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Supporting Migrant Parents in Multicultural UK Schools: A Phenomenological Study about Turkish Migrant Parents and Children Perception of School Support

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Abstract

This phenomenological study examines perceptions of some migrant Turkish parents and children about support provided by schools for parents. Additionally reveals perceptions of some schools about parental support. The study is carried out at two schools with 6 teachers and at a community centre with 7 parents and 5 children. Individual and group interviews were employed to learn about the experiences of parents, students and teachers, about schools, support to migrant parents and its effects on migrant parents' lives. Findings suggest poor language skills, working full-time, lack of confidence and not being familiar with the education system are big challenges for parents, which prevent them from involving their children's education and getting into contact with school. It is also found that parents experienced little or no support from school about their challenges and schools that parents are talking about lack different activities to engage parents with their child's education and make them feel confident. During interviews, there were very limited examples of supportive activities by schools to help parents gain confidence and socialize, but two parents felt more confident and socialized with the help of their daily interaction with the school.

Keywords

Migrant Parents, Multicultural Education, Parental Involvement, Phenomenology, United Kingdom

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

According to United Nations (2024) statistics, Europe is among the regions with the highest number of international immigrants in the world, and the UK keeps its place in the top five destinations of international immigration. As a result, many cities in the UK have diversified in terms of culture, ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic conditions. The highly diversified structures of cities put a burden on education as well as other social services that try to meet the different needs of society. There are many challenges for schools in such contexts (Moskal, 2010). Poor language skills and low academic achievement (Cummins, 2001), early leave from school and low attendance (Sutherland & Purdy, 2006) are some of the problems that such schools have to cope with. In such a context, another challenge for schools is the lack of parental involvement (Avvisati et al., 2014; Moskal, 2010; Harris et al., 2009; Heckmann, 2008).

The children of migrant parents have the chance to go to school to learn a new language, get the skills needed, and familiarise themselves with the host culture. Unfortunately, their parents do not have the same opportunities. Therefore, any support provided by schools to migrant parents is of vital importance to them so they can help their children and cope with the challenges of life in a new country.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore experiences and perceptions of Turkish migrant parents and children, and some school staff, on the schools' support for migrant parents. Results of this study are expected to help the schools, researchers and policy makers to hear some voices about how parent-school collaboration looks in a multiethnic and multicultural context, difficulties of parent-school collaboration and how this collaboration contributes to parents' lives.

Before talking about the context of the study, the term "migrant" needs to be clarified to avoid confusion. In this study the term "migrant" includes those who left their country of origin for more than one year due to any reason (refugee, asylum seeker, business, education, marriage, etc.) and they now reside in the new country. As defined by the United Nations (1998), "Migrant parents" are those parents who are raising a child at the primary or secondary level in the "destination country". "Migrant children" are those who move to the new country or were born in the "destination country" in a migrant family.

1.2. Context and Sites of the Study

The city in which the study has been conducted is a multicultural city in the East Midlands that has received international migration from all over the world during the migration history of Britain. There are many nationalities, cultures and ethnic groups in their own communities "sticking together" as stated by Knowles (2013) in certain parts of the city. According to statistics of the city council (reference is not given due to protecting anonymity) more than half of the city population is migrant with a population of 30% Asian and mostly Indian. Different religions are represented in the city with percentages of 34% Christian, 20% Muslim, 16%

Hindu, 6% Sikh, etc. Many schools in the multicultural areas of the city are the only places where children from migrant backgrounds interact with the English language and culture. The role of the schools in this context therefore becomes difficult as they have to teach the English language, represent British culture and at the same time try to create a welcoming environment for pupils and parents from different languages, cultures and religions.

There were two schools that participated in the study. One group interview took place in each school. The schools are indicated in the study as School 1 and School 2. School 1 is a secondary state school (academy) located far from the city centre in a wealthy area with a dominantly native "white" population. School population is between 600 to700 and the school only has year 7, 8, and 9 students. Total migrant background students in the school is around 8%. The school is a language specialist school and functions also as an academy training other teachers in that area.

School 2 is a primary school located in a deprived area close to the city centre with a highly multiethnic migrant population. 99% of students are coming from families with migrant backgrounds. The school is known with its success in collaborating with parents and the local community among the schools with similar contexts (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants of the study.

	Participants	Occupation	Gender	Age
Parents	Parent 1	Housewife	Female	35 - 40
	Parent 2	Teacher	Female	40 - 45
	Parent 3	Academician	Male	40 - 45
	Parent 4	Housewife	Female	30 - 35
	Parent 5	Housewife	Female	40 - 45
	Parent 6	Housewife + family business	Female	35 - 40
	Parent 7	Ph.D. Student	Male	35 - 40
Students	Student 1		Female	11
	Student 2		Female	13
	Student 3		Male	12
	Student 4		Male	12
	Student 5		Male	12
School 1	Deputy head		Female	30 - 35
	Pastoral officer		Female	40 - 45
	Science Teacher (migrant background)		Female	35 - 40
	SEN Coordinator		Female	40 - 45
School 2	Head teacher		Female	45 - 50
	Pastoral Officer (migrant background)		Female	45 - 50

The parent and student participants of the study were contacted via a Turkish community centre in the city at which the second researcher worked voluntarily. The community centre provides a supplementary school for Turkish children at weekends. Some Turkish parents bring their children to this supplementary school both to learn and improve the Turkish language and to get support for other school subjects (Math, English and Science). The parents of the supplementary school mostly operated their own business and have a middle-class income as most of the other Turkish people in the city. The interviews with parents and students were mostly carried out in this community centre by second researcher.

1.3. The Rationale for the Study

This study emerges from second researcher's dissertation thesis for his MA degree. First researcher was carrying out his post-doc study and provided academic support and supervision for the study. During this time, the researchers had the chance to visit some schools in multiethnic areas and get into contact with Turkish parents at a Turkish community centre. During school visits, the teachers talked about their relationship with migrant families and at the community centre sometimes parents and children talked about their experiences with schools. This process of "gossiping" with different parties allowed the researchers to think about the experiences of migrant parents with schools.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The collaboration between school, students and parents is much more important as they are the ones who are always at the centre of educational practices. The support provided by parents has crucial importance in pupils' education as parents are the primary source of love, support, knowledge and trust for their children. Francis & Mills (2012: p. 577) confirm this reality stating that "family background is still the strongest predictor of educational achievement level". The support that parents can provide for their children is related to parents' socio-cultural background, educational level, awareness and socio-economic conditions. Feiler (2010) supports the importance of families in pupil's learning by Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory which emphasizes the significance of socio-cultural context in which the pupil is brought up.

