings pertaining to physical and non-physical

school facilities and resources were considered by students to either enrich their learning experiences or reduce their inclination to come to school, thus playing a critical role in their sense of belonging at school. For example, the students mentioned that lack of or inaccessible playgrounds, school libraries and smelly washroom facilities lead to negative experiences at school. In many cases, the schools do not have washrooms and libraries. If they do have libraries, students are denied the right to borrow books; if they do have washrooms, they are not user-friendly. Similarly, non-physical facilities, such as lack of co-curricular activities and weak school management (class noise), appear to impact students' sense of belonging.

Employing postcolonial theory attempted to shed light on students' experiences of belonging from cultural, historical and sociopolitical points of view. The study employed postcolonial constructs of identity, agency and power to analyse students' belongingness experiences at school. The use of postcolonial theory facilitated the discovery of how the deployment of unequal power dynamics through the use of corporal punishment subjected Bangladeshi students to authoritative compliance under their teachers. It demonstrates how teachers' practice suggests they own the students and can do whatever they like to them. In addition, the use of postcolonial theory uncovered how students' voices are suppressed in the daily teaching and learning process, mirroring an educational system built on ownership and control, inherited from a colonial legacy. These practices inhibit students' belongingness, as they often experience domination and marginalisation by their teachers.

Further, postcolonial analysis supported the framing of existing Bangladeshi pedagogical practices as rigid, punitive and examination-based, with rote memorisation and teacher-centred instruction as the aspects that trouble students' sense of belonging most. From a postcolonial perspective, current practices, revealed through this research, undermine students' identity as being capable of co-constructing knowledge with their teachers. The Bangladeshi schools' excessive practice of rote memorisation and examination preparation often limits students from bringing their own understanding of knowledge as well as locating the meaning of their learning within their personal lives. Categorisation based solely on examination performance gives students the binary identity of either a 'good' or 'bad' student. In this way, marginalised students who cannot comply with this procedure often drop out from the school's community. Thus, it can be argued that this identity formation triggers psychological threats and belonging concerns (Cohen & Garcia, 2008) embedded in inherited colonial practices in the school system in Bangladesh. The sociopolitical facet cannot be detached from the educational facet. In this sense, it can be argued from a postcolonial perspective that the sociopolitical organisation in Bangladesh itself is structured on a colonial legacy of hierarchical relationships, with implications for the ways in which educational activities and teaching are organised. For example, teachers are not included in any policy decisions regarding curriculum development for schools. Decisions are made at the central level of government and handed down to teachers. This, in effect, mirrors what Bangladeshi teachers do with children: they exclude them from important decisions and practices that affect their education.

In conclusion, young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging in terms of joyful feelings at school (i.e. how they experience love, care, fairness, engagement,

accomplishment and support for their academic success), is indeed worth taking seriously.

The way forward: key recommendations

The implications of the research findings led to a number of recommendations to enhance students' sense of belonging. There are five key recommendations regarding enriching their sense of belongingness at school that teachers, school administrators, curriculum developers, educators and other stakeholders need to take into consideration: 1) enhancing students' experience of a welcoming environment at school, 2) ensuring classroom attendance and providing joyful and engaging academic support, 3) supporting organised and regular co-curricular activities, 4) providing and maintaining elementary schools' facilities, and 5) incorporating the theoretical perspective of students' belongingness and educational applications in teacher education programmes, providing a more joyful and effective schooling experience for primary school children in Bangladesh.

Enhancing students' experiences of a welcoming environment at school

The research findings have implications for a primary school environment that affects children's emotions via its discipline measures. Pervasive use of corporal and verbal punishment makes it difficult to have enjoyable experiences at school. Though the government bans using any type of physical punishment in primary schools, students from all of the schools studied reported being punished daily as a disciplinary measure at school, both for academic and non-academic reasons. A discrete initiative in primary school in Bangladesh showed that teachers' use of alternative methods of classroom management brought significant change in students' attendance and academic achievement (Mohiuddin et al., 2012). This

suggests it would be beneficial for schools to share their good practices of class and disciplinary management in cluster training sessions (teachers in Bangladesh have school-based training once every two months in which teachers from neighbouring schools gather). Central administration can provide teachers with booklets, CDs, DVDs or stories of alternative behaviour and school management strategies from other countries. Similarly, reflective practices and school university collaboration (Deppeler, 2012) could provide teachers with home grown and international sources of good practice and evidence-informed pedagogical innovations to enhance student learning. Reflective training about how students might feel when exposed to debasing language and situations in the classroom, for example, could be arranged. Students' documented lived experiences can be shared with teachers to facilitate understanding of how teachers' behaviour may impact students' emotional and mental processes.

The research findings of this study further revealed that experiencing unfair judgement can have an intense and long-term impact upon students' views of school and teachers. The findings indicate the intensity of how unfair treatments have a deep influence on students' school belongingness and that students prefer being punished for a reason to being wrongly accused. The results of this study show teachers' preconceptions and biases (e.g. high-performing students are innocent and low-performing students are likely to misbehave). Not listening to students leads teachers to misjudge students' issues. Teachers might consider this to be inconsequential, ignoring students consciously or unconsciously; however, a simple solution that would result in significant change is to be aware of students' feelings and devote more time to their issues. Thus, by enhancing teachers' awareness of how they affect students at school would greatly aid in students' sense of belonging.

Alternatively, a particular teacher could be assigned to deal with students' issues after receiving brief training on management.

Ensuring teachers' classroom attendance

The findings of the study reveal two clear aspects of the academic environment that are linked to students' sense of belonging at school: 1) less academic activities due to teachers' absenteeism or not holding classes, and 2) uninteresting teaching methods based on lectures, class tests or examination and rote memorisation. Teachers' frequent absenteeism in class and lack of proactive methods in classroom activities leave students feeling purposeless. The Bangladesh Directorate of Primary Education report (2013) showed that teacher absenteeism (14%) and lateness (47%) were not only due to teachers' unauthorised absence from work, but also teachers' high level of official engagement. Further, the absence of a system to provide temporary cover for regular teachers, otherwise students are left directionless at school. It is recommended, along the lines of raising school administrative monitoring and accountability, a pool of reserve teachers should be developed to substitute regular teachers in their absence to deliver the lessons (see Gershenson, 2012). The existing Upazila Resource Centre (URC, subdistrict level resource centre for primary education) can take on the management role of substitute teachers and provide teachers to the neighbouring school on demand.

