

Formative Research on Providing Psychosocial Support through Home Visits after Fire Incident

Background

BRAC and its' partners have been initiating a project named Play to Learn (PtL) in which the Humanitarian Play Lab (HPL) has been implemented for the 0 to 6 years old children and their caregivers of forcefully displaced Myanmar Nationals since 2019. From mid-March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit Bangladesh, and subsequently, government-mandated lockdown imposes the movement restriction within the Rohingya camps. For that, the PTL beneficiaries have been reached out through telecommunication to reduce the impact of COVID-19, ensure smooth development, and enhance the emotional wellbeing of children and their mothers.

Recently, a massive fire incident was broke out on 22nd March in Rohingya camps which caused heavily as over the 17000 shelters were turn into ashes. According to the UNHCR report, 15 people had died, 400 missing, 560 were injured, and around 45,000 individuals were displaced. This incident triggered the traumatic experiences they had during their persecution from Myanmar. Rohingya people who were not directly victimized by the fire incident, developed fear of fire after knowing this fire severity, according to the information that came from Camps areas. So, there emerged a need for providing psycho-social support to Pashe Achhi beneficiaries. Considering this, a 15 minutes long home visit to each enlisted children's home was delivered. So, the present formative study was designed to explore the reflections of mothers, play leaders, and mother volunteers on home visits for providing psychosocial support.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the present formative study was to explore the reflections of mothers, Play Leaders (PLs) and Mother Volunteers (MVs) on home visit for providing psychosocial support.

Methodology

Method

Qualitative research methodology from grounded theory perspective was followed for this study and qualitative data were collected conducting In-depth interview.

Participants

A total of 68 participants was taken from three layers, front-liners, beneficiaries, and managerial staff.

Table-1: Distribution of the study participants

Types of Participants	N
Front-liner	10 mother volunteers (MVs) and 10 play-leaders (PLs)
Managerial and technical staff	2 program organizers, 2 Program assistants, 2 Para-counsellors
Mother	38 mothers

Materials

In-depth interviews will be conducted according to the In-depth interview guideline developed by a group composed of curriculum experts and researchers.

Findings

Findings were presented in three sections; mothers' reflections, Mothers and PLs/MVs Reflection about children's Response, and MVs/PLs' reflections.

Theme 1: Mothers' reflections

Mothers showed greater acceptance toward MVs/PLs' home visits, perceived home visits as the sign of a good relationship as how the volunteers feel them, even in such COVID-19 pandemic situation MVs/PLs came to take care of them. Mothers took MVs/PLs' home visits as a blessing for themselves as they shared their feelings and emotions with volunteers more easily. They enjoyed more, shared more, and felt an enhanced connection with volunteers so that they showed increased commitment to volunteers' words, and invited for a frequent home visit. Moreover, some mothers showed health concerns for volunteers. Mothers' reflections were described under the fewer themes below.

Take as a sign of Good relationship: Mothers perceived the play-leaders (PL)/ mother-volunteers' (MV) visit as a sign of the good relationship between volunteers & their families.

Scope of emotional release: Mothers took the PLs/ MVs' visits as the opportunity to share their personal sufferings & sorrows with greater confidence of confidentiality. While in telecommunication, male members of the families usually listen to what mothers shared with PLs/ MVs over the phones, as they owned the mobiles. Some mothers shared that they didn't find a confidential place for sharing.

Take as a blessing for her child: Mothers thought that the PLs/ MVs' home visits are a blessing for their children as their children can learn, enjoy, & become emotionally more flexible by receiving sessions from PLs/ MVs.

Enjoy session more: Mothers found that the PLs/ MVs' home visits are more enjoyable than telecommunication sessions as they are not used to talk over the phone. They usually felt shy while talking over the phones but during home visits, they easily enjoy the fun with PLs/ MVs that allow them to be more enthusiastic & relaxed.