2.2. Importance and the Nature of Parent-School Collaboration

There is a great deal of literature about the importance and different aspects of parent-school collaboration, but before dealing with examples from the literature first, the term parent-school collaboration should be clarified. Driessen et al. (2005) use the term "parental involvement" to address the partnership between parents and schools, whereas Harris et al. (2009: p. 12) prefer to use the term "parental engagement" and define it as:

> "a concept to encompass all parental activities that directly support children's learning, including providing support, creating a learning environment at home, communication between parents and school and participating in decision making".

The term parent-school collaboration, which is used in the heading of this part, includes Harris et al.'s (2009) definition of "parental engagement" and the support provided by school for parents to ensure this engagement. However, the terms "parental involvement" and "parental engagement" will be used interchangeably during this study to address the definition by Harris since they are used in studies reviewed in this chapter. The term "parent" also includes the caregivers who have the responsibility of the child.

In the Green Paper "Every Child Matters" (ECM) it is stated that "*The bond between the child and their parents has the most critical influence on a child's life. Parenting has a strong impact on a child's educational development*, *behaviour*, *and mental health*" (2003: 39). Stating the insufficient attention to supporting parents in past policies the above-mentioned green paper puts the importance of parents into "*heart of the children's services*" (ECM, 2003). Reviewing literature about research on parental involvement in middle school, Hill and Tyson (2009) found that across 50 studies, there was a positive link between parental involvement and students' achievements. In their book, Harris et al. (2009) emphasise parental engagement as the most important aspect to increase student achievement. In their study based on a field experiment in deprived schools, Avvisati et al (2014) found that parental involvement has positive effects on students' behaviours as well.

2.3. Problems with Parent-School Collaboration and Potential Barriers

Reviewing literature about educational, developmental, and social psychology, the authors (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Walker et al., 2005) suggest that there are factors about parents' physiological and socioeconomic conditions and factors that are related with school and other parties. Here, the argument is that the factors that motivate parents to get involved would help us understand the factors that prevent parents from getting involved. If there is any problem with these factors this will cause a barrier for parental involvement. We can address these barriers for parental involvement in two categories namely, **parent related barriers** and **school related barriers**.

To start with parent related barriers, Hornby (2000) and Harris et al. (2009). addresses some demographic changes in families like women being involved in the work force resulting in both parents being busy or divorces which leave one parent with responsibility of working and dealing with the children. Another barrier about parents that is stated in the literature is the lack of parental knowledge about how to get involved in children's education. For many parents, parental involvement means helping or being able to help pupils with their homework

(Harris et al., 2009).

Some studies show that school related barriers are strong inhibitors of parent-school collaboration which blocks the way for parents to be involved. Davies et al. (1996) and Hornby (2000) present some school related barriers to parent-school collaboration such as: lack of structures and mechanisms for informal communication, lack of frequent contact with parents, lack of strategies to involve "hard to reach" parents, and lack of ability or willingness to face differences (cultural, ethnic etc.) within the school.

In their study which deals with the success of a teacher training program for parental involvement (TIP) Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2002) indicate that the program increased teachers' invitations for involvement and their beliefs about parents' efficacy for supporting their children. As an alternative, Davies et al. (1996) put forward a model of "outside facilitators" for schools to be able to train their staff and increase parental involvement, as the schools have limited time and usually no school staff is educated for parental involvement. Currently schools in the UK have support staff (pastoral officers) which is employed to foster parent school collaboration which brings the discussion again to the beliefs of school staff about parental involvement. Another school related barrier for parent-school collaboration is negative staff attitudes towards parents. While Hornby (2000) states that teachers may put themselves in a superior position and perceive some of the parents as problematic.

2.4. Challenges about Involving Migrant Parents

The parents who have migrated to be able to provide a better life for their families, which is not possible for them in their home countries, are actually highly interested in education of their children (Heckmann, 2008). Vincent (2000) raised the issue that the lack of parental involvement does not mean that parents are not interested in the child's education but actually they do not know how to contact the school due to the language barrier and unfamiliarity with the education system.

A study from southern US by Gaitan (2012) reveals that Latino parents feel disempowered because of limited English language and lack of knowledge about the education system, thus not being able to play a strong partner role at the school. An example of parents having difficulties with the education system, and school practices is the study by Işık-Ercan (2010). In this study, it is stated that although Turkish parents in USA are aware of differences between American and Turkish education systems, parents are still not happy with the low expectations of teachers from students and say that teachers do not push students to be more successful.

Heckmann (2008) also indicates that especially for first generation immigrant families and their children the schools is encountered as a strange and culturally different place. According to Vincent and Martin (2002) such parents may perceive the school as a foreign place and do not feel as though they belong to the school and prefer to stay away. This may be inevitable to some extent, but proper school policies and practices can be developed to reduce this feeling for both chil-

dren and their parents. Kim (2009) states that other than parent related issues when relevant literature is reviewed, teachers' perceptions about efficacy and capacity of the minority parents, leadership style, lack of policies and diverse programmes are found to be school related barriers for minority parent involvement.

A research project by Levine-Rasky (2009) in a British school with both native students and ethnic minority students reveals that the parents of native students are actively involved in the school and form relationships with teachers while other parents from ethnic minorities fail to do so. A reason might be that migrant parents cannot transfer their socio-cultural capital to the new society (Moskal, 2014) and thus cannot be equal partners with the school like native parents.

2.5. School's Role in Supporting Migrant Parents to Involve Them in the Education of Their Children.

Firstly, Harris et al. (2009) invite us to accept the fact that most of the school parent interaction in migrant contexts, is initiated by the schools. In addition to that there seems to be a consensus in the literature that schools should develop strategies to ensure the involvement of migrant parents as schools are expected to be the initiators of parent-school collaboration. Based on a qualitative longitudinal research López et al. (2001) suggest that the most successful approach would be the schools listening to parents' questions and needs. Similarly, Gaitan (2012) states that schools should know about migrant parents' goals and perspectives on child's education as well as the culture that the student comes from and represent those perspectives in the curriculum.

In an experimental study in a deprived area of France, parents of middle school children were invited to take part in a program informing parents how to be better involved in their child's education (Avvisati et al., 2014). At the end of the year, it was found that there was an increase in school and home-based involvements of families who participated in the programme. The paper which reviews recent literature in UK, US, Canada and Australia, about "hard to reach" families by Boag-Munroe & Evangelou (2012) suggest that school services which try to reach such families should encapsulate the skills like communication, flexibility, adaptability and relationship ensuring contextualised and community-based work. Boag-Munroe & Evangelou (2012) concluded that schools in this need may seek ways to work holistically with other services to support parents with trained and dedicated staff.

The rationale behind parent-school collaboration discussed up to here is to increase students' achievements, academic and social skills. But what about parents themselves? How can migrant parents' relationships with schools affect their lives? The next section deals with these questions and concludes this chapter in relation with research questions.