Creating joyful and engaging learning environments

Colonial teacher-centred pedagogical practices restrained students from contributing, engaging, and thus developing a sense of ownership of their learning. In decolonising schooling and education, a constructivist model in the teaching–learning approach could be an opening to incorporate students' knowledge, voices

and experiences with his/her community and provide context in the teaching–learning milieu (See Akomolafe & Dike, 2011; Dei, 2010b; Richardson, 2011). Application of constructivist approaches to teaching and learning through teacher training and reflective practices, and sharing best practice can enhance teacher motivation and knowhow for making Bangladeshi classrooms more attractive, interactive and learning centred. It can be seen that moving towards a constructivist approach is challenging in a place such as Bangladesh, where pedagogy is broadly rooted in colonial didactic lectures, rote learning and high-stake examinations. However, David's (2011) model proposed a two-step initiative for adopting a constructive pedagogical approach in an instruction based education tradition. The first step is diagnosing existing educational philosophy in how it shapes its own innovative actions in the learning environment in order to see how pedagogical habits, expectations and epistemology affect the structure and assessment of classroom activities. The second step is identifying the educational philosophy of the students directly, by questioning them, or by indirectly analysing their reactions to the educator's innovations to understand how students' academic habits and epistemology have led to conflict and students' subsequent dismissal of innovative practice. David (2011) argued that this process can build the ground work for understanding how teachers or students come to adapt their own innovations in their educational philosophy and practice.

It is recommended that teachers reemphasise the affective domain of the taxonomy of educational objectives in the teaching–learning process. This taxonomy values students' attitudes, feelings and beliefs and focuses on their personal interests and experiences (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964; Sawyer, Zianian, Evans, &

Gillham, 2012). Further, it promotes joy and ownership of students' learning environments, which can increase their sense of belonging.

The present study shows that colonial legacies created a culture of school assessment based on rote memorisation, both in teachers as well as in students. The recognition and measurement of students' learning achievements were solely by summative assessment, for example, annual school examinations categorise children (such as 'first boy' or 'first girl' and 'passed' or 'failed'). The limited practice of using alternative assessment tools often excludes students from school who cannot meet the demands of memorising texts. This illustrates the need for formative assessment (assessment for learning) practice in schools, in contrast to summative assessment, which is only used for grading and does not enhance learning. Formative or learning assessments encourage and support the learning process for learners and teachers, e.g. providing useful feedback during the learning process instead of a single judgement at the annual examination (Shute & Kim, 2014). The research indicates that formative assessment practices, such as classroom dialogue/questing, peer and self-assessment and even formative use of summative tests (peer-marking), not only improve students' engagement and achievement, but they also accelerate student–teacher and peer interactions (Black & Wiliam, 2012; Carless, 2011).

Interviews with irregular students showed they might be absent from class and examinations due to illness (both themselves and family members) or family relocation, which in some cases led them to fail in the year-end terminal examination. This one-off assessment does not reflect students' true capabilities, and consequently leads them to turn away from school. The school needs to emphasise continuous assessment strategies, such as ethical assessment, which assesses

students' strengths and challenges over time (Dockett, 2011). Through an ethical assessment procedure, as Dockett suggests, schools can involve students, teachers and parents to reflect on students' learning, not only in terms of academic performance, but also to recognise and celebrate students' achievements and potential. This practice can be incorporated via existing activities in government primary schools, such as the Mother's Assembly (students' mothers gather at school once a month) or the teachers' home visit programme.

Supporting organised and regular co-curricular activities

It was quite evident from this study that students in government primary schools had limited opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities due to inadequate physical facilities (e.g. playgrounds, sports equipment), and irregularly occurring activities (e.g. sports, music or clubs). In some cases, even though the schools had government supplied sports equipment or extra reading books, schools were reluctant to organise sports or issue books and sports equipment to the students. Thus, this subsection concentrates on enhancing physical facilities for co-curricular activities, embedding co-curricular activities in schools' daily activities, and raising awareness of the importance of school co-curricular activities among teachers, headmasters and management committees.

However, engaging in school co-curricular activities for young students is a selective process influenced by personal characteristics and context, which may change over time (Mahoney et al., 2009). Schools should thus provide a range of co-curricular options so that all students can choose something they like. For example, the female students in this study preferred performing arts activities including music, dance and theatre. It is understandable that Bangladeshi government primary schools

might not be able to afford performing arts teachers, yet a number of schools together could afford an itinerant teacher. Similar to itinerant teachers for children with special needs (Couse & Recchia, 2011), itinerant music, drama or any other specialty teacher could travel around to neighbouring schools to cater to students' co-curricular needs.

This study found that students suffer from inadequate library facilities, despite the fact that participating students showed that reading library books was one of the main attractions of the school. It is strongly recommended that each school develop a well-equipped library, which is suggested by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Public Library Manifesto. UNESCO recommends that school library services support the use of books and other information sources ranging from fiction to documentaries, from print to electronic, both on site and remote for the whole school and surrounding community (UNESCO, 2014). Further, schools should develop resource sharing programmes with neighbouring schools, nearby public libraries, district child academic libraries (government libraries for children in certain areas) and libraries established by private organisations to create inter-library borrowing programmes.

Providing and maintaining primary school facilities Students subjected to poor primary school physical facilities have uncomfortable and negative experiences. Most of the schools lacked functional water and sanitation facilities. The students often mentioned dirty or inaccessible washrooms, which particularly for female students, leads to uncomfortable experiences during school hours (Jasper et al., 2012). Schools must ensure that students have access to separate toilets/urinals for girls and boys with adequate running water and soap. The washroom facilities need

to be equipped to ensure accessibility to children with special needs and have arrangements for menstrual hygiene management in girls' toilets. Schools must maintain a cleaning, disinfection and repair/renovation schedule. Similarly, schools should encourage students to bring water bottles to school that can be filled from a tap, or provide water sources when needed in order to increase drinking water habits during school hours.

Limitations of the research

There were several challenges in this research in terms of methodology, context, translation and age of participants. The first challenge was the semantic analysis/linguistic connotation of the word 'belonging' itself. First of all, the word is abstract, and there is no direct synonym in spoken Bangla. The closest synonym I could find was '*apon*', which when translated into English means something close to belonging and ownership. I am aware that there could be some different meanings like 'sense of possessiveness'. Further, the construct of a sense of belonging is abstract, and the participants of this study were young. I made an effort to reduce connotative variation by breaking the belongingness construct into different behavioural expressions (e.g. the participants could respond to questions with examples). Most of the research conducted in English used a limited set of words (e.g. sense of belonging, school connectedness, school membership). Though there are some researchers who have studied belongingness in non-English-speaking countries, it is surprising that none of them mentioned any language challenges.

Sense of belonging is related to students' emotions and personal experiences, which take time to explore, particularly with young children. Further, it was a major challenge to build a rapport with young children within two school visits. In this

short interaction, it was particularly challenging for female students and students in remote areas to share their experiences with an unfamiliar researcher. Further, students were culturally in the practice of not expressing their opinions, especially anything negative against their schools or teachers. Interview transcripts revealed that students expressed more negative and uncomfortable experiences as the conversation progressed. For example, while students initially talked only about positive (ideal) aspects of school and denied receiving any punishment, as the interviews progressed, they spoke about physical punishment, bullying and teacher absenteeism. A more extensive amount of time and greater engagement with the students might shed more light on how and what influences students' sense of belonging in school.

Key contributions to knowledge

In spite of the limitations, the study identified several important issues that can contribute to the understanding of Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging, as well as to the body of literature focusing on students' belongingness and attachment to the school environment. This study contributes to three major areas.

Theoretical contribution The present study reaffirms that social relationships are vital to a sense of belonging. At the school level, the experience of emotional bonding with teachers and peers is linked to students' sense of belonging. In addition to the social aspect, in this study, school facilities, students' wellbeing and teachers' academic support are connected to students' sense of belonging. The study found that the belongingness model and related theories need to consider, in addition to social involvement, school facilities, teachers' educational support and students' wellbeing as related to their belongingness experiences at school. These aspects are

particularly linked to students' experiences in developing countries, such as Bangladesh, where inadequate water supply, inaccessible washrooms, non-existent or limited co-curricular activities and uninteresting learning practices inhibit students' positive attitudes toward school.

A further theoretical effort of this study was to employ a postcolonial lens to understand student–teacher relationships and students' agency and identity in relation to belongingness experiences at school. This perspective posits a new dimension from previous studies: instead of belongingness as an innate quality, here, it is a socio-historical phenomenon. The postcolonial lens showed how belongingness is shaped by the influence of colonial education practices such as test centre pedagogy, pervasive use of corporal punishment and rote memorisation.

Research implications One of the unique methodological techniques used in this study was employing sticky notes to generate students' opinions during focus group interviews. Using sticky notes is not a new data collection tool (Peterson & Barron, 2007). The present study found that in addition to its effectiveness in aiding shy and introverted students to express their views, sticky notes can be useful for bilingual students. In this study, students who had a mother tongue other than Bangla felt more comfortable and were more expressive in writing than describing their experiences orally. In general, students were enthusiastic about writing on small, colourful sticky notes with coloured pencils. Students, including those from diverse ethnic backgrounds, were more structured in their opinions when writing them on sticky notes rather than via spoken language; thus, this approach is highly recommended for other studies.

The photographs taken by the students were not used as data in and of themselves, yet the approach was useful to initiate conversation. Research shows that students can identify their school and learning issues through an image based approach (Anderson, 2015) . This added to the depth and allowed the researcher to explore avenues that may not have been available through interviews alone.

Practical contribution: training The study itself is a structured document, and the lived experiences of students' schooling provide vivid scenarios of how they feel and think about their peers, teachers and school. The findings of this study could be a helpful practical guide for teachers, local administrators, educators, parents and curriculum developers to understand students' needs and priorities. For teachers, it could help them understand students' emotions and priorities in their school experiences. For administrators, it provides a very useful way of understanding how school irregularities, teachers' absenteeism and lack of innovative curriculum activities can impact students' attendance, engagement and achievement. Curriculum developers can incorporate these findings into the curriculum and focus on issues revealed in students' discussion, like the importance of adding a library class/time, sports time, interactive lessons and alternative learning methods to replace rote memorisation based on rigid assessments. Teacher educators might gain new insight into what should be given priority in teacher training programmes, for instance, special needs children, classroom management and child psychology.

Policy contribution Bangladesh has a highly centralised education system, and policies come from the top down, leaving little room for end stakeholders to weigh in. The present study is one of the few that used students as the sole contributors to speak about their schooling experiences. Thus, the study could give fresh insight into

how government primary school students feel and think about their schools (e.g. how corporal punishment is pervasive in government primary schools even though it has been banned for several years).

Critical / personal reflections

As a teacher educator, I have extensively engaged in teacher training and research projects in Bangladesh. Though I have been involved in research with children and teachers before, this PhD study was my first in-depth encounter with primary school students. I myself studied in a privileged elite kindergarten. The present study examined students' experiences in government primary schools in Bangladesh including those situated in rural and remote areas. Overall, I felt that the students liked and loved attending their school amid unimaginable deprivation of all sorts, from academic support to mere entertainment at school, from washrooms to library facilities. These problems were particularly acute in low-performing schools, and schools in low socioeconomic and rural areas in Bangladesh.

What I have learned from this research. This PhD research study was a transformative journey for me. When I wrote my first research proposal in 2011, it was a quantitative proposal to measure students' sense of belonging using a standardised belonging scale; however, thanks to my supervisors' input, I was confronted with a different route: exploring Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging using a scale that was developed in different socio-economic and cultural contexts. I was in search of a tool and theory that could measure students' perspectives and explain them from a Bangladeshi context. I found phenomenology well fitted the study of students' lived experiences. The use of postcolonial theory helped me to frame the students' experiences from historical, cultural and

sociopolitical points of view. I have learned a great deal in many aspects over the course of this academic journey, transforming me as a researcher.

- As a teacher educator and educational psychologist, I was acquainted with motivational theories. The present study extends my theoretical understanding of motivation, particularly how it works on students for making connections to schooling.
- The shifting from a positivist to an interpretative paradigm not only influenced my research methodology, but it also impacted my way of thinking and beliefs. I have achieved greater understanding of doing research on people's experiences. I have recognised what interpretative study can do to uncover the subtle but profound understanding of human psychological processes. For example, in this study, teachers' unintentional unfairness could overlook invisible behaviours and could have a broad impact on students' emotions and perceptions of school.
- Phenomenology. This was the first time I used qualitative research methodology in this research. It not only determined my research enquiry techniques, but it changed my way of seeing the world. I am now closer to human experience, which gives me a much more comprehensive understanding of such phenomena.
- Using postcolonial theory, a social science subject that was very new to me, gave me the opportunity to understand students' and teachers' psychology and behaviour through many different lenses (i.e. how history, cultural and sociopolitical influences in people's psyche lead to certain behaviours and my understanding of the holistic view of the phenomenon. I studied Fanon (Fanon, 1952, 1963), himself a psychiatrist, who drew on Freud's theoretical

concept to explain colonised behaviour; this enriched my knowledge of psychology from a very different perspective.

Directions for further research

In light of the results of this research, this section outlines areas for future possible consideration.

Firstly, this study is an explorative investigation and employed a small number of participants through maximum variation sampling techniques. The study focused more on diversity than the number of study participants. Future research could therefore be carried out on a broader sample size to generate more representative results. Also, this research was restricted to government primary schools in Bangladesh. Future research could be replicated in private schools in the country, where it is considered that private schools are better equipped and resourced. Such a future study could also include teachers' perspectives to shed light on further understandings of student belongingness in the Bangladesh sociocultural context.

Secondly, the research used a qualitative approach, relying on focus groups and individual interviews. Further research could employ a mixed methods approach to allow generalisation of findings. The study used visual methodology only to illicit conversation. However, the study found that visual methodology could be an excellent tool for further investigation, particularly for children of this age group, or indigenous students who may have difficulties in national Bangla language expression.

Finally, this study highlights the paucity of research on social and emotional aspects of students in Bangladesh. Few studies have been conducted into students'

schooling experience in light of curriculum, pedagogy, and educational policy reform. This is the first major qualitative study on students' school belongingness in Bangladesh, providing an in-depth view of students' social and emotional experiences at school. There is clearly a need for a more comprehensive study that extends this research in ways that open up the field to social, pedagogical and emotional aspects from the students' point of view and voice.

Conclusion

To move towards an effective, engaging and quality primary school system in Bangladesh, we must strive for affective academic environment, meet rudimentary school facilities and weight co-curricular activities with equal importance to academic work. To provide students with educational experiences that facilitate reaching their fullest potential; schools need to move beyond rote memorisation and examination-centred education practices toward a pedagogy that promotes students taking ownership of their learning, co-constructing knowledge that is related to their lives and surroundings: "the highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence" (Tagore, 1917, p. 116). This means allowing students' voices to be heard by providing space to expose their ideas as related to their lives and surroundings. In this way, students in Bangladesh will regain their identities, discover their agency and be empowered to contribute to their education.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questions for focus group interviews

1. Tell me what you think about this school.
2. Why might some students attend this school? Why might some students not attend this school?
3. What do students think teachers need to know about their students?
4. How do student know others in the school cared for students? How do students know an adult in the school respects students?
5. What do you think about your school facilities? What parts of the school make students most comfortable? Are there parts of the school where some students might not feel safe? What is it about those parts of the school that makes students feel safe/not safe?
6. How do you feel about your classroom activities? Class lessons? What makes class really interesting? What makes class boring or not so interesting?
7. What makes students want to do best at school? What do teachers do to make students want to do your best? Other school staff?
8. What do teachers do that make this school a good place to be at, if at all? What do others do to make this school a good place to be, if at all?
9. What makes a good school? What makes a bad school?

ফোকাস গ্রুপ প্রশ্নমালা দল-১

১) স্কুলটি (স্কুটির নাম) তোমাদের কেমন লাগে?

২) কেন কিছু শিক্ষার্থী নিয়মিত এই স্কুলে আসে? আর কেনই বা কিছু শিক্ষার্থী নিয়মিত আসে না?

৩) তোমরা মতে শিক্ষার্থীর কোন কোন বিষয়গুলো শিক্ষকের জানা প্রয়োজন? কেন ?

৪) শিক্ষার্থী কি ভাবে বুঝতে পারে বিদ্যালয়ের অন্যান্যরা তাকে পছন্দ করে? শিক্ষার্থী কিভাবে বুঝতে পারে বিদ্যালয়ের বড়রা তাদের সম্মান করে / গুরুত্ব দেয়?

৫) এই বিদ্যায়ের কি কি সুযোগ-সুবিধা আছে আর কি কি নাই বলে তোমরা মনে কর? বিদ্যালয়ের কোন জায়গাটি তোমাদের সবচেয়ে ভাল লাগে ? বিদ্যালয়ে কি এমন কোন জায়গা আছে যেটি কোন কোন শিক্ষার্থীর কাছে অস্বস্থির্পূণ/ভয় লাগে?

৬) তোমাদের ক্লাসের বিভিন্ন বিষয়গুলো সর্ম্পকে তোমাদের অনুভূতি বল (যেমন শ্রেণী পাঠ... ভাল খারাপ সব ধরনের অনুভূতি)। শিক্ষার্থীর কাছে কি কি বিষয় পাঠদানকে আনন্দায়ক করে? আর কখন এক ঘেয়েমী বা ক্লাসে থাকতে ভাল লাগে না?

৭) কোন কোন বিষয় শিক্ষার্থীকে আরো ভালো করতে ইচছা জাগায় ? শিক্ষকগণ ছাত্রদের ভালো করার জন্য কি কি করে থাকেন? অন্যান্যরা (প্রধান শিক্ষক) কি করে থাকেন?

৮) শিক্ষকরা বিদ্যালয়কে একটি আনন্দায়ক স্থান পরিনত করার জন্য কিছু করেন কি? করে থাকলে কি করেন?

৯) তোমরা বল কি কি বিষয় একটি স্কুলকে ভালো স্কুলে পরিনত করে ? অথবা একটি খারাপ স্কুলে?

Appendix B: Questions for individual interviews

1. Tell me what you think about this school.
2. Why might you attend this school? Why might you not attend this school?
3. What do you think teachers need to know about you?
4. How do you know others in the school cared for you? How do you know an adult in the school respects you?
5. What do you think about your school facilities? What parts of the school make you most comfortable? Are there parts of the school where you might not feel safe? What is it about those parts of the school that makes you feel safe/not safe?
6. How do you feel about your classroom activities? Class lessons? What makes class really interesting? What makes class boring or not so interesting?
7. What make you want to do best at school? What do teachers do to make you want to do your best? Other school staff?
8. What do teachers do that make this school a good place to be at, if at all? What do others do to make this school a good place to be, if at all?
9. What makes a good school? What makes a bad school?