Show commitment to PLs/ MVs' words: Door-to-door home visits of PLs/ MVs impressed mothers and they showed more commitment to follow what volunteers share with them. While in telecommunication, mothers often failed to recognize few words due to mobile connectivity issues, but during door-to-door home visits, they can interact with volunteers which is helpful to understand the PLs/ MVs' words.

Acceptance: All mothers accepted the home visits as the opportunity to learn, share and enjoy during the pandemic situation. Moreover, they appreciated that volunteers are visiting their home as like close relatives to take care their well-being

Invite for more frequent home-visit: Mothers enjoyed the PLs/ MVs' door-to-door visits and they invited for more frequent home visits so that they can share their emotional issues, and learn more about child-rearing. Mothers took the PLs/MVs' home visits as the home visits of their close relatives because they became emotionally attached through regular telecommunication sessions, as they expressed.

Some quotations from the mothers' opinions expressed during data collection were as follows.

We feel good when she has come to our house. She discussed many beautiful things with us, teach something very important. For that, if she comes to our house we like it. (Mother)

So far play lead has taught rhymes, told stories, taught games, and my son has learned a lot. And, if she didn't teach, it would have been tough to manage my baby during this situation (COVID-19 pandemic situation). Now, she comes to my house, it is very good (Mother).

In fact, my child and I become happy to see Serema (Play Leader). I can talk with her with an open mind and my mind becomes relaxed. If she visits home frequently it will be good for us. (Mother)

-----We could not see her during tele-communication, now we can see. I can talk to her face to face. I am very happy about that. We have a good relationship and I will hear the stories and poems that she used to teach us through mobile phones. When she used to call us, the child's father would ask me what she has been saying for so long. Now, when she come and sit down and talk, sit in front of the child and see how beautiful the sessions are. (Mother)

She has met us after a long time. It seems that we have got a very close relative. How many excuses my child had made so far to visit his Serema. I have seen her today, my child has become better. We also like it a lot, it seems we have got her dear one, back again. (Mothers)

Theme 2: Children's responses

During home visits of PLs/MVs, the children expressed happiness, became more spontaneous, showed curiosity, shared their toys and play materials with PLs, seek more time for enjoyment and play activities. Children responses were described under the following themes.

Express happiness: While PLs/ MVs were visiting their homes, children expressed happiness by showing enthusiasm. They laughed & demonstrated enhanced joyful activities when PLs/ MVs visit them.

Try to show hospitality: Some children between 3 to 6 years old tried to show hospitality toward PLs/ MVs while volunteers went to their house. They tried to spread mats on the ground or to give chairs to volunteers to sit on. When they saw play leaders/ volunteers, they were shouting at their parents and saying that Serema (PLs/MVs) was coming.

Seek more time: Children enjoyed the PLs/ MVs' home visits so they wanted to spend more time with PLs/ MVs. They shared that they want to recite the rhyme, tell a story, and play games with their Serema (PLs/MVs).

Become more spontaneous: Children were more spontaneous & playful while PLs/ MVs were visiting their homes. They were laughing, playing & rhyming with PLs. By seeing these, mothers were also very enthusiastic.

Show curiosity by asking questions: Children showed curiosity by asking questions on various issues such as when their HPLs will be opened when they will be able to play with their peers, why PLs didn't come to visit them previously etc. Children spontaneously asked PLs to tell them stories & recite rhyme with them.

Share toys & play materials: While PLs was visiting the children's homes, some children showed their toys & other play-materials, & played with their PLs. Most of the toys and play-materials were homemade and those were usually made from paper, bottles, clay, or cloths.

Some quotations from the mothers' opinions expressed with volunteers were as follows.