2.6. Schools Support for Migrant Parents to Become a Part of the Social Life in the Host Society

The study by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggests that schools may find ways to support parents in terms of parental role construction, self-efficacy and per-

sonal motivations. In this manner migrant parents will be more successful in engaging in the socio-economic life in the host country and be more engaged in the children's education. Furthermore, Portes & Rumbout (2001) cited in Lea (2012) state that the cooperation between teachers and parents promotes parents' understanding of school and society which might increase parents' trust to society, help to foster their acculturation and reduce intergenerational conflict which might occur in the future. Hornby (2000) indicate that parental involvement also increases self-confidence of parents which is an important aspect of social life for migrant parents. Similarly, results of a study (Waterman, 2009) about school-based language classes for Mexican mothers in US, reveals a substantial development in language and involvement skills of parents.

In a US based study, Durán (2003) found that migrant children sharing homework with parents created a fostering environment for migrant parents to learn English contributing to their life competencies. In their study done with schools that were successful at involving migrant parents, López et al. (2001) found out that these schools were effective in engaging migrant parents because their primary goal for parental involvement was to meet the needs of parents before all other concerns. Thus Feiler (2010) confirms that studies about parent school collaboration emphasize the links with community to make sure parents get into contact with the local society which fosters their engagement.

2.7. Discussion

Literature suggests that parent-school collaboration is important for students' achievements, success and behaviour but there are some problems and certain barriers for parent-school collaboration. Migrant parents may be affected by these barriers more than native parents due to their own circumstances. Lack of language skills, lack of knowledge about education system, working full time and lack of self-confidence are some of the barriers that prevent migrant parents from engaging in their children's school life as well as being a part of the life in the host society. There are also school related barriers which inhibit parental involvement. These are the lack of activities for parents, lack of contact during events, lack of strategies and policies to support migrant parents. Schools are expected to eliminate or minimise these barriers and encourage such parents to get involved in their child's education and become partners for schools. There is also evidence in the literature that school-parent collaboration may also empower migrant parents to engage in social life within host society.

Based on the literature discussed in this chapter this study explores whether schools in a multicultural city of the UK play a direct or indirect role in helping migrant parents to cope with the challenges of supporting their children and engaging with life in a new country.

The study is based on the following research questions:

- What kind of challenges do migrant parents experience while providing support for their children in children's education?

- Does school play a part in helping migrant parents to cope with these challenges?
- Does the relationship between school and parents have any impact on migrant parents' engaging social life in host society?

3. Methodology

3.1. Philosophical Stance

The ontological stance of this study suggests that reality is relative and based on context and there is no reality out there existing free from our knowledge of it but rather reality is constructed through the interactions of those who know it based on their experiences meaning making and understandings as stated by Sarantakos (2005: p. 37).

Epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge and answers the question "how do we know what we know?" (Sarantakos, 2005: p. 30). The answer for this question in this study would be "we know what we know by interpretation".

Since qualitative research generally seeks to understand the ways, people prefer to live their life and the meanings they construct out of their experiences (Newby, 2010), this study aims to explore the school's role in supporting migrant parents through experiences of parents, students and school staff. The study does not aim to reach any generalisation depending on the data collected. Rather, the study seeks to find answers about how participants perceive, understand and give meaning to migrant parents-school relationship based on research questions. The study is restricted within the context of the schools being visited and the context of the small group of Turkish people from which parents and children were chosen.

Researcher's position

Epistemologically there is a relationship between the researcher and the phenomena being researched (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011) labels this relationship as transactional or subjective epistemology) and the research process and the results are not completely free from researcher's values (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011) as the data collected during the study is not free from the values and perceptions of those (respondents) who have provided it. Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba (2011) suggest that if the steps of the study are explained, this will reduce this risk making the study more transparent and less biased. In this study the researchers are the interpreters who aims to construct knowledge by interacting with people who have experiences about the phenomenon being researched. In this study the researchers are somehow in the data and the researchers' position cannot be fully neutral, but the researchers report the research process transparently as a way of controlling the effect of researcher related factors on the study. Newby (2010) adds that it is important for a researcher to explain exactly how the study is done and the data is collected not just for philosophical verification but for the clarity of the research.

Trustworthiness

Accepting trustworthiness as another name for validity, Sarantakos states that

the issue of validity is a fundamental part of the qualitative study. Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) cited in Creswell (2013) suggest four criteria for trustworthiness (See **Table 2**).

Table 2. Criteria for trustworthiness by Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001) adapted from Creswell (2013: p. 248).

Criteria	Question to be answered by these criteria?
Credibility	Are the results an accurate interpretation of the participants' meaning?
Authenticity	Are different voices heard?
Criticality	Is there a critical appraisal of all aspects of the research?
Integrity	Are the investigators self-critical?

Credibility: What participants said has been recorded and translated verbatim. The interviews were analysed as they were and the findings were translated for a more accurate interpretation. The researchers got help from a native English researcher (researchers' friend from MA Classes) during data analysis and translations.

Authenticity: There are children (participants) with different levels and parents and teachers with different professions and backgrounds (See **Table 2**).

Criticality and Integrity: Issues that are related to the researchers' position, background, and knowledge of research among others arose during data collection as well as the interpretation which is discussed in relevant sections. The philosophical background of the research and philosophical view of the researchers are also discussed at the beginning of the methodology section. There is also a critique of the study and a self-critique of the researchers at the end of chapter 5.

Another aspect of trustworthiness is "**triangulation**" which is described as "comparing many sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of information or phenomenon" as stated by Bush (2012: p. 85). The process of triangulation enables the researcher to see a phenomenon from different points of view as stated by Sarantakos (2005). In this study, data is collected from different groups of participants (parents, teachers and students) using different methods (individual and focus group interviews) and analysed by more than one researcher.

Some findings of this study coincide with the findings of previous studies presented in the literature review which increases the trustworthiness of the study as stated by Sarantakos (2005).

Sampling

The sampling strategy employed in this study is purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013). That is the researchers choose people or sites purposefully who/which can provide the research with better information/data. The study seeks experiences of those who have a migrant background (parents and children) and those professionals (school staff) who work with migrants; thus, the parents were chosen from

those who have migrated to UK and have children at the primary or secondary level. The children were chosen from those who have at least one migrant background parent and those who reached a certain maturity (9 years and above) to be able to answer interview questions. The parents were chosen with different occupations and backgrounds (See Table 1) to be able to collect different points of view. The sample size for parents is 7 and for children it is 5 excluding a parent and a child for pilot interviews.

Although the study was planned to include staff from multiethnic primary schools who are more likely to interact with migrant families only a primary and a secondary school replied positively from approximately 80 schools that were contacted (Detailed information about the schools is given in Table 1). Two group interviews were carried out in these two schools in a group of 4 and 2 members of the school's staff with different occupations and backgrounds were interviewed as well.