একক সাক্ষাতকার প্রশ্নমালা দল-৩ (ননএটেনডিং শিশু)

১) (স্কুলটির নাম) সর্ম্পকে তোমার অনুভূতি বল?

২) তুমি কেন এই স্কুলে আসতে? আর কেনইবা এখন এই স্কুলে নিয়মিত আসো না?

৩) তোমার কোন কোন বিষয়গুলো বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষকদের জানা প্রয়োজন বলে মনে কর? কেন?

৪) তুমি কি ভাবে বুঝতে পারো বিদ্যালয়ের অন্যান্যরা তোমাকে আপন ভাবে ? উদাহরণ দাও। তুমি কি ভাবে বুঝতে পারে বিদ্যালয়ের বড়রা তোমাকে সম্মান করে/ গুরুত্ব দেয়?

৫) তুমি এই বিদ্যায়ের সুযোগ-সুবিধা সর্ম্পকে কি ধারনা পোষণ করে? বিদ্যালয়ের কোন স্থানটি তোমার সবচেয়ে ভালো লাগে ? বিদ্যালয়ে কি এমন কোন স্থান আছে যেটি তোমার কাছে অস্বস্থির্পূণ/ভয় লাগে?

৬) তোমার ক্লাসের বিভিন্ন বিষয়গুলো সর্ম্পকে তোমার অনুভূতি বল (যেমন শ্রেণী পাঠ... ভাল খারাপ সব ধরনের অনুভূতি)। কোন বিষয়গুলোর জন্য তোমার ক্লাশ করতে বা স্কুলে আসতে ভালো লাগে? আর কখন এক ঘেয়েমী বা ক্লাসে থাকতে ভাল লাগে না?

৭) কোন বিষয়গুলো তোমাকে স্কুলে আসতে ইচছা জাগায় ? কোন বিষয়গুলো তোমাকে আরো ভালো করতে ইচছা জাগায় ? শিক্ষকগণ তোমাকে আরো ভালো করার জন্য কি করে থাকেন? প্রধান শিক্ষক কি করে থাকেন?

৮) শিক্ষকরা বিদ্যালয়কে একটি আনন্দায়ক স্থানে পরিনত করার জন্য কিছু করেন কি? করে থাকলে কি করেন?

৯) তোমার মতে কি কি বিষয় একটি স্কুলকে ভালো স্কুলে পরিনত করে ? অথবা একটি খারাপ স্কুলে?

Appendix C: Ethics approval information

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date:	**17 December 2012**
Project Number:	**CF12/2722 - 2012001487**
Project Title:	**Exploring young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging to school: A phenomenological study**
Chief Investigator:	**Assoc Prof Joanne Deppeler**
Approved:	**From: 17 December2012 To: 17 December 2017**

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research**.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

[redacted]

Professor Ben Canny
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Dr Andrea Erika Reupert, Mr Ahsan Habib

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Telephone [redacted]
Email [redacted] http://www.monash.edu.au/researchoffice/human/
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

From: **MRO Human Ethics Team** [redacted]
Date: 29 November 2013 10:45
Subject: MUHREC CF12/2722 - 2012001487 - Exploring young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging to school: A phenomenological study
To: Joanne Deppeler [redacted]

Dear Researchers
Thank you for the Final Report provided in relation to the above project.

This is to advise that the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) has noted your comments and confirms that this project is now closed.

Thank you for your assistance.

Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC
Human Ethics
Monash Research Office

Our aim is exceptional service

Monash University

Level 1, Building 3e, Clayton Campus

Wellington Rd

Clayton VIC 3800, Australia

[redacted]

Website: http://www.monash.edu.au/researchoffice/human

ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider No 00008C

Appendix D: Approval of the Directorate of Primary Education

Director General
Directorate of Primary Education
Section 2, Mirpur, Dhaka 1216
Phone: 8057877. Fax: 8016499
Web: www.dpe.gov.bd

Permission Letter

Permission Letter for "Exploring young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging to school: A phenomenological study"

Date: 04 December 2012

Md. Ahsan Habib
Building no. 5, Room no. 118
Faculty of Education
MONASH UNIVERSITY VIC 3800

Dear Mr. Habib,

Thank you for your request to recruit participants from Government Primary School Bangladesh for the above-named research.

I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research and hereby give permission for this research to be conducted.

[redacted]

Name: Shyamal Kanti Ghosh

Designation: Director General

Name of the Institution: Directorate of Primary Education

[redacted]

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা অধিদপ্তর
সেকশন ২, মিরপুর, ঢাকা ১২১৬

স্মারক নং প্রাশিঅ/৫পি/৩-ইনক্লুসিভ/০৯/৩২৯/৯ তারিখ: ২০ অগ্রহায়ন ১৪১৯ / ০৪ ডিসেম্বর ২০১২

বিষয়: গবেষণা কাজে সহযোগিতা প্রদান।

উপর্যুক্ত বিষয়ের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, জনাব আহসান হাবিব, PhD student, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia এর Phd Title: "Exploring young Bangladeshi students". তিনি তাঁর গবেষণা কাজের অংশ হিসেবে নারায়নগঞ্জ, রাঙ্গামাটি ও কুড়িগ্রাম জেলার প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষার্থীদের নিকট থেকে সংযুক্ত প্রশ্নছকের মাধ্যমে তথ্য সংগ্রহ করার অনুমতি চেয়ে মহাপরিচালক, প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা বরাবর আবেদন করেছেন।

২। জনাব আহসান হাবিবকে তাঁর আবেদনের প্রেক্ষিতে গবেষণা কাজে সহযোগিতা করার জন্য নির্দেশক্রমে অনুরোধ করা হলো।

সাক্ষরিত/-
০৪.১২.২০১২
মহাপরিচালক

জেলা প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা অফিসার
নারায়নগঞ্জ/রাঙ্গামাটি/কুড়িগ্রাম

স্মারক নং প্রাশিঅ/৫পি/৩-ইনক্লুসিভ/০৯/৩২৯/৯ তারিখ: ২০ অগ্রহায়ন ১৪১৯ / ০৪ ডিসেম্বর ২০১২

অনুলিপি সদয় অবগতি ও প্রয়োজনীয় কার্যার্থে:

১। উপপরিচালক, প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা, ঢাকা/চট্টগ্রাম/রংপুর ।
২। উপজেলা শিক্ষা অফিসার (সকল),ঢাকা/চট্টগ্রাম/রংপর।
৩। মহাপরিচালক মহোদয়ের ব্যক্তিগত সহকারী, প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা অধিদপ্তর (মহোদয়ের সদয় অবগতির জন্য)।
৪। সংরক্ষণ নথি।

[redacted]
সহকারী পরিচালক (একীভূত শিক্ষা)

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Appendix E: Explanatory statement for the Director General (DG) of the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), Bangladesh

MONASH University
Education

Explanatory Statement

The Director General (DG) of the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), Bangladesh.

NOTE: This information sheet is for you to keep.

My name is Ahsan Habib and I am conducting a research project towards a PhD in the Faculty of Education at Monash University under the supervision of Associate Professor Joanne Deppeler and Dr. Andrea Reupert. This means that I will be writing a thesis which will include published and unpublished papers. The project is entitled 'Exploring young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging to school: A phenomenological study' and it involves a study of students' perspectives regarding their experiences of being connected to school.

Aim of the research

The aim of this research is to improve the quality of schooling with the aim of increasing attendance and the retention rate for students in primary school. I am interested in understanding from students' perspectives what supports students' connection to and engagement with their school. The study is expected to add new knowledge regarding the perspectives of students towards schooling in primary schools in Bangladesh and further contribute to the international research knowledge regarding school belonging. In particular, the proposed study will contribute

knowledge that can potentially inform educational policy and practices regarding increasing the retention rate of students in Bangladesh schools.

Research participants

Grade five students are chosen because this year level records the highest dropout grade across Bangladesh school and many of these students tend not to continue into secondary schools. In addition, grade five is the highest grade in a Bangladesh primary school and it might be assumed that given their age, participants from this grade might have a better understanding of the issues related to school belonging, than younger students.

What does the research involve?

We would like to invite students to participate in focus group or individual interviews. With parents' consent, the interviews will be audio recorded to ensure that the children's statements are captured accurately. The audio recording will be transcribed and no names or school names will be used in the transcription.

How much time will the research take?

Group interview will require not more than one hour. Individual interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes. Both focus group and individual interviews will be conducted before or after the school hours.

Inconvenience/discomfort

There is no foreseeable risk to the participants or side effects from participating in this study. Focus group and individual interviews will be conducted at the school premises either in classroom or in the school playground as children feel comfortable. The participants however, can avoid answering questions in interview which are felt too personal, sensitive or uncomfortable to them.

Reimbursement

Children will be given simple items of stationary in recognition of their time.

Withdrawal from research

Participating in this study is voluntary and parents are not under any obligation to consent to their children's participation. As well, students do not need to answer any questions they feel to be too personal. However, if you do consent for your child to participate, you may only withdraw immediately before the focus group. If engaged in the individual interview, you may withdraw your individual interview data three months only after the interview has been conducted.

Confidentiality

Interview transcripts will be transcribed using pseudonyms of student names which will be used in the thesis and any resulting publications where appropriate. All interviewees will be given the opportunity to review and approve the transcript of the interview. The specific location of the school will not be disclosed in the final publication.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in a locked room for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Results

If you would like to be given a de-identified summary of the research findings finding, please contact Md. Ahsan Habib on +61 0452077810 or

md.habib@monash.edu. The findings are accessible for one year after completion of the research project.

This research study has the approval of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) and confidentiality of all records regarding this research will be strictly maintained.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	**If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, please contact:**
Associate Professor Joanne Deppeler **Faculty of Education** [redacted]	**Professor Nazmul Haq** **Department of Educational Psychology & Guidance** **Institute of Education and Research (IER)** **University of Dhaka, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh** [redacted]

If you are willing to participate in this study by providing the permission to contact with related administrators and primary schools - a consent form has been provided to give consent.

Thank you,
Sincerely,
Md. Ahsan Habib
PhD student, Faculty of Education
Monash University, Victoria 3800, Australia
Email: [redacted]

Appendix F: Explanatory statement for the headmaster

MONASH University
Education

30.12.2012

To
The Headmaster
.....Government Primary School
Rangamati

Re: Permission to conduct research in your school

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you to request permission to conduct research you primary schools prior to formal consent from the Directorate of Primary Education, Bangladesh.

My name is Ahsan Habib and I am conducting a research project towards a PhD in the Faculty of Education at Monash University under the supervision of Associate Professor Joanne Deppeler and Dr. Andrea Reupert. This means that I will be writing a thesis which will include published and unpublished papers. The project is entitled 'Exploring young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging to school: A phenomenological study' and it involves a study of students' perspectives regarding their experiences of being connected to school. .

The study will explore students' perspectives what supports students' connection to, and engagement with their school. The study is expected to add new knowledge regarding the perspectives of students towards schooling in primary schools in Bangladesh and further contribute to the international research knowledge regarding school belonging. In particular, the proposed study will contribute knowledge that can potentially inform educational policy and practices regarding increasing the retention rate of students in Bangladesh schools.

I am seeking permission of parents to conduct focus group or brief individual interviews with Grade Five children. There is no foreseeable risk to the participants or side effects from participating in this study. Please find attached explanatory statement and consent forms for the intended parents and children.

Participating in this study is voluntary and parents are not under any obligation to consent to their children's participation. In addition, students themselves will have to provide consent to be involved.
Interview transcripts will be transcribed using pseudonyms which will be used in the thesis and any resulting publications where appropriate. The specific location of the school will not be disclosed in any way.
Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in a locked room for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants or schools will not be identifiable in such a report.

It is possible that this data might be used in the future in other publications relating to the purpose of this study such as journal articles or conference papers. In this event, because it is anonymous data, nobody will be named and you will not be identified in any way.

If you would like to be given a de-identified summary of the research findings finding, please contact Md. Ahsan Habib on +61 0452077810 or md.habib@monash.edu. The findings are accessible for one year after completion of the research project.

This research study has the approval of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) and confidentiality of all records regarding this research will be strictly maintained.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, please contact:
Associate Professor Joanne Deppeler	Professor Nazmul Haq

[redacted]	Department of Educational Psychology & Guidance Institute of Education and Research (IER) University of Dhaka, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh [redacted]

If you are willing for me to proceed with this research please sign the consent form and return in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Md. Ahsan Habib

PhD student, Education Faculty

Monash University, Victoria 3800, Australia

Email: [redacted]

Appendix G: Approval of the Headmaster of the primary school

Permission Letter

Permission letter for "Exploring young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging to school: A phenomenological study"

Date

Md. Ahsan Habib

Building 5, Room 118

Education faculty

Monash University VIC 3800 Australia

Dear Mr. Habib

Thank you for your request to recruit participants from our Primary school for the above-named research. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement regarding the research and hereby give permission for this research to be conducted.

Yours Sincerely,

Name:

Headmaster

Name of the school:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Appendix H: Explanatory statement/ letter for parents who wish to let their children to participate in the project

MONASH University
Education

Explanatory Statement/ letter for parents who wish to let their children to participate in the project:

Title: Exploring young Bangladeshi students' sense of belonging to school: A phenomenological study

NOTE: This information sheet is for you to keep.

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

I am Md. Ahsan Habib, a student researcher at Monash University in the Faculty of Education, Australia. I am writing to you regarding my project which contributes towards my PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) study, under the supervision of Associate Professor Joanne Deppeler and Dr. Andrea Reupert. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a 300 page book.

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before making a decision.

Why did you choose this particular person/group as participants?

Describe how (from whom?) you obtained the participants' contact details and why you chose this particular person/group of participants.

With the permission from the Directorate of Primary education we would like to conduct the study on the students grade five in government primary schools. Grade five students are chosen because this year level records the highest dropout grade across Bangladesh school and many of these students will not continue to attend the secondary schools. In addition, grade five is the highest grade in a

Bangladesh primary school and it might be assumed that given their age, participants from this grade might have a better understanding of the issues related to school belonging, than younger students.

Aim of the research

The aim of this study is to explore how Bangladeshi students might perceive and experience school belonging. This means the project is to study students feelings for theirs school and how they feel bonding with school that contribute to children to come to school and engage actively in the school.

I am conducting this research to find out

1. How do students conceptualize a 'sense of school belonging' in primary school?
2. What are the range of issues related to students' sense of school belonging?
3. What do students identify as important to their sense of school belonging?
4. What are the culturally specific issues of sense of school belonging, within a Bangladesh context?

Benefits of the research

You or your child will not obtain any direct benefit from participating in the study but we hope that it will bring students' experiences and voices to a wider audience. As the study result will be disseminated through publication and conferences and shared with concerned organisations, it anticipated that our study will make a contribution to in understanding and implementation of overall student welfare in the school system. Knowing more about how children make themselves connected to school is important for better understanding how to plan school activities to attract, engage and remain them in school. The target parties that can benefit in general from this research are students themselves, teachers, policymakers

and administrative personnel of primary education system in Bangladesh and also other researchers.

What does the research involve?

We would like to invite your child to participate in group and individually interviews about how they feel and experience about their school. The interview will be audio recorded to ensure that their thoughts are captured accurately. The audio recording will be transcribed and no names will be used in the transcription.

How much time will the research take?

Group interview will require approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Individual interview will take approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes. Focus group interview will be held in the school classroom after or before the school hour. Individual interview will be conducted during the class break.

Inconvenience/discomfort

It is anticipated that the research study will not cause any level of inconvenience and discomfort to the children. Group interview will be conducted in the school classroom after or before the school hour. Individual interview will take place either in classroom or in the school playground during the class break where your child feels comfortable. The participants however, can avoid answering questions in interview which are felt too personal, sensitive or uncomfortable to them.

Payment

No payment will be offered to the participants of this research.

Withdrawal from research

Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may withdraw from further participation at any stage and the data provided during interview can be withdrawn.

Confidentiality

The participants' identification will not be reported in any thesis result, publications and oral presentations. The names will be coded after the transcription done. The information collected from the participants will not be communicated to anyone else other than using for study purpose.

Storage of data

All data, audio recordings and subsequent transcriptions will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations, kept on university premises in a locked filing cabinet for 5 years. Electronic files will be accessible only by using the computer of the researcher which is password protected and after five years these information will also be destroyed using the secure disposal mechanisms of Monash University.

Use of data for other purposes

A report of the study may be submitted for publication by using anonymous data. Individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report as the participants identity will not be mentioned but a code name or group representations will be used for presenting the findings of the study.

Results

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings please contact my supervisors Dr. Joanne Deppeler (phone: +61

[redacted] or Dr. Andrea Reupert ([redacted]) or me on [redacted]

This research study has the approval of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) and confidentiality of all records regarding this research will be strictly maintained.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	**If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research is being conducted, please contact:**
Associate Professor Joanne Deppeler **Faculty of Education, Monash University;** [redacted]	**Professor Nazmul Haq** **Department of Educational Psychology & Guidance** **Institute of Education and Research (IER)** **University of Dhaka, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh** [redacted]

If you wish to participate in the above research study, please keep this letter for your record and sign the enclosed consent form and return it to the researcher in the reply paid envelope provided.

Thank you for your time and for considering involvement in our study.

(Md. Ahsan Habib)

Doctoral Degree Candidate, Faculty of Education,

Monash University, Victoria 3800, Australia.

[redacted]

Appendix I: Explanatory statement/ letter for students who wish to participate in the project (in Bangla)

ব্যাখ্যা মূলক বিবরণ পত্র

শিরোনামঃ বাংলাদেশী শিশু শিক্ষার্থীদের বিদ্যালয়ের প্রতি একাত্মতার অনুভূতি যাচাই।

নোটঃ এই তথ্য পত্রটি তোমার কাছে রাখার জন্য

আমার নাম আহ্সান হাবীব। আমি অস্ট্রেলিয়ার মেলবোর্ণে মোনাশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে পড়ছি। তুমি তোমার স্কুলকে কেমন ভালবাসো এবং স্কুল সম্পর্কে তোমার সব অভিজ্ঞতার কথা আমরা শুনতে চাই।

আমি বিশেষভাবে তোমাদের কাছে এসেছি কারণ তোমরা পঞ্চম শ্রেণীতে পড় এবং তোমরা জানো পঞ্চম শ্রেণী খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ একটি বছর কারণ তোমরা স্কুলের সবচেয়ে বড় ক্লাসে পড় এবং সবচেয়ে ভালো বুঝতে পারো কিন্তু পঞ্চম শ্রেণীতে পড়ার পর সবাই হাইস্কুলে ভর্তি হয় না।

স্কুল তোমার কাছে কেমন লাগে তা আমরা জানতে চাই। আমরা তোমাদের এই তথ্যগুলো ব্যবহার করে স্কুলে এমন পরিবেশ তৈরি করতে চাই যেখানে তোমরা স্কুলকে আপন মনে কর। তুমি ইচ্ছা করলে একা একা আমাদেরকে সাক্ষাৎকার দিতে পারো। আবার চাইলে তোমার বন্ধুদের সাথে বসে দলীয় আলোচনার মাধ্যমে বলতে পারো।

বন্ধুদের সাথে দলীয় আলোচনার ক্ষেত্রে ৬০-৯০ মিনিট সময় লাগবে, আর তুমি একা একা সাক্ষাৎকার দিতে চাইলে প্রায় ৬০ মিনিট সময় লাগবে। কাজগুলো আমরা টিফিনের সময় তোমাদের ক্লাসরুমে না হয় খেলার মাঠে করব।
আমরা সাক্ষাৎকারের সময় তোমার কথাগুলো রেকর্ড করতে চাই, যদি তোমার কোন আপত্তি না থাকে।

তোমার দেয়া তথ্যগুলি হয়ত কোন বই বা রিপোর্টে প্রকাশিত হতে পারে। কিন্তু সেখানে তোমার এবং তোমার স্কুলের নাম আমরা গোপন রাখবো।
সাক্ষাৎকারের সময় আমরা তোমাকে এমন কোন প্রশ্ন করব না যা তোমাকে বিব্রত করবে। তবুও তোমার কাছে কোন প্রশ্ন যদি খুব ব্যক্তিগত মনে হয়, যা সম্পর্কে তুমি কথা বলতে চাচ্ছ না, সেই প্রশ্নের উত্তর দেয়ার দরকার নেই।

আমাদেরকে সময় দেয়ার জন্য তোমাকে অনেক ধন্যবাদ। সাক্ষাৎকারের পর আমরা তোমাকে ছোট্ট একটা উপহার দেব।

সাক্ষাৎকারের সময় যদি তোমার খারাপ লাগে বা আর কথা বলতে ইচ্ছে না করে তাহলে তুমি যেকোন সময় চলে যেতে পারো। তোমার দেয়া সব তথ্য এবং রেকর্ড আমরা নষ্ট করে ফেলব।

দলীয় আলোচনার সময় তোমার খারাপ লাগলে তুমি তখনো ইচ্ছে করলে চলে যেতে পারো, তবে তোমার কথাগুলো আমাদের কাছে রেকর্ড করা থাকবে।
তোমার রেকর্ড করা কথাগুলো আমরা খুব সাবধানে রাখব বাইরের কেউ এগুলো শুনতে পারবে না।

সম্পূর্ণ ফলাফল কি হবে তুমি যদি জানতে চাও তাহলে মোঃ আহ্সান হাবীবের সাথে যোগাযোগ করতে পার।

[redacted]

কেবলমাত্র একবছরের জন্য তথ্যগুলো সেখানে থাকবে।

এই গবেষণার জন্য আমরা মোনাশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) হতে অনুমোদন পেয়েছি।

যদি তুমি এই গবেষণার বিভিন্ন দিক সম্পর্কে জানতে চাও প্রধান পরীক্ষকের সাথে যোগাযোগ করতে পার:	আমাদের কোন আচরণে তোমার যদি খারাপ লাগে তাহলে তুমি ইচ্ছে করলে অভিযোগ করতে পার:
Associate Professor Joanne Deppeler [redacted]	অধ্যাপক নাজমুল হক শিক্ষা মনোবিজ্ঞান ও নির্দেশনা বিভাগ শিক্ষা ও গবেষণা ইনষ্টিটিউট ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঢাকা-১০০০ [redacted]

তুমি যদি আমাদের সাথে অংশ গ্রহণ করতে রাজী হও তাহলে শিক্ষার্থী সম্মতিপত্রের "হ্যাঁ"-তে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে তোমার ক্লাসের পিছনে রাখা বক্সের মধ্যে কাগজটি রেখে দাও। যদি তুমি অংশগ্রহন করতে না চাও কোন সমস্যা নেই শুধু "না"-তে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে পিছনে রাখা বক্সের মধ্যে রেখে দাও।

তোমাকে কেউই জোর করবে না এবং তোমার কোন সমস্যাও হবে না।

এই ফর্মটি পড়ার জন্য তোমাকে অনেক ধন্যবাদ।

মোঃ আহ্সান হাবীব

পিএইচডি শিক্ষার্থী, শিক্ষাঅনুষদ

মোনাশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ভিক্টোরিয়া ৩৮০০, অস্ট্রেলিয়া

[redacted]

শিক্ষার্থী সম্মতিপত্র

আমার পিতামাতা এবং গবেষক এই গবেষণা সম্পর্কে আমার সাথে কথা বলেছে। আমি বুঝতে পেরেছি আমার কাছে কি জানতে চাওয়া হয়েছে এবং

০১. আমি গবেষককে সাক্ষাৎকার দিতে রাজী ☐ হ্যাঁ ☐ না

০২. আমি একান্ত সাক্ষাৎকার দিতে আগ্রহী ☐ হ্যাঁ ☐ না

এবং/অথবা

০৩. আমি দলীয় সাক্ষাৎকার দিতে আগ্রহী ☐ হ্যাঁ ☐ না

০৪. সাক্ষাৎকারটি রেকর্ড করতে দিতে আমি রাজী ☐ হ্যাঁ ☐ না

আমি বুঝতে পেরেছি এখানে অংশ নেয়া সম্পূর্ণ আমার ইচ্ছার উপর। আমি জানি আমি ইচ্ছা করলে যেকোন সময় সাক্ষাৎকার দেয়া থেকে চলে যেতে পারি এবং সেক্ষেত্রে আমার কোন সমস্যা হবে না।

আমি বুঝতে পেরেছি আমার দেয়া তথ্যগুলো হয়ত কোন বইয়ে ছাপা হবে কিন্তু সেখানে আমার নাম ঠিকানা লেখা থাকবে না।

স্বাক্ষর:

তারিখ: