Chapter 9

Socioeconomic Inequality and Children's Emergent Primary Literacy and Numeracy in Bangladesh:
The Mechanisms From Family Investment Model

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ABSTRACT

We know little about how socioeconomic inequalities transmit disparities in young children's early primary literacy and numeracy. Drawing from family investment model this chapter examined parental material investment (PMI) and parental educational involvement (PEI) by which low-socioeconomic status (SES) might affect first-graders' literacy and numeracy scores in Bangladesh. Three-web data on low-SES, poor parental investments, and numeracy and literacy scores were collected from Bangladeshi first-graders and mothers through a final exam. The results from structural equation modeling suggested that low-income and fewer PMIs were directly and significantly associated with poor literacy achievement. Lower-education and lower frequency of PEI were directly and significantly associated with poor numeracy scores. Although both factors partially mediated the relationships between low-SES and poor school outcomes, lower frequency of PEI was stronger than fewer PMIs in the relationships between low-SES and children's poor literacy and numeracy outcomes during first grade.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children's poor literacy and numeracy skills during school entry are critical to succeed in first-grade exam (Duncan et al., 2007; Organization for Economic Cooperation & Development, OECD, 2020; Manolitsis et al., 2013). Past research reveals that parental low-income and low-education affect first-graders' literacy and numeracy outcomes (Ball et al., 2014; Duncan & Brooks-Gunn, 1998; Halpin et al., 2019; Pisani et al., 2018; Wolf et al., 2017; Wolf & McCoy, 2019). In Bangladesh, children from low-SES families enter first grade with limited knowledge in literacy and numeracy. About 50 to 60% of the low-SES students failed to achieve minimum proficiency in literacy and numeracy during first-grade (Pisani et al., 2018; Uddin, 2017a, 2023a). These poor literacy and numeracy outcomes during first-grade have detrimental effects on their psycho-social development and educational achievement during adolescence (Duncan et al., 2007).

Developmental psychologists and family scientists view that parents' early investments and educational engagement have developmentally potential benefits for young children's school readiness and achievement (Casey et al., 2018; Elliott & Bachman, 2018b; Kalil & DeLeire, 2004; Manolitsis et al., 2013). A considerable longitudinal studies drawing from family investment model (FIM) have been examined family investment mechanisms (e.g., home-enriching materials, parental stress, expectation and support) underlying the association between income and school readiness in the high- and low-income countries (Coley et al., 2020; Linver et al., 2002; Lombardi & Dearing, 2020; McCoy et al., 2015; Vasilyeva et al., 2018; Wolf et al., 2017; Yeung et al., 2002). Although previous research has found an association of income via family processes (e.g., parental stress and low-involvement) with poor cognitive and language scores (Linver et al., 2002; Lombardi et al., 2020; Wolf et al., 2017; Yeung et al., 2002), few studies have directly focused on parental material investment and educational involvement by which low-SES affects first-graders' literacy and numeracy outcomes. Based on FIM, present study examined family investment processes such as parental material investment and educational involvement underlying the relations between low-SES (measured as a low-income and low-education) and literacy and numeracy outcome among Bangladeshi first-graders (Uddin et al., 2023; Uddin & Jahan, 2023d). The present study also examined parental material investment and educational involvement differed by gender in Bangladesh context. Examining these potential investment pathways by which low-income and education differently affects the first-graders' literacy and numeracy outcomes are essential to improve their educational achievement (Pollitt, 1994; Whitehurst et al., 1999; Wolf, et al., 2019). This chapter has several sections. The first section focuses

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