Ethical considerations

As a complex process research needs collaboration and contribution of different parties (Busher & James, 2012) and it is the researcher's responsibility to make sure that the research does not produce any negative effects or results for participants and for third parties. All participants should know the aim of the study, how the study will be carried out and how the data they provided will be used.

For this reason, an informed consent form was given to participants explaining the purpose of the study and ensuring the protection of the participant's identity and anonymity. The research included children who are defined as "potentially vulnerable groups" by ESRC (2012: p. 8) and the topic was also sensitive to some extent for schools because it was asking them about migrant parents which raise questions about ethnicity, injustice, equity etc. Ethical approval was received from the University. The parents were asked for permission to conduct interviews with their children by informed consent forms. The students were informed either verbally or by informed consent forms about the details of the study. During all interviews with children there was a third person (a friend or an elder person) in the setting.

In order to not disrupt the daily process (Busher & James, 2012) of the school, one group interview was held after school, and the other group interview was done with the head teacher and pastoral officer who were not supposed to be with the students at that time.

The interviews were recorded with a phone and transferred to second researcher's personal computer and stored in a safe folder. The participants were coded with numbers, and the transcripts were coded accordingly. Personal information of participants such as names, occupation, age, gender and year group was kept in a different folder from the data folder.

Relationship of researchers with participants

The second researcher was a volunteer teacher at the Turkish community centre, and the first researcher was as parent who brought his daughter to commu-

nity centre for supplementary courses.. Therefore, both researchers were known by other parents and students for a while and there was a certain level of trust between the researchers, parents and student participants thus they wanted to take part in the study and share their experiences and perceptions with the researchers.

3.2. Phenomenology as a Qualitative Approach

Creswell (2013) and Lincoln, Lynham & Guba (2011) talk about some "approaches" or "qualitative traditions" within the scope of qualitative study under qualitative inquiry. Phenomenology, Grounded theory and Ethnography are some of these approaches. Ethnography is commonly based on long term observation of a group sharing common culture (Newby, 2010) while grounded theory aims to generate or discover a theory based on the collected experiences of participants about a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology whereas deals with the common meaning that people experiencing a certain phenomenon ascribe to that phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). As a method, phenomenology is described by Lichtman (2006) as collecting lived experiences of those who have experienced a certain phenomenon. This study neither aims to generate a theory nor aims to focus on a group but rather it aims to explore experiences and perceptions of parents, children and school staff about the support that schools provide for migrant parents. Hence this study takes a phenomenological stance as a qualitative approach.

3.3. Methods of Data Collection

Since the study aims to collect the perceptions of participants about a particular phenomenon the best way to do is to communicate with them via interviews. Two types of interviews employed in this study are semi structured individual and group interviews.

Semi structured individual interview

Semi structured interviews give the interviewer enough space to ask extra questions according to flow of conversations during interview (Newby, 2010). Although semi structured interviews are found to be time consuming, costly and require prior training for the interviewer, it is chosen for this study because it provides insights into a particular phenomenon, going into detail and revealing more about it (Newby, 2010).

Semi structured group interview

The group interview carried out in this study fits the definition of Fontana & Frey (2005) as what they call "field and formal". This is where the interview is arranged in advance in a formal setting taking place in the field in a semi structured way and is somewhat directive and carries a phenomenological purpose. Another reason for choosing focus group interviews in schools is that when they are contacted the school staff were very busy and they chose to be in groups to save time, which was convenient for the researchers as well.

3.4. Data Analysis

Firstly, all records were transcribed verbatim but not the "speech fillers" like "err.", "ah.." or "umm..". The data was then reviewed and placed into three groups. These groups were **parents**, **children** and **school staff**. To be able to organise and categorise the data properly and keep on the tuck, a template was created for each group of interviews. The template included main categories of data which were produced according to the interview and research questions.

Mainly a phenomenological data analysis procedure is followed, that is all transcripts were reviewed, and "significant statements" were identified. These "significant statements" were usually the sentences and expressions of participants about a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2013: p. 82). These statements were collected into the template under categories that were identified beforehand. By doing so the "clusters of meanings" start to occur leading to formation of themes (Creswell, 2013: p. 82). At the beginning there were many themes (around 30) but after several revisions the themes were reduced to four. While reviewing the data and identifying significant statements the data was re-categorised and reorganised. During this process another researcher was involved for reliability.

4. Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents findings of the study and their discussion in relation to the literature review. The findings are presented under four main themes.

4.1. Theme 1. Experiences and Perceptions about Parental Involvement

❖ Findings from parents

The first thing that all parents said about being involved in their child's education was "helping with homework and attending parents' evenings". Second thing that parents indicated was "reading together". Taking kids to school and picking them up were also accepted as a type of involvement by all parents. Parent 1 and Parent 3 stated that they help to design art projects as well. Parent 3 said "*Every day I ask my son what he had done at school so that I am aware of what is happening at school*". Attending some activities in schools were also stated by most of the parents as a sign of supporting or being involved in the children's education. All mothers stated that they provided support at home instead of the fathers as they worked till late hours. Parent 3 who was a father stated that his wife helped with homework because she knew English better and she was more familiar with the education system. As it relates to attending parents' evenings, the parents reported that the parent who knew English better, attended parents' evenings or other meetings at the school.

❖ Findings from students

All students agreed that attending "parents' evenings" and "helping homework" was parental involvement. Students 1, 2 and 5 mentioned "responding to letters and Student 2 also mentioned "checking reading" and "reminding about home-

work" as parental involvement. None of the children mentioned "taking to school" and "picking up" as parental involvement. Student 2 and Student 4 mentioned that their mothers were involved because of their father's workload. Student 1 and Student 5 said that their fathers came to the school generally because of their mothers' language barrier.

❖ Findings from school staff

Staff from the two schools agreed that cooperation and collaboration between parents and the schools were important. School 1 emphasized that collaboration is a form of parental support to teachers and to the school. As the deputy head and pastoral officer stated, "they should attend parents' evenings, give feedback and support us". SEN coordinator stated that "parents should give students the message that we (parents and school) are thinking in the same way". The pastoral officer added that "parents should get the students to school on time". Whereas, participants from school 2 stated that "the school should form links with the community". The head teacher said "You cannot just expect parents to come in. It is frightening for them". She also stated that the pastoral officer went to the playgrounds and made contact with the parents. The pastoral officer brought them into school and subsequently formed links with the community.

Discussion of theme 1

It was indicated by all participants that parental involvement was very important. Although the findings revealed that "parents' evenings" was a strong indicator of parental involvement, parents, schools and students might have different expectations and perceptions about parental involvement as Harris et al. (2009) stated.

School 1 expected support from parents, assuming that parents' personal requirements were met (Crozier & Davies, 2007), while School 2 emphasized that making parents feel comfortable and informing them about school processes were essential for effective involvement, as Hill & Tyson (2009) suggest. The structural differences between two schools might affect the approaches of two schools about parental involvement. And this might be the subject of another research but still this study puts forward two different point of view about parental involvement from two different schools.

4.2. Theme 2. Challenges and Barriers to Parental Involvement

❖ Subtheme 1: Personal challenges of migrant parents

All parents reported the language barrier as the first challenge. Parent 2 and Parent 3 stated that working full time was also a challenge for them and Parents 1, 2 and 4 mentioned childcare and housework as other challenges. Additionally, Parent 1 and Parent 2 reported the lack of confidence as their personal challenges.

> "Since I have little English, I am not confident to get into contact with others so I just do not attend those kinds of activities". (Parent 1)

All children mentioned language as a challenge for at least one of their parents.

Students 1, 2 and 5 mentioned "Difficulty in responding to letters and students 2, 4 and 5 stated "working full time" as challenges for parental involvement.

Participants from both schools agreed that language and lack of confidence were huge barriers for migrant parents. The science teacher from School 1 said that "it is about feeling confident to get into contact with the school". She added that there was a father who spoke Panjabi and never came to the school but started to come after he learned that there was a teacher who spoke Panjabi and the father talked to all school staff after that time. Other challenges mentioned for parents by School 2 were, working full time and doing night shifts.

❖ Subtheme 2: School related challenges

Statements from some parents indicated that schools lacked ways and time for parent-teacher communication and effective feedback about child's progress. For example, Parent 2 and Parent 3 stated that they only had a chance to talk to teachers during parents' evenings for 5 - 10 minutes and just heard how their children did well. There was no info about the weak sides of the students and no time to talk about how to improve these sides. Parent 7 said, "I cannot get effective feedback from teachers, so I do not know how to help." Moreover Parents 2, 3, 4 and 7 stated that teachers were not willing to meet parents other than parents' evenings. Students 2, 4 and 5 mentioned that the parents talked to teachers for 5-10 minutes during parents' evenings and got advice about what to do at home, that is, how to help their children.

The staff's attitudes and perceptions about migrant parents were other school related barriers that were mentioned by parents. Although 6 parents (except for parent 3) stated that they were happy with their children's current school and teachers, Parents 4 and 6 said they still felt bad when they went to the school. Parent 2 stated that the school was a strange place for her at first.

Parents 2, 3 and 7 stated that they had to change the school because they were not happy with the previous ones. Regarding the attitudes of school staff, Parent 1 said the staff at the school were very helpful and they explained school procedures and things to be done. The office staff also helped her to write letters. However, Parents 4 and 7 stated that they did not find office-staff friendly. Parent 4 said:

> "If it was in Türkiye, I would be closer with teachers. Even if they pretend to understand your situation, sometimes they just do not understand".

Parent 5 stated that the school staff did not refuse directly even if they cannot help but they just tried to make them feel relaxed. Parents 3 and 5 stated that primary schools were more informal and the teachers were reachable up to year 6. Parent 5 stated that sometimes she felt that her race was an issue to the staff at the school. Parent 5 added that:

> "I know that is strictly forbidden in this country, but some members of staff just tend to support their kindness in case of any dispute and tend to ignore you".

Parent 7 stated that a deputy head teacher got angry when he raised an issue that he was not happy with. He also stated:

> "The staff was bossy and they disdained us. They wanted us to know that they were not happy with complaints or criticism."

Children did not mention anything regarding staff attitudes or their parents' perceptions about the staff's attitudes but Student 1 stated that her mother felt more confident with coming to the school since she got help from one of the officers and felt welcomed.

All participants from School 1 and School 2 were aware of the importance of positive staff attitudes in school-parent collaboration. The pastoral officer of School 1 stated that they encouraged parents to come in but she also added that migrant parents did not trust the school as British parents did. She said that they had to learn how to trust them. The head teacher of School 2 said that "we encourage our teachers to be open to parents and talk to them". Pastoral officer from School 2 said:

> "…You are new in this country, and you do not know the language. When somebody gives you a simile you say yes this is the right place for me."

❖ Subtheme 3: Challenges about the system

All parents and school staff mentioned "the lack of knowledge about the education system" was a challenge. According to some parents, the education system had its own challenges. Parent 2, Parent 3 and Parent 7 stated that the system was so "closed" that the parents did not know what and how the child was learning. Parent 3 said:

> "I cannot learn which topics were covered and which topics will be covered. No textbook or notebook was allowed home during primary school. So, I cannot follow how my child progresses."

Parent 2 and Parent 7 mentioned that the system did not expect the students to learn much, so it did not push students forward and thus left no space for parental help.

Parent 5 stated another challenge as: "*Some parents compare it (the system) with their period in Türkiye, so they cannot keep up to date in terms of requirements of the school and social life.*"

Student 2 and Student 4 said that the lack of knowledge about education system was a challenge for their parents.

Participants from School 1 stated that another barrier was having a different experience as it relates to education. The pastoral officer said that "they have quite different expectations about the system which could be very challenging to them".

Discussion of theme 2

All groups of participants agreed that language, working full time and doing night shifts, were barriers for parent-school collaboration which is revealed by Gaitan (2012), Moskal (2010), Sutherland & Purdy (2006), Heckmann (2008) and

Vincent (2000). Some of the staff from both schools and two parents talked about the lack of confidence as a challenge which coincides with findings of Vincent & Martin (2002). Two parents stated that school was a strange place for them which were stated by Harris et al. (2009) as some parents felt "shy" and "intimidated".

Emerging from what some parents said, lack of time and feedback mechanisms are school related barriers. It is difficult to deal with all parents during a parents' evening but if teachers are not willing to meet parents other than parents' evenings (as some parents stated) this is a serious barrier indicating lack of communication and "frequent contact" as stated by Davies et al. (1996).

Parents seemed to be happy with their children's school at first glance, but more than half of the parents experienced negative staff attitudes during their child's education. To avoid this School 2 encouraged teachers to be open to parents and talk to them as suggested by Harris et al. (2009) and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005). Parent 7 complained about staff being bossy which fits what Hornby (2000) states. The participants from School 2 seemed to be more aware of school related barriers but pastoral officer from School 1 (which was a secondary school) expect the migrant parents "to learn how to trust them" ignoring their own circumstances. This perception is indicated in Crozier & Davies's (2007) study as "the expectations of parents were assumed by the secondary schools".

All parents, two students and all participants from two schools stated that the lack of knowledge of the education system was a challenge. Parents have difficulties about understanding how curriculum is implemented and how lectures take place. They want to follow what the student does daily but the way lectures take place, and the school operates do not allow this according to them. These parents want to help their children daily, but they find it impossible to follow the students' daily progress as notebooks or textbooks are not allowed to be taken home. For example, three parents were not happy with the low expectations of teachers as it relates to the students' progress which is also found by Işık-Ercan (2010). Expectations of parents from schools can be challenging for both parents and schools as stated by pastoral officer of School 1 and Parent 5. This phenomenon fits with what Isik-Ercan (2010) says: "Although parents know the system is different, their expectations are still affected by the schooling experiences in their country of origin".

4.3. Theme 3. Lack of Support and Supporting Activities

❖ Subtheme 1. Type and frequency of activities

Parents reported activities like, parents' evenings, celebration, reading day, student performances and end of year programme, Christmas, awarding programmes, social activities and religious programmes. All parents stated that these activities had taken place once or twice a year. Parents 2, 3, 5 and 7 stated that the activities stated above are not designed to bring parents together for getting into contact with each other. Parent 7 said:

"These activities might be good chances to get into contact with British people otherwise you have to go to pub, or wherever they go, where they eat and you have to do what they do to get into contact with them."

Five parents reported that their children's school currently does not provide activities to bring parents together. As examples, Parent 2 said she remembered there were literature and math courses in her child's previous school and Parent 5 reported that there were language courses, science, math and computer courses in some schools but there were not anymore. Parent 1 reported that there were tea or coffee mornings for parents, but she did not attend mainly because of the language barrier.

Parents 1, 5 and 6 stated that they only got support from the school in the form of advice during parents' evenings. The letters that contained information about what was going on at the school were seen as a form of support by Parent 2. Parent 1 stated she got a 2-hour seminar while her child started primary school.

All children mentioned parents' evenings at first when they were asked about their parents' relationships with their school. Student 2 and 5 mentioned that parents only came for parents' evenings "once or twice a year". Students 1, 4 and 5 mentioned that their parents got no direct help or support from the school. Student 1 said there was a parents' club in which they tell parents how to help their children. Student 4 said the school only informed parents about the services available if they need any help.

The participants from School 1 talked about some activities in which parents were informed about their responsibilities and school processes. These are: "Transition meetings when students start year 7", "newsletters and letters", "parents' evenings" and "pastoral evenings". The pastoral officer said that "We inform them about the events happening locally or in the wider community". School 1 said that parents are also invited to provide help and support in some activities like award ceremonies, drama productions, music performances, housing competitions and baking cakes for fund raising. The deputy head said, "we used to have a parent group with the parents, but it was never well attended so… its kind of stopped".

Participants in group 2 said they were carrying out activities which aimed to develop parents' skills and abilities for their lives and for helping their children. These activities were family learning activities in which parents learnt English, communicated with their children, read with them, helped with homework, played and practiced language together. The pastoral officer said that the school also offered literacy and math courses which were level courses for college to enable parents to go to college if they wanted to. The school also ran behaviour courses for parents so that they can manage their child's behaviour and behaviours of their respective families. There was also an early start programme in which parents at the foundation stage attended activities with their children and had a chance to see how they are learning and they also got into contact with the teachers daily.

The participants from School 2 said there were also activities like religious festivals for different religions, language celebrations for different languages every month. The pastoral officer added that "with these activities we wanted parents to come in and see that they are welcomed, appreciated and valued". The head teacher said that "we even help them in housing services, provide advice for family and even for marriage".

> "We are providing parents with an opportunity to feel confident, feel a part of the community and get skills needed". (Head teacher, School 1)

❖ Subtheme 2. Interaction during the activities

All of the parents stated that they have little or no interaction with other parents. Parent 6 said that she wants to get into contact with other parents, but the interaction never goes beyond saying "hello" and "how are you". Parent 4 says the reason for not getting into contact with other parents is as follows:

> "Actually, there are opportunities for me to get into contact with other nationalities, but I do not want to get into contact because of language."

All parents (except parent 4) and the children said that the school made no effort to bring the parents together. In addition, all children said that their parents are not friends with any of the other parents. Participants from School 1 said that they do not remember any parent making friends during activities at the school.

As it relates to the interactions of parents during school activities, experiences of 4 parents were a bit different from the other parents. 4 Parents reported that parents often got into contact with people from similar backgrounds. Parent 2 stated that "during these activities, everybody tends to remain in their own cultural chamber", and Parent 7 said that "I witnessed some parents making friends during these activities, but they were from similar backgrounds". Parent 3 stated that during these activities, British parents may come together and make friends but not migrant parents. Similarly, Student 5 mentioned that English parents came together at the school.

Parent 2 said she did not feel confident while talking to English parents because she felt in a lower position and that affected the relationship.

> "An English person has already founded a life here and does not need to include you. We need to get into contact with them and we need to initiate the communication. After a while you get used to life here and have your community so you do not need any friends from other cultures as well". (Parent 2)

❖ Subtheme 3. Perceptions about the school support for parents

All of the parents said that there is no support from their children's current school for parents to be able to help their children. Parent 5 stated that if "they provided courses or other kinds of help they would provide support but what they offer can be completely different from what I need". Parent 3 says:

> "It's all about tick box. They do these kinds of activities just to say "we did".

Actually, there is no support for parents."

Parent 3 added that "It is not useful to provide parents with English or math courses once or twice but there should be continuous mechanisms at the schools to support parents.

The perception of participants from School 1 was different from that of School 2. Participants from School 1 agreed that the school would be successful if the students progressed and this progress would make the parents feel more comfortable with the society they are living in. The pastoral officer said that:

> "If the children are progressing and becoming confident with English, if they are well integrated into the community, feel comfortable with their British kind of life and celebrate their own culture in the wider community, it is going to have a knock-on effect with their parents. This enables them to better help their parents access more of the cultural and social life."

To support this idea, the science teacher gave an example from her own life and said "my parents came from India and when my four-year elder brother started school my parents were reluctant to go to school but when I started since, I have already learnt English they were more comfortable to come and meet my teachers."

Discussion of theme 3

The science teacher from school 1 expressed that "I remember once there was a Halloween party…" and the deputy head from School 1 said that "We used to have a parent group but never well attended…. so it kind of stopped" indicated that such activities rarely took place in School 1. Activities reported by School 1 (transition meetings, parents' evenings, pastoral evenings, newsletters) aimed to inform parents about school processes and parents' responsibilities and provided advice for parents. These are ways of formal communication and are not engaging for parents since most of the parents stated that these activities are not for them. Davies et al. (1996) stated that the lack of informal communication mechanisms and the lack of frequent contact with parents formed a barrier for parent school collaboration. What parents, students and participants of School 1 said showed that school-based activities are not for bringing parents together to get to know each other but are for informing them about school processes and parent responsibilities.

School 2 reported that activities like family learning groups and behaviour courses to involve parents are similar to what Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) and Todd & Higgins (1998) suggest. School 2 reported much positive feedback for their parent-centred activities, that parents felt more confident getting into contact with the school. They felt a part of the community and got skills which they needed for their daily lives and for supporting their children. They even gave examples of some parents who continued to college after taking the courses offered by the school subsequently gaining employment.

Although Moskal (2010) stated that through their children, parents make con-

tact with other parents, teachers or different service providers, those parents who found a chance to attend activities at the school stated that they could not make any friends from other nationalities. As two parents stated everybody preferred to stay in their own "cultural chamber". This might be normal to some extent for migrant parents, but it is the school which should develop strategies to break these "chambers" in order to allow everyone to become equal partners of the school as stated earlier by Levine-Rasky (2009). Even if there were opportunities like coffee-tea mornings and drop-in sessions so that parent got into contact with other parents, language and lack of confidence would prevent some parent participants from getting into contact with parents from other nationalities.

What Parent 2 said about getting into contact with native parents seemed to be similar to what Crozier (2001) put forward. This parent feels that natives who are already settled do not get into contact with migrants and as migrants start to settle and form their community they do not need to get into contact with other ethnic groups as well. The staff at School 1confirmed that they never witnessed any parents making friends during or via the activities at school but did they ever think why? Is that because of the way that particular activity is organised? These questions may be answered by further studies. But this issue also addresses the discussion about multiculturalism and interculturalism. From an interculturalist point of view school with the help of local services might foster intercultural dialogue (interculturalism) between different ethnic groups (Council of Europe, 2008; Cantle, 2012).

Participants of the study from School 1 support the idea that if the student is progressing then everything is ok and there is no need for extra activities. However, during the group interview School 1 staff complained about the difficulties of getting parents to attend meetings and activities which means this perception abut support to parents might not work.

4.4. Theme 4. Impact of Parent-School Relationship on Migrant Parents

Parents 2 - 5 and 7 clearly stated that they did not experience a direct effect of the school on their social life and they did not think that schools can help migrant parents to engage with life in the host society. Parents 3 and 7 said there might be an indirect effect because the school may create an environment for that. Parent 3 said that "It could help but the schools do not do that".

Parents 1 and 6 mentioned that their relationship with the school made it easier for them to get accustomed to life in a new country and engage with it. Parent 6 stated that her relationship with the school gave her the chance to talk to natives every day. Parent 1 said that her relationship with the school increased her willingness to improve her language skills. These two mothers reported that their interaction with the school increased their self-confidence.

> "Since I have to take kids to school every day, I have to be social. I have to get into contact and speak to others. So, it helps me a lot to get used to life here". (Parent 6)

In addition, Parent 5 said "I hated math for all of my life but I liked it in one of the courses provided by my son's school, but it was years ago."

Most of the children said the school does not support parents in getting used to social life in the host society. Only Student 1 mentioned that her mother felt more confident and started to come to the school more frequently because she got support from office staff and started to understand English more.

The two participants of School 2 said they have witnessed many parents who felt more confident and comfortable after attending the activities and courses ran by the school. There were also parents who continued their level courses in college. The pastoral officer said she had witnessed on many occasions, parents making friends when they get together in the groups. The head teacher said;

> "It is not about the school it's about being a service to the community. We help them (parents) to become more independent. It is hard to talk about changes in their lives but when they feel confident, they support the school as well".

School 2 also stated that by getting parents involved in the school it helped with their integration and confidence but participants in group 1 said that their focus was the student not the parent. As long as the student is confident with his/her academic progress this will contribute to parents' lives as well.

Discussion of theme 4

Two parents (Paren 1, Parent 6) clearly stated that their involvement in their child's education contributed to life skills and increased their confidence. Vygotsky (1986) argued that all mental functions appear twice: first on the social plane and later on the psychological plane. The "daily interactions" reported by some parents served as social mediators that, once internalized, transformed into increased individual confidence and a sense of belonging within the school community. Parent 3 and Parent 7 believe that there might be an indirect effect of parent-school relationship on parents' lives but the schools do not create such an environment. The other parents did not experience any effect of their relationship with the school on their lives. All students except Student 1 did not experience any effect of school-parent relationship on their parent's lives.

Although the head teacher of School 2 said it is hard to talk about changes in parents' lives, the head teacher and the pastoral officer gave many examples of positive feedback on parents who feel more confident, improved social skills, made friends, took level courses and found a job with the help of their interaction with the school. So, it is safe to say that School 2 does support parents in terms of parental role construction, self-efficacy and personal motivation to improve their involvement (Walker et al., 2005) in the child's education and to become more successful in socioeconomic life (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). For many migrant parents, the complexities of the UK education system fall well beyond their current level of understanding. When schools do not provide the necessary social mediation, these parents are unable to enter a "Zone of Proximal Development"

(ZPD), where learning and involvement could actually occur (Vygotsky, 1978). It is seen that School 2 is successful in engaging migrant parents because the school organises activities for parents primarily according to their needs as López et al. (2001) states. School 2 also believes that their support for parents will contribute to their integration as well.

There seem to be two competing paradigms about two schools. What school 1 participants state, show that students' performance, confidence and life skills will affect their parents and the parents will feel more confident as their child progress. But what school 2 participants state, indicate if parents are contacted and made confident to come to school and involved with different activities this will foster parent-school collaboration and have an effect on students' learning and confidence. So, which came first the chicken or the egg. The literature reviewed in this study solves this and puts forward the importance of parental involvement on child's achievement (Mansour & Martin, 2009; Hill & Tyson, 2009).

5. Conclusion

5.1. Answers to Research Questions

❖ **Challenges that migrant parents face**

It is found that challenges like poor language skills, working full time and lack of confidence coincide with the studies by Gaitan (2012), Moskal (2010) and Harris et al. (2009). According to Vygotsky (1978), language is the primary psychological tool that mediates social interaction and cognitive development. Language barrier dominates parent related challenges and according to Vygotsky language itself prevents most of the parents from social interaction. The challenges with the school, such as the lack of contact time and negative staff attitudes (e.g. not being friendly) which are found in this study coincide with Davies et al. (1996), Hornby (2000) and Hoover-Dempsey et al (2005). Studies by Heckmann (2008) and Vincent (2000) show that the lack of knowledge about education system is a challenge for migrant parents which is also found in this study, but findings also show that parents might feel this challenge more strongly at the first year of their interaction with the school. However, findings suggest that the way curriculum is designed and implemented can be more challenging for parents when they try to help their children because they judge the schooling with their past schooling experiences. This is confirmed by one study which was also done with Turkish parents in the U.S.

❖ **School's Role in supporting migrant parents**

Findings suggest that the schools that parents talk about lack supportive and diverse activities for parents to foster parent-school collaboration. The lack of supportive activities for migrant parents suggests a failure in educational "scaffolding"—the temporary support provided to help a learner achieve a task they cannot yet do independently (Vygotsky, 1978). Without this scaffold, the task of school involvement remains outside the parents' reach, leading to the alienation observed in this study. The two participating schools stand on two far edges in terms of their

ideas about school support for migrant parents. School 1 expects support from parents and claims that the best way to support migrant parents is to educate their children. However, School 2 thinks that in order for parents to engage in their children's education, the school should initiate the communication and make them feel comfortable. They will then collaborate and support the school as stated by Harris et al. (2009), Driessen et al. (2005) and Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005). This difference between the perceptions of the two schools might be because of their context (one in a multi-cultural area, one in a middle-class dominantly "white" area) and their levels one primary and one being a secondary school, as found by Crozier & Davies (2007).

❖ **Effect of parent school relationship on migrant parents' engagement with social life in the host society**

Participants' experiences and perceptions show that schools that participants talk about do not have any effect on parents to engage with social life. The parents who reported positive effects of their relationship with the school on their life take the kids to school every day and interact with teachers and other school staff daily. Thus, the improvement in their confidence and social skills is due to their daily interaction with the school and it is not because of any support provided by the school.

The study shows that most of the schools that parents talk about have no direct or indirect effects on parents' social life, but schools (like School 2) should organise different activities that consider parents' needs, such as an increase in confidence levels and social skills. The statement given by the head teacher of school 2 displays this idea:

"It is not about the school it is about being a service to the community".

Although policies (ECM, 2003) suggest support for parents and studies (Harris et al., 2009; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005) raise the importance of parent school collaboration, some schools in the city where the study was conducted still lack the capacity for effective parent school collaboration.

It can be argued that getting parents equipped with the necessary skills in social life is not the schools' responsibility since schools exist for children. However, the support provided for parents as well as extra activities organised according to parents' requirements (Driessen et al., 2005) foster parents' confidence levels and social skills which gives them access to various services, the wider community and the ability to support their children.

5.2. Meanings Drawn from the Study and Implications for Teachers, Schools and Authorities

The study shows that there are some activities that are not perceived as "support" by parents, but some other activities are reported to be effective by some of the parents and school staff. In **Figure 1**, activities that participants talked about were put into a hierarchy according to different aspects, as explained in the following paragraph.

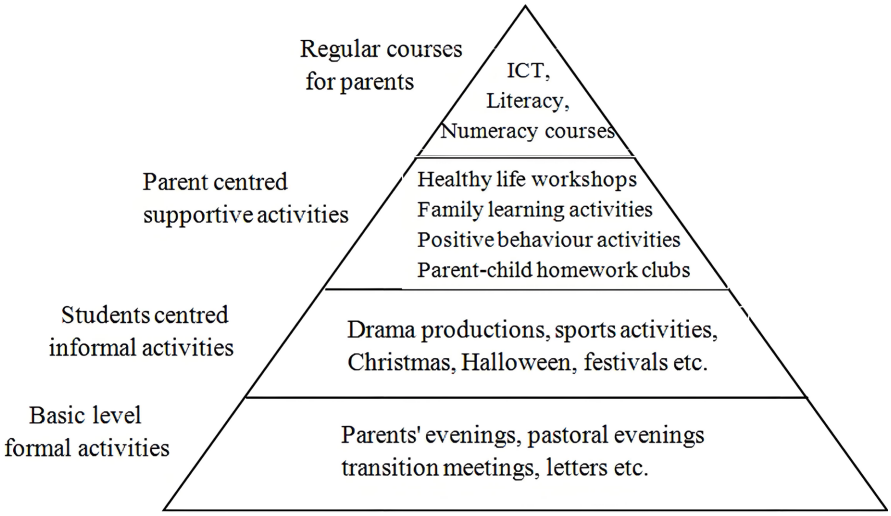

Figure 1. Hierarch of activities to improve migrant parents' involvement.

The activities in **Figure 1** are put into 4 levels. The size of the level indicates the commonness of the activity among schools according to participants' statements. While going up in the pyramid, the commonness of each activity decreases but it's effect on parents increases. The top-level activities are more likely to eliminate barriers to parent-school collaboration and support parents to cope with their challenges. Going up the pyramid, the cost of activity (in terms of time and money) is likely to increase which might be a reason for the rarity of these activities. The top level shows the courses that are directly used so that parents improve their skills and it is most effective on migrant parents which is confirmed by literature and this study but the activities on the top level are the rarest ones.

What this pyramid suggests is that teachers and other school staff should organise activities from the top two levels of the pyramid. However, parent-centred supportive activities are easier to organise and less costly. The study found that during the activities at level 1, parents did not get enough time or chance to interact with teachers. Therefore, other schools might create chances during these activities for parents to get into contact with teachers and other parents which may make the activities of the first two floors of the pyramid more "parent friendly".

The suggestion for authorities is to provide schools in multiethnic contexts with the resources which are needed to increase their collaboration with parents as this process will contribute to the integration of migrant parents in the long run.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Studies

There are some suggestions that emerged during the study that require further research. Firstly, there were differences between the two schools in this study, so further studies can be carried out to find school staff's perceptions of school-parent collaboration.

Secondly, all the parents were Turkish and complained about schools not pushing students forward. Low expectations of the system from students is also found by Işık-Ercan (2010) with Turkish parents in the U.S. An ethnographic study can

be done with a wider migrant Turkish community to find out their perceptions about curriculum and schooling.

5.4. The Critique of the Study

This phenomenological study aimed to explore migrant parents' challenges with involving their children's education, the schools' role in supporting these parents and the effect of school support on parents' lives. The study was context based with a limited number of participants.

Firstly, the study was planned to be carried out using children, parents and participant children's schools to ensure a consistent triangulation. However, as the study commenced 6 schools were contacted, but the researcher did not get an answer from the children's schools except one. Other schools were contacted to have more school voice in the study and among eighty, only two schools replied positively. Meanwhile, not all parents could be reached and as the data collection finished, the participants were different from what was planned. The composition of the sample might be a weak side of the study, but all parties had a voice in the study.

Secondly, the study is done with Turkish parents and students, which does not represent other migrant communities; therefore, it could be an ethnographic study, but the researcher did not have a chance to meet with the Turkish community frequently and make observations over a period of time.

If this study had to be done again, I would visit schools before stating my research intention and explain the research process face-to-face at the schools. I would also choose children from schools that try to contact those children's parents. If I had another opportunity, I would have held group interviews with the help of a native English researcher who would have encouraged the participants to speak more freely and made them more comfortable/confident with the study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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