Children talked to us on my mobile before. they are very happy to see me. They tell us to come their homes every day. They ask again that if the Khelakhana (HPL) will not open, will you come to the house and play with me? (Play Leader)

When I visited children's home, they ask, Serema (Play-leader), will you not play? They remember the game I used to play with them. (Play Leader)

The children look at me and say, Serema, will Khelakhana (HPL) not be opened? Couldn't we go to Khelakhana? They asked about when the Khelakhana will be opened? (Play Leader)

The children say, "Serema sits down, eats rice", and they express happiness. (Mother)

The children were very happy to see us. Some children were trying to spread mats, while others are trying to give us chairs to sit on. And, when they saw us, they shouted at their parents and were saying that Serema (Volunteer) is coming. (Play Leader)

Children become very happy when we (Play leaders) meet with them in their homes. Child usually says that my Serema (Play leader) has come to see me, now I will play with her. (Play Leader)

If the children wanted to take time, I had to spend around an hour with them. Some children didn't let me come easily, they said we'll play more, you will eat rice and then go, they said these. It was hard to manage time by giving priority to the wishes of the children. (Play leader)

Theme 3: PLs/ MVs' reflections

During home-visits, volunteers experienced more effective interaction with mothers and children. They felt good as they were welcomed, and accepted by the mothers and children. Both mothers and their children were more engaging. Overall, the volunteers' home-visits experiences were good but they felt that the 15 minutes duration of the session was inadequate. Sometimes, while a child demanded more time, they had to stay at a house for about 1 hour. MVs/PLs' reflections were described under the following themes.

More effective interaction: During home visits, the PLs/ MVs perceived that their interactions with mothers & their children were very effective as they could see each-others. By observing mothers' and children's facial expressions and gestures, volunteers could understand the mothers' responses towards their words & information.

Easier means to convey information: The PLs/ MVs found conveying information through home visits was easier than any other means especially than telecommunication. Mothers easily understood what PLs/ MVs wanted to make them understand. Children were also more responsive toward PLs/ MVs' behaviors in home-visit sessions than they usually responded in telecommunication sessions.

Less challenging: The PLs/ MVs found that conducting home-visit sessions was less challenging than reaching mothers & children over the phones. Usually, in the Rohingya families, only male members are using mobile phones, and more often they don't stay at home during day time. So, reaching mothers over the phones were very challenging for play leaders/ volunteers. Moreover, call drop was a very common issue in the telecommunication sessions.

Feel good: During home-visit sessions, PLs/ MVs felt good by experiencing warm acceptance from mothers & children. Moreover, they were striving to meet their HPLs' children & they could able to meet their beloved HPLs' children through home-visit sessions.

Inadequacy of session duration: PLs/ MVs found that 15 minutes long home-visits sessions were inadequate to share mothers' feelings and to engage children through play. In some homes, while children wanted to spend more time with volunteers, volunteers had to spend more than 15 minutes in each of those houses.

Some quotations from the responses of PLs/MVs are as follows.

Talking face to face, I see them and they can see me. That's way I feel better. ----- If mothers want to say something more, I listen to their words. (Mother Volunteer)

Now, we can go to the children's home. ----- In fact, the more time we spend with children, the better we feel. (Play Leader)

Now, I have acquainted with 52 children's mothers. I don't feel good if I don't see them for a long time. They also feel like me, as they even said that if you don't meet with us frequently, we don't feel good. They talk to me nicely. (Play Leader)

Since, we have been from house to house for knowing about the wellbeing of mothers and their children, we understood their mental conditions more easily. If mother is talking to us, whether she is talking with happiness or unhappiness, we can understand that. (Mother Volunteer)

Since, we are going home and talking to them, seeing them in front of us, we can understand their emotion better. (Play Leader)

I can talk to the children and mothers; we like it a lot. Now, I can talk in front of them. Again, I can sit next to children's mothers and talk, so I feel very good. (Play Leader)

Sometimes the children's mothers were busy. The children also came to the mothers and caused disturbance. That's why, it was often difficult for mothers to pay attention to the sessions by managing the children. So, it would be better to increase the time of home visit. (Mother Volunteer)

Theme 4: Challenges

PLs/MVs faced several challenges which are given below.

Time-management: Some play leaders and mother volunteers faced a challenge to manage time as children wanted to spend more time with play leaders/ volunteers.

Home visiting time: Some play leaders/ mother volunteers shared that they did not talk to mothers because they were busy with household chores. Mothers asked to fix time before visits, so that they could be free for the session.

Family's privacy issue: Some male members of Rohingya families rarely expressed their familial privacy issue as PLs/ MVs try to know about their confidential issue. After, making them understand the PLs/ MVs are for to ensure the betterment of their family, they permit to conduct the session.

Concerns over the COVID-19 issue: A small number of Rohingya parents showed concern over the COVID-19 issue as the COVID-19 is still spreading why the PLs/MVs are visiting their homes. After, briefing about the preventive measures practiced by the PLs/MVs, they become convinced and allowed to talk to them.

Practicing health measures: COVID-19 preventive practices sometimes become challenging as children even mothers want to hug volunteers as they saw them after a long time.

Discussion and Conclusion

This formative study aims to examine the experiences of mothers, playleaders and mother volunteers about the “*Pashe Achhi*” home-visit session. To meet this objective, mostly qualitative data were collected from mothers, playleaders and mother volunteers. Findings were presented under three themes: mothers’ own reflections, mothers and PLs/MVs reflection surrounding children’s responses, & PLs/MVs own reflections.

Mothers’ Reflections

Findings revealed that the mothers were very enthusiastic to see the MVs/PLs from whom they were received telecommunication sessions. They showed greater acceptance toward MVs/PLs as they perceived that MVs/PLs are like relatives, for that they are visiting their homes, even in such COVID-19 pandemic situation, to take care of their wellbeing. They perceived MVs/PLs’ home visits as a blessing for themselves as they shared their feelings and emotions with volunteers easily in confidential places. Sharing became feasible as they had friendly relationships with MVs/PLs developed during telecommunication sessions. Consequently, they become emotionally connected and relaxed, and they hoped for frequent home visits for a longer time length. As per the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), feeling close and connectedness toward others resulted from the relatedness need (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Through telecommunication sessions, this relatedness had already been established between mothers and MVs/PLs. So, telecommunication sessions contributed as a foundation of enhanced acceptance and enjoyment of MVs/PLs’ home visits.

Children’s responses

In this study children’s responses about home visits were collected from the mothers and play leaders. Findings revealed that during home visits the children expressed happiness, became more spontaneous, showed curiosity, shared their toys and play materials with PLs, and sought more time from PLs for more play activities. During home visits, children were happy as they know play leaders very well and most of them were connected with PLs through Pashe Achhi. Some children identified play leaders as they communicated with them over the phone. This indicated that children were able to connect their phone experiences with the present home visits so they were more enthusiastic. Moreover, some children between 3 to 6 years showed hospitality toward play leaders during home visits by spreading mats on the ground or giving chairs to sit on. These also indicated a greater connection between play leaders and Children.

MVs and PLs’ Reflections

For that play leaders and mother volunteers’ reflections were collected and findings revealed that all of them experienced effective interaction with mothers and children as they were well-known with children’s families, so mothers shared their psychological concerns with PLs/MVs, enjoy lots of fun, expressed happiness for seeing MVs/PLs after a long time. Through telecommunication sessions, Play leaders built a strong rapport with the mothers of older old children with whom they didn’t interact frequently. These strong relationships helped them to interact with mothers effectively during home visits. PLs/MVs also experienced that they were able to recognize the mothers’ emotions and feelings as they could have to observe mothers’ gestures, postures along with listening to the mothers. Besides these, some PLs/MVs experienced a challenge in maintaining social distances as some mothers and children overwhelmed with emotions when they saw their MVs/PLs, with whom they are connected as close relatives, after a long time.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, some recommendations are as follows.

- **Frequency of home visit:** Participants suggested more home visits as these visits were very helpful for the beneficiaries and the facilitators.
- **Session duration:** All facilitators shared that the 15 minutes is not enough for home visit. They suggested to extend the length of the sessions.